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IDENTITY CLAIMS, TEXTS, ROME AND GALATIANS

ABSTRACT

This contribution explores the interplay between Paul's use of the Scriptures of Israel and the imperial setting in claims about Abraham and the negotiation of identity in the Galatians letter. The letter, from Paul's perspective, is testimony to fierce contestation of identity and finds him engaged in describing, defining and scripting insiders and outsiders in and around the community. In his efforts to argue for a certain identity, Paul not only enlisted the Scriptures of Israel but also availed himself of frameworks reminiscent of contemporary socio-political notions, and of imperial posturing in particular.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social identity theorists insist that people tend to formulate their identity in terms of groups, those with whom they claim affiliation as well as those groups they deliberately dissociate themselves from. Both self-consciousness as well as the portrayal of Others and their Otherness inform the identity claimed and negotiated by people and groups. When Paul concluded that he together with the Galatian addressees were, like Isaac, children of the promise (κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ, Gal 4:28), he claimed Abraham as ancestor of all Jesus-followers.[1] His claim resided not

1 While Paul's own claim upon Abrahamic lineage would not have raised eyebrows given his association with Jewish traditions (e.g., Gal. 1:13-14: τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ; cf. Phil. 3:4-6), and despite a notable Jewish presence in Galatia, the inclusion of the Galatian community of Jesus followers was another matter.

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only in alignment with Abraham, but also in asserting an identity contrary to "children of the slave" (οὐκ ἐσμὲν παιδίσκης τέκνα, 4:31). Through constructive appeals to Abraham as well as by distancing his followers from Hagar's lineage, Paul claimed an identity reliant upon self- and Other-construction. Examples of identity constructing can be multiplied in Galatians, processes in which memory and texts figured prominently, situated in contexts of unequal relations of power. Through a re-appropriation or recycling of traditions Paul framed his claims on Abraham, invoking customary beliefs as encoded in the Scriptures of Israel. The social setting for Paul's identity-construction in Galatians was the Roman Empire, whose ideology also was undergirded by strong claims about insiders and outsiders, and who inscribed such claims in different ways.[2]

2. CONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT IDENTITY: TEXTS AND MEMORY, AND EMPIRE

Memory and identity theories attempt to explain both how and why traditions formed and changed, as well as how they were maintained and abolished. Social memory theories demonstrate in a powerful way how recounted history is not about history that happened but about history remembered by people for reasons contemporary to the remembering community.[3] In the study of social identity, reliance upon categorisation, stereotyping and construing and negotiating similarities and differences in and between groups are emphasised.[4] Since acquiring social identity in and through groups includes socialisation into the memories of the group, and therefore identifying with the group's collective past (Byrskog 2008b:57), a group's social identity and memory are interrelated.

2.1 Texts, memory and identity

In antiquity memory was negotiated by various means which included written resources or texts, where texts are not narrowly defined but include besides

2 Paul's letters are understood as social events rather than idealistically-framed literary constructions implying the continuous dialectic between literary and social worlds (see Lopez 2011:93).

3 Social memory studies which at times focus on oral and written traditions, or on specific practices and/or sites, or specific behaviour demonstrate that "the confident (and modernist) strength of an orderly center" is still lacking (Brenner & Long 2009:4).

4 Social identity theory was boosted by the work of scholars like Henri Tajfel (1919-1982). Cf., e. g., Tajfel (1982), Turner (1982).

documents also inscriptions and even buildings.[5] Identity or a sense of self was commonly constructed through narrative, in stories told by people about and among themselves. The link between identity and memory can thus be expanded to include narrative or text (cf. Olick 2006:5-6). Text and oral-mediated texts in particular are webs

> … of meaning and meaning-effects that depend on the cultural signs encoded in the text and that condition the experience of it during and after the performance. To the extent that it contains traces of a cultural system of other written and oral texts, it is a reservoir of collective memory and affects the hearers' negotiation of how they remember the past socially and construe their social identity (Byrskog 2008a:4).[6]

Appealing to memory through texts in order to negotiate identity was neither unique to Paul nor foreign in his world. First-century people encountered Augustus' *Res Gestae* and the Priene Calendar inscriptions which used traditions considered authoritative to foster the identity of the ruler as well as the ruled.[7] For Paul, the Scriptures of Israel were primary, although not the sole, constituent artefacts in his (group's) cultural memory.[8] The scriptures were both indispensable for his thinking about group identity, and instrumental in construing and reconstructing identity (Punt 2011). Paul's use of the texts came closer to invoking them as significant handles or parameters of collective memory than historical source documents.[9] Recent studies in history and memory stress that

5 In analogy to Gadamer's dictum on hermeneutics, "being that can be understood is language", Assmann suggests that "Being that can be remembered is text" (Assmann 2006:ix).

6 Collective memory, in other words, entails more than a context where prototypes from the past may be used to negotiate social identity (so Esler 2003). For the distinction between *mneme* (remembered knowledge) and *anamnesis* (scrutinising activities), cf. Ricoeur (2004:7-21), Kelber (2006:18).

7 Cf., e. g., Evans (2000:67-81); and references in Crossan (2008:62-73) to Virgil's *Aeneid*; Octavian's tent inscription; Actium coinage; *Gemma Augustea* cameo; Prima Porta statue; *Ara Pacis* in Rome; and the *Sebasteion* at Aphrodisias, to name a few more. Fragments of the Priene inscription were discovered in five cities in Asia Minor (Priene, Apamea, Maeonia, Eumenia, Dorylaeum).

8 The argument that "the collective memory of Judaism, the Hebrew Bible, was at first pushed aside (together with the alternative memories that emerged in the Second Temple period) during the process of the creation of a new set of memories in the Second Temple period" (Mendels 2004:45) is therefore too general.

9 The notion of "collective" memory sits uneasily with Mendels, who finds its too artificial and suggests that "common events," "common matters" or even "common experiences" may be better expressions (Mendels 2004:x).

memory is susceptible to modification, since the interests driving it are generally closer connected to sense-making than factual accuracy (Lategan 2004:136). Treating texts as memory emphasises remembering as being not so much about the restoration of some original self, but rather *re*-membering, of putting past and present selves together in a process of provisional (re)construction.[10]

The notion of cultural memory which attempts to link the three elements, memory (the contemporised past), culture, and the group (or community) to each other (Assmann 1995:129) puts Paul's use of the Scriptures of Israel in perspective, particular in their use to negotiate the identity of the early communities of Jesus followers.[11] But in Paul's approach the historicist position of bringing the narratives into contact with a new, changed future reigned supreme.[12] The role Paul attributed to the Abraham narrative in Galatians and the Pauline letters generally was very much as case of

> [t]hrough narration of its master narrative a group continually reconstitutes itself as a coherent community, and as it moves forward through its history it aligns its fresh experiences with this master narrative, as well as vice versa (Kirk 2005:5).

2.2 Ancient identity and the Other

All identity is a social construct, construed according to mutable descriptions of and expectations for groups.[13] Characteristics can be dropped or added over time so that differences connected to an ethnic identity are real and observable, but granting power to such differences is synthetic and can be regulated.[14] Binary thinking regarding identity was

10 On the one hand, "Christian thought, behaviour, attitudes, values, and self-understanding were forged textually," but, on the other hand, "multiple self-representations we encounter in the texts are themselves constructs" (Cameron 1991:21, 32; cf. Lieu 2004:67).

11 Scholars may claim a memorialist role of looking back in time when groups of people also tried to make sense of the world, rather than as historian intend on generating narratives aimed at a meaningful future (Perkins 2009:1; cf. Xu 1994:266; Perkins 2009:1).

12 The distinction between history and memory is important but should not unnecessarily be radicalised; cf. Punt (2011) and (Polak 2009:296).

13 Even ethnic identity is a social construct, cf. Barth (1969:10). Besides its conceptual dexterity, ethnicity or ethnic identity was not devoid of other social aspects, such as constellations and formations of culture, politics, religion and economics. Cf. e. g., Baumann (2004) on framing identity through others.

14 In contrast, an essentialist position of identity such as found in attempts at an "ontology of Judaism" reduces ethnicity to irreducible qualities. Lines between

less typical among Roman imperial authorities, and more common among Greeks and Jews. Confronted by Persian imperial influence, Greeks were concerned with identity since the fifth century BCE, to be Hellenes. In the Jewish Scriptures the contrast made between Israel and the nations is not offset by the variety of ethnic and political entities also represented in these texts. The Romans were not only more aware about human diversity than most other groups in antiquity but contrasts made with other peoples as barbarians were mostly on basis of "cultural deficiencies" rather than "with ethnic difference per se" (Stanley 2011:125).[15]

Recent studies suggest that a general first-century postulation of identity politics construed in opposition to real or imagined Others is too simplistic.[16] While admitting that constructions of the Other was indeed vital for framing and sustaining identity, collective identity in fact was developed in terms of rather than in contrast to another culture or group. The imperial divide and rule strategy which entailed deliberately playing different nations off against one another (e. g., Lopez 2008:56-118; 2011:85-89) was encapsulated by Tacitus (*Germania* 33.2): "Fortune can guarantee us nothing better than discord among our enemies."[17] However, and notwithstanding the acknowledgement of differences between groups, ancient societies also often saw themselves connected to a broader cultural heritage (Gruen 2011:3-4). Not only did this entail the formulation of links between societies but also framing their own social memories in terms of a borrowed or adopted past.[18]

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insider and outsiders are conceived as rigid and unbroken, with the boundaries themselves taking on an inviolable status (Wan 2007:246-47).

15 Stanley (2011:125) argues that Roman anxiety about their status in comparison with the revered histories of the Egyptians and Greeks, and the special privileges accorded to Jews in many parts of the Empire, are testimony to Roman lenience regarding identity categories.

16 Wills (2008:12-14; 217-18) defines nine theorems about the construction of the Other applicable to the Bible and elsewhere.

17 "May the nations retain and perpetuate, if not an affection for us, at least an animosity against each other! Since, while the fate of the empire is thus urgent, [179] fortune can bestow no higher benefit upon us, than the discord of our enemies" (Oxford translation, http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/europe/l/bl_text_Tacitus_Germania.htm, consulted 2 March 2012).

18 "That practice [associating themselves with the traditions of others] affords a … revealing insight into the mentalities of Mediterranean folk in antiquity. It discloses not how they *distinguished* themselves from others but how they transformed or reimagined them for their own purposes." (Gruen 2011:4).

Ancient notions of identity that fed off others did not lead to an amalgam of convoluted identities, nor to some idealised universal identity.[19] To the contrary, various groups saw high stakes involved in jostling for their own identity as well as otherness. The negotiation of identity meant that groups interacted with and often embraced elements of others' identity, reconstructing such elements into their own sense of identity (Gruen 2011:5). The sense of identity of ancient groups was not only self-constructed but also fabricated in comparison with neighbouring peoples (cf. Mendels 1998:19). In the end, the complex negotiation of identities in self-sustaining binaries (Gruen 2011:1-2) cannot be resolved through emphasis on simple contrasts.

In short, it *does not* imply that the Other was unimportant to ancient identity negotiations. It *does* mean, though, that the Other was appropriated not only in opposition. Others and their traditions were not only challenged or vilified but also taken up and retooled. Paul's appropriation of "his" and "his people's" Abraham narrative therefore was not out of the ordinary at all. Paul's language about the Others was less than favourable ("slave children"), and his rhetorical strategy sharply pointed, challenging and even decrying their tradition *and* position, and his negotiation of identity included binaries more complex than mere contrasts.[20] The intricate web of relations within which Paul appropriated existing identities and retooled them for further use in Galatians should be understood in this social setting.

2.3 Identity amidst power and authority: The imperial context

Paul's Letter to the Galatians is marked by strong rhetorical appeals and harsh language.[21] His rhetorical strategy etched in power and authority makes much sense when read in the Roman imperial context. The imperial setting constituted and shared in a larger social web of configurations, institutions, and structures. Empire was a negotiated concept (cf. Punt 2012)

19 Even in Claudius' insistence to include some Romanised Gallic notables in the Senate (48 CE), an event remembered in both the (but for two lacunae, well-preserved) bronze Lyons tablet, and in Tacitus (*Annales*, 11.23-24), the emperor towards the end of his oration defaults to the us-them binary, ironically when insisting upon the full inclusion of these Gauls into the Roman society.

20 Although, it can be debated whether Paul's affirmation of Abraham as ancestor from the ranks of the Other and criticism of the contemporary Other, does not imply Pauline criticism of the Other's interpretation and use of Abraham in "their" traditions and claims.

21 At times claiming an unassailable position, "let no man trouble me" based on his carrying the *stigmata* of Jesus Christ on his body (6:17).

whose ubiquity and influence in the first century is difficult to overestimate. At least five considerations are vital[22] in construing the intersection of Galatians and the imperial context.

First, the long-held influential notion that Romanisation was a largely beneficial enterprise is under fire, and not resolved with a dismissive nod in the direction of minor collateral damage.[23] Questioning the scholarly tradition of Romanisation with the perceived benefits of Roman rule emphasised and its brutality and domination of other people slighted is becoming more pointed (e.g., Mattingly 2010). *Second*, the traditional interpretations of Romanisation as the elite-driven promotion of a bounded cultural identity are questionable. Empire is better understood in a dialectical or interactive sense,[24] although the power differentials were of course vastly unequal. As is illustrated in ancient architecture from the period, "different kinds of identity without undermining an overall empire-wide identity" was possible (Revell 2009:10).

A *third* consideration concerns criteria for Empire-negotiation, with sceptics insisting on evidence amounting to the demonstration of similarity, establishment of correlation, or proof of causation.[25] Breaking with the

22 Segovia's criticism of the six "underlying *principles*" identified in the historical critical model of biblical interpretation (Segovia 1995:278-80) throws different light on the nature of the "proof" of the NT texts' intersection with the imperialist context.

23 The resistance of New Testament scholars to admit to the sense-making role of historical work can be connected to theological reasons (textual validity depends on historical truth), scholarly work (recognition of the biblical texts' historicity, but reluctance to live up to the "linguistic turn"), and epistemological reasons (rationalistic and positivist legacy of historical-critical work as well as the perpetual fear of anachronism or the danger of "modernising" texts) (Lategan 2004:145-46). The historical critical call for and *negation of partiality* in biblical critics was more apparent than real (Segovia 1995:281-85).

24 To some extent, going against the grain of Bourdieu' notion that "what exist in the social world are relations – not interactions between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist 'independently of individual consciousness and will'" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:97.)

25 E.g., Paul's engagement with philosophical notions is often explained with reference to appropriateness of the socio-historical contexts (cf. e. g., Engberg-Pedersen [2000], Malherbe [1987]). The reluctance to treat the Pauline letters and Roman Empire interface in similar fashion is probably due the current absence of scholarly consensus about the legitimacy and/or feasibility of such work (cf. Marchal 2011:147-50), and the dearth of comparative material resources. The scholarly discourse on Empire in biblical studies is notwithstanding earlier forerunners (cf. Deissmann 1995) only more recently starting to take off and encountering reluctance and even resistance (e. g., Bryan 2005) in various academic quarters.

traditional interpretative model of a subject acting on unrestrained and rational reflection, human subjectivity is increasingly understood as the result of forces that lie outside the control or even register of individuals. Human subjects are embodied and as such always implicated in historically situated networks (Perkins 2009:12). Foucault's notion of discourse and Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* explains how social groups undertake reasonable actions without having necessarily deliberated on or consulted about it.[26] Agency[27] depended on *habitus* which is a range of embodied socialised frameworks which supply agents with a rationale of social practices and a sense of the social structure that leads to sensible behaviour in a given context[28] (Bourdieu 1990:52-55; cf. Perkins 2009:12). *Habitus* entails that social agents develop strategies adapted to the needs of their social worlds. This explains how the powerful and elite of the Roman Empire managed to secure their own interests and privileges, and how subordinates interacted with imperial structures. Foucault also emphasises the on-going and active presence of power independent of whether individuals or groups consciously or actively experience or participate in such power plays.[29] Discourse is intimately connected to power and knowledge, and maintained by those in power through controlling knowledge. Discourse regulates and controls, drawing people into it and conforming to the accompanying expectations even where it is contrary to their best interests or even where they experience marginalisation.[30] It was in this normalisation of power that the Empire excelled, and intersections with Pauline letters can be located.

Fourth, the emphasis on Rome's material power as key to its domination is gradually unsettled. Rather than brute force, the Empire's reliance on a growing consensus about its self-claimed right to maintain social order and to enforce a normative political regime was key to its power. Consensus was

26 Earlier work by sociologists also emphasise how people are socialised or "programmed" from birth in their society's values, convictions and norms with the effect that each person contributes unquestioningly to the functioning of the system (cf. Berger 1967:3-52).

27 Bourdieu distinguishes between agents and subjects, with the latter referring to those who supposedly know what they are doing (Bourdieu 1990:52, 75; cf. Perkins 2009:12).

28 "The habitus is a spontaneity without consciousness or will" (Bourdieu 1990:56), therefore "It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know" (Bourdieu 1990:69).

29 "There is now power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject" (Foucault 1978:95; cf. Perkins 2009:12).

30 Foucault has been criticised that his world view disallows a strong view regarding morality, allowing for a relativist position at best.

not left to its own devices, as the Empire constantly and through various administrative practices engaged the daily lives of their subjects, reminding them of Roman power over their lives (Revell 2009:89; Ando 2000:x).

Fifth, neither the first-century world nor the Roman Empire was so script-less as some scholars (e.g., Perkins 2009:10) contend.[31] Materials of Latin authors, imperial decrees and also epigraphic evidence (milestones, temples, statues, coins) go beyond oral imperial ideology. The normalisation of power saw imperial ideology and its carriers in close concert, exemplified in how epic equated power and narrative (cf. Polak 2009:298-99). A narrative teleology that developed out of an epic linearity stood in close company with imperial power: all events lead to an ultimate, imperial-defined end (cf. Lopez 2011:83; Quint 1989:27).[32] Empire generally presents itself as a system of instrumental ideas, "an inter-textual network of interests and meanings implicated in the social, political and institutional contexts of colonial hegemony" (Said 1991:8). Rome not only saw fit to devise policy to suit its own interests, but reinvented history to serve imperial purposes (Mattingly 2010:75-93). Empire was heavily invested in making memory given the link between re-membering and re-writing history.[33]

3. CLAIMING ABRAHAM: OTHERING IN GALATIANS

Paul's appropriation of the Abraham traditions in Galatians stood central to his rhetorical power jostling, and his claims about identity and otherness were socially located in a space marked out by Roman imperialism.[34] Groups such as Paul and the Galatian Jesus-followers increasingly carved out a language and an ethos related to Jesus Christ and informed by appropriating older traditions. In the process they created a social world,

31 Ironically, the counter-Hellenistic culture prevalent among Jews used many Hellenistic techniques of education, thus creating a "resistance hybridity," which can be found in other cultures that resisted Hellenism (Carr 2005).

32 "[T]extuality is endemic to the colonial encounter" (Gandhi 1998:142). The initial phase of empire building may see a stronger dominance by "guns, guile and disease, but [imperial relations] were maintained in their interpellative phase largely by textuality" (Lawson & Tiffin, in Gandhi 1998:142).

33 Cf., e.g., Gowing (2005) on the republic in imperial (= principate) memory.

34 The geographical location of the community to which Paul directed his Galatian letter is still the subject of scholarly debate. While a well-rounded consensus has largely stayed out, both the rhetorical situation (cf. Lategan) and the broader Asia Minor context are of primary importance here. Assuming the letter is directed to the southern Roman province of Galatia, this setting informs the understanding of the letter's othering-discourse as well as subtle hints at an imperial context.

part of which was the construction of a particular identity – an on-going dynamic and non-monolithic process, and not unlike other groups during the same period.[35] The concern for a new identity in Christ, or at least for negotiating such an identity, is embedded in a complex network of signification in Paul's letters and in Galatians in particular.[36]

3.1 Abraham and identity issues in Galatians

Regardless of whether Paul is best described as "a communities' organiser" (Rowland 2006:660), his ideas provided fledging Jesus followers communities with a sense of common interests in an uneven socio-political context.[37] His letters in general and strategies of ideological polemic show his concern with the social identity of the groups he addressed.[38] Given the letter's polemical context, how did he plot and negotiate the identity of the Jesus followers, and how did his efforts differ from his distracters in the community? (Cf. Nanos 2000:151; Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:44.) In line with ancient practices and an imperial context that negotiated identity through appropriating identity formulations of others, and recycling it for the new group, it was the biblical Abraham narratives that featured particularly prominently in the Galatians' letter.[39]

In Paul's formulations the Abraham narratives no longer authorise a specific and special relationship between God and Israel and their election in particular. Paul reinterprets Abraham as more than an exemplary figure of faith for Jesus followers, with the Abraham narrative re-appropriated as

35 "[T]he early Christian talk about a newly created ego does not *describe,* mirror or represent an already *existing* reality ... The entire realm of social relationships is based on words and information that *create* reality" (Lampe 1995:940, emphasis in the original).

36 This is not to argue for either the similarity of different Pauline letters or for a generalised version of "the" Pauline letter. A general claim, however, is that identity concerns were not peripheral to people's social and personal lives, and should not in the New Testament be portrayed as being in contrast to theological concerns. Cf. Freyne (1985:141, n. 2).

37 Certainly also in much broader ethnic and gender concerns, as scholars have recently suggested: "The starting point for a study of Paul's letter to the Galatians is the ethnic tension that infuses every line of the work" (Wan 2007:246).

38 "Justification by faith alone is less an article of faith than a technique of social cohesion used to weld disparate ethnic and social groups together" (Rowland 2006:661). Cf. Dahl (1977) on the Pauline emphasis on community, neglected in the Western church and scholarship.

39 Abraham as father of all nations (Gen. 17:4-5) was called upon as common ancestor and so legitimated the early second century B.C.E. pact between the Hasmoneans and the Spartans (1 Macc. 12:21; cf. Mendels 1998:28-29).

sanctioning discourse for his new communities. Elsewhere it was argued that the selective recalling of the Abraham narrative through the texts of the Scriptures was vital for positioning Paul's arguments (Punt 2011), and that Galatians is no exception. Abraham is not invoked primarily as an example of faith, but as patrilineal ancestor of many nations;[40] neither his fatherhood nor his family were biological but constituted by spiritual descent[41] (e. g., Gal. 3:7, 16, 29; 4:28; Eisenbaum 2000:132). Invoking and preserving narratives are often the means for communities to rise above unfamiliarity in time, space and experience, enticing people into a hitherto unknown world (Anderson & Foley 1998:4). With narratives reclaimed by a group with vested interests, their importance as well as tension regarding the agency of their re-authoring increases. This is clear in Paul's argument in Galatians 4:21-5:1 in particular, that builds on notions of insiders and outsiders, us and them, self and Other.

3.2 Paul as Other

Posing the question about Paul's identity and otherness raises the further question of other to whom or what?[42] For a start Paul's own identity was characterised by otherness at different levels, in fact, his self-portrayal betrays hints of having been as "othered" by "Judaisers". With identity as that which is perceived to constitute one group in distinction from another, self-identification is ironically often in accordance with other people's views of the own group itself.[43] Paul's self-identity and otherness were established variously, in his former life of persecuting Jesus followers (Gal. 1:13-14), as well as in his life in Christ notwithstanding remaining tensions. Paul attempted to resolve the tension through re-membering his own life-narrative by an appeal to his pre-existence (Gal. 1:15). On the one hand, Paul's status as self-proclaimed apostle to the Gentiles (e. g., 2:2, 7)

40 Paul's attempts in Galatians to define a new identity for the followers of Jesus, separate from a Jewish identity, rested largely on paternity.

41 Abraham's son Isaac was indeed borne "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα, Gal. 4:29). But in line with a God who created not through copulation and a consort but through speech (cf Eisenbaum 2000:144).

42 A pitfall to avoid is to assume too much of a role for Paul, as one "should refrain from putting up straw 'elites' that presumably dominate social discourse and whose alleged interests determine the shape of cultural memory" (Polak 2009:298-99).

43 "[I]f we do not basically see ourselves as others see us we experience severe dissonance" (Casey 1991:12). The list of eight identity factors of Second Temple Judaism used by Casey in his study is useful further afield, too: ethnicity, Scripture, monotheism, circumcision, Sabbath observance, dietary laws, purity laws and major festivals (Casey 1991:12).

did not mean relinquishing his Jewish identity (2:15), while on the other hand Paul's mission meant his presence in alien territory. "[Paul] came to understand what it means to be an 'other,' so much so that he partly became an 'other'" (Eisenbaum 2000:145), as Paul also claims in 4:12 (Γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ, ὅτι κἀγὼ ὡς ὑμεῖς). Paul's insider-claim makes much sense in a foreign context with other Jews present and where a Jew-Gentile distinction was useful to him. But questions remain about diversity within Second Temple Judaism as demonstrated by dissimilar views of the Torah's role and resultant traditions, regardless of the social identity of the Galatians distracters.

Elsewhere Paul also made strong insider-claims, that he was from the people of Israel (ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ), a Hebrew born of Hebrews (Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων), from the tribe of Benjamin (φυλῆς Βενιαμίν), circumcised (περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, Phil. 3:5) as a Jew of one of the twelve tribes who shared a centuries old tradition[44] (cf. Rom. 11:1). When it comes to identity, similarity of course also implies difference, since the constructing of self always invokes and construes the others, the outsiders (cf. Lieu 2004:15). In Galatians, Paul's otherness remains tense and ambiguous, leaving open the question whether and for what reasons he is genuinely a side-lined apostle; unlike his antipathy towards the Others he constructs in the letter.

3.3 Paul and Galatian Others

Paul inscribed Others in Galatians. As becomes evident in Paul's allegory in Galatians 4, it was not only in as far as his self-identity was concerned that Paul relied on the Scriptures of Israel (cf. Stanley 2011:123) through explicit references or sublime invocation or echoing of Scriptures-related ideas and language. Paul also used Leviticus 19:18 in Galatians 5:13-15 (cf. Rom. 13:8) to conceive the neighbour (ὁ πλησίος). The notion of ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν (Rom. 13:8) is an indication of Paul's explicit use of othering.[45] A first important dividing line that Paul draws is between him and the Jesus-follower community members, powerfully

44 The nature of Paul's claims fitted into the pattern in Second Temple Judaism to lay claim to a tribal Jewish identity although such tribes no longer existed or functioned as such. Mendels (1998:27-28) is of the opinion that Jewish tribal affiliations were transformed into geographical terms in the Hellenistic period.

45 Whether one can conclude, based on Paul's use of ἄλλος in, e. g., Gal. 1:6-7, a distinction between ἕτερος and ἄλλος along the line "another of a different kind" and "another of the same kind" (cf. Powery 2008:141) is another question. Even Powery has to admit that Paul "frequently utilizes these words interchangeably as synonyms (e. g., 1 Cor. 12:8-10).

asserted in his adaptation of the ancient letter structure.[46] Replacing thanksgiving with cursing in Galatians 1:6-10, Paul keeps at in throughout the letter and expressly with his "foolish Galatians" remark in Galatians 3:1. Typical of contemporary stereotyping (cf. Punt 2010:212-31) it is possible that also the Roman concept of "idiotic/foolish" as description of outsiders is invoked here. But also in Paul's plotting of the community's otherness, his is an ambivalent portrayal and relationship, given his regular alternating between second and first person plural-pronouns ("our" and "your").

Paul defined another spectrum of otherness within the larger Jesus follower movement. A first group here are the other or "pillar" (Gal. 2:9) apostles with whom he describes a less than favourable interaction (Gal. 2:11-14). Otherness is now expressed as accusations of separation and insincerity (Gal. 2:12-13), with ritualised action as subtext (Gal. 2:14).[47] The second group was identified as engaged in "judaising" (Gal. 2:14). Opinions differ about their origin and identity, and so also about appropriate terms for them: "opponents," "agitators," "troublemakers," or simply "influencers."[48] Some scholars believe these distracters to have been emissaries from Antioch or Jerusalem tracking Paul since he left Antioch (Wan 2007:257-58).[49] A third group, who may have been linked to either of the former groups, is briefly mentioned and described as "false brethren" who spy out "our freedom" (2:4). It remains a question whether the real source of Paul's agitation was those in the community or those whom Paul believed to agitate against him and his work in the community.

Paul's rhetoric reserved the focus on otherness for the community members. His polemic was directed at the community, plotting their identity and working towards their cohesion. Conflict situations served

46 The ethnic or cultural background of community remains a debate. Suggestions include that they were mostly Gentiles Jesus followers (cf. Gal 4:8-10); Nanos (2000) describes a "Jewish majority" in the community.

47 According to Wan (2007:262), "The Jerusalem-Antioch leaders saw themselves as the centre of the Jesus movement … In their response to imperial pressure, they adopted a rigid ethnic boundary between themselves and outsiders. Paul … elected to embrace a universalism that would extend the 'Jewish' borders to the end of the earth." But is this not saying too little about Roman imperial contours and claiming too much for ethnic conflict?

48 For semantic, ideological and historical reasons Nanos (2000:151) prefers "influencers" to refer those Paul attempted to counter.

49 It has been suggested that it may be the same group elsewhere referred to as well, cf Phil 3:2 (dogs, doers of evil deeds); 2 Cor. 11:5, 12:11 (super-apostles); or 2 Cor. 11:15 (ministers of Satan) (Wan 2007).

an important purpose in defining identity.[50] Conflicts between insider and outsider groups contributed to group identity because they clarify boundary lines and consolidate the difference between insiders and outsiders (Telbe 2009:140-41). In Galatians 5-6 with its strong ethical impact Paul construed the community in harsh terms, at times with suggestions of brutal, animal-like behaviour (Gal. 5:15).[51] Scriptures were invoked to map out Others and their nature, a strategy reminiscent of imperial othering. While Empire, household and body were all intimately related, bodily strength and beauty were as much related to the bodies of the elite and upper-class, as were weakness and ugliness related to those of the lower class (Martin 1995:xviii, 47-55). Paul employed harsh language for the community members, and also threatened expulsion, a drastic and typical imperial measure. "Cast out the slave and her son" (Gal. 4:30; Ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς).[52] Rewriting history, here Paul dealt with his own "countrymen" or previous Others who have now sided with his traditions in a way reminiscent of imperial style. Choosing against the overwhelming understanding of a formal, ritualised notion of Jewish identity, in favour of a rather recent reformatting or contamination of the memory about Abraham in light of the Christ-event, rendered a third position: promoting belief in the God of Abraham in contradistinction from enforcing identity-formatting customs and rituals.

3.4 Paul's Galatians and imperial othering

Paul's striving to articulate a new identity, built at least in part upon the vestiges of his own history and that of the Jewish people, was not unaffected

50 Telbe, borrowing from Coser's thesis on social conflict, summarises four potential characteristics of ingroup and outgroup conflicts in a social setting: "First, conflict may serve as a boundary-maintaining and group-binding function. … Secondly, the closer the relationship, the more intense a conflict seems to be. ... Thirdly, conflicts may serve to define and strengthen group structures and may result in ingroup solidarity, enhanced awareness of ingroup identity and a tightening of the group boundaries. … Fourthly, ideology (the collective aims) that transcends personal interests will make struggles between competing groups more intense" (Telbe 2009:140).

51 Apart from negative portrayals of Others, the very "[a]cts of identity formation are themselves acts of violence" (Schwartz 1997:5).

52 Reports on expulsions in the Empire shared a common discourse, in which foreigners are portrayed as a polluting and infecting threat to Roman ways. Eviction included Jews and other groups that could be portrayed as foreign, such as astrologers and philosophers. I thank Birgit van der Lans (Groningen) for mentioning this aspect.

by the Roman imperial context and its contemporary scripts of power.[53] On the one hand, "[s]ocieties and groups in the Graeco-Roman world were apt to recycle their traditions, thus reshaping their cultural and political identities" (Mendels 2004:30). On the other hand, those who resisted contemporary dominance through visions of future utopia still were obliged to use the language and images of the current social system to formulate and construct a new world,[54] and that which can be considered attainable (Perkins 2009:176). Paul's re-descriptions of his communities' identity took up several scripts, of the religiously influential, the politically dominant and the socio-culturally normative, loosely identified under the labels of Jewish, Roman, and Greek/Hellenistic.[55]

The quest for and negotiation about identity in Galatians played out around the central notion of the incorporation of Gentile Jesus-followers into the Jewish ethnos, with disagreements regarding the ethnic boundaries, and the distributions of power within (Wan 2007:252-56). Second Temple Judaism is often evoked as crucial for understanding Galatians;[56] the Roman imperial context, however, is not well accounted for, if at all. Situated in the context of first-century imperialism, it is in the Jerusalem-Antioch alliance that the discursive and material dominance[57] of the metropolitan centre over the marginalised and peripheral colonies is made effective.[58]

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53 "Roman identity was, then, more than simply a legal status. It was a collective identity" (Mendels 2007:34). For the politicised context of Galatians, cf. Lopez (2008) re Roman Empire, and Nanos (2000) re a postulated Jewish majority community.

54 Perkins (2009:172-76) refers to Tertullian who in the later second and early third centuries ascribed harsh punishments to the Roman overlords, relished his own joyous reaction in anticipation of their brutal suffering (cf. *Spect.* 16.6) yet condemning the cruelty of the games (cf. *Spect.* 19.1).

55 For the close relationship between enculturation and imperialism, seen especially in education (παιδεία), cf. Swancutt (2006:4).

56 As scholarship is finally if slowly divorcing itself from an all too simplistic Jewish particularism vs. "Christian" universalism, it is also in Galatians important to emphasise the Jewish perspective of both Paul and those he identify as his critics (cf. Nanos 2000; Wan 2007:247-48).

57 Demanding tribute and material from the "colonised," Jerusalem is portrayed in Galatians as the centre defining the symbolic universe to which all colonies are mere extensions, on the periphery. The use of ethnic binarism, courtesy of the myths of homogeneity (Gentiles as a collective sameness) and of difference (with ontological essentialisms used for polarising Gentiles and Jews in opposing camps) and also settler colonialism aided the discursive onslaught of Jerusalem (Wan 2007:253).

58 "The military and political centre was Rome; only Rome had the authority to make demands on its colonies, among which counted Jerusalem. Yet …

Texts broadly defined had a constructive role in shaping (self) understanding in the first-century imperial world (Lieu 2004:10). In imperial times the production of knowledge takes place through and by means of texts, with texts becoming repositories of power issues. In the Roman Empire instances included Augustus' *Res Gestae*, victory columns and arches in Rome, and Augustus' skilful use of monuments and inscriptions to format a version of history, i.e., to create a collective memory suitable to his own purposes (Mendels 2004:37-42).[59] As one example can be mentioned Claudius' appeal to the Senate to allow the inclusion of Gallic notables into this body, based on historical references. He insisted that the Empire's interests as well as cultural and social integration should be the deciding factors rather than past animosity and conflict. This incident was recorded on a bronze tablet, the Lyons tablet and referred to by Tacitus (*Annales* 11.23-24), in which the thrust if not the details of the argument cohere. The importance of appeals to ethnicity, culture and customs is evident.[60] Notwithstanding the historical inaccuracies dotting Tacitus' account as well as the Lyons tablet, this depiction of a senatorial debate reveals the importance of appeals to historic peoples or ethnic considerations for decisions made in Rome regarding identity.[61] The recording of Claudius' speech dealt with an imperial decree allowing Gaul representation in Senate, but it also demonstrates the importance of authorised texts in the Empire.

Paul's mapping out of identity in Galatians learns from imperial practice. The Jerusalem proclamation (Gal. 2:6-9) not only reversed the reigning cartography by making lands beyond the centre into territories to be claimed and filled out by missionaries, but was also "a daring bravado by a subjugated people: to reverse the Roman order by privileging the position and status of the Jesus-movement" (Wan 2007:254). The Jerusalem Jesus movement adjusted and appropriated Roman imperial discourse for its own

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[t]he apocalypticism of the early Jesus-followers had given them a claim on the whole world" (Wan 2007:253).

59 The *Res Gestae* and Priene Calendar inscriptions illustrate the use of traditions considered authoritarian or at least credible, without denying the ideological slant (considered par for the course), to foster a specific identity for the ruler but also for the ruled (clients of the patron) – "imposed" collective memory (Mendels 2004:xi); cf. Evans (2000:67-81).

60 "Now that custom, culture and the ties of marriage have blended them with ourselves, let them bring among us their gold and their riches instead of retaining them beyond the pale" (Tacitus, *Annales* 11.24).

61 Neither claims about the (short) duration of Gallic resistance against Julius Caesar, nor a lengthy period of peace after conquest, nor the postulated loyalty of the Gauls towards Claudius' father Drusus variously referred to in Tacitus' account and the Lyons tablet are factually correct (Yakobson 2007:23-26).

purpose.[62] The allegory of Abraham's wives and sons is a further indication of how Jews can be incorporated into the re-constituted Israel defined by Paul. His argument resembles imperial language of subjugation of foreign nations for the sake of their incorporation into Empire. Jews fit the mould of subjugated nations when Paul ascribes them the status of slavery. Barbarism, effeminism, intemperatedness and other negative qualities ascribed to the nations were presented (with divine imperative) as legitimate reasons for subjugation. In fact, Paul made a female slave the norm for the identity of Jew. Defined though the image of Hagar as the wife rather than as descendants (since descendant of a slave mother found themselves in a liminal position), sanctioned the need to incorporate Jews into Jesus-follower circles.

Paul also plotted Jesus-followers from a woman, Sarah and not from Abraham. However, unlike the Jews that could have been associated with Ishmael but was connected to the slave-woman Hagar, the Jesus-followers are connected to the boy, Isaac, 4:28 (or elsewhere, to Abraham directly, cf. 3:7, 29). Therefore, the promise that Abraham will be father of many nations Paul connected explicitly to the conception of Isaac. All believers, Jewish and Gentile, are descendants of Abraham and being properly adopted determines their Abrahamic inheritance[63] (Eisenbaum 2000:140). Forgetting is a form of memory and has implications for how memory is shaped, as it creates a new interpretation of the past or new collective memory. In Paul's retelling of the Abraham's wives and children, the names he remembers as much as those he forgets, are instructive for the collective memory he seeks to promote.

Finally,[64] Paul's engagement with Others in Galatians is not limited to human beings. Scripture (ἡ γραφή) is personified with power to foresee (προϊδοῦσα) and to preach (προευηγγελίσατο) in Galatians 3:8. The focus, however, was on the Scriptures of Israel as foreign element, showing the ambiguity of enlisting another, potentially distractive discