

# Early Christians Adapting to the Roman Empire

Mutual Recognition

*Niko Huttunen*

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BRILL

## Early Christians Adapting to the Roman Empire

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*Mutual Recognition*

*By*

Niko Huttunen



BRILL

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## Preface

Writing this book has taken me on a journey of many years. Originally, I was urged on by Associate Professor Raimo Hakola, my dear friend and colleague. For some periods, I was part of his research project *Enemies in the Making*, funded by the Academy of Finland. Apologies, Raimo, that it took longer to reach the goal than expected. Thank you for your support, which got me off to a good start. Raimo's project, however, was not the beginning. There is also a prehistory. Some years before *Enemies*, Professor Antti Marjanen urged me to write an article on soldiers for his research project *Gender, Social Roles and Occupations in Early Christianity*. This project, also funded by the Academy of Finland, provided me an initial platform for discussion. Later, Professor Risto Saarinen invited me into the Academy of Finland's *Centre of Excellence, Reason and Religious Recognition*, based in the Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki. One might note that the key concept "recognition" originates here. I wrote the current book alongside my official duties, first as a lecturer of New Testament Greek in the Faculty of Theology during the years 2013–2017, and later as a translator in the Finnish Bible Society, where I prepared a new Finnish translation of the New Testament. Now it appears that the day has come for this book to finally emerge from the sidelines.

Within this range of years, many persons both in Finland and abroad have contributed to my research by commenting on and discussing it. Any list of names would be incomplete, as I would surely forget to mention them all, so numerous you are! If you have ever commented on my texts and/or discussed them with me, you are worthy of my warmest thanks. I will just mention Professor Ismo Dunderberg, who commented on the manuscript at its late stage, and the anonymous peer reviewer at Brill, whose critiques and suggestions were very helpful. My thanks are also extended to those who have contributed to any of my earlier articles, of which I have incorporated material into this volume in a more or less modified form. No article is incorporated without modifications. These articles are as follows:

Stoic Law in Paul? *Stoicism in Early Christianity*. Ed. by Ismo Dunderberg, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Tuomas Rasimus. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010, 39–58 (Excerpt from *Stoicism in early Christianity* edited by Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg, copyright © 2010. Used by permission of Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group.);



In the Category of Philosophy: Christians in Early Pagan Accounts. *“Others” and the Construction of Early Christian Identity*. Ed. by Raimo Hakola, Nina Nikki, and Ulla Tervahauta. Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 106. Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2013, 239–281;

The Centurion’s Faith in the Gospels and Soldiers in Early Christian Imagination. *Christ and the Emperor*. Ed. by J. Verheyden and G. van Belle. Biblical Tools and Studies 20. Leuven: Peeters, 2014, 301–314;

How Fantasy Comes True: Paul between Political Realism and Eschatological Fantasy. *Stasis* 2/2015, 90–109;

Epictetus’ View on Christians: A Closed Case Revisited. *Ancient Philosophy and Religion: Religio-Philosophical Discourses within the Greco-Roman, Jewish and Early Christian World*. Ed. by Anders Klostergaard Petersen and George van Kooten. Ancient Philosophy & Religion 1. Leiden: Brill, 2017, 306–322;

Powers, Baptism, and the Ethics of the Stronger: Paul among the Ancient Political Philosophers. *Paul and the Greco-Roman Philosophical Tradition*. Ed. by Joseph R. Dodson and Andrew W. Pitts. London: T&T Clark, 2017, 101–116 (used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc);

Early Christians on Philosophy: Seeking Recognition in Greco-Roman Culture. *Reflections on Recognition: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*. Ed. by M. Kahlos, H. J. Koskinen, and R. Palmén. London: Routledge, 2019, 90–108 (Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear);

Esivalta: The Religious Roots of the Finnish Moral View of Society. *On the Legacy of Lutheranism in Finland: Societal Perspectives*. Ed. by K. Sinnemäki, A. Portman, J. Tilli, and R. H. Nelson. Studia Fennica Historica 25. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2019, 257–272;

After Anti-Imperial Readings: Early Christians in the Empire Re-Examined. *Nordic Interpretations of the New Testament: Challenging Texts and Perspectives*. Ed. by M. B. Kartzow, L. Heldgaard, and R. Falkenberg. Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica 5. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht (forthcoming);

Brothers in Arms: Soldiers in Early Christianity. *Gender, Social Roles and Occupations in Early Christianity* (the name of the book remains unconfirmed). Ed. by Antti Marjanen (forthcoming).

The translations of the biblical texts are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. In the case that I use existing translations of other ancient texts, I always indicate this. As my native language is not English, I

have consulted Lisa Muszynski, Ph.D. and Albion M. Butters, Ph.D., who have carefully corrected my numerous mistakes. I deeply thank you for your toil. All the remaining shortcomings are due to my negligence. I also express my gratitude to Professor Margaret M. Mitchell and Professor David P. Moessner, who as editors of the series made it possible in several ways to publish this book. I also thank the whole Brill staff, who greatly contributed to the publication.

I have dedicated all my previous books to my beloved wife Tarja and to my lovely daughter Liina. I do it again. This book is dedicated to you, Tarja and Liina, the best earthly gifts of God.



## Introduction: Recognition between Anti- and Pro-imperial Readings

Paul opposed Rome with Christ against Caesar, not because that empire was particularly unjust or oppressive, but because he questioned the normalcy of civilization itself, since civilization has always been imperial, that is, unjust and oppressive.<sup>1</sup>

This is how John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed positioned Paul in their *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*. Several scholars have pronounced views similar to those of Crossan and Reed, not only on Paul but also on the New Testament as a whole. The scholarly situation can easily be grasped by reading, for example, Judy Diehl's tripartite review on recent anti-imperial readings of the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> Roland Boer puts it illustratively:

The fact that so many books published in the last few years on the New Testament have “empire” somewhere in the title is an indication of a significant shift in scholarship. Four streams have come together to form what is now a wide and full river: older Marxist-inspired studies that have sought the historical conditions of a rebellious movement, liberation-theological approaches to the Bible, more recent postcolonial approaches and the growing sense (not new in itself) that the New Testament cannot be understood without considering its place within the Roman Empire. A significant feature of many of these studies is that they find deeply anti-imperial themes in the biblical texts. Or at least one can find, they argue, a consistent anti-imperial theme running through them. Invariably, the comparison is made with our own times, whether it is the imperialism of the United States, or the global ravages of transnational corporations, or the profound difference between the majority of impoverished peoples of the world and the small number of the obscenely rich.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Crossan and Reed 2005, x–xi.

2 Diehl 2011; 2012; 2013. See also, e.g., Barclay 2011, 364–365.

3 Boer 2013, 181–182.

As Boer points out, these studies are often tinged by an impulse for modern applications.<sup>4</sup> This is also the case with Crossan and Reed, who ask: “To what extent can America be Christian? We are now the greatest postindustrial civilization as Rome was then the greatest preindustrial one. That is precisely what makes Paul’s challenge equally forceful for now and as for then, for here as for there, for *Senatus Populusque Romanus* as for *Senatus Populusque Americanus*.”<sup>5</sup> Basically, there is nothing wrong in these intentions to present modern applications. It is a problem if a reading pretends to be historical but is actually steered by modern goals. I like to point out the split between “what it meant” and “what it means,” as Krister Stendahl once highlighted.<sup>6</sup>

As far as is hermeneutically possible, scholars should allow the text to communicate its own intentions, even if its message is strange or displeasing—and there is at least one displeasing passage in the New Testament, Romans 13:1–7. Roland Boer aptly states that it is “the stumbling block ... for those who interpret the New Testament as an anti-imperial and anti-colonial collection of texts.”<sup>7</sup> The discomfort of scholars reading this passage is almost tangible. I once again take Crossan and Reed as an example. In their book of 450 pages, they discuss these verses in just two pages. There is good reason to limit this discussion to a minimum. If one wants to write of an apostle opposing the Roman Empire, there is not much to say about Romans 13:1–7. It is another matter, however, for the reader to get an accurate picture of what Paul thought of the Empire without a close look at Romans 13:1–7. This passage is the only one in Paul’s epistles where he intentionally speaks about the state.

The anti-imperial reading finds its home mainly in the USA. In my opinion, such a reading reflects the American political tradition. Stephen Kalberg (referring to Max Weber) notes that the Puritan tradition, which is so effective in the USA, is suspicious or even hostile toward human authority. The Protestants of the 17th century believed that “should rulers violate God’s decrees, the faithful stood under *religious* obligation to protest against and overthrow such illegitimate and unjust authority.”<sup>8</sup> One can easily see the same tradition behind the US Declaration of Independence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,  
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,

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4 See, e.g., Diehl’s articles; Lehtipuu and Labahn 2015, 8; Barclay 2011, 367.

5 Crossan and Reed 2005, xi.

6 Stendahl 2000, 70 (originally 1962).

7 Boer 2013, 179–180.

8 Kalberg 2016, 43 (original emphasis).

that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness ... whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.... [W]hen a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

The Declaration supports Americans to maintain sharp eyes to see any limitations placed on their freedom. It promulgates the continuous “Right of the People” to alter or to abolish governments. I suggest that American eyes also explain the recent anti-imperial reading of the New Testament. For those raised in American culture, anti-imperialism is the given position. Crossan and Reed were educated into this same culture, but their American eyes have turned a critical gaze toward the USA. These are self-critical eyes, but they are still the same culturally American eyes in search of freedom from tyranny. Europe trusts more in the centralized state, although it has had its own turmoils. It is noteworthy that the Declaration blames the king of Great Britain for establishing “an absolute tyranny.” Such hard words naturally had a reason within the historical situation in which they were composed, but they also reflect certain differences in the political culture on both the western and eastern banks of the Atlantic Ocean.

This difference is especially true when the USA is compared to Northern Europe, where the Lutheran political tradition recognizes Romans 13:1–7 as one of the culturally key texts, which repels any revolutionary spirit.<sup>9</sup> To my Northern European eyes, the US Declaration of Independence resembles the constitution proposed by the Finnish revolutionaries in 1918. They were inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and stated in their constitution that, should the parliament remove the constitution, “let the people arise and dissolve that parliament.”<sup>10</sup> The similarity between the US Declaration and the Finnish red constitution is not accidental. Besides the fact that the authors of the red constitution consulted US constitutional documents,<sup>11</sup> they both belong to the apocalyptic tradition. The presence of apocalyptic themes in

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9 Nelson 2017, 87–105; Huttunen 2019.

10 § 43 (my translation from Finnish).

11 Rinta-Tassi 1986, 330.

American political culture is conspicuous,<sup>12</sup> like it is in Marxism. The Marxist philosophy of history is a secularized modification of Jewish-Christian apocalypticism.<sup>13</sup> Even the sentiments sound similar, as the anarchist Emma Goldman once noted when intuitively depicting the Bolsheviks as puritans: “The Bolsheviks were social puritans who sincerely believed that they alone were ordained to save mankind.”<sup>14</sup> Americans and Bolsheviks are in many respects strange bedfellows, but the revolutionary tendency to oppose the powers that be is similar. Northern Europe has been a hard soil for such tendencies. The religious heritage of Romans 13:1–7 resulted in the fact that—borrowing the words of Anthony F. Upton—“from the Finnish revolution some vital spark was missing.”<sup>15</sup> Revolution is an anomaly in Finnish political culture, and in the other Nordic countries revolution never broke out. To me, therefore, the anti-imperial reading appears somewhat strange.

After recognizing the differences between the political traditions on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, it probably comes as no surprise that European scholars are somewhat critical toward the anti-imperial reading of the New Testament. The Belgian scholar Joseph Verheyden notes that in the anti-imperial readings there is a risk of interpreting specific passages too exclusively “in light of the overall thesis at the cost of obscuring the immediate context in which a particular passage occurs.” Verheyden gives an elaborate example of an anti-imperial interpretation of the yoke analogy in the Gospel of Matthew (11:28–30). He concludes that the result is “too simplistic” and that “early Christianity cannot be captured under this sole header,” namely anti-imperialism.<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein, Outi Lehtipuu and Michael Labahn, the European editors of *People under Power*, describe the essays in the book as follows:

The task of the present volume is to show that the topic is more complicated than often assumed and that relations between the empire and the

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12 See, e.g., Jewett and Lawrence 2003.

13 See, e.g., Zimdars-Schwartz and Zimdars-Schwartz 1998, 286–289; Baumgartner 1999, 201–202. Boer (2010; 2012, 289–290) is somewhat suspicious of this view, but I think that the numerous similarities in the apocalyptic and Marxist visions of history cannot be accidental. Boer notes that Engels’ interest in Revelation had not so much to do with the historical vision but the revolutionary spirit. I have no reason to doubt this claim. However, I guess that the Marxist philosophy of history finds its apocalyptic roots through several adaptations. Hegel was the immediate predecessor.

14 Goldman 1923, 112.

15 Upton 1980, 395. I just need to add that in the 1930s, the Nordic countries were resistant also to right-wing politics. The Nazis received acceptance in the multi-confessional Germany, but not in the Nordic countries (Nelson 2017, 100–104).

16 Verheyden 2014, xvi–xxi.

Jews and Christians living within its limits cannot simply be described in terms of conflict, clash, and opposition. As several recent studies have made clear, early Christianity and early Judaism were diverse movements that included various versions of how to be and live as a Christian or Jew. The attitudes toward the Empire also varied and differed both geographically and temporally. There is no such thing as the Christian or the Jewish response to imperial rule and ideology. The attitudes of peasants living in the Roman Galilee, for example, were not the same as those of the urban dwellers living outside of the region who wrote about them. The further the Jesus movement expanded, the more diversified it became, while reactions toward the Roman authorities proliferated. Moreover, the Roman world was no less diverse; the faces of the empire did not look the same for all its inhabitants. This profound diversity is mirrored in manifold ways in the ancient sources and is also reflected in the essays of this volume.<sup>17</sup>

European scholars seem to be much more cautious with the anti-imperial interpretations than the Americans.<sup>18</sup> However, it would also be a mistake to pass anti-imperial readings off as pure eisegesis. One can even find sympathy for anti-imperial readings from surprising quarters. For example, Leopold von Ranke, who is famous for the paradigm he introduced into subsequent historical research, supported an anti-imperial reading. Ranke was a conservative thinker who had been ennobled by the Prussian king and had no apparent reason to introduce an anti-imperial agenda into the New Testament texts. In his writings, however, he constructed a political problem at the center of early Christianity. Obedience toward the Empire and toward the Kingdom of God ran into an undeniable conflict, Ranke claims.<sup>19</sup>

Denying the anti-imperial potential of the New Testament is meaningless, because right at the heart of Christianity lies a person executed by the Roman authorities. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul prefers to know nothing but “Jesus Christ, him crucified.” He continues by proclaiming that it was “the rulers of this age” who “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:2,8). However, with the power structure changing, Paul is convinced that Christ is alive and he will give the kingdom to God after destroying “every ruler and every authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24). This is not only an anti-Roman claim. This is an

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17 Lehtipuu and Labahn 2015, 9. I would like to mention Anders Klostergaard Petersen's (2015) chapter in *People under Power*, as it elegantly exemplifies balanced cautiousness toward anti-imperial readings.

18 There are surely exceptions to this European/American divide (see, e.g., Harrill 2011), but it does indeed reflect a general pattern.

19 Ranke 1883, 182, 184.



anti-imperial claim, anarchistically directed against any political use of power, “the normalcy of civilization itself,” as Crossan and Reed put it in the epigraph that heads this chapter. This did not remain the case only at the theoretical level but was realized in actual tensions with the contemporary political powers of the day. Paul was put to death in Rome, and this was not an isolated incident. Even non-Christian sources report on tensions between the early Christians and Roman society. Describing Nero’s persecution in Rome in the 60s CE, Tacitus maintains that the Emperor falsely blamed Christians for the burning of the city, but that Christians got what they deserved anyway (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). Suetonius praises Nero’s response as a good action (*Nero* 16). And Pliny the Younger reports on his problems with Christians in Asia Minor (*Ep.* 10.96).<sup>20</sup>

Both the Christian and the Roman sources demonstrate the real tensions that existed between Christians and Roman society. Therefore, aside from some overly daring interpretations of single statements exemplified by Verheyden, what—if anything—is unsound or amiss in the anti-imperial readings? I claim that the overall thesis is too daring: the early Christians and Roman society were not in constant tension. Even according to Verheyden, the picture is a “much more colourful one and cannot fully be grasped under this one perspective.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the early Christians were not only anti-imperial. There is also much evidence of pro-imperial perspectives in the early Christian sources.<sup>22</sup> How can this be understood? Were there different kinds of Christians? Absolutely. Commenting on the anti-Roman message in Revelation, Henk Jan de Jonge puts it as follows:

The anti-Roman stance of the author of Revelation need not be taken as representative of early Christianity in Ephesus, or in Asia, or in Anatolia, at the beginning of the second century CE. On the contrary, 1 Peter 2:13–17 ... and 1 Tim. 2:2, possibly also written in Ephesus at the beginning of the second century, show that when Revelation was written, other Christians in Asia Minor succeeded in coming to terms with Rome. That was indeed the more usual attitude of Christians towards Rome, at least in

20 Cook (2010) presents a careful reading of these texts. It may be added that the historicity of Nero’s persecution has been recently questioned by Shaw (2015, 2018), but without success (Jones 2017; van der Lans and Bremmer 2017). From my point of view, it is essential to note that the accounts themselves attest to tensions at least in Tacitus’ own time in the beginning of the second century. Even Shaw does not deny this.

21 Verheyden 2014, xxii.

22 Boer 2012, 293: “We do not find that the Bible and theology are squarely with the oppressors and powers-that-be, nor do we find it gives voice solely to the aspirations of the downtrodden. Rather, in that vast mix of literature and thought, we find both.”

the first century CE, as appears from Paul (Rom. 13:1–7), Mark (12:17), and 1 Clement (61:1–2).<sup>23</sup>

One can even find pro- and anti-imperial tendencies expressed by a single author. I remarked on the difference between Paul's sayings in Romans and in 1 Corinthians above. On the other hand, in the Book of Revelation, Christ finally gets the upper hand as a military conqueror, which bears a striking resemblance to Roman ideology. Thus, it is a simplification to label early Christianity, the New Testament, or even an individual author anti- or pro-imperial. How might this tension in political attitudes be resolved or explained? John S. Kloppenborg has made several helpful observations based on postcolonial studies. His material deals with the figure of the Judge in Q, but his insights bear a more general validity. Kloppenborg notes that the imitation of the dominant discourse by the subaltern has two functions. First, "the subaltern adopts the language of the dominant culture in order to reduce alterity." Kloppenborg presents Romans 13:1–7 as an example. Second, the imitation of the dominant discourse is incomplete. By partial imitation, the subaltern "both disguises herself as compliant, and creates room for identity in a new discursive space."<sup>24</sup> I argue that the anti-imperial reading of the New Testament cannot grasp this complexity. It is too indulgent of a strict opposition between the oppressor and the oppressed to do justice to the varied modes of contact between the hegemonic and the non-hegemonic. It narrows this interaction into a conflict. In her *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt prefers the term "contact zone" to make room for the agency of the dominated:

By using the term "contact," I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A "contact" perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations ... not in terms of separatedness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.<sup>25</sup>

One can easily see that in Romans 13, Paul is addressing an audience that does not have authority within the state. The addressees are subjects, like Paul

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23 De Jonge 2002, 140.

24 Kloppenborg 2014, 181.

25 Pratt 1995, 7.

himself, “within radically asymmetrical relations of power.” Yet, Paul does not offer resistance as a cure. Instead, he creates a new discursive space. This is what Pratt calls “autoethnography” or “autoethnographic expression.” She uses “these terms to refer to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer’s own terms.” Autoethnographic texts are constructed in response to or in dialogue with the colonizing representations.<sup>26</sup> My aim is to show how Paul’s thoughts in Romans 13 interact with Greco-Roman mainstream thinking. His admonition to obey is a piece of political realism in a society where opposition would have led to disaster. However, Paul creates a discursive space where a Christian identity can breathe and keep distance from the authorities. His message was neither that of a political revolutionary, nor that of an eager loyalist. I question the paradigm of polar opposites; I question that the early Christians were *either* resisting the authorities *or* conforming to them. There are many more positions, which I gather under the concept of “recognition.” Here I follow the heuristic findings of Risto Saarinen in his recent book *Recognition and Religion*. Recognition describes a situation in which the parties can come to terms with each other in several ways, that is, without full agreement. Recognition resembles tolerance, but these concepts are not synonymous:

While both recognition and toleration assume a lasting disagreement between two or more parties, the attitude of recognizing another person or group typically means something ‘more’ than mere toleration. This ‘more’ may consist in a commitment to work together, respect other convictions, and approve a general societal or ideological framework in which the coexistence takes place.<sup>27</sup>

Recognition does not have the prerequisite that the parties be equal. Instead, there are cases of downward and upward recognition.<sup>28</sup> Upward recognition is an act of submission to an authority, something that clearly happens in Romans 13. This is important for my study, because Christians were clearly in the minor position in the vast Empire; they granted recognition to the authorities and the society of which they were a part. At the same time, however, they sought recognition for themselves. Moreover, recognition can be mediated, such that the parties cannot recognize each other but they recognize a

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<sup>26</sup> Pratt 1995, 7 (original emphasis).

<sup>27</sup> Saarinen 2016, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Saarinen 2016, 32–33, 35–36.

third party, which can be, for example, a person or set of rules.<sup>29</sup> For instance, Christians could be recognized as a philosophical school and, thus, in such a way, they were able to find a position in Greco-Roman culture, although the content of their thoughts was not recognized on their own merit. In this case, philosophy is mediating the recognition. Finally, one should note that the process of recognition does not always appear in concepts or conceptions, but also within actual practices.<sup>30</sup> An example of recognition in practice is Christians who were in service to the Roman imperial army. Service itself proved recognition of the Empire from the side of the Christian soldiers, while the Empire recognized the Christian soldiers as its legitimate servants. As a heuristic tool, the concept of recognition is employed to avoid black-and-white interpretations of Christian-Empire relationships. The alternatives are not only full denial and full acceptance but much more in-between these two extremes. In this book, I discuss the relationship between the early Christians and the Roman Empire on three levels: cultural, political, and practical.

In Chapter 2, I concentrate on the cultural level. There is a long tradition attempting to split Christian religiosity from ancient philosophy. In contrast to that, I show that the contact zone between them was not only hostile, but also a place for mutual recognition. In section 1 of this chapter, I concentrate on some non-Christian philosophers of the second century. A close reading of the accounts of Christians by Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Galen leads me to the conclusion that these philosophers saw Christians in the category of philosophers. In this way, they recognized Christians as a rival philosophical school and a legitimate group in society. The recognition was real, despite the fact that the philosophers found deficiencies in Christian teachings. In section 2, I claim that non-Christian philosophers recognized Christians as philosophers, after the latter sought recognition as such. I start with Tertullian's famous sentence on Athens and Jerusalem. Its heightened antagonism between ancient philosophy and Christianity should be seen as a rhetorical exaggeration. I claim that Tertullian's sentence describes neither his own position nor that of the biblical passages (Acts 17, Col 2) he uses to warrant the antagonism. I also show how Paul's words against human wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1–2 participate in the contemporary philosophical discourse of the day, although scholars have routinely read the text as a misrecognition of philosophy. Later in the same epistle, in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul shows clear affinities with Stoicism. I conclude that philosophical elements are present already in the earliest Christian documents and, thus, philosophy forms a recognized

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29 Saarinen 2016, 33, 41.

30 Saarinen 2016, 34–35.

part of the Christian identity, not a later lapse from pristine piety, as Tertullian and others have claimed.

In Chapter 3, I deal with the political level, including the theme I have already touched on above. I take a fresh look at Romans 13:1–7 and put it into the context of ancient political philosophy. Instead of looking for the ancient theories of ideal kings and political structures, I look at how ancient people constructed sources of power. I claim that the context of Paul's words on earthly authorities is the law of the stronger that has permeated ancient texts for centuries. The readers of Paul have always seen the theological edge: authorities are instituted by God. One has less often discussed how the institution can be identified. What is the hallmark of God's institution? In the social reality, it is the sword. According to the law of the stronger, power is a witness of divine favor. Paul seems to follow this pattern, providing a Jewish variant, which is also known from Josephus. There are no Roman gods, but rather the God of Israel showing His favor for the Empire. This was a theological explanation for the ruthless political realism, with brutal force being the leading factor in political life. On the other hand, this was not all that Paul said on the topic. In reality, he was a kind of Christian anarchist waiting for the end of all human hierarchies. This eschatological expectation reflected by intra-Christian morals and, during the centuries, the larger society. In this way, at least some eschatological hopes, which Marxists have criticized as a fantasy, have been gradually realized. This is the paradox of political quietism. In turn, the Marxist revolutions which ideologically stemmed from apocalypticism and aimed at realizing its hopes resulted in oppressive empires. I have framed this chapter around a discussion with Marxists and anarchists. I also note the ways that scholars and general audiences have tried to cope with the unlimited obedience of authorities required by Romans 13:1–7.

Chapter 4 deals with the practical level of recognition. This represents a vast area of topics to be studied. However, I have chosen to focus on the problem of Christian soldiers. What do we know of them in the first two centuries and what was their position among the early Christians? This part of my study is a voice from the margins, as there is little discussion on the topic, apart from the modern ethical discourse often lacking understanding of the ancient social world and the army as part of it. In section 1 of this chapter, I read the military characters presented in the gospels as part of the ancient social world. Unlike most modern studies seem to assume, military characters in the texts do not aim to present a moral stance vis-à-vis military service as such. They may reveal something about this matter, too, but this is not their function in the narrative. I suggest, rather, that the main factor in understanding military figures is the difference between rank-and-file soldiers and centurions. In the

ancient sources, the former are mainly negative figures and the latter positive ones. The gospels seem to repeat this general view. This division was dependent on how the civil population experienced soldiers in their everyday life. The modern moral discussion has also narrowed the view on soldiers, as it has failed to see that the role of the army was broader than that of modern armies. This is not to say that there was never any moral discussion on military service in early Christianity. As I show in section 2 of chapter 4, many literate early Christian theologians shared the evasive or negative attitude of the philosophical authors of the time. Their statements should not be read as *the* Christian statements. Actually, they often betray the fact that some Christians served in the army and thereby recognized the Roman Empire on the practical level of their daily life. Despite occasional tensions, the army seemed more or less to recognize its Christian soldiers as legitimate servants of the Empire.

In the final chapter, I summarize the main results of my study. The aim of this book is to propose a balance against the black-and-white claims of resistance and conformism. The political history of the early Christians cannot be reduced into the positions of anti- or pro-imperialism. I claim that recognition is a good concept with which to analyze the variegated modes of interaction between the Roman Empire and the early Christians.

# Imperial Recognition in the Intellectual Sphere: Christians and Philosophers

## 1 Almost Philosophers: Pagan Philosophers Recognizing Christians

The earliest Roman sources on Christians are dated to the beginning of the second century. Three famous accounts of Christians are quoted repeatedly: Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny the Younger. In their view, Christianity is a criminal superstition. In this chapter, I argue that these authors present only one side of the coin. Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Galen provide more positive accounts. Thus, the image of Christians among ancient pagans was not a purely negative one; in a sense, they recognized Christianity as belonging to the category of philosophy.

Tacitus' *Annals* contain a well-known account of Emperor Nero's persecutions. Tacitus calls Christianity "the deadly superstition," one among "the shocking and shameful things" which flow into the city of Rome. He explains that the Christians were "hated for their crimes" and reports that they were brought to trial for hatred of the human race. Tacitus admits that Nero made the Christians scapegoats in order to deflect the scandalous rumors surrounding him. In the same breath, Tacitus adds that the Christians really "were guilty and deserving of the most unusual exemplary punishments" (*Ann.* 15.44.2–5).

The claim of Christianity as superstition recurs in Suetonius' book *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. While Suetonius lists Nero's evil deeds, he also mentions the good ones. Among these, he lists the fact that "punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition" (Nero 16.2; trans. Rolfe, LCL).<sup>1</sup> The third Roman author recurrently quoted is Pliny the Younger. As a *propraetor* of the province of Bithynia and Pontus, he had to handle legal procedures against local Christians. Pliny seems to be conscious that they are not guilty of grave crimes, and he is somewhat uncomfortable with his task. Pliny, however, sees Christianity as a "corrupt and

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1 According to another passage, which is often presented as a reference to Christ (Claudius 5.25), a certain Chrestus has caused disturbances among the Jews, but it is not clear if Chrestus actually means Christ or not (for the differing views, see, e.g., Benko 1980, 1056–1059; Thorsteinsson 2003, 92–96; Cook 2010, 11–28). Whatever the case may be, it does not change the picture of Christians that Suetonius gives in Nero 16.

immoderate superstition,” a kind of disease, which menaces the traditional cults but which can be remedied. He is ready to punish the pure “defiance and inflexible obstinacy” of Christians which he also calls “madness” (*amentia*) (*Ep.* 10.96).

John Granger Cook has written an excellent book, *Roman Attitudes Towards Christians: From Claudius to Hadrian*, where he extensively analyzes these three and some other Roman texts on Christians. In the introduction, Cook suggests that the concept of “othering” is useful for understanding the relationship between the Romans and the Christians. He continues: “There were some Roman intellectuals and officials who viewed (‘constructed’) the Christians as ‘the other’—a *novum* that they comprehended with difficulty.”<sup>2</sup> Cook formulates this “otherness” of Christianity:

Probably the Roman intellectuals and governors like Tacitus and Pliny were so disgusted at the phenomenon of Christianity that they lacked the inclination to make any profound explorations into the nature of early Christian faith, morality, and ritual practice. What I have sought to do during this project is develop a sympathy for the Romans’ shock when they had to deal with this ‘other’—these Christians who were so difficult to conceive using the categories they were familiar with.<sup>3</sup>

Cook’s view of Christians as “others” is fully justified. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny attest that the Romans had a tendency to count Christianity among the dangerous superstitions. Cook’s presentation, however, has a deficiency: it presumes that “otherness” is always coupled with a negative image of the “other.” This is not the case. “Otherness” mirrors the identity of the observer; “other” demarcates what the observer is not. For example, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny portrayed Christianity as a superstition—something that they did not think that they themselves held. Yet, although the indications of otherness tend to be negative, they can also be neutral or even laudatory.<sup>4</sup> “Otherness,” therefore, is not a purely negative category.

Images of others can contain positive elements, “depending on the relationship between the subject of the image and the examiner’s hopes, interests, or fears and what the environmental circumstances, such as the political and economic factors, are at each given time.”<sup>5</sup> The reasons can be even purely

<sup>2</sup> Cook 2010, 2; see Barclay 2014, 323–324.

<sup>3</sup> Cook 2010, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Rauhala 2013, 286.

<sup>5</sup> Fält 2008, 41.



rhetorical. For example, in Romans 1, Paul provides a picture of the pagans as a *massa perditionis*. In Romans 2, he turns the critical view toward the Jews and blames them, for example, by claiming that some pagans, unconsciously fulfilling the requirements of the Law, are better than Jews transgressing the Law they know (Rom. 2:14–29).<sup>6</sup> Thus, Paul’s view of pagans is turned on its head in consecutive chapters. Early Christian theologians, who usually labeled pagans negatively, could present images of good pagans.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, pagans did not always present only negative images of Christians. Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny provide only a partial sample of the whole. When looking at philosophical accounts, one can find more relaxed attitudes.<sup>8</sup> While far from promoting Christianity, they can nonetheless see some positive traits in Christians. I will take a look at the Stoic Epictetus, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the satirist Lucian, and Galen, the famous physician and philosopher. Their images of Christians contain positive elements. The chief indication is the fact that Christians are assessed in the category of philosophers—albeit with certain limitations.

The first section of this chapter is devoted to Epictetus, who is the earliest and perhaps the most interesting case. I claim that there is still much material left out of the scholarly discussion. The latter section is devoted to Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Galen, who were roughly contemporary with each other.

### 1.1 *Epictetus: Fearless People in Sympathy with Their Words*

The earliest philosopher to speak of Christians is the Stoic Epictetus (ca. 50–130). His *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* were written just at the beginning of the second century.<sup>9</sup> It is possible—but far from certain—that Epictetus knew Christians from his childhood in Hierapolis, Asia Minor, where there was a Christian community (according to Colossians 4:13). Born as a slave, Epictetus was sold to Rome, where he had close contacts to the court of Nero in the 60s CE.<sup>10</sup> We can suppose that he knew about Nero’s persecution of Christians (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2).<sup>11</sup> Epictetus studied Stoic philosophy under the Stoic Musonius Rufus, the most distinguished Roman philosopher of his time. After gaining his freedom, Epictetus started his own career as a teacher of philosophy. Possibly in the ’80s or ’90s, he resettled in Nicopolis, which

6 Räsänen 1987, 97–109.

7 See, e.g., Kahlos 2008 and Tervahauta 2013.

8 See Wilken 1980, 108.

9 For Epictetus’ life and works, see Huttunen 2009, 4–5, and the literature cited there.

10 Millar (1965) has helpfully gathered the evidence of these contacts.

11 This requires the historicity of the persecution recently questioned by Shaw (2015, 2018), but whose view has not gained ground (Jones 2017; van der Lans and Bremmer 2017).

today is situated close in Greece to the Albanian border; there he founded a school which became quite famous and attracted students of wealthy families. Nicopolis is also mentioned in the New Testament (Tit 3:12), but it is not certain if there was a Christian community during Epictetus' lifetime. The city was an important harbor on the way to Rome, however, which hardly escaped Christian influence.<sup>12</sup>

Epictetus never unambiguously speaks of Christians, but—as I will show—two passages actually mention them: *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 and 4.7.6. In his profound study, Cook addresses the latter briefly,<sup>13</sup> while the former he does not mention at all. His procedure is indicative of a more general tendency in the scholarship. The scholarly negligence is due to Adolf Bonhöffer's classic *Epiktet und das Neue Testament* (1911), which deals with parallel texts in depth but delivers only a short discussion on *Discourses* 4.7.6, while glossing the other passage with superficial references.<sup>14</sup> Bonhöffer refuted all attempts to find Christian influences in Epictetus' texts. His main goal of attack, however, was Theodor Zahn's inaugural speech as a vice-principal of the University of Erlangen. In this speech, Zahn proposed that Epictetus knew of the New Testament writings and embraced ideas from it, "as long as ... not in contrast to his dogma."<sup>15</sup>

Zahn emphasized that Epictetus differed from Christians on many points, and "he did not become a Christian, because he was a Stoic and wished to die as a Stoic." He was not even a friend of Christianity or Christians.<sup>16</sup> Even this moderate statement was too much for Bonhöffer. Zahn claimed that Epictetus' views were not fully coherent, basically due to the inconsistencies in the old Stoic theory but strengthened because of non-Stoic influences. Bonhöffer defended Epictetus' consistency, and in a detailed analysis—partly based on an article by Franz Mörth, who had already criticized Zahn—shot down every sporadic parallel Zahn presented as a proof of Christian influences on Epictetus. A few years after Bonhöffer's *Epiktet und das Neue Testament*, Douglas S. Sharp published his *Epictetus and the New Testament*. Sharp concluded that "it is doubtful whether Epictetus was acquainted with the New Testament," the linguistic similarities being mostly due to the fact that both were written in the koine of their time. The case was closed, and Bonhöffer

12 For the character of the city, see, e.g., Quinn 1990, 255.

13 Cook 2010, 173.

14 Bonhöffer 1911, 41–44, 72, 273.

15 Zahn 1895, 29; my translation.

16 Zahn 1895, 33–34; my translation.

became the main authority of the consensus since then. Scholars routinely refer to Bonhöffer's classic work on the matter.<sup>17</sup>

A recent example of Bonhöffer's authority is A. A. Long's magnificent monograph on Epictetus. Long's subject is not Epictetus' relationship toward Christians, and it is understandable that he addresses the theme in passing. Long supposes that Epictetus mentions Christians,<sup>18</sup> but he shares Bonhöffer's view of the very remote relationship between Epictetus' thinking and the New Testament: "Notwithstanding striking verbal parallels, there is no strong reason to think that one has directly influenced the other."<sup>19</sup> As we see here, the discussion on Epictetus' view of Christians continues to be steered by Bonhöffer still in the 21st century. Without questioning Bonhöffer's great merits, one should nonetheless be judicious when approaching his work. In a response to Rudolf Bultmann's article which questions Epictetus' Stoic orthodoxy, Bonhöffer claims in an offended tone that his scholarly life's work was dedicated to prove that Epictetus presents "the pure, the genuine and the coherent theory of the old Stoicism."<sup>20</sup> Here we see his tendency, which is later questioned. Long points out that, despite the fact that Bonhöffer's works are "indispensable for close study of Epictetus' relation to the Stoic tradition ... they tend to overemphasize his doctrinal orthodoxy."<sup>21</sup>

I claim that Bonhöffer's tendency also affects his assessment of the passages on Christians. It is surprising how briefly he comments on *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 and 4.7.6. It is especially eye-catching that he does not comment on the word *πάθος*, which occurs in the former passage with a positive connotation. I will later come back to this term below, but here it is enough to note that the Stoics understood it in the negative sense. Bonhöffer claims that

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17 For the significance of Bonhöffer's view in terms of subsequent studies, see Hersbell 1989, 2161. Spanneut (1962, 630–631) lists the scholars who have considered it possible that Epictetus did encounter some Christian influence. Recently, Simon Gathercole (2017, 280–282) has treated *Discourses* 4.7.6 in three pages, which is more than usual. He addresses *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 in a footnote, but notes it as "a fascinating section." Surprisingly, Gathercole does not mention Bonhöffer at all.

18 Long 2002, 17, 110.

19 Long 2002, 35.

20 "Ich darf wohl darauf hinweisen, daß meine wissenschaftliche Lebensarbeit hauptsächlich dem Nachweis gewidmet ist, daß wir dem kostbaren Vermächtnis, das uns Arrian von seinem Lehrer hinterlassen hat, im wesentlichen die reine, unverfälschte und konsequente Lehre der alten Stoa, deren ursprüngliche Zeugnisse uns fast ganz verloren gegangen sind, vor uns haben" (Bonhöffer 1912, 282; partial English translation above by me).

21 Long 2002, 36.

“Epictetus’ conception of the essence and the origin of the *πάθη* is completely similar to the old and the genuine Stoicism.”<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly, he does not discuss *Discourses* 2.9.20 in his lengthy chapter on the passions. I cannot avoid having the impression that a profound discussion on Epictetus’ references to the Christians would have contributed toward ruining the rigid view of Stoic orthodoxy. As this view is relativized today, one can be open to a more relaxed assessment of Epictetus’ relationship with early Christianity.

In the following, I first analyze *Discourses* 4.7.6, as it is a more clear case. Then I proceed to *Discourses* 2.9.19–21, before concluding with suggestions for further study. In both passages, Epictetus seems to link Christians to Judaism in a way that has continuously confused scholars. A close reading of these two passages shows that against all suspicions they do speak of Christians and that Epictetus knew something about Christians as a distinct group, as well as their teachings. In addition to attesting to the fact that Epictetus spoke of Christians, analysis of these two passages is significant in several ways. First, I will demonstrate that Epictetus borrowed some expressions from Christians. This opens a discussion that Bonhöffer and some others closed a full century ago: because Epictetus cited Christian expressions, there may be more of them in the *Discourses*. This presents a path for further study. Second, the analysis contributes to our knowledge of early Christianity. Epictetus has been underestimated as a source for early Christianity until now, despite the fact that his texts are contemporary with much of the New Testament and many other of the earliest Christian writings. Third, a close reading of these passages reveals that the Roman attitude toward Christians was not hostile only, but that there was room for more relaxed assessments than what Epictetus’ contemporaries Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny provided.

#### 1.1.1 Christians as Fearless Galileans

In *Discourses* 4.7, Epictetus speaks of fearlessness and makes a throwaway remark on fearless Galileans. The discourse begins with a description of uncomprehending children and maniacs who do not fear a tyrant, his guards, and their swords. Lack of comprehension or madness explains fearlessness in the face of these threats (section 1–5). Then, Epictetus proceeds with other bases of fearlessness.

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22 “Epictets Ansicht über das Wesen und den Ursprung der *πάθη* entspricht vollständig den Anschauungen der Alten, echten Stoa” (Bonhöffer 1890, 278; my English translation).

εἶτα ὑπὸ μανίας μὲν δύνανται τις οὕτως διατεθῆναι πρὸς ταῦτα καὶ ὑπὸ ἔθους οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι· ὑπὸ λόγου δὲ καὶ ἀποδείξεως οὐδεὶς δύνανται μαθεῖν ὅτι ὁ θεὸς πάντα πεποιήκεν τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

Therefore, if madness can produce this attitude of mind toward the things which have just been mentioned, and also habit, as with the Galileans, cannot reason and demonstration teach a man that God has made all things in the universe ...?

*Disc.* 4.7.6; trans. Oldfather, LCL

The reference to God, who has made all things, begins a long argumentation (sections 6–11) having the aim of proving that one can philosophically justify fearlessness. Epictetus recommends just the philosophical version of fearlessness. Children, maniacs, and Galileans are nothing but the starting point of his argumentation: as they are not afraid of tyrants, guards, and swords, fear or fearlessness cannot be conditioned by these outer circumstances but by the persons themselves. Thus, Epictetus reasons, it is meaningful to seek a philosophical state of mind that enables fearlessness. He mentions Galileans only incidentally, however, without displaying any further interest in them.

At least in the Middle Ages, Galileans were understood as a reference to Christians. A Christian commentator, possibly Arethas of Caesarea (9th–10th century), noted: “I said above that he seems to have read the Gospels. Now he, however, remembers the Christians themselves though it was not unavoidable. The Lacedaemonians did nothing less.”<sup>23</sup> For the commentator, the reference to Galileans seems to attest to his (or her?) earlier assumption that Epictetus had read the Gospels. The assumption was based on *Discourses* 3.22.53, which provides a close analogy with Jesus’ command to express love toward the enemy.<sup>24</sup> Though Bonhöffer denied any Christian influence on Epictetus’ philosophy, he did not deny that Epictetus knew of the existence of Christians. According to Bonhöffer, Galileans meant Christians, and most scholars have subsequently held that as a self-evident fact.<sup>25</sup> Eduard Meyer also considered another alternative: Galileans stood for Zealots. Meyer denied this correlation, as one cannot reliably explain why Epictetus would incidentally refer to

23 My translation. Schenkl has published all the Greek comments in his edition on Epictetus. On the commentator, see Spanneut 1962, 674–675.

24 The comment is found under *Disc.* 3.22.58, but it quite certainly addresses the abovementioned section (Oldfather 1928b, 151 n. 2).

25 Bonhöffer 1911, 41–43; Hartmann 1905, 267; Oldfather 1928a, xxvi; 1928b, 363 n. 1; Stellwag 1933, 173; Karpp 1954, 113; Spanneut 1962, 628; Sevenster 1966, 254–255; Benko 1980, 1077; 1985, 40; Hershbell 1989, 216; Engberg-Pedersen 2010, 132–133.

a group that was defeated several decades ago in the Jewish war. Thus, Meyer concluded that Galileans must mean Christians.<sup>26</sup>

Martin Hengel, however, became a powerful spokesman of the “Zealot interpretation.” He cited the fact that Epictetus lived in Rome during the Jewish war, where he had an opportunity to get to know details of the conflict in Palestine. Hengel also notes that, according to Josephus, the fame of the Jewish resistance movement *sicarii*—which he lumps together with the Zealots, against his own differentiation between these two—became very famous (*Bell.* 7.409–421, 433–450).<sup>27</sup> It is possible that Epictetus knew about the Zealots. Yet, it is very improbable that he would incidentally refer to them. His students would hardly have understood such a reference several decades after the Jewish war. For the same reason, it is also improbable that Epictetus referred to any other Jewish resistance movement during the Jewish war.<sup>28</sup>

Somewhat more probable is a reference to the *sicarii* who were still active in Egypt and Cyrenaica after the Jewish war, as Josephus has it. In these areas, a Jewish uprising broke out in 115 CE, and it may have been contemporary with Epictetus’ discourses.<sup>29</sup> Arrian, who wrote down Epictetus’ discourses, was present in Nicopolis in the first or the second decade of the second century.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in theory, Galileans can mean a group of Jewish rebels who continued the tradition of the *sicarii*. This is nothing but guesswork, however, as we have no evidence of this kind of group called Galileans. Later, in the 130s, Bar Kokhba spoke of Galileans, but this should apparently be understood as a purely geographical definition of certain people.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Arrian, the actual author of the *Discourses*, was a student prior to Bar Kokhba’s uprising.

26 Meyer 1923, 530 n. 1.

27 Hengel 1976, 60–61. For differentiation between the *sicarii* and the Zealots, see Hengel 1976, 49. Applebaum (1971, 164) had identified Galileans with Zealots before Hengel.

28 Zeitlin (1974) supposes that there was a resistance movement called the Galileans. Feldman (1981) has criticized this suggestion.

29 The uprising broke out also in Crete and Syria. See Hengel 1983. Epictetus possibly refers to this event when he speaks of “the conflict between Jews and Syrians and Egyptians and Romans” (*Disc.* 1.22.4; trans. Oldfather, LCL). Although there is a question of different views on holiness, it is remarkable that Epictetus mentions the parties of the Jewish uprising.

30 Hartmann 1905, 254; Long 2002, 38. The actual contribution of Epictetus to the *Discourses* has been widely discussed. Wirth (1967) prefers the view that they are essentially Arrian’s production. Some, such as Dobbin (1998, xx–xxiii), prefer the other extreme, claiming that the *Discourses* were written by Epictetus himself, despite Arrian’s claim that he wrote them down. Most scholars, Long (2002, 40–41) among them, trust Arrian’s claim.

31 Wise 1992, 605.

Two second-century Christians, Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 80) and Hegesippus (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.7), mention Galileans as a Jewish sect without any further qualification. It is temporally possible that Epictetus denotes this sect of Galileans. According to the Mishnah, the Galileans criticized the practice of putting the name of the governor with the name of Moses on the bill of divorce (*m. Yad.* 4:8). This critical attitude toward the authorities fits well with the fearlessness in the face of a tyrant characteristic of the Galileans in Epictetus' reference. Nevertheless, it is improbable that Epictetus meant this Jewish sect. The sect should have been famous enough that Epictetus' incidental reference could have been understandable for his students. This was not the case. The little information we have on the sect proves the opposite.<sup>32</sup>

Epictetus' incidental reference to the Galileans presumes that the group is known to the students without further explications, and Christians are the clearest candidate for this. Though we have no information of a Christian community in Nicopolis during the first decades of the second century, the presence of Christians in the town is more than probable. There were Christians in other Greek cities and in Rome, and Epictetus had connections to Rome and other cities.<sup>33</sup> It is much more likely that the Galileans are Christians rather than Zealots or members of a Jewish sect called Galileans by Justin, Hegesippus, and the Mishnah. Zealots or sect members would have been too remote from the students to be instantly recognized from Epictetus' incidental reference.

Yet, there is one problem in identifying the Galileans as Christians: the designation "Galileans" itself. The designation unequivocally refers to Christians first in the writings of Emperor Julian in the 4th century.<sup>34</sup> In the New Testament, the designation refers to a person's birthplace or living place. For example, Peter is identified as a Galilean because of his dialect (Matt. 26:69, 73). Also the designation of the disciples as ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι (Acts 1:11) should be understood as a reference to their birthplace. Philip S. Esler has shed light on the fact that groups that have a designation originating in geography also have a connection to the geographic area. For example, according to Esler, Ἰουδαῖοι should be translated as "Judeans," not "Jews."<sup>35</sup> Geography was also on Julian's mind when

32 Hengel (1976, 58–60) claims that the Galileans in the Mishnah refer to the Zealots. If this is so, it does not help to identify the Galileans in Epictetus' text.

33 Hock (1991) has charted Epictetus' network.

34 Hengel 1976, 60–61. According to a source, the gnostic Valentinus called Christians who believed in Christ's two natures "Galileans." The source is late, however, and it hardly describes Valentinus in a reliable way (Markschies 1992, 270–275).

35 Esler 2003, 40–76. Cohen (1999, 69–101) thinks that "Jews" is an apt translation when the connotation is clearly religious, not national.

he called Christians “Galileans.” Julian’s Neoplatonic worldview underlined the local bond of Christianity; it thus denied the universality of Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

For Epictetus, the designation seemingly does not have any ideological significance. Unlike Julian, Epictetus does not particularly resist the group of Galileans, but just uses the designation he knows. The designation surely betrays a connection to Galilee, but it does not imply that every Galilean was born in Galilee. Similarly, “Nazarenes” became a group name which was largely divested of its local overtones. In the Book of Acts, “Nazarenes” means Christians in general (Acts 24:5) and later it is used in reference to a Jewish Christian group.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the designation “Galileans” seems to have turned into a group designation without indicating Galilee as the birthplace of its members. It can be easily understood as a nickname for Christians in general.

The fact that besides Epictetus’ text the term “Galileans” is not deployed as a general term for Christians before the 4th century may justify questioning its originality in Epictetus’ text. The text of the *Discourses* is preserved in a medieval manuscript and later copies. One cannot rule out changes in the manuscript tradition. In theory, it is possible that a Christian copyist has confused another word with the more familiar Galileans. Epictetus speaks of Γάλλοι, the priests of Cybele (Disc. 2.20.17), which is the closest to Γαλιλαῖοι in the words he uses in the *Discourses*. Γάλλοι means the priests of Cybele (*galli*), and one could form a cognate, a substantivized adjective Γαλλαῖοι (cf. Suda, *Lexicon* γ 23). According to Epictetus, μανία and wine compel the *galli* to perform what they perform. Epictetus does not qualify the performance, as it is apparently familiar to the audience.<sup>38</sup> The word μανία is also mentioned in the section on the Galileans, but it does not mean religious ecstasy, as in the case of *galli*, but pure foolishness. Moreover, Galileans are characterized on the basis of habit, and not by madness. Therefore, it is quite improbable that Γαλιλαῖοι was originally Γάλλοι (or Γαλλαῖοι).

Johannes Schweighäuser proposed that the words οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι were originally a marginal comment and then copied into the text itself. Schweighäuser based his solution on Paul, who says that Christianity is nothing but foolishness (μωρία) for the gentiles (1 Cor 1:23). This made Schweighäuser argue that Epictetus cannot see the ground of Christian fearlessness on the basis of habit,

36 Hargis 1999, 117–118; see Gathercole 2017, 281. Quite surprising is Gathercole’s (2017, 282) claim that an ethnic designation would prove that Epictetus treats the Christians as anything like a philosophical school. At least there was a philosophical school called Cyrenaics (e.g., Diogenes Laërtius 2.85).

37 For the Nazarenes as a Jewish group, see Luomanen 2005.

38 See Rauhala (2012) on the image of the Cybele cult.



but on the basis of foolishness. Since the ground is habit in the text, a reference to the Galileans must be a later emendation.<sup>39</sup> More recently, Jonathan Barnes has endorsed Schweighäuser's view.<sup>40</sup> Schweighäuser's argumentation is not very cogent. It strangely attributes authority to Paul to define what all gentiles thought about Christians. In fact, a gentile could see Christians more positively, as is evident in Galen's account from the late second century. He admired the Christian lifestyle and finds fault only in the lack of philosophical argumentation.<sup>41</sup> A gentile did not necessarily see Christians as errant fools.

There is more scholarly discussion on the originality of the word for habit, ἔθος. Many scholars have held it as nothing short of incredible that Epictetus would have seen habit as grounds for Christian fearlessness. Contrary to Schweighäuser, they have usually maintained the term "Galileans" but emended the grounds, namely, the word ἔθος. The earliest emendations are ἀπόνοια (insanity) and ἐνθουσιασμός (enthusiasm).<sup>42</sup> The latter is a pure guess, lacking any basis in Epictetus' works. The word does not occur in the extant *Discourses* or *Encheiridion*. The former emendation, ἀπόνοια, is based on the previous section (*Disc.* 4.7.5), where ἀπόνοια is used as a parallel for μανία (ὑπό τινος μανίας καὶ ἀπονοίας). There is, however, no similar parallelism in *Discourses* 4.7.6. The grounds for the Galilean fearlessness is an afterthought too far removed from the word μανία to create a parallelism. Actually, the syntax requires that the grounds for the Galilean fearlessness differs from that of madness. Repeating the same grounds (i.e., madness) under another word would be unnecessary and confusing.<sup>43</sup>

There are also some other emendations. One scholar proposes the substantive πεῖθῶ (conviction) instead of ἔθος, because Lucian says that Christians, being convinced (πεπείκασι) of immortality, despise death (Lucian, *Peregr.* 13).<sup>44</sup> Another scholar responds that the neutral conviction—that is, besides madness—is as unsatisfactory as habit. Resting on what Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 10.96) and Marcus Aurelius (*Med.* 11.3) say about Christians, this second scholar finds ἀπείθεια (obstinacy) to be an apt emendation.<sup>45</sup> A third scholar develops these two considerations. He remarks that Epictetus has a techni-

39 Schweighäuser 1799c, 913–915.

40 Barnes 1997, 63 n. 157.

41 See my discussion on Galen in this chapter.

42 See the textual apparatus in Schenkl's edition.

43 The parallelism would require that ἀπόνοια is closely connected with μανία. Had Epictetus said that the Galilean fearlessness is based on madness, the end of the clause might go: εἶτα ὑπὸ μανίας καὶ ἀπονοίας μὲν δύναται τις οὕτως διατεθῆναι πρὸς ταῦτα ὡς οἱ Γαλιλαῖοι.

44 Meiser 1910.

45 Corssen 1910.

cal word for irrational conviction (*πάθος*) and emends the text with it. He argues further that Epictetus characterizes Christians with the same word in *Discourses* 2.9.20.<sup>46</sup> All these emendations of *ἔθος* are highly hypothetical and unnecessary. The text is understandable in its textual context and does not appreciate Christians in a way that would make questionable a non-Christian authorship.<sup>47</sup> Syntactically (*μέν* - *δέ*) Christians are on the side of the maniacs against those whose fearlessness is based on reason and demonstration. Thus, Christians are as unphilosophical as maniacs. But this does not mean that Christians are maniacs. Actually, Christian fearlessness is not based on madness but on habit.<sup>48</sup>

What, then, is this habit? According to Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Epictetus perhaps “means that the Christians were brought up more or less blindly, that is, without ‘reason and demonstration’, to have their strange beliefs.”<sup>49</sup> As we saw, the syntax betrays that Christians are without “reason and demonstration.” Their beliefs were surely strange to Epictetus. Yet, we can be more precise, since *ἔθος* (‘habit’) and its cognate *ἐθίζω* are technical terms in his philosophy.<sup>50</sup> According to Epictetus, habit has no unequivocal relationship with rationality or irrationality. It means just the thinking and acting we are habituated to. In other words, the “normal” decisions and value judgements we make without

46 Kronenberg 1910. As we will see below, Epictetus speaks of Christians in *Disc.* 2.9.20, but this is not as self-evident as Kronenberg suggests.

47 See the account on Christ in Josephus’ *Antiquitates judaicae*. The account is surely a Christian addition or—if Josephus himself wrote something on Jesus—fully rewritten by a Christian. The tone is unmistakably that of a Christian: “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared” (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63–64; trans. Feldman, LCL.). Ulrich Victor (2010) defends the authenticity of this passage. While he argues with certain success that the words “if indeed one ought to call him a man” is a fixed *topos* in antiquity and that “the Messiah” should be understood as the proper name “Christ,” he does not explain how a Jew would admit that prophets were speaking of Christ. This idea sounds too Christian to be from Josephus’ pen.

48 Similarly Ramelli 2015, 127.

49 Engberg-Pedersen 2010, 133.

50 It may be added that Epictetus also uses the word *ἔξις* as an equivalent of *ἔθος*. For ‘habit’ in Epictetus, see Hijmans 1959, 64–65 and Huttunen 2009, 127–128. Gathercole (2017, 282) also notes the technical role of habit in philosophy, but for some reason or other he does not refer to its use in Epictetus’ works.

elaborated consideration are based on habit. Everyone has habits developed since childhood. Even those who have learned the philosophical truths can act against such truths on the basis of habit: “In the course of years we have acquired the habit (εἰθίσμεθα) of doing the opposite of what we learn and have in use opinions which are the opposite of the correct ones” (*Disc.* 2.9.14; trans. Oldfather, LCL; cf. 3.19.4–6). Thus, the roots of habits are strong. The uprooting and the changing of bad habits require hard practical training (ἄσκησις) after one has learned theoretical truths (μάθησις) and meditated on the practical application of those truths (μελέτη) (cf. *Disc.* 2.9.13).<sup>51</sup> The antidote to bad habits is the opposite habit:

(4) What reinforcements, then, is it possible to find with which to oppose habit (ἔθος)? Why, the contrary habit (ἑθός). (5) You hear the common folk saying, “That poor man! He is dead; his father perished, and his mother; he was cut off, yes, and before his time, and in a foreign land.” (6) Listen to the arguments on the other side, tear yourself away from these expressions, set over against one habit the contrary habit (τῷ ἔθει τὸ ἐναντίον ἔθος).

*Disc.* 1.27.4–6; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Epictetus’ text presents nicely how one has to be habituated into a philosophical value judgment of death. Of practical help are short sentences, or “canons” (κανόνες), which crystallize the philosophical principles. One should memorize these in order to have them at hand in practical situations. Epictetus gives an example of two canons that are useful “when death appears to be an evil”: “It is a duty to avoid evils” and “Death is an inevitable thing” (*Disc.* 1.27.7; trans. W. A. Oldfather, LCL, revised).<sup>52</sup>

When Epictetus speaks about the habit of the Galileans, he presupposes that Christians are brought up to be fearless, either from childhood or after their conversion. He also possibly knows that Christians had canons of their own.<sup>53</sup> For example, Paul presents the sentence “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!” as a canon (Gal. 6:15–16; cf. 1 Cor. 7:19.). Thus, Paul’s canon has nothing to do with fearlessness, but 4 Maccabees does speak of such a canon: vicious emotions (πάθη) are ruled by those who “philosophize the whole canon of the philosophy” (πρός

51 For the threefold division, see Bonhöffer 1890, 10; 1894, 147; 1911, 14; Hijmans 1959, 64–68; Barnes 1997, 47–48.

52 For the canons in Epictetus, see Newman 1989, 1496–1502.

53 For the use of the word κανών in Christian writings, see, e.g., Beyer 1974.

ὄλον τὸν τῆς φιλοσοφίας κανόνα φιλοσοφῶν), believe in God, and know that it is blessed by virtue of enduring all pain (4 Macc 7:21–22; my trans.). Though 4 Maccabees clearly embraces Stoic ideas,<sup>54</sup> Adolf Bonhöffer aptly notes that κανών is not at all a distinctively Stoic technical term. He concludes that the use of the word in Paul or in 4 Maccabees does not attest to any particular connection between those texts and Epictetus.<sup>55</sup>

However, Paul makes clear that Christians also used short sentences as canons. These canons surely were—as Engberg-Pedersen puts it—“strange beliefs” for Epictetus, something which could be lumped together with madness, but only when compared with “reason and demonstration.” At the same time, Engberg-Pedersen acknowledges that these “strange beliefs” were not an equivalent to madness in every respect. Christians were so well trained in their beliefs that they were actually fearless in front of threats. In Epictetus’ ranking, Christian fearlessness is an admirable result, albeit on the wrong grounds. While this conclusion does not presume that Epictetus’ knowledge of Christians or Christianity was deep, he still seems to know more than he says, expecting the same knowledge of his audience. Otherwise a passing reference could not be understandable.

Epictetus’ words do not reflect Tacitus’, Suetonius’ or Pliny’s prejudices against Christian beliefs as a superstition. Although Epictetus lumps Christianity together with madness, this is not a polemical claim. He merely points out that Christians are not real philosophers. Their fearlessness is not based on madness but on habituation without apt philosophical grounds. Actually, he thinks that Christians are as fearless as philosophers should be.

### 1.1.2 Christians as Real Jews Practice What They Preach

What Epictetus says of Galileans in *Discourses* 4.7.6 shows that he knew Christians as a group of its own. In *Discourses* 2.9.19–21, he compares Stoics to Jews. This connection is not without parallels. For example, Josephus compared the Pharisees to the Stoics (*Vita* 12). Epictetus’ passage, however, contains some features that may make the reader ask if Epictetus in fact is speaking about Christians. I am not claiming that Epictetus mistook Christians as Jews. As I said, *Discourses* 4.7.6 shows that Epictetus identified Christians as comprising a group of their own. On the other hand, Epictetus knew Jews

54 According to Renehan (1972) and Klostergaard Petersen (2017a, 148), 4 Macc is usually seen as vacillating between Stoicism and Platonism. Renehan supposes that this is due to the influence of Middle Stoicism. Renehan’s highly erudite article shows verbal similarities with texts which seem to originate with the Middle Stoic philosopher Posidonius. Posidonius adapted certain Platonic components into his philosophy.

55 Bonhöffer 1911, 119–120.

as a people parallel to Syrians and Egyptians (*Disc.* 1.22.4). Thus, instead of claiming that ‘Jews’ in Epictetus’ parlance simply means Christians, I suggest a more nuanced relationship between Jews and Christians in his understanding. Epictetus makes a distinction between the Jews and the real Jews. I claim that the latter group actually denotes Christians. The distinction is anti-Jewish and, thus, it seemingly originates from Christians who claimed to be the real heirs of God’s promises. In other words, *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 reflects Christian suprasessionist theology. This is an unexpected detail in a philosophical text of the early second century. On the other hand, Epictetus himself does not have any deeper interest in the Jewish-Christian relationship. The issue illustrates in passing his main point regarding philosophical lifestyle. In the *Discourses*, Epictetus includes details from every branch of life in order to illustrate his philosophical teachings. Christians are just one illustrative analogy among many others. However, it is interesting that Christians are mentioned at all. Moreover, it is important to note that Epictetus had such a close knowledge of the Jewish-Christian debate.

The complexities of *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 require a careful and close reading in three stages. First, I prove that scholars have seriously misunderstood the passage because of an unnecessary emendation of the text in the standard editions. I read the original text of the passage and present its message as a part of Epictetus teaching. This prepares one to observe details in the second stage, where I show that Epictetus uses several loan expressions. Above I mentioned that *πάθος* unexpectedly occurs with a positive meaning. There are also other expressions that strikingly differ from Epictetus’ normal parlance. The deviant features indicate loans. The third stage is to specify the origin of these loans. I give proofs that the loans most probably go back to Christian usage. The most indicative is the understanding of baptism as a non-recurrent rite. Jewish ablutions were typically recurrent. The Jewish baptism of proselytes was non-recurrent, but it does not fit with the original text of the passage. While the emended text speaks of a non-Jew becoming a Jew, the original text speaks of a Jew becoming a real Jew. In the original text, Christian baptism seems to be the only explanation for a baptism occurring only one time. In addition to the fact that the Christian practice of baptism suits Epictetus’ text, the closest analogies also lie in Christian texts. Now it is time to enter the first stage of my analysis.

#### 1.1.2.1 *The Passage and Its Message*

The passage I am analyzing is an integral part of *Discourses* 2.9, headed “That although we are unable to fulfil the profession of a man, we adopt that of a philosopher” (trans. Oldfather, LCL). Epictetus claims that each profession (*ἐπαγγελία*)—for example, that of a carpenter or grammarian—requires

conduct corresponding to the profession. The corresponding conduct preserves (σώζω) the profession while deviant conduct destroys (ἀπολλύμι) it. After this general introduction, Epictetus turns to the profession of a philosopher. A Stoic philosopher should live like a philosopher, in harmony with the philosophical doctrines. As indicated above, it is not enough to learn philosophical truths, but it is also necessary to meditate on them and practically train in them as an antidote to bad habits (*Disc.* 2.9.13–14). Mere technical discussion of philosophical doctrines does not make anyone a philosopher.<sup>56</sup> In this context follows the passage I am going to analyze.

(19) τί γὰρ διαφέρει ταῦτα ἐξηγεῖσθαι ἢ τὰ τῶν ἑτεροδόξων; τεχνολόγει νῦν καθίσας τὰ Ἐπικούρου καὶ τάχα ἐκείνου χρηστικώτερον τεχνολογήσεις. τί οὖν Στωικὸν λέγεις σεαυτόν, τί ἐξαπατᾷς τοὺς πολλούς, τί ὑποκρίνη Ἰουδαῖος ὦν Ἕλληνας; (20) οὐχ ὀρθῶς, πῶς ἕκαστος λέγεται Ἰουδαῖος, πῶς Σύρος, πῶς Αἰγύπτιος; καὶ ὅταν τινὰ ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα ἴδωμεν, εἰώθαμεν λέγειν οὐκ ἔστιν Ἰουδαῖος, ἀλλ' ὑποκρίνεται. ὅταν δ' ἀναλάβῃ τὸ πάθος τὸ τοῦ βεβαμμένου καὶ ἡρημένου, τότε καὶ ἔστι τῷ ὄντι καὶ καλεῖται Ἰουδαῖος. (21) οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς παραβαπτισταί, λόγῳ μὲν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἔργῳ δ' ἄλλο τι, ἀσυμπαθεῖς πρὸς τὸν λόγον, μακρὰν ἀπὸ τοῦ χρῆσθαι τούτοις ἃ λέγομεν, ἐφ' οἷς ὡς εἰδότες αὐτὰ ἐπαιρόμεθα.

(19) For how much better is it to set forth these principles than those of the other schools of thought? Sit down now and give a philosophical discourse upon the principles of Epicurus, and perhaps you will discourse more effectively than Epicurus himself. Why, then, do you call yourself a Stoic, why do you deceive the multitude, why do you being a Jew act the parts of Greeks? (20) Do you not see in what sense men are severally called Jew, Syrian, or Egyptian? For example, whenever we see a man halting between two faiths, we are in the habit of saying, “He is not a Jew, he is only acting the part.” But when he adopts the *pathos*<sup>57</sup> of the one who has been baptized and has made his choice, then he both is a Jew in fact and is also called one. (21) So we are also counterfeit “baptists,” Jews in words, but in deeds something else, not in sympathy with our own words,<sup>58</sup> far from applying the principles which we profess, yet priding ourselves upon them as being men who know them.

*Disc.* 2.9.19–21; trans. Oldfather, LCL, revised

56 See also Bonhöffer 1890, 11–13; Long 2002, 107–112.

57 The word is not translated here. Possible translations are discussed below.

58 An alternative translation for ‘words’ is ‘reason,’ but the context here prefers the former.

Epictetus' basic message in this passage seems to be clear: one's words and deeds should correspond. However, the abrupt change of the grammatical person is somewhat confusing. In section 19, Epictetus blames 'you' (singular) for non-corresponding words and deeds. In section 21, all those present ('we') are blamed for the same vice. 'You' is best understood as a rhetorical appeal to each of Epictetus' listeners and, thus, he addresses no individual. Actually, 'you' refers all those present, including Epictetus.<sup>59</sup> In section 20, the grammatical person varies. In the beginning, Epictetus uses 'you,' then moves to the passive voice to illustrate what people generally say, and then exemplifies the general attitude by referring to 'us.' Thus, there is a transition from 'you' to 'we' in section 20. However, Epictetus is all the while addressing the same people, his audience. Another, more confusing feature in the passage is the metaphorical use of the designation "Jews." Does Epictetus assume that the audience consists of Jews who are acting the parts of Greeks (section 19)? Or are they non-Jews acting the part of Jews (section 20)? Or are they something in between, Jews in word and non-Jews in deed (section 21)? The most serious problem concerns sections 19 and 20: is the basic identity that of a Jew (section 19) or that of a non-Jew (section 20)? Section 21 can be harmonized with either, though in this section Epictetus clearly prefers being a wholehearted Jew.

The tension between sections 19 and 20 has traditionally been resolved by means of an emendation. Heinrich Schenkl embraced this solution in his critical editions of Epictetus' *Discourses* (1894 and 1916 repr. 1965).<sup>60</sup> He makes a text-critical conjecture in the end of section 19. Instead of the reading that 'you' are a Jew acting the part of the Greeks (Ἰουδαῖος ὢν Ἑλληνας), he emends the text to say that 'you' are a Greek acting the part of a Jew (Ἰουδαῖον ὢν Ἕλληνα). This emendation was then accepted by W. A. Oldfather in his edition published in the Loeb Classical Library series (1925–1928; several reprints) and by Joseph Souilhé in his Budé edition (1948–1965). Schenkl's, Oldfather's, and Souilhé's emended editions are standard reference books, which practically all scholars use without further text-critical discussion. The emendation creates the impression that Epictetus is speaking of Greeks who partly embrace Judaism (sections 19–20), but who should embrace it wholeheartedly in order to become real Jews (section 21). It is no wonder that in scholarly literature this passage is usually presented as a reference to pagan sympathizers of Judaism (sections 19–20), who are assumed to have become proselytes (section 21).

