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**Paul's Emotional Regime:
The Social Function of Emotion
in Philippians and 1 Thessalonians**

By

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Durham University

Department of Theology and Religion

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of the function of emotion in the social formation of the believers in the Pauline churches. In his letters, Paul speaks often of his own emotions, and also promotes certain emotions while banishing others; all this surely indicates that emotion has an important role to play within the believing community. However, in New Testament studies, the study of emotion is still at an embryonic stage. This thesis, which represents the first thesis-length treatment of emotion in the Pauline letter corpus, attempts to take the discussion forward. It argues that for Paul, emotions are integral to the proper formation and stabilizing of Christian identity and community, because they encode structures of belief and influence patterns of sociality.

Chapter 1 reviews the nascent scholarship on emotion in Paul's letters and the wider New Testament, and also surveys the state of play of emotions research in the sciences and social sciences. In chapter 2, we examine emotion in Stoicism, the dominant philosophical influence of the day, focusing particularly on joy and grief—the two emotions that we take up and investigate exegetically in chapters 3 and 4, which concern, respectively, joy in Philippians, and grief in 1 Thessalonians. Finally, in chapter 5, we enlist the sociological notion of the “emotional regime” to explore how authorized emotions are constructed and reinforced in the Pauline communities. I conclude by offering an account of emotion in Paul, contrasting it with Stoic thinking.

Taking its cue from current emotions research, which highlights the cognitive and social dimensions of emotion, this thesis proposes that as Paul sees it, right patterns of feeling stem from, and indeed embody, right patterns of belief, and that the social display of sanctioned emotions upbuilds the communal life of the believers. Furthermore, such right emotions, by squaring felt experience with held beliefs, and demarcating social boundaries between Christians and others, have powerful integrating and differentiating functions that profoundly influence identity and belonging. These conclusions have potentially far-reaching implications for our overall understanding of the social formation of the early believers, not least in terms of how a hitherto neglected aspect of that socialization—Paul's emphasis on the affective dimensions of personal and communal life—is brought into active conversation with the theological realities that were believed to shape all of human existence and the practices that undergirded and sustained these beliefs.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations generally follow the guidelines in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, SBL Press: 2014); those not listed therein are given below. Citations of ancient literature are from the Loeb Classical Library unless otherwise indicated.

EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
LS	Long, Anthony A., and David N. Sedley. <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> . 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987
NT	New Testament
<i>OSAP</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
OT	Old Testament
<i>PHP</i>	<i>Galen: On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato (=De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis)</i> . Translated by Philip De Lacy. 3 vols. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978-1980
PiNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
SGBC	The Story of God Biblical Commentary
THNTC	The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electronic, without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.

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The initial ideas for my study emerged during several master's courses at Durham University. It is no coincidence that my approach reflects the influence of my teachers. From Prof Francis Watson, I learnt how to be a more attentive and discriminating reader of Paul; Dr Stephen Barton showed me the usefulness of social-scientific criticism; and I was inspired by Prof Walter Moberly's perspectives on theological hermeneutics.

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To God alone be the glory.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introductory Comments

The NT attests strongly to the fact that Paul displayed a wide range of emotions in his life and ministry, and expected the same from his converts in the churches that he had founded. However, the study of emotion in the Pauline letters is still in its infancy; and to my knowledge, there is, as yet, no monograph-length treatment of Paul and emotion. To date, scholarly work has focused largely on Paul's rhetorical use of *pathos*, though in recent years there has been a nascent interest in probing the relationship between his construals of emotion and early Christian eschatological faith. However, more fundamental questions regarding the role of emotion in Paul's writings have yet to be addressed.

Accordingly, this present investigation aims to get at the heart of what Paul is doing with emotion in his communications with his churches. Through historical analysis and exegetical study, and in dialogue with present-day social-scientific approaches to emotion, I will offer an account of the function of emotion in Paul's letters that engages deeply with his theological discourse and pastoral agenda, while also taking careful account of the complexes of sociality, symbolic meanings, and cultural influences that shape the sociocultural milieu in which his churches are set. As a result, I hope that our overall understanding of Pauline Christianity will be advanced in some small way.

1.2. Emotion and Early Christianity: Survey of Research

1.2.1. Studies of Emotion in the Wider New Testament

1.2.1.a. Recent Monographs

There are a number of older studies in the NT that have a specific emotion such as love or joy as their focus, but they are targeted at a non-specialist readership.¹ As far as I am able to discover, there have been in recent years only a handful of monographs

¹ James Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929); William G. Morrice, *Joy in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984).

that have emotion as the main focus for investigation; however, these studies are generally wanting in theoretical and analytical depth.

Stephen Voorwinde's two monographs both deal with the significance of Jesus' emotions for aspects of Christology: in the first of them, Voorwinde seeks to establish that the emotions of the Johannine Jesus throw significant light on the ongoing debate surrounding his humanity/divinity, and in its sequel Voorwinde extends his scope to include the synoptic gospels in order to ascertain if they together with John's gospel present a coherent picture of Jesus' emotions.² However, Voorwinde offers only a cursory appraisal of what emotions are: for him, they are experiences of feeling that activate and affect behaviour.³ While there is some recognition that emotions emerge from situational reasoning, his discussion of them lacks theoretical sophistication.

In a wide-ranging study, Matthew Elliott applies current research in psychology to emotion in the NT writings.⁴ Elliott's expressed desire to interpret emotion in the light of both modern studies of emotion and how it was understood in its historical context is certainly laudable.⁵ Unfortunately, Elliott's exegetical approach is somewhat facile and in several places amounts to little more than using the biblical material as a proof text for his assertions. There is minimal engagement with the Greco-Roman sociocultural setting for emotional life. Furthermore, while Elliott stresses that emotion is connected to ethics,⁶ he does not adequately explore its implications for the early Christian communities. To be fair, Elliott does acknowledge that his efforts to utilize a cognitive approach to understanding emotion in the NT are merely the opening of a door into this new realm of research.⁷ While Elliott's emphasis on the cognitive basis of emotion has certain echoes in my approach, any indebtedness to his work is negligible.

1.2.1.b. Stephen Barton

One scholar whose recent short studies are helping to advance the study of emotion in early Christianity is Stephen Barton. In 2011, the first of his explorations of

² Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human or Divine?*, LNTS 284 (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

³ Voorwinde, *Gospels*, 3.

⁴ Matthew Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Emotion in the New Testament* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2005).

⁵ Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, 124–125.

⁶ Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, 252–264.

⁷ Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, 236–237.

emotion in the NT was published;⁸ this article has become a seminal contribution to this emerging area of scholarly interest. Barton's approach is exemplary: after surveying recent developments in emotions research in the social sciences, and judiciously using these theories to open up the question of early Christian emotions,⁹ he brings key interpretative perspectives to bear on the issue of grief in 1 Thessalonians, situating such grief alongside wider sociocultural views of grief in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁰ Using grief as a case study, Barton demonstrates convincingly that early Christian eschatological faith and emotional life are intimately connected to each other.¹¹ In not insignificant ways, my own theoretical stance takes its cue from some of Barton's proposals: first, that emotions, being cognitive and evaluative, are a form of rationality that may offer another avenue towards understanding early Christian rationality as a whole; second, that emotions play a role in expressing identity and marking social boundaries and points of transition, for example through "feeling rules"; and third, that emotions arise in the course of social relations and are integral to processes of social engagement.¹² Important for Barton as an analytical tool is the concept of the "emotional regime" (see section 1.3.2 of my study), the import of which is the capacity to locate emotions within wider social-symbolic realities.¹³

Barton continues to probe emotion in early Christianity in a subsequent study, adopting again a multidisciplinary and broadly constructionist approach to the emotions; this time he focuses on joy in Luke-Acts and in Philippians, taking note also of the ways in which joy is inflected in earlier biblical tradition.¹⁴ Several of Barton's conclusions are especially noteworthy. He argues that while the basis of joy is eschatological, "its expression is *social*, bound up with the quality of ecclesial sociality."¹⁵ Moreover, joy is the individual and corporate manifestation of what really matters—the progress of the gospel and the progress in faith of those who accept this

⁸ Stephen C. Barton, "Eschatology and the Emotions in Early Christianity," *JBL* 130 (2011): 571–591.

⁹ Barton, "Eschatology," 574–581.

¹⁰ Barton, "Eschatology," 581–589.

¹¹ Barton, "Eschatology," 573; 591.

¹² See esp. Barton, "Eschatology," 575–581.

¹³ Barton, "Eschatology," 577–578; 589–591. On the "emotional regime," see section 1.3.2 of my study.

¹⁴ Stephen C. Barton, "Spirituality and the Emotions in Early Christianity: The Case of Joy," in *The Bible and Spirituality: Exploratory Essays in Reading Scripture Spiritually*, ed. Andrew T. Lincoln, J. Gordon McConville, and Lloyd K. Pieteresen (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 171–193.

¹⁵ Barton, "Spirituality," 185–187 (quote from 187, emphasis original), 190; see also 183.

gospel.¹⁶ Furthermore, since joy has to do with an entirely new and countercultural way of classifying, and being in, the world, it has to be inculcated and nurtured. Thus, for Barton, Philippians is “both a display of joy and a pedagogy in joy.”¹⁷

In a recent essay, Barton explores the relationship between anger and sin in Ephesians, concluding that anger has to be understood in the light of the letter’s overall moral-theological vision of unity in the Church.¹⁸ Again, Barton’s approach is instructive: he brings perspectives on anger in Jewish thought and in Greco-Roman philosophy into conversation with a careful, contextual reading of Eph 4.26a, while being even-handed in his use of modern theories of emotion. Useful too is Barton’s highlighting of “the potential for the emotions, as a form of cognition, to be in alignment with, and an expression of, *the truth*,”¹⁹ i.e. the realities associated with Paul’s notions of divine redemption; and the fact that new ways of feeling, along with new ways of thinking and behaving, have to be learnt—which underlines the important role that processes of moral instruction and discipleship play in the Church.²⁰

1.2.1.c. Katherine Hockey

In her very recent thesis—which is the first comprehensive, monograph-length investigation of the rhetorical use of emotion in a NT letter—Katherine Hockey examines the role of emotion in the rhetorical discourse of 1 Peter.²¹ Using Stephen Barton’s work as a springboard for her own approach,²² Hockey ably mobilizes developments in modern emotion theories and Greco-Roman philosophical and rhetorical teaching on emotions to establish a methodological framework for her inquiry that is both theoretically informed and historically sensitive. She argues in her analysis of key emotions such as joy, suffering, fear, hope, and shame in 1 Peter that as evaluative judgements they are used in particular contexts to rhetorically shape the recipients’ interpretation of the world, and thus construct and enforce a new

¹⁶ Barton, “Spirituality,” 187–188, 191.

¹⁷ Barton, “Spirituality,” 187.

¹⁸ Stephen C. Barton, “‘Be Angry But Do Not Sin’ (Ephesians 4:26a): Sin and the Emotions in the New Testament with Special Reference to Anger,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 28 (2015): 21–34. See also Stephen C. Barton, “Why Do Things Move People?: The Jerusalem Temple as Emotional Repository,” *JSNT* 37 (2015): 351–380, where he explores the relationship between material-symbolic objects and emotion; this essay will not be discussed here as its motifs are not of direct relevance to my study.

¹⁹ Barton, “‘Be Angry,’” 33 (emphasis his), citing Eph 1.13; 4.25; 5.9; 6.14.

²⁰ Barton, “‘Be Angry,’” 33–34.

²¹ Katherine M. Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally: An Investigation of the Role of Emotion in the Rhetorical Discourse of 1 Peter” (PhD diss., Durham University, 2016).

²² Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 21.

worldview.²³ As Hockey maintains, “[t]he positive or negative presentation of each emotion creates an emotional regime for the believers which subsequently produces the boundaries for their understanding of self and other.”²⁴ This emotional reinforcement of the believers’ new realities has profound implications: ethically, it helps to drive the believers collectively towards the achievement of desired outcomes; sociologically, it repositions them in relation to objects in their revised worldview, which strengthens in-group bonds and weakens previous societal ties, thereby bolstering their community identity; and therapeutically, it helps to concretize a stable and confident outlook on their present circumstances of persecution and suffering.²⁵

1.2.2. Studies of Emotion in Paul

For much of the twentieth century, discussions by NT scholars surrounding Paul’s use of passion language traditionally portrayed him as strenuously rejecting the perspectives of Hellenistic philosophy.²⁶ However, this view has been refined in more recent scholarship; in the past four decades a growing number of scholars have argued that Paul’s references to emotion are best understood in conversation with contemporaneous philosophical and literary perspectives on emotion in the Greco-Roman world. David Aune observes that four areas have received the most attention: (1) Paul’s rhetorical use of emotional appeal; (2) Paul’s descriptions of his own sufferings and emotional endurance; (3) Paul’s treatment of grief, anxiety, and anger in his communities; (4) Paul’s negative assessment of sexual passions.²⁷ To this list I would add a fifth category to account for a discernible though still modest measure of scholarly interest in very recent years: (5) Paul’s notion of joy.

In the interests of space, the following discussion of current research is necessarily selective. I will limit my attention to categories (1), (3) (with a focus on grief), and (5): (1) is the area that has been studied the most and is of some relevance to the questions that I am bringing to Paul’s letters; (3) and (5) have to do with grief and joy, which form the twin affective foci of my study. Those aspects of research into Paul

²³ Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 249; see also 133–135, 170–171, 220, 245–246.

²⁴ Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 249.

²⁵ Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 253–257.

²⁶ See the overview in David Charles Aune, “Passions in the Pauline Epistles: The Current State of Research,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 222–231.

²⁷ Aune, “Passions,” 224.

and emotion that I do not cover are addressed in Aune's instructive and still useful survey (cited above).

1.2.2.a. *Paul's Rhetorical Use of Emotional Appeal*

In recent decades, many scholars have mined categories from ancient rhetoric for data to bring to the study of Paul's language of persuasion, though there is still little consensus on how best to go about analysing *πάθος*, or discursive emotional appeal, in rhetorical criticism. Good examples of studies that investigate Paul's rhetorical use of *πάθος* include Edgar Krentz on 1 Thessalonians, Larry Welborn on 2 Corinthians, Lauri Thüren on Galatians, and more recently, Oda Wischmeyer on 1 Corinthians.²⁸

In 2001, the Society of Biblical Literature published a collection of essays entitled *Paul and Pathos*²⁹ that sought to address the question of how to develop systematic guidelines for *πάθος* that would be most apropos for biblical criticism.³⁰ Following two background essays discussing Greco-Roman rhetoric and *πάθος* in Hellenistic thought are eight essays that examine Paul's use of *πάθος*, drawing on ancient rhetorical theories (those of Aristotle, and the Roman tradition represented by Cicero and Quintilian) concerning emotional appeal. I shall highlight features of certain essays that are especially pertinent to my study.

Stephen Kraftchick argues in his nuanced approach that Paul's letters suggest that his use of *πάθος* is a hybrid of Aristotle and the Roman tradition.³¹ On the one hand, with the Roman tradition, Paul's appeals are directed to the emotions rather than being arguments from them. On the other hand, Paul's sensibility for building a community's ethic and well-being puts him closer to Aristotle in the logic behind his arguments: Paul

²⁸ Edgar M. Krentz, "1 Thessalonians: Rhetorical Flourishes and Formal Constraints," in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 287–318; Larry L. Welborn, "Paul's Appeal to the Emotions in 2 Corinthians 1.1–2.13; 7.5–16," *JSNT* 82 (2001): 31–60; Lauri Thüren, "Was Paul Angry? Derhetorizing Galatians," in *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 302–320; Oda Wischmeyer, "1Korinther 13. Das Hohelied der Liebe zwischen Emotion und Ethos," in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2011*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Jeremy Corley (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 343–359. See further Aune, "Passions," 224–225.

²⁹ Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney, eds., *Paul and Pathos*, SBL Symposium Series 16 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). Most of the essays in this volume were presented at the 1999 international meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

³⁰ On the role of emotional appeal in the creation of discourse, see generally Jakob Wisse, *Ethos and Pathos from Aristotle and Cicero* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1989); George A. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 93–96.

³¹ Steven J. Kraftchick, "Πάθη in Paul: The Emotional Logic of 'Original Argument,'" in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney, SBL Symposium Series 16 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 39–68.

is not merely persuading his audience, but using emotional argumentation to provide reasons why it is appropriate for a community to take a specific action.³² Kraftchick thus seems to recognize the presence of distinctly noetic as well as social elements to emotional appeal in Paul; and in his analysis of Galatians he seeks to demonstrate that Paul is a pragmatic, innovative rhetor who uses arguments based on emotion in order to persuade his readers, and that these arguments are made because the matters under deliberation are vital for their continued communal existence.³³

Jerry Sumney concludes from his investigation of Paul's argumentative strategy in 2 Corinthians that he seems to regard emotions as intelligent and discriminating aspects of the human personality.³⁴ From the evidence in the letter, Paul probably understood as rational his own emotive arguments both for perceiving his actions as he wanted the Corinthians to, and for their seeing his opponents' actions as being objectionable.³⁵ Sumney finds that Paul uses widely known rhetorical conventions to affect the *πάθος* of his hearers; these conventions drew largely on Aristotelian categories of affect in which emotions were regarded not as irrational but as being "based to some degree on beliefs arrived at through the use of reason."³⁶ A broadly similar approach is adopted by James Thompson, who reads Paul's argument from *πάθος* in 2 Corinthians against an Aristotelian understanding of affect and thus connects Paul's rhetorical strategy to an understanding that emotional response is not irrational but is instead "intelligent behaviour open to reasoned persuasion."³⁷

Overall, while the essays in the collection arrive at slightly different conclusions concerning the extent to which the theories of classical rhetoricians are relevant for assessing *πάθος* in the Pauline epistles, they all highlight the affective dimensions of Paul's thought and represent an effort to understand it in more holistic terms. In addition, the authors seem to detect and thus implicitly promote a generally cognitive basis for emotion, in so far as they place Paul's use of *πάθος* within broadly Aristotelian

³² Kraftchick, "Πάθη," 56.

³³ Kraftchick, "Πάθη," 57–68.

³⁴ Jerry L. Sumney, "Paul's Use of Πάθος in His Argument against the Opponents of 2 Corinthians," in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney, SBL Symposium Series 16 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 147–160.

³⁵ Sumney, "Paul's Use," 160.

³⁶ Sumney, "Paul's Use," 148; referencing the work of Martha C. Nussbaum, "Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion," in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. Amélie O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 303–304.

³⁷ James W. Thompson, "Paul's Argument from Pathos in 2 Corinthians," in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney, SBL Symposium Series 16 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 129–130 (quote from 130).

categories, which argue for the intelligibility of emotional response. However, more work needs to be done to move the discussion of *πάθος* in the biblical documents beyond Aristotle,³⁸ and a more deliberate engagement with modern theories of emotion may prove to be fruitful. My study, which is not primarily interested in the rhetorical dimensions of Paul's pathetic discourse, nevertheless seeks both to broaden the discussion of Paul's use of emotion and to take it forward using insights from current developments in emotions theory.

1.2.2.b. Paul's Treatment of Grief

The scholar who has probably done the most work in this area is Abraham Malherbe, who has demonstrated convincingly that Paul's approach to the assuaging of grief has its parallels in the therapeutic strategies of many of the moral philosophers of the day.³⁹ Malherbe focuses in particular on the paraenetic character of Paul's language of consolation in 1 Thessalonians,⁴⁰ and shows that Paul's treatment of grief in 1 Thess 4.13–18 shares many of the features of ancient consolation,⁴¹ which was widely practised and well attested throughout the Greco-Roman world.⁴² Malherbe concludes that Paul's consolatory instructions regarding appropriate grief have their basis in his understanding of the eschatological events surrounding the parousia of Christ.⁴³

Several other scholars have also investigated the topos of Paul's treatment of grief in 1 Thessalonians.⁴⁴ A thought-provoking contribution comes from John Barclay, who argues that in 1 Thess 4.13 Paul is not merely trying to moderate the Thessalonians' grief on the occasion of the deaths of some of their brethren, but is literally instructing them not to grieve at all.⁴⁵ As Barclay sees it, for Paul it was crucial that the way that

³⁸ As indeed Thomas H. Olbricht, one of the editors of the essay collection, recognizes; see "Introduction," in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney, SBL Symposium Series 16 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 1–3.

³⁹ On Hellenistic philosophy as therapy, see the survey of literature and examples in Abraham J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," *ANRW* 2.26.1 (1992): 301–304; see Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) for an extensive discussion.

⁴⁰ Abraham J. Malherbe, "Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians," in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 49–66; Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 57–60, 68–81.

⁴¹ Malherbe, "Exhortation," 64–65; Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB 32B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 264.

⁴² I survey the topos of consolation in antiquity in section 2.5.1.a.

⁴³ Malherbe, "Exhortation," 65–66.

⁴⁴ See also Barton, "Eschatology," which I discussed earlier in section 1.2.1.b.

⁴⁵ John M. G. Barclay, "'That you may not grieve, like the rest who have no hope' (1 Thess 4.13): Death and Early Christian Identity," in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, WUNT 275 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 217–235.

the early believers dealt with death and bereavement marked them out clearly from the world around them, since they were, after all, “a community who made a special point of being destined to salvation.”⁴⁶ By specifying how the Thessalonian believers were to view and mark death, Paul was taking the first momentous steps towards “making the death of a Christian a Christian death,” or, in other words, making death itself a central symbol of Christian distinction—a distinction that had everything to do with the believers’ theological convictions concerning their eschatological destiny and confidence for the future.⁴⁷ Even if one is not convinced by Barclay’s argument that Paul is here completely prohibiting the expressing of grief,⁴⁸ his primary thesis concerning the “christianizing” of death, which he grounds in a careful reading of Paul’s theological strategy to quell the Thessalonians’ grief, still holds in the main.⁴⁹

In a recent article, Larry Welborn explores *λύπη* in 2 Corinthians from the perspective of Greco-Roman psychagogy.⁵⁰ He contrasts Paul’s treatment of emotional pain with the therapeutic strategies employed by his contemporaries, especially the Stoics, and concludes that Paul emerges as the harbinger of change in the ancient practice of emotional therapy through how he valorizes *λύπη* and attributes to it a constructive rather than merely utilitarian value in the pursuit of moral progress. For Welborn, Paul—who expresses “pain given and pain received” in his letter—had “reflected deeply upon the nature and function of the emotions ‘in Christ,’” and found his answer in how Christ’s suffering disclosed a *λύπη* that was in accordance with God’s will and led through repentance to salvation.⁵¹ Noteworthy in Welborn’s study of 2 Corinthians is its implied endorsement of a reasoned, ethical basis for *λύπη* as an emotional response, and also its example of contextual sensitivity through the widespread use of Greco–Roman literary sources for comparison.

1.2.2.c. Paul’s Notion of Joy

In the past few years, several essays by NT scholars have appeared in which Paul’s view of joy is central to the discussion.⁵²

⁴⁶ Barclay, “Death,” 234.

⁴⁷ Barclay, “Death,” 227–228 (quote from 228), 234; see also 217–218.

⁴⁸ I discuss in detail the question of whether or not 1 Thess 4.13 enshrines a prohibition against grief in section 4.3.4.

⁴⁹ So also Barton, “Eschatology,” 587 n.51.

⁵⁰ Larry L. Welborn, “Paul and Pain: Paul’s Emotional Therapy in 2 Corinthians 1.1–2.13; 7.5–16 in the Context of Ancient Psychagogic Literature,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 547–570.

⁵¹ Welborn, “Paul and Pain,” 570.

⁵² See also Barton, “Spirituality,” which was discussed in section 1.2.1.b

N. T. Wright's observations about joy in the NT⁵³ highlight its theological dimensions as well as its ethical nature. For Wright, the character of early Christian joy is definitively shaped by the events surrounding Jesus, while remaining within ancient Israelite parameters: this joy has to do with discovering that Israel's God is now fulfilling his promises to bring restoration.⁵⁴ These ideas are crystallized in Paul's missive to the Philippians. At one level, joy has to do with the bonds of mutual affection between him and his converts. But at a deeper level, joy has to do with the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus, and the new world that his lordship has inaugurated. Those who follow Jesus are part of this new world; and so Paul rejoices—even in suffering, for it is “an indication that the new world and the old are chafing together”—and summons the Philippians to rejoice with him.⁵⁵ For Wright, this joy certainly involves “internal mental or emotional states”; but he also suggests, while acknowledging that it is impossible to prove, that on the basis of Phil 1.27–30 and 4.4–5 Paul might even have in mind an outward, public, activity of celebration, perhaps as a kind of protest against the celebrations of *Kyrios Caesar* or pagan religion.⁵⁶

Helpful in Wright's discussion is his reminder that the joy of which the NT speaks is capable of overlapping with quite different emotions, such as sorrow, which alerts one to the fact that something rather different from “ordinary” joy is envisaged; indeed, joy has to do with “the Lord.”⁵⁷ The basis for joy is thus theological: as Wright notes, “[t]he sovereign lordship of Christ frames and renders joyful his [Paul's] reflections on his likely fate (Phil 1.18–26).”⁵⁸ Wright also alerts us to the sociality of joy—that there is a sense in which it is socially generated and also to be socially performed. However, his suggestion that Paul is promoting a regular, highly visible, and counter-cultural celebration of joy seems rather unlikely, given the belligerent environment in which the believers lived.

In a relatively short yet perceptive essay, Colleen Shantz brings Paul's notion of happiness into interdisciplinary dialogue with recent research on emotion in positive

⁵³ N. T. Wright, “Joy: Some New Testament Perspectives and Questions,” in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 39–61. This collection of essays, the result of a series of consultations hosted by the Yale Center of Faith and Culture, represents an effort to help to remedy the paucity of contemporary theological reflection on joy.

⁵⁴ Wright, “Joy,” 46–49.

⁵⁵ Wright, “Joy,” 49–55 (quote from 55).

⁵⁶ Wright, “Joy,” 56–58.

⁵⁷ Wright, “Joy,” 40–41.

⁵⁸ Wright, “Joy,” 53.

psychology and other fields.⁵⁹ Applying Martin P. Seligman's typology of the three kinds of lives that bring people happiness to her reading of Paul, Shantz finds that it is the meaningful life (where one looks beyond oneself to a transcendent purpose) rather than the pleasurable life or the good life that encapsulates how Paul is able to achieve happiness despite his frequent experiences of affliction and turmoil.⁶⁰ Paul's participation in the Christological pattern of dying and rising allows him to articulate a hermeneutic for all of life in which conventional standards of honour are turned on their heads: suffering thus becomes "an actual participation in the way of Christ that has defeated the powers of death and sin."⁶¹ This revised understanding of meaning and happiness in life enables Paul to establish and nurture his new faith communities, which in turn generates the happiness that comes from group cohesion and shared values.⁶² Shantz's study is instructive in how she engages in heuristic fashion with the work of neuroscientists, psychologists, and social scientists on emotion. Theories regarding happiness, the link between cognition and emotion, and the social character of emotion, are carefully mapped onto Paul's experience to produce an account that remains grounded in the realities of the text while being alert to viable ways of understanding it in more comprehensive terms.⁶³

1.2.3. Summary

What we are seeing in NT studies is a budding interest in drawing on resources in modern emotions studies to investigate the role of emotion in early Christianity. The growing attention to emotion in biblical studies has its parallel in the field of classics, with scholars from both disciplines making important contributions as to how the

⁵⁹ Colleen Shantz, "'I Have Learned to Be Content?': Happiness According to St. Paul," in *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness: What the Old and New Testaments Teach Us about the Good Life*, ed. Brent Strawn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187–201. The essays in this collection originated in a 2009 conference in Atlanta which was part of a five-year project focused on the Pursuit of Happiness, hosted by the Centre for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University.

We should note that while the emotion term that Shantz uses throughout her essay is "happiness" (which is in keeping with the theme of the collection and also of the larger project of which it is a part), when it comes to her discussion of Paul's letters she is referring, in actual fact, to "joy." We shall therefore take her references to happiness as a terminological proxy for joy.

⁶⁰ Shantz, "Happiness," 189–197.

⁶¹ Shantz, "Happiness," 199.

⁶² Shantz, "Happiness," 197–198.

⁶³ So, for example, Shantz observes that in Phil 3.3–6 Paul lists all the ways in which he had excelled according to cultural norms, which in Seligman's framework would have made for a virtuous life. However Paul recounts these details only to reject them (Phil 3.7–8), which Shantz sees as describing a twofold loss—his personal honour, and his place within a community that structured his identity. The resultant sociocultural isolation would mean that happiness was elusive ("Happiness," 194–195).

emotions were viewed in antiquity.⁶⁴ This interest arguably provides further evidence for what many academics term as an “emotional turn” or “affective turn”—a theoretical engagement with emotion since the mid-1990s in the humanities and social sciences⁶⁵—which is itself part of a veritable explosion of interest in the academic study of emotion in recent decades, an interest that is unusually widespread and remarkably interdisciplinary. The eminent development psychologist Jerome Kagan has observed that “[t]he corpus of scholarly writing on emotion is so extensive that it would seem presumptuous for anyone to assume they could add to the existing record of wisdom.”⁶⁶ Indeed, the literature continues to expand at such a breathtaking pace that to offer any kind of critical overview of recent theoretical and empirical research on emotion is a dauntingly ambitious undertaking. In the section that follows, I can do little more than outline the main contours of the arguments surrounding the nature of emotion, especially as they pertain to my study.

1.3. Contemporary Emotions Research: Selected Aspects

1.3.1. Overview

The study of emotion is complex and continues to be steeped in debates related to the definition, constitution, and function of emotion. In a recent survey, Carroll Izard canvasses thirty-five prominent academics—representing scientific disciplines concerned with emotions research (behavioural and cognitive neuroscience,

⁶⁴ See John T. Fitzgerald, “The Passions and Moral Progress: An Introduction,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 1–2.

In classics, important book-length examples include Nussbaum, *Therapy*; Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Margaret R. Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3–4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Margaret R. Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Teun Tieleman, *Chrysippus’ On Affections: Reconstructions and Reinterpretations* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

Significant collections of essays include Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill, eds., *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, eds., *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998); John T. Fitzgerald, ed., *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

⁶⁵ See e.g. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean O’Malley Halley, eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); for more references see Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 63 n.120.

⁶⁶ Jerome Kagan, *What Is Emotion? History, Measures, and Meanings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 4.

computational cognitive science, and clinical, developmental, and social psychological science)—on their working definitions of emotion.⁶⁷ Based on their responses, Izard delineates a composite picture of the main features of emotion:

Emotion consists of neural circuits (that are at least partially dedicated), response systems, and a feeling state/process that motivates and organizes cognition and action. Emotion also provides information to the person experiencing it, and may include antecedent cognitive appraisals and ongoing cognition including an interpretation of its feeling state, expressions or social-communicative signals, and may motivate approach or avoidant behavior, exercise control/regulation of responses, and be social or relational in nature.⁶⁸

While Izard's findings show that scholars in the psychological and behavioural sciences have yet to converge on a consensus definition of emotion, his multivalent description indicates the challenges that theorists face in articulating the relationships between the various processes that are thought to be integral to emotion. It is interesting that some of the scientists who were surveyed opined that emotion may have also a social facet; this takes us to the heart of the debate concerning the nature of emotions—whether they are universal or socially constructed.

As Jan Plamper observes, since the mid-nineteenth century at the very latest, academic discussion of emotion has revolved around these two polarities: the universal, essentialist, trans-historical nature of emotion on the one hand, and its being socially conditioned, culturally contingent, and historical on the other.⁶⁹ Scholars have often noted the polarization between universalism and social constructivism,⁷⁰ and the arguments that are made in support of each side of the debate continue to characterize the cutting edge of research.⁷¹ Certainly, however, as Izard's survey reveals, it is not as if the paradigms themselves have been fleshed out in agreed-upon terms. One of the most difficult challenges facing emotions researchers today is how to establish a middle ground, by bridging scientific discourse in neuroscience and psychology with the work of social scientists and scholars in the humanities. While certain universalist conceptions of emotion allow for a degree of cultural contingency,⁷² in the same way

⁶⁷ Carroll E. Izard, "The Many Meanings/Aspects of Emotion: Definitions, Functions, Activation, and Regulation," *Emotion Review* 2 (2010): 363–370.

⁶⁸ Izard, "Many Meanings," 367.

⁶⁹ Plamper, *History*, 5, 74.

⁷⁰ Plamper, *History*, 5–6.

⁷¹ On the historical development of both views up to the present day, see Plamper, *History*, 75–250; a succinct analysis of their theoretical underpinnings is in John Corrigan, "Introduction: Emotions Research and the Academic Study of Religion," in *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretations*, ed. John Corrigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7–13.

⁷² E.g. in studies in social neuroscience on empathy; for discussion see Plamper, *History*, 248–249.

that some cognitive theories leave room for physiological influences,⁷³ a conclusive theoretical synthesis of both paradigms remains elusive.⁷⁴

1.3.2. Emotions Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities

It is well beyond the scope of my study to attempt to adjudicate between the two paradigms. However, since my approach to emotion revolves around, broadly speaking, historical investigation, the constructivism that continues to influence emotions research in the humanities and social sciences is of far more direct applicability than the universalist paradigm. Social constructionist approaches to emotion have their origin in the field of anthropology. Until the publication in the 1980s of influential emotional ethnographies, especially those by Michelle Rosaldo, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Catherine Lutz,⁷⁵ that demonstrated that the expression of emotion varied across cultures and that people from different cultures had very different feelings, it was widely assumed that emotions were prelinguistic and invariant across cultures.⁷⁶ These new findings, which were part of a broader social constructionist trend in anthropology,⁷⁷ undermined any notions of pancultural emotions and ushered constructionist arguments for emotion onto centre stage. Thus Lutz, for example, insists that “emotional experience is not precultural but preeminently cultural;”⁷⁸ and Rosaldo, reiterating her views in a subsequent, seminal essay, argues that emotion is shaped by thought, and is indeed embodied thought—and as such, emotions should be interpreted as processes structured by the forms of cognition and reason that arise from a person’s embeddedness within a particular sociocultural milieu.⁷⁹ Since the mid-1990s or so, however, some

⁷³ For a recent example see Batja Mesquita and Michael Boiger, “Emotions in Context: A Sociodynamic Model of Emotions,” *Emotion Review* 6 (2014): 298–302.

⁷⁴ Perhaps the most well-known attempt is that of William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Reddy’s aim is to bring together the universalism of cognitive psychology and the social constructivism of the anthropology of emotions, but his proposals are not uncontroversial and have been debated by theorists on both sides; see Plamper, *History*, 251–265.

⁷⁵ Michelle Z. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Catherine A. Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll & Their Challenge to Western Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

⁷⁶ On the earlier anthropology of emotions, see Plamper, *History*, 80–98.

⁷⁷ On this see Plamper, *History*, 109–114. This trend is a devolution of what is often known as the linguistic or cultural turn, or the advent of postmodernism, within the social sciences and humanities.

⁷⁸ Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, 5 (emphasis original).

⁷⁹ Michelle Z. Rosaldo, “Towards an Anthropology of Self and Feeling,” in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, ed. Richard A. Schweder and Robert A. LeVine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 137–157, esp. 137–143.

anthropologists have moved beyond these views of emotion to promote, among other things, the supersession of dichotomous emotional constructs, and even certain universalist tendencies.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, as Plamper rightly concludes, “no other discipline has done so much to shatter the idea that feelings are timeless and everywhere the same as has anthropology.”⁸¹

In the related field of sociology, the contemporary interest in emotion began to be discernible in the 1970s, with the diminishing influence of grand theory and a turn to microsociology. It was arguably the work of Arlie Hochschild⁸² that marked the emergence of the sociology of emotions as a distinct sub-field of study.⁸³ For Hochschild, social interactions are construed as a scripted drama in which actors abide by “feeling rules” that form the basis for the “emotional work” that they have to perform in order to make their feelings conform appropriately to society’s emotional norms. Emotional life is regulated through the assessment and modification of personal feeling in relation to the operative feeling rules, which set standards of what is owed and owing in emotional exchanges.⁸⁴ Though one might wish for a more nuanced account of emotion that grants individual agents more leeway in their responses to emotional pressure,⁸⁵ Hochschild’s basic notion of feeling rules remains influential in the sociology of emotions. In his survey of the field, Jonathan Turner notes that since the late 1970s the study of emotion has made remarkable progress, and it now stands at the forefront of microsociology and, increasingly, macrosociology, with theoretical research traditions already in evidence.⁸⁶

A recent contribution to the broader field comes from Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead, who in 2010 published *A Sociology of Religious Emotion*, drawing inspiration from across a wide range of disciplines that deal with emotion (philosophy, psychology, behavioural studies, neuroscience, cultural studies, linguistics,

⁸⁰ For discussion see Plamper, *History*, 129–130, 136–146.

⁸¹ Plamper, *History*, 146.

⁸² Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); see also Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure,” *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (1979): 551–575.

⁸³ So Plamper, *History*, 123; see here n.198 for major subsequent publications in the field. For an overview of how research has developed since, see Jonathan H. Turner, “The Sociology of Emotions: Basic Theoretical Arguments,” *Emotion Review* 1 (2009): 340–354.

⁸⁴ Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, ix–x, 18, 56–75, 85; see also Hochschild, “Emotion Work,” esp. 571–573.

⁸⁵ So e.g. Deborah Lupton, *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration* (London: Sage, 1998), 169–170.

⁸⁶ Turner, “Sociology,” 340; on these research trajectories see Jan E. Stets and Jonathan H. Turner, eds., *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions* (New York: Springer, 2006).

anthropology, and sociology) to produce a multidimensional conceptual framework for emotion that is attentive to its variegated character.⁸⁷ They propose a model in which emotion is generated in the interactions between individual agents, societal structures, and cultural symbols;⁸⁸ and to consolidate these interactions they posit the concept of an “emotional regime.”⁸⁹ Eschewing the need to choose between scientific or cultural approaches to emotion, they argue that recent work in cognitive and neurological science and in philosophical phenomenology is further destabilizing the overly simplistic dichotomy between these poles.⁹⁰ For Riis and Woodhead, emotion is “‘both-and’ rather than ‘either/or’: both personal and relational; private and social; biological and cultural; active and passive;”⁹¹ it is “a label for a range of coordinated psychophysical elements, in and through which we relate to other beings and symbols, and in terms of which they relate to us.”⁹² Furthermore, Riis and Woodhead specifically contextualize *religious* emotion within their conceptual framework, and demonstrate comprehensively how religious emotion is integral to, and configured by, its social and symbolic relations.⁹³

1.3.3. Emotion: Nature and Terminology

To conclude this brief, and necessarily only representative, overview of current emotions research, we attend now to the closely related questions of definition and terminology. What is meant by “emotion”? And is there a fundamental linguistic unity of meaning in the various terms that have represented “emotion” across history, cultural space, and disciplinary specialization?

⁸⁷ Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead, *A Sociology of Religious Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20–53.

⁸⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 5–9.

⁸⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10–12. To be sure, the term “emotional regime” is not new. William Reddy seems to have introduced it: he defines the term formally as “[t]he set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime” (*Navigation*, 129). Certainly, as Plamper observes (*History*, 265), the term is now often heard in various settings, detached from its context and used for the general idea of emotional norms or standards. Riis and Woodhead assign to it a very specific meaning in their scheme (see further my discussion in section 5.3.1).

⁹⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 24–30.

⁹¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 5.

⁹² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 47.

⁹³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 54–55, 69–73, 93–94.

1.3.3.a. *The Nature of Emotion and Its Conceptual History*

Plamper observes that the sheer difficulty of defining emotion is often treated as its leading characteristic.⁹⁴ As James Russell writes at the beginning of his introduction to a specially designated section of a recent volume of *Emotion Review* treating the matter: “Emotion researchers face a scandal: We have no agreed upon definition for the term—*emotion*—that defines our field.”⁹⁵ Indeed, even within each of the disciplines that study emotion, there is incomplete agreement about what constitutes emotion; this state of affairs hampers the progress of research and stymies interdisciplinary work. An academic consensus as to what emotion is might be next to impossible to achieve, not least because each field of study privileges different aspects of emotion. Nonetheless, scholars of different disciplinary commitments continue to try to move the discussion forward constructively: examples include, from neuroscience, Joseph LeDoux; from psychology, Jerome Kagan; from philosophy, Martha Nussbaum; and the collaborative proposals of a philosopher, Kevin Mulligan, and a psychologist, Klaus Scherer.⁹⁶ My own theoretical position follows the eclectic but broadly sociological approach of Riis and Woodhead, who present emotion as cognitive, psychophysical stances and interventions embedded in complex socio-symbolic structures of meaning.⁹⁷

In regard to terminology: the English term “emotion” shares a capacious semantic domain with several other commonly used terms. Riis and Woodhead speak for many in suggesting that these alternative terms highlight different dimensions of emotion:

“passions” conveys the power of emotion, “feeling” their embodied aspect, “sentiments” the way they relate to character and education, while “affect” suggests their passive and reactive dimension. “Emotion” is good at conveying its dynamic, motivating force of “e-motion,” but tends to support an individualistic conception of emotions as inner states.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Plamper, *History*, 11. Among the studies Plamper cites is Beverly Fehr and James A. Russell, “Concept of Emotion Viewed from a Prototype Perspective,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113 (1984): 464–486: “everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition” (here 464).

⁹⁵ James A. Russell, “Introduction to Special Section: On Defining Emotion,” *Emotion Review* 4 (2012): 337 (emphasis original).

⁹⁶ Joseph LeDoux, “A Neuroscientist’s Perspective on Debates about the Nature of Emotion,” *Emotion Review* 4 (2012): 375–379; Kagan, *Emotion*; for a summary of its main themes see Jerome Kagan, “Once More into the Breach,” *Emotion Review* 2 (2010): 91–99; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. 1–16; Kevin Mulligan and Klaus R. Scherer, “Toward a Working Definition of Emotion,” *Emotion Review* 4 (2012): 345–357.

⁹⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 29, 47–53. See in my study sections 1.3.2 and 5.3.

⁹⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 20. They note also that no one term captures the full complexity of what it articulates.

These kinds of observations find broad support in Thomas Dixon's account of the conceptual history of the term "emotion,"⁹⁹ in which he argues that "emotion" displaced other more specific terms when, as an everyday word used in common parlance to refer to any kind of mental feeling, it was commandeered as a theoretical term in the science of the mind in the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Until then, theorists like philosophers, physicians, and theologians had tended to use more than one term to refer to those states that would later be designated as "emotion." Influenced by Augustine and Aquinas (who were in turn influenced by ancient debates between Stoicism and Christianity), these theorists had especially distinguished between "passions," which were involuntary, troubling lusts and desires to be avoided, and "affections," which were the virtues such as love and compassion to which one should voluntarily aspire.¹⁰¹ The linguistic ascendancy of "emotion" as a theoretical term in the nineteenth century reflected the shifts in institutional and intellectual authority that were occurring:

the term "emotion" suited the purposes of a self-consciously secularizing and scientific cadre of psychological theorists of the late 19th century, detached as it was from the centuries of moral and theological connotations that had accrued to the terms "passion" and "affection."¹⁰²

The final stage in the semantic history of "emotion" has been the popularization of scientific ideas associated with it, such as "emotional intelligence" and "emotional well-being," in ways that have traded on the psychological and medical authority of the term.¹⁰³

The intellectual history of "emotion" also helps to explain the conceptual confusion and debate that has marked so much of emotions research. Here we must outline Dixon's account a little more fully.¹⁰⁴ In the early nineteenth century, when the new theoretical term "emotion" was first put into use by the philosopher Thomas Brown, he championed the notion that "emotions" were vivid feelings that could not be embodied in any verbal definition. Brown's was also an explicitly non-cognitive concept of "emotion" in which intellectual thought was separated from feeling. The

⁹⁹ Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of A Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); I refer below primarily to his own précis, published as Thomas Dixon, "Emotion": The History of a Keyword in Crisis," *Emotion Review* 4 (2012): 338–344.

¹⁰⁰ Dixon, "History," 339–340; Dixon, *From Passions*, 109–127.

¹⁰¹ Dixon, "History," 339; Dixon, *From Passions*, 26–61. However, Barbara Rosenwein finds a greater overlap between "passions" and "affections," seeing the presence of a continuum between the terms; Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4.

¹⁰² Dixon, "History," 342; see also Dixon, *From Passions*, 233–242.

¹⁰³ Dixon, "History," 343.

¹⁰⁴ Here I summarize Dixon, "History," 340–342.

physician Charles Bell, who regarded “emotions” as certain changes in the mind that were manifested in bodily ways, was also influential. Brown’s and Bell’s ideas were endorsed by many psychologists and scientists and exercised a formative influence on the emotions theories of William James and Charles Darwin. Dixon concludes:

The founders of the discipline of psychology in the late 19th century bequeathed to their successors a usage of “emotion” in which the relationship between mind and body and between thought and feeling were confused and unresolved, and which named a category of feelings and behaviours so broad as to cover almost all of human mental life including as Bain (1859) had put it, all that was previously understood by the terms “feelings, states of feeling, pleasures, pains, passions, sentiments, affections.”¹⁰⁵

Modern psychology has had to deal with this muddled legacy in which emotional feeling and intellectual thought were bifurcated and “emotion” left bereft of a clear definition.

The above discussion of the conceptual history of emotion is germane to our discussion because it helps us to be alert to certain unconscious assumptions or biases that may be inadvertently carried into the study of emotion in the NT. First, there is a popular and academic tendency to dichotomize thought and feeling based on the premise that emotion is non-cognitive and irrational compared to properly evaluated thinking and volition.¹⁰⁶ Second, if emotions are regarded as irrational, then they are seen to hamper sensible and intelligent action—which can cause a negative assessment or disregard of people or situations in which emotion is evident: “[p]eople tend to see emotions as a disruption of, or barrier to, the rational understanding of events. To label someone ‘emotional’ is often to question the validity, and more, the very sense of what they are saying.”¹⁰⁷ Third, with the corporeality of emotions comes the assumption that they are natural, and culturally universal. For Hockey, it is not surprising, given all these commonly held assumptions, that emotion in NT has been overlooked in modern scholarship. The privileging of rationality has led to a trivializing of emotion; and furthermore, the assumption that emotions are universal can mean that one makes the further assumption that emotions in a text do not need to be thoroughly investigated because they can be automatically understood from personal experience.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Dixon, “History,” 342–343, citing Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (London: Parker, 1859), 3.

¹⁰⁶ Here I am indebted to Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 27–29, where she uses the work of Catherine Lutz (*Unnatural Emotions*, 53–80) to highlight Western historical biases that we need to be aware of when exploring the writings of an ancient author.

¹⁰⁷ Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 28 (quote from Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions*, 60).

¹⁰⁸ Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 28–29.

1.3.3.b. *Emotion and Cognition*

Although definitional and other issues are still debated, present-day emotions scholarship in psychology has largely moved beyond the thought/feeling dualism that marks non-cognitive approaches.¹⁰⁹ The authors of a review to mark *Cognition and Emotion*'s 25th year of publication in 2011 note that “[a]lthough occasional grumbling was once heard about ‘cognitive imperialism’ the idea of a cognitive approach to emotions is now firmly at the centre of any articulated understanding of emotion.”¹¹⁰ In cognitive models of emotion, a typical emotion “combines appraisal, physiological change, experience, expression, and action”;¹¹¹ however, theorists do not agree as to the precise number and nature of these components, nor their sequence, in emotional arousal.¹¹² But at the heart of all cognitive approaches is the premise that an emotion is a judgement of value—an evaluation or appraisal in relation to a person’s needs or goals—that gives rise to one or several modes of action readiness.¹¹³ As such, cognitive theories ascribe great importance to the role of emotions in human life, since they relate outer events and other people to inner concerns.¹¹⁴

1.3.3.c. *“Emotion” as a Portmanteau Term*

We end our survey of research by considering if the present-day term “emotion” is conceptually equivalent to the terms that were in use in the Greco-Roman world. Certainly, “emotion” is a contested word in terms of its precise definition and its nature. Yet, as we have also seen, the intellectual history of the term shows that there is significant overlap with the other terms with which it is associated. Before “emotion” was endowed with its modern meaning by the scientific community in the nineteenth century, people spoke more often and more precisely of things like “passions,” “affections,” and “sentiments”; all such terms therefore referred to subsets of the ideas

¹⁰⁹ Non-cognitive theories are still held by a few psychologists; on this see the discussion in Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, 24–27.

¹¹⁰ Keith Oatley et al., “Cognition and Emotion Over Twenty-Five Years,” *Cognition and Emotion* 25 (2011): 1345. See also the survey by Izard discussed earlier (section 1.3.1).

¹¹¹ Keith Oatley and P. N. Johnson-Laird, “Cognitive Approaches to Emotions,” *Trends in Cognitive Science* 18 (2014): 134; see also Agnes Moors, “Theories of Emotion Causation: A Review,” *Cognition and Emotion* 23 (2009): 626, who aggregates these elements slightly differently and expresses them in terms of cognitive, feeling, motivational, somatic, and motor components.

¹¹² Moors, “Theories,” 627–630; Oatley and Johnson-Laird, “Cognitive Approaches,” 134–137.

¹¹³ Oatley et al., “Twenty-Five Years,” 1345. On appraisal theory generally, see Agnes Moors et al., “Appraisal Theories of Emotion: State of the Art and Future Development,” *Emotion Review* 5 (2013): 119–124; see also the useful overview in Hockey, “Seeing Emotionally,” 32–35.

¹¹⁴ Oatley and Johnson-Laird, “Cognitive Approaches,” 134.

that today come under the umbrella of “emotion.”¹¹⁵ Terms like “passion” and “affection” especially were influenced by Augustine’s and Aquinas’ understanding of them; and they were in turn influenced by Stoic philosophical conceptions of those states that we would today call emotions—in particular, the passions, and the category of “good emotions” called the *eupatheiai*.¹¹⁶ Thus our conclusion is that all the above terms track the same lexical field in overlapping if not strictly synonymous fashion, and as such can be represented in my study by “emotion”—a broad, inclusive portmanteau word that aggregates the various meanings that are embedded in these alternative terms, and can therefore be used in a generic sense to designate all of them. In order to vary my prose, and in common with much of academic writing today, I will occasionally use words such as “feeling” and “affect” as equivalents for “emotion.” However, I will not use “passion” and “affection,” with their moralizing connotations, unless I am referring to specific historical contexts where these terms refer to ethical mores.

1.4. Aims of the Study

We are now in a position to set out the aims of this study and to delineate the methodological approach that it will take.

Our survey of current research in emotion in early Christianity in general, and in Paul in particular, reveals that it is still at a very early stage. It was only in 2016 that the first full-scale examination of emotion in a NT letter (1 Peter) was produced. Certainly, scholarly work on specific emotions in the Pauline letters, carried out in dialogue with modern emotions research, is beginning to suggest several things about Paul’s view of these emotions—that for him, they have a cognitive, rational basis, that they are linked in some way to his theological agenda, and that they seem to be connected also to processes of social engagement. However, further work is needed to develop these findings and elucidate their implications. In addition, and importantly, more can be done to investigate the broader role of emotion in Paul’s writings, beyond its use in persuasive discourse.

These questions drive my study: For Paul, what is the main role of emotion, and why is this important for him? Since we will operate on the assumption that emotion is cognitive, how precisely are thought, faith, and feeling correlated to each other? What is

¹¹⁵ See Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 3.

¹¹⁶ These will be thoroughly investigated in the following chapter of this study.

the rationale behind Paul's promotion of certain emotions, such as joy, and banishment (or at least moderation) of other emotions, like grief? How are "right" emotions fostered and "wrong" ones curbed, and long-term emotional dispositions established and reinforced? How does Paul's handling of emotion compare to that of the most significant ancient parallel, the Stoics? My study, which is the first thesis-length study of emotion in Paul's letters, aims to fill a gap in present-day NT research by addressing precisely these questions, and by taking the discussion forward through the articulation of a robust account of the function of emotion in Paul's writings. I will seek to show that Paul regards emotion as being integral to, and an embodiment of, belief, and that he also understands emotion to be both socially formed and socially formative. The thrust of my argument is that for Paul, emotion plays a critical role alongside belief in the shaping of identity and community, and is therefore integral to the proper acculturation and social formation of the early Christians—a role that is only beginning to be recognized and explored in NT scholarship.

In broader terms, my hope is that this thesis will make a modest contribution towards the much larger enterprise of deepening our understanding of Pauline Christianity and the social world of the NT. Furthermore, I hope that this study will be a useful example of how appropriate social-scientific resources can be put to use alongside exegetical analysis to mount a thoroughgoing historical investigation of emotion in the Pauline letters, and that it provides evidence of the value of exploring emotion using such tools. In a 2014 journal article surveying the state of play of cognitive approaches to emotion, Oatley and Johnson-Laird concluded that for any account of emotion, "a central task for future emotion research is to focus on the functions of emotions in social relationships."¹¹⁷ I hope that such a focus will be fruitful even in an interdisciplinary investigation like this present one.

1.5. Methodological Approach

It remains for me to outline how this study is laid out; but first, some general comments concerning the theoretical underpinnings of my approach are in order.

In line with what is now the mainstream understanding of emotion in current scholarship, this study adopts a cognitive approach to emotion, which involves, at its

¹¹⁷ Oatley and Johnson-Laird, "Cognitive Approaches," 138.

core, a judgement or appraisal of an object's value that gives rise to some form of action tendency. At the same time, as mine is a historical study of emotion, I take also the view, prevalent in emotions theories in the social sciences and humanities, that it is socially constructed and culturally conditioned. As I see it, an approach to emotion that deliberately incorporates the interplay of these two ideas—that emotion is a cognitive as well as a social phenomenon—holds much promise for my inquiry because it recognizes the personal dimensions of affective response while also being attentive to the impact on emotion of social dynamics and cultural influences since, after all, Paul's letters are written to, and for, communities.

If, as we say, emotion is socially constructed, then it is vital that we are familiar with thinking concerning emotion in the first century Greco-Roman world, so that our reflection on Paul's treatment of emotion is firmly tethered to its historical and sociocultural context. Accordingly, in the chapter to follow (ch. 2), I will provide a comprehensive discussion of the Stoic understanding of emotion and its therapy. We will allow the Stoics to speak for themselves (so to speak!), to ensure that we are not anachronistically importing modern conceptions of emotion into ancient texts. And in the course of our work on Paul in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, we will return to this material on Stoicism and interact with it by highlighting points of similarity and difference and drawing out their implications. I have chosen to focus my attention on the Stoics—and *only* the Stoics—for several reasons. First, it is commonly held that Stoicism was the most important philosophical influence in that era;¹¹⁸ Anthony Long notes that “[i]n the Roman world of the first two Christian centuries Stoicism was the dominant philosophy among educated pagans.”¹¹⁹ Second, the Stoics were known for their explicit emphasis on philosophy as a way of life;¹²⁰ by any reading, Pauline Christianity, too, was at least also a way of life.¹²¹ Third, and related to the foregoing, there is an astonishingly long-established scholarly tradition of using Stoicism as a conversation partner for Christianity, which suggests that juxtaposing the two traditions is, as Kavin Rowe elegantly puts it, “a particularly promising way of eliciting creative thought about complex cases in which rival traditions negotiate each other's claims to

¹¹⁸ So e.g. Anthony A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 107; F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 16.

¹¹⁹ Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 232.

¹²⁰ See John Sellars, *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 55–85.

¹²¹ A very recent and intelligently provocative reading of the relationship between emergent Christianity and Stoicism as rival traditions of life is C. Kavin Rowe's *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

truth through time.”¹²² Fourth, the Stoics had by far the most fully developed account of emotion of the day, which is helpful in terms of constructing comparisons with Paul’s views.

In chs. 3 and 4 of my study I investigate joy in Philippians and grief in 1 Thessalonians respectively: though both emotions occur across a number of Paul’s letters, joy is an especially significant theme in Philippians, and grief in 1 Thessalonians. Admittedly, due to the constraints of space, I have had to be very selective as to which emotions to focus on. Joy and grief have been chosen because they are powerful, contrasting emotions that Paul categorically deals with, and at some length; in Philippians he expressly commands joy, while in 1 Thessalonians he forbids a certain type of grief. The prominence of joy and grief in these letters suggests that they have something to do with the thrust of Paul’s theological thinking; and it would therefore seem that a careful study of these emotions can help to take us to the heart of Paul’s pastoral agenda. In terms of specifics: both chs. 3 (Joy in Philippians) and 4 (Grief in 1 Thessalonians) will be prefaced by a discussion of the background of the letter in question, its genre, and its distinctives—all of which help us to have a sense of Paul’s purposes for writing. Moreover, since our study proceeds on the assumption of the unity of the letter, this fact will have to be established. In regard to my approach to the texts themselves: here in chs. 3 and 4, like in ch. 2, I will not deploy modern emotions theories in my reading of Paul beyond their general role in alerting us to the cognitive and social dimensions of emotion. Instead, we will endeavour to “hear” him on his own terms and in his own historical context through a rigorous exegetical analysis of what he has to say. At the same time, we will keep an eye also on what he might be trying to do to shape Christian community. Where appropriate, I will introduce Stoic thinking as a foil for Paul’s views, so as to make his understanding of joy and grief come into even sharper focus.

Finally, in ch. 5, I bring modern emotions theory to bear on my study. The understanding that emotion is related to cognition and that it is not only personal, but has also a social cast, suggests that the use of Riis and Woodhead’s sociological model of the emotional regime (see section 1.3.2) might be a particularly fruitful means of heuristic engagement with how Paul deals with joy and grief. Accordingly, Riis and Woodhead’s framework will be discussed in detail, and then used to elucidate how

¹²² See Rowe, *One True Life*, 3–4

desired emotional patterns are produced and reinforced, and how their strength and longevity are sustained. I will then correlate these findings to my proposals concerning how Paul is using emotion in his letters. To end, I will contrast the Pauline emotional regime with Stoic thinking on emotion by bringing together the key findings from this and earlier chapters of my study, and in so doing, also highlight the distinctiveness of Paul's account of emotion.

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Chapter 2. Emotion in Stoicism

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will delineate the Stoic understanding of emotion through a detailed examination of the primary sources that we have. The trajectory of the discussion is straightforward. We begin by considering the broader philosophical context, after which I will set out the Stoic account of emotion: we look first at the construal of the causation of affective events, and then move on to their overall classification of emotion—the Stoics distinguished between the passions, the *eupatheiai* (good emotions), the *propatheiai* (pre-emotions), and what might be called “moral emotions.” Next, Stoic ideals concerning the philosophical therapy of emotion and its practical expression will occupy our attention. The chapter will end with an investigation of how Seneca and Epictetus viewed grief and joy.

2.1.1. Translating *πάθος*

First, however, some important clarifications are needed in regard to terminology. The Stoic doctrine of affective events uses a specific term, *πάθος*, which in earlier Greek philosophical thought had encapsulated a wide-ranging set of phenomena that we would today designate by the use of the English term “emotion.”¹²³ However, as we shall see in our study, the Stoics applied the term *πάθος* in a more narrow, technical sense: they regarded the *πάθη* as being inherently wrong and thus a non-normative component of the rational human condition. The English word “emotion”—which, as we have discussed earlier (see section 1.3.3.c), is used today both in everyday language and academic discourse to denote the generic body of experiences that are commonly regarded as such—is therefore a potentially misleading translation of *πάθος*, with its ethical connotations.¹²⁴

Following the lead of scholars such as Anthony Long and D. N. Sedley,¹²⁵ Brad Inwood,¹²⁶ Troels Engberg-Pedersen,¹²⁷ Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher

¹²³ According to Diogenes Laertius 5.23 and 5.45, Aristotle and Theophrastus each produced a work concerning the *πάθη*.

¹²⁴ LS 1.420: “Passion is ... an unhealthy state of mind, not synonymous with emotion in ordinary language.”

¹²⁵ LS 1.410–423.

¹²⁶ Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 127–128.

Gill,¹²⁸ and others, I have chosen to render *πάθος* as “passion” instead of “emotion,” which is perhaps the more popular translation.¹²⁹ This allows us to distinguish *πάθος* as a subset of that broad category of human experience that is understood as “emotion” in common parlance, which is very useful for our purposes, because we are then able to retain in our discussion that same basic understanding of “emotion” as is found in language today, and simultaneously assign to “passion” the distinctive contextual meanings associated with Stoic theory—which includes the fundamental notion that every *πάθος* is out of place in the life of the wise man.¹³⁰

2.2. The Broader Philosophical Background

There is some consensus that in recent decades the salient features of Stoic thinking on the emotions have emerged with increasing clarity.¹³¹ The founders of the Stoic school did not set out to eradicate all trace of emotion in humans; on the contrary, identifying false belief as the cause of the experiences of feelings with which they were dissatisfied, they sought to determine what the natural feelings of a person should be, in the absence of all false belief. Through careful observation the Stoics developed psychological explanations for affective responses that harmonized with their ideas concerning causation and the physiological basis of mental experiences. These explanations were integrated into a comprehensive theory of emotion.

However, the Stoic theory of emotion cannot be understood in isolation from its philosophical context. The Stoics prided themselves on the coherence of their philosophy,¹³² and Stoic thinking on emotions can only be understood by reference to their broader theories of psychology, ethics, epistemology, and physics.¹³³ It was an organic part of a much larger conceptual framework that the Stoics constructed to make sense of human nature and behaviour. A fundamentally important and pervasive

¹²⁷ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990), 170–206.

¹²⁸ Braund and Gill, *Passions* (in the title of their volume).

¹²⁹ Used by, for example, Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 103–120; Tad Brennan, “The Old Stoic Theory of Emotions,” in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 21–70; Sorabji, *Emotion*; Simo Knuutila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 47–80.

¹³⁰ On the Stoic ideal of the sage, see Sellars, *Art of Living*, 59–64.

¹³¹ Graver, *Stoicism*, 2; Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 21.

¹³² Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 108, citing Cicero, *Fin.* 3.74.

¹³³ Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 21.

element of that framework is reason; and it is with the Stoic understanding of reason that we begin our exploration.

2.2.1. Rationality, Virtue, and *Eudaimonia*

In Stoic thinking, rationality permeated the entire cosmos: divine reason or *λόγος*, which the Stoics equated with universal nature, and with their conception of deity, pervaded all things and shaped every event.¹³⁴ The universe was regarded as an organized system that was amenable to rational explanation. Since *λόγος* was present in human beings, the individual person at the essence of his nature shared the property of rationality with the cosmos. As such, to live in agreement with nature was to act in accordance with the best of human reason.¹³⁵ The Stoics believed that rational contemplation and action would facilitate the living of life according to nature's purposes,¹³⁶ for nature's activity was one of perfect rationality.¹³⁷ Therefore, that which was of greatest good for a person was the perfection of his own reason—which led to virtue:

And what quality is best in man? It is reason; by virtue of reason he surpasses the animals, and is surpassed only by the gods. Perfect reason is therefore the good peculiar to man; all other qualities he shares in some degree with animals and plants ... What then is peculiar to man? Reason. When this is right and has reached perfection, man's felicity is complete. Hence, if everything is praiseworthy and has arrived at the end intended by its nature, when it has brought its peculiar good to perfection, and if man's peculiar good is reason; then if a man has brought his reason to perfection, he is praiseworthy and has reached the end suited to his nature. This perfect reason is called virtue, and is likewise that which is honourable. (Seneca, *Ep.* 76.9–10)

Summed up as “the natural perfection of a rational being qua rational,”¹³⁸ virtue was a rational consistency (*ὁμολογία*, literally, “harmony with reason”) that ensued in happiness or *eudaimonia* (*εὐδαιμονία*)—which was wholly constituted by virtue.¹³⁹ To

¹³⁴ See Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.39 (=LS 54B); Diogenes Laertius 7.134 (=LS 44B); Seneca, *Ep.* 124.13–14.

¹³⁵ Stobaeus 2.75.11–76.8 (=LS 63B).

¹³⁶ Diogenes Laertius 7.130. See also the similar statement in Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.37–39 (=LS 54H); here Cicero refers to man's purpose, which is to contemplate and imitate the world, in order to be perfected in virtue.

¹³⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 124.13–14: “that alone is perfect which is perfect according to nature as a whole, and nature as a whole is possessed of reason.”

¹³⁸ “Τὸ τέλειον κατὰ φύσιν λογικοῦ ὡς λογικοῦ” (Diogenes Laertius 7.94).

¹³⁹ Diogenes Laertius 7.89; Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 441B–C (=LS 61B). Cicero, in *Tusc.* 4.34 opines that virtue may, in its most concise formulation, be termed “right reason.”

On the translation of *eudaimonia* as “happiness,” see Anthony A. Long, “Stoic Eudaimonism,” in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 181; here Long argues that “happiness” is the normal and indeed correct translation of *eudaimonia* because it includes both the objective features of

be sure, the Stoics admitted that very few would achieve this state of perfect well-being,¹⁴⁰ but they insisted on its possibility; for them, “the case of bad men becoming good” was evidence that virtue was teachable.¹⁴¹ If virtue was rational consistency, then its opposite, vice, was irrationality that stemmed from aberrant thinking and erroneous judgement.¹⁴² The Stoic position on the nature of the soul did not allow for degrees of virtue and vice. The soul was a unitary whole, and as such its powers were not divisible into the rational and the irrational; thus a person’s reasoning faculty was either consistent or inconsistent.¹⁴³

Eudaimonia was by no means unique to Stoicism: most of the major systems of moral philosophy in antiquity are broadly eudaimonist in their structure.¹⁴⁴ The Stoics share with Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus the general claim that *eudaimonia* is a condition that depends on a person’s beliefs, values, desires, and moral character; where they stand alone is in their tenet that *eudaimonia* consists solely and entirely in ethical virtue and is thus not dependent on the possession of goods that partly depend on chance.¹⁴⁵ In Stoicism, then, the cultivation of rationality was the key to *eudaimonia*. A happy life was a life of perfected reason in accordance with nature; moreover, such a condition was within one’s power to achieve

since they [the Stoics] have perceived the final good to be agreement with nature and living consistently with nature, which is not only the wise man’s proper function, but also in his power. It necessarily follows that the happy life is in the power of the man who has the final good in his power. So the wise man’s life is always happy (*ita fit semper vita beata sapientis*). (Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.82 [=LS 63M])

As Long expresses it, the Stoic specification of happiness “involves the fulfilment of all desires that it is *reasonable* for human beings to have”; such a condition is certainly attainable provided that one completely limits these desires (and aversions) to the domain in which one is capable of being autonomous, i.e. in such things as rationality,

happiness (the attainment of good) and its subjective connotations (a profoundly content state of mind). See also his *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 190.

¹⁴⁰ See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Fat.* 199.14–22 (=LS 61N).

¹⁴¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.91; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.39.

¹⁴² Stobaeus 2.66.14–67.4 (=LS 61G); Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.29, 34–35 (=LS 61O); Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 441C–D (=LS 61B); Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1046E–F (=LS 61F). Long and Sedley note that the principal characteristics of vice in the relevant accounts are established by parity of reasoning, with an emphasis on inconsistency and ignorance (LS 1.385–386).

¹⁴³ LS 1.383, citing Diogenes Laertius 7.127 (=LS 61I).

¹⁴⁴ For a comparative study of ancient Greek eudaimonistic theories see Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). On eudaimonism in Stoicism see Long, “Eudaimonism,” 179–201; John M. Cooper, “Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and ‘Moral Duty’ in Stoicism,” in *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 427–448; LS 1.398–401.

¹⁴⁵ Long, “Eudaimonism,” 182.

judgement, and volition.¹⁴⁶ Hence we see that *eudaimonia* is inextricably linked both to reason and virtuous agency;¹⁴⁷ indeed, its benefits are constituted by virtue.¹⁴⁸

2.2.2. Stoic Physics and the *Pneuma*

Though the Stoics placed much emphasis on the propositional content of human mental experience and on the norms that could be established as a result of rational evaluation, they insisted also on the physical nature of all events in the mind. For them, mental events were always constituted by some kind of psychophysical change. Earlier, Aristotle had proposed that when investigating the nature of the psyche, the biological and non-biological approaches were both valid:

But the natural philosopher and the logician will in every case offer different definitions, e.g., in answer to the question what is anger. The latter will call it a craving for retaliation, or something of the sort; the former will describe it as a surging of the blood and heat around the heart. The one is describing the matter, the other the form or formula of the essence. (Aristotle, *De an.*, 1.1.403a29–403b3)

Stoicism adopted Aristotle's methodological stance and propounded a hypothesis in which mental events could be construed either in intentional terms (by articulating their propositional content) or in physical terms (by specifying some material shift within a somatic locale). Though greater emphasis was placed on the intentional dimensions of their theory, the Stoics made significant effort also to explain the processes of the mind in physical terms, in a manner that was consistent with their understanding of natural science.

The Stoic belief that the mind was necessarily a material substance and that all mental events were also manifested physically came from their claim that anything that interacted with a body had to be itself corporeal in some way. Indeed, for the Stoics, the tangible bodily reactions that accompanied emotional upheavals were proof that thoughts and emotions were also alterations in some kind of psychic material.¹⁴⁹ This animating mind-material consisted of *pneuma* (*πνεῦμα*)—a highly energized compound of fire and air. In early Stoicism, Zeno had identified the heat that was in all things as the “designing fire” (*πῦρ τεχνικόν*) which supplied the “seminal principle” (*λόγος*

¹⁴⁶ See Long, *Epictetus*, 191 (emphasis original).

¹⁴⁷ Cooper, “Eudaimonism,” 427–428; Lawrence C. Becker, *A New Stoicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 21.

¹⁴⁸ LS 1.399; citing Seneca, *Ep.* 92.3 (=LS 63F).

¹⁴⁹ Nemesius, *De natura hominis*, 78.7–79.2 (=LS 45C). On corporealism see also Cicero, *Acad.*, 1.39 (=LS 45A); Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 8.263 (=LS 45B); and the very useful discussion in David E. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 3–28.

σπερματικός) that explained their structure and function; indeed the universe as a whole was a macrocosm of this structural and functional complexity, because of the presence of the designing fire in it.¹⁵⁰ However, from Chrysippus onwards, it was the *pneuma* that was assigned this cosmological function and associated with rationality; all things owed their identity and properties to the *pneuma*.¹⁵¹ It was therefore the *pneuma* that endowed humans with all the capacities necessary for life, perception, and response.¹⁵² This helps to account for the readiness of the Stoics to assume a connection between human rationality and cosmological ordering: individual living things are parts of the cosmos and derive their psychic capacities from the psychic material of the whole.¹⁵³

The term *psychē* (ψυχή), often rendered in English as “soul,” referred to the entire innate expanse of *pneuma* present in a human,¹⁵⁴ but in its common and more restrictive usage it designated the centralized portion of the *pneuma*—the *hēgemonikon* (ἡγεμονικόν) or “directive faculty”—that was responsible for what we would call the person’s psychological operations.¹⁵⁵ Here, cognition was also coordinated with locomotion and other motor functions.¹⁵⁶ The *hēgemonikon* was therefore regarded as a command centre, located at the heart, which received sensory inputs from, and initiated behaviours to, other portions of the psychic material extending into the sense organs and limbs.¹⁵⁷ In Stoic nomenclature, *hēgemonikon* is the closest equivalent to our term “mind.”

The Stoic conception of the soul as a centralized system shows similarities to contemporaneous medical theories proposed by Praxagoras and the Alexandrian physicians Herophilus and Erasistratus. Praxagoras, Herophilus’s teacher, advanced the

¹⁵⁰ Stobaeus 1.213.15–21 (=LS 46D); Diogenes Laertius 7.135–136 (=LS 46B); Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 15.14.2 (=LS 46G).

¹⁵¹ Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1053F–1054B (=LS 47M); Galen, *Intr.* 14.726.7–11 (=LS 47N); see further Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 152–158.

¹⁵² More specifically, it was the variations in the “tension” (τόνος) between the fire and air in the *pneuma* as they worked together upon the two passive elements of water and earth that explained differences in the qualities imparted by *pneuma* to things; see Graver, *Stoicism*, 19–21. For a fuller discussion see Hahm, *Stoic Cosmology*, 165–174.

¹⁵³ See Hahm, *Stoic Cosmology*, 163.

¹⁵⁴ *SVF* 2.885 (=Galen, *PHP* 7.1.112).

¹⁵⁵ The two meanings of ψυχή are distinguished in Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.234 (=LS 53F).

¹⁵⁶ The Stoics divided the soul into eight parts: the five senses, the speech and reproductive faculties, and the *hēgemonikon*. See Aetius, *Doxographi Graeci* 4.21.1–4 (=LS 53H), 4.4.4 (=SVF 2.827); also Diogenes Laertius 7.110, where the mind is called *δοανοία*.

¹⁵⁷ Chrysippus is described as likening it to a spring that flows through the whole body, a tree with its branches, and a monarch with his network of spies, in Calcidius, *On the Timaeus of Plato* 220 (=LS 53G), and an octopus and its tentacles in Aetius, *Doxographi Graeci* 4.21.1–4 (=LS 53H).

view that the arteries contained *pneuma* while the veins carried blood,¹⁵⁸ which became widely accepted in antiquity.¹⁵⁹ Erasistratus distinguished between vital *pneuma*, which flowed through the arteries, and psychic *pneuma* in the brain and nerves, which was responsible for cognition and motor activity.¹⁶⁰ Like the Stoics, they made *pneuma* central to their accounts of the soul. Yet the Stoic position was distinctive in several respects; one difference was that Chrysippus located the *hēgemonikon* in the heart (and not in the brain).¹⁶¹ The question of the direct influence of the Hellenistic physicians on the Stoics remains open.¹⁶²

The *hēgemonikon* was apparently also attributed with the function of self-perception. In a valuable account, Hierocles argues that when any part of the body moves, parts of the *psychē*, which was thoroughly mixed together with the body, monitors this movement and produces perception. In this way, the *hēgemonikon* has direct awareness of the “non-soul” components of the body and is also indirectly aware (through the *psychē*) of its own movements within these components, and this explains why one can sense any change in one’s own being.¹⁶³

2.2.3. Stoic Psychology of Knowledge and Action

The Stoics also provided psychophysical explanations for how information in the mind was conceptualized and acted upon. In this psychology of knowledge and action, the main elements are impression, assent, and impulse; these generate the action that is to be explained.¹⁶⁴ The sequence is provided by the Stoicizing Academic Antiochus of Ascalon and cited by Cicero,¹⁶⁵ who attributes these same ideas to Chrysippus.¹⁶⁶ Further support for these elements as being integral to the Stoic theory comes from the

¹⁵⁸ Fritz Steckerl, *The Fragments of Praxagoras of Cos and His School*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10–22.

¹⁵⁹ Galen, *PHP* 7.5. See also Heinrich von Staden, *Herophilus: The Art of Medicine in Ancient Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 260–263.

¹⁶⁰ Heinrich von Staden, “Body, Soul, and Nerves: Epicurus, Herophilus, Erasistratus, the Stoics and Galen,” in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment*, ed. John P. Wright and Paul Potter (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 87–96, especially 93; Staden, *Herophilus*, 151–161, 247–267.

¹⁶¹ The localization of the *hēgemonikon* in the chest, where heartbeat and respiratory function were observed, was a natural choice in view of the limited understanding of human physiology in that era. See Graver, *Stoicism*, 22–23; Annas, *Mind*, 25–26.

¹⁶² For details see Hahn, *Stoic Cosmology*, 160–163; Staden, “Body, Soul, and Nerves,” 97–105; Annas, *Mind*, 20–26.

¹⁶³ Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics*, 4.38–53 (=LS 53B).

¹⁶⁴ For a comprehensive discussion, see Inwood, *Ethics*, 42–101.

¹⁶⁵ Cicero, *Acad.* 2.24–25.

¹⁶⁶ Cicero, *Fat.* 41–42.

fact that they correspond to three of the four powers of the rational soul in Iamblichus' report as found in Stobaeus: here the *hēgemonikon* is the seat of impression (*φαντασία*), assent (*συγκατάθεσις*), impulse (*ὄρμηξ*), and reason (*λόγος*).¹⁶⁷

2.2.3.a. Knowledge

An impression is an alteration that occurs in the *psychē* through which something seems to be present or to be the case.¹⁶⁸ The Chrysippian account runs as follows:

An impression is an affection occurring in the soul (*φαντασία μὲν οὖν ἔστι πάθος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γιγνόμενον*), which reveals itself and its cause. Thus, when through sight we observe something white, the affection is what is engendered in the soul through vision; and it is this affection which enables us to say that there is a white object which activates us. (Aetius, *Doxographi Graeci* 4.12.1 [=LS 39B])

An impression is thus essentially sentient in nature. Further, in having an impression, the mind produces thought that is linguistically formulable and therefore propositional (“which enables us to say there is”).¹⁶⁹ Elsewhere, the relationship of impressions to articulate thought is expressed very clearly: “For impression comes first; then thought, which is capable of expressing itself, puts into the form of a proposition that which the subject receives from a impression.”¹⁷⁰ However this does not imply that the mind receives raw data that it then subsequently interprets. All impressions of rational persons are rational “processes of thought,”¹⁷¹ and all rational impressions may be classified as being either true or false on the basis of the assertions that can be made about them,¹⁷² which further accentuates their propositional character. These claims combine to produce a scenario in which the mind’s stock of conceptions is instantly activated upon receiving an impression, such that it presents its object in a conceptualized form.¹⁷³

In addition, the Stoics had a specific term for the true impression which was unmistakably trustworthy because it represented its real object with complete accuracy:

¹⁶⁷ Stobaeus 1.368.12–20 (=LS 53K).

¹⁶⁸ Graver, *Stoicism*, 24.

¹⁶⁹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 147–152, especially 150.

¹⁷⁰ Diogenes Laertius 7.49; I translate *φαντασία* as “impression” instead of “presentation.” See also Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 8.70 (=LS 33C). For a succinct discussion of the Stoic argument for a linguistic dimension to rationality, see Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 124–125.

¹⁷¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.51.

¹⁷² Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.242–246 (=LS 39G).

¹⁷³ LS 1.240.

this was the “cognitive” or “kataleptic” impression (*φαντασία καταληπτική*)—literally, “impression capable of grasping (its object).”¹⁷⁴ Sextus Empiricus reports:

Of true impressions, some are cognitive, others not (*τῶν δὲ ἀληθῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι καταληπτικαὶ αἱ δὲ οὐ*). Non-cognitive are ones people experience when they are in abnormal states. For very large numbers of people who are deranged or melancholic take in an impression which is true but non-cognitive, and arises purely externally and fortuitously, so that they often do not respond to it positively and do not assent to it. A cognitive impression is one which arises from what is (*καταληπτικὴ δὲ ἐστὶν ἢ ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος*) and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is, of such a kind as could not arise from what is not . . . For the Stoics say that one who has the cognitive impression fastens on the objective difference of things in a craftsmanlike way, since this kind of impression has a peculiarity which differentiates it from other impressions. (*Math.* 7.247–252 [=LS 40E])¹⁷⁵

As Engberg-Pedersen observes, whether an impression is kataleptic or merely true is a difference of degree with respect to the mind’s contribution. The nature of this contribution may be elucidated from Sextus’ description of the person having a kataleptic impression as one noticing “in a craftsmanlike way” (*τεχνικῶς*) the uniqueness of its properties. The person does this not by having an impression in the sense of an image with some special property that marks it out as veridical, but by recalling previous knowledge to help him determine what the thing or event is that impinges on his mind. Thus in a kataleptic impression such knowledge is articulated more and more precisely until the description of the thing or event that forms the impression matches exactly that thing or event.¹⁷⁶

However, to have an impression—whatever its type—is still simply to entertain a thought, without any implication of commitment to it. Impression is not belief;¹⁷⁷ that which transmutes thought into belief is a subsequent mental event called an assent. Specifically, one assents to the unique proposition that is intrinsic to, and the proper object of, any impression.¹⁷⁸ This implies making a commitment to the veracity or desirability of the state of affairs that form the content of an impression, and also having

¹⁷⁴ See LS 1.250–253, in which there is also a useful summary of the debate between the Stoics and the Academics concerning the self-certifiability of such impressions. For the sake of consistency, in my study I shall refer to these impressions as “kataleptic” impressions.

¹⁷⁵ See also Diogenes Laertius 7.54, who notes that the Stoics regarded the kataleptic impression as “the criterion of truth, i.e. the impression arising from what is.”

¹⁷⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 157–160.

¹⁷⁷ See LS 1.239–240, where Long and Sedley helpfully explain that “a Stoic impression is not an impression *that* something is the case—which in modern English, does imply some degree of belief—but just the impression *of* something’s being the case” (emphases theirs).

¹⁷⁸ Stobaeus 2.88.2–3.

the capacity to refrain from doing so.¹⁷⁹ Assents can be strong or weak: the wise man's strong assent is one that is not only firm and certain but is also irreversible, while the weak, less reliable assent of an ordinary person is characterized by precipitancy and changeability.¹⁸⁰ In regard to kataleptic impressions, the Stoics assumed that the rational human being was endowed with the mental ability to make accurate discriminations that are congruent with living according to nature. As such, he was therefore naturally predisposed to give his assent to such impressions,¹⁸¹ the outcome of which was "cognition" or *katalēpsis* (κατάληψις), i.e., assent to a kataleptic impression.¹⁸²

Drawing together what has been discussed thus far: the Stoic framework for understanding the formation of belief in the human mind has two components: impression and assent. Any occurrent thought, inclination, desire, or belief that a person may have is necessarily some combination of these two components. In Stoic epistemology, the highest cognitive state of "knowledge" or "scientific knowledge" (*ἐπιστήμη*) occurs only when an impression is kataleptic and the corresponding assent is strong. Though *katalēpsis* is a necessary condition of knowledge, it is not sufficient to constitute it because the cognition has to be impregnable to any thinking that might engender a change of mind. All other combinations of impression and assent produce "opinion" (*δόξα*), for our sources also tell us that *doxa* involves weak assent, or assent to what is not kataleptic.¹⁸³ The Stoic account of these things may be depicted in tabular form, which shows how two kinds of assent, to three kinds of impression, result in six possible types of beliefs (see Table 1).

¹⁷⁹ LS 1.322; Long and Sedley observe also that Epictetus calls assent "the power to use impressions" (*Diatr.* 1.1.12).

¹⁸⁰ Stobaeus 2.111.18–112.8 (=LS 41G); Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1057B (=LS 41F). As Graver, *Stoicism*, 26, expresses it: "The ordinary mind is, as it were, a pushover, yielding easily to impressions which the wise person would resist."

¹⁸¹ Cicero, *Acad.* 2.30–31, 2.37–38 (=LS 40N). See also Steven K. Strange, "The Stoics on the Voluntariness of the Passions," in *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. Steven K. Strange and Jack Zupko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47–48.

¹⁸² Cicero, *Acad.* 1.40–41 (=LS 40B).

¹⁸³ See e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 7.151–157 (=LS 41C); Cicero, *Acad.* 1.41–42 (=LS 41B); Stobaeus 2.111.18–112.8 (=LS 41G); 2.73.16–74.3 (=LS 41H). Brennan, "Stoic Theory," 27, notes that as the definition of knowledge is conjunctive, with knowledge and opinion between them exhausting the options, DeMorgan's laws confirm that opinion's definition should be disjunctive in this fashion.

		Impression	
		true	false
Assent	strong	kataleptic knowledge <i>katalēpsis</i> (in the wise)	merely true opinion
	weak	opinion <i>katalēpsis</i> (in the non-wise)	opinion opinion

Table 1. *Impression and Action in the Formation of Belief.*¹⁸⁴

We should note that knowledge requires a strong assent, and can only be found in the wise person, whose perfected reason contains no inconsistencies. All beliefs found in the non-wise, even if kataleptically true, are merely opinions.

2.2.3.b. Action

Having elucidated how the Stoics understood belief to be constructed, we turn now to their analysis of action, which centred on the concept of impulse (*ὀρμή*). An impulse was not some vague instinctual urge or underlying drive. It was that psychophysical event that caused an action.¹⁸⁵ According to Stobaeus:

What activates impulse, they [the Stoics] say, is precisely an impression capable of directly impelling a proper function (*φαντασίαν ὀρμητικὴν τοῦ καθήκοντος αὐτόθεν*). In genus impulse is a movement of the soul towards something. (Stobaeus 2.86.17–19 [=LS 53Q])

Furthermore,

They [the Stoics] say that all impulses are acts of assent, and the practical impulses also contain motive power. But acts of assent and impulses actually differ in their objects: propositions are the objects of acts of assent, but impulses are directed towards predicates, which are contained in a sense in the propositions. (Stobaeus 2.88.2–6 [=LS 33I])

¹⁸⁴ Adapted from Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 27.

¹⁸⁵ “Impulses are that activity of the soul’s commanding-faculty which converts its judgements of what it should pursue or avoid into purposive bodily movements.” LS 1.420.

From this we may learn several things. First, an impulse is stimulated by a “hormetic impression” (*φαντασία ὁρμητική*): one that indicates to the person something that is “proper” (*καθήκον*)—i.e. relevant or appropriate—because it will contribute to his well-being or the fulfillment of his nature. Second, an impulse is a motion of the *psychē* towards the predicate in the endorsed proposition.¹⁸⁶ Third, an impulse is thus a type of assent involving impressions that have a special evaluative and practical character: thus, on the Stoic theory all occurrent practical attitudes—all desires, intentions, flights, and so on—are impulses, and therefore assents to these hormetic impressions.¹⁸⁷ Elsewhere, our sources tell us that an impulse is the necessary¹⁸⁸ and sufficient¹⁸⁹ condition of an action, and that unless an external obstacle hinders the physical execution of the act, an impulse invariably produces an action.¹⁹⁰

That all impulses are acts of assent logically entails a view in which individuals are held responsible for their thoughts and desires.¹⁹¹ Indeed, by performing much of the work of intention as part of its essential role in human action, impulse “isolates the ethically significant aspect of an action.”¹⁹² Long and Sedley are correct to argue that assent, for the Stoics, seems to be a distinguishing mark of rationality.¹⁹³ This brings us to *λόγος*: the fourth of the four powers or aspects of the *hēgemonikon*. To the observations that were made earlier concerning the centrality of rationality in Stoic thought, we may add a further comment. This uniquely human endowment—decisively lacking in animals—fundamentally qualifies the *hēgemonikon* as a unitary rational agent, by making its impressions and impulses rational, and also its powers of giving or withholding assent. So we see for example (in relation to human impulse) that Chrysippus’ understanding is that it is “reason prescribing action to him ... Repulsion then is prohibitive reason.”¹⁹⁴ While the four powers of the rational soul work

¹⁸⁶ See also Inwood, *Ethics*, 51, 272 n.53; Inwood notes that the evidence is relatively uniform in revealing that impulses are directed towards action predicates, which confirms their causal role (51).

¹⁸⁷ See Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 28. See also 29, where, using a helpful example, Brennan explains the apparent conundrum of how an assent to an impression can be simultaneously a belief (an assent to a full proposition, e.g. “the cake is to be eaten by me”) and an impulse (an assent to a predicate contained by that proposition, e.g. “to eat the cake”). Impulses and beliefs are both assents, and impulses are correlated with beliefs in such a way that the impulse for an action (to eat the cake) and the belief that the action is to be carried out by the person (the cake is to be eaten by me) always entail one another.

However, as Brennan admits, the state of our sources denies us further insight into the details.

¹⁸⁸ Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Fat.* 183.5–10; Seneca, *Ep.* 113.2.

¹⁸⁹ Cicero, *Acad.* 2.108.

¹⁹⁰ On this see Inwood, *Ethics*, 52; Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 28.

¹⁹¹ Stobaeus 2.88.2–6 (=LS 331); Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1057A (=LS 53S).

¹⁹² Inwood, *Ethics*, 53.

¹⁹³ LS 1.322.

¹⁹⁴ Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1037F (=LS 53R).

seamlessly as a single entity, reason is the key function: it works with impressions through an act of assent, thereby shaping impulses.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, Long argues that the soul's activities of imaging, assenting, and impulsion are modified by *λόγος*, which is the mode of the whole soul's operation.¹⁹⁶

2.3. The Stoic Understanding of Emotion

2.3.1. The Passions as “Excessive” Impulses

We are now in a position to detail how the Stoics incorporated affective events into their account of mental functioning. The Stoics defined passions as “excessive” impulses, or, in other words, particularly compelling motivations towards actions of certain kinds. The standard definition as found in Stobaeus' report runs as follows:

Πάθος δ' εἶναι φασιν ὀρμὴν πλεονάζουσαν καὶ ἀπειθῆ τῷ αἰρούντι λόγῳ ἢ κίνησιν ψυχῆς <ἄλογον> παρὰ φύσιν (εἶναι δὲ πάθη πάντα τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς).

They [the Stoics] say that passion is impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason, or a movement of soul which is irrational and contrary to nature; and that all passions belong to the soul's commanding-faculty. (Stobaeus 2.88.8–10 (=LS 65A))¹⁹⁷

Since passions are impulses and therefore involve assenting to some hormetic impression, it follows that passions depend on the formulation and ratification of specific propositions about oneself and one's surroundings. In effect, the person has assented to a false value-judgement—one that is contrary to reason, as is made explicit in the statement above—and in so doing issued himself with the excessive impulse to either pursue or avoid something.

The meaning of “excessive” is explained by Chrysippus in relation to people who “overstep the proper and natural proportion of their impulses,” and he illustrates this using the imagery of a person walking and running. When the person walks in accordance with his impulse, he remains in control of his movements and is able to stop or change direction when he wants to; the movement of his legs is commensurate with the impulse and not excessive. However, in running, the person loses the sense of this control: the movement in his legs “exceeds” the impulse, such that they are carried

¹⁹⁵ Inwood, *Ethics*, 52–53.

¹⁹⁶ Anthony A. Long, “Soul and Body in Stoicism,” *Phronesis* 27 (1992): 50–51.

¹⁹⁷ The same account of *παθος* as an excessive impulse or irrational and unnatural movement of the soul is attributed to Zeno at Diogenes Laertius 7.110 and Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.11.

away by their motion. By analogy, Chrysippus argues, an impulse is excessive if it goes beyond the natural control of reason.¹⁹⁸

The important and original insight expressed by the analogy is the continuity, and also the difference, between normal, healthy impulses and passions.¹⁹⁹ We have already seen that in Stoic physiology, any impulse is an effective cause of action. Since reason characterizes the *hēgemonikon*, there is nothing intrinsically irrational about impulses as such. However, as Chrysippus insists, the passions are “irrational” because they run contrary to the natural limits and dictates of reason; their unnaturalness consists in the immoderation of their movement.²⁰⁰ Passions do not stem from ordinary errors of fact,²⁰¹ but are “vicious and uncontrolled reason which acquires vehemence and strength from bad and erroneous judgement.”²⁰²

Passions, then, are characterized by their “excess” in terms of the nature of the judgements that give rise to them. At the same time, as we have seen, the standard Stoic definition of passions also relates this “excess” to the concomitant psychophysical movements (“movement of soul”) that form their coordinate definitions. These movements are elsewhere described in greater detail, in terms of the four generic types of passion with which they are correlated.

They [the Stoics] say that desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) is a stretching (*ὄρεξις*) which is disobedient to reason, and its cause is forming an opinion (*δοξάζειν*) that a good is approaching and that when it is present we shall do well by it; this opinion that it is really worth stretching for has a fresh power to stimulate irregular motion. Fear (*φόβος*) is a shrinking (*ἐκκλισις*) which is disobedient to reason, and its cause is forming an opinion that something bad is approaching; this opinion that it is really

¹⁹⁸ Galen, *PHP* 4.2.10–18 (=LS 65J). The person with an excessive impulse is “not obedient” (*μὴ εὐπειθῶς εἶχειν*) to reason. Another example cited, by Cicero and Seneca, is that people falling from a high place do not have control over their movements; they can neither hold back nor delay their physical reactions; see Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.42; Seneca, *Ira* 1.7.4.

¹⁹⁹ LS 1.420.

²⁰⁰ Galen, *PHP* 4.2.10–18 (=LS 65J). See the Stobaeian account at 2.89.4–12, where we learn that passions, being irrational and disobedient to reason, overpower people with their intensity. This is not to say that the process has not been evaluated, as the quoting of a commonly-heard phrase shows (“Although I have [better] judgement, nature forces me to do this” [Pomeroy]), but rather that the act does not conform to normal rational choices. Commenting on this, Arthur Pomeroy notes that the effect “is to reinforce the moral responsibility of individuals for their acts, rather than excuse them as outside their control.” (*Arius Didymus: Epitome of Stoic Ethics* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 118 n.128.

²⁰¹ Stobaeus 2.89.16–18 tells us: “All those in the grips of passion turn their backs on reason, not in the same way as those who have been thoroughly deceived in any matter, but in a special way (*ἀλλ’ ἰδιαζόντως*)” (Pomeroy). Long and Sedley, 1.420, argue that this implies that the pro or contra judgement underlying a passion is perfectly natural in itself: the wise man will naturally try to seek or avoid the things that form the objects of passions—but he will do so at a walking pace, as it were, i.e. on the basis of a properly rational judgement of such things’ moral indifference. In this way, he experiences nothing in contrary to his desire or impulse; since he “acts with reserve,” his impulses are rationally regulated so as to accord with his environment (see Stobaeus 2.155.5–17=LS 65W).

²⁰² Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 441D (=LS 61B).

worth shrinking away from has a fresh power to stimulate motion. Grief (*λόπη*) is a contraction (*συστολή*) of the soul disobedient to reason, and its cause is forming a fresh opinion that a bad thing is present, for which it is appropriate to be contracted. Delight (*ἡδονή*) is a swelling (*ἐπαρσις*) of the soul disobedient to reason, and its cause is forming a fresh opinion that a good thing is present, for which it is appropriate to be swollen. (Stobaeus 2.90.7–18 [=SVF 3.394]; my translation)²⁰³

As expected, the phrase “it is appropriate” (*καθήκει*) in relation to contraction in grief and swelling in delight corresponds precisely to the description of appropriateness in our earlier discussion of the Stobaeian account of Stoic impulse (section 2.2.3.b). Just as in impulse generally the *psychē* views some predicate as appropriate and moves to fulfil it, so in the passions it sees certain conditions as being appropriate and therefore experiences the physical movement associated with the passion. Thus in the passage above we note that in grief the person sees “being contracted” as appropriate and therefore suffers the type of movement termed a contraction (*συστολή*); in delight he regards “being swollen” as appropriate and so experiences a swelling (*ἐπαρσις*). Though *καθήκει* is absent in relation to the movements associated with desire and fear, the use of language of similar force denotes clearly the presence of appropriateness.²⁰⁴ All these alterations in the *psychē* can be sensed because of its continual proprioceptive awareness.²⁰⁵ The precise form of each type of alteration is not important; for our purposes it is sufficient to highlight that in the Stoic account some kind of *felt* psychosomatic change accompanies each type of passion.²⁰⁶

But what precisely is the relationship between these felt movements and the judgements that are also involved in affective events? According to Galen, while Zeno identified the passions with the contractions, shrinkings, and other psychophysical

²⁰³ See also the similar accounts in Andronicus, *De passionibus* 1, Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.14–15, and Diogenes Laertius 7:111–114. Also, in referring to a “fresh” (*πρόσφατον*) power or opinion, the Stoics are stressing its immanent force and immediacy rather than specifying some notion of temporal recentness (which Posidonius tries to do; see *PHP* 4.7.1–5 [=SVF 3.481]; with Inwood, *Ethics*, 146). The term, used frequently of food and also of new corpses, implies that no decomposition has yet set in and that the item in question has retained its pristine character; see Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 381–382.

²⁰⁴ The idea of appropriateness is wide and not confined to judgements made on moral grounds, though, as Sorabji observes, it includes in Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.83 and Seneca, *Marc.* 1 the case in which mourners come to think that they have a moral duty to react (*Emotion*, 30). As Graver, *Stoicism*, 43, notes, a reading more consistent with Stoic usage “finds in it only a loose notion of what is fitting under the circumstances—what is ‘called for,’ as we might say.”

²⁰⁵ As discussed at section 2.2.2.

²⁰⁶ See Knuutila, *Emotions*, 60–62, for a useful summary of the scholarly interpretations as to the precise nature of these psychophysical movements. An expanded list of these movements is provided by Galen in *PHP* 4.2.4–6 and 4.3.2; of note is the term “bitings,” which was long established in Greek usage as a way of speaking of the pain of grief. See also Cicero, *Tusc.* 4:15, where Cicero’s Latin terminology for these movements corresponds closely to what Galen reports. For a fuller discussion see Graver, *Stoicism*, 28–34.

motions that followed or supervened upon (*ἐπιγίγνεσθαι*) the judgements, Chrysippus subsequently revised the Zenoian view to equate the passions with the judgements themselves.²⁰⁷ However, as Graver argues, even though there is certainly a difference in wording, there is much similarity in the two accounts: both hold that a passion involves a psychophysical change and a judgement. In addition, they describe the relation between the two in very much the same way; for Zeno the change supervenes on the judgement and would not be a passion if it did not supervene on such a judgement, while for Chrysippus the change is induced by the judgement, which would not be a passion if such a movement was not produced. The chief difference between the two philosophers is in the exact application of the term “passion” within the sequence. In reformulating the definition, Chrysippus clarifies what was already implied in Zeno’s version: that it is the nature of the judgement that defines what sort of impulse has occurred.²⁰⁸ Graver concludes that a distinction can therefore be made between the passions as judgements (i.e. strictly for their intentional content, which may be either true or false), and the feeling one gets from a certain passion. In itself, the feeling merely registers the physical event that necessarily occurs with the passion. Moreover, because the felt psychophysical event merely supervenes on the judgement, rather than being itself the passion, it is possible to experience something which *feels* like delight or fear but which is not actually one of these passions because it lacks the pertinent intentional criteria.²⁰⁹ We shall pick this up again in our exploration of the *propatheiai*, or “pre-passions” (section 2.3.3.c).

2.3.2. The Passions as Value Judgements

Let us return to our discussion of the passions as judgements of value. More than mere supervenient psychic motions, passions—being certain kinds of impulses—necessarily contain propositional content: evaluative construals of external objects as being either advantageous or injurious to oneself.²¹⁰ These evaluations comprise both an

²⁰⁷ Galen, *PHP* 5.1.4; 4.3.2–3.

²⁰⁸ Graver, *Stoicism*, 33. See also Christopher Gill, “Competing Readings of Stoic Emotions,” in *Metaphysics, Soul, and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji*, ed. Ricardo Salles (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 453–454. I concur with Graver and Gill, who do not agree with the arguments for a substantive difference between Zeno and Chrysippus in Sorabji, *Emotion*, 55–65.

²⁰⁹ Graver, *Stoicism*, 33–34.

²¹⁰ I use the term “external object” to designate those things that are external to one’s sphere of control; the Stoic term is *ἀδιάφορα* (“indifferents”). Although some indifferents may be “preferable” (*προηγμένα*) because they have some sort of positive value, they are still intrinsically indifferents; the fact is that nothing is really good except the perfection of one’s reason, which is virtue. See Cicero, *Fin.* 3.50–

occurrent element (e.g. “this is desire”) and a dispositional one (“desire is good, and it is appropriate to react in an emotional way to it”), and these two elements are brought together syllogistically to produce the judgements that are intrinsic to affective response. Thus a fundamental feature of the Stoic theory of the passions is its position concerning the propriety or impropriety of these judgements, which is based on normative claims as to the types of objects that one could legitimately value as a result of properly rational thinking. The classification of affective responses proceeds accordingly: imperfectly reasoned evaluations give rise to the passions, while there is another ideal or “eupathic” class of emotions which are generated through proper reasoning.

The source that illuminates most clearly the interplay between the occurrent and dispositional dimensions of the evaluative process is the Stobaeian account of the causation of affective events at the level of genus that was quoted earlier (Stobaeus 2.90.7–18). In all four genera (desire, fear, grief, and delight) the person experiencing these passions is credited with a belief that something either good or bad is present or in prospect. It is important to highlight that here, in the case of grief for instance, the judgement is not that “a present thing is bad” but that “a bad thing is present.” As such, the evaluative component comes in not because the person makes the decision there and then that something is bad, but because the occurrent judgement engages dispositional attitudes that are already in place concerning the badness of certain object types.

However, this ascription of value still does not produce a passion on the Stoic account. The Stobaeian summary also informs us that in the genesis of the passions, the evaluation of a contingent object is followed by a further judgement that some sort of predicative response is appropriate under the circumstances. This same sequence is found in Cicero’s analysis of the causes of grief. He describes grief as “a belief (*opinio*) that some serious evil is present,” and then adds,

Specifically it is a fresh belief (*recens opinio*), and the evil is of such a nature that it seems right to be pained by it—seems so, at least, to the person who is suffering and who believes that it is appropriate for him to suffer. (*Tusc.* 3.25 [Graver])²¹¹

More specifically, it is a combination of two judgements that brings about grief:

But when our belief in the seriousness of our misfortune is combined with the further belief that it is right, and an appropriate and proper thing, to be upset by

54; Diogenes Laertius 7.104–107. For an overview of the Stoic ethical stance regarding the objects of evaluation, see Graver, *Stoicism*, 46–51.

²¹¹ For the meaning of a “fresh” belief, see Cicero’s own explanation in *Tusc.* 3.75, where he explains that “freshness” relates not only to matters of time but to the vigour of the imagined evil.

what has happened, then, and not before, there comes about that deep emotion which is distress. (*Tusc.* 3.61–62 [Graver])

Hence Cicero's claim is that when an external trigger occurs, the conjunction of two related judgements—an evaluation of an external object, and a belief in the appropriateness of a predicative response to it—generates distress in the person.²¹²

The Stoic theory is based on the assumption that the object of a passion is either good or bad. As we have seen earlier, only behaviour that is rational and therefore in accordance with virtue is intrinsically good; behaviour that is irrational is a deviation from the norms of nature and reason and therefore intrinsically bad. People who are driven by irrational thinking wrongly believe that external objects are of significance in their lives, and as a result both their judgements about the value of these objects and the appropriateness of their reactions to them are systematically misguided.²¹³

Therefore, on the Stoic account, the passions are the consequence of reason gone astray. The Stoics rejected the Platonic model of a divided soul in which emotional conflict was explained by how passion was often at odds with reason.²¹⁴ Instead, such conflict arose from extremely rapid fluctuations in the unitary *hēgemonikon*;²¹⁵ Zeno uses the ornithological metaphor of “fluttering” to convey this notion of volatility.²¹⁶ Thus the dominant Stoic conception of those subject to passion is their instability and lack of consistent direction.²¹⁷ Since human beings are responsible for the state of their rationality, they are also held responsible for their passions and any ensuing actions.

According to Epictetus,

It is not the things themselves that disturb men, but their judgements about these things. For example, death is nothing dreadful, or else Socrates too would have thought so, but the judgement that death is dreadful, *this* is the dreadful thing. When, therefore, we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never blame anyone but ourselves, that means, our own judgements. (*Ench.* 5; emphasis translator's)²¹⁸

²¹² This two-component analysis is reiterated, for grief at *Tusc.* 3.74, 76, 79; and for grief and the other generic passions at 4.14. At 4.82, Cicero stresses that grief and the other passions “are a matter of belief and are voluntary, and that we experience them because we think it appropriate to do so.”

²¹³ Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 59.

²¹⁴ Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 446F–447A (=LS 65G).

²¹⁵ Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 441B–D (=LS 61B).

²¹⁶ “Therefore every fluttering is also a passion, and likewise, every passion is a fluttering.” Stobaeus 2.88.11–12 (=LS 65A).

²¹⁷ LS 1.422; here attention is drawn to references to the soul's “weakness” and “lack of tension” in Galen, *PHP* 4.6.2–3 (=LS 65T) and Stobaeus 2.88.22–89.3 (=LS 65C). For Galen's and Posidonius' objections to the Chrysippian doctrine of passion, see LS 1.422–423; Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiosis*, 182–193; Graver, *Stoicism*, 75–81.

²¹⁸ See also Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.12.20–21 and Seneca, *Ira* 2.3.1–2.4 (=LS 65X).

For the Stoics, the passions followed directly upon faulty judgements based on a mistaken interpretation of one's mental impressions or an erroneous description of one's experiences.²¹⁹

2.3.3. The Taxonomy of the Emotions

2.3.3.a. The Passions

As we already know, the Stoic account of the causation of the passions informs us that there are four generic ones: desire (*ἐπιθυμία*), the opinion that something in prospect is a good of such a sort that one should reach out for it; fear (*φόβος*), the opinion that something in prospect is an evil of such a sort that we should avoid it; grief (*λύπη*), the opinion that some present thing is an evil of such a sort that we should be downcast about it; and delight (*ἡδονή*), the opinion that some present thing is a good of such a sort that we should be elated about it.²²⁰ Clearly, these four passions are the product of two dichotomies, between present and future, and good and evil, and are often depicted graphically by scholars as follows (see Table 2):

	<i>present</i>	<i>in prospect</i>
<i>good</i>	Delight	Desire
<i>evil</i>	Grief	Fear

Table 2. *The Passions.*

The above generic passions are each further broken down into a number of species. The surviving lists of these species are all different, both in terms of the number of them included, and their names.²²¹ The unsystematic structure of these lists is exacerbated by the presence of overlapping definitions as well as gaps; no reasonable amount of emendation would produce anything like the neat taxonomy at the level of

²¹⁹ LS 1.421.

²²⁰ Our main sources are Stobaeus 2.90.7–18; Andronicus, *De passionibus* 1; Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.14–15; Diogenes Laertius 7.111–114. The four-fold classification was very widely attested; for examples see Graver, *Stoicism*, 231 n.38.

²²¹ For the canonical definitions see Stobaeus 2.90.19–92.20; Diogenes Laertius 7.111–114; Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.16–21; Andronicus, *De passionibus* 2–5; Nemesius, *De natura hominis* 19.229–21.235.

genus that is seen in all the Stoic sources. Margaret Graver's solution to this mystery is compelling: she argues that the point of offering such lists can only have been to demonstrate that the broad-brush classification by genus could be made fine-grained enough to capture the nuances of ordinary emotional experience. This approach probably reflected a deliberate choice, made early in the history of the school, that its philosophical needs would be better served by a list that included a wide variety of everyday terms and definitions than by some neat and exhaustive classification which employed unfamiliar language.²²²

2.3.3.b. The *Eupatheiai*

The Stoics also had a class of emotions that belonged to the person of wise understanding: these affective responses are to the passions what the Stoic sage is to the ordinary person. The collective term *ἐπάθειαι* (the term designated to mean “good emotions,” or “proper feelings”)²²³ is attested from an early date and may have been the term used in the early treatises.²²⁴ For Inwood, the proper understanding of the Stoic ideal of freedom from the passions may be summed up in the slogan “*apatheia* is *eupatheia*,” from which it follows that a *eupatheia* is simply the impulse of a fully rational person.²²⁵ In the psychology of the wise person, then, the *eupatheiai* were analogous to, and indeed replaced, the passions of the non-wise.

There are three genera of eupathic responses: joy (*χαρά*), the knowledge that some present thing is a good of such a sort that one should be elated about it; wish (*βούλησις*), the knowledge that something in prospect is a good of such a sort that one should reach out for it; and caution (*ἐνλάβεια*), the knowledge that something in prospect is an evil of such a sort that one should avoid it.²²⁶ The absence of a fourth *eupatheia* follows organically from the Stoic definitions. The corollary of grief would have to be the knowledge that some present thing is an evil. The wise, however, can

²²² Graver, *Stoicism*, 57–58.

²²³ As is common, I will retain the Greek term and speak of *eupatheiai* or eupathic responses rather than use vague language like “good feelings.”

²²⁴ Graver, *Stoicism*, 51, citing the evidence in Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 449A–B; *St. rep.* 1037F–1038A. Inwood, *Ethics*, 172, notes that it is not clear when the term came to be first used in the Stoa. The main (and almost sole) evidence for them is in Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.11–14, Diogenes Laertius 7.116, and Andronicus, *De passionibus* 1–6.

²²⁵ Inwood, *Ethics*, 172.

²²⁶ Adapted from Tad Brennan's reconstruction of the full forms of the *eupatheiai*. As he notes, we have well-attested definitions for the *eupatheiai* that mirror the impulse-formations for the passions, but their full forms must be reconstructed; see Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 34. See also Diogenes Laertius 7.116 and Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.12–14.

never have the knowledge that some evil was present to them. Putting it another way: “the wise never are affected emotionally by anything they regard as, and that in truth *is*, bad.”²²⁷ On this basis, there can be no fourth genus of eupathic response.²²⁸ We should note also that like the passions, within each genus the *eupatheiai* may be broken down into species.²²⁹

Since the *eupatheiai* gave rise to normative responses, their evaluations are necessarily completely accurate, veridical attributions of goodness and badness. In the *eupatheiai*, then, opinion has been replaced by knowledge and external objects or indifferents have been rejected in place of genuine goods and evils (which is to say, virtue and vice), for the impulses that are correlated with the *eupatheiai* are wholly rational.²³⁰ Phenomenologically, as Graver argues, since the *eupatheiai* are instances of the same felt psychic movements, they should resemble the passions at the psychosomatic level of description; where they differ at the level of feeling, it should be that the *eupatheiai* are without any sense of conflict or contradiction. However, far from being flat and diminished versions of emotions, the *eupatheiai* are corrected versions of them, and as such may be likened to “the easy movements of a powerful athlete, forceful but without strain.”²³¹ We may depict the *eupatheiai* as follows (see Table 3):

	<i>present</i>	<i>in prospect</i>
<i>good</i>	Joy	Wish
<i>evil</i>	N.A.	Caution

Table 3. *The Eupatheiai.*

²²⁷ John M. Cooper, “The Emotional Life of the Wise,” in *Ancient Ethics and Political Philosophy: Proceedings of the Spindel Conference 2004*, Southern Journal of Philosophy Supplement 43 (Memphis: University of Memphis, 2005), 180, interpreting Cicero at *Tusc.* 4.14 (emphasis original).

²²⁸ See Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.14; and Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 35.

²²⁹ These species are named in Diogenes Laertius 7.116, with full definitions appearing only in Andronicus, *De passionibus* 6.

²³⁰ Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 34–35.

²³¹ Graver, *Stoicism*, 52. Similarly, Cooper describes the emotions of the non-wise as “agitated and effusive” when compared to the good feelings of the wise, which are “calm, steady, smooth, and so on”; “Emotional Life,” 179.

2.3.3.c. *The Propatheiai*

We have already seen (at the end of section 2.3.1) how it is possible that one might experience something which feels like one of the passions but is not actually so, because the criterion of intentional judgement is absent. Even before the Stoics came on the scene, there was discussion about the relationship between spontaneous physiological reactions and thought. Aristotle, for example, observed that involuntary movements such as changes in heart rate and sexual arousal responded merely to impressions.²³² This connection was later also made in a fragment of Chrysippus, preserved by Galen, in which he records his observations concerning involuntary weeping and cessations of weeping.²³³ The Stoic founders seem also to have devised specific terms like “biting” (*δηγμα*) and “troubling” (*συνθροήσις*) to designate certain types of affective responses which did not have the status of genuine emotions because they did not meet the assent criterion.²³⁴

The fullest account of feelings that occur in the absence of assent is provided by Seneca in Book 2 of *On Anger*. He gives a succinct presentation of what he takes to be the Stoic view of the causation of anger: for him, it is a response that requires both impression of injury and assent to that impression. Most interestingly, Seneca also refers explicitly to the presence of an involuntary psychological event, a “single mental process” (*simplex*) that “follows immediately upon the impression and springs up without assistance from the mind.”²³⁵ This prior event—which occurs without the mind’s volition—is not the same as anger, which Seneca understands to be a complex process that requires the forming of an impression of injury and the thought that one ought not to have been wronged and therefore should be avenged.²³⁶

What then is this *simplex* event? Quite clearly, it is not an impulse, since there is no assent. However, this is not to say that one’s cognitive faculties are not involved. The event requires some conceptualization of the experience of injury—which draws on

²³² Aristotle, *De an.* 3.9.432b26–433a1 and *Mot. an.* 11.703b–11.

²³³ Galen, *PHP* 4.7.16–17.

²³⁴ See Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 449a: here Zeno and Chrysippus are in all probability implicated as those who claim that “tremblings and changes of colour” need not be indications of fear but of a “troubling,” and that tears are not evidence of grief but only of a “biting.” In *Tusc.* 3.82–83, Cicero, following Chrysippus, explains that the wise person is not susceptible to grief, but allows that a lesser response which he terms “the sting and certain minor symptoms of shrinking” (*morsus tamen et contractiunculae quaedam*) is natural to the wise, and can occur with regularity.

²³⁵ Seneca, *Ira* 2.1.3–5.

²³⁶ Seneca, *Ira* 2.1.4–5.

a sophisticated array of concepts such as personhood, intention, and fairness.²³⁷ That Seneca conceives of this prior event in rational terms is further confirmed by the extensive listing of examples of such events that he furnishes, to demonstrate how fully articulate thoughts can come about without meeting the condition of voluntariness.²³⁸ However, such prior events are not passions:

None of these things which move the mind through the agency of chance should be called passions (*adfectus*); the mind suffers them, rather than causes them. Passion, consequently, does not consist in being moved by the impressions that are presented to the mind, but in surrendering to these and following up such chance prompting. (*Ira* 2.3.1–2)

For Seneca, anger has not occurred unless the person judges that a certain response is appropriate for oneself, and chooses to act upon this response:

Anger must not only be aroused but must rush forth, for it is an active impulse; but an active impulse never comes without the consent of the will, for it is impossible for a man to aim at revenge and punishment without the cognizance of the mind. A man thinks himself injured, wishes to take vengeance, but dissuaded by some consideration immediately calms down. This I do not call anger, this prompting of the mind which is submissive to reason; anger is that which overleaps reason and sweeps it away. Therefore that primary disturbance of the mind which is excited by the impression of injury is no more anger than the impression of injury is itself anger; the active impulse consequent upon it, which has not only admitted the impression of injury but also approved it, is really anger—the tumult of a mind proceeding to revenge by choice and determination. (*Ira* 2.3.4–5)

Clearly, Seneca does not regard the unassented feelings of which he speaks as passions.²³⁹ As such, these feelings are not only non-culpable experiences, but perfectly normal—and indeed, expected—ones in even the wise person.²⁴⁰

Seneca's discussion coheres substantially with what Stoic-influenced authors in Alexandria wrote about *propatheiai* or “pre-passions”: involuntary feelings that were not to be seen as passions because assent did not accompany the relevant impression. The Alexandrian *propatheiai* tradition appears quite early, in the commentaries of Philo, and finds fuller expression later in the exegetical writings of Origen and others.²⁴¹ The

²³⁷ Graver, *Stoicism*, 94–95.

²³⁸ Seneca, *Ira* 2.2.1–2.3.3. Here he gives twenty-six highly varied scenarios which range from what would seem to be crude reflex actions (e.g. recoiling from certain types of touch) to responses that require more complex mental processing (e.g. boiling up when others are fighting, or having certain feelings when reading of past events, such as Sulla's proscriptions or Hannibal's siege after the battle of Cannae).
²³⁹ Seneca's term for them is *principia proluentia adfectibus* (“beginnings preliminary to passion”).

²⁴⁰ Seneca, *Ira* 2.2.1–3. Elsewhere, Seneca discusses various types of involuntary affects that arise in the wise; for him these unassented feelings are “natural” and reflect nature's intentions for human psychology (see *Ep.* 11.1–2; 57.4–5; 71.29). In *Marc.* 7 Seneca pursues this idea of “natural” affect and argues that it is natural to miss a family member not only in bereavement but in separation; for him it is “inevitable” that such partings bring about “a biting and a contraction of even the stoutest minds.”

²⁴¹ The term is used by Origen, Jerome, and other Christian writers; see M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung*, 2 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1947), 1.307–308; 2.154.

correspondences in the views of the authors in Rome and in Alexandria concerning unassented feelings suggest clearly the influence of a common source: authoritative material from the early Stoics, whose precise formulations had been lost. The points of similarity include the involuntary nature of such feelings, their dependence on rational impression, and their continued occurrence in the wise.²⁴²

Though their theological commitments were markedly different, the writers at Alexandria shared with the Stoics a strong interest in providing a description of the perfection of human nature. For Philo and the Christian writers, Abraham and the incarnate Christ respectively were the prime exemplars of virtue; however, as the passions were thought to arise from an irrational valuation of external objects, passages of Scripture that seemed to attribute such emotions to these exemplar figures were of particular concern. The concept of the *propatheiai* was sometimes pressed into service to help resolve this difficulty.²⁴³ One clear instance occurs in Philo's comments on his quotation of Gen. 23.2 ("Abraham came to bewail Sarah and to mourn"); here Philo opines that Scripture, which informs the reader that Abraham came to mourn Sarah, does not represent him as finally doing so.

But excellently and carefully does [Scripture] show that the virtuous man did not resort to wailing or mourning but only came there for some such thing. For things that unexpectedly and against his will strike the pusillanimous man weaken, crush and overthrow him, whereas everywhere they merely bow down the man of constancy when they direct their blows against him, and not in such a way as to bring [their work] to completion, since they are strongly repelled by the guiding reason, and retreat. (Philo, *QG* 4.73)

To be sure, Abraham is "struck" by "things," namely, impressions that represent his circumstances as evil; however, the equanimity that ensues from his "constancy" and state of rationality means that he does not give in to grief, but is only "bowed down" for the moment. For Philo, though Abraham experiences involuntary feelings akin to grief, his virtuous state is not compromised by the appearance of any passion.²⁴⁴

To summarize: the concept of the *propatheiai* allowed the Stoics and those influenced by them to accommodate within their overall theoretical framework for human psychology those affective reactions that were beyond the voluntary control of the agent, and therefore not to be construed as passions.²⁴⁵ According to Seneca, these "first movements" (*primi motus*) cannot be overcome by reason, "although perchance

²⁴² See Graver, *Stoicism*, 102.

²⁴³ Graver, *Stoicism*, 102–108.

²⁴⁴ See also Margaret R. Graver, "Philo of Alexandria and the Origins of the Stoic *Προπάθειαι*," *Phronesis* 44 (1999): 306–307.

²⁴⁵ Inwood, *Ethics*, 174–180; Sorabji, *Emotion*, 66–75.

practice and constant watchfulness will weaken them.”²⁴⁶ The Roman anthologist Aulus Gellius tells the story of an impending shipwreck that some people were facing. In such a terrifying situation, it was entirely natural for even the wise person to be beset by uncontrollable feelings and physical sensations—“certain swift and unconsidered motions which forestall the action of the intellect and reason.” However, by withholding assent from any occurrent impressions, he “rejects and repudiates them, and sees in them nothing to cause him fear.” Though “his colour and expression have changed for a brief moment,” he “keeps the even tenor and strength of the opinion which he has always had about mental impressions of this kind.”²⁴⁷

2.3.3.d. “Moral Emotions”

There is a fourth category of emotions that our Stoic sources seem to reveal. In an often-recounted story, the young man Alcibiades comes to a realization of his errors when they are revealed to him by his teacher, Socrates. Alcibiades is deeply remorseful, and implores him for help in amending his life.²⁴⁸ Alcibiades’ emotional turmoil is precipitated by his acknowledgement of the presence of a genuine evil, namely his own vices, not some external object. His response problematizes the supposition that every passion is constituted by a false judgement that an external object is good or evil. Indeed, the anecdote undermines simultaneously the assumptions for three of the four passions: for in addition to the grief that Alcibiades experiences for his present vice, he feels also a desire for his future virtue and a fear for his future vice.²⁴⁹

We have already seen that the four generic passions are concerned with external goods, while the *eupatheiai* have their basis in genuine goods, i.e. virtue and vice. However, the experience of Alcibiades resists this classification: while it resembles the *eupatheia* because of the type of object with which it is correlated, it is not the response of the wise person, who could not experience any feelings of moral inadequacy.²⁵⁰ Yet even those who are non-wise, like Alcibiades, can respond emotionally to integral

²⁴⁶ Seneca, *Ira* 2.4.1–2.

²⁴⁷ Aulus Gellius, *Noct. att.* 19.1.17–20 (=Epictetus fr. 9, part).

²⁴⁸ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.77–78; the portrait of Alcibiades appears also in several other sources, e.g. Plato, *Symp.* 215e–216c and *Alc.* 118b–c, 127d; Plutarch, *Alc.* 4. Dialogues named *Alcibiades* were written also by the Socratic philosophers Antisthenes, Euclides, and Phaedo of Elis.

²⁴⁹ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.77. The remaining passion, delight, cannot be veridically orientated, as the other three can be, for the same sort of reason that there is no fourth *eupatheia*: if someone is delighted by the true belief that something good is present to them, then it must indeed be so—but this means that they must be a sage, who cannot have any sort of passion; see Brennan, “Stoic Theory,” 51.

²⁵⁰ Graver, *Stoicism*, 192.

objects that are features of one’s own character. That such responses—remorse over one’s vices, the desire for moral improvement, and the fear of future errors—were considered by the Stoics to be bona fide psychological events is shown by Chrysippus’ and Cicero’s inclusion of them among the phenomena to be considered by a theory of consolation, and Seneca’s and Epictetus’ use of them in ethical therapy.²⁵¹

In modern psychology, the term “moral emotions” is often used to designate this category of affective response.²⁵² However, the Stoic authors did not use such a catch-all term. Instead, they referred to specific responses, e.g. *μεταμέλεια* or remorse, which Stobaeus defines as “distress over things that have been done, that they were done in error by oneself.”²⁵³ The ordinary, non-wise person, who constantly did things badly, would be expected to experience remorse with much frequency.²⁵⁴ A genus grid of such a person’s set of affective responses—not towards external objects as with the standard passions, but towards genuine goods or evils as with the *eupatheiai*—would, like the *eupatheiai*, result in three genera, with remorse instead of joy being the pre-eminent one²⁵⁵ (see Table 4).

	<i>present</i>	<i>in prospect</i>
<i>good</i>	N.A.	Desire for improvement
<i>evil</i>	Remorse	Fear of future error

Table 4. The “Moral Emotions.”

The Stoics clearly believed that the responses described for Alcibiades are true to life, since even those who are unwise may respond emotionally to integral objects. It certainly seems possible that such a person’s responses are at least sometimes generated

²⁵¹ Graver, *Stoicism*, 192. See e.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.76; 4.60–62; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.23.27–38; Seneca, *Tranq.* 1.1–17.

²⁵² See Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Julia Price Tangney, Jeff Stuewig, and Debra J. Mashek, “Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 58 (2007): 345–372.

²⁵³ Stobaeus 2.102.25–26 (my translation).

²⁵⁴ Stobaeus 2.102.23–25.

²⁵⁵ Graver, *Stoicism*, 195.

on the basis of true beliefs; if so they have the status of *καθήκοντα*, or the ordinary person's appropriate actions—the same status as other actions that are premised on true beliefs about appropriateness.²⁵⁶ Thus it seems that we have good cause to believe that the “moral emotions” fall within Stoic parameters for acceptable affective responses to integral goods and evils.²⁵⁷ As long as one's subjective states of feeling are not associated with any falsehood or inconsistency, there is no reason why the experience of them should be deleterious to the Stoic goal of rational perfection.

With this, we complete our survey of the Stoic theory of emotion, situating it within its wider philosophical context. We now turn to the question of how the Stoics treated the problem of emotions that had run out of control.

2.4. The Stoic Therapy of Emotion

2.4.1. Reason, Nature, and *Oikeiōsis*

We have already seen how the Stoics saw the perfection of reason in accordance with nature, which was virtue, as the greatest good for a person. Not surprisingly, the bedrock of Stoic thinking about emotional therapy was an unyielding belief in the dignity of human reason. This belief stems from how nature is regarded as the ultimate source of everything that has value, such that the value of anything else in the world, like reason, depends upon its relationship to universal nature. Agreement with nature denotes positive value, and contrariness to nature the opposite.²⁵⁸

For the Stoics, reason is not just the foundational element of what makes us human, but also, crucially, something that is fully within one's own power to cultivate and control. The attainment of rational understanding did not require any help from without, divine or otherwise; indeed, as Seneca tells Lucilius:

it is foolish to pray for this when you can acquire it for yourself . . . God is near you, he is with you, he is within you. This is what I mean, Lucilius: a holy spirit

²⁵⁶ The starting point of appropriate acts is reason; appropriate actions are defined as “all those which reason prevails with us to do,” with inappropriate actions defined the opposite way; Diogenes Laertius 7.108–109; see also Stobaeus 2.85.12–86.4.

²⁵⁷ Graver, *Stoicism*, 210–211.

²⁵⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.88. For discussion see further Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Discovering the Good: *Oikeiōsis* and *Kathēkonta* in Stoic Ethics,” in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*, ed. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 145–183; Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 179–184; Anthony A. Long, “The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics,” in *Stoic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 134–155.

indwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian.
As we treat this spirit, so are we treated by it. (*Ep.* 41.1–2)²⁵⁹

Martha Nussbaum observes that this is not at all an atheist view: reasoning is not only divine internally in the human being, but his piece of the divinity that inhabits the whole framework of the universe. Yet it is certainly a rationalist view that repudiates the subservience to external anthropomorphic and capricious divinities that were a central feature of conventional Roman religion.²⁶⁰ At a fundamental level, reason goes hand in hand with the practical choices and decisions that one makes; for the Stoics, the power of choice wholly resides within the human person. Epictetus thus asserts:

Consider who you are. To begin with, a man; that is, one who has no quality more sovereign than moral choice (*προαίρεσις*), but keeps everything subordinate to it, and this moral choice itself free from slavery and subjection. (*Diatr.* 2.10.1–2)²⁶¹

Underlying all this was the belief that human beings were predisposed to living rationally in the first place, although it was a process of natural development—a process that the Stoics termed *oikeiōsis*. The basic idea was that humans, and indeed all animals, possessed a fundamental orientation towards what was best for themselves, towards what was truly good. It was the human person's natural inclination to preserve and take care of the things that it saw as belonging to it.²⁶² There were two dimensions of *oikeiōsis*: the personal,²⁶³ and the social.²⁶⁴ A young infant had an initial natural bent towards self-preservation,²⁶⁵ but between infancy and adulthood were distinct stages of rational development in which nature sanctioned modes of thinking and behaviour that changed a creature whose responses were purely animal-like and reflexive into an adult fully endowed with reason.²⁶⁶ In parallel with increasing maturity came also a natural extending of that *oikeiōsis* to the people around oneself, beginning with one's children, and moving in ever-widening circles to encompass all of one's social sphere and beyond.²⁶⁷ *Oikeiōsis* can therefore be understood as a sort of continuum: at one end is

²⁵⁹ The “holy spirit” which Seneca speaks of is equated with God; Seneca, like his Stoic predecessors, identifies God with the material universe: “All of this universe which encompasses us is one, and it is God; we are associates of God; we are his members” (*Ep.* 92.30).

²⁶⁰ Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 326.

²⁶¹ See also Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.1.12–13. On *προαίρεσις* see section 2.5.1.c.

²⁶² In Diogenes Laertius 7.85–86 (=LS 57A), Chrysippus uses the notion of “appropriation” (*οικείωσις*) to frame the connections between nature's constitution of animals, their inherent impulses, and their innate ability to respond discriminately to their external environment. For Sandbach: “*Oikeiōsis* is then the process of making a thing belong, and this is achieved by the recognition that the thing is *oikeion*, that it belongs to you, that it is yours”; *Stoics*, 32.

²⁶³ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.17–21.

²⁶⁴ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.62–68.

²⁶⁵ Cicero describes this as preserving “oneself in one's constitution” (*Fin.* 3.20).

²⁶⁶ Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 187–188, referring to Cicero, *Fin.* 3.20–21; see also Seneca, *Ep.* 121.

²⁶⁷ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.62–68.

the instinctive self-preservation of a young infant, at the other, the outward-looking disposition and sociability of a rational adult (the so-called “social *oikeiōsis*”²⁶⁸), who is “designed by nature to safeguard and protect his fellows.”²⁶⁹ As we might expect, this normative account of the development of human nature is grounded completely in a singular commitment to a fully reasoned way of life.

It is on the basis of *oikeiōsis* that Epictetus poses this rhetorical question:

who has come into being without an innate concept of what is good and evil, honourable and base, appropriate and inappropriate, and happiness, and of what is proper and falls to our lot, and what we ought to do and what we ought not to do? (*Diatr.* 2.11.3–4)

Epictetus goes on to insist that the task is to cultivate that which nature has already endowed one with, and also to apply what one knows to one’s circumstances.²⁷⁰ For him, one’s innermost moral intuitions could serve as a worthy guide to those things in the universe that were truly good.

2.4.2. Philosophy as Therapy

The ideals outlined above—that life in accordance with nature and reason is man’s chief end, and that the power of reason can be nurtured through the proper exercise of choice—are key aspects of Stoic teaching that underscore how philosophy was seen to have inherent practical value in everyday life. Seneca commends Lucilius for his diligence in his studies and implores him to keep at it, for the point of philosophical study is that “you make it each day your endeavour to become a better man.”²⁷¹ There were at least two results that would accrue to those who diligently pursued philosophical study. At the societal level, since “the first thing which philosophy undertakes to give is fellow-feeling with all men; in other words, sympathy and sociability,” there would be greater understanding of, and increased admiration for, the philosopher’s mien and behaviour from the people whom he was trying to improve.²⁷² At a personal level, philosophy

²⁶⁸ E.g. Brad Inwood, “Comments on Professor Görgemanns’ Paper: The Two Forms of *Oikeiōsis* in Arius and the Stoa,” in *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus*, ed. W. W. Fortenbaugh (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983), 193.

²⁶⁹ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.68. For detailed discussion on *oikeiōsis* see Gisela Striker, “The Role of *Oikeiōsis* in Stoic Ethics,” *OSAP* 1 (1983): 145–167; Engberg-Pedersen, *Oikeiōsis*, 64–100; Annas, *Happiness*, 262–276; Gretchen Reydams-Schils, “Human Bonding and *Oikeiōsis* in Roman Stoicism,” *OSAP* 22 (2002): 221–251.

²⁷⁰ *Diatr.* 2.11.4–18.

²⁷¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 5.1.

²⁷² Seneca, *Ep.* 5.1–6; quote from 5.4.

moulds and constructs the soul; it orders our life; guides our conduct, shows us what we should do and what we should leave undone; it sits at the helm and directs our course as we waver amid uncertainties. (Seneca, *Ep.* 16.3)

The point is that philosophical study was thought to bring tremendous practical benefit to humanity; this produced an obligation to extend to all the advantages of such an education.²⁷³ The Stoics therefore paid careful attention to such matters as rhetoric and the literary aspects of their teachings, aiming not at philosophical jargon that would appeal only to a small elite, but for maximum reach across a general audience.²⁷⁴

For philosophical study to be effective, there had to be regular self-scrutiny. Living actively in conformity with one's reason, instead of being passively dominated by wrong thinking and habitual dispositions, required constant watchfulness and perseverance.²⁷⁵ Indeed, the most general strategy of Stoic therapy was that one had to be aware of how one saw one's circumstances—a priority that Epictetus frequently expressed in his cardinal rule of life: “making use of impressions.”²⁷⁶ Hence the task of philosophy was to prompt rigorous and sustained reflection that would enable one to take charge of one's own thinking.²⁷⁷ It was the goal of the teacher of philosophy to facilitate this process. Like a physician, the teacher's role was complex; it involved exacting work with the pupil:

Just as it is appropriate for the [physician] of the body to be “inside,” as they say, the affections that befall the body and the therapeutic treatment that is proper to each, so it is the task of the physician of the soul to be “inside” both of these, and in the best possible way. (Galen, *PHP* 5.2.23–24=*SVF* 3.471, citing Chrysippus [trans. Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 328–329])

Some brief comments should be made regarding the media through which philosophical therapy was to be applied. According to Seneca, personal interaction and conversation provided the greatest benefit, because “it creeps by degrees into the soul.”²⁷⁸ Public fora were not as effective: “Lectures prepared beforehand and spouted in the presence of a throng have in them more noise but less intimacy. Philosophy is good advice; and no one can give advice at the top of his lungs.”²⁷⁹ Written communication was generally inferior to personal communication; Epictetus certainly carried out his teaching in oral form—we have his pupil Flavius Arrian to thank for his

²⁷³ Seneca, *Ep.* 16.1.

²⁷⁴ See Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 330–332.

²⁷⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 16.1–3.

²⁷⁶ Long, *Epictetus*, 85, referring to Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.1.7; 1.3.4; 1.6.13; 1.7.33; 1.12.34; 1.20.15. Epictetus in *Diatr.* 3.22.19–22 also connects the priority of making one's *hēgemonikon* pure with the right use of one's impressions.

²⁷⁷ Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 328.

²⁷⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 38.1.

²⁷⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 38.1.

stenographic record of his teacher's *ipsissima verba*. Yet, in what is often regarded as the greatest showpiece of Stoic philosophical therapy in action, Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*, Seneca ingeniously creates within the written text an intimate dialogue between teacher and pupil that demonstrates to his readers how epistolary paraenesis could be carried out in a way that was effective and fruitful.²⁸⁰

2.4.3. The Case for Stoic Therapy

The most comprehensive description of the Stoic view of the passions is found in the third and fourth books of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, which have their basis in Chrysippus' understanding of the extirpation of the passions and the therapy of the soul. In Cicero's view, "souls which have been ready to be cured and have obeyed the instructions of wise men, are undoubtedly cured",²⁸¹ this was the central thrust of Chrysippian therapeutic thinking. In book four, after a survey of the Stoic classification and definitions of the passions, Cicero draws an analogy between physical and psychological ailments:

Just as when the blood is in a bad state or there is an overflow of phlegm or bile, bodily sickness and disease begin, so the disturbing effect of corrupt beliefs warring against one another robs the soul of health and introduces the disorder of disease. (Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.23)

In both cases, treatment was possible. In the case of mental distress, as Cicero enunciates,

there is an art of healing the soul—I mean philosophy, whose aid must be sought out, not, as in bodily diseases, outside ourselves, and we must use our utmost endeavour, with all our resources and strength, to have the power to be ourselves our own physicians. (Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.6)²⁸²

Indeed, without philosophical intervention, there was no cure.²⁸³ As such "diseases of the soul" were "both more dangerous and more numerous than those of the body,"²⁸⁴ the goal was not only to cut away the external manifestations of the passion, but to "tear out all the fibres of its roots."²⁸⁵ Cicero's vivid language emphasizes the Stoic ideal of the wise man as being completely free from passions of any sort.²⁸⁶ Enshrined in the *modus*

²⁸⁰ For an overview of letter-writing as a means of philosophical paraenesis, see Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, LEC 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 36–40.

²⁸¹ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.5.

²⁸² The use of the medical analogy in philosophical therapy, which is more highly developed in Stoicism than in the other Hellenistic schools, can be traced to Chrysippus (see Galen, *PHP* 5.2.22–24).

²⁸³ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.13.

²⁸⁴ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.5.

²⁸⁵ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.13, 83.

²⁸⁶ Diogenes Laertius 7.117.

operandi of Stoic philosophical therapy is thus a profound respect for the integrity of the reasoning abilities of every person.²⁸⁷ As such, the function of philosophical therapy is understood as that of strengthening the soul, or, as Nussbaum puts it, “developing its muscles, assisting it to use its own capabilities more effectively.”²⁸⁸

As we have seen, in the Stoic account of emotion, the judgements which give rise to the passions are based on one’s appraisals concerning whether something is good or bad, beneficial or baneful. These evaluations are all marked by the ascription of a high value to external objects, or things that do not fall under one’s control.²⁸⁹ Of paramount importance in Stoic therapy was therefore its insistence that the judgements with which the passions are identified are false, because externals are devoid of any intrinsic ethical value. Cicero is in agreement with the Stoics that as sick and irrational motions of the soul, the passions are injurious to the individual; in several places he provides rhetorical illustrations of the morbidity of irrational affective action,²⁹⁰ and contrasts such behaviour with the restraint, consistency, and serenity of the wise man.²⁹¹

The Stoics advanced several other arguments for their position. One that Cicero seems to have found compelling was that passions are never reliable motivations for virtuous action.²⁹² In fact, it is the person who is unable to resort to reason who resorts to impassioned modes of conduct; such a person is manifestly unwise.²⁹³ This notion of the non-necessity as well as counter-effectiveness of the passions is supported by a slippery slope argument: tiny motions of affect may seem innocuous, but they are actually irrational movements that quickly become ungovernable.²⁹⁴ In Cicero’s view, when an emotional judgement of any kind is repeated, the soul’s power of reasoning is progressively weakened, such that “it is impossible for a disordered and excited soul to

²⁸⁷ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.10.1–2.

²⁸⁸ Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 317–318, referring to Seneca, *Ep.* 15. See also Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.31.

²⁸⁹ Nussbaum observes that the evaluative beliefs on which the major passions rest “all embody a conception of the agent’s good according to which the good is not simply ‘at home’ inside of him, but consists, instead, in a complex web of connections between the agent and unstable worldly items such as loved ones, city, possessions, the conditions of action;” see *Therapy*, 370.

²⁹⁰ Speaking of anger, Cicero asks, “is there anything more like unsoundness of mind than anger? ... What share have change of colour, voice, eyes, breathing, ungovernableness of speech and act in soundness of mind?” (*Tusc.* 4.52; see also e.g. 4.35, 48).

²⁹¹ See e.g. Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.37.

²⁹² Cicero uses the example of bravery in battle, which “does not need the backing of irascibility” and “stands in no need of loss of temper” (*Tusc.* 4.53). See also Seneca, *Ira* 1.12.1–13.5, which concludes with Seneca’s argument that “[n]o man is ever made braver through anger, except the one who would never have been brave without anger. It comes, then, not as a help to virtue, but as a substitute for it.” (1.13.5)

²⁹³ Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.55.

²⁹⁴ Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 77.

control itself or stop where it wishes.”²⁹⁵ Furthermore, due to the interconnections between the passions, when one experiences an emotional upheaval of some sort, there is a ripple effect that brings about alterations in other emotional dispositions.²⁹⁶ Another argument concerns the intensely painful feelings that are associated with the experience of the passions. The Stoics point out that passions are felt, more often than not, as violent pains and upheavals; moreover, the person subject to them feels himself to be in a chronic condition of weakness and lassitude.²⁹⁷

It should be noted that Cicero’s analysis of the passions reflected his personal experience of them. He was grief-stricken by the death of his only daughter and first child, Tullia, and in book three of the *Tusculan Disputations* he summarises the rival approaches to consolation that he applied and wrote about in his lost *Consolatio*.

Some hold that the comforter has only one responsibility: to teach the sufferer that what happened is not an evil at all. This is the view of Cleanthes. Others, including the Peripatetics, would teach that it is not a great evil. Still others, for instance Epicurus, would draw attention away from evils and toward good things, and there are yet others who think it sufficient to show that nothing has happened contrary to expectation. And the list goes on. Chrysippus, for his part, holds that the key to consolation is to get rid of the person’s belief that mourning is something that he ought to do, something just and appropriate. Finally there are those who bring together all these types of consolation, since different methods work for different people. In my *Consolation*, for instance, I combined virtually all these methods into a single speech of consolation. For my mind was swollen, and I was trying out every remedy I could. (*Tusc.* 3.76 [Graver])

He continues:

The most dependable method as regards the validity of its reasoning is that of Chrysippus, but it is a hard method to apply in time of distress. It’s a big task to persuade a person that he is grieving by his own judgment and because he thinks he ought to. (*Tusc.* 3.79 [Graver])

Though Cicero prefers his own eclectic approach he endorses the Chrysippian approach as the one which best combines a sound theoretical basis with the possibility of success;²⁹⁸ Cicero sees it as superior because attention is placed not on the evaluation of an external object but on the assessment of the appropriateness of the emotional response itself; he confirms later that dealing with the emotions themselves as the

²⁹⁵ Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.38–42, quote from 41. There are similar arguments in Seneca, *Ep.* 85.6–16 and Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.1–14.

²⁹⁶ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.19–20. As Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 398, puts it: “The very same evaluations that ground one group of passions ground—given a change of circumstances or a different temporal perspective—the others as well.”

²⁹⁷ Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 392–394. She cites, by way of example, the description of the angry man in Seneca, *Ira* 1.1.3–5, and also notes that even the alleged positive emotions like joy and love are associated with a phenomenology of upheaval and disruption.

²⁹⁸ Graver, *Cicero*, 122. On Cicero’s views of the competing approaches, see Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 74.

starting point is didactically and therapeutically the most efficacious strategy.²⁹⁹ The Chrysippan approach helped the individual to recognize that an affective response incorporated a voluntary assent to the prescription that one should have such a response. It was then possible to demonstrate that such a response was neither fitting nor useful, and that it ensued in behavioural patterns that sabotaged the quest for true happiness.³⁰⁰

2.4.4. Stoic Therapy in Practice

Having reviewed the arguments in favour of the Stoic position, we can now outline the practicalities of their cognitive therapy. The arguments that were mounted against the passions and for an ideal of *apatheia* had a therapeutic function as a general orientation, but a focus on the concrete, and the use of instructive examples, together with an emphasis on understanding the background and circumstances of the individual, were also indispensable components of their approach.³⁰¹

A primary task of the teacher was to help his student to reach the goal of rational self-determination. This involved the creation of a space, internal to the pupil, for critical self-examination:

Make it, therefore, your study at the very outset to say to every harsh impression, “You are an external impression and not at all what you appear to be.” After that examine it and test it by these rules which you have, the first and foremost of which is this: Whether the impression has to do with the things which are under our control, or with those which are not under our control; and if it has to do with some one of the things not under our control, have ready to hand the answer, “It is nothing to me.” (Epictetus, *Ench.* 1.5)

Epictetus here shows his students how to deconstruct an external impression without recourse to an emotion-filled reading of it. Elsewhere, he also advises his pupils to reject bad impressions and replace them with good ones.³⁰² Alongside these strategies, he prescribes other practical exercises, such as putting key Stoic doctrines into action, participating in a range of life situations without affective reactions, and preparing for eventualities through careful premeditation.³⁰³ In addition, as we have observed, vituperation of the passions was part of the Stoic approach.

In Stoic teaching, the use of example figures is prominent. One reason had to do with motivation: portraits of exemplars helped the individual to see that conceptual

²⁹⁹ Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.60–62.

³⁰⁰ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.61–66.

³⁰¹ See Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 78; and esp. Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 335–341.

³⁰² Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.23–26.

³⁰³ See e.g. *Ench.* 4–5, 9–10; *Diatr.* 2.2.1–7; 2.13; 2.16; 3.3; 3.8.1–6.

notions of right thinking could have concrete expression.³⁰⁴ But as Nussbaum points out, the Stoics were concerned not only with getting the general content of an act right, but to promote fully virtuous acts. Since this was a highly contextual matter, general rules could not guarantee a correct result. Ultimately, what was needed was a strategy for rational assessment that would, in a specific scenario, show one “when he should do certain things, and to what extent, and in whose company, and how, and why” (Seneca, *Ep.* 95.5). Certainly, *exempla* had to be supplemented by philosophical explication, but they demonstrated as nothing else could what it was to think and act wisely.³⁰⁵

However, the success of the Stoic method depended also on the pupil’s practical response to the sorts of cognitive therapy outlined above. He had to take an active role in the introspective supervision of his own motivations, thoughts, and actions.³⁰⁶

Writing about anger, Seneca highlights the benefits of a regular self-appraisal of the quality of one’s actions and moral development:

Anger will cease and become more controllable if it finds that it must appear before a judge every day. Can anything be more excellent than this practice of thoroughly sifting the whole day? And how delightful the sleep that follows this self-examination—how tranquil it is, how deep and untroubled, when the soul has either praised or admonished itself, and when this secret examiner and critic of self has given report of its own character! (Seneca, *Ira* 3.36.2–3)³⁰⁷

Clearly, what is implied here is that regular self-examination leads to the betterment of one’s state, by reducing one’s proneness to unregulated emotional behaviour.³⁰⁸ At its heart, Stoic philosophy was not about the promulgation of abstract theory, but was a way of life that transformed the individual’s modes of seeing and being. Rigorous self-examination was integral to this process, because such a transformation required the reawakening of the mind’s powers of rational self-consciousness and active vigilance, and the discarding of old habits.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.79; 4.60.

³⁰⁵ See Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 339–340.

³⁰⁶ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.12; *Ench.* 33.

³⁰⁷ See also Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.18.12–18.

³⁰⁸ See also Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.12.6.

³⁰⁹ See further Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 340–341, and especially Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 83–86. Hadot notes that no systematic treatise codifying the instructions and techniques for what he terms “spiritual exercises” has come down to us; yet the presence of frequent allusions to them in Stoic writings suggests that they were very much part of the philosophical curriculum. However, we have Philo’s two lists of spiritual exercises (in *Alleg. Interp.* 3.18 and *Heir* 253), which provide us with a fairly complete panorama of Stoic-Platonic inspired therapeutics. Hadot aggregates the elements of the two lists into four groups of exercises: first, attention; then meditation and the remembrance of good things; then the more intellectual exercises of reading, listening, research, and investigation; and finally the more active exercises of self-mastery, accomplishment of duties, and indifference to externals.

2.5. The Early Roman Empire Stoics on Grief and Joy

We shall conclude our discussion with a focused examination of how the Stoics of the early Roman Empire, who were Paul's contemporaries, dealt with emotion. Our best sources are Seneca and Epictetus; and as Stoicism had by that time become an established doctrinal system, moral exhortation rather than matters of theory was their concern. Even if for the most part they confirm rather than add to our knowledge of Stoic theory, what they have to say furnishes us with invaluable information about what it meant to live as a committed Stoic. In order both to give our exploration precision and to facilitate the comparisons that we shall later make with Paul's views, our study will be limited to two key emotions: grief and joy. Given the theoretical consistency which frames and indeed finesses Stoicism, we can be assured that such a delimitation will not disadvantage our study; on the contrary, the use of specific foci will help us to appreciate how Stoic therapeutic concepts took on flesh and translated into real life practice.

2.5.1. Grief

2.5.1.a. Consolation in Antiquity

By the time of the late Republic and the early Roman Empire, the *consolatio*—a piece of writing which employed rational argument to combat grief and other misfortunes—had become a distinct genre with its own tropes.³¹⁰ A number of consolations have come down to us from this period, with the most common type being the consolatory letter, examples of which are found within the letter collections of Cicero, Seneca, and Pliny, and also among the letters of Apollonius of Tyana.³¹¹ In addition, six longer works are extant: three by Seneca, two by Plutarch, and one

³¹⁰ Useful general surveys of consolation in antiquity are Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories*, Patristic Monograph Series 3 (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 1–50; J. H. D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 15–33; Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy*, SNTSMS 112 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 55–83. The literary sources are collected by Carl Buresch, “Consolationum a Graecis Romanisque scriptarum historia critica,” *Leipziger Studien zur classischen Philologie* 9 (1886): 1–170. On the conceptual notion of a consolatory genre in antiquity, see J. H. D. Scourfield, “Towards a Genre of Consolation,” in *Greek and Roman Consolations: Eight Studies of a Tradition and Its Afterlife*, ed. Hans Baltussen (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2013), 1–36.

³¹¹ Cicero, *Fam.* 4.5; 5.16; 5.18, 6.3; *Att.* 12.10; 15.1; *Ep. Brut.* 1.9; Seneca, *Ep.* 63; 99 (some scholars include also *Ep.* 93); Pliny, *Ep.* 1.12; 3.21; 9.9; Apollonius of Tyana, *Ep.* 55; 58.

attributed to Plutarch.³¹² Quite clearly, the practice of consolation was by that time already widespread in the Greco-Roman world. Its origin dates to at least the eighth century BCE, because consolatory *topoi* are found as early as Homer³¹³; this means that consolation predates the rise of philosophy as a specialized branch of thought. However, it was not until the late fifth and early fourth centuries that the problem of grief began to be treated in a more systematic fashion—in writings that dealt with death and loss either explicitly or indirectly,³¹⁴ and in several treatises and other types of literature on topics that included consolatory aspects.³¹⁵

In subsequent centuries, two particularly influential works emerged. The most significant early treatise was the *Περὶ πένθους* of Crantor of Soli, the fourth century Academician, which was accorded a paradigmatic status by the many philosophers who took it as a model.³¹⁶ Of at least equal importance for later tradition was Cicero's aforementioned *Consolatio*, which was also influenced by Crantor's work.³¹⁷ C. E. Manning notes that the *consolatio* was a natural literary development of the Hellenistic Age, when the prime concern of philosophy was to equip the individual to meet the challenges of life, and that it became part of the armoury of all the major schools of philosophy.³¹⁸ Though the range of circumstances that consolers addressed was very broad,³¹⁹ bereavement was the most prevalent subject matter.³²⁰ Greco-Roman letters of consolation contained traditional materials such as quotations from the poets, examples, precepts, and arguments against excessive grieving.³²¹ The content of these arguments

³¹² Seneca, *Helv.*, *Marc.*, *Polyb.*; Plutarch, *Exil.*, *Cons. ux.*; Ps-Plutarch, *Cons. Apoll.*

³¹³ E.g. in *Il.* 6.486–489, where Hector attempts to comfort Andromache by appealing to the inevitability of fate, or in *Il.* 24.522–551, where Achilles stresses to Priam that grief is pointless.

³¹⁴ From doxographical tradition we learn that death and bereavement were the focus of most of these early writings (see e.g. Diogenes Laertius 4.11; 6.15; 6.80; 9.46) but topics such as poverty and exile were also given attention (e.g. Diogenes Laertius 2.84; 5.42; 9.20).

³¹⁵ These include the *Περὶ εὐθυμίας* of Democritus (Diogenes Laertius 9.46) and Hipparchus (Stobaeus 4.44.81), and the *Περὶ παθῶν* of Theophrastus (Diogenes Laertius 5.42), Xenocrates (Diogenes Laertius 4.11), Zeno (Diogenes Laertius 7.4), Herillus (Diogenes Laertius 7.166), Sphaerus (Diogenes Laertius 7.178), Chrysippus (Diogenes Laertius 7.111), and Hecastus (Diogenes Laertius 7.110).

³¹⁶ See Cicero, *Acad.* 2.135; Diogenes Laertius 4.27; and also Fitzgerald, "Introduction," 9–10. Only fragments remain; for details see Holloway, *Consolation*, 58 n.20.

³¹⁷ This too has been lost, but much of its substance is preserved in *Tusc.* books 1 and 3. Cicero refers to his *Consolatio* at *Tusc.* 1.65, 76, 83; 3.70, 76; 4.63.

³¹⁸ C. E. Manning, *On Seneca's "Ad Marciam,"* Mnemosyne Supplement 69 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 12.

³¹⁹ Cicero in *Tusc.* 3.81 names specific situations such as "*de paupertate ... de vita inhonorata et ingloria ... de exsilio, de interitu patriae, de servitute, de debilitate, de caecitate, de omni casu, in quo nomen poni solet calamitatis.*"

³²⁰ It forms the subject-matter of the following extant prose *consolationes* from the period of the early Roman Empire: Cicero, *Fam.* 4.5; 5.16; 6.3; *Att.* 12.10; 15.1; *Ep. Brut.* 1.9; Seneca, *Marc.*; *Polyb.*; *Ep.* 63; 99; Plutarch, *Cons. Ux.*; Ps-Plutarch, *Cons. Apoll.*

³²¹ Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 142.

tended towards the philosophical commonplace, with platitudes of general application such as would find ready acceptance with the bereaved.³²² To be sure, each major school of philosophy developed its own distinctive position in regard to comforting the grieving person;³²³ but consolations of the period often displayed a studied eclecticism in which school lines were regularly crossed.

2.5.1.b. Seneca on Grief

In their approach to the treatment of grief, Seneca's consolatory writings share many similarities with Greco-Roman letters of consolation in general.³²⁴ Seneca freely utilizes several ideologically neutral stock arguments: e.g., that death is inevitable;³²⁵ that the intensity of grief diminishes over time;³²⁶ and that death delivers from present and future misfortunes.³²⁷ To these we may add standard exhortations to responsible behaviour: two common ones were not to neglect one's familial or public duties, and not to complain against God or fate.³²⁸ As with philosophical paraenesis generally, the use of exemplars featured prominently in ancient consolation.³²⁹ In addition, Seneca valorizes rigorous philosophical study: "encircle yourself with them as bulwarks for your mind in order that sorrow may find no point that will give entrance to you."³³⁰

These platitudes are accompanied by other arguments that come from a range of philosophical traditions, giving ancient consolation its characteristically eclectic quality while at the same time reinforcing its intensely practical goal.³³¹ At several places in his

³²² Margaret R. Graver, "The Weeping Wise: Stoic and Epicurean Consolations in Seneca's 99th Epistle," in *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Thorsten Fögen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 235.

³²³ Cicero in his *Consolatio* identifies five major theories of consolation: those of Cleanthes, the Peripatetics, the Epicureans, the Cyreniacs, and Chrysippus (*Tusc.* 3.76); for a concise summary see Holloway, *Consolation*, 64–74.

³²⁴ Five of Seneca's texts are conventionally referred to as coming within the ambit of consolatory literature: *Marc.*; *Polyb.*; *Helv.*; *Ep.* 63; and *Ep.* 99. On the construction of a Senecan consolatory corpus see Marcus Wilson, "Seneca the Consoler? A New Reading of His Consolatory Writings," in *Greek and Roman Consolations: Eight Studies of a Tradition and Its Afterlife*, ed. Hans Baltussen (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2013), 94–95.

³²⁵ *Marc.* 11; 17.1; *Polyb.* 1.4; *Ep.* 99.7–9.

³²⁶ *Marc.* 8.1–2; *Ep.* 63.12.

³²⁷ *Marc.* 19.4–5; 20.6; 22.1–2; *Polyb.* 9.4–5.

³²⁸ See Holloway, *Consolation*, 64–65, citing *Polyb.* 5.4–6.5; *Helv.* 18.7–8 (on fulfilling familial and public duties); and *Marc.* 10.2; *Polyb.* 2.2; 4.1 (on not complaining).

³²⁹ *Marc.* 2.1–4.4; *Polyb.* 14.1–16.3; 17.1–6;

³³⁰ *Polyb.* 18.1–2. See also *Helv.* 17.2–5, where Seneca argues that philosophical study helps one to bring an end to grief, for "the grief that has submitted to reason is allayed for ever" (17.2).

³³¹ As Scott LaBarge observes: "One of the most interesting things about the ancient literature of consolation is the range of distinct philosophical schools and traditions represented in it, but more interesting still is how schools that are so divergent in other ways seem largely to have converged in their treatment of grief. The consensus view is that grief should be indulged as little as possible, and many

consolations, Seneca promotes Epicurean therapy by steering the grieving person's mind away from his or her present misfortunes towards more pleasurable experiences, such as good recollections of the past³³² and thoughts of family, books and reading, and Caesar³³³—all of which should help to compensate for any present misfortune. He also modifies this Epicurean approach by connecting the making of pleasant memories to discourse on the virtues of the diseased person.³³⁴ Elsewhere, Seneca endorses the Cyreniac strategy of contemplating possible future evils in order to lessen the shock of any sudden calamity.³³⁵ Initially associated with the Cyreniacs, in a slightly less bald form it was adopted by the Stoics who from the time of Chrysippus maintained that foreseen evils strike more lightly.³³⁶ More explicitly Chrysippian influences are found in Seneca's arguments against the appropriateness of grief. Scattered across his letters is the charge that grieving is useless, and accomplishes nothing whether for oneself or the person for whom one mourns.³³⁷ Moreover, since grief is inherently irrational, it is always beneath human dignity.³³⁸ These arguments appear together with another distinctively Stoic notion: that false opinion has a key role in fuelling one's irrational grief. Seneca writes, "what tortures us, therefore, is an opinion (*opinio*), and every evil is only as great as we have reckoned it to be."³³⁹

thought that ideally we should not grieve at all." Scott LaBarge, "How (and Maybe Why) to Grieve Like an Ancient Philosopher," in *Virtue and Happiness: Essays in Honour of Julia Annas*, ed. Rachana Kamtekar, OSAP, Supplementary Vol. 2012 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 323. LaBarge however does not discuss *why* there was a convergence of views.

C. E. Manning suggests, quite plausibly, that the historical context in which Seneca was writing was one in which philosophers and rhetoricians were openly disputing which form of advanced education was most beneficial. It was therefore natural for Seneca and others to avoid dogmatic writing that might result in philosophy being dismissed as useless. Instead of giving an exposition of his own views, "[s]uch a teacher must aim to create the right disposition to receive the doctrine; he must lead gently from common ground to his own position"; "The Consolatory Tradition and Seneca's Attitude to the Emotions," *Greece and Rome* 21 (1974): 73–74; see also 78–79.

³³² One could be thankful that the person lived at all, "for it is better to have blessings that will flee than none at all" (*Marc.* 12.1–3, quote from 3); see also *Polyb.* 10; *Ep.* 99.4–5.

³³³ *Helv.* 18–19; *Polyb.* 8; 12–13.

³³⁴ *Marc.* 24.1–4; *Polyb.* 18.7–8. On Epicurean consolatory theory, see Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.33, 76; Manning, "Consolatory Tradition," 79–81; Manning, *Marciam*, 47–48; more generally, see Nussbaum, *Therapy*, 102–139; Malte Hossenfelder, "Epicurus—Hedonist Malgré Lui," in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*, ed. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 245–263.

³³⁵ *Marc.* 9–10; *Helv.* 5.3. On Cyreniac thinking see Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.28, 52, 76; Manning, *Marciam*, 60.

³³⁶ Manning, *Marciam*, 60, citing Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.52.

³³⁷ *Marc.* 6.1–2; *Polyb.* 2.1; 5.1–3; 9.1–3; *Ep.* 99.4; see also Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.66–67.

³³⁸ Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.59. The argument that grief is inappropriate and unworthy often takes the form of short asides that misfortune should be borne with manly courage: see *Marc.* 1.1; 7.3; *Polyb.* 6.2; *Ep.* 99.1–2.

³³⁹ *Marc.* 19.1; see also 7.1: "false opinion has added something more to our grief than Nature has prescribed."

Does Seneca advocate the complete rooting out of one's emotions of grief (*apatheia*), or their moderation (*metriopatheia*)?³⁴⁰ In several places, Seneca evidently admits that to grieve is both natural and reflexive. However, he also insists that due confines must be placed on one's grieving. Addressing Marcia, who after three years was still mourning her son, Seneca writes,

“But,” you say, “Nature bids us grieve for our dear ones.” Who denies it, so long as grief is tempered? For not only the loss of those who are dearest to us, but a mere parting, brings an inevitable pang and wrings even the stoutest heart. (*Marc.* 7.1–2)

The same views are found in Seneca's consolation to Polybius upon the death of his brother. Referring to the sorrow and weeping which constantly intrude upon human life, he tells Polybius,

Thus we spend our lives, and therefore we ought to do in moderation this thing that we must do so often; and as we look back upon the great mass of sorrows that threatens us behind we ought, if not to end our tears, yet at any rate to keep watch over them. (*Polyb.* 4.3)

Seneca's approval of moderate grief is confirmed when he discloses to Polybius that “nature requires from us some sorrow ... But never will I demand of you that you should not grieve at all.”³⁴¹ Moreover, it is the proper application of reason to one's grief that is effective in curtailing its excessiveness.³⁴²

In the *consolationes*, Seneca comes across as a defender of *metriopatheia*. Yet in his letters to Lucilius, which were written later,³⁴³ his views become more nuanced. At the beginning of *Ep.* 63, Seneca tells his pupil:

I am grieved to hear that your friend Flaccus is dead, but would not have you sorrow more than is fitting. That you should not mourn at all I shall hardly dare to insist; yet I know that it is the better way. (*Ep.* 63.1)

That for Seneca the expunction of grief is “the better way” is substantiated by the revelation later of his regret at weeping excessively, to the point of being “overcome

³⁴⁰ “Moderate emotion” (*μετριοπάθεια*), a view often taken to be Peripatetic or Old Academic, is discussed by Cicero in *Tusc.* 3.22; 3.74; *Acad. pr.* 2.135 (where it is attributed to Crantor, whose views were taken to be the same as Aristotle's). For its approval see Ps.-Plutarch, *Cons. Apoll.* 102d (quoting Crantor); for Stoic objections see *Tusc.* 4.38–47 with Graver, *Cicero*, 163–165.

³⁴¹ *Polyb.* 18.4–5. See also *Marc.* 3.3.

³⁴² *Polyb.* 18.6–7: “Reason will have accomplished enough if only she removes from grief whatever is excessive and superfluous; it is not for anyone to hope or to desire that she should suffer us to feel no sorrow at all. Rather let us maintain a mean which will copy neither indifference nor madness, and will keep us in the state that is the mark of an affectionate, and not an unbalanced, mind. Let your tears flow, but also let them cease, let deepest sighs be drawn from your breast, but let them also find an end; so rule your mind that you may win approval both from wise men and from brothers.”

³⁴³ Miriam Griffin dates the three *consolationes* to 39–49 CE, the *Epistulae Morales* to 64–65 CE; see her *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 349–350, 395–400, 518.

with grief,” when his friend Serenus died.³⁴⁴ Seneca thus acknowledges that his own sorrow had been beyond his ability to quell; subsequently, he—using, twice, in the final section the jussive subjunctive verb form (*cogitemus*, “let us think”)³⁴⁵—casts himself in the role of the patient, as he often does in the *Epistulae*.³⁴⁶ However, Seneca’s uncompromising stance is then immediately tempered by his concession that tears are forgivable if they remain within one’s power to control them (*si ipsi illas repressimus*). He therefore adjures Lucilius to exercise self-control in the midst of grief: “Let not the eyes be dry when we have lost a friend, nor let them overflow. We may weep, but we must not wail.”³⁴⁷ Seneca is in *Ep.* 63 still giving some leeway to grief exercised under restraint, but he also seems to want to highlight the danger of allowing that grief to descend into unappeasable sorrow—a state to which he had succumbed against his better wishes.

Appearing as a long enclosure within *Ep.* 99 is Seneca’s letter to Marullus, which is the last and also least conventional of his consolations.³⁴⁸ Here, Seneca’s doctrinal commitments are foregrounded by his argument that a life of virtue, one that is circumscribed by natural rationality, is wholly incompatible with the expressions of emotion that are properly called grief. Consolatory arguments from tradition continue to be pressed into service, but in more restricted fashion. In accordance with Stoic principles, Seneca now explicitly contends that Marullus, despite the death of his son, has not suffered any real evil that justifies his grief. In contrast with the hypothetical case of the wise man who despite losing an intimate friend (which for the Romans was “the greatest blow of all”) still finds joy because of the privilege of having had that friendship, the death of a child is an illusory evil—one of those “shadowy troubles over which men make moan through force of habit.”³⁴⁹ He chides Marullus for his false belief that death is inherently evil,³⁵⁰ and for conforming to societal norms of mourning

³⁴⁴ *Ep.* 63.14.

³⁴⁵ *Ep.* 63.15–16.

³⁴⁶ See Marcus Wilson, “The Subjugation of Grief in Seneca’s ‘Epistles,’” in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, ed. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 49. On Seneca’s self-identification as a fellow patient, see e.g. *Ep.* 27.1; 68.9.

³⁴⁷ *Ep.* 63.1. We should note that Seneca continues to use therapeutic arguments from a range of schools, e.g. Chrysippus (63.3), the Epicureans (63.4–7), and the Cyreniacs (63.15); for details see Manning, “Consolatory Tradition,” 78.

³⁴⁸ A fact which Seneca himself admits: “I have not observed the usual form of condolence”; *Ep.* 99.1. For a detailed literary analysis of *Ep.* 99 see Wilson, “Subjugation of Grief,” 48–67.

³⁴⁹ *Ep.* 99.3.

³⁵⁰ *Ep.* 99.7–13. See also *Ep.* 74, which concerns virtuous living: in 74.24–26 and 30–31, Seneca argues that the integrity of the wise man’s virtue means that even if his friends or children die, no distress

behaviour that required an exaggeration of natural responses.³⁵¹ Seneca does not deny that there are indeed natural responses—tears, changes in facial expression, and felt inner pain—that accompany bereavement; in fact, he pre-empts the charge of *inhumanitas* by saying that it is unnatural to suppress these responses.³⁵² For him, then, certain natural expressions of bereavement are associated with a life of virtue; but grief and some of its accompanying practices are clearly excluded.

Seneca continues by stating that there are two forms of weeping which occur in the wise person's experiences.³⁵³ One type are the tears that emerge "by their own force," being "wrung from us by the necessity of Nature" at those times when the immediacy and intensity of one's loss is most keenly experienced.³⁵⁴ Earlier, in our examination of the *propathēiai* (see section 2.3.3.c), we saw how the Stoic founders apparently distinguished from genuine emotions another level of affective response, for which a special terminology was used. These "bitings" and "troublings" were involuntary sensations that lacked the necessary belief structures to make them passions as defined by the Stoics. We also discussed how Seneca applied this "pre-emotion" concept in his *De ira*. Here, in *Ep.* 99, he is merely restating his position and lending further support to the older Stoic stand.

It is the second category of tears which now concerns us. Noting that such tears "fall by consent," and that they come about "when we muse in memory of those whom we have lost," Seneca contends that they express positive rather than negative feelings, and as such may be likened to tears of joy: *tunc oculi velut in gaudio relaxantur*.³⁵⁵ I am persuaded by the view of several scholars who suppose that Seneca, in referring to tears as a voluntary reaction of the wise person, is drawing on his understanding of the Stoic doctrine of eupathic response.³⁵⁶ The *eupathēiai*, as we have already seen, are impulses which result from fully accurate assessments of goodness and badness. In Margaret Graver's hypothesis, the mention of joy (*gaudium*) at *Ep.* 99.1 is confirmation of this supposition, because joy figures prominently in Seneca's writings as that feature of the

is experienced, for "the sage will retain the firm belief that none of these things is evil, or important enough to make a healthy mind break down." (74.31).

³⁵¹ *Ep.* 99.16–17.

³⁵² *Ep.* 99.15.

³⁵³ *Ep.* 99.18–19.

³⁵⁴ Seneca gives as examples the initial news of an untimely death and the final embrace before a body's cremation.

³⁵⁵ *Ep.* 99.18–19

³⁵⁶ See Graver, "Weeping," 244–248; Graver, *Stoicism*, 101; Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 140–141.

wise person's inner experience that corresponds to pathological delight in the non-wise person.³⁵⁷ Graver emphasizes that as a matter of procedure the best indication that Seneca means to refer to an existing doctrine lies less in his exact choice of words than in the inclusion of a key word within the relevant conceptual frame. He has already stated that the wise response to the death of a friend is joy, occasioned by memories of the friendship (*Ep.* 99.3–4); as such, this same joy is to characterize the response of the person at *Ep.* 99.18–19.³⁵⁸

If a type of grief that could be considered a *eupatheia* is indeed in view here, the question is whether this is one of those points where Seneca is marshalling ideas from Stoic tradition and putting them to use, or an innovation in which he takes his Stoic inheritance in a new direction. Graver is open to the developmental view, but does not want to dismiss the former possibility. She cites a passage in Philo's *On the Migration of Abraham* (*Migration*, 156–157) in which Philo gives a physicalist explanation of joyful tears which strongly resembles *Ep.* 99.18–19, and suggests that it is entirely reasonable to suppose that Philo's explanation is one he remembered from reading Chrysippus—who had, according to Galen, provided phenomenological explanations for affective sensations including those of fear, distress, confidence and joy. If Philo's language reflects old Stoic material referring to tears of joy, then Seneca's presumably does as well.³⁵⁹ For Reydams-Schils, Seneca is walking a fine line between the well-established categories of his Stoic predecessors and breaking new ground. In *Ep.* 99.20–21, Seneca speaks of proper behaviour even in grief which results in tears that do not impair the dignity and authority of the wise man. Reydams-Schils sees in this an attempt by Seneca to move beyond traditional Stoic categories to posit an acceptable counterpart to grief that is analogous to joy: a fourth eupathic response, concomitant with the correct use of reason—which in effect fills the empty box in the symmetric schema of the Stoic doctrine of the *eupatheiai*.³⁶⁰

To summarize: Seneca's consolatory writings demonstrate that he made use of the majority of theories of that era, Stoic or otherwise, provided that they suited his

³⁵⁷ Graver, "Weeping," 244–245, notes that the concept appears as early as *Vit. beat.* 4.2–5 and is explained in relation to integral goods at some length in *Ep.* 23.1–6 and 27.2–3; furthermore, in *Ep.* 59.2 it is clearly marked as Stoic (*ad nostram albam*), with the Stoic definition also quoted.

³⁵⁸ Graver, "Weeping," 245.

³⁵⁹ Graver, "Weeping," 246–248, referring to Galen, *PHP* 4.7.3–4. Concerning the extent of Philo's knowledge of Stoic views on emotion, see David Winston, "Philo of Alexandria on the Emotions," in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 201–220. On eupathic joy specifically, see Philo, *QG* 4.15–16, 4.19, 4.101.

³⁶⁰ Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 140–141, and also 136.

purpose in writing to a particular addressee. However, our evidence also clearly indicates that Seneca was not afraid to push back the boundaries of Stoic thinking. By advocating a position of moderate emotion, he was not merely parroting Peripatetic theory. Much more than that, as Reydams-Schils elegantly words it,

Seneca is struggling to find a way compatible with Stoic doctrine to tell Cicero (and indirectly Plato) that even in public and at a burial not only a mother but also any philosophically inclined human being has neither to be stone-faced nor stone-hearted in order to preserve dignity and virtue.³⁶¹

Despite being bound by the rhetorical and contextual limitations of the consolatory genre in which he was working, Seneca was trying to find a place in Stoicism for the wise person's weeping—the non-culpable, eupathic antithesis of pathological grief.

2.5.1.c. Epictetus on Grief

We now turn to Epictetus, who did not pen a consolation per se. In his understanding and treatment of the emotions, Epictetus endorses fully the teachings of his Stoic forebears. Since his protreptic addresses are works of informal moralizing rather than explanations of Stoic moral theory, he avoids technicalities in his writing and also does not proffer an explicit theory of the emotions. Nevertheless, his position clearly reflects orthodox Stoicism: the passions are, in his view, the consequence of erroneous judgements and the misuse of reason.³⁶² In Epictetus' scheme, a key term is *prohairesis* (προαίρεσις), which Long translates as “volition”—“the purposive and self-conscious centre of a person”; for Epictetus, nothing except this God-given rational faculty of evaluation, choice and action truly belongs to the human person and lies within the ambit of his or her control.³⁶³ All other things in life, including external circumstances whether *prima facie* good or bad, are not in one's control and are therefore ultimately not of any real concern. This fundamental distinction allows Epictetus to correlate human autonomy with his cardinal rule of “making the right use of impressions”; indeed, as Long expresses it, Epictetus insists that “impressions have

³⁶¹ Reydams-Schils, *Roman Stoics*, 141.

³⁶² On Epictetus and emotion, see Long, *Epictetus*, 244–254; Anthony A. Long, “Epictetus on Understanding and Managing Emotions,” in *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 377–394; and Edgar M. Krentz, “ΠΙΑΘΗ and ΑΠΙΑΘΕΙΑ in Early Roman Empire Stoics,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 126–131.

³⁶³ Quote from Long, *Epictetus*, 207; on the concept of *prohairesis* (including its relationship with the *hēgemonikon*), and its translation, see 207–220, 232–233. A succinct discussion of the various aspects of *prohairesis* is found also in Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Self-Sufficiency and Power: Divine and Human Agency in Epictetus and Paul,” in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 120–121.

only the effects that we permit them to have.”³⁶⁴ The upshot of all this is that the person who chooses to live within the sphere of his *prohairesis* (and who therefore necessarily also upholds the notion that any occurrent external event is to be set in the context of a divinely benevolent ordering of the universe) is able to experience uncurbed tranquility.³⁶⁵

Epictetus’ position as outlined above is seen very clearly in his *Diatr.* 3.3, in which he discusses how the good and virtuous man, working upon his own *hēgemonikon*, can succeed in the task of dealing with his impressions in accordance with nature (3.3.1). Right action consists in acting within one’s sphere of volition (*prohairesis*) and disregarding all external situations that fall outside one’s ability to control them (3.3.14–16). Epictetus acknowledges the fact that it is all too easy to be “caught gaping straightway at every external impression that comes along” (3.3.17). Yet it is possible, through the vigilant appraisal of one’s judgements, to maintain in every situation a state of equanimity:

if we see a man in grief, we say, “It is all over with him”; if we see a Consul, we say, “Happy man”; if we see an exile, “Poor fellow”; or a poverty-stricken man, “Wretched man, he has nothing with which to get a bite to eat.” These, then, are the vicious judgements which we ought to eradicate; this is the subject upon which we ought to concentrate our efforts. Why, what is weeping and sighing? A judgement. What is misfortune? A judgement. What are strife, disagreement, fault-finding, accusing impiety, foolishness? They are all judgements, and that, too, judgements that lie outside the province of moral purpose (*prohairesis*), assumed to be good or evil. Let a man but transfer his judgements that lie within the province of the moral purpose (*prohairesis*), and I guarantee that he will be steadfast, whatever the state of things about him. (3.3.17–19)³⁶⁶

However, such a state of unflappable self-composure is not tantamount to a callous detachment from other people and the misfortunes that may befall them. Epictetus insists that in one’s relationships and dealings with others, one “ought not to be unfeeling (*ἀπαθῆς*) like a statue,” and couples this stance with the characteristically Stoic notion of appropriate action (*τὸ καθῆκον*) (*Diatr.* 3.2.4). Elsewhere he makes it clear that one should not hesitate to show sympathy to a grieving person, and, if the occasion warrants it, even “groan with” (*συνεπιστενάζω*) the person. However, to this he immediately appends a caveat: “be careful not to groan also in the centre of your being” (*Ench.* 16). Hence one can—and in fact, should—grieve with the bereaved person, but not to the extent that one’s imperturbability is imperiled. For Epictetus, the correct

³⁶⁴ Long, *Epictetus*, 216.

³⁶⁵ See John M. G. Barclay, “Security and Self-Sufficiency: A Comparison of Paul and Epictetus,” *Ex Auditu* 24 (2008): 61–62.

³⁶⁶ On training oneself to deal with impressions, see also *Diatr.* 3.8.1–6.

performance of one's social roles has both an outward and inward orientation,³⁶⁷ in other words, the human person's attitudes and actions towards others are to be structured by a judicious sociability that both reflects one's appropriate duty to others and maintains the integrity of one's volition and freedom. We should therefore be affectionate (*φιλόστοργος*) towards others, but without becoming abject, broken-spirited, dependent on another, slavish, or miserable (*Diatr.* 3.24.58–59). As John Barclay observes, “the Stoic, while bound in a network of duties *to* others, is never bound by anything he needs *from* them.”³⁶⁸

It comes as no surprise that Epictetus does not have very much to say about the practical therapy of grief. The wise man has no place in his life for grief, and the Stoic teacher's task is to help his students rid themselves of this and other passions—all of which are evidence of the presence of mistaken judgements of value.³⁶⁹ Specifically, in Epictetus' view, grief is the result of a false judgement that death is something terrible.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, the control of grief is a problem for the individual: “Now another's grief is no concern of mine, but my own grief is” (*Diatr.* 3.24.23). Even though one may strive to help others in their grief, it is one's own freedom from disturbance that is paramount (3.24.24). Beyond this, Epictetus shows no further interest in how one might comfort the bereaved. Contrasting him with Seneca, Marcus Wilson notes that for Epictetus there is no place for rhetorical persuasion or for the adaptation of multiple arguments to the particular character and situation of the bereaved. Seneca is more alert to the overwhelming power of grief and far more ready to address the grief of others than to focus exclusively, as Epictetus urged, on the control of the individual's own mind.³⁷¹ It is interesting that in Seneca and Epictetus a common set of conceptual apparatuses led to the construction of partially divergent practical philosophies of grief. We can already see here that Stoicism made room for a more rich and complex emotional life than is often assumed.

³⁶⁷ Long, *Epictetus*, 237.

³⁶⁸ Barclay, “Security,” 65 (emphases original); see further 60–65.

³⁶⁹ See e.g. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.1.111–112, where he speaks of the need to “purify” one's judgements concerning one's possessions, body, and familial relationships.

³⁷⁰ E.g. *Diatr.* 3.8.5; *Ench.* 3, 5, 26.

³⁷¹ See Wilson, “Seneca the Consoler?,” 112.

2.5.2. Joy

2.5.2.a. Joy as a Eupathic Response

We have already seen how on the Stoic account the *eupatheiai* were that set of perfected emotions, free from the grounds of criticism on which the passions were rejected, which were regularly the experience of the wise person. John Cooper argues that the doctrine of eupathic responses arose early in the development of Stoicism as a reaction against the accusation that the Stoics were insensitive to certain situations in which attachments to or aversions from certain people or things were justified.³⁷² Given the defensive context in which this aspect of Stoic theory was worked out, it is not surprising that we have only limited details about how precisely the *eupatheiai* would function in a perfected human life. It seems that the Stoics did not develop the theory very far as a positive account in its own right of what they certainly regarded as important aspects of the moral life.³⁷³ This means that we have considerably less information about Stoic thinking on joy, for example, compared to the material on grief that we have already discussed. Yet I think that our sources do still allow us to adumbrate what the Roman Stoics—or more precisely, Seneca, since Epictetus does not seem to say very much here—thought about joy as a eupathic response.

But first, it is helpful at this point to summarize very briefly what earlier Stoicism has to tell us about joy. Unlike its eupathic relations, wish and caution, joy does not motivate actions of pursuit or avoidance; it is instead a reactive response. Putting together the accounts in Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and Andronicus, we learn that joy is a feeling of “rational uplift” or “elation” (*εὐλόγος ἔπαρσις*) at being in the presence of true goods—that is, virtue itself, virtuous deeds, and their essential accompaniments.³⁷⁴ Since wise people are, on Stoic principles, continually aware of their own virtuous condition, and since this awareness never fails to generate actions that are wholly virtuous, the wise will experience a steady joy both at their condition and its practical expression.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Cooper, “Emotional Life,” 176.

³⁷³ Cooper, “Emotional Life,” 177–178.

³⁷⁴ See Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.13; Diogenes Laertius 7.116; Andronicus, *De passionibus* 6.

³⁷⁵ Cooper, “Emotional Life,” 186–187.

2.5.2.b. Seneca on Joy

Seneca's fullest exposition about joy is found in *Ep.* 23, where he describes what true joy is and how it can be achieved through the application of philosophy. He begins his letter to Lucilius with the assertion that joy (*gaudium*) is both the "foundation" and "pinnacle" of a sound mind and that joy may be found "if we have not placed our happiness in the control of externals" (*qui felicitatem suam in aliena potestate non posuit*).³⁷⁶ Seneca is in effect restating standard theory about the *eupatheiai*, for in the person of wise understanding, joy and its fellow eupathic responses emanate from fully veridical judgements of the goodness or badness of genuine goods or evils. Such a wise person, whose actions are always fully coordinated with the proper exercise of virtue, is able to experience eupathic joy consistently. Seneca writes:

Real joy (*gaudium*), believe me, is a stern matter. Can one, do you think, despise death with a care-free countenance, ...? Or can one thus open the door to poverty, or hold the curb on his pleasures, or contemplate the endurance of pain? He who ponders these things in his heart is indeed full of joy; but it is not a cheerful joy. It is just this joy, however, of which I would have you become the owner; for it will never fail you ... do the one thing that can render you really happy (*felicem*): cast aside and trample under foot all those things that glitter outwardly and are held out to you by another or as obtainable from another; look toward the true good (*verum bonum*), and rejoice only in that which comes from your own store. And what do I mean by "from your own store"? I mean from your very self, that which is the best part of you. (*Ep.* 23.4–6)

Seneca clearly sees joy as the affective state that especially marks the normative human agent. Yet this state is only accessible to Lucilius when he is transformed by moral progress, whose aim is virtue; thus the "true good" in which he is called to rejoice is his potential for virtue—the "best part" of him. Elsewhere, Seneca reaffirms his thinking: writing to console his mother during his exile, he reminds her that as the human person is already imbued with such a potential, she is able to actualize it and achieve joy through the judicious evaluation of external goods:

Nature intended that we should need no great equipment for living happily; each one of us is able to make his own happiness (*beatum*). External things are of slight importance, and can have no great influence in either direction. Prosperity does not exalt the wise man, nor does adversity cast him down; for he has always endeavoured to rely entirely upon himself, to derive all of his joy (*gaudium*) from himself. (Seneca, *Helv.* 5.1–2)

The parallels with *Ep.* 23 may be readily discerned. There, the joy that Seneca has in view is a joy that is to be "born" in one's being—as he tells Lucilius: "*Volo illam tibi domi nasci*" (*Ep.* 23.3). This joy has no commerce with "objects of cheer" (*hilaritates*)

³⁷⁶ *Ep.* 23.1–2.

that are superficial and transient; while these things may possibly elicit laughter, they do not reflect the presence of real joy. As Seneca emphasizes, joy causes the wise person's soul to be "happy and confident, lifted above every circumstance" (*Ep.* 23.3).³⁷⁷

We find analogous ideas in Seneca's *De Vita Beata*, which was written for his elder brother Gallio.³⁷⁸ Here Seneca considers the question of how true happiness (i.e. in a eudaimonist sense) is to be obtained. He argues that the answer is to be found in living according to nature (*Vit. beat.* 3.1–3; 8.1–2). The result is a life of inner harmony, ruled by reason, where there is constancy in one's perceptions and convictions. The "highest good"—a life of virtue—is attained, and in consequence "no crookedness, no slipperiness is left to it, nothing that will cause it to stumble or fall" (8.5). Untouched by external goods, the person experiences "unbroken tranquillity and enduring freedom" (3.3–4)³⁷⁹ and "a boundless joy (*gaudium*) that is firm and unalterable" (3.4), a joy that "is deep and issues from deep within, since he finds delight in his own resources, and desires no joys greater than his inner joys" (4.4). In this and the examples cited earlier, Seneca's conception of joy is in keeping with standard Stoic thought about eupathic joy.

However, as Margaret Graver has recently argued, there is a passage (*Ep.* 66) in which Seneca's construal of joy does not fully square with the usual Stoic account.³⁸⁰ Here Seneca speaks of "deriving joy from the dutiful behaviour of one's children and from the well-being of one's country" (*gaudere liberorum pietate, patriae incolumitate*, 66.37). That this joy is an affective responsive is shown by the use of terms that reflect Stoic theory concerning sensed alterations in the *psychē*: thus, for example, this joy is "effusive and expansive" (*remissa et laxa*, 66.12) and involves a "natural effusion and expansion of the mind" (*naturalis animi remissio et laxitas*, 66.14).³⁸¹ Graver theorizes that *gaudium* here in relation to the safety of one's homeland and the piety of one's children is an occurrent response of the virtuous mind to what the Stoics would term as preferred indifferents. It is not another name for the delight that an ordinary person experiences, even though similar affective sensations may be experienced, because the ordinary person's response is predicated on the assumption that these objects are good.

³⁷⁷ See also *Ep.* 59.2, 16, where Seneca tells Lucilius that for the wise man, joy stems from the awareness and enjoyment of one's own virtue; as such, joy is independent of one's circumstances and is "unbroken and continuous."

³⁷⁸ The same Gallio as is mentioned in Acts 18.12–17.

³⁷⁹ See also 8.3–4.

³⁸⁰ Margaret R. Graver, "Anatomies of Joy: Seneca and the *Gaudium* Tradition," in *Hope, Joy, and Affection in the Classical World*, ed. Ruth R. Caston and Robert A. Kaster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 123–142, esp. 133–136.

³⁸¹ Graver, "Anatomies," 134–135.

The wise person knows that they are preferred indifferents, yet responds to them with real joy, as a “natural effusion of the mind.” Thus there appears here to be a divergent Stoic account of how normative affect works.³⁸²

Our evidence earlier tells us that Seneca is certainly committed to the idea of joy as that emotional state which especially characterizes the wise person. Yet, if Graver is correct, what we have here in *Ep.* 66 is an effort by Seneca to account for the possibility of occurrent, wise joy that is based on the presence of non-integral goods. As in the curious case of the wise person’s weeping (section 2.5.1.b), Seneca reveals himself as a Stoic philosopher who is unafraid to show his ingenuity while broadly remaining within school boundaries.

2.6. Conclusion

The Stoic understanding of personhood was wholly integrated within a philosophical framework in which the entire universe—all of nature—was understood to be shaped and ordered by divine rationality. The goal of life therefore consisted in a life in agreement with nature, the result of which was *eudaimonia*. This meant the rational selection of those things which accorded with nature, or, in other words, the perfection of virtuous agency. Since rationality characterized the human soul, one’s emotional states, far from being irrational drives, were primarily specified by their cognitive content. Emotions embodied certain ways of interpreting the world. However, in the non-wise, imperfections of rationality gave rise to the passions—which were false judgements about the value of external goods. As the Stoics were committed to rational self-determination, the passions, which violated the integrity of human agency, had to be extirpated.

Yet not everything that we would today consider an “emotion” was considered by the Stoics to be a passion that required elimination; there were other classes of affective response—the “good emotions” or *eupatheiai*, the “pre-emotions” or *propatheiai*, and also what one might term the “moral emotions”—which were deemed to be appropriate and indeed even normative. Alongside these we might place also the curious instance of the wise person’s weeping, which seems to have been the eupathic antithesis of pathological grief. The Stoics have long been caricatured as being almost inhumanly

³⁸² Graver, “Anatomies,” 135–136 (quote from 136).

disengaged from the emotions that make life and its relationships meaningful. In fact, our sources suggest that they allowed—and perhaps even deliberately made room for—a considerable variety of affective states and thus for a rich and complex emotional life.

The passions, however, were problematic and had to be eradicated. Since they arose from false beliefs, it was thought that the treatment of the mind was the best way to achieve this. Stoic cognitive therapy was in part a philosophical analysis of what the passions were, and in part a battery of cognitive devices (which were often not philosophical, and often shared with other schools) for attacking the objectionable aspects of emotion. The work was performed by the coercion of both parts of the therapeutic package.³⁸³ However, it is important to note that the chief demand of Stoic ethics was not that one should suppress or deny one's feelings, but that one should perfect one's rational core. A proper understanding of Stoic axiology makes it clear that the Stoics did not seek to attain *apatheia* only because of the disruptive effects of emotional disquiet, but because no rational person would want to continue to believe that which was false.

³⁸³ See Sorabji, *Emotion*, 160.

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Chapter 3. Joy in Philippians

3.1. The Background to Philippians

3.1.1. Overview

Philippians is one of Paul's³⁸⁴ most personal letters, one in which we may readily observe in his writing the heartfelt emotions that arise from the close relationship that he enjoys with this community of believers. The Philippians, who have been so supportive of Paul, are "his beloved and longed-for brothers and sisters" and his "joy and crown" (Phil 4.1).³⁸⁵ These strong feelings of affection have their basis in the Philippians' stalwart participation in the gospel mission—an active partnership or mutual relationship (*κοινωνία*) that is both spiritual and practical. In the course of this partnership, the Philippian Christians have repeatedly sent to Paul moneys to support his work of ministry (4.15–16), thereby demonstrating their commitment to their common cause. Most recently one of their members, Epaphroditus, had been tasked to bring to Paul a financial gift and also to be of general service to him (4.10, 18; 2.25–30). Epaphroditus had fallen dangerously ill, either along the way to Paul or in his company,³⁸⁶ but now that he is recovered, Paul is sending him back. The return of Epaphroditus thus provides Paul with the opportunity to send a letter to the Philippians.

Internal evidence suggests that Paul has several inter-related purposes for writing.³⁸⁷ He expresses joy over the Philippians' support and acknowledges their gift,

³⁸⁴ The Pauline authorship of Philippians has only very rarely been questioned. In the nineteenth century, F. C. Baur challenged Paul's authorship (*Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, trans. Allan Menzies, 2nd ed. [London: Williams & Norgate, 1875], 2, 45–79), but his conclusions were rejected by later NT scholarship. More recently, Darrell Doughty's argument in "Citizens of Heaven: Philippians 3.2–21," *NTS* 41 (1995): 102–122, that the letter fits better a post-Pauline setting has not found favour with other scholars.

³⁸⁵ As Gordon Fee notes, that the vocative *ἀδελφοί* means "brothers and sisters" in the Pauline letters is made clear from Phil 4.1–2, where Paul uses this vocative and then specifically addresses two women. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 109 n.9.

³⁸⁶ Paul Holloway argues that the most reasonable way to read Paul's statement in 2.30 that *διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ μέχρι θανάτου ἠγγισεν παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ* is that in bringing the gift from Philippi Epaphroditus became sick and, rather than stopping to recover, pressed ahead, so that Paul did not need to suffer from need in prison; *Consolation*, 25. However, nothing conclusive can actually be said about when or where Epaphroditus fell ill or recovered.

³⁸⁷ There is considerable scholarly opinion concerning the occasion of the letter; see especially Fee, *Philippians*, 29–38; Markus Bockmuehl, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1997), 33; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Revised ed., WBC 43 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), lv–lvii; G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PiNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 19–30. However, it seems to me rather difficult—and perhaps

commends Epaphroditus (and Timothy), provides the Philippians with an update of his own situation, and addresses aspects of theirs that he is concerned about. Reporting his own situation, Paul repeatedly mentions being “in chains” (1.7, 13, 14, 17). However, instead of curtailing the progress of the gospel, as the Philippians might have expected, his incarceration, most likely in Rome,³⁸⁸ and the circumstances surrounding it are turning out for its very advancement (1.12–14). In relation to the situation affecting the Philippian believers, Fee argues convincingly that at least two matters—suffering because of current opposition, and some sort of internal unrest—coalesce in some way as the driving force behind the letter’s two blocks of hortatory material (1.27–2.18 and 3.1–4.3).³⁸⁹ In his letter to the Philippians, then, Paul produces a multi-faceted message that brings together pastoral sensitivity and the practical outworking of doctrine: a message of solidarity, encouragement, hope, and the possibility of joy even in turmoil and suffering.

altogether unnecessary—to make a case for a single factor, from among several inter-related ones, to form the occasion for writing.

³⁸⁸ The question of the place of writing remains controversial, but is ancillary to my study. I follow many scholars in favouring the traditional view of a Roman provenance: see, notably, Morna D. Hooker, “The Letter to the Philippians,” *NIB* vol. 11, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 473–475; Fee, *Philippians*, 34–37; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 25–32; Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 5–7.

However, there are a number of recent commentators who opt for Ephesus: examples include Frank Thielman, “Ephesus and the Literary Setting of Philippians,” in *New Testament Greek and Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Gerald F. Hawthorne*, ed. Amy M. Donaldson and Timothy B. Sailors (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 205–223; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, xxxix–l; Bonnie B. Thurston and Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, SP 10 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2005), 28–30; Charles B. Cousar, *Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 9–11.

For a Caesarean origin, see Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, 14th ed., KEK 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 3–4, 15–16.

³⁸⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 29. He notes that both of these matters appear in the initial imperative of 1.27–28: “that you *stand firm* in the *one Spirit, striving together as one person* for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by *those who oppose you*” (emphases his), followed by a clause explaining their suffering (1.29–30) and by an appeal to have the same mindset (2.1–2). These same verbs (“stand firm”; “have the same mindset”) are used in the appeals that conclude the second hortatory section (4.1–3). For Fee, these two concerns, viz. suffering and disunity, bookend Paul’s hortatory material. Fee also finds it noteworthy (29 n.77) that these two matters are taken up in two monographs as providing the key to what drives the letter, in each case seeing the one as the primary cause over against the other: L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians*, JSNTSup 78 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Davorin Peterlin, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church*, NovTSup 79 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the determination of the identities of the opponents to whom Paul alludes in 1.14–17; 1.27–28; 3.2, 18–19. Interpreters generally take the view that Paul is referring to Judaizers, especially in ch.3; see the succinct analysis in Jerry L. Sumney, “Studying Paul’s Opponents: Advances and Challenges,” in *Paul and His Opponents*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 25–29.

3.1.2. Literary Integrity

Our discussion so far has assumed that Philippians is an integral whole and that our reconstruction of its occasion applies to it in its totality. However, the matter of the integrity of canonical Philippians has attracted considerable scholarly interest, with some arguing that it is a composite of several letters.³⁹⁰ Their case rests primarily on the construal of two seemingly abrupt transitions within the letter. The first is the sharp change of tone at 3.1–2, where Paul seems to be preparing to end the letter but inexplicably launches into polemical invective. This has led some commentators to conclude that a fragment from another letter has been spliced in here; on this reading, at 3.1 *τὸ λοιπὸν* means “finally,” while *χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ* is a farewell formula akin to 2 Cor 13.11. The second uneven seam concerns the location of Paul’s thanksgiving for their gift (4.10–20). Its placing within an ancient letter is unusually late; and again, the *τὸ λοιπὸν* of 4.8 should lead to concluding remarks rather than to an expression of thanks.

Though the various partition theories are not all agreed, the most common proposal is that Philippians comprises three letter fragments, which are (in chronological order): Letter A (4.10–20), a short letter of thanks sent immediately after the arrival of Epaphroditus; Letter B (1.1–3.1), a letter of reassurance dispatched with Epaphroditus upon his return to Philippi; and Letter C (3.2–4.3), a polemical letter sent later, perhaps after Paul’s release, or when he had become more fully apprised of the theological dangers facing the Philippians.³⁹¹ The remaining material (4.4–9 and 4.21–23) is variously assigned, with 4.4–7 and 4.21–23 often shoehorned into Letter B.³⁹²

For every argument favouring composite authorship, there is a counterargument favouring the letter’s literary integrity. Furthermore, as Osiek notes, modern composite theories presume an intellectual consistency acceptable to a modern literary critic in the writing of an ancient author, but consistency and continuity are cultural values that differ widely. Abrupt transitions in other ancient letters have been identified upon closer look, so those of Paul would not need to be so unusual.³⁹³ In any case, the very presence of redactional seams has been challenged. It is unnecessary to conclude in 3.1a that Paul

³⁹⁰ For a chronicle of the early debates see Veronica Koperski, “The Early History of the Dissection of Philippians,” *JTS* 44 (1993): 599–603; a useful recent discussion is in Holloway, *Consolation*, 7–33.

³⁹¹ Holloway, *Consolation*, 7–8.

³⁹² See the table in Lukas Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus*, *NovTSup* 78 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 110.

³⁹³ Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 17.

is bringing the letter to a close: τὸ λοιπὸν is best understood here as a transitional instead of concluding particle (“furthermore,” instead of “finally”),³⁹⁴ and χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ means “rejoice [not goodbye] in the Lord.”³⁹⁵ Furthermore, βλέπετε in 3:2 can simply mean “consider” and not “beware”—in which case the tonal shift is minimal.³⁹⁶ As to the supposedly delayed “thank you” (4.10–20): it has been demonstrated that this section forms an *inclusio* with the introductory thanksgiving at the beginning (1.3–11), thus precluding its excision as a separate letter. The presence of numerous clear parallels between these two sections proves that 4.10–20 is not the only place where Paul thanks the Philippians for their gift.³⁹⁷ In the first place, in a Hellenistic letter, an expression of thanks for a gift need not occur near its beginning; in fact, formal expressions of thanks might be absent.³⁹⁸

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been an increase in numbers of scholars returning to the older assumption of the literary integrity of Philippians, such that one may speak now of a majority view that eschews partition theories.³⁹⁹ Several important studies, undertaken from different perspectives, uphold the unity of the letter. David Garland’s literary approach reveals the extensive use of *inclusio* which mark out several shorter sections as well as the overall paraenesis of 1.27–4.3.⁴⁰⁰ Duane Watson’s seminal rhetorical-critical inquiry demonstrates that Philippians systematically develops the proposition found in 1.27–30 and is thus a cohesive whole.⁴⁰¹ For Gordon Wiles, the introductory thanksgiving of 1.3–11 is an epistolary anticipation, controlled by liturgical idiom, of the major themes that run

³⁹⁴ Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 25–30, esp. 28; Loveday Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians,” *JSNT* 37 (1989): 96–97. See also Fee, *Philippians*, 290–291.

³⁹⁵ Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms,” 97.

³⁹⁶ George D. Kilpatrick, “ΒΛΕΠΕΤΕ, Philippians 3:2,” in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle*, ed. Matthew Black and G. Fohrer (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1968).

³⁹⁷ Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul’s Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift-Exchange and Christian Giving*, SNTSMS 92 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 90–93. Peterman notes that “the large-scale *inclusio* forces us to view the thought of the letter as more concerned with providing a response to the Philippians’ support than has commonly been recognized” (92–93).

³⁹⁸ Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms,” 97–98.

³⁹⁹ Indeed, almost all recent commentaries and monographs champion the integrity of the letter, with striking exceptions being Jean-Baptiste Edart, *L’Épître aux Philippiens, Rhétorique et Composition Stylistique*, EBib 45 (Paris: Gabalda, 2002); John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰⁰ David E. Garland, “The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 141–173, esp. 159–161. He also highlights the numerous thematic and verbal parallels between chs. 2 and 3, not least between the hymn of 2.5–11 and 3.20–21 (157–159).

⁴⁰¹ Duane F. Watson, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 57–88, esp. 66–67, 84. See also Peter Wick, *Der Philipperbrief: Der formale Aufbau des Briefs als Schlüssel zum Verständnis seines Inhalts*, BWANT 135 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 11, 187–191.

through the letter.⁴⁰² Loveday Alexander observes that the arguments typically adduced for partition are not reflected in Hellenistic epistolary conventions.⁴⁰³

However, rhetorical and epistolographic arguments for unity are not without their problems, as Bockmuehl points out.⁴⁰⁴ As a way out of the impasse, he furnishes two considerations about the text and the composition of Philippians that suggest that one may reasonably continue to interpret the letter in its received form. First, the manuscript transmission of Philippians *as a whole* is consistent without exception—a fact which is significant especially given the well-documented tenacity of textual variants.⁴⁰⁵ Second, it is difficult to imagine how an editor clever enough to carry out such a sophisticated splicing operation would be so inept as to leave such obvious breaks in the redacted document.⁴⁰⁶

It seems clear that partition hypotheses do not hold water, and I shall therefore proceed on the assumption of the literary integrity and unity of Philippians, and interpret the letter as an integral whole. We turn next to the question of Philippians as a letter: precisely what kind of letter is it? Several recent studies of Philippians draw attention to the importance of recognizing the literary and social conventions upon which it is based, in order to elucidate the precise nature of Paul's implied relationship with his readers and thus understand better the purpose and cohesiveness of the letter as a whole. However, as we shall now see, these studies are not conclusive.

3.1.3. Genre

3.1.3.a. *A Hortatory Letter of Friendship*

On the basis of evidence from Greco-Roman epistolography, some scholars posit that Philippians reflects many characteristics of both a “letter of friendship” and a “letter

⁴⁰² Gordon P. Wiles, *Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St Paul*, SNTSMS 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 194–215; see also Paul Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings*, BZNW 20 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939), 71–82.

⁴⁰³ Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms,” 87–101. See also Jeffrey T. Reed, “Philippians and the Epistolary Hesitation Formulas: The Literary Integrity of Philippians, Again,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 63–90, who demonstrates that Phil 3.1b forms what he labels the “epistolary hesitation formula”—a common expression used in letters of Paul's day to effect a transition from one subject to another.

⁴⁰⁴ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 23–24 and 38–40.

⁴⁰⁵ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 24–25; Silva, *Philippians*, 12.

⁴⁰⁶ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 24–25. Fee, *Philippians*, 22, stresses that there is simply no historical evidence for this kind of “scissors-and-pasting” of someone's letters. The only letter from antiquity that might possibly serve as an analogy is 2 Cor (1–9 and 10–13), but in this case we are dealing merely with stitching two letters together in their assumed chronological order, not with an intricate and non-chronological weaving together of three letters.

of moral exhortation,⁴⁰⁷ and is therefore best described as “a hortatory letter of friendship.”⁴⁰⁸ Certainly, the letter seems to abound with allusions to the *topoi* and language of friendship.⁴⁰⁹ Examples are the presence-absence motif (1.19–26; 2.12), expressions of affection and desire to be with the readers (1.7–8; 4.1), the reciprocity between writer and readers (1.7, 30; 2.17–18; 4.14), the pattern of giving and receiving (4.10–20), the importance of mutual participation (1.5; 2.1; 3.10; 4.15), the push for

⁴⁰⁷ L. Michael White, “Morality Between Two Worlds: A Paradigm of Friendship in Philippians,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David J. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 201–215; Stanley K. Stowers, “Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians,” in *Pauline Theology 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians*, ed. Jouette M. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 107–114; Fee, *Philippians*, 2–14. For a survey of the scholarship see John Reumann, “Philippians, Especially Chapter 4, as a ‘Letter of Friendship’: Observations on a Checkered History of Friendship,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies in Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, NovTSup 82 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 83–106.

See also Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms,” 87–101, on the closely related category of the so-called “family letter”: since the content of family letters was similar to that of letters of friendship, family letters were grouped together with them by the ancient theorists, and not regarded as a distinct type (on this, see Fee, *Philippians*, 2 n.8). Ben Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 17–21, has recently made a case for Philippians to be regarded as a family letter because key aspects of the grammar of friendship such as direct reciprocity and explicit references to friendship itself are absent. Witherington draws support from the work of Alexander and from Reidar Aasgaard’s study of the Pauline sibling metaphor, in which he argues that the familial metaphor is used to strengthen the ties between Paul and his readers and to support his drive for unity and mutual responsibility; see Reidar Aasgaard, “My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!”: *Christian Siblingship in Paul*, JSNTSup 265 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 309, 311. However, our evidence indicates that the family letter was not regarded as a distinct type.

On letter-writing in the Greco-Roman world, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, SBLSPS 19 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 1–14; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 27–40. As Malherbe (6–7) and Stowers (32–35) explain, formal schooling would have included instruction in letter-writing. Two manuals for such instruction are extant: “Epistolary Types,” by Pseudo-Demetrius, and “Epistolary Styles,” by Pseudo-Libanius, both of which are reproduced and translated by Malherbe in *Theorists*, 30–41 and 66–81 respectively. Pseudo-Demetrius illustrates twenty-one different types of letters, with the “friendly” type heading his list and the “advisory” letter listed as the eleventh type. Pseudo-Libanius expands the list from twenty-one to forty-one styles, with the “paraenetic” and “friendly” letter listed as the fifth and eleventh styles.

⁴⁰⁸ Fee, *Philippians*, 12. Cf. White, “Morality,” 206 (“Philippians ... is primarily a friendly hortatory letter”); Stowers, “Friends,” 107 (“a hortatory letter of friendship”). Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 80, notes that the styles of a letter could be mixed.

⁴⁰⁹ On friendship in classical antiquity see Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* Book 8; Cicero, *Amic.*; Seneca, *Ep.* 1, 9, 35; Plutarch, *Amic. mult.*; for discussions in the vast secondary literature, see esp. Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 7–39; Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians*, WUNT 2.23 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 1–34; Stowers, “Friends,” 107–114; David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John T. Fitzgerald, “Paul and Friendship,” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 319–343.

For the language of friendship in Philippians chs. 1–3, see John T. Fitzgerald, “Philippians in the Light of Some Ancient Discussions of Friendship,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies in Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, NovTSup 82 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 144–147; in ch. 4, see Ken Berry, “The Function of Friendship Language in Philippians 4:10–20,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies in Friendship in the New Testament World*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, NovTSup 82 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 107–124.

agreement and equality (1.27–2.4; 4.2), the need for a single mind (2.2, 5; 4.2) and the sharing of common enemies (1.27–30; 3.2, 17–19).⁴¹⁰ That Philippians also contains significant elements of moral instruction is not in question: two large hortatory sections (1.27–2.18 and 3.1–4.3) take up a large part of the letter. Consistent with the goal of Greco-Roman letters of exhortation (which often took place in the context of friendship)⁴¹¹ the aim of this hortatory material is to advocate a certain kind of behaviour and deprecate another, and this is evident in Paul’s explicit appeal throughout the letter to exemplary paradigms (Christ, 2.6–11; Timothy, 2.20–22; Epaphroditus, 2.29–30; and Paul himself, 3.4–14).⁴¹²

However, critics argue that while some of the phraseology that is characteristic of Greco-Roman friendship is found in Philippians, Paul does not actually make explicit reference, nor unambiguous allusion, to friendship; moreover, he does not use here (nor in any other letter) the terms *φίλος/φιλία*.⁴¹³ In addition, the social equality that was thought to be ideal in friendship—between two males of equal standing—is lacking; Paul’s seniority in the relationship is implicit throughout the letter.⁴¹⁴ Also, there is no parallel example of one person entering into a friendship with a group of people, as is the case here.⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, while one might argue that a Greco-Roman paradigm of friendship can shed light on some aspects of the two-way relational dynamics between Paul and his readers, it does not account for one factor that some interpreters see as being central to the understanding of Paul’s relationship with the Philippians—God’s presence in it.⁴¹⁶ On balance, Bockmuehl is probably correct in his assessment: “Philippians certainly manifests many informal aspects of a warm human friendship ...

⁴¹⁰ As Cousar, *Philippians*, 12, summarizes; see also Stowers, “Friends,” 108–114; Fee, *Philippians*, 5–6, 12–14; Hansen, *Philippians*, 8–11.

⁴¹¹ On this see Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 91–112; Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 79–80 and passim.

⁴¹² Fee, *Philippians*, 11–12.

⁴¹³ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 34; Silva, *Philippians*, 19. However the absence of explicit friendship terms in Paul has been variously explained; for a summary see Reumann, *Philippians*, 684.

⁴¹⁴ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 34–35. However, one may argue that friendship was found also among social unequals; on this see David E. Briones, *Paul’s Financial Policy: A Socio-Theological Approach*, LNTS 494 (London: T&T Clark, 2013), 75–77.

⁴¹⁵ Osiek, *Philippians*, 24.

⁴¹⁶ However, Fee seems fully cognizant of this possible objection. On his reading, Philippians is an especially Pauline and therefore intensely Christian expression of a “hortatory letter of friendship,” one in which first-century epistolary conventions are mere scaffolding for Paul, in whose hands friendship is thus radically transformed from a two-way bond to a three-way bond—between him, the Philippians, and Christ; see *Philippians*, 12–14.

That recognition alone, however, does not suffice to confirm the requisite social and epistolary conventions of Greco-Roman *philia*.⁴¹⁷

3.1.3.b. *A Letter of Consolation*

An interesting proposal comes from Paul Holloway, who situates Philippians within the literature and practice of consolation in antiquity. He argues that Philippians should be seen in the light of ancient consolers, who “understood their primary task to be not one of sharing in the grief of others, but one of removing that grief by rational argument and frank exhortation.”⁴¹⁸ For Holloway, Paul diagnoses the chief problem at Philippi to be discouragement; his primary purpose in writing is thus to console the Philippians that things were going much better than they imagined.⁴¹⁹ To correct their sense of distress and restore them to responsible behaviour, Paul exploits two key consolatory motifs: the distinction between things that matter and things that do not (he introduces the “adiaphora” topos at 1.10: *εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα*), and the disposition of “joy” (*χαρά*), which characterized the wise person in both good times and bad.⁴²⁰ Although Holloway identifies Philippians in formal terms as a “letter of consolation,” his focus is not so much on the matter of form but on broader questions of function and content. As such, he is open to fuller descriptions of the genre of Philippians, and accepts that the letter can be discussed helpfully in terms of “other modalities,” such as a letter of friendship (since it was certainly the duty of friends to console one another) or a kind of family letter; however, these descriptions identify what are secondary modes of discourse.⁴²¹

3.1.3.c. *Other Proposals and Conclusion*

Though the above proposals are inconclusive, in my view they remain among the most promising. To be sure, other approaches have been championed. These include efforts to locate and understand Paul’s implied relationship with the Philippians within the milieu of societal conventions and structures, such as mutual benefaction,⁴²² the

⁴¹⁷ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 35. See also the discussion and similar conclusion in Reumann, *Philippians*, 678–685.

⁴¹⁸ Holloway, *Consolation*, 1. He offers a useful survey of the genre of ancient consolation in 55–74.

⁴¹⁹ Holloway, *Consolation*, 45–48.

⁴²⁰ Holloway, *Consolation*, 74–83, 87–145.

⁴²¹ Holloway, *Consolation*, 2.

⁴²² Marshall, *Enmity*, 157–164; White, “Morality.”

Roman *societas*,⁴²³ or patron-client relationships.⁴²⁴ Other scholars have interpreted Philippians against the background of ancient rhetoric,⁴²⁵ or even as a *praemeditatio mortis*.⁴²⁶ However, just as efforts to classify Philippians on the basis of literary genre have proven ambiguous, attempts to read it in the light of ancient social conventions or rhetoric have been equally inconclusive. Arguing that many of these highly precise models are proving less than helpful as tools for the analysis of Philippians, not least because few of them tend to agree, Bockmuehl wisely pleads for a cautious and light-handed application of all these approaches⁴²⁷—an approach that this study will adopt.

3.1.4. Distinctives

3.1.4.a. Lexical Distinctives

The profiling of a document’s character using statistics based on vocabulary can generate more than merely superficial results and provide useful clues about the author’s priorities, if one proceeds with discrimination and due regard for the overarching themes of the piece of writing. There are in Philippians some terms that occur with disproportionate frequency. Most noticeable is the remarkable frequency of *χαρά* and its verbal cognates, which are found a total of sixteen times in Philippians⁴²⁸ (more than anywhere else in Paul), out of a total of some fifty occurrences in the undisputed Pauline letters;⁴²⁹ this is a clear indication of the importance of joy in Paul’s thinking.⁴³⁰ Two verbs that relate to the activity and disposition of the mind occur also

⁴²³ J. Paul Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ: Christian Community and Commitment in Light of Roman Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980). See recently also Julien M. Ogereau, *Paul’s Koinonia with the Philippians: A Socio-Historical Investigation of a Pauline Economic Partnership*, WUNT 2.377 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), who affirms Sampley’s views and finds that Paul and the Philippians had formed a financial partnership “where they cooperated in his missionary activities by providing material and financial resources, while he performed the work of ministry” (15).

⁴²⁴ E.g. Bormann, *Philippi*, 187–217.

⁴²⁵ E.g. Watson, “Rhetorical Analysis”; Bloomquist, *Function of Suffering*. See the discussion in Hansen, *Philippians*, 12–15.

⁴²⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *Studies in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, WUNT 343 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 133–154, esp. 153.

⁴²⁷ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 39; see also 34–40 for a shrewd assessment of these approaches.

⁴²⁸ In noun form: *χαρᾶς* (1.4); *χαράν* (1.25); *χαράν* (2.2); *χαρᾶς* (2.29); *χαρά* (4.1). In verbal form: *χαίρω*, *χαρήσομαι* (1.18); *χαίρω*, *συγχαίρω* (2.17); *χαίρετε*, *συγχαίρετε* (2.18); *χαρήτε* (2.28); *χαίρετε* (3.1); *χαίρετε* (twice) (4.4); *ἐχάρην* (4.10).

⁴²⁹ Hans Conzelmann, “*χαίρω*, *χαρά*, *συγχαίρω*,” *TDNT* 9.359–372; William G. Morrice, “Joy,” *DPL* 511–512.

⁴³⁰ N. T. Wright rightly notes that though it is sometimes claimed that there is theological significance in the etymological proximity between *χαρά* and *χάρις*, the NT writers themselves do not make this link explicit; thus we must be wary of going beyond the usual rule of locating the meaning of a word in its context and not in its history or family resemblances; “Joy,” 47.

with unusual frequency: *φρονέω* (ten times;⁴³¹ otherwise used only twelve times in the undisputed Pauline letters, nine of which are in Romans), and *ἡγέομαι* (six times;⁴³² elsewhere only three times in the undisputed Paulines).

3.1.4.b. Thematic Distinctives

It has become something of a hackneyed commonplace to speak of Philippians as a “letter of joy,” as if it was written to an exemplary church that did not have to deal with any serious problems. The obvious affection that unites Paul and his readers only reinforces this jejune notion in the popular Christian imagination. This may have led to a downplaying of both the nature of the problems at Philippi and the theological content of the letter. A second factor pulls in a different direction, but has also led to potential misunderstanding about Paul’s central concerns: so much attention has been given to the Christ poem of Phil. 2:6–11 in contemporary NT scholarship—which tends to focus on the pre-Pauline origins of the passage and thus isolate it from its literary context—that questions of christology may have obscured other important features of the letter.⁴³³

It becomes apparent, when the Christ poem is seen in its context, that its point here is to showcase the pattern of selflessness and humility to which the Philippians must be conformed if they are to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (1.27). For this to happen the Philippians need to have the correct mindset; that this is a major concern for Paul is shown in his repeated use of *φρονέω*.⁴³⁴ He first models for his readers what it means to think rightly about others (1.7), and then uses the same verb at several key points: to encourage them towards unity in Christ (2.2), to mandate the same self-abasing attitude that Christ displayed (2.5), and to emphasize the contrast between mature thought and its opposite (3.15, 19). Paul adjures Euodia and Syntyche to think the same things in the Lord (4.2). His final use of the verb is in connection with the commendable attitude of the Philippians towards him (4.10). To further impress on the reader the significance of all this, Paul uses comparable terms throughout: *ἡγέομαι* (see n.432), *σκοπέω* (2.4; 3.17), and *λογίζομαι* (3.13, 4.8). There is also an abundance of

⁴³¹ *φρονεῖν* (1.7); *φρονῆτε*, *φρονοῦντες* (2.2); *φρονεῖτε* (2.5); *φρονῶμεν*, *φρονεῖτε* (3.15); *φρονοῦντες* (3.19); *φρονεῖν* (4.2); *φρονεῖν*, *ἐφρονεῖτε* (4.10).

⁴³² *ἡγούμενοι* (2.3); *ἡγήσατο* (2.6); *ἡγησάμην* (2.25); *ἡγημαι* (3.7); *ἡγοῦμαι* (twice) (3.8).

⁴³³ Silva, *Philippians*, 20–21.

⁴³⁴ Wayne Meeks has drawn attention to Paul’s frequent use of *φρονέω* in Philippians—a frequency comparable only with the latter part of his letter to the Romans; “The Man from Heaven in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians,” in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays*, ed. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 109–110.

“knowledge” terminology throughout the letter: most notably in 1.9–10, where Paul prays that the Philippians’ love may increasingly abound *ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα*; and in 3.8–10, where Paul speaks of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ (*τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*) and expresses his desire to know Christ more fully (*γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ*). Paul also employs military and athletic imagery to express the notion of mental determination (1.27, 30; 3.12–14; 4.1–3). It is clear that in Philippians there is a strong focus on the mind and on right thinking.⁴³⁵

The reason for this emphasis is that the faith of the believers and its practical expression are being stymied by much adversity and disunity. Accordingly, Paul emphasizes the need to stand firm (1.27–28; 4.1) and persevere (3.13–15); right thinking about Christian truth will lead to a repositioning of the ways in which suffering and opposition are faced. Specifically, Paul reminds the Philippians of their sure future with its eschatological victory—a major motif running through the letter, and one that is seldom noted, according to Fee.⁴³⁶ The end result is joy: indeed, the motif of joy in Philippians is pervasive, more so than in any other Pauline letter. The importance of this theme is not accidental: 2 Cor 8.1–2 reveals that joy in the midst of great affliction is a hallmark of the Macedonian churches (cf. 1 Thess 1.6, in which Paul recalls how the gospel was received in Thessalonica *ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς πνεύματος ἁγίου*).

Our broad analysis thus far already yields some tantalizing clues about what joy is, for Paul: it seems that has something to do with correct thinking, and the relativization of present suffering in the light of eschatological hope. Since suffering is, in this sense, a foil for joy, it is helpful for our purposes to specify in some detail the suffering that Paul refers to. The way in which various descriptions of suffering (Paul’s, his co-workers’, the Philippians’, and Christ’s) are woven into the letter—and also tied together—indicates that it is for Paul an important motif. Hence we now turn our attention to suffering in Philippians, before we investigate what Paul says about joy.

⁴³⁵ I am indebted to the insights of Silva, *Philippians*, 21.

⁴³⁶ Fee, *Philippians*, 30.

3.2. Suffering in Philippians

3.2.1. Paul's Suffering

3.2.1.a. Paul in Prison (Phil 1.7, 13–14, 17)

The notion of suffering makes its first appearance early in the letter, in the middle of Paul's thanksgiving for the Philippians' partnership in the gospel (1.3–8).⁴³⁷ Paul's speaking of "chains" (*δεσμοί*, 1.7) indicates that he is under some form of custody.⁴³⁸ He mentions these chains again in 1.13–14, 17; and probably refers again to his detention in 4.4 when he commends the Philippians for sharing in his "affliction" (*πλήν καλῶς ἐποίησατε συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει*; in this regard, it is instructive that earlier in 1.17 the notion of *θλίψις* is linked with *δεσμοί*). Fee argues that although "chains" could possibly be a metonymy for imprisonment as such,⁴³⁹ it is most likely that Paul was literally chained to his guards, since imprisonment without the use of chains was a concession to high status.⁴⁴⁰ Some scholars have suggested, on the basis of the account in Acts 28.30–31 (which indicates that for a length of time Paul, in Rome, was undergoing a less severe form of remand), that at the time of writing to the Philippians, Paul was certainly chained to a guard—but under house arrest.⁴⁴¹

However, though we cannot be certain about the precise mode of Paul's confinement at this time, on balance the language and structure of communication of the letter seem to indicate that he was incarcerated in prison.⁴⁴² In general, the Roman penal system did not seek to rehabilitate people: prisons were basically holding tanks where people were detained awaiting trial or execution, and conditions of life in prison were

⁴³⁷ For an overview of the historical interpretation of the motif of suffering in Philippians, see Bloomquist, *Function of Suffering*, 18–70.

⁴³⁸ Lohmeyer, *Briefe*, sees here one of many indications of persecution and impending martyrdom in Philippians. Though Lohmeyer's perspective of Philippians as a disquisition on the experience of martyrdom is widely criticized for going beyond the realities depicted in the letter and overemphasizing suffering at the expense of other motifs, his approach highlights the pervasiveness of the language of suffering in the letter. See Bloomquist, *Function of Suffering*, 50–52, for an analysis of Lohmeyer's approach.

⁴³⁹ BDAG 219.

⁴⁴⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 92, drawing on the work of Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting 3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 25–28.

⁴⁴¹ So most recently Witherington, *Philippians*, 9–10. But such a reading may owe too much to Acts 28.30–31; see Angela Standhartinger, "Letter from Prison as Hidden Transcript: What It Tells Us about the People at Philippi," in *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 111–112. For a reconstruction of Paul's custody in Rome, see Rapske, *Custody*, 177–191, 227–242.

⁴⁴² So e.g. Standhartinger, "Letter," 124–130, noting the presence of coded references to people and situations, e.g. the unnamed "loyal companion" (4.3), in order to lessen the dangers of writing in prison.

often gruesome.⁴⁴³ The support and material help of friends was crucial,⁴⁴⁴ but the stigma associated with imprisonment made it socially costly, if not downright dangerous, to identify publicly with a prisoner.⁴⁴⁵ In short, incarceration in any form was grim and degrading; Fee is right to say that the repetition of the phrase “my chains” (1.7, 13–14, 17) indicates that Paul is smarting under the imprisonment.⁴⁴⁶

3.2.1.b. *The Actions of Paul’s Rivals (Phil 1.15–17)*

Furthermore, while Paul’s confinement has catalyzed an increasingly strong sense of evangelistic fervour among the believers who have been inspired by his example of courage and conviction (1.14; see also 1.16, where Paul seems to draw a connection between his present sufferings and “the defence of the gospel”), it has also created an opportunity for his rivals to achieve their own goals by capitalizing on his misfortunes. They proclaim Christ, but their motives stem from envy and rivalry (*διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν*, 1.15), unlike others who do so out of goodwill towards Paul (*δι’ εὐδοκίαν*, 1.15).⁴⁴⁷ Driven by their own selfish ambitions and insincere in their aims, they are more than willing to allow further distress to fall upon Paul (*οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἄγνως, οἰόμενοι θλιῦσιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου*, 1.17).⁴⁴⁸ It seems accurate to think, therefore, that the already considerable physical suffering and mental distress resulting from Paul’s imprisonment are being compounded by the emotional pain wreaked upon him through the actions of his rivals.

⁴⁴³ On the purposes and varieties of custody in the Roman world, see Rapske, *Custody*, 10–35; Craig S. Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul’s Imprisonments*, JSNTSup 130 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 28–32; Richard J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 37–43. On conditions in prison, see Rapske, *Custody*, 196–225; Wansink, *Chained*, 33–40, 44–95.

⁴⁴⁴ Cassidy, *Paul in Chains*, 48–51; Rapske, *Custody*, 370–388.

⁴⁴⁵ Rapske, *Custody*, 293–294, 388–392.

⁴⁴⁶ Fee, *Philippians*, 92.

⁴⁴⁷ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 78–79, detects in the phrase *δι’ εὐδοκίαν* the possibility that Paul here refers to the desire of the second group of evangelists to pursue the divine will, rather than their wish to show him some sort of goodwill. His argument, based on the contemporary usage of *εὐδοκία* elsewhere, does not lack cogency; however, it perhaps downplays too much the juxtaposition of the phrases *διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν* and *δι’ εὐδοκίαν*, which surely has a contrastive function in terms of emphasizing two antithetical attitudes towards Paul and his ministry.

⁴⁴⁸ On the precise identity of this group of evangelists who are opposed to Paul, see the proposals in Reumann, *Philippians*, 202–207.

3.2.1.c. Paul's Common Suffering with the Philippians (Phil 2.17–18)

Paul returns to a discussion of his suffering at 2.17–18. In ancient Mediterranean religious practice, sacrifices were often completed with a libation or drink offering.⁴⁴⁹ Paul is thus using a familiar metaphor in describing his suffering as a libation that is “poured out” onto the “sacrificial service” of the Philippians’ faith (*Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν*, 2.17).⁴⁵⁰ Commentators are divided as to whether Paul is drawing on a pagan or a Jewish cultic background,⁴⁵¹ but the question need not detain us. In either case, it is evident that for Paul, the Philippians’ faith constitutes a sacrifice to God, with his own ministry being the accompanying drink offering.⁴⁵²

There is some debate concerning Paul’s self-description as a libation: is he referring generally to his ongoing missionary work, including his present suffering, or specifically to the eventuality of martyrdom?⁴⁵³ Some interpreters find it likely that Paul’s imagery here incorporates the supposition of a possibility of martyrdom. Hansen, for example, argues that the present tense *σπένδομαι* (2.17) is used in a concessive clause (*εἰ καὶ*, “even if, although”) to portray a real possibility, i.e., “even if I am martyred.”⁴⁵⁴ Further, other uses of *σπένδω* (2 Tim 3.6 and *Ign. Rom* 2.2) demonstrate that the verb’s cultic associations made it suitable for use with reference to imminent martyrdom.⁴⁵⁵ It is also noteworthy that Paul has alluded to the possibility of martyrdom earlier at 1.20–21 and will do so again at 3.10.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁴⁹ See e.g. Num 28.7; Plutarch, *Arist.* 21.2–5.

⁴⁵⁰ The verb *σπένδω* means “offer as a libation/drink offering” (BDAG 937) and in the NT appears only here and in 2 Tim 4.6, both in the passive and employed figuratively. On the use of *σπένδω* as a cultic term in the Hellenistic world, see Otto Michel, “*σπένδομαι*,” *TDNT* 7.528–536; A. M. Denis, “La fonction apostolique et la liturgie en Esprit. Étude thématique des métaphores paulinières du culte nouveau,” *RSPT* 42 (1958): 631–634. On its use in the LXX together with the cognate noun *σπονδή*, see Reumann, *Philippians*, 398.

⁴⁵¹ See Reumann, *Philippians*, 397–398.

⁴⁵² Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 160. For a discussion of the possible meanings of the Philippians’ “sacrifice and service,” see esp. Reumann, *Philippians*, 398–401. Reumann concludes by noting that both terms within the hendiadys had cultic applications, Greco-Roman and Jewish, and also wider non-cultic applications; there is no consensus on which term dominates. Even so, along with several other interpreters (e.g. Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 148), he takes *λειτουργία* as basic and *θυσία* as adjectival; hence, “sacrificial service.”

⁴⁵³ See the useful overview in Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, EGGNT (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2015), 140–141.

⁴⁵⁴ Hansen, *Philippians*, 188.

⁴⁵⁵ Hansen, *Philippians*, 188; Silva, *Philippians*, 128. See also J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 6th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1881), 118–119, who in connection with this cites the examples of Seneca and Thrasea who used similar metaphors when at the point of death (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.64; 16.35).

⁴⁵⁶ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 161.

However, others do not see here any allusion to Paul's death. Hawthorne and Martin note that while libation accompanies most sacrifices in both the Greek world and Jewish cultus, "never in the Greek bible nor in the Hellenistic world is this term ever used to denote libations of blood."⁴⁵⁷ Moreover, the present tense, *σπένδομαι*, indicates that Paul sees his ministry as ongoing and not one that will terminate prematurely in death. The libation metaphor is to be understood in conjunction with the earlier two metaphors of running and labouring (2.16) as describing the rigours of his current apostolic activities. Hence when Paul uses the libation metaphor, he does not have death in mind; indeed, within a few sentences, in 2.24, he confidently assures the Philippians of a future visit to them.⁴⁵⁸ Rather, "he is picturesquely referring to his sufferings as an apostle"; these sufferings "act as a seal on whatever sacrifice the Philippians may make, just as a libation completes any offering made to God."⁴⁵⁹ Fee reaches a similar conclusion. On the basis that 2.14–18 serves with 1.27–30 as an *inclusio*, he argues that the libation metaphor most likely refers to the present suffering mentioned in 1.30 (which he takes to be imprisonment). As Fee puts it: "Thus he [Paul] is suggesting that his imprisonment, besides being a "drink offering" to the Lord, is to be understood as his part of their common suffering, the "drink offering" poured out in conjunction with their 'sacrifice.'"⁴⁶⁰

Clearly, there is no consensus on the matter. However, Bockmuehl offers a helpfully conciliatory perspective: in his opinion, Paul most likely takes a comprehensive view of things: his work and ministry—whether in life or in death—is offered to God as a complement to the sacrifice of the Philippians.⁴⁶¹ In a similar way, Reumann interprets the "libation" motif as a premise about Paul's long-time apostolic, missionary experience and his giving of himself, and not just possible martyrdom to come.⁴⁶² As we shall see below, for Paul as for the Philippians, such a view is cause indeed for mutual joy (2.17–18). For now, however, we should note that Paul is clearly

⁴⁵⁷ Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 149, citing Jean-François Collange, *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians*, trans. A. W. Heathcote (London: Epworth, 1979), 113 (following Denis, "La fonction," 630–645).

⁴⁵⁸ Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 149. Fee, *Philippians*, 253, argues that Paul nowhere in the larger context of the letter suggests (or even hints) that he expects his imprisonment to end in death: he might yearn that it did (1.23), but actually expects to be vindicated (1.19–20), and that out of divine necessity he will live, and revisit them (1.24–26; 2.24).

⁴⁵⁹ Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 149.

⁴⁶⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 254.

⁴⁶¹ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 161–162.

⁴⁶² Reumann, *Philippians*, 415.

tying his own experience of suffering—even unto death, if need be—to that of the Philippians in a very specific way: as partners in the work of the gospel.

3.2.2. The Philippians' Suffering (Phil 1.27–30)

From 1.27–30 it is clear that the Philippian believers are also experiencing some form of adversity. Here, Paul exhorts them to live worthily of the gospel of Christ and to stand firm together in their faith (1.27), and not to be intimidated in any way by those who oppose them (*μη̄ πτυρόμενοι ἐν μηδενὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντικειμένων*, 1.28). Some commentators discern here the presence of pagan opposition: the Philippians' adversaries come from outside the Christian community, since they are destined for “destruction” (*ἀπώλεια*, 1.28); and they are possibly linked with the Roman civic authorities, since they are of the same kind as those who confronted Paul when he first came to Philippi (1.30; see also Acts 16.19–39).⁴⁶³ Others identify the *ἀντικειμένοι* with the Judaizers, since this is the group that Paul appears to be greatly concerned about elsewhere (3.2).⁴⁶⁴ This latter proposal is much the weaker of the two: the context (1.27–30) indicates actual suffering, and it is difficult to imagine the Philippians putting tensions caused by the presence of false teachers into this category. Furthermore, *πτύρω*⁴⁶⁵ is much too forceful a choice of term to use to describe a response to false teaching; that danger is surely one of being persuaded rather than being panicked.⁴⁶⁶ However, whatever view one takes, the fact is that the Philippians are facing opposition; and according to Paul, the presence of this opposition is evidence (*ἔνδειξις*) of the Philippians' salvation (1.28). Paul provides a theological précis of why this is so,⁴⁶⁷ contextualizing their suffering firstly in terms of their relationship with Christ (1.29), and secondly in terms of their relationship with him (1.30).

In 1.29, Paul explains that to suffer for the sake of Christ is as much a gift of divine grace as it is to believe in Christ (*ὅτι ὑμῖν ἐχαρίσθη τὸ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν*, 1.29). Paul's markedly

⁴⁶³ E.g. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 100–101.

⁴⁶⁴ E.g. Silva, *Philippians*, 82–83.

⁴⁶⁵ Hapax legomenon in the NT. It occurs almost always in the passive, and means “let oneself be intimidated, be frightened, terrified” (BDAG 895). Thus it can denote the panicked stampede of startled horses; Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 106.

⁴⁶⁶ See Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, SNTSMS 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81–82; also Fee, *Philippians*, 167 n.50.

⁴⁶⁷ As Fee, *Philippians*, 170 n.59 observes, this is similar to the kind of thing Paul has done elsewhere, e.g. 1 Thess 3.2–3; 2 Cor 4.17–18; Rom 5.3–4; 8.17–18.

christological emphasis in describing their suffering⁴⁶⁸ indicates that he is not offering encouragement about suffering in general. Rather, he is reminding believers that it is not just their lot but their privilege “to suffer for the sake of Christ” (*τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν*)⁴⁶⁹ in a world that is hostile to God; indeed, it is precisely because their believing in Christ and their suffering for his sake have both been “graciously given” (*ἐχαρίσθη*)⁴⁷⁰ by God that they can be assured that whatever they are undergoing is a sure sign of their future salvation.⁴⁷¹

Paul augments these comments on suffering by calling attention to the parallels between the Philippians’ experiences and his own (1.30). Already in 1.7 he had referred to them as his co-participants in the grace of God—the grace manifested in his imprisonment and in the defence and propagation of the gospel (*ἐν τε τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπολογία καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου συγκοινωνοῦς μου τῆς χάριτος πάντας ὑμᾶς ὄντας*); that he could address them in this way demonstrates their resolute solidarity with him in his gospel mission and hence also in his suffering. Now he explicitly correlates their suffering to his: they and he are engaged in the very same struggle (*τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες*, 1.30). As he suffers, so they suffer. Since Paul is suffering at the hands of the Roman authorities, the implication may be that the Philippians are being troubled likewise by them.⁴⁷² Some commentators assert that the point of the comparison is not the similarity of the circumstances, but their shared theological rubric: they were all part of the one same apostolic *ἀγών*.⁴⁷³ However, even if the parallel is limited to this level of abstraction (a view which I am not fully persuaded by), Paul’s incorporation of the Philippian believers into his sphere of suffering demonstrates clearly that he sees them going through harsh treatment on behalf of the gospel, as he does. As such, a paradigmatic understanding of the narrative of 1.12–26 is surely in view (cf. 1.30: *οἶόν εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί*). Also, their common experience for the sake of Christ represents something of the “participation in his sufferings” of which Paul goes on to speak in 3.10.

⁴⁶⁸ On this see further Fee, *Philippians*, 171, esp. n.63.

⁴⁶⁹ Hellerman, *Philippians*, 86, notes that *ὑπὲρ*, when used with verbs of suffering, gives the reason for it; see also BDAG 1031.

⁴⁷⁰ BDAG 1078: *χαρίζομαι*, “to give freely as a favour, give graciously.”

⁴⁷¹ “God has granted you the high privilege of suffering for Christ; this is the surest sign, that He looks upon you with favour”; Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 106.

⁴⁷² Fee, *Philippians*, 172; similarly, Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 103.

⁴⁷³ Joachim Gnilka, *Der Philipperbrief*, HThKNT 10.3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 102; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 77.

3.2.3. Christ's Suffering (Phil 2.5–11)

We turn our attention, next, to the suffering of Christ. An extraordinary amount of scholarship has centred on the famous encomium to Christ of 2.5–11. Our interest, however, lies solely in how Paul uses this passage in its epistolary context to draw out the motif of suffering. As such, I am assuming that the text is a unity; moreover, concerns about its religious origin and authorship are of only secondary importance to my inquiry.⁴⁷⁴ Even if Paul merely quotes the passage, Morna Hooker argues most reasonably that “even if the material is non-Pauline, we may expect Paul himself to have interpreted and used it in a Pauline manner.”⁴⁷⁵

Paul launches into the hymn with an opening imperative that serves a double purpose: it both sums up the habits of reasoning and behaviour which he has just outlined to the Philippians at 2.2–4 and emphasizes the paradigmatic nature of the *φρόνησις* of Christ, the contours which he is about to describe: *Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* (2.5).⁴⁷⁶ In no uncertain terms Paul exhorts his readers to adopt the very mindset of Christ⁴⁷⁷—the possession and practical expression of which will result in faithful living that is “worthy of the gospel” (1.27) and the assurance of salvation in the face of opposition (1.28), as the Philippians apply their knowledge of the gospel to the specific circumstances that they find themselves in. As Fowl rightly observes: “Within this scheme the story of Christ narrated in 2.6–11 functions as an exemplar, a

⁴⁷⁴ Many scholars, following the seminal work of Ernst Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil 2.5–11*, SHAW, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Jahrgang 1927–1928, 4. Abhandlung, 18 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1928), take the passage to be a pre-Pauline hymn; see esp. Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2.5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983). The various views concerning the inter-related issues of background and authorship are helpfully summarized in Fee, *Philippians*, 43–46.

⁴⁷⁵ Morna D. Hooker, “Philippians 2:6–11,” in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 152.

⁴⁷⁶ Meeks argues that “this letter’s most comprehensive purpose is the shaping of a Christian *phronēsis*, a practical moral reasoning that is ‘conformed to [Christ’s] death’ in hope of his resurrection”; see “Man from Heaven,” 110.

⁴⁷⁷ That the *φρόνησις* of Christ is also to be that of the Philippians is made even clearer by some further structural parallels that Paul composes: *ἠγούμενοι* (2.3) / *ἠγήσατο* (2.6b); *μηδὲν ... μηδὲ ... ἀλλὰ* (2.3), *μη ... ἀλλὰ* (2.4) / *οὐχ ... ἀλλὰ* (2.6b, 7a). As Bertschmann notes, the presence of these parallels “makes it even clearer that the point of correspondence between the Philippians and Christ which Paul wants to point out is one of *attitude*. The unselfish behaviour of Christ is contrasted with the potentially selfish behaviour of the Philippians and vice versa” (*Bowing Before Christ - Nodding to the State?: Reading Paul Politically with Oliver O’Donovan and John Howard Yoder*, LNTS 502 [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014], 96, emphasis original).

concrete expression of a shared norm from which Paul and the Philippians can make analogical judgments about how they should live.”⁴⁷⁸

One primary way in which Christ functions as an exemplar in his *φρόνησις* lies in his willingness to embrace abasement, suffering, and even an ignominious death for the benefit of others (2.6–8). As a slave (*δοῦλος*, 2.7), Christ enters human history without rights or privileges; instead, he is the servant of all.⁴⁷⁹ Clearly, 2.3–4 is in view: Christ exhibits and indeed exemplifies, in superlative fashion, the spirit of self-abnegation and selflessness of mind and behaviour that the Philippian believers are urged to have. Amongst other things, then, the Christ poem highlights that the one who truly follows Christ will also willingly take on the role of a slave for the sake of others. As Fee concisely expresses it: “the Philippians are to pursue the mindset of the one who as God emptied himself and as man humbled himself, even to death on the cross.”⁴⁸⁰ The basic paradigmatic concern of the Christ poem, found in 2.6–8, thus has to do with “the pattern of service provided by Jesus in his dying.”⁴⁸¹

However, as Paul goes on also to emphasize, the death of Christ is not the end of the story. The poem concludes on a stunning note of exaltation, as Christ is bestowed with the title of *κύριος* and accorded universal worship (2.9–11).⁴⁸² Paul thus affirms the rightness of the paradigm to which he has called the Philippians, while at the same time

⁴⁷⁸ Stephen E. Fowl, “Christology and Ethics in Philippians 2:5–11,” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 145–146. See also his *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul: An Analysis of the Hymnic Material in the Pauline Corpus*, JSNTSup 36 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 92–96, 198–207, for an account of analogy as the way in which *phronēsis* operates.

⁴⁷⁹ Only here in his letters does Paul use *δοῦλος* to specify Christ. On the basis of certain conceptual and linguistic affinities, scholars often posit a connection between the *δοῦλος* here and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah; see e.g. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 680–684, though some would demur, e.g. Reumann, *Philippians*, 360–361. However, whether or not such a link can be established, the key point remains the same: Christ voluntarily gives up his divine privileges in order to serve as a slave, descending from the highest status to the lowest (Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 136).

⁴⁸⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 218 n.3.

⁴⁸¹ I. Howard Marshall, “The Theology of Philippians,” in *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*, by Karl P. Donfried and I. Howard Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 137.

⁴⁸² On the causal link between 2.6–8 and 9–11, see esp. Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, THNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 100–101. Fowl is correct to say that God’s exaltation of Christ displays something about God’s character: “Christ’s death on the cross is not the last word on the relationship between God and the Christ who both shares God’s glory and manifests the appearance of a servant in his incarnation and obedience. Christ’s willed obedience to God can truly display the glory of the God of Israel if that suffering is vindicated.” (101). As such, to read the causal link as a transaction where obedience is offered in exchange for exaltation is to miss the point (101).

highlighting the eschatological vindication that also awaits them as followers of Christ—a thought that runs throughout the letter.⁴⁸³

3.2.4. The Examples of Paul’s Co-workers (Phil 2.19–30)

Next, in 2.19–30, Paul turns his attention to Timothy and Epaphroditus, casting them as examples for the Philippians.⁴⁸⁴ Timothy is commended as one who is like-minded (*οὐδένα γὰρ ἔχω ἰσόψυχον*)⁴⁸⁵ (2.20a); lit. “I have no one of equal soul”) and who therefore, like Paul, manifests in his thinking a genuine concern for the welfare of the Philippians (2.20b–21); the context suggests that this concern has to do with how they are faring in the gospel mission in the face of growing opposition (1.27–30). Epaphroditus, too, is commended: though severely ill, he chose to put his life on the line in order to complete the task that was entrusted to him by the Philippian church, and thereby honour his commitment to them and to Paul (2.25–30).⁴⁸⁶ As such, Paul instructs the Philippians to receive him “in the Lord” with due honour and great joy (2.29), as one who has risked his life for “for the work of Christ” and been willing to give up his life on behalf of another.

In the latter part of chapter 2, then, the Philippian church is presented with three examples of the self-renouncing *φρόνησις* that Christ has and which is enjoined (2.5). There is Paul, who regards his life and ministry as an offering that accompanies the Philippians’ sacrifice. Timothy has served faithfully in the work of the gospel and shown a selfless concern for them. Finally, Epaphroditus’ devotion to the service of Christ has led him to jeopardize his life for the good of others. In two of these examples (Paul’s and Epaphroditus’) suffering for the sake of the gospel is described in explicit

⁴⁸³ See Fee, *Philippians*, 219.

⁴⁸⁴ Peter-Ben Smit rightly argues that although Timothy and Epaphroditus are introduced in the letter because Paul needs to tell the Philippians about his plans concerning the two men, it is reasonable to read his characterizations of them as *exempla*, since the surrounding context in which information is given about them is dominated by *exempla*: Paul has presented Christ’s example as a model for emulation, and his own *periautological exemplum* is about to come in ch.3 (*Paradigms of Being in Christ: A Study of the Epistle to the Philippians*, LNTS 476 [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013], 107–109). We would add that Paul has already described his attitude and actions in 1.12–26 in paradigmatic terms as well, via 1.30, as we saw earlier (see section 3.2.2).

⁴⁸⁵ Hapax legomenon in the NT. As Fee notes, attempts to give it a more precise nuance have not met with success (*Philippians*, 265 n.27).

⁴⁸⁶ The grammar at 2.30 indicates that Paul is saying that Epaphroditus came close to death in his willingness to put his life at risk in order to fulfil his mission. The main clause (*ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ μέχρι θανάτου ἤγγισεν*) is modified by a participial clause (*παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ*) that is connected to a purpose clause (*ἵνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρὸς με λειτουργίας*).

terms; in Timothy's ministry, it is implicit—but is not unreasonable, on the basis of the evidence, to read into his example a willingness to suffer likewise for the same cause.

3.2.5. Conclusion

The motif of suffering is threaded right through the letter. However, this suffering—that which Paul is himself undergoing and gives voice to, and which he also describes in the lives of others—is not some generalised, catch-all notion of mental or physical distress. It refers instead to suffering that is borne for the sake of Christ and his gospel. Paul sets up this suffering as a correlative of faith in Christ: both are “graciously given” (1.29) by God and are therefore integral to his divine purposes in the life of the believer. For Paul, the presence of such suffering is evidence of the Philippians' salvation, because the God who has granted to them the gift of salvation has thereby also graced them to be Christ's people in the world, which entails suffering for his sake. As Paul goes on to demonstrate in 2.5–11, Christ's own death and resurrection prefigures and provides the warrant for the experiences of those who follow him. Thus believers are to live (and suffer) for the sake of Christ who himself lived (and suffered) for the sake of this world; in this way, they—as with their Lord—move from present suffering to future glorification.

Paul thus looks to Christ as the ultimate paradigm: in possessing a totally selfless mindset and by being willing to suffer and even die for the sake of another, Christ advances the gospel and receives eschatological vindication. By setting up himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as exemplars, Paul teaches the Philippians that those who pattern their thinking and behaviour after that of Christ will likewise advance his gospel and receive that same prize at the parousia. Suffering for the sake of Christ is thus the harbinger of resurrection glory. However, the picture of suffering as Paul paints it is not yet complete. For while it is the lot of the believer in this age to bear suffering for the sake of Christ, along with that suffering there can also be the experience of joy in Christ—which in a very profound way signals the believer's entry into the eschatological practice of life in the age to come.⁴⁸⁷ Hence, it is not surprising that in the course of the letter suffering is often articulated with joy. We will now investigate in detail Paul's account of joy in Philippians.

⁴⁸⁷ Wright, “Joy,” 54–55.

3.3. Joy: Exegetical Considerations

3.3.1. Joy in Partnership in the Gospel (Phil 1.3–5; 2.28–30; 4.10–19)

Paul’s first mention of joy occurs within the introductory thanksgiving, where he tells the Philippians that he thanks God each time he remembers them (1.3), and that his prayers for them are always made “with joy” (*μετὰ χαρᾶς*, 1.4). These thankful remembrances and the prayers of joy that accompany them have their foundation *ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς*⁴⁸⁸ *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν* (1.5); Paul’s joy thus reflects a profound partnership in the spread of the gospel that he has shared with the Philippian church since the beginning of his missionary endeavours in Macedonia. In the NT the phrase *κοινωνία ... εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* is unique to Philippians; Paul’s use of it here defines his relationship with them early on and removes all doubt as to the character of their partnership: it is a partnership in the gospel’s advancement.⁴⁸⁹ This partnership is certainly “spiritual” in nature (in that it has its basis in Paul’s and the Philippians’ shared theological understanding of God and his work),⁴⁹⁰ but it also finds expression in concrete, material terms, both in the task of evangelism and in the matter of finances.⁴⁹¹ More than once, the Philippians have sent pecuniary aid to Paul to help him to meet his needs; by so doing they have demonstrated their backing of Paul’s ministry and their solidarity with him in his troubles (4.14–16). Most recently, their ongoing support has been shown again in their sending of Epaphroditus to Paul with a monetary gift and, presumably, also to be of general help to him (4.18; cf. 2.25–30).

Apparently very touched by the Philippians’ gift—which he regards as a renewed and concrete expression of their concern for his welfare—Paul expresses great joy (*Ἐχάρην*⁴⁹² *δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ μεγάλως ὅτι ἤδη ποτὲ ἀνεθάλετε*⁴⁹³ *τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν*,

⁴⁸⁸ The Greek *εἰς* has here the sense of “unto,” i.e. “with the furtherance of the gospel in view”; Fee, *Philippians*, 81 n.46.

⁴⁸⁹ Peterman, *Gift*, 100–101.

⁴⁹⁰ See 1.7, “my partners in God’s grace”; 2.1, “fellowship in the Spirit”; 3.10, “fellowship of his [Christ’s] sufferings.”

⁴⁹¹ See Barton, “Spirituality,” 185.

⁴⁹² On whether *ἐχάρην* is a genuine or epistolary aorist, see esp. the discussion in Fee, *Philippians*, 428 n.17. I am persuaded by Fee’s arguments for the former interpretation.

⁴⁹³ Grammatically the unusual verb *ἀναθάλλω* (lit. “to bloom again”; hapax legomenon in the NT) can be either intransitive, taking *τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν* as an accusative of reference (hence, “you flourished again in your concern for me”), or transitive, taking *τὸ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ φρονεῖν* as its direct object (“you caused your concern for me to flourish again”); both meanings are possible here and the difference is insignificant. See BDAG 63; Fee, *Philippians*, 429.

4.10).⁴⁹⁴ Interestingly, this is the only place where Paul quantifies his own experience of joy: the adverb *μεγάλως* appears only here in the NT, and its very uniqueness intensifies what he is saying about the depth of his feelings.⁴⁹⁵ It is clear that the concern (*φρονεῖν*) of the Philippians and the way it continues to find tangible expression draw from him immense joy. Peterman notes that the same expression “to rejoice greatly” is found in various papyri (e.g. P.Oxy. 1676 and 3356), where it serves to confirm the bond between the parties, and is typically used in connection with the receipt of a letter. In his view, Paul’s expression of joy here fits well with such expressions because it is based on contact with, and good news from, the Philippians, even though, in more specific terms, his joy is linked not so much to the receipt of a letter but to their remembrance of him.⁴⁹⁶ However, even so—and consistent with the exhortations of 3.1 and 4.4 (which we shall examine below, at section 3.3.3)—Paul’s joy is first and foremost *ἐν κυρίῳ*. Although the immediate occasion for Paul’s joy has to do with the Philippian church’s concern for him, its ultimate basis is “in the Lord,” since, among other things, it is he who has begun the good work in the Philippians (1.6) that has led to their work of partnership with him.⁴⁹⁷ Also, we should not read any hint of reproach in Paul’s words here in 4.10: the adverbial expression *ἤδη ποτέ* points to the conclusion of the hiatus in the Philippians’ giving rather than to any insinuation that it was long overdue⁴⁹⁸—a

⁴⁹⁴ Many have found it strange that Paul acknowledges in 4.10–20 gifts from Philippi without actually expressing thanks by using a verb like *εὐχαριστέω*; the various explanations offered for Paul’s “danklose Danke” are documented in Reumann, *Philippians*, 685–688. Among them is the view of Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philippenerbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), 43, that joy and thanks occupy the same semantic field; against this Peterman, *Gift*, 128–129, argues that Schenk relies too heavily on the etymological connection between *εὐχαριστέω* and *χαίρω* and on the fact that thanks to God in the Old Testament often takes the form of an expression of joy. Peterman’s own view (*Gift*, 74–83)—that first century social conventions between friends did not call for a statement of thanks—has won some scholarly endorsement (so e.g. Reumann, *Philippians*, 686–688), but is not without its detractors; see recently Briones, *Financial Policy*, 124–128, who argues that Paul’s so-called thankless thanks actually reflects a theological conviction that only God occupies the position of benefactor.

⁴⁹⁵ Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 261.

⁴⁹⁶ Peterman, *Gift*, 129.

⁴⁹⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth, 1991), 12, rightly draws attention to the recurrent theme in Philippians of Christian growth being simultaneously ascribed to God’s activity and to enrolling the believer’s own efforts. As such, as Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 64, expresses it (in reference to 1.6): “God’s good work in these Christians, then, is to make them active participants in the gospel and its benefits. This participation includes, but goes far beyond, their material contribution to Paul’s ministry.”

⁴⁹⁸ Contra F. F. Bruce, “St. Paul in Macedonia. 3. The Philippian Correspondence,” *BJRL* 63 (1980–1981): 274, who claims that the modern reader “finds it difficult not to discern a nuance of ‘And high time too!’” in these words.

point of view that is surely confirmed by the clause that follows, *ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ἐφρονεῖτε, ἡκαιρεῖσθε δέ*.⁴⁹⁹

This joy, then, has nothing to do with the satisfaction of his physical or financial needs, as 4.11a (*οὐχ ὅτι καθ' ὑστέρησιν λέγω*) makes clear.⁵⁰⁰ The reason (*γάρ*) that he gives for not speaking to the Philippians of these needs is that he has learned to be content in whatever circumstance he might find himself in (*ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον*⁵⁰¹ *ἐν οἷς εἰμι ἀτάρακτος εἶναι*, 4.11b). Long exegetical tradition has interpreted this clause in the light of Stoicism.⁵⁰² On this reading, the adjective *ἀτάρακτος*⁵⁰³ is freighted with Stoic introspection: the truly “contented” or “satisfied” person, being sufficient unto himself in all things, is one whose state of inner tranquility is never disturbed by the vicissitudes of life and the actions of others.⁵⁰⁴ Other scholars, however, argue that since *ἀτάρακτος* was also used widely to denote contentment in a general, non-technical sense, we cannot be sure that Paul was consciously drawing on Stoic sources.⁵⁰⁵ Malherbe locates Paul’s language outside the technical Stoic idea of *ἀτάρακτος* altogether, placing it instead in the context of ancient discussions of friendship.⁵⁰⁶

However, it seems to me that a careful consideration of the context of Paul’s language can help to settle the matter. When Paul later in 4.12 reveals that he has

⁴⁹⁹ The imperfect tenses of *ἐφρονεῖτε* and *ἡκαιρεῖσθε*, together with the intensive *καί* (which emphasizes the *φρονέω* repeated from the previous clause; on this see Thrall, *Greek Particles*, 90), imply strongly that the Philippians had all along been concerned for Paul’s welfare but faced an ongoing lack of opportunity to do something about it; see Fee, *Philippians*, 430. For hypotheses concerning the circumstances surrounding this lack of opportunity, see Hellerman, *Philippians*, 256; however, none can be fully supported.

⁵⁰⁰ *ὑστέρησιν* stems from *ὑστέρησις*, “the condition of lacking that which is essential” (BDAG 1044). Hence Hellerman, *Philippians*, 258, rightly argues that Paul’s joy is not that of a poor man whose need has been met, but of “a man whose Christian family has found renewed opportunity to tangibly express its Christlike mind-set of concern for him.”

⁵⁰¹ Most likely a constative aorist, used of completed experiences; see Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 260.

⁵⁰² See e.g. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 163–164; Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (Cleveland: Collins, 1956), 138, 185–186; and more recently Fee, *Philippians*, 431–432.

⁵⁰³ *ἀτάρακτος* appears only here in the NT; its cognate noun (*ἀτάρακτος*) twice, in 2 Cor 9.8 and 1 Tim 6.6.

⁵⁰⁴ Many commentators note the similarity of Paul’s language at 4.11 with that of Seneca’s, e.g. in *Vit. beat.* 6.2: “the happy man is content with his present lot, no matter what it is, and is reconciled to his circumstances”; see e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 432 n.37; J. N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca*, NovTSup 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 113–114. Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.7.14: “Wherever I go it will be well with me, for here where I am it was well with me, not because of my location, but because of my judgments, and these I shall carry away with me; ... and with the possession of them I am content, wherever I be and whatever I do”; quoted by Fee, *Philippians*, 432 n.37.

⁵⁰⁵ e.g. Silva, *Philippians*, 204.

⁵⁰⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe, “Paul’s Self-Sufficiency (Philippians 4:11),” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies in Friendship in the New Testament World*, NovTSup 82 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 125–139.

“learned the secret”⁵⁰⁷ of having plenty and being in need and so forth, he is actually making the claim that none of these things matter to him any more—in other words, that he is indifferent to matters which are outside the sphere of one’s control. That this is so is because his contentment now wholly derives from his relationship with Christ, who empowers him to face any challenge (*πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με*, 4.13). As we have earlier seen, the concept of the “indifferents” (*ἀδιάφορα*), or external goods, is important in Stoic thought. Virtue alone is the only good and thus the one thing which fits the bill of making up the Stoic *telos*; as such, virtue alone is self-sufficient and all else is indifferent. It seems likely that Paul adopts the same ideas here; the parallels with Stoicism are too clear to be put aside.⁵⁰⁸ Paul is *αὐτάρκης*: his personal situation with regard to material goods is a matter of complete indifference to him. However, his is not the cultivated imperturbability of the Stoic sage, who, by relying on his own inner resources, has trained himself to face any situation with equanimity. Instead, Paul’s self-sufficiency has its basis in a special kind of strength and empowering that originates from a profound, ongoing sense of connection with Christ. As Fee deftly puts it, “he [Paul] turns ‘self-sufficiency’ into ‘contentment’ because of his ‘Christ-sufficiency.’”⁵⁰⁹ Paul’s self-sufficiency is wholly constituted by his relationship to Christ.

Only after qualifying his opening statement of joy against possible misunderstanding, and after elaborating why the Philippians’ ministering to his material lack was *not* the cause of his joy, does Paul proceed to explain further the question of what it *is* about in 4.14–18—thereby returning to his earlier train of thought. At 4.10, as we have seen, Paul had joyfully received the Philippians’ gift, seeing it as tangible proof of the revival of their care for him. He now hastens to reassure them that he is by no means ungrateful for their generosity (*πλὴν⁵¹⁰ καλῶς ἐποιήσατε⁵¹¹*, 4.14), and that his

⁵⁰⁷ The verb *μεμύημαι* (lit. “I have been initiated”); hapax in the NT) came from the vocabulary of the mystery religions and was used in relation to initiatory rites, but like other mystery terminology also acquired more general meanings (BDAG 660). However, as Bockmuehl observes: “Initiation in a metaphorical sense may well still be intended, in which case Paul’s point is that Christian contentment remains unintelligible to those outside and can only be “learned” from the God of peace ...” (*Philippians*, 261).

⁵⁰⁸ So Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Stoicism in Philippians,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 270, referring to Cicero, *Fin.* 3.23–26, 32. See also his *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 101; and Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 260–261.

⁵⁰⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 434.

⁵¹⁰ With *πλὴν* (“nevertheless”), Paul does two things: he underscores for the Philippians that he could just as well have done without their contributions, and returns to the task of affirming them for their care and concern; see Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 267. Thrall, *Greek Particles*, 21, claims that in 4.14 (in relation to 4.11) we have the clearest example in Paul of *πλὴν* functioning as a balancing adversative (used to contrast two truths of divergent tendency).

remarks in 4.11–13 should not be taken to imply that he regards their gift as unnecessary (4.15–18). However, Paul does more than just these things. He continues to contextualize what he says within a candid but carefully calibrated affirmation of the special partnership that he shares with the Philippian Christians, an affirmation in which he combines his appreciation for their gift with assertions about his financial independence.

Since their gift was aimed at meeting his material needs while in prison—though he has no actual need of the gift—it stands as evidence of their being partners with him in his affliction (*συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει*, 4.14).⁵¹² At the same time, the Philippians are partners with him in the gospel mission through their financial contributions to his work (*ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινωνήσεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι ... καὶ ἅπαξ καὶ δις εἰς τὴν χρεῖαν μοι ἐπέμψατε*, 4.15–16). Paul’s description of the *κοινωνία* in which he and the Philippians jointly participate recalls and adds to what he has earlier said (1.5, 7; 2.1). His language is now couched in terms of “giving and receiving” (*δόσις καὶ λήμψις*)—commercial parlance that in the first century was also regularly co-opted to refer to the mutual obligations inherent to contexts of friendship and social reciprocity.⁵¹³ It is almost certain that Paul is drawing on familiar notions and conventions of friendship to acknowledge the recent gift from the Philippians and to express his gratitude to them.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ Some commentators suggest that the expression *καλῶς ἐποιήσατε* (lit. “you did well”) is the closest that Paul comes to saying “thank you”; see e.g. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 262 (citing F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, NIBCNT (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 154). Fee, *Philippians*, 438 n.7 offers the American slang “you did good” as a translation which captures better the sense of the Greek.

⁵¹² Fee, *Philippians*, 438 n.8, notes that the redundant *συν* prefix of the modal participle *συγκοινωνήσαντες* “emphasizes their participation together with him in his affliction”; cf. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 164 (cited by Fee): “It was not the actual pecuniary relief, so much as the sympathy and companionship in his sorrow, that the apostle valued.” That they were suffering as he was has already been intimated at 1.29–30.

⁵¹³ On *δόσις καὶ λήμψις* in the Greco-Roman world, see Peterman, *Gift*, 51–65; Marshall, *Enmity*, 157–164. The term also appears in Jewish-Hellenistic writings, both in its financial sense (e.g. Sir 42.7) and metaphorically of a socially reciprocal relationship (e.g. Sir 41.21).

⁵¹⁴ So e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 442–445. See also 445–446, where Fee offers two perspicacious reasons why Paul even sees the need to tell the Philippians what (by his own admission) they well know, and why he emphasizes their being the only church to have entered into this kind of partnership with him. First, as often happens between friends, one partner in the friendship takes delight in reminding the other how that one has expressed friendship in the past; Paul’s point, then, is that their gift represents yet another in their long and laudatory history in this regard. Second, in keeping with social convention, Paul is most likely expressing his thanks indirectly, but even more tellingly, by rehearsing in this manner the long history of his benefitting from their generosity.

With another *οὐχ ὅτι* (4.17; cf. 4.11),⁵¹⁵ Paul immediately qualifies what he has just said. Aware that the Philippians might misinterpret his words as a request for more aid, he tells them in no uncertain terms, still using accounting terminology, that what he “strives for”⁵¹⁶ is not any gift of theirs (*οὐχ ὅτι ἐπιζητῶ τὸ δόμα*, 4.17a), but rather, “the interest that accrues to your account” (*ἐπιζητῶ τὸν καρπὸν*⁵¹⁷ *τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν*, 4.17b). Its meaning, as 4.18 goes on to show, is theological: the “fruit” is not their enhanced standing vis-à-vis Paul, but their practical praise offering to God.⁵¹⁸ Using metaphorical language (*ὄσμην ἐωδίας, θυσίαν δεκτὴν*) drawn from the LXX, Paul likens the Philippians’ gift to an aromatic sacrifice that is pleasing to God.⁵¹⁹ Paul then closes his thoughts in this section with an assurance that would have been very striking to his readers, because of the way it radicalized the social conventions that structured relationships. Here in 4.19, a third party, God, is explicitly introduced as an integral member of the partnership that Paul shares with them; it is God, not Paul, who will supply (*πληρώσει*⁵²⁰) *all* the Philippians’ needs (*πᾶσαν χρείαν ὑμῶν*), i.e. whether these needs are associated with material lack (cf. 2 Cor 8.1–2) or spiritual concerns (which are mentioned throughout the letter).⁵²¹ This divine provision is not according to the balanced reciprocity of a Greco-Roman friendship, but *κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. Paul’s partnership with the Philippians is not predicated on the social expressions of mutuality that one would expect, but instead upon their common participation in a heavenly citizenship (3.20) in which all notions and norms of giving and receiving are relativized. For Paul, this partnership—specifically, what it consists in and how it is lived out—forms the basis for his joy here.

⁵¹⁵ In both 4.11 and 4.17, *οὐχ ὅτι* is used to introduce a correction. See further Schenk, *Philippenerbriefe*, 44–46, for the linguistic and syntactical parallels in two verses.

⁵¹⁶ *ἐπιζητῶ*: in Paul, only here (twice) and at Rom 11.7; an intensified form of *ζητέω*, meaning here “to be seriously interested in or have a strong desire for” (BDAG 371).

⁵¹⁷ Lit. “fruit” (appearing also at 1.11, 22); used here metaphorically in a commercial sense (Hellerman, *Philippians*, 266).

⁵¹⁸ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 265–266. Bockmuehl also highlights the plausibility of “fruit” being read in eschatological terms too; i.e. relating to the future reckoning on the “day of Jesus Christ” (1.6; 2.16) when the Philippian gift will accrue not only to their own account, but they themselves will be Paul’s “joy and crown” (4.1; cf. 2.16), i.e. his eschatological reward.

⁵¹⁹ On this see esp. Reumann, *Philippians*, 667–670.

⁵²⁰ I follow the majority of recent commentators in preferring the better attested future indicative *πληρώσει* rather than the aorist optative *πληρώσαι*. However, even if the optative is original, Paul’s note of assurance is not significantly diminished. For discussion see Reumann, *Philippians*, 670–671.

⁵²¹ See e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 452–453; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 269–270; contra those who understand *πᾶσαν χρείαν* in eschatological terms (e.g. Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, NCB [London: Oliphants, 1976], 169), or in present material terms (e.g. Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 273).

That Paul expects the Philippians also to find joy in this gospel partnership is seen in his instructions concerning Epaphroditus' return. To be sure, this occasion is, naturally, already cause for rejoicing (2.28). However, Paul makes it clear that joy is to come also because Epaphroditus has exemplified selfless service both to him and them in relation to the work of the gospel (2.29–30).

Summarizing our findings thus far: for Paul, joy arises because of his partnership with the Philippians in the advance of the gospel—a partnership that is at once both spiritual and material. Most recently, he has had cause to find particular joy on the occasion of the receipt of a financial gift from the Philippians. However, since Paul derives his sense of contentment solely from his relationship with Christ, the actual ground for his joy does not consist in any pecuniary benefit that this gift might bring; instead, it consists in what the gift represents—a renewal of the Philippians' concern for his welfare, and an offering to God that is pleasing to him. In a sense, then, along with Peterman we may infer that Paul's joy has to do with “delight in the spiritual maturity of the Philippians,” since their display of concern (*φρονεῖν*) in 4.10 is in keeping with the Christian mindset (*φρόνησις*) that he has delineated throughout the letter (esp. at 2.2, 5; cf. 4.14 in which Paul pays tribute to their willingness to share in his afflictions).⁵²² Furthermore, given that such Christian maturity—and the right thinking and action that mark it—have their basis in God's work, Paul sees his joy over the Philippians' concern as being “in the Lord” (4.10).

3.3.2. Joy in the Gospel's Advancement

3.3.2.a. Joy and the Progress of the Gospel in Rome (Phil 1.15–18)

Paul's joy, however, also has a dimension that is predicated on the spread of the gospel itself. In 1.18, the apostle rejoices because Christ is being preached through the evangelistic efforts of the believers in Rome; this is the “progress” (*προκοπή*) of the gospel that he has earlier referred to at 1.12. The motives of these believers, as we have noted, are mixed; among these fellow Christians are those who are quite willing to let further distress fall upon Paul (1.17; see also section 3.2.1.b). However, this is clearly a secondary concern for him. Even if there is duplicity rather than sincerity in the ministry of some of the other evangelists, what matters is that Christ is being preached; as long

⁵²² Peterman, *Gift*, 128; see esp. n.42.

as this happens, Paul will rejoice (*Τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω*, 1.18).⁵²³ Moreover, in expressing this singular joy in the advancement of the gospel rather than in self-advancement, Paul demonstrates to the Philippians the kind of mindset and practical behaviour that he wants them to imitate (see 3.17 and 4.9). In Christ, Paul's ambition and desire have now found a true and satisfying goal—one in which all pain and gain are reconfigured in the light of God's call upon his life (3.7–14).⁵²⁴ The gospel of Christ is being increasingly heard in Rome; for Paul, this fact alone is cause for joy.

3.3.2.b. *Joy and the Progress of the Gospel in the Philippians' Lives (Phil 1.18–26; 2.1–4; 4.1)*

Paul's reflection on the matter of the progress of the gospel, which began with evangelism, ends on a related note: the progress of the gospel in the lives of the Philippians themselves. Despite what he is presently undergoing, Paul is confident that he will remain alive and continue his ministry (1.19–26), the immediate focus of which concerns the Philippians' "progress and joy in the faith" (*εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως*, 1.25)⁵²⁵—which is almost certainly the progress of the gospel (1.12) now applied specifically to the Philippians.⁵²⁶ The deliberate co-location of the themes of progress and joy in relation to faith is instructive: we may say that progress denotes the objective aspect of faith, while joy (and, we as shall later discuss, mutual joy) are its appropriation in the experience of the believer, because it emerges from a renewed outlook on the world that is made possible only through genuine progress in the faith. These twin themes of progress and joy, which have characterized Paul's description of his own situation since 1.12, will also guide his concern for the believers throughout the rest of the letter. Progress in the faith and joy in the faith are to go hand in hand.⁵²⁷

⁵²³ Fee, *Philippians*, 124, notes: "Without doubt the newly emboldened, fearless preaching of the gospel by his friends was cause for joy under any circumstances. What he wants the Philippians to hear is that the preaching which intended as one of its side effects to afflict him is also a cause for joy."

⁵²⁴ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 81.

⁵²⁵ With regard to *εἰς τὴν ὑμῶν προκοπὴν καὶ χαρὰν τῆς πίστεως* (1.25): most commentators see the single preposition and article (*εἰς τὴν*) as holding the two nouns together as one thought unit, while *ὑμῶν* and the genitive *τῆς πίστεως* qualify both nouns. On this reading, the phrase is understood as "for your progress and joy in the faith," with *τῆς πίστεως* taken as a genitive of reference and *ἡ πίστις* used to denote the content of belief, i.e., the faith of the gospel (cf. 1.27); see Fee, *Philippians*, 153. For alternative interpretations see Reumann, *Philippians*, 227–229.

⁵²⁶ *προκοπή* at 1.12 and at 1.25 from an *inclusio*.

⁵²⁷ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 94.

However, Paul's joy over the Philippians has yet to reach full flower. Despite the enthusiastic affirmations with which he begins the letter at 1.3–11, it is clear from 2.1–4 that his joy over them is curtailed by what he perceives to be a lack of love and harmony among them. Even so, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that disunity was at this point in time already a dire problem in the church.⁵²⁸ Only at 4.2–3 is there an explicit mention of a division within the church. Hence Paul's language in ch. 2 may merely reflect his identification of disunity as a potentially serious risk⁵²⁹—something that he hopes to nip in the bud through an impassioned yet tactful appeal that presupposes the secure bonds of friendship and mutuality that exist between him and the Philippians. This strongly personal appeal—*πληρώσατέ⁵³⁰ μου τὴν χαρὰν* (2.2)—is far from being egotistical and self-serving;⁵³¹ instead, it reveals much about the nature of the relationship between Paul and his church. His heart and apostleship are deeply bound up with the well-being of his converts. The Philippians' progress in the faith, expressed in unity for the sake of the gospel (see 1.25, 27) and in like-minded, harmonious relationships in which the interests of others have priority (2.1–4), will fill up his own measure of joy (2.2)—and given their bonds of friendship, that in itself should be incentive for them to pursue it.⁵³²

To be sure, as we have noted earlier, Paul *already* experiences joy because of the Philippians (1.4; 4.10); indeed, he expresses delight in, and further desire for, their progress in the faith (1.3–11; 25). Now, through the like-mindedness and unity of soul of the Philippians, (2.2–4), Paul's joy will be enlarged—even though his joy will reach its final goal only on the “day of Christ,” as he has first intimated at 1.6. At the parousia, it will be evident that Paul has not labored in vain (2.16), and the Philippians

⁵²⁸ Pace Peterlin, *Paul's Letter*, 59–65 and passim.

⁵²⁹ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 108 (following G. B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison*, New Clarendon Bible [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976], 129) argues that such a risk is heightened in Paul's mind because tensions in the church in Rome have become evident (1.15, 17; 2.20–21).

⁵³⁰ This is best understood in the sense of “to bring to completion that which was already begun” (Reumann, *Philippians*, 304).

⁵³¹ Therefore pace Robert T. Fortna, “Philippians: Paul's Most Egocentric Letter,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 220–234, who produces a caricatured reading of Paul that is based more on modern psychologizing than on the realities of the text.

⁵³² Fee, *Philippians*, 183–184; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 108; see also Lynn H. Cohick, *Philippians*, SGBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 87–88.

will be his cause for joy; hence, by metonymy, they are already now his “joy and crown” (*χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου*, 4.1).⁵³³

3.3.2.c. *Mutual Joy in the Face of Suffering (Phil 2.17–18)*

The subject of joy appears again at 2.17–18. Here, while at the same time referring to his suffering, Paul enjoins the Philippians to rejoice with him—a thought that has been anticipated at 1.18. As we have earlier seen, Paul regards his present circumstances as a form of libation—the giving of himself and his apostolic experiences as a sacrifice to God to complement the sacrificial service of the Philippians: *Ἀλλὰ εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ⁵³⁴ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν,⁵³⁵ χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν* (2.17). The imagery makes it clear that Paul’s focus of attention is not on himself, however, but on the Philippians: theirs is the main offering that is offered to God, and Paul is more than willing to expend his ministry—and indeed, his very life—on their behalf if one thing remains to make that sacrificial service acceptable.

Paul’s joy therefore consists in the fact that he continues to make a contribution to the sacrificial service that his Philippian converts offer, just as he has previously identified their faith (1.4–5) and progress in the gospel (1.25) as a cause for joy.⁵³⁶ Specifically, he takes joy in the fact that his own sacrifice will complete their act of offering and make it perfectly acceptable to God.⁵³⁷ Interestingly, Paul also rejoices *with* the Philippians: *συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν* (2.17); this strongly suggests that they were themselves already rejoicing in their own participation and sacrificial service in the gospel mission. Indeed, evidence of their joy comes from several ingredients in that sacrificial service: their prayers, their pecuniary support, and the sending of Epaphroditus to him. Paul rejoices in the Philippians’ joyful sacrificial service for the sake of the gospel. The social dimension of joy is clearly apparent.

⁵³³ Since *στέφανος* in the NT often has eschatological connotations, and since the parallel passage (1 Thess 2.19) is used of the parousia, many commentators take both *χαρὰ* and *στέφανος* to refer to the future; see Hellerman, *Philippians*, 226–227.

⁵³⁴ On *τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ* (“sacrificial service”) see also section 3.2.1.c. It seems likely that Paul sees this sacrificial service in comprehensive terms, i.e. to refer to all that the Philippians have done as an expression of their faith; contra e.g. Hansen, *Philippians*, 188–190, who limits the notion to just “sacrificial financial support.”

⁵³⁵ *τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν* qualifies the Philippians’ sacrificial service. I follow most commentators in taking the genitive *τῆς πίστεως* as subjective (i.e., “your sacrificial service, prompted by your faith”); for discussion see Reumann, *Philippians*, 148.

⁵³⁶ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 162.

⁵³⁷ Fee captures Paul’s thought well: “But if indeed my present struggle represents a kind of drink offering to go along with your own suffering on behalf of the gospel, then I rejoice over that”; *Philippians*, 255.

The emphasis on mutual joy continues in 2.18 where Paul instructs them: τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι. The resultant fourfold (συγ)χαίρειν produces an awkward redundancy for some, but I suggest that the most natural way to understand Paul’s thrust, factoring in the τὸ δὲ αὐτό, is to see it as some kind of pleonastic parallelism: “Just as I take joy in my service, and I rejoice with you in yours, so you must take joy in your service, and rejoice with me in mine.” Fee is correct to say that Paul’s emphasis is that “first, he and they rejoice on their own accounts for the privilege of serving the gospel, even in the midst of great adversity, and second that they do so mutually, as they have done so much else mutually.”⁵³⁸

It is on this highly striking note of shared joy—with the emphatic repetition of verbs to do with joy (χαίρω, χαίρετε) and mutuality in joy (συγχαίρω, συγχαίρετε)—that Paul brings his thoughts here to a close. The Philippians are beginning to make “progress and joy in the faith” (1.25), and there is no doubt at all that these inter-related ideals are crucial things which Paul wishes to nurture in their lives. In particular, here at least, the aspect of joy is accentuated: it is the “experienced” concomitant of genuine progress in the Christian life, and thus capable of flourishing even in times of deprivation and suffering. Moreover, joy for Paul is not just an emotion belonging to the individual; it is equally a “social” emotion—the Philippians are to express their joy corporately, and they are also to share in Paul’s joy, just as he shares in theirs. These emphases are reflected in Paul’s handling of the theme of joy. As Fee notes: up to 2.17–18 every mention of joy, except in 1.25, has had to do with Paul himself; but a subtle but noticeable shift towards the Philippians now takes place (Paul’s own “rejoicing” occurs only once more in the letter, at 4.10). What began in 1.25 as concern for the Philippians’ “progress and joy in the faith” is now expressed with imperatival force in 2.18 (an emphasis that will appear again later at 3.1 and 4.4). Significantly, the first appearance of joy as an imperative is intertwined with Paul’s joy, and also found in the context of affliction and opposition.⁵³⁹ Our conclusion must be that joy—and *mutual* joy—even in the face of suffering is surely the goal of Paul’s preceding instructions and exhortations. As Paul goes on to highlight, that such joy is possible in the first place is because it is predicated on the work of Christ, both past and future.

⁵³⁸ Fee, *Philippians*, 256.

⁵³⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 256.

3.3.3. Joy “in the Lord”: the Eschatological Horizon (Phil 3.1; 4.4–9)

In the final analysis, for Paul, joy is to be found “in the Lord.” At 3.1, Paul picks up the earlier *χαίρετε* from 2.18 and adds *ἐν κυρίῳ* to it. The imperative therefore explicitly recalls his earlier mentions of joy but is now couched in explicitly theological terms. As with the Psalmists whose language Paul is borrowing (there are numerous references, e.g. Ps 32.11; 33.21; 35.9), the Lord is both the ground and object of joy.⁵⁴⁰ This perspective on joy is to form the framework, both theological and experiential, in which the Philippians are to understand Paul’s injunctions in this section,⁵⁴¹ and indeed in the entire epistle. This joy is neither a psyched-up satisfaction in feeling miserable nor a superficial triumphalism that blithely disregards the realities of one’s circumstances. What Paul is describing is a joy that emerges *in spite of* the presence of suffering, not because of it; he is inculcating in the Philippians a perspective on joy in which suffering can be seen in the light of the bigger picture of God’s working in and through adversity to achieve his purposes in Christ. Indeed, it is Christ who in his service, suffering, and exaltation provides the example and assurance of future victory and glory for the believer (2.5–11; 3.20–21). Christ, then, is the source and occasion of the Philippians’ joy—a joy that begins here on earth and reaches its final fulfilment in the eschaton.

These theologically-charged ideas are reinforced at 4.4 where Paul begins a set of final imperatives (4.4–9)⁵⁴²; here, he repeats the interim conclusion at 3.1 not once, but twice, and adds the important qualifier “always”: *Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἔρῳ, χαίρετε* (4.4). Just as Paul has in 3.1 reinforced his prior exhortations to joy in the letter,

⁵⁴⁰ Fee, *Philippians*, 291 n.27, observes that the LXX translators consistently avoided *χαίρω* for this idiom in the Psalms, using instead either *ἀγαλλιάω* or *εὐφραίνω*. Paul, on the other hand uses the latter terms only once (2 Cor 2.2), not counting the LXX citations, preferring *χαίρω* and its cognates. Fee concludes that given the flexible way this idiom is handled in the LXX and given Paul’s linguistic preferences, *χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ* is best understood as Paul’s own rendering of this OT idiom.

I follow Fee in taking *ἐν κυρίῳ* to denote that the Lord is *both* the object and ground of joy (*Philippians*, 291); similarly, Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 60, thinks that the fact that joy is “in the Lord” indicates that it arises “from belonging to him who is both its source and its object.” Some scholars, however, here distinguish—unnecessarily, in my opinion—between the two senses: e.g. Bruce, *Philippians*, 76, who takes it (and the Psalms) to indicate that the Lord is the object of the believer’s rejoicing, and Fritz Neugebauer, *In Christus: Eine Untersuchung Zum Paulinischen Glaubensverständnis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 144 n.17 (against any OT derivation) who emphasizes the incorporative sense of being “in the Lord,” i.e. that it is union with the Lord that provides the ground for rejoicing.

⁵⁴¹ Fee, *Philippians*, 291, is correct in saying that this framework serves as Paul’s first antidote to the Philippians’ being taken in by the possible attractiveness of the Judaizing option (on which see Fee, *Philippians*, 293–303).

⁵⁴² On how the concluding paraenesis in Philippians compares to the other Pauline letters, see Fee, *Philippians*, 400–402.

so here at 4.4 he underlines—doubly—that previous encouragement as standing at the very heart of his message to the Philippians.⁵⁴³ Once again, some sort of cosmetic happiness that appears when things go well is not in view here. The joy that Paul speaks of can be had πάντοτε, “because it depends not on changing circumstances but on the one who does not change.”⁵⁴⁴ The imperative to rejoice is followed by two further exhortations which are related to this joy.⁵⁴⁵

The first of the two is to have an attitude of forbearance towards others: τὸ ἐπιεικὲς⁵⁴⁶ ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις (4.5a). In the midst of their present adversity, the Philippians’ unbridled joy in the Lord is to be accompanied by a noticeable quality of gentle forbearance towards one another and towards all; this seems to include the patient bearing of abuse from those who are making life difficult for them.⁵⁴⁷ More precisely, the context suggests that ἐπιείκεια here denotes “a humble, patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace and maltreatment without hatred or malice, trusting God in spite of it all.”⁵⁴⁸ The second exhortation relates to the believer’s prayer life: μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, ἀλλ’ ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν (4.6). Only in prayer about “everything” can they be anxious about “nothing”: the comprehensive

⁵⁴³ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 243–244.

⁵⁴⁴ Silva, *Philippians*, 194.

⁵⁴⁵ Hansen, *Philippians*, 287. The asyndetic injunctions in 4.4–6 (χαίrete ... γνωσθήτω ... μεριμνᾶτε) have led some scholars to look beyond syntax to semantics to connect the imperatives, with differing conclusions (see Reumann, *Philippians*, 634, for whom they are “aphoristic dicta but linked at points”). I agree with Fee, who reads them as sharing ground with the “threefold expression of Jewish piety—rejoicing in the Lord, prayer, and thanksgiving—which are basic to the Psalter” (*Philippians*, 402–403). It is noteworthy that these three things form also that familiar Pauline triad of practices that mark the mature believer (see 1.3–4; 1 Thess 3.9–10; 5.16–18; also Col 1.9–12).

⁵⁴⁶ ἐπιεικὲς is from the adjective ἐπιεικής (“not insisting on every right of letter of law or custom, yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant,” BDAG 371); this range of meanings is reflected in the varied English translations of the word. It appears elsewhere in the Paulines only in 1 Tim 3.3 and Titus 3.2; Paul uses the noun ἐπιείκεια alongside πραΰτης at 2 Cor 10.1 to denote Christ’s attitude of humility and gentleness.

⁵⁴⁷ As Hellerman, *Philippians*, 237, observes: the word group is often used to describe the superior party, e.g. Felix (Acts 24.4), Christ (2 Cor 10.1), and slave owners (1 Pet 2.1); so some see Paul here enjoining the Philippians to exhibit ἐπιείκεια in the sense of “magnanimity,” since the Lord is at hand (so e.g. Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 244). However, other uses of the word group describe the weaker party (e.g. Wis 2.19; Titus 3.2). Hellerman is correct to argue that the context indicates that the latter situation is the better description of the Philippians’ circumstances, as those who face serious opposition.

Silva makes the interesting suggestion that Paul is here in 4.5a most likely recalling 2.3–4 (where he had instructed the Philippians to place the interests of others above their own). Christian joy is not inward-looking, and the believer is to find godly satisfaction in focusing on others and their needs; in this way joy can be learnt, and the call to show forbearance towards others can be seen as a way of reinforcing Christian joy (*Philippians*, 194). However, a proactive consideration of the interests of others does not seem to be a basic semantic component of ἐπιείκεια.

⁵⁴⁸ R. Lievestad, “The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. X.1,” *NTS* 13 (1965–1966): 158.

positive *παῶς* sets up a contrast with the comprehensive negative *μηδέεις*.⁵⁴⁹ The result of heeding this exhortation is the promise⁵⁵⁰ of God's peace,⁵⁵¹ bestowed on his people and standing guard over their hearts and minds (4.7).⁵⁵²

Lying in the middle of the exhortations of 4.4–6 is a terse, important formulation about the “nearness” of Christ: *ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς* (5b). Its meaning is slightly ambiguous, as *ἐγγύς* can be understood either temporally or spatially;⁵⁵³ furthermore, its function in relation to the surrounding instructions is in dispute because there is no grammatical connection to them.⁵⁵⁴ I follow many modern exegetes in taking the nearness of the Lord in a temporal sense, and therefore understand *ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς* to mean the imminent parousia of Christ.⁵⁵⁵ On this interpretation, the return of the Lord provides eschatological motivation to respond confidently to all the apostolic injunctions of 4.4–6.⁵⁵⁶ It is this sure hope that provides the essential underpinning of Paul's exhortations here and hence also of Paul's approach to joy. Earlier in the letter, Paul had spoken of his joyful confidence in the fact of his own final vindication before God: *Ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρήσομαι, οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν*⁵⁵⁷ (1.18–19). He now enjoins the Philippians, who are suffering as he is, to keep their sight on that same eschatological horizon, and thereby find their joy “in the Lord” (3.1; 4.4).

⁵⁴⁹ See Ulrich B. Müller, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper*, THKNT 11.1 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1993), 198.

⁵⁵⁰ As Müller, *Brief*, rightly emphasizes, this is a promise, not a wish.

⁵⁵¹ *ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ* appears only here in the NT, though a similar expression, *ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, is found in Col 3.15. The genitive is subjective, and the phrase is therefore best understood as “the peace that God himself has and guarantees” (Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, trans. James W. Leitch [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 123), rather than signifying an inward peace of the soul that comes from God (as many older commentators think, e.g. M. R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897], 135).

⁵⁵² Recent commentators rightly draw attention to the fact that 4.4–7 “reflects the conjunction between individual and corporate piety” (Fee, *Philippians*, 403). See also Hansen, *Philippians*, 294–295, Cohick, *Philippians*, 222–223.

⁵⁵³ See further Hellerman, *Philippians*, 237–238.

⁵⁵⁴ I take *ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς* to ground both v.5a and v.6; so e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 407–408; Silva, *Philippians*, 194–195.

⁵⁵⁵ See Reumann, *Philippians*, 613. Fee however thinks both meanings are probably in view (*Philippians*, 407–408). Bockmuehl opines that it is theologically pointless to choose between the two interpretations, because the evidence in the NT is that each one in any case implies the other (*Philippians*, 246).

⁵⁵⁶ So correctly J. Ernst, who argues that for Paul, awaiting the parousia is a key paraenetic motif; *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1974), 115. See 1.6, 10; 2.16; 3.20–21.

⁵⁵⁷ *τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν* is Job 13.16a (LXX) verbatim. The majority of scholars argue that *σωτηρία* in Paul always refers, directly or indirectly, to eschatological salvation and vindication, and never to physical deliverance; that eschatological salvation and vindication are in view here seems highly likely in light of the Job citation, so e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 128 n.7; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 83. Hawthorne and Martin's advocacy of the latter view is a minority position (*Philippians*, 49–50).

3.4. The Basis and Function of Joy

Our exegetical spadework has revealed that the theme of joy runs right through Philippians. Far from being merely incidental, joy often occupies a central place in Paul's thinking and certainly integral to much of the hortatory material in the letter. Noteworthy is the fact that Paul's call to joyful living emerges from the privations of imprisonment; this in itself is significant because it emphasizes to the believers his ability to rise above the thoroughly adverse circumstances in which he finds himself and to experience joy in spite of the hardships and opprobrium that he has had to bear. However, in the letter, joy is inflected in other important ways as well—so much so that it may be said that what Paul offers to the Philippians is careful, deliberate instruction on how to live the Christian life victoriously while in the very midst of suffering and affliction: it is a “pedagogy in joy.”⁵⁵⁸ Indeed, Paul's indefatigable efforts both to exemplify this joy himself and to inculcate, guide—and even regulate—its expression within the Philippian church seem to suggest that he views joy as being crucial to the establishment of early Christian culture. The question is: why is so much weight put on joy as the goal of Paul's instructions?

3.4.1. The Theological Basis of Joy

That Paul's promoting of joy in the Philippian Christians is practicable and, indeed, makes good sense in the first place is because God's work of redemption—the death and resurrection of God's Christ, the coming of the Spirit, and the certainty of the parousia—has meant that new terms of engagement with the world are now available. For the believer, it is no longer only visible, corporeal manifestations of reality that feed his consciousness and govern his sense of existence; instead, his metaphysical horizon is to be definitively reshaped by eschatological reality. This has, as its corollary, a profound effect on his mental and emotional engagement with the world around him. A radical reconfiguration of his sense and conception of identity, value, meaning, and purpose has taken place.

As such, to rejoice in the face of suffering is to reject any notion that one's sense of well-being depends on one's circumstances, for the present age no longer has the last word. Paul regards joy as being for the believer's taking, because it is grounded in the

⁵⁵⁸ Being the expression used by Barton, “Spirituality,” 185.

confident assurance that in the end all will be made right through God's work in Christ (Phil 3.20–21; cf. 1 Cor 15.24–28). Putting it a different way: this revised hermeneutic for all of life that reads in it the possibility of joy at all times is rooted in the transfiguration of meaning that emerges from the believer's participation in the christological pattern of dying and rising (Phil 3.10–11).⁵⁵⁹ The basis of Christian joy is therefore intrinsically theological; this joy simultaneously signals and celebrates the profound connection between the believer and God and his work in the world, past, present and future. For the believer, then, the experience of suffering for the sake of the gospel throws into sharp relief the painful tensions that result from a life lived both in this world and the one to come. However, joy is attainable in spite of these tensions, because the presence of such suffering is proof of—and a precursor to—eschatological salvation (Phil 1.27–30).

In the letter to the Philippians, the theological basis of the believer's joy is made most explicit in 3.1 and 4.4, where the summons to rejoice is articulated to the fact that this joy is “in the Lord,” and similarly in 4.10, where Paul expresses much joy “in the Lord” over the Philippians' renewed concern for him (though *ἐν κυρίῳ* is absent at 1.18 and 2.17–18, the verbs for “rejoicing” in these verses surely stand in this same theological correlation). It is precisely because Christian joy has a firm theological basis that it can be called forth with imperatival force.

Closely related to the theological underpinning of joy is the emphasis on thinking and on the mind that runs through Paul's letter. We have noted earlier the significance of the numerous appearances of verbs that relate to the disposition or activity of the mind (*φρονέω*, *ἠγέομαι*, *σκοπέω*, and *λογίζομαι*), the abundance of “knowledge” vocabulary, and the use of military and athletic imagery to flesh out the notion of mental tenacity. It is right thinking about Christian truth, and the possession of a mindset that reflects the character and disposition of Christ, that will help the Philippians to overcome the suffering and trials that they are going through—and to do so with joy. Quite clearly, for Paul, there is a significant cognitive dimension to living the Christian life well.

Interestingly, the cognitive aspect of the Pauline reality-framework that makes joy possible is in some respects parallel to that of the Stoic account of affective response, but, as we shall see, at a fundamental level the two schemes are completely

⁵⁵⁹ See Shantz, “Happiness,” 198–199.

different. A recapitulation of the Stoic theory is helpful at this juncture. For the Stoics, joy belongs to a select group of emotions called the *eupatheiai*, which are acceptable, non-culpable ways of experiencing affect. The wise person—whose perfected rationality mirrors the universal reason that governs the cosmos, and who therefore always acts in conformity with nature and its ends—would regularly be subject to the *eupatheiai*. Such a person would not be overwhelmed emotionally by any circumstance, whether (in the eyes of the ordinary person) beneficial or baneful. This is because the wise person has redirected his capacity to perceive and ascribe value correctly through his judgements and affective responses, so that they are appropriate for a rational human being. At the heart of Stoic ethics is the doctrine that virtue alone is good, vice alone bad; everything else is an indifferent. The wise person is incapable of being emotionally impacted by anything that others would regard as a present evil. To be sure, like any other person, in life he encounters suffering (and other circumstances that an ordinary person would consider as bad)—but he would not count them as bad. Suffering is not for him a present evil, because vice is the only evil there is; the Stoic sage is, by definition, free of vice and its effects. He would not mistake an indifferent for genuine goods and evils, which is to say, virtue and vice.

Instead, the wise person would experience the *eupatheiai* on a regular basis. He would be able to experience joy often, because the perfection of reason produces virtue and the actions that are the immediate practical expression of such a state of mind—virtue and virtuous acts being the genuine goods towards which the wise person's rational impulses are directed and in relation to which he consistently forms fully accurate, veridical judgements. So Seneca, as we have seen, speaks of a “boundless joy” that emanates from deep within the wise man because he delights in his own inner resources (*Vit. beat.* 3.4, 4.4), a joy that causes one's soul to be “happy and confident, lifted above every circumstance” (*Ep.* 23.3). The wise maintain a steady joy both at their virtuous condition and its practical expression, and remain unaffected by externals—the things that lie beyond their sphere of control. Stoic joy is therefore premised on a belief about the rational ordering of the world and its inhabitants.

Like the Stoics, Paul has a cognitive interest in what makes joy reasonable. In his scheme, right thinking can also produce a profound sense of joy that is able to transcend all adversity. However, Paul's ideological framework has a totally different basis; for him, joy is grounded in a proper understanding of—and, one might add, a participation in—God's continuing action in the world. Paul's inaugurated eschatology speaks of a

world in which God's perfect order is yet to be fully established: the *πολίτευμα* of believers is in heaven, from which they expect the arrival of Christ, who will transfigure and glorify their bodies through the same power that will subject all things to his rule (Phil 3.20–21; cf. 2.11). Therefore, though there is an already present reality that governs the lives of Christians, their orientation is one of forward anticipation, as 3.12–14 has already made very clear,⁵⁶⁰ because the “day” is not yet here (1.6, 10; 2.16).

However, this forward-looking thrust makes present joy possible, but also precarious: there is a danger that a severe or prolonged ordeal of some sort might severely weaken, or even totally extinguish, the believer's joy. Paul's solution seems to be threefold. First, throughout the letter, and in different ways, he stresses the importance of developing and maintaining a Christian mindset—one that demonstrates right thinking, maturity, and perseverance and, above all, is patterned after Christ's. This mindset is thus to be a common mindset: one that consists in the Philippians having the same outlook on the world, on the work of God in the world, and on one's responsibilities in light of these truths.⁵⁶¹ Second, he himself models such a mindset for the Philippians, and shows them what Christian joy looks like, even in the presence of great adversity. Third, he calls for the corporate reinforcement of this joy, knowing that the Philippians' faith would be buttressed by the mutual encouragement that shared joy can bring. For Paul, joy very clearly also has a social dimension—and as we shall see, this distinctive Christian sociality not only protects and promotes joy, but helps to complete it.

3.4.2. The Social Character and Function of Joy

While the ground of joy in Philippians is theological, its expression is manifestly social. Joy here is not simply a matter of the emotions construed as private experiences and expressions that occur within the individual's thought-world and remain embedded within its confines, important though this aspect is. The way in which Paul describes his own joy and how it comes about shows beyond any doubt that it is dependent—and to no small degree—on the attitudes and actions of the Philippians. Furthermore, this joy is not to be contained within the individual, but is to be enacted and shared. In other

⁵⁶⁰ See Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 235.

⁵⁶¹ Cohick, *Philippians*, 89.

words, for Paul, joy is very much a matter of sociality and public performance; it is both socially generated and socially expressed.

The sociality of joy in Philippians is made evident several times during the course of the letter. We note, firstly, that the ongoing, flourishing mission partnership between Paul and the Philippian church is a key ingredient in the production of joy. In ch. 1, Paul speaks of the joy that accompanies his prayers of thanksgiving for his Philippian brethren—a joy that arises from their faithful partnership with him in the work of evangelism. In ch. 4, we learn that this partnership includes also an important financial dimension: the Philippian believers have, on a number of separate occasions, sent money to Paul to help him to meet his needs. They have recently despatched Epaphroditus to Paul with another monetary gift, which he receives with much joy, though (as we have discussed earlier) he hastens to inform them that his joy comes not so much from the economic value of the gift but from the fact that it is a concrete expression of their ongoing concern for his welfare and interest in his ministry.

Secondly, and related to the above, Paul speaks of a joy that he and the Philippian believers are to have because of their common commitment to the gospel mission. Paul's and the Philippians' evangelistic efforts take place against a backdrop of suffering. Yet, even in the midst of great adversity, it is apparent that both Paul and the Philippians have been able to take joy in the privilege of serving the gospel. What is even more striking is that this joy is also a *shared* joy: Paul rejoices in his own service to God and also in that of the Philippians, and he expects them likewise to rejoice in his service even as they rejoice together in their own (2.17–18). Quite clearly, the joy that Paul refers to here does not belong only to the realm of personal experience. It is also very much a mutual, social joy that stems from the fact that in the very face of suffering both Paul and the Philippian believers are giving themselves wholeheartedly to God in sacrificial service, and gladdened by the salutary example of the other. It is, I think, not unreasonable to suggest that such a joy would have a strongly mutually-reinforcing quality.

Another depiction of a social basis for joy in the letter occurs at 2.1–4. Here, Paul attempts to galvanize his readers towards a vision of solidarity and like-minded relationships within the church. The achieving of this ideal state of affairs would induce an even fuller flowering of the joy that he already experiences from his evangelistic partnership with them and investment in their lives. To be sure, the Philippians are already his “joy and crown” (4.1)—but growth in unity of mind and spirit among the

believers would intensify Paul's sense of joy and indeed "complete" it (2.2). Once again, the sociality of joy comes to the fore: joy is now directly correlated to the quality of the relationships within the church, or, to be more specific, to the extent to which the Philippians display to each other Christ's attitudes of humility and self-abnegation (2.2–5), and thereby "'think' in a manner appropriate to where they *are*, which is 'in Christ Jesus.'"⁵⁶² For Paul, a unified church brings deep joy, because unity is a clear indicator of the presence in the believers of a Christ-like *φρόνησις*, and thus also a marker of their maturity in the faith.

Finally, we note that joy is a matter also of public performance: it is to be *socially expressed*. This is already evident in Paul's exhortation to mutual joy in the face of suffering at 2.17–18 (discussed earlier); and certainly, Paul himself models it through the ways in which he describes and communicates his own joy throughout the letter. Paul also expects the Philippians to welcome with joy the returning Epaphroditus, who has faithfully served both him and them (2.28–29). We meet this notion again at 3.1 and 4.4, where he summons again the believers at Philippi to joy "in the Lord" in spite of the trials and pressures through which they are called to pass. Their joy is to be visible; and not only that, but visibly celebrated.⁵⁶³ This is, again, a shared joy—certainly, premised on a particular view of salvation history, but also at once a joy that is indispensably social in its orientation and manifestation.

Indeed, to a degree that would have made his Stoic contemporaries rather nervous, the way Paul describes his joy shows that it is intentionally bound up with the outlook and behaviour of others. Specifically, Paul's joy is generated in relationship with the Philippian believers, for the expression of warm concern and friendship that their gift to him represents brings him immense delight and comfort; indeed, it is obvious that he desires their *φρονησιν* more than the material expression of it.⁵⁶⁴ Also, the Philippians' unity and like-mindedness, and their continuing progress in the faith, are for Paul rich sources of joy, as is their committed and faithful partnership with him in the work of the gospel. This joy, however, is not to be his alone; Paul expects the Philippians to exhibit in their demeanour a lively, mutual joy.

⁵⁶² Francis B. Watson, "Barth's *Philippians* as Theological Exegesis," in Barth, *Philippians*, xlix.

⁵⁶³ As Barth (commenting on Phil 4.4–5) puts it: "And perhaps we are to think at the same time of the fact that the Lord is near: the time of rejoicing is at the door—see that all men notice it!" (*Philippians*, 121).

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. 2 Cor 12.14, where Paul tells the Corinthians: *οὐ γὰρ ζητῶ τὰ ὑμῶν ἀλλὰ ὑμᾶς*.

All this indicates that Paul's thinking—and that which he also wants to see among his Christian brethren—is far removed from the relational self-sufficiency that marks the Stoic sage. Paul's attitude, as a Stoic would understand and interpret it, involves the evaluative construal of an external object (the actions of fellow Christians) as being beneficial in some way for oneself, such that one should reach out for it. However, the Stoic wise person, whose rationality has been perfected, would not allow an external object to affect in any way his state of complete inner equanimity. Furthermore, Paul's joy is not eupathic joy, which derives from one's virtuous condition and its practical expression, and is untouched by the presence of externals. The implication is that in the Stoic schema, Paul's joy would most likely be classified instead as one of the four generic passions—*ἡδονή* (delight), the opinion that some present thing is a good of such a sort that one should be elated about it—and, as such, to be extirpated, since the passions followed directly upon faulty judgements of one's impressions.

The comparison of Pauline joy with Stoic thinking about emotion throws the sociality of Christian joy into sharp relief, and leads to some rather intriguing questions. First, Paul is obviously *not* self-sufficient at a relational level (in the sense of not needing any encouragement and care); he certainly values—and indeed, deeply so—the ongoing, thoughtful concern of his friends at Philippi. Would he still rejoice if they had forgotten about him and his needs, if they had not responded at this time and in such a manner? Second, all these human relationships are, in a sense, embedded in the common relationship with Christ that believers share. For Paul, to what extent could this relationship with Christ substitute for his relationship with the Philippians when it came to the engendering of joy? Third, the presence of Christ serves to embolden and empower Paul's ministry, even without material supply. Could Paul's work still be carried out effectively and his mission be accomplished, without interaction and fellowship with other believers? And finally, what about the Philippian church—would it continue to grow without the vivifying presence of joy, expressed at both the individual and corporate level?

Our answers to these questions can be at best only speculative. However, from what we have elucidated, Paul's attitude towards joy seems to show that in certain very important ways its promotion and social flourishing are seen to be integral to the health of the fledgling Christian community at Philippi and to the success of the gospel mission, and also to his personal well-being.

3.5. Conclusion

The evidence before us indicates that joy, for Paul, is a crucially important emotional corollary of certain key theological values in the Christian life. More specifically, we may say that Paul sees joy as the believer's deep-seated, embodied, and enacted pleasure that emerges through his or her discernment of, and active participation in, God's eschatological renewal of creation and creature in the light of the work of Christ and the coming of the Spirit.⁵⁶⁵ The good news is that Christ has come, and that he is coming again; Christian joy is grounded in these realities and therefore profoundly connected to the advancement of this good news and to the growth in faith of those who accept it. To be joyful is thus to believe rightly in the truths that the gospel of Christ proclaims; and the implication is that the quality of a person's joy is in some sense an indication of the extent to which these truths have actually taken hold of the person's thinking⁵⁶⁶—and thereby shaped his or her Christian identity, outlook in life, and sense of mission.

Moreover, since the basis of joy consists in God's eschatological act of renewing the world, the presence of suffering in the here and now does not need to cripple the believer's joy. Paul does not shy away from telling the Philippians that suffering for the sake of the gospel is part of what it means to follow Christ. For just as it was for Christ, lying behind such suffering is the promise of ultimate vindication. Therefore suffering becomes, in a way, a theological crucible in which the melding together of pain and a renewed, Christ-focused perspective on such pain produces the possibility of a deeper and richer understanding of the Christian life, as the believer learns to fix his gaze on the eschatological horizon, thereby becoming increasingly cognizant of the hope—and accompanying joy—that are also present realities.⁵⁶⁷ Joy is thus an experience of revitalization—one that is “so profound, so touched by transcendence, that it makes possible the transcendence of suffering, grief, shame, and all that is death-dealing, even and especially death itself.”⁵⁶⁸ Putting these things together, it seems entirely reasonable

⁵⁶⁵ See also Barton, “Spirituality,” 183.

⁵⁶⁶ As Wright, “Joy,” 61, observes: “Not to celebrate, not to express joy in the lordship of the crucified and risen Jesus, would be tacitly to acknowledge that one did not really believe.”

⁵⁶⁷ To use Nicholas Lash's apt expression: joy is “the felt form of Christian hope.” See his *Seeing in the Dark* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005), 201; quoted in Barton, “Spirituality,” 190 n.40.

⁵⁶⁸ Barton, “Spirituality,” 191.

to conclude that for Paul joy is to be regarded as a primary, and perpetual, orientation within the life of the believer (cf. Rom 14.17).⁵⁶⁹

In addition, Paul clearly regards joy as being also a social phenomenon: socially generated in relationship with fellow believers, and socially displayed through expressions of mutual joy that reflect and reinforce the fact that each believer's story is part of a larger narrative, one in which God has the final word. We may therefore say that joy is the collective manifestation of salvation and spiritual transformation in the lives of individual believers. Throughout the letter, Paul places joy within the context of his special relationship with the Philippians: he repeatedly makes clear his desire that they know and share his joy, and so attain a greater fullness of joy in their own lives. The mutuality and sociality of joy are thus foregrounded; it would certainly seem that Paul sees joy as being a critical ingredient in the establishment of a distinctively Christian culture, in view of its powerful potential to structure both personal sensibility and public behaviour. One might even say that here in Philippians Paul regards joy as a responsibility of the believer, because of the far-reaching ways in which joy expresses key aspects of Christian belief and is thus constitutive of the emotional ethos of a community that is truly Christian.

All this helps to explain why Paul takes such great pains to call forth joy from the Philippians by making it the subject of repeated pedagogy, as well as to exemplify it in his own life and ministry. It is interesting to note that like the Stoics, Paul develops a process to inculcate Christian joy: Paul knows that it can be taught (and conversely, also learned), modelled, requested, and also reinforced through the solidarity of shared feelings. And like the Stoics, in his understanding of joy Paul assumes that some kind of grand ordering of the cosmos is at work. But here any superficial similarities end, not least because Pauline joy and Stoic joy are premised on entirely different ideological realities. For in the final analysis Paul derives his joy from his relationship with his Lord, and from his relationship with others who also call Christ Lord. True Christian joy will emerge when these relationships are what they should be.

⁵⁶⁹ Paul writes elsewhere that joy is a fruit of the Spirit and thus serves as evidence of the Spirit's presence and ministry in the life of the believer (Gal 5.22).

Chapter 4. Grief in 1 Thessalonians

4.1. The Background to 1 Thessalonians

4.1.1. Overview

Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica—his earliest extant letter—was most likely written from Corinth in 50/51 CE,⁵⁷⁰ several months after his abrupt flight from Thessalonica, where his evangelistic mission had fomented much hostility (Acts 17.1–10; 1 Thess 1.6). Following Paul's departure, the opposition against the fledgling church that he had planted intensified. Deeply concerned about the well-being of his new converts (1 Thess 3.5)—not only because they were suffering (2.14–16; 3.3–4), but also because he had been forced to leave them before he had finished instructing them in their newfound faith (2.17; 3.10)—and repeatedly frustrated in his efforts to return to Thessalonica to see them again (2.18), Paul sent Timothy to them to strengthen them (3.1–5). Timothy has since returned with a favourable report of the believers' faith and love, and of their good memories of Paul and desire to see him again (3.6).

In response, Paul writes this warm pastoral letter to the Thessalonians to encourage them to continue to stand firm in the Lord (3.8) in the midst of the severe adversity they are experiencing. The missive creates the impression that Paul is generally pleased with the progress of his converts; there are no major issues identified for censure, nor doctrinal aberrations for correction. Paul does provide teaching and advice on certain aspects of their corporate ethics (in various parts of chs. 4–5), but the main problem that he concerns himself with has to do with the Thessalonians' eschatological outlook (4.13–5.11): the recent deaths of some of their number have brought on immense grief—which, for Paul, indicates that their understanding of the resurrection of believers at the return of Christ is incomplete. Hence Paul takes time to help the Thessalonians deal with their grief; and as we shall see, the consolation he offers is firmly rooted in his theology, and has profound personal and social implications for his addressees.

⁵⁷⁰ I follow the traditional view of the dating and provenance of the letter; so also e.g. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 72–73; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 38–39. For objections to this view and an evaluation of them, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 71–74; I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 20–23; Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 49–60.

4.1.2. Literary Integrity

There is an overwhelming scholarly consensus concerning Paul's authorship of 1 Thessalonians as a whole.⁵⁷¹ However, the literary integrity of the letter has on occasion been challenged by arguments that it is interpolated, or a compilation of a number of Pauline letters. The various compilation theories do not have a following and may be set aside.⁵⁷² In relation to the matter of interpolation: only 1 Thess 2.13–16 (or a portion of it) has garnered a certain degree of support that it did not emerge from Paul's hand and thus deserves our consideration.⁵⁷³ In the nineteenth century, Baur and others had already challenged the authenticity of 1 Thess 2.13–16,⁵⁷⁴ but the contemporary debate was given its impetus during the second half of the twentieth century, primarily through the work of Birger Pearson.⁵⁷⁵

In sum, Pearson marshals three types of arguments—historical, theological, and form-critical—to make the case that 1 Thess 2.13–16 is a post-Pauline interpolation. In regard to matters of history: Pearson contends that 2.16c is about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, as the aorist *ἔφθασεν* refers to a past event of wrath, with *εἰς τέλος* underscoring its catastrophic finality.⁵⁷⁶ He also finds it problematic that in 2.14 the

⁵⁷¹ There has been no scholarly challenge to Paul's authorship of 1 Thess since the nineteenth century, except for Marlene Crüsemann's recent monograph, *Die pseudepigraphen Briefe an die Gemeinde in Thessaloniki: Studien zu ihrer Abfassung und zur jüdisch-christlichen Sozialgeschichte*, BWANT 191 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010).

⁵⁷² See esp. Karl-Gottfried Eckhart, "Der zweite echte Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Thessalonicher," *ZTK* 58 (1961): 30–44, who regards the letter as an aggregation of numerous fragments of authentic and inauthentic material; Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 123–218, who partitions 1 and 2 Thessalonians into four distinct letters made up of material from 1 and 2 Thessalonians; and Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, SP 11 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995), 11–19, who proposes that 1 Thessalonians was formed by combining two separate letters and interpolating 2.14–16 into the combination. For an evaluation of Eckhart's and Schmithals' proposals, see esp. Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 34–35.

⁵⁷³ Scholars who reject the authenticity of 2.13–16 include, more recently, John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 255–256; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 17–18, 119–127; for further examples see Todd D. Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours*, JSNTSup 183 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 24 n.2.

The only other passage in 1 Thessalonians which has received serious consideration as a post-Pauline interpolation is 5.1–11. Gerhard Friedrich, "1. Thessalonicher 5,1–11, der apologetische Einschub eines Späteren," *ZTK* 70 (1973): 288–315, has argued that the thought and language of 5.1–11 is not consistent with other parts of the letter. However, his arguments have not convinced other scholars; see Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 33.

⁵⁷⁴ See the survey in Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 37.

⁵⁷⁵ Birger A. Pearson, "1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation," *HTR* 64 (1971): 79–94.

⁵⁷⁶ Pearson, "Interpolation," 82–83; here he also implies that the whole of 2.14–16 is suspect, as 2.16c formally constitutes the conclusion to the participial clauses of 2.15 and 2.16a–b, which in turn modifies the *τῶν Ἰουδαίων* of 2.14.

Thessalonians' sufferings are compared with those of the churches in Judea at the hands of the Jews, because there is no evidence of any significant persecution of the Judean Christians before the first Jewish-Roman War.⁵⁷⁷ Pearson reinforces these arguments with the claim that there are theological incompatibilities between 2.15–16 and Paul's thoughts elsewhere. Pearson insists that Paul nowhere attributes Jesus' death to the Jews—which means that he did not write 2.15.⁵⁷⁸ Furthermore, Pearson finds it impossible to ascribe to Paul the anti-Semitic invective of 2.15–16 when in Rom 9–11 he speaks far more positively of the Jews.⁵⁷⁹ Finally, Pearson argues that a form-critical investigation substantiates the fact that 2.13–16 is a later interpolation. Structurally, 2.11–12 introduces the apostolic parousia, but this actually begins only at 2.17. The appearance at 2.13 of a second thanksgiving (indicated by *εὐχαριστοῦμεν*) is not only an anomaly in Paul's letters, but also interrupts his flow of thought.⁵⁸⁰

However, Pearson's arguments have been refuted. It has been shown that the past event that the *ἐφθασεν* of 2.16c refers to could be any of several calamitous situations that the Jewish people had undergone in the period preceding Paul's writing of the letter;⁵⁸¹ while, in relation to 2.14, several scholars have demonstrated that the Judean Christians did suffer at the hands of their fellow Jews before the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman War.⁵⁸² Pearson's more theologically-grounded assertions have also been called into question. Karl Donfried argues that Rom 9–11 adds new information to what Paul has previously said in 1 Thess 2.13–16. Also, the *εἰς τέλος* of 1 Thess 2.16c is referring to the future, with the sense of "until the end." Thus, for Donfried: "1 Thessalonians reports God's attitude of wrath towards the Jews from the death of Jesus until the last day; Romans adds that at the last day God's mercy will be revealed towards them in a mysterious and radically new way."⁵⁸³ Furthermore, there is good reason to think that Paul's polemic of 1 Thess 2.15–16 is directed not at all Jews generally, but specifically

⁵⁷⁷ Pearson, "Interpolation," 86–87.

⁵⁷⁸ Pearson, "Interpolation," 85.

⁵⁷⁹ Pearson, "Interpolation," 85–86.

⁵⁸⁰ Pearson, "Interpolation," 88–91.

⁵⁸¹ See Weima, *Thessalonians*, 43.

⁵⁸² See esp. Robert Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," *NTS* 17 (1970–1971): 204–208; Bo Reicke, "Judaean-Christianity and the Jewish Establishment, A.D. 33–66," in *Jesus and the Politics of his Day*, ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (London: SCM Press, 1984), 145–152; Markus Bockmuehl, "1 Thessalonians 2:14–16 and the Church in Jerusalem," *TynBul* 52 (2001): 20–27.

⁵⁸³ Karl P. Donfried, "Paul and Judaism: 1 Thessalonians 2.13–16 as a Test Case," *Int* 38 (1984): 251–253, quote from 253.

at those who have opposed God's messengers.⁵⁸⁴ The form-critical basis for regarding 1 Thess 2.13–16 as an interpolation has also been undermined. Several scholars have shown that the passage is integral to the letter.⁵⁸⁵ Furthermore, even if 2.13 can be properly classified as a thanksgiving, Paul consistently demonstrates in his letters that he is never straitjacketed by epistolary conventions; he is certainly capable of adding a second thanksgiving if it suits his purposes for writing.⁵⁸⁶

Pearson's objections to the authenticity of 1 Thess 2.13–16 are supplemented by an argument by Daryl Schmidt that is based on a number of claimed linguistic inconsistencies.⁵⁸⁷ However, scholars who have evaluated Schmidt's proposal are not convinced by his findings: the general view is that the claimed linguistic anomalies in the text are not so unique in Paul's letters that a case for inauthenticity can be made.⁵⁸⁸ In addition, there is a distinct possibility that Paul is borrowing from traditional material, which would explain some of the text's unusual linguistic features.⁵⁸⁹

In conclusion: the arguments put forward for the inauthenticity of 2.13–16 are not persuasive. There are compelling reasons to regard the text as being part of the letter—a conclusion that is only strengthened by the fact that it is found within every extant manuscript of 1 Thessalonians. My study will therefore proceed on the assumption of the literary integrity of the letter.

4.1.3. Genre

4.1.3.a. A Paraenetic Letter

Malherbe has built a forceful case for understanding 1 Thessalonians as a paraenetic letter⁵⁹⁰—a type of letter that, at the time of Paul's writing, had already

⁵⁸⁴ See the discussion in Still, *Conflict*, 41–42; so rightly W. D. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," *NTS* 24 (1977–1978): 8; and Frank D. Gilliard, "The Problem of the Antisemitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2.14 and 15," *NTS* 35 (1989): 498–501.

⁵⁸⁵ See e.g. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 38; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 32; Weima, *Thessalonians*, 45.

⁵⁸⁶ See Still, *Conflict*, 29–30.

⁵⁸⁷ Daryl Schmidt, "1 Thess 2:13–16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation," *JBL* 102 (1983): 269–279.

⁵⁸⁸ See esp. Jon A. Weatherly, "The Authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 2.13–16: Additional Evidence," *JSNT* 42 (1991): 91–98; Carol J. Schlueter, *Filling up the Measure: Polemical Hyperbole in 1 Thessalonians 2.14–16*, JSNTSup 98 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 34–36; Still, *Conflict*, 32–35.

⁵⁸⁹ See e.g. Donfried, "Paul and Judaism," 247–250; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 169, 174–175.

⁵⁹⁰ See esp. Malherbe, "Exhortation"; Malherbe, *Pastoral Care*, 68–78; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 81–86 (85: "1 Thessalonians is clearly a paraenetic letter; indeed, it is one of the best examples of such a letter."). For an overview of the development of Malherbe's thesis in his writings, see David

become one of the recognized forms of epistolography in the Greco-Roman world.⁵⁹¹ For Malherbe, the paraenetic intention of 1 Thessalonians is highly pronounced: chapters 4 and 5 are clearly paraenetic, while chapters 1 to 3, which are autobiographical, function paraenetically by laying the foundation for the specific advice that would follow in the second half of the letter.⁵⁹² He opines that the heavy use of paraenesis may lie in the fact that Paul is writing to recent converts to Christianity sooner than he writes to his other converts; these new believers need to be nurtured in their faith and given more basic instruction in Christian behaviour. Hence, “its paraenetic features perform what we would call pastoral care.”⁵⁹³

Malherbe identifies in Paul’s letter many key features of contemporary paraenesis. These include (1) the frequent, conscious use of material that is already known to one’s readers,⁵⁹⁴ (2) complimenting the readers for living as they should, along with the encouragement to do so more and more (4.1, 10; 5.11);⁵⁹⁵ (3) the offering of models for imitation (1.6; 2.14);⁵⁹⁶ and related to this, (4) the delineation of such a model in antithetical terms, for the sake of emphasis (“not ... but,” 2.1–8);⁵⁹⁷ (5) employing a wide range of hortatory terms throughout the letter;⁵⁹⁸ and (6) the use of philophrontic, even familial, language and imagery that are redolent with positive feeling designed to strengthen one’s readers.⁵⁹⁹ Attention is drawn also to the unique character of 4.13–18, where Paul consoles those who are grieving: for Malherbe, the pericope exhibits similarities to the genre of the letter of consolation, which was discussed in the epistolographic handbooks of the era in terms that reflected its

Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, NTOA/SUNT 71 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 26–28.

⁵⁹¹ Pseudo-Libanius lists the “paraenetic” style as the fifth style in his instruction manual for letter-writing; this broadly corresponds to Pseudo-Demetrius’ “advisory” type, which is the eleventh type of letter in his manual (see further n.407 of my study).

⁵⁹² Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 49–51; at 49 he cites Schubert, *Thanksgivings*, 16–20, 88–89, in arguing that all Pauline thanksgivings (in this case 1.2–3.13) have either explicitly or implicitly a paraenetic function.

⁵⁹³ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 85. We should note, however, that it is difficult to use the adjective “pastoral” unambiguously because of possible connotations that may be anachronistic.

⁵⁹⁴ See Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 51, for further details and references to 1 Thessalonians. As Malherbe notes in *Pastoral Care*, 76, the frequent use of language such as the paraenetic “as you know” subtly makes the point to the Thessalonians that despite their novice status in their new faith, they already share a history in the faith that is documented by their own experience.

⁵⁹⁵ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 51; Malherbe, *Pastoral Care*, 76.

⁵⁹⁶ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 51.

⁵⁹⁷ Malherbe, *Pastoral Care*, 71.

⁵⁹⁸ See Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 51–52, for details.

⁵⁹⁹ See Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 52–55; Malherbe, *Pastoral Care*, 72–75; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 85–86.

paraenetic character.⁶⁰⁰ Paul's use of these hortatory terms and motifs thus demonstrates his continuity with the hortatory tradition and reflects his pastoral method; however, he often radically reshapes the material so that it squares with his understanding of theology.⁶⁰¹ At the same time, Paul freely modifies conventional epistolary form so that his letter can take on certain functions.⁶⁰²

To be sure, and as Malherbe acknowledges, his identification of 1 Thessalonians as pastoral paraenesis is not new. He notes that Patristic commentators, especially John Chrysostom and Theodoret, have frequently commented on Paul's pastoral sensibilities by using the language of paraenesis and psychagogy.⁶⁰³ Even so, it is Malherbe's comprehensive (and vigorous) articulation of this view that raised its profile,⁶⁰⁴ and indeed, his prolific scholarly contributions in this area continue to be cited regularly—though not without some reservations, particularly concerning how his analyses of the letter's eschatological sections often disregard the Jewish and apocalyptic dimensions of Paul's theology.⁶⁰⁵

4.1.3.b. *A Letter of Consolation*

Based on his investigation of the Greco-Roman consolatory tradition, where consolatory visits and letters played central roles, Abraham Smith proposes that the letter of consolation, which was a notable form of psychagogy in antiquity, “can account for virtually every aspect of 1 Thessalonians.”⁶⁰⁶ In his argument that the consolatory letter is a generic model for 1 Thessalonians, Smith looks beyond epistolary structural parallels and focuses on how Paul co-opts the *topoi* of the consolatory tradition in the Hellenistic world as literary expressions of the typical pattern of social interaction associated with consolation.⁶⁰⁷ Smith's conclusion is that Paul's consolatory goal is not limited to 4.13–18; instead, the entire letter reflects its shared origin with

⁶⁰⁰ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 64–65, citing the fifth type in Pseudo-Demetrius' “Epistolary Types” (see further n.407 of my study).

⁶⁰¹ Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 56–66.

⁶⁰² Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 90–91.

⁶⁰³ See Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 86; Malherbe, “Exhortation,” 58.

⁶⁰⁴ For an early endorsement see Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 25–26; and 96: “First Thessalonians is an excellent example of a paraenetic letter.”

⁶⁰⁵ On this see the discussion in Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 28–29.

⁶⁰⁶ Abraham Smith, *Comfort One Another: Reconstructing the Rhetoric and Audience of 1 Thessalonians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 47–60 (quote from 48).

⁶⁰⁷ Smith, *Comfort*, 45–46, 52–57; here Smith builds on the work of Stowers (*Letter Writing*, 144) who notes three fundamental elements of the typical social interaction reflected in ancient consolatory letters: (1) The writer may have a wide range of positive relationships with the recipient. (2) The recipient has experienced some major misfortune that is apt to produce grief. (3) The writer expresses his grief and provides reasons why the recipient should bear up under this grief.

contemporaneous consolatory writing, through how its readers are furnished throughout with consolatory examples and commonplaces to help them overcome their experiences of grief.⁶⁰⁸

Donfried reaches a similar conclusion in an essay that seeks to uncover the purpose for which 1 Thessalonians is written.⁶⁰⁹ He argues that Paul writes to the Thessalonians primarily to console them and encourage them in the face of persecution; in order to carry out this purpose effectively he must also emphasize the divine origin of the message he had proclaimed while he was in their company, and defend himself against charges made against his motivation and behaviour.⁶¹⁰ At the heart of Paul's purpose, however, lies the desire to bring consolation and encouragement to the discouraged; thus, as Donfried explains, "we understand 1 Thessalonians not primarily as a 'paraenetic' letter but as a 'paracletic' letter, as a *consolatio*."⁶¹¹

4.1.3.c. Other Proposals and Conclusion

With the rise of rhetorical criticism in the latter decades of the twentieth century, a number of studies of 1 Thessalonians have been carried out on the assumption that its interpretation as a letter is better served by prioritizing a concern for its rhetorical genre

⁶⁰⁸ Smith, *Comfort*, 59.

⁶⁰⁹ Karl P. Donfried, "The Theology of 1 Thessalonians as a Reflection of Its Purpose," in *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 119–138.

⁶¹⁰ Donfried, "Purpose," 119–120.

⁶¹¹ Donfried, "Purpose," 119–120. Donfried does not deny Malherbe's claim that there are paraenetic elements in 1 Thessalonians, but he rejects the idea that it is the overriding genre: "Much closer to Paul's intention is the genre *consolatio*, a genre which, like many other subcategories, includes paraenesis. 1 Thessalonians is a *λόγος παραμυθητικός* to a Christian church suffering the effects of persecution." ("Purpose," 137–138). See also his "The Theology of 1 Thessalonians," in *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*, by Karl P. Donfried and I. Howard Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5, where he contends that 1 Thessalonians "approximates, but is not identical with, ancient letters of consolation."

See also e.g. Craig Steven de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationship of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities*, SBLDS 168 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 171–175, who agrees that 1 Thessalonians shares many characteristics of the letter of consolation, and accordingly frames Paul's response to the Thessalonians in terms of consolation and exhortation. In a similar vein Juan Chapa, "Is First Thessalonians a Letter of Consolation?," *NTS* 40 (1994): 150–60 (esp. 156–160), identifies several features that 1 Thessalonians shares with Greco-Roman consolatory letters, but stops short of formally classifying it as such, because it does not adhere to the structural guidelines of the consolatory letter-type as outlined in the standard handbooks. However, David Luckensmeyer and Bronwen Neil, "Reading First Thessalonians as a Consolatory Letter in Light of Seneca and Ancient Handbooks on Letter-Writing," *NTS* 62 (2016): 31–48, have recently suggested that since the Senecan consolatory epistles do not rigidly follow such guidelines, there is some justification in locating 1 Thessalonians within a reinterpreted understanding of the consolation genre and reading it as a letter of consolation.

over its epistolary features. The earliest explicit attempt at the rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians as a letter seems to have been the short discussion by Kennedy, who regards it as deliberative rhetoric.⁶¹² Subsequent studies have led several scholars to conclude instead that it is an example of epideictic rhetoric,⁶¹³ with at least one of them assigning it to a specific sub-genre of epideictic rhetoric.⁶¹⁴ Even so, we cannot speak of a consensus view: there are a number of scholars who see 1 Thessalonians as deliberative rhetoric,⁶¹⁵ or find it unhelpful to have to choose between epideictic and deliberative rhetoric,⁶¹⁶ or even delineate a new rhetorical genre for it because it does not square with the traditional ones.⁶¹⁷

The nature of the relationship between rhetorical criticism and epistolary approaches continues to be debated. To be sure, the advocates of rhetorical analysis recognize that its effectiveness is heightened when it is carried out alongside a corresponding epistolary analysis—but its most fervent proponents stress that it is rhetorical analysis that brings the interpreter closer to the meaning and intention embedded within a text.⁶¹⁸ However, on the other side of the hermeneutical fence are those who question the value of applying the rules of Greco-Roman rhetoric to 1 Thessalonians, not least because the various studies of the letter have elicited much

⁶¹² George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 142.

⁶¹³ So e.g. George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Towards a New Understanding*, SBLDS 73 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 219–221; Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 71–76; Frank W. Hughes, “The Rhetoric of 1 Thessalonians,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. Raymond F. Collins, BETL 87 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 94–116, esp. 97; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 46–50; Steve Walton, “What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul? Rhetorical Criticism and 1 Thessalonians,” *TynBul* 46 (1995): 249–250; Johannes Schoon-Janssen, “On the Use of Elements of Ancient Epistolography in 1 Thessalonians,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 192–193; Ben Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 21–27.

⁶¹⁴ So Wilhelm Wuellner, “The Argumentative Structure of 1 Thessalonians as Paradoxical Encomium,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. Raymond F. Collins, BETL 87 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 126–128.

⁶¹⁵ E.g. Bruce C. Johanson, *To All the Brethren: A Text-Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians*, ConBNT 16 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), 189; Krentz, “Rhetorical Flourishes,” 304.

⁶¹⁶ E.g. Jan Lambrecht, “A Structural Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4–5,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 177.

⁶¹⁷ So Thomas H. Olbricht, “An Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Thessalonians,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David J. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 216–236, esp. 225–226. However, Olbricht’s proposal of 1 Thessalonians as “church rhetoric” does not have much of a following, perhaps because of his failure to offer any other examples of it.

⁶¹⁸ See e.g. Charles A. Wanamaker, “Epistolary vs. Rhetorical Analysis: Is a Synthesis Possible?,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?*, ed. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 283–286.

disparity in its rhetorical disposition,⁶¹⁹ but more fundamentally, because of concerns about the very legitimacy of using the categories of rhetorical theory to analyze the Pauline letters.⁶²⁰

4.1.4. Distinctives

Whatever one's views might be as to the overall character of Paul's letter in relation to some sort of genre, it seems clear that he aims through his writing to nurture and establish the Thessalonians in their new-found faith, since he is unable to be physically present with them (3.10–11). Evidently, these recent converts still lack a basic grounding in all the proprieties of Christian living, because running through the letter is a distinct interest in matters of behaviour (e.g. 2.1–12; 4.1–18; 5.1–22). It is thus not surprising to find a preponderance of discourse and terminology of the type that Malherbe has termed as paraenetic in nature,⁶²¹ since such a mode of writing is arguably the most effective communicative vehicle for Paul's thinking.

Indeed, Paul's deep love and concern for the spiritual well-being of the Thessalonian believers is woven into the fabric of the letter. He constantly refers to them as "brothers,"⁶²² and speaks passionately of his intense affection and longing for them (e.g. 2.8, 17–20; 3.6–11). Forced to leave them against his will, he emphasizes his sense of loss by describing himself as a bereft orphan (*ἀπορφανίζω*,⁶²³ 2.17). Recalling his past conduct and that of his colleagues in ministry, he recounts how they had treated the Thessalonians as a nursing mother (*τροφός*, 2.7) would cherish and care for her own infants; because of their love for the Thessalonians, Paul and his colleagues had shared with them not only the gospel but their "own selves" (*ἡ ἐαυτῶν ψυχή*, 2.8). As a father

⁶¹⁹ On this see esp. Krentz, "Rhetorical Flourishes," 295–304.

⁶²⁰ See Weima, *Thessalonians*, 55–56, and further references therein.

⁶²¹ See section 4.1.3.a above.

⁶²² The fictive-kinship term *ἀδελφός* occurs proportionately more often in 1 Thessalonians than in any of Paul's other letters (1.4; 2.1, 9, 14, 17; 3.2, 7; 4.1, 6, 10 (x2), 13; 5.1, 4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27): a total of 19 times, compared to 13 times in Romans, 33 times in 1 Corinthians, and 9 times in 2 Corinthians—all three of which are considerably longer letters. For further details and for the function of the term in 1 Thessalonians see esp. Trevor J. Burke, *Family Matters: A Socio-Historical Study of Kinship Metaphors in 1 Thessalonians*, JSNTSup 247 (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 165–175. See also Aasgaard, *Christian Siblingship*, 151–166.

⁶²³ The verb is hapax in the NT, and occurs only infrequently in the extant Greek literature where it consistently refers to children who are orphaned from their parents and not the reverse; see further John B. Faulkenberry Miller, "Infants and Orphans in 1 Thessalonians: A Discussion of *Ἀπορφανίζω* and the Text-Critical Problem in 1 Thess. 2:7" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Boston, 20 March 1999). Paul's placement of the orphan metaphor within a passive participle, coupled with his earlier mention of being driven out (2.15), strongly indicate that he was forcibly separated from his new converts (which squares with the account in Acts 17.10).

with his own children (2.11), he and his colleagues had exhorted (*παρακαλέω*, 2.12; cf. 3.2, 7; 4.1, 10, 18; 5.11, 14), encouraged (*παραμυθέομαι*, 2.12; cf. 5.14) and urged (*μαρτύρομαι*,⁶²⁴ 2.12) the Thessalonian believers to live a life that was worthy of God (2.12), which would please (*ἀρέσκω*, 4.1; cf. 2.4, 15) him.

I think that one may conjecture with some justification that Paul's heartfelt concern for the believers at Thessalonica is precipitated by two related exigencies: first, the fact that he and his co-workers had to leave Thessalonica so abruptly, very likely without having completed the task of instructing the new Thessalonian believers in the basics of Christian belief and praxis (as 3.10 seems to indicate); and second, because they, like him, are presently undergoing much suffering for their faith.

Indeed, the motif of suffering and conflict is highly significant in the letter. The Thessalonians had received the gospel "in much affliction" (*ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ*, 1.6), and they were suffering the same things as did the churches in Judea (2.14). Suffering and affliction for the sake of the faith would continue to mark the lives of the believers at Thessalonica (3.3), as it did Paul's own life and ministry (3.7). Several times in the letter, Paul speaks of his own sufferings. He had previously suffered (*προπάσχω*, 2.2) at Philippi and been shamefully mistreated (*ὀβριζέω*, 2.2) there; however, taking courage in God, he had brought the good news to Thessalonica in spite of the continuing presence of what seems to have been a considerable degree of opposition (*ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι*, 2.2).⁶²⁵ Paul describes some of this opposition: there are those who have been persecuting him and his team of co-workers, and thus hindering their task of evangelism (*καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐκδιωξάντων ... κωλύόντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν*, 2.15–16). Also lined up against them is Satan, whose actions have "prevented" (*ἐγκόπτω*, 2.18) Paul from returning to Thessalonica to see his friends there.

Yet in spite of suffering and persecution, the Thessalonians had accepted the gospel with joy that was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and in this way they had become imitators of both Paul and the Lord (1.6). Paul links joy with a "crown of boasting" (2.19) in which he will glory at the coming of Christ; and indeed, as he tells them: *ὁμεῖς γὰρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρά* (2.20). Joy cannot be said to be a major motif in 1 Thessalonians, but it serves to bridge two themes that are key to the letter: suffering,

⁶²⁴ BDAG 619: "to urge something as a matter of great importance."

⁶²⁵ If credence is given to the parallel account in Acts 17.1–10, there is here a depiction of aggressive, possibly also physical, opposition.

and eschatology—which we shall now briefly outline, before we return to a discussion of the theme of suffering and conflict.

Paul makes explicit mention of the parousia several times in the letter. At the end of ch. 1, he reminds the Thessalonians that they are waiting for God’s son to come from heaven—Jesus, who would deliver believers from the coming wrath (1.10; cf. 1.3). At 2.19–20, as we have already seen, the parousia forms the context in which the Thessalonians are to be celebrated as Paul’s hope or joy or crown of boasting; at that eschatological event the Thessalonians are pictured as being blameless in holiness before God (3.13). The parousia takes centre stage in the pericopes of 4.13–18 and 5.1–11, where Paul explains how the return of Christ relates to the status of believers, whether deceased (4.13–18) or living (5.1–11). Indeed, since the “day of the Lord” is imminent (5.2), the believers are to wait for Christ’s coming from heaven (1.10), in full assurance that they are called into God’s own kingdom and glory (2.12). Then, as he brings the letter to a close, Paul makes a final reference to the parousia (5.23). The letter is shot through with the imagery and language of apocalyptic.

4.2. Conflict and Suffering in 1 Thessalonians

4.2.1. Introduction

We now take a closer look at the notion of conflict and suffering in 1 Thessalonians. Such a notion is readily apparent in the letter at a number of levels: thus we find a reference to violent conflict culminating in the death of Jesus and his prophets (2.15); conflict arising from the Gentile mission (2.2, 15–16); conflict between spiritual powers (1.9; 2.18; 3.5); Paul’s anxiety associated with the possibility that his work would be in vain (3.1–5); ideological conflict between the Christian message and that of ancient Rome (5.3); and conflict among members of the community (5.12–15).⁶²⁶ However, for the purposes of this study what I wish to discuss is the social aspect of such conflict from the perspective of the Thessalonians themselves, or, in other words, I wish to be able to offer some answers to the two questions that follow. What precisely is the nature of the conflict that the Thessalonian Christians are facing? How might this conflict have affected them as a community of believers? The answers to these

⁶²⁶ As Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 22, helpfully summarizes.

questions may help us to understand further the background to Paul's paraenesis in the letter, especially as it pertains to the quelling of the grief that the Thessalonians are experiencing (4.13–18).

4.2.2. The Nature of the Thessalonians' Suffering (1 Thess 1.6)

As we have already noted, it is evident that the Thessalonian believers had encountered a considerable degree of hostility when they first heard and accepted the gospel that Paul had proclaimed to them (1.6). That this *θλίψις* had continued may be inferred from Paul's reference to the fact that the Thessalonians had suffered (*πάσχω*, 2.14) at the hands of their compatriots (*συμφυλέται*, 2.14), and is confirmed when he reveals that Timothy was sent to them to strengthen and encourage them (3.2) because of his concern that they would be shaken by these afflictions⁶²⁷ (*τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις*,⁶²⁸ 3.3a). Yet Paul takes the view that such suffering is part and parcel of the Christian life (*αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἴδατε ὅτι εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα*, 3.3b), and highlights that he had in fact already warned the Thessalonians that they would have to endure these afflictions—which was apparently what did happen (3.4).

What can be gleaned from the letter about the precise nature of the conflict that the Thessalonian believers found themselves embroiled in? The mimetic parallel that Paul draws at 1.6 between the experiences of the Thessalonians and those of himself and Jesus clearly suggests that Paul, in referring to the Thessalonians' *θλίψις*, has in view at least some form of social oppression connected with the proclamation or reception of the gospel;⁶²⁹ it is not entirely improbable that this may have also been manifested in terms of physical opposition, especially if credence is given to the account in Acts 17.1–10. Malherbe holds a decidedly minority position in arguing that

⁶²⁷ Contra a minority of interpreters (e.g. Richard, *Thessalonians*, 141–142) who take the verb *σαίνομαι* (hapax legomenon in the NT) to mean “to flatter” and argue that Paul is therefore saying that Timothy was sent to the Thessalonians to prevent them from being talked out of their new faith. For further discussion see esp. Weima, *Thessalonians*, 211–212; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 131.

⁶²⁸ The antecedent of *ταύταις* is not entirely certain, and this has led a few commentators (e.g. more recently Traugott Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKKNT 13 [Zürich: Benziger, 1986], 127; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 193) to suggest that Paul is referring to his own suffering. On this reading, Paul is worried that the faith of his converts will be shaken once they discover that he is undergoing persecution. However, this seems rather unlikely: first, the Thessalonians surely already knew this fact (2.2), and second, the second-person pronouns that Paul employs in the preceding verse (*εἰς τὸ στηρίζαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν*, 3.2c; cf. 3.5) surely indicate that the Thessalonians are in view (so rightly Weima, *Thessalonians*, 212–213).

⁶²⁹ So the majority of commentators, e.g. Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, BNTC (London: A & C Black, 1972), 79, who thinks Paul is referring to persecution; and Holtz, *Thessalonicher*, 49 (followed by Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 80–82) who speaks of the presence of social oppression at the time of the Thessalonians' conversion.

θλίψις refers instead to the “distress and anguish of heart experienced by persons who broke with their past as they received the gospel.”⁶³⁰ We may certainly grant that the Thessalonian believers have experienced significant social dislocation, but it seems most unlikely that Paul has only some kind of inner psychological turmoil in view in speaking of his converts’ *θλίψις*.⁶³¹

On the other hand, is it possible that this conflict had led to the death, or even martyrdom, of a number of the Christians at Thessalonica? As we shall see later in greater detail in section 4.3.3.a, such a conclusion is generally arrived at by correlating what Paul says about the Thessalonians’ *θλίψις* with his discussion in 4.13–18 of the death of certain believers. However, the presence of martyrdom seems unlikely, given the fact that Paul nowhere in his letter mentions nor celebrates the fact that any of the believers had died for their faith.⁶³² Barclay therefore rightly concludes that the Thessalonians’ *θλίψις* is best understood as social harassment of the kind that became common for Christians in the Greco-Roman world.⁶³³

4.2.3. The Cause of the Thessalonians’ Suffering (1 Thess 2.14)

Next, what can be said concerning the source of the Thessalonian Christians’ suffering? Our evidence comes from 2.14, where one may logically deduce that Paul in referring to the *συμφυλέται*⁶³⁴ of the Thessalonians must be using the term in its ethnic sense to indicate a Gentile source for their afflictions, since the Thessalonians are themselves Gentile converts to Christianity (1.9). This conclusion is supported by the fact that Paul is always mindful of the matter of race and careful to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles in his writings⁶³⁵—it would therefore be completely inconsistent of him to employ the term in its geographic sense to designate *all* the denizens of

⁶³⁰ Malherbe, *Pastoral Care*, 48 (see also the wider discussion in 46–52); also Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 127–129.

⁶³¹ See the discussion in Still, *Conflict*, 208–217. See further Weima, *Thessalonians*, 100–101.

⁶³² John M. G. Barclay, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 514, argues that Paul would surely have celebrated them as martyrs if so. In support Barclay cites (n.6) Phil 2.25–30 and Rom 16.4, where Paul lauds those who have risked their lives for the gospel; no such eulogy is present here in 1 Thess.

⁶³³ Barclay, “Conflict,” 513–516.

⁶³⁴ BDAG 960: “one’s people”; hapax legomenon in Paul and in the rest of the NT. However, its cognate *φιλή* occurs twice in Paul (Rom 11.1; Phil 3.5); on both these occasions it is in relation to Paul’s belonging to the tribe of Benjamin.

⁶³⁵ E.g. in Gal 2.

Thessalonica irrespective of their ethnicity.⁶³⁶ Hence (and notwithstanding the mention of Jewish troublemakers in Acts 17.5–6) Paul is in his letter saying that the source of the church's afflictions were unconverted Gentiles.⁶³⁷

It seems most likely then that the chief cause of the harassment is the fact that the Thessalonian believers have turned their backs on common Greco-Roman religion as a result of their conversion (1.9). De Vos outlines a situation of social conflict that “centered on the rejection of traditional religious practices and a withdrawal from social/religious activities.”⁶³⁸ Still makes a similar observation: “the conflict occurred because unbelievers wanted to control and to censure a novel religious movement which they viewed as ideologically and socially deviant.”⁶³⁹ The discrimination and pressure that was effected against the Thessalonian Christians was therefore presumably aimed at reversing their beliefs and practices.⁶⁴⁰

From the viewpoint of the wider community, the behaviour of the converts was utterly reprehensible. First, their religious mores and social exclusiveness disrupted normal familial and cultic activity and thereby both offended and injured public sensibility.⁶⁴¹ Second, given the way that politics and religion were so closely integrated in Greco-Roman society, it was highly probable that the religious ideals of the Christians—with their claim to be subjects of another king—became overlaid with political overtones that were thought to be subversive; all this would have loudly sounded alarm bells in a city like Thessalonica, which was acutely aware of its continuing dependence on Imperial benefaction.⁶⁴² Third, it was very likely that the Christians' rejection of traditional religion not only branded them as *ἄθεοι*, but was also seen to compromise the city's overall well-being as far as its dealings with the gods was concerned; if even one segment of the community raised the ire of the gods, the entire city was put at risk because their wrath could lead to the meting out of severe

⁶³⁶ As Barclay, “Conflict,” 514, stresses: “With his acute consciousness of the racial distinction between Jews and non-Jews, Paul could hardly refer to Jews as *symphyletai* (2.14) of his non-Jewish converts (1.9).”

⁶³⁷ See esp. Still, *Conflict*, 218–227, for a persuasive articulation of this view.

⁶³⁸ de Vos, *Conflicts*, 176; see also the wider discussion at 155–160.

⁶³⁹ Still, *Conflict*, 267.

⁶⁴⁰ de Vos, *Conflicts*, 157; Still, *Conflict*, 267.

⁶⁴¹ Barclay, “Conflict,” 515; see also his “Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity,” in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, WUNT 275 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2011), 53. For an extensive discussion see Still, *Conflict*, 232–255.

⁶⁴² See de Vos, *Conflicts*, 156–157; Barclay, “Conflict,” 514; and especially Still, *Conflict*, 260–266. On the relationship between Rome and Thessalonica, and the favoured political status that Thessalonica enjoyed, see the useful summary and references in Weima, *Thessalonians*, 3–7.

punishments such as famine, flooding, or other natural calamities.⁶⁴³ As Still summarizes succinctly, the conflict between the Christians and non-Christians in Thessalonica arose because the latter “viewed the church to be subversive to the foundational institutions of Greco-Roman society, namely family, religion, and government.”⁶⁴⁴

4.3. Grief in 1 Thessalonians 4.13–18

4.3.1. Extent of the Passage

We turn our attention now to the specific issue of grief in 1 Thessalonians. At 4.13, Paul marks the start of a fresh topic in his letter—the fate of deceased believers at the return of Christ—with his mention of “those who have died” (*περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων*); despite the repeated appearance up to this point of motifs related to the parousia, this is the first discussion of the implications of that event for those who have died.⁶⁴⁵ The shift in topic at 4.13 is confirmed by the combined use of three distinct transitional devices: the disclosure formula at 4.13 (“I do not want you not to know,” *οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν*)—the double negative form of which contrasts with, and also functions as an emphatic equivalent to, the positive form found elsewhere in the letter (“you know that,” see 2.1; 4.2; 5.2),⁶⁴⁶ the vocative *ἀδελφοί*,⁶⁴⁷ and the *περὶ δέ* formula;⁶⁴⁸ together with the presence of several literary and thematic features that signal the end of the previous section at 4.12.⁶⁴⁹

Despite some similarities in content and structure between 4.13–18 and 5.1–11,⁶⁵⁰ it is clear that the present section ends at 4.18 and not at 5.11. At 4.18, the particle *ὥστε*

⁶⁴³ Still, *Conflict*, 255–260. See also Barclay, “Conflict,” 515; Barclay also notes here (citing Christian and non-Christian sources) that if anything went wrong the Christians could get the blame.

⁶⁴⁴ Still, *Conflict*, 267.

⁶⁴⁵ Beverly R. Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998), 62.

⁶⁴⁶ For further details and for examples of both forms within the Pauline corpus, see Weima, *Thessalonians*, 307.

⁶⁴⁷ See note 622 above.

⁶⁴⁸ Occurring in the letter also at 4.9 and 5.1; and elsewhere in the undisputed Paulines at 1 Cor 7.1, 25; 8.1, 4; 12.1; 16.1, 12. Here in 1 Thess 4.13 the disclosure formula nudges the preposition *περὶ* further along the sentence, while the particle *δέ* retains its position.

⁶⁴⁹ For further discussion see Weima, *Thessalonians*, 249–251.

⁶⁵⁰ See esp. Raymond F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, BETL 66 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 154–172; Tracy L. Howard, “The Literary Unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11,” *Grace Theological Journal* 9 (1988): 163–190; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 181.

introduces a concluding clause⁶⁵¹— *παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις*— which looks back on the preceding material in 4.13–17 and draws it to a close, while simultaneously forming a thematic *inclusio* with the passage’s opening injunction to “not grieve” (4.13). The coherence of 4.13–18 is further supported by a number of lexical and conceptual recurrences: *κοιμωμένων / κοιμηθέντας* (4.13, 14, 15) and its semantic equivalent *οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ* (4.16); the double occurrence of the phrase *ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι* (4.15, 17); and the conceptual parallels between *ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ* (4.14) and *σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα* (4.17), and also between *Ἰησοῦς ... ἀνέστη* (4.14) and *οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται* (4.16).⁶⁵² Moreover, it is also clearly apparent that at 5.1 a new section has begun: Paul uses two familiar transitional devices (the *περὶ δέ* formula and the vocative *ἀδελφοί*) and a paralipsis (*οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι*) to flag the beginning of a new topic of discussion.

4.3.2. The Disclosure Formula

In his opening assertion of 4.13, does Paul with his use of the disclosure formula *οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν* introduce not only a change of topic, but one that is completely new to the Thessalonians? While there are some scholars who caution against reaching such a conclusion,⁶⁵³ there are others who maintain that Paul is indeed presenting something that was previously unknown to his converts.⁶⁵⁴ It seems to me that the matter is far from clear; from Paul’s phraseology we cannot be sure whether he is providing totally new information to the Thessalonian believers or merely

⁶⁵¹ *ὥστε* is used similarly to conclude a discussion in 1 Cor 7.38; 11.27, 33; 14.39; 15.58.

⁶⁵² Weima, *Thessalonians*, 305–306, citing Johanson, *Brethren*, 119; Hubert Jurgensen, “Awaiting the Return of Christ: A Re-Examination of 1 Thessalonians 4.13–5.11 from a Pentecostal Perspective,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 4 (1994): 86.

⁶⁵³ Perhaps most notably Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 262, who opines that Paul’s varied use of both the positive and negative forms of the disclosure formula “makes it impossible to draw rigid conclusions about their significance” (see also the broader discussion on 262–263); cf. Barclay, “Death,” 218. See also Bédard Rigaux, *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres aux Thessaliciens*, EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1956), 239, 526–527; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 118; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 233; Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, 62; and Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 212–213, who makes the persuasive suggestion that “Paul’s repeated references to eschatological motifs increase the probability that he spoke at length on such subjects during his founding visit.”

⁶⁵⁴ So e.g. Best, *Thessalonians*, 184; Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 135; Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 71; Karl P. Donfried, “The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence,” in *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 40; Colin R. Nicholl, *From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, SNTSMS 126 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20–22; Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 164; Weima, *Thessalonians*, 307–308.

supplementing or perhaps clarifying certain points in his earlier apocalyptic teaching; on this matter there is no scholarly consensus. However, what seems certain is that Paul wants to give the Thessalonians instruction by emphasizing the material that immediately follows: he wants them to know *περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων*.⁶⁵⁵

4.3.3. The Circumstances of the Thessalonians' Grief

From the evidence, we may reasonably surmise—based on the plural construction *περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων*—that a number of the Thessalonian believers had died in the period between Paul's hurried escape from Thessalonica and the penning of this letter to them. Paul (understandably) in his response does not see any need to indicate who these individuals are nor how they have died, since the Thessalonians must already be in full possession of the facts. The second half of 4.13 contains a purpose clause that sets out the thesis that Paul will establish in the verses that follow: *ἵνα μὴ λυπησθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα*. Quite clearly, the Thessalonians were grieving—and with some degree of intensity—over the deaths of the fellow believers among them.⁶⁵⁶ What is not made clear is *why* they should be grieving in such a manner. But before we try to ascertain in more precise terms the reason why the Thessalonian believers were in such grief, it is pertinent to consider if martyrdom might lie behind the deaths that are alluded to here.

4.3.3.a. The Martyrdom of Fellow Believers?

A number of exegetes have put forward the argument that some in the Thessalonian church were martyred for their faith.⁶⁵⁷ This view is generally arrived at

⁶⁵⁵ Terms relating to sleep were commonly employed as euphemisms for death in antiquity: see Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 167, and Weima, *Thessalonians*, 309, for examples from Greek, Jewish and Christian writings. Indeed, the conceptual link between sleep and death was by no means distinctively Jewish or Christian, probably because their association was so intuitive (so Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PiNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 217). The figurative extension of the meaning of “sleep” as “death” is the only way in which Paul uses *κοιμάω* (BDAG 551). A number of scholars suggest that Paul's metaphorical use of sleep for death may connote something about the individual's post-mortem state, e.g. a waiting for a future resurrection, or an interim, so-called intermediate state of existence; however, such arguments are overly speculative, especially in the absence of any clear semantic implications associated with the term that might support either conclusion (see the helpful discussion in Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 214).

⁶⁵⁶ The present passive of *λυπέω* means “be sad, distressed, grieve” (BDAG 604); and as Weima, *Thessalonians*, 310, notes: “the use of the present tense highlights the ongoing nature of the action and so hints at the great depth of the Thessalonians' grief.”

⁶⁵⁷ See e.g. John S. Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*, JSNTSup 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 113–114; Chapa, “Letter of Consolation?,” 156; Donfried, “Theology,”

through an attempt to read Paul's instructions here in 4.13–18 against his earlier statements concerning the Thessalonians' *θλίψις* in 1.6, 3.3–4, and especially 2.14 (where Paul sets up a parallel between the sufferings faced by the Thessalonians with those experienced by the churches in Judea), and by taking support from references to the afflictions that they had endured in 2 Thess 1.4–7, 2 Cor 8.2, and Acts 17.5–9.⁶⁵⁸

However, these scattered references to affliction more likely have in view severe social harassment and ostracism rather than physical death and martyrdom.⁶⁵⁹ Indeed, as Bruce rightly notes: “The references in both 1 and 2 Thessalonians to the ‘afflictions’ endured by the Christians of Thessalonica scarcely give the impression that positive martyrdom was involved.”⁶⁶⁰ Further, the parallel that Paul describes in 2.14 rests not so much on any similarity in the specifics of the suffering that the two groups have endured as on the presence of a similar type of opponent: both the Thessalonian and Judean churches have suffered at the hands of their “own fellow countrymen” (*τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν*).⁶⁶¹ Finally, as we have already noted, based on his actions elsewhere we may well argue that Paul would have paid tribute to any Thessalonians who had actually died for their faith.⁶⁶² Overall, the evidence seems to suggest quite clearly that martyrdom is not in view here.⁶⁶³

21–23; Donfried, “Cults,” 41–43; and more recently Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 139. For additional discussions see the references in Weima, *Thessalonians*, 309.

⁶⁵⁸ Donfried, “Cults,” 41–42 also makes much of a supposed parallel between the use of *κοιμάω* in 4.13 and the account of the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7.60. However this conceptual link is tenuous at best; as de Vos, *Conflicts*, 159–160 points out, both Paul and Luke use *κοιμάω* elsewhere to refer to death without any sense of martyrdom (Acts 13.36; 1 Cor 7.39, 11.30, 15.51).

⁶⁵⁹ See Weima, *Thessalonians*, 311–312, and as already noted, Barclay, “Conflict,” 514.

⁶⁶⁰ F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, WBC 45 (Waco: Word, 1982), 98; cited in Weima, *Thessalonians*, 309–310.

⁶⁶¹ As Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 113, rightly argues: “Obviously, the persecution undergone by the Thessalonian Christians cannot be lined directly to the crisis in Judea. Rather the point of comparison, as the *καθὼς* shows, was that both groups had suffered harassment at the hands of their own compatriots.” See similarly Weima, 310; also 166–167.

⁶⁶² See n.632.

⁶⁶³ Note however Still, *Conflict*, 216–217, who broadly demurs at the identification of the Christian dead of whom Paul speaks here as martyrs while not completely rejecting “the possibility that some of Paul’s converts were victims of physical violence and that perhaps on the rarest of occasions such opposition might have culminated in death” (216). Still’s concession is based on an interpretation of 2.14 in which *τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπάθετε* is taken literally, i.e., that the Thessalonians suffered the same things as the Judean churches did; however, as we have noted above, this reading does not adequately elucidate the meaning of the parallel that Paul is setting up here. In a not dissimilar way, de Vos, *Conflicts*, 160, while concluding that “there is no textual basis for the idea that some were executed,” opines also that if the repressive measures against the Thessalonians were in response to charges of atheism or breaches against the oath of loyalty to the Emperor, “physical violence, and even death cannot be ruled out.” However, against both Still and de Vos it must be pointed out that Paul nowhere links the deaths that are implied in 4.13–18 with the afflictions that the Thessalonian believers are undergoing (Barclay, “Conflict,” 514; “Thessalonica,” 53).

4.3.3.b. Major Hypotheses Concerning the Thessalonians' Grief

We return now to the larger question of the circumstances surrounding the Thessalonians' emotional state here at 4.13: what can be said about the main cause of the apparently intense grief that they are experiencing? A number of proposals have been offered, and here I discuss those that are more significant.⁶⁶⁴

An older, minority line of interpretation is that Gnostic missionaries in Thessalonica had subverted Paul's kerygma by insisting that the resurrection of the dead was a present reality. The unexpected deaths of some of the believers therefore triggered shock and grief within the Thessalonian church.⁶⁶⁵ However, there is no evidence for the presence of Gnostic influences in Thessalonica; and in any case it may be questioned whether Gnosticism existed as a developed movement (or group of movements) at this early date. Furthermore, Paul's response in his letter does not indicate that a denial of the resurrection was the problem.⁶⁶⁶

The mainstream interpretations of the reason for the Thessalonians' grief may be placed into one of two groups. One group comprises those views that are based broadly on the premise that the Thessalonians were confused and unable to synthesize the dual sets of eschatological expectations concerning the resurrection of dead believers and the parousia into a coherent whole. Their grief therefore stemmed from uncertainty concerning the relationship between the living and the dead at Christ's coming, and was further fuelled by Jewish apocalyptic speculation that those deceased would be at some sort of *relative* disadvantage compared to people who were alive (see e.g. 4 Ezra 13.24; cf. 6.25; 7.26–44; 13.16–18; Pss. Sol. 17.44; 18.6).⁶⁶⁷ However, these views fail to account for the severity of the Thessalonians' reactions: it is hard to understand why they would grieve with such hopelessness since they believed that their brethren would eventually be resurrected (albeit some time after the parousia).⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁴ For further details see especially the useful table in Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 192–211.

⁶⁶⁵ Wilhelm Lütgert, *Die Volkommenen im Philipperbrief und die Enthusiasten in Thessalonich*, BFCT 13 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1909), 55–81; Schmithals, *Gnostics*, 160–164; Wolfgang Harnisch, *Eschatologische Existenz: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zum Sachanliegen von 1. Thessalonicher 4,13–5,11*, FRLANT 110 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 16–51.

⁶⁶⁶ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 310; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 283.

⁶⁶⁷ So Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 284; see also Ulrich Luz, *Das Geschichtsverständnis des Paulus*, BEvT 49 (Munich: Kaiser, 1968), 318–331; Helmut Merklein, "Der Theologe als Prophet: Zur Funktion prophetischen Redens im Theologischen Diskurs des Paulus," *NTS* 38 (1992): 407–408; Weima, *Thessalonians*, 312–313; cf. James Everett Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 163–164.

⁶⁶⁸ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 313, tries to counter this objection by contending that it "underestimates the great anticipation and hope that the Thessalonians have about participating in the glory of the parousia

In contrast, in the second group are those views which take the Thessalonians as being overwhelmed by grief because they regarded their dead as being at an *absolute* disadvantage at the parousia compared to themselves; in other words, the deceased were thought to have lost their salvation. We may distinguish between several views that fall within this group:

(1) One proposal rests on the hypothesis that Paul had previously described the participation of the Thessalonian church in the parousia in terms of an assumption—which, according to OT and Jewish apocalyptic teachings, could occur only in connection with living persons. With the death of some of their members, the Thessalonian believers were plunged into grief, since they took it as axiomatic that the dead were not in a condition to be taken up at the parousia.⁶⁶⁹ However, there is no evidence that Paul’s kerygma included teaching about such a motif.⁶⁷⁰ Furthermore, Paul depicts Christ’s return with the metaphor of the *Einholung* or Hellenistic formal reception (*ἀπάντησις*, 4.17)⁶⁷¹—an image which does not portray an upward movement from earth to heaven (which an assumption would involve) but its very opposite, i.e. the believers meet Christ in the air and usher him down to earth.⁶⁷²

(2) Another theory is that Paul did not teach the Thessalonians about the resurrection of dead believers because he was convinced that the return of Christ was highly imminent. Indeed, Paul’s thinking about the resurrection had not yet been fully formulated, and it would take time for him to develop his early position here to the more developed understanding of 1 Cor 15. Consequently, when some among the Thessalonian believers died, great sorrow ensued; and, with Christ’s return still only in prospect, Paul was now obliged to provide instruction concerning the resurrection of

event (1.3, 10; 2.19)—a time when their faith would be vindicated and they would enjoy eternal life with Christ (4.17; 5.10), while their fellow citizens who caused them so much affliction would be justly punished in the ‘coming wrath’ (1.10; 5.9)”; but the argument is not sufficiently convincing.

⁶⁶⁹ Joseph Plevnik, “The Parousia as Implication of Christ’s Resurrection: An Exegesis of 1 Thess 4,13–18,” in *Word and Spirit: Essays in Honor of David Michael Stanley on His 60th Birthday*, ed. Joseph Plevnik (Toronto: Regis College, 1975), 199–277; see also his other work e.g. “The Taking Up of the Faithful and the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18,” *CBQ* 46 (1984): 274–283; “The Destination of the Apostle and of the Faithful: Second Corinthians 4:13b–14 and First Thessalonians 4:14,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 83–95. Plevnik applies the work of Gerhard Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Untersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts- und Erhöhungstexten bei Lukas*, SANT 26 (Munich: Kösel, 1971), to 1 Thess 4.13–18; and he is followed by Richard, *Thessalonians*, 237; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 166, among others.

⁶⁷⁰ So Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 276; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 46–47.

⁶⁷¹ Erik Peterson, “Die Einholung des Kyrios,” *ZST* 7 (1930): 682–702, esp. 693–697.

⁶⁷² For an instructive discussion of the debates surrounding how Paul uses *εἰς ἀπάντησιν* in 4.17 see Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 260–266; he concludes that “an association of Paul’s reference with Hellenistic formal receptions cannot be rejected” (265).

dead believers.⁶⁷³ However, against this view, it seems rather improbable that in the decade⁶⁷⁴ prior to his arrival in Thessalonica Paul had not encountered and dealt with the death of any believers—which means that by the time of the Thessalonian mission, teaching concerning such matters would have become integral to his regular programme of instruction. In addition, as we have noted earlier (see section 4.1.4), the contents of the letter reveal that the Thessalonians had received extensive eschatological instruction, at which time the question would surely have come up.

(3) A third solution, which has certain points of affinity with the foregoing view, but involves less speculation, is that Paul may have “emphasized the possibility of Jesus' imminent return so much that the expectation of being alive at its occurrence had swallowed up what little Paul had taught them about a future resurrection.”⁶⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that some of the objections to the foregoing theory may also be raised here, on balance this is likely to be the best of the possible explanations for Thessalonians' grief.

(4) A fourth proposal grants that the Thessalonians did learn about the resurrection of believers from Paul; however, the actual occurrence of the death of their brethren provoked an outpouring of grief that blunted their apprehension of the doctrine. As Marshall thus suggests: “It is, after all, one thing to have a theoretical belief in resurrection and quite another to maintain that belief in the actual presence of death and physical decay.”⁶⁷⁶ The ways in which this proposal captures some of the existential realities of lived human experience is not without its merits; but it does not account for

⁶⁷³ So Willi Marxsen, “Auslegung von 1 Thess 4,13–18,” *ZTK* 66 (1969): 22–37; Jürgen Becker, *Auferstehung der Toten im Urchristentum* (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1976), 46–54; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 35–38. See also Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology*, trans. F. Stanley Jones (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 212–238, who argues that the undeveloped character of Paul's teaching about these matters is a reflection of the fact that the letter was penned in the early 40s CE, i.e. up to ten years before its generally accepted date of 50/51 CE, which seems rather unlikely.

⁶⁷⁴ If we follow Michael Gorman's general chronology of Paul's life (which is broad enough to be acceptable to many scholars) Paul's conversion dates to ca. 32–36 CE, and the period of major missionary activity begins ca. 46 CE with the first missionary journey; see Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 56–60. The Macedonian mission was part of Paul's second missionary journey, i.e. some time after 46 CE, which means that by the time he reached Thessalonica, Paul would have been preaching and teaching for some ten years at least.

⁶⁷⁵ Robert H. Gundry, “The Hellenization of Dominical Tradition and the Christianization of Jewish Tradition in the Eschatology of 1–2 Thessalonians,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 167; see also Todd D. Still, “Eschatology in the Thessalonian Letters,” *RevExp* 96 (1999): 196–197.

⁶⁷⁶ Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 120–121, following Peter Siber, *Mit Christus Leben: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Auferstehungshoffnung*, ATANT 61 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971), 13–22. See also Green, *Thessalonians*, 215; Gary Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 188.

why Paul takes such pains not only to reaffirm the doctrine of the resurrection of believers but also to explain its connection with the parousia.⁶⁷⁷

To conclude at this stage: what Paul has mentioned so far in the passage points to the fact that a number of the Thessalonian Christians have died, for reasons that are not known to us (however, the wider evidence suggests that martyrdom is very likely not in view here). The grief that overwhelms the Thessalonians is probably caused by a lack of knowledge concerning the eschatological destiny of the deceased; it was thought that they had “slipped, through death, out of the current which was heading for salvation: they would not, and could not, be present when the much-anticipated parousia took place.”⁶⁷⁸ Such an interpretation allows for aspects of the fourth causal hypothesis (as outlined above) to have a place at the table also: thus, it seems not unreasonable to grant that the Thessalonians, who did not have an adequate understanding of life after death, were simply unable to manage their grief when they were suddenly confronted by the deaths of people who mattered to them. Furthermore, as Barclay points out, the precise circumstances of these deaths—i.e. perhaps whether they had led to increased derision from the Thessalonians’ opponents, who attributed these deaths to the wrath of the gods—could have affected the degree of distress and grief which they occasioned.⁶⁷⁹

We now turn our attention to Paul’s consolatory strategy, beginning with a consideration of whether or not 4.13b is in effect an absolute prohibition against grief.

4.3.4. A Prohibition against Grief?

The question of *how* Paul intends the Thessalonians to grieve—*ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα* (4.13b)—has attracted not a little debate. Here, *ἵνα μὴ* expresses a negated purpose clause that presents the problem that is to be overcome, *ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε*. The adverb *καθὼς* introduces the comparative subclause *καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα*: *καθὼς* thus indicates that Paul’s readers are being compared to “the rest” (*οἱ λοιποὶ*), i.e., those outside the Christian community, who are “those who do not have hope” (*οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα*).⁶⁸⁰ In broad terms, the scholarly opinions that have been offered may be located in one of two camps.

⁶⁷⁷ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 311.

⁶⁷⁸ Barclay, “Death,” 221. Similarly Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 122.

⁶⁷⁹ See Barclay, “Conflict,” 516; and also his “Death,” 219.

⁶⁸⁰ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 167.

Several exegetes argue that what Paul is calling for is an absolute prohibition: the Thessalonians are not to grieve at all for their deceased brethren.⁶⁸¹ To a significant degree, this argument rests on the interpretation of *καθὼς καί*:⁶⁸² those who champion this line of thought typically take it to be setting up an absolute contrast, based on its similarity with the *καθάπερ καί* in 4.5 (which introduces a negative comparison that functions as an antithesis). So Frame, for example, insists that

καθὼς καί here does not mean that the Christians are indeed to grieve, but not in the same manner or degree as the unbelievers ... Paul speaks absolutely, for death has a religious value to him, in that after a short interval the dead are brought to the goal of Christian hope, *σὺν ἀύτῳ*. In view of this glorious consummation, present grief, however natural, is excluded.⁶⁸³

However, this view remains rather controversial, not least because it glosses over the anguish of bereavement and denigrates the natural psychological responses that come in its wake.⁶⁸⁴

The majority of commentators from Theodoret and the Antiochenes onwards have supported more moderate interpretations, wherein *καθὼς καί* is thought to specify a difference between Christian and pagan attitudes to grieving.⁶⁸⁵ Thus Paul is by no means saying that Christians are not to grieve; but that they must not do so to the same degree and with the same types of motives as do those who are without hope. Scholars advocating this position often cite certain verses from Paul's letters elsewhere and from the NT in general to demonstrate that there is no support for the view that he is balking at the legitimacy of grief for believers. These include, in particular: Phil 2.27, where Paul refers to the mercy that God had showed both Epaphroditus and him, lest he should have "grief upon grief" (*ἵνα μὴ λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην σχῶ*); Paul's general exhortation in Rom 12.15 to "mourn with those who mourn" (*κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων*); his description

⁶⁸¹ See e.g. J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1904), 63; Frame, *Thessalonians*, 167; Best, *Thessalonians*, 186; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 264; Barclay, "Death," 223–224. Thus Malherbe, for example, argues that since the cause of the Thessalonians' grief is an incomplete understanding of matters pertaining to Christians who had died, "Paul's attitude towards this grief is equally straightforward: it is prohibited." (264).

⁶⁸² *καθὼς* can be an adverb of comparison or of degree; see BDAG 493–494.

⁶⁸³ Frame, *Thessalonians*, 167, cited with approval by Barclay, "Death," 224, who argues (225 n.22) that linguistic parallels involving the use of *καθὼς καί* and equivalents, such as 1 Thess 4.5, strongly suggest an absolute contrast.

⁶⁸⁴ This problem has not been ignored by those within the "prohibition" camp: thus Lightfoot, for example, concedes that "here, as elsewhere, he [Paul] states his precept broadly, without caring to enter into the qualifications which will suggest themselves at once to thinking men" (*Notes*, 63); while Malherbe suggests that Paul's absolute prohibition must be understood in its context and thus does not forbid "any grief at all in any circumstance surrounding the death of Christians," but only "in reply to the specific question the Thessalonians had addressed to him" (*Thessalonians*, 264).

⁶⁸⁵ See the discussion in Paul Hoffman, *Die Toten in Christus: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zur paulinischen Eschatologie*, NTAbh 2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1966), 210–211.

of the Corinthians' grief unto repentance (*ἐλπιήθητε εἰς μετάνοιαν*, 2 Cor 7.9) as a godly grief leading to salvation (*ἡ γὰρ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν εἰς σωτηρίαν*, 2 Cor 7.10a) and not a worldly grief that brings death (*ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη θάνατον κατεργάζεται*, 2 Cor 7.10b); and the example of Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus in John 11.35.⁶⁸⁶

Yet the use of texts like these and others to substantiate the view that Paul in 1 Thess 4.13 is not issuing an absolute prohibition of grief has not gone unchallenged. Barclay, for example, notes that while several Pauline passages show that a kind of *λύπη* is necessary and even beneficial (Rom 9.2; 2 Cor 2.2–5; 6.10; 7.8–11), or give examples of permissible weeping (Rom 12.15; 1 Cor 7.30), none of these passages concern death. In Paul's letters, only in Phil 2.27 is death possibly at issue; and even so, here Barclay reads Paul as saying that he is relieved that he was altogether spared the experience of grief. Further, Barclay suggests that in the gospels it is Mark 5.39 rather than John 11.35 that is the closest rhetorical and theological parallel to the situation in Thessalonica.⁶⁸⁷ On balance, however, it seems preferable to follow the majority view that Paul is in 1 Thess 4.13 not telling the Thessalonians that they are to stop grieving *per se*, but rather that they are to stop grieving as unbelievers do;⁶⁸⁸ “their grief, no matter how deep, should be of the hopeful variety.”⁶⁸⁹ Such a reading preserves the broad sense in which grief in its various forms seems to be understood by Paul as a natural, legitimate expression of the human experience. Furthermore, as Still suggests, if full weight is given to the fact that Paul here uses the passive (*λυπήσθε*), then it seems improbable that he has in mind an absolute prohibition on an emotional reaction that he himself understands as being more or less beyond the Thessalonians' control.⁶⁹⁰

Whether one takes Paul to be reframing grief or prohibiting it altogether, it is apparent that he wants the Thessalonians believers to understand and handle their grief in a way that distinguishes them from the people around them. Paul has already outlined the distinction between Christians and non-Christians by using expressions such as “the Gentiles who do not know God” (*τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν*, 4.5) and “the outsiders” (*οἱ ἔξω*, 4.12) to describe the latter group. In 4.13, he continues to use such in-group

⁶⁸⁶ See e.g. Weima, *Thessalonians*, 314; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 215.

⁶⁸⁷ Barclay, “Death,” 225 n.22.

⁶⁸⁸ So e.g., Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 25, and most commentators. As John R. W. Stott rightly observes: “What Paul prohibits is not grief but hopeless grief”; *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 94.

⁶⁸⁹ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 229.

⁶⁹⁰ Todd D. Still, “Interpretive Ambiguities and Scholarly Proclivities in Pauline Studies: A Treatment of Three Texts from 1 Thessalonians 4 as a Test Case,” *CBR* 5 (2007): 207–219.

language to cement this distinction: the Thessalonians are instructed not to grieve like “the rest who have no hope” (*οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα*).

That *οἱ λοιποὶ* refers to unbelievers can be readily inferred from Paul’s contextual use of the phrase here in 4.13 and again in 5.6;⁶⁹¹ this is confirmed by how Paul here juxtaposes it with an adjectival phrase, *οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα*, that qualifies *οἱ λοιποὶ* in the same way that *τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν* qualifies *τὰ ἔθνη* in 4.5.⁶⁹² Thus “the rest” are characterized as having “no hope”—which is not at all surprising given that Paul’s understanding of *ἐλπίς* is so thoroughly shaped by his kerygma. This hope is a distinctively Christian hope that is focused on the eschaton, as Pauline usage generally, and in 1 Thessalonians specifically (1.3; 2.19; 5.8), demonstrates.⁶⁹³ The circle is thus clearly drawn: outside its boundary are found all who do not accept the gospel and who therefore do not share in the Christian hope of salvation, while inside are the Thessalonian (and other) believers, who know this eschatological hope and are exhorted to hold on to it in the very face of grief and death.

At this point, however, as Barclay cautions, commentators are apt to stumble as they wrestle with the ramifications of what Paul seems to be saying.⁶⁹⁴ Those who think (perhaps on the basis that he is addressing a predominantly Gentile congregation) that Paul excludes the Jews from *οἱ λοιποὶ*,⁶⁹⁵ are missing the thrust of his deliberately blunt rhetoric: all of humanity is theologically bifurcated into two streams—those with, and those without, the Christian hope. Other exegetes, mindful of the evidence that there were some people in antiquity who held hopes for an afterlife, try to defend Paul against the charge of over-generalization when he seems to speak of the hopelessness of the pagan world in the face of death, by claiming that there is at least a general sense in which this was actually true.⁶⁹⁶ Admittedly, Paul does overstate the case to some extent,⁶⁹⁷ but again, the point of his rhetoric is to establish a distinction between believers and non-believers, based on a distinctively Christian conception of hope.

⁶⁹¹ Contra Edwin D. Freed, *The Morality of Paul’s Converts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 91, whose view that *οἱ λοιποὶ* refers “to other members of the brotherhood who have not yet reached the status of ‘in Christ’ (4.16)” fails to account for Paul’s use of the phrase here and its parallels in 4.5, 12.

⁶⁹² See Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 216.

⁶⁹³ See Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 215–216 for a helpful précis of Paul’s use of the word group *ἐλπίς/ἐλπίζειν*; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 25–26.

⁶⁹⁴ Here I largely follow Barclay’s incisive argumentation in his “Death,” 223–224.

⁶⁹⁵ E.g. Lightfoot, *Notes*, 64; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 23; Ernst von Dobschütz, *Die Thessalonicher-Briefe*, 7th ed., KEK 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), 188.

⁶⁹⁶ Barclay, “Death,” 224, citing Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 104; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 119.

⁶⁹⁷ So Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 167 (cited by Barclay, “Death,” 224); cf. Best, *Thessalonians*, 185–186.

Luckensmeyer is right to say that Paul's use of the phrase *οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα* must be understood against the background of "the polarising effect of *ἐλπίς/ἐλπίζειν* on humanity."⁶⁹⁸ For Paul, the Christian hope of salvation, as it is understood and appropriated in relation to the deep human pain of bereavement, must not only inform but also condition, and in that way also demarcate, the very expression of sorrow. Thus, believers do not need to grieve as others do who are without this hope. As we shall see next, as part of his consolatory strategy Paul goes on to explain how and why this should be so. And as we shall discover, this strategy—rooted as always in his understanding of theology—is at once personal in its application and social in its function.

4.4. Consolation in 1 Thessalonians

4.4.1. The Theological Basis of Consolation

From the evidence so far, it would seem that the believers at Thessalonica are deeply anguished by the sudden demise of some within their midst, because they fear that their deceased brethren would miss out on the great eschatological blessings that were associated with the imminent return of Christ. In response, Paul tells his readers not to grieve like the unbelievers around them who do not have the hope that they have (4.13). In the verses that follow, he spells out the two fundamental reasons for this hope.⁶⁹⁹

4.4.1.a. *The Confession of the Church (1 Thess 4.14)*

First, Paul writes: *εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη* (4.14a)—which most likely encapsulates an early Christian, i.e. pre-Pauline, credal formula concerning the death and resurrection of Christ.⁷⁰⁰ By doing so, Paul reminds the Thessalonians about what he had previously taught them about Christ's death and

⁶⁹⁸ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 217–218.

⁶⁹⁹ The *γὰρ* of 4.14 functions as a marker of cause or reason.

⁷⁰⁰ So many commentators, typically on the basis of (1) the confession-like introduction; (2) the presence of the rare Pauline designation *Ἰησοῦς* without qualification; (3) the use of the verb *ἀνίστημι* instead of Paul's favoured verb *ἐγείρω* (all the more striking because the other NT writers employ *ἀνίστημι* to speak of the resurrection); (4) the reference to Jesus rising instead of God's activity in raising Jesus (which Paul always refers to); and (5) the sheer economy of words. See e.g. Weima, *Thessalonians*, 316–317; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 220–221; for a contrary view see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 265.

resurrection, which he assumes that they have accepted and embraced; this is indicated by the grammatical construction *εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν* and by his earlier thanksgiving that they were waiting for the return of God's son, “ὃν ἠγείρεν ἐκ [τῶν] νεκρῶν” (1.10). Moreover, Paul's citing of the credal formula rhetorically reinforces the authority of what he is saying: the death and resurrection of Christ are not merely a matter of his own privately-held beliefs, nor even those held by the Thessalonian congregation, but something continually affirmed by the wider church to which they all belong.⁷⁰¹

In the second half of the verse, Paul draws out the implications of this belief as it relates to the deceased believers over whom the Thessalonians grieve: *οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ* (4.14b). The authoritative confession of the church concerning the resurrection of Jesus effectively guarantees the resurrection of believers who have died, such that they will be alive and with him at the parousia.⁷⁰² Putting it another way, Paul anchors the assurance that he gives to the Thessalonians concerning the fate of dead believers to their shared belief in the resurrection of Christ.

However, even though the broad thought-flow of the verse is indisputably logical, Paul's words are elliptical, largely because the protasis and apodosis do not correspond as one might expect: (1) the protasis introduced by the formally conditional *εἰ* (4.14a) is completed clumsily with the formally comparative *οὕτως καὶ* (4.14b); (2) the verb *πιστεύομεν* disappears; (3) the expected subject, *Ἰησοῦς* or *οἱ κοιμηθέντες*, is replaced with *ὁ θεός*; and (4) instead of the anticipated *ἀνίστημι* there is *ἄξει*; closely related to this is the question of whether the prepositional phrase *διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ* modifies the preceding substantival participle (*τοὺς κοιμηθέντας*) or the main verb (*ἄξει*).⁷⁰³

With regard to (1) and (2): Nicholl's suggestion that Paul's assertive apodosis might be a concerted attempt on his part to avoid any uncertainty that might be inferred from *εἰ* seems quite plausible;⁷⁰⁴ certainly, its grammatical awkwardness heightens its effect, and the *καί* strengthens what is being stated.⁷⁰⁵ Change (4) is the most significant, and much hinges on the interpretation of *διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, the result of which has a bearing on change (3). The more common of the two views is to take *διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ* with *τοὺς κοιμηθέντας*, in which case it qualifies the object of the clause and is

⁷⁰¹ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 317.

⁷⁰² See Weima, *Thessalonians*, 317. Paul also draws a paradigmatic connection between Christ's resurrection and that of believers in Rom 8.11–12; 1 Cor 6.14; 15.20–23; 2 Cor 4.14.

⁷⁰³ See esp. the detailed discussion in Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 26–32.

⁷⁰⁴ Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 26 (appealing to Lightfoot, *Notes*, 64; Dobschütz, *Thessalonicher-Briefe*, 190).

⁷⁰⁵ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 264.

virtually equivalent in meaning to ἐν Χριστῷ.⁷⁰⁶ Yet the decision to do so rests mainly on arguments of word order and parallelism in the pericope, but these are not so compelling as to rule out any other option.⁷⁰⁷ I follow instead the majority of German and an increasing minority of Anglo-American scholars who opt for taking διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ with ἄξει.⁷⁰⁸ On this view, God acts through Jesus, his intermediary agent of salvation—a reading which makes good sense of Paul’s thought here, and is also in keeping with his use of διὰ elsewhere to express Christ’s agency.⁷⁰⁹ In addition, this reading smooths the link between the two halves of the verse, by making God-through-Jesus the subject of the apodosis, i.e., change (3).⁷¹⁰ Thus 4.14 would run: “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God, through Jesus, will gather with him those who have died.”

The first option (διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ with τοὺς κοιμηθέντας) has the advantage of making explicit an implicit fact—that those believers who have died are “in Christ.” But the second option (διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ with ἄξει) affords a different and perhaps more helpful nuance: the risen Jesus is the one through whom God will act to effect the resurrection likewise of those believers who have died, and so bring them to himself. Ultimately, however, both options do not affect the overall thrust of the verse, which is to emphasize the presence of deceased believers with Christ at his return (ὁ θεὸς ... ἄξει σὺν αὐτοῖς, 4.14b).

4.4.1.b. The “Word of the Lord” (1 Thess 4.15–17)

The second reason Paul furnishes to explain why the Thessalonians have hope as they grieve involves a striking appeal to a “word of the Lord,” i.e., to some kind of authoritative saying or teaching of Jesus: Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου (4.15a).⁷¹¹ Scholars are divided over all three major issues that emerge from the

⁷⁰⁶ So e.g. Frame, *Thessalonians*, 170; Rigaux, *Thessaloniens*, 535–537; Plevnik, “Parousia,” 211; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 124; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 168–169; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 226; Green, *Thessalonians*, 221; Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 133.

⁷⁰⁷ Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 28; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 222 (see also 181–182).

⁷⁰⁸ So e.g. among German scholars, Hoffman, *Die Toten*, 213–216; others taking this view include Best, *Thessalonians*, 189; Collins, *Studies*, 159; D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC 33 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 146; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 266; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 28; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 223; Fee, *Thessalonians*, 170.

⁷⁰⁹ See e.g. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 223, for references.

⁷¹⁰ Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 28.

⁷¹¹ The conjunction γὰρ parallels its use in the previous verse (so most commentators); however, recently a number of scholars have countered that it is explanatory, i.e. that it identifies 4.15 as an explication of 4.14 instead of providing a second ground for Paul’s instructions in 4.13 (so e.g. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 267; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 35; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 177; Shogren,

interpretation of these verses: where the precise placement of this “word” is, its source, and Paul’s aim in citing it. However, it is unnecessary for the purposes of my study to examine the first two issues in any detail.

Following an increasing number of scholars,⁷¹² I take the logion to be located at 4.16–17a.⁷¹³ On this reading, it is preceded by an anticipatory statement that relates the logion to the Thessalonians’ specific concern, *ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας* (4.15b), and followed by a comment that reinforces its importance to their situation, *καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα* (4.17b).⁷¹⁴ As to the source of the “word”: it seems likely that Paul is citing a dominical saying within the Jesus tradition represented in the canonical gospels, but does not do so exactly, in keeping with his practice elsewhere (1 Cor 7.10, 25; 9.14; 11.23–25).⁷¹⁵

The third question, concerning *why* Paul quotes this logion, is far more important for our understanding of the pericope. Earlier, in 4.14, Paul had looked to a credal formulation about the death and resurrection of Jesus to lend authority to his argument that Christians, like their Lord, would rise from the dead. Now in 4.15–17 Paul

Thessalonians, 183). The demonstrative pronoun *τοῦτο* looks ahead to the material that follows as the site of this logion (so virtually all commentators; *pace* Richard, *Thessalonians*, 226, 240, who takes it to refer to the preceding argument).

⁷¹² E.g. Hoffman, *Die Toten*, 219–220; Harnisch, *Eschatologische*, 40–42; Plevnik, “Parousia,” 230–231; and more recently, Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 32–33; Weima, *Thessalonians*, 320–321.

⁷¹³ 4.16: *ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον*, 4.17a: *ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα*.

⁷¹⁴ Some scholars argue that the converse is true, i.e. that 4.15b is the “word” and 4.16–17 an explication of it; see e.g. Dobschütz, *Thessalonicher-Briefe*, 193–194; Holtz, *Thessalonicher*, 184–185; Merklein, “Der Theologe,” 410–411; Donfried, “Theology,” 39–41. Thus Merklein for example (followed by Donfried) finds several parallels between 1 Thess 4.13–18 and 1 Cor 15.50–58 that, for him, limit the logion to 1 Thess 4.15b. However, apart from the fact that there are also other NT passages that are cited as parallels by various scholars, Merklein’s solution discounts the important matter of stylistic features and vocabulary: as Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 32–33, persuasively argues, 4.15b is mostly consistent with Paul, while parts of 4.16–17a are not; the few particularly Pauline elements in 4.16–17a may be readily explained by Paul’s redaction to suit the epistolary context. All this strongly suggests that the *λόγος κυρίου* is located at 4.16–17a (introduced by a recitative *ὅτι*), with 4.15b functioning as an anticipatory summary (introduced by an epexegetical *ὅτι*).

That 4.17b does not lie within the logion is clearly indicated by its thoroughly Pauline vocabulary; furthermore, the adverb *οὕτως* is “summarizing a thought expressed in what precedes” (BDAG 742).

⁷¹⁵ So Weima, *Thessalonians*, 321; see also e.g. Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 171. This is one of five major possibilities that commentators have identified as the possible source of the logion; there is no consensus: (1) a Pauline revelation; (2) a non-Pauline prophecy which Paul has accepted as originating from Jesus; (3) an agraphon; (4) a general reference to Jesus’ eschatological teachings; (5) a saying of Jesus as found in the gospels (i.e. my preference). Combinations of the above solutions are possible; e.g. Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 135–136, who thinks it plausible that Paul saw himself both as an interpreter of the sayings of the historical Jesus and as a prophet who received direct messages from the risen Lord. The precise provenance of the logion is not important for my study; for a concise summary of the scholarly debates see esp. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 267–270; Nicholl, *Thessalonica*, 38–41.

solidifies this argument by not only providing further information concerning the fate of dead believers at the parousia, but locating these details in nothing less than a dominical warrant—in something that Jesus had actually taught or said. As Wanamaker notes: “By placing his assurance that the living would not have precedence over the dead at the coming under the rubric ‘a word of the Lord,’ Paul attributed the highest possible authority to his assertion in v.15b.”⁷¹⁶ The fact that Paul finds it necessary to appeal to such weighty sources of Christian authority in relation to both his arguments certainly suggests that he sees the Thessalonians’ grieving as no small matter.⁷¹⁷

In his argument Paul emphasizes in the strongest terms that at the parousia, believers who are alive “will by no means precede” (*οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν*, 4.15b)⁷¹⁸ those who are dead. The temporal character of the verb *φθάνω* is reinforced by the use of the adverbs *πρῶτον* and *ἔπειτα* in the following verses (4.16–17) to underscore the notion that deceased believers would rise “first,” and “then” they, together with living believers, would be taken up to meet the Lord. Paul’s obvious concern throughout is with the faithful who have died before the parousia; and clearly his point is that they will not suffer any disadvantage whatsoever. In fact, as the first order of things at Christ’s return, they will be raised from the dead.

In 4.16–17 Paul rehearses, using the most explicit descriptions anywhere in his writings, the events surrounding the return of Christ. These verses have received a great deal of scholarly attention, but we do not need to be bogged down by the debates;⁷¹⁹ it is sufficient for our purposes to remember that Paul is redacting, from diverse sources, traditional material rich in symbol and metaphor to paint a complex apocalyptic scenario—but always with his stated consolatory intention in mind (4.18). He paints a picture of the three events that would occur in sequence at the parousia: the Lord would descend from heaven; dead Christians would be resurrected; and these resurrected Christians, together with those still living, would be joined with the Lord (4.16–17a). Thus the result, as Paul makes crystal clear, is that all believers—whether presently

⁷¹⁶ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 171.

⁷¹⁷ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 322.

⁷¹⁸ The construction *οὐ μὴ* with aorist subjunctive expresses the strongest form of negation possible (BDF §365). Excluding his quotations from the LXX, Paul employs this construction only 3 times elsewhere: 1 Cor 8.13; Gal 5.16; 1 Thess 5.3. His highly emphatic response lends further credence to the view that the concerns being addressed are of actual and not merely theoretical import; so e.g. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 272, who thinks that the use of the construction here “is so strong that it sounds like a denial of an opinion actually held by some people in Thessalonica,” especially in view of the parallel in 5.3, *οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν* (“they will by no means escape”), which is directed at those who propound erroneous teachings because of a misplaced confidence in Roman “peace and security.”

⁷¹⁹ For a recent and admirably instructive discussion, see Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 237–268.

alive or dead—would be in the Lord’s presence for eternity: *καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα* (4.17b).⁷²⁰ This brief, climaxing summary seems to reinforce the likelihood that Paul’s intention lies neither in documenting in precise terms the events surrounding the return of Christ nor in elaborating in any detail the nature of the eternal life that believers would enjoy with the Lord. Rather, his concern is to provide pastoral comfort to the Thessalonian Christians who are grieving over their deceased brethren.

4.4.1.c. *Comfort One Another with These Words (1 Thess 4.18)*

This aim is made explicit in the exhortation with which Paul brings this pericope to a close: *Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις* (4.18). The particle *ὥστε*, when introducing an independent clause, means “for this reason, therefore, so”;⁷²¹ accordingly, here it serves to draw out Paul’s conclusion from what he has written earlier in 4.13–17.⁷²² The verb *παρακαλέω*—a favourite of his⁷²³—carries a range of meanings⁷²⁴ which can be grouped into two main nuances: either command (“appeal, exhort, request, implore”), as in 2.12; 4.1, 10; 5.14; or comfort (“encourage, comfort, cheer up, console”), as in 3.2, 7; 4.18; 5.11.⁷²⁵ From the context, here in 4.18 the latter nuance is undoubtedly in view: Paul writes to console his readers; moreover, they are to share this comfort with others within the Thessalonians church.

Stowers notes that ancient letter writers who wrote on the theme of grief often urged their bereaved readers to use their words of consolation to exhort both themselves and others. He cites the example of a second century papyrus letter, P.Oxy. 115, where a woman named Irene writes to a couple who have lost a son. After expressing her own grief and reasoning that “nothing can be done in the face of such things [i.e., death],” Irene concludes: “Therefore comfort one another.”⁷²⁶ Stylistically, Paul’s closing exhortation in this pericope seems to parallel this. However, his ground of consolation is ideologically completely different.

The consolation that Paul speaks of has its basis in *τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις* (4.18); it is immediately apparent from the context that he is referring back to the two arguments

⁷²⁰ As we have already noted, this is almost certainly not part of the logion.

⁷²¹ BDAG 1107.

⁷²² Paul uses the particle in a similar manner in e.g. 1 Cor 7.38; 14.39; 15.58 (see n.651).

⁷²³ The verb appears 40 times in the undisputed Paulines: most frequently in 2 Cor (18 times) and in 1 Thess (8 times: 2.12; 3.2, 7; 4.1, 10, 18; 5.11, 14).

⁷²⁴ See e.g. BDAG 764–765, which lists 5 meanings.

⁷²⁵ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 336.

⁷²⁶ Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 145–146 (translations his). See similarly Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 280; Weima, *Thessalonians*, 335–336.

that he has just outlined: first, the ecclesiastical confession that Christ has risen from the dead, which serves to guarantee the resurrection of Christians and their presence at the parousia (4.14); and second, the authoritative “word of the Lord” which specifies that the faithful dead would suffer no disadvantage compared to those who remain alive but would participate with them on equal terms at that great eschatological event (4.15–17). It is these two factors that enable Paul to tell the Thessalonians with confidence that they need not grieve like others who do not share in the Christian hope.

The ground of Paul’s consolatory instruction is therefore resolutely theological: it rests squarely on the Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus, which in turn renders certain the future resurrection of dead believers upon his return. As with Paul’s strategy for the inculcation of joy in the Philippian church, here in his letter to the Thessalonians he attempts to draw the attention of the believers to the eschatological realities on which Christian life (and life after death) are premised—dimensions of thinking and belief that the Thessalonians may perhaps have either not fully understood, or forgotten as a result of the emotional trauma that they are undergoing. Again, as with joy, a comprehensive re-evaluation and transfiguration of the believer’s mental and emotional engagement with the world around him or her lie at the heart of Paul’s teachings. He wants the Thessalonians to know that a hopeless and uncontrolled sorrow because of the death of their believing brethren is both baseless and unnecessary. Paul does not completely prohibit the expression of grief when it comes to the death of believers. Rather, he contrasts Christian grief with the grief of those outside the faith, and emphasizes that the expression of the former must be different from that of the latter, because death does not have the last word in the kingdom of God. For Paul, this is comfort indeed—and comfort that is to be spoken of and shared within the church.

4.4.2. The Social Character and Function of Consolation

As we have seen earlier, Paul’s adjuration to the Thessalonians to bring comfort to one another in their grief—*παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους* (4.18)—is not something new, at least not from the standpoint of literary style. Paul is apparently following the letter writing conventions of the day, which in turn reflected social norms and practices. Consolation in antiquity was a matter of sociality and social performance: one was expected to give sympathy, support, and comfort to one’s bereaved friends and relatives. However, the eschatological ideas that Paul injects into the consolatory

tradition make it his own. And as I hope also to demonstrate, the Thessalonians' consolatory praxis now becomes imbued with new sociological significance, because it carries with it the powerful potential to enhance and structure corporate sensibility and self-definition, as the believers begin to reckon fully with the profound implications of Paul's teachings.

4.4.2.a. *The Social Regulation of Grief*

Both private grief and its public expression in mourning were matters that were of much concern to the peoples of the Roman empire.⁷²⁷ This concern manifested itself in feeling rules that regulated the social display of grief and mourning.⁷²⁸ Stephen Barton helpfully highlights several noteworthy aspects of these feeling rules as they operated within the emotional regimes of Greco-Roman society in general.⁷²⁹ First, grief and mourning were subject to sanction and control in such things as the manner and intensity of mourning, and its duration. Second, it is evident from the rich textual-rhetorical tradition of consolatory discourses, laments, treatises, and the like, and also non-literary material in the form of funerary inscriptions, that attitudes to grief and mourning generated widespread public comment and philosophical scrutiny. Third, underlying these feeling rules was a gendered ordering of behaviour in both the private and public spheres of daily life; this was seen particularly vividly in how inordinate grief was disapproved of and thought to be something to which women were especially prone.

Fourth, and perhaps most important for our purposes, since mourning customs were governed by considerations that related emotions to larger questions of ontology and worldview, the differences in these behavioural conventions served to distinguish one group from another and thereby contributed to corporate self-definition. As Barton rightly concludes: "Given the plurality of philosophical and societal views, a distinctive stance on grief and mourning was a likely indication of group identity and moral ethos."⁷³⁰ All this is most helpful, because it gives us a firm basis on which we may

⁷²⁷ For a sociological analysis of grief and mourning in relation to the political and social order of the time, see Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, Sociological Studies in Roman History 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. 201–255.

⁷²⁸ See generally Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London: Continuum, 2009), esp. 121–149.

⁷²⁹ Barton, "Eschatology," 582–586; here I summarize his main points, modifying slightly their sequence.

⁷³⁰ Barton, "Eschatology," 586.

build an account of consolation in 1 Thessalonians that is at once sympathetic to the historical context of contemporaneous attitudes to grief and mindful of the ways in which grief and its therapy can express belief and identity.⁷³¹

4.4.2.b. *The Thessalonians' Grief*

Earlier, on the basis of on the evidence in 1 Thessalonians, we had surmised that the Thessalonian believers' grief was most likely brought on by their underdeveloped understanding of the fate of the faithful dead at the return of Christ. Up to now, we have not said very much about the *effect* of these apparently unexpected deaths on the Christian community at Thessalonica. This aspect is important because it forms part of the background against which we seek to interpret why Paul says what he does to the Thessalonians by way of consolation.

Again, our evidence shows that the nascent church in Thessalonica had found itself mired in an ongoing situation of social conflict; indeed, such was its severity that Paul, apparently worried that the believers' Christian confidence was under threat, had despatched Timothy to Thessalonica to strengthen and encourage them (1 Thess 3.2–5). In all probability, the Thessalonians' deliberate repudiation of traditional religious Greco-Roman beliefs and practices (1.9) had sparked a virulent backlash against them in the form of opprobrium, discrimination, ostracism, and perhaps even physical harassment and abuse; their behaviour was denounced as being not just socially offensive but also religiously and politically subversive.

It is in this situation of considerable suffering (e.g. 1.6; 2.14) that the already vulnerable Thessalonians now find themselves having to cope also with the shock caused by the sudden demise of some of their members. The community was very likely a small one, and certainly tight-knit and characterized by deep bonds of mutual affection and support; after all, their exemplary *φιλαδελφία* was highlighted and commended by Paul (4.9–10). It is not unreasonable therefore to suppose that the feelings of grief and loss that the Thessalonians were registering emotionally were particularly acute. They had probably already been dispossessed of many of their kinship and friendship ties through rejection and ostracism; that sense of loss was now

⁷³¹ In what follows I am indebted to Stephen Barton's insightful proposals in his "Eschatology," 586–591, and also to John Barclay's succinct reading of the social factors behind the Thessalonians' grief in his "Death," 221–223.

compounded by further separation and emotional pain, this time due to bereavement.⁷³² It therefore seems fair to make the observation that at both personal and group levels, the deaths of their much-loved brethren represented a severe crisis of loss for the Thessalonian Christians.⁷³³

There is also another sense in which these deaths very likely occasioned a severe crisis for the believers. It seems that they did not understand what was happening: what was the fate of those who had died? Had they missed out on the future blessings that were supposed to accrue to Christ's followers? Were they really God's beloved (1.4)? It is wholly plausible that the Thessalonians were wrestling with difficult existential and teleological questions concerning their Christian identity. Barton is therefore right to say that for the believers the deaths of their brethren represented also "a tear in the delicate fabric of their intensely eschatological faith ... and, if of their faith, then of their self-understanding, sense of identity, and sense of future destiny."⁷³⁴ In other words, the crisis that the Thessalonians were facing had as much to do with their faith as it had to do with the loss of people who mattered to them.⁷³⁵

This is, I think, confirmed by the way in which Paul deals with these matters. His consolatory strategy has a firmly theological basis, as has been earlier discussed in some detail—but its character and function are in many ways social. It is to the sociological dimensions of consolation that we now turn.

4.4.2.c. *The Social Character of Consolation*

We note, first of all, that the dominant social metaphor that Paul employs to address his recipients is thoroughly familial,⁷³⁶ here in 4.13–18 but also in the rest of the letter: in the Lord, the Thessalonian believers are ἀδελφοί to one another and to him

⁷³² Barclay, "Death," 221–222, referring to the classic study of Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), notes that all mourners are in a "liminal state," but the Thessalonian Christians now suffered a "double liminality."

⁷³³ Barclay, "Death," 222, offers the intriguing suggestion that it may be that for the Thessalonians the normal mourning processes were disrupted by the social tensions that their faith had engendered. He does not elaborate further at this juncture; but one can well imagine a situation where the embattled believers find it difficult to grieve for their brethren as they might wish to (perhaps because they face continued mockery from others who attribute these deaths to the anger of the gods against the impiety of the Christians; on this see Barclay, "Conflict," 516; "Death," 219; and earlier in this chapter of my study at the end of section 4.3.3.b), or where any distinctively Christian funerary proceedings become the target of additional derision or vitriol.

⁷³⁴ Barton, "Eschatology," 587.

⁷³⁵ This is however not to say that the Thessalonians were discouraged to the point that their sense of hope had become "disengaged from their faith," *pace* Donfried, "Theology," 27.

⁷³⁶ Barton, "Eschatology," 590.

(4.13; for other occurrences see n.622 earlier in this study). Paul uses also the imagery of loving parental nurture to describe the nature of his relationship with the Thessalonians (2.7, 11). In the consolatory material here, as in his letter generally, a distinctive form of sociality is clearly presupposed: one that is characterized by the mutual affection, devotion, and care that characterize, and indeed enhance, the best familial relationships.

That this type of sociality is important, even crucial, for the proper ordering and functioning of the Thessalonian church is seen in how Paul repeatedly draws the believers' attention to the life in common which they inhabit and of which they are to be fully engaged stakeholders. This common life includes such aspects as the Thessalonians' shared experiences of suffering (2.14; 3.7–8) as well as of hope (5.8); a decided emphasis on corporate holiness, which includes being careful not to wrong each other (4.1–8); a proactive and vigorous *φιλαδελφία* (4.9–10); and the keeping of ethical instructions that foster social cohesiveness (5.12–15) and strengthen their corporate witness to outsiders (4.11–12). Even everyday rituals could acquire new layers of meaning in Paul's conception of an ideal Christian community. The giving of a kiss as part of a greeting was widespread practice in the ancient Near East, but the behest Paul issues at 5.26 regarding the exchanging of a kiss greeting is far from being a merely perfunctory concluding exhortation, because this kiss is to be a "holy kiss" (*φίλημα ἁγίον*).⁷³⁷ It is perhaps no coincidence that Paul draws his letter to the Thessalonians to a close with a call to what is in effect a powerful somatic-symbolic enactment of the unique spiritual oneness and social solidarity to which they are to aspire.

However, for our purposes, the aspect of the Thessalonians' sociality that concerns us most has to do with their practice of consolation. Paul's exhortation to "comfort one another" (4.18) on this occasion of immense grief places the responsibility for a ministry of consolation not on any single individual or group of people, but squarely within the believing community as a whole.⁷³⁸ He reinforces this in no uncertain terms by repeating and further fleshing out the exhortation at 5.11 ("comfort one another and build up each other") and commends the Thessalonians for already doing this; thus it is clear that in the church at Thessalonica, consolation—and

⁷³⁷ For a useful study of the Pauline "holy kiss," and also the ancient kiss greeting generally, see the discussion and further references in Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, JSNTSup 101 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 112–114; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Sincerely, Paul: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 330–332.

⁷³⁸ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, 68.

specifically, consolation that is grounded in Christian teachings about life beyond death—is to be a *shared* responsibility.

I venture to suggest three possible reasons as to why this is so. First, since the believers' grief is due to ignorance on their part concerning the fate of the faithful dead (4.13), it is precisely the studied, corporately reinforced articulation and re-articulation of the theological realities underlying Christian consolation—for as we have seen earlier, the phrase *ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις* within Paul's consolatory instructions (4.18) relates to his antecedent arguments (4.14–17)—which provide the best corrective to the problem of inordinate grief.

Second, given Paul's painstaking efforts to highlight to the Thessalonians the exceptional sociality that is to mark and shape their common life, it stands to reason that he should locate the responsibility of consolation within the ambit of this sociality, providing as it does further concrete opportunities to demonstrate brotherly love and upbuild social solidarity. The type of community that Paul seems to want to develop within the Thessalonian church is one that is characterized by unity, mutuality, interdependence, and a loving concern for one another—and all this to a superlative degree. Indeed, the bonds of relationship among the believers are to be so close that they approximate those that one might find in ideal family relationships; thus, for example, Paul applauds their exemplary *φιλαδελφία*, yet expresses a desire to see this love for the brethren intensify further (4.10; cf. 3.12). It seems reasonable to imagine that in Paul's mind one way this would happen is if they were more intentional about their responsibility to bring encouragement and consolation to one another especially in difficult times, like grief; indeed, as we shall later see, such an attitude builds each other up (5.11).

There is a third possible reason why Paul sees consolation as a shared responsibility within the church. It is intriguing that for him consolation has its basis in a specific theological construal of a future, glorious sociality in which living believers are united with (*σὺν*) deceased believers and both groups united with (*σὺν*) their Lord for eternity (4.17; cf. 4.14; 5.10). It seems most fitting that the ministry of consolation—which, after all, announces and celebrates the eschatological warrant for such a perfected sociality—should be embedded within an earthly sociality that serves as a harbinger of that heavenly one.

We turn now to the closely related question of the relationship between consolation and mutual upbuilding. At 5.1–11, Paul concerns himself with the matter of

the fate of living believers at the return of Christ, rather than the fate of deceased believers (4.13–18). That the Thessalonian believers are anxious about the timing of this event and its consequences is indicated by the way Paul treats the subject and carefully reassures them of their eschatological destiny. It is particularly noteworthy that he brings his argument to a close by returning to the theme of being with the Lord, which was already so prominent (see 4.13, 17): *ἵνα εἴτε γρηγοροῦμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν* (5.10). Not only will all believers, deceased or living, be found in the company of Christ at his parousia, but they “will live” with him—the *ἐσόμεθα* of 4.17 being modified to *ζήσωμεν* to underscore the certainty of eternal life as the existential reality in which eschatological salvation consists.

Paul concludes the section with the injunction *Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε* (5.11), in which the *παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους* of 4.18 is repeated verbatim. Appended to it is a second command, *οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἕνα*, which speaks unequivocally of the believers’ obligation to build each other up: the verb *οἰκοδομέω* is always figuratively in Paul’s letters to connote some aspect of spiritual edification,⁷³⁹ while the elliptical phrase *εἷς τὸν ἕνα* (literally, “one on one”) seems to stress here the personal and intimate nature of such a mutual ministry.⁷⁴⁰ He does not specify the precise teachings that form the basis for this individual, reciprocal upbuilding, but the flow of his argument shows that at the very least he has in view both the immediately preceding discussion (5.1–10) and the subsequent exhortations that conclude the letter (5.12–22). The inferential conjunction *διό* with which he introduces the double commands of 5.10 links them to the preceding material in 5.1–10 (the *διό* thus functions similarly to the particle *ὥστε* in 4.18, in relation to 4.13–17), while the call to mutual edification has also a transitional function in the way it sets the stage for the explicit exhortations that follow, especially regarding attitudes and behaviour towards church leaders and fellow members of the Christian community (5.12–15).⁷⁴¹

Yet one may with some justification argue that Paul in 5.11 has in mind a more expansive picture of mutual encouragement than he has earlier at 4.18. Certainly, as we

⁷³⁹ BDAG 696: “strengthen, build up, make more able”; likewise, its cognate noun is almost always used figuratively of “spiritual strengthening” and thus connotes “edifying, edification, building up” (BDAG 696–697). Paul uses the verb especially in 1 Corinthians (8.1, 10; 10.23; 14.4 [2x], 17).

⁷⁴⁰ So Weima, *Thessalonians*, 372–373; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 300–301, 307–308; Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 153–154; Richard, *Thessalonians*, 257; who all argue that as in 2.11 (“how we dealt with each one of you”) Paul is stressing here in 5.11 the individualistic nature of this ministry. In other words, Paul had claimed in 2.11 that he had treated his converts as individuals; now, he expects them, as individuals, to build up other individuals just as he has done.

⁷⁴¹ See Weima, *Thessalonians*, 373, for further discussion.

have seen, with its parallel syntax the *παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους* in 5.11 picks up the note of comfort that is advocated in 4.18. However, it is noteworthy that here in 5.11 the *ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις* of 4.18 is omitted, and that the *παρακαλεῖτε* is now instead deliberately juxtaposed with *οἰκοδομεῖτε*—which thereby interprets it and nuances its import. For Paul, then, exhortation has to do with mutual spiritual edification. Yet since it is in consequence of being the eschatological community that the Thessalonians are to edify and upbuild one another, the *διό παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους*, with its concomitant *οἰκοδομεῖτε*, must relate not only to 5.1–10 but to the entire section, 4.13–5.10.⁷⁴² As such, the consolation of 4.18 is an integral aspect of the broader ministry of mutual edification that Paul speaks of and calls the believers to in 5.11.

This emphasis on mutuality is all the more striking when we compare Paul’s thinking to the type of sociality that his Stoic contemporaries like Epictetus were advocating. At first blush, the two frameworks seem broadly comparable: Epictetus affirms the social nature of humankind, and also teaches that one should fulfil one’s duties to others.⁷⁴³ However, any apparent similarities very quickly vanish, because absent entirely from Epictetus’ scheme is any notion of the corporate mutuality that is so central to Paul’s programme. For Epictetus, as for the Stoics generally, happiness emerges through the deliberate limiting of one’s desires to those things that are located within the sphere of one’s volitional autonomy, and which are therefore reasonable to possess.⁷⁴⁴ As such, a proper relationship consists only in what one can do for someone else; one is never dependent on that other person for anything, least of all one’s own happiness and well being. Long explains it well:

The correct performance of one’s social roles ... is both outwardly and inwardly oriented. It is outward in what it requires by way of sensitivity to the dignity and claims of other persons, but *what it is about other persons that should concern us is not how they treat us ... but only how we dispose ourselves in relation to them.* The relevant relationship is entirely one-sided: us in relation to them, not them in relation to us. That is because, as Epictetus views the basis of proper relationships, they should be entirely translated, like everything we deal with, into the domain of our volition and integrity.⁷⁴⁵

Thus, while the fulfilment of one’s duties to others is integral to Epictetus’ thought, one’s first responsibility is to maintain the integrity of one’s own volition—the result of which is properly dutiful behaviour that reveals a remarkably high level of relational self-sufficiency. Paul’s emphasis on unity, mutual love, and reciprocity in the

⁷⁴² On this see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 300.

⁷⁴³ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.2.4. See also the discussion in section 2.5.1.c above.

⁷⁴⁴ Long, *Epictetus*, 191; see also section 2.2.1 above.

⁷⁴⁵ Long, *Epictetus*, 237 (emphasis mine). See Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.22.20

carrying out of responsibilities such as the ministry of consolation and the upbuilding of one another, takes the Thessalonian church in a completely different direction. There is no trace of Stoic self-sufficiency in Paul's scheme; instead, what he promotes within the Thessalonians is a purposeful interdependence that is expressed through mutual ministry among them. Each person is to assume thoughtful responsibility for the spiritual nurture and upbuilding of others within the community of faith. In fact, we may go so far as to suggest that there is a sense in which Paul is saying that each member of the church *needs* the faithful, attentive ministry of other members, so that together they can more fully become the community that God has called them to be. As we have seen, this ministry, as Paul construes it, is both deeply individual and warmly reciprocal in nature; and in good paraenetic style he concludes this section by complimenting the Thessalonian for already demonstrating it in their relationships with each other (*καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε*, 5.11). The believers are apparently already actively engaged in ministry to one another—ministry that is to include the bringing of consolation and comfort to the bereaved among them.

4.4.2.d. *The Function of Consolation*

We turn, finally, to a consideration of the function of consolation in the letter. To be sure, Paul's provision of feeling rules to the Thessalonians to manage their grief puts him in the company of many others in his day who sought to bring comfort to the bereaved. Whether one takes what Paul says to be an absolute prohibition against grief or otherwise, the fact remains that he prescribes strict qualitative limits on the extent of grief as it pertains to the death of other Christians. Why, however, is Paul so concerned about inordinate grief? Or, to ask a more pointed question: what would happen if the Thessalonians failed to console one another at this time of mourning?

As Barton notes, the instructions issued by Paul place him at or near one end of the spectrum of the philosophical (and general) debate as to whether grief and its social representation in mourning were reasonable responses to death for those who thought themselves to be truly wise and virtuous. He goes on to suggest that Paul's consolatory approach very likely carried moral and rhetorical weight with its recipients at least in part because it accorded with the strong emphasis on the control of the emotions within Stoic therapeutic paraenesis.⁷⁴⁶ Certainly, there are some interesting parallels—at least

⁷⁴⁶ Barton, "Eschatology," 587–588.

at a superficial level—between Paul’s teachings and that of his Stoic contemporaries on the subjugation of grief. In different ways, both Paul and the Stoics locate the possibility of consolation within a thoroughgoing rational dismantling of the usefulness and appositeness of grief in the face of death. A recapitulation of Stoic thinking about grief and its cure is helpful at this point.

In Stoicism, grief (*λύπη*) is the opinion that some present thing is an evil of such a sort that one should be downcast about it (see section 2.3.3.a). More specifically, grief is the result of the combination of two related value judgements: an evaluation of an external object as being injurious to oneself, and a belief in the appropriateness of a predicative reaction to it. However, since it is irrational to think that external objects are of any significance to one’s state of well-being, both sets of judgements are systematically misguided. Therefore on the Stoic account, grief—being the consequence of fallacious reasoning—is a passion to be extirpated. As such, integral to Stoic philosophical teaching and therapeutic intervention is the insistence that the judgements with which the passions are identified are erroneous, since all externals do not carry any intrinsic value whatsoever.

Thus, as we have seen earlier (see section 2.5.1.b), Seneca freely harnesses several stock philosophical arguments in his efforts to attenuate the grief that the addressees of his letters are experiencing: for instance, that death is inevitable for all, that it delivers those who have died from both present and future misfortunes, and that grief is of no use whatsoever—benefitting neither oneself nor the person for whom one mourns. Outwardly, his consolatory strategies share many similarities with Greco-Roman consolation in general,⁷⁴⁷ especially in regard to their ideological neutrality and highly practical bent. Embedded within Seneca’s thought, however, is also some quintessentially Stoic thinking, at the heart of which is the conclusion that grief is inherently irrational because it is fuelled by a false opinion about the state of matters in which the individual finds himself. Yet, as I have argued, Seneca’s view of grief and its expression is a multi-faceted one. On the one hand, though he acknowledges that grief is a naturally reflexive and therefore unavoidable response to the tragedies that inevitably encroach on human life, he calls for a carefully deliberate application of

⁷⁴⁷ As Paul Holloway observes, popular arguments against grief took various conventional forms: “(1) time heals all things, (2) death is common to all, (3) grief does not avail the dead and is detrimental to the living, and (4) the proper response is gratitude for the life lived”; “Left Behind: Jesus’ Consolation of His Disciples in John 13,31–17,26,” *ZNW* 96 (2005): 4.

reason to curb any grief that becomes uncontrollably excessive.⁷⁴⁸ Seneca apparently champions, at least in relation to grief, a form of *metriopatheia*. On the other hand, he also seems to want to uncover within the boundaries of Stoicism the possibility of the presence of a specific type of grief that is not incompatible with virtuous thinking and living, or, in other words, the wise person's grief—one that emerges not because of some involuntary emotional reflex but because of positive, voluntary feelings that are based on fully veridical assessments of one's circumstances.⁷⁴⁹ As we have noted, such a "proper" grief might be considered a eupathic antithesis to pathological grief.

Seneca's multivalent understanding of grief stands in contrast to that of Epictetus, whose perhaps more straightforwardly Stoic reading of the passions construes grief as the result of the wholly mistaken judgement that death is something dreadful for the human person (see section 2.5.1.c). Simply put, then, the Stoic wise person would not experience nor exhibit grief of the kind that would compromise his state of rational equanimity. Yet even though Epictetus, unlike Seneca, does not show much interest in how one might bring consolation in practical ways to someone who was grieving, it is noteworthy that he mentions that one should not hesitate to show sympathy to such a person. However, any demonstration of affective solidarity must not result in sorrow that causes a disruption in one's control over one's own mind and thinking.⁷⁵⁰ For Epictetus, the maintaining of the integrity of one's self-autonomy and volition is of the utmost importance.⁷⁵¹ Thus we see that both Seneca and Epictetus are seeking to work out and promote, within the Stoic philosophical framework, a rational basis for the management of grief. Since death is a natural phenomenon that lies beyond the ability of humans to control, it is to be accepted dispassionately. What is important is the manner in which one chooses to live.

That Paul has an equally reasoned interest in what makes consolation efficacious in the constraint of grief is hinted at in his choice of words relating to knowledge, belief, and the mind—*οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν* (4.13), *εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν* (4.14)—and immediately confirmed when he discloses the theological rationale for his approach. The Stoics located their solution wholly within the human person's own internal resources, or more specifically, within his or her powers of right reason, but Paul has cast his gaze elsewhere—to God's action in human history in the past, present, and

⁷⁴⁸ See esp. Seneca, *Polyb.* 18.4–7.

⁷⁴⁹ See Seneca, *Ep.* 99.18–21.

⁷⁵⁰ Epictetus, *Ench.* 16.

⁷⁵¹ See also section 2.5.1.c above.

future. As Paul sees it, for the Christian to grieve in the manner of unbelievers is wholly irrational: not because death is an external good that is devoid of any intrinsic value, but because death will give way to life with other believers and with Christ at the eschaton. At its core, then, Paul's consolatory strategy is rooted in his theological worldview—in the hope of a cosmic union at the parousia, one so powerful that it overcomes both physical and mortal separation and thereby reinterprets, and indeed relativizes, death itself.⁷⁵² Thus, for believers to grieve *καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα* (4.13b) would be to misrepresent the grand, overarching eschatological narrative which encompasses their individual life histories, and thus misunderstand the true nature of their Christian identity. For as Christians, their destinies are eternally secure: the dislocation that death produces is only temporary, because Christ will return to bring to himself those who are his.

This, I suggest, points us towards the answer as to why Paul is so concerned about inordinate grief in the Thessalonian church, and why he takes such care to deal with what is happening among his new converts. Simply put, for Paul, *how* one grieves is inextricably related to what one truly believes about death and therefore also to the entire system of Christian theological understanding that underpins and sustains these beliefs. The Stoics, too, thought that grief, like other passions, could be assuaged through a process of corrected cognitive evaluation. However, though both frameworks evince a rigorously reasoned approach to the therapy of grief, there are fundamentally different ideological bases for the consolation that they each offer. Furthermore, *why* such consolation is important is also not the same. Paul does not share the Stoics' overriding concern for inner serenity and rational imperturbability; instead, he is interested in the creation and maintenance of a robust Christian self-identity which will thereby foster the stability of the community of believers as a whole. Hence, for Paul, excessive grief is highly problematic not only because it betrays in the individual an inadequate understanding of Christian death, but because it threatens the ethos of the young church at Thessalonica. In fact, as Paul might see it, any failure of the Thessalonians to bring consolation to each other could be potentially disastrous; for if they were to waver in their Christian faith because of despairing grief, they would surely find it increasingly difficult to bear up under the social conflict in which they

⁷⁵² Smith, *Comfort*, 57.

were embroiled—social conflict which had arisen precisely because of their allegiance to this faith.⁷⁵³

Given Paul’s interest in safeguarding the health of the church at large, it is not surprising that while the feeling rules concerning grief that he gives to the Thessalonians are certainly premised on the specifics of his eschatological vision, these rules have also a distinctively sociological cast in that they reveal a powerful potential to establish clear group boundaries, thereby helping to structure both individual and corporate self-definition along distinctively Christian lines.

As we have noted earlier, in Paul’s theological framework, all of humanity may be located in one of two categories: those who have eschatological hope, because they follow Christ; and everyone else—somewhat unceremoniously dismissed as “the rest” (*οἱ λοιποί*, 4.13)—i.e., those who are without this hope. There are no exceptions to the complete polarizing of humanity on this basis. Perhaps because he wishes to drive home the point, in several places but especially in ch. 5, Paul contrasts these two categories of humanity in starkly antithetical terms, often using metaphorical language. On the one side are the believers, *ἀδελφοί*⁷⁵⁴ loved and chosen by God (1.4), to whom knowledge of “the times and seasons”—a stock phrase relating to the timing of apocalyptic events⁷⁵⁵—has been disclosed (5.1–2).⁷⁵⁶ In Paul’s eschatological drama, they are cast in approving terms as “children of light” (5.5) and “children of the day” (5.5; cf. 5.8) who remain awake and sober (5.6); ultimately, they obtain salvation through Christ (5.9). On the other side lies the rest of humanity: they are “outsiders” (4.12) who do not know God (4.5) nor anything of his eschatological agendum (5.3). Depicted as a negative foil to believers, such people are “of the night and of darkness” (5.5; cf. 5.4), being drunk and asleep (5.7). In the end, lacking sober vigilance, they, unlike the believers, are unable to escape God’s wrath (5.3, 9).⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵³ Barclay, “Conflict,” 516–518, argues convincingly that the Thessalonians’ apocalyptic worldview and their experience of social alienation reinforced each other in a complex dialectic: their apocalyptic perspective helped them to see their sufferings as something that was to be expected but also temporary; conversely, every experience of social conflict only reinforced the truth of the apocalyptic teachings that they had adopted.

⁷⁵⁴ See n.622 for the other occurrences in 1 Thess.

⁷⁵⁵ On this see the discussions and similar conclusions in Weima, *Thessalonians*, 344; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 288–289; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 177–178.

⁷⁵⁶ Whether *οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι* (5.1) is indeed a case of paralipsis (Weima, *Thessalonians*, 345) or not (Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 289) does not affect the interpretation of 5.1–2: Paul is saying that the Thessalonians already know that the coming of the parousia is certain but that it will be unexpected.

⁷⁵⁷ See further Barclay, “Death,” 225–227.

One cannot fail to notice the care with which Paul distinguishes the believing community from the rest of humanity on the basis of their wholly different eschatological destinies. Barclay argues rightly that “[t]he crucial move that Paul makes here is to adjust this differentiation so as to take account of death, indeed to direct believers into making death itself—how they mark it and how they view it—a symbol of their distinction.”⁷⁵⁸ In other words, the manner in which a Christian grieves can reveal a great deal about what he or she truly believes concerning the eternal destiny of the believer. On this view, eschatological confidence (or its lack thereof) becomes an important Pauline boundary marker of identity and self-definition on both the personal and corporate planes of Christian self-understanding. Putting it another way: for Paul, attitudes towards grief function to differentiate believers from the people around them, and thereby become intrinsic to the proper formation of Christian identity.

We may therefore conclude that for Paul consolation plays a highly distinctive role in the upbuilding of the Thessalonian church. Since consolation has to do with having a right knowledge of eschatological reality, Paul carefully summarizes the teaching of the church concerning the events at the parousia. That which is certain to happen in the future has momentous ontological and ethical implications for the present state of bereavement in which the believers find themselves, in relation to their self-identity and to how they are to grieve. As Beverly Gaventa writes:

What Paul affirms regarding the relationship of believers with one another and with their Lord reaches well beyond a social relationship confined to this place and time. Those who are bound together remain so, even after death. The boundary Paul has drawn around the church is a boundary that extends into the future. Although a boundary separates believers from non-believers, it does not separate the living from the dead. The social world created in the church runs in two directions—believers’ association with the Lord and their association with one another.⁷⁵⁹

For Paul, consolation both expresses and is itself embedded within this extraordinary multi-dimensional sociality. It simultaneously brings comfort and assurance, because it occurs within and speaks of relationships that do not end with death, and because this felicitous state of affairs is grounded in a hope that is certain. It is interesting that this hope is directed towards an ultimate goal that is thoroughly social: eternal life lived with Christ, in the company of other believers.

⁷⁵⁸ Barclay, “Death,” 227. Though I am not persuaded by Barclay’s interpretation of 1 Thess 4.13 as an absolute prohibition against grief (see section 4.3.4), in the main his thesis about a Pauline “christianizing” of death is highly compelling; on this see esp. 227–228, 234.

⁷⁵⁹ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, 68.

4.5. Conclusion

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul responds to a beleaguered church that has also recently been thrown into grief because of the unforeseen deaths of some of its members. Several factors contributed to the opprobrium and oppression that the Thessalonians have had to endure, including, most notably, their rejection of traditional Greco-Roman religious beliefs, the social disruption resulting from their conversion experience, and the political overtones of the Christian message—all of which led to their being stigmatized as socially and ideologically deviant. These sufferings are now exacerbated by the heartache of bereavement; and there is a sense in which the deaths of their members represented a double crisis—of loss as well as faith—because the already emotionally fragile Thessalonians have been hit by deaths that they could not reconcile with what they knew of the Christian's identity and destiny. Unable to return to Thessalonica in person, Paul writes this letter to encourage them in their convictions and also to comfort them in their grief, which he presupposes is symptomatic of a confused or incomplete eschatology.

The painstaking care with which Paul addresses the Thessalonians' grief indicates how serious the matter is to him. At one level, there is the searing pain of personal loss—perhaps all the more acute given the close bonds of affection among the believers, and the fact that relationships within the church were probably particularly valued because of the social dislocation that scarred their lives. However, at another level, at stake is nothing less than the long-term stability of the Thessalonian church, because protracted and untreated sorrow that stemmed from an inadequate understanding of death would surely undermine the believers' confidence in the future and hope in God.

Like others in his day, Paul therefore imposes feeling rules to control grief; and like much of contemporaneous philosophical thought, these consolatory principles take their cue from some form of cognitive evaluation as to what death actually is. However, the ideological roots of Paul's injunctions are entirely unique: thus, where for example the Stoics reject grief because they see it as a completely misjudged and therefore wholly irrational affective response to death, which lies beyond one's ability to control, Paul instead grounds his consolatory instructions in a theological rehearsal of the events surrounding the parousia. The death of fellow Christians is not an occasion for inordinate grief, because their eternal destiny is secure: the resurrection of Jesus is a guarantee of the resurrection of dead believers. Thus, as Paul seems to see it, a forward-

looking confidence that is based on sound eschatological expectation can help to immunize believers against excessive grief, thereby making their response to death itself a powerful symbol of Christian distinctiveness.

At the same time, Paul charges the Thessalonians with the task of bringing comfort to one another in their grief, thus deliberately situating this shared responsibility for consolation within the locus of the remarkable sociality that their common life is to embody and manifest. The effect of all this is to foreground the distinctiveness of their faith, and with it the distinctiveness of their eschatological identity and corporate ethos, in two important ways.

First, the profoundly relational nature of the Christian life is emphasized. While a believer's identity certainly derives primarily from his or her relationship with Christ, it is reinforced and even vivified in community as individuals take seriously their responsibility to nurture and upbuild one another. Paul's summons to the Thessalonians to continue their ministry of mutual spiritual edification seems to imply that they require each other's ministry in order to develop and live out their Christian identity. Such a network of interdependent relationships would be unimaginable for a Stoic, in whose eyes the presence of others might possibly be instrumentally necessary for the exercise of virtue, but is never constitutive of it. For Paul, however, there is an intrinsically social dimension to the Christian's proper flourishing: it is in relationship with Christ and with other believers that one reaches one's fullest potential.

Second, and related to the foregoing, the permanence of these sets of relationships is highlighted. It is precisely because death results in only a temporary disruption of these bonds that consolation makes any sense at all. The Christian hope is that at the return of Christ, death will give way to life with him and with other believers. Therefore consolation, for Paul, has to do with believers reminding one another during times of grief—no matter how severe—that this beatific vision of consummate sociality is also an eschatological reality that awaits them.

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Chapter 5. The Pauline Emotional Regime

5.1. Introduction

Our study of two key emotional stances in Paul's writings—joy, and the consolation of grief—has shown that far from being related only to the individual's inner states, emotion has also a distinctively social cast: there are fundamental ways in which emotion is both socially constructed and socially promulgated. Moreover, an emotion is not a subjective paroxysmal response to an external trigger, but is connected deeply to, and in fact generated from, fundamental dispositions of thought and belief. To the extent that all this is so, specific emotional states can therefore be commanded, and hence also be learnt and regularly practised. Within the church, emotions such as joy are to be actively encouraged, while other emotional patterns such as inordinate grief are to be jettisoned from the life of the believer. Paul takes pains to carefully put into place and to promote certain ways of feeling and means of affective response; in a highly pragmatic sense he is teaching his followers *how they should feel*—just as he constantly teaches them how they should think and act. All this suggests that in his overarching scheme, emotion plays a substantial role in helping to shape and stabilize key aspects of Christian identity at both the individual and corporate level. Right emotion can embody, and thereby reinforce, modes of cognition and thinking that are consonant with what it means to be a believer amidst other believers; conversely, uncontrolled displays of affect can severely compromise or even destroy the believer's self-identity and witness. The stakes could not be any higher.

What I am therefore proposing is that for Paul, patterns of feeling are to go hand in hand with patterns of belief; and that these patterns of feeling, like the patterns of belief with which they are intertwined, have a social context and function. To use a term that we shall explain fully in due course, through what he is doing (i.e. encouraging certain emotions and discounting others) Paul is in effect inculcating in his churches what some sociologists have called an “emotional regime”—an ordering of emotion, closely bound up with the social world of which it is a part and informed by the system of religious symbols to which it is intricately connected, that simultaneously structures and regulates the emotional responses of its members in accordance with the reality framework that is deemed as normative for them. Since this deliberate control of emotion has a set of functions or effects that are targeted at the upbuilding of the

community of believers, there is ample justification to regard emotion as a key dimension of the social formation of the early Church—a dimension that has yet to be fully explored in current NT scholarship. Far from being only incidental in the effort to understand the lives of the first believers, a rigorous engagement with emotion—which encodes and communicates theological beliefs and moral judgements, and thus expresses individual and group identity in the everyday context of social relationships and cultural engagement—can only contribute to a fuller appreciation of Pauline Christianity.

In 1983, Wayne Meeks published his *The First Urban Christians*—an innovative, wide-ranging, and yet meticulous reconstruction of the social realities of the Pauline assemblies that placed early Christianity squarely in its sociocultural setting and signalled the fact that social-scientific approaches to the study of the NT had come to substantial maturity. Meeks' landmark work (now in its second edition⁷⁶⁰) arguably heralded a new era in scholarship on Paul, and numerous subsequent studies reveal the breadth and depth of his enduring influence. Of particular relevance to my study is Meeks' correlating of the beliefs and doctrines of the early Church with the social structures within which the early Christians operated and with certain aspects of their social experience. In the following section, I will outline Meeks' proposals in this area. However, highly influential though his proposals have been, next to nothing is said about the emotional life of the believers. I suggest that the inclusion of the role of emotion would flesh out more fully Meeks' account of the socialization of Paul's converts in line with their newfound faith, and thereby help to move us towards an even more robust and full-orbed understanding of early Christianity.

This chapter will be laid out in the following manner. First, as mentioned, I will outline Meeks' ideas concerning the two-way relationship between what a typical member of a Pauline congregation believed in regard to doctrine and the social force or effects of that belief. As a corollary I will very briefly trace selected trajectories of scholarship that develop Meeks' basic ideas, where these studies contribute to our appreciation of Paul's understanding of the function of emotion. Next, I will explore in detail the sociological concept of the emotional regime as a heuristic tool for our investigation of Paul and emotion. Finally, bringing all these aspects together—and building on, and going beyond, the earlier work of others—I will provide an account of

⁷⁶⁰ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

the function of emotion in Paul's churches, and argue that for Paul how the believer is to feel is intimately related to what he or she thinks about crucially important matters of faith, life, and death, and that a certain set of prescribed, right feelings must therefore be placed within that larger set of prescribed, right beliefs and behaviours that distinguish those who pledge their allegiance to Christ from others who do not belong to the community of faith. As with the right beliefs that constitute and animate them, right emotions have both a socially integrating and a differentiating function: a set of endorsed, taught, learnt, and mutually experienced emotions strengthens a group's solidarity while at the same time clearly demarcating its boundaries. For Paul, emotion is an important aspect of the complex composite of Christian belief and sociality, and thus an integral aspect of what it means for a believer to be in community with other believers, and for that community to be in the world.

5.2. The Early Christians and Emotion

5.2.1. Wayne Meeks' *The First Urban Christians*

In his study of the social world of the Pauline congregations, Meeks draws on a range of anthropological and sociological insights, on Roman social history, as well as NT studies, to elucidate what life was like for ordinary Christians. Certainly, his study was part of a burgeoning body of scholarly work which, beginning in the 1970s, had incorporated social-scientific criticism in the study of early Christianity. Yet the creative ways in which Meeks consolidated much of the early scholarship on the Pauline churches (perhaps most notably Gerd Theissen's work on social stratification in Corinth) and also championed important new ideas (e.g. concerning the purpose of ritual, and the role of "status inconsistency" in attracting would-be converts) led to the widespread recognition that his study represented a milestone in NT scholarship, a mature flourishing of studies in this area.

Methodologically, Meeks regards himself as a social historian of early Christianity whose general approach is aimed at producing what is in effect a Geertzian "thick description" or interpretative ethnography of the social world of the Pauline congregations.⁷⁶¹ Adopting what he takes to be an increasingly shared view among

⁷⁶¹ Meeks, *Christians*, 5–6. Meeks declares that his approach is "analogous to Clifford Geertz's description of the social anthropologist's task as an ethnographer, a describer of culture" (6).

social scientists and historians of religion, for Meeks “[s]ociety is viewed as a process, in which personal identity and social forms are mutually and continually created by interactions that occur by means of symbols.”⁷⁶² Hence, social and symbolic structures are related in a real but complex way, and religion is an integral part of the sociocultural web.⁷⁶³ Within this general context, Meeks styles himself a “moderate functionalist;” in his own words, the comprehensive question guiding the reading of his primary sources has to do with “not only what each one says, but what it does.” For him, such a theoretical stance sidesteps the reductionism that would result from a purely functionalist, Durkheimian, reading of the function of religion.⁷⁶⁴

Meeks’ avowedly eclectic and piecemeal use of the social sciences parades a deliberate yet shrewd pragmatism in which a theory is employed as needed when it can help to shed light on some aspect of the social lives of the early Christians.⁷⁶⁵ Accordingly, he borrows and carefully applies insights from a wide assortment of approaches,⁷⁶⁶ with impressive results. For example, in the second chapter of his study, where he discusses the social level of Pauline Christians, Meeks suggests that an individual’s social profile was a multidimensional composite of diverse indicators beyond merely economic ones, such as ethnic origin, *ordo*, citizenship, personal liberty, wealth, occupation, public offices, and others.⁷⁶⁷ Furthermore, the person’s relative status within each of these categories was often very different—leading to what sociologists term as “status inconsistency” or “status dissonance.”⁷⁶⁸ Meeks argues that the nascent Christian movement was attractive to those of high status inconsistency because it offered them the resources to resolve the perceived ambiguities in their social positioning.⁷⁶⁹

Especially germane to my study is Meeks’ exploration (in ch. 6 of his book) of the relationship between the systems of doctrine reflected in the Pauline letters and the systems of social relations experienced by those to whom these letters are addressed. In Meeks’ view, there are discernible correlations between these “patterns of belief” and

⁷⁶² Meeks, *Christians*, 6.

⁷⁶³ Meeks, *Christians*, 6.

⁷⁶⁴ Meeks, *Christians*, 6–7.

⁷⁶⁵ Meeks, *Christians*, 6.

⁷⁶⁶ E.g. Victor Turner (Meeks, *Christians*, 88–89, 157), Mary Douglas (97, 141), and Melford E. Spiro (140–141) on aspects of ritual; Tony Reekmans (22–23), P. R. C. Weaver (22–23), and Seymour Martin Lipset (54) on questions of social status and social mobility; Leon Festinger (85) on social cohesion; and Brian Wilson (85) on sects.

⁷⁶⁷ Meeks, *Christians*, 55.

⁷⁶⁸ Meeks, *Christians*, 22–23, 54–55.

⁷⁶⁹ Meeks, *Christians*, 72–73.

“patterns of life”: the term “correlation” is specifically chosen to indicate that one can speak of how belief structures match social forms without needing to assume that there is a direct causal relationship in either direction.⁷⁷⁰ He concludes his discussion by outlining four areas where the correlations between symbolization and socialization seem particularly apparent. First, the unity of the one God of Pauline Christianity is correlated with the unity that is to mark the entire body of believers, i.e., in each local congregation and in the connections between them. Second, the belief that God is personal and active is correlated with the nature of the relationships within the local assembly of believers, which are to be marked by intimacy, mutual commitment, and the expectation of a high degree of interpersonal engagement. Third, Pauline eschatology is matched with, and thus helps the Christians to make sense of, the social experiences that have come in the wake of conversion. Fourth, the social contradictions experienced by the group and embodied personally by its members find their correlate in the contradictions experienced and embodied by Christ.⁷⁷¹ At this juncture Meeks reiterates his earlier proposal concerning how the status inconsistency that characterized the lives of the new converts would have drawn them deeper into Christianity, with its powerful symbols of a divine ordering of the world and of personal and communal transformation, and its enticing promises of a sense of belonging and of relational intimacy.⁷⁷²

In summary, then: for Meeks, belief structures and sacred symbols (patterns of belief) affect social reality and socialization (patterns of life) in profound ways, and vice versa. Moreover, it is precisely this complex dialectic that helps to explain why typical converts to Pauline Christianity were attracted to it in the first place; for Meeks, matters concerning the societal status of the individual play directly into the question of how Christianity was viewed and accepted and its teachings legitimated. All this has led to the common acknowledgement that one of the most significant contributions that Meeks’ work has made to the study of the NT is in its consideration of the extent to which the growth of first century Christianity in its urban setting was assisted by socio-economic factors.⁷⁷³

⁷⁷⁰ Meeks, *Christians*, 164.

⁷⁷¹ Meeks, *Christians*, 190–191.

⁷⁷² Meeks, *Christians*, 191.

⁷⁷³ So e.g. Bruce W. Longenecker, “Socio-Economic Profiling of the First Urban Christians,” in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 36–37.

Not unexpectedly, Meeks' proposals have also aroused much debate, perhaps especially in regard to his methodological stance on the social-scientific study of the NT and his use of status inconsistency to explain in socio-economic terms the allure of early urban Christianity.⁷⁷⁴ Nonetheless, Meeks' legacy is immense, and his work has hugely influenced subsequent generations of scholars and galvanized numerous studies.⁷⁷⁵ Of course, all this scholarly activity must be placed in its broader context: in the three decades since the publication of *The First Urban Christians*, there has been a continued diversification in both the range of approaches and types of concerns associated with efforts to engage with and understand the NT in social-scientific terms—and to such a diffuse degree that that it impossible to speak today of any kind of common approach, method, or focus to define the field.⁷⁷⁶ Nonetheless, Meeks' work has in many ways remained highly seminal.

5.2.2. Moving Beyond Meeks: The Social Function of Emotion

As I have earlier mentioned, the aspect of Meeks' work that I want to focus on for the purposes of my study has to do with how he correlates the social experiences of the Pauline Christians with the structures of belief that were integral to their resocialization as members of a new social organization. The dialectical relationship that Meeks identifies between patterns of belief and patterns of life is extremely helpful in opening up the question of the social force of doctrine in relation to the formation of a distinctively Christian identity at both the individual and group level. Yet I wish to suggest that Meeks' account would be enriched, and perhaps to no small degree, if it incorporated an explicit consideration of the function of emotion in the socialization of these new converts, especially given what recent developments in cognitive science and in social-scientific research suggest about the nature and construction of emotion (see section 1.3 above).

⁷⁷⁴ For a concise summary of the reactions to Meeks insofar as they relate to methodological considerations, see David G. Horrell, "Whither Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation? Reflections on Contested Methodologies and the Future," in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 7–8. On the debate over Meeks' approach to social profiling, see Longenecker, "Profiling," esp. 38–45.

⁷⁷⁵ See esp. the essays in Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell, eds., *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later* (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

⁷⁷⁶ Horrell, "Contested Methodologies," 8. See 8–11 for a useful overview of key developments in social-scientific approaches to the NT since the 1980s.

To be sure, at a number of points in his study Meeks seems to acknowledge that emotion has some sort of role in this process, at least in connection with the use of language. For example, in his discussion of the formation of the Pauline communities, Meeks stresses that boundaries were drawn to help the groups identify themselves as groups and as a broader movement. These boundaries included “aspects of language, practice, and expressed sentiments and attitudes that gave the group internal cohesion”;⁷⁷⁷ and among the aspects of language that Meeks highlights is the emotionally-charged, fictive use of kinship terms within the group—which he understands to play a role in cementing a believer’s new identity and thus in reinforcing the *communitas* of the Christian groups, especially when such use is accompanied by special terms for “the outsiders” and “the world.”⁷⁷⁸ Noting the extremely unusual frequency and intensity of affective phrases in the Pauline corpus when compared to other ancient letters, Meeks cites several examples from 1 Thessalonians and Philipians and concludes that “[t]he Pauline letters are unusually rich in emotional language—joy and rejoicing, anxiety, longing.”⁷⁷⁹ Nowhere, however, does Meeks treat emotion independently of language as a separate aspect of the resocialization of the new believers.

Thus, later in his study (and still with reference to the function of language) Meeks makes the observation that

“not just the shared contents of beliefs but also shared forms by which the beliefs are expressed are important in promoting cohesiveness. Every close-knit group develops its own argot, and the use of that argot in speech among members knits them more closely still.”⁷⁸⁰

In his discussion, Meeks has in mind such things as in-group jargon and special nuances, syntactical patterns of speech, slogans, and ritual language.⁷⁸¹ But while his wide-ranging focus on the function of language as a repository and carrier of belief is salutary, one wonders if his conclusions might be reinforced by an exploration of emotion itself as a site for the expression—linguistic or otherwise—of shared beliefs. Elsewhere, Meeks concludes in his analysis of 1 Thess 4.13–5.11 that the function of Paul’s apocalyptic language here and in the letter as a whole is to reinforce the sense of uniqueness and cohesion of the community, which in turn produces a disposition to act

⁷⁷⁷ Meeks, *Christians*, 85.

⁷⁷⁸ Meeks, *Christians*, 85–86, 94–95; see also 88–89.

⁷⁷⁹ Meeks, *Christians*, 86–87 (quote from 86).

⁷⁸⁰ Meeks, *Christians*, 93.

⁷⁸¹ Meeks, *Christians*, 93–94.

in a way appropriate to its well-being. Meeks sets out what such appropriate behaviour is: it “includes internal discipline and obedience of leaders (5.13–22), a quiet life that will seem benign to outsiders (4.11f).”⁷⁸² While it seems right to think that it is not Meeks’ intention to be exhaustive here, it is still rather surprising that a properly Christian response to the untimely death of other believers is omitted from this rehearsal of appropriate behaviour patterns—for after all, it was the issue of grief which precipitated the writing of 1 Thessalonians in the first place. Furthermore, as we have seen earlier, Paul takes painstaking care to bring consolation to them because, left untreated, such grief—which stemmed from a deficient understanding of eschatology—would surely rupture the self-identity and thus the well-being of the believing community. Again, it seems to me that attention to the function of emotion would further strengthen Meeks’ fine arguments concerning the socialization of Paul’s new converts.

My point, however, is not so much to try to identify gaps in Meeks’ approach as to use it as a kind of launch pad for my suggestion that there is much to be gained in placing emotion alongside belief when asking questions about the ways in which the early Christians were formed into communities, and into a movement, and about how these social structures acquired such stability and longevity. What can be added to what we already know about the socialization of new believers in the first century milieu of Pauline Christianity through a considered exploration of the role of emotion? I suggest that like the beliefs with which they are associated (and like the structures of language and ritual within which such beliefs are encoded), emotions as Paul sees them play a crucial role in staking the boundaries, personal as well as corporate, between believers and the world around them, and therefore in reinforcing the internal social cohesion of the Christian groups. Emotions are able to perform this role because, as we shall see, they can have a socially integrating or a socially differentiating function. The patterns of feeling that Paul seems to want to promote are related closely to the patterns of belief that mark out what it means to be a Christian.

It is at this point that I wish to introduce, from recent social-scientific thinking, the notion of the “emotional regime” as an analytical framework for our heuristic engagement with emotion in Paul. Our reading of what he says about joy and grief and consolation in two of his letters has demonstrated that there is very clearly a social

⁷⁸² Meeks, *Christians*, 174–175 (quote from 175).

dimension to these states of emotion: they are socially generated and socially expressed, and they also influence and shape Christian sociality itself. As such, a tool that can help us to investigate in comprehensive terms the social dimensions of emotion, without losing sight of the fact that emotion is at the same time something intrinsic to the individual, will be very useful; and in what is to follow I will describe the sociological concept of the emotional regime (first introduced at section 1.3.2) in some detail.

5.3. The Sociological Concept of the “Emotional Regime”

5.3.1. The Emotional Regime

In their multidimensional account, Riis and Woodhead posit emotion as being produced in the interactions between (1) self and society, (2) self and symbol, and (3) symbol and society. Each of these three sets of relationships are dynamic, two-way, dialectical processes in which the *relata* are themselves shaped by the relationship. At the same time, these three sets of relationships are inherently interdependent and therefore mutually constitutive.⁷⁸³ For example, while cultural and religious traditions set broad communal parameters and continuities, the symbols associated with these traditions can be interpreted and shaped by individuals in ways that give purchase over their own personal dramas. At the same time, these individuals also place these symbols within, and relate them to, wider webs of symbolic and social significance.⁷⁸⁴ Thus these three sets of dialectical relationships come together to form an entity that is more than the sum of its parts, because novel processes emerge from the interaction of the parts that are irreducible to those parts.⁷⁸⁵

Conceptually, this entity—which Riis and Woodhead call an “emotional regime”—captures how these dialectical processes come together in the construction of emotion. It brings together the personal, symbolic, and social aspects of emotion, and discloses how emotions are integral to the structured social and material relations that constitute a particular social unit or context.⁷⁸⁶ In the authors’ view, emotional regimes exist in every type of society or interactive system, from a family to nation; and in fact there can be a plurality of overlapping and even contradictory emotional regimes in a

⁷⁸³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 7–9, 95.

⁷⁸⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 8.

⁷⁸⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 95.

⁷⁸⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10.

single time and place.⁷⁸⁷ In addition—and as a corrective to behavioural studies that see emotion as episodic and delimited by particular situations—the concept of an emotional regime also opens up to tradition and the past, since habituated patterns of emotional engagement actually mediate between past, present, and future. As such, an emotional regime carries patterns of relating across history by linking habitual personal emotional responses to broader social and cultural arrangements—not in a static way, but in a way that develops out of what has been in relation to it.⁷⁸⁸

As Riis and Woodhead see it, an emotional regime characteristically “holds together a repertoire of different emotions, and specifies their rhythm, significance, mode of expression, and combination.”⁷⁸⁹ By so doing, it “captures the way in which emotions relate embodied agents to their wider social and material-symbolic interactions, anchor and communicate the emotional agenda, and serve as normative points of reference.”⁷⁹⁰ Like the social ordering that it is part of and bound up with, an emotional regime has an internal coherence, but it can often be in a state of flux—or even enter a state of imbalance or disintegration. Nonetheless, emotional regimes “persist over time and transcend individuals, shaping what they feel and how they feel it, and the way they can express their feelings, and hence the form of social relationship and course of action that are open to them.”⁷⁹¹ Notably, the authors, following the lead of a growing number of sociologists and political theorists, argue for the significance of personal and collective emotion in shaping and reproducing structures of power.⁷⁹²

For Riis and Woodhead, the way their tripartite scheme conceives of the relationships between self, symbol, and society serves to prise apart processes that are in reality closely bound up with one another while all the while respecting their interwoven nature. By isolating these dialectical exchanges in order to understand them better, and then putting them together and showing how they relate (or fail to relate) to one another, a richly textured analysis of the cultivation of emotion becomes possible. The authors argue that such an approach, for example, helps to clarify instances of one-sided dialectics between *relata* and to identify not only the elements that are present in an emotional situation, but what is absent—since there are numerous social, psychological, cultural, and material factors that can influence an emotional pattern.

⁷⁸⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 49–50, 53.

⁷⁸⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 50–51.

⁷⁸⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10.

⁷⁹⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 69.

⁷⁹¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10.

⁷⁹² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10.

Attention to the presence of any relational disconnections and the study of unbalanced dialectics can help in the understanding of why expected emotional responses fail to be evoked in a particular setting. The framework thus helps one to investigate not only why emotions occur, but also why they do not.⁷⁹³

5.3.2. Religious Emotional Regimes

Riis and Woodhead further propose that *religious* emotional regimes—which have their basis in an ideal ordering of reality—confront the everyday empirical world with this ostensibly perfected social and material order, and interpret the one in relation to the other. All aspects of personal and social life and interaction are viewed and evaluated in the light of this ideal ordering. Hence a religious emotional regime embodies and regulates the standards by which certain emotions are promoted and others are abased, so that the emotional lives of the adherents of the religion are formed according to an approved pattern of coherence.⁷⁹⁴ Such training of the emotions occurs through both formal and informal mechanisms: emotional standards may be imposed through hierarchical structures, the promotion of authoritative, prescriptive teaching, and the meting out of punishment for disobedience; they can also be established through less formal means such as observation and imitation, and the use of more subtle obstacles to non-compliance. An emotional regime therefore subjugates errant unauthorized emotions, while at the same offering rewards for following emotional conventions.⁷⁹⁵

By promulgating and enforcing a unique emotional programme that guides how its adherents are to feel about themselves, one another, and their wider circumstances, a religious emotional regime educates and structures sensibility in profound ways. Through its promise to reconfigure emotional response according to the ordering that is embodied by a religious group, its members, and its symbols, an emotional regime helps those within the group not only to cope with the everyday demands of life, but to navigate its transitions and crises. Religious emotional regimes therefore inculcate long-lasting moods and motivations, and provide anchorage for meaning, moral identity, and choice-making.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 8–9.

⁷⁹⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10–11, 69–73.

⁷⁹⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 48–49, 71.

⁷⁹⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10–11, 69–70, 209–210.

A religious emotional regime, then, may be described as a framework which conditions the way in which emotion is produced, amplified, or modified in the context of the dialectical relations between self, society, and symbol, leading to a structuring of the emotional life of participants and the social whole in accordance with the ordering of reality that the religion prescribes as normative for its adherents. The concept of a religious emotional regime makes possible a synthetic analysis of the dialectical interrelations among its constituent elements and the systems of morality and meaning to which emotions are integral.⁷⁹⁷ In addition, it can serve as a useful organizing framework for thinking about emotion and power, since, like any emotional regime—i.e. by shaping what and how individuals and societies are to feel, and hence the forms of sociality and courses of action that are open to them—a religious one helps to structure and reproduce power relations.⁷⁹⁸

5.3.3. Key Characteristics of Religious Emotion

From their discussion of religious emotional regimes, Riis and Woodhead outline three main features that they see as being particularly characteristic of religious emotion: “emotional ordering,” “emotional transcendence-transition,” and “inspiration-orientation.”

5.3.3.a. Emotional Ordering

In a similar way to how everyday emotions are configured in relation to situations composed of symbolic, material, and social elements, religious emotions are structured according to a symbolically mediated ideal framework, or “alternate ordering.” Such an ordering “shapes an emotional template that may extend over the whole of life, and override other emotional programmes.”⁷⁹⁹ Emotional ordering occurs at the individual, group, or societal level, or all three. It implies offering a coherent programme—involving components such as guidance, inspiration, ritual, symbolism, and living example—in which emotions embody normative patterns of feeling and relating that shape both personal and collective life. This means that over time, and with appropriate religious disciplines, discordant emotional notes can be removed in favour of the dominant ones that should sound within the religious emotional regime. Moreover,

⁷⁹⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 208–210, 217, esp. 208.

⁷⁹⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 10, 72–73; see also 147–171.

⁷⁹⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 76–77 (quote from 77).

because religion has a reference point beyond the here and now, religious emotional orderings also integrate and reorient feelings related to death and bereavement. Such emotional ordering is not static, but is constantly produced, consolidated, and reproduced (often through innovation and adjustment below a fully conscious level) in the lives of religious communities and their members. In addition, religious emotions serve also as markers of identity: those who respond emotionally in ways that are in line with a group's emotional orderings are taken as genuinely belonging to that group, while those who do not are decried as outsiders.⁸⁰⁰

5.3.3.b. *Emotional Transcendence-Transition*

Religious emotional regimes enable transcendence over everyday emotional states, at both personal and collective levels. As Riis and Woodhead put it, “[b]y multifarious means, religions offer some distance from everyday emotions, some critical purchase over them, some ability to review, alter, or selectively confirm them.”⁸⁰¹ Emotional transcendence has to do with the bringing of emotions into relation with alternate orderings and their structures and symbols in a ways that enhance order, control, and change.⁸⁰² Related to transcendence is “emotional transition”: a significant shift in the structure of personal sensibility that involves a de-patterning and re-patterning of emotion. Emotional transition is thus a dramatic form of transcendence that occurs over a much shorter time and involves more intense emotions. The authors posit that most religions combine routine, ritualized means of patterning religious sensibility with dramatic rites and techniques to make and mark more dramatic shifts. They use the term “emotional transcendence-transition” in order to hold these two aspects together, though they can be distinguished from each other.⁸⁰³

5.3.3.c. *Inspiration-Orientation*

Riis and Woodhead observe that although religions can produce short-lived moments of emotional intensity, it is their ability to shape long-term emotional dispositions and thus influence both human character and relational stances that is more notable. Religious emotional regimes have an active and inspiring quality through the

⁸⁰⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 77–79.

⁸⁰¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 81–82.

⁸⁰² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 82.

⁸⁰³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 82.

way that they promote certain specific feelings and spur the actions that correspond to them. At the same time,

[s]ince emotions are what orient us within our life worlds, and since religions claim to reveal what is truly sacred, valuable, and meaningful, the emotional orientation they provide often has a particularly strong bearing on how adherents live out their lives, and what inspires their ultimate loyalty.”⁸⁰⁴

In addition to providing fundamental inspiration, religious emotions also play an important role in value direction, for example by training emotions of love to become attached to their proper objects and detached from inappropriate ones. They provide orientation by providing a focus not only of devotion, but of such things as fear, anxiety, and aversion. Rogue emotions within a religious emotional regime are abjured, and internal deviants are castigated or stigmatized.⁸⁰⁵

5.3.4. Dialectical Relationships within an Emotional Regime

Having established what they mean by emotion and an emotional regime (ch. 1), and having indicated some of the characteristic features of religious emotion (ch. 2), in chs. 3–5 Riis and Woodhead put their model to work in their analyses of the connections and disconnections of self, society, and symbols (chs. 3–4) and the power of religious emotion (ch. 5), before concluding with an analysis of religious emotion in late modern society (ch. 6).

5.3.4.a. *Connections of Self, Society, and Symbol*

As we have seen, Riis and Woodhead’s model involves three *relata*—agent, symbol, and community—which are affected and shaped by the dialectical relationships between them. The authors depict their concept diagrammatically as follows (see Figure 1):

⁸⁰⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 89.

⁸⁰⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 89–90.

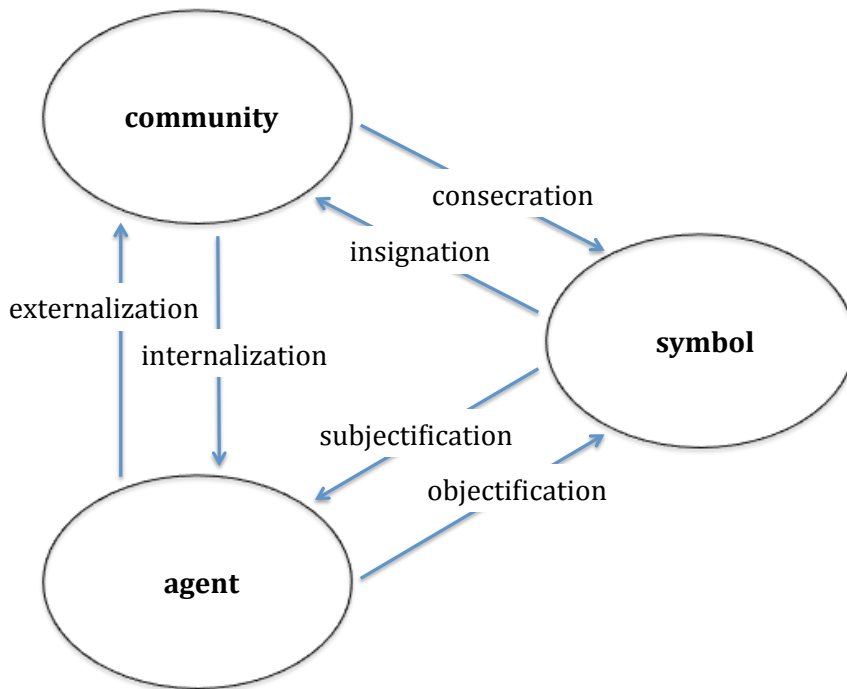


Figure 1. Dialectical Relationships within an Emotional Regime.⁸⁰⁶

Located between agent and symbol are the processes of “objectification” and “subjectification.” Objectification is the production or appropriation of a religious symbol by an agent. An example is given of a devout woman’s visit to an Orthodox church: when she kisses an icon, it seems to provoke tears by its own power rather than her volition. The power of such objects is enhanced by personal and collective associations and memories. Other examples of objectified religious emotions include sacred art, buildings, and rituals, and less tangible forms such as telling a myth or singing a song. Through acts of objectification, emotional expressions become fixed and communicable, and outsiders and new generations can be affected by the objects.⁸⁰⁷ On the other side of the dialectical relation, “subjectification” occurs when a symbolic object provokes in an individual an emotional reaction that is considered religious. In many religious contexts, the ability to feel emotions sanctioned by the wider regime when in the presence of its sacred objects is proof of piety. So, for example, the tears shed before a religious icon confirms that one is a true believer, and simultaneously confirms the holiness of the icon and the saint it represents.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁶ This is my reproduction of the figure in Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 118.

⁸⁰⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 96–99.

⁸⁰⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 99–100.

These two processes have their parallels in the dialectic between community and symbol. “Consecration” refers to the process in which a religious community (or its elite) legitimates an object as a religious sign that binds the community and helps define its identity. “Insignation,” on the other hand, is the process whereby a community is moved and inspired emotionally by a religious symbol. A strong form of consecration occurs when a state establishes standards for religious symbols, such as, for example, a law against blasphemy. Other examples of consecration include the harnessing of a group’s stories, symbols, or rituals as focal points in its emotional programme.⁸⁰⁹

The final two processes of “internalization” and “externalization” are derived from Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s cognitive theory, in which they demonstrate how society makes an impression on the minds of individuals (internalization), and individuals give their ideas social expression (externalization).⁸¹⁰ Riis and Woodhead apply this analysis to emotion, since they believe individual emotional experiences and social sentiments to be closely related. Internalization refers therefore to the ways in which a community influences individuals’ emotional lives. Its opposite, externalization, occurs when an individual’s felt emotions are noticed. To externalize emotion by creating a communal sentiment involves the encouraging of appropriate individual emotions, and the curtailing of deviant ones.⁸¹¹

In an emotional regime characterized by balanced dialectical connections, the relations between agents, symbols, and the community are mutually constitutive, and there is a correspondence between the emotional symbols, the community’s emotional programme, and the individual emotions of the participants. As Riis and Woodhead express it,

the power of the symbols is strengthened as they are venerated by the community and subjectified by individuals, the power of the community to move its members is enhanced as it refers to accepted symbols and as members participate in it, and religious emotions among participants are intensified as they participate in collective rituals or relate to established symbols.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 102–104.

⁸¹⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 109, referring to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1966). See esp. 78–79, 121–122, 149–193.

⁸¹¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 109.

⁸¹² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 121.

5.3.4.b. *Disconnections of Self, Society, and Symbol*

Using the same framework, Riis and Woodhead demonstrate how one may also analyze *imbalances* in emotional regimes. This is because relations between a community, agents, and symbols often do not tend towards a state of equilibrium. For each of the three dialectical relationships identified earlier, there are two ways in which the balance can tilt.

In the relationship between a community and its members, “ultra-internalization” occurs when a regime considers that the only normative emotions are those that it sanctions; personal feelings are suppressed and the collective mood overwhelms. The contrasting emotional balance is “ultra-externalization,” which takes place when members are encouraged to freely express their emotions without any inhibitions. In such a setting, extraordinary and even extreme emotions are allowed and even welcomed.⁸¹³

If a human agent is not emotionally affected to any significant degree by a symbol, the dialectical relation weakens to a case of “ultra-objectification.” On the other hand, the individual may be so overcome by emotions that arise in relation to a religious symbol that the symbol appears to be a powerful agent in its own right: this represents a case of “ultra-subjectification.” Examples of ultra-objectification—an emotional distancing from religious symbols—are artefacts considered “kitsch” by cognoscenti, or religious art that is appreciated purely for its aesthetic or economic value. Ultra-subjectification can be observed, for example, in what might be termed “fetishism”—where memorabilia of celebrities like Elvis evoke extremely strong passions.⁸¹⁴

In the relationship between a community and its collective religious symbols, if these symbols are regarded as purely instrumental objects that can be changed to suit the needs of the regime with little reference to collective emotions, the dialectic is tipped towards “ultra-consecration.” This is less common than “ultra-insignification,” where collective symbols have a power that overwhelms individuals, but may bear no relation to authorized consecration. Riis and Woodhead highlight also the interesting instance of a “desecration,” which takes place when a symbol that has intense emotional power for religious people is ridiculed or attacked. Desecration, or iconoclasm, in a narrow sense refers to the banning or destruction of visual symbols. However,

⁸¹³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 124–132.

⁸¹⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 133–137.

iconoclasm may be used to purify emotional life by excluding emotionally evocative symbols that are deemed to be incompatible with the regime's ordering, and is typically a consequence of enhancing the status of texts, doctrines, and their interpreters.⁸¹⁵

5.3.5. The Power of Religious Emotion

Riis and Woodhead argue that the potency of emotions becomes clear once emotions are understood as feelings, motivations, and relational stances, rather than as merely private and subjective impressions. In their account, emotions move or inhibit people, help to bind and coordinate social groups, and attach them to certain symbolic objects and repulse them from others. As they acknowledge, a comprehensive analysis of power involves much more than an investigation of emotion, since the capacity of individuals and groups to act is affected by a whole range of factors—but emotions certainly have a place.⁸¹⁶ They propose that the concept of an emotional regime is a helpful way of understanding power and emotion, since the idea of emotional norms and standards sanctioned and enforced by social and symbolic means is integral to it. The concept also helps to frame discussions of relations between different emotional regimes, including means of emotional boundary reinforcement. Most importantly, an emotional regime makes possible an analysis of the dialectical relations between agential, social, and symbolic power.⁸¹⁷

Since emotions are embodied stances by means of which individuals and groups “actively negotiate their relational standing, as well as monitoring and reacting to their social and material-symbolic positioning,” emotional power is inherent in the relations between actors, groups, and symbols. Hence “all emotions, even the most personal, register and ‘set’ a relationship—whether with self, others, or symbols.”⁸¹⁸ To feel proud or ashamed, for example, is to rank oneself relative to other people, symbolic benchmarks, or one's own standards. Since emotions are the product not only of particular encounters but also of individuals' positioning within social and symbolic structures, they are not merely episodic but can develop into habitual dispositions—with either crippling or enabling consequences. For example, status quos may be reinforced,

⁸¹⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 137–140.

⁸¹⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 147.

⁸¹⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 151.

⁸¹⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 152.

or the standing of persons or groups relative to one another is either enhanced or diminished.⁸¹⁹

The power of a religious group is likely to be heightened when emotional dialectics are in balance. In such a situation, individual participants are in solidarity with one another and with the group as a whole; personal emotions find their resonance in the feelings of others, and these feelings are experienced as authentic. This state of harmony is structured also by consecrated symbols that provide the focus of devotion and action. Feelings of kinship are thereby strengthened through the ways in which group members are united in their aspirations. The experiences of individuals vivify the collective experience, reinforce it, and feed its emotional energy.⁸²⁰ In ideal situations of dialectical balance, “each ‘node’ is empowered by being brought into relation with the other: each is able to ‘move’ to a greater extent than would otherwise be possible; hence each is empowered.”⁸²¹ This experience is maximized when an emotional regime is abutted by compatible emotional regimes in other social domains. But religion can flourish even in competitive, pluralistic situations; its power then resides in its ability to provide a space for the cultivation of feelings not permitted elsewhere, such as solidarity and hope in the midst of grindingly hard conditions.⁸²² In fact, it is the power of a religion to focus, contain, and transform powerful emotions that lends that religion wider social power.⁸²³

Riis and Woodhead draw attention to the vital role of symbols in this process: “Symbols have power by representing an agenda in concentrated form and focusing feeling towards it.”⁸²⁴ The power of symbols is related to how people feel about them, and to the number of people who feel this way. Religious symbols are especially significant in relation to power because they represent a higher, other-worldly power; more importantly, they are experienced as placing those who give assent to them in a direct relation with such power.⁸²⁵ In other words, once consecrated, religious symbols bind the emotional regime of a group and cannot easily be separated from it; they accrue enormous power over the group and its members. The authors argue that

⁸¹⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 152–153. See also 50–51 for a discussion of context-dependent dispositions, or “emotional habits,” and more general emotional dispositions, or “habitus.”

⁸²⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 157–158

⁸²¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 158.

⁸²² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 169.

⁸²³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 158.

⁸²⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 154.

⁸²⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 155–156.

[i]n the right context, the most powerful of sacred symbols are the monotheistic Gods. Their power is related to the emotions of terror, awe, and surrender that they may evoke, and the counterbalancing feelings of joy, assurance, security, and power that come from knowledge of their protection and blessing.⁸²⁶

Accordingly, such symbols help individuals, groups, and nations gain a sense of control, meaning, and power, in life, while helping them to sacralize their agendas.⁸²⁷

5.3.6. Conclusion

Riis and Woodhead's account is a multidimensional, far-reaching, yet supple understanding of the construction of emotion. Rather than privileging the self as the only site of emotional life, their approach contextualizes feeling within a framework of dialectical inter-relations between the individual, society, and religious and cultural symbols. Every social unit in society has a unique emotional programme in which certain emotional notes are encouraged and others repudiated; and when these patterns of affect are enforced in some way, an emotional regime comes into being. Religious emotional regimes are those that make reference to an alternate ordering of reality that is seen to be foundational to life, and thereby offer transcendence over everyday emotional states, as well as long-term emotional inspiration.

5.4. The Function of Emotion in the Pauline Congregations

5.4.1. Introduction

In what follows in this chapter we shall elucidate how, for Paul, right emotions help to forge and cement a distinctive and robust Christian identity in the individual believer as well as in the community of faith to which he or she belongs. As I shall suggest, in the way they embody structures of belief and promote patterns of sociality, emotions take on crucial integrating and differentiating roles in both the personal and corporate spheres of the believer's life. Clearly, Paul's therapeutic engagement with the emotions—his careful efforts to put into place an emotional regime—is aimed at the upbuilding of the congregations that he has established. We shall seek to uncover, with the aid of sociological analysis, how precisely Paul aims to achieve this.

⁸²⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 159.

⁸²⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 159.

5.4.2. The Integrating and Differentiating Functions of Emotion

For Paul, how the believer is to feel is correlated at a fundamental level with the beliefs that form the basis for the Christian faith. Putting this another way, one might say that sanctioned emotions, such as joy in the midst of suffering, align the believer's experiences of life with the reasoned evaluation of those experiences in the light of the various interlocking theological convictions that together frame a portrayal of true reality. For the individual believer, right emotion therefore expresses the squaring of felt experience with belief; in this way it is a uniquely tangible, psycho-somatic reification of sometimes abstract, and certainly slippery, Christian ideals concerning affect and its relation to belief and behaviour. At the same time, the theologically informed and socially structured reading of these personal felt experiences—resulting as they do in the promotion of emotional dispositions and patterns that are held in common as being normative—serves to integrate the believer with other believers by reinforcing individual as well as corporate notions of what it truly means to be a follower of Christ. Hence, through the bringing together of the experiential with the cognitive, there is a powerful, *integrating* dimension to emotions: at the level of the individual, right emotions embody the integration of felt experience with cognitive belief, while at the societal level they simultaneously signal the integration of personal subjectivity with group norms in regard to authorized patterns of feeling; and in both cases, the result is a strengthening of Christian identity and community.

Emotions have also a corresponding *differentiating* function; thus, when right emotions are given expression or when inappropriate ones are rejected, a similar result ensues. A clear example is found in relation to Paul's order to the Thessalonians not to grieve as those around them do. It is noteworthy that Paul here makes explicit his efforts to engineer a type of behavioural differentiation, that, for the Thessalonians, requires on their part a profound relativization of grief that is more than a little counterintuitive, especially given the already very challenging circumstances in which they seek to live out their faith. Yet it is precisely the counterintuitive, and indeed, countercultural, nature of such an emotional response that marks the divide between the believing community and the people around them, and showcases both the uniqueness of the Christian way of life and the audaciousness of its claims to truth.

It is important to note, however, that it is not as if such authorized emotional dispositions carry only either an integrating or differentiating function. In my view,

these functions are actually the two sides of the same coin; and as such, right emotion incorporates facets of both functions. It is likely though that with a particular emotion the working of one of the two functions is more evident, at least on the surface. To illustrate, using the example in the preceding paragraph: as we have seen, the prohibition against uncontrolled grief embodies a marked differentiating function in how it stakes the boundaries, both social and theological, between believers and others. Yet at the same time the imposition of such a feeling rule helps to bolster the Thessalonian believers' sense of group belonging and identity by specifying and reinforcing the possibility of a specific form of normative affective behaviour for Christians in a particular context (the death of a fellow believer) and locating the warrant for such an emotional stance in eschatological reality; and as such, it incorporates also a possibly less obvious socially integrating function.

My contention, then, is that emotion in Paul's letters—at least based on the evidence of joy in Philippians and grief and consolation in 1 Thessalonians—plays an important role in the social formation of the believers in the congregations that he had planted. By issuing specific feeling rules to his followers, Paul is in fact creating an emotional regime in which cognition, reason, and emotion commingle to produce a distinctive Christian sociality that has its basis in his understanding of God's work in the past, present, and future—or, in other words, in an alternate, and explicitly theological, conception of reality. For Paul, right emotions are related to, and are to be in sync with, right beliefs; and such emotions—which, as we have seen, exhibit a mix of socially integrating and differentiating functions—are therefore integral to the socialization of his converts and to the ongoing development and safeguarding of their Christian identity. However, how exactly are these right emotions produced? What sustains their ongoing activity and functional potency? An exploration of the Pauline emotional regime, in which we combine our findings thus far with careful sociological analysis, will shed further light on how authorized emotions are generated and maintain their vigour, and also help us to answer in a fuller way the question of the role of such emotions in the early Church.

5.5. Exploring the Pauline Emotional Regime

To recap: in Riis and Woodhead's account of religious emotion that was outlined earlier, emotions are seen to be generated within a framework of mutually shaping

interactions between (1) individual agents, and the communities to which they belong; (2) agents, and the cultural and material symbols that are attached to religious life; and (3) communities, and these sacred symbols. The interplay of these three sets of dialectical relationships between self, society, and symbol forms a religious emotional regime, which, since it takes as normative a certain ideal ordering of reality, shapes and modifies emotion in line with this reality and so plays a decisive role in the inculcation of long-term affective moods and motivations. Furthermore, through the way in which emotional norms are promoted and maintained, an emotional regime provides a mooring for abstract things such as meaning and morality, and also plays a key role in shaping sociality and structures of power.

It almost goes without saying that Riis and Woodhead's ideas seem extremely useful as a way into our inquiry into the nature and function of emotion in the Pauline churches. Our exegetical exploration of joy in Philippians and grief and consolation in 1 Thessalonians has highlighted that emotion does not merely involve personal, inner states, but is also generated in a social context. Riis and Woodhead's theories are particularly helpful for our purposes because they propose a social basis for emotion without discounting the importance of the individual agent's decisions. To adopt Riis and Woodhead's conceptual tool: the *Pauline* emotional regime, then, is the framework within which emotion is generated, shaped, or transfigured in the context of the tripartite inter-relationships between the individual believer (i.e., "self"), the church to which he or she belongs ("society"), and such things as the Christian concepts of God, Christ, the Spirit, and the gospel ("symbol"). Rooted deeply in, and therefore comprehensively informed by, Paul's understanding of reality, the emotional regime prescribes and reinforces certain modes of feeling that are open to his converts, and so profoundly influences such things as Christian self-understanding and corporate identity formation. In what is to follow, we shall examine several key aspects of the Pauline emotional regime.

5.5.1. Emotional Ordering

Central to the concept of a religious emotional regime is the premise that a symbolically-mediated ideal ordering is at work to structure the emotional lives of participants in accordance with the alternate, transcendent reality that the religion in question holds to show the true state of life as it is lived in the here and now. Certainly,

for Paul the unseen reality against which he lives his life and carries out his evangelistic mission is never far from his mind. It is clear that in Paul's missive to the Philippian Christians, the idea of an alternate ordering is foregrounded whenever he makes mention of matters and events that relate to what he understands to be eschatological reality. Throughout the letter we find references to the parousia and to the events surrounding it (1.6, 10; 2.16; 3.10–11, 14); to the ultimate lordship of Christ (2.9–11; 3.20–21); to God's ongoing ministry in the lives of believers to achieve his purposes (2.13); and to the fact that the Philippians are citizens of heaven who are destined for eternal glory (3.20–21)—an eschatological fate that stands in stark contrast to that of those whom Paul lambastes as “enemies of the cross of Christ,” whose sure end is destruction (3.18–19). It is apparent that Paul is repeatedly reminding the Philippians that life is much more than what they experience with their physical senses, and that they are to understand that their life stories are part of a greater, transcendent metanarrative; for as he sees it, behind all that is happening to his readers is the providential hand of God, who is faithfully working to bring to eschatological completion the good work that he has begun in their lives (1.6).

If Philippians is rich with eschatological ideas and allusions, 1 Thessalonians—where these motifs are writ especially large—is at least equally so. Quite apart from the major apocalyptic pericopes of 4.13–18 and 5.1–11, in which he deals with the question of how the return of Christ will correlate with the eternal destinies of believers dead and living, Paul elsewhere also makes mention of the certainty of the parousia (2.19; 3.13; 5.23) and assures the Thessalonian believers that on that day, they would be judged to be blameless in holiness before God (3.13; cf. 2.19–20 where Paul describes them as being his hope or joy or crown of boasting at that event) and thus be spared God's wrath (1.10), since they had been called to his kingdom and glory (2.12). By threading eschatological motifs right through the letter and tying them together, Paul obviously wants to bring to the attention of his readers the presence of another reality in their lives—one that reveals the true contours of human history, and in fact governs its very course.

In the light of this alternate understanding of reality, Paul puts into place an emotional programme through which he seeks to educate the sensibility of his converts and to instil feeling patterns that reflect, as well as legitimate, this ideal ordering of life. As far as we may ascertain from the evidence in our two Pauline letters, the emotional programme includes such inter-related elements as the use of religious symbols,

exhortation and instruction, the offering of exemplars, and participation in ritual action—all of which combine to shape an emotional template that extends over the whole of life. An investigation of each of these major aspects will, as we shall see, reap ample dividends in terms of helping us to understand how Paul’s emotional programme is effected, and maintains its efficacy and longevity.

5.5.2. Symbols and Emotional Ordering

In order to appreciate more fully the ways in which symbols play their role in Paul’s scheme, we need to look more deeply at their social significance for emotional life. Once again, Riis and Woodhead offer us a helpfully illuminating perspective. As we have seen, their analytic framework sets out a view of religious emotion in which the symbolic and cultural dimensions of emotion are integrated with personal experience and social life. Against the tendency of some philosophers and sociologists of emotion to overlook the importance of symbolic and material settings for emotion, Riis and Woodhead argue that an account of religious emotion must take into consideration the symbolic and material contexts and manifestations of emotional life, partly because religious emotions are so bound up with sacred symbols and places, and partly because they go beyond ordinary social relations to include relations with deities, ancestors, and other symbolically mediated beings.⁸²⁸ Their approach to symbols is markedly synthetic but also sympathetic to the influences which shape their thinking; as such, an outline of these influences is helpful in order for us to both understand where they are coming from and to help us to use some of their key ideas in a heuristic manner.

Riis and Woodhead canvass a range of viewpoints in order to construct their framework. From Émile Durkheim and Randall Collins comes the notion that symbols somehow store emotions between the ritual interactions of a group, and act as a shared focus for its emotions.⁸²⁹ As Riis and Woodhead see it, these ideas are taken further by Maurice Halbwachs, who emphasizes that it is not only the collective representation of the present, but also the remembered past, that shapes social action and emotion. Thus there is, as Riis and Woodhead understand it, a dialectical relationship between present-

⁸²⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 38.

⁸²⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 38, referencing Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

day concerns and collective memories; furthermore, abstract thought becomes potent only when related to concrete figures, symbols, and stories, particularly those whose existence is memorialized by rituals and symbols.⁸³⁰ However, they go beyond a Durkheimian understanding of the power of collective symbols for collective sentiment and acknowledge also that there is an interplay between personal and collective emotions in relation to a symbol. Hence symbols—which can carry also intensely personal meanings—may not always act in a uniform way to stir some sort of collective mood.⁸³¹ Thus, lying near the heart of Riis and Woodhead’s scheme are the symbolic dimensions of both personal and collective experience. Such an integrative approach recognizes that a symbol’s meanings are shaped both by the social relations in which it is embedded and by its relationship with other symbols. With Talal Asad they opine that “a symbol is not an object or event that carries a meaning but a set of relationships or events coming together as complexes or as concepts, having at once an intellectual, instrumental, and emotional significance.”⁸³² The connective role of symbols is enshrined by such things as established authority, tradition, ritual practice, and familial and societal conventions.⁸³³

For Riis and Woodhead, the way that specifically *religious* emotions are interlinked to symbol and social relations is shown most clearly in the work of Georg Simmel, Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, and Gananath Obeyesekere.⁸³⁴ Riis and Woodhead note that for Simmel, social relations are characterized by certain emotions, and from these develop a symbolic content, such as gods who protect these relations—or in other words, that from a subjective faith process there develops an object for that faith, which then impacts back on the faith experience.⁸³⁵ For them, Douglas’ discussion

⁸³⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 38–39, citing Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁸³¹ See Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 39–41.

⁸³² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 64, quoting Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 28.

⁸³³ See Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 41.

⁸³⁴ See Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 65–69, referencing in particular Georg Simmel, “A Contribution to the Sociology of Religion,” in *Essays on Religion*, ed. and trans. Horst Jürgen Helle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1898), 101–120; Georg Simmel, “Religion,” in *Essays on Religion*, ed. and trans. Horst Jürgen Helle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), 137–214; Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Essays in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970); Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87–125; Gananath Obeyesekere, *Medusa’s Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁸³⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 65.

of the correspondence of religious symbols and rituals with social structures goes further than Durkheim in appreciating the socially and culturally inflected diversity of religious emotion. From Geertz's famous definition of "religion as a cultural system"⁸³⁶ Riis and Woodhead highlight the way in which the conviction and power of a symbolic system are tied up with the emotions it inspires, while the emotions it inspires give it power and conviction. Indeed, as they see it, "[t]he process is dialectical: our feelings shape our reality, and what we take to be real shapes our feelings."⁸³⁷ Finally, they look to the work of Obeyesekere, whose psychologically informed approach to anthropology emphasizes the deeply felt and highly personal religious emotions bound up with unique autobiographies, in the wider social and symbolic contexts to which they relate. Thus, for Riis and Woodhead, while religious emotion is inspired by and related to symbols, the symbolic and cultural dimensions of religious emotion are at once social and personal, collective and individual.

We turn now to a consideration of the role of symbols in the cultivation of joy in Philippians and in the appeal against excessive grief in 1 Thessalonians.

In our exegetical analysis of joy in Philippians, we concluded that the joy about which Paul writes has three main dimensions. The first is the co-participation of Paul and his converts in the gospel mission. As he begins his letter to the believers at Philippi, Paul speaks of the prayers of joy that constantly occur together with his thankful remembrances to God for the profound partnership in evangelism that he shares with them (Phil 1.3–5). For Paul, this is certainly a partnership that is based on shared beliefs and convictions, but it is also a partnership that is disclosed in concrete ways, one of which—as Paul acknowledges and expresses great joy over—has to do with how the church in Philippi has renewed its concern and support for him through a recent monetary gift to him (4.10). Thus, for Paul, joy emerges from the ongoing partnership that he and the Philippians have in the advancement of the gospel—a deep and mutual participation that reveals both a spiritual and a material commitment to God's work.

The second main dimension of joy in the letter is related to the actual advancement of the gospel itself. This itself has several sub-dimensions. That the gospel

⁸³⁶ For Geertz, religion is "(1) a system of symbols (2) which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (3) by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz, "Religion," 4, quoted in Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 67).

⁸³⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 67.

is being preached in Rome, even if by those who are his rivals and who are taking advantage of the fact that he is in prison, is for Paul a cause for joy (1.15–18). Yet, despite his present circumstances, Paul remains joyfully confident that his deliverance is at hand, and that his ministry will continue to bear fruit in the lives of the Philippians, as will be evidenced by their continued growth in the faith and by the joy that accompanies it (1.18–26). These notions anticipate the emphatically mutual joy in serving the gospel that Paul speaks of in 2.17–18. It is clear that in Paul’s mind the advancement of the gospel itself forms the basis for joy—joy that is also to be reflected to, and shared with, other believers.

The third dimension of joy concerns its eschatological origin and object. For Paul, as he makes clear at several points in his letter, joy is “in the Lord” (3.1; 4.4; see also 4.10). Such joy should emerge in the life of the believer no matter how adverse his or her circumstances may presently be, because it has its basis in God’s ongoing work, through Christ, of redemption and renewal in the world. That work will reach its final fruition on the day of Christ’s return, when all who follow Christ will receive eschatological vindication and share in his glory. For Paul, present suffering must be read in the light of this grand perspective of true reality. Thus Paul summons the Philippians to joy “in the Lord,” because Christ is very much the ground and occasion for the believer’s joy in the here and now.

Turning now to consolation in 1 Thessalonians: our findings earlier led us to see that Paul’s instructions are premised firmly on the eschatological realities which he is calling his grieving readers to understand and embrace fully. At the centre of these realities is the work of Christ, in consequence of which a hopeless sorrow is not only unnecessary but entirely baseless, because the resurrection of Christ serves as a sure guarantee of the resurrection of Christians and their presence at the parousia, and because it is clear that at that great event those believers who are dead will not be at any disadvantage compared those who remain alive.

To summarize at this point in our discussion: we observe that the three dimensions of joy that we identified are coordinated with two basic symbols—the gospel, and “the Lord” (i.e. Christ). The possibility of consolation, meanwhile, is mediated by the symbolic content associated with Christ and his resurrection. Hence, taking Philippians and 1 Thessalonians together, it would seem that the two major symbols that we need to concern ourselves with in our discussion here are the gospel, and Christ. It is pertinent to note also that these two symbols are, of course, related

intrinsically to each other: the former chronicles the story of the latter, i.e. the gospel is the story of the good news that Christ has come, and that he is coming again in eschatological glory.

Riis and Woodhead's conceptual framework offers us some helpful ways to understand the importance of these symbols in emotional life and their role in emotional ordering. Several observations can, I think, be put forward with profit.

First, and perhaps rather obviously, the emotions that Paul is promoting are directly inspired by, and related to, these symbols. The extent and quality of a believer's joy is commensurate with the degree to which the believer is influenced by, and participates in, the story of Christ—by seeking to understand, live according to, and make known to others the truths that he or she believes as a follower of Christ. Similarly, the believer's attitude to grief is also connected intimately to and therefore reflective of his or her theological understanding and intellectual appropriation of the work of Christ at the eschaton. In both scenarios we observe something about the connective role of symbols in emotional cultivation. Symbols seem to serve as means through which individual states of feeling are brought into relation with collective sentiments and memories, thereby connecting believers to a living tradition or way of looking at the world.⁸³⁸ Thus we see that the sufferings of a believer in Philippi and the grief of a bereaved Christian in Thessalonica are both brought to a symbolic focus and articulated with some corporately-held Christian ordering of reality. The results are joy, in the former instance, and the expulsion of inordinate sorrow in the latter one.

Second, and related to the above, these authorized emotions act back upon the symbolic structures from which they are generated. In other words, a particular dialectic is at play: one's perception of reality produces certain feelings, and these feelings in turn confirm and further shape that perception of reality, which then reinforces those feelings, and so on. Thus, for example, in the case of joy: the believer whose perspective on suffering is framed by a thoroughgoing appreciation of the eschatological reality that is mediated through God's actions in Christ is imbued with the necessary inner resources to relativize his or her suffering in the light of this ultimate reality. This engenders joy; and the felt experience of this joy works in turn to validate and even cement the believer's perspective on what he or she takes to be the true state of affairs here on earth.

⁸³⁸ See further Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 90–93.

Third, we note that the symbols of the gospel and of Christ express and influence the course of social relations and can thus be said to be integral to them. A particularly clear instance of this is found when Paul tells the Philippians that his joy will be enlarged through their growth in likeminded unity and unselfish concern for one another—a mindset that is modelled for them by Christ (see Phil 2.1–8). As we concluded earlier, the social basis of joy is depicted here: there is a sense in which joy is directly correlated to the nature and quality of relationships amongst the believers. Hence the symbolic paradigm of Christ helps to establish and consolidate new solidarities and shape social relations and even take them in new directions, all the while also contributing to the promotion of joy within the church. Noteworthy also for our purposes is how an emotional norm is articulated through a particular socio-symbolic structure.

Fourth, for the believer, the symbols of Christ and his gospel are freighted with associations to divinity and transcendence, and represent a higher power that surpasses all earthly ones. Furthermore, these symbols are experienced as placing those who give assent to them in a direct relation with this transcendent power—a power that is able to command a level of fealty and commitment that can trump all other personal interests and loyalties.⁸³⁹ And because they shape social relations and act as a focus for feeling, these symbols potentially exert enormous influence and power over a church and its members, especially as the symbols acquire ever-increasing power by being repeatedly consecrated and objectified⁸⁴⁰ in various settings such as, for example, ritualized gatherings involving acts of worship, teaching, corporate prayer, and the receiving of communion, or informal, personal moments of reflective meditation and devotional prayer. Such power can profoundly inspire not only shared patterns of emotion, but also collective action.

5.5.3. Instruction, Imitation, and Emotional Ordering

It is not only religious symbols that help to determine patterns of feeling in an emotional regime. What we might term generally as human authorities also play decisive roles in setting emotional standards, and in training and enforcing emotional norms. These human authorities include formal means such as hierarchical structures

⁸³⁹ On this see Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 155–156; and also section 5.3.5 in this study.

⁸⁴⁰ Using Riis and Woodhead's terminology; see section 5.3.4.a above.

within which figures of influence such as community leaders, religious teachers, or even parents prescribe what emotions should be felt (and proscribe what cannot be felt), and less formal mechanisms such as personal guidance, advice, and the pervasive presence of subtle societal sanctions against non-conforming patterns of affect and behaviour.⁸⁴¹ In addition, as Riis and Woodhead also suggest, “[m]uch emotional training occurs through observation and imitation rather than through overt instruction.”⁸⁴²

In both Philippians and 1 Thessalonians some of the abovementioned elements of an emotional programme are clearly in evidence. We have already seen how the theme of joy pervades Philippians and lies at the heart of much of its hortatory material—so much so that one may well say that Paul is offering his readers “a pedagogy in joy.”⁸⁴³ And as we have also seen, through careful teaching Paul sets emotional standards for the Thessalonian believers in relation to grief. Certainly, it seems clear that what Paul says carries significant weight; he is not only the founder of the churches that he is now writing to, but also one who claims apostolic authority from none other than the Lord.⁸⁴⁴ He therefore wields considerable influence over his churches through his teaching as well as through his personal example, which he calls his converts to imitate.⁸⁴⁵

Paul makes specific laudatory mention of the fact that the Thessalonians have become imitators of both him and the Lord, in how they had accepted the gospel with joy⁸⁴⁶ in the face of considerable affliction (*Καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου, δεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς πνεύματος ἁγίου*, 1 Thess 1.6). In fact, their conduct has been so exemplary that they, in turn, are now a model (*τύπος*) for other believers (1.7)—which says a great deal about the powerful, far-reaching influence of Paul’s example and witness.⁸⁴⁷ However, it is in Philippians that the motif of imitation comes into its own; and here it becomes readily apparent how central the

⁸⁴¹ See Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 48–49, 71; and section 5.3.2 above.

⁸⁴² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 48.

⁸⁴³ Barton, “Spirituality,” 185. See also section 3.4 above.

⁸⁴⁴ On Paul’s apostolic authority see esp. John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, SNTSMS 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), in which the sociology of charismatic authority is brought into conversation with a theologically-informed reading of the relevant Pauline texts.

⁸⁴⁵ The express language of mimesis occurs several times in Paul: in the undisputed letters 1 Cor 4.16; 11.1; Phil 3.17; 1 Thess 1.6; 2.14; cf. also Eph 5.1; 2 Thess 3.7, 9. On its use, see esp. Brian J. Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’: Personal Example as Literary Strategy*, JSNTSup 177 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); and also the survey in Andrew D. Clarke, “‘Be Imitators of Me’: Paul’s Model of Leadership,” *TynBul* 49 (1998): 329–360.

⁸⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that Paul in 1.6 singles out joy as that affective posture that has characterized the Thessalonians’ reception of the gospel; this confirms our finding in Philippians that Paul correlates joy with the advancement of the gospel, among other things.

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. 1 Thess 2.14 where Paul commends the Thessalonians for imitating the churches in Judea suffering for the sake of the gospel.

use of imitation is for Paul, especially when it is combined with instruction—which suggests that Riis and Woodhead may perhaps be driving a little too sharp a wedge between these practices in terms of their relative importance in influencing emotional ordering. At least from what we observe in Paul’s letter, they seem to go hand in hand and may even be said to reinforce each other. The two key texts that we shall look at in closer detail are Phil 3.15–17 and 4.8–9; to understand the full import of these texts we need to see how Paul sets the stage for what he wishes to say.

Earlier, at 1.12–26, Paul has spoken paradigmatically of his own experiences, which includes joy in how the gospel is being advanced in spite of his incarceration (1.12–18), and the possessing of a joyful confidence that divine deliverance lies on the horizon and that he would be able to resume his ministry among the Philippians (1.18–26).⁸⁴⁸ A showcasing of several exempla follows: superlatively, Christ (2.5–8),⁸⁴⁹ and next, Timothy and Epaphroditus (2.19–30), who both illustrate in their lives a Christ-like mindset.⁸⁵⁰ Then, at 3.4–14, Paul gives a heartfelt testimony of how Christ has shaped his own mindset; Paul is “one who not only rejected his Jewish privileges for the gospel but also lives in the present totally orientated to the future.”⁸⁵¹

Now, in Phil 3.15–17 Paul enjoins his readers to follow his example and thus to grow in their personal appropriation of the life of Christ. At 3.15, Paul invites those who are mature to adopt his mindset (*Ὅσοι οὖν τέλειοι, τοῦτο φρονῶμεν*); here *τέλειοι* is best taken in its normal Pauline sense to refer to spiritual maturity, rather than to connote some use of the language of the Mystery cults.⁸⁵² Several commentators rightly note that Paul’s use of *τέλειοι* is a play on *Οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι* (3.12), i.e., those who are mature recognize that they have not yet been brought to completion in an eschatological sense.⁸⁵³ In essence, Paul is therefore saying, “let ὅσοι τέλειοι recognize that οὐ τετελειώμεθα.”⁸⁵⁴ For a number of reasons—not least because Paul’s language is inclusive and non-polemical (note his use of the first person plural hortatory subjunctive

⁸⁴⁸ See sections 3.3.2.a and 3.3.2.b.

⁸⁴⁹ See section 3.2.3.

⁸⁵⁰ See section 3.2.4.

⁸⁵¹ Fee, *Philippians*, 351.

⁸⁵² See the discussion and references in Hellerman, *Philippians*, 206; Fee, *Philippians*, 343 n.23; cf. Paul’s similar use of the term in 1 Cor 2.6 and 14.20.

⁸⁵³ So e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 355.

⁸⁵⁴ Similarly, Friedel Selter and Colin Brown, “Other,” *NIDNTT* 2.739–742, at 741. As Fee rather nicely puts it: “Thus *teleioi* probably means ‘mature’ in the sense outlined in v.16; those who live in keeping with what they have already attained are thus ‘complete’ to that degree, even though the final completion, when all are fully conformed into the likeness of the Christ whom they desire to know above all else, still remains.” (*Philippians*, 355).

φρονῶμεν, which places himself amongst the τέλειοι;⁸⁵⁵ and the correlative conjunction ὅσοι, which tends to be used inclusively⁸⁵⁶)— it is improbable that any irony or polemic is intended.⁸⁵⁷ The τοῦτο likely refers to 3.12–14 rather than to the entirety of Paul’s autobiographical narrative in 3.4–14:⁸⁵⁸ “this” mindset, which Paul wants the Philippians to adopt, has to do with the eschatological orientation that he is modeling; not yet having been made perfect, he is pressing on to win the promised prize that awaits all believers (3.12–14).

After a qualification (καὶ εἴ τι ἐτέρως φρονεῖτε, καὶ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει, 3.15), which is best understood as Paul’s allowing that some within the church might see things differently from himself but expecting that God will redirect their thinking,⁸⁵⁹ Paul reaffirms the exhortation of 3.15: Christians are to keep in step with what they have already attained (πλὴν εἰς ὃ ἐφθάσαμεν, τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν, 3.16).⁸⁶⁰ Then, at 3.17, using the express language of *imitatio*, Paul reiterates his call to the Philippians to embody the way of thinking and living that he exemplifies: Συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς (3.17). They are to “be fellow imitators of him”⁸⁶¹—Paul’s innovative terminology likely stresses his desire that there be a community effort in following his example⁸⁶²—and also to take note of others who are walking according to his pattern of life. To drive the point home, Paul goes on to warn the Philippians about others who live contrary to this pattern (3.18–19). It is important to note that Paul’s charge to the Philippian believers to imitate him is based squarely on his own imitation of Christ as one who gave up privilege and power for the sake of others; thus, to assert that what Paul says is a defence of his own

⁸⁵⁵ So e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 355, and esp. n.17 where he notes also the presence of the first person plural verb ἐφθάσαμεν at 3.16.

⁸⁵⁶ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 225–226, citing BAGD 586.

⁸⁵⁷ See further Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 225–226. To be sure, however, the question is not at all settled: Fee, *Philippians*, 353 n.10 lists scholars holding contrary views.

⁸⁵⁸ So many commentators, e.g. recently Hellerman, *Philippians*, 207, who argues that the τετελείωμαι/τέλειοι shows that τοῦτο refers primarily to what Paul has emphasized in 3.12–14; *pace* Fee, *Philippians*, 356–357.

⁸⁵⁹ See esp. the discussion in Hellerman, *Philippians*, 208–210.

⁸⁶⁰ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 228.

⁸⁶¹ The compound verb συμμιμηταί is found only here in the NT, and indeed only here in all of Greek literature; on its precise meaning see esp. the discussions in Hellerman, *Philippians*, 212–214; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 217.

⁸⁶² Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 217; citing among others Hans D. Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament*, BHT 37 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 145–153; Willis Peter De Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen: Kok, 1962), 169–188.

apostleship⁸⁶³ or a way to shore up power via the “hierarchy Christ-Paul-Christians”⁸⁶⁴ is to misread him.⁸⁶⁵

In ch. 4 of the letter, Paul again sets himself up as a model for imitation. He tells the Philippians in explicit terms that they are to put into practice those things that they have learnt from his teaching and observed in his conduct (*ἃ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε*, 4.9).⁸⁶⁶ Paul is doubtless relating their mimetic practice to the morally excellent and praiseworthy mindset that he has just described and instructed them to take account of (*Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί, ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἀγνά, ὅσα προσφιλή, ὅσα εὐφρημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, ταῦτα λογίζεσθε*, 4.8), but there is some debate over how 4.8 and 4.9 are linked syntactically,⁸⁶⁷ as well as disagreement concerning the background of the virtues that Paul lists in 4.8.⁸⁶⁸ On balance, a mediating view seems best: following Reumann, I see 4.8 as a call to reflection over “norms in the world of the day that Christians too can practice”; and in this, the apostolic tradition and Paul himself serve as criteria (4.9).⁸⁶⁹

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that Paul’s call to the Philippians to follow his example is closely linked to his pedagogical aims. As Bockmuehl notes:

⁸⁶³ A. Reinhartz, “On the Meaning of the Pauline Exhortation: ‘*mimētai mou ginesthe*’ — Become Imitators of Me,” *SR* 16 (1987): 393–404.

⁸⁶⁴ Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 96.

⁸⁶⁵ Hansen, *Philippians*, 261–262.

⁸⁶⁶ The four verbs are variously grouped together, producing slightly different nuances in the resultant meaning: Hansen, for example, takes the first two to refer primarily to Paul’s teaching of the gospel and the remaining two to refer to the paradigmatic value of his life (*Philippians*, 300). See the discussion in Hellerman, *Philippians*, 249; I follow Hellerman who suggests that it may be best however to leave the issue open by simply stringing the verbs together, as most English translations do, which preserves the staccato effect of the repeated *καὶ* (*Philippians*, 249, quoting BDF §460(3): “polysyndeton produces the impression of extensiveness and abundance by means of an exhausting summary”).

⁸⁶⁷ Chiefly over whether the definite relative pronoun *ἃ* in 4.9 relates to (a) the antecedent *ταῦτα* of 4.8 (so Hansen, *Philippians*, 300, referencing Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 254, who notes that sentences beginning with *ἃ καὶ* usually “introduce a further and specific elaboration of the preceding subject at hand”)—which means that 4.9 is an elaboration of 4.8, i.e. that Paul’s teachings and way of life exemplify these things that are excellent and praiseworthy; or to (b) the subsequent *ταῦτα* within the same verse (so Fee, *Philippians*, 413 n.5)—in which case the ideas of 4.8 are put into perspective in 4.9; i.e. that the list of virtues is to be understood and practised in light of Paul’s instructions and example.

⁸⁶⁸ Attempts to read 4.8 as emerging from Jewish moral thinking have generally been criticized (see the discussion in Reumann, *Philippians*, 638). Many commentators argue that Paul’s language broadly affirms values that are commonly seen in Greco-Roman, and especially Stoic, moral discourse, so e.g. F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 148; Sevenster, *Paul*, 156; their views are representative of many others. More recent scholars adopting this basic position include Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 250–251; Reumann, *Philippians*, 638–640; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 244–245. However there are a few scholars who demur and hold that Paul’s language here is his own, despite apparent correspondences to Hellenistic moralism and Jewish wisdom; so e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 416–417, 419–420; Witherington, *Philippians*, 249–253.

⁸⁶⁹ Reumann, *Philippians*, 640.

While the invitation to imitate one's teacher or rabbi was of course standard Graeco-Roman as well as Jewish didactic procedure, in Paul's case that invitation derives both its authority and its limitations from his own faithfulness to the prior example of Christ, who is himself the prototype and measure of all Christian discipleship (2.5ff and *passim*). Paul's own ministry is merely the apostolic illustration and exemplification of that mind in Christ: it "makes the truth visible" (cf. 2 Cor. 4.2).⁸⁷⁰

The mind of Christ—that remarkable, selfless, and self-giving *φρόνησις* that Paul patterns his own example after—is something that Paul delineates throughout the letter, along with an interest in cognition and a focus on right thinking in general.⁸⁷¹ As his use of the verb *φρονέω* in connection with Christian maturity (Phil 3.15) makes clear, what is at stake for Paul is "a basic frame of mind, a way of looking at everything, which in turn leads to a way of behaving."⁸⁷² Indeed, the frequency with which *φρονέω* occurs in the letter, and the way it is used, support Meeks' proposal "that this letter's most comprehensive purpose is the shaping of a Christian *phrōnesis*, a practical moral reasoning that is 'conformed to [Christ's] death' in hope of his resurrection."⁸⁷³ As the Philippians conform their character and practice to the moral exemplar of Christ (and to others who take Christ as their model), they cultivate the virtues that are embodied in him and given expression in his life, such as humility, other-regard, confidence, and joy in suffering.⁸⁷⁴

We therefore observe that in Philippians and 1 Thessalonians, Paul combines careful theological instruction with explicit appeals to imitate exemplars in the faith in order to fashion the Christian mindset that he wants to see in his converts. And it seems readily apparent that with its inculcation comes, among other things, the fostering of an emotional programme that promotes emotional dispositions that reflect the beliefs upon which such a mindset is formed.

⁸⁷⁰ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 254.

⁸⁷¹ As noted earlier; see section 3.1.4.b and the end of section 3.3.1.

⁸⁷² Fee, *Philippians*, 356.

⁸⁷³ David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 235, citing Meeks, "Man from Heaven," 110.

For a lucid overview and analysis of the appearances of *φρονέω* in Philippians together with a comparison of how the verb features in Greco-Roman thought, see Craig S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Basic Books, 2016), 217–236.

⁸⁷⁴ See Horrell, *Solidarity*, 235.

5.5.4. Ritual and Emotional Ordering

Another potentially far-reaching influence on emotional ordering is ritual.⁸⁷⁵ As Riis and Woodhead observe:

Ritual engages individuals in orchestrated and formalized social performances, and serves to coordinate bodily movements in synchronized and harmonious ways that can often reinforce and intensify certain feelings, and banish others. Emotion may, thereby, be focused more effectively by and upon certain symbols and myths.⁸⁷⁶

Citing the work of Jonathan Z. Smith, they argue that ritual creates a controlled environment that can simplify and concentrate the confusion of everyday experience, by focusing attention on what really matters and how one should feel about it.⁸⁷⁷ In this way, “ritual brings an alternate ordering to life.”⁸⁷⁸ Noting that the category of ritual is not clear-cut, Riis and Woodhead follow Catherine Bell in suggesting that is useful to think in terms of “ritualization” instead of taking ritual as a fixed category involving a special place in social life; for them, this also helps to avoid isolating ritual from the other aspects of religious life in relation to which it makes sense.⁸⁷⁹ Understood this way, the category of ritual can be broadened to include not only orchestrated public ritual practices, but also domestic practices that may have profound emotional significance for participants.⁸⁸⁰ Thus, in ritual, “emotional cultivation has to do with not only crowds and intensity and authorized orchestration, but also with duration, repetition, and reinforcement.”⁸⁸¹

All this is most helpful when we turn to Paul’s letters and ask questions about the role of ritual in the ordering of emotion within his churches.⁸⁸² David Horrell has

⁸⁷⁵ For a helpful survey of scholarly discussion on the application of ritual theory to emotion, see Dorothea Lüddeckens, “Emotion,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, ed. Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 545–570.

⁸⁷⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 92.

⁸⁷⁷ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 92, referencing Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

⁸⁷⁸ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 92.

⁸⁷⁹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 92, referencing Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). On “ritualization,” see further Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. 74, 88–93; Bell uses the term to highlight how certain social actions differentiate themselves from others. Thus, “ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualization is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane,’ and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors” (74).

⁸⁸⁰ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 92–93, referencing Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion, Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁸⁸¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 93.

⁸⁸² NT scholarship is only just beginning to embrace the field of ritual studies, which has come into its own in recent years due to a recognition that ritual plays a central role in human societies. For useful

suggested that the Pauline material should be seen as the development of a body of tradition based on a specific narrative myth which, when enacted in ritual performance, gives meaning to, and shapes, the lives of its adherents. Attention to ritual activity reminds us that early Christian faith was not just “believed,” but also performed; and indeed, it is not least through such ritual performance that myth exercises its community-forming power.⁸⁸³ Following Meeks, Horrell argues that due emphasis should be placed not only of what each Pauline text “says, but what it does,”⁸⁸⁴ since the Pauline texts “are intended not only to inform, or to convey content, but quite clearly to persuade, and to shape the social practice of those to whom they are directed.”⁸⁸⁵ Such a practice-based approach to understanding ritual⁸⁸⁶ dovetails very neatly with Riis and Woodhead’s proposals concerning how ritual practices can help to mold and reinforce an emotional programme, especially if over time such practices become increasingly entrenched, habituated patterns of behaviour.⁸⁸⁷

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine every occurrence of ritual activity in Philippians and 1 Thessalonians; such an effort would, in any case, be stymied at the onset because of the lack of a coherent taxonomy of ritual in Paul’s letters, given the embryonic state of ritual criticism of the NT (see n.882).⁸⁸⁸ For my purposes, however, it is sufficient to draw attention to representative examples of ritual practices.

In Philippians and 1 Thessalonians, perhaps the most common mention of what we may term as “ritualization” has to do with prayer. Paul speaks of his own impassioned prayers for the believers (Phil 1.3–6, 9–11; 1 Thess 1.2–3; 3.10), reminds them of the importance of prayer concerning all things (Phil 4.6) and at all times (1

overviews of scholarly work on key ritual themes in the NT, see Richard E. DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 1–10; and Louise J. Lawrence, “Ritual and the First Urban Christians: Boundary Crossings of Life and Death,” in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 99–115.

⁸⁸³ See Horrell, *Solidarity*, 99–100. Horrell’s notion of “myth” follows the use of the term in the study of religion in general, i.e. to refer to a means by which truth is conveyed (93–94). For Horrell, “the centre of the myth which Paul’s letters reflect is undoubtedly the Christ-event, that is the descending, dying and rising of Jesus Christ, which represents the saving action of God in which believers participate” (95).

⁸⁸⁴ Horrell, *Solidarity*, 100, quoting Meeks, *Christians*, 7. See also Meeks, *Christians*, 142.

⁸⁸⁵ Horrell, *Solidarity*, 100.

⁸⁸⁶ On this see esp. Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 81–88.

⁸⁸⁷ See also Douglas J. Davies, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity, and Otherness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37–67. Davies shows that the meanings and values that are inherent in ritual practice help to generate and sustain an identity that is replete with emotion.

⁸⁸⁸ DeMaris, *Ritual World*, 5–6, has suggested that Christian Strecker’s observations concerning how rites and text are interwoven (in his *Die liminale Theologie des Paulus: Zugänge zur paulinischen Theologie aus kulturanthropologischer Perspektive*, FRLANT 185 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999], 78–80) could form the basis of a programme of analysis of ritual in the NT, and that this could be developed into a full-scale study of ritual, if it were coupled with a theoretical framework.

Thess 5.17), and solicits their prayers for himself and his coworkers (1 Thess 5.25).⁸⁸⁹ Paul's repeated mentions of intercession are highly suggestive of a sustained effort to highlight its central importance in the life of the Christian. Certainly, in his own life and practice Paul exemplifies the believer who prays—and one who does so regularly (1 Thess 1.2–3; 3.10; implied strongly in Phil 1.3–4); and, having set an example for his readers, he mandates that they too adopt this attitude of constant prayer (1 Thess 5.17). The fact that Paul does not urge prayer without also stressing the need for its regular practice suggests that he is intimately familiar with the danger of diminished enthusiasm and the eventual abandonment of prayer, whether from weariness, apathy, cynicism, or creeping unbelief; for him, persistent prayer characterizes the faithful.⁸⁹⁰

Drawing insights from cultural anthropology, Bruce Malina offers a useful definition of prayer that weaves together certain key emphases:

Prayer is a socially meaningful symbolic act of communication, bearing directly upon persons perceived as somehow supporting, maintaining, and controlling the order of existence of the one praying, and performed with the purpose of getting results from or in the interaction of communication.⁸⁹¹

Since prayer involves communication with a divine being who is thought to be able to shape one's "order of existence," it presupposes the presence of certain attitudes related to dependence on, and trust in, that being, as well as the belief that some kind of tangible change can be truly effected within the ordering of reality that the one praying believes to be in force in the world. Applied to our context here, for Paul, prayer represents a renewed trust in God and in his ability to work in the world to achieve his divine will. Expressing this thought a little differently: prayer entails the believer's deliberate reorientation of himself or herself towards God, in the light of the symbolic structure that frames and gives shape to his or her conception of true reality. The result is a reaffirmation of one's identity and status, and with this, a recalibration of one's role, within this theological ordering of life.⁸⁹²

Malina's succinct definition also alerts our attention to the social dynamics surrounding the practice of prayer. To be sure, Malina's focus on prayer as

⁸⁸⁹ The same thoughts are found frequently in his other letters too; for references see Weima, *Thessalonians*, 400.

⁸⁹⁰ David Crump, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: A New Testament Theology of Petitionary Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 215.

⁸⁹¹ Bruce J. Malina, "What Is Prayer?," *The Bible Today* 18 (1980): 215; quoted in Jerome H. Neyrey, "Prayer, in Other Words: New Testament Prayers in Social-Science Perspective," in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, ed. John J. Pilch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 351.

⁸⁹² Neyrey refers to the ritual "status transformation" that petitionary prayers are associated with; "Prayer," 376.

communication between someone from a lower social standing and someone with a higher social power comes from how societal structures provide models for the language and ideology of prayer.⁸⁹³ But there is another social aspect of prayer that has to do with its effect on relationships: it may be argued that intercessory prayer for others predisposes the one praying to experiencing heightened feelings of mutuality, affection, and solidarity of purpose towards those being prayed for (so Paul in Phil 1.3–8 and in 1 Thess 1.2–3, 9–10),⁸⁹⁴ which would surely help to affirm and fortify social ties and thus strengthen the community as a whole.

We shall take 1 Thess 5.16–18 by way of illustration. Here Paul instructs the believers to pray constantly (*ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε*, 5.17),⁸⁹⁵ sandwiching this command between two other commands, to rejoice always (*Πάντοτε χαίρετε*, 5.16),⁸⁹⁶ and to give thanks in all circumstances (*ἐν παντί εὐχαριστεῖτε*, 5.18a).⁸⁹⁷ These three commands are so general and terse, and form such a brief unit, that it is difficult to relate them to a specific situation in the Thessalonian church that Paul might want to address. Yet the contextual locale of these injunctions indicates that he continues to cast his gaze on the Christian community as a whole, though his instructions are certainly pertinent also to the devotional life of the individual believer. The surrounding sections of the letter all have to do with the ordering of various aspects of church life and the relations within it: proper attitudes towards leaders (5.12–13); ministry to troubled

⁸⁹³ See Rodney A. Werline, *Pray Like This: Understanding Prayer in the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 10.

⁸⁹⁴ As John Koenig, *Rediscovering New Testament Prayer: Boldness and Blessing in the Name of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 91, observes: “Intercession creates a deep connection with others and a mutual caring that often leads to active ministry.”

⁸⁹⁵ Paul has earlier in the letter repeatedly demonstrated the centrality of constant prayer in his own life, using different verbs for prayer and qualifying them with different adverbs: *Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε ... ἀδιαλείπτως μνημονεύοντες* (1.2–3); *εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως* (2.13); *νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ δεόμενοι* (3.10) (Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 329). In several other letters in addition to this one, he likewise instructs his readers to devote themselves to prayer (2 Thess 3.1; Phil 4.6; Rom 12.12). It should be obvious that here in 1 Thess 5.17 (and elsewhere) Paul does not expect *ἀδιαλείπτως* to be taken literally; as Weima (*Thessalonians*, 400) notes, the adverb is formulaic and somewhat hyperbolic. Nonetheless it is clear that Paul expects the believers to take prayer seriously and to pray frequently for themselves and others, presumably whether in private or corporately.

⁸⁹⁶ This echoes Paul’s earlier mentions of joy in the letter (1 Thess 1.6; 2.19–20); and as we have discussed earlier, joy is an important theme in his writings generally (see section 3.1.4.a).

⁸⁹⁷ I take *ἐν παντί* (5.18) to mean “in everything,” i.e. in every situation, rather than the temporal idea of “always”; for an outline of the debate see Weima, *Thessalonians*, 401. However, as Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 155 rightly points out, this is “surely a pointless controversy, since either translation is virtually equivalent to the other. Believers are to find reason to praise and thank God in whatever situation they may find themselves and thus at all times” (quoted by Weima, *Thessalonians*, 401).

members (5.14–15); and living in the Spirit, which includes handling prophecy in the setting of worship (5.19–22).⁸⁹⁸

To be sure, this is not the only place in Paul’s letters where prayer is placed alongside rejoicing and thanksgiving; see earlier in the letter at 1 Thess 3.9–10, and also Phil 1.3–4 and 4.4–6. In fact, their recurrent, deliberate juxtaposition surely implies that Paul considers it important that these practices flourish in tandem in the life of the believer. For Paul, to rejoice is to acknowledge God’s sovereignty in all of life and to remain certain of God’s eschatological salvation. Prayer is grounded in the Christian’s relationship with God and communicates his or her trust in God to achieve his perfect and sovereign will. Thanksgiving is the proper response of believers to God’s gracious work and saving action in their lives and in the world. That Paul considers these three related directives to be of crucial importance is made clear through how he anchors them in the very will of God for the believer, and thereby imbues what he says with the greatest authority (*τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς*, 5.18b).⁸⁹⁹

In this, we have an explicit portrayal of how prayer is integral not only to the social ordering of the Christian community but to its emotional ordering as well. While we cannot be completely sure as to how prayer was actually carried out whether privately or in corporate worship,⁹⁰⁰ on Paul’s part there is certainly an intentional, sustained effort to lift up prayer as what is, in effect, a ritual practice that covers all of the Christian life and helps to sustain it. Here, François Berthomé and Michael Houseman’s recent analysis of the connection between ritual and emotion may help to illuminate matters further.⁹⁰¹ In regard to prayer, they argue that it is precisely its performative and self-referential property that makes it so emotionally exceptional in devotional practice. As they see it, in prayer,

[t]he perfect relationship devotees aim for, and the sequence of actions and dispositions that are held to embody it, are maximally fused, in stark contrast with the constant negotiation characteristic of the daily emotional grind. In this light, what ritual episodes achieve is probably less an incorporation of enduring dispositions than a fragile instantiation of exemplary ... relationships. Such

⁸⁹⁸ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 381, 398; see also Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 190–191.

⁸⁹⁹ With most commentators I take the phrase to look backwards to embrace all three commands. There are a few scholars who see it as referring to only the final directive (so e.g. Malherbe, *Philippians*, 330); however the parallel structure of the three commands and their co-appearance elsewhere (see discussion earlier) suggests that the majority view is to be preferred (so e.g. Weima, *Philippians*, 402).

⁹⁰⁰ See e.g. Koenig, *Prayer*, 129–134, for an attempt to elucidate the circumstances, times, and postures of corporate prayer in the early Church.

⁹⁰¹ François Berthomé and Michael Houseman, “Ritual and Emotions: Moving Relations, Patterned Effusions,” *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 1 (2010): 57–75, doi:10.3167/arrs.2010.010105 (esp. 66–69).

compressed, rarefied moments, which act as benchmarks for what it is for God to be present, may subsequently be used as a sounding board to navigate through the everyday, as long as certain reminders are close at hand.⁹⁰²

If this is so, then we may have another way to understand why Paul emphasizes not only the need to pray but also the importance of doing so frequently. As Berthomé and Houseman seem to see it, episodic prayer may not bring about a thoroughgoing inculcation of preferred long-term emotional dispositions. Yet, on the basis of their analysis, it seems fair to infer that an intensification of prayer—i.e., by practising it deliberately and frequently, until it becomes a habituated form of behaviour—would help to school an appropriate repertoire of affective states. Furthermore, Berthomé and Houseman’s perspective on prayer helps us to be alert to the presence of those “certain reminders”—other forms of ritual activity, or media rich in symbolic content—that help to strengthen its efficacy as a way of making sense of quotidian experience.

There are in Philippians at least two other possible allusions to practices of ritualization. One is the Christ poem of Phil 2:6–11: while there is widespread agreement that “exalted, lyrical, quasi-credal language” is found here,⁹⁰³ the matter of whether the passage constitutes a “hymn” and thus comes from actual use as such is contentious.⁹⁰⁴ Yet even if we take the passage to *not* be a hymn, its distinctively credal qualities surely suggest a connection to liturgical practice⁹⁰⁵ and thus also to its function within some kind of ritual process.⁹⁰⁶

Another allusion to ritualization comes from a reference that Paul makes in Phil 3.3 to the service of God as one of the defining characteristics of those who have faith in Christ, within his scathing indictment against his Judaizing adversaries (3.2–4a). The use of the verb *λατρεύω* in 3.3 (*ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμὲν ἢ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες*) comes from the LXX, where it is widely used as a cultic term; and in both

⁹⁰² Berthomé and Houseman, “Ritual and Emotions,” 68.

⁹⁰³ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 116.

⁹⁰⁴ Since the publication in 1928 of Lohmeyer’s thesis *Kyrios Jesus*, the majority of scholars have assumed that we are dealing in Phil 2.6–11 with an early Christian hymn (whether of Pauline origin or not). However, there is no agreement on the passage’s poetic structure, see e.g. the recent discussion in M. Sydney Park, *Submission within the Godhead and the Church in the Epistle to the Philippians: An Exegetical and Theological Examination of the Concept of Submission in Philippians 2 and 3*, LNTS 361 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 12–13. Furthermore, contextual evidence is lacking that the passage was actually sung in some setting or other (see Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 116–117). In recent years several scholars have argued against taking the passage as a hymn, e.g. Fee, *Philippians*, 192–193; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 116–117; however others continue to argue that it is such (e.g. Hansen, *Philippians*, 122–123; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 101, who find it “beyond doubt that these verses constitute an early hymn, or at least part of an early hymn”).

⁹⁰⁵ Perhaps as an encomium that the Philippians had worked out to use in mission proclamation (so e.g. Reumann, *Philippians*, 333, 365–366; see also Hellerman, *Philippians*, 106).

⁹⁰⁶ See also Meeks, *Christians*, 144–145.

OT and NT the verb signifies divine service either to God or to pagan deities.⁹⁰⁷ Fee observes that Paul's usage stands in ironical contrast to 3.2, where he decries the illegitimate service rendered by those whom he pejoratively labels as the "mutilation"—the "workers of evil" who are engaged in doing the very thing that was forbidden in the temple cultus. It is the believers who are the true circumcision, who "serve" by the Spirit, over against serving by the flesh. Hence the verb refers not to the worship offered to God as a gathered people, but rather represents "the 'service' of God's people in terms of their devotion to him as evidenced in the way they live before him." As Fee summarizes: Paul is contrasting "not external rite over against internal 'spiritual' service," but rather life in the flesh against life "as the eschatological people of God, evidenced to be so by the Spirit of God, through whom all life in the present is now service and devotion to God."⁹⁰⁸ Here we are perhaps on less firm ground when it comes to identifying *obvious* ritual activity; but if we take what Paul says to be an emphasis that for the believer every activity in every sphere of life is to be an act of worship, consecration, and service to God (Rom 12.1), then what we have here is tantamount to a view of life itself as a deliberate, wholehearted, and also "ritualistic" offering of oneself to God, in so far as devotion and duty are brought together in both the privately expressed and publicly performed contexts of a vital, ongoing relationship with God.

Furthermore, on the basis of the evidence of passages such as Acts 2.42–47 (a vignette of life in the early church that highlights, among other things, the importance of the Lord's Supper, prayer, and worship for the first Christians) and Acts 16.13–15 (which narrates the story of the baptisms of Lydia and the members of her household at Philippi) and parts of Paul's letters in addition to Philippians and 1 Thessalonians that relate to these same patterns of activity, i.e. baptism (e.g. Rom 6.4), the Lord's Supper (e.g. 1 Cor 11.17–34), prayer (e.g. Rom 12.12), and worship (e.g. 1 Cor 14.26–40), it seems entirely reasonable to suppose that all these practices were regarded as being integral to the proper functioning of each of Paul's churches. As such, there is in place in the Pauline churches a regular and highly variegated ritual embodiment and

⁹⁰⁷ Helleman, *Philippians*, 173–174, noting also that in the LXX *λατρεύω* is applied to the cultic service of the people as a whole, versus *λειτουργέω*, which is restricted to priestly functions. See also BDAG 587: "in our lit. only of the carrying out of religious duties, esp. of a cultic nature, by human beings."

⁹⁰⁸ Fee, *Philippians*, 299–300 (all quotes are from 300); see also Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 192. Similarly Helleman, *Philippians*, 174, notes that *λατρεύοντες* functions here in a broadly metaphorical sense to denote the entirety of Christian existence, i.e. the "cultic concept is now spiritualized" (quoting Hermann Strathmann, "*λατρεύω, λατρεία*," *TDNT* 58–65, at 65).

expression of the beliefs that arise in relation to the Christ story.⁹⁰⁹ From an anthropological perspective, one might say that these practices of ritualization are in fact “bodily and collective means of meaning making” that “allow actions to become part of the very essence of people’s identities.”⁹¹⁰ All these practices help to schematize an emotional programme and thereby instil and manage appropriate emotional repertoires; and there is a profound resultant impact on individual and corporate identity formation. As Davies maintains: “Ritual, by bonding a group’s core values with its preferred emotions in response to life’s reciprocal obligations and opportunities, fosters identity by giving meaning and hope to life.”⁹¹¹

5.5.5. Language and Emotional Ordering

Riis and Woodhead argue also that “[j]ust as emotions can be stabilized, objectified, communicated, and shaped by symbolic-material objects, so they can be by language.”⁹¹² Further, they emphasize that there is no need to make a sharp distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic forms of communication, since both arise from the “felt sense” of a situation which is associated with the “continent of feeling” that underlies all meaning, thought, and symbolically-mediated expression.⁹¹³ As Riis and Woodhead see it, this felt sense of life—the elemental form of engagement with the world—is full of proto-linguistic possibilities relating to the patterned, recurring relations between oneself and one’s social and material settings, which take shape as structures of meaning through which one’s world acquires coherence and intelligibility. While visual images may be the most basic means by which such patterns are brought to consciousness, they can also be articulated by way of words; in fact, as already noted the two are closely linked, since language works through metaphor by articulating felt, embodied, understandings of the world through words. Thus it becomes apparent that one’s felt sense of life is shaped significantly by language. Furthermore, there is a

⁹⁰⁹ See the still useful discussion in Meeks, *Christians*, 140–163. However, Meeks’ influential schematic classification of rituals as major (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), minor (most other ritualized actions), and unknown and controverted (e.g. funeral rites and baptism for the dead) has been questioned by certain scholars; for discussion see Lawrence, “Ritual,” 102–105.

⁹¹⁰ Louise J. Lawrence, *Reading with Anthropology: Exhibiting Aspects of New Testament Religion* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2005), xvi, drawing on the work of Ronald Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁹¹¹ Davies, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion*, 37.

⁹¹² Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 44.

⁹¹³ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 44–45, citing the work of Eugene T. Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning: A Philosophical and Psychological Approach to the Subjective* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997).

profound connection between language and emotion. When personal feelings are expressed using a common language, these feelings are interpreted and presented within the shared framework of emotional language. As Riis and Woodhead observe, “[j]ust as meaning can be concentrated material symbolization, so sets of words can become cultural objects with the same power to move and motivate.”⁹¹⁴

Riis and Woodhead go on to make the important point that

[t]his discussion of emotions, cultural symbols, and language reminds us that human lives are characterized by emotional indeterminacy, which articulation in words and images helps us to control. In reality we are uncertain about how we feel, and need help to work it out. Even when we have some grasp on how we feel, we may struggle to clarify our emotions and their consequences ... We have no clear touchstones by which to identify our feelings; the causes of those feelings are often mixed or unclear, and our language for expressing them is inadequate. (*Sociology*, 46)

For them, it is precisely this emotional indeterminacy that explains why the tendency of many theorists to treat emotions “like stones or ponds or static objects that are given labels” is so misleading.⁹¹⁵ Moreover, it is also mistaken to think that the general field of emotion can be subdivided into ever more complex general classifications of emotions, because emotions such as fear, shame, and so on “are culturally contingent words with which we try, with varying degrees of inadequacy, to capture aspects of shifting social and material relationships and associated image-schema that always exceed the capacity of our words.”⁹¹⁶

Riis and Woodhead’s ideas regarding the connection between language and emotion are helpful for our exploration of the Pauline emotional regime in at least two ways. First, the importance of language in articulating and even concretizing an emotional stance is highlighted. So, for instance, by referring to his own joy and stressing to the Philippian believers the basis for this joy (1.3–5, 15–19; 2.1–4, 17–18; 4.10–19), or by issuing to the Thessalonians a prohibition against inordinate grief and explaining why such grief is not appropriate (1 Thess 4.13–17), the literary formulations with which he communicates with them become the media through which theologically-rich symbolic content that helps one to make sense of one’s felt reality is shared and given expression. As discussed earlier (see in particular sections 3.4.1 and 4.4.1), Paul

⁹¹⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 44–45 (quote from 45).

⁹¹⁵ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 46, quoting Norman K. Denzin, *On Understanding Emotion* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1984), 26. As Denzin notes here, those who take this view locate the explanation of emotion in the development and appearance of the emotion as that development is shaped by factors external to the person, instead of treating emotions as processes lived by self-reflective individuals in interactional experiences.

⁹¹⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 46.

seems to expect this material to influence strongly his readers' ways of thinking and thereby shape the concomitant emotional dispositions that emerge as a result of their excogitations concerning their new terms of engagement with their surroundings. Thus, he is able to confidently adjure the Thessalonians to bring encouragement to one another in the very words with which he has just emphasized the theological ground for consolation (1 Thess 4.18); in this we see further reinforcement of Riis and Woodhead's idea that language functions as a repository of symbolic meaning that, through articulation, can motivate emotional change.

Second, and related to the above, it may be that we perhaps underestimate the importance of Paul's use of language in fostering greater emotional determinacy. Taking the example of joy: throughout the letter, as we have seen, Paul makes much of his joy and correlates it to the new ordering of reality that is to govern the lives of those who follow Christ. Then, at 3.1 and 4.4, he expressly commands joy from the Philippians. While the use of the imperative recalls its earlier appearance at 2.18, where Paul calls the believers to mutual joy in the face of suffering, here at 3.1 and again (twice) at 4.4, the joy that the Philippians are told to show forth is *ἐν κυρίῳ*. It seems likely that Paul's language comes from the Psalms;⁹¹⁷ and if so, this imperative refers not only to an inward feeling but to an outward display or action—"to verbalize with praise and singing."⁹¹⁸ In both these cases (i.e., in Paul's descriptions of his own joy and in his explicit behests concerning the social display of joy) it seems apparent that there is at work a deliberate effort—through the use of symbol-laden written language and rhetorical formulations—to achieve a heightened, fuller sense of emotional determinacy in regard to the precise nature of joy (and its expression) that should characterize the life of the believer.

5.5.6. Letters and Emotional Ordering

It is helpful at this juncture to make some remarks concerning the nature of Paul's own role in the ordering of his churches. One of his major concerns was that they would not just survive in what was often a belligerent social environment, but thrive as unified, Spirit-filled communities of love, grace, goodness, and joy (so e.g. Phil 1.9–11; 2.1–4; 1 Thess 5.14–24). However, Paul has a great many things to do as a community

⁹¹⁷ See earlier section 3.3.3.

⁹¹⁸ Fee, *Philippians*, 291; cf. Hansen, *Philippians*, 288, who relates Paul's language to the joyful corporate worship of the Lord in the Psalms.

organizer: he has to acquaint himself with the particular problems faced by each congregation, solve conflicts, deal with false teachings and troublemakers, build unity between the believers, strengthen them in their faith, and comfort the afflicted and the grieving—in short, to do everything necessary to upbuild the fledgling churches. That for the most part all these things have to be accomplished from a very great distance only multiplies the challenges that are involved in what are already complex tasks. To accomplish his plans, Paul seems to depend on three main instruments: prayer to God concerning the believers, letters that he pens to his churches, and emissaries such as Timothy and Epaphroditus who are sent to them on his behalf. It is in his letters that these elements come together: in addition to the encouragement and instructions that Paul gives to the believers, he makes mention of them his prayers, thereby further revealing his deep concern and enduring affection for his converts (Phil 1.3–11; 1 Thess 1.2–3), and refers to the previous or impending pastoral visits of his coworkers, which again signals to them his anxiety over their well-being (Phil 2.19–30; 1 Thess 3.1–10).

In antiquity, letters were regarded as a means of mediating one's actual physical presence,⁹¹⁹ and scholars have sought to apply findings from the study of ancient epistolography to Paul's epistles.⁹²⁰ In particular, Robert Funk's form-critical study of Paul's "apostolic *parousia*" remains influential:⁹²¹ as Funk sees it, Paul's presence by letter is a manifestation of the apostolic *parousia* in and of itself, even though it is not as powerful an expression of it when compared to Paul's personal presence. There is in the apostolic *parousia* a hierarchy of authoritative communication: the weakest is the letter; stronger than this is the emissary; while the most powerful is the personal visit.⁹²² While not all scholars have accepted Funk's precise conclusions,⁹²³ the tendency to relate

⁹¹⁹ The topos of *parousia* in ancient epistolography was identified several decades ago by Heikki Koskenniemi (*Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr.*, AASF, Series B, vol. 102.2 [Helsinki: Finnish Academy, 1956], 38–42). For examples of ancient letters which functioned as a mode of personal presence see Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 192–193; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 59–60.

⁹²⁰ For example, Malherbe (*Pastoral Care*, 72–73) has argued that the theme of bodily absence but spiritual presence is a standard feature of epistolographic theory, and that Paul consciously uses the literary conventions of his day to communicate his anxiety about the Thessalonians and to guide their religious and moral development; cf. Stowers, "Friends," 109.

⁹²¹ Robert W. Funk, "The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249–269.

⁹²² Funk, "Apostolic *Parousia*," 258–259, following the conclusions of Koskenniemi, *Studien*, 38–42, 172–180.

⁹²³ See esp. Margaret M. Mitchell, "New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus," *JBL* 111 (1992): 641–662, esp. 642–643, who contests Funk's conclusions, noting that Paul's own comments (2 Cor 10.10) reveal

Paul's sensitivity to the effects of personal presence to matters of epistolary form has persisted;⁹²⁴ and certainly, the evidence of passages such as 1 Cor 5.3–4 seems to demonstrate that Paul himself sees a consistency between his letters and his personal presence.⁹²⁵

Jane Heath has helpfully nuanced the debate over the relevance of the epistolary topos of personal presence by exploring the literary and rhetorical concept of *enargeia* in 1 Thess 1.2–2.16.⁹²⁶ Heath argues that the effect of Paul's prompting of the believers' memories of his missionary visit "is likely to have been experienced as *making* that *absent* past experience *present* and vivid to the senses and emotions."⁹²⁷ For the Thessalonians, this past event had to do with their experience of God's saving love as it was made known to them through the teachings of Paul and his coworkers; their experience also pointed to and anticipated the *parousia* of Christ, since this was the focus of the gospel proclamation. Now that Paul is absent, this experience has to be supplied by memory—which makes vivid the truth of the gospel while also arousing desire for renewed personal contact.⁹²⁸ Heath concludes that

Paul's purpose is understood to be a making present of the absent apostles with cognitive and emotional intent, directed essentially not on their relationship to him and the other missionaries, so much as on their relationship to God and anticipation of the *parousia* as it was experienced through the missionaries. The effect is to strengthen faith and Christian love ... Remembering Paul effects and strengthens a relationship to God and to Christ, as well as to Paul and his companions themselves, as the visible, perceptible link to that divine Other.⁹²⁹

As we have seen, there is broad agreement that Paul in his letters seems to believe, and even assume, that he is making his presence felt in ways that reveal a certain continuity with his personal presence. The view that Paul's presence via the

that he privileges his letters over his personal presence, and suggests that Paul in each situation chooses which one of the three modes of communication (letter, envoy, and personal presence) would best suit his purposes; see further Lee A. Johnson, "Paul's Epistolary Presence in Corinth: A New Look at Robert W. Funk's Apostolic *Parousia*," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 481–501.

⁹²⁴ See Jane M. F. Heath, "Absent Presences of Paul and Christ: *Enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians 1–3," *JSNT* 32 (2009): 6; see also the references here.

⁹²⁵ See Peter Orr, *Christ Absent and Present: A Study in Pauline Christology*, WUNT 2.354 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 132.

⁹²⁶ Heath, "Absent Presences."

⁹²⁷ Heath, "Absent Presences," 28 (emphases original).

⁹²⁸ Heath, "Absent Presences," 28, see also 20. As Heath notes: "To the ancient mind, *enargeia* was achieved through memory even when the subject portrayed was something beyond the previous experience of the audience. This was because the ancient understanding of imagination was not creative but mimetic: it drew on preconceived notions of reality and values concerning it, lying within a common cultural experience" (11, referencing Ruth Webb, "Imagination and the Arousal of Emotions in Greco-Roman Rhetoric," in *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, ed. Susanna Morton Braund and Christopher Gill [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 123–124).

⁹²⁹ Heath, "Absent Presences," 29.

written word is but a weak substitute for a personal visit has not gone unchallenged; and it must be noted in any case that scholarly discussions of “absent-presences” in Paul have taken place in the light of epistolary conventions—a premise which itself has been called into question by those who define the apostolic *parousia* as a literary rather than an epistolary topos.⁹³⁰

Heath’s insightful analysis of *enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians helps to move the discussion forward: by focusing on a significant phenomenon in the social discourse and experience of the day and judiciously sidestepping the debates over such matters as the literary or rhetorical categories that can be applied appropriately to the study of the letter, a rich and potentially highly fruitful hermeneutic emerges with which one can examine Paul’s power of drawing significance from absent presences. Paul’s words make vivid the apostolic presence and thus also God’s past work and Christ’s *parousia*, which in turn prompts both awareness of the immediacy of the divine and longing for its fuller realization.⁹³¹ If this is so, it then seems entirely reasonable to conjecture that these cognitive and emotional associations would have been taken up along with Paul’s instructions later in the letter concerning such matters as community ethics (1 Thess 4.1–12; 5.12–15) and eschatology, along with the proper handling of grief (4.13–5.11), and helped to form the “lived” context in which these teachings were appropriated through belief, praxis, and feeling.

All this interfaces rather nicely with what Judith Lieu has recently highlighted about the symbolic significance of early Christian letters: while they were grounded in the letter-writing conventions of the day, these letters—which instantiated and gave expression to new, Christian, modes of being and relating—were powerful cultural symbols that were instrumental in shaping an alternate worldview.⁹³² In the very articulation of standard epistolary *topoi* such as matters concerning distance, relationality, and intimacy, letters were actually cultural strategies that had to do with performance and ritual, and with these, the ritualization of relationships.⁹³³ It seems evident that in 1 Thessalonians these social and ritual dynamics come into play, and in a rather pronounced way. Paul describes a new worldview—a Christian symbolic

⁹³⁰ So Terrence Y. Mullins, “Visit Talk in New Testament Letters,” *CBQ* 35 (1973): 350–358; David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, LEC 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 190.

⁹³¹ Heath, “Absent Presences,” 26.

⁹³² Judith M. Lieu, “Letters and the Topography of Early Christianity,” *NTS* 62 (2016): 167–182.

⁹³³ Lieu, “Letters,” 181. Lieu observes also that even the materiality of letters has its own intrinsic power: “Like a bundle of love-letters tied with a ribbon, the letter almost embodies the affective dimensions of its contents, even beyond those whom it initially bound together” (182).

universe in which new patterns of thinking, feeling, and relating are to hold sway; and his letter is thus itself a “performed,” symbolic expression of this alternate reality. At the same time, if Heath is correct, Paul’s presence with the Thessalonians is supplied not only by means of what he writes, but through vivid memory—which, in turn, triggers for the believers cognitive and emotional associations related to God’s continuing dealings with them. Furthermore, in the foregoing we might see some vindication of Riis and Woodhead’s understanding of the interplay between symbols and collective memory in the formulation of the framework of a religious emotional regime: bringing together the work of Durkheim, Halbwachs, and others, they propose that present-day concerns and the remembered past (both of which are mediated by sacred symbols and stories) shape social action and emotion.⁹³⁴ All this goes some way towards helping us to understand how Paul is able in his churches to play the role of community organizer with such effectiveness, even to the extent of being able to pull the emotional strings of his converts from a great distance.⁹³⁵

5.5.7. Conclusion

It remains for us to pull together the different but closely related strands of our investigation into how authorized emotions are constructed and shored up in the Pauline communities. Key to Paul’s strategy is the putting in place of an emotional programme in which a symbolically-mediated emotional ordering operates to guide and also reinforce the emotional notes that are to be sounded, in line with the eschatological reality framework that is seen to govern all of life and human existence. Emotional ordering involves aspects such as inspiration and instruction, personal exemplification, ritual practice, language, and most of all the pervasive use of symbols. And as we have seen, the harmonized interplay of the symbolic, material, and social elements within an emotional regime has a profound effect on feeling and sensibility.⁹³⁶ A particularly striking example of this comes from Paul’s delimiting of the grief of the Thessalonian believers in 1 Thess 4.13–18 in the light of the eschatological ordering of reality: it would seem that here there is every possibility that the Thessalonian believers can

⁹³⁴ See section 5.5.2.

⁹³⁵ The reader will be aware that our conclusions here emerge primarily from an investigation of 1 Thessalonians. Given the presence of thematically parallel (and similarly interlocking) motifs in Philippians, an investigation of it along the same lines is very likely to only bolster our findings, and will therefore be foregone in the interest of space.

⁹³⁶ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology*, 71.

achieve an unusually high degree of emotional transcendence⁹³⁷ through a deliberate cauterization of excessive grief.

The application to the above of Riis and Woodhead's understanding of balanced dialectics within an emotional regime makes this even clearer.⁹³⁸ Based on the evidence in the letter, we may well imagine the following (not unlikely) scenario taking place. The believers in Thessalonica—reeling from the shock of the unexpected deaths of a number of their brethren, and plunged into grief—receive and read Paul's letter. They are confronted anew and deeply encouraged by the symbol-charged theological realities that he espouses and which they remember as being integral to the Christian vision of life after death. Processes of objectification and consecration begin to gain momentum as individuals, along with the wider body of believers to which they belong, look afresh to Christ to fashion their mindsets—through prayer, worship, and other ritual enactments, the recollection of memories and their articulation through shared language, a readiness to follow Paul's directives, and the adoption of exemplars as models for imitation. As objectification (in individuals) and consecration (in the church) occur, the corresponding dialectical processes of subjectification and insignation come into play as individual believers and the church as a whole, respectively, are inspired and moved by symbols that are the very objects of devotion and reverence (here, in the main, Christ), and by the eschatological realities that these symbols reference (principally, the resurrection of believers at the parousia of Christ, and the promise of eternal life with him). The remaining pair of dialectical relationships, internalization and externalization, are simultaneously given expression as the renewed emotional stance of the individual—characterized in particular by the excision of inordinate grief and the repristination of true joy—influences and vivifies the affective experiences of the collective whole, which in turn acts back upon and further enlivens the individual believer's experiences.

This illustration of balanced dialectics within the emotional regime of the church at Thessalonica demonstrates clearly a situation in which authorized emotions acquire great stability and power. Our reconstruction coheres remarkably well with, and is amplified further by, Riis and Woodhead's description of balanced emotional dialectics that reinforce one another:

⁹³⁷ See section 5.3.3.b.

⁹³⁸ See section 5.3.4.a.

Individual participants are in solidarity with one another and with the group as a whole. Their feelings are amplified by being reflected in the feelings of other participants. Whether metaphorically or literally, everyone is dancing to the same tune, their bodies, thoughts, and feelings echoing and reinforcing one another. Feelings are experienced as authentically personal, not as externally imposed. There is harmony between the group and its leaders: they are all parts of the same whole, participating in the same experience. The experience is not amorphous, but structured by consecrated symbols that provide the focus of attention, devotion, feeling, and action. Because participants feel equally about their focus of devotion, their sense of harmony and kinship with their fellows is heightened; they are united by common inspiration and commitment. (*Sociology*, 157–158).

To conclude our discussion at this point: the conceptual apparatus of the emotional regime allows us to explore emotion in Paul's letters in dialogue with the increasingly widespread argument that emotion is as much a social and relational construct as it is a private, inner state. Furthermore, careful attention is paid also to the effect of symbolic relations, since an emotional regime presupposes the presence of a symbolically-charged alternate ordering of reality that embraces all of existence and helps individual believers and the churches to which they belong gain a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life. Such an ordering implies the offering of an emotional programme that regulates affect, promoting sanctioned emotions such as joy and stigmatizing rogue ones like uncontrolled grief. As we have seen, when balanced dialectics are at work within an emotional regime, its emotional programme is given full sway to establish and police normative patterns of feeling.

5.6. Comparing the Pauline and Stoic Emotional Regimes

As we conclude our study, it is helpful to place the Pauline emotional regime alongside our earlier findings concerning Stoic thinking on emotion, and to identify their major points of similarity and contrast. By doing so we are able to see especially clearly the sharp edges, as it were, of Paul's account of emotion, since Stoic ethics offers a powerful alternative to it. We begin by briefly summarizing Paul's, and then the Stoics', attitude to joy and grief.

5.6.1. Paul on Joy and Grief

For Paul, the basis of joy is irreducibly theological: it is premised entirely upon God's work—past, present, and future—of radically renewing all of creation in the light of the death, resurrection, and coming again of Christ, and the sending of the Spirit. It is

of course the gospel that announces these realities; and as such, joy is correlated in profound ways to the believer's understanding of and involvement in the kerygma, in the sense of how its truths come to authentic, "lived" expression within the life of the believer. Indeed, as Fee expresses it, "joy is the distinctive mark of the believer in Christ Jesus."⁹³⁹ Putting it another way: to the degree that the Christian is able not only to discern, but to participate in, this all-encompassing metanarrative that envelopes and gives meaning to all of life, and which is thus that overarching story within which all other life stories are to be located and made sense of, joy—"the felt form of Christian hope"⁹⁴⁰—may be found.

However, as Paul repeatedly demonstrates, far from being only a private experience for the individual, Christian joy is simultaneously also very much a social phenomenon: it emerges and flourishes within the context of active participation with others in the advancement of the gospel. For Paul, there is thus an important sense in which joy is understood to be both socially generated in relationship with fellow believers and also socially embodied through expressions of mutual joy. This decidedly social dimension to joy seems to reinforce the fact that the Christian life is not to be lived alone, but in community—a community whose *raison d'être* is centred squarely on the gospel of Christ and whose mission is fully bound up with its faithful proclamation in word and deed.

Turning now to grief: in the light of the above, it is perhaps not at all surprising that inordinate, runaway grief over the death of other believers has no place in Paul's thinking concerning the believer's proper emotional constitution. For as he sees it, such excessive grief exposes a serious lack of understanding as to what death actually is for Christians, and thus also a grossly inadequate eschatology. To counter the problem, Paul issues loving yet firm instructions: he does not expect his converts to stop grieving entirely, but asks that they temper their sorrow in the light of the true, eschatological state of affairs. The demise of another believer should not, and indeed must not, trigger uncontrolled outpourings of grief, because the resurrection of Christ renders certain the resurrection at the *parousia* of the dead who have put their trust in him.

Paul's consolatory strategy, like his attitude towards the promotion of joy, reveals a perceptive awareness and appreciation of the inherently social nature of the Christian life. The onus for bringing comfort, perspective, and encouragement to the bereaved

⁹³⁹ Fee, *Philippians*, 53.

⁹⁴⁰ Lash, *Seeing*, 201 (see also n.567 above).

rests not on his shoulders alone, but jointly on those of each member of the community of faith. As Paul understands it, then, the task of consolation is undeniably a shared responsibility, one that falls within the broad sweep of the ever-growing, protean ministry of mutual upbuilding that is both to mark and to vivify the common life of believing community.

5.6.2. The Stoics on Joy and Grief

In Stoicism, joy is understood as an elevation of the material psyche that occurs in the wise person in response to present goods.⁹⁴¹ It is one of the *eupatheiai*: that select trio of normative versions of emotions that are evoked through veridical judgements of value, and which are therefore the consistent experience of the wise person, since such a person's behaviour is always wholly in keeping with the proper exercise of virtue. For the wise, virtue and the actions emanating from it are the only true goods towards which their perfected rational impulses are directed.

In contrast, grief, the mistaken opinion that there is something in the present that is evil and therefore to be avoided, is classified as one of the passions: the group of rogue emotions that arise from erroneous evaluations of the value of external goods. Since grief, along with all the other passions, was the product of deficient processes of rationality and their concomitant false beliefs, it was to be not only repudiated but extirpated. The solution, as the Stoics saw it, was the treatment of the mind, because the passions were the direct result of faulty thinking. Their therapeutic arsenal comprised the careful application of philosophical teaching on the one hand, and cognitive tools such as psychagogy and the imitation of exemplar figures on the other; acting in concert, both approaches comprehensively targeted the person's rational core in an effort to perfect it.

5.6.3. Similarities

To be sure, there are some apparent parallels, at least *prima facie*, between Paul's and the Stoics' approaches to emotion. First, they share a deep concern with the importance of right thinking as the basis for appropriate affective response. For the Stoics, the only thing that can bring mastery over the passions, and indeed over oneself in general, is the proper exercise of reason:

⁹⁴¹ Graver, "Anatomies," 125. See also section 2.3.3.b earlier.

These passions, which are heavy taskmasters, sometimes ruling by turns, and sometimes together, can be banished by you by wisdom, which is the only true freedom. There is but one path leading thither, and it is a straight path; you will not go astray. Proceed with steady step, and if you would have all things under your control, put yourself under the control of reason; if reason becomes your ruler, you will become ruler over many. (Seneca, *Ep.* 37.4).

Paul, too, shows a not dissimilar interest in the key role of cognition in emotion and in living life well. He stresses to the believers at Philippi that it is the adoption of a Christ-like mindset, coupled with a right understanding of Christian truths, that would enable them to joyfully overcome their sufferings and trials. Likewise, the grieving Thessalonians are offered a thoroughly reasoned theological basis for consolation, and instructed to use this to encourage one another.

Second, and related to the above, both the Stoics and Paul try to effect an active, comprehensive management of emotion so that transcendence over the emotional vicissitudes of day to day life is achieved.⁹⁴² With both, emotion is brought into relation with an ideal, overarching ordering of life, and reordered accordingly; certain emotional dispositions or types of emotion are encouraged, and even prescribed or commanded, while others are censured and repudiated. Thus, the Stoics, and Paul, go to great lengths to establish and fortify their respective emotional regimes. The Stoics, as we have seen, utilized a wide battery of complementary philosophical, paraenetic, cognitive, and practical apparatus to reorient and then consolidate their students' conceptual frames; the Stoic philosophers understood that repeated, systematic exhortation, and the judicious application of philosophical instruction, was needed to radically overhaul a person's thought processes. The parallels with Paul's general approach and methodology are apparent—Paul, too, employs similar types of tools to fashion in his converts the type of mindset that he wants to see in them. Both the Stoics and Paul seem to have fully appreciated the fact that a wide-ranging and yet carefully targeted approach was necessary precisely because it was aimed at bringing about a fundamental, and in many ways also counterintuitive, reconfiguration of a person's value system.

A third parallel is found in how the Stoics and Paul seem to assign a broadly similar place to the role of affect in their respective conceptions of human flourishing: both do not regard the achievement of complete emotional equanimity as a goal in and of itself, but instead see right feeling as the natural corollary of right thinking. To be

⁹⁴² On the concept of emotional transcendence, see section 5.3.3.b earlier.

sure, specific emotions were encouraged and others rejected in accordance with the emotional ordering that was at work; and it is clear that the possession of prescribed emotional dispositions was something that was aimed at. Yet this was so largely because emotion was seen to be a telling reflection of one's innermost beliefs and values. In Stoicism, as Christopher Gill notes, emotions are not typically presented as aspirations in their own right.⁹⁴³ Furthermore:

The appropriate target for aspiration is the development of the virtues, through ongoing transformation of one's understanding, character, interpersonal relationships, and way of life, that is, through *oikeiōsis*, in its various strands. This transformation naturally or necessarily, on Stoic psychological assumptions, brings about the change of emotional inclinations, from foolish to wise, that forms part of developmental process.⁹⁴⁴

To use joy as a specific example: for Seneca, the advent of joy is not the purpose of moral progress; instead, virtuous wisdom continues to be the aim of existence, and joy is, on Stoic principles, a further characteristic of the virtuous life.⁹⁴⁵ Paul, too, does not see the possession of joy as the chief aim of believers. For him, gaining Christ and being transformed into his likeness is the goal of life (Phil 3.21), and Christians are to think and act with this goal always before them.⁹⁴⁶ That such a goal (and its attainment) is at all possible in the first place is because of God's work in the world through Christ and the Spirit; and therefore, as Paul sees it, joy flourishes to the degree that the believer is able to discern and participate in this work, even in the face of great adversity. Thus, for both the Stoics and Paul, regulation over the emotions is important, not as an end to itself, but because a person's emotional repertoire—in particular, the presence in it of those dispositions that are encouraged, and the absence from it of those that are rejected—are clear indications of the extent to which any claimed allegiance to a system of beliefs has translated to actual, lived reality.

5.6.4. Differences

Though there are certain parallels between Stoic and Pauline thinking on emotion, a closer examination soon discloses, as in fact we have already begun to see, that the

⁹⁴³ Christopher Gill, "Positive Emotions in Stoicism," in *Hope, Joy, and Affection in the Classical World*, ed. Ruth R. Caston and Robert A. Kaster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 149.

⁹⁴⁴ Gill, "Positive Emotions," 150.

⁹⁴⁵ Graver, "Anatomies," 140, see also 131–132 and references there.

⁹⁴⁶ See Bradley Arnold, *Christ as the Telos of Life: Moral Philosophy, Athletic Imagery, and the Aim of Philippians*, WUNT 2.371 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 219–221 and passim. Arnold argues persuasively that in Philippians Paul uses the thought pattern in ancient moral philosophy, which posits that there is one *τέλος* of life that all choices and actions are to be made with respect to attaining, to structure his argument that the chief end of the Christian life consists in gaining Christ.

two traditions diverge in fundamental ways at the very places where they seem to exhibit some agreement. While there are what we might perhaps term, albeit inadequately, “structural” affinities in how they each conceive of emotion vis-à-vis their construal of reality and how it is schematized, the content of that reality in the two accounts is entirely different.

In more specific terms: while the Stoics and Paul both demonstrate an interest in the cognitive dimension of emotion, locate emotion within a systematic ordering of life, and commandeer a broad range of philosophical, cognitive, and practical approaches to help their respective adherents to develop new ways of thinking and feeling that reflect and in turn validate such an ordering of reality, their arguments stem from intrinsically disparate ideological commitments. Taking centre stage in Stoic philosophical thought is, of course, reason: and it is reason, consistently and perfectly exercised in accordance with nature, or the order of the cosmos, that leads to a life of virtue and thus of *eudaimonia*. It is highly noteworthy that there is in Stoicism an unwavering confidence in the ability of humans to repair their own thinking and transfigure themselves in accordance with Stoic principles. As Rowe rather nicely describes it:

The Stoic story of human reparation has at its heart the claim that the human being is its own resource and the resolution of its problem. As we progress further and further in the Stoic disciplines, we discover a deeper and more profound ability to rely on ourselves.⁹⁴⁷

However, for Paul, nothing could be further from the truth: we human beings simply do not have the power ourselves to escape from the never-ending cycles of self-defeating damage that we are tethered to because of sin. Such is the utter helplessness of the human condition that Christ was sent into the world to set humanity on a radically re-created foundation through his life, death, and resurrection. Again, quoting Rowe:

In the Christian story, human reason is not capable of self-repair, indeed, left on its own, it will even lead one astray, mistaking foolishness for wisdom and wisdom for folly. Reason’s repair occurs only through knowing God in Christ—or, rather, being known by him—and the communal norms that inculcate reason’s right workings in a pattern of church life and public witness. The re-creation of reason is simultaneously the participation in the ecclesial form of life that matches the future’s arrival in the present—to be a people of the meantime is to learn how to know truth and love wisdom.⁹⁴⁸

At the heart of Paul’s thinking, then, is the importance of an eschatological faith in God who is still at work to remake humanity and society. Completely absent from his account is the remarkable confidence that Stoic anthropology invests in the human

⁹⁴⁷ Rowe, *One True Life*, 214.

⁹⁴⁸ Rowe, *One True Life*, 221.

ability to find within oneself the resources necessary to transform one's reason. Yet Paul's interest in the mind and in correct thinking is just as deep-seated as it is for his Stoic contemporaries; both would certainly argue that what one believes is not only integral to emotion, but actually controls it. However, cognition itself is differently conceived in the two accounts: for the Stoics, right thinking stems from the exercise of reason in accordance with nature, while for Paul, right thinking has everything to do with the development of a wholly renewed mindset that is patterned after that of Christ—a process in which reason itself becomes re-created.

A further key difference between Paul and the Stoics emerges in regard to how the two traditions relate emotion to social life. Paul firmly locates emotion in the context of the relationships within the believing community. As we have seen, for him, there is an unalienable mutuality and sociality in Christian joy, because it comes from the believers' shared engagement with God's ongoing redemptive work in the world. Similarly, consolation in grief, too, is located squarely within the ambit of the mutual responsibilities that believers have towards one another. Paul is very much aware of the communal dimension of emotion—that it is in community that right emotions are formed and expressed. All of this emphasizes the profoundly social nature of the Christian life: it is in relationship with one another that believers flourish both as individuals and as a community.

Contrary to the popular but caricatured view of them that often gets bad press, the Stoics were not self-absorbed and unfeeling automata who cared nothing about the people around them. In fact, they understood that living according to nature's design meant that each person should recognize that he or she had been given one or more roles to play in society, e.g., son, brother, father, town councillor,⁹⁴⁹ and that it was the person's responsibility to "play admirably the role assigned you," since "the selection of that role is Another's."⁹⁵⁰ However, the acknowledgement and carrying out of such natural duties was to be completely independent of how others might behave towards you. In other words, the Stoic's conduct was to always emerge from, and be circumscribed by, his or her *prohairesis*, the sphere of one's volition. Discharging one's familial and societal obligations in a fitting manner entailed making correct evaluations concerning whether happenings were under one's control or not, and acting in accordance with these decisions, thereby fulfilling one's natural duties to others while

⁹⁴⁹ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.10.7–23.

⁹⁵⁰ Epictetus, *Ench.* 17; the designation is a reverent one for divinity.

also preserving the integrity of one's security and self-sufficiency.⁹⁵¹ Thus, for example, the Stoics taught that it was entirely proper to come alongside a grieving person to offer solidarity and support. However, in showing sympathy, one must not be overwhelmed by the person's grief—which, after all, came from his or her judgement about an event rather than from the occurrence of the event itself. For the Stoics, one's inner imperturbability was never to be troubled or compromised.⁹⁵² Hence, while a Stoic would not shirk from his or her responsibilities towards other people, in relating to them the Stoic would never allow false judgements to derail his or her self-sufficiency and emotional tranquillity.

We see therefore that both the Stoics and Paul presuppose a certain relational embeddedness, and with it, the presence of a network of social duties towards others, which characterizes and dignifies human existence. Even so, the Stoics are able, through their craft of reason, to maintain and even entrench the self-sufficiency and serenity that have been hard won by their philosophy. Paul, too, through the consistent exercise of right thinking, achieves a kind of self-sufficiency—but it is entirely different from Stoic *autarkeia*, because he derives it from his relationship to Christ. One might argue that it is precisely because Paul's inner security is so firmly anchored in Christ's sufficiency in all things that he is able to allow his relational dealings with his converts to be shot through with a pronounced vulnerability that a Stoic would find decidedly alarming. So, for example, and as we have discussed earlier, the quality of Paul's own joy is intentionally bound up with the progress of the Philippians in the faith and with their growth in like-minded unity, and indeed, with their joy as well. Paul sees Christian joy as being generated in relationship with other believers, because joy is a felt corollary of their shared commitment to the hope that they hold to be true reality.

This brings us to the third key difference between the Stoic and Pauline emotional regimes. Each regards the right ordering of emotion as coming from, and in turn also validating, a particular conceptual framework that encompasses and seeks to make sense of all of life. However, the frameworks that the two traditions espouse, reflecting as they do mutually exclusive ideological interests, paint very different pictures of cosmological reality, not least in how it relates to humans and emotion.

As Seneca explains it, the Stoics see the world as being beset by incursions of fortune (*fortuna*)—the myriad miscellaneous happenings, freakish or more ordinary,

⁹⁵¹ Epictetus, *Ench.* 30.

⁹⁵² Epictetus, *Ench.* 16.

baneful or salubrious, that bear upon humankind. Fortune thus represents “all that which touches and shapes our lives for good or for ill from somewhere beyond the reach of our control.”⁹⁵³ However, the Stoics are confident that humans possess within themselves the requisite resources to triumph over fortune. For the Stoics, there is an overarching governing principle over the entire universe, and this is nature, or divinity, which is constituted by reason; and since humanity is imbued with this same reason—for reason is, as Seneca variously defines it, “nothing else than a portion of the divine spirit set in a human body”⁹⁵⁴ and “copying nature”⁹⁵⁵—the natural goal of the human person is to exercise his or her reason in a life of virtue. It is precisely the following of this goal that produces in that person a rightly formed soul, one that will flourish in the very face of fortune’s capriciousness by forming correct judgements at all times.

Yet it is important to note that as the Stoics see it—and notwithstanding the mercurial vagaries of fortune’s forays into the lives of people—the world, ultimately ordered as it is by divine rationality, is exactly as it should be. As Epictetus proclaims, there is every occasion for humankind to recognize the divine character of the providential ordering of the universe.⁹⁵⁶ As such, each human being’s path to happiness lies in internally reconfiguring his or her way of being in the world; and thus, the person who is wise “takes Nature for his teacher, conforming to her laws and living as she commands.”⁹⁵⁷ By doing so, i.e., by training the soul’s rational capacities and practising virtue in line with nature’s dictums, one frees oneself from the destructive power of the passions by submitting them to reason,⁹⁵⁸ and experiences instead their corrected versions, the *eupatheiai*.

The Stoic view of the world and of humanity is manifestly out of kilter with Pauline eschatology, which describes instead how a thoroughly sick world and its inhabitants, who are marred by sin, mired in its deleterious effects, and rendered completely unable to help themselves, will one day be wholly and radically repristinated. God’s act of renewing creation was inaugurated at the first coming of Christ, and it will come to a glorious culmination at his return. This transcendent metanarrative of God’s ongoing work in the world should form the backdrop against which believers locate their own life stories, if they are to make sense of what they

⁹⁵³ See Rowe, *One True Life*, 22–24 (quote from 22).

⁹⁵⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 66.12; see also *Ep.* 92.1

⁹⁵⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 66.39.

⁹⁵⁶ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.6.1.

⁹⁵⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 45.9.

⁹⁵⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 37.4.

believe to be true about their faith in Christ. Thus, even in present suffering the believing community can still experience joy: not because things are fine now, but because of the certain hope that things will be fine in the future. And even though some among them have unexpectedly died, they need not give rein to helpless grief: again, not because things are fine now, but because of the certain hope that things will be fine in the future. Joy celebrates the believer's participation with other believers in the story of God's re-creation of the cosmos—a story that reaches its zenith at the parousia, where death itself is finally and conclusively vanquished. We thus observe that layered deeply within Pauline Christianity are several distinctively forward-looking, storied, and social registers that have no echo in Stoicism. For the Stoics, the world is as it should be, and life is what one makes of it. For Paul, the world is not yet as it should be, but the time will come when the world is remade; and on that day, all who know Christ as Lord, who have allowed his life to map the course of theirs, will be united with him and with one another for all eternity.

5.7. Conclusion

This study has argued that as Paul sees it, emotions are intrinsic to the proper formation and stabilizing of identity and community, because they emerge from and encode structures of belief, and also influence patterns of sociality. Right emotions have an important integrating function: for the individual, they bolster Christian identity through the squaring of felt experience with held beliefs; while for the believing community, they help to cement group belonging by reinforcing the shared eschatological realities upon which authorized norms of affect are based. At the same time, right emotions have an important differentiating function: the social expression of sanctioned emotional dispositions (particularly if they are countercultural) demarcates the social and theological boundaries between Christians and others, which further strengthens group solidarity within the church by accentuating the insider status of its members.

For Paul, the management of emotion is therefore a crucial aspect of his efforts to establish his churches and resocialize his new converts. This explains why in his congregations he assiduously imposes feeling rules that specify not only which emotions are approved and which ones rejected, but also how those emotions that are approved are to come to expression within the community. The upshot of Paul's efforts

is the crystallization of what is in effect an emotional regime: a framework of dialectical interactions between the self, society, and symbol, which produces and shapes emotion in accordance with a transcendent ordering of reality. Using the concept of the emotional regime as a heuristic tool, we discovered that the interplay of symbolic, ritual, and social elements within the eschatological ordering of reality has a remarkably profound influence on the construction and reinforcement of authorized emotions in the Pauline communities. All this helps also to explain how such emotions maintain their longevity and power.

To be sure, Paul was not the only person of his time to establish feeling rules; his Stoic contemporaries, too, thought deeply about emotion and came up with a far more systematic way to approach the whole subject, particularly in regard to the passions—those unruly, damaging patterns of affect that had no place in the life of the wise person. Throughout our study we have allowed both traditions to speak for themselves, and on their own terms; but we also made comparisons between them whenever appropriate, so that the distinctiveness of their respective views of emotion would come into sharp focus. Even though both the Stoics and Paul emphasize the centrality of right thinking as the means to control emotion, it is exactly at this point of similarity that the Stoics and Paul diverge, and fundamentally so, because their accounts are premised on completely different conceptions of reality.

For Paul, as with the Stoics, right patterns of feeling come from right patterns of belief, and their social expression validates the truth-claims of these beliefs. However, as Paul sees it, these patterns of belief are rooted not in the workings of some cosmic rationality, but in nothing less than the epic narrative of how God is renewing his creation on the basis of Christ's work—a story in which Paul's converts are invited to anchor their own life stories. And it is indubitably because Paul himself has done just so, that he can instruct them, with untrammelled confidence and, perhaps, a certain exultation of spirit: *Χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἔρω, χαίρετε* (Phil 4.4).

5.7.1. Suggestions for Further Research

It is hoped that this study has helped to open up, in a fuller way than hitherto, the question of the social function of emotion in Paul's letters, and also demonstrated one way in which a methodologically robust inquiry into this neglected aspect of early Christianity life might be conceptualized and conducted. It is hoped too that the findings

from this thesis show that there are useful gains to be had from such an approach. Yet I hasten to emphasize that this study represents only an exploratory effort in terms of mining emotion within the Pauline corpus, and that there is potential for much more work to be done. For example, one might explore the nature and function of joy or grief in Paul's other letters (e.g. in 2 Corinthians, where grief is inflected in a variety of ways throughout the letter) to see how our account of emotion could be more finely nuanced. Alternatively, the scope of this study could be extended to include other affective dispositions as specific subjects for analysis, in order to build up a richer and more comprehensive understanding of emotion in Paul's letters. Another worthwhile direction for research might be to investigate in a more systematic fashion how certain complexes of symbolic and social meaning are connected to the ordering and expression of emotion in Paul's writings: particularly fruitful aspects of study might be the relationships between ritual and emotion (using ongoing research in ritual studies and the NT), or language and emotion (drawing on work in sociolinguistics and related fields). It will be interesting to see how NT scholars develop this necessarily interdisciplinary field of study in the future.

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