59 The rhetorical change of the grammatical person is very common in Epictetus. A good example is *Disc.* 2.17.13–18, where Epictetus changes the grammatical person from 'we' to 'you' (singular) and finally to 'I,' as a rhetorical device. See Huttunen 2009, 101–102.

60 For the earlier emendations, see Schenkl's text-critical notes.

For example, John G. Gager writes: “The context indicates clearly that he is speaking of converts to Judaism.”<sup>61</sup> This assumption, however, is based on the emended text.

The emendation can be supported by one testimony, John Upton’s commentary on Epictetus published sometime between the years 1739 and 1741. Upton cites the first printed version of *Discourses* from 1535, which is not preserved.<sup>62</sup> Upton reads ‘you’ as a Greek acting the part of the Jews (Ἰουδαίους ὦν “Ἐλλην”). The difference between Upton and the modern editions is minor: modern editions read Jew in the singular, while Upton provides a plural form. This does not affect the basic logic. However, Upton is quite vague as to any external evidence. The modern editors do not fully trust Upton, as attested by the change from the plural to the singular. Upton is also quite late compared to the oldest remaining manuscript. That manuscript originates from the Middle Ages, probably from the 11th or 12th century, and there are several copies of it without changes in this reading.<sup>63</sup> What comes to the internal evidence, one must admit that the manuscript reading is logically difficult. Upton’s reading and the modern editions obviously improve the logic in the passage. Yet, the manuscript reading is not so completely nonsensical that one must reject it. Next, I will show how the manuscript reading makes sense.

Section 19 presumes that the difference between a Greek and a Jew has something to say about the difference between a Stoic who just speaks of philosophical principles and the Stoic who also follows those principles in their life. Section 21 assumes that one should live in accordance with Jewish principles. The wholehearted Jewish lifestyle is a metaphor for the ideal Stoic lifestyle, and the Jew is a metaphor for the Stoic. In his rhetoric, Epictetus assumes that his audience consists of Stoics who—alas!—do not practice what they preach. As the audience is put in the place of Jews (that is, Stoics), the basic identity constructed in the passage is that of a Jew. This is *his* definition, while in section 20 he describes the understanding of “the multitudes” (οἱ πολλοί); the word for the common people is clearly degrading, and it refers to their lack of instruction.<sup>64</sup> They simply define a person’s identity by his or her conduct.

61 Gager 1983, 77.

62 On this printed version, see Sicherl 1993.

63 The basic facts on the manuscripts and sources are found in the modern editions. See also Dobbin 1998, xxiii–xxiv.

64 “We should not trust the multitude (τοῖς πολλοῖς),” whose views are indiscriminate and unphilosophical, Epictetus says (Disc. 2.1.22; trans. Oldfather, LCL). On this saying, see Huttunen 2009, 106–107. Here Epictetus is in the line of the early Stoic Cleanthes, who advised not to fear the indiscriminate utterances of the multitude (πολλῶν) (*Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* 1.559).



This simple definition is no mistake as such. Epictetus continues that this is the way ‘we,’ the educated, also define identity. The general criteria for defining people’s identity are given in the passive voice (λέγεται, καλείται). The problem is the contradiction between words and deeds, which is a central theme in Epictetus’ *Discourses*.<sup>65</sup> The multitudes, however, do not realize this complex identity. For them, the basic Jewish identity remains secret because of the deficiency in Jewish conduct. In the case of the tension between Jewish words and non-Jewish deeds, they base their understanding on deeds and, consequently, define the basic identity as a non-Jewish one. In section 21, Epictetus admits that the simple definition of the multitudes is in some sense right. Jews are really Jews only when their words and deeds are concomitantly Jewish. In reality, Epictetus sees the identity of his audience as being more complex. Their basic identity is that of Jews, though their conduct is deficient and deceives the multitudes to form a problematic conclusion.

What makes the logic of the passage difficult is the twofold use of the word ὑποκρίνομαι (‘act a part’). For a scholar of the New Testament, it may sound negative that something is labeled as hypocrisy. For Epictetus, however, the word is quite neutral. It hints at the idea that the world is like a theater. This idea is well known in antiquity, and Epictetus also embraces it (*Disc.* 1.29.41–47; fr. 11; *Ench.* 17).<sup>66</sup> He understood God as the director of this divine play, assigning to everyone her or his own role (τοῦ προσώπου ἐπαγγελία) (*Disc.* 2.10.7). The problem is not that people act their parts, but that they act the wrong parts, which God has not assigned to them. In section 19, the problem is that this ‘you’ acts the parts of Greeks instead of the right part of a Jew. In section 20, Epictetus presents how people generally define the identities of a Jew and a non-Jew. He speaks of the conclusion that anyone, even Epictetus himself and his audience, are wont (εἰώθαμεν)<sup>67</sup> to make if the identity is based on the non-Jewish conduct of a Jew. In section 20, he uses the word ὑποκρίνομαι in another sense than in section 19. Here he deviates from its philosophical usage, moving instead to the vernacular. In the vernacular usage, it means something detached, superficial, and spurious, acting in contrast to a genuine lifestyle. Thus, there is close similarity with the idea of hypocrisy in the New Testament (e.g., Gal. 2:13–14).<sup>68</sup>

The passage and its message are understandable without emendations. The key to following the manuscript reading is to recognize that in section 20,

65 See, e.g., Huttunen 2009, 101–112.

66 For the idea of the world as a theater in Epictetus, see, e.g., Gretenkord 1981, 227–230, and Huttunen 2009, 45.

67 According to Nolland (1981, 181), the word εἰώθαμεν proves that the following saying is an established proverb.

68 See Wilckens, Kehl, and Hoheisel 1988, 1209.

Epictetus embraces a more general level in common with the multitudes. He does this in order to point out that not even the common people—however indiscriminate and foolish their views are otherwise—identify the audience as Jews (that is, Stoics) as long as deeds do not follow words. Epictetus basically agrees that one should practice what one preaches. Still, the actual identity of the audience is more complex, basically being Jewish but remaining incomplete and unrecognizable until they practice what they preach. The incomplete Jewish identity is a metaphor for the present and incomplete Stoic identity of the audience. In the following, I am interested in what information the metaphor provides about the Jews. The emended text promotes the common scholarly view that Epictetus is speaking about sympathizers of Judaism who should become proselytes. The manuscript reading does not lend support to such view. As Epictetus is speaking of Jews from the outset (instead of a Greek acting the part of a Jew), he is not speaking of sympathizers or wannabe Jews. He speaks of two kinds of Jews: those who do not practice what they preach and those who do. The manuscript provides a situation where Jews not following their faith are supposed to make a change in their conduct after baptism and make a choice—although Epictetus does not say what this choice involves. As I will demonstrate, this lack of clarity is one indication of loan expressions.

#### 1.1.2.2 *Loan Expressions*

The reference to baptism has made some scholars—for example, Oldfather in his edition—suppose that Epictetus is actually speaking of Christians. Other features raise similar thoughts. Before prematurely hastening to such conclusions, however, it is necessary to read the text carefully. I claim that several expressions are loans in Epictetus' usage and that they have a Christian origin.

As I briefly noted above, the word *πάθος* instantly catches the eye of one who is familiar with Epictetus' philosophy or Stoic philosophy in general. Besides this passage, Epictetus uses the word ten times.<sup>69</sup> In all of these ten occurrences, *πάθος* is something negative, in accordance with the Stoic philosophy in general.<sup>70</sup> Epictetus tells us that *πάθος* is the emotion that arises when people do not get what they like or when they receive something that they actively dislike. Symptoms of this *πάθος* include, for example, sorrow, lamentation, and envy (*Disc.* 3.2.3; cf. 1.27.9–10); it is said to be like a disease or scar

69 *Disc.* 1.4.26; 1.27.10; 2.18.11; 3.1.8; 3.2.3 (two times); 4.1.57, 115; 4.8.28; fr. 20.

70 For the Stoic definition of *πάθος*, see, e.g., Forschner 1995, 114–123, and Brennan 1999, 21–39. Bonhöffer (1890, 276–280) has analyzed Epictetus' use of the Stoic philosophy vis-à-vis *πάθος* rather than the use of the word itself.

which requires careful treatment (*Disc.* 2.18.10–11; 4.8.27–29). Epictetus states that a person without πάθος is morally good: she or he praises just people (*Disc.* 3.1.8). It goes without saying what kinds of people praise a person with πάθος—namely, πάθος and vices are two sides of the same coin. Keeping this general background in mind, it is baffling that Epictetus makes a moral example of a Jew with πάθος. Readers seem to have intuitively seen that the standard Stoic or Epictetan understanding of πάθος does not fit here. There is a wide range of translations, but they usually refer to a mental disposition or conduct, or some kind of persecution.<sup>71</sup>

Theoretically speaking, πάθος might be taken within the context of its ordinary Stoic meaning here. A Jew with πάθος would be just an example of a wholehearted life: just as πάθος makes a real Jew, some more positive feature similarly makes a real Stoic. This would require that Epictetus has a negative picture of the Jews, which is improbable. Elsewhere he mentions the Jews when discussing disputes about dietary laws. Epictetus claims that one can find clarity for the problem with the help of philosophy (*Disc.* 1.11.12–15; 1.22.4). In these passages, Epictetus clearly thinks that Judaism has its own philosophical deficiencies. However, he also saw deficiencies in other peoples. Hence, nothing indicates that Epictetus would have labeled one of those peoples with the word πάθος.<sup>72</sup> It is therefore better to hold to the intuitive impression that the Jewish πάθος indicates something positive. This means that the meaning of the word πάθος in *Discourses* 2.9.20 radically deviates from its usual meaning in the Epictetan texts.

The word πάθος, derived from the same root as the verb πάσχω (“to suffer”), has the added nuance of being a passive object. The context, however, assumes that πάθος unfolds itself in daily activity. This communicates Epictetus’ basic point of the passage: to not only speak but also practice the philosophical truths. A Jew with πάθος exemplifies that. As πάθος is somehow related to conduct, the passively labeled πάθος is quite unexpected. Instead of πάθος, the reader would

71 Translation terms indicating a mental disposition: *adfectus, animi sensus* (Schweighäuser; Schweighäuser 1799b, 420), ‘sentiments’ (Sharp 1914, 134), ‘attitude of mind’ (Oldfather), ‘Erlebnis’ (Bauer 1963, βάρτω), ‘Gemütsart’ (Berger and Colpe 1987, 269). Oepke’s (1974, 535) translations ‘uncomfortable manner of life’ (‘Unbequeme lebensweise’) and ‘persecution’ (‘Verfolgung’) clearly indicate conduct or persecution, as do possibly also Whittaker’s (1984, 89) ‘consequences’ and Long’s (2002, 110) ‘condition.’ Hartmann understands πάθος with the word ἡρημένου as ‘die gerichtliche Verfolgung.’ See also Bonhöffer 1911, 41 n. 2.

72 See also what Gager (1983, 77) writes on the passage without discussing the word πάθος: “as the sequel makes clear, far from offering any criticism of such converts [to Judaism], he presents them as models for the full acceptance of Stoicism. These comments need not be interpreted so as to make Epictetus an admirer of Judaism.”

expect, say, the habit which, according to Epictetus, makes Galileans fearless. This reading would make better sense in Epictetus' philosophy, but it would require a textual emendation (ἔθος pro πάθος). Alternatively one can suppose that Epictetus borrows a word, which is strange for his philosophical terminology. I prefer this latter alternative, because a textual emendation is always a highly hypothetical solution and, therefore, the last alternative. Moreover, there seems to be even stranger features in the same passage, which—as we will see below—are probably due to borrowing.

It is not just πάθος but also its qualification, in tension with the context, that makes one suspect a loan expression. Epictetus qualifies πάθος as the πάθος of the one who is baptized and has made the choice. This expression assumes that persons have πάθος if they are both baptized and have made the choice. This is in tension with Epictetus' addition that a person should adopt (ἀναλάβῃ) the πάθος of the one who is baptized and has made the choice. It becomes unclear why a person should adopt πάθος, which she or he already has as a baptized person and as a person who has made the choice. The baptism and the choice qualifying πάθος do not fit with the requirement to adopt πάθος. The tension between the verbs ἀναλαμβάνω and αἰρέω is especially clear. In Epictetus' vocabulary, these terms bear practically the same meaning. The way Epictetus uses them in this passage creates a tautology.

The verb ἀναλαμβάνω in Epictetus' texts can be translated in several ways. The basic meaning is 'to take up' or 'to pick up' (*Disc.* 1.11.27; 3.25.4). Yet, this meaning can be adapted to various contexts. In some cases it refers to taking up clothes in order to put them on; hence, the meaning is 'to put on [clothes]' (*Disc.* 1.29.45; 4.8.15, 34). Three times the verb figuratively refers to memory: taking up words in order to remember them, hence 'to memorize' (*Disc.* 2.16.5), and taking up things from memory, hence 'to summon up' (*Disc.* 2.16.5; 3.25.1). Only the figurative meaning is possible in the passage we are dealing with. If the verb was understood in that way, Epictetus would say that the conduct is better when a Jew memorizes or summons up πάθος. This, however, is anything but probable. Epictetus surely emphasizes mental operations as prerequisites for right conduct, and sometimes he speaks in a way such that the reader may forget that this is not enough. Theoretical study and meditation on the philosophical truths should be followed by practical training (ἄσκησις), as I noted above when discussing the habituation of the Galileans. This threefold curriculum is mentioned also in the context of the passage we are dealing with (*Disc.* 2.9.13). So, merely 'summoning up' is not enough for the right conduct.

Fortunately, Epictetus adapts the verb ἀναλαμβάνω in other contexts. The most usual meaning of the verb is 'to adopt' a skill or doctrine (*Disc.* 1.20.13; 2.19 title; 3.5.4; 3.21.1,3,16; 3.26.13; 4.8.11), or a role (πρόσωπον) and a way of life

(*Disc.* 1.29.57; 3.20.6; 4.8.16; *Ench.* 37). This last meaning fits well with the passage we are dealing with. The passage seems to suppose the idea of persons acting their parts in the divine play. In some other passages, Epictetus clearly describes the universe as a theater (*Disc.* 1.29.41–47; fr. 11; *Ench.* 17), a common idea in antiquity.<sup>73</sup> Note the similar vocabulary in the passage we are dealing with and the Stoic Aristo. According to Diogenes Laërtius (7.160), Aristo compared a wise person “to a good actor (ὑποκριτῆ) who, if called upon to take the part (πρόσωπον ἀναλάβη) of a Thersites or of an Agamemnon, will impersonate them both completely” (Trans. Hicks, LCL). Epictetus seems to suppose that πάθος is a substantial part of a Jewish role. Thus, one should adopt πάθος in order to properly play the part of a Jew in this theater called life.

It seems that in the present passage the verb αἰρέω means quite the same thing as ἀναλαμβάνω. Basically, αἰρέω refers to different choices: people make choices in practical life (*Disc.* 1.28.6; 1.29.28; 2.22.8; 2.23.35; 3.24.44) and such judgments are based on rational choice (*Disc.* 2.2.20; 3.24.58; *Ench.* 32.3). Closest to our passage are the parts of the text where Epictetus speaks of a choice between a right and a wrong way of life (*Disc.* 1.9.24; 4.2.3,7; 4.6.13). An especially good analog for our passage is *Discourses* 4.2.3–7, where Epictetus repeatedly exhorts the hearer to choose (αἰρέω) between two ways of life, because a life that hesitates between two opposing options (ἐπαμφοτερίζω) cannot progress.

(3) Choose (ἐλοῦ), therefore, which you prefer; either to be loved just as much as you used to be by the same persons, remaining like your former self, or else, by being superior to your former self, to lose the same affection. (4) Because if this latter alternative is the better choice, turn forthwith in that direction, and let not the other considerations draw you away; for no man is able to make progress when he is facing both ways (ἐπαμφοτερίζων). (5) But if you have preferred this course to every other, if you wish to devote yourself to this alone, and labour to perfect it, give up everything else. Otherwise this facing both ways (οὗτος ὁ ἐπαμφοτερισμός) will bring about a double result: You will neither make progress as you ought, nor will you get what you used to get before. (6) For before, when you frankly aimed at nothing worthwhile, you made a pleasant companion. (7) You cannot achieve distinction along both lines, but you must

73 Cf. Plato, *Phileb.* 50b; Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertationes* 1.1; Suetonius, *Aug.* 99.1; Marcus Aurelius 12.36; Diogenes Laërtius 7.160. See also Bonhöffer (1911, 39 note 1); Billerbeck (1978, 50–51); Long 2002, 242–243; and Stephens 2012, 68–70.

needs fall short in the one to the degree in which you take part in the other. If you do not drink with those you used to drink with, you cannot in their eyes be as pleasant a companion as you used to be; choose, therefore, whether you wish to be a hard drinker and pleasant to those persons, or a sober man and unpleasant. If you do not sing with those you used to sing with, you cannot be loved by them as you used to be; choose (ἔλω), therefore, here also, which you wish.

*Disc. 4.2.3–7; trans. Oldfather, LCL*

This passage is closely reminiscent of the passage we are dealing with. Both discuss two alternative ways of life, but also hesitating (ἐπαμφοτερίζω) between them. Yet, there is one terminological difference. The other passage admonishes the hearer to choose (αἰρέω) between one of the alternatives, while the other speaks of adopting (ἀναλαμβάνω) one of them. In Epictetus' parlance it seems to be a matter of indifference whether to use αἰρέω or ἀναλαμβάνω in such contexts. Thus, it is tautological to say that the one hesitating between two faiths adopts πάθος after already choosing it. I am inclined to argue that αἰρέω is also a loan expression. I have a couple of reasons for this suggestion. First, this is the only time that Epictetus uses the perfect tense of the verb. Second, the verb ἀναλαμβάνω is the predicate in the clause and, therefore, more emphatic than the participle of αἰρέω. Third, as πάθος seems to be a loan, this is also quite naturally the case with its participle qualifier. Fourth, it remains unclear what the choice involves. I prefer to conclude that αἰρέω has lost its meaning in Epictetus' usage. This is understandable, if the verb was part of the loan expression.

Between πάθος and the participle of the verb 'to choose' is the participle of the verb 'to baptize.' This verb is a *hapax legomenon* in the extant Epictetan texts. Between the probable loan expressions, the substantive *pathos* and the verb 'to choose,' it also seems to be a loan. Thus, the whole Greek expression τὸ πάθος τὸ τοῦ βεβαμμένου καὶ ἡρημένου is best understood as a loan. The other expression related to baptism, the substantive 'counterfeit baptist' (παραβαπτιστής), is also a *hapax legomenon* in the Epictetan corpus and otherwise rare in Greek. It should also be counted among the loan expressions. There are similar logical problems with baptism as with the choice, because both qualify πάθος. The expression assumes that a person has πάθος as a result of baptism and choice. Yet, Epictetus still requires that a Jew should adopt πάθος. This is certainly due to his view that a ritual is effective only if one interprets it rationally.

Epictetus' rationalizing tendency to interpret rituals is apparent when he speaks of the Eleusinian mysteries (*Disc. 3.21.13–16*). He considers the mysteries

with piety,<sup>74</sup> but does not refer to the conventional idea that mere attendance at them guarantees immortality.<sup>75</sup> Actually, Epictetus believed neither in personal immortality nor in any effect based on attending such mysteries.<sup>76</sup> According to Epictetus, the most important thing is the attitude of the attendees at the mysteries: “Only thus do the Mysteries become helpful, only thus do we arrive at the impression that all these things were established by men of old time for the purpose of education and for the amendment of our life” (*Disc.* 3.21.15; trans. Oldfather, LCL). Epictetus expects that the attendees at the mysteries understand rationally the moral message of the rite. A similar moral emphasis is visible when he speaks about baptism. The baptism itself is not important, but *πάθος* which one should consciously adopt. Actually, the wording Epictetus borrows betrays that baptism is comprehended as a mystery. Fritz Graf points out that the perfect participle is typically the linguistic form which is used in describing the effect of the mystery rites.

These rituals very often transformed the person who underwent them. The linguistic for this transformation is, as we saw, the participle perfect. These participles not only express the lasting effect of the rites of Bakchos, the Korybantes or Kouretes—the initiates actually have become Bakchoi and Korybantes, they have exchanged a former identity against one which is as close to their gods as a human being can get; and even having served as an Ephesian Kouretes left its imprint for the rest of one’s life.<sup>77</sup>

In Epictetus’ passage the perfect participle forms are *βεβαμμένου* and *ἡρημένου* in the borrowed expression. Thus, he understood these rites as a mystery cult, which he rationalized similarly to those of the Eleusinian mysteries. In both cases, Epictetus’ treatment created a tension between the claimed ritual effect of the rites and Epictetus’ moral requirement. However, in the case of the Eleusinian mysteries, it is clear which rites he refers to. In the passage we are dealing with, it is not so obvious. As stated above, I suggest that Epictetus speaks of Christians. Next, I will prove that this is quite probably the case by considering the different possible sources of the loan expressions.

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74 Bonhöffer 1911, 321.

75 Klauck 2003, 103–105.

76 For Epictetus’ view on the postmortal state, see Bonhöffer 1890, 65; 1894, 28; 1911, 293; Benz 1929, 36–41.

77 Graf 2003, 256; see also Graf 2003, 252.

### 1.1.2.3 *Source of the Loans*

When searching for the source of the loans, it is natural to start with Epictetus' philosophical context. I look at some similar sounding expressions in philosophical texts. After that, I consider some Jewish texts. However, neither the former nor the latter provide any good alternative. Lastly, I show that certain Christian texts provide the closest analogies for Epictetus' loan expressions.

Emperor Marcus Aurelius provides an analogy for Epictetus' loan expression, as he uses the words πάθος and βάπτω in the same context. Marcus Aurelius says that the divine element<sup>78</sup> in the human being makes “a champion in the highest of championships—that of never being overthrown by any passion (πάθους)—dyed in grain with justice” (δικαιοσύνη βεβαμμένον εἰς βάθος) (*Med.* 3.4.3; trans. Haines, LCL). The translation suggests that the verb βάπτω denotes dyeing, a common metaphor in the ancient moral discourse.<sup>79</sup> In this case, dye is justice, as openly stated with the instrumental dative δικαιοσύνη. With the help of the divine element, one can metaphorically immerse oneself in justice and thus be blameless inside and out. In Greek, there is certainly an easy shift from dyeing to baptizing, as is evident from the *Gospel of Philip*, which for dyeing uses the Greek loan word βαπτίζω.

God is a dyer. As the good dyes, which are called “true,” dissolve with the things dyed in them, so it is with those whom God has dyed. Since his dyes are immortal, they become immortal by means of his colors. Now God dips what he dips in water.

*Gospel of Philip* 61:14–20; trans. ISENBERG

The author of the *Gospel of Philip* clearly makes use of the common ancient metaphor of dyeing and applies it to baptism. Marcus Aurelius, in contrast, does not make any shift to baptism, while Epictetus does not refer to dyeing in any way. An interpretation that would have Epictetus use dying metaphorically makes things too complex: it would introduce a new metaphor (dye) inside the existing metaphor (Jew). Moreover, Marcus speaks of πάθος in its usual Stoic sense as denoting vicious emotions, while Epictetus indicates something positive.<sup>80</sup> Marcus admired Epictetus and knew his writings (*Med.* 1.7.3, 4.41, 7.19, 11.34), but he does not comment on Epictetus' words concerning Jews

78 This interpretation of the philologically difficult sentence is based on Farquharson's (1968b, 560) solution.

79 Farquharson 1968b, 561. For the meaning of dyeing for βάπτω, see Ferguson 2009, 43–46.

80 Some manuscripts of Marcus' text read βεβλαμμένον εἰς πάθος (something like “caught in pathos”) instead of βεβαμμένον εἰς βάθος. Even the alternative reading does not provide any effective analogy for Epictetus, as it suggests a negative meaning for πάθος. Moreover,



and baptism. Therefore, Marcus' writings do not help to clarify the source of Epictetus' words.

Epictetus' terminology of a performance refers to acting in a play and possibly to rhetorical skills. In rhetoric, *πάθος* means the emotion that the speaker should expediently excite and steer (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1356a, 1378a–1389a). In the *De sublimitate*, Pseudo-Longinus says that *πάθος* is one of the sources of sublimity, as it does not denote anything base like pity, sorrow, or fear (8.1–2). Epictetus also shuns these emotions, usually referring to them with the word *πάθος*. They are the result of philosophical errors properly exhibited in tragic plays: “For what are tragedies but the portrayal in tragic verse of the sufferings (*πάθη*) of men who have admired things external?” (*Disc.* 1.4.26; trans. Oldfather, LCL). In the Epictetan passage that we are concerned with, *πάθος* cannot mean emotions but something that is intimately joined with a conduct or way of life. These things were usually called *ῆθος* in the art of rhetoric.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, in the art of rhetoric it would be meaningless to qualify *πάθος* with baptism and choice. Therefore, the loans do not stem from the art of rhetoric.

The fact that Epictetus speaks of a *πάθος* that is characteristic of Jews makes it natural to search for the origin of the loans in Judaism. The word *βεβαμμένον* is in the perfect tense denoting ‘a completed action, the effects of which still continue in the present.’<sup>82</sup> Thus, Epictetus does not indicate renewed purification rites<sup>83</sup> but a single baptism, which has an ongoing effect, seemingly in the form of the *πάθος*. In the Jewish context, a single baptism would mean a proselyte baptism. According to the Talmud, conversion to Judaism happened through circumcision, proselyte baptism and sacrifice (e.g., *b. Ker.* 9a), but the last part was waived after the destruction of the temple (70 CE). Before the circumcision and the proselyte baptism, the convert was asked about the reason of the conversion (*b. Yebam.* 47a–b).<sup>84</sup> Is this the choice that Epictetus mentions?

For several reasons it is problematic to accept that Epictetus speaks of a proselyte baptism. First, this would be the first reference to the practice. Even if

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there is no mention of dye or baptism, as *βλάπτω* replaces *βάπτω*. Lastly, one can note that the alternative reading hardly makes sense in its larger context.

81 See, e.g., Kraftchick 2001, 49–57.

82 Smyth 1984, 434 (§ 1945). This is the basic meaning of the perfect tense. Smyth also lists other meanings, but the context of Epictetus' passage does not indicate any of them. It is safest and most natural to keep the basic meaning here.

83 On the purification rites, see, e.g., Oepke 1974, 530–536; Thomas 1950, 1167–1172; Sanders 1992, 222–230. See also Ferguson 2009, 79.

84 For more on the conversion, see, e.g., Moore 1955, 331–335; Bamberger 1968, 31–52; Schiffman 1985, 19–39; Cohen 1999, 198–238; Ferguson 2009, 76–82.

this does not rule out the possibility of such a reference,<sup>85</sup> it sheds a shadow on it. Second, why does Epictetus not speak a word about circumcision, which was certainly a better known mark of Judaism than proselyte baptism.<sup>86</sup> Attempts to find circumcision in the text has not won favor.<sup>87</sup> Neither have scholars accepted the theory that Epictetus' words reflect a practice of conversion without circumcision.<sup>88</sup> These two arguments may not be fully decisive, while the third is: the passage does not speak of a non-Jew converting to Judaism. As I showed above, the common scholarly misunderstanding that Epictetus is speaking of proselytes is based on the emended text. This emendation has created the odd impression of uncircumcised proselytes, which the scholars have been at pains to explain. Instead of proselytes, Epictetus is speaking of two kinds of Jews: those who do not practice what they preach and those who—after they have adopted the *πάθος* of one who is baptized and has made the choice—practice what they preach. There is no mention of a gentile becoming a Jew, but of a Jew becoming a real Jew. In this context, it is quite natural that circumcision is not mentioned. In this context the proselyte baptism is meaningless. Epictetus must be thinking of another baptism, which must be a single event indicated by the perfect tense.

Actually, Epictetus does not speak of one baptism but two. As we saw, there are real Jews whose conduct is in harmony with their words. However, he also speaks of baptism in terms of those whose words and deeds are not in harmony: “we are also counterfeit ‘baptists’ (*παραβαπτισταί*).” Thus, there are two baptized groups: those who keep words and deeds in harmony and those who do not. This may seem confusing, as people usually take the word *βαπτιστής* as meaning the one who baptizes in contrast to the baptized person. This confusion, however, stems from the Christian preconception. Actually, the word *βαπτιστής* fits to those who baptize themselves. It is used with varying prefixes for several Jewish sects, which practiced repeating self-immersions.<sup>89</sup> Epictetus hardly knew these remote sects. However, the names of the sects attest that the

85 Donaldson (2007, 391), who picks up the chronology, continues: “Still, there are good reasons for believing that the immersion was already a common practice. For one thing, it arises logically from the ritual immersions that formed a normal part of Jewish purity practice. Proselytes would eventually need to undergo the ritual in any event, and it is easy to see how the first instance of this could take initiatory significance.”

86 On the general knowledge of circumcision, see, e.g., Schiffman 1985, 24–25; Sanders 1992, 213; Feldman 1993, 155–158.

87 Ysebaert (1962, 20 n. 2; see also Ferguson 2009, 78 n. 99) proposes that *πάθος* denotes circumcision, while Sharp (1914, 134–135) argues that the participle *ἡρημένου* means that.

88 Conversion without circumcision is proposed by McEleney (1974, 332) but rejected by Nolland (1981, 179–182).

89 On the sects and their names, see Rudolph 1999.

word βαπτιστής can philologically denote both the one who takes the proselyte baptism and the one who practices repeated ablutions of mainstream Judaism (see, e.g., Lev. 15; Num. 19).

Epictetus assumes that all Jews are baptized,<sup>90</sup> albeit in two different ways: the prefix παρα- makes plain that the other baptism is somehow invalid.<sup>91</sup> This seems to reflect disputes over baptism: some Jews have an invalid baptism (section 21) while real Jews have a valid baptism (section 20). I have argued that the valid baptism can be nothing but the Christian baptism. While the word παραβαπτισται can well denote the practicers of repeated ablutions, the perfect tense of βεβαμμένου cannot. Because the latter cannot be the proselyte baptism, the next alternative for a definitive baptism, performed once and for all, is the Christian baptism. This creates a picture where the baptized person with πάθος is a Christian while the counterfeit baptists are Jews. This scenario is anti-Jewish, and it betrays that Epictetus' loans are from a Christian source.

It does not matter if βεβαμμένου is interpreted as the middle or the passive voice. In basic grammar teaching, they are usually differentiated sharply, but actually their nuances can be quite close to each other.<sup>92</sup> In Acts 9:18, Paul is baptized (passive), but in Acts 22:16 Ananias admonishes Paul with a word in the middle voice: "Get up, be baptized (βάπτισαι) and have your sins washed away, calling on his name."<sup>93</sup> Thus, the middle voice can be used for the Christian baptism, too. The middle voice emphasizes the role of the person who takes baptism or lets it happen. Even a clearer reflexive meaning for the middle voice is possible, as self-baptism is not entirely unknown in early Christianity (see the Acts of Paul and Thecla in *ANF* 8:490). Without speculating further about Christian baptismal practices, I summarize that the voice of βεβαμμένου is of no consequence for its interpretation as a Christian baptism.

The idea of real and counterfeit baptisms corresponds to the Jewish-Christian relationship in the second century. There are examples of baptismal rivalry between the Jews and the Christians.<sup>94</sup> According to Luke, John's baptism is insufficient (Acts 19:3–6). Justin Martyr makes plain that Christians do not accept Jewish ablutions but prefer the Christian baptism (*Dial.* 14.1; 19.2). This is similar to Epictetus' words, though chronological reasons restrain Epictetus'

90 Rightly Wander 1998, 167.

91 This is the earliest occurrence of the word παραβαπτιστής. Later we encounter it in the church fathers, who use it to refer to the persons who commit schismatic baptisms (Lampe 1961, παραβαπτιστής).

92 See Smyth 1984, 390–398.

93 For the discussion on this middle voice, see Porter 2002.

94 Rudolph (1999, 482) speaks of a rivalry between Christian and proselyte baptism.

dependence on Justin. Moreover, the word βαπτιστής and its derivatives are philologically a Christian phenomenon, as they occur only in Christian texts—with two exceptions. These exceptions are Epictetus and Josephus. In Epictetus, it seems to be a Christian loan, while Josephus only uses it when speaking of “John called the Baptist” (*Ant.* 18.116; my trans.). Possibly Josephus also was dependent on a Christian source. Justin also speaks of a choice in the context of baptism. According to him, converts are baptized so that they become children of free choice (προαιρέσεως) and knowledge. They have chosen (ἐλομένω) the rebirth (*1 Apol.* 61.10.). Justin speaks of Christ’s πάθος, meaning his suffering (e.g., *Dial.* 74.3; 97.3), but not in the context of a baptized Christian.

There are closer analogies for πάθος in the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, a contemporary of Epictetus. For Ignatius, πάθος is an important concept which, one way or another, is always combined with Christ’s suffering (πάθος).<sup>95</sup> Christ’s πάθος is central for the Christian communities (see, e.g., the introductory salutations in *Ign. Eph.* and *Ign. Trall.*). It also ensures the effectiveness of baptism. As Christ was baptized, he cleansed water through his suffering (*Ign. Eph.* 18.2).<sup>96</sup> Ignatius also speaks of choice and πάθος in the same context. He says that Christians should freely choose (αὐθαιρέτως) death and thus adhere to Christ’s suffering (*Ign. Magn.* 5.2). Ignatius himself likes to imitate Christ’s suffering in his death (*Ign. Rom.* 6.3). A heretic, in contrast, is not in harmony with πάθος (*Ign. Phld.* 3.3). For Ignatius, πάθος is exclusively the virtue of an orthodox Christian. Ignatius distinguishes between a real Christian and a Christian by name only (*Ign. Rom.* 3.2; *Ign. Magn.* 4). Thus, πάθος is a marker defining the group of real Christians. In the *Gospel of Philip*, a similar distinction is made in terms of baptism.

If one goes down into the water and comes up without having received anything and says, “I am Christian,” he has borrowed the name with interest. But if he receives the holy spirit he has the name as a gift.

*Gospel of Philip* 64:22–26; trans. ISENBERG, revised

The examples in Ignatius’ epistles and the *Gospel of Philip* do not fully fit with Epictetus, who distinguishes between a Jew and a real Jew. However, it is interesting that there is a distinction between a counterfeit and a real adherent, even in terms of baptism. This shows that the distinction in Epictetus’ texts was possible in Christian parlance. On the other hand, Ignatius differs from Epictetus, as the former does not present Christians as Jews. Ignatius’

95 Paulsen and Bauer 1985, 21; Schoedel 1985, 85–86; Brown 2000, 33–37.

96 Paulsen and Bauer 1985, 42.

relationship to Judaism is critical, but even this criticism has similarities with Epictetus' words. In the spirit of Epictetus, Ignatius criticizes the conflict between Christian words and Jewish practice: "It is outlandish to proclaim Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity" (Ign. *Magn.* 10.3; trans. Ehrman, LCL; cf. Ign. *Phld.* 6.1).<sup>97</sup> Interestingly, in the same context Ignatius reminds that conduct is reflected in the popular designation: "Let us learn to live according to Christianity. For whoever is called by a name other than this does not belong to God" (Ign. *Magn.* 10.1). Moreover, Ignatius presented Christianity as a mystery cult (Ign. *Eph.* 12.2; 19.1),<sup>98</sup> which is similar to Epictetus. As we saw earlier, Epictetus interpreted baptism as a moral lesson, as he did with the Eleusinian mysteries. I also showed that Epictetus' wording of the Christian ritual closely follows the expressions used in the mystery cults.

Epictetus' expressions—"the πάθος of the person who has been baptized and has made the choice" and παραβαπτισταί—seem to be loan expressions that he does not fully incorporate, as there remains the tension noted above. Even single words betray that they do not belong to Epictetus' normal usage. I showed earlier that πάθος has an unusual meaning, that the words βάρπτω and παραβαπτιστής are *hapax legomena* in the Epictetan corpus, and that the perfect tense of the word αἰρέω occurs only here. The contents of the loan expression seemingly refer to Christianity. There are good Christian analogies for the supposed loan expressions, especially in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, although one cannot pinpoint any unambiguous source for Epictetus' loans. Ignatius' suffering, however, makes sense as one meaning of πάθος in Epictetus' loan. Epictetus' words would refer to a Christian who is ready to suffer because of her or his beliefs. Such a Christian maintains the harmony between words and deeds. This interpretation is also in accord with what Epictetus says of Galileans—meaning, as we saw, Christians—and their fearless exposure to violence. The requirement that a Jew should also live like a Jew is found in Paul (Rom. 2). Paul also speaks of a Jew who has adopted Greek customs (Gal. 2:12–14). Though these texts are close to Epictetus, there is no clear link to Paul. The idea that one should overcome the conflict between theory and practice or between words and deeds is more or less clearly present in ancient literature in general (cf., e.g., Thucydides 2.8; 4.67; 5.55; 6.18). A further analogy for Epictetus' words is found in Revelation: "I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews (ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτούς) and

97 On Ignatius' view of Judaism, see Wilson 2004, 162–164; Robinson 2009 offers an even more profound perspective.

98 Harland 2009, 47–49.

are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer (ὃ μέλλεις πάσχειν)” (Rev. 2:9–10). The common features with Epictetus are the counterfeit Jews and suffering—if Epictetus’ πάθος is interpreted as such. Although there is no exact parallel to Epictetus’ loan words, they seem to suit Christian parlance.

Epictetus’ words about Christians who are real Jews undoubtedly reflect a Christian self-understanding. This self-understanding—seen in the New Testament (Rom. 9:6–8), not to speak of later Christian literature<sup>99</sup>—has a taste of Christian suprasessionist theology. Epictetus, however, does not present Christian self-understanding as a theological reconstruction but as an ethnic definition. Christians are Jews, whom he compares with Syrians and Egyptians. This is possibly not a misunderstanding on Epictetus’ part. Scholars have often seen the Bar Kokhba revolt as a milestone, namely, the definitive point at which the Christian and Jewish ways clearly parted.<sup>100</sup> Epictetus wrote before this revolt. While ‘Galileans’ undoubtedly refers to the geographical origin of the movement, ‘Jews’ (Ἰουδαῖοι) does not. In Epictetus’ time, the word Ἰουδαῖοι no longer denoted only the inhabitants of Judea, the Judeans, but a larger group. Galileans could also be called Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι).<sup>101</sup> Stephen G. Wilson notes that the shift from geography and ethnicity (‘Judean’) to include people with other backgrounds (‘Jew’) opened a possibility for “the opportunistic appropriation of Jewish terminology and identity by dissident groups such as the early Christians.”<sup>102</sup> It seems that Epictetus’ source has utilized this possibility in describing Christians as real Jews.

### 1.1.3 Conclusions on Epictetus’ Views on Christians

Epictetus’ views on Christians are often ignored. In particular, his *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 has not gained the attention it deserves. This is due to the difficulties in the text and the unfortunate emendations in the standard editions, which have misled many scholars into putting it in the category of Jewish proselyte baptism. The other reason is the weight of Adolf Bonhöffer’s authority among scholars. Bonhöffer was probably the most distinguished scholar on Epictetus ever. Questioning him is a scholarly risk. I have taken this risk and maintain with A. A. Long that Bonhöffer tended to overemphasize Epictetus’

99 Feldman 1993, 196–200; Wilson 1995, 295–296.

100 Schiffman 1985, 75–78; Wilson 1995, 287–288, 299.

101 Wilson 2004, 158; Hakola 2005, 10–11. Esler (2003, 62–74) thinks that Ἰουδαῖοι should be translated as ‘Judeans,’ but he admits that a Judean can also bear another geographical definition.

102 Wilson 2004, 159.

doctrinal orthodoxy.<sup>103</sup> This made him blind to the nuances in two passages on Christians.

*Discourses* 4.7.6 suggests that Epictetus knew Christians and their use of canons in habituation. The passage on Jews and real Jews (*Disc.* 2.9.19–21) utilizes Christian views and refers to baptism. Epictetus even borrows expressions from an unknown Christian source, textual or not. Both passages have received only superficial mentions, and deep analyses have been non-existent before my study. While deepening the understanding of *Discourses* 4.7.6, my analysis radically changes the picture of *Discourses* 2.9.19–21. I argue that the dominant reading of the passage is based on an unnecessary emendation of the text. The original text cannot speak of a non-Jew becoming a Jew, but a Jew becoming a real Jew. Therefore, the one-time baptism of the real Jew cannot refer to proselyte baptism. Instead, the only alternative is Christian baptism. The distinction between the counterfeit Jew and the real Jew seems to reflect Christian suprasessionist theology. The closest analogies for Epictetus' expressions are in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, but no exact source can be attested. What is interesting in these two passages is the fact that Epictetus refers to Christians in passing. Granted that these passages do not betray any interest in Christianity *per se*, they do betray a self-evident knowledge of them, even among the audience. Epictetus does not explain who these Christians are or what their beliefs are. He seems to expect that his audience knows enough to understand his points. He even expects that the audience knows the Christian suprasessionist theology, which proclaims Christians as the real heirs of Judaism. Thus, the passing references to Christians indicate a surprisingly profound knowledge of Christians. Everything is mentioned in passing without hostility or contempt.

These findings reopen the discussion of Epictetus' relationship to Christians, which Adolf Bonhöffer shut down a century ago. The discussion, however, should be framed anew. Bonhöffer was right when he supposed that Epictetus would not have supplemented his philosophical system with Christian thoughts. His *Discourses*, however, shows that Epictetus used different motives from those of everyday life to illustrate his Stoic philosophy. Christians were presented as examples of fearless people whose words and deeds are in harmony. As Epictetus even uses some expressions from Christian sources, one can legitimately ask if there are even more references to Christians—or even Christian loans—in the *Discourses*. The case dismissed by Bonhöffer, I suggest, should be reframed in the following manner. First, it is unnecessary to limit the study to Epictetus' relationship to the New Testament. There is much more

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103 Long 2002, 36.

early Christian literature that is relevant for the comparison. Epictetus' *πάθος* has a good equivalent in Ignatius' epistles. Second, after Mörth's, Bonhöffer's, and Sharp's evaluations, one should not simply pick up parallels and make claims of dependences in a parallelomaniac way. This was Zahn's deficiency. In many cases, the similarities between Epictetus' and Christian texts can be explained by their common cultural and linguistic background, that is, without forgetting the philosophical elements in the Christian literature.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the fact that Epictetus cites Christian expressions increases the probability that some similarities are due to Epictetus' contact with Christians.

In order not to fall into parallelomania, one should concentrate on such Epictetan passages that include a special hint, for example the quiet waiting of the cross in *Discourses* 2.2.19–20. In the context of these sections, Epictetus blames those who incite judges in court, as this procedure will just ruin the case. On the other hand, if one likes to provoke the judges, why not keep quiet: “Why do you mount the platform at all, why answer the summons? For if you wish to be crucified, wait and the cross will come (εἰ γὰρ σταυρωθῆναι θέλεις, ἔκδεξαι καὶ ἤξει ὁ σταυρός)” (trans. Oldfather, LCL). Two points in Epictetus' words attract interest. First, one should wait for the cross without answering the summons, like Jesus who did not “answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed” (Matt 27:14). Jesus' silence became paradigmatic, as attested by the wide use of Isa 53:7 as a prophecy foretelling Jesus. There are several references to the following words of Isaiah in early Christian literature (Acts 8:32; 1 Clem. 16; Barn. 5.2; Justin, *1. Apol.* 50.1–11).<sup>105</sup>

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its  
shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Isa 53:7

<sup>104</sup> Some examples illustrate this. In *Discourses* 1.2.3, Epictetus speaks of a person who goes and hangs himself (*ἀπελθὼν ἀπήγγατο*). Even Sharp (1914, 3) speculates that this has something to do with Judas, whose suicide is reported in a similar phrase (Matt 27:5). I think that Epictetus' aorist is naturally understood as a gnomic one and not as a reference to some person, which Sharp also understands. Thus, there is no real dependence. *Discourses* 2.20.21 includes the phrase *ἐπίγνωσις τῆς ἀλήθειας*, which is not found in classical philosophy (Saarinen 2016, 45) but appears in 1 Tim 2:4 and Titus 1:1. However, the phrase is used by Diogenes Laërtius (7.42) and Sextus Empiricus (*Math.* 7.259), both of whom use it for epistemological matters, like Epictetus. Thus, I suggest that Epictetus is dependent on philosophical usage instead of Christian terminology.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. also 1. Pet 2:21–25, which extensively uses Isa 53 (though not exactly verse 7). On the use of Isa 53 in early Christian tradition, see, e.g., Elliott 2000, 546–548.



Second, Epictetus' students were from well-to-do families, presumably Roman citizens and other upper-class people for whom the cross was no real threat. Admittedly, there were rare cases when citizens were punished by the cross. Yet, "there was a distinction between the punishments suffered by citizens and slaves, and those of higher rank suffered less severe penalties than those of lower rank."<sup>106</sup> To be sentenced to death on the cross is just a theoretical or symbolical threat for Epictetus' students. Just before the reference to the cross, Epictetus presents Socrates as an example. Socrates did not die on the cross. Does Epictetus hint at Jesus as an example? A further analysis of this and possibly other passages may reveal if there are more contacts between Epictetus and early Christians in addition to *Discourses* 2.9.19–21 and 4.7.6.

In his references to Christians, Epictetus is not as polemical as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny. While Pliny thought that Christianity is madness (*amentia*) (*Ep.* 10.96.4), Epictetus held a different view. Epictetus thought that Christians and madmen had a similar lack of philosophical grounds for fearlessness, but he did not lump these groups together. He admits that Galileans bravely attained virtuous conduct through habituation. In this respect, Christians are braver than the common people, who are not trained for a fearless encounter of threats. Thus, Epictetus' statement is quite a laudable one. This raises the question of the relationship between early Christian religion and ancient philosophy. In a way, Epictetus counted Christians as being above-average people, close to the level of philosophers. Yet, while Christians were not madmen, they were not fully philosophers either. They did not belong to the multitudes but to the Jews who practice what they preach. Christians can thus be compared to real Stoics. Epictetus put Christians in the category of "other," but it is probable that this categorization also led him to be benevolent to the Christians. Gerard J. Boter has convincingly demonstrated that Epictetus shows kindness toward laymen in philosophy, as they err unknowingly.<sup>107</sup> In Epictetus' view, Christians are the noblest among the laymen, as they—without adequate philosophical knowledge even—have attained virtues through habituation.

Epictetus shows that otherness does not always mean hostility. This fact is seen again when we proceed some decades, from the beginning of the second century to the end of it. While the Christians still belong to the category of "other" in their views, the pictures painted by Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Galen are somewhat sympathetic.

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106 Cook 2014, 362. In his book, Cook extensively discusses the practice of crucifixion in antiquity.

107 Boter 2010.

### 1.2 *Christians and Philosophers at the End of the Second Century*

In this section I am going to study what Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Galen wrote about Christians. Before I dig deeper into their texts, I take a general look at the Christians in the society at that time, at the end of the second century. I also make a brief summary of Celsus' views. His work *The True Word* has a reputation of calling the Christians' beliefs base and stupid, but even a short look reveals that this is a rhetorical strategy in a situation where Christians were rising. During the second century, Christian philosophers and teachers were flourishing around the Empire: Basilides in Alexandria, Justin Martyr and Valentinus in Rome, Irenaeus in Lyon—just to mention a few. They became so visible in the intellectual sphere that Christians also met with philosophical criticism, as is evident in Celsus' treatise *The True Word*. Celsus' case is a good reminder of not taking every statement at face value. One should also note the rhetorical tactic which leads the author to represent and choose arguments in a certain way. There were enough unfavorable stories to pick from in order to present Christians in a questionable light. An example is a female character in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, who is probably a Christian:

That vile woman lacked not a single fault. Her soul was like some muddy latrine into which absolutely every vice had flowed. She was cruel and perverse, crazy for men and wine, headstrong and obstinate, grasping in her mean thefts and a spendthrift in her loathsome extravagances, an enemy of fidelity and a foe to chastity. Furthermore she scorned and spurned all the gods in heaven, and, instead of holding a definite faith, she used the false sacrilegious presumption of a god, whom she would call "one and only" (*quem praedicaret unicum*), to invent meaningless rites to cheat everyone and deceive her wretched husband, having sold her body to drink from dawn and to debauchery the whole day.

Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 9.14; trans. HANSON, LCL

Simon Gathercole opens the earlier scholarly discussion on this passage by suggesting that Apuleius is really referring to Christians. He thinks this not only due to the monotheism mentioned, but also because of the early wine drinking (assumed to refer to the Eucharist) and lexical resemblances to Tacitus' account of Christians; together these tip the balance in favor of a Christian reference.<sup>108</sup> If Apuleius referred to Christians, the account is an exaggerated and negative one meant to inspire something close to a horror story. In the horror stories, Christians were associated with the old *topos* of vicious nocturnal

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108 Gathercole 2017, 285–287.

rites.<sup>109</sup> Minucius Felix had one of the characters of his dialogue recount grotesque tales of infanticide, cannibalism, obscure rites, and promiscuous sexuality. Christians “establish a herd of a profane conspiracy, which is leagued together by nightly meetings, and solemn fasts and inhuman meats” (Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 7–8; *ANF* 4:177–178).

Andrew McGowan has rightly pointed out that these circulating stories probably have nothing to do with the actual practices of the labeled groups. The labeling “expresses a fantasy whose real substance is the anxiety thus expressed about the internal structure and external boundaries of society.”<sup>110</sup> Minucius refers to Marcus Cornelius Fronto, a famous orator, as one source of the rumors; he also says, however, that they belong to the general talk of people.<sup>111</sup> Rude criticism and malicious storytelling indirectly prove the rising threat that Christianity posed. For Celsus, Christianity was not only a social but also a philosophical menace.<sup>112</sup>

Celsus’ literary reply to Christianity was a symptom of the progress his opponents had made over the previous hundred years; when Christianity was little more than a secretive sect of Judaism, there had been no need for philosophical opposition. By the time Celsus and the other polemicists began their attack, however, their enemy had become a force to be reckoned with.<sup>113</sup>

Generally, scholars date Celsus’ *The True Word* to the late 170s, but the evidence is not conclusive. Some scholars date it a few years or even a few decades later.<sup>114</sup> In any case, it mirrors the atmosphere at the end of the second century. It is debated whether Celsus was an Epicurean or Platonist. Even Origen seems to be uncertain of Celsus’ philosophical affinities (Origen, *Cels.* 4.54), but the argumentation tends to the Platonic.<sup>115</sup> However, there is no debate over the philosophical character of the work, despite its stigmatizing storytelling.

109 See Kahlos 2013 and Rauhala 2013. Later these stories were associated with Gnostics (see, e.g., Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.7.9–11 and Benko 1980, 1083–1089).

110 McGowan 1990, 441.

111 On the relationship between Fronto and Minucius’ text, see Baldwin 1990.

112 Gathercole 2017, 299.

113 Hargis 1999, 15.

114 Pichler 1980, 94–97; Hargis 1999, 20–24; Cook 2000, 23–24; Arnold 2016, 3 n. 9. Hargis defends a much later dating (around 200) while Mitchell (2007, 235 n. 94) modestly proposes the 180s. Mitchell reliably shows that the text cannot be dated earlier than 177.

115 On the discussion of Celsus’ philosophical background, see Dörrie 1967, 52–53; Pichler 1980, 27–38; Cook 2000, 18–22. Andresen (1955, 72–78) also discusses Celsus’ relationship to Stoicism.

For example, Celsus reports that Jesus is not born of a virgin (παρθένος), but Mary was impregnated by a Roman soldier called Panthera (Πανθήρα) (Origen, *Cels.* 1.32).<sup>116</sup> In general, Celsus reported what he actually knew of Christians and Christianity,<sup>117</sup> but in an uncompromisingly unfavorable light. Rhetorically Celsus tries to show that there is a gaping chasm between Christianity and the Greco-Roman culture, pressing time and again that Christianity is philosophically nonsensical and that Christians are even encouraged to despise understanding and take things without any grounds. Origen paraphrases Celsus' point as follows:

He next proceeds to recommend, that in adopting opinions we should follow reason and a rational guide, since he who assents to opinions without following this course is very liable to be deceived. And he compares inconsiderate believers to Metragyrtæ, and soothsayers, and Mithræ, and Sabbadians, and to anything else that one may fall in with, and to the phantoms of Hecate, or any other demon or demons. For as amongst such persons are frequently to be found wicked men, who, taking advantage of the ignorance of those who are easily deceived, lead them away whither they will, so also, he says, is the case among Christians. And he asserts that certain persons who do not wish either to give or receive a reason for their belief, keep repeating, "Do not examine, but believe!" and, "Your faith will save you!" And he alleges that such also say, "The wisdom of this life is bad, but that foolishness is a good thing!"

Origen, *Cels.* 1.9; trans. *ANF* 4:399–400

Originally Moses has deluded some "herdsmen and shepherds" into believing that there is only one God (Origen, *Cels.* 1.23). For Celsus, the problem is not monotheism itself but its exclusive Christian (and Jewish) form. He states that contrary to the Christian view, the supreme god is worshiped by different names in various nations and there are also several lower deities which must be worshiped. In this opinion, he followed the standard Platonic theology of his time.<sup>118</sup> Against this, Christianity is vulgar doctrine "and on account of its vulgarity and its want of reasoning power, obtained a hold only over the ignorant (οὐδαμῶς ἐν λόγοις δυνατὸν ἰδιωτῶν μόνων κρατήσασαν)" (Origen, *Cels.* 1.27; trans. *ANF* 4:408). Jesus' disciples were "the very wickedest of tax-gatherers and sailors" (Origen, *Cels.* 1.62; trans. *ANF* 4:423–424), and this is mirrored in

116 On the text-critical problems in this passage, see Arnold 2016, 85–87.

117 Hargis 1999, 20.

118 Hargis 1999, 54–59.

Christianity and its followers. Celsus represents Christianity as a radically and consciously alliterate faction.

The following are the rules laid down by them. Let no one come to us who has been instructed, or who is wise or prudent (for such qualifications are deemed evil by us); but if there be any ignorant, or unintelligent, or uninstructed, or foolish persons, let them come with confidence. By which words, acknowledging that such individuals are worthy of their God, they manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children.

Origen, *Cels.* 3.44; trans. *ANF* 4:481–482

In sum, Christians have a low social background and, therefore, they cannot understand philosophical truths.<sup>119</sup> They are “utter boors,” as Cook puts it, following Celsus’ view.<sup>120</sup> Asking if Celsus maliciously undervalued the philosophical capacity of the Christians, Heinrich Dörrie then answers: “Unfortunately not.” Dörrie maintains that the chasm between the two camps was really so deep that they could not understand each other.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, Jeffrey W. Hargis laments these kinds of conclusions.

Scholarship on Celsus has historically tended to treat him as an impartial observer, perhaps forgetting that his was a polemic work intended for rhetorical effect, not a record for church historians of a later era.<sup>122</sup>

When one considers Celsus’ work from a rhetorical point of view, the situation seems different. First of all, it is symptomatic that Celsus considers Christianity to be worth a philosophical response. It is surely possible to philosophically examine an unphilosophical subject. However, a close reading of Celsus’ rhetoric reveals that the educational differences between Christians and philosophers are not as great as he tries to maintain. According to Johannes Arnold, the rhetorical key to *The True Word* is the passage which reveals that every Christian is not just stupid-minded and unlearned.<sup>123</sup>

119 Hargis 1999, 51–54.

120 Cook 2000, 88.

121 Dörrie 1967, 48.

122 Hargis 1999, 60.

123 Arnold 2016, 403–405.

He continues, moreover, to linger over the accusations which he brings against the diversity of sects which exist, but does not appear to me to be accurate in the language which he employs, nor to have carefully observed or understood how it is that those Christians who have made progress in their studies (οἱ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις διαβεβηκότες Χριστιανοί) say that they are possessed of greater knowledge than the Jews; and also, whether they acknowledge the same Scriptures, but interpret them differently, or whether they do not recognise these books as divine.

Origen, *Cels.* 5.65; trans. *ANF* 4:571

In theory, the expression ἐν τοῖς λόγοις can mean deeper knowledge of faith, Christian doctrine, or Scriptures, but Arnold argues for general higher education, and he is not alone.<sup>124</sup> In other words, Celsus admits here that there are Christians who have a philosophical education. What follows in Celsus' work after this remark is a comparison of Christian and Platonic views, which suggests that his Christian audience has at least a basic knowledge of Plato's philosophy.<sup>125</sup> Celsus asks the Christians who can to follow his arguments (Origen, *Cels.* 7.45; cf. 6.3). Obviously he is suggesting that there are some Christians who fulfill the requirements; otherwise he would not be addressing them. These Christians are even capable of independently gaining more knowledge (Origen, *Cels.* 4.61; 7.58). According to Arnold, the further Celsus' work proceeds, the more philosophical expertise he calls into play and, consequently, the narrower audience he has in mind.<sup>126</sup>

It is true that there were a lot of common, uneducated Christians, but even Celsus' own text betrays that there were also educated ones. It is his rhetorical tactic that created an insuperable barrier between Christians and educated philosophers. Celsus did not really think that Christianity "obtained a hold *only* over the ignorant" (my emphasis). Origen himself notes immediately after these words that Celsus' words are an exaggeration. He adds that Celsus himself admits "that there were amongst them some persons of moderate intelligence, and gentle disposition, and possessed of understanding, and capable of comprehending allegories" (Origen, *Cels.* 1.27; trans. *ANF* 4:408).

Celsus' case gives the proper frame to see how other non-Christian philosophers considered Christians. Marcus Aurelius and Lucian<sup>127</sup> did not lack a

124 Arnold 2016, 403–404. Similarly, see Andresen 1955, 184–185; Pichler 1980, 155; and Chadwick in his translation of Origen's work.

125 Arnold 2016, 428 n. 65; see also Pichler 1980, 153–169.

126 Arnold 2016, 427–430.

127 Lucian and Celsus seem to have been in contact (see, e.g., Mitchell 2007, 232–236).

critical eye toward Christians, but in the manner of Celsus they acknowledged the different philosophical strains that existed among this group. And Galen openly praised Christians in relation to philosophy. Next, I will take a look at what these three said about Christians.

### 1.2.1 Marcus Aurelius: Christians and the Military Metaphor of Philosophy

Fronto was the tutor of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161–180), with whom he had a lively correspondence.<sup>128</sup> Thus, Marcus Aurelius surely had access to the horror stories of Christians. There is a saying in the *Meditations* where the common themes of these stories come up:

Yet to have the intelligence a guide to what they deem their duty is an attribute of those also who do not believe in Gods and those who fail their country in its need and those who do their deeds behind closed doors.

MARCUS AURELIUS, *Med.* 3.16; trans. HAINES, LCL

C. R. Haines straightforwardly assumes that this passage “must undoubtedly refer to the Christians, who were accused precisely of these three things—atheism, want of patriotism, and secret orgies.” He also assumes several other passages (*Med.* 1.6; 7.68; 8.48; 8.51) to be indirect references to the Christians.<sup>129</sup> Simon Gathercole rightly comments: “Marcus may have had Christians in mind in some of these places, but the references are too general to be certain.”<sup>130</sup> This fits also with the horror stories referred to in Marcus’ passage above. As noted, these were stock stories used to label various groups regarded as deviant. Thus, there is no solid ground for discussion, except in one case. Keeping in mind that Marcus was under the influence of malicious stories and that there were harsh persecutions in Lyon and Vienne during his reign (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1–4),<sup>131</sup> his overt reference to Christians is decent. He wrote about them only once in his *Meditations*:

Οἷα ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡ ἔτοιμος, ἐὰν ἤδη ἀπολυθῆναι δέη τοῦ σώματος, καὶ ἦτοι βρεσθῆναι ἢ σκεδασθῆναι ἢ συμμεῖναι. τὸ δὲ ἔτοιμον τοῦτο, ἵνα ἀπὸ ἰδικῆς

<sup>128</sup> Birley 1987, 69–86.

<sup>129</sup> Haines 1916, 63 n. 1. See also Haines 1916, 383–385.

<sup>130</sup> Gathercole 2017, 287 n. 35.

<sup>131</sup> On Christianity in relation to Marcus Aurelius, see, e.g., Birley 1987, 256–265.

κρίσεως ἔρχηται, μὴ κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν, ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ λελογισμένως καὶ σεμνῶς, καὶ ὥστε καὶ ἄλλον πείσαι, ἀτραγώδως.

What a soul is that which is ready to be released from the body at any requisite moment, and be quenched or dissipated or hold together! But the readiness must spring from one's own judgment, and not be the result of mere opposition as is the case with the Christians. It must be associated with deliberation and dignity and, if others too are to be convinced, with nothing like tragic actors.

MARCUS AURELIUS, *Med.* 11.3; trans. HAINES, LCL; slightly revised

Christians are associated with the words “the mere opposition,” but only as an exemplary case. Syntactically, the words “the mere opposition” are contrasted (indicated by *μὴ* and *ἀλλά*) with the previous words of one's own judgment and the following words on deliberation and dignity. After dignity (*σεμνῶς*), the sentence is possible to understand either as a further contrast to the “mere opposition” or independently as a continuing list of recommended characteristics. I prefer the latter interpretation, as it is hard to see the words *κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν* in contrast with the word *ἀτραγώδως*. It is widely acknowledged that *παράταξις* basically denotes the battle array, and that it is employed in metaphorical use here.<sup>132</sup> Marcus Aurelius metaphorically refers to soldiers who face death strenuously, that is, with energy and strength. This strenuous fighting surely happens without tragic lamentation.<sup>133</sup> Fighting in battle does not contrast with a non-tragic way of facing death. Therefore, the expression *κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν* is qualified only in contrast with one's own judgment (*ἀπὸ ἰδικῆς κρίσεως*), rational deliberation, and dignity (*λελογισμένως καὶ σεμνῶς*).

Some scholars have doubted that Marcus originally spoke of Christians, considering instead the possibility that there is a later addition to the text.<sup>134</sup> The expression *ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί*, which appears in passing, seems like an additional thought, as it does not grammatically fit in with the rest of the clause. The text qualifies the manner of the agency (*κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν*) with a substantive, as though Christians were some kind of manner (aiming to say that Christians shared the manner), but the syntactical construction is incorrect.

132 Brunt 1979, 488; Birley 1987, 264; Motschmann 2002, 265.

133 Birley (1987, 264) understands the word *ἀτραγώδως* after Farquharson's translation as ‘without histrionic display,’ but Marcus Aurelius' references to tragedies make clear that there is a question of lamentation (*Med.* 3.7; 3.8; 5.28; 9.29; 11.6) (see Brunt 1979, 487 n. 11). The last reference is the clearest and has weight, as it belongs to the close textual context of *Med.* 11.3.

134 See also Gathercole 2017, 288–291.



As the expression is incorrect, one can therefore ask whether it is original at all. In his edition of Marcus Aurelius' text, C. R. Haines put the words *ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί* in brackets, indicating that they do not belong to the original text; he thought that it is a margin comment later inserted into the text.<sup>135</sup> However, A. S. L. Farquharson pointed out several parallels of Marcus' syntactical incongruencies.<sup>136</sup> Later P. A. Brunt accepted Farquharson's note, but also followed Haines' omission. Brunt thought that a reference to the Christians does not suit Marcus Aurelius' thought.<sup>137</sup> Anthony Birley, on the other hand, expressed that he was "totally unconvinced" by Brunt's arguments.<sup>138</sup>

Brunt provided four arguments to prove the inauthenticity of the expression. First, as the word *παράταξις* actually means 'battle array,' it would be absurd to describe Christians in this light.<sup>139</sup> Birley rightly rebuts that Christians widely used military metaphors, and thus the metaphor here is by no means absurd.<sup>140</sup> Farquharson and Birley exemplified the sense of *παράταξις* and its cognates in the Christian usage. They referred to a letter (cited by Eusebius) on the martyrs in Lyon and Vienne during Marcus Aurelius' reign.<sup>141</sup> According to the letter, God's mercy led the army (*ἀντεστρατήγει*) and marshaled pillars against (*ἀντιπαρέτασσε δὲ στύλους*) the devil's adherents (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.6). The deacon Sanctus remained steadfastly opposed (*ἀντιπαρετάξατο*) to the torturers (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.20).

Second, Brunt claims that references to the lamentation of the tragic actors do not fit with the Christians, "who accepted their fate calmly and even joyfully."<sup>142</sup> Actually, it is difficult to associate tragic lamentation with the disciplinary contempt of death in a battle array, even if one omits the words *ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί*. As I argued above, one should not syntactically understand tragic lamentation in contrast to a battle array. Marcus contrasts the standing in the battle array with deliberation and dignity. The non-tragical death is just an additional qualification of *ars moriendi*, and one should not understand it

135 Haines 1916, 382. He also claims that *Χριστιανοί* is a vulgar expression, which Marcus Aurelius could not have used, while admitting that Pliny and Lucian did use it. Thus, the claim is not very strong, and Farquharson (1944, 859) rightly rejects it.

136 Farquharson 1944, 859.

137 Brunt 1979, 484–498.

138 Birley 1987, 264. Rutherford (1989b, 178) claims that Brunt's claim of inauthenticity "is less persuasive." This is surprising, as Rutherford accepts Brunt's stance with caution in his study published in the same year (1989, 188)!

139 Brunt 1979, 488.

140 Birley 1987, 264. On the Christian use of military metaphors, see Chapter 4 in this book.

141 Farquharson 1944, 859; Birley 1987, 264.

142 Brunt 1979, 487 n. 11.

in opposition to the standing in the battle array. Thus, unlike Brunt suggests, Marcus does not claim that Christians in the battle array lament tragically.

Third, Brunt rightly assumes that Marcus Aurelius is primarily thinking of suicide in the *Meditations* 11.3. He thinks that it would be difficult to find here an allusion to Christians, who only in exceptional cases denounced themselves in order to become martyrs.<sup>143</sup> However, as Brunt himself notes, it is easy to bring martyrdom and suicide into parallel relation, as martyrs preferred death to apostasy. The Christian readiness to die was well known, as Pliny and Epictetus attest. I cannot see any argument against the originality of the text.

Fourth, Brunt points out that Christian martyrs opposed Marcus Aurelius' government. As Brunt reasons, it would therefore be odd if Marcus Aurelius reminded himself not to die like Christians who oppose the Emperor. Brunt rightly claims, however, that Marcus Aurelius is speaking of an opposition to divine rationality: death should happen according to that reason (λελογισμένως) which is also the divine rationality permeating the universe (cf. *Med.* 7.9). Marcus Aurelius thus blames Christians for opposing rationality, instead of opposing his government, which is not even hinted at in the context. In sum, Brunt's arguments against the originality are not convincing.

Cornelius Mutschmann skillfully associates Marcus Aurelius' words with those of Epictetus in *Discourses* 4.7.6.<sup>144</sup> The fact that there really is something similar should not come as a surprise, considering that Marcus Aurelius knew Epictetus' writings (*Med.* 1.7; 4.41; 11.34, 36). According to Epictetus, Christians face death fearlessly, not due to rational reasons, but out of habit (ἔθος) achieved by training. It is quite apparent that Marcus Aurelius also contrasts Christian opposition with reasonable judgment. In describing the motivation of Christians, he does not use Epictetus' technical term ἔθος, but the analogical idea, mapped from the military metaphor deployed in this context, onto Christian believers. The battle array thus stands for the continual training which "instilled a habit of obedience to instructions, and which, combined with a fear of punishment, kept a soldier in his place in his unit's formation."<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Marcus Aurelius assumes that Christians were like soldiers who do not withdraw, thanks to their committed training. William O. Stephens aptly assumes that Marcus "may have meant that the Christians were not making their own individual choices to die as martyrs, but were being pressured into

143 Brunt 1979, 491–493.

144 Mutschmann 2002, 266. See also Gathercole 2017, 291 n. 56.

145 Goldsworthy 1996, 251.

it by their peers in the cult, like soldiers trained to line up and get bowled over like pins.”<sup>146</sup>

The military metaphor gives the impression that Christians were drilled to face death. Their steadfastness did not arise out of their own rational judgment (ἀπὸ ἰδικῆς κρίσεως, λελογισμένως) but authoritative commands, as in the case of trained soldiers. Moreover, Christians did not die with dignity (σεμνῶς)—a word that also bears religious overtones.<sup>147</sup> These expressions make it explicit that these Christians were “others” to Marcus Aurelius, albeit clearly not in the sensational sense of Fronto. Interestingly, there were also Christians who discussed martyrdom in a critical tone.<sup>148</sup> Marcus Aurelius’ view was not necessarily far from the inter-Christian discussion, although the emperor lumped all Christian martyrs together.

The military metaphor reveals that Marcus Aurelius counted Christians on the same level as his soldiers.<sup>149</sup> This means that the Christians were “others” in the same sense that soldiers were. Military pride in victories is seen as morally questionable (*Med.* 10.10), but Marcus Aurelius nonetheless honored his duty to command the army.<sup>150</sup> Christians were—like soldiers—*philosophically* “others.” It is, however, indicative that Marcus Aurelius described Christians by employing a military metaphor. These kinds of metaphors belonged to a long philosophical tradition.<sup>151</sup> In spite of Marcus Aurelius’ philosophical reservations toward war and soldiers, he used military metaphors in a positive sense: “Life is a war and a campaign in a foreign land” (*Med.* 2.17) during which one should stay on guard (*Med.* 2.7; 7.45). It is noteworthy that shortly after mentioning Christians, Marcus Aurelius reminds himself of his own guard duty: both to become angry and to give in to the opposition (οἱ ἐνιστάμενοι), thus rendering one a deserter by leaving one’s post (*Med.* 11.9).

Marcus Aurelius follows Epictetus’ path: Christian conduct is outwardly acceptable and even laudable to the extent that soldiers are laudable. There is actually nothing wrong with standing resolute in the battle array, but rational opposition has an additional benefit, as it frees one from internal passions. Even if one—note the similarity of the expression with the passage

146 Stephens 2012, 28–29.

147 Liddell, Scott and Jones 2011, σεμνός.

148 Dunderberg 2013.

149 One may ask if this has something to do with the probable fact that there were Christian soldiers in his army, who were claimed to have been present in witnessing a miracle. The miracle incident is communicated through both Christian and pagan sources. See, e.g., Helgeland 1979, 766–773, and Kovács 2009.

150 Birley 1987, 216–217.

151 Emonds 1963. See also Chapter 4.2 in this book.

on Christians—stands in irrational opposition (κἄν ἀλόγως παρατάξῃται), she or he is nevertheless psychologically an invincible acropolis (*Med.* 8.48). Christians are invincible, but they just lack the right principles to attain inner serenity. This is a moderate assessment, far from Fronto's horror stories or the "Romans' shock" of which Cook speaks.

### 1.2.2 Lucian: Pseudo-philosophy of the Poor Wretches

Lucian was a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius but died some years after him, as he once mentions the deification of Marcus Aurelius (*Alex.* 48). Lucian was a satirist who ridiculed the oddities of human life. Thus, though he was acquainted with philosophy, he was not a philosopher in the full sense of the word.<sup>152</sup> Lucian mentions Christians in two of his numerous books, presenting Christianity as a mystery cult with certain affinities to philosophy. The mixture of philosophy and a mystery cult is not considered blame as such, as there was no clear-cut division between philosophy and religion in the ancient view.<sup>153</sup> For example, Epictetus could praise the Eleusinian mysteries, as I showed above. Lucian's ridiculing tone, however, undoubtedly betrays that Christians are "others" whom at best he might pity: Christians are just poor wretches (κακοδαίμονες) (*Peregr.* 13).<sup>154</sup>

In the book *Alexander the False Prophet*, Christians are mentioned three times. Lucian tells a story of Alexander, a religious impostor, who scapegoats his adversaries by claiming that "atheists and Christians" crowd the whole area.<sup>155</sup> According to Alexander, these suspicious persons blaspheme him and should be expelled with stones (*Alex.* 25). Later, Alexander begins his own mysteries with the outcry: "If any atheist or Christian or Epicurean has come to spy upon the rites (τῶν ὀργίων), let him be off, and let those who believe in the god perform the mysteries (τελεῖσθωσαν), under the blessing of Heaven."<sup>156</sup> He then adds ceremonially "Out with the Christians!" and the multitude responds "Out with the Epicureans!" (*Alex.* 38; trans. Harmon, LCL).<sup>157</sup> The outcry expresses

<sup>152</sup> Betz 1961, 4–5.

<sup>153</sup> See, e.g., Betegh 2009.

<sup>154</sup> Betz 1961, 11.

<sup>155</sup> Victor (1997, 149) states that the "crowding" should not be understood as an overstatement of the situation in Pontus, the area where everything happens in the account. Victor shows that the New Testament (Acts 2:9; 1 Pet 1:1) and Pliny (*Ep.* 10.96) both report Christians there.

<sup>156</sup> Lucian interchangeably uses the words ὀργια and τελετή to denote the mystery rites (Schuddeboom 2009, 66, 168–169). The latter is used just before the citation. The verb τελέω (instead of ὀργιάζω) also indicates the interchangeableness.

<sup>157</sup> Outcries at the beginning of the mysteries were standard (Victor 1997, 156). Just the content of Alexander's outcry is exceptional.

a hostility which possibly indicates religious rivalry with the Christian rites.<sup>158</sup> As I noted above, the loan expression that Epictetus uses reflects a theology in which baptism was understood as a kind of mystery rite.

In *Alexander the False Prophet*, Lucian describes Christians as a minority that can be used as scapegoats. Lucian possibly was an Epicurean, but placing the Epicureans and the Christians in parallel does not lend any special sympathy toward the latter.<sup>159</sup> At least there is no trace of it in the text. However, the paralleling itself is worth noting. As the paralleling of the Christians and the atheists reflect one strand of the popular notion (cf. *Mart. Pol.* 3.2; 9.2),<sup>160</sup> the parallel with the Epicureans is also indicative. There really were some similarities, as both the Christians and the Epicureans challenged commonly accepted religious views.<sup>161</sup> However, the paralleling of Christians with a philosophical school is noteworthy in a more general sense. In the following, I will show that this reflects the fact that Christianity was increasingly understood in terms of philosophy in the second century.<sup>162</sup>

A more detailed description of Christians is found in the book *The Passing of Peregrinus*. Peregrinus is a picaresque character who wanders as a Cynic philosopher, encounters Christians, and becomes popular among them. Lucian describes Christianity as a religious association, claiming that soon after the encounter Peregrinus became their θιασάρχης, a leader of their θίασος (*Peregr.* 11). The word θίασος is one of the many names for an association, which usually had a connection to a cult.<sup>163</sup> Lucian also identifies Christianity more specifically by saying that it is a τελετή, a mystery cult of Eastern origin (*Peregr.* 11).<sup>164</sup> The character of a religious association is strengthened when it is said that Peregrinus encountered Christian priests (ιερείς). As Christian sources do not

158 Victor 1997, 155–156.

159 See Betz 1961, 7. Victor (1997) claims that the paralleling of the Epicureans and the Christians originates in Alexander and not in Lucian, who could not parallel these two groups. Lucian, however, sketched a satirical image of Alexander and the words in Alexander's mouth should not be read as though Lucian would prefer this kind of paralleling. One should also note that Lucian's sympathy for Epicurus in *Alex.* is questionable, as it can be read ironically (Branham 1989, 181–210).

160 On the association between Christianity and atheism, see Walsh 1991.

161 On the similarities, especially in relation to the popular mind, see Simpson 1941. See also Glad 1995.

162 See Benko 1980, 1097.

163 Goulet-Cazé 2016, 218–219. For a short and informative introduction on the associations, see Harland 2009, 26–29; Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011, 1–13. Pliny already saw Christian gatherings as associations (*collegia*) (*Ep.* 10.96).

164 Schuddeboom (2009, 67) constructs Lucian's meaning of the word more specifically: it denotes "the circle of regular participants," hence a "sect."

know any Christian priest in the second century, Lucian just associates a word known in the cult associations at that time.<sup>165</sup> Besides being a leader of the Christian association, Peregrinus is identified as a *προφήτης* and a *ξυναγωγέυς*. Although these are ordinary words in the Jewish and Christian texts, they do not necessarily have anything to do with these traditions. The word ‘prophecy’ and its cognates recur several times in the pagan context (e.g., Lucian, *Alex.* 11, 22, 24, 40, 43, 55, 60) and even in the New Testament to refer to a pagan prophet (Tit 1:12).<sup>166</sup> The word *ξυναγωγέυς* belongs to general Greek for the one who assembles. Just to give an example, there were leaders of “synagogues” (*ἀρχισυναγωγοί*) without any connection to Judaism or Christianity.<sup>167</sup>

The picture of a religious association is enriched by its philosophical character—or pseudo-philosophical, as Lucian ridicules Christians. He explains that Christians called Peregrinus “the New Socrates” (*Peregr.* 12). This is surely an ironic statement on the part of Lucian, but at the same time it betrays the fact that Christians associated themselves with philosophy. Socrates in this context is no surprise after reading Justin Martyr, who inferred that Socrates was Christian insofar as he was so closely associated with the divine *Logos* (1. *Apol.* 46.3). Lucian relays the fact that Christians admired and used philosophy, although he laughs at this.<sup>168</sup> Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé interestingly notes that even Peregrinus’ own character speaks for the harmonization between philosophy and Christianity. He was even a Cynic and a Christian at the same time.<sup>169</sup>

I am inclined to associate the literary character of Christianity with philosophy. Lucian made it known that there were Christian scholars (*γραμματεῖς*) (*Peregr.* 11).<sup>170</sup> Peregrinus explained their books and even composed new ones (*Peregr.* 11).<sup>171</sup> There surely can be books within a mystery cult (cf. *Alex.* 11), but the literate character is more easily associated with philosophy. Ilaria Ramelli rightly notes that Lucian “knew that Christianity in fact was not only a religion for simpletons, but an intellectual movement that was constructing itself as a philosophy in his day.”<sup>172</sup> Another feature which can be associated

165 Pilhofer 2005, 58.

166 See further Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011, *προφήτης*.

167 Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011, 311–312. See Pilhofer 2005, 60; Goulet-Cazé 2016, 219–221.

168 Edwards 1989, 94.

169 Goulet-Cazé 2016, 224–226.

170 Christian scholars are already mentioned in Matt 13:52 (Betz 1961, 8). However, this word was also commonly known in the ancient world (Pilhofer 2005, 59).

171 There are apologies that are ascribed to Peregrinus and mentioned in the Christian sources (Pilhofer 2005a, 98–100). We do not know if this is the same person as the one mentioned in Lucian’s treatise.

172 Ramelli 2015, 150.

with philosophy is the interest in lawgivers. Lawgivers primarily refer to the political sphere, but the meaning of the word can be enlarged. What seems to be essential is the setting of rules, be it by God, who gives each man his wife (Epictetus, *Disc.* 2.4.10),<sup>173</sup> or reason as a source of morality (Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 4.12).

Lucian uses a satirical overstatement to say that Christians revered Peregrinus “as a god (ὡς θεόν),<sup>174</sup> made use of him as a lawgiver (νομοθέτη), and set him down as a protector (προστάτην), next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine” (*Peregr.* 11; trans. Harmon, LCL). Later, Lucian identifies Jesus (without saying his name) as the first lawgiver, who promised an eternal life for those who live according to his laws (κατὰ τοὺς ἐκείνου νόμους βιώσιν) (*Peregr.* 13). As the word ‘lawgiver’ resonates with how the ancient world regarded older lawgivers like Solon and Lycurgus, Lucian uses this resonance to ridicule Christians who so easily make big claims. The pseudo-philosophical character of Christianity is expressed by saying that Jesus is a “crucified sophist” (*Peregr.* 13). The word ‘sophist’ (σοφιστής) is here used in a negative sense to denote a charlatan.<sup>175</sup> Lucian describes Jesus as a sophist who gave stupid laws to his followers.<sup>176</sup> He misled simple folk who were exposed to financial exploitation. This becomes clear after Lucian describes the energetic acts of Christians to free or at least to relieve Peregrinus’ stay in prison:

They show incredible speed whenever any such public action is taken; for in no time they lavish their all. So it was then in the case of Peregrinus; much money came to him from them by reason of his imprisonment, and he procured not a little revenue from it. The poor wretches have convinced themselves (πεπείκασι γὰρ αὐτοὺς οἱ κακοδαίμονες), first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody, most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping

173 On the identification of the lawgiver, see Huttunen 2009, 78–79.

174 The translation “like a god” would suit Christians better.

175 Betz 1961, 11. Interestingly, Plato linked sophists with mysteries (Schuddeboom 2009, 27). See also the ironic characterization of Christianity as the “wondrous wisdom” (*Peregr.* 11).

176 Pilhofer (2005a, 64; 2005b, 105–107) thinks that the lawgiver is Paul and not the same person as the crucified sophist. Yet, Lucian says earlier that Peregrinus was a lawgiver “next after that other ... the man who was crucified in Palestine” (*Peregr.* 11; trans. Harmon, LCL). This indicates that Jesus was *the* lawgiver.

that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence (ἄνευ τινὸς ἀκριβοῦς πίστεως τὰ τοιαῦτα παραδεξάμενοι). So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk.

*Peregr.* 13; trans. HARMON, LCL

Jesus as a sophist opened the way for any kind of charlatan, including Peregrinus, to exploit people. There are, however, certain details of Christianity that are unrelated to the main claim of easy exploitation: belief in immortality, contempt of death, brotherhood, being an exclusive cult, and common property. Later Lucian assumes that Peregrinus ate something forbidden and thus broke the laws (*παρανομήσας*) (*Peregr.* 16). It is easy to find parallels for these ideas in early Christian writings, but actually all of them are also found in ancient philosophy, even being an exclusive cult.<sup>177</sup> In this light it is understandable that Lucian hastens to add that Christians accept these doctrines without adequate demonstration. They are pseudo-philosophers of a new mystery cult.

Lucian's irony belongs to his wish to describe Christians as an "other." The category of philosophy is the vehicle of his irony. Lucian makes plain that one cannot take Christians seriously in this category as they embrace doctrines "without any definite evidence." However, the basic tone is not abhorrent or aggressive—as it is in Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny—but pitying: Christians are "poor wretches" who are easily tricked. Their beliefs are a simple-minded mimicry of philosophy. Thus, Christians are the "others" of philosophy. This categorization is understandable in the historical context where many Christians themselves presented their faith as a true philosophy. As I will demonstrate in what follows, one finds the same category in Galen as used by Lucian.

### 1.2.3 Galen and the Others of Philosophy

After Hippocrates, Galen was the most famous medical doctor of antiquity. He died around 200, or some years after, so that his sayings on Christians are dated to the turn of the 2nd century. A profound student of philosophy and medicine,

<sup>177</sup> On Pythagoras, see, e.g., Diogenes Laërtius, 8.10, 13, 19, 28. Some have tried to reconstruct what Peregrinus may have eaten, but Goulet-Cazé (2016, 223–224) rightly notes that Lucian just speculates about forbidden food. Thus, Lucian did not actually know the reason why Peregrinus left Christianity. Whether Lucian's story mirrors some Jewish-Christian sect, Montanism, or something else is difficult to prove (see Ramelli 2015, 146–148; Goulet-Cazé 2016, 223–224).



Galen served for a while as a court physician to the emperor Marcus Aurelius.<sup>178</sup> Four texts by Galen on Christians have been preserved, two in Greek and two in Arabic translations. In addition, there is one Greek text discussing the creation of the world with a reference to Genesis. I argue that this can also be read in relationship to Christianity.

In the book *De pulsuum differentiis*, Galen discusses with a certain Archigenes who, following the Stoics, assumes eight qualities of the pulse without giving adequate reasons for it. Galen marvels at those prominent people whose view is worth following.<sup>179</sup>

νυνὶ δὲ, εἰ τοὺς καθαρείους ἀντὶ τῶν σοφῶν χρηρῆ νοεῖν, οὐκ οἶδα. κάλλιον δ' ἂν ἦν πολλῶ προσθεῖναι τινα, εἰ καὶ μὴ βεβαίαν ἀπόδειξιν, παραμυθίαν γ' οὖν ἰκανήν τῷ λόγῳ περὶ τῶν ὀκτῶ ποιότητων, ἵνα μὴ τις εὐθύς κατ' ἀρχὰς, ὡς εἰς Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ διατριβὴν ἀφιγμένους, νόμων ἀναποδείκτων ἀκούῃ, καὶ ταῦτα ἐν οἷς ἤκιστα χρηρῆ.

Now, however, I wonder whether one ought to take the “prominent” people in place of the wise; it would at any rate be much better to add to the statement about the eight qualities, if not a cogent demonstration at least a reassuring and sufficient explanation so that one should not at the very beginning, as if one had come into the school of Moses and Christ, hear talk of undemonstrated laws, and particularly where this is least appropriate.

*De pulsuum differentiis* Kühn 8, p. 579; trans. WALZER,<sup>180</sup> slightly revised

The school of Moses and Christ is placed on the same level with Archigenes, both being said to put forward undemonstrated claims. Two things are worth noting here. First, Galen speaks of a διατριβή. The word has several meanings, but here it can mean nothing but a philosophical school.<sup>181</sup> This definition as a school is not praise from Galen's side, but proves rather that he saw the Christians as comparable with the other philosophical schools, or at least comparable to the Stoic school of Archigenes.<sup>182</sup> Second, there is *one* school of Moses and Christ. It is actually a Christian school, as both Moses and Christ can be associated only with the Christians.<sup>183</sup> Galen did not confuse Christians

178 See, e.g., Martin 2004, 109–110.

179 Walzer 1949, 45–46.

180 Walzer 1949, 46.

181 Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011, διατριβή.

182 See Flemming 2017, 185.

183 Similarly Gathercole 2017, 292–293.

and Jews; otherwise he speaks of them as separate groups. He is familiar with the distinctively Christian standards of morality (see below) while also certainly knowing that Moses “gave laws to the Jewish people” (Ibn Abu Usaibi’ah, *History of Physicians*, p. 151; trans. Kopf). Galen returns to the school of Moses and Christ later in the same book. He is criticizing the strict adherence of a certain school as it prevents one from acquiring new insights. Therefore, it is of no use to discuss with them. Even the people in the school of Moses and Christ are more ready to change their minds.

θάττον γὰρ ἂν τις τοὺς ἀπὸ Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ μεταδιδάξειεν ἢ τοὺς ταῖς αἰρέσεσι προστετηκότας ἰατρούς τε καὶ φιλοσόφους.

One might more easily teach novelties to the followers of Moses and Christ than to the physicians and philosophers who cling fast to their schools.

*De pulsuum differentis* Kühn 8, p. 657; trans. WALZER,<sup>184</sup> slightly revised

Here Galen does not literally speak of a Christian school, but of people “from Moses and Christ.” However, it is obvious that he is again speaking of the school, as the comparison to medical and philosophical schools implies. The comparison is possibly a sarcastic remark meant to blame other physicians and philosophers; even Christians who are famous for their obstinacy (cf. Pliny’s and Marcus Aurelius’ views) are more easily converted than dogmatic philosophers.<sup>185</sup> There is still one fragment preserved in Arabic where Galen blames Christians (and possibly also Jews) for accepting everything without any definitions:

If I had seen people who taught their disciples in the same way as the disciples of Moses and Christ were taught—that is, who ordered them to accept everything on trust—then I would not have given you any definitions.

IBN ABU USAIBI’AH, *History of Physicians* p. 151; trans. Kopf; slightly revised

In this text, Galen not only blames Christians for inadequate arguments but also reveals the basis upon which they present such arguments: trust—or faith, as one also can translate the Arabic word.<sup>186</sup> One should not assume a contra-

184 Walzer 1949, 38.

185 See Sprengling 1917, 107.

186 As Walzer (1949, 15, 49) translates this.

diction between faith and reason, as Galen is ready to believe what is “said and believed by everybody” (κατὰ τοῦ παρὰ πᾶσι λεγομένου τε καὶ πεπιστευμένου). This he has been taught by Aristotle (*De pulsuum differentiis* Kühn 8, p. 579; trans. Walzer).<sup>187</sup> The mistake is to take *everything* on faith. Galen traces the lack of demonstration back to Genesis, which was evidently known to many philosophers.<sup>188</sup> In a fragment, Galen seems to focus on the wording of Genesis 1: Moses “wrote his books without adducing proofs, he merely said: God has ordered, or, God has said” (Ibn Abu Usaibi’ah, *History of Physicians* p. 151; trans. Kopf). A pagan rhetorician commented similarly on the word of God, though in the positive sense: “So, too, the lawgiver of the Jews, no ordinary man, having formed a worthy conception of divine power, gave expression to it at the very threshold of his *Laws* where he says: ‘God said’—what? ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. ‘Let there be earth,’ and there was earth” (Longinus, [*Subl.*] 9.9; trans. Fyfe, LCL).

There are clear assessments of Genesis in the *De usu partium*, where Galen aims at proving that “every part of the body is perfectly formed and arranged to fulfill its preordained purpose or function.”<sup>189</sup> In Galen’s theology, it means that Nature, God or a demiurge—he uses these words interchangeably—is in control of creation. When commenting on the hair of the eyelashes, for example, he reflects on how the divine has functioned, and he also refers to Moses and Epicurus:

Did our demiurge simply enjoin this hair to preserve its length always equal, and does it strictly observe this order either from fear of its master’s command, or from reverence for the god who gave this order, or is it because it itself believes it better to do this? Is not this Moses’ way of treating Nature and is it not superior to that of Epicurus? The best way, of course, is to follow neither of these but to maintain like Moses the principle of the demiurge as the origin of every created thing, while adding the material principle to it.

*De usu partium* HELMREICH, p. 158; trans. WALZER<sup>190</sup>

Galen proceeds to show that God must have structured the eyelashes in a certain way, as material principles have their own limitations. It would not have

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187 Walzer 1949, 46.

188 Walzer 1949, 20–23; Gager 1972.

189 Martin 2004, 120.

190 Walzer 1949, 11–12.

been possible to make a human being out of stone just by willing it, as Moses thinks.

It is precisely this point in which our own opinion and that of Plato and of the other Greeks who follow the right method in natural science differs from the position taken up by Moses. For the latter it seems enough to say that God simply willed the arrangement of matter and it was presently arranged in due order; for he believes everything to be possible with God, even should He wish to make a bull or a horse out of ashes. We however do not hold this; we say that certain things are impossible by nature and that God does not even attempt such things at all but that he chooses the best out of the possibilities of becoming.

*De usu partium* HELMREICH, p. 158–159; trans. WALZER<sup>191</sup>

Galen discusses the details of the structure of the eyelashes and their attachment to the rest of the human body, for it is significant that the demiurge planted them in a cartilaginous part of the body: “If He had planted them in a soft and fleshy substance He would have suffered a worse failure not only than Moses but also than a bad general who plants a wall or a camp in marshy ground” (*De usu partium* Helmreich, p. 906; trans. Walzer).<sup>192</sup> This is the last reference to Moses in Galen’s book. Nothing implies that Galen is speaking only of the Jews when referring to Moses.<sup>193</sup> As earlier noted, the reference to *one* school of Moses and Christ must be a reference to the Christians. It is logical that even these assessments of Genesis can be seen in relation to Christians, though one cannot exclude Jews. The simple explanations in reference to God’s will are also similar to the simplicity of the “undemonstrated laws” in the school of Moses and Christ. Galen does not view Genesis very highly.

Despite his reserved or even ridiculing attitude toward Genesis, Galen discusses it in the same category as Plato’s *Timaeus*. He associates Plato’s demiurge with the biblical God without any hesitation.<sup>194</sup> Galen admits that Moses is right in his belief in the demiurge; for this reason, he places the prophet on a higher level than Epicurus. But Genesis is just too simple, as it passes

191 Walzer 1949, 11–12.

192 Walzer 1949, 11–12.

193 Walzer (1949, 23) understands these texts as references to Jews, but without questioning this assumption.

194 Walzer 1949, 26.

over the details of creation and attributes of God with impossible conditions.<sup>195</sup> Dale B. Martin balances this critique with Galen's theology of the best possible world with its political implications: the teleological view was conservative, while the Jewish-Christian apocalypticism with its hope for a better world in the future was revolutionary. If God could break the limits of the possible, it would open a door to the impiety of thinking that God's creation is not perfect.<sup>196</sup> There is, however, no criticism of the Christians for their apocalyptic or non-conservative views in the Galenic corpus. While Galen expressed philosophical criticism of their theoretical views, he saw nothing wrong with their actual practice or way of life. In a text preserved in quotations, Galen praised Christians in a way not seen before in the pagan texts.

Most people are unable to follow any demonstrative argument consecutively; hence they need parables, and benefit from them—and he (Galen) understands by parables tales of rewards and punishments in a future life<sup>197</sup>—just as now we see the people called Christians drawing their faith from parables [and miracles], and yet sometimes acting in the same way [as those who philosophize]. For their contempt of death [and of its sequel] is patent to us every day, and likewise their restraint in cohabitation. For they include not only men but also women who refrain from cohabiting all through their lives; and they also number individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink, and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.

Trans. WALZER<sup>198</sup>

The transmission of this passage raises questions of its authenticity of the text. It has been transmitted in two seemingly independent traditions, say, “Republican” and “Phaedonian.” One tradition in Arabic maintains that this passage on Christians is actually a comment on Plato's *Republic X*. Another

195 Van der Eijk 2014, 351–354. Walzer (1949, 26) assumes that Galen refers to *creatio ex nihilo* when requiring the material principle to be counted. I think that Galen just refers to the limitations of different materials, so that God cannot create, say, a horse out of ashes.

196 Martin 2004, 123–124.

197 As one sees, this is a clarifying interpretation within the quotation. It was seemingly not clear enough as to what *rumüz* means. Walzer preferred “parable” (παράβολαι) but there are other alternatives discussed by Gero (1990, 405). This is of minor interest here, as Gero concludes: “The general intention of Galen's comment is in any case obvious enough.”

198 The translation is based on several versions; see Walzer 1949, 15–16. The Syriac text was published as an English translation by Levi Della Vida (1950, 184).

tradition transmitted in Arabic and Syriac speaks of a comment on Plato's *Phaedo*.<sup>199</sup> Both traditions convey a roughly similar text, meaning that there must have been a common original, seemingly in Greek. Martin Sprengling claims that the Greek under the Arabic "is fairly apparent" and that it is Galen's Greek. Sprengling boldly maintains that "it would be an easy matter to retranslate Abulfeda's Arabic into Greek composed of Galen's own words and phrases."<sup>200</sup> Scholars do not usually question the suggestion of a Greek original, but the idea of verbatim translation. The existence of two slightly different traditions and the differences even within both traditions show that the text has been revised. Probably close to the truth is Stephen Gero's cautious view that Galen really wrote something like this, which the remaining texts witness, but that some details are elaborated. Gero singles out the comment admiring sexual abstinence, which seems to contrast against Galen's more moderate view in other texts.<sup>201</sup> However, one can assume that the transmitted texts express Galen's general tone, even if some details are later revisions.

One thing that connects this text to Galen's other texts on Christians is the claim that Christians do not follow demonstrative arguments. Their myths, however, seem to be a short cut to virtuous conduct. The idea fits with the structure of the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*, where there is the famous myth at the end. However, the idea that the myth is not literally true is not present in the tenth book. In *Phaedo* 114d, Plato hints that it is morally useful to believe in myths but leaves open whether they are literally true or not. Galen seems to remain within the non-literal tradition.<sup>202</sup> He saw the benefits of these tales, which he thought served the same ethical purpose as philosophical argumentation.

Though presenting Christians in an admirable light, Galen counts them among the οἱ πολλοί, or common people. In this way, he certainly intended to put them in their right place. There were, however, features that elevated them above this category and, in other passages, Galen also seems to assume that one can include them within the philosophical categories. Genesis is placed in parallel with Plato's *Timaeus*, and Moses is at least placed on a higher level than

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199 Walzer (1949) sees that the "Phaedonian" tradition is dependent on the "Republican" one. Thus, the former is a modification of the latter. Levi Della Vida (1950), in turn, is convinced that the traditions are independent. This view has won sympathy in the subsequent scholarly discussion. See Köbert 1956; Pines 1971, 73–83; Gero 1990; Gathercole 2017, 292–296.

200 Sprengling 1917, 106.

201 Gero 1990, 404, 407–411.

202 Walzer 1949, 60–61, 70. It is not worth pinpointing any exact passage in Plato to which Galen refers (see Sprengling 1917, 108).

Epicurus. There is a school of Moses and Christ comparable to the other philosophical schools. This certainly has something to do with how the Christians presented themselves. An anonymous Christian author around the year 200 criticizes some Christians for treating the Holy Scriptures without fear, eagerly seeking to find syllogisms in the Scriptures instead of learning what they declare. They even devote themselves to secular sciences like geometry, and study Euclid, Aristotle, and Theophrastus laboriously. The anonymous author supposes that some perhaps even worship Galen (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.28.14). This is clearly a polemical overstatement, although it is completely credible that some Christians were acquainted with Galen's works.

According to Gero, "there is no evidence that Galen puts the Christians and philosophers on the same level."<sup>203</sup> This is simply not true, as Galen does speak of a Christian school. He did not approve of its doctrines that highly, but neither did he approve of Archigenes' Stoicism or the Epicureans. Loveday Alexander puts it aptly:

Galen places most of his Greek and Roman contemporaries, including the adherents of the philosophical and medical schools, on the same side of the gulf as the Jews and Christians. The essential point ... is that the "followers of Moses and Christ," whatever their deficiencies as philosophers, are *in this respect* no worse than—in fact may even be superior to—the adherents of the schools.... In fact, for Galen "the followers of Moses and Christ" are treated here as two among many contemporary schools which show a devoted—and in Galen's eyes culpable—loyalty to their own particular dogmas.<sup>204</sup>

I concur with Alexander's statement, adding only the minor comment that Galen—as I have argued above—did not speak of Jewish and Christian schools, but only a Christian school. There is, however, one aspect that separated Christians from other schools. While some Christians were educated in philosophy, others were ordinary people without any formal instruction in it. This is certainly one reason for Galen's vacillation between different views on Christians. In some sense, Christians were a school, but in another sense they were common people with a belief in myths. If one is to follow Pierre Hadot, it was not critical for a philosopher to have certain theoretical convictions,

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<sup>203</sup> Gero 1990, 407.

<sup>204</sup> Alexander 1995, 65–66.

but rather to have a brave life.<sup>205</sup> In this light, it would have been natural to accept virtuous Christians as philosophers, but Galen resisted this idea. The Christians remained “others” to him, but certainly “others” of philosophy. They lived like “genuine philosophers” without being philosophers.

### 1.3 *Conclusions*

Richard Walzer maintains that Galen was the first philosopher in Rome to make a sympathetic assessment of the Christians for philosophical reasons.<sup>206</sup> I have argued that there were positive assessments already existing before Galen. Indeed, something similar was already present in the remarks and comments of both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Even Lucian’s satirical view lent some sympathy toward Christians. All of these accounts were far from the abhorrent reports of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny.<sup>207</sup> One characterization is common to all authors I have engaged with here: the contempt of death expressed by the Christians. However, there are also other features. Galen and Epictetus maintained that Christian conduct was quite praiseworthy. While Epictetus made this point by way of analogy—with Christians following rules as do the Stoics—Galen directly assumed that Christians followed philosophical principles. Another “pair” can be found in Epictetus’ and Lucian’s description of Christianity as a mystery cult, which seems to be due to the self-representation of Christians themselves.

All the pagan authors I have treated here saw Christians in one way or another in relation to philosophy. This is probably a mirror effect of the Christian self-representation.<sup>208</sup> In pagan eyes, Christians were perplexingly situated between categories. Marcus Aurelius found them a place with the help of his military metaphor. On the one hand, it mapped the attributes of philosophers onto those of Christians, as the metaphor was often used to describe the philosophical stance. On the other hand, the metaphor showed that Christian steadfastness is not due to reasonable argumentation but rather training in obedience to commandments. For Galen, the Christians were a conundrum: while they could be counted among the philosophical schools, they were also common people with a belief in myths.

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205 Hadot 2002.

206 Walzer 1949, 69.

207 Alexander (2002, 245–246) makes a similar contrast between Epictetus and Galen, on the one hand, and Tacitus and Pliny, on the other.

208 Wilken 1980, 109–110.



It is understandable that the confusion created both sympathetic and hostile images of the Christians. John Granger Cook showed the Romans' shock in the face of the otherness of Christianity.<sup>209</sup> It tells the other side of the story. Epictetus—as a contemporary of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny—had a quite different tone when speaking of Christians. At the end of the second century, the dual views were still present. Fronto and Celsus represented the hostile front, while Lucian and especially Galen saw positive elements in Christianity: Lucian ridiculed Christian simplicity but not without a certain sympathy, while Galen saw that such simplicity was no hindrance to a conduct comparable to that of the true philosophers. The partially positive view of Christians among some pagan authors of the second century proves that the category of “other” was not always loaded with pure hostility. Although the gentile philosophers did not acknowledge Christians fully as their peers, they granted them a certain amount of recognition. There was certain positive value in Christianity. For their part, Christians clearly sought philosophical recognition, understanding philosophy as a positive category. Next, I wish to show that this pursuit of philosophical recognition was not merely a second-century phenomenon. It was apparent already in the first century.

## 2 Early Christians Seeking Recognition in Greco-Roman Culture

Tertullian, an early Christian theologian from around 200 CE, has won a place in history as a paradigmatic Christian character who misrecognized philosophy with his words “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” (*Praescr.* 7; *ANF* 3.246). Since Athens represented philosophy and Jerusalem the Christian faith, the question deals with the relationship between faith and philosophy. Tertullian's question is rhetorical, as is evident from its textual context. The unstated answer is self-evidently: “They have nothing do with each other.” One can speak of a blatant misrecognition of philosophy.

In this section, I question whether Tertullian really represented the standard Christian position. The philosophical assessments of Christians presented in the previous section would be incomprehensible if Christians had misrecognized philosophy in the uncompromising manner that Tertullian's statement seems to presume. Misrecognition is not the only available way of reading the dynamic—and this applies even in Tertullian's own writings. The later history of theology shows that philosophy was assimilated into the developing

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209 Cook 2010, 2. See also Wagemakers' (2010) article on anti-Christian accusations of immoral sexual behavior and cannibalism.

Christianity. Did this represent a fall from an original purity, and is Tertullian reacting to this later shift to philosophy, seeing it as a decline? My answer is in the negative. There was an interaction with philosophy from the earliest Christian sources onward.

However, Tertullian's misrecognition of philosophy gave voice to a lasting tradition. With his anti-philosophical ethos, Tertullian is not a unique case in the history of Western thought. One could list multiple names, but I will refer to just two cases after Tertullian, who exemplify the continuing tradition from antiquity until modern times: Martin Luther and Bertrand Russell. Luther states that Aristotle is a heathen who "has caught and made fools" (*vorfüret und narret hat*) of even the best of the Christians. In a nutshell: "Using him God has plagued us for our sins" (*got hat uns also mit yhm plagt umb unser sund willen*). Luther criticizes the use of Aristotle, whose understanding is limited, as the Holy Scriptures teach everything that is necessary.<sup>210</sup> Bertrand Russell makes the same division as Luther, but preferring philosophy to Scripture: "A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men. It needs a fearless outlook and a free intelligence."<sup>211</sup>

From ancient times to the present day, there seems to be a tradition of making a clear-cut separation between religion and philosophy.<sup>212</sup> In line with this, Jerusalem and Athens withheld recognition from each other. The separation between religion and philosophy can be specified—at least from one important angle—as an opposition of free intellectual exploration and the Bible. Both Luther and Russell spoke of this contrast. One may respond that Tertullian, Luther, and Russell spoke within their own personal and existential spheres. I must note that this division between faith and philosophy is present also in academic work. Many scholars seem to put ancient texts more or less unconsciously into this matrix with the result that the division is seen everywhere.<sup>213</sup> In academic work, we should get rid of this division and study the relationship between philosophy and religion in more general and non-subjective terms. I take my examples of this division in academic work with an eye to my study and, therefore, I quote some classics on the relationship of Galen and Epictetus to the Christians.

210 WA 6.458. On Luther's attitude toward Aristotle, see, e.g., Dieter 2001.

211 Russell 1957, 23.

212 On the relationship between religion and philosophy, see, e.g., Ebeling 1962.

213 See Engberg-Pedersen 2001, 11.

In his *Galen on Jews and Christians*, Richard Walzer reconstructs an opposition between faith and reason. The foundation is one sentence, where Galen criticizes “the followers of Moses and Christ” for accepting everything on faith (or trust). As I showed in the previous section, this saying does not blame faith (πίστις) as such. Yet, it is worth noting that Walzer constructs a philosophy/religion distinction on the basis of this statement. Walzer argues that the Greek intellectuals did not understand faith in terms similar to those of Philo or the Christians.<sup>214</sup> As George van Kooten notes, the philological division characterized by the term πίστις has the undesirable result “that early Christian sources have become disconnected from their natural habitat in the ancient world at large.”<sup>215</sup> He shows that there is no clear-cut distinction between the way the Christians and Plutarch used the word πίστις. Van Kooten concludes: “Further comparative research into early Christian and ancient philosophical notions, values and virtues might show that, in many respects, they are more closely related than a modern, anachronistic understanding of the difference between philosophy and religion seems to allow.”<sup>216</sup>

One should not limit van Kooten’s view only to the interpretation of a single term. In contrast to the modern philosophy/religion distinction, ancient philosophers were quite religious. Philosophers spoke intimately of God(s) and composed hymns like the *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes the Stoic. The adherents of a school were religiously committed to founder figures, whose divine nature was emphasized and whose texts were treated as authoritative.<sup>217</sup> Anders Klostergaard Petersen has convincingly shown that Plato’s philosophy is religion from our modern point of view.<sup>218</sup> Many scholars have noted the tendency to adhere to authoritative texts in ancient philosophy. Here, the effort to maintain the difference between religion and philosophy can lead scholars into difficulties. In his *Epiktet und das Neue Testament*, Adolf Bonhöffer characterizes the difference between early Christianity and Stoicism by noting that, despite its religious traits, Stoicism was a philosophy based on reason and not on revelation.<sup>219</sup> In the same book, however, he admits that Epictetus celebrated Zeno and Chrysippus in a similar fashion as Christians celebrated divine revelation: in a fixed moment of history, rational truth (*Vernunftwahrheit*) emerged through these founding figures. Is this so different from Christianity? When we

214 Walzer 1949, 48–56.

215 Van Kooten 2014, 216.

216 Van Kooten 2014, 233. For profound analysis of πίστις, see also Morgan 2015.

217 Van Kooten 2010, 6–8. See also Alexander 2001.

218 Klostergaard Petersen 2017.

219 Bonhöffer 1911, 354.

take a look at Bonhöffer's earlier book *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epiktet*, the picture of Epictetus' position becomes even more confusing:

Yes, he [Epictetus] also knows the concept of *revelation*: the writings of Chrysippus, whom he praises as the greatest benefactor of humankind, because through him the gods have shown the truth leading to happiness (*Disc.* 1.4.28, etc.). The writings also function for him in a sense like a sacred codex and ground both his teaching and homilies in the same way as the biblical texts do for Christian preaching.<sup>220</sup>

Bonhöffer's and Walzer's attempts to maintain the philosophy/religion distinction are dubious even in light of their own studies. Walzer admits that, at least socially, Christians resembled philosophers:

It would be natural, even had we no particular evidence, for Galen's contemporaries to mistake a religion of this unusual kind for a new philosophical school. For religious teachers who offered guidance in conduct and a scheme of the universe were so different from the priests of traditional Greek rites and cults that it is not at all astonishing that they should be looked on as philosophers.<sup>221</sup>

Loveday Alexander has put forth the same argument. The role of philosopher provided the Jews and the Christians with a template within the structures of imperial public life. Through the channels of philosophy these foreign groups could gain power, while philosophy also provided a culturally recognized arena for resistance.<sup>222</sup> During recent years, several scholars have emphasized that the early Christians actually took part in the philosophical discourse.<sup>223</sup> I showed above that the philosophical character of early Christianity is not only a modern reconstruction. Several second-century Roman philosophers

220 "Ja er kennt auch den Begriff der *Offenbarung*: die Schriften des Chrysipp, den er als den grössten Wohlthäter der Menschheit preist, weil durch ihn die Götter die zur Glückseligkeit führende Wahrheit gezeigt haben (1, 4, 28 etc.), gelten ihm gewissermassen auch als ein heiliger Kodex und bilden für seinen Unterricht und seine Homilien in ähnlicher Weise die Grundlage wie die biblischen Texte für die christliche Predigt" (Bonhöffer 1896, 2; translated by myself and Lisa Muszynski, emphasis in the original).

221 Walzer 1949, 51.

222 Alexander 2002.

223 In addition to those mentioned above e.g., Engberg-Pedersen 2000; 2010; Huttunen 2009; van Kooten 2008; Thorsteinsson 2010; Wasserman 2008. The views naturally diverge in the details, but the general tendency is to see early Christianity in the philosophical context.

acknowledged the philosophical cast of Christians. Next, I will show that these non-Christian accounts of Christians mirror Christian self-representation.

I concentrate on several New Testament texts often presented as a foundational justification for the misrecognition of philosophy: Colossians 2, Acts 17, and 1 Corinthians 1–2. I argue that these texts actually make good use of the ancient philosophical discourse, so that one can read them as seeking recognition in the Greco-Roman intellectual milieu. I claim that the philosophical tendency was present already in the earliest extant Christian texts. After that, I will briefly present 1 Corinthians 7 as an example of philosophy. This case shows that philosophy was not taken up only in cases that marked the boundaries between its relationship with Christianity. Instead, I show that philosophical arguments are a natural part of Paul's argumentation. Thus, the later mutual recognition between Christians and philosophers had its necessary background in what the earliest Christians presented in their writings. This section makes comprehensible the partial recognition of Christianity from the side of pagan philosophers. I argue that this philosophical recognition was only a mirror of the Christians pursuing it. At the end of this section, I briefly discuss Justin Martyr as an example of the intellectual and philosophical development among the early Christians. In the following centuries, the intellectual spheres of society were Christianized, which helps to clarify the view that the religion/philosophy division is a biased way of constructing history.

### 2.1 *Athens and Jerusalem—Still Something in Common*

Tertullian justifies his misrecognition of philosophy with two references to the Bible: Colossians 2:8 and Acts 17:17–18 (*Praescr.* 7; trans. *ANF* 3.246). These verses are the only ones in the entire New Testament to mention philosophy and philosophers.<sup>224</sup> Colossians mentions philosophy:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy (διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας) and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.

Col 2:8

<sup>224</sup> In the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), philosophers and philosophy are mentioned only in Dan 1:20 and several times in 4 Macc. According to Otto Michel (1973, 176), in 4 Macc 5 King Antiochus and the Jew Eleazar discuss whether Judaism can be recognized as a philosophical lifestyle (“als φιλοσοφείν anerkannt werden kann”).

Tertullian emphasizes that Paul (or so Tertullian believes the author to be—the epistle’s authorship is a controversial topic)<sup>225</sup> explicitly names “philosophy as that which he would have us be on our guard against.” The second biblical reference Tertullian uses is the story of Paul’s visit to Athens:

So he argued (διελέγετο) in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there (ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας). Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (τινὲς δὲ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στωϊκῶν φιλοσόφων) debated with him. Some said, “What does this babblers want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities (ξένων δαιμονίων).”

Acts 17:17–18

On Paul, Tertullian notes: “He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it.” As Acts mentions two different philosophical schools, the Epicureans and Stoics, Tertullian hastens to argue that philosophy is “divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects.” Reflecting on Paul’s visit to Athens actually leads Tertullian to the rhetorical question: “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”

However, the implied negative answer is prescriptive, not descriptive. Tertullian means that Athens and Jerusalem should not have anything in common—but in fact they do have a lot in common. The context of Tertullian’s attack on philosophy has a background in his attack on Christian theologians whose views he did not accept. He blamed them for heresies arising from blending faith and philosophy. “Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition!” Tertullian exclaims. However, if blending philosophy and Christianity is a brand of heresy, Tertullian himself is heretical. It is widely known that his theology is deeply in debt to philosophy, especially Stoicism. The polemics against philosophy is in fact nothing but polemics against heresies. Outside this constellation, he

225 Most scholars assume that Colossians was written after Paul, despite the fact that the epistle presents itself as written by him. On the discussion, see standard scholarly commentaries on the epistle or, for example, Leppä 2003.

can “call on the Stoics also to help” and then praise Zeno of Citium, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus (*An.* 5; trans. *ANF* 3.184–185).<sup>226</sup>

Tertullian’s harsh criticism of philosophy seems to be an occasional rhetorical device rather than a conscious theological position. A careful reading also reveals that Tertullian’s biblical references do not present an uncompromising position regarding philosophy. A few verses after condemning philosophy, the author of Colossians admonishes:

Do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow (σκιὰ) of what is to come, but the substance (σῶμα) belongs to Christ.

Col 2:16–17

A philosophically trained reader may notice that here we encounter a variation of Plato’s allegory of the cave (*Resp.* 514a–518b). Plato tells the story of people chained in a cave, where shadows on the walls present everything they know of the world outside. According to Plato, material facts are like the shadows of immaterial ideas. Colossians adapts the Platonic allegory to the apocalyptic, temporally oriented linear worldview. The true substance is to come, but its shadow is already visible in the present. Lacking this temporal dimension, Plato’s allegory does not speak of the present and the future. Instead, the shadows and the ideas are present at the same time. Despite this difference, Colossians shares the contemporary philosophical discourse.<sup>227</sup> The author of Colossians adapts the Platonic allegory to her or his own purposes: Jewish ritual practices are but a shadow of the substance, and ignorance in these matters should not lead to condemnation (hinting at a potential conflict with Jewish Christians). A conflict is also present in Plato’s text. The philosopher who knows the ideas

is forced to plead in the law courts, or anywhere else, about the shadows (σκιῶν) of justice, or the images whose shadows (σκιὰί) they are, and dispute about it on the basis of how these things are understood by those who have never yet seen actual justice.

*Resp.* 517d; trans. EMLYN-JONES and PREDDY, LCL

226 On Tertullian’s slogan, its interpretation, and his use of philosophy, see, e.g., Osborn 1997, 27–47.

227 Sometimes scholars note that the pair σῶμα and σκιὰ are unusual, as one usually speaks of εἰκῶν instead of σῶμα. There are, however, other examples of the pair σῶμα and σκιὰ, too (see, e.g., O’Brien 1982, 139–140). Moreover, Plato does not use any fixed terminology for the substance in his allegory.

Although the Platonic theory is modified into a Jewish-Christian dialogue, its philosophical source can still be felt. Does this use of philosophy go directly against the condemnation of philosophy only some verses earlier in the same text? It may well be that the condemnation is a rhetorical move, just as we saw in Tertullian's case. The other—and more probable—explanation is that the rejection of philosophy by the author of Colossians does not involve general condemnation. Scholars usually note that the author is speaking of her or his adversaries and, thus, of their particular philosophy.<sup>228</sup> As the adversaries seem to be obliged to adhere to some Jewish ritual practices, it may seem extraordinary to call their views “philosophy.” Yet, we have several examples of Judaism or some of its sects presented in that way.<sup>229</sup> This wide understanding of philosophy is by no means limited to Judaism. In fact, the separation between religion and philosophy is extraordinary in ancient culture. According to Pierre Hadot, even Epicureans who denied vernacular beliefs participated in the cult.

In antiquity, the philosopher encountered religion in his social life (in the form of the official cult) and in his cultural life (in the forms of art and of literature), yet he lived religion philosophically by transforming it into philosophy. If Epicurus recommended participation in civic festivals and even prayer, this was to allow the Epicurean philosopher to contemplate the gods as conceived by the Epicurean theory of nature.... The philosophical way of life never entered into competition with religion in antiquity, because at the time religion was not a way of life which included all of existence and all of inner life, as it was in Christianity.<sup>230</sup>

This philosophical attitude toward religion is present also in the philosophy which the author of Colossians opposes. Gregory E. Sterling notes how the Colossian philosophy coheres with the philosophical views of the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who in turn owes much to the Middle Platonic demonology. Sterling supposes that the author of Colossians seemingly knew the Middle Platonic scale of being. Sterling says:

The scale they knew placed the angels or daemons in the intermediate zones between God and humanity. Their fasting practices suggest that

228 Michel 1973, 183–184; Bormann 2012, 126.

229 O'Brien 1982, 109; Bormann 2012, 127.

230 Hadot 2002, 271–272. See Maisch 2003, 153: “Philosophie bezeichnet im Hellenismus nicht ein theoretisches Lehrgebäude, sondern ein umfassendes System, das Weltdeutung, Identitätsstiftung, Spiritualität, Einsicht in den rechten Lebensvollzug und sogar magische Praktiken in sich vereinigt.”



they thought of these beings negatively: their asceticism served as a protection against injurious elemental spirits. It is likely that they observed their fasts in conjunction with a Jewish liturgical calendar.<sup>231</sup>

The Colossian philosophy is what Hadot describes as practicing religious rites with a philosophical mindset. The author of the epistle philosophically responds to this practice by placing such rites in the lower level of shadows. It remains unclear if this is a carefully considered answer to the scale of being. The scale cannot explain the temporal dimension introduced by the author, but this difficulty should not be overestimated. Hebrews (8:5; 10:1) contains temporal and non-temporal adaptations of the Platonic allegory, side by side. The discrepancy between the eschatological and non-eschatological adaptations, however, is not enough to dismiss philosophical influences in Colossians. Both the author of Colossians and her or his adversaries seem to participate in a discussion which one can describe as being philosophical in nature.

The case of Acts is clearer. One cannot avoid noticing that its relationship with philosophy is much more positive than Tertullian claims. Actually, Paul's figure in the narrative hints at Socrates.<sup>232</sup> David M. Reis has called Acts 17 an echo chamber, which not only provides an opportunity to hear Socratic reverberations in the figure of Paul, but also Pauline echoes in the figure of Socrates. Justin Martyr invoked the latter when describing Socrates as Paul at the Areopagus (2 *Apol.* 10).<sup>233</sup> With the help of the Socratic echoes, the Areopagus episode positions Christian identity within the Greco-Roman intellectual culture and thus sets a standard for the recognition that Christians sought among the philosophers.

The author of Acts<sup>234</sup> opens the episode by narrating Paul's sightseeing in Athens. The apostle roams in public every day, arguing (διελέγετο) in the synagogue and in the marketplace (ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ) with "those who happen to be there." This is what Socrates did:

Socrates lived ever in the open; for early in the morning he went to the public promenades and training grounds; in the forenoon he was seen in the market (ἀγορᾶς); and the rest of the day he passed just where most people were to be met: he was generally talking, and anyone might listen.

Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.10; trans. MARCHANT, LCL

231 Sterling 1998, 270.

232 This observation is commonplace among scholars. See Sandnes 1993, 20.

233 Reis 2002, 260, 273–274.

234 In fact, we do not know the name of the author who is responsible for Acts and the gospel bearing Luke's name. The scholarly commentaries discuss the question of authorship.

I have never been anyone's teacher, but if anyone, young or old, is keen to hear me speak and getting on with my activities, I have never begrudged anyone; I don't charge for conversation (διαλέγομαι), nor do I refuse if no money is offered, but I make myself available to rich and poor alike for questioning as well as if anyone wants to hear and give an answer to whatever I have to say.

Plato, *Apol.* 33a; trans. EMLYN-JONES and PREDDY, LCL

Paul is reproached for being a proclaimer of foreign divinities (ξένων δαιμονίων) and Socrates for proclaiming novel divinities (καινὰ δαιμόνια) (Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.1; Plato, *Apol.* 24c). When the story continues in Acts, Paul is taken to the Areopagus to report his teaching (Acts 17:19). Again, Luke's choice of words echoes the story of Socrates, who was sentenced to death there. In Paul's time, the Areopagus possibly functioned as a city council,<sup>235</sup> but this is a moot point. The name Areopagus in the story merely serves to create a new echo of Socrates. Even Luke's ambiguous word choice is evocative. The verb ἐπιλαμβάνομαι may mean 'arrest' but also well-intentioned attachment.<sup>236</sup> Luke "appears simply to evoke the image of trial and arrest, allowing it to resonate in the reader's mind without feeling the need to make the connection explicit."<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, both Socrates and Paul began their speeches at the Areopagus with the words "Men of Athens" (ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι) (Plato, *Apol.* 17a; Acts 17:22).

As a result, one can easily agree with Sandnes' observation that there is "a firm basis for saying that the prelude to the Areopagus speech involves a clear comparison between Paul and Socrates." Sandnes emphasizes that readers were aware of this comparison, since Socrates' figure was well known. Sandnes cites Lucian's words to illustrate the situation: "His praises are sung by everyone" (*Gall.* 12).<sup>238</sup> Socrates' reputation was impeccable among the majority of the educated, but some did not praise him. Scholars have mainly missed that Luke uses the Socratic echoes to locate Paul more closely with one of the two previously mentioned philosophical schools: namely, closer to the Stoics than to the Epicureans. The Stoics eagerly invoked Socrates, while the Epicureans despised him. According to A. A. Long, "from Zeno to Epictetus, that is to say throughout the history of the Stoa, Socrates is the philosopher with whom the Stoics most closely aligned themselves." Three stories of Zeno, who founded the Stoic school, tell of his devotion to philosophy, pointing out that Socrates inspired him in one way or another. Long accurately notes the function of

235 Barrett 2004, 831–832.

236 Barrett 2004, 831.

237 Reis 2002, 270–271.

238 Sandnes 1993, 22. Similarly many others; see, e.g., Alexander 2002, 230.

these diverging accounts: “The literal truth of these stories is unimportant. What they attest to is a tradition, which Zeno’s followers must have encouraged, that Socrates was the primary inspiration of his philosophy.” One source even claims that the Stoics wanted to be called Socratics.<sup>239</sup> The contrary was true of the Epicureans:

If Epicurus was fairly restrained in his remarks about Socrates, his immediate followers were not. From Metrodorus and Idomeneus, extending through Zeno of Sidon and Philodemus down to Diogenes of Oenoanda, a tradition of hostility to Socrates was established that is virulent even by the standards of ancient polemic. In their writings, Socrates was portrayed as the complete anti-Epicurean—a sophist, a rhetorician, a sceptic, and someone whose ethical inquiries turn human life into chaos.<sup>240</sup>

Thus, Paul’s Socratic characterization associates the apostle with the Stoics. This association becomes clearer in the speech that Luke has him deliver at the Areopagus. Of the several Stoic themes of the speech,<sup>241</sup> it is enough to mention only one, the quotation: “For we too are his offspring (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμὲν)” (Acts 17:28). These words belong to the opening verses of the poem *Phaenomena* by the Stoic Aratus:

From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the havens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus. For we are also his offspring (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμὲν).

Aratus, *Phaen.* 1–5; trans. MAIR and MAIR, LCL

Aratus’ poem was famous and celebrated in antiquity. Its reputation is illustrated by the fact that the poem was translated several times into Latin (for example, by Cicero and Ovid).<sup>242</sup> The Jew Aristobulus of Alexandria cited it in the 2nd century BCE, which shows that the poem was also known within the Jewish sphere (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 13.12.1–8). Aratus’ Stoic idea of God permeating the whole universe accords well with Paul’s Areopagus speech, in which

239 Long 1988, 151, 160–161. Long (1988, 150) also states: “Socrates’ presence in Epictetus’ *Discourses*—which I must pass over here—could be the topic of a monograph.” This task was completed in 2002 in his book *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*.

240 Long 1988, 155.

241 Scholars routinely note the Stoic coloring of the speech. See, e.g., Barrett 2004. This does not exclude, however, the possibility of also finding parallels with the Jewish texts.

242 Fantuzzi 1996, 959–960.

he preaches: “In him [i.e., God] we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). However, at the end of his speech Paul diverges from the Stoics by saying that God has overlooked ignorance until now (Acts 17:30). This is an implicit placing of the Stoics among other ignorant people. The sudden turn of the speech after a Stoic-sounding proclamation is a slap in the face of the Stoics, who claimed to know the truth and—contrary to the Sceptics—claimed that virtue is nothing other than knowledge.<sup>243</sup> The Stoics associated their teaching with Socrates, but the Socrates figure here nullifies their knowledge. In a way, Paul fulfills Socrates’ prophecy: “you’d spend the rest of your lives asleep, unless the god were to send you someone else, in his care for you” (Plato, *Apol.* 31a; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL).<sup>244</sup> Paul is the prophesied person in Luke’s narration, the real follower of Socrates.

From the perspective of seeking recognition, the Areopagus episode is interesting. Paul debates with the philosophers with the consequence that he is challenged to report his teaching at the Areopagus. It is as if the Athenians were considering their recognition of Paul. Paul, in turn, seeks recognition by adhering to the Stoics in his speech. At the end of the speech, the constellation turns upside down: Paul proclaims that everything up to that point has been ignorance. The apostle assumes the role of granting or withholding recognition—in this case the latter. The audience becomes irritated with Paul’s idea of resurrection. They seemingly interrupt the speech and, in turn, withhold their recognition. Only a small group joins Paul, like those who remained faithful to Socrates during his trial (Plato, *Apol.* 38b; Xenophon, *Apol.* 27–28). The mutual misrecognition, however, is not the whole story. In the eyes of the reader, through the character of Paul Christianity attains its place among the philosophical schools. Ries comments aptly:

Luke constructs a Socratic Paul who deftly negotiates among his enemies with rhetorical skill, first by developing an argument for reality of the one true God based on common Hellenistic philosophical principles, and then by proclaiming the decidedly Christian teaching about the resurrection and judgment, which elicits among his audience consternation, intrigue, and conversion.<sup>245</sup>

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243 Long 1988, 158.

244 One may note that the idea of a prophecy did not sound strange to Stoic ears. The Stoics firmly believed in divination, and Cicero relates that the Stoic Antipater “gathered a mass of remarkable premonitions received by Socrates” (*Div.* 1.123; trans. Falconer, LCL).

245 Ries 2002, 272–273.

Paradoxically, the fact that the encounter with philosophers at the Areopagus terminates in mutual misrecognition may be the ultimate catalyst for locating Christianity among the philosophers. Hubert Cancik notes that the recurrent disputes in Acts elevated Christianity from a cult to a philosophical school:

It is furthermore highly remarkable, so far as I see, that this kind of dispute over unity, inheritance, and continuity does not occur in Greek and Roman religion. Controversies over “worldview,” moral behavior, the relation of the individual to the state, marriage, work, war, and death, so far as these can be rationalized, are dealt with in Greco-Roman culture by means of philosophy, not religion.<sup>246</sup>

Luke’s picture of Paul disputing with philosophers did not propagate an anti-philosophical tendency. The episode is rather a claim of Christianity as the most truthful philosophy, which surpasses other schools. Tertullian’s anti-philosophical reading of this text seems more than questionable. I will still widen the discussion on the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians, which Tertullian did not use, but which are often thought of as representing an anti-philosophical attitude.

## 2.2 *Paul, Philosophy and the Torah*

### 2.2.1 Corinthians—Philosophical Folly in the World

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” Paul<sup>247</sup> asks rhetorically (1 Cor 1:20). Paul answers in the affirmative, as he also points out several times in 1 Corinthians 1–2. After the salutation, Paul briefly relates what he has heard of the Corinthians and then, from 1:18 onwards, proceeds to his criticism of worldly wisdom: The Greeks have searched for wisdom without acknowledging God. Therefore, God decided to save the world through foolishness (*μωρία*), through the proclamation of Christ crucified. Paul stresses that he did not proclaim this “in lofty words or wisdom” (2:1). He even denies knowing something, with one exception: “I decided to know nothing (*οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι*) among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (2:2). Yet, Paul’s proclamation is wisdom nonetheless: not “a wisdom of this age” (2:6), but God’s wisdom so that “faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God (*ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ*)” (2:5). Christians, he says, speak “in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.”

<sup>246</sup> Cancik 1997, 693.

<sup>247</sup> Contrary to Colossians, the authorship of 1 Corinthians is not disputed. The author is Paul himself.

In his commentary, Gordon D. Fee summarizes the main thesis of 1 Corinthians 1–2: “The gospel is not some new *sophia* (wisdom, or philosophy), not even a new divine *sophia*. For *sophia* allows for human judgments or evaluations of God’s activity.”<sup>248</sup> What is this but a total misrecognition of philosophy? Loveday Alexander plainly speaks of an “apparently anti-philosophical stance adopted by Paul himself in the letter of Corinthians.”<sup>249</sup> Should Tertullian refer to this text? No. When Paul’s words are placed in a philosophical context, they no longer seem so anti-philosophical. My aim is to show that there are several contact points with philosophy and that Paul’s text therefore participates in philosophical discourse. I mostly cite Plato, but this does not indicate Paul’s particular attachment to Platonism. Plato’s texts were also used outside the Platonic school and interpreted differently by various schools.<sup>250</sup> Instead of trying to link Paul to a certain philosophical school,<sup>251</sup> I generally argue that the ostensibly anti-philosophical words themselves belong to the philosophical discourse.

Fee’s claim that the gospel is no divine *sophia* is forced. In fact, he later has to admit that Paul speaks of divine wisdom in opposition to human wisdom. Fee explains that Paul “transformed ‘wisdom’ from a philosophical, rhetorical term into a historical, soteriological one.”<sup>252</sup> True, Paul identified salvific wisdom with the crucified Christ; thus, divine wisdom really is historical and soteriological. I argue, however, that these features do not rule out philosophy. One can find a similar opposition between human and divine wisdom in Plato’s texts. In the *Apology*, Socrates states that Apollo called him the wisest human being. Socrates wanted to prove this claim wrong—without success. Socrates explains: “the god is in truth wise and this is what he means in this oracle: that human wisdom (ἡ ἀνθρωπίνῃ σοφία) is of little worth, even worthless.” (Plato, *Apol.* 23a; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL). Here the most famous representative of ancient philosophy differentiates between divine and human wisdom.

Plato’s *Sophist* repeats the same opposition, adapting it to the division between the philosophers and the sophists. The latter imitates the former and, therefore, what the sophists represent does not belong to the divine, but

248 Fee 1987, 68, 98.

249 Alexander 2002, 230.

250 Long 1988, 152. For example, Long (2002, 70) suggests that the Stoic Epictetus “knew the *Gorgias* more or less by heart.”

251 Some have seen similarities between Paul and the Stoics (e.g., Engberg-Pedersen 2000; 2010; Huttunen 2009; Thorsteinsson 2010), others between Paul and the Platonists (e.g., van Kooten 2008; Wasserman 2008). Downing (1998) prefers the Cynic Paul.

252 Fee 1987, 73.

to the human (οὐ θεῖον ἀλλ' ἀνθρωπικόν) category (Plato, *Soph.* 268c–d). The background is Plato's theory of ideas: unlike the true philosophers, the sophists just imitate the divine wisdom of ideas. As imitators, the sophists remain on the worldly level. In 1 Corinthians, Paul does not represent the Platonic theory of ideas. Nevertheless, the opposition between human and divine wisdom is present in both Plato's and Paul's texts. This similarity is quite general, but it proves that the differentiation between divine and human wisdom created by Paul should not be straightforwardly explained as anti-philosophical.

Plato's dialogue *Ion*<sup>253</sup> comes closer to Paul, who associates divine wisdom with the power of God. Meeting Ion, who is specialized in performing Homer's poetry, we are told that he is not at all interested in other poets and cannot even form any clear opinions about them. Socrates infers that Ion is not actually skilled in the art of poetry, for if he were, he would have been able to perform any work of it. As this is not the case, the conclusion is that Ion's skill to perform poetry—or anyone's, for that matter—cannot be of human origin. The skill must originate via divine influence, that is, divine power.

For not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence (θεῖα δυνάμει); since, if they had fully learnt by art to speak on one kind of theme, they would know how to speak on all. And for this reason God takes away the mind of these men and uses them as his ministers, just as he does soothsayers and godly seers, in order that we who hear them may know that it is not they who utter these words of great price, when they are out of their wits, but that it is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them.

Plato, *Ion* 534c–d; trans. FOWLER and LAMB, LCL

One may recall that in the *Republic*, Plato openly expresses his disgust of poetry, which is just an imitation of reality: “Starting with Homer, all composers of poetry are imitators of images of virtue and of every other subject they deal with, but they don't grasp the truth” (*Resp.* 600e; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL). Thus, poetry as an imitation is on the level of sophistic arguments. It is thus possible, though not obvious, that Plato's praise of divine inspiration in *Ion* is ironic; in reality, Plato might be hinting that poetry is nothing but foolishness.<sup>254</sup> Be that as it may, Plato is not the only philosopher to present the concept of divine power. In Xenophon's version of Socrates' *Apology*,

253 It is possible that *Ion* was not written by Plato himself, but somewhat after him (Thesleff 1982, 221–223).

254 Thesleff 1982, 222.

Socrates says that the *daimonion* speaking to him is no novel idea, as people traditionally believe in omens coming through birds, thunder, and the Pythia.

The only difference between them and me is that whereas they call the sources of their forewarning ‘birds,’ ‘utterances,’ ‘chance meetings,’ ‘prophets,’ I call mine a ‘divine’ thing (δαιμόνιον), and I think that in using such a term I am speaking with greater truth and piety than those who ascribe the gods’ power to birds (τῶν τοῖς ὄρνισιν ἀνατιθέντων τὴν τῶν θεῶν δύναμιν).

Xenophon, *Apol.* 13; trans. MARCHANT, LCL

A later philosopher presenting the idea of divine power can be found in the text of the Stoic Epictetus at the beginning of the 2nd century CE. Epictetus may be basing himself on Xenophon’s words, as his argumentation is quite similar.<sup>255</sup> Epictetus creates an opposition between the divine message and the human message, with the former originating in divine power.

Once you have heard these words go away and say to yourself, “It was not Epictetus who said these things to me; why, how could they have occurred to him? but it was some kindly god or other speaking through him. For it would not have occurred to Epictetus to say these things, because he is not in the habit of speaking to anyone. Come then, let us obey God, that we rest not under His wrath.” Nay, but if a raven gives you a sign by his croaking, it is not the raven that gives the sign, but God through the raven; whereas if He gives you a sign through a human voice, will you pretend that it is the man who is saying these things to you, so that you may remain ignorant of the power of the divinity (τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ δαιμονίου), that He gives signs to some men in this way, and to others in that, but that in the greatest and most sovereign matters He gives His sign through His noblest messenger (διὰ καλλίστου ἀγγέλου) [i.e., Hermes; Epictetus continues by citing the *Odyssey*]?

Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.1.36–37; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Epictetus does not seriously claim to be an oracle in the normal sense of the word.<sup>256</sup> However, he surely understood his philosophical message as divine wisdom, which makes the comparison to oracles understandable. As a Stoic,

<sup>255</sup> Long (1988, 151) holds it as certain that “Epictetus has reflected hard on the Socratic writings of Plato and Xenophon.”

<sup>256</sup> Huttunen 2009, 21.



Epictetus believed in the god within, which he calls by many names. Here he speaks of the power of *δαίμονιον*, which denotes the divine and the rational part of the human being.<sup>257</sup> Thus, “the power of the divinity” simply means human rationality. This is not what Paul thinks.<sup>258</sup> However, his concept of the divine Spirit abiding within Christians comes close. He makes it clear that the Spirit boosts cognitive capacity (1 Cor. 2:10–16).<sup>259</sup> Stoics could also call the divinity ‘spirit’ (*πνεῦμα*), though the word is quite rare in Epictetus’ usage.<sup>260</sup>

Finally, I would like to treat Paul’s report of his earlier sojourn, found in 1 Corinthians: “I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing (οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι) among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1–2).<sup>261</sup> Fee understands this non-knowing as a rejection of philosophical reasoning,<sup>262</sup> but even this saying has its parallel in Plato’s *Apology* (21b,d; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL): “I assure you I’m conscious that I’m not wise in any way great or small,” and “It’s probable, of course, that neither of us knows anything that is fine and good, but this man thinks he knows something without knowing it, whereas I, just as I don’t know, I don’t think I do either. At least it seems I’m wiser than this man in just this one minor respect, that I don’t even think I know what I don’t know.” (οὗτος μὲν οἶεται τι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς, ἐγὼ δέ, ὥσπερ οὖν οὐκ οἶδα, οὐδὲ οἶομαι· ἔοικα γοῦν τούτου γε σμικρῶ τιμι ἀτῶ τούτῳ σοφώτερος εἶναι, ὅτι ἄ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἶομαι εἰδέναι.)

This sounds similar to Paul.<sup>263</sup> Both Socrates and Paul reflect on their knowledge and make decisions accordingly. Paul does not claim to be ignorant, however, but reports about his decision to be ignorant except in what comes to Christ. Anthony A. Thiselton is right when he states that this interpretation releases Paul from any anti-intellectualism.<sup>264</sup> Yet, if ignorance is

257 Bonhöffer 1890, 83–86. Bonhöffer’s work is still worth consulting, despite its age. He profoundly contextualizes the philosophical concepts that Epictetus uses.

258 In Romans, there is a closer parallel to Epictetus. Paul presents the devotion to the rational cult (τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν) as an ideal (Rom. 12:1), similarly to Epictetus (*Disc.* 1.6.20).

259 On the cognitive role of the Spirit and its relationship to Stoicism, see Engberg-Pedersen 2010, 76–80.

260 *SVF* 1.121.6; 2.112.31; 2.299.11; 2.306.21; 2.307.21. In Epictetus’ texts, the word *πνεῦμα* or its derivatives occur only in *Disc.* 2.1.17; 2.23.3; 3.3.22; 3.13.15.

261 Paul’s word order is somewhat surprising. The more precise translation may be “I did not decide to know something ...” However, I do not see any difference in the meaning. On the translation, see Thiselton 2000, 211–212.

262 Fee 1987, 92.

263 The former sentence (οὔτε μέγα οὔτε σμικρὸν ξύνοιδα ἑμαυτῷ σοφὸς ὢν) is close to 1 Cor. 4:4 (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἑμαυτῷ σύνοιδα).

264 Thiselton 2000, 212.

anti-intellectualism, is Socrates anti-intellectual? It depends on the philosophical school. As it turns out, the Sceptic school “invented” the Socrates who knows nothing. Conversely, the Stoic Socrates knows a lot of things.<sup>265</sup> It is difficult to say what Paul’s position on these epistemological questions was—if he even had strong attachments to any position. It is possible, however, that his words echo these discussions. In any case, the contemporary philosophical discussions prove that Paul’s words are in no self-evident way directed against philosophy.

In sum, it seems plausible that Paul was partaking in the general philosophical discourse. The division between worldly and divine wisdom is present in the philosophical texts. Plato, Xenophon, and Epictetus refer to divine power. Although Paul emphasized his ignorance (except in matters of Christ), he does not seem to reject knowledge—and if he did, he would come close to the Sceptic school. These similarities do not diminish the dissimilarities. For example, Paul and Epictetus share a conviction regarding the divine power within human beings, but Paul restricts it to Christians, who are the only ones to receive the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12). Stoics thought spirit to be present in every human being. Dissimilarities between Paul and Epictetus are clear, but there are also dissimilarities, say, between Plato and Epictetus. I cannot see that Paul’s discourse categorically deviates from the philosophical discourse.

This being the case, I would like to question the traditional reading of 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. Paul does not try to deviate from philosophy, and he is not presenting a categorical alternative to what is earlier presented in philosophy. Quite the contrary, he joins in the contemporary philosophical discourse. In fact, Paul’s words against specious human wisdom can be seen as a search for recognition in the intellectual culture of the day. In this discourse, truth was presented as a divine essence, opposite to that of worldly wisdom. Paul presents himself as the most truthful philosopher, a messenger by divine call (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος) (1 Cor. 1:1), who reliably presents the divine mysteries, “God’s wisdom, secret and hidden” (1 Cor. 2:7). Paul’s revelatory character or invocation of the authority of the Septuagint do not make him a deviant either. As Pierre Hadot points out, in many philosophical schools of the imperial period, natural revelation “was augmented by what the Greeks have always believed: revelations made by gods to a few inspired mortals.” The texts of Plato, Xenophon, and Epictetus quoted above exemplify this well. Hadot notes, “Also sought-after were revelations made to the barbarians: Jews, Egyptians, Assyrians, and inhabitants of India.” Philosophical teaching took the form of

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265 On the Sceptic and Stoic interpretations of Socrates, see Long 1988, 156–160.

commenting on authoritative texts.<sup>266</sup> In this tradition, 1 Corinthians 1–2 is not a misrecognition of philosophy.

But am I forgetting Paul's Judaism? If we look at his epistles, they are full of biblical citations and allusions. Equally clear references to philosophical authors are non-existent. Admittedly, Paul did not discuss philosophers in his epistles. Still, I maintain that his thoughts can be read within the context of philosophical discourse. The similarities are sufficiently recognizable. Next, I will support my claim by a short analysis of Paul's thoughts on law, which are routinely associated with the Torah. This is mostly right, but does not rule out the use of philosophy. If philosophy and the Torah were impossible bedfellows, Philo's Jewish philosophy should be an impossibility—which it is evidently not. We can expect that Paul could likewise combine the Torah and philosophical discourse.

### 2.2.2 Paul's Philosophical Interpretation of the Torah

It is well known that Jews in diaspora interpreted the Torah in terms of philosophical categories.<sup>267</sup> Anyone can acknowledge this fact when reading, say, Philo's treatises where the Torah, as anything else, is interpreted in philosophical categories. Paul in this respect was surely not an exception among diaspora Jews. It is quite natural that Greco-Roman interpretations were not alien to the apostle, whose liberal views of gentile inclusion tested the boundaries of Judaism. It is also worth noting that the Greek expressions for "law," "commandment," "ordinance," etc. do not necessarily refer to the Torah. When Paul uses these, he does not necessarily mean the Torah and its regulations. Heikki Räisänen has shown that in some cases it is difficult to interpret  $\delta\ \nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$  as the Torah.<sup>268</sup>

It is misleading, however, to track whether Paul is speaking of the Jewish law or law in Greco-Roman terms. As it is invariably a question of the same Greek terms, some strict dividing line is hard or even impossible to make. This is to follow the program of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, who demanded an end to using "any form of the Judaism/Hellenism divide as an interpretive lens." One should stop reading the comparative material "as if *either* the Jewish *or* the Hellenistic material is in the end the really important one."<sup>269</sup> The purpose is not to abandon Judaism or Greco-Roman categories, but to stop seeing them as mutually exclusive categories. If these categories can overlap in Philo, why

266 Hadot 2002, 149–153.

267 See, e.g., Weber 2000.

268 Räisänen 1992, 48–94.

269 Engberg-Pedersen 2001, 3–4.

would they not overlap in Paul? Here my aim is to see how philosophical and Jewish elements overlap in one passage, 1 Corinthians 7:17–24. I make my point by comparing Paul's words to Epictetus' sayings. This is not to claim any direct dependence but to illustrate that Paul's words on the law and commands do not exclude philosophy.

As Paul was a diaspora Jew, it might seem reasonable to compare his views with those of other diaspora Jews, especially with those who have philosophical inclinations, such as Philo. However, I avoid this kind of comparison for methodological reasons. A comparison with diaspora Jews would lead to asking whether the similarities between potentially compared parts merely proves Paul's Jewishness. If Paul and another diaspora Jew were to present similar views, the easiest interpretation for the similarities would be their shared Jewish—not Greco-Roman—background. This would lead to again falling back on the Judaism/Hellenism divide. Therefore, I preclude the problem by comparing the views of Paul and a pagan thinker. In this comparison we see how much Paul resembles the latter's philosophical context, even when speaking of the law and commandments.

My procedure is as follows. First, I take a short look at 1 Corinthians 7:17–24 to illustrate the basic problem in Paul's statements on the commandments. Second, I present relevant passages in Epictetus' texts so that we can, third, turn back to Paul with the information gathered from Epictetus. I would like to show that Paul's thinking is heavily indebted to ideas that are similar to those of Epictetus. I do not hesitate to call Paul's thinking in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24 "Christian Stoicism." In this regard, Paul's Jewish and philosophical elements do not exclude each other.

In 1 Corinthians 7:17–24, Paul admonishes Christians to stay in their present social position and make use of it. Circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing, while "obeying the commandments of God (τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ) is everything" (1 Cor 7:19). The expression has solid parallels in the Jewish literature. The Wisdom of Solomon states: "The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction, and concern for instruction is love of her, and love of her is the keeping of her laws (τήρησις νόμων αὐτῆς)" (Wis 6:18). Sirach, in turn, admonishes: "Guard yourself in every act, for this is the keeping of the commandments (τήρησις ἐντολῶν)" (Sir 32:23). In both instances, laws and commands denote the Torah.<sup>270</sup> Initially it makes sense to think that Paul also speaks of the commandments in the Torah. However, in closer analysis this interpretation becomes dubious. If Paul is thinking of the Torah, how could he say that circumcision is *nothing* (οὐδέν ἐστίν)? It is well known that in the

<sup>270</sup> Lang 1986, 96; Räisänen 1987, 68.

contemporary Judaism of the day, circumcision was held as one of the main expressions of obedience to the Torah.

Philo tells of so-called allegorists, who made a spiritual reinterpretation of the circumcision command (Philo, *Migr.* 89–93). Was Paul spiritualizing the circumcision? Had he meant this, circumcision would not be nothing but *something*, namely something spiritual, for example, similar to the circumcision of the heart in Romans 2:28–29. This, however, is not the case in 1 Corinthians 7:19, where circumcision is simply nothing. Another option is to interpret the commandments so that they refer to the love command (Lev 19:18). In Romans and in Galatians, Paul compresses the Torah to the love command (Rom 13:9; Gal. 5:14), but even this interpretation seems to be false. It is difficult to think that a plural “commandments” would refer to the one command.<sup>271</sup> There is even a further difficulty, as love is not mentioned in the context. Neither the spiritualization nor the love command provides an interpretive option.

The meaning of the commandments must be primarily and closely examined in the textual context. In the larger passage (1 Cor 7:17–24), Paul discusses social positions. Therefore, the “commandments” probably have something to do with them. Many scholars have noted resemblances between Stoicism and Paul’s teachings on social positions. In his *Epiktet und das Neue Testament*, Adolf Bonhöffer states: “There is no doubt that here exists one of the most important similarities between Stoicism and Christianity.”<sup>272</sup> Next I look at how Epictetus deals with social positions and how this theme sheds light on “the commandments of God” in Paul’s text. I start quite far, in order to adequately place Epictetus’ individual sayings on social positions within his larger philosophical system. In this way one can be sure that the similarities concern the contents and not only the wording.<sup>273</sup>

The nucleus of Epictetus’ philosophy is the right division of things and the moral value or the lack of value. The division is aptly summarized in the opening section of Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*.<sup>274</sup> It begins with the fundamental division between the things, which are our own and under our control, and the things which are not our own (τὰ ἀλλότρια) and not under our control.

271 Lindemann 2000, 171.

272 Bonhöffer 1911, 171. See also, e.g., Jones 1987, 37, 53; Vollenweider 1989, 211, 241; Deming 1995, 159; Dautzenberg 2001, 61–62.

273 On the methodological considerations, see Huttunen 2009, 10–19.

274 The author of *Encheiridion* is not Epictetus but his student Arrian, who has summarized the main points of Epictetus’ philosophy. On *Encheiridion*, see Brandt 2015. For Epictetus’ philosophy in general, see Long 2002 and Bonhöffer 1890 and 1894. Bonhöffer’s studies are still held in high regard and worth consulting, regardless of their age and a certain tendency to overemphasize Epictetus’ philosophical orthodoxy. Long’s immensely learned study is the first comprehensive survey after Bonhöffer.

Some things are under our control, while others are not under our control. Under our control are conception, choice, desire, aversion, and, in a word, everything that is our own doing; not under our control are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, everything that is not our own doing.

*Ench.* 1.1; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Epictetus uses several names for the things which are not our own and not under our control. They are, for example, external things (τὰ ἔκτος) or materials (ὕλαι) (*Disc.* 1.29.2). According to Epictetus, material things are indifferent (αἱ ὕλαι ἀδιάφοροι) (*Disc.* 2.5.1), while our conceptions, choices, desires, and aversions are not. These mental operations follow our value judgements (δόγματα) on external things. According to Epictetus, all external things are indifferent as such. It is our judgements that make them good or bad. In other words, that which is good or bad lies not in external things as such but solely in our judgements of them. This is his Stoic theory of value. Embracing this theory has an effect on one's mental state. As external things are indifferent, they cannot disturb us. "What, then, are the things that weigh upon us and drive us out of our senses? Why, what else but our judgements" (*Disc.* 2.16.24; trans. Oldfather, LCL). For example, a tyrant can imprison, behead, or exile anyone, but those who have embraced philosophy can remain undisturbed in spite of all these tyrannical operations. Tyrants threaten only external things. One can remain calm "if I feel that all this is nothing (οὐδὲν ἔστι) to me" (*Disc.* 1.29.5–7; trans. Oldfather, LCL).

On the other hand, one can ask if this theory of value makes one totally negligent in one's responsibilities and even one's own life. Why did Epictetus continue to live, eat, and teach in his school in spite of the fact that these all constitute indifferent external things? In his answer, Epictetus emphasizes that the indifference to external things does not determine the use of those things: "Materials are indifferent, but the use of which we make of them is not a matter of indifference (ἡ δὲ χρῆσις αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀδιάφορος)" (*Disc.* 2.5.1; trans. Oldfather, LCL). In *Discourses* 2.16, Epictetus presents the right use of external things as the law of God. The starting point is the fundamental division between the things which are our own and which are not.

(28) And what is the law of God (ὁ νόμος ὁ θεῖος)? To guard (τηρεῖν) what is his own, not to lay claim to what is not his own, but to make use (χρησθαι) of what is given to him, and not to yearn for what has not been given; when something is taken away, to give it up readily and without delay, being grateful for the time in which he had the use (ἐχρήσατο) of it.

*Disc.* 2.16.28; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Now I approach our theme more directly. Keeping an eye on Paul, one can see here a certain terminological similarity. According to Epictetus, people should guard (τηρεῖν) what the law of God commands, that is, one's judgements. People should be content with the things which God has loaned us, make use (χρησθαι) of them, and give them away if it is God's will (cf. *Disc.* 2.5.22; *Ench.* 11). This attitude also concerns social positions. They belong to the external things of which people should make use. In the same text, Epictetus presents this attitude in an exemplary prayer: "Wouldst Thou have me to hold office, or remain in private life; to remain here or go into exile; to be poor or be rich? I will defend all these Thy acts before men" (*Disc.* 2.16.42). It does not matter what the social position is. Slaves and masters are brothers under God (*Disc.* 1.13). What makes a difference is the careful use of the position which God has provided.

A similar attitude toward social positions is found in *Discourses* 3.24, where Epictetus also speaks of God's commands. Epictetus says that a good and excellent man fills his place (χώρα) "with due obedience to God" until it is time to depart (*Disc.* 3.24.95–97; trans. Oldfather, LCL).

(98) "How do you depart?" "Again (πάλιν), as Thou didst wish it, as a free man (ἐλεύθερος), as Thy servant (ὑπηρέτης), as one who has perceived Thy commands and Thy prohibitions (τῶν προσταγμάτων καὶ ἀπαγορευμάτων).

(99) But so long as I continue to live in Thy service, what manner of man wouldst Thou have me be? An official or a private citizen, a senator or one of the common people, a soldier or a general, a teacher or a head of a household? Whatsoever station and post (χώραν καὶ τάξιν) Thou assign me, I will die ten thousand times, as Socrates says, or ever I abandon it."<sup>275</sup>

*Disc.* 3.24.98–99; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Epictetus says that one should depart from life in accordance with God's "commands and prohibitions," which is a Stoic definition of law.<sup>276</sup> The word 'again' indicates that God's law regulates not only dying but also life. Obedience to God's law must happen freely. One should serve God as a free man or as a free servant (ὑπηρέτης), not as a compelled slave (δοῦλος).<sup>277</sup> Freedom is one of Epictetus' main themes, and it recurs in the pages of *Discourses* time and again.<sup>278</sup> I add just one further example: "I am a free man and a friend of God, so as to obey Him of my own free will. No other thing ought I to claim, not body,

275 This may be a paraphrasing of Plato, *Apol.* 28e–29a (cf. *Disc.* 1.9.23–24; 3.1.19–20).

276 Bonhöffer 1911, 231; *SVF* 3.314.

277 For the difference between ὑπηρέτης and δοῦλος, see Rengstorf 1974, 532–533.

278 Epictetus' emphasis on freedom can be illustrated by the fact that the longest discourse (*Disc.* 4.1) deals with this theme. Willms (2011) has recently written an in-depth commentary on this discourse and provides secondary literature.

or property, or office, or reputation ... I cannot transgress any of His commands (τῶν ἐντολῶν)" (*Disc.* 4.3.9–10; trans. Oldfather, LCL). For Epictetus, obedience to God's law brings freedom.<sup>279</sup> Later in *Discourses* 3.24, Epictetus explains that one is a witness in service to God, showing that social positions are indifferent, while obedience to God's commands is everything:

He is training me, and making use of me as a witness to the rest of men (μάρτυρι πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους χρώμενος). When I have been appointed to such a service, am I any longer to take thought as to where I am, or with whom, or what men say about me? Am I not wholly intent upon God, and His commands and ordinances (οὐχὶ δ' ὅλος πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τέταμαι καὶ τὰς ἐκείνου ἐντολὰς καὶ τὰ προστάγματα)?

*Disc.* 3.24.114; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Remembering 1 Corinthians 7, it is worth adding that an exemplary person is "a witness summoned by God" (μάρτυς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κεκλημένος) and one should not disgrace "the summons which He gave you" (τὴν κλήσιν ἣν κέκληκεν) (*Disc.* 1.29.46, 49; trans. Oldfather, LCL). One should face difficulties "with trust in Him who has called you to face them and deemed you worthy of this position" (πεποιθότως τῷ κεκληκότι σε ἐπ' αὐτά, τῷ ἄξιον τῆς χάρας ταύτης κεκρικότι) (*Disc.* 2.1.39; trans. Oldfather, LCL).

Before revisiting what Paul might have meant with "the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19), I briefly summarize previous findings on Epictetus' thought. First, the external things like social positions are *adiaphora*, but their use is not. Actually, God has decreed different kinds of external things for different people. This decreeing Epictetus calls divine law, using such Greek terms as νόμος and ἐντολαί. One should guard (τηρέω) this law by using (χράομαι) the external things. The social position can be understood not only as a divine law but also God's call (καλέω, κλήσις). I claim that Epictetus' thoughts shed light on what Paul meant with "the commandments of God." If Paul means the commandments of the Torah, his idea is totally blurred, as evidenced by the indifference toward circumcision. And being so blurred, it does not explain what the content of the "commandments" might be. In this context, Paul does not speak of the Torah but of social positions.

In 1 Cor. 7:17–24, Paul stresses that God calls (καλέω, κλήσις) each person within his or her social position, not beyond or outside it. The position is thus

<sup>279</sup> Gretenkord 1981, 217–218. Gretenkord juxtaposes this against what Paul states, but actually Gretenkord is discussing with Bultmann's interpretation of Paul. The new perspective on Paul may see the relationship as less oppositional. The covenantal nomism projected onto Paul and Judaism, however, may also fit with Greco-Roman religion (Roitto 2013).



indifferent. This is immediately clear when Paul says that circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing. The indifference of status seems to also be the background when he states that a slave should not be concerned about his or her status. In this regard, any concern with status seems to be out of place since statuses are indifferent. Paul qualifies the positions by saying that slaves are freedmen of the Lord, while free persons are the Lord's slaves. Then, he immediately continues by calling all Christians slaves bought by the Lord.<sup>280</sup> This change of viewpoints illustrates the relativity of social positions: anyone can be called free or slave. Thus, the external social positions are nothing that one should concern oneself with. This view is just a variation of Epictetus' logic when he says that one can remain calm when losing everything, because those things are nothing (οὐδέν ἐστι) (*Disc.* 1.29.5–7). Paul seems to share the Stoic theory of value: external things are indifferent and therefore do not have an effect on our inner selves.

Paul strongly stresses that Christians should remain in their social positions. If social positions are indifferent, why should anyone foster, attend to, or take care of them? Epictetus' philosophy makes this paradox understandable: external things are indifferent, but their use (χρησις) is not. Paul even uses the Stoic technical verb *χράομαι* in verse 21. This idea has both Paul and Epictetus generally emphasizing that one should remain in one's position. Paul possibly speaks of changing social status in verse 1 of *Cor* 7:21. This verse is linguistically unclear: what is the object of the verb *χράομαι*? Should the slave continue to make use of her or his position as a slave or use the opportunity to become free? Both interpretations can be understood along the lines of Stoic philosophy.

The choice between freedom and slavery was officially in the hands of the owner, not in the hands of the slave.<sup>281</sup> If Paul admonishes one to remain in slavery, he means that slaves should not make any unofficial petitions to their owners for this freedom. Such a petition would express a striving for an external social position, and this is something that Stoics do not accept. According to the Stoics, social freedom is indifferent and, therefore, it is not worth striving for. Still, if the owner just asks what the slave would like to happen, there is no striving; Stoics would surely advise the slave to gain his or her freedom.<sup>282</sup> Thus, both interpretations of *1 Cor.* 7:21 can (but must not) be read along the lines of Stoic philosophy. The Stoic reading is very probable, since Paul stands close to the Stoic theory of value and Stoic admonitions to remain in one's social

280 The Greek verb ἀγοράζω denotes the buying of a slave for service, not making a payment for freedom (Jones 1987, 31; Martin 1990, 63). Cf. *1 Cor.* 6:19–20.

281 Bartchy 1973, 106–109. Bartchy himself tries to interpret the verse in a third way, that Paul is admonishing manumitted slaves to remain Christians.

282 Bonhöffer 1911, 170–172. Linguistically I prefer the first interpretative option: the slave should remain in slavery. See Huttunen 2009, 28–29.

position. Moreover, there is the Stoic technical verb *χράομαι* in the verse. In the last analysis, it is quite unimportant whether or not Paul admonishes slaves to make use of the opportunity to become free or continue to make use of their position as a slave. What is decisive here is that Paul is probably presenting the Stoic idea that one should make use of indifferent things—whatever they are.

All this Stoic philosophy of life can be viewed in theological terms. Epictetus utters prayers to express his fealty in any social position that God decrees. Whatever the position is, Epictetus promises to remain in it, because God prefers such conduct. Epictetus says that God summons or calls (*καλέω, κλήσις*) people to be his witness. The idea of the divine calling is also central in Paul's passage. The idea differs only slightly from that of Epictetus. For Paul, God's call has a double meaning: it is at the same time a call to remain in a social position and to also become a Christian.<sup>283</sup> For Epictetus, the connection between the call and the social position is vaguer. He says that God calls people to be his witness. Although Epictetus does not explicitly say that God calls us to a certain social position, it is clear that the positions are given by God. The philosophical differences between Paul and Epictetus are minor, and they do not diminish the general philosophical similarity.

God's call is a Stoic idea and Paul seems to adjust it in the context of a Stoic theory of value. The distinct Stoic coloring in the passage leads to a Stoic explanation for the commandments of God in 1 Corinthians 7:19. Here again occurs a term with a Stoic ring. The word *τήρησις* is suggestive of *τηρέω*, which Epictetus uses in the context of a divine law (*Disc.* 2.16.28). The divine law stresses the importance of the Stoic theory of value and admonishes one to make use (*χράομαι*) of any external thing that God has given. Epictetus also speaks of God's commandments (*ἐντολαί*), and he uses other similar expressions when speaking of social positions. This theological parlance serves to instruct the Stoic theory of value. This theory is present in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24 with several other Stoic features. In this context, the commandments of God are easily interpreted in a manner that is similar to that in Epictetus: the commandments refer to the different social positions. Each position imposes differing demands, which explains the plural form.

This Stoic interpretation of the commandments makes excellent sense in the context of 1 Corinthians 7:17–24. It is much more difficult to interpret the relevant commandments in relation to either the love command or the Mosaic commandments in general. The context does not speak in favor of love or the Torah. However, Paul can sometimes blur the line between the Stoic natural law and the Torah, as exemplified in Romans 2:14. It would be unwise, therefore, to totally exclude the possibility that Paul may have had the commandments of

<sup>283</sup> Plank 1987, 26; Schrage 1995, 137.

the Torah in mind. If he can blur the line between philosophy and the Torah in Romans 2, why could it not happen here? Be that as it may, the actual content of the commandments is a version of Stoic philosophy. If Paul had the Torah in mind, he must have thought of it in strongly philosophical terms. In this sense, the Torah and philosophy do not exclude each other.

After noting the strong Stoic flavor in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24, one clear difference between Paul and Epictetus should be added. For Paul, only Christ relativizes the indifference of social positions. He speaks of an equality between Christians within different statuses and of no equality between all people, as Epictetus has it. One can safely assume that at this point Paul differed from all Stoics—or at least from non-Christian Stoics. Paul's thought in this passage has such a clear Stoic character that it is a matter of preference if one chooses to call it Stoicism or not. Probably Christian Stoicism is a more apt characterization. Moreover, Paul's Jewish heritage does not exclude philosophical elements in his thought. We can find similar features in Paul's other epistles as well. Romans 1 presents a gentile lapse as a shift from the aniconic monotheism to a polytheistic image cult, which can be understood in both Jewish and philosophical terms.<sup>284</sup> Romans 7 presents the problem of the Torah as a soliloquy of a divided self. This divided self is a *topos* in the philosophical literature.<sup>285</sup>

In this section, I have gone through a sample of the earliest remaining Christian texts that exhibit philosophical elements. One can safely assume that there has been an interaction between Jerusalem and Athens from the beginnings of Christianity, despite what Tertullian may have claimed. The use of philosophy by Christians was not a later innovation and the recognition from the side of non-Christian philosophers was based on the actual reality of the early Christians. The early Christians presented philosophical elements, as is evident in Paul's texts. It can still be discussed if Paul already sought philosophical recognition, but the picture that Acts presents of Athens programmatically shows him as a new Socrates among the philosophers, thereby making a claim that Christianity should be seen as a philosophy. Acts reflects what became mainstream in the following centuries.

### 2.3 *Mutual Recognition Becomes Mainstream*

About one hundred years after Paul, the Christian apologist Justin Martyr wrote about his conversion to Christianity. After vainly seeking the truth in

284 Van Kooten 2008, 343–356; Huttunen 2009, 37–62.

285 Wasserman (2008) has proposed that Paul's background is Platonic philosophy, while I prefer to see Paul's words as a variation of the Stoic version of the inner conflict (Huttunen 2009, 101–126).

numerous philosophical schools, one day he encountered a mysterious old man on a lonely shore. The characterization of the old man hints at the figure of Socrates and, in a sense, Socrates becomes the midwife of Justin's conversion.<sup>286</sup> The man tells him about Christianity and then leaves, but not without making a lasting impression:

I have not seen him since. But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul; and a love of the prophets, and of those men who are friends of Christ, possessed me; and whilst revolving his words in my mind, I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher.

*Dial.* 8; trans. *ANF* 1.198

Justin's conversion to Christianity was no abrupt shift from philosophy to religion. As Runar Thorsteinsson notes: "Justin's new identity as a Christian philosopher became readily integrated with his identity as a Platonist."<sup>287</sup> His recognition of philosophy becomes clear when he assesses it quite positively. Christianity, the true philosophy, was fragmentarily present already in the ancient tradition: "There seem to be seeds of truth among all men; but they are charged with not accurately understanding [the truth] when they assert contradictories" (*1 Apol.* 44; trans. *ANF* 1.177). As there were excellent pre-Christian philosophers, Justin reasons that they must have been Christians, since they stuck to reason, which he identifies with Christ (cf. John 1:1–3): "He [Christ] is the Word (λόγον ὄντα) of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably (μετὰ λόγου) are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them" (Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 46; trans. *ANF* 1.178). Justin in a way Christianizes the Greek intellectual tradition by saying that Christianity does not contradict but completes it. This apologetic strategy to seek recognition in the Greco-Roman intellectual milieu continued after Justin.<sup>288</sup>

The standard picture is that Paul's, Justin's, and other Christians' bold claims of Christianity as the supreme philosophy were received with disgust.<sup>289</sup> Three famous accounts of Christians are quoted time and again: those of Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44.2–5), Suetonius (Nero 16), and Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 10.96), according to which Christianity is a criminal superstition. However, this is only a partial

<sup>286</sup> Thorsteinsson 2012, 496, 502.

<sup>287</sup> Thorsteinsson 2012, 509; see Klostergaard Petersen 2017a, 11–12: "Justin did not conceive of Christianity as something so different from philosophy that it would preclude a description of Christianity in terms of philosophy."

<sup>288</sup> Hadot 2002, 239–240.

<sup>289</sup> See, e.g., Cook 2010, 2.

truth, as I argued in the previous section. The Stoic Epictetus, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the satirist Lucian, and Galen described Christians more or less positively. The chief indicator of recognition is the fact that Christians are assessed in the category of philosophers—albeit with certain failures. The most positive is Galen, who explicitly mentions “the school of Moses and Christ” (Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ διατριβή) (*De pulsuum differentiis*; Kühn 8, p. 579). Although Christians belong to the people who are unable to follow demonstrative arguments, they have attained virtue “not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.”

It would require a more profound analysis to position early Christianity on the intellectual map of the ancient philosophical schools. However, none of the texts (Colossians 2, Acts 17, 1 Corinthians 1–2) present a blatant misrecognition of philosophy in the manner of Tertullian’s Jerusalem/Athens opposition. Actually, there are clearly philosophical elements in them, just as in other texts, which do not overtly discuss philosophy. I presented 1 Corinthians 7, which clearly utilizes Stoic philosophy as a natural part of argumentation. Justin proves that by the mid-2nd century at the latest, a Christian could recognize himself as a philosopher. But this development must have begun also earlier. The Epistle to the Colossians attests that around the year 100 CE, some Christians called their religious conviction “philosophy.” Around the same time, Luke “Socratized” Paul, and in the early 2nd century, Epictetus included the Christians in the category of philosophy, in spite of whatever deficiencies Christianity had from his Stoic point of view.

Early Christians recognized ancient philosophy as a legitimate part of their faith and searched for recognition in that intellectual milieu. The relationship was not equal, however, as Christianity was a novelty in Greco-Roman culture. Some pagan authors attest to being disgusted by Christianity. But this is not the whole picture. From the early 2nd century onwards, we also have information of pagans granting recognition to Christians. This was the strengthening development that led finally to the Christianization of the whole Greco-Roman intellectual world in the following centuries. The popular tradition that separates philosophy from religion does not recognize this strong and—I would say—mainstream course of Western intellectual history. The separation is more of an ideological attempt either to secure a non-human and divine status for Christianity or to dismiss Christianity as non-intellectual nonsense. Responsible scholarly work must transcend ideological biases. If the ancient situation has any significance for modern discussions, it will show that mutual misrecognition is not the only possibility. Non-Christian philosophers and Christians recognized each other at least partially.

# Imagination Made Real: Paul between Political Realism and Eschatological Hope

## 1 Paul and His Readers

“The invisible Kingdom of God, the realm of Messiah, ran into an undeniable conflict with the idea of unconditional obedience to Imperial authority.” With these words Leopold von Ranke, the “father” of modern history, constructed the political problem of early Christianity. In the third volume of his massive world history, Ranke extols Paul as the person who successfully united the new faith with the Empire.<sup>1</sup> It is true that Romans 13:1–7 is a loyal paean to the divinely instituted state. In these verses, Paul claims that God has instituted all governing authorities and that every person must be subject to them. Ranke’s progressive contemporaries were less convinced of the blessings to unite Christian convictions and the state. Karl Marx saw religion as the reflection of a human self “in the fantastic reality of heaven,” although people should seek “true reality.” It is an oppressive society, the state that creates the need of a religious fantasy. “This state and this society produce religion,” Marx stated in an introduction written in 1844 for his earlier treatise *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*.<sup>2</sup> He famously called religion an opiate that eased the distress of real conditions.

*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo the criticism of the vale of tears*, the *halo* of which is religion.... Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the

<sup>1</sup> Ranke 1883, 182, 184; my translation.

<sup>2</sup> Marx 1975, 175.

earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law* and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*.<sup>3</sup>

The union of faith and empire is just to let the oppressive society get on. Developing the Marxist criticism of religion, Mikhail Bakunin, one of the founders of anarchist theory, required the end of religion, as it is the root of all exercises of power. Whoever invokes the divine revelation enslaves the other, he promulgated in *God and State*, published posthumously in 1882:

These, once recognized as the representatives of divinity on earth, as the holy instructors of humanity, chosen by God himself to direct it in the path of salvation, necessarily exercise absolute power. All men owe them passive and unlimited obedience; for against the divine reason there is no human reason, and against the justice of God no terrestrial justice holds. Slaves of God, men must also be slaves of Church and State, in so far as the State is consecrated by the Church. This truth Christianity, better than all other religions that exist or have existed, understood.... The idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and practice.... If God is, man is a slave.<sup>4</sup>

One may marshal Romans 13 to prove Bakunin's point. Paul seems to bring a divine consecration for earthly rulers—and this is celebrated by conservatives like Ranke. The conservatives were, however, heavily challenged by Marxists, anarchists, and other revolutionary forces of the time. In the 20th century, the social criticism of religion really took wing in the communist societies. According to Vladimir Lenin, religion is an instrument used to maintain capitalist society, where the “free” workers receive just minimum subsistence to uphold this capitalist slavery.<sup>5</sup> In his *Socialism and Religion* (1905), Lenin proclaimed that religion is like an opiate or booze.

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation.... Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly

3 Marx 1975, 175–176; original emphases.

4 Bakunin 1907, 24–25.

5 Lenin 1978, 83.

reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.<sup>6</sup>

The metaphors of opium and booze do not simply label religion as a tool to dull the senses of the oppressed in order that they remain in their place. They also ease the pains of those in an oppressive society, and this seems to contain elements of medicine.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough, Lenin went even further, in passing acknowledging the revolutionary spirit in early Christianity, which was “forgotten” with Constantine’s turn in the fourth century: “Christians, after their religion had been given the status of state religion, ‘forgot’ the ‘naïveté’ of primitive Christianity with its democratic revolutionary spirit.”<sup>8</sup> This comes close to Ranke who, however, dated the extinction of the revolutionary enthusiasm back to Paul and Romans 13. Interestingly, both conservatives like Ranke and progressives like Lenin acknowledged revolutionary and loyalist sides in Christianity. They differed only in their sympathy for the opposite sides. Ranke is right in invoking Romans 13. Paul really contributed to the maintaining of state authorities, as shown by the history of influence. Still, one may ask whether this is the whole truth of the early Christians or even of Paul. I claim that the revolutionary spirit is hidden in what Marx and his followers arrogantly labeled as a fantasy and what I think of in positive terms as the active imagination. Paul was a kind of political realist, but he does not exemplify Bakunin’s mechanism between religion and the state. My claim is that Paul provides little support to Marx’s and Lenin’s view that eschatology was only a narcotic fantasy meant to dull the senses of the oppressed, in order to keep them passively in their existential conditions. Instead, eschatology is a force for change in society, that is, by turning what is actively imagined into something true and real.

I start this chapter by positioning Paul among his fellow Christians. Paul is quite open toward the Empire—at least in comparison with John the Seer, who seems to be openly hostile toward it. Romans 13 is the antithesis to John’s

6 Lenin 1978, 83–84. In his *State and Revolution* (1918), Lenin castigated those German Social Democrats, who renounce “the party struggle against the opium of religion which stupefies the people” (Lenin 1974, 455).

7 For the dual implication of these metaphors, see Boer 2013a, 9–30.

8 Lenin 1974, 425. The idea is older and one encounters it, for example, in Friedrich Engels (1894–1895).



eschatology. Its call for unlimited obedience has always posed a problem for interpreters. I go through the exegetical and other efforts to find a principle that relativizes absolute obedience, but I keep them factitious. Next, I show how Paul's thought belonged to the philosophy of the stronger in ancient tradition, as well as the positive outcome that Paul expected of it. Last, I demonstrate how Paul's eschatology provides a detour regarding social change. This change does not come in terms of the revolutionary force expected by Marx and Bakunin, and implemented by Lenin; this (Bolshevik) revolutionary force turned out to be just another variant of the old pattern of oppressive violence. The imagined dream comes true by peacefully eroding the legitimation of human hierarchies.

### 1.1 *Paul's Openness toward Roman Society*

The kingdom of God is a multi-dimensional concept, the use of which in the Bible is impossible to systematize into one consistent whole. It is—like eschatological hopes in general—thought to be realized in the present age or in the future, in heaven or on earth, spiritually or materially, individually or collectively. Its conflicting visions of catastrophe and new hope have invited countless interpretations.<sup>9</sup> While Paul seems to have a tendency of seeing eschatology as something that will be realized spiritually in heaven and individually in the future, the other dimensions are still visible.<sup>10</sup> Revolutionary or even anarchic dynamite can be felt, for example, in the claim that Christ will give the kingdom to God after destroying “every ruler and every authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24). What is worse, this conflict was even at the heart of Paul's faith: he liked to know nothing except “Jesus Christ, him crucified,” and it was “the rulers of this age” who “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:2, 8).<sup>11</sup> There is no need to pursue a hidden criticism of Roman power, which is so popular in the anti-imperial reading but highly difficult to ascertain.<sup>12</sup> Paul's actual words are enough to prove his critical stance, like Anders Klostergaard

9 For an overview, see Räisänen 2010, 79–113. Räisänen makes some references to the later adaptations.

10 Räisänen 2010, 98–102.

11 It is not absolutely clear that Paul is speaking here of mundane authorities; one can also see them as celestial angelic or demonic powers. Schrage (2001, 173–174; 2008, 253–254) sees a double meaning in these verses. Jewett (2007, 552) sees Rom 8:32 as a possible critical note on mundane authorities, but he admits that this reading is not very well grounded. I prefer to see only celestial powers in this context.

12 Heilig (2015) provides an illustrative reflection of the claims regarding the hidden criticism.

Petersen states: “Definitely, any Roman ruler whom we imagine to have had access to the text would hardly have been satisfied with what he found.”<sup>13</sup>

These words of Paul are not what Bakunin might expect, however. For Bakunin, at the heart of all representatives of religion is “something cruel and sanguinary,” a hierarchy that sacrifices humanity.<sup>14</sup> However, Bakunin might be defended by the fact that, as far as we know, the anarchic and revolutionary elements of early Christianity never led to real deeds of rebellion. There is no evidence of Christians participating in the Jewish revolutionary movements.<sup>15</sup> During the Jewish War (c. 60–70s CE), Christians fled from the war zone (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.5.3; cf. Matt 24:15–16; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20–21).<sup>16</sup> Still, there really was a potential for conflict that was, from time to time, realized in persecutions. Possibly the most famous case is the description of the Beast in the Book of Revelation: “it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them” (Rev. 13:7). Although the Beast is a shadowy figure, it was identified already in antiquity with the Roman Emperors who forced Christians to make offerings in the imperial cult.<sup>17</sup> Another example is the (even contemporary) idiom of carrying one’s cross. The idiom is inherited from the idea of *imitatio Christi*, the central motif of Christian ethics, which emphasizes the readiness to suffer. In its scriptural roots (Matt 16:24; 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27), it was not merely an exaggerated figure of speech.

In the pagan sources, the historian Tacitus describes the early persecution in Rome during the 60s CE. Although he maintains that Emperor Nero falsely scapegoated Christians for the burning of the city, he adds that the Christians got what they deserved for their hatred for humankind (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). Suetonius lists the persecution among Nero’s *good* deeds (*Nero* 16). As governor of Asia Minor, Pliny the Younger reports on his measures against the local Christians (*Ep.* 10.96). John Granger Cook takes these texts as evidence of the

13 Klostergaard Petersen 2015, 117.

14 Bakunin 1907, 26.

15 Among Jesus’ disciples, Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15) is possibly the closest candidate for a rebel, but we do not know if his nickname really refers to the rebellious Jewish movement or if he was rather just zealous in other meanings of the word. Note, for example, that Paul refers to his pre-Christian identity as “a Zealot of the traditions of my ancestors” (Gal 1:14; revised version of the NRSV), which meant persecuting the Christians, not fighting the Romans.

16 In addition to the Jewish War in Palestine, there was the so-called Bar Kokhba Revolt in the 130s CE. In diaspora, there was a vast Jewish uprising in 115–117 CE. See, e.g., Räsänen 2010, 28.

17 Actually, there are two beasts in Rev. 13. The first one is an Emperor, probably *Nero redivivus* (i.e., the arisen Nero; in depth on this, see Aune 1998, 713–780). On the interpretations of the Beast in the Early Church, see *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 196–203.

Roman disgust and shock at the phenomenon of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Yet, one should not exaggerate the persecutions. Before the mid-third century CE they were just sporadic and local, incited by the neighborhood rather than by officials, who were often somewhat reluctant in their punitive measures after Christians were denounced to them. John the Seer, the author of the Book of Revelation, seems to exaggerate some real experiences in its apocalyptic worldview, which provided an expectation of the eschatological war against the saints (cf. Dan 7:21).<sup>19</sup> This expectation was rooted in a continuous feeling of threat. Christians bore a social stigma that increased the risk of negative encounters, although this stigma did not always lead to violent hostilities.<sup>20</sup>

The conflict between Christians and the society in which they lived was not the only truth. As I showed earlier, there were philosophers like Epictetus (a contemporary of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny), who highlighted the Christians as moral examples, despite his lack of any deeper interest in Christianity (*Disc.* 2.9.19–21; 4.7.6). At the same time, the evangelist Luke thought that a Roman soldier could be a Christian (Acts 10). Only a century later, a Christian soldier was no exception, despite objections made by early Christian intellectuals like Tertullian (see, e.g., his treatise *De corona*).<sup>21</sup> Actually, John the Seer was a Christian hardliner who drew an extremely clear line between “us” and “them,” and blamed his Christian companions for their readiness to adjust themselves to this world and society. The target of his criticism was, among other things, having too liberal of an attitude toward food sacrificed to idols (Rev 2:14, 20). The attitude under scrutiny was that of Paul, who counted “idol food” among the *adiaphora*, considering that one should merely give up eating “idol food” lest it insult persons like John, who still falsely held that such things make a difference (1 Cor 8; 10).<sup>22</sup>

Paul’s openness toward pagan society is also reflected in his attitude toward the Roman Empire. Heikki Räisänen states: “Unlike the seer of Revelation,

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18 Cook 2010, 2.

19 Räisänen 2010, 288–295.

20 For example, expulsion orders were often more symbolic than real acts. These orders, like other proclamations, confirmed social order (van der Lans 2015). This does not mean that proclamations were without effect. Paul Holloway (2009, 36) notes that “scholars of early Christianity make a serious mistake when they focus on the ‘local and sporadic’ nature of early Christian persecution—as if tallying actual deaths allows one to somehow quantify the lived experience of lethal prejudice—and ignore this much more fundamental and abiding problem.” Possibly Candida Moss goes too far in diminishing the extent of persecutions in her *The Myth of Persecution* (2013).

21 See Chapter 4.

22 Paul’s thought is somewhat ambiguous in 1 Cor 8 and 10, but the main line is clearly liberal toward eating “idol food.” On this issue in early Christianity, see Räisänen 2010, 285–288.

Paul, a middle-class cosmopolitan of sorts, apparently does not experience Roman rule as something from which he specifically needs to be redeemed.<sup>23</sup> Thus, there was undeniably a clear potential for conflict with the Empire, but it did not necessarily need to be an actual one. Despite the occasional critical comments of earthly rulers, Paul was far from a political dissident. The only passage where he intentionally discusses the relationship with the state authority proves the opposite. In Romans 13:1–7, he explicates the relationship toward the Empire in a way that has steered attitudes since then in the Western world. Paul's influence is visible already in the New Testament itself. Sayings in 1 Timothy 2:1–2, Titus 3:1, and 1 Peter 2:13–14 are clearly dependent on Romans 13:1–7. In later documents, Paul's words repeated frequently until today.<sup>24</sup> This fact supports Ranke claim that Paul's Epistle to the Romans is "a monument of the most important class." According to him, Paul made room for the state and the Emperor within the new faith. He ascribed the existence of all, even the Emperor, to the monotheistic God. "Everything is united in Paul's thinking," Ranke extols, adding: "This is the sum of his apostleship."<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2 *Avoiding Offense: Exegetical Attempts*

Not everyone agrees with Ranke's praise for Paul and Romans 13. Some readers of Paul are offended. Neil Elliott, one of the main representatives of the so-called anti-imperial reading of Paul, feels uncomfortable.<sup>26</sup> He makes a general claim that Paul's thinking is "ideological intifada," a "call for resistance," and "revolutionary." By contrast, the exhortation to subordinate all to the governing authorities "threatens to capsize every Christian liberative project," which Elliott laments, referring to Romans 13:1–7 as a theological offense.<sup>27</sup> In the modern Western world, Elliott's lamentations have been more typical than Rankean praises. These lamentations vaguely reflect the 19th-century anarchist and revolutionary tradition. Yet, this stance regarding Paul has a point that is difficult to accept. Paul straightforward requires obedience to any authorities that happen to be in power, because that authority is instituted by God to

23 Räsänen 2010, 101.

24 1 Tim and Tit are usually seen as later productions of the "Pauline school" in a similar manner as some of Plato's epistles. For the dependence between 1 Pet and Rom, see, e.g., Elliott 2000, 38. On the history of influence, see, e.g., Wilckens 2008, 44ff.

25 Ranke 1883, 182, 184; my translation.

26 In fact, Elliott has grown calmer and distanced himself from his earlier readings of Rom. 13 (Elliott 2011, 48). For an overview on the anti-imperial reading of Rom. 13:1–7, see Krauter 2009, 28–32.

27 Elliott 1995, 217, 230. Blumenfeld (2003, 396) thinks that Elliott's work is provocative and "suited to a discourse on oppression and liberation, a modern political theme."

promote good and resist evil. Although the politics of recognizing earthly rulers was not without predecessors in Judaism,<sup>28</sup> there is one atypical element in Paul that threatens to ruin any critical attitude: *unlimited* theological justification for the state. This point has always raised questions. The reading strategies among both biblical scholars and the more general audience demonstrate the attempts to avoid this offense.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most frequently proposed limitations is found in the fact that, according to Paul, the authorities promote good. This is thought to mean that only those authorities promoting good should be obeyed. But this is not what Paul says. He claims simply that the authorities promote good, without exception. A critical reader must surely marvel at this, but this is what Paul says—if he speaks of earthly authorities at all. In fact, this is another attempt to ease the offense. Irenaeus already knows the interpretation that the Greek words for authority (ἐξουσία, ἄρχοντες) do not denote civil authorities but angelic powers (*Haer.* 5.24.1). Thus, Paul would not be speaking of obedience to the state at all, or he is referring only to obedience to the angelic powers behind it. In modern times this interpretation is mainly associated with Oscar Cullmann, who promoted it in his *Der Staat im Neuen Testament*.<sup>30</sup> Actually, the interpretation had its lure already among early critics of the Nazis; for example, Karl Barth promoted it in the 1930s. Gerhard Kittel, a committed Nazi himself, grappled with it, but for good philological reasons.<sup>31</sup> As ἐξουσία and ἄρχοντες refer generally to power and authority, there should be some implication around the spiritual character of those powers. Paul does not give any hint of that. To the contrary, the context requires political character, as Irenaeus already noted, referring to Romans 13:6: “Now, that he spake these words, not in regard to angelical powers, nor of invisible rulers—as some venture to expound the passage—but of those of actual human authorities, [he shows when] he says, ‘For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, doing service for this very thing’” (*Haer.* 5.24.1; trans. *ANF* 1.552). In recent decades, the spiritualizing interpretation has been unanimously dismissed.<sup>32</sup>

Interpreters have also searched for the limiting principle in the textual context of the epistle. In the beginning of his paraenetic part, Paul admonishes Christians not to “be conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2), which some

28 Riekkinen 1980, 53–60.

29 Boer (2013, 182–183) seems to use quite similar examples to those I mention. See also Harrison 2011, 271–277.

30 Cullmann 1959.

31 Kittel 1939, 48–54. On Kittel’s Nazism, see, e.g., Ericksen 1977.

32 Krauter 2009, 11–12. This is true of another exceptional interpretation, namely, that the words refer to synagogue rulers (Harrison 2011, 270).

scholars interpret as drawing a line vis-à-vis obedience.<sup>33</sup> This is a very ambiguous passage, however. One can easily reconcile it with the admonition to obey the authorities. Conforming to this world is against God's will. If God's will entails obedience toward authorities, conforming to this world is expressed in worldly resistance. The reference to "this world" is too hazy to provide an interpretative exit from the obedience. Another exit is sought in Paul's eschatology. Shortly after his words on authorities, Paul reminds the readers of the imminent eschatological change (Rom 13:11–14). Can it relativize the state authorities and obedience to them? Is it more important to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" than to obey the authorities? Possibly yes, but does this lead to any resistance? At least in 1 Corinthians, the imminent end seems to lead to a conservative stance: everyone should remain in his or her social position without seeking to change it (1 Cor 7). It is meaningless to search for a change in a situation that is soon disappearing.<sup>34</sup> In the textual context, there is nothing mitigating the admonition to obey the authorities. Biblical scholars have also sought to contextualize Paul's words in relation to the political situation of his time. Scholars have supposed that Paul recommended loyalty because of this or that political disturbance, be it tax uprisings, the problems between Jews and Romans (cf. Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4; Acts 18:2), or strife between the Jews and the Christians. Thus, Paul's admonition would be situational rather than general.<sup>35</sup> The problem is that Paul hints at no situational factors.

Some scholars grant that the passage admonishes unlimited loyalty toward the state authorities—only to explain that Paul *never* could have said or meant it. Some claim that the passage is not originally a part of the epistle but an early

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33 See, e.g., Jewett 2007, 732.

34 Huttunen 2009, 26–36. It is also proposed that Paul stoically counted the authorities among the *adiaphora* (Engberg-Pedersen 2006). This, however, would not necessarily lead to resistance any more than the idea of an imminent end. Moreover, Paul speaks of fear (*φόβος*) as a motivation for obedience, while fear serves as a major category of vice for the Stoics. For the Stoic theory of emotions, see, e.g., Brennan 1998. For the contrast between Paul's thought and that of the Stoic Epictetus, see Huttunen 2009, 96. Ironically, Epictetus praises Christians for their habit of *not yielding* to fear before tyrants (*Discourses* 4.7.6; see Chapter 2)!

35 See, e.g., Friedrich, Pöhlmann, and Stuhlmacher 1976; Harrington and Keenan 2010, 171. Krauter (2009, 12–15) and Harrison (2011, 271–272) have helpfully presented these situational explanations. Georgi (1991, 102) provides a variant of the situational interpretation. He points out that Paul never mentions the *princeps* and, thus, refers to the republican tradition urging decentralization and undermining the ideology that supports majesty. Paul did not mention the emperor, unlike 1 Peter, but his words are too general to promote republican ideas. It is more probable that Paul refers to the general hierarchy between the rulers and the ruled—be that hierarchy republican or imperial.

addition to the text.<sup>36</sup> No manuscript evidence backs up this claim, however, and the scholarly majority has rejected this theory.<sup>37</sup> In the so-called anti-imperial reading of Paul, it has been claimed that Paul's words constitute such exaggerated praise for the authorities that a wise reader cannot miss the irony. Paul tried to undermine and subvert the social structures.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, the reading is anything but obvious. I am not conscious of any ironic reading of Romans 13 before the "anti-imperialists." Robert Jewett explains that Paul ascribes the power behind the authorities to the God of Israel, not to the Roman gods. He claims that this is subversive in terms of political theology.<sup>39</sup> But this is hardly true. Actually, there was indeed a Jewish imperial theology. It is a standard view in the Hebrew Bible that power comes from God; for example, one reads: "He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings" (Dan 2:21). Josephus allows King Agrippa to express the same idea concerning the Roman Empire: "Without God's aid, so vast an empire could never have been built up" (Josephus, *Bell.* 2.391; trans. Thackeray, LCL). The cultic expression of this imperial theology constituted the daily offerings on behalf of Romans and the Emperor (Josephus, *Bell.* 2.197). The end of these sacrifices erupted in revolt, as Josephus states:

Eleazar, son of Ananias the high-priest, a very daring youth, then holding the position of captain, persuaded those who officiated in the Temple services to accept no gift or sacrifice from a foreigner. This action laid the foundation of the war with the Romans; for the sacrifices offered on behalf of that nation and the emperor were in consequence rejected. The chief priests and the notables earnestly besought them not to abandon the customary offering for their rulers, but the priests remained obdurate.

Josephus, *Bell.* 2.409–410; trans. THACKERAY, LCL

Thus, there was not only a Roman theological legitimation of Empire but also a Jewish one, and it was recognized by Romans as an expression of loyalty. Paul's Romans 13 stays in the tradition of the Jewish imperial theology, albeit not in its cultic form. Paul's theology of political power does not question the rule of the Romans, as Jewett argues, but rather legitimizes it in a way that was acceptable also to them. Paul's words are therefore pro- rather than anti-imperial.

36 See, e.g., Barnikol 1961.

37 Jewett 2007, 789–790.

38 See, e.g., Carter 2004. For an overview of this reading with critical remarks, see Krauter 2009, 28–32. See also Harrison's (2011, 308–323) reading, which is anti-imperial but finally comes quite close to my reading with its emphasis on Paul's realism (see more below).

39 Jewett 2007, 789–790.

I dare to claim that the modern scholarly pains to limit the power of authorities fail. These failed attempts, however, touch on the sore spot felt from the earliest times onward.

### 1.3 *The Unease of the Christian Tradition*

The reception history of Paul's words has always radiated a certain unease. 1 Tim 2:1–2 is an admonition to pray for the authorities in order to maintain peace for the Christians (cf. 1 Clem 61). Are the authorities not always good, as Paul assumes, in the sense that Christians must pray for peace from the side of the authorities? Traditionally the authority ascribed to the state by Paul is limited by a reference to the *clausula Petri*: "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29).<sup>40</sup> Acts 5:29 is just one variant of Socrates' famous saying, "I shall obey the god rather than you" (Plato, *Apol.* 29d; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL), which has a rich history of influence. For example, Epictetus states: "When you come into a presence of some prominent man, remember that Another looks from above on what is taking place, and that you must please Him rather than this man" (*Disc.* 1.30.1; trans. Oldfather, LCL). Thus, the use of Acts 5:29 to limit the authority of earthly rulers merely continued the ancient tradition in Christian form. Tertullian requires that obedience be limited to the area outside of the spiritual sphere. If rulers demand authority in divine issues, a Christian should be ready for martyrdom (*Scorp.* 14).<sup>41</sup> The same trend is visible in later times. Martin Luther, who also refers to Acts 5:29 (among other biblical verses), limits state authority to earthly issues and requires freedom of religion, which can be manifest, for example, in the denial to hand over religious books.<sup>42</sup> Actually, this is how Ranke understood Paul: a Christian should have freedom of religion, while it is the job of state to punish wrongdoers.<sup>43</sup>

In the Western sphere, law later became the main source for limits on the power of authorities, mainly monarchs. This also had an effect on the interpretation of Romans 13, and therefore it is worth looking at the background of this legal thinking. Francis Fukuyama points out that the rule of law has religious origins and that this principle is known around the world: law is binding because it is higher than those holding political power. In Western

40 The NRSV gives an alternative translation: "than men." This is actually closer to the Greek (*anthrōpōis*). The translation "authority" is in itself possible evidence for the fact that this verse is often read in parallel with the authorities in Romans 13. For the use of Acts 5:29 in the interpretation of Rom 13, see Wilckens 2008, 45.

41 See translation in Ante-Nicene Fathers 3.

42 *Von weltlicher Oberkeit*, 1523 = WA 11, 265–271.

43 Ranke 1883, 184.



Europe, the rule of law developed further for institutional reasons; as a religious authority the Catholic Church became independent of the monarchs and was itself rooted in the idea of legal rule. According to Fukuyama, Western Europe clearly differs from other societies: “The result was that few European monarchs ever acquired the concentrated powers of the Chinese state, despite aspirations to do so. Only in Russia, where the Eastern Church was always subordinated to the state, did such a regime emerge.”<sup>44</sup> In the Reformation, the nascent Lutheran churches became subordinated to the royalty, but the idea of legality seems to continue the earlier tradition and “resist” absolute monarchy. For example, Swedish bishop Olaus Petri’s (1493/1497–1552) rules for judges (still printed in the Swedish and the Finnish statute books) express this legal tradition: “Because a judge is commanded by God to judge right, he ought to labour with all his might and craft to know the law.” This divine law is not necessarily identified with positive law. Rather, the positive law should be viewed in light of divine justice: “What is not just and fair cannot be law either.”<sup>45</sup> This legal tradition strengthened in Europe from the 18th century onward. I will discuss two important moderators and their effect on the interpretation of Romans 13.

First, Immanuel Kant’s political theories strongly promoted the idea of political authorities subordinated to the law. In his *Science of Right (Metaphysik der Sitten, 1797)*, Kant emphasized the duty to obey the authorities, coined by the Lutheran neologism *Obrigkeit* for Romans 13 and certain other biblical passages.<sup>46</sup> Romans 13 is explicitly paraphrased and called a categorical imperative, while Kant admits its objectionable character:

Now, it is asserted that obedience must be given to whoever is in possession of the supreme authoritative and legislative power over a people; and this must be done so unconditionally by right, that it would even be penal to inquire publicly into the title of a power thus held, with the view of calling it in doubt, or opposing it in consequence of its being found defective. Accordingly it is maintained, that ‘Obey the authority which has power over you’ (in everything which is not opposed to morality), [*Gehorchet der Obrigkeit (in allem, was nicht dem inneren Moralischen widerstreitet), die Gewalt über euch hat*] is a Categorical Imperative. This

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44 Fukuyama 2014, 12.

45 An introduction and an English translation of Olaus Petri’s Rules for Judges, see Tontti 2000.

46 For more on the neologism in the Lutheran tradition, see Huttunen 2019.

is the objectionable proposition [*der anstößige Satz*] which is called into question.<sup>47</sup>

Kant straightforwardly nullifies the duty of obedience, if *Obrigkeit* opposes morality. This, however, is not his main point. Instead, he searches for a general justification for obedience—and finds it in the idea of a legal constitution (*Staatsverfassung*). A people is “united by laws under a sovereign power (*durch Gesetze unter einer Obrigkeit vereinigt*).” Therefore, people cannot simultaneously be entitled to oppose “the Constitution, however defective it may be,” since it “would result in a supreme will that would destroy itself.” Any defects in the constitution should be gradually removed by reforms.<sup>48</sup> Kant reduces *Obrigkeit* to laws and especially to the constitution. Instead of obedience toward certain persons (authorities), Kant sees *Obrigkeit* as a system of government steered by a legal constitution, which can be reformed if needed.

Second, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) became another influential moderator. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he (according to the editors of this posthumous publication) made a connection between religion and government in a way that Bakunin did later as well. Hegel, contrary to Bakunin however, held this connection as good: “A nation which has a false or bad conception of God, has also a bad State, bad government, bad laws.” Clearly referring to Romans 13, Hegel says that this connection finds its vernacular expression “in the tracing of laws, authority [*Obrigkeit*], and the constitution of the State to a divine origin.” Hegel clarifies: “It may be taken as meaning that man obeys God in the act of conforming to the laws, to the ruling authority [*indem man den Gesetzen und der Obrigkeit folgt*], to the powers which hold the State together.”<sup>49</sup> Hegel points out that the duty of obedience should not lead to the incorrect view that people are obliged “to obey the laws whatever they may happen to be. In this way the act of governing and the giving of laws are abandoned to the caprice of the governing power.” Hegel sees that the problem is most difficult in Protestant countries, where the “unity of religion and the State actually exists.” He explicitly refers to the system of state churches and gives special attention to England, where “the ruler was responsible for his actions to God only” during the last kings of the House of Stuart. This also assumes that the ruler knows what is good in the state so that he unites

47 *Metaphysik der Sitten* Rechtslehre I, Beschluß = Kant (1999, 371); trans. Hastie (p. 256).

48 *Metaphysik der Sitten* Rechtslehre I, Beschluß = Kant (1999, 371–372); trans. Hastie (pp. 256–257).

49 *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* I: 237–238; trans. Speirs and Burdon Sanderson (pp. 247–248).

God's will and the state laws. Hence, "he is an immediate revelation of God." Hegel, however, claims that this runs against the Protestant conviction, which holds that there is no distinction between priests and laymen, as priests are not the sole possessors of divine truth. Hegel concludes: "But even supposing that the general principle at least has been established that laws exist through an act of the divine will, still there is another aspect of the matter which is just as important, namely, that we should have a rational knowledge of this divine will, and such knowledge is not anything particular or special, but belongs to all."<sup>50</sup> Thus, Hegel limits the duty of obedience—a feature so common in the reception history of Romans 13. Ultimately, he left it up to the individual to consider whom one obeys and whom one does not. This is something, at least in my own Finnish tradition, that is still visible in the idea of a specifically *legal* authority. It blocks out obedience to just any kind of authority.<sup>51</sup>

The reception history among both biblical scholars and other readers shows that the limiting principle—be it *clausula Petri*, law, or something else—has been brought outside of the passage itself. This betrays the fact that to find a limiting principle in the passage fails. Those rare persons who were happy with the idea of unlimited power could cite Paul's words without further commentaries. Thomas Hobbes, who championed the unlimited power of the sovereign over society, cites Romans 13:1–6 in order to show that there is no excuse for disobedience to the "civill authority," not even a faith-based one.<sup>52</sup> Hobbes understood correctly, as Paul does not place any limits on the authorities in Romans 13. He thinks that their limitless power promotes the good, in any case. It is our task to make sense of this and ask, how could Paul claim such a thing? The answer comes less from theology than from ancient social practice. Scholars and other readers of Romans 13:1–7 have always noted the theological side: the authorities are instituted by God. But what makes God's institution *socially* visible and what consequences does it have in the moral sphere?

50 *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* 1: 238–239; trans. Speirs and Burdon Sanderson (pp. 248–249).

51 Johann Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881), a very influential philosopher in Finland, maintained that obedience to authority should be developed with an understanding of the rationality of the national law. Pure obedience to authority would mean obedience to any kind of irrational statute or random ruler (*Läran om staten* 18 = *Samlade arbeten* III, 341). Thanks to general conscription, most Finnish men have given an oath where they have sworn loyalty to the legal authority ("laillinen esivalta"/ "laglig överhöghet"), the background of which is firmly rooted in the political situation at the beginning of the 20th century (Huttunen 2019).

52 Hobbes, *Leviathan* 3.42.

## 2 Paul's Realism and Imagination

### 2.1 *Paul's Political Realism and the Law of the Stronger*

Paul's famous words in Romans 13 are usually read as a moral exhortation to subordinate oneself to the civil authorities. True, this is their character. Paul warns the readers about any rebellion, as it will lead to disaster: those who resist authorities will incur judgment. However, the imperative of the third person (ὑποτασσέσθω) draws attention. Paul is not exhorting just his readers. Rather, he expresses a general rule concerning "every soul" (πάσα ψυχή).

Πάσα ψυχή ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω. οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, αἱ δὲ οὐσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσίν.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.

Rom. 13:1

Paul's choice of words recalls the creation story where God creates human beings and lets them govern animals, which are also called "all soul/life of the living" (πάσα ψυχή ζῶων; Gen 1:20–26). Here the imperative in the third person (ἄρχέτωσαν) is used, just like in Paul. However, one should also note the dissimilarity between Paul and Genesis 1. While the latter expresses a hierarchy between humankind and animals, Paul speaks of subjects under the rule of authorities. Only the hierarchical thought and the Hebraism (πάσα ψυχή) are similar. Paul's words seem to have presented a stumbling block for some early copyists of his text, as if Paul was laying down rules for all life. No wonder that some manuscripts modestly read: "Be subject to all governing authorities" (πάσαις ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτάσσεσθε). This is a moral exhortation to the readers instead of a universal rule. Scholars, however, have nearly univocally rejected this reading as a secondary one.<sup>53</sup> Paul may have expressed a universal rule, possessing a divine ring, but likely did not intend to set such a rule. The Septuagint is *not* the only context of Paul's words on authorities, probably not even the primary one. Besides the biblical tone, Paul's words could also resonate in the minds of his Greco-Roman audience. Outside of its Hebraic connotations, the expression πάσα ψυχή also occurs in non-biblical Greek,<sup>54</sup>

53 Krauter 2009, 171.

54 See πάσα γὰρ ψυχή ἄκουσα στέρεται τῆς ἀληθείας (Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.28.4; cf. Plato, *Soph.* 228c).

and it was fully understandable to any Greek-speaking person. The imperative of the third person occurs in an interesting passage by the Stoic Epictetus. According to Epictetus, God's law, which is most powerful (κράτιστός) and most just, prescribes, "Let the stronger always prevail over the weaker" (τὸ κρείσσον ἀεί περιγινέσθω τοῦ χείρονος) (Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.29.13; trans. Oldfather, LCL, revised).<sup>55</sup> The imperative of the third person describes the universality of the rule, as it does in Rom 13.1.<sup>56</sup>

The formal similarities between Paul and Epictetus, however, are less important than the fact that Paul seems to communicate the idea of the law of the stronger. He assumes that one can do nothing but be subject to the authorities, willingly or unwillingly. Paul summarizes the motives to obey in Rom 13:5: "one must be subject (ἀνάγκη ὑποτάσσεσθαι), not only because of wrath but also because of conscience" (Rom 13.5). Here 'wrath' clearly refers to the sword (μάχαιρα) the authorities bear, in order to "execute the wrath," or literally as an "avenger due to wrath" (ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργήν);<sup>57</sup> it worked through judicial processes or through direct use of armed power, but Paul does not differentiate between these.<sup>58</sup> It is all the same to him. One should avoid trying to resist authorities, as it will always lead to disaster. This is the law of the stronger in its rawest form. According to Paul, one is under duress (ἀνάγκη) caused by wrath and conscience. While wrath refers to violent means, it is more difficult to determine what the duress caused by conscience is. Because conscience refers one way or another to consideration, in this context Paul seemingly refers to an understanding of the divine institution and the rulers' ability to crush the opposition: one should not obey purely out of blind fear, but also because one understands the situation. Paul is not putting forward any ideal of the ruler, unlike philosophers who discussed whether the king should be a living law unto himself in the state, or whether to honor the gods, etc.<sup>59</sup> Neither is there any trace of the critical attitude toward rulers that is so prominent in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible or Deuteronomistic history.<sup>60</sup> He is not

55 Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.29.13; trans. Oldfather, slightly revised.

56 On Epictetus' passage, see Huttunen 2009, 63–65.

57 Here 'sword' does not specifically refer to capital punishment (*ius gladii*), but to violent power in general (cf. Rom 8:35), which includes capital punishment. While the word ἔκδικος ('avenger') can also be read in relation to a particular official, the idea of vengeance is present in Rom 12:19.

58 Some scholars of early Christianity are too eager to overemphasize the policing power of local magistrates. This is due to Theodor Mommsen's legacy. Liebs (2005, 204–205) calls for a more precise consideration in readings of the martyr processes.

59 Scholars usually try to discover the background of these philosophical discussions; see, e.g., Bulmenfeld 2003 and Harrison 2011, 277–299.

60 On the philosophers' discussions and the Jewish background, see, e.g., Harrison 2011, 279–308.

speaking about what the powers *should* be, but what the powers really are and what their ability to coerce actually constitutes. This is his political realism.

In the Roman sphere, it was the armed forces that pacified the world. In *Res Gestae*, Emperor Augustus proudly announces that he closed the temple of Janus “when peace had been achieved by victories on land and sea throughout the whole empire of the Roman people” (*Res Gestae* 13; trans. Cooley). What is romanticized as the *Pax Romana* indeed has the unacknowledged nature of a violent structure behind all its achievements, as Roland Boer puts it:

The famed Roman roads were not built for the sake of the postal service or for wagons laden with trade; they were for rapid movement of armies, spatial control over the countryside and the movement of state-sequestered goods. The infamous Pax Romana (analogous to the Pax Americana of our own day) was actually spattered with the blood of systematic violence, destruction, enforcement and enslavement in order to expand and maintain the Empire.<sup>61</sup>

The legions overpowering the provinces were seen as bringing peace and justice.<sup>62</sup> The Roman army was not only for warfare. It also attended to the affairs of the internal peace. This police work was not so much aimed at protecting people, however, as attending to the interests of the Empire.<sup>63</sup> In the case of unrest, “brute force was often expedient and effective, especially in dealing with ill-equipped townsfolk.”<sup>64</sup> This is not far from Paul’s words concerning the sword, where Roman forces act as “the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rom 13:4). One can now see what makes God’s institution socially visible. It is the execution of power, not least in its violent form. The public approval for good conduct (Rom 13:3) is just a single exception in the midst of a series of violent and fearful measures.

I claim that Paul’s statements are just one part of the Greco-Roman tradition of the law of the stronger, which was deeply rooted in Greek culture.<sup>65</sup> In his fable of a hawk and a nightingale, Hesiod let the hawk say: “Stupid he who would wish to contend against those stronger (κρείσσονας) than he is: for he is deprived of the victory, and suffers pains in addition to his humiliations.”

61 Boer 2013, 193–194.

62 On *Pax Romana* and its ties to such concepts as “freedom” and “safety,” see Dmitriev 2011, 368–377.

63 Campbell 2002, 88; Fuhrmann 2012, 8, 91, 119.

64 Hubbard 2005, 423.

65 Pace Blumenfeld (2003, 390), for whom Paul’s concept of power differs from the classical Greek political thinking. In addition to examples of the law of the stronger that I present here, see Räisänen 1992, 81–82.

Hesiod, however, warns of outrageousness or hubris: “The better (κρείσσων) road is the one towards what is just, passing her by on the other side. Justice wins out over Outrageousness (Δίκη δ’ ὑπὲρ Ὑβριος ἴσχει) when she arrives at the end.” Justice is Zeus’ law established for human beings, while there is no justice among animals (*Op.* 210–211, 216–218, 275–278; trans. Most, LCL). Hesiod’s warning implies that some people did not see anything wrong with the law of the stronger. Such people are vividly exemplified by Callicles and Thrasymachus, two characters in Plato’s dialogues.

Callicles proclaims “that it is right for the stronger to have advantage of the weaker, and the abler of the feebler” (δικαιόν ἐστι τὸν ἀμείνω τοῦ χειρόνος πλεόν ἔχειν καὶ τὸν δυνατώτερον τοῦ ἀδυνατωτέρου). It is “so, not only in the animal world, but in the states and races, collectively, of men—that right has been decided to consist in the sway and advantage of the stronger over the weaker” (ὁ δίκαιον κέχριται, τὸν κρείττω τοῦ ἥττονος ἄρχειν καὶ πλεόν ἔχειν). According to Callicles, this is the law of nature in contrast to the law enacted by humans (Plato, *Gorg.* 483d–e; trans. Lamb, LCL, revised). Thrasymachus, a cruder variant of Callicles, states his thesis as follows, “I say that justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger” (τὸ δίκαιον οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος συμφέρον). Thrasymachus rebukes Socrates for naive illusions. Shepherds and herdsmen consider the good of the flocks because of their master’s good or their own.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Socrates imagines that “the attitude of those who govern our cities (those who really are rulers) toward those who are governed is somehow different from the way one might regard sheep, and that they think of anything else night and day but how to make a profit out of them” (Plato, *Resp.* 338c, 343b–c; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL).

Callicles’ and Thrasymachus’ view of the law of the stronger was not pure speculation, as Plato’s contemporary Thucydides attests in the so-called Melian dialogue. The subject of the dialogue is the lot of the city of Melos in the hands of the Athenian army. The Athenians recommend capitulation with the following rationalization: “the powerful (δυνατά) exact what they can, while the weak (οἱ ἀσθενεῖς) yield what they must.” In a good Hesiodian manner, the Melians put their trust in divinity. “We are god-fearing men standing our ground against men who are unjust (οὐ δίκαιούς).” The Athenians, however, believe that the law of the stronger is accepted by the gods: “For of the gods we hold the belief, and of men we know, that by a necessity of their nature wherever they have power they always rule (ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαιᾶς, οἷ ἂν κρατῆ, ἄρχειν). And so in our case since we neither enacted this law nor when it was enacted were the

66 Cf. John 10:11–15, where the shepherd is even ready to die for the sheep.

first to use it, but found it in existence and expect to leave it in existence for all time, so we make use of it ..." (Thucydides 5.89, 104–105; trans. Smith, LCL).

These classical examples remained well known even in later times. Following the Stoic Posidonius, Seneca supposed that "nature has the habit of subjecting the weaker to the stronger" (*potioribus deteriora summittere*) (Seneca, *Ep.* 90.4; trans. Gummere). Josephus also applied the law of the stronger. He tells how he admonished Jews to surrender during the siege of Jerusalem.

Fortune, indeed, had from all quarters passed over to them, and God who went the round of the nations, bringing to each in turn the rod of empire, now rested over Italy. There was, in fact, an established law, as supreme among brutes as among men, 'Yield to the stronger' and 'The mastery is for those pre-eminent in arms' (νόμον γε μὴν ὀρίσθαι καὶ παρὰ θηρσὶν ἰσχυρότατον καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώποις, εἴκειν τοῖς δυνατωτέροις καὶ τὸ κρατεῖν παρ' οἷς ἀκμὴ τῶν ὄπλων εἶναι). That was why their forefathers, men who in soul and body, aye and in resources to boot, were by far their superiors, had yielded to the Romans—a thing intolerable to them, had they not known that God was on the Roman side.

Josephus, *Bell.* 5:367–369; trans. THACKERAY, LCL

Josephus follows the theological tradition—already visible in Thucydides' dialogue as the Athenian standpoint—in which divinity is on the side of the stronger. To make his point even clearer Josephus adds, "listen, that you may learn that you are warring not against the Romans only, but also against God" (*Bell.* 5:378–379; trans. Thackeray). This is a very close parallel to Paul's words: "whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed" (Rom 13:2). Here we see that both Josephus and Paul embraced the Greco-Roman political theology and adjusted it to their Jewish tradition. One can ask why Paul so strongly turned to the dominant imperial ideology. Would less glorification of the state have been enough? John S. Kloppenborg, referring to postcolonial studies, notes that subaltern groups often adopt a hegemonic discourse so that they can reduce their alterity. For him, Romans 13:1–7 is an example of that. As I have shown, Paul actually embraced a very common and deeply rooted ancient view of society. However, imitation of the hegemonic discourse is only a partial answer. Incomplete imitation presents one as compliant, but it also creates space for identity.<sup>67</sup> Romans 13:1–7 can be seen as an example of that: at the top of society is the God of Israel, not the Roman gods. As I noted above,

67 Kloppenborg 2014, 181.



Robert Jewett sees this as subversive in terms of political theology,<sup>68</sup> but his argument is unsuccessful. I pointed out that Josephus testifies to Jewish imperial theology both on a cultic level (sacrifices in temple) and on a theoretical one. Thus, there was a Jewish tradition recognized by the Romans, and Paul joined in that. This nicely corroborates Kloppenborg's observation of multiple hegemonic discourses.<sup>69</sup> For Paul, Jewish imperial theology was a means to legitimately avoid the Roman gods. This theological option did not limit the duty of obedience in Romans 13:1–7. The theological differences between the official Roman religion and Jewish monotheism did not create any differences in daily life in the quotidian power structures.

The law of the stronger was well known in the Greco-Roman tradition, including the Jewish part of it. In many of the passages cited, the relationship between power and justice is in focus. Hesiod preferred justice like Plato and Thucydides' Melians; Callicles, Thrasymachus, and the Athenians in the Melian dialogue represent figures who prefer the unscrupulous use of power. Romans 13:1–7 clearly belongs to this discussion on the power play. Paul speaks about how "one must be subject" (ἀνάγκη ὑποτάσσεσθαι), like Athenians speak of "natural compulsion" (ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαιίας) in Thucydides' dialogue. James R. Harrison, who promotes the so-called anti-imperial reading, is ready to admit Paul's realism. Harrison points out that "Paul's heavy emphasis on judiciously 'fearing' the authorities is ... far-sighted acknowledgement of first-century political realities." Even in the end of his analysis on Romans 13, Harrison notes that Paul refused an open resistance as a "tragic miscalculation regarding Rome's determination to suppress all rebellion."<sup>70</sup> Next I will show Paul's compliance as one of the ancient strategies to cope with the stronger.

## 2.2 *Coping Strategies and the Ethics of the Stronger*

Epictetus seems to go in the opposite direction than Paul. He thinks that resistance is both possible and morally acceptable. When speaking of the stronger and the weaker in *Disc.* 1.29 (cited above), Epictetus is seemingly commenting on Plato's *Gorgias*. A. A. Long has noted, "Epictetus knew the *Gorgias* more or less by heart, and he probably included it as one of the main readings for his formal curriculum."<sup>71</sup> Although Callicles in *Gorgias* claims the superiority of the stronger, Epictetus answers by taking advantage of the binary meanings in the Greek words *κρείσσων* and *χείρων*, denoting 'stronger' and 'weaker' but

68 Jewett 2007, 789–790.

69 Kloppenborg 2014, 180–181.

70 Harrison 2011, 313, 323.

71 Long 2002, 70.

also ‘better’ and ‘worse,’ which contain moral connotations.<sup>72</sup> Epictetus states that physical strength and moral strength (i.e., goodness) are two different things. The law of the stronger and the better leads to different conclusions when applied in physical and moral domains:

“Ten are better (κρείττονές) than one,” you say. For what? For putting in chains, for killing, for dragging away where they will, for taking away a man’s property. Ten overcome one, therefore, in the point in which they are better (κρείσσονες). In what, then, are they worse? If the one has correct judgements, and the ten have not. What then? Can they overcome in this point? How can they? But if we are weighed in the balance, must not the heavier draw down the scales?

Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.29.14–15; trans. Oldfather, LCL

This differentiation between strength and morality makes it possible to criticize authorities despite their physical supremacy. Socrates is the chief example of this attitude: “The paltry body of Socrates may be carried off and dragged to prison by those who were stronger (ὑπὸ τῶν ἰσχυροτέρων) than he” (Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.29.16; trans. Oldfather, LCL). Now Epictetus changes the word κρείσσων to ἰσχυρότερος in order to make his point clear; he speaks of the physical superiority. Yet, Socrates was also the prevailing one, as his moral judgements were superior:

But do you prove that one who holds inferior judgements prevails over the man who is superior in point of judgements (χείρονα ἔχων δόγματα κρατεῖ τοῦ κρείττονος ἐν δόγμασιν). You will not be able to prove this; no, nor even come near proving it. For this is a law of nature and of God: “Let the stronger always prevail over the weaker.” Prevail in what? In that in which it is stronger.

Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.29.19–20; trans. Oldfather, revised<sup>73</sup>

In addition, the differentiation between the stronger and the better makes it possible to differentiate between physical and mental freedom. The person who is physically subjugated can prevail in a moral sense. This opens the possibility for a moral resistance, as, for example, the following passage proves:

<sup>72</sup> See Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011 on κρείσσων and χείρων.

<sup>73</sup> For a further analysis of Epictetus’ text, see Huttunen 2009, 63–65.

For when the tyrant says to a man, “I will chain your leg,” the man who has set a high value on his leg replies, “Nay, have mercy upon me,” while the man who has set a high value on his moral purpose replies, “If it seems more profitable to you to do so, chain it.” “Do you not care?” “No, I do not care.” “I will show you that I am master.” “How can you be my master? Zeus has set me free. Or do you really think that he was likely to let his own son be made a slave? You are, however, master of my dead body, take it.” “You mean, then, that when you approach me you will not pay attention to me?” “No, I pay attention only to myself. But if you wish me to say that I pay attention to you, too, I tell you that I do so, but only as I pay attention to my pot.”

Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.19.8–10; trans. Oldfather, LCL

A non-Stoic would mistakenly identify his freedom with the freedom of the body. The Stoic, however, is interested in mental freedom.<sup>74</sup> Epictetus does not hide his bold attitude toward tyrants, who are recurrent figures in his *Discourses*.<sup>75</sup> He also expresses his resistant attitude in words that remind of Romans 13:

Is it for this that the tyrant inspires fear (φοβερὸς ἔσταιν)? Is it because of this that his guards seem to have long and sharp swords (τὰς μαχαίρας)? Let others see to that; but I have considered all this, no one has authority (ἐξουσίαν) over me. I have been set free by God, I know his commands, no one has power any longer to make a slave of me, I have the right kind of advocate, and the right kind of judges.

Epictetus, *Disc.* 4.7.16–17; trans. Oldfather, LCL, revised

God’s commands, which are equivalent to philosophy,<sup>76</sup> make it possible to resist authorities. In contrast, Paul claims that those resisting authority (ἐξουσία) resist God’s ordinance (διαταγή). Moreover, the issue of fear is central in *Disc.* 4.7, as its title “Of the freedom from fear” expresses. The whole discourse affirms that one should not fear authorities. Actually, Epictetus even takes fearless Christians an example of that (*Disc.* 4.7.6).<sup>77</sup> They were surely not following what Paul states: “Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval” (Rom 13:3). Paul unambiguously identifies obedience with what is good; accordingly, disobedience

74 Long 2002, 198.

75 See, e.g., Starr 1949.

76 Huttunen 2009, 87–88.

77 On Epictetus’ sayings of Christians, see Chapter 2.

toward the authorities is the same as distancing oneself from the good and living in fear. Yet, this was not the art of Epictetus and many other Stoics. Epictetus' resistance was in line with that of the so-called Stoic opposition embodied by Helvidius Priscus, who was martyred by Vespasian.<sup>78</sup> Epictetus presents Helvidius' bold dialogue with the emperor as an example for future generations (Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.2.19–24). Helvidius and his father-in-law Thrasea Paetus, who was executed by Nero, became symbols for the philosophical and republican resistance in the early Empire. Even their memory was felt as a threat for the Empire, as Tacitus reports:

It is recorded that when Rusticus Arulenus extolled Thrasea Paetus, when Herennius Senecio extolled Helvidius Priscus, their praise became a capital offence, so that persecution fell not merely on the authors themselves but also on their books: the police, in fact, were given the task of burning in the courtyard of the Forum the memorials of our noblest characters.

Tacitus, *Agr.* 2; trans. HUTTON and PETERSON, LCL

Without blaming Thrasea or Helvidius for their resistance, Tacitus presents an alternative way for Agricola, his own father-in-law: "He read aright the reign of Nero, wherein to be passive was to be wise" (*Agr.* 6; trans. Hutton and Peterson, LCL). The Stoic Seneca seems to follow along the lines of Agricola, although he did not escape death but committed suicide, per Nero's order. Seneca differentiates between three types of fear, of which the third is the most fearful: "we fear (*timentur*) the troubles which result from the violence of the stronger" (*per vim potentioris*) (*Ep.* 14.3; trans. Gummere, LCL). It becomes clear that the stronger ones are the authorities, who make a parade with several violent acts.

Surrounding it is a retinue of swords and fire and chains and a mob of beasts to be let loose upon the disemboweled entrails of men. Picture to yourself under this head the prison, the cross, the rack, the hook, and the stake which they drive straight through a man until it protrudes from his throat. Think of human limbs torn apart by chariots driven in opposite directions, of the terrible shirt smeared and interwoven with inflammable materials, and of all the other contrivances devised by cruelty, in addition to those which I have mentioned! It is not surprising, then, if our greatest terror (*timor*) is of such a fate; for it comes in many shapes and its paraphernalia are terrifying (*terribilis*).

Seneca, *Ep.* 14.5–6; trans. GUMMERE, LCL

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78 On Helvidius, see, e.g., Malitz 1985, 231–246.

Keeping Paul in mind, it is worth noting that Seneca assumes fear to be an important issue in the relationship between subjects and authorities. This relates to a more general belief in the connection between power and fear. Shepherd of Hermas seems to reveal that ancient ethos:

ἐν ᾧ δὲ δύναμις οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδὲ φόβος· ἐν ᾧ δὲ δύναμις ἢ ἔνδοξος, καὶ φόβος ἐν αὐτῷ. πᾶς γὰρ ὁ δύνάμιν ἔχων φόβον ἔχει· ὁ δὲ μὴ ἔχων δύνάμιν ὑπὸ πάντων καταφρονεῖται.

But in whom there is no power, neither is there fear. But in whom there is glorious power, there is also fear. For everyone who has power is feared; but the one who is powerless is despised by all.

Herm. *Mand.* 7.2 [37.2]; trans. EHRMAN, LCL

The passage presents as a piece of general wisdom the idea of power operating through fear. As shown above, this logic was also seen in the relationship to the state authorities: fear and power were interwoven, although some Stoics (like Epictetus) tried to disentangle them. Paul, in turn, accepted the connection between fear and power as an axiom. In Romans, one can see only the practical outcome of this conviction: Paul admonishes his audience to obey the authorities, in order to avoid fear (μὴ φοβεῖσθαι) of their wrath (ὀργή). Unlike many other Stoics, Seneca is in line with Paul. He admonishes his readers to avoid anger: “So the wise man will never provoke the anger (*potentium iras provocabit*) of those in power; nay, he will even turn his course, precisely as he would turn from a storm if he were steering a ship” (*Ep.* 14.7–8; trans. Gummere, LCL). Similarly, Josephus has King Agrippa advise the following: “The authorities (τὰς ἐξουσίας) should be served, not irritated” (*Bell.* 2.351; my translation). Again, this sounds quite similar to Paul. Such logic leads Seneca to recommend a quiet life outside the political sphere:

I beg you to consider those Stoics who, shut out from public life, have withdrawn into privacy for the purpose of improving men’s existence and framing laws for the human race without incurring the displeasure of those in power (*potentioris*). The wise man will not upset the customs of the people, nor will he invite the attention of the populace by any novel ways of living.

Seneca, *Ep.* 14.14; trans. GUMMERE, LCL

Seneca’s stance comes close to Epicurus’ famous maxim “Live unknown” (Plutarch, *Mor.* 1128C). This is probably not a surprise, as Seneca repeatedly

cites Epicurus in his *Epistles*. Epicurus' own relationship toward society is as similarly quietist as Seneca's in *Ep.* 14. In his *Principal Doctrines* 34–35, Epicurus' motivation for quietism is a life without fear:

Injustice is not in itself an evil, but only in its consequence, viz. the terror (φόβος) which is excited by apprehension that those appointed to punish such offences will discover the injustice. It is impossible for the man who secretly violates any article of the social compact to feel confident that he will remain undiscovered, even if he has already escaped ten thousand times; for right on to the end of his life he is never sure he will not be detected.

Diogenes Laërtius 10.151; trans. HICKS, LCL

Lucretius repeats these doctrines: a criminal can live undetected, but he can never be sure that his crimes will remain hidden: "Hence comes fear (*metus*) of punishment that taints the prizes of life" (Lucretius 5.1151–1160; trans. Rouse, LCL). Lucretius even ridicules how a fool not only fears the punishments in this life but also in the hereafter.

But in this life there is fear of punishment (*metus in vita poenarum*) for evil deeds, fear as notorious as the deeds are notorious, and atonement for crime—prison, and the horrible casting down from the Rock, stripes, executioners, condemned cell, pitch, red-hot plates, firebrands; and even if these are absent, yet the guilty conscience (*mens sibi conscia factis*), terrified before anything (*praemetuens*) can come to pass, applies the goad and scorches itself with whips, and meanwhile does not see where can be the end to its miseries or the final limit to its punishment, and fears (*metuit*) that these same afflictions may become heavier after death. The fool's life at length becomes a hell on earth.

Lucretius 3.1014–1023; trans. ROUSE, LCL

Epicurus and Lucretius put forth ideas that come quite close to what Paul presents in Romans 13. Both the Epicureans and Paul subscribe to the idea that one has to follow rules in order to avoid fear of punishment. Paul even seems to have noted the same thing as the Epicureans, namely, that authorities do not catch every wrongdoer. Paul asks and then answers, "Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good" (Rom. 13:3). He does not say that wrongdoers will be caught but only that they will live in fear. However, Paul takes seriously what Lucretius ridicules, that is, judgement in the hereafter: "those who resist will incur judgement" (κρίμα λήμψονται; Rom. 13:2). The

expression κρίμα λήμψονται is a *hapax legomenon* in Paul, but in the rest of the New Testament it refers to the Last Judgement (Matt. 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47; Jas 3:1).<sup>79</sup> Thus, Paul is aligned with Epicurus and Lucretius by claiming that criminals will always live in fear of punishment, but he differs from them by taking seriously the idea of divine punishment. There is also another aspect where Paul differs from the Epicureans. Epicurus claimed, “There never was an absolute justice, but only an agreement made in reciprocal intercourse” (Diogenes Laërtius 10.150; trans. Hicks, LCL). In other words, justice and injustice are just human agreements. Therefore, the concrete content of justice differs according to time and place, as Epicurus states in the same context. There is no reason to think that ‘good’ and ‘wrong’ imply some totally different moral code in Romans 13:3–4 and its context, where Paul at least partly speaks of intra-Christian relationships (Rom 12:9, 17, 21; 13:10). Thus, the good required in intra-Christian relationships is the same good as that required by the authorities.<sup>80</sup>

In sum, Paul seems to differ from the Stoic opposition embodied by Helvidius Priscus and celebrated by, for example, Epictetus. Paul’s answer to the law of the stronger is more quietist, being closer to Seneca’s *Epistle 14* and the Epicureans. I generally agree with Runar Thorsteinsson’s conclusion that for Paul it was “important that the Christ-believers in Rome avoid unnecessary attention to themselves on behalf of the civic authorities.” In Paul’s words: “So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:18).<sup>81</sup> There is, however, one important difference between Paul and other quietists trying to cope with authorities. Paul assumed that the authorities really promoted the good and “therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience” (Rom 13:5). Why did Paul view the authorities so optimistically? The answer lies in the fact that the ancient ethics of the stronger were not without obligations for the good of the weaker. This has not won enough attention, because many modern readers tend to sympathize with a Bakunin-like disgust of hierarchy and power as such. This tendency blinds one to the positive aspect that many ancient people found in social hierarchies.

Plato’s picture of Calicles and Thrasymachus cited above point out that the stronger make a profit from the weaker. Similarly, Paul admonishes his readers to pay taxes and revenues to the authorities (Rom 13:7), but he also points out an important difference in these Platonic figures. Paul does not present relative morals, which qualify the profit of the stronger as the good. He does

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79 Huttunen 2009, 95.

80 Huttunen 2009, 97.

81 Thorsteinsson 2010, 99.

not seek to justify the law of the stronger. In contrast, he optimistically claims that authorities operate “for your good” (Rom 13:4). The good the authorities promote is the good he also recommends to Christian in-group relations (Rom 12:9–10; 13:8). There is no indication that the civil good would differ from the good of the Christian in-group.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Paul claims that the authoritative power promotes justice in a genuine sense. This is quite an amazing claim. How could he think this? Is Paul proposing “a utopian vision of the state”?<sup>83</sup> Or is there any other explanation? Yes, there is.

I take an example of the ethics binding the stronger. Thucydides’ report on the Athenians’ shameless invocation of the law of the stronger in the Melian dialogue and the subsequent destruction of the city of Melos is often presented as a classical example of immoral power politics.<sup>84</sup> This is a misconception, however. As I observed above, in ancient culture the stronger also had obligations toward the inferior. In the initial part of the dialogue, the Athenians openly state that they would like to have dominion over Melos “without trouble,” that is, without destroying the city. However, they claim that the capitulation of Melos would save the city, “to the advantage of both.” When the Melians ask what the advantage might be, the Athenians answer, “It would be to your advantage to submit before suffering the most horrible fate, and we should gain by not destroying you” (Thucydides 5.93; trans. Smith, LCL). This is surely a piece of war propaganda, but not altogether. The Athenians destroy Melos only as a fear-inspiring example to the other inferior cities in the Athenian dominion (Thucydides 5.99) how rebels are handled. As a general procedure, the destruction of inferiors would disadvantage the Athenians themselves. The dominion needed its subjects.<sup>85</sup> At the end of the dialogue, the Athenians counsel the Melians “to acknowledge yourselves inferior to the most powerful state when it offers you moderate terms.” The Athenians validate their counsel with a general wisdom: “Those who, while refusing to submit to their equals, yet comport themselves wisely towards their superiors and are moderate towards their inferiors—these, we say, are most likely to prosper” (Thucydides 5.111; trans. Smith, LCL). The exercise of power lies not in destroying but in moderate subjugation.

This wisdom is the moral code of the hierarchically structured ancient societies. One can find it also in Roman times. Lucretius ascribes it to the dawn

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82 Wilkens 1982, 31; Huttunen 2009, 97–98. Thorsteinsson (2010, 98–99) makes the same point, but warrants that “it is hard to believe” that this would literally mean unlimited acceptance of the authorities.

83 Harrington and Keenan 2010, 170.

84 See, e.g., Crane 1998, 23 n3.

85 Crane 1998, 291–293.



of the world, when the human race started to make covenants, “signifying by voice and gesture with stammering tongue that it was right for all to pity the weak” (Lucretius 5.1022–1023; trans. Rouse, LCL). Augustus boasts, “[A]s victor I was merciful to all citizens who asked for pardon. As for foreign peoples, those whom I could safely pardon, I preferred to preserve than to destroy” (*Res Gestae* 3; trans. Cooley). Virgil puts this thought into his verses: “Roman, be sure to rule the world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice, to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud” (*parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*) (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.853; trans. Fairclough, LCL). Josephus clearly recalls this morality after he has impressed the law of the stronger on besieged Jerusalem. He recounts what he told about the Romans to the Jews in the city:

The Romans would bear them no malice for the past, unless they persisted in their contumacy to the end: they were naturally lenient in victory, and would put above vindictiveness considerations of expediency, which did not consist in having on their hands either a depopulated city or a devastated country. That was why, even at this late hour, Caesar desired to grant them terms; whereas, if he took the city by storm, he would not spare a man of them, especially after the rejection of offers made to them when in extremities.

Josephus, *Bell.* 5.372–373; trans. Thackeray, LCL

This is a close variant of the story of Melos in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Both cities are advised to capitulate, such that the stronger would have the advantage of a living city, but both cities are destroyed after refusing subjugation. In a way, this morality is also found in Thrasymachus’ crude words about rulers as shepherds who consider the good of the sheep in order to profit from the animals. The stronger takes care of the weaker for its own advantage. This is also the moral code which Teresa Morgan has detected in the popular morality of the early Roman Empire. Using as sources both fables and stories of exemplary figures, which predominantly deal with relations between the weak and the strong, she finds that hierarchy was seen as a natural phenomenon. The weak get advice to not put themselves in the way of the powerful, but instead try to show themselves as useful for the strong. Respectively, the strong should not destroy themselves by unwise treatment of their inferiors.<sup>86</sup> The whole society is interconnected: everyone is bound to those above and below, and the exemplary figures Morgan discusses are loyal toward persons of higher rank. State institutions such as the army, censors, magistrates and law courts

86 Morgan 2007, 63–67; See Reasoner 1999, 45–58.

are regarded as moral authorities.<sup>87</sup> Morgan shows that popular morality was connected with philosophy,<sup>88</sup> as I presented above. Romans 13 is nothing but a Christian variation of this popular morality. Paul views the authorities optimistically, because they need their obedient subjects.

### 2.3 *The Imagination Made Real*

I showed that Romans 13:1–7 is a Christianized version of common ancient ethics. Its starting point is the prevailing social hierarchy, including its violent basis. It also seems to be ruthlessly realistic in the sense that it discouraged all attempts to change the society. However, this is not all. As Ranke clearly saw, Paul's teaching on authorities was a reaction to the social dynamite at the heart of the Christian beliefs which Paul himself shared. Paul was deeply convinced that the power structures were disappearing. His teaching on the authorities very smoothly transitions to that of Christian in-group ethics. After admonishing readers to give to the civil authorities what is due to them, he continues by advising Christians to owe nothing but mutual love. It is as if all other obligations could be fulfilled, but never the duty of love. The impending eschaton sharpens the ethical requirements. Troels Engberg-Pedersen has proposed that Paul is here depending on his Stoic ethics in 1 Cor. 7:31: those who deal with the world should deal "as if they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away" (trans. slightly revised). According to Engberg-Pedersen, Paul similarly thinks here that the obligations to the authorities are secondary when compared to love:

Pay your taxes (fulfil your duties in *that* field) as something that can in fact be fulfilled. And then *forget about it* since the duty has, by now been fulfilled. In other words, do it "as if not". Or: do it, but without paying any special attention to it. That is *not* what *matters*. *By contrast*, fulfil your obligation to love. Or rather: *try* to fulfil it, always, and everywhere. For *that* is what *matters*. And that kind of life precisely belongs with the eschaton.<sup>89</sup>

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87 Morgan 2007, 136, 142. There were alternative discourses, as Kartzow has shown, for example, in his study on the Pastoral Epistles. Kartzow (2009, 207) notes that the author of the Epistles rebukes women for gossiping, because "gossips" represent an alternative discourse. In this way women achieved power and influence. This single example shows that the hierarchical structure of society is not the whole truth of power in ancient society.

88 Morgan 2007, 274–299.

89 Engberg-Pedersen 2006, 170–171.

The distinction between what matters and what does not matter is basic Stoic ethics, and 1 Corinthians 7 fits well into such a context.<sup>90</sup> Even the idea of an impending eschaton is not strange in the Greco-Roman world. Lucretius reconstructs a theory of the growth and the fading of the world. He concludes, “now indeed the power of life is broken,” and the world goes “to the reef of destruction” (Lucretius 2.1150, 1173–1174; trans. Rouse, LCL).<sup>91</sup> Stoics represented the cyclic view of the universe: everything will be destroyed in a conflagration and/or deluge so that a new cycle can begin. In his *Naturales quaestiones*, Seneca says that the destruction will be sudden, and “a single day will bury the human race” (*Nat.* 3.27.2, 3.29.9; trans. Corcoran, LCL). According to Seneca, the deluge and the conflagration “will occur when it seems best to god for the old things to be ended and better things to begin.” He estimates, “There will be no long delay in the destruction” (*Nat.* 3.28.7, 3.30.5; trans. Corcoran, LCL).<sup>92</sup> Paul’s vision is similar: “The night is far gone, the day is near” (Rom 13:12). The imminent end of this era emphasizes the right style of life (Rom 13:12–14), while Seneca emphasizes the vanity of all human achievements in the face of such cataclysms.<sup>93</sup> For Paul, eschatology was a call for new values and new life; accordingly, he did not resist the state of the world being left behind.

Paul illustrates the requirement of a new life with the metaphor of “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14). This is a clear reference to baptism.<sup>94</sup> Robert Wilson estimates how baptism by immersion lent itself to the development of an imagery of “garment symbolism”: “the candidate left his garments behind as he entered the water, and put on a fresh set of clothing when he emerged.”<sup>95</sup> By means of this new “garment,” one should already imitate the coming world after the eschatological turn. This becomes clear in Romans 6, where Paul rebukes Christians for sinning. In baptism, Christians have mystically died to sin with Christ. This leads to the ethical conclusion: “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom. 6:5). Here is the *future* resurrection life projected onto the *present* as an ethical standard.<sup>96</sup>

As usual, the initiation revealed the central beliefs of the cult. What is of interest now in this chapter is the social dimension of the new faith. In the

90 See Chapter 2.

91 Interestingly, in 5.330–331 Lucretius claims just the opposite: “But, as I think, the world is young and new, and it is not long since its beginning.”

92 See Heinonen 1990, 53–58; Downing 1995, 196–211.

93 Heinonen 1990, 57–58.

94 Jewett 2007, 827–828.

95 Wilson 2005, 250.

96 Huttunen 2009, 148–149.

Epistle of Galatians, Paul declares: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:27–28). This maxim was seemingly a fixed part of the baptismal paraenesis. When it appears otherwise in the New Testament, it is always combined with baptism (1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11).<sup>97</sup> One can easily see that the indifference to ethnic status lies at the heart of Paul’s thinking, as he makes room for non-Jews among the Christians, but the baptismal paraenesis actually reveals that such indifference applies to other statuses within the baptized group as well. Male and female, slave and free are just examples of statuses which do not make any difference in the future life.

As the baptismal paraenesis shows, one of the cornerstones of this ethical standard is the lack of ethnic, status, gender, or—I suppose—any other characteristics. Of course, this does not mean that these characteristics somehow disappear, but that they are just *adiaphora*. In this tendency, Paul comes close to the ethics of the Stoics, where the world is organized by the divine *logos*. According to the Stoics, even the social structure of the world is divinely instituted, and every person occupies a social position at God’s command. The social position itself does not matter. What counts is to fulfill one’s duties as an official or slave or in any other position that one happens to find oneself occupying. Every person is equal to others and the different ranks are just like roles composed by the divine playwright. Therefore, a Stoic slave-owner is not obliged to set his or her slaves free, but to treat them humanely:<sup>98</sup> “Do you not remember what you are, and over whom you rule—that they are your kinsmen, that they are your brothers by nature?” (Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.13.4; trans. Oldfather, LCL, revised).

The analogy between the Stoic and the Pauline thinking is clear: social differences are *adiaphora*, but in actual life they are not rejected. Interestingly, Paul admonishes everyone to remain in the social position he or she occupies. Not even slaves should try to find their freedom (1 Cor 7:17–24). The analogies with Stoic ideas (and even technicalities) are so distinct in these verses that I have referred to them as a Christian version of Stoicism.<sup>99</sup> As an inner

97 Col 3:11 lacks a concrete reference to baptism, but the symbol of “clothing” in 3:9–10 is clearly a reference to baptism (Wilson 2005, 250).

98 Huttunen 2009, 24–26, 45. On the Stoic idea of equality, especially between genders, see Grahn’s profound study (2013).

99 See Chapter 2. Paul’s words on slaves can also be understood in the way that slaves should promote their emancipation when possible. If so, the parallel with Stoicism may be even clearer (Bonhöffer 1911, 171). However, I have philologically argued against the interpretation that Paul would admonish the promotion of emancipation (Huttunen 2009, 28–29).

conviction, Paul's Christianity makes no less an impact than does Stoicism. Paul's short epistle to a certain Philemon stands as witness to this. The theme of this epistle is the slave Onesimus, who was probably a runaway. Paul returns Onesimus to his owner "no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother" (Philem. 16). The short personal letter should not be read as an overall statement on slavery or even on the treatment of runaways,<sup>100</sup> but the human tone is distinctive and fits well with the baptismal paraenesis.

Among the statuses that become irrelevant through baptism are those of the stronger and the weaker. This is highly interesting after noting the law of the stronger in Paul's teaching on civil authorities in Romans 13:1–7. Paul takes up the relationship between the strong (οἱ δυνατοί) and the weak (ὁ ἀσθενῶν, οἱ ἄδυνατοί) in the next chapters. In this case it is a question of weakness and strength in spiritual matters: the weak are scared by the "idol food," while the strong—among whom Paul counts himself—know that "nothing is unclean in itself" (Rom 14:14). This spiritual strength is parallel to the moral strength shown by the physically conquered person in Epictetus' example (see above). It is characteristic of an ancient mind that people are classified by their strength, even in intellectual, moral, and spiritual matters. Disputes between the strong and the weak are the subject of Paul's pastoral guidance in Romans 14–15. He presents himself as though he were a sage from the Golden Age. Posidonius (cited by Seneca) says that in the Golden Age, "the government was under the jurisdiction of the wise. They kept their hands under control, and protected the weaker from the stronger (*infirmiorem a validioribus*)" (Seneca, *Ep.* 90.5; trans. Gummere, LCL).

Paul tries to smooth over the disagreements between the strong and the weak, although he identifies himself with the strong (Rom. 15:1) and gives philosophical arguments for their views.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the apostle does not even try to get rid of the traditional vocabulary of the weak and the strong. He classifies believers as weak or strong in matters of faith. In this sense, he also accepts a social hierarchy within the Christian in-group. It is secondary, however, as both subgroups share the common interest of giving glory to God: "Those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God" (Rom 14:6). They should thus recognize each other's practices as differing outcomes of the same conviction. This illustrates the fact that though "the night is far gone," there are still Jews and Greeks, slaves and freedmen, males and females—and also strong and weak. The dawn has not yet broken, and one can only get a dim idea

100 See the discussion by Glancy (2002, 91–92).

101 Huttunen 2009, 71–74.

(cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) of the future non-hierarchies. Paul ridicules the Corinthians who, according to him, already claim to have reached the eschatological fullness: “Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you!” (1 Cor. 4:8). This ideal, which Paul ascribes to the Corinthians, is a Stoic one. Diogenes Laërtius relates that Zeno and Chrysippus taught about the kingship of the wise.

According to them not only are the wise free, they are also kings; kingship being irresponsible rule, which none but the wise can maintain: so Chrysippus in his treatise vindicating Zeno’s use of terminology. For he holds that knowledge of good and evil is a necessary attribute of the ruler (ἐγνωνκένας γάρ φησι δεῖν τὸν ἄρχοντα περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν), and that no bad man is acquainted with this science. Similarly the wise and good alone are fit to be magistrates, judges, or orators (ἀρχικούς δικαστικούς τε καὶ ῥητορικούς), whereas among the bad there is not one so qualified.

Diogenes Laërtius 7.122; trans. HICKS, LCL

According to Paul, it is premature to claim that someone has already become a philosopher-king. Even Stoics would deny those claims, except in the case of few uncommon figures. For Epictetus, such figures were only Diogenes of Sinope, Socrates, or Heracles.<sup>102</sup> For Paul, the Corinthian claim is also premature, because the eschatological kingdom has not yet come. Besides this prematurity, Paul sees nothing wrong with the Stoic ideal, which is nothing but anarchical. In the future commonwealth (Phil. 3:20), there are only the saved, all of whom are wise. They all become kings, who hold knowledge of good and evil, the same knowledge and power authorities have in this world (Rom. 13:3–4). Therefore, the need for hierarchies will disappear. Actually, this is what Paul expects of Christ when that new day dawns: “He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has annulled every ruler and every authority and power” (καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν) (1 Cor. 15:24; trans. revised).<sup>103</sup> This is anarchy, but not in the sense of armed revolution or any other practical resistance. The opposition toward earthly empires is just on the ideological level, whereas on the social level Paul pursued peace with all (Rom 12:18).<sup>104</sup>

102 Downing 1998, 88–90; Huttunen 2009, 130–139.

103 Paul can also mean celestial angelic or demonic powers, or there can be a double meaning in these verses. See Schrage 2001, 173–174.

104 Klostergaard Petersen 2015, 123.

However, Paul also expected something to happen on the concrete level. With a reference to Romans 14, French philosopher Alain Badiou claims: “Paul takes great pains to explain that what one eats, the behavior of a servant, astrological hypotheses, and finally the fact of being Jewish, Greek, or anything else—all this can and must be envisaged as simultaneously extrinsic to the trajectory of truth and compatible with it.”<sup>105</sup> This is certainly true in Romans 14, but this is an overstatement if it is presented as Paul’s overall conviction, as Badiou does. Badiou wants to show that Paul was not promoting anti-Judaism or misogyny, but rather a genuine universalism that transcended all differences.<sup>106</sup> To just take the case of the Jews, one can read a lengthy discussion on them in Romans 9–11. It proves that Paul indeed had a serious intention to find a place for non-Christian Jews within salvation, but he fluctuated between different solutions and ended up leaving the matter to God.<sup>107</sup> Ultimately, he could not find a universal solution. However, his intention toward one was undeniable. His intention was to eliminate any hierarchical differences.

The limitation of Paul’s universalism is clearly revealed when his thoughts are compared with those of the Stoics. Runar Thorsteinsson claims that “Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism are fundamentally similar in terms of morality or ethics,” but that only Stoics taught universal humanity. The Christian texts, in turn, “reserve the application of their primary virtue for fellow believers.”<sup>108</sup> This is easily seen, for example, in Romans 13:8–10: here Paul exhorts the *Christians* to *mutual* love. While he surely does not leave non-Christians out, or say they are not worthy of concern, the main line highlights in-group matters.<sup>109</sup> This is due to the fact that the equality of all people is closely tied to faith and baptism in Christ. Transcending differences—say, between slaves and freedmen—is closely reminiscent to what the Stoics said. But whereas equality for the Stoics was based on common humanity, here it was based on Christ. This is clearly visible in 1 Corinthians 7:17–24.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless,

105 Badiou 2003, 100.

106 Badiou 2003, 101–116. It is revealing that Badiou claims that Paul did not accuse the Jews of deicide. This is true, but deceiving. Although Paul does not speak of deicide, he ruthlessly blames Jews for being enemies of humankind and for murdering Christ (1 Thess 2:15). This is so heightened a claim that one is tempted to see it as an interpolation. There is, however, no manuscript evidence for this proposition. In the case of women, Badiou is more sensitive. He admits that Paul sometimes utters things that are unacceptable today. However, “the only question worth asking is whether Paul, given the conditions of his time, is a progressive or a reactionary” (Badiou 2003, 104–116).

107 For an illustrative discussion on Rom 9–11, see Räisänen 2008.

108 Thorsteinsson 2010, 209. See also Engberg-Pedersen 2013.

109 Huttunen 2009, 71; Thorsteinsson 2010, 193–194.

110 See Chapter 2.

there was really a universal mission in early Christianity: to make disciples of all nations (ἔθνη) (Matt 28:19). This was also Paul's mission in the sense that he believed himself to be "the apostle to the nations (ἔθνῶν ἀπόστολος)" (Rom 11:13; trans. revised). That there is no independent, humanistic interest toward outsiders is a completely understandable situation in a cult that projected all good onto Christ. In short, there was no freedom, equality, or brotherhood outside of Christ.

For some people, such a Christian outlook is regarded as too restrictive and vague, or even an illusion. They rationalized that because "there is so much hellish," people take refuge in religion, "the creation of a world of fantasy."<sup>111</sup> Instead of fantasy they would rather that such goals be realized in and for the whole of society. The Russian Revolution and subsequent communist revolutions around the world were attempts at consummating the eschatological imagination. The Marxist philosophy of history can be seen in this light as a secular variant of Jewish-Christian apocalypticism:<sup>112</sup> according to this view, global revolution will be the final conflict, Armageddon. Amid the battle, a devout revolutionary could have the premonition "that this will be the last one,"<sup>113</sup> to be followed by everlasting human unity. Although apocalyptic Marxism has its prehistory from the late 16th century on,<sup>114</sup> the Marxist union of the secular and the sacred is probably the strongest revolutionary power ever seen in history.<sup>115</sup> Lenin put into practice the revolutionary spirit that he saw in the original Christianity, here apparently being under the influence of Friedrich Engels, who took the Book of Revelation as the original expression of Christianity.<sup>116</sup>

After few years after the Russian Revolution, enthusiasts claimed that the teachings of Jesus were "being realized in Russia." But the disillusioned anarchist Emma Goldman was less keen in her comments: "A preposterous falsehood."<sup>117</sup> Indeed, what actually followed the October Revolution of 1917 was a realization of the bloody visions of John the Seer. The picture of blood rising to the bridles of horses (Rev 14:20) was not far away. *The Black*

111 Dzerzhinsky 1959, 221 (March 9, 1914).

112 See, e.g., Zimdars-Schwartz and Zimdars-Schwartz 1998, 286–289; Baumgartner 1999, 201–202.

113 Dzerzhinsky 1959, 291 (August 22, 1918). Dzerzhinsky's prison diary and letters document his constant faith in a kind of eschatological reality in the secular Marxist form. Lauchlan (2015, 101–104) also notes Dzerzhinsky's Christian-like sentiment.

114 Räisänen 2017, 199. On the prehistory, see Funkenstein 1986, 202–289.

115 Altizer 1998, 341.

116 Engels 1894–1895.

117 Goldman 1924, 96–97.



*Book of Communism* counted nearly 100 million deaths on the communist conscience.<sup>118</sup> The exact number of victims is debated, but no one questions that the number was huge. The modern Bolshevik apocalypticists, however, saw spilling of blood with pleasure. For Lenin (citing Engels), revolutionary violence was good power in contrast to the “diabolical power” of the old society.<sup>119</sup> Along these lines, Lenin’s servants in the Cheka, the political police, were instructed to crush the old world in the apocalyptic turn toward the new eon:

Our morality is new, our humanity is absolute, for it rests on the bright ideal of destroying all oppression and coercion. To us all is permitted, for we are the first in the world to raise the sword not in the name of enslaving and oppressing anyone, but in the name of freeing all from bondage.... Blood? Let there be blood ... for only the complete and final death of that [old] world will save us from the return of the old jackals.<sup>120</sup>

Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder and the first leader of Cheka, was at pains to explain to his sister why “there is no name more terrifying than mine,” while “love is everything for me.” He claimed to “banish injustice from the world.”<sup>121</sup> “My purpose compels me to be merciless,” he relates to his wife.<sup>122</sup> This is how the Marxist eschatology took form in one individual who had spent years in the prison of the previous authorities. Violent rule was dethroned by even more intense violent rule. Is this exactly what happens in the Book of Revelation? The Lamb of Revelation begins to look here like a dragon or the Beast of the same book. The Lamb, who was earlier a slaughtered victim, destroys his enemies after all (Rev 19), just like the Beast who waged war against the followers of the Lamb (Rev 13:7). This is how David L. Barr puts the moral problem of the last book in the Bible.<sup>123</sup> The Lamb becomes the new power. In a sense, John’s vision foreshadows the Christian empires, which eagerly utilized Paul’s legitimation for their dominance. Not even Lenin’s rule forgot such a useful biblical passage. Pyotr Krasikov, the deputy of the People’s Commissar of Justice, claimed in 1919 that Romans 13 belongs among the most important sayings of the apostle. Krasikov deplored that Tikhon, the Patriarch

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118 Courtois et al. 1999.

119 Lenin 1974, 404.

120 These words are from 1919 and the first issue of *The Red Sword*, a weekly periodical of the Ukrainian Cheka. Cited and translated by Leggett 1981, 203 (my clarification in brackets is based on the textual context).

121 Dzerzhinsky 1959, 293–294 (April 15, 1919).

122 Dzerzhinsky 1959, 290 (May 27, 1918).

123 Barr 2006, 218. Barr himself takes distance from this reading while aptly describing it.

of Moscow and All Russia, did not use it to elucidate the relationship between the state and the church.<sup>124</sup> Once they seized power, the Bolsheviks claimed to reign as those before—despite the fact that this was not their stated aim. Lenin wrote:

We do not after all differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power against the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the abolition of classes.<sup>125</sup>

The anarchists also preached social revolution.<sup>126</sup> The temporary means that Lenin enumerated were just more longstanding than those held by the anarchists. Emma Goldman demanded that the means of revolution should be identical with the purposes to be achieved. In a weird way, she still suggested that violent revolution inspires “with a new concept of life and its manifestations in social relationships,”<sup>127</sup> obviously expecting something else than the state and state-driven terror. While the anarchists believed in an immediate collapse of the state after revolution, Lenin ridiculed this idea by citing Engels:

Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all of which are highly authoritarian means. And the victorious party must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries.<sup>128</sup>

The Marxists saw how contradictory the anarchists were when they promoted authoritarian methods to destroy the authorities. Oddly enough, the Marxists did not see a contradiction between their own lasting violence and the ultimate abolition of authority. As a consequence, the state was never abolished but strengthened rather. This is the lesson that history provides: the revolutionary heritage of the Christian tradition leads to disaster, turns the Lamb into

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124 Rössler 1969, 116.

125 Lenin 1974, 441.

126 Bakunin (1907, 16) thought that the oppressive structures can be circumvented in three ways: “two chimerical and a third real. The first two are the dram-shop and the church, debauchery of the body or debauchery of the mind; the third is social revolution.”

127 Goldman 1924, 175.

128 Engels 1913, 39 (translation in Lenin 1974, 442–443).

the Beast, and makes the victim a victimizer. Is there a non-revolutionary alternative? The strong emphasis on obedience to authority has certainly played its part in oppressive societies. One routinely refers to Auschwitz as a horrible outcome of honoring the powers that be. This is not the whole truth, however. Northern European countries with Romans 13:1–7 as their underlying political ethos have never become totalitarian states. Instead, they have been receptive to ideas of a state-driven welfare system.<sup>129</sup>

Paradoxically, preserving eschatology as a vision for the future has at least led to some general changes in the society as a whole. How did this happen? Christianity was just another little cult in Paul's time, and the apostle showed but a piece of realism when accepting the Empire as it was. What he could expect was a new order among those who found the source of all good. The eschatological imagination could be acted on, and so come true, insofar as this occurred in the attitudes of the Christian in-group. On the more general level, Paul could put trust only in Christ, who will destroy "every ruler and every authority and power" (1 Cor 15:24). While waiting for this divine revolution, it was better for Christians to realistically lead a quiet life in the Empire and "deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31). More important for Paul is the new order among those in Christ. This is how Jacob Taubes understood Paul—and rightly so:<sup>130</sup> "Paul's genius was to create of a parallel state that posed no immediate threat to the existing political structure, the Roman state."<sup>131</sup> But the story did not end when Paul passed away. What he could not expect or even imagine is that such a vision would come true, also at the practical level of social structures, already before the form of this world passed away. At least in the case of slavery, Christian attitudes gradually influenced society. Clement of Alexandria, an early Christian theologian (ca. 200 CE), required a decrease in work by slaves. Although the theologians usually admitted slavery as a matter of fact, it became more and more restricted. In a sense, the anti-hierarchical spirit corrupted the system of slavery from the inside. Certainly, the development toward the end of slavery was not without some backtracking; in

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129 Nelson 2017, 104. Karimäki (2019, 52) aptly describes the mentality that resisted the right-wing takeover in the 1930s: "Finnish liberal anti-fascism and the policy of national unification were anti-communist, democratic, parliamentary, legalistic and nationalistic in nature. This combination of liberal yet nationalistic values aspired to achieve a united nation in spirit and mentality, but never a coerced acceptance of a single political ideology."

130 Taubes 2004, 52–54.

131 Blumenfeld 2003, 389. Similarly, see Klostergaard Petersen 2015, 116.

addition, the general prohibition of slavery was not only due to Christianity.<sup>132</sup> However, Christianity did play a significant role in that process.<sup>133</sup> In other words, what Marx rejected as a fantasy has had a more powerful effect than violent revolution.

Today, it is difficult to imagine any serious Christian leader who would share Paul's opinion that slaves should not pursue their freedom. At the level of the letter, these modern Christians have put aside "what the Bible says." There is no general prohibition of slavery in the Bible, and even Paul accepted it. However, Paul also says that "we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit" (Rom. 7:6; cf. 2 Cor 3:6). He preached spiritual change, and therefore we can legitimately ask if the one who follows his spirit is more his disciple than the one who follows his letters. From this spiritual point of view, the limitations placed on Romans 13 can be justified, although they go against the letters that Paul wrote. Do such limitations not actually enhance Paul's vision that there will be an end of "every ruler and every authority and power" (1 Cor 15:24)?

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132 That Paul's ideal of equality among Christians was easily changed back to the ethics of the law of the stronger is illustrated by Clement of Rome, who wrote only a few decades after Paul: "Let the one who is strong (ὁ ἰσχυρὸς) take care of the weak (τὸν ἀσθενῆ); and let the weak show due respect to the strong. Let the wealthy provide what is needed to the poor, and let the poor offer thanks to God, since he has given him someone to supply his need" (1. Clem. 38.2; trans. Ehrman, LCL).

133 Klein 2000; Turley 2000; Ramelli 2016.

## Brothers in Arms: Soldiers in Early Christianity

So far as our sources permit us to judge, this kind of career has little or no relevance for the first generations of Christians, although later on Christians in the army would constitute a problem both for the empire and for the church's leaders.<sup>1</sup>

This is what Wayne A. Meeks has to say about Christian soldiers in his groundbreaking study *First Urban Christians* (1983), which mapped the social world of the Pauline churches (for example, pointing out that Philippi was a Roman colony consisting of veterans). A quarter of a century later, Meeks' book has been critically revisited in *After the First Urban Christians* (2009), but a gap remains unfilled. Raymond Hobbs is right when he says: "Many studies of the Roman-Hellenistic social world of the New Testament offer a strange silence on things military."<sup>2</sup>

Why are soldiers passed over? The answer flickers brightly through Meeks' comment that soldiers are a problem, especially a moral one. This is the way in which scholars usually discuss the military. Nearly all scholars focusing on soldiers in early Christianity basically consider them in a modern sense, not a historical one. More precisely, this motivation springs from the needs of modern Christian ethics, in which soldiers, wars and armies represent nothing but a problem.<sup>3</sup> Such a viewpoint surely makes soldiers a less attractive theme for the more historically oriented scholar. The present situation of scholarly discussion makes me treat earlier studies with caution. In the words of David G. Hunter, soldiers and early Christianity are "a field where ideological bias seems so often to affect one's interpretation of the evidence."<sup>4</sup> However, these studies are not worthless. As Roland Bainton puts it, the "various contentions are not to be dismissed simply because they support the views of those who propose them. Some may be right."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Meeks 1983, 20.

2 Hobbs 2001, 334; see also Zeichmann 2019, 42.

3 Helgeland (1974, 149; 1979, 725) puts the scholars discussing soldiers into three categories: Roman Catholics, Protestant pacifists, and "establishment" Protestants, mainly Lutherans. The fact that the categorization is based on religious confessions illustrates the modern point of view.

4 Hunter 1992, 92.

5 Bainton 1986, 67.

To give an example, C. John Cadoux's *The Early Christian Attitude to War: A Contribution to the History of Christian Ethics* (first published in 1919) is a classic in its area, which contains rich source material of great value for anyone interested in the topic. The book surveys biblical and other early Christian texts, both pro- and antimilitary, and yet it has Christian pacifism as its underlying mission.<sup>6</sup> Cadoux criticizes non-pacifistic readings of the sources, among others Adolf Harnack's *Militia Christi: The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries* (German orig. 1905; English trans. 1981), which is also a classic. Cadoux thought that there was an original antimilitary ethos in early Christianity, which he traced back to Jesus. Interestingly, Harnack shared this view.<sup>7</sup> Both scholars were unanimous that this original ethos was then gradually changed to a more positive attitude toward Christian participation in the army. Both avoid falling prey to the popular misconception that the existence of a Christian soldier would be a possibility only after the Constantinian turn in the fourth century. Unlike Harnack, Cadoux thought that the positive attitude was a minor trend even after the Constantinian turn. He criticized Harnack and other scholars for overestimating the approval given to Christian soldiers in the early Church.<sup>8</sup>

In the early Church Cadoux found what he needed to provide an arguable ethical judgment against any participation in bloodshed.<sup>9</sup> However, he was no blinkered pacifist. He was also sensitive to the fact that there were Christian soldiers in the early Church and that they were more or less tolerated.<sup>10</sup> This fact does not destroy his pacifist argumentation, however, as he traces pacifism back to Jesus and shows witnesses from the early Church who understood Jesus' words in an antimilitaristic sense. Cadoux explains the participation of early Christians in the army as the result of a certain immaturity of reflection, noting that there was no exigent reason for such reflection: Christians could easily avoid enlistment in the army, if they liked. But the lack of reflection also made room for various compromises. Cadoux explains, "This, of itself, meant

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6 Hunter 1992, 92. Gero (1970, 285 n. 1) speaks of Cadoux's "doctrinaire pacifism."

7 Harnack 1981, 65.

8 Cadoux 1919, 254; McInnes Gracie 1981, 9–10. Recently, Despina Iosif (2013) has strongly questioned the pacifistic readings. She tends to read sources as approving of military service.

9 McInnes Gracie 1981, 9.

10 Shean (2010, 76) goes too far when claiming that "Cadoux refused to acknowledge any Christian participation in the military" and that "Cadoux's arguments represent the most extreme pacifist position and are the least convincing historically."

that at any time after the inception of Christianity, the existence of Christian soldiers was at least a possibility.”<sup>11</sup>

This seems to be a historical result as long as a reader forgets Cadoux’s interest in the search for a norm for modern Christian ethics. He can admit early Christian participation in the army as long as he can find an authoritative pacifistic tradition originating in Jesus and looming large enough in the early Church. After the horrors of World War I, Cadoux found a modern function for the tradition he constructed. This, however, is not my interest. Reading his book, I prefer to place more emphasis on the historical side, asking a further question: if Christian soldiers *possibly* existed since “the inception of Christianity,” as Cadoux admits, did any *really* exist? What can we say about them in historical terms? My aim is to make a shift from applied exegesis to a more historically oriented one.

The earliest indisputably documented Christian soldiers served in the late second century.<sup>12</sup> The scholarly discussion on the participation of early Christians in the army deals mainly with sources from that time or later. This is mostly the case with the recent study *Soldiering for God* by John F. Shean, whose viewpoint is largely historical without any overt theological or ethical program. He engages in groundbreaking work at the crossroads of Christianity and the Roman army. However, the time before Marcus Aurelius’ reign (late second century) only occupies a minor place in his learned study. Unfortunately, historically oriented research mainly moves from covering soldiers from earlier times to instead discuss what Jesus’ words on love, nonresistance, and so on mean for Christian ethics today. Yet, even the earlier documents should undergo scrutiny from a historical standpoint.

In the historical approach, one should be open to differing views instead of searching for one, in particular only one, authoritative Christian stance; it is typical for many studies to pursue *the* Christian view on war and soldiers. As Shean rightly notes, early Christianity was not a unanimous movement. He continues:

This also means that there was no effective control over who could be a member of these different groups and that it is not possible to say with any assurance that soldiers could not be found among those calling

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11 Cadoux 1919, 244–249. Similarly, Hays acknowledges that military figures were presented in a favorable light in the New Testament, but thinks it inconsistent with the overall message of the New Testament: “The place of the soldiers within the church can only be seen as anomalous” (Hays 2004, 335–337). Hays treats the subject openly from a modern ethical point of view.

12 Harnack 1981, 71.

themselves Christians. Nor can it be said that all Christian groups would have had the same attitude towards the use of violence.<sup>13</sup>

The core of my interest does not lie in the general ethics of love and nonviolence, although I will take a short look at these in the Sermon on the Mount. There is a more direct road in our quest to discover early Christian soldiers: those passages where soldiers are mentioned. How true these passages are in terms of the historical record is another matter, however. Fortunately, the question of the historicity of the descriptions is not of primary importance. What is important is the fact that the descriptions surely bear the values of their Christian authors.<sup>14</sup> If a soldier is described positively, or described even as a Christian, it certainly betrays something of the actual practice or at least the values of the author. One must be careful not to conclude too much based on scanty evidence, for the values that the portrayals express are not straightforward. In this sense there is a danger of interpreting the values anachronistically, if one does not realize that value judgments always represent opinions within a certain social situation. Focusing on the social situation brings us out of the abstract domain of values and grounds us in a more historically reliable context. Such a position helps to anticipate with greater accuracy the actual practices within early Christianity.

In 2014, two studies were published that have contributed to a greater understanding of the picture of soldiers in the New Testament: Laurie Brink's *Soldiers in Luke-Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending the Stereotypes* and Alexander Kyrychenko's *The Roman Army and the Expansion of the Gospel: The Role of the Centurion in Luke-Acts*. Brink's and Kyrychenko's approaches are close to mine. They do not concentrate on what modern Christians should think about war and soldiers, but how Luke's description can be understood in its historical context. Brink and Kyrychenko scrutinize the picture of soldiers and the Roman army in the ancient sources so that the cultural background of Luke's portrayal becomes more apparent. Brink concludes that Luke piggybacks on the negative picture of soldiers in order to let Jesus exonerate them, like tax collectors and sinners. The soldier functions in Luke's treatment "as a parabolic exemplum of a good disciple, and as the author's optimistic expectation of imperial benevolence."<sup>15</sup> Kyrychenko also sees that Luke-Acts gives a favorable portrayal of the Roman military, especially

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13 Shean 2010, 9.

14 See Zeichmann 2019, 45: "Though some of these depictions are fantastical, they nevertheless elucidate how many civilians perceived soldiers of the Roman East."

15 See especially Brink 2014, 175.



centurions. Kyrychenko thinks that centurions represent the Empire in the narrative and that the positive picture of them proves that the Empire was a receptive mission field.<sup>16</sup> Despite some differences between Brink's and Kyrychenko's analyses,<sup>17</sup> their main conclusions amount to the same thing: Luke's soldiers exemplify the opportunity for a good relationship between Christians and the Empire.

Unfortunately, both studies focus only on Luke-Acts, which is just one among many early Christian sources. Moreover, I would question whether there is merely one portrayal of soldiers, even in a single ancient author's text. As I will argue, there are commonly two stereotypes in the ancient sources. The usual picture of centurions as different from the rank-and-file men is due to certain social factors. Thus, it is not enough to read just early Christian texts in the frames of the ancient stereotypes; it is also important to read behind the stereotypical representations and ask, what was the place of soldiers in the social reality of the Empire. This makes us conscious of why the stereotypes are what they are. Social reality also makes us see where and how early Christians factually encountered soldiers. In this way, we can take a step closer toward historical reality.

My thesis is that there were Christian soldiers from the very beginning of Christianity. This does not mean that all Christians accepted the military vocation. Some did, some did not, and some did not even consider the matter. There are three large aspects regarding this matter: (1) the dual view of soldiers in the gospels, (2) the use of military metaphors, and (3) the difference between the non-military views of the early Christian theologians and the actual reality in the ranks of Christians, which included soldiers.

First, I treat the dual view of soldiers in the gospels: centurions seem to be positive characters, while the rank-and-file soldiers are more ambiguous figures, mostly negative ones. The modern phrasing of the question on early Christianity and the military has left scholars to emphasize either the positive or the negative side, depending on their interests in either defending or resisting Christian participation in the military. However, because the duality of soldier characters in the gospels is actually there, the task is to explain it. I will put the gospels into their ancient social context, which shows that the duality was a common view among the ancient population. In order to properly frame the gospel material, I take a view on the presence of the military in the Eastern Mediterranean area in the first two centuries. Where did people encounter soldiers? How were the army and the rest of society interconnected? The answers

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16 See especially Kyrychenko 2014, 189.

17 Kyrychenko (2014, 6) criticizes Brink for arguing that there was only one common set of stereotypes of soldiers "known and accepted by Luke and his intended audience."

to these questions introduce us to the social context of the scattered sayings in the gospels and make visible the pattern of connections between soldiers and Christianity.

After looking at the gospels, I look at the military metaphors in the early Christian literature. Scholars have discussed whether these betray the existence of soldiers among the early Christians or not. I show that the use of military metaphors belongs to the longer philosophical tradition, which can be traced back at least to Plato. An analysis of Christian texts and how they compare with philosophical analogies leads mostly to negative results. Only in 1. Clement does the wording betray a positive identification with the Roman soldiers as “our soldiers.” On the other hand, the vocabulary of Latin Christianity betrays a strong connection with the army. This is a question which I deal with on a deeper level when discussing Tertullian.

Turning from military metaphors to the theologians of the early Church, I compare their views to the other data we have on early Christians. I claim that most theologians, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria, belonged to the philosophically minded intellectual class of the society. The intellectuals of the early Empire had rather reserved or even overtly negative attitudes toward the military. They could use military metaphors but usually without indicating any positive stance regarding the army or soldiers. The common Christians, however, lived their life in the larger social context, including the army. According to archeological evidence, the Christian soldiers seem to have had public piety as early as the beginning of the third century. This is in conflict with the reserved attitude of the Christian intellectual elite.

Interestingly, Tertullian brought the two strands together in the beginning of the third century. At the end of this chapter, I concentrate on him. Tertullian was passionately against Christian participation in the military, but when promoting his view he also openly states that there were many Christians in the Roman legions. The military influence on the North African Church seemed to have been strong, and it is indeed felt in the vocabulary of the Latin Bible translations and in Tertullian’s own language. Tertullian’s words prove the dual relationship to the military among the early Christians.

## 1 Soldiers in the Gospels Contextualized

### 1.1 *The Army in Roman Society*

#### 1.1.1 Police Work

Cadoux wrote his book in a time when the trenches and bloody massacres of World War I were still fresh in memory. “The most crying and scandalous evil of our time,” as he notes in the closing pages, aimed at large-scale warfare with

mass destruction. When we turn that view toward ancient Rome, however, one sees that the imperial army had far more tasks than large-scale campaigns.<sup>18</sup> The disasters of the Jewish War and the Bar Kokhba revolt do not tell the whole truth of the Roman army, its tasks, and its presence in the East. Actually, campaigning seems to be the exception. Roy W. Davies explains, “Many soldiers would have spent only a small part of their quarter of a century’s service taking part in campaigns; there must have been quite a few who rarely, if ever, saw active service, as several writers noted about the troops in Syria and the East.”<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that soldiers spent their time peacefully. After an area was occupied, the army started to consolidate Roman control, which was often a violent process taking many years.<sup>20</sup>

In Judaea—unlike in Galilee—the local unrest was continuous.<sup>21</sup> While it is a matter of definition how long the process of consolidation took there, it is clear that the army continued to be present even afterwards. The troops had a role in maintaining Roman control, overcoming local unrest, cooperating in judicial processes, executing punishments, and safeguarding tax collection or exacting taxes themselves.<sup>22</sup> Davies notes that the New Testament provides a catalog of the various police jobs routinely performed by soldiers:

They arrested and flogged Christ; an execution squad of a centurion and four armed soldiers crucified Him and two brigands, detained earlier in a security operation, but not Barabbas, in custody for insurrection and murder; a small picket guarded the tomb; the rest of the cohort was drawn up in full battle kit in the governor’s residence, ready to suppress any outbreaks of rioting. In Jerusalem the men of the *cohors equitata* commanded by Claudius Lysias had to rescue Paul from a lynch mob three times in twenty-four hours; he was arrested, almost flogged, released, taken into protective custody, and then sent under heavy armed escort to Caesarea for trial. The tribune wrote an official report and came to give evidence. In the capital he was first held in custody in the governor’s residence, but was then put under open arrest under the surveillance of a centurion for two years. When the governor left, Paul was put back into protective custody, appealed to his successor, and was remanded in custody pending transport. On the sea voyage he was under open arrest,

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18 Isaac 2000, 54.

19 Davies 1989, 33.

20 Isaac 2000, 54–67; Campbell 2002, 90.

21 Isaac 2000, 77–89. On Galilee, see Freyne 1998, 245–246.

22 Davies 1989, 56–57; Isaac 2000, 113; Campbell 2002, 90; Kyrychenko 2014, 29–32.

but the non-Roman prisoners were kept under close arrest by the centurion and escorts of *cohors I Augusta*; in Rome the latter were confined in the camp of the Praetorians by the *princeps peregrinorum* [the head of the *castra peregrina*, the headquarters of the secret police in Rome; *peregrini* were people without Roman citizenship], while Paul was kept under house arrest with one soldier for two years.<sup>23</sup>

Davies mentions in passing that secret police also appear to have been present in Rome, as Epictetus describes:

In this fashion the rash are ensnared by the soldiers in Rome. A soldier, dressed like a civilian, sits down by your side, and begins to speak ill of Caesar, and then you too, just as though you had received from him some guarantee of good faith in the fact that he began the abuse, tell likewise everything you think, and the next thing is—you are led off to prison in chains.

Epictetus, *Disc.* 4.13.5; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Epictetus is obviously describing the politically heated atmosphere of the capital city, not his immediate environment in Nicopolis in Greece.<sup>24</sup> However, it tells how far soldiers' tasks could be from battlefield operations. It is also worth noting that soldiers are described as informers in the Gospel of Luke, where John the Baptist warns against corruption in denunciations (*συκοφαντέω*) (Luke 3:14). This warning fits well with the general picture of soldiers as policemen.

On the other hand, the army was not alone in policing. Christopher J. Fuhrmann points out in his *Policing the Roman Empire* that there were also other organizations safeguarding the order. The civil policing institutions were most developed in Egypt and in Asia Minor. In the *Martyrium of Polycarp*, the bishop Polycarp was captured by a troop of "pursuers" (*διωγμίται*) and horsemen (*Mart. Pol.* 6.2–7.1), whose leader is called an "officer of the peace" (*εἰρήναρχος*). These Greek words denoted particular city officials.<sup>25</sup> Yet, Fuhrmann also shows how the army took an increasing role in policing during the first three centuries CE.<sup>26</sup> He even sees this trend in the gospels: in the earliest ones, Jesus is arrested by armed rabble, but John writes of a military unit.

23 Davies 1989, 57.

24 Fuhrmann (2012, 143) notes that this is the only case when soldiers were used as *agents provocateurs*. Yet, the civil disguise is attested to by other sources (Fuhrmann 2012, 115).

25 Fuhrmann 2012, 66–69.

26 Fuhrmann 2012, 6–12, 93, 202.

Fuhrmann points out that when Origen was commenting on Matthew, he did not understand the scene without soldiers and referred to John.<sup>27</sup> By the third century, a reader of the gospel could not imagine an arrest without soldiers.

Police work, or any other paramilitary or nonmilitary tasks<sup>28</sup> carried out by the army, did not change the fact that soldiers were, first and foremost, fighters. They regularly conducted exercises for warfare,<sup>29</sup> but their daily drills are not described in the earliest Christian sources. There are references to military campaigns in the Jewish War (e.g., Luke 19:43–44), but Davies' words above are revealing: the New Testament primarily describes their police work, although that differs from the modern understanding. Another difference is the decentralized form of military command. In modern Western societies, usually the army is strictly under the command of the government. This was not the case in the Roman Empire. The vassal rulers had their own armies. Thus, for example, Herodian client rulers had their own military forces, as Josephus informs us. It was exceptional for Roman troops to be present in the areas of the vassal rulers.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the Roman army did not only consist of regular troops, but also auxiliary units, mostly made up of locally recruited manpower and possibly even Italian citizens, like Acts 10 reports.<sup>31</sup>

It is clear that soldiers and Christians did not encounter one another only in times of war, but in many other ways in everyday society. In his study *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria*, Nigel Pollard uses two scholarly models to show the relationship between the Roman army and the local population. The older model emphasizes the integration of the army and the rest of society, while the more recent one reconstructs their relative separation.<sup>32</sup> Pollard himself remains halfway between these, arguing that there were elements of both separation and integration. The Romanization of soldiers—without any word of the surrounding society—was superficial. However, the army as an institution created a separate social identity.<sup>33</sup> I will first look at the separation, which was manifested in the tensions between the army and the local people. After that I will address the integrative element visible in the positive relationships between the army and the civilians.

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27 Fuhrmann 2012, 240.

28 “Soldiers were dispatched as surveyors, engineers, even judges. They built roads, supervised mines, and collected supplies” (Fuhrmann 2012, 105).

29 Davies 1989, 41–43.

30 Chancey 2007, 54. Kyrychenko (2014, 35 n. 141) lists some exceptional cases.

31 Chancey 2007, 49. I will later note that despite the name of the unit, manpower could also be recruited in the provinces.

32 Pollard 2000, 5–7.

33 Pollard 2000, 7–8.

### 1.1.2 Tensions between the Army and the Local People

Roman police work was not so much aimed at protecting people than at attending to the interests of the Empire.<sup>34</sup> The bigger detachments were usually concentrated in camps in the countryside, except in the East. There were big garrisons in Antioch, Caesarea, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. Benjamin Isaac assumes that the reason for the exceptional practice in the East was the need for tighter control over the local centers.<sup>35</sup> From the beginning of the second century, there is increasing evidence of soldiers being widespread in outposts in both small towns and the countryside.<sup>36</sup> One of the main purposes of these outposts was maintenance of Roman order.<sup>37</sup> All this suggests some kind of tension between the army and the local people. This tension is clearly felt in Paul's words on earthly authorities in Romans 13. He is uncompromisingly loyal to the authorities, but his line of thought is interesting. Besides the theological reasoning—which scholars have always noted—he also provides a more “secular” interpretation: you *must* (ἀνάγκη) obey in order to avoid wrath (Rom. 13:5). He speaks of the fear before authority, which bears a sword and executes wrath (Rom. 13:3–4). The fear that Paul describes is an emotional echo for a population that understands how the troops will overpower any resistance or unrest.<sup>38</sup>

One source of tension between soldiers and the local population was the practice of requisition. Its technical term in Greek was *angareia* (ἀγγαρεία, ἀγγαρεύω). In principle, it meant local help with transportation, as the Latin cognate *vehiculatio* expresses. Jonathan P. Roth explains, “Both animals and drivers, including slaves, freedmen and free persons were requisitioned for such duty. The Roman army also routinely requisitioned civilians to carry supplies.”<sup>39</sup> Demanding *angareia* was allowed for state officials. Soldiers could practice it only with an official permit, but in reality this limitation was just theoretical. Soldiers often exercised requisition without any permit. They could confiscate clothes, foodstuff for men and animals, firewood—practically anything. *Angareia* also made it possible to commission local people or their animals. The latter could be returned or not.<sup>40</sup> Fuhrmann notes that “the very

34 Campbell 2002, 88; Fuhrmann 2012, 8, 91, 119.

35 Isaac 2000, 269–282.

36 Fuhrmann 2012, 10.

37 Davies 1989, 56–57.

38 Hobbs 2001, 334–335.

39 Roth 1999, 110.

40 Rostovtzeff 1971, 381–388; Wink 1988, 215–218; Davies 1989, 51; Isaac 2000, 282–297. A picture of *angareia* is presented in a funeral stele (Rostovtzeff, plate LXXIV). *Angareia* or *vehiculatio* was officially different from *annona* (grain provisions) and taxation.

expansion of military policing increased soldiers' abuse of civilians, evident in several sources." Emperors tried to limit the malpractice in vain.<sup>41</sup>

The work compelled of the people is exemplified by Simon of Cyrene, whom the soldiers forced (ἀγγαρεύουσιν) to carry Jesus' cross (Mark 15:21; cf. Matt. 27:32). In the Sermon on the Mount, not only did Jesus exhort his followers not to resist *angareia*, but to do even more than was required (Matt. 5:41). The alternative that Jesus rejects is a scuffle (i.e., "if anyone strikes you ..." in Matt. 5:39). *Angareia* is described in a lively manner by Apuleius in *Metamorphoses*. The main character of this comic novel is Lucius, who is transformed from a man into a donkey and tells about his adventures. Once, being in the possession of a gardener, he met with a soldier who was clearly doing what I call *angareia*.<sup>42</sup> The soldier says to the gardener that he needed the donkey. He took it by the halter and would have taken it away if the gardener had not started to beg and finally fight. The soldier was overcome, and to avoid further battery he feigned death. The gardener fled and hid himself with the donkey (Apuleius, *Metam.* 9.39–40). Overcoming a soldier may have been an exceptional case, of course. Juvenal reports the advantages of being a soldier as follows.

First, let's deal with the advantages shared by all soldiers. Not the least of these is that no civilian will have the nerve to beat you up. Instead, if he gets beaten up himself, he'll pretend he wasn't, and he won't be eager to show the praetor his teeth that have been knocked out, or the black lump on his face with the swollen bruises, or the eye he still has, though the doctor isn't making any promises.

Juvenal, *Sat.* 16.7–12; trans. BROUND, LCL

Epictetus shares general wisdom about the right attitude to express when a soldier might require a donkey: "If it be commandeered (ἂν δ' ἀγγαρεία ᾖ) and a soldier lay hold of it, let it go, do not resist nor grumble. If you do, you will get a beating and lose your little donkey just the same" (*Disc.* 4.1.79; trans. Oldfather, LCL). Roth claims that Epictetus' advice "was sound common sense for provincials wishing to avoid bodily injury."<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, *Didache* 1.4 seems to share Epictetus' pessimism. The passage roughly follows Matthew 5:38–41 with its reference to *angareia*. There are small differences, however; of

41 Fuhrmann 2012, 11, 159–161. See Pollard 2000, 85; Fuhrmann 2012, 133–134, 232–237.

42 There is no technical term for *angareia* in the story, either in the Latin or in the Greek version of it (Ps.-Lucian, *Asin.* 44–45). One may also note that before entering Jerusalem in a kingly fashion, even Jesus seems to have practiced something like *angareia*, commanding disciples to take a donkey and a colt with a promise of their return (Matt. 21:2–3) (see Derrett 1971, 243–249).

43 Roth 1999, 145.

these, the concluding words catch the eye: “If anyone seizes what is yours, do not ask for it back, for you will not be able to get it (οὐδὲ γὰρ δύνασαι)” (*Did.* 1.4; Trans. Ehrman, LCL). The author seemingly thinks it an impossibility to resist *angareia*.<sup>44</sup> Even in Apuleius’ story the soldier finally gets the donkey after a home search, which is based on a false denunciation by the soldier and his comrades. Later the soldier sells the donkey for eleven *denarii* (*Metam.* 9.41–42; 10.1, 13). In Apuleius’ story, *angareia* became robbery. Similar malpractices are reported frequently in the Roman sources.<sup>45</sup>

The reason for such robbery was not always pure greed. A soldier’s pay was not generous, being little more than the wages of a laborer. We have information of corrupt officers who kept the pay of their men,<sup>46</sup> while pay was deducted for necessities organized by the troops. Furthermore, the pay of auxiliary troops was less than that of the regular army.<sup>47</sup> So, what Sirach complained about some centuries earlier could indeed have been true: “a warrior in want through poverty.” Interestingly enough, Sirach did not view soldiers with contempt, comparing the poor soldier with “intelligent men who are treated contemptuously” (Sir 26:28). Percennius, a rebellious soldier under Emperor Tiberius, also provides an impression of the difficulties a soldier could encounter. According to Tacitus, he lamented the following iniquities:

In fact, the whole trade of war was comfortless and profitless: ten asses a day was the assessment of body and soul: with that they had to buy clothes, weapons and tents, bribe the bullying centurion and purchase a respite from the duty.

Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.17; trans. JACKSON, LCL<sup>48</sup>

44 The meaning of the words οὐδὲ γὰρ δύνασαι have been under discussion and some scholars prefer textual emendation. Niederwimmer (1998, 79), however, considers the meaning to be obvious: “Let yourself be robbed, because you cannot really defend yourself, no matter what!” I would like to add that the robbery may be *angareia*—at least if we look at the textual context, which explicitly speaks of *angareia*.

45 Campbell 2002, 91–92. Zeichmann (2019, 47) also notes these practices, although he strangely misunderstands what Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:7: “Who at any time pays the expenses for doing military service (τίς στρατεύεται ἰδίοις ὀψωνίοις ποτέ)?” According to Zeichmann, Paul suggests that soldiers do not spend money earned in their service (ὀψώνια). Yet, as the parallel examples in the same verse (planting a vineyard and tending a flock) show, Paul must have thought that soldiers used the money earned in their service for their subsistence. Indeed, this was the normal practice in the army. What Paul denies is that the soldiers should cover their subsistence by any “own money” received outside of their service.

46 Isaac 2000, 273; Williams 1999, 244 n. 156.

47 Pollard 2000, 179–182.

48 The rates of the payment varied considerably during the course of the empire, depending on costs and circumstances. See, e.g., MacMullen 1963, 155–156; Campbell 2002, 83–89.



Tacitus describes how respite from duty laid an economic burden on the shoulders of the rank and file. No one cared how the soldiers got their money. Tacitus continues: “In reality, it was through highway robbery, petty thieving, and by menial occupations that the soldiers purchased rest from military service” (Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.46; trans. Moore, LCL).<sup>49</sup>

These miseries were just one side of the coin. There were also advantages to be had in the Roman army, which drew one to enlist. No laborer could dream of a contract for 25 years, complete with medical care, a pension, and Roman citizenship.<sup>50</sup> The prevalence of voluntary recruitment surely attests to the fact that the average soldier was content with his occupation,<sup>51</sup> and the opportunities for some extra income via private *angareia* probably helped with this contentment. But it was for this very reason that a soldier encountered tensions with the local population of the area.

### 1.1.3 Positive Relationships between Soldiers and Civilians

The tension between soldiers and local people is only one part of the picture. At the same time, one has to recognize that the army recruited soldiers from around a vast empire, and these recruits were not necessarily brought from their original home area.<sup>52</sup> In such cases, the tensions with local people were lighter. Another factor that lessened tension was marriages made with local women (see, e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.80). Until Septimius Severus, who reigned in 193–211, Roman soldiers were forbidden by law from contracting a marriage; in practice, however, concubinage was common and widely tolerated. The ban on marriage caused perpetual problems, since the status of a soldier’s child was that of a bastard, making it impossible to be an heir of the father. For soldiers, the unofficial status of family ties was hard to accept and there were attempts to reduce the obstacles caused by the ban on marriage. For instance, families settled close to the garrisons.<sup>53</sup>

Among the auxiliary troops, marital unions were acknowledged. After twenty-five years of service, an auxiliary and his family received Roman citizenship,<sup>54</sup> and centurions of the auxiliary troops were often citizens already during their service. The soldiers of vassal rulers were also free from the marriage ban. For example, Herod’s soldiers could have families. I will later discuss

49 Sometimes soldiers simply changed career from the military to robbery (Kloppenborg 2009, 469–471).

50 Campbell 2002, 34.

51 Davies 1989, 68.

52 Pollard 2000, 115, 132, 133; Campbell 2002, 25–32.

53 Campbell 1978, 153–159; Campbell 2002, 96–97; Kyrzhenko 2014, 168–170.

54 Saddington 1996, 2411.

the case of the centurion in Capernaum, which was under Herod's rule, but I note here that according to Matthew (8:6) he had a son (as we should translate the word *παῖς*).<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Fuhrmann supposes that soldiers who were detached from their legions and given posts among civilians created more or less lasting relationships with local women. This is the social background of Celsus' claim that Jesus was a son of a soldier called Panthera.<sup>56</sup>

Though one should not exaggerate the economic effects of the army, its presence surely stimulated trade.<sup>57</sup> Supplying the army did not happen only through requisition, but also via the open market. If soldiers had wealth, they could take part in business, contract debts, or lend money. A document from the Judean desert dated 124 CE reveals that a centurion in the camp of En Gedi lent money to a Jewish owner of a local palm grove,<sup>58</sup> thus showing the economic resources of centurions. In the early first century CE, centurions earned about fifteen times the salary of a legionary. This does not mean, however, that centurions were from wealthy families. While the rank and file came from low social backgrounds, the centurionate was socially heterogeneous. Centurions were in the main the most experienced soldiers in the army, and they were often destined to rise to more senior posts and then into the civil administration.<sup>59</sup> Service in the army was a way of climbing the social ladder.

Local communities could honor centurions as benefactors in inscriptions. For example, the people in the Syrian village of Phaena thus distinguished a centurion as "friend and benefactor."<sup>60</sup> Sometimes centurions acted as judges.<sup>61</sup> Centurions were often asked for help in situations that were officially not their tasks,<sup>62</sup> and Richard Alston has illustratively described the confidence which local people could feel toward them. Soldiers could act on behalf of locals in legal cases or present petitions to the emperor, representing the population. In addition to the official cult, they could also worship diverse deities, including local ones.<sup>63</sup> John F. Shean writes on the cult of local deities:

55 Luz 2001, 10 n. 17; cf. John 4:46. Saddington (2006) shows that the meaning of "boy love" is anything but evident. Later I will address the historicity of the story.

56 Fuhrmann 2012, 229–230.

57 MacMullen 1963, 90–95; Pollard 2000, 182–191; Campbell 2002, 92–96.

58 Campbell 2002, 100. For a close reading of the document, see Oudshoorn 2007, 156–168.

59 Wegner 1985, 61–63; Campbell 2002, 32–33, 41, 103; Fuhrmann 2012, 242.

60 Pollard 2000, 88.

61 Pollard 2000, 94.

62 Alston 1995, 86–96. The evidence is from Egypt. See also Kyrychenko 2014, 86–89.

63 Helgeland, Daly, and Burns 1981, 48; Campbell 2002, 100.

In the course of moving from one area of the empire to another, a soldier was conscious of the fact that he could encounter and unwittingly offend various local spirits who were unknown to him but, nevertheless, could potentially harm him out of pique. To ensure peace-of-mind, soldiers recently arrived at a new, alien post would set-up altars to the *genius loci* ('spirit of the locality'), a generic term used by Romans for any unknown spirits in a given area, however, those spirits already known by name would be directly addressed.<sup>64</sup>

One should not overestimate, however, the attraction of the local deities among the soldiers. Pollard's analysis of the archeological evidence shows only limited partaking by soldiers in the local cults.<sup>65</sup> Of these, there are some dedications to local deities. For example, a former centurion of Moesian extraction offered to the Phoenician god Baetocaece.<sup>66</sup> Shean points out that centurions belonged to the itinerant officer corps; often changing posts actively, they became acquainted with numerous deities and were the most open to new ones.<sup>67</sup> In this context, the picture of the centurion who had funded a synagogue in Capernaum is credible (Luke 7:4), as is Cornelius the centurion, called a God-fearer (Acts 10:2); of course, this does not prove the historicity of these accounts.<sup>68</sup> There were also Jewish soldiers in the imperial army.<sup>69</sup> From this economic and religious background, Shean concludes:

From the point of view of the church soldiers, especially officers, would have been too attractive from a sociological perspective to reject out of hand considering the important role of the Roman military in imperial society. Roman army officers were a positive asset due to their leadership skills and their financial resources. They also would have been amenable to taking up the faith given their proclivity to be religious innovators.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, soldiers in the world of the early Christians were doing something that today is called police work. Because the army attended more to the interests of the Empire than to the population, the latter could feel the army as a

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64 Shean 2010, 39.

65 Pollard (2000, 142–149) points out that there were three dimensions in the religiosity of the soldiers: state cults, unofficial military cults (like that of Mithra), and local cults.

66 Pollard 2000, 148.

67 Shean 2010, 41.

68 See Shean 2010, 139–140.

69 Schoenfeld 2006.

70 Shean 2010, 141.

threat. At the same time, there were also traces of more positive interaction. This twofold experience of soldiers comprises the context of that described by the early Christian sources (all early Christian authors seem to have been civilians). These give voice to encounters with soldiers which were both positive and negative. The accounts do not necessarily include any principled comments on pacifism, conscientious objection, military service, just war, or other moral matters that interest many modern scholars. The accounts mirror more the civil experience of soldiers in their everyday life. The image of centurions presented in the ancient sources is quite often better than that of the rank-and-file men. Although there are exceptions to this general rule, I claim that this division is decisive for our understanding of the attitudes toward soldiers in the gospels.<sup>71</sup>

While I do not mean to deny that the sources can also include more principled views, one should be careful not to search too hard for a moral statement in any verse referring to soldiers. The sources are primarily an echo of the diverse social experience. What Mark says about soldiers is partly colorless, partly negative, and partly positive. One cannot find traces of any principled view, for instance. Matthew strengthens the ambiguity between good and bad soldiers, but the value judgments do not seem to mirror any judgment on having a military calling as such, though scholars usually tend to think so. Luke whitewashes the dark side of the soldiers. Compared with Matthew, Luke has a more positive picture, which becomes even clearer in Acts. Regarding John, his comments on soldiers are limited to the Passion narrative, not appearing elsewhere. Among the gospels, John seems to have the most negative attitude toward soldiers. The *Gospel of Peter* offers an interesting development of the gospel tradition; in a story that is parallel to that in Matthew, soldiers are mentioned at the tomb. It is noteworthy that Matthew paints a very negative

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71 See Fuhrmann 2012, 231. Brink (2014, 139) claims that the picture of centurions was less favorable than I claim. First, her examples from Tacitus speak of the relationship between centurions and the rank and files. I have cited a similar example above. My aim is to speak of the relationship between centurions and civilians. Second, Brink refers to Juvenal's *Satires* 16, which I also cited above. This text speaks of the bullying rank and file defended by a centurion judge. The centurion is just a side figure, but he admittedly acts against the civilian. Certainly centurions also acted negatively, but it is less frequently noted than Brink claims. Actually, Brink (2014, 74–77) herself notes that centurions also had quite a good reputation and refers, for example, to Alston's study, which I have also cited. Third, a negative picture of centurions reflects an upper-class and intellectual view, because the literary sources come mostly from that background (see Zeichmann 2019, 44). I will show later that early Christian theologians belonged to that social group, for whom military issues were quite unattractive.

picture of the soldiers in this story, but the *Gospel of Peter* changes them into positive figures.

## 1.2 *Soldiers in the Gospels*

### 1.2.1 Military Characters in Mark

Mark mentions soldiers in four passages. Two of them are unique, as soldiers are not mentioned in the parallel stories of the other gospels. The first is the story of the death of John the Baptist (Mark 6:21–29), which is retold by Matthew (14:6–12) and briefly noted by Luke (9:9) without mentioning soldiers. Mark mentions soldiers twice, initially the ranking officers (χιλίαρχοι) among the guests and then the *speculator* (σπεκουλάτωρ), who beheads John in the prison. The latter term is a Latin loanword in Mark, which can mean a scout, bodyguard (δορύφορος) or legionary in the staff corps who was also responsible for executions.<sup>72</sup> These soldiers in Mark's story are just extra characters. The officers included among the other exalted guests in Herod's banquet are just there to add color to the high society around the tetrarch.<sup>73</sup> The *speculator* carries out Herod's command. Neither Matthew nor Luke mentions these extra characters, about whom Mark has nothing more to say. Yet, we must note that although these soldiers are quite colorless, from the evangelist's point of view they belong to a remote environment, that is, to Herod's court. Mark seems to have no closer relationship with the soldiers.

This is also the impression given by the synoptic apocalypse. It does not even mention soldiers, though it speaks of wars. Wars are the basic elements of an apocalyptic vision of the future: "When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Mark 13:7–8). Nevertheless, the outbreak of wars is far beyond the power of Christians, and the wars are encountered with simple perseverance as are all the other eschatological sufferings: "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13). In this vast apocalyptic vision, soldiers as persons disappear from sight: wars like earthquakes and famines are powers independent of human agency. In the story of the death of John the Baptist, soldiers are just tools in Herod's hand. It is a question of Herod's and his wife's agency, not that of the soldiers. Therefore, Matthew could easily leave soldiers out of his version.

72 Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011, σπεκουλάτωρ; Lewis and Short 1969, *speculator*; Saddington 1996, 2413; Fuhrmann 2012, 193; Kyrychenko 2014, 32.

73 Verbally χιλίαρχοι are leaders of 1000 men. "It may not mean more than 'senior officer' in this context" (Saddington 1996, 2413).

Raymond Hobbs, who has studied the soldiers in the gospels from a social-scientific point of view, thinks that Mark mirrors the threat felt by the rural people vis-à-vis the urban environment and its soldiers. Hobbs adds that the strategies for dealing with this threat vary from outright rebellion to apathetic non-involvement.<sup>74</sup> If one follows Hobbs' distinction of the strategies, one must conclude that a colorless or non-existent depiction of soldiers expresses the apathetic strategy. However, the gospel does not primarily mirror the Palestinian rural viewpoint—as Hobbs seems to think—but Mark's own (urban?) environment.<sup>75</sup> The story of John the Baptist's death presents Herod as a slightly sympathetic figure, who vaguely believes in John's message but is compelled to follow the will of his capricious wife. Thus, one cannot depict Mark's story as a black-and-white opposition between urban nobility and rural peasants. The story of John's death is more of a glance into the exotic but somewhat dangerous feasts of high society. Ranking officers and bodyguards belonged to this environment, which was remote from the author and his readers.

Besides the soldiers at Herod's feast, there are two other soldiers mentioned in Mark. In the Passion narrative, he depicts soldiers twice. First, there are the soldiers who mock Jesus (Mark 15:16–20), take him to Golgotha (15:20–22), and then crucify him and two robbers (15:23–27). Mark clearly describes the soldiers in a brutal light. After Jesus' death, a centurion makes a Christian-sounding confession: "Truly this man was God's Son!" (15:39.) A little later, the centurion corroborates to Pilate that Jesus is really dead (15:44–45). The reader may see an inconsistency between the behavior of the rank-and-file men and the confessing centurion. How could Mark describe soldiers in such a different light so close to each other? Or to ancient eyes was there any clear difference between them? Hobbs reminds us not to read our modern values into the story and criticizes the imposition of hasty moral judgments on the mocking soldiers:

They were, states Hagner, "rough men" and "immature" (Hagner 2.829–832). Similarly Lane (Lane 559) characterizes this whole episode as an "impious masquerade," reflecting a "perverted sense of humor" on the part of the soldiers. The presuppositions of these judgments are, of course, modern and western. Such roughness and "immaturity" is expected of soldiers, and quite common in their acknowledged roles in first century politics (see Tacitus, *Histories*). Soldiers in all societies are trained to do

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74 Hobbs 2001, 346.

75 Brown (1997, 161–163) discusses the place where the gospel is written. Although he leaves the location open, he is quite sure that it is not Galilee.

harm to others, and nowhere was this clearer than in the Roman army (Watson 1969). It should come as no surprise then that soldiers inflict harm in the story of the crucifixion.<sup>76</sup>

Hobbs' evaluation bears some truth: one should expect nothing but this procedure from soldiers. They behaved just as soldiers are supposed to behave. Mark describes soldiers in a way that is familiar from other ancient sources: rank-and-file men are brutal. Thus, a modern evaluation of the mocking soldiers is not as wrong as Hobbs maintains. Though the ancient people expected brutality, it is not to say that this brutality was seen as being morally neutral. The Passion narrative surely expresses that Jesus experienced something negative. Robert M. Fowler claims that the vivid portrayal of their ironic mockery of Jesus is important for our understanding of the confession of the centurion. Fowler concludes that in light of the soldiers' irony, the confession is also easy to see as an ironic one: "the centurion utters the last of all the mockery committed by the soldiers and the passersby." Noting that the centurion sees the death of Jesus and the curtain of the temple being torn in two, Fowler asks rhetorically: "Why should we be surprised if he mocks the demise of both with cruel, insincere flattery?"<sup>77</sup>

Fowler's conclusion rests on the supposition that the centurion shares the brutality of the rank-and-file men. This presupposition can be questioned on the basis of the ancient point of view, however. As the picture of centurions was much more positive than that of the rank-and-file men, one should not be surprised by the different attitudes. Actually, it is noteworthy that Mark seems to differentiate the centurion from the rank-and-file men in his narrative. As Fowler says, the centurion is probably thought to be in charge of the execution squad,<sup>78</sup> but he is not visible when the rank-and-file men mock Jesus, bring him to Golgotha, and put him on the cross. It is as if the rank-and-file men execute Jesus without supervision. They do the dirty work, while the centurion enters into the story to utter the Christological confession. Contrary to Fowler's supposition that the centurion is as brutal as the rank-and-file men, the ancient reader would have expected more civilized behavior from the officer. This is also what Mark seems to tell us. Fowler points out that the readers have "almost universally" understood the confession of the centurion as "the grand denouement in the Gospel."<sup>79</sup>

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76 Hobbs 2001, 333.

77 Fowler 1991, 207.

78 Fowler 1991, 203.

79 Fowler 1991, 204.

I have here described what kind of characters the soldiers are in the Gospel of Mark. It does not, however, directly inform about any Christian soldiers in Mark's Christian community. What Mark tells of the rank-and-file men makes it improbable that there were any such soldiers in his Christian circle. If there were, they surely were centurions. At least Mark regarded it as credible that a centurion might confess Christ as the Son of God.

### 1.2.2 Ambiguous Matthew

Many readers of the Bible have seen a kernel of early Christian pacifism in the Sermon on the Mount. Even the word 'pacifist' is derived from the Latin translation of *beati pacifici* (Matt 5:9). If Matthew actually means an adherent of pacifism, it would be a strong value judgment, making it improbable that there were soldiers among the Matthean Christians. However, the beatitude on so-called pacifists does not make explicit what kind of peacemaking was at stake. The Greek εἰρηνοποιός is a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, but in principle it can bear overtones of making peace during war or maintaining peace in contrast to war (Xenophon, *Hell.* 6.3.4; Plutarch, *Nic.* 11.3), though not necessarily (Prov 10:10 LXX). The title was sometimes used of emperors. Cassius Dio claims that among the several superb titles that Commodus assumed, one was Εἰρηνοποιός τῆς οἰκουμένης (Cassius Dio 73.15.5; cf. 44.49.2). In this imperial use, εἰρηνοποιός shows the ideology of the *Pax Romana*, with the idea that peace was brought by the Roman army.<sup>80</sup> The character of this kind of peacemaking is famously described by the British Calgacus, who criticized Roman peace by means of the sword: "they make a desolation and they call it peace" (Tacitus, *Agricola* 30.5; trans. Hutton and Peterson, LCL). In the Jewish-Christian usage, the word 'peace' had a far broader meaning than the mere absence of war.<sup>81</sup> This also makes peacemaking a broader concept. In Colossians and Ephesians peacemaking refers to Christ unifying Jews and gentiles (Col 1:20; Eph 2:15). For James, peacemaking means shunning quarrels in social relationships, but there is also the certain metaphorical weight of warfare.

A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace (τοῖς ποιούσιν εἰρήνην). Those wars (πόλεμοι) and conflicts (μάχαι) among

80 Swartley 1996, 2311–2314.

81 Swartley (1996) shows this in his article. He also demonstrates that similar ideas were present in the ideology of the *Pax Romana*: "Clearly the *Pax Romana* was celebrated as an ideal state of affairs, a time of one worldwide Greco-Roman language and culture, a time of prosperity and order. These latter features accord with the Hebrew notion of *shalom*." Swartley continues that the situations where the subjugated peoples suffered oppression "oppose and mock *shalom*" (Swartley 1996, 2312).



you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war (τῶν στρατευομένων) within your members? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in conflicts and wars (μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε).

Jas 3:18–4:2

James, Plutarch, and Xenophon attest that the wording of Matt 5:4 may refer to the idea of making peace during war. Conversely, Prov 10:10, Colossians, and Ephesians attest to such an idea being anything but tenable. Everything depends on the textual context, where many have found a clear reference to pacifism, namely in the fifth and the sixth antitheses:

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt 5:38–48

On such words, Michel Desjardins comments: “The message found in these antitheses, if carried out, would make it virtually impossible for Christians to support war or to participate in most forms of violence, however broadly defined. This cannot be said strongly enough.”<sup>82</sup> Desjardins is not alone in this opinion,<sup>83</sup> and this is obviously why he dares to state his view without any further grounds. Gerd Theissen is more sensitive to the social context presented

82 Desjardins 1997, 42.

83 See, e.g., Cadbury 1918, 86–88; Cadoux 1919, 22–25; Harnack 1981, 66; Luz 1989 with further references.

here, which he traces back to the historical Jesus. According to him, the enemy that Matthew speaks of is a national enemy. Matthew perceived in Jesus' words an injunction against resistance in the manner of King Agrippa's speech in Josephus (*Bell.* 2.350–352). The words expressed a means to get through the bitter time after the defeated Jewish uprising.<sup>84</sup>

Theissen is right in claiming that Matthew understood Jesus' words as a way to get by. However, I would like to question his claim that they are closely connected to the post-war era. The references to a lawsuit and to lending imply that Matthew is speaking of normal peace-time activities. The reference to *angareia* presumes an encounter with a soldier, but even this does not indicate warfare; instead it deals with advice on how to get through an unpleasant situation in normal everyday life.<sup>85</sup> As I have shown, the (mal)practice of *angareia* was a well-known burden at any time and in any place in the Empire. Matthew's negative tone—he speaks of an evildoer<sup>86</sup>—merely presumes an encounter with any soldier compelling a civilian to his service.<sup>87</sup> The forbidden resistance could mean the kind of physical coercion which Apuleius describes, probably without any positive results, as *Didache* and Epictetus point out. Even the word ἐχθρός in the sixth antithesis fails to refer to warfare. It does not primarily mean a foe in war, which has a word of its own (πολέμιος), but rather a personal enemy.<sup>88</sup> While this differentiation is not a strict one and there are examples of ἐχθρός being used for a foe in war (e.g., Luke 19:43),<sup>89</sup> the context here, lacking any reference to war, speaks for the basic meaning.

One further point in the Sermon on the Mount should be treated: the ban on killing in the first antithesis (Matt 5:21–26). Eager to promote pacifism, Cadoux cannot but admit that in the Hebrew Bible the commandment does not cover

84 Theissen 1979, 176–180, 182.

85 Roth (1999, 110–111) notes not only the word ἀγγαρεύω, but also the Latin loanword μίλιον (Lat. *mille*). He continues by saying: “In first-century Palestine, a Latin loan-word in such a context strongly suggests the ‘whoever’ in this case represents a military officer. The army was practically the only Latin-speaking Roman institution encountered by common people in Palestine at that time.” Roth speaks as if the Greek text would transmit Jesus' actual words, although the gospel is written later and possibly not in Palestine.

86 See Weaver 2005, 111. It does not matter here if the Greek τῷ πονηρῷ actually is masculine (as the NRSV understands) or neuter (when it should be understood as evil in an abstract and general sense). In both cases, Matthew is describing negative encounters.

87 Brink (2014a, 117) rightly notes that even some civilians could practice *angareia*. This leads her to an unusual interpretation. According to Brink (2014a, 124–126), the text should be understood metaphorically, referring to the load the scribes and the Pharisees put on others. In reality, *angareia* was usually associated with soldiers. Because nothing indicates civilians practicing *angareia*, one should read the common association.

88 This is attested to by Ammonius in his dictionary (*Diff.* 208) from the 1st or 2nd century.

89 Cadoux 1919, 23 n. 1.

war, as the word רצח never means killing in the context of military engagements. However, he hastens to add that the Greek φονεύω does mean any type of killing, including killing in war, and that Jesus extended the meaning of the commandments of the Torah.<sup>90</sup> While this is true, Jesus (as presented by Matthew) extends the meaning of the commandment only in personal relationships: even anger and verbal insults should be counted as killing. There is no hint of war in the antithesis, and I cannot see any intimations in this direction. I thus conclude that the Sermon on the Mount does not bear pacifistic overtones. In this sense it does not speak against the possibility that soldiers belonged to the Matthean community. On the other hand, the implied audience of the Sermon on the Mount consisted of civilians who had to cope with the (mal)practice of *angareia*. The evangelist gives no advice to soldiers, who are counted as evildoers. Soldiers are evil others for Matthew, though for different reasons than the pacifistic reading suggests. Does this negative picture make it probable that there were no soldiers among the Matthean Christians?

One should not hasten to any such conclusions. An unambiguously positive military figure can be found just after the Sermon on the Mount: the centurion of Capernaum (Matt 8:5–13). Jesus appreciates his faith, which is above all faith in Israel. The centurion is clearly prefiguring gentiles who “will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness” (Matt 8:11–12). Who is this centurion? We have to differentiate between the centurion as a possible historical person in Capernaum in Jesus’ time and the centurion as a literary figure in the Gospel of Matthew. When speaking of a historical person, we have to be aware that the Roman army was not present in Galilee in Jesus’ time when the area was under the rule of Herod Antipas. This is due to the fact that Rome did not station its own army in the client kingdoms. There is no evidence of either Roman troops or *coloniae* of veterans in this area during Jesus’ time.<sup>91</sup> If the centurion is a historical figure, he cannot be a Roman. Actually, both Matthew and Luke (the other evangelist reporting on the centurion) only assume that the centurion is a gentile.<sup>92</sup> They do not claim that he is a Roman soldier.

Mark A. Chancey has helpfully analyzed the passage on the centurion in Capernaum. He notes that the Greek word behind the English ‘centurion’ is not the Latin loanword *κεντυρίων* (cf. Mark 15:39, 44–45), but dependent on reading *ἐκατοντάρχη* or *ἐκατόνταρχος*. Though all these words can be used as

90 Cadoux 1919, 21–22.

91 Chancey 2002, 53–54; 2005, 47–50, 53; Sanders 2002, 9–13.

92 Saddington 1996, 2413.

equivalents, there are also differences in their usage. The words *ἐκατοντάρχης* and *ἐκατόνταρχος* are also used for non-Roman commanders in Josephus and the Septuagint (e.g., Exod 18:21; Num 31:14).<sup>93</sup> Chancey concludes: “In short, the gospels themselves do not present the centurion at Capernaum as the commander of Roman forces, and it is far more likely that he was a Herodian officer.”<sup>94</sup> It is no surprise that the centurion is a gentile. Antipas’ father, Herod the Great, recruited troops from the gentile areas of his kingdom; his bodyguards consisted of Gauls, Thracians, and Germans. It is probable that Antipas also had foreign forces.<sup>95</sup> What, then, might have been the tasks of a centurion in a fishing village like Capernaum? The presence of a centurion does not indicate any large-scale military troops. The number of soldiers in the command of a centurion could be more or—probable in this case—less than one hundred. As we have seen, centurions had tasks in the local administration. Possibly the centurion in Capernaum was coordinating or safeguarding the toll collection in the nearby border region between Antipas’ and Philip’s territories.<sup>96</sup>

So much for the possible historical person. Primarily here we can discuss a literary person presented in the gospels. Matthew (or Luke) was conscious of the fact that Galilee was under Antipas’ vassal rule during Jesus’ lifetime. The changes in the government were rapid after Antipas’ reign. Galilee continued to remain under the Herodian dynasty for a couple of years, but then fell to the governance of the Roman procurator (Josephus, *Bell.* 2.183, 247). These later circumstances may be reflected in the story which Matthew found in the Q document. Matthew may or may not be thinking of a Roman soldier. In the last analysis, the answer is quite unimportant. Concretely belonging to the Herodian or Roman army seems to make no difference to Matthew.<sup>97</sup> For him, the centurion is just one person whom Jesus encounters. He lives among civilians like the *centuriones regionarii* (ὁ ἐκατόνταρχος ἐπὶ τῶν τόπων) did. From circa 100 CE we have information of this kind of centurionate, whose task was mostly policing. At least in one case a *centurio regionarius* received praise from the local authorities of the community.<sup>98</sup> It is possible that Matthew (and Luke) thought of the centurion in Capernaum as a *centurio regionarius*. Thinking about this happening at the time of the writing of the gospel, this is certainly within the limits of possibility.

93 Chancey 2007, 52.

94 Chancey 2007, 55.

95 Chancey 2007, 51–52.

96 Chancey 2007, 54–55.

97 See Fuhrmann 2012, 232; Brink 2014, 137.

98 On the *centuriones regionarii*, see Fuhrmann 2012, 222–224.

From Matthew's point of view, the centurion's profession does not seem to pose a problem. Cadoux is not convinced, however. He points out that it is an argument from silence to claim that a military profession is acceptable.<sup>99</sup> True, there is no explicit approval of a centurion's profession. However, in this case, the argument from silence has a certain weight. The centurion is clearly an exemplary figure. Could he still be exemplary if his profession were dubious? The calling of Matthew the tax collector makes for a good point of comparison (Matt 9:9–13). Tax collecting was viewed as a dubious profession, coupled with sinning (cf. Matt 11:19), and yet Matthew followed Jesus in an exemplary way. There is, however, a difference between the centurion and Matthew the tax collector: only tax collectors are paralleled with sinners. On the other hand, nothing indicates that the centurion left his post and followed Jesus, while Matthew the tax collector does. Is this an indication that the centurion was left out of the Jesus movement? Probably not. He represents the pagans eating with Abraham and the other patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven.

The centurion is presented as a good guy, while soldiers are hinted at as evil just before in the Sermon on the Mount. This ambiguity is characteristic of the gospel. The reader encounters a similar ambiguity in Matthew's Passion narrative. A whole cohort of soldiers—between 500 and 600 men!<sup>100</sup>—mocks Jesus in the most brutal way (Matt 27:27–30). Soldiers mock Jesus as a pretender, however, not as a Son of God. Their ridicule lacks all the religious overtones which are so clear in the comments of the Jewish leaders (Matt 26:59–68). This by no means mitigates the brutality of the soldiers, but it shows up as a meaningful detail when one reads the narrative that follows. After mocking Jesus, the soldiers lead him to Golgotha and crucify him (Matt 27:31–37). Bypassers deride him. The chief priests, scribes, and elders mock him. Even the two crucified bandits taunt him. There are clear religious overtones—even satanic: the phrase “if you are the Son of God” (Matt 27:40) is word-for-word the same as Satan stated earlier (Matt 4:3, 6).<sup>101</sup> Yet, the soldiers are quiet until the miracles after Jesus' death.

Suddenly the reader encounters a centurion (Matt 27:54). Before that the evangelist has told only of “soldiers” (οἱ στρατιῶται) in the Passion narrative. Like the centurion of Capernaum, this centurion at the cross represents an exemplary gentile, in opposition to the Jews who abandon Jesus. He and “those with him”—seemingly the rank-and-file men under his command—utter the

99 Cadoux 1919, 33–34.

100 Luz (2005, 513) understands this as an exaggeration.

101 Luz 2005, 538. This is part of Matthew's theological anti-Judaism. See further in Räisänen 2010, 268.

Christological confession that is reminiscent of the confessions of the disciples (cf. Matt 14:33; 16:16).<sup>102</sup> The narrative points toward the idea that soldiers can be Christians. They represent gentiles, who can be accepted into the Christian community. In this theological structure their profession is a secondary issue. There is no particular statement on the military profession. Yet, we can again point to what Cadoux falsely discounted as the argument from silence: if these gentiles can prefigure gentile Christianity, then their profession is no stumbling block.

Matthew found the mocking soldiers and the centurion at the cross in Mark. Matthew gave to these figures a distinctive theological role, making two small changes to Mark's story. First, he adds that even the rank-and-file men uttered the Christological confession, while in Mark this was done only by the centurion. Second, Matthew leaves out of his story Mark's account of a centurion who *ex officio* confirms Jesus' death (Mark 15:44–45). The latter change has no theological weight; it makes the narrative sleeker, as the centurion plays just a technical role in Mark's story, for the agency is in Pilate's hands. The former change, however, cannot be explained as a streamlining of the narrative. The centurion says the essential thing. Why did Matthew make "those with him" join in the Christological confession? The most natural explanation is Matthew's theological agenda regarding Jews and gentiles, which becomes visible when this account is compared to the account of the centurion in Capernaum. When presenting the centurion in Capernaum as an example, Matthew gives a lesson on two groups: "many will come from east and west" (i.e., many gentiles), but "the heirs of the kingdom" (i.e., Jews) are thrown out (Matt 8:11–12). In the Passion narrative, he again presents two groups, Jews and gentiles, with their different relationships to Jesus. The centurion at the cross is not the sole gentile to confess Jesus as the Son of God.

If this was all that Matthew said of soldiers, it would be quite probable that soldiers were welcome to join the Matthean community. The picture, however, becomes more ambiguous because of the epilogue of the resurrection story, which is probably Matthew's own invention.<sup>103</sup> Here soldiers remind of dark figures in the gospel. First, the soldiers are like the false witnesses whom the Jewish leaders presented in the trial scene (cf. Matt 26:59–61). In

102 Luz 2005, 569–570.

103 Luz 2005, 585–587. Luz discusses Crossan's and Koester's hypothesis of the "Cross gospel," which Matthew and the author of the gospel of Peter have used. Luz regards the hypothesis as implausible and thinks that, despite some possible earlier traditions, the pericope is essentially Matthew's creation.

the epilogue, the leaders pay off the guards<sup>104</sup> of Jesus' tomb to give false testimony (Matt 28:11–15). Second, soldiers are like Judas. They take a large sum of money (ἀργύρια), like Judas taking 30 pieces of silver (ἀργύρια) (Matt 26:14–16). Third, they are counterimages of disciples. The soldiers follow the *teaching* of the Jewish leaders: “they took the money and did as they were directed (διδάχθησαν). And this story is still told among the Jews to this day” (Matt 28:15). Matthew's wording bears the clear weight of biblical language, which he otherwise uses in a positive sense (Matt 1:24; 21:6; 26:19); soldiers are counterimages for the right attitude.<sup>105</sup>

The word διδάσκω is usually translated in biblical texts by the word ‘teach.’ As the translation of the New Revised Standard Version (the verb ‘direct’) indicates, this is not the only possibility. Even a less directing tone is possible (e.g., ‘advise,’ ‘inform’).<sup>106</sup> This makes understandable the use of the verb διδάσκω here. Yet, the choice of the word becomes striking if the reader remembers that it denotes spiritual teaching earlier in the gospel (e.g., Matt 4:23; 5:2, 19; 7:29; 9:35; 13:54; 21:23). The word is even more poignant after one has read the theologically significant ending of the gospel, which follows immediately after the pericope on the bribed soldiers.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed (ἐτάξατο) them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching (διδάσκοντες) them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matt 28:16–20

104 In Greek κουστωδία, a loan from Latin *custodia*. Matthew's word choice reflects the Latin spread by the Roman army.

105 Luz 2005, 61.

106 “At first the soldier resisted and threatened to kill him with his sword, if ever he got to his feet again. As though warned by the soldier's own words (ὥσπερ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου διδάχθεις), my master chose the safest course, drew the soldier's sword and threw it a long way off, before ...” (Ps.-Lucian, *Asin.* 44; trans. MacLeod, LCL). “It was the people itself, as everybody knows, which voted for the government of the Four Hundred, being advised (διδασκόμενος) that the Lacedaemonians would trust any form of government sooner than a democracy” (Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.3.45; trans. Brownson, LCL). Cf. Liddell, Scott and Jones, διδάσκω (esp. meaning 11).

Soldiers are counterimages of Jesus' disciples. Matthew's use of the word διδασκω sketches a hazy picture of soldiers sitting at the feet of the Jewish leaders. Soldiers obey the false "mission commandment" of the Jewish leaders—and this is a conscious betrayal, as they saw the miracle at Jesus' tomb (Matt 28:4). There is no trace of the pious confession at the cross. Of course, Matthew could think that the soldiers at the cross were different persons than the guards at the tomb.<sup>107</sup> But Matthew does not indicate this. Probably he did not bother with a closer identification. However, it seems to be an intentional choice to specify the guards as soldiers. He could have presented Jewish leaders sending their own armed mob, similar to the throng arresting Jesus in Gethsemane: "a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people" (Matt 26:47). Remembering Matthew's theological agenda, it would have been logical to assign a Jewish guard to watch over the tomb. A Roman guard made up of soldiers destroys the contradiction between the Jewish and the gentile attitudes toward Jesus. Now they are both against him.

I suggest that there is no longer a need to knit into the figures of soldiers a contrast between Jews and gentiles. The theological agenda is stated openly in the mission commandment: one should make disciples of all nations (τὰ ἔθνη).<sup>108</sup> Matthew does not need believing gentiles, as it is now the *future* task to make disciples of them. This theological composition does not explain, however, why gentile soldiers are pictured as open allies of the Jewish leaders and spreaders of the anti-Christian lie. Had Matthew wanted to narratively emphasize the future task, he would have presented the soldiers as being more open to the Christian message. Now they are actively resisting it. There must be a reason that explains the negative characterization of soldiers. The answer may partly lie in the political situation. Matthew was writing in the aftermath of the Jewish war.<sup>109</sup> The Jewish nobility, including high priests and the leading Pharisees, had resisted the war and even asked King Agrippa and the Roman procurator Florus to send troops to smother the rebellion in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Bell.* 2.411–421). The uprising did not lack elements of class war between the population and the local aristocracy.<sup>110</sup> From this point of view, the high priests and Pharisees asking Pilate's assistance (Matt 27:62–66) represent nothing but the hated aristocracy allied with the Romans. If this is also Matthew's viewpoint,

107 According to Luz (2005, 570), who presents this assumption as an explanation for the ambiguity.

108 Discussing whether Jews can be considered part of the nations, Luz (2005, 628–631) inclines toward the positive. In any case, pagans belong among those who should be made disciples.

109 On the date of writing, see, e.g., Brown 1997, 216–217.

110 Brunt 1990, 272, 282–287.



he exploits the social antipathy to present all claims against Jesus' resurrection in a dubious light.

Yet, we can ask how central a factor were the social antipathies present in Palestine during the Jewish War? Matthew wrote in a post-war situation, probably outside of Palestine.<sup>111</sup> The political aspect was probably not so intense in Matthew's own social context. Another factor has a much greater explanatory force: the evil reputation of the rank-and-file men (mal)practicing *angareia*, etc. As soon as Matthew stops needing soldiers to represent the collective of gentiles, this general view becomes visible. Now they serve to cast dubious light on the Jewish leaders. One of the odd sides of the story is the fact that no leader of the *custodia* is mentioned. The soldiers at the tomb are just "guards" (οἱ τηροῦντες), like those who guarded Jesus at the cross and were led by the centurion (Matt. 27:54; 28:4). They are also called "soldiers" (οἱ στρατιώται), like those who mocked Jesus (Matt. 27:27–31; 28:12). Brutal and corrupt soldiers are ready to promote a serious lie for a bribe. No superior is mentioned, which fits well with the ancient stereotypes. The Jewish leaders thus operate with corrupt rank-and-file men; this reveals a great deal about the leaders, reflecting poorly on them.

The distinction between rank-and-file men and their superiors is seen nearly throughout the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>112</sup> Matthew follows Mark, who already made this distinction and told how the rank and file mocked Jesus, while the centurion confessed his faith at the cross. In Matthew, the exemplary centurions include the one in Capernaum and the one at the cross. No negative superiors are presented, while the rank and file perpetrate *angareia*, mock Jesus, and promote the anti-Christian lie. The only exception is the guard at the cross, but the positive representation is due to Matthew's theological contrast between Jews and gentiles, and it is not due to any overall positive attitude toward soldiers. At the end of the narrative, the rank-and-file men turn out to be what they were commonly thought to be: greedy, corrupt, untrustworthy, and, in a word, immoral.

So, were there soldiers in Matthew's community? First, contrary to the pacifistic readings, Matthew does not present any principled reason to preclude soldiers from the Christian community. The door was in principle open for soldiers, but it is another question whether any entered. As Matthew's view

111 Brown 1997, 212–213.

112 Weaver (2005, 111, 114–116, 121–122) claims that in Matthew's mind, the centurions would generally "appear to be people who inspire the same fear and hatred as their soldiers." As both of the centurions in the gospel are positive characters, I find it difficult to agree with Weaver's view of the general picture.

of rank-and-file men follows the general stereotype, this does not speak for a personal knowledge of soldiers joining the faith. In turn, the images of centurions are highly positive: they believe in Jesus. Remembering that these men just represent gentiles in Matthew's narrative, we should not read too much into their military profession. However, the profession of exemplary gentiles cannot be entirely without relevance. Matthew gets these figures or at least part of them from his sources, but they would have been more strongly rewritten had they not been acceptable. This fits well with the information of positive interactions between centurions and the local people. In sum, Matthew held the door open for soldiers, but anticipated them with an ambiguous mind. He did not foresee that brutal rank-and-file men would enter the community, and he expected more of centurions. In the narrative world, two centurions entered. This reflects Matthew's expectations of his social context, if not beyond. Most scholars assume that Matthew wrote in Antioch.<sup>113</sup> A big garrison was located there and, thus, Matthew surely had lived experiences of soldiers.

### 1.2.3 Luke's Exemplary Soldiers

In the Gospel of Luke, the reader encounters several military figures known from Matthew. However, the story is not the same. Luke does not just repeat the same stories but presents his own versions, leaving some figures unmentioned and adding a group of soldiers to the opening of his Gospel. After the infancy stories, where a heavenly army has praised God (Luke 2:13), Luke recounts the preaching of John the Baptist and tells of the reaction of the listeners, among whom one encounters soldiers present in neither Mark nor Matthew.

And the crowds (οἱ ὄχλοι) asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers (στρατευόμενοι) also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages (μηδένα διασείσητε μηδὲ συκοφαντήσετε καὶ ἀρκείσθε τοῖς ὀψωνίοις ὑμῶν)."

Luke 3:10–14

There are three groups here: crowds, tax-collectors, and soldiers. I suppose that this indicates everyday life; the crowds can be interpreted as the common

<sup>113</sup> Brown 1997, 212.

people with matters of adequate livelihood and clothing, and tax collectors and soldiers were officials met in everyday life. It is not problematic that these officials are mentioned together, because soldiers could safeguard taxation.<sup>114</sup> MacMullen vividly describes gross abuse on the part of soldiers and tax collectors.

At Mendechora, *stationarii* and *kolletiones*, threatening reports to their superiors or imprisonment, practiced a *diaseismon*, a “shakedown,” upon the whole village; nearby, nine men were imprisoned and only one released, for a thousand drachmas; a third neighboring village was loaded “with insupportable burdens, exhausted by unlimited expenses of these sojourners and for the hordes of *kolletiones* is deprived also of its baths due to its depleted condition, and deprived too of the necessities of life.”<sup>115</sup>

*Stationarii* were soldiers scattered around in minor posts, *stationes*. MacMullen describes their ill repute: “It is natural that they should have made themselves unpopular, taking the oxen from the fields, and so forth.”<sup>116</sup> In other words: they perpetrated *angareia*. The other group mentioned, *kolletiones*, were tax collectors or their helpers.<sup>117</sup> Interestingly, MacMullen describes soldiers and tax collectors in cooperation, just as Luke seems to presume. This cooperation is even philologically visible in the words *συκοφαντέω* and *διασείω*, which John the Baptist uses to refer to soldiers’ questionable activities, as such terms not only apply to soldiers but also tax collectors. Zacchaeus the tax collector uses *συκοφαντέω* to admit that he has “defrauded” people (Luke 19:8). The other verb, *διασείω*, is the semiofficial term for extortion.<sup>118</sup> Its cognate, *διασεισμός*, appears in MacMullen’s description, denoting the joint activities of soldiers and tax collectors. Luke parallels *συκοφαντέω* with *διασείω*, which is somewhat pleonastic but not unique in the ancient literature.<sup>119</sup> The verbs as such do not necessarily refer to the extortion of money or goods but the end of the

114 Nolland 1989, 150; Pollard 2000, 101.

115 MacMullen 1963, 87. The text is from the third century. The serious illegality it recounts may mirror the increasing disorder in the Empire (Fuhrmann 2012, 220).

116 MacMullen 1963, 55–56. See also Brink 2014, 169.

117 MacMullen 1963, 87 n. 38; Fuhrmann 2012, 218–220.

118 MacMullen 1963, 87 n. 38; Brink 2014, 76.

119 Brink 2014, 101. Cf. Antiphon, *De Choreuta* 43, where *σείω* and *συκοφαντώ* are used in parallel with a similar meaning, and Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011 on *διασεισμός*. Zeichmann (2019, 46) claims that *συκοφαντέω* “denoted false charges against the wealthy, evident in perusing use of the term in documentary papyri and literary texts of the period.” This is incorrect, as Prov 14:31, 22:16, and 28:3 (LXX) put “a poor one” as object of the verb.

sentence makes this meaning incontrovertible.<sup>120</sup> The verb *διασεῖω* refers to violent means of extortion, while *συκοφαντέω* alludes to false accusations. As we saw earlier, extortion and other injustices were a real threat in the Roman East. Thus, Luke 3:14—like Matthew 5:41—refers to common problematic encounters between soldiers and local people.

However, there are three noteworthy differences when Matthew 5:41 and Luke 3:14 are compared. First, Matthew speaks of *angareia*, while Luke refers most probably to soldiers' activities in taxation. This is not a large difference, as people surely felt *angareia* and taxation to be two aspects of the same burden. Second, Matthew does not make a distinction between lawful and unlawful *angareia*, both being bad without qualification. Luke refers only to clear crimes, hinting that soldiers can blamelessly fulfill their tasks. Third, Matthew sees soldiers practicing *angareia* as people one simply has to cope with, not expecting any change in them. Luke is not so pessimistic. He describes soldiers as asking guidance from John the Baptist—possibly with the intention to become baptized. Luke paints a picture of soldiers who *may* become good. This is in line with his emphasis in the gospel as whole, where repenting sinners, like Zachaeus the tax collector, are recurring figures and paradigms of real followers of Christ.<sup>121</sup> Luke's positive view of soldiers is here *in nuce*. One will encounter this positive trait also later in the gospel and in Acts.

The positive trait becomes clearly visible in the next Lukan passage on a soldier, the centurion of Capernaum (Luke 7:1–10). This is no surprise after one has noted the general tendency in ancient texts to depict centurions positively. As we have seen above, the common people could feel some kind of trust toward centurions, who often had economic resources. While in the Matthean parallel the centurion of Capernaum is exemplary, Luke's centurion is even more so. Laurie Brink says that the evangelist characterizes him in encomiastic terms.<sup>122</sup> In Luke's version, the centurion never meets Jesus but communicates with him via Jewish elders and friends. The elders praise the centurion as a wealthy benefactor in the local community.<sup>123</sup> He is clearly not a Jew (7:9), but he “loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.”

120 The NRSV speaks only of extorting money. This is possibly due to translating *ὀψώνιον* as ‘wages.’ Yet, *ὀψώνιον* probably means provisions in a more general sense. For the meaning of *ὀψώνιον*, see Caragounis' (1974) careful examination. He proposes the following translation for the Lukan sentence “Do not by applying violence rob anyone, nor slander anyone with a view to possible gain, and be content with your own provisions/shoppings” (Caragounis 1974, 51).

121 On Luke's interest in sinners and their repentance, see Pesonen 2009.

122 Brink 2014, 163.

123 There are examples of gentiles founding a synagogue. See Nolland 1989, 317.

The words may support the idea that the centurion is a God-fearer—whatever this means in practice. As I noted earlier, soldiers could honor local deities alongside state and military deities. Loving Israel and building a synagogue can also imply good relations with the local people.

One can question Luke's picture from a historical point of view. Can a centurion afford to build a synagogue?<sup>124</sup> Is it credible that a centurion in pre-war Galilee had such a good relationship with the local Jews? Before 44 CE, the soldiers in Galilee were Herod Antipas' men, who were known for their anti-Jewish attitudes (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 19.356–359). Could there be an exception? These questions are secondary, as I try to understand Luke's message rather than the historicity of his account. Because Luke wrote outside of Galilee after the Jewish war,<sup>125</sup> for him the centurion primarily served as a religious example for the audience of the Eastern Mediterranean area; he may have thought about a Roman soldier, which suited his political purposes.<sup>126</sup> There are examples of wealthy centurions serving as benefactors and funding local sanctuaries.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the prestigious status of the centurion in the local community is credible in light of what we know about Roman centurions. Martin Goodman notes that Jews even tried to find sympathizers of their religion in order to build useful social links.<sup>128</sup> Early Christians surely had similar goals.

In the narrative, the centurion's office and economic resources secure him a powerful status in Capernaum. He can send a Jewish delegation to represent himself, which proves his authority among the local people. Seemingly the centurion is a patron to them.<sup>129</sup> In this context the word "friends" (φίλοι) probably does not indicate equality between the friends and the centurion, but loyal relationship between patrons and clients.<sup>130</sup> What makes the centurion so exemplary is his humble attitude toward Jesus. His socially high status emphasizes the humility. While the Jewish delegation describes him as worthy (ἄξιός) of Jesus' help, the centurion claims to be unworthy: "I am not worthy (οὐ γὰρ ἱκανός εἰμι) to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume (οὐδὲ ἐμαυτὸν ἠξίωσα) to come to you" (Luke 7:6–7). The centurion is humble like the tax collector praying in the temple (Luke 18:9–14), but they are not comparable in every respect. In the story of the praying tax collector, a Pharisee

124 Wegner 1985, 257–259.

125 Brown 1996, 269–271, 273–274.

126 Kyrychenko 2014, 154–155.

127 Kyrychenko 2014, 156.

128 Goodman 1994, 87–88.

129 Moxnes 1991, 65; Hobbs 2001, 333.

130 Stählin 1974, 147, 159. Aristotle explains the several types of friendship. Among others he mentions the one between unequal persons (*Eth. Nic.* 1158b–1159a).

pairs tax collectors with thieves, rogues, and adulterers (Luke 18:11; cf. 15:1). Similarly in the story of Zaccheus the tax collector, he confesses fraud (Luke 19:8). The centurion, in comparison, bears no trace of immoral behavior. There does not seem to be anything dubious in his past or present. He is exemplary in a different way than the repenting sinners.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, even his military profession cannot be brought into question. If it was, the centurion could not be the exemplary believer, if he did not repent. Luke probably did not see any obstacles for a centurion to be a member of the Christian community.

The following soldiers in the gospel are not positive, however. In the story of Judas' betrayal, Luke adds military figures that are absent from the other gospels. These figures are officers (στρατηγοί) who appear on the side of the chief priests and the elders (Luke 22:4, 52). As the latter occurrence clearly indicates, Luke means the officers of the temple police.<sup>132</sup> One can only speculate why Luke added the officers. Possibly it has something to do with the fact that Roman soldiers are reduced in the Lukan passion story. The soldiers mocking Jesus are not Roman soldiers but belong rather to Herod's men (Luke 23:11).<sup>133</sup> The odd absence of Roman soldiers continues when Pilate reluctantly hands Jesus over—to translate it literally—“to their will” (τῷ θελήματι αὐτῶν) (Luke 23:25). Luke continues that “they” (using only verbs in the third-person plural) led him away. “They” also put the cross on Simon of Cyrene, but—and this catches the eye of the reader—Luke (23:26), unlike Mark (15:21) and Matthew (27:32), avoids the verb ἀγγαρεύω and the impression of an official procedure which that verb would give. As Jesus is brought to Golgotha, “they” even put Jesus and the two criminals on the cross. The people see what is happening and the leaders scoff at Jesus. Only after he has been crucified do the soldiers suddenly appear to mock (ἐνέπαιξαν) him (23:36).<sup>134</sup> The reader's first association

131 Pace Brink (2014, 175), who sees soldiers and tax collectors in a similar category of sinners to be exonerated by Jesus.

132 Scholars have identified them as officials in the temple (Wolter 2008, 693–694), but the textual context clearly refers to temple police. As Nolland (1993, 1030) says, “their importance is surely related to their ability to set in motion the arrest of Jesus.”

133 Luke uses the word *στράτευμα*, which does not denote a soldier explicitly but rather a group of soldiers, a military unit (cf. Acts 23:10, 27), without defining its strength (Bauernfeind 1971, 702, 709 n. 34). The plural form indicates several units, in this case surely the detachments in Herod's bodyguard.

134 The mocking soldiers offer coarse (poor quality) wine (ὄξος), which was usual among the military (Nolland 1993, 1147). It might be a merciful act, but Luke possibly had in mind Ps 68:22 (LXX), where inferior wine is offered as part of a mocking performance.

is with the previously mentioned soldiers, namely Herod's contingent, who mocked (ἐμπαίξας) Jesus.<sup>135</sup>

Who actually are the nameless "they" to whose will Pilate hands Jesus over? In the textual context they are the chief priests, leaders, and the people (Luke 23:13), who all (παμπληθεῖ) required Jesus' death (Luke 23:18). Thus, it seems as if Jesus was crucified by the chief priests, leaders, and the people (cf. Acts 5:30). This is anything but clear, however. In the *Gospel of Peter*, Herod (not Pilate!) commands people to execute Jesus, but there is no similar authorization in Luke's account. The handing over of Jesus "to their will" can actually mean that Pilate did "as they wished."<sup>136</sup> Ancient people might have thought that only Roman officials had the right to execute Jesus (cf. John 18:31). In fact, "they" indicate that the decision of execution was Pilate's responsibility, as "they" shout: "Crucify, crucify him!" (Luke 23:21; cf. 23:18). It is also quite odd that the subject of the verbs in the third-person plural is never mentioned again after Luke 23:13. It is possible that the third-person plural is used to express a more general agency. In other words, one could translate the active voice with the passive one without violating Luke's idea.<sup>137</sup> It is as though Luke does not wish to pinpoint those very persons who are responsible for executing Jesus' death sentence. There are reasons to believe that they were not what a mechanical reading of the third-person plural presumes. One could naturally accept that the executioners were the soldiers of the local prefect, but Luke carefully avoids saying this in explicit terms. When the soldiers suddenly appear to mock Jesus, their actual task there is left in obscurity. The reader easily associates them with the soldiers of the tetrarch. With regard to Jesus' death, therefore, Luke tries to obscure the role of the Romans in the shadows.

After Jesus' death, there is another military figure at the cross, a centurion who immediately praises God and confesses: "Certainly this man was innocent (δίκαιος)" (Luke 23:47). One can speculate why Luke made the centurion speak of an innocent (or righteous) man—not the Son of God, as seen in Mark and Matthew. Probably it has something to do with what Pilate said earlier: Jesus is not guilty (Luke 23:4,14,22). Similarly, the repenting criminal attests that

135 Brink (2014, 104–105) and Kyrychenko (2014, 148–149) assume that the soldiers at the cross are Romans. Both are aware of the problematic identification and mention it in footnotes. Only Kyrychenko gives reasons for his interpretation, saying that the parallel accounts and the presence of a centurion make it impossible to speak of Herod's soldiers or the temple police. I do not see why parallel accounts (in other gospels?) should rule out what Luke says or why a centurion could not serve in other than Roman troops.

136 Wolter 2008, 751.

137 Nolland (1993, 1136) speaks of Luke's grammatical carelessness. See also Smyth 1984, 259 (§ 931d).

Jesus has been unjustly condemned. Pilate, the centurion, and the repenting criminal make the same claim regarding Jesus' blamelessness.<sup>138</sup> As the repenting criminal is clearly a paradigmatic figure for Christians,<sup>139</sup> one can assume that the centurion is of the same type. At the cross, the reader of Luke's gospel encounters again the ancient dualism commonly seen between rank-and-file men and centurions. The former mock Jesus, while the latter is a more positive figure. Earlier in the passion narrative the officers of the temple police are negative figures, but this is because they assist Jesus' opponents. The different evaluations of military persons depend on their status or their task, not on their profession as soldiers per se. Here the modern scholarship usually strays, arguing for acceptance or rejection of the military profession. For Luke the problem seems not to be soldiers as such, but *unjust* soldiers. As an ancient person, he tended to think of rank-and-file men in those terms, but believed that even they could become just (Luke 3:14).

It will suffice to make a few short comments on soldiers in Acts, which support my observations on the gospel. First, the temple police are hostile to Christians (Acts 5:23–26), as in the gospel. Second, there are soldiers who are just doing their work and are mainly extra figures (24:22–23; 27:1, 11, 31–32; 28:16). For example, Herod's soldiers guarding Peter in prison emphasize the miracle.<sup>140</sup> Peter succeeds in escaping while the guards are sleeping, which leads to their execution for lack of vigilance (Acts 12:6–19).<sup>141</sup> Third, in Acts, Roman soldiers are mainly described in a positive light. One may surmise that Luke's positive attitude toward Roman soldiers can already be seen from their absence in the passion story in the gospel. The third point deserves more attention. Roman soldiers protect Paul against the Jews (Acts 21:31–40; 22:24–29, 30; 23:10, 15, 17–35), and Luke finds only minor faults in them. Julius the centurion “treated Paul kindly,” but makes the mistake of not believing Paul's weather report (Acts 27:3, 11). Later he protects Paul and other prisoners against guards who wanted to kill them, fearing their escape (Acts 27:42–43)—a very understandable reaction on the part of the soldiers (cf. Acts 12:19). Otherwise, Paul almost always engaged with members of high society (e.g., Felix, Festus, Agrippa) and the *tribunus cohortis* (ὁ χιλιάρχος τῆς σπειρής) (cf. Acts 21:31), the leader of the Roman troops in Jerusalem.<sup>142</sup> Paul is brought to Ceasarea in the custody of a mixed unit of infantry and cavalry. Luke even states the

138 Brink (2014, 171) notes only Pilate and the centurion.

139 Syreeni 1991, 47–49; Pesonen 2009, 215–216.

140 Barrett 2004, 579.

141 It is uncertain if Luke really means execution with the verb ἀπαχθῆναι, but it is probable in this context (Barrett 2004, 588).

142 On the *tribunus*, see Tajra 1989, 67.



strength of the force (470 men). The level of security employed to protect Paul against the Jewish conspirators clearly emphasizes his importance.

While the overall picture of Roman soldiers in Acts is positive, the value placed on Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10) is the greatest. He is probably presented as serving in the *Cohors II Italica voluntariorum civium Romanorum*, an auxiliary troop. The name of this unit indicates that it recruited Roman citizens, placing it in the superior category of auxiliary regiments. On the other hand, the name could have been an honorary title, with soldiers who were non-citizens recruited locally in the East.<sup>143</sup> These historical details have minor importance for Luke, however. Key here is that Cornelius was a Roman soldier and the first gentile Christian.<sup>144</sup> He was “a devout man who feared God” (Acts 10:2) already before his conversion. The stumbling block which Luke pushes aside in the account of Cornelius’ conversion is not his military profession, but the fact that he is not a Jew. The whole account tries to argue that a non-Jew can be a Christian. The military profession is quite inessential in the conversion story of Cornelius, as no questions are raised in terms of this.

When commenting on the stories of Cornelius and other military figures in the New Testament, Harnack claims that they “are not told in order to praise the military profession or even to suggest toleration. That they were soldiers in all these cases was of minor importance for the teller of the story.”<sup>145</sup> The last statement makes clear why Luke welcomed soldiers into the Christian community. Cornelius’ profession is of no consequence for the evangelist, who indicates toleration.<sup>146</sup> The case is so clear that even a pacifist, like Cadoux, can see it. He writes on Cornelius and the jailer (δεσμοφύλαξ)<sup>147</sup> in Philippi (Acts 16:23–34), connecting them with the soldiers who posed a question to John the Baptist (Luke 3:14):

The New Testament itself and the earliest Christian literature nowhere express disapproval of the continuance of these men—assuming they

143 Saddington 1996, 2415–2416; Kyrychenko 2014, 39–40. Brink (2014, 151–152) assumes that Cornelius was a veteran.

144 See Brink 2014, 154. Kyrychenko (2014, 164) notes that the place, Caesarea, is hardly coincidental. The city was the Roman capital in Judea.

145 Harnack 1981, 70.

146 Later Harnack (1924, 578; the previous citation is from *Militia Christi*, which was originally published in 1905) relayed that there was no problem of Christian soldiers (“eine christliche ‘Soldatenfrage’”) before Caesar Marcus Aurelius.

147 Some jailers were soldiers, but slaves and civilians were also employed to this end. The jailer in Philippi, under the *duoviri* (στρατηγοί) city authorities, heeds the commands of their *lictores* (ραβδούχοι). It seems that this jailer is a civilian. Later (from ca. 150 onwards), the city prison came more strongly under military command. For more on prison guards, see Krause 1996, 252–264.

did continue—in their calling, or of the military calling in general. It is even possible that Luke, who records these cases, as well as the conversation between John the Baptist and the soldiers, may have meant to intimate thereby his view as to the propriety of admitting soldiers to the Church without requiring them to abandon the profession of arms: and the existence even of these few cases makes it possible that from the earliest times there *may* have been soldier-converts in the Church.<sup>148</sup>

Cadoux's reserved attitude—"there *may* have been soldier-converts"—is well-grounded, as we should be cautious with the historical reliability of all the details in Acts. Scholars have justly asked whether Cornelius and the jailer in Philippi are historical figures.<sup>149</sup> But if they are not historical, the author has intentionally created them. If this is the case, their profession may not be so inconsequential, as Harnack claimed. If Cornelius is Luke's innovation, why did he choose a soldier to be the first non-Jewish Christian? Why not another gentile in Caesarea? If Cornelius is an imaginary figure, Luke's choice could attest to the fact that he at least hoped there would be soldier converts.

In sum, it is characteristic for Luke to maintain the reputation of the Roman soldiers. Herod's soldiers or the temple police are presented in a less favorable light. This distinction is seemingly based on political needs. Alexander Kyrychenko puts it as follows: "The Roman Empire in Luke's narrative is a receptive mission field, and the Roman centurion, the principal representative of the Empire, exemplifies the desired response."<sup>150</sup> Otherwise Luke presents the standard distinction between rank-and-file men and their superiors. At the very least centurions were clearly welcomed into the Christian community. This is commensurate with Mark and Matthew. While Matthew seems to have reservations regarding rank-and-file men, Luke hopes that even they can be converted, as the admonition addressed to them assumes (Luke 3:14).<sup>151</sup> In Acts, Luke also reports on a baptized soldier. Why, then, would there not have been any in his own day? Luke would have accepted them if there had been any. However, it is noteworthy that he assumes his readers to be civilians. In the synoptic apocalypse, Luke presents Christians in the midst of a war. There is no hint of Christian soldiers, but rather refugees of war: "When you see Jerusalem

148 Cadoux 1919, 228–229.

149 On Cornelius, see, e.g., Haenchen 1982, 355–362, and Barrett 2004, 491–497. One can question if Cornelius' troop was really stationed in Caesarea at that time: "It may be that circumstances prevailing at a later period were assumed to have existed at an earlier one" (Schürer 1973, 364–365). On the jailer, see, e.g., Haenchen 1982, 355–362.

150 Kyrychenko 2014, 189.

151 See Brink 2014, 175. Zeichmann (2019, 46) argues that Luke tries to put the rank and file in their place with the poor while presenting the values of the wealthy elite.

surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it" (Luke 21:20–21). If there were Christian soldiers in Luke's community, they must have been exceptions.

#### 1.2.4 John's Soldiers Fulfill Prophecies

In the Gospel of John, soldiers are like puppets on a string. They behave as God has planned, acting in a deterministic drama where Christ is to be crucified and then lifted to heaven. Soldiers appear only in the passion story. Their march to the stage is massive: a cohort (*σπειρα*) led by a *tribunus cohortis* (ὁ χιλίαρχος), come to arrest Jesus along with servants (ὑπηρέτας)<sup>152</sup> of the Pharisees and high priests (John 18:3, 12). Thus, Jews and Romans cooperate in the arrest.<sup>153</sup> The Jewish-Roman cooperation is surprising. In the story of the arrest, John refers to a Jewish plan to seek Jesus' death: Jews were afraid of the Romans and they planned Jesus' death to avoid national destruction (John 11:47–50; 18:14). Thus, the cooperation does not reflect a good or confidential relationship between Jewish leaders and Romans. Pilate will be won over to the side of the Jews only later (John 18:28–19:18). Nonetheless, a whole cohort assists in the arrest of Jesus. How can a cohort be united with Jews in this situation? The answer involves Judas: he—and no one else—"took" (λαβών) the cohort and the servants as though he were the real leader. This might be an overinterpretation of a single verb,<sup>154</sup> if one were to forget that Judas plays the part of Satan (John 13:27). Being that Satan is the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), he can recruit these massive forces against Jesus.<sup>155</sup> Still, in the last analysis, God pulls all the strings: everything happens as he has planned.<sup>156</sup>

152 Not 'police,' as the NRSV translates. It is surely possible that John is thinking about the temple police, but this is anything but clear. The basic meaning of ὑπηρέτης is a free servant as distinct from a slave servant (δοῦλος) (Rengstorf 1974, 532–533). See Brown 1970, 314.

153 Quite similarly, see Beasley-Murray 1999, 322.

154 This kind of criticism of my interpretation is quite common. For most interpreters, the verb indicates that Judas showed the way (see, e.g., Carson 1991, 577; Beasley-Murray 1999, 322). The meaning of the verb, however, requires more (see Brown 1970, 807).

155 Lindars (1972, 539–540) sees here a symbolic dimension: both religious and secular powers stand against Jesus. Theissen (1999, 203) claims that "a cohort can be commanded only by someone who has a Roman mandate" and, thus, Judas' satanic power is also the Roman power, haunted by the words "the ruler of this world." On the other hand, Hakola (2005, 205 n. 15) comments that neither John nor the other references to the devil in the Jewish or Christian sources support Theissen's interpretation.

156 On John's dualism and its relationship to his idea of God's governance, see, e.g., Hakola 2005, 197–210.

Soldiers appear again on the scene when Jews try to induce Pilate to pass a death sentence on Jesus. Pilate is reluctant and flogs Jesus; this surely means that he ordered soldiers to do the flogging (John 19:1). The flogging is an odd turn, as Pilate saw no case against Jesus (John 18:38; 19:4). Did he hope that the Jews would be satisfied with flogging only?<sup>157</sup> Be that as it may, soldiers properly humiliate Jesus: they not only flog but also mock him.<sup>158</sup> The mocking itself resembles the descriptions in Mark and Matthew and their view on soldiers. When analyzing Mark's story, I showed that the description corresponds to the normal ancient view of rough rank-and-file men. As Pilate finally assents to execute Jesus, John's story continues as if the Jews crucified Jesus. After stating that Pilate discusses with the Jews and the chief priests, John continues by saying that Pilate handed Jesus over "to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus" (John 19:16). The reader gets the impression that the Jews took Jesus. This is the impression even at Golgotha, where "they" crucify Jesus and two other men (John 19:18). I showed above that Luke possibly tried to blot out the role of soldiers. There is seemingly no similar motive behind John's story, as he later openly states that soldiers crucified him (John 19:23).<sup>159</sup> The appearance of the third-person plural in John 19:16 and 19:18 is imprecise usage and actually refers to soldiers.

After the crucifixion, soldiers appear twice to assure the reader that it is God who pulls the strings. Soldiers fulfill prophecies:<sup>160</sup>

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that is what the soldiers did.

John 19:23–24

157 Thus see, e.g., Brown (1970, 886) and Beasley-Murray (1999, 334).

158 Beasley-Murray (1999, 336) regards the mockery as "motivated by a spontaneous desire for some crude and cruel horseplay."

159 In principle, it is syntactically possible to read John 19:23 in a way that soldiers did not crucify Jesus: Οἱ οὖν στρατιῶται ὅτε ἐσταύρωσαν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἔλαβον τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ... ("The soldiers, when they (i.e. the Jews) had crucified Jesus, took his clothes ...") This translation, however, is against all probability and would be forced.

160 Brown 1970, 913.

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.” And again another passage of scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”

John 19:32–37

Everything happens according to the divine plan, and soldiers play their role, as it is written. This, however, is no positive statement regarding soldiers. All the protagonists, even the Jews striving for Jesus’ death, are part of this plan (John 11:51–52), but this does not mean that every character in the gospel is a good one. The reader cannot miss the fact that the Jews are dark characters with nefarious motives.<sup>161</sup> This is clear throughout the gospel, hitting an apex when Jesus says to the Jews: “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires” (John 8:44). Does the statement about the Jews apply also to the soldiers? Yes and no. On the one hand, in John’s dualism the soldiers fall on the side opposing Jesus, as the story of Jesus’ arrest clearly presupposes. On the other hand, one can see that soldiers are like extra figures. One can also perceive that the evangelist’s attitude toward Pilate is more lenient than toward the Jews. John lets Jesus say to Pilate: “the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin” (John 19:11).<sup>162</sup> If one were to extend any conclusion to the soldiers, it would mean that John’s attitude was similarly lenient to them.

Despite these mitigating circumstances, one must conclude that in John’s dualism, soldiers were against Jesus. Moreover, fighting is not found among Jesus’ followers: “If my kingdom were from this world (*ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*), my followers would be fighting (*ἠγωνίζοντο*)<sup>163</sup> to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). Is it possible to soften this statement by claiming that fighting is out of place *in*

161 On the Jews in John, see Hakola 2005.

162 “The one who handed me over to you (Pilate)” cannot refer to Judas, as he did not hand Jesus over to Pilate but to the Jews (Morris 1995, 705). The reference is possibly to Caiphias or to the leading Jews as a collective (Brown 1970, 878–879; Beasley-Murray 1999, 340).

163 ‘To fight’ is the only possible meaning of the verb in this context. The basic meaning of *ἀγωνίζομαι* is ‘to contend,’ especially in games. Yet, the meaning ‘to fight’ is well known, even in early documents (e.g., Herodotus). See Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011, *ἀγωνίζομαι*.

*this situation?* In other words, one would see Jesus' crucifixion as a part of the divine plan, which Jesus' followers accept without resistance, while fighting would be allowed in other situations. This is not a possible reading, however. After reading the Gospel of John to this point, one cannot miss that the "world" (κόσμος) has become an increasingly negative concept.<sup>164</sup>

In the opening hymn, the world is made by God through the *logos* (John 1:10). A little later, it is said that the world is the object of God's love. Jesus came to bear the sins of the world and save it (John 1:29; 3:17). Despite this basically positive aspect, one cannot miss the fact that there is something seriously wrong in the world. The negative trait becomes clearer as the story proceeds toward Jesus' death. It is illustrative that Jesus proclaims his victory over the world (John 16:33) as though it were his enemy (though he earlier was meant to save it!). A similarly oppositional situation is encountered when Jesus says that he does not pray for the world (John 17:9). Now it is no more the world which will be rescued, but the believers who are rescued from the world. In this context, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that fighting is something entirely negative, as it belongs to the world. Moreover, Jesus speaks of his non-fighting followers as his servants (ὑπηρέται), although the NRSV translates them as 'followers' (John 18:36). The use of the word 'servant' possibly equates Jesus' followers with those servants who came to violently arrest Jesus (John 18:3, 12).<sup>165</sup> In this light, it is difficult to imagine a soldier in a Johannine community.

This Johannine background also sheds light on the story of the royal official (John 4:46–54). This story is dependent on the same tradition as the synoptic parallels,<sup>166</sup> but John either changed the centurion into the official or he was influenced by a variant of the tradition where there was no centurion.<sup>167</sup> The choice between the two alternatives is highly speculative. However, it is worth noting that the other believing centurion of the synoptic tradition is missing from John, namely, the centurion at the cross.<sup>168</sup> One can sense the reason after reading the Johannine passion story where the soldiers belong to the world. Believing soldiers simply do not fit with John's dualistic drama. This makes it improbable that the official is a soldier; although the Greek word βασιλικός can mean a wide range of professions in royal service, including the military

164 Schnackenburg (1986, 285) sees the world in John in a more positive light than I do.

165 Morris 1995, 680 n. 85.

166 Dunderberg (1994, 74–97) supposes that John probably knew the parallel stories.

167 The centurion seemingly was present in Q (see Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg 2000, 102–117).

168 Walle (2010, 62–63) takes note of this fact, although his explanation is not very convincing. Walle thinks that soldiers represent Mithraism and, therefore, a believing centurion does not fit in the story.

ones, it is also a royally virtuous mindset.<sup>169</sup> The word βασιλικός does not make it clear that the believing person is a soldier. The official does not metaphorically refer to his power to command minions like the centurion does in the synoptic parallels. All in all, there are no positive military figures in the Gospel of John. As Jesus quite programmatically says, in contrast to the servants of the earthy kingdoms, his followers do not fight. In this, then, there is something akin to modern pacifism.<sup>170</sup> It is thus difficult to imagine a soldier in a Johannine community.

#### 1.2.5 *The Gospel of Peter*

The *Gospel of Peter* reflects an interesting development from the canonical gospel tradition.<sup>171</sup> While Luke is somewhat obscure about whether soldiers or the crowd crucified Jesus, the *Gospel of Peter* is clear: the crowd did it. Soldiers are not even mentioned in the crucifixion scene, nor before that. For example, the crowd mocks Jesus. The author's tendency is to put the blame on the Jews, while Pilate's role is diminished.<sup>172</sup> This general tendency is mirrored in the representation of soldiers, who appear only after Jesus is brought to the tomb; the Jewish elders ask soldiers to guard the grave so that the disciples will not steal his body and present a claim of resurrection (*Gos. Pet.* 8.30). The story is a variant of Matthew's version, but the role of the military is quite different here than in the Matthean version, where soldiers are bribed and liars. Paul Foster claims rightly:

While a Roman presence has been removed from the previous scenes involving the torture and execution of Jesus, it is now required as a reliable witness to the veracity of the resurrection. For this reason the author has the Jewish leaders beseech the impartial Pilate to provide the soldiers, who in narratival terms will perform the more significant role of reliable witnesses.<sup>173</sup>

169 Wegner 1985, 57–60; Dunderberg 2014, 281, 289–292.

170 “Pacifism” is surely a somewhat anachronistic expression, as John's view does not necessarily presuppose nonviolence, as modern pacifism usually does. Jesus violently expels people from the temple (John 2:13–15).

171 Some, like Crossan (1988), have claimed that the *Gospel of Peter* transmits an early tradition which is independent of the canonical gospels. Foster (2010, 119–147; see Augustin 2015, 57–109) argues convincingly that the *Gospel of Peter* is dependent on the synoptic gospels (possibly also on the Gospel of John) and that the unparalleled sections in the *Gospel of Peter* are due to the author's own creativity. The gospel has been preserved only as a fragment containing the trial, execution, and resurrection of Jesus.

172 Räisänen 2010, 272.

173 Foster 2010, 374.

This favorable view of soldiers is probably the reason why the *Gospel of Peter* tells not only of rank-and-file soldiers at the tomb, but also their leader, a centurion called Petronius (*Gos. Pet.* 8.31).<sup>174</sup> As I have repeatedly noted, centurions had quite a good reputation. A centurion at the tomb gives reliability to the witness of the soldiers. Against the canonical versions, soldiers are active in rolling the stone into its place at the mouth of the tomb (*Gos. Pet.* 8.32). Foster sees in this detail “the author’s validation of the placement of the body in the tomb prior to the miraculous resurrection.”<sup>175</sup> The author informs that the soldiers guarded it in an orderly manner in pairs, thereby proving the impossibility of a theft.<sup>176</sup> During the night, the miracle takes place. The guards see (εἶδον) two men descend from heaven and go to the reopened tomb. After seeing (ἰδόντες) this they wake up the centurion and the elders and tell what they saw (εἶδον). (*Gos. Pet.* 9.36–39). The repeated references to seeing stress the fact that the soldiers on guard duty really witnessed this miraculous event.

The author’s claim that Jewish elders were also guarding the tomb is idiosyncratic. Foster proposes three reasons, asking, “was there a perception that the Romans could be bribed to allow the theft of the body, or that they might be derelict in their duties, or perhaps the narrator simply wanted the Jewish elders present at the resurrection to illustrate how recalcitrant they had become in refusing to accept divine revelation and affirmation of Jesus as God’s messiah and son?”<sup>177</sup> The first two reasons, bribery and negligence of duties, would be credible when thinking of the general ancient view of rank-and-file soldiers. On the other hand, the narrator likes to present the soldiers as trustworthy witnesses. This is probably why there is also the centurion Petronius, unknown in the canonical tradition, at the tomb. A centurion diminishes doubts about the soldiers. The third reason Foster gives fits well with the author’s general tendency to slander the Jewish leaders. Later in the narrative, they prefer to commit a great sin before God over falling into the hands of the people (*Gos. Pet.* 11.48). The elders did this even though they saw (ὀρῶσιν) how Christ came out of the tomb (*Gos. Pet.* 10.39).

After seeing the miracle, the soldiers, the centurion, and the elders determined to report everything to Pilate. While still thinking to do this they saw an additional miracle, which made the soldiers depart quickly and tell what they had seen (εἶδον). Interestingly, the centurion seems to have stayed at the tomb.

174 Augustin (2015, 138) claims that a centurion commanding this small size of a guard is historically suspect.

175 Foster 2010, 382.

176 Foster 2010, 398.

177 Foster 2010, 415.



The author says that “those around the centurion” (οἱ περὶ τὸν κεντυρίωνα) rushed to Pilate and reported what had happened and concluded that “truly this was God’s son” (*Gos. Pet.* 11.43–45). The elders also stayed at the tomb, but later “they all came” to visit Pilate. In the text, “all” refers only to the elders, who prefer sin over being delivered into the hands of the people (*Gos. Pet.* 11.47–48).<sup>178</sup> Is the centurion alone at the tomb then? His return is not mentioned. Surely he is assumed to be present when Pilate later commands him and the soldiers. Is he the last one at the tomb, calming remaining after the “distressed” (ἀγωνιῶντες) soldiers have rushed to Pilate and the elders have also arrived there? In this case, he would be the most trustworthy witness of Christ. This is not the only solution. It is possible that Petronius is included in “those around the centurion” and thus he has returned with his soldiers. The Jews ask Pilate to command the centurion and the soldiers not to tell anyone about what happened. Pilate does as the Jews ask and commands the centurion and the soldiers to keep silent (*Gos. Pet.* 11.49). This is an odd turn of events, as Foster remarks:

With this complete media black-out on reporting the events that occurred, the author does not explain to his audience how he is able to relate this version of events. Is this simply the prerogative of an omniscient narrator, the product of divine revelation, the result of a breaking of silence by one of the observers, or do such questions rob this narrative of the impact it was intended to create for its audience?<sup>179</sup>

Foster leaves the matter open, but I am inclined to see here an intention to say that the soldiers broke the silence. Had this been otherwise, why would the author have placed so much stress on the trustworthiness of the soldiers? The author does not say that the soldiers kept the silence, which is a remarkable difference from Matthew’s version. Matthew pointedly says that the soldiers kept silent (*Matt* 28:15). As the author of the Gospel of Peter probably knew of Matthew’s version, it must have been his intentional choice not to follow it here. The figures of the soldiers and the centurion are clearly positive. There is no trace of Matthew’s ambiguity around the soldiers, and the positive image of the centurion is similar to the Gospel of Matthew. Petronius’ name is surely “due to a fascination for detail in the development of

178 Foster (2010, 448–449) supposes that the soldiers are included.

179 Foster 2010, 455.

the tradition, rather than the preservation of a historical detail.”<sup>180</sup> But naming gives more personal color and makes the figure even more positive in the readers’ eyes. The name is a reliably Roman name, which possibly hints that he is a citizen.<sup>181</sup> A centurion is again the most positive military figure—and surely not by accident. The *Gospel of Peter* just follows the standard imagery of centurions.

### 1.3 *Conclusions*

The scholarly discussion on soldiers and early Christianity is characterized in the light of modern moral discussions. The sources are often used to defend or oppose Christian participation in the military, as though there were a Christian stance on the issue. In fact, these discussions dismiss the fact that views and practices were diverse among the early Christians. Moreover, all descriptions of soldiers are not meant to be a moral judgement on the question of whether a Christian can serve as a soldier.

I showed that in the gospel material there is an important division between centurions and rank-and-file men. While this division has moral overtones, too, they are not the ones of the modern discussion on Christian ethics. Instead, they reflect the ancient stereotypes of civilized centurions and the brutality of the rank and file. One can only indirectly assume a moral stance on Christian participation in the army. If centurions are acceptable, then the military calling is not questionable in and of itself. This is what one can assume in the case of Mark, Matthew, and—most clearly—Luke. Luke openly states that soldiers must fulfill moral standards: “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages” (Luke 3:14). What comes to the fore here is that soldiers were morally criticized for their violent corruption, not for killing at war, as in the modern debates. Moreover, centurions may have had considerable economic resources, and Christians perhaps used their services. Especially Luke’s version of the centurion in Capernaum presents a picture of a wealthy benefactor—surely a proper convert. In general, the gospels speak of soldiers engaged in police work, not at war. The representation of soldiers reflects the views of civilians who encountered soldiers in their everyday life. The soldiers in the synoptic gospels are thus understandable as a part of the social setting. Only Luke seems to have clearer ideological tendencies, as the Roman soldiers contribute to his pro-Roman message, especially in Acts.

<sup>180</sup> Foster 2010, 378.

<sup>181</sup> Saddington 1996, 2414, 2414 n. 12.

As is generally known, the Gospel of John differs from the synoptics in many respects; this is also the case in respect to the soldiers represented in it. First, centurions are missing. While Matthew and Luke speak of a centurion in Capernaum, John speaks of a βασιλικός, which may or may not mean a soldier. John seems to intentionally disregard the military character as soldiers belong to the dark side in his dualism. In the Passion narrative, John even states that earthly rulers use men to fight, but Jesus does not (John 18:36). John proves that there are indeed some antimilitaristic tendencies among the early Christians.

## 2 Metaphors, Antimilitarism, and Christian Soldiers

In this section, I show that the antimilitaristic tendencies pronounced, especially within the literate class. I first look at the military metaphors. Then, I proceed to examine what Christian apologetes and other early Christian theologians have said about soldiers. Their views are well represented in the surviving literature. The views of other Christians must be read through them or on the basis of archaeological evidence. I will show that there were Christian soldiers, despite the antimilitaristic tendency among the theologians.

### 2.1 *Military Metaphors*

One encounters military issues not only in the literary persons of the gospels. What do military metaphors imply about attitudes toward the military and indirectly about soldiers in Christian communities? John F. Shean refers to the centurion of Capernaum, who presents a military analogy for his authority over those under him and Jesus' authority (Matt 8:8–9; Luke 7:7–8), Paul's military metaphors, and the patristic usage. This leads him to ask what the parlance betrays of the audience:

One can only speculate on the intended audience for such comparisons, but they may reflect the active participation of military personnel in Christian communities for whom such analogies would have had a particular resonance.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Shean 2010, 145. Helgeland, Daly, and Burns (1987) claim that there are no military metaphors in the gospels. This is apparently wrong unless we draw a straight line between metaphors and parables and count the centurion's words among the latter. Moreover, there is the parable of a king who wonders if he may engage an enemy in battle (Luke 14:31–32).

Shean acknowledges that he is only speculating. The key of his assumption is that the analogies of military life “would have had a particular resonance” among soldiers. This sounds intuitively true, but before rushing to conclusions I would like to ask whether the frequency of military metaphors makes sense in the absence of real soldiers among Christians. I will take a look at the use of the metaphors in early Christian writings and then in antiquity in general. After that I will discuss what military metaphors betray about the potential presence of soldiers among the early Christians.

### 2.1.1 Military Metaphors in Early Christian Writings

David J. Williams has helpfully collected military metaphors in the Pauline epistles.<sup>183</sup> I will neither repeat all these metaphors nor limit my survey to the Pauline material. Instead, I will present examples from this material, add examples outside of the Pauline texts and group the material into three main types. First, there are single military words or expressions used without further elaboration. Second, there are military metaphors for the inner conflict within an individual person. Third, Christian conduct is sometimes presented as military service.

Some single words in early Christian texts originally belong to the military.<sup>184</sup> For example, in the passage on the wages of sin (Rom 6:23), the word ‘wages’ (ὀψώνια) actually means payment or provisions for soldiers.<sup>185</sup> In Hebrews, there is a two-edged sword (μάχαιρα δίστομος) (Heb 4:12),<sup>186</sup> and Ignatius of Antioch says that Christ lifted up a “standard” or a “flag” (σύσσημον) (Ign. *Smyrn.* 1.2). Ignatius’ own zeal wages war (πολεμεῖ) against him (Ign. *Trall.* 4.2). These are a few examples of single words bearing a military ring. The last example leads to the second type of military metaphors, the description of inner conflict within an individual person. This is quite common in early Christian writings. Ignatius makes his point with one word, but there is a more extended version, for example, in Rom 7:23: “I see in my members another law at war (ἀντιστρατευόμενον) with the law of my mind, making me captive (αἰχμαλωτίζοντα) to the law of sin.” Polycarp claims that “every passion wages war (στρατεύεται) against the spirit” (Pol. *Phil.* 5.3; trans. Ehrman, LCL; cf. also 1 Pet 2:11). The *Letter of Peter to Philip*, which belongs to the Nag Hammadi

183 Williams 1999, 211–244.

184 Of course, it is not always clear which terms can be counted among military metaphors. For example, Gupta (2017, 27–30) discusses πίστεις. I provide only clear cases.

185 Williams 1999, 224.

186 The word μάχαιρα can also mean a sacrificial knife (Liddell, Scott, and Jones 2011, μάχαιρα). Yet, μάχαιρα δίστομος is a weapon in LXX (Judg 3:16; Prov 5:4).

library, also uses a military metaphor for the inner fight. Christian teaching is a way to fight the enemy attacks:

Concerning the fact that you are being detained, it is because you are mine. When you strip yourselves of what is corruptible, you will become luminaries in the midst of mortal people. Concerning the fact that you are to fight the powers, it is because they do not have rest like you, since they do not want you to be saved. The apostles worshiped again and said, "Lord, tell us, how shall we fight against the rulers, since the rulers are over us." A voice called out to them from the appearance and said: "You must fight against them like this, for the rulers fight against the inner person. You must fight against them like this: come together and teach salvation in the world with a promise. And arm yourselves with my Father's power, and express your prayer, and surely the Father will help you by sending me."

NHC VIII,2 137; trans. MEYER

James concludes that the war within the individual Christian is the reason for Christian in-group disputes. He also calls these disputes wars and conflicts. Thus, James develops a two-sided metaphor where the in-personal conflict is the starting point: "Those wars (πόλεμοι) and conflicts (μάχαι) among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war (στρατευομένων) within your members? You want something and do not have it, so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it, so you engage in conflicts and wars (μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε) (Jas 4:1–2; trans. slightly revised)." For James, warfare in Christian daily life is a negative metaphor. Usually it is something positive, as is the case in the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, cited above.

The positive usage is the third type of military metaphors. The author of 2 Timothy puts it in a way which later became classic:<sup>187</sup> "Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (συγκακοπάθησον ὡς καλὸς στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ) (2 Tim 2:3). This is actually not meant to describe just any Christian, only preachers. The limited usage is already present in the undisputed Pauline epistles where Paul calls his co-workers comrades in arms (συστρατιώτης) (Phlm 2; Phil 2:25). Early Christian literature also affords examples of all Christians as soldiers. This is openly stated by Clement of Rome when he is discussing the right attitude toward Jesus Christ: "Who then are the enemies (οἱ ἐχθροί)? Those who are evil and oppose (ἀντιτασσόμενοι) his will. And so,

<sup>187</sup> See Hamack 1981, 38.

brothers, with all eagerness let us do battle as soldiers (στρατευσώμεθα) under his blameless commands (προστάγμασιν)” (1 Clem. 36.6–37.1; trans. Ehrman, LCL). Clement continues by presenting imperial soldiers as a good example of Christian conduct. The metaphorical Christian army is led by Jesus as the commander-in-chief, Clement says.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is not the commander but a soldier whose willingness to sacrifice himself is exemplary. Jerome H. Neyrey has presented an illustrative array of classical texts in which the good shepherd repeats the ancient values of a noble warrior who gives his life for others (John 10:11–18) and leaves an example of right conduct.<sup>188</sup> Jesus also provides an example of heroism with his words: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:12–14). Lengthy military metaphors are found in 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Ignatius’ epistle to Polycarp. In 2 Corinthians, Paul presents the picture of a victorious battle:

Indeed, we live in the flesh, but we do not wage war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not in the flesh, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

2 Cor. 10:3–6; trans. revised

Paul presents Christians as an assaulting army that destroys the enemy base and after the battle pacifies the area by punishing every remaining foe.<sup>189</sup> The aggressive and belligerent tone is quite striking from Paul, who just previously appealed to the recipients of the epistle “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (1 Cor 10:1). A similar oddity occurs in Ephesians, where the readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace is joined with a lengthy military metaphor:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the

188 Neyrey 2001.

189 Williams 1999, 215–217.

heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand, therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Eph. 6:10–17

The background of this metaphor is quite surely found in 1 Thessalonians, which is undoubtedly an authentic epistle of Paul, even the oldest one. There Paul exhorts, “But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). One may note that the pattern illustrates the well-known Pauline triad of faith-hope-love.<sup>190</sup> Ignatius of Antioch is possibly dependent on the Pauline tradition, but he extends the tradition with concrete Latin words from the Roman military usage of his day:<sup>191</sup>

Be pleasing to the one in whose army you serve, from whom also you receive your wages. Let none of you be found deserter (δεσέρτωρ). Let your baptism remain as your weaponry, your faith as a helmet, your love as a spear, your endurance as a full set of armor. Let your works be a down payment on your wages (δεπόσιτα), that you may receive the back pay (ἄκκεπτα) you deserve.

Ign. *Pol.* 6.2; trans. EHRMAN, LCL

Cadoux notes that it was “apparently Paul who introduced this custom of drawing from the military world metaphors and similes illustrative of different aspects of Christian, particularly apostolic, life.”<sup>192</sup> This is surely right if the criterion is based on the earliest Christian documents on this practice. However, it is up to the reconstruction of the gospel material to determine if this usage goes back to the centurion of Capernaum or to the historical Jesus himself (Luke 14:31–32).<sup>193</sup> Military metaphors later became increasingly

190 Lohse 1990, 8.

191 For the Latin words and their meaning in the army, see Schoedel 1985, 276. Harnack (1981, 41) explains the presence of these technical terms with the fact that Ignatius wrote his letter during his transportation to Rome under the auspices of soldiers.

192 Cadoux 1919, 161. Cadoux seems to think that Paul is the author of Ephesians.

193 See Hobbs 1995, 271.

popular among Christians, especially in the West.<sup>194</sup> Two illustrative examples are the words *paganus* and *sacramentum*. The latter originally meant the military oath.<sup>195</sup> The former could mean a person who lives in the countryside, but it also denoted a civilian in contrast to a soldier. The military meaning seems to be the origin of the term in Christian usage.<sup>196</sup> Does this fact reflect the active participation of soldiers in the Christian communities, as Shean cautiously assumes? I do not want to hasten to conclusions. The view remains unbalanced as long as the Christian usage is deprived of its ancient context.

### 2.1.2 The General Background of Military Metaphors

Ramsay MacMullen has pointed out that certain military concepts and even slang spread from the army into common usage.<sup>197</sup> The Latin-based words *δεσέρτωρ* and *ἄκκεπτα* in Ignatius' text (*Pol.* 6.2) clearly belong to this category. However, military metaphors occur already in the pre-Roman Greek. In his article on spiritual warfare, Emonds argues that Plato is the oldest source where a military metaphor is related to human life.<sup>198</sup> Emonds notes that the metaphor in *Apologia* became very popular.<sup>199</sup>

This is in truth how it is, fellow Athenians. Wherever someone takes his stand thinking it's the best thing to do, or is posted by his commander, he must remain there, in my opinion, and face the danger without taking into account either death or anything else rather than the prospect of disgrace. So I would have done a dreadful thing, fellow Athenians, if, when the commanders whom you had chosen to lead me gave me orders both in Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, on that occasion I remained where they had posted me like anyone else and risked being killed, but when the god commanded, as I thought and assumed, that I must spend my life in philosophy and examining myself and others, I then abandoned my post because I was afraid of dying or some other difficulty. That would have been dreadful and in truth then someone would have justly taken

194 Harnack 1981, 52–61.

195 Harnack 1981, 53–55.

196 Harnack 1981, 84, 105. Harnack refers to examples in Christian and non-Christian texts, among others Tertullian's *De Corona* 11.

197 MacMullen 1963, 165–169.

198 Emonds' article was originally published in *Heilige Überlieferung. Ausschnitte aus der Geschichte des Mönchtums und des heiligen Kultes. Eine Festgabe zum silbernen Abtsjubiläum des hochwürdigen Herrn Abtes von Maria Laach Dr. theol. et iur. h.c. Ildefonds Herwegen* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung; 1938), pages 21–50. I refer to the pages of the 1963 reprint, which appears as an appendix of Harnack's *Militia Christi*.

199 Emonds 1963, 135.



me to court because I don't believe gods exist, disobeying the oracle and fearing death and thinking I'm wise, though I'm not.

Plato, *Apol.* 28D–29A; trans. EMLYN-JONES and PREDDY, LCL

Plato is not the first to use this type of metaphor, however. Referring to Cicero (*Sen.* 73), Emonds states that these kinds of metaphors must have been present in the Pythagorean sources before Plato.<sup>200</sup> Yet, Plato's words became very influential, as Epictetus shows, for example, in a context where he explicitly refers to Socrates:

You make yourselves ridiculous by thinking that, if your general had stationed me at any post, I ought to hold and maintain it and choose rather to die ten thousand times than to desert it, but if God has stationed us in some place and in some manner of life we ought to desert that.

Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.9.24; trans. Oldfather, LCL<sup>201</sup>

Emonds shows that the *topos* appears not only in Epictetus but also in Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and the writing of *De Mundo* by an unknown author (usually called Ps.-Aristotle).<sup>202</sup> The concise form is found in Seneca (*Ep.* 96.5): "Life is warfare." Marcus Aurelius follows suit (*Med.* 2.17). What comes to the versions of the military metaphors, Emonds distinguishes two types, the metaphysical or mystical metaphor and the ethical metaphor. In Plato's metaphors he sees the metaphysical version, where Socrates understands himself in a certain relationship with God. In Seneca's texts he sees a more ethical aspect, following Stoic lines.<sup>203</sup> I am not sure that Stoicism put less weight on the relationship with God. At least Epictetus and Cleanthes prove the opposite.<sup>204</sup> This also goes for the military metaphor, as proved by Epictetus' passage cited above.

200 Emonds 1963, 138. Moreover, one should bear in mind that Heraclitus spoke of natural phenomena in terms of war. See fragment 80, and possibly also 53, as explained by Kirk (1962, 238–249).

201 For similar references to this section of Plato's *Apologia*, see Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.1.19–20; 3.24.99.

202 Emonds 1963, 142–162. Emonds fails to show that the military metaphor was present in early Stoicism, though he thinks that it must have been there. The only reference he gives is Cleanthes' prayer transmitted by Epictetus (*Ench.* 53), but it is hardly clear that a military metaphor was really intended. Yet, it is without question that in New Testament times there were military metaphors in non-Christian sources.

203 Emonds 1963, 136–137, 148–149.

204 On Stoic theology in general, see Algra 2003; for Cleanthes' religion, see Thom 2005; for Epictetus' religion, see Long 2002, 142–179.

One can say fairly that as concerns the religious dimension in general, there is no lack of ancient military metaphors. In this sense, the early Christian usage is similar. There are analogies for all three types of military metaphors in Christian texts. First, there are single military words with a metaphorical meaning (e.g., Epictetus, *Disc.* 3.22.18). Regarding the second type of military metaphors, the conflict within an individual, Aristotle speaks of it with expressions closely reminiscent of Rom. 7:23. According to Aristotle, the human soul seems “to contain another element beside that of rational principle, which combats and resists (μάχεται καὶ ἀντιτείνει) that principle” (*Eth. Nic.* 1102b; trans. Rackham, LCL; cf. Plato, *Leg.* 626e). James claimed that the inner conflict in individual Christians also causes “wars” and “conflicts” (πόλεμοι, μάχαι) between Christians who covet something and do not get it without violence. This is an old theme. Plato writes: “For nothing causes us wars, revolts and battles (πολέμους καὶ στάσεις καὶ μάχας) other than the body and its appetites” (*Phaed.* 66c; trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL). This is echoed by Epictetus:

For it is my nature to look out for my own interests. If it is in my interest to have a farm, it is in my interest to take it away from my neighbour; if it is in my interest to have a cloak, it is in my interest also to steal it from a bath. This is the source of wars, uprisings, tyrannies, and plots (πόλεμοι, στάσεις, τυραννίδες, ἐπιβουλαί).

Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.22.14; trans. Oldfather, LCL revised

Plato and Epictetus speak of wars and uprisings in relation to literary meaning. However, their reasoning is close to that which James metaphorizes when speaking of Christian in-group disputes as wars.

The third type of military metaphors comprises the one where Christian conduct is described as warfare. A good parallel is in Plato's *Apologia* cited above. Clement (1 Clem. 36.6–37.1) emphasizes the orderly conduct of Christian life with a comparison to order in the army. Clement's words have a parallel in *De Mundo*, whose unknown author (called Ps.-Aristotle) compares the orderly processes of the universe (cf. 1 Clem. 20) to those of an army.

The process is very like what happens, particularly at moments in a war, when the trumpet gives a signal in a military camp; then each man hears the sound, and one picks up his shield, another puts on his breastplate, and a third his greaves, helmet or belt; one harnesses his horse, one mounts his chariot, one passes on the watchword; the company-commander goes at once to his company, the brigadier to his brigade, the cavalryman to his squadron, and the infantryman runs to his own station;

all is stirred by a single trumpeter to a flurry of motion according to the orders of the supreme commander.

Ps.-Aristotle, *Mund.* 399B; trans. FURLEY, LCL

*De Mundo* lacks the ethical intention so clear in 1 Clement, but as we have seen in the texts of other ancient authors, the military metaphor is easily extended in this direction. The form of catalog also reminds one of the metaphor in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians though there is no detailed metaphorical breakdown of the soldiers' equipment. Catalogs of the equipment that soldiers used can be found, for example, in Homer's *Iliad* 3.328–339.<sup>205</sup> I am not aware of any allegorical interpretation of these (or similar) Homeric verses, but if there are any, they would provide a good parallel to Ephesians. Ephesians is also recalled in Musonius Rufus' comparison between clothes and the armor (πανοπλία); just as one uses weapons (ὄπλα), which protect the bearer, one should also wear clothes suited for the protection of the body and not for display (Musonius Rufus 19).<sup>206</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe notes that some Cynics understood their rough cloaks as their armaments.<sup>207</sup> There are also clear models for Christian writings in the Jewish scriptures:

He put on righteousness like a breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,  
and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle.

Isa 59:17

Here, as in Wisdom of Solomon 5:17–40, it is God who puts on the military equipment. This imagery is transferred to the Christians in Ephesians.<sup>208</sup> Thus, military metaphors were known to Christians from scripture and from the general Greco-Roman discourse. All three types of military metaphors can

205 "But goodly Alexander did on about his shoulders his beautiful armour, even he, the lord of fair-haired Helen. The greaves first he set about his legs; beautiful they were, and fitted with silver ankle-pieces; next he did on about his chest the corselet of his brother Lycaon, and fitted it to himself. And about his shoulders he cast his silver-studded sword of bronze, and thereafter his shield great and sturdy; and upon his mighty head he set a well-wrought helmet with horse-hair crest—and terribly did the plume nod from above—and he took a valorous spear, that fitted his grasp. And in the self-same manner warlike Menelaus did on his battle-gear" (trans. Murray, LCL).

206 Lutz 1957, 120, lines 21–25.

207 Malherbe 1983, 157.

208 Best 1998, 587.

be found in classical texts. In the Christian usage, the metaphors with their theological implications are just “christened.” The military element does not substantially differ from the non-Christian texts. This fact frames our approach anew. One cannot straightforwardly ask whether the Christian use of the military metaphors speaks of Christian soldiers. Instead, one has to ask whether there is a correlation between the use of military metaphors and some attitude toward soldiers.

### 2.1.3 Do Military Metaphors Speak of Real Soldiers?

In Plato’s case, there is a positive correlation between the military theme of the metaphor and actual military life. In the text, the metaphor is developed in relation to Socrates’ dutiful service in earlier campaigns. As Epictetus’ echo of this metaphor shows, the correlation is not always so clear. In the passage cited above, he compares any social position in life (given by God) to the post of a soldier (commanded by a general).<sup>209</sup> One of those actual social positions can be that of a soldier (*Disc.* 3.24.99). God put Agamemnon in command, as he was “able to lead the host against Ilium” (*Disc.* 3.22.7; trans. Oldfather, LCL). Socrates is a great moral example, which includes his military service (*Disc.* 3.24.61; 4.1.159–160). Despite these positive sayings on soldiers, there is no clear correlation between the use of the military metaphor and a positive attitude toward military things. Wars break out due to philosophical lapses (*Disc.* 1.22.14; 2.22.22), as was seemingly the case in the Trojan War. In a fictional discussion with Agamemnon, Epictetus points out that there is no reason to attack Troy (*Disc.* 3.22.36–37). At last, philosophical training leads to the Stoic indifference toward everything, including wars and armies:

How, then, is a citadel destroyed? Not by iron, nor by fire, but by judgements. For if we capture the citadel in the city, have we captured the citadel of fever also, have we captured that of pretty wenches also, in a word, the acropolis within us, and have we cast out the tyrants within us, whom we have lording it over each of us every day, sometimes the same tyrants, and sometimes others? But here is where we must begin, and it is from this side that we must seize the acropolis and cast out the tyrants; we must yield up the paltry body, its members, the faculties, property, reputation, offices, honours, children, brothers, friends—count all these things as alien to us. And if the tyrants be thrown out of the spot, why should I any longer raze the fortifications of the citadel, on my

<sup>209</sup> On Epictetus’ thoughts about social positions, see Huttunen 2009, 24–26.

own account, at least? For what harm does it do me by standing? Why should I go on and throw out the tyrant's bodyguard? For where do I feel them? Their rods, their spears, and their swords they are directing against others.

*Disc.* 4.1.86–88; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Abraham Malherbe has shown that this Epictetan metaphor has a long tradition, beginning with Antisthenes the Cynic.<sup>210</sup> In Epictetus' version, concrete military things like fortifications turn out to be *adiaphora*. Actual warfare is meaningless to the one whose judgments are right. It is worth comparing Epictetus' thought with 2 Corinthians 10:3–4, which closely resembles the Antishenian tradition, as Malherbe demonstrates. Paul points out that “we do not wage war fleshly; for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly.”<sup>211</sup> Christian warfare is warfare in a metaphorical meaning without any explicit connection to actual military operations. There is not one word about actual warfare.<sup>212</sup> The metaphorical meaning of warfare is repeated in Ephesians: “Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:11). The list of soldiers' equipment is explained with their spiritual equivalents, so that the reader cannot miss the spiritual nature of the warfare. This kind of metaphorical usage is already found in Isaiah (Isa 11:4–5; 59:17), but the exact relationship between Ephesians and Isaiah is not clear.<sup>213</sup>

These Pauline words in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians may sound pacifistic,<sup>214</sup> which they are not. The words “we do not wage war fleshly” (2 Cor. 10:3) mean that the war Paul is speaking of is not a war in the ordinary sense: “we”—referring to all Christians—are waging special kind of war. What one should think about soldiers waging ordinary wars is left unspoken. It is surely an overstatement to see here a claim against ordinary wars. It is only underlined that the war under discussion has an unusual meaning. A similar point can be made in Ephesians. “Our struggle” underlines the anomalous meaning of war

210 Malherbe 1983.

211 The translation is a modification of the NRSV. For some reason or other, the NRSV translates this passage as saying that the weapons are not *merely* carnal, as if there were also carnal weapons.

212 I cannot say if warfare is indifferent to Paul in this passage. He was acquainted with the Stoic idea of *adiaphora* (Huttunen 2009, 26–31).

213 Lincoln 1990, 436. Asher (2014) helpfully illustrates the cultural background of missiles or arrows being attributed to the devil.

214 For this reason, it is no surprise that Cadoux (1919, 162–163) noted them.

in Christian life. In other words, it does not deal with struggle in the ordinary sense. One must add that promoting “the gospel of peace” by military means (Eph. 6:15) is not a contradiction in terms, as the imperial ideology of the *Pax Romana* was grounded in the Roman army securing the peace.<sup>215</sup> This ideology is turned toward Christian use without any indication of the attitude toward the Empire or its army.

2 Corinthians 10:3–4 and Ephesians 6:10–17 lack any connection to ordinary warfare. Thus, they do not say anything of actual soldiers. As the military metaphors in the Christian texts clearly belong to the common usage in antiquity, they do not create any grounds for a hypothesis regarding Christian soldiers. It is noteworthy that Ignatius of Antioch can both use a military metaphor (Ign. *Pol.* 6:2) in the positive sense and paint actual soldiers in a negative light:

From Syria to Rome I have been fighting the wild beasts, through land and sea, night and day, bound to ten leopards, which is a company of soldiers, who become worse when treated well. But I am becoming more of a disciple by their mistreatment.

Ign. *Rom.* 5:1; trans. EHRMAN, LCL

The military metaphor is woven even into this saying. The expression “From Syria to Rome ... through land and sea, night and day” resonates with the imperial propaganda by which an emperor or army leader would relate his military achievements in the campaigns.<sup>216</sup> At the same time, Ignatius’ view of soldiers is clearly negative. The passage does nothing more than state the ancient perception, however: rank-and-file soldiers are mean.<sup>217</sup> His military metaphors do not tell anything of soldiers in Christian communities. The common discourse provided these metaphors, which Christians could use for their own purposes. Comparing the domestic and the military metaphors, Raymond Hobbs notes that the latter emphasize more the outer and visible aspect of a person’s behavior. There is also a strong emphasis on boundary control and heroic suffering in the military metaphors. Hobbs concludes that their use “reflects a community which sees itself as a community under threat from human and superhuman powers.”<sup>218</sup> Hobbs’ claim fits well with the defensive character of soldiers’ equipment in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and Ephesians 6:10–17. Especially

215 See what I said above about the εἰρηνοποιός (Matt. 5:4).

216 Schoedel 1985, 178.

217 Cadoux (1919, 92 n. 2) understands this as he explicates Ignatius’ words with Edward Gibbon’s statement: “The common soldiers, like the mercenary troops of modern Europe, were drawn from the meanest, and very frequently from the most profligate, of mankind.”

218 Hobbs 1995, 266–268, 270.

in the latter text, the Christians are under an attack. In 2 Corinthians 10:3–4, however, the reader encounters a more offensive and triumphant metaphor, where the enemy is under threat of annihilation. Thus, the military metaphors do not always speak of a community under threat, but rather of a situation of struggle in general.<sup>219</sup>

Military metaphors later became quite common in Western Christianity. Harnack states that in the third century, Latin Christianity is “filled with images of military service, military discipline, and battle. One may flatly state that this schema and these images are the most frequent of all.”<sup>220</sup> This may suggest a greater influence of the army within the Church, but there is also another option: the values of military metaphors described by Hobbs were intensified by the Church. These two options are not mutually exclusive, and the intensified use of the metaphors in early Latin Christianity is an interesting phenomenon which I will examine again in Tertullian’s case, treated below. At this point, it is enough to state that the sheer existence of some military metaphors in a text does not testify to the existence of Christian soldiers. The investigation of the metaphors does not merely lead to a dead end. It is perhaps enough to say that military themes are not avoided by the early Christian authors we have examined. Military life was but one part of the experienced world that provided illustrative material for Christian rhetoric. Scholars have not always avoided the temptation to read more into it. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Shean speculates about the military audience. In contrast, scholars with pacifist leanings are eager to read the military metaphors as implicating an exclusion of military life in the normal sense. The spiritual point of these metaphors would then exclude any actual military involvement.<sup>221</sup> This is far-fetched, as J.J. O’Rourke aptly notes:

[T]he use of a figure of speech merely shows the use of the figure of speech; one would scarcely take the comparison of the coming day of the Lord with a nocturnal thief (Mt 24,43; 1 Th 5,2), or “Behold I come as a thief” (Ap 16,15), as an indication of the early Church’s view of thieves.<sup>222</sup>

219 Lohse (1990, 13) claims that the battle is just the defensive matter of adherence to the victory that Christ has already won, in contrast to the Qumran community, which looked forward to the future victory. Yet, even in the metaphorical sphere, we encounter Christians on the offensive, not to mention in their visions of the future visions (for example, Revelation).

220 Harnack 1981, 60.

221 See, e.g., Gabris 1977, 228–229.

222 O’Rourke 1970, 235.

In some cases, however, one can sense concrete dimensions. First, there is sometimes a vague boundary between a metaphor and apocalyptic warfare. In Ephesians 6, the war is waged not by real weapons but by spiritual weapons. Nevertheless, there is a real war going on—not in a mundane sense but a celestial one:<sup>223</sup> “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). There is also a certain future day given for the battle: “the whole armor of God” should be taken in order to withstand “that evil day” (Eph. 6:13). If the author means the final day of the eschatological tribulations, he means that Christians will really wage war in the end times. Yet, the metaphorical meaning of “gearing up” with military equipment makes clear that it is not a question of war in the normal sense. In this way, the war in Ephesians differs from the apocalyptic wars described in the Christian and Jewish sources.<sup>224</sup> It is also possible to see the expression “that evil day” as a reference to the whole present age, possibly with an idea of “a climatic evil day, when resistance will be especially necessary.”<sup>225</sup> This turns our perspective back to the idea of continuous Christian conduct presented as warfare against cosmic forces.

Cosmic military powers are known in the early stage of the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gen 32:2–3), but mostly they are combined with apocalyptic visions (cf. 2 Macc 3:24–26; 1QM XI). There are similar visions in Christian sources (cf. Rev 12:7), where Christ can be a commander leading the troops to a victory in the final battle (Rev 19:11–21). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus refers to celestial legions that are ready to fight when necessary (Matt 27:53).<sup>226</sup> The visions tell of an army which prevails over all others and, thus, reduces the significance of any terrestrial forces. These apocalyptic armies wage actual war, though differently and more effectively than mundane ones. In this sense, Christian texts do speak of actual warfare. There is also one case where the metaphor carries a positive attitude toward the Roman army. Clement of Rome presents the Roman army as an example for Christian life within the congregation. However, the way Clement describes the Roman army betrays more of a positive attitude. Clement states, “Consider those who soldier under our own leaders” (1 Clem. 37.1; trans. Ehrman, LCL).

223 Harnack 1981, 36.

224 Lincoln 1990, 438.

225 Lincoln 1990, 446.

226 Jesus' words “Whoever takes the sword will perish by the sword” in the previous verse is often used to promote pacifism. This is difficult to defend, however, in the context where angelic legions are legitimately clad in armor.



Harnack notes Clement's discourse using "our": "The spokesman of the Roman congregation looks upon the Roman army with satisfaction and pride. Can he regard an army whose discipline and obedience he praises as in every respect the camp of the devil? I think not."<sup>227</sup> Louis J. Swift goes further, stating that without speaking of Christian participation in war, Clement's stance is difficult to reconcile with pacifism. He continues: "The fact that the author is not at all embarrassed by such imagery very likely indicates that the problem of a Christian's serving in the army was not an issue for him."<sup>228</sup> This is a sole exception among the early Christian metaphors. Otherwise the metaphors do not tell about the attitudes toward the soldiers. The Christian authors used the metaphor as their contemporaries did. But if the case is this, we can conclude that the views of Christian authors did not greatly differ from those of their contemporaries. As I have shown, Epictetus seemed to be slightly negative toward warfare and soldiering without being an outspoken pacifist in the modern sense. Indeed, he shared the common literate view, which is clearly visible among the apologists and early Christian theologians, as I argue below.

## 2.2 *The Antimilitarism of Christian Intellectuals and the Christian in the Ranks of the Roman Army*

### 2.2.1 Philosophical Disgust toward Wars and Armies

In his *The Second Church*, Ramsay MacMullen speaks of a divide between elite Christians and the common believers, whose life can be reconstructed mainly through archeology.<sup>229</sup> The literary evidence comes from the elite, reflecting their views. If the Christian populace is represented at all, it happens on the elite's terms. I will show that the divide between the theological elite and the populace makes understandable why there were both strong antimilitarists and soldiers among the early Christians. Actually, this divide was common in contemporary Roman culture. It is exemplified in a case reported by Tacitus, who tells how Vitellius's army halted Vespasian's troops in a Roman suburb. After successful defense, Vitellius sent several delegations to persuade the enemy that a peace agreement would be better than a fight. Musonius Rufus, a prominent Stoic philosopher who belonged to one of these,<sup>230</sup> found that his ideas were strongly rejected by Vespasian's men.

227 Harnack 1981, 70.

228 Swift 1983, 33.

229 MacMullen 2009.

230 On Musonius, see, e.g., Thorsteinsson 2010, 40–54.

Musonius Rufus had joined these delegates. He was a member of the equestrian order, a man devoted to the study of philosophy and in particular to the Stoic doctrine. Making his way among the companies, he began to warn those in arms, discoursing on the blessings of peace and the dangers of war. Many were moved to ridicule by his words, more were bored; and there were some ready to jostle him about and to trample on him, if he had not listened to the warnings of the quieter soldiers and the threats of others and give up his untimely moralizing.

Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.81; trans. MOORE, LCL

The troops were frenzied, heightening the dissonance between the soldiers and the philosopher. Still, I would claim that the situation betrays the divide between the moral views of the philosophical elite and the populace. Musonius' antimilitarism won little understanding. This divide is important to acknowledge in order to understand why there were both soldiers and strong antimilitarists among the early Christians. To be sure, there were also upper-class Christian authors (just think of Luke!) who saw nothing wrong with the military. Yet, as a generalization, the divide provides an explanation for the presence of soldiers, despite certain antimilitaristic traits among the early Christians. I will first examine how the philosophical elite viewed wars and soldiers. Then I will turn to examine the early Christian theologians, who appear to have been negative or hesitant in relation to military issues. Next, I will examine both the literary and archeological evidence of Christian soldiers. At the end of this chapter, I concentrate on Tertullian, who, despite his antimilitaristic views, openly discusses Christian participation in the army.

In ancient Rome, the upper-class and literate view on soldiers was somewhat negative.<sup>231</sup> In the *New Comedy*, which flourished before the Empire but was still known during it (see, e.g., Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 11.6), "the stock character soldier of comedy is usually portrayed as swaggering and boastful. His masculinity goes to excess, and he does not tend to learn by experience."<sup>232</sup> Alexander Kyrychenko notes that this negative view of the soldiers is a literary *topos*.<sup>233</sup> There were exceptions to this general view. Some within the literate elite did not share the negative picture of soldiers. Caesar's works are examples of positive attitudes toward the military. Yet, the literary *topoi* tell of the general atmosphere. Especially the philosophical elite felt some kind of disgust toward the military. Harry Sidebottom argues that their "attitudes to soldiers

231 Campbell 2002, 33.

232 Pierce 1998, 139. I thank Marika Rauhala for drawing my attention to this matter.

233 Kyrychenko 2014, 89–90.

appear to have usually been a mixture of alienation, contempt, and antipathy.” He illustrates his point with examples:

Philosophers’ dislike of soldiers found expression in unflattering comparisons. Soldiers were like sheepdogs, which were renowned for their viciousness. They were compared to sailors, and the bad company kept on ships was proverbial. They were likened to pedagogues, and they were generally thought of as being of such low status that they were like hired labour for the grape harvest. Serving on a campaign was said to be like being a convict.

Epict. 4.1.39; cf. 3.24.29<sup>234</sup>

There was even some philosophical “flirtation with pacifism,”<sup>235</sup> but not without a certain degree of ambiguity. Especially the wars in the remote past could be viewed positively and the fulfilling of military duty could be viewed as a good thing.<sup>236</sup> For example, Epictetus praises Spartans who died fighting in Thermopylae (*Disc.* 2.20.26),<sup>237</sup> and he sees it as a duty to serve as a soldier (e.g., *Disc.* 3.22.7; 3.24.61, 99; 4.1.160). This last view contains a certain ethical admiration of military discipline—something which legions honored as the divine *Disciplina*.<sup>238</sup> Even if certain military features are admired, they are mostly presented as a singular point of comparison. The point of these comparisons or metaphors is to exhort the civilian audience to lead a better life. Military life is not the point but just a vehicle for moral exhortation in civil life. Epictetus’ exemplary soldiers are mostly persons of mythology or the remote past. In the abovementioned passages, the dutiful soldier is Socrates or a person in Homer’s *Iliad*. In the remote past, there were some brave battles, like those waged by the stout-hearted Spartans, who died fighting for freedom in Thermopylae (*Disc.* 2.20.26).<sup>239</sup>

These brave soldiers were actually figures of literary and cultural traditions, not contemporary or real soldiers. Military heroes of recent history or contemporary life were lacking. Epictetus presents a former slave, who suffered through three campaigns in order to get a higher office, only to find himself “in the handsomest and sleekest slavery” (*Disc.* 4.1.39–40; trans. Oldfather, LCL). There was nothing brave about military life here, as the ex-slave was

234 Sidebottom 1993, 253.

235 Sidebottom 1993, 262.

236 Sidebottom 1993, 254–255.

237 Huttunen 2009, 85–86.

238 Other military virtues honored as deities were *Honos*, *Virtus*, and *Pietas* (Helgeland, Daly, and Burns 1981, 48).

239 For this abnormal estimation of warfare in Epictetus, see Huttunen 2009, 85–86.

emotionally dependent on external things; according to Epictetus, his social prestige belonged to indifferent things,<sup>240</sup> and his suffering in campaigns was futile. Epictetus' philosophical view of war contains a strong trace of negativity: wars are due to a lack of philosophical knowledge (e.g., *Disc.* 1.22.14; 2.22.22; 3.22.32–37). This philosophical disgust toward wars also seemed to be Musonius' perspective when he tried to inspire pacifism in Vespasian's troops.

Epictetus' admirer Emperor Marcus Aurelius could not avoid wars. This created an ethical dualism, which he himself noted in his *Meditations*. He lamented that several experiences, including war among others, obliterate all the holy principles of philosophy (*Med.* 10.9). After this notion, he continues with an example using self-irony:

A spider prides itself on capturing a fly; one man on catching a hare, another on netting a sprat, another on taking wild boars, another bears, another Sarmatians. Are not these brigands, if thou test their principles?

MARCUS AURELIUS, *Med.* 10.10; trans. HAINES, LCL

The self-irony is found in the Sarmatians mentioned here. Marcus Aurelius led the Roman army in 170 against northern enemies, among others the Sarmatians.<sup>241</sup> He assumed the title *Sarmaticus*, the conqueror of the Sarmatians, in the year 175.<sup>242</sup> The column erected to the memory of the Emperor and the triumphal arch depict prisoners of war that his army captured.<sup>243</sup> The divide between philosophers and other people is thus embodied in the Emperor's person. Most other philosophers could avoid an encounter with the necessities of the political life and thereby maintain their antimilitaristic views in an uncompromised manner. Sidebottom notes: "The perception that warfare did not impinge directly on the ordinary lives of the majority of the inhabitants of the empire, coupled with tenets of Stoic philosophy, led to what can be seen as significant omissions in the philosophers' stated views on warfare."<sup>244</sup> Early Christian theologians like Aristides, Justin the Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria belonged to the intellectual elite with a philosophical education. It is no surprise that they represent the same philosophical attitude in the christened form.

240 Huttunen 2009, 20–26.

241 On these wars, see Birley 1987, 159–183. Birley calls Sarmatians "Jazyges."

242 Birley 1987, 189; Rutherford 1989, 2–3.

243 See the picture on the opening page of Haines' edition of the *Meditations* and the pictures in Ferris 2009, 121–126.

244 Sidebottom 1993, 258.

### 2.2.2 Theologians of the Early Church

Aristides of Athens, who lived in the first decades of the 2nd century, writes in passing that the immoral tales of Greek gods misled people toward several disasters, including wars: “So that from these misguided practices it has been the lot of mankind to have frequent wars and slaughters and bitter captivities” (Aristides of Athens, *Apologia* 8; trans. *ANF* 9.269). War belongs to the miseries of the world, yet Aristides provides no further elaboration on the theme. Actually, one cannot know what exactly he thought about war and military service. The theme seems distant to him. His criticism of polytheism and the traditional tales of gods is old, as it is already found in Xenophanes (6th and 5th centuries BCE).<sup>245</sup> Thus, Aristides just modifies an ancient philosophical tradition to Christian use.

Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165) is sometimes presented as refusing military service.<sup>246</sup> He wrote that the fallen angels sowed all kinds of vices among humankind: “murders, wars (πολέμους), adulteries, intemperate deeds” (2. *Apol.* 5.4; trans. *ANF* 1:190). One may explain war as a metaphor for the personal strivings between individuals. This explanation, however, does not rule out war in the literal sense. Justin is namely speaking of any kind of conflict, as he says that the fallen angels and the demons did these things “to men, and women, and cities, and nations” (2. *Apol.* 5.5; trans. *ANF* 1:190). Thus, wars are the large-scale version of personal striving. Here Justin belongs to the Greek philosophical tradition. For example, both Plato and Epictetus saw personal and collective strivings in the same continuum, although they did not speak of fallen angels or demons.<sup>247</sup> However, middle Platonists knew different kinds of demons, both good and evil. Apuleius claims that there are demons who are souls that have left their bodies. The souls who have sinned in the body are bad demons, creating all kinds of havoc (*De deo Socr.* 153).<sup>248</sup> Plutarch describes the activities of certain evil demons as follows:

But as Heracles laid siege to Oechalia for the sake of a maiden, so powerful and impetuous divinities (δαίμονες), in demanding a human soul which is incarnate within a mortal body, bring pestilences and failures of

245 On Xenophanes, see, e.g., Leshner 1992.

246 Cadoux 1919. 103; Bainton 1946, 196; Sider 2012, 23.

247 See Plato, *Phaed.* 66c and Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.22.14 (cited above).

248 Dillon 1996, 319.

crops upon States and stir up wars and civil discords, until they succeed in obtaining what they desire.

Plutarch, *Moralia* 417D–E; trans. BABBITT, LCL<sup>249</sup>

Justin gives a Christian character to the generally known philosophical view. The Christian side of his argumentation is the reference to the Book of Isaiah, which he reads as a prophecy of the Christian mission.

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, / and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. / He shall judge between the nations, / and shall arbitrate for many peoples; / they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, / and their spears into pruning-hooks; / nation shall not lift up sword against nation, / neither shall they learn war any more.

Isa 2:3–4

Justin concludes that the prophecy was fulfilled when God sent the disciples from Jerusalem. The result is that “we who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies (οὐ πολεμοῦμεν τοὺς ἐχθρούς), but also, that we may not lie nor deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ” (1. *Apol.* 39.3; trans. *ANF* 1:175–176). Again, “making war” may be a metaphor for personal strivings, and here the metaphorical sense seems to be in the foreground. Justin continues by comparing Christian readiness for martyrdom to soldiers being ready to die. The metaphorical sense seems to be close also in Justin’s other reference to the same prophecy: “[W]e who were filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons,—our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into implements of tillage,—and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith, and hope” (*Dial.* 110.3; trans. *ANF* 1:254). Justin metaphorically explains the agricultural words as referring to piety and other spiritual virtues. Thus, it is also natural to understand “war” metaphorically without totally excluding the literal sense. As shown above, in *Second Apology* 5.4–5, personal and national enmity are the same thing, albeit on different scales.

Beside his peaceful message, Justin also maintains that the destruction of Jerusalem in the Bar Kokhba revolt was a righteous punishment (*Dial.* 108.1, 3; 110.6). The Roman rulers and the Roman army seem to be a divine instrument against the unrepentant Jews. Similarly, Luke maintains that the Romans

249 In this matter, Plutarch seems to be dependent on Xenocrates, a philosopher of the Old Academy in the fourth century BC (Dillon 1996, 32).

punished Jerusalem in the Jewish war (Luke 19:41–44). This thinking reflects the Deuteronomistic theology. In the Deuteronomistic history, the Babylonians put divine punishment into effect. This does not entail any positive statement about Babylonians, however. Thus, the statements about Romans punishing Jews are vague, and they can be interpreted in different ways. Justin grants recognition to the rulers and expects that they will punish wrongdoers (1 *Apol.* 17; 2 *Apol.* 9). He requires the emperor to punish even the Christian heretics (1 *Apol.* 16.14). There is a parallel in Epictetus' thought. Although Epictetus is mainly against the violent use of power, he admits in passing that rulers rightly punish wrongdoers. Yet, even in this case Epictetus points out that rational means are much better for ruling (*Disc.* 3.22.94).<sup>250</sup>

Justin and Epictetus did not totally deny the violent use of power. As we saw above, the main line of their thought, however, took another direction than violence. These views, however, do not explicitly tell whether or not Justin accepted Christian soldiers. In general, he does not have much to say about soldiers. Justin claims that “your Pilate,” with the soldiers, was against Christ (1 *Apol.* 40.6). This is possibly an echo of the Johannine dualism where soldiers are against Christ and his followers. In another place, Justin compares the compensation given to soldiers and to persecuted Christians. Soldiers put their life in danger without any incorruptible compensation. Why, then, would the Christians not do the same if they get an eternal compensation (1 *Apol.* 39.5)? Eduard Lohse comments on this by saying that Christians are soldiers in a peculiar way (“Soldaten besonderer Art”).<sup>251</sup> Whether or not this peculiar art of soldiers can also pertain to an ordinary soldier is left open, however. Cadoux claims that Justin was against Christian participation in the army, but provides an explanation why there was no open antimilitarism. According to Cadoux, an open denial of military service would have ruined Justin's main purpose, to win toleration in the Empire.<sup>252</sup> One might ask how Cadoux can know this. As there is no statement on the matter, I think that it is safer to leave Justin's view open. In any case, it is clear that military matters were not close to him. He belonged to the intellectual elite of his time, which had a negative or distant relationship in relation to such affairs.

After Justin we find similar slightly negative or distant views in many other Christian authors. Tatian (ca. 120–180) shared Justin's middle Platonist view that wars are inspired by demons (*Oratio ad Graecos* 19.2–4). It is claimed that

250 For Epictetus' view on state laws and rulers, see Huttunen 2009, 83–92.

251 Lohse 1990, 15.

252 Cadoux 1919, 103.

he refused to follow military commands.<sup>253</sup> This view is based on an incorrect understanding of the text and probably even on an incorrect translation in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*:

I do not wish to be a king; I am not anxious to be rich; I decline military command (τὴν στρατηγίαν παρήτημαι); I detest fornication; I am not impelled by an insatiable love of gain to go to sea; I do not contend for chaplets; I am free from a mad thirst for fame; I despise death; I am superior to every kind of disease; grief does not consume my soul. Am I a slave, I endure servitude. Am I free, I do not make a boast of my good birth.

Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 11.1; trans. ANF 2:69

This text is given in the context where Tatian denies that sinning is up to Fate. It is easily seen that, in the Stoic manner, he despises the value of every external thing. As I have noted above, for example, Epictetus claimed that external things are indifferent, but their use is not. People should not be emotionally dependent on any external thing, but treat them as God wants.<sup>254</sup> Thus, declining “military command” means only that one is not automatically *forced* to follow the command. Moreover, why should one who despises such commands be a soldier? The case of *angareia* already shows that soldiers could command civilians. There is still one strong reason to doubt that Tatian is not speaking of the Christian attitude toward the army. The word *στρατηγία* basically means praetorship or some other high office, which suits well in this particular context.<sup>255</sup> It is probable that Tatian just denies the value of this kind of socially high position, insofar as he despises the position of king. Here, Tatian’s reasoning is similar to that of Epictetus, who ridiculed an ex-slave for suffering in the campaigns in order to reach a high office (*Disc.* 4.1.39–40). However, Tatian does not combine the high office with warfare. Thus, I cannot conclude that Tatian was against Christian participation in the army. The issue is left open, which shows a distant relationship to these matters.

Athenagoras (ca. 130–190) claims that punishment in the hereafter is morally needed. Otherwise those robbers, rulers, and tyrants who have unjustly (ἀδίκως) killed myriads are left without their due. Their crimes include, for example, razing cities unjustly (ἀδίκως), burning houses along with their inhabitants, devastating a country, and destroying inhabitants of cities, peoples, and even an entire nation (*Res.* 19.7). Athenagoras seemingly refers to campaigns

253 Cadoux 1919, 103; Bainton 1946, 195; Ryan 1952, 17; Shean 2010, 91.

254 On the Stoic theory of value, see, e.g., Huttunen 2009, 20–26.

255 For the meanings of *στρατηγία*, see Liddell, Scott, and Stuart 2011.



that led to total destruction, and which are critically described by Tacitus: “To plunder, butcher, steal, these things they misname empire: they make a desolation and they call it peace” (Tacitus, *Agricola* 30.5; trans. Hutton and Peterson, LCL). However, Athenagoras uses the word ‘unjustly’ twice, indicating the violent acts he speaks of as being immoral. This raises the question of whether or not some violent acts are just. Cadoux notes that “Athenagoras instances the usages of unjust war” without further commentary.<sup>256</sup>

In principle, Athenagoras may refer to the just war theory, as it was known to the Romans. According to Cicero, there is only one justified *casus belli*: “The only excuse, therefore, for going to war is that we may live in peace unharmed; and when the victory is won, we should spare those who have not been bloodthirsty and barbarous in their warfare” (Cicero, *Off.* 1.34–40; trans. Miller, LCL). The Emperor Augustus boasts that he waged wars in that manner: “I made peaceful the Alps from the region near the Ionian bay as far as the Tyrrhenian sea, but made war on no tribe unjustly (ἀδίκως)” (Augustus, *Res Gestae* 26.3; trans. Cooley). This text is found in three inscriptions, and it must have been widely known. In any case, it transmits the standard Roman propaganda of just war repeated later, for example, by Suetonius (*Aug.* 21.2).<sup>257</sup> In the context of this political discourse, it seems probable that Athenagoras shared the Roman theory of just war. He only blamed those rulers and tyrants who waged unjust wars. His words are vague, as if he is generally not interested in warfare or armies. Athenagoras’ attitude toward the military is distant, a stance which is characteristic of members of the Roman intellectual elite.<sup>258</sup>

Irenaeus (c. 130–202)—like Justin before him—thinks that Isaiah’s (2:3–4) and Micah’s (4:2–3) prophecies are fulfilled in the Christian proclamation that the nations beat their swords and war-lances into peaceful instruments and that “they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek” (*Haer.* 4.34; trans. ANF 1:512). It is, of course, hyperbole to claim that nations no longer fought in Irenaeus’ time. He must factually mean that Christian individuals do not fight. It is again unclear if “fighting” is a metaphor or not. A reference to the Sermon on the Mount gives the impression of personal quarrels between individuals. Complete peace will be attained only after

256 Cadoux 1919, 50.

257 Cooley 2009, 223.

258 In another passage, Athenagoras claims that Christians do not endure seeing killing, even when someone is justly killed (δικαίως φονευόμενον) (*Leg.* 35.4). The context, however, does not refer to war or to the army. Athenagoras claims that rumors of killings in Christian gatherings are senseless, as Christians do not even attend the gladiatorial games. Thus, gazing upon just killings refers to what people watching gladiators do.

the eschatological turn,<sup>259</sup> when people are no longer like wild animals but tame ones:

[T]hose inflict no hurt at all who in the former time were, through their rapacity, like wild beasts in manners and disposition, both men and women; so much so that some of them were like wolves and lions, ravaging the weaker and warring on their equals; while the women (were like) leopards or asps, who slew, it may be, even their loved ones with deadly poisons, or by reason of lustful desire. (But now) coming together in one name they have acquired righteous habits by the grace of God, changing their wild and untamed nature. And this has come to pass already.

*Epid.* 61; trans. ROBINSON

As the last sentence reveals, Irenaeus thought that Christians had already changed from being like wild beasts into tame animals. His starting point is Isa 11:6–7; while Isaiah's text is not clearly metaphorical, Irenaeus' explanation is that animals refer to different kinds of people. The metaphorical use of animals is known from the philosophical tradition. For example, Epictetus says:<sup>260</sup>

It is because of this kinship with the flesh that those of us who incline toward it become like wolves, faithless and treacherous and hurtful, and others like lions, wild and savage and untamed.

Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.3.7; trans. Oldfather, LCL

Though Irenaeus speaks of “warring on their equals,” this surely meant all kinds of violent quarrels. On the other hand, it is clear that there will be no wars after the eschatological turn. If Christians already live this peaceful life in this era, as Irenaeus assumes, it does logically include conscientious objection. This conclusion is not accepted by Jean-Michel Hornus, who refers to *Haer.* 5.24;<sup>261</sup> here Irenaeus refers to Rom 13:4, where civil authorities are claimed to be agents of God's wrath. He advises Christians not to call the authorities into question when they punish wrong-doers legitimately. According to Hornus, this suggests that Christians could also be agents of God's wrath.

Hornus' interpretation, however, goes too far. Irenaeus probably thought that gentile authorities used the sword. He says that those who departed from

259 Sider (2012, 29–30) restricted the passage so that its eschatological character is no longer clear for the reader.

260 More analogies for Epictetus texts are referred to by Dobbin (1998, 88).

261 Hornus 1980, 65.

God—clearly non-Christians—are “subjected to human authority, and kept under restraint by *their* laws,” so that they can attain “some degree of justice, and exercise mutual forbearance through dread of the sword” (*Haer.* 5.24; trans. *ANF* 1:552, italics added). Unlike Paul, Irenaeus speaks of the laws that hold society together, but behind these laws the sword looms large as the ultimate restraint. The wrathful sword and its use belong to *their* life, that is, to the life of the gentiles. I do not see here any hint of Christians using the sword. Irenaeus seems to acknowledge that authorities legitimately punish wrongdoers. Christians do not need such punishment, however, as they are tame animals instead of wild beasts. This seems to be in line with Justin and Epictetus, who also acknowledge civil punishments but prefer better, non-violent means.

One can find more concrete information in the writings of Clement of Alexandria. There are several passing references to war and soldiers.<sup>262</sup> Three of them are of greater interest. First, in a series of scattered passages from the Bible, Clement cites the exhortation of John the Baptist (Luke 3:14; *Paed.* 3.12.91). As I showed above, Luke did not question soldiers as such but only their malpractices. This seems to be Clement’s stance, too, as he does not qualify the exhortation in any way.<sup>263</sup> Another interesting passage is his injunction to use shoes. According to Clement, women should not go barefoot, whereas men can go barefoot, except in military service (*Paed.* 2.11.117). Ronald J. Sider comments on this: “Given the fact that Clement’s whole book is devoted to describing how Christians should live, we should probably assume that Clement is thinking of Christians in the army.”<sup>264</sup>

Sider’s supposition is far from definitive, however, as Clement does not say this explicitly. His argumentation for soldiers wearing shoes is just a cryptic word play: ὑποδέδεσθαι τῷ δεδέσθαι, “For being shod is near neighbour to being bound” (trans. *ANF* 2:267). This seems to apply to any soldier, not just a Christian one. A passing reference to soldiers with word play can be a side comment, which does not necessarily refer to Christian soldiers. However, one passage does give more information, and it is sometimes presented as a witness that “Clement regarded military service as merely another occupation.”<sup>265</sup> In the context, he states that human beings are created to have knowledge of God.

262 See a larger collection in Sider 2012, 32–42.

263 See also the *Didascalia apostolorum* (probably written in Syria around 230), which refers to the same exhortation in Luke (Sider 2012, 64–65).

264 Sider 2012, 37.

265 Helgeland 1979, 744; Cf. Harnack 1981, 75; Swift 1983, 52.

Practise husbandry (γεώργει), we say, if you are a husbandman; but while you till your fields, know God. Sail the sea (πλεῖθι), you who are devoted to navigation, yet call the whilst on the heavenly Pilot. Has knowledge taken hold of you while engaged in military service (στρατευόμενόν σε κατεῖληφεν ἡ γνώσις)? Listen to the commander, who orders what is right.

*Prot.* 10.100; trans. *ANF* 2:200

I am hesitant to claim that this text presents military service as “merely another occupation.” First, one may note that Clement speaks of those soldiers who have become Christians during their service. It is not just an occupation that a Christian takes. This may mirror the practice that a Christian should not enlist (*Trad. ap.* 16.9), though Clement does not express it clearly.<sup>266</sup> Second, there is an interesting difference between the admonitions given to the soldiers and to the others. The commander who orders what is right surely denotes God, like the heavenly Pilot is God.<sup>267</sup> Thus, the peasant and the sailor are admonished to do their work with God in their minds, but there is no specific injunction for soldiers to fulfill their military tasks. They are only admonished to listen to God. What this concretely means is left unsaid. While military service is somewhat problematic, it can be admitted that Clement is not an uncompromising antimilitarist.

The philosophically oriented Christian elite did not encounter the problem of militarism only in the Roman army but also in the Scripture. Marcion and some other theologians rejected the entire Old Testament, partly because of its violent and belligerent parts. Others justified the Scripture by allegorizing or by thinking that the times of such warfare were over and should be left in the past.<sup>268</sup> The last stance we saw already in Epictetus, who could praise the Spartans' fighting in Thermopylae while his view of contemporary wars was negative. Clement of Alexandria bridged the histories of the Greco-Roman culture and the Old Testament by claiming that the Greeks learned all their skills from Moses—including military tactics and strategy (*Strom.* 1.24.158–160). The

266 Similarly, Rordorf 1969, 113. In contrast, Helgeland (1979, 744) claims that “Clement never gave the slightest indication that enlistment would be a problem.” The *Apostolic Tradition* is preserved in several versions and details vary between them (see Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips 2002, 89–90). In each version, it prohibits the catechumen and baptized Christians from becoming soldiers. There were also limitations in accepting some high-ranking soldiers (thus interpreted by Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips 2002, 94) into the Christian community, while other soldiers are not mentioned at all. Seemingly those in military service who became Christians were usually not required to leave their occupation.

267 Sider 2012, 34. Cf. Rordorf 1969, 113.

268 Bainton 1946, 212.

same church father, however, was dubious about the armies of his own time. Clement belonged to the intellectual elite of his time and shared their ambiguity vis-à-vis military issues.

All this religious hesitation in the face of military service seems confirmed by Celsus, who criticized Christianity in his book *The True Word* in 170–180. Celsus blamed Christians for not taking up arms for the emperor. Origen quotes his words:

For if all were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent his being left in utter solitude and desertion, and the affairs of the earth would fall into the hands of the wildest and most lawless barbarians; and then there would no longer remain among men any of the glory of your religion or of the true wisdom.

Origen, *Cels.* 8.68; trans. *ANF* 4:665

According to Harnack, Celsus “confirms what we have assumed, that the church did not allow its faithful to serve in the military.” Roland Bainton claims that Celsus “knew of no Christians who would accept military service.” Origen, who wrote 70–80 years later, accepts Celsus’ claim of Christians who did not enter the army. This is just intellectual discussion, however. Intellectuals discussed the ideas of the philosophically oriented Christian elite, not social facts. Many literate Christians despised or at least felt religious hesitation about military service, while other Christians lived their life within Roman society, including the army. Our first evidence of Christian soldiers after the New Testament writings come from Celsus’ time. Next I will look at the non-intellectuals and some intellectual dissidents.

### 2.2.3 Intellectuals and Other Christians

Tertullian and Eusebius of Caesarea discuss Christian soldiers in Marcus Aurelius’ “thundering legion,” *Legio XII Fulminata*, which fought on the northern frontier in the 170s. Both authors refer to the so-called “rain miracle.” The miracle has historical roots, as it is also described in gentile sources without any mention of Christians.<sup>269</sup> The column of Marcus Aurelius represents two anomalous weather phenomena, the rain and the thunderbolt.<sup>270</sup> The rain god

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269 The most important ancient sources are Dio Cassius 72.8–10; *Historia Augusta*, *M. Ant.* 24.4; Tertullianus, *Apol.* 5.6; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.5. Kovács (2009, 23–93) provides an extensive collection of the sources and commentaries on them.

270 On the incidents described in the column with an overview to the literary sources, see, e.g., Ferris 2009, 81–93.

depicted on the column was a new figure in Roman iconography. The god does not correspond to Hermes Aerios, to whom the Roman sources attribute the miracle.<sup>271</sup> Kovács assumes that “the creator of the visual message of the column evidently did not wish to identify the figure with any specific Roman god,” and suggests that the rain god is an allegorical figure.<sup>272</sup>

Because the rain god is a totally new figure, one is tempted to see here a reference to a new divinity for the Romans, that is, the god of Christian worship. Tertullian attributes the rain to God, to whom Christian soldiers prayed in distress. Tertullian refers to what Marcus Aurelius himself would have written in a letter: “He bears his testimony that that Germanic drought was removed by the rains obtained through the prayers of the Christians who chanced to be fighting under him” (Tertullian, *Apol.* 5.6; trans. *ANF* 3:22).<sup>273</sup> What imperial letter Tertullian has seen is unknown.<sup>274</sup> However, he also mentions the rain miracle in *Ad Scapulam* 4.6, maintaining that it is a famous incident. While Tertullian’s descriptions are short, they are the earliest preserved written sources.<sup>275</sup> These testimonies come some decades after the incident. Eusebius is more generous with his account, telling that rain and thunder brought victory to the Roman army after the Christian soldiers kneeled and prayed for help (*Hist. eccl.* 5.5). Although Eusebius wrote in the fourth century, his words have some reliability, as he used earlier sources, gentile texts, Tertullian and—what is most interesting—Apollinaris, the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, who was a contemporary of the campaign. Although one cannot exactly know what comes from Apollinaris, Eusebius seems to base his work on a source independent of any that has been preserved.<sup>276</sup>

John Helgeland points out that neither Apollinaris nor Tertullian give any hint that the Christian soldiers did something wrong.<sup>277</sup> Shean reads this as a general acceptance of military service.<sup>278</sup> I do not agree. One should keep in mind that Apollinaris and Tertullian wrote apologies for the emperor. In this context it is understandable that no critical stance toward the military would be expressed. They did not wish to raise any suspicion of disloyalty. As I later

271 Ferris 2009, 84.

272 Kovács 2009, 166–167.

273 Tertullian also mentions the incident in *Scap.* 4.6; *ANF* 3:107.

274 There is a letter from Marcus Aurelius to the Roman senate, but it seems to have been written in the 4th century (Helgeland 1979, 769; Kovács 2009, 113–121). The text of the letter is given, e.g., by *ANF* 1:187; see Kovács (2009, 51–53) and Snyder (2012, 140–142).

275 Pace Ferris (2009, 86, 88) who claims that Dio Cassius provides the earliest writing in the first decades of the third century. Later, however, he reports that Tertullian wrote ca. 200.

276 Kovács 2009, 47–50.

277 Helgeland 1979, 773.

278 Shean 2010, 191.

show, Tertullian could also write on Christian soldiers in a totally different tone. Tertullian's (and possibly Apollinaris') critical stance, however, lends reliability to the information. There was no ideological need to invent stories of Christian soldiers. In sum, it seems a fact that there were Christians in Marcus' army. *Legio XII Fulminata* was recruited in Cappadocian Melitene, and it must have trained there rigorously before the campaign. Helgeland suggests that "Christian participation in the army at Melitene must have taken place long before 173,"<sup>279</sup> when he dates the miraculous victory. This dating is not universally accepted, but all scholars place the rain miracle in the first years of the 170s.<sup>280</sup> Thus, there must have been Christians in the legion no later than the late 160s.

The Christians of the "thundering legion" are the first Christian soldiers after those mentioned by the Gospel of Luke and Acts. It makes no difference whether the Christian soldiers referenced by Luke are historical. Luke's text proves that soldiers were welcome to join the Lucan communities. Since Luke wrote around 100, the "silent years" between Luke and the rain miracle comprise about seven decades. Is it credible that there was no continuity from the canonical writings of Luke to the times of the "thundering legion"? I would argue that we should not put too much weight on the philosophically oriented church fathers, as they did not cover the whole of Christianity of their time. *The Gospel of Peter*, the origin of which is before 150–190,<sup>281</sup> gives a very positive picture of soldiers, though it does not claim that they were Christians.

Through an analysis of *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, Helgeland has supported the idea that soldiers were accepted into Christian circles. Its picture of Jesus is less peaceful than that of the canonical gospels. This apocryphal gospel attracted the interest of less literate Christians, which brings Helgeland to conclude that "a study of the church fathers alone is likely to present a dangerously biased impression of the experience of the early church."<sup>282</sup> Though *The Infancy Gospel* does not speak of Christian soldiers, it shows that the common Christians did not always share the ideals and values of the intellectual elite.<sup>283</sup> Differences within the Christian communities on the educational level also

279 Helgeland 1979, 773.

280 Kovács 2009, 265–275.

281 Foster 2010, 172.

282 Helgeland 1979, 762–764. Sider (2012, 129–130) rightly criticizes Helgeland for confusing *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. However, that does not weaken the point that *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* indeed presents a more violent picture of Jesus than the canonical gospels.

283 On the differences between the literate elite and other Christians, see Shean 2010, 154–162.

explain why some literary sources are so negative or hesitant toward military service, while other texts leak that Christians were soldiers.

I do not to claim that every literate Christian shared the hesitant or negative views of many philosophers. Otherwise one could not explain, for example, Luke's views. Later, Julius Africanus clearly differs from the philosophical church fathers; he is a deviant figure among the literate Christians of the beginning of the third century. That Julius shamelessly promoted the art of war embarrassed Cadoux, leading him to claim that Julius was only nominally a Christian and thus "represents no one but himself."<sup>284</sup> In fact, he is a good reminder that the views of the church fathers did not represent the whole truth. Born in Aelia Capitolina some fifteen years after the Bar Kokhba revolt, Julius belonged to the high society of the eastern parts of the Empire.<sup>285</sup> He may have been an officer of Septimius Severus' army, but if not, he was at least well acquainted with military matters.<sup>286</sup> This is evident from his book *Kestoi*, which he wrote during his stay in Rome. The book was aimed at insinuating himself into the good graces of Emperor Severus Alexander.<sup>287</sup>

Encyclopedic in scope, it is an assemblage of miscellaneous, practical advice about military ruses, armament, horse medicine, weights and measures, botany, antidotes, textual criticism, amulets, truth serums, hypnotics, aphrodisiacs, fertility drugs, and even family planning. Much of what survives from it is a disquieting catalogue of various methods of biological and chemical warfare. The tone is strident and merciless. Poison the food and water of the barbarians, Africanus urges, just as they try to poison us.<sup>288</sup>

The book belongs to the category of manuals that provided technical details supporting the Emperor's warfare. It is not without parallels, though its Christian origin is unique.<sup>289</sup> Despite his more clearly Christian writings, Julius was a fringe figure in the Church. He "held no church office, formed no sect,

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284 Cadoux 1919, 206–207.

285 Adler 2004, 521–522; Shean 2010, 193–194. Adler (2004, 531–534) denies that the court of Edessa was Christian, although the court had close relationships with Christians like Julius.

286 Adler 2004, 539.

287 Adler 2004, 540.

288 Adler 2004, 542.

289 Adler 2004, 543–544.



had no school, taught no students, attracted no following.”<sup>290</sup> Hence, he did not belong to the philosophically oriented Christians. Yet, his figure reveals a side of early Christianity which is so easily forgotten in the shadow of the more antimilitaristic church fathers.

While most Christians never wrote a single word, there is fortunately archaeological evidence that points to the existence of Christian soldiers at the turn of the third century. Some scholars have counted funerary inscriptions as proof of this, but very few of the inscriptions are from the pre-Constantine period. Even fewer are from the first half of the third century or earlier. I comment on only two of the inscriptions, as they are early enough and seem to have a tie to Christianity.<sup>291</sup> First, there is an inscription which commemorates the wife of a certain Cossutius serving in Septimius Severus’ army. The text includes a date: April 10, 201.

*d(is) m(anibus) Cossutius Eutyches Aureliae Romanae coniugi kar(issimae) dulcis(simae) ben(e) m(erenti) fecit cum quo vix(it) ann(os) XXVIII secund(a) Parthica Sever(iana) Faviano Muc(iano) con(sulibus) III idus April(es).*

To the gods and to the shades. Cossutius, spouse of Eutyche Aurelia, made this monument for his Roman spouse, dearest and sweetest, with whom he lived twenty-eight years, member of the Second Parthian Severan Legion, in the consulship of Favianus and Mucius, three days before the Ides of April.<sup>292</sup>

The identification with Christianity is seemingly based on the place of the inscription, not on the text itself.<sup>293</sup> Actually, the text raises doubts about the identification of Cossutius as a Christian. First, there is no hint of Christianity in the text. Second, are the opening words of the text something which can be expected of a Christian? What are the “gods” that a Christian would refer to? Third, if we accept that the place of the inscription determines

290 Adler 2004, 547.

291 See, e.g., Hornum 1980, 118–122; Helgeland 1979, 791–793; Swift 1979, 862; Shean 2010, 183–185. Sider (2012, 145–151) gives a series of inscriptions. Among them is one from the year 217, which is sometimes supposed to be Christian because of the words “welcomed to God.” Yet, because it is far from certain that this implies the Christian God (Sider 2012, 148), I leave this inscription aside.

292 Cf. *CIL* 6.32877; trans. Owen Ewald in Sider 2012, 147.

293 Swift 1979, 826.

that Eutyche was a Christian, what makes us suppose that Cossutius shared her faith? Thus, this inscription does not provide evidence of Christian soldiers.

Another interesting inscription is found in the Christian cemetery of Priscilla in Rome. Scholars have dated it to the end of the second century. Thus, it might be even earlier than the inscription cited above.<sup>294</sup>

*P(ublio) Marcello veterano | AA(u)gg(ustorum) nn(ostrorum) eq(uiti)  
R(omano).*

To Publius Marcellus, a Roman knight, veteran of the army of our two emperors.<sup>295</sup>

Not even this is unambiguously an inscription of a Christian soldier. The deceased man is certainly a veteran, but the text does not tell whether or not he was a Christian during his active service. Scholars who normally comment on all the pre-Constantine inscriptions conclude that the very existence of these inscriptions proves the toleration of soldiers in the Christian communities.<sup>296</sup> When looking only at these two inscriptions, however, such a conclusion must be made more carefully: there were *possibly* soldiers among the Christians around the year 200. What these funerary inscriptions show, at the very least, is that the social network of Christians reached into military life. It was acceptable to not prohibit military careers in the communities where the inscriptions were found.<sup>297</sup> This is not much, but an expert of inscriptions would find more. Germane to my discussion, Ronald J. Sider writes that a new, up-to-date study on this topic would be very useful.<sup>298</sup>

Fortunately, we also have other archaeological evidence of Christian soldiers. In Dura-Europos, a town and military base in Syria, a home church has been discovered.<sup>299</sup> The town was destroyed in 256, so the church must be dated earlier than that. There was a dwelling of soldiers in the same city block as the church, as the Greek and Latin inscriptions prove.<sup>300</sup> In the church, there are some Roman names in the inscriptions.<sup>301</sup> One of these, Proclus, is found

294 Sider 2012, 146.

295 Cf. *CIL* 6.37273; trans. Owen Ewald in Sider 2012, 147.

296 Bainton 1946, 193–194; Hornus 1980, 122; Swift 1979, 862; Shean 2010, 185.

297 Cf. Swift 1979, 862.

298 Sider 2012, 146.

299 For an overview of the church and the Christian community there, see Snyder 2003, 128–134; MacMullen 2009, 1–10; Mell 2010, 33–105.

300 Mell 2010, 87.

301 Mell 2010, 101.

in a wall painting that presents the victory of David over Goliath. Otherwise, the name Proclus appears only in the military sources of Dura-Europos. The name in the painting indicates either the painter or the benefactor.<sup>302</sup> Ulrich Mell has convincingly shown that the motif of David and Goliath belongs to the old Syrian baptismal ritual,<sup>303</sup> but one can speculate whether it had a special appeal to soldiers. It seems probable that there was a Proclus among the Christians of Dura-Europos.

If the case of Christian soldiers is somewhat speculative in Dura-Europos, it is not in Megiddo. A Christian prayer hall at Megiddo has an unequivocal military character, as both its place and an inscription prove. The construction is dated around 230,<sup>304</sup> which means that it is earlier than the house church in Dura-Europos. The prayer hall is situated in the immediacy of a Roman army camp. Besides the prayer hall, the building consists of dwellings of centurions and their families. There was also a bakery, which belonged to the army, as bread stamps used by the army were found there.<sup>305</sup> Thus, it seems that the army owned the building.<sup>306</sup> The floor of the prayer hall is decorated with four mosaic carpets situated around a stone table. All the carpets have geometrical figures. In addition, one carpet has two inscriptions and one carpet an inscription with a picture of two fishes, a tuna and a bass.<sup>307</sup> The three inscriptions, written in Greek, prove that the prayer hall is a Christian construction. The carpet with the picture of fishes includes the following text:

Gaianus, also called Porphyrius, centurion, our brother (ἀδελφός ἡμῶν), has made the pavement at his own expense as an act of liberality. Brutius has carried out the work.<sup>308</sup>

This text fits well with the picture of centurions from the gospels and other material. As I have shown above, centurions had economic resources, which

302 Mell 2010, 162.

303 Mell 2010, 169–173.

304 Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 28, 50. The dating is debated (Adams 2008, 64–66). Adams compares the construction with a post-Constantine building in Britain, where there is a chapel installed in one of the rooms. According to Adams, this similarity with the prayer hall in Megiddo “could perhaps lend weight to the view that the Megiddo church is a later (post-313 CE) Christian addition” (Adams 2008, 67). This evidence is very weak, however. A later survey on the site has not changed the dating (Tepper, David, and Adams 2016, 116).

305 Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 24, 29–30, 45.

306 Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 50–51. The unit there was *Legio VI Ferrata*, which seems to have been present already at Hadrian’s time (Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 14; Pollard and Berry 2012, 153–154).

307 Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 31–34.

308 Trans. Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 34.

made them appealing for the Christian communities. Gaianus could afford a mosaic construction. Though he is “our brother,” this designation is not enough to prove that he was a Christian. This designation was used in Greco-Roman associations and in military life, especially among the adherents of Mithraism.<sup>309</sup> The Christian character becomes plain in the other carpet, which includes two texts. The first indicates the donor of the stone table:

Προσήνικεν Ἀκεπτους ἢ φιλόθεος τὴν τράπεζαν θ[ε]ῶ Ἰ[ησο]ῦ Χ[ριστ]ῶ μνημόσυνον.

The God-loving Akeptous has offered the table to God Jesus Christ as a memorial.<sup>310</sup>

The words “God Jesus Christ” unequivocally proves that the prayer hall is a Christian construction. Each of the sacred names appears as a standard abbreviation, which we know from papyri of the 3rd–4th centuries.<sup>311</sup> As the inscription dedicates the table to God Jesus Christ, it was probably used for the Eucharist.<sup>312</sup> Yotam Tepper and Leah Di Segni interestingly point out that the word *μνημόσυνον* occurs three times in the New Testament (Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9; Acts 10:4). In Acts, the word is used by an angel in speaking to Cornelius the centurion: “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God (εἰς μνημόσυνον ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ).” In Matthew and Mark, the word occurs in the story of a woman anointing Jesus in Bethany. Jesus says that the incident should be told to the whole world in memory of her (εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς). Tepper and Di Segni claim that in light of the anointing story, the word does not occur by chance in the inscription. There are also women in the other inscription of the same carpet. The inscription runs as follows:

Remember (μνημονεύσατε) Primilla and Cyriaca and Dorothea, and moreover also Chreste.<sup>313</sup>

Tepper and Di Segni note that the formula is unusual, as the request is not addressed to God—which is usual in the memorial inscriptions—but to other

309 Harland 2005; Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 34–35.

310 Trans. Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 36. Tepper and Segni remark that *προσήνικεν* is the vulgar form of *προσήνεγκεν*.

311 Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 36.

312 See Tepper and Di Segni (2006, 37), who note that the Greek word used in the inscription also occurs in Paul when he refers to the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:21).

313 Trans. Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 41.

Christians.<sup>314</sup> One is tempted to think that, as a woman, Akeptous wanted to be remembered like the other women mentioned in the carpet. In this interpretation, Akeptous would have erected the table for Christ so that it would also serve as a reminder of her. In the Scripture, there are also examples of a memorial (*μνημόσυνον*) for people in cultic situations (cf. Lev. 23:24; Num. 17:5). This interpretation is anything but clear, however. The parallel between the woman in the New Testament story and Akeptous is not very close. The former does not offer a memorial, as Akeptous does. Instead, the story itself is a memorial of the woman for people. One should consider other interpretative options.

Was the table intended to remind the people of Christ or Christ of the people? As the table was probably used for the Eucharist, one can associate it with the idea that the Eucharist is celebrated in remembrance of Christ (1 Cor 11:24–25; Luke 22:19; Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 66:3). In this reading the table would be a memorial of Christ for the Christians. This is, however, not very probable. First, in the traditionally transmitted eucharistic words the remembrance is not *μνημόσυνον* but *ἀνάμνησις*. Second, it is quite natural to understand the word *μνημόσυνον* as a second object for the verb.<sup>315</sup> Thus, the table should remind God Jesus Christ of something, probably of the local Christians. This idea comes close to the Eucharist prayer of Didache, which contains the petition “Remember (*μνήσθητι*) your church, O Lord” (Did. 10.5; trans. Ehrman, LCL). There are analogies for the use of *μνημόσυνον* in this sense. In the story of Cornelius, prayers and alms are a memorial (*μνημόσυνον*) for God. The Book of Tobit speaks of prayers as a memorial (*μνημόσυνον*) before God (Tob 12:12; cf. Sir 50:16). The Septuagint provides analogies of cultic articles as a memorial (*μνημόσυνον*) for God (Exod 28:29; 30:16; Num 31:54). This use of *μνημόσυνον* suits quite well for the table, while the use of the word in the story of the anointing woman is more remote. I conclude that Akeptous erected the table to remind God Jesus Christ of the believers in the camp. In addition, the analogical use of *μνημόσυνον* in the story of Cornelius may have appealed to the Christians congregated in a building that belonged to the Roman army.

The Christian prayer hall in Megiddo is an unequivocal witness that there were Christians in the Roman army in the beginning of the third century. As the prayer hall is in the building owned by the army, Christians gathered

314 Tepper and Di Segni 2006, 42. Similar formulations are found in the church of Dura-Europos (Mell 2010, 160–161). One could also ask, is it certain that the plural refers to Christians and not, for example, to the divine Father and Son? Justin Martyr already pointed out that Jesus is “another God and Lord” (*θεός και κύριος ἕτερος*), which was the explanation for the occasional plural referring to God in the Scripture (*Dial.* 56.4; 62.1–4). That said, I do not know any Christian prayer with an address in the plural.

315 On two accusatives with one verb, see Smyth 1984, 362.

openly there and their faith was tolerated in the unit. Neither was the church in Dura-Europos a secret one; it was generally known.<sup>316</sup> These facts fit well with the relative tolerance of Christianity in the beginning of the third century. A positive peak for the Christians was during the reign of Emperor Alexander Severus (r. 222–235). He is claimed to have kept Christ and Abraham among his household *lares* (*Historia Augusta, Alex. Sev.* 29.2).<sup>317</sup> The emperor's mother played an important role in the administration (*Historia Augusta, Alex. Sev.* 14.7). Eusebius of Caesarea reports that she had Origen give her a lecture and that the emperor's household was largely Christian (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.21.3–4; 6.28). The sources may somewhat exaggerate the favor of Christianity in the court, but there was apparently a certain degree of peace. The existence of the prayer hall in a military area fits with this warmer period for Christians in the Empire.<sup>318</sup>

As Christianity did not belong to the official cults of the state, it was celebrated outside of the army camp. We do not know how the centurion Gaianus, “our brother,” and other brothers in *Legio VI Ferrata* lived with the official cult. Neither do we know, for instance, how they reconciled the “gospel of peace” with their military profession. They apparently did not concern themselves so much with these issues, or at least they found a way to reconcile their profession with their faith. Tertullian, an educated intellectual Christian, provides more information in spite of the fact that he did not accept them.

#### 2.2.4 Tertullian's Antimilitarism Meets Christian Practice

Tertullian is routinely presented as *the* pacifist in the early Church. Jean-Michel Hornus speaks of “Tertullian and other Christian ethicists,” who rejected all compromise with the military.<sup>319</sup> As Roland Bainton points out, “In the West, Tertullian was the most unambiguous when he said that ‘Christ in disarming Peter ungirt every soldier.’”<sup>320</sup> Tertullian provides two basic arguments against Christian participation in the army. First, Christians are not allowed to spill blood and, second, the idolatry included as part of military service is strictly

<sup>316</sup> Mell 2010, 81–82.

<sup>317</sup> *Historia Augusta, Alex. Sev.* 43.6–7, 51.7–8 also reports of Alexander Severus' otherwise positive attitude toward Christianity. One can surely see here the tendency of a pagan author to propagate religious tolerance in the Theodosian Christian Empire at the end of the 4th century (Stertz 1977).

<sup>318</sup> Adams (2008, 66) supposes that construction of the prayer hall would have invited a religious conflict, but in the political climate of Alexander Severus it was not automatically so. Alexander's successor Maximinus Thrax started persecutions, but these were limited to certain leaders of the Church (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.28). Later, Philip the Arab (r. 244–249) is reported to be a Christian (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.34), but this is also an exaggeration. However, his reign was evidently mild for the Christians (Pohlsander 1980).

<sup>319</sup> Hornus 1980, 158.

<sup>320</sup> Bainton 1986, 73.

prohibited (*Cor.* 11; *Idol.* 19).<sup>321</sup> While it is right to present Tertullian as an anti-militarist, he is not representative of the general Christian attitude. His own writings betray the fact that all Christians did not live up to his ideals. What we encounter again is the discrepancy between the views of the elite Christians and the reality among other Christians. For this reason, it is fruitful and illustrative to complete this chapter with a survey of Tertullian's writings.

Jerome claimed that Tertullian was the son of a centurion (*Vir. ill.* 53), but this information is not always taken as fully certain.<sup>322</sup> One of the arguments for Tertullian's military background is his dense use of military parlance.<sup>323</sup> "We were called to the warfare of the living God (*ad militam Dei vivi*) in our very response to the sacramental words (*in sacramenti verba*)" (*Mart.* 3; trans. *ANF* 3:694), he proclaims in a manner that is not very unusual for him.<sup>324</sup> One of the original meanings of *sacramentum* is military oath, to which Tertullian clearly refers here. However, the sheer existence of military metaphors does not require a military background. I earlier noted that the military metaphors in early Christianity have roots in the ancient philosophical tradition. One encounters military metaphors in Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, and other philosophers. The same metaphors were present in the Latin literature. Seneca admonished: "*vivere, Lucili, militare est* (*Ep.* 96.5). In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, a priest of Isis tells that at the end of the initiation rite, Lucius, the main character of the novel, enlists himself "in this holy army (*sanctae huic militiae*), to whose oath of allegiance (*sacramento*) you were summoned not long ago" (*Metam.* 11.15; trans. Hanson, LCL).<sup>325</sup> Pliny the Younger already spoke of the oath (*sacramentum*) among Christians (*Ep.* 10.96). He seemingly borrowed the word from the military parlance.<sup>326</sup>

Thus, military language as such betrays nothing of the background in the Christian congregation. It is more a question of its frequency than the simple occurrence of military metaphors. Tertullian used military parlance more densely than any other theologian of the early Church,<sup>327</sup> but as an antimilitarist he framed the military concepts anew. These refer to a lifestyle which creates an alternative or even an opposition to the concrete military calling.

321 See also Rordorf 1969, 124; Gero 1970, 294–295; Shean 2010, 95–98. Helgeland (1979, 741) plays down the problem of bloodspilling in a questionable way. Although it is true that the biblical references Tertullian uses are not pacifistic, his way of using them is clearly against any bloodspilling that included war and the army.

322 On the scholarly discussion, see, e.g., Trilling 2004, 29–31.

323 Trilling 2004, 31, 60.

324 On Tertullian's military parlance, see, e.g., Bähnk 2001, 58–76.

325 Rordorf (1969, 134) refers to this and other parallels, which, as far as I see, are not so clear as this one.

326 Cook 2010, 209.

327 Cancik 2008, 273.

“For what wars should we not be fit, not eager, even with unequal forces, we who so willingly yield ourselves to the sword, if in our religion (*apud istam disciplinam*) it were not counted better to be slain than to slay?” (*Apol.* 37; trans. *ANF* 3:45).<sup>328</sup> Why, then, does Tertullian’s writing have this strong military color? As Tertullian himself was an antimilitarist, is the parlance due to the influence of soldiers in the early Latin Church? According to Harnack, Tertullian’s strong militaristic language is located in the tradition of Latin Christianity, which had social reasons for this tendency: “the military element was at times very strong in some of the earliest Latin congregations.”<sup>329</sup> Hubert Cancik notes that there is a difference between the intellectual and abstract character of the Greek theological concepts and the Latin terms derived from the administrative and the military sources.<sup>330</sup> Cancik also points out that such military parlance preceded Tertullian.<sup>331</sup>

Some scholars have proposed that Tertullian wrote at the time of a growing role of the army in the Empire. The military offered more attractive opportunities than before, and, during Tertullian’s time, the first Christian soldiers appeared—or at least their number grew immensely then.<sup>332</sup> To claim that the first Christians appeared around the year 200 goes against the information available from the “thundering legion” in the 170s. Even Tertullian himself claims that Christians fought in this legion (*Apol.* 5.6). The military character of the Latin Christian concepts before Tertullian also points to Christian soldiers being no new phenomenon in Tertullian’s time. On the other hand, it may be true that their number increased, raising ethical and theological questions.<sup>333</sup> This creates a sensible background for Tertullian’s heightened antimilitarism, which he unequivocally represented in his works *De idolatria* and *De corona*. The strength of the resistance against Christian participation in the army is thus related to the strength of the phenomenon in Latin Christianity that he resists.

328 The word *disciplina* is noteworthy: while the Christian religion is a kind of regimentation, it is not aimed at turning Christians into a disciplined army but into martyrs (Cancik 2008, 275). To count it better to be slain than to slay is actually a variation on the Platonic principle: it is better to suffer wrong than do it (*Gorg.* 469c, 474b, 475e).

329 Harnack 1981, 54.

330 Cancik 2008, 269–271. Similarly also Bähnk 2001, 61.

331 Cancik 2008, 271–273.

332 Rordorf 1969, 109–110, 119–120; Gero 1970, 289, 291; Trilling 2004, 80. Rordorf denies the existence of Christian soldiers before Tertullian’s time. Harnack (1981, 84–85), in contrast, claims that the credit of the army was diminishing. This may be true only of the literate elite, to which Harnack refers.

333 Rordorf (1969, 107 n. 4, 118) claims that Tertullian refers to the contemporary discussion on soldiers in *Idol.* 19.1. As Rordorf openly states, this interpretation is not entirely unequivocal.



If Tertullian was a rigorous antimilitarist, why does he not criticize the Christian soldiers in the *Apologeticum*? Instead he presents them as a proof of Christian loyalty to the Empire. He says that Christians fill “cities, islands, fortresses (*castella*), towns, market-places, the very camp (*castra ipsa*), tribes, companies (*decurias*), palace, senate, forum” (*Apol.* 37; trans. *ANF* 3:45). A common view is that Tertullian’s attitude developed from the tolerant views in the *Apologeticum* into more rigorous ones.<sup>334</sup> This supposition, however, assumes a certain chronology of the works that is hardly clear.<sup>335</sup> Actually, the differences between Tertullian’s views in the books mentioned above should not be exaggerated. The problem lies in the *Apologeticum* itself. Immediately after presenting Christians in every area of the society, the army included, he continues by saying—as we saw above—that according to the *disciplina* Christians prefer to be slain than to slay!

One can try to harmonize Tertullian’s view by a reference to the paramilitary tasks of the army. A soldier could have tasks that were not military in the full sense of the word. Shean notes that “it was possible for a Christian to serve in the army without violating any of the pacifist prohibitions against killing.”<sup>336</sup> Unfortunately, this reading is out of place. As we have seen, in the *Apologeticum* he reported on Christian soldiers of the “thundering legion” on the northern front. This can mean nothing but fighting men. The real reason for Tertullian’s ambivalence seems to be rhetorical. When writing an apology on behalf of all Christians to his non-Christian audience, he toned down his criticism of Christian soldiers. The discrepancy between his views and the conduct of his fellow Christians became part of his own treatise. Writing the *De idolatria* and *De corona* for his fellow Christians, he openly expresses his antimilitaristic conviction.<sup>337</sup> Adolf Harnack put this bluntly, “We cannot exonerate this hot-blooded man from the charge of keeping two sets of books.”<sup>338</sup>

The *De idolatria* rigidly rejects any service in the army. In the treatise, Tertullian discusses different cases where a Christian might encounter idolatry. Military matters are treated in a passage after he has discussed the idolatrous clothing and ornaments required by public offices, which are unsuitable for a Christian (*Idol.* 17–18). Tertullian admits that rank-and-file soldiers can avoid

334 Gero 1970, 291–293; Shean 2010, 95.

335 On the scholarly discussion, see Bähnck 2001, 12 n. 11. Trilling (2004, 209–211) gives Harnack’s chronology (orig. 1904) and T. D. Barnes’ chronology (orig. 1971): both assume that the *Apologeticum* was written around 197. Harnack says that both *De idolatria* and *De corona* were written between the years 208–212, while Barnes dates *De idolatria* to 196–197 and *De corona* to 208.

336 Shean 2010, 96. Similarly Gero 1970, 292.

337 Cf. Bähnck 2001, 70 n. 125.

338 Harnack 1981, 77. See also Dunn 2015, 100–101, 103.

idolatry, and then he turns to other arguments in order to rebut Christian participation in the army:

But now inquiry is made about this point, whether a believer may turn himself unto military service, and whether the military may be admitted unto the faith, even the rank and file, or each inferior grade, to whom there is no necessity for taking part in sacrifices or capital punishments. There is no agreement between the divine and the human sacrament (*sacramento divino et humano*), the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness. One soul cannot be due to two *masters*—God and Caesar. And yet Moses carried a rod, and Aaron wore a buckle, and John (Baptist) is girt with leather and Joshua the son of Nun leads a line of march; and the People warred: if it pleases you to sport with the subject. But how will a *Christian man* war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away? For albeit soldiers had come unto John, and had received the formula of their rule; albeit, likewise, a centurion had believed; *still* the Lord afterward, in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier. No dress is lawful among us, if assigned to any unlawful action.

*Idol.* 19; trans. ANF 3:73

After illustrating the incompatibility of Christian and military callings, Tertullian suddenly turns the discussion to clothing: Moses' rod (Exod 4:2; 17:5) is associated with the rod (*virga*) of the centurion, Aaron's buckle (Exod 28:12; cf. 1 Macc 14:44) with the buckle (*fibula*) of the *tribuni militum*, and John the Baptist's belt (*lorum*) with the girdle worn by soldiers.<sup>339</sup> Moreover, Joshua led the army and "the People" (i.e., Israelites) waged war. How can it thus be against Christian faith to serve in the army?<sup>340</sup> John the Baptist accepted soldiers, as Luke reports, and the centurion of Capernaum believed without receiving an admonition to leave his office.<sup>341</sup> These references seem to be arguments that some Christians have presented for the acceptance of military service.<sup>342</sup> Tertullian shrugs off these scriptural proofs by claiming that the disarming of Peter in Gethsemane bears a principal message and, being a later incident, is more authoritative than the earlier ones. "A rather artful proof," Harnack

339 Waszink and van Winden 1987, 273.

340 Instead of "the People" (*populus*), Waszink and van Winden (1987, 62–63, 267–269) read "Peter" (*Petrus*), which makes understandable the following claim of a joke. Tertullian is probably thinking of Peter using the sword in Gethsemane.

341 Tertullian cannot mean Cornelius the centurion, as he presumes that the centurion believed before Jesus' passion.

342 Harnack 1981, 77.

ironically states, continuing: “The centurion from Caesarea is also forgotten, probably intentionally.” Harnack rightly points out, however, that Tertullian is basically not pondering single scriptural proofs. Instead, there is a basic conviction that military service belongs to the realm of the devil.<sup>343</sup> This is surely attested to by the idolatrous army religion.

This discussion of girdles or such things seems to have little to do with idolatry. Tertullian seemingly detours, as he must admit that the rank and file can avoid idolatry; their case must be treated with other arguments. As the end of the passage shows, Tertullian reasons that a soldier’s dress is indeed connected to idolatry. In that way, the rank and file also participated in idolatry. Helgeland recalls the significance of clothing in the religious festivals of the army: every soldier had to wear formal dress on these situations. According to Helgeland, idolatry is the basic problem for Tertullian, not the military calling as such.<sup>344</sup> This is partly true. Idolatrous clothing was *the* issue in the previous passage, and Tertullian returns to it at the end of this passage. Still, Tertullian’s negative attitude toward soldiers does not wholly rest in idolatry. Killing is also a problematic issue, as the references to capital punishment and the disarming of Peter indicate.<sup>345</sup>

In *De idolatria*, Tertullian does not directly write about Christian soldiers. However, some arguments for the permissibility of Christian military service betrays their presence in the army. While there is surely an overstatement in the *Apologeticum* that Christians “fill” (*implevimus*) fortresses, camps, and companies, it certainly contains some truth: there really were Christians in the army.<sup>346</sup> This is attested to by Tertullian’s *De Corona*, which opens with an incident in the *nuncupatio votorum*, one of the several religious ceremonies performed in the army. This ceremony, held annually on January 3rd, included the crowning of soldiers and a recitation of the military oath (*sacramentum*).<sup>347</sup> This particular year, the soldiers also received a cash bonus:

Very lately it happened thus: while the bounty of our most excellent emperors was dispensed in the camp, the soldiers, laurel-crowned, were

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343 Harnack 1981, 78.

344 Helgeland 1979, 739–740.

345 Quite similarly Sider 2012, 50.

346 In the same context, he claims that the majority of the inhabitants in the cities are Christians. This is without doubt an overstatement. See also Gero 1970, 292. In *Apol* 42 (trans. ANF 3:49), Tertullian says: “We sail with you, and fight with you, and till the ground with you.” Gero (1970, 291–292) philologically discusses this passage, but concludes that actual military service cannot be ruled out.

347 Kossmann 2008, 135–136, 145–146. Otherwise, the oath was recited after enlisting and on the anniversary of the emperor’s ascension to power (Helgeland 1979, 739).

approaching. One of them, more a soldier of God, more steadfast than the rest of his brethren, who had imagined that they could serve two masters, his head alone uncovered, the useless crown in his hand—already even by that peculiarity known to every one as a Christian—was nobly conspicuous.

*Cor. 1; trans. ANF 3:93*

The opening words reveal that the main character had Christian brothers in arms who did not deny the laurel. Tertullian blames them, but also reports their arguments:

Thereafter adverse judgments began to be passed upon his conduct—whether on the part of Christians I do not know, for those of the heathen are not different—as if he were headstrong and rash, and too eager to die, because, in being taken to task about a mere matter of dress, he brought trouble on the bearers of the Name. [...] they murmur that a peace so good and long is endangered for them. [...] they put forth also the objection—But where are we forbidden to be crowned?

*Cor. 1; trans. ANF 3:93*

Tertullian continues to address the question of forbidden laurels, but later opens his argumentation against all military service in *Cor. 11–12*. His strategy is to develop with examples the basic notion in the opening words: Christian soldiers try to serve two masters when adding a human oath to the divine one,<sup>348</sup> keeping watch for others than Christ and so on: “The very carrying of the name over from the camp of light to the camp of darkness is a violation” (*Cor. 11; trans. ANF 3:100*). In addition to idolatry, killing is against the law of Christ, who proclaimed that those who take up the sword will perish by the sword. Moreover, a Christian soldier can be laureled after a victorious campaign against barbarians, which includes killing and, what is even worse, killing of fellow-Christians: “Is the laurel of the triumph made of leaves, or of corpses? Is it adorned with ribbons, or with tombs? Is it bedewed with ointments, or with the tears of wives and mothers? It may be of some Christians too; for Christ is also among the barbarians” (*Cor. 12, ANF 3:101*).

348 See also *Cor. 12* (trans. *ANF 3:101*): “Lo! the yearly public pronouncing of vows, what does that bear on its face to be? It takes place first in the part of the camp where the general’s tent is, and then in the temples. In addition to the places, observe the words also: ‘We vow that you, O Jupiter, will then have an ox with gold-decorated horns.’ What does the utterance mean? Without a doubt the denial (of Christ). Albeit the Christian says nothing in these places with the mouth, he makes his response by having the crown on his head.”

Unlike in *De idolatria*, in *De corona* Tertullian reluctantly finds room for Christian soldiers. Now he mentions not only the soldiers, which John the Baptist encountered, and the centurion of Capernaum—like in *De idolatria*—but also Cornelius. Tertullian consequently reasons: “Of course, if faith comes later, and finds any preoccupied with military service, their case is different”—but only if they can “avoid offending God,” which Tertullian seems to regard as being very difficult (*Cor.* 11). In allowing military service for those who were baptized when serving in the army, Tertullian goes along with *Apostolic Tradition* 16.9.<sup>349</sup> Still, he is quite skeptical about whether a Christian can serve in the army without “quibbling” over his faith. He argues that a soldier has no special liberties in his Christian conduct. The necessities of military life allow for no exception to the normal Christian faith and morality (*Cor.* 11). Seemingly, some have allowed exceptions because of the necessities, but Tertullian has a profoundly contrary view. If there is any necessity, it is the necessity to suffer and die because of faith.<sup>350</sup> He remarks with contempt on the reaction of his fellow Christians when they saw one refusing the military crown:

They murmur that the peace so good and long is endangered for them. Nor do I doubt that some are already turning their back on the Scriptures, are making ready their luggage, are equipped for flight from city to city; for that is all of the gospel they care to remember. I know, too, their pastors are lions in peace, deer in the fight.”

*Cor.* 1; trans. ANF 3:93

The refusing soldier put away his sword and military dress, and thus he was “equipped in the apostle’s armour” (Eph 6:11–17) to fight the spiritual fight so that he would receive “the white crown of martyrdom” worthier of other crowns (*Cor.* 1; trans. ANF 3:93).<sup>351</sup> Yet, Harnack doubts that the soldier was as exemplary a martyr as Tertullian claims. Harnack sharply questions why, for instance, the soldier suddenly refused to take the crown but has “not resisted military authority before on any of a hundred other occasions.”<sup>352</sup> Harnack points out that Tertullian makes a comparison with worshipers of Mithras in the closing section of the treatise (*Cor.* 15; trans. ANF 3:103). They had the liberty to be uncrowned, as they had refused it already in their rites, stating:

349 See the discussion above on Clement of Alexandria.

350 Bähnk 2001, 71–76. Bähnk speaks of Tertullian’s other treatises, but clearly there are similar ideas in *De corona*. See also Dunn 2015, 99.

351 Bähnk 2001, 69–70.

352 Harnack 1981, 83.

“Mithras is my crown.”<sup>353</sup> Harnack concludes that Tertullian’s hero actually requires the same freedom of religion as Mithraists: “It is a symptom of the increased self-consciousness of the Christians (especially those in the army) as a religious group distinct from others. Apparently this Christian soldier did not at all want to demonstrate that Christian service and military service were irreconcilable.”<sup>354</sup>

The reader must distinguish between the soldier’s protest as a historical phenomenon and the interpretation Tertullian gave to it. It was Tertullian, who—as an intellectual—felt aversion toward military life and made this soldier into a hero of his own antimilitarism. This reveals his connections to the philosophical elite of his time, although he also maintained a certain distance.<sup>355</sup> It is well known that Tertullian rhetorically rejected philosophy as Athens, which should have nothing to do with the Christian truth of Jerusalem (*Praescr.* 7). Still, he wrote a remarkable text, *De pallio*, which is an *encomium* on the philosopher’s mantle that he had embraced. Tertullian says that his Christianity is “a better philosophy” (*Pall.* 6; trans. *ANF* 4:12); this simultaneously indicates a connection to and taking distance from “ordinary” philosophy. In philosophical terms, Tertullian’s deep disgust toward idolatry is surely unique, though there were reserved attitudes among philosophers, too.<sup>356</sup> For him, idolatry was the clearest reason to reject military service. Yet, he also thought that killing was against Christian morality. This reason comes closer to the philosophers, who felt disgust toward violence and violent means of ruling. In *De pallio*, Tertullian allows the philosopher’s mantle to list public offices where it does not serve, for example: “no judge, no soldier (*non milito*), no king” (*Pall.* 5; trans. *ANF.* 4:11). It is symptomatic that it is just the philosopher’s mantle that utters this. As a Christian intellectual, Tertullian shared the antimilitaristic ethos of his pagan peers.

### 2.3 Conclusions

I started the last section’s discussion on military metaphors in order to ask whether they tell something about soldiers among the Christians. The result was mainly negative. However, the lengthy discussion was necessary to dismiss

353 This ceremony belongs to the initiation of the grade of *miles* (soldier). See Merkelbach 1984, 95–96.

354 Harnack 1981, 83.

355 Cf. Trilling 2004, 36–38.

356 For example, Epictetus ridicules the desire to see Phidias’ statue of Zeus when Zeus is everywhere (*Disc.* 1.6.24; Huttunen 2009, 39). See also Goulet-Cazé’s article (1996) on Cynics and their views on religion and van Kooten’s (2008, 347–354) description of Roman ideas of the aniconic cult.

the idea that repeated military metaphors necessarily imply the existence of Christian soldiers. I showed that these metaphors belonged to the standard philosophical parlance of the day and were used also by persons with antimilitaristic attitudes. Only 1 Clement seemed to suggest more than this.

In the previous section I pointed out an antimilitaristic tendency in the Gospel of John. I showed that this tendency finds its home in the writings of the early Christian theologians, Tertullian being the most prominent Christian antimilitarist. The antimilitaristic tendency was part and parcel of the intellectual ethos of the time. Antimilitarism was characteristic not only of the Christian theologians, but also their philosophical pagan peers. While there were exceptions among Christian theologians, like Julius Africanus, most written sources reflect antimilitarism or at least a distant attitude to military issues. One should not read these sources as *the* Christian statement, however. The reality was more heterogenous. This looms in the antimilitaristic writings, too. While being an uncompromising antimilitarist, Tertullian speaks of Christian soldiers. In his in-group polemics he criticizes them, but in his apologetics for a non-Christian audience, these same soldiers are presented as a proof of Christian loyalty toward Roman society. The excavations in Dura-Europos and Megiddo suggest that some soldiers were quite openly Christians in the first decades of the third century. Tertullian's *De Corona*, despite its antimilitarism, betrays the same fact from ca. 200 CE. The number of Christians seems to have been high enough to require some sort of recognition and freedom from the state cult.

The increasing need to recognize Christians led not only to granting of recognition but also intensified periods of persecution, that is, until the Constantinian turn in the next century. The Decian persecution in the 250s seems to have been the result of the rising importance of Christianity in Roman society.<sup>357</sup> However, these persecutions do not make up the whole picture of Christians in Roman society. The remains of a prayer hall in Megiddo suggest a considerable degree of toleration or recognition of Christians from the side of the Roman army from the beginning of the third century. At the same time, many Christians granted recognition to the the Roman army by participating in its structures. While admittedly there was an antimilitaristic trait among the early Christians, which Tertullian clearly represents, his antimilitarism does not represent the whole truth of the relationship between early Christianity and the Roman army, since Tertullian had brothers in arms.

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357 Rives 1999, 151.

## Conclusions

What was wrong with the state was its old paganism. Change its religion and all would be well.<sup>1</sup>

This is how Henry Chadwick once described the Christian mission in the Roman Empire. If we believe Chadwick, Christians were far from a constant source of opposition to the Empire. It is true that there were tensions between Christians and the Empire, but it is far-fetched to reconstruct anti-imperial sentiment as a foundational value of early Christians in general. Romans 13 and its heritage in early Christianity proves the opposite. In this book I introduced Risto Saarinen's concept of recognition as a tool to depict Christians in the Roman Empire. Apart from periods of persecution, one could say that Christians and the Empire tolerated each other. However, toleration is a too weak of a concept. There was a kind of commitment, more than toleration, which Saarinen calls recognition. Instead of a full agreement, the attitude of recognizing could "consist in a commitment to work together, respect other convictions, and approve a general societal or ideological framework in which the coexistence takes place."<sup>2</sup> I have employed the concept of recognition to avoid black-and-white interpretations of Christian-Empire relationships. I emphasize that there are alternatives between full denial and full acceptance. In this book, I discussed the recognition between the early Christians and the Roman Empire on three levels: political, cultural, and practical.

There is no political theory in the New Testament, but Romans 13:1–7 became a seed for it. This passage had a lasting impact on later Christian generations, and it contributed to the approval of the general societal and ideological framework. Paul's imperial theology was not very different from the contemporary political theology and philosophy. Indeed, the passage is a monotheistic adaptation of the polytheistic imperial theology. Paul did not invent this monotheistic variation. He just advanced the Jewish monotheistic legitimation of the Empire. Nevertheless, it is Paul's influence that had such a huge impact on the subsequent Christian political culture. Romans 13 is felt in 1 Peter, in the Pastoral Epistles, in 1 Clement, and so on—until the present day.

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<sup>1</sup> Chadwick 1986 [1967], 24.

<sup>2</sup> Saarinen 2016, 1. This is already given as part of the longer citation in the introduction of this book.



Paul paved a path for the Christian empires from the fourth century onwards. In this sense, the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin's condemnation of religion as the source for all state power seems to be justified. He claimed that God's authority is repeated in human relations, and seemingly this is just what Paul argued: God has the power to appoint some people to govern the rest of humankind, and God has delegated his might to the powers that be.

However, it is misleading to read Romans 13 merely from a theological point of view. Paul's argumentation does not rest only on God's ordinance. At the same time, he argues socially. There is a fixed political philosophy behind Paul's words in Romans 13: the law of the stronger. Here he followed the general ancient tradition, which could be argued both theologically and socially. Paul presents both sides. Theological and social reasonings are not dialectically separated but integrated. In this theopolitical tradition, divine favor is deduced from social facts; divine support reveals itself in supremacy. Ruthless political realism is well attested in this line of thought. It is socially hopeless to resist the stronger, and theologically such an act entails resistance to God. Earlier studies have not noticed this general ancient background of Paul's thought. I suggest that the reason for such negligence is the tradition to take the text as a norm to simply be obeyed. Paul's words are traditionally read as a prescriptive text, not a descriptive one. He surely exhorts his audience, but his exhortation is not just a commandment. Paul justifies his exhortation by means of a reference to the actual reality of wielding of power. He understood the power play in a way that was widely shared by the people in antiquity. In this sense, his exhortation was founded on common knowledge. For an ancient reader, Paul's exhortation would have been a natural conclusion based on the social reality more than a new light appearing directly from heaven.

The argumentation based on the social reality does not diminish the theological edge of Paul's thought. In this sense, Bakunin's critique is still valid: God seems to guarantee the power structure in society. However, what Bakunin did not note is the fact that God's power does not only duplicate itself in human relationships. For Paul, the powers that be belong to this world, which is passing away, and Paul's own epistles also proclaim the end of all human power structures. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul claims that all authority will be put down at the eschatological turn. Indeed, at the end God will be all in all. Thus, unlike Bakunin suggested, God's power does not necessarily repeat itself in human relations, but ultimately ends all human power over other people. It is clear that the end of human power was Paul's fundamental view: the present form of life is passing away (1 Cor 7:31). Christians did not adapt to society wholeheartedly. Here the concept of recognition is apt. Christians saw the provisional

value of the Roman imperial order as God's institution prior to the eschatological turn, after which all human orders are purposeless.

Interestingly, the eschatological end of human authorities is also based on the law of the stronger. As a conqueror, Christ will trample underfoot all enemies before delivering total authority to God (1 Cor 15:24–28). The Book of Revelation gives a vivid picture of this final conflict in universal history. An apocalyptic underpinning represented the revolutionary edge of the Christian faith, even if it did not lead to practical consequences for centuries. The revolutionary sentiment can be felt in the American political tradition, as seen in the constitutional documents of the United States. I claim that this sentiment is reflected in American scholarship and its keen interest in anti-imperial readings of the early Christian documents.

However, the apocalyptic hopes really erupted in the revolutionary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Marxists stopped waiting for the heavenly kingdom; they wanted to create it on earth with a last fight. The intention was sooner or later to abolish state and repression, but the result was a bloodbath and more repressive states than ever. In spite of opposite intentions, the powers that be remained in a new guise. Paul never named the powers; he never spoke of emperors, the Senate, or anything else. He was more abstractly speaking of the phenomenon of power that seems to stand the test of time. Powers remain even when their abolition is intended.

The phenomenon of power can also be called "the normalcy of civilization," as Crossan and Reed put it in the passage quoted in the opening of this book. Contrary to what Crossan and Reed claim, however, Paul did not seem to oppose "Rome with Christ against Caesar." Instead, he intentionally reminded his audience that opposing the authorities is to oppose God, while the whole enterprise will ultimately end up in the judgment. According to Paul, it is Christ's task to dethrone "the normalcy of civilization," while the believers can only wait for the eschatological dawn and start to remodel their own lives to be worthy of God's rule. In the process of remodeling, the eschatological expectation is reflected in the present life, which, in turn, may erode "the normalcy of civilization" in the long run. However, this is something other than the straightforward opposition in the apocalyptic-revolutionary sentiment visible in Marxism and the American political tradition. Instead of revolting, many Christians actually granted recognition to Roman society on cultural and practical levels. They more or less adapted to the Empire, both culturally and practically. In my study, Christian adaption to the ancient philosophy exemplifies the cultural level, while Christian soldiers represent the practical level.

Irrespective of the contrast that Tertullian constructed between Athens and Jerusalem, Christians adopted philosophy and sought recognition as philosophers. The general picture that modern studies provide seems to be that of a misrecognition from the side of the non-Christian intelligentsia. Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, and Celsus are presented as proving the Roman disgust of Christians. This is only a partial truth, however. Several non-Christian second-century philosophers seemed to grant recognition to the Christians; this does not mean that they subscribed to everything Christians said and did. Christians were recognized in the category of philosophy, whatever their faults. The Stoic Epictetus is the earliest of those non-Christian philosophers. His two acknowledgments of Christians (*Disc.* 2.9.19–21; 4.7.6) date back to the first decades of the second century. Quite surprisingly, this early source has won only superficial attention among academic readers. I have presented the first thorough a scholarly analysis of two passages where Epictetus speaks of Christians. Due to the text-critical difficulties, scholars have mainly misinterpreted Epictetus. He is not speaking of proselytes, but of Christians as real Jews, which shows that he is familiar with Christian suprasessionist theology. He can also cite Christian expressions. In another passage, he seems to know the Christian practice of using short sentences, so-called canons—a practice that was widespread in the philosophical schools, too. Epictetus' words do not betray any deeper interest in Christianity. The Christians are just occasional examples of a virtuous life. The passing observations on Christians seem to presuppose that Epictetus' audience knew what he was talking about. I claim that Epictetus' passages are more important sources of early Christianity than scholars have realized. A stronger interest in these passages is a desideratum.

In the late second century, more sources recognized Christians in the category of philosophers. Marcus Aurelius and Lucian viewed Christians in a critical or satirical light, but the standards that Christians are unable to reach are those of philosophers. Christians are poor in the class of philosophy, but this is not the most interesting thing. What is most important is that Christians are measured with the standard of philosophy. Even Celsus' text betrays this tendency, despite his intense aspiration to give an opposite picture. At the end of the second century, Galen presents a more laudable view of Christians. Although he saw intellectual faults in the Christian doctrine and criticized it, he put it above the Stoic doctrine, even calling Christianity a philosophical school which has generated such virtuous persons that they surpass many genuine philosophers. This is high acclaim for Christians, because in antiquity philosophers were not only weighed on the basis of their theoretical doctrines but also their practical virtues. Galen's passages need still further study, not

least because some texts have a complex history of transmission and variant readings.

I suggest that the philosophical recognition of Christians reflected what the Christians themselves sought after. To this end, I pointed to examples of New Testament passages that mention philosophy or philosophers. Although one cannot avoid an impression of some tension, it is clear that these passages try to show Christianity in the category of philosophy. Actually, the criticism of human wisdom, present in 1 Corinthians 1–2, is a fixed part of the philosophical discourse itself. Several features in those chapters have good parallels in philosophical texts. Thus, 1 Corinthians 1–2 does not present an anti-philosophical stance, as is usually suggested, but instead presents a philosophical criticism of rival schools. The philosophical elements in 1 Corinthians 7 do not contradict the opening chapters of the epistle but are aligned. As the earliest Christian documents, Paul's words show that seeking philosophical recognition was not a later development. In sum, the relationship between early Christians and philosophers was not one of pure enmity, but more of a mutual recognition.

Mutual recognition can also be found on a practical level in life, where it does not appear in concepts or conceptions but actual practices. In this book, I presented Christian soldiers as an example of practical recognition. One should be careful not to depend on one-sided evidence or rhetorical exaggerations. Tertullian eloquently not only rejected philosophy but also military calling. This has misled some scholars to imagine that Christians generally dismissed service in the imperial army. A careful reading of Tertullian's own account of the Christian soldier in *De corona*, however, proves the opposite. Tertullian praises a soldier for declining a laurel in the ceremony of the imperial religion. While Tertullian explains that real Christian conviction makes it impossible to serve in the imperial ranks, he nonetheless mentions Christian soldiers who disapprove of their Christian brother. Tertullian reproaches them for their lack of Christian firmness and see them as apostates. Apparently, those Christian soldiers themselves did not see anything wrong in their service.

Tertullian's value judgment should not lead us astray from the fact that there were some serving in the army who thought that they were good Christians. One can even question whether the refusing soldier suits the role in which Tertullian placed him. The soldier's protest seems to be more about freedom of religion than military service in general. The soldier refusing to wear the laurel wreath required a similar freedom of religion as the Mithraists. Thus, he was seeking recognition as a Christian soldier. Actually, the protest testifies to the increasing number of Christians in the ranks. At the turn of the third century they seem to have made up such a considerable religious minority that they

could justifiably demand their rights. In turn, they saw military service as being compatible with their Christianity and, thus, they recognized the Empire in their everyday practice.

Tertullian's Christian antimilitarism appears to have been more home in the literate circles. I showed that many other contemporary Christian and non-Christian intellectuals shared his negative view, though not always with Tertullian's vigor and Christian reasoning. Tertullian's Christian antimilitarism was a variation of the common stance among philosophers. The majority of Christian literary sources originate in intellectual circles, and therefore the picture they give is unbalanced. A careful reading may open a window to a reality that is different from the ideals of the author. This is the case with Tertullian, as we saw. Although antimilitarism is the main line in most of the sources, there are also some that openly approve of Christian soldiers. Among the evangelists, Luke is the one who likes to present Roman soldiers as Christians or is sympathetic to them. Julius Africanus' *Kestoi* is a manual for warfare, including, for example, biological and chemical methods to poison the enemy. While the *Kestoi* is admittedly a strange and unusual work from a Christian in the beginning of the third century, it betrays the fact that early Christian attitudes to war and military service were more diverse than one might believe when reading the antimilitaristic passages of the early Christian theologians.

Emperor Marcus Aurelius embodies in his own person the two sides: philosophical antimilitarism and personal military service. He ridicules himself for being a brigand who catches prisoners of war. The emperor could not combine the moral ideals of the philosophical elite and his actual duties. This was easier for those philosophers and theologians who could concentrate on their intellectual activities without any disturbing official responsibilities. Accordingly, the sources they provide must be read with caution and contextualized with the other evidence that is available. The archaeological evidence from Megiddo indicates that Christian soldiers could openly practice their religion in the beginning of the third century. At least in this case, Christian soldiers were recognized by the army.

There is still one aspect of soldiers that scholars have failed to see, namely, when a description of soldiers does not necessarily reflect the narrator's stance toward the moral appropriateness of military service—and, even less, warfare. The Roman army exercised greater responsibilities of security than large-scale campaigns. In the gospels and Acts, a reader finds soldiers in tasks which today would be called administration, policing, and war on terrorism. The resulting encounters between soldiers and civilians created both tensions and positive developments. The military characters in the gospels and in Acts mostly reflect

these everyday experiences, and thus they should not be read in terms of a value judgment on the appropriateness of a military career for a Christian, as many scholars have done. Instead, these characters illustrate how civilians experienced soldiers in their daily life. While John belongs to the group of antimilitaristic theologians, the synoptics follow the general ancient view of constructing a rough division between rank-and-file soldiers and centurions.

In the division between ordinary soldiers and centurions, the former are painted as the bad ones. They extort, rob, and use violence. These are things that John the Baptist urges soldiers to refrain from (Luke 3:14). Centurions, in turn, are presented in a positive light. The centurion of Capernaum believes in Jesus and, according to Luke, is a wealthy benefactor for the local Jewish community. In Acts, Cornelius is the ideal Christian. The passion narrative illustrates this division: the rank and file torture Jesus, while the centurion confesses his status as God's son. This division is not aimed at expressing the appropriateness of military service. It just gives voice to the civil experience of soldiers. One can thus conclude that a military career was acceptable. If the problem was the threat the soldiers pose to the population, a military career as such was no problem. The problem was malpractice in that career. With that threat removed, the characterization of soldiers can be laudatory. In the synoptic gospels and Acts, the centurions are precisely such positive figures. One could legitimately serve in the army if the ethical standards were upheld. It was no problem to serve the state. This conclusion, in turn, betrays that the authors basically recognized the Empire.

Modern readers have sometimes overemphasized the anti-imperial tones in the New Testament. But the potential conflict did not erupt in antiquity. It burst into flames in a secular form in the Marxist revolutions of the 20th century. Their logic was to put all enemies under the feet of the oppressed; however, the result was not the end of state authority, as expected, but a stronger state than those which existed in the first place. The state became the god that was all in all.

While the first Christian centuries do not demonstrate revolutionary activism, the revolutionary element should not be dismissed. It can be found in a more subtle or even unconscious form. I showed that the early Christians felt the eschatological end of hierarchies "in Christ." Paul never questioned the differences, nor even the hierarchies between any given social positions, but claimed rather that these hierarchies and differences have ultimately become *adiaphora* among Christians. Paul admonishes Christians to superficially live the normal social life without having deep attachment to it (1 Cor 7:29–31). This ultimate conviction of equality in Christ slowly eroded the legitimation

of social hierarchies, although the end of hierarchies was projected onto an eschatological turn. What has changed in the present is the attitude. Paul's words in the epistle to Philemon demonstrate the expected change in the mutual attitudes of master and slave, but the epistle provides no proof of activism directed at ending the practice of slavery. Of course, attitudes always seep into practice and slowly replace indifference. Because Paul did not know how long the wait for the eschaton would be, he could not anticipate how much the eschatological values would bleed into the social reality. The case of slavery is illustrative. Paul never questioned the social practice of slavery, but step by step it became increasingly questionable. What Marx ridiculed as a fantasy proved its revolutionary power more reliably than the unsubtle armed revolutions of the 20th century. Looking at the nightmarish executions of Marx' apocalyptic visions, Paul's recognition of the powers that be can be seen as having a point.

Chadwick was right. Early Christians recognized the Roman Empire and they wished only to change its religion. But this change of religion was later reflected in the society. Adaptation to the Empire did not mean political stagnation. Instead, it began a process that ultimately changed some of the values of the Empire itself. The Christian Empire and its political followers in the Western world have not fulfilled all the eschatological hopes. The process is ongoing.

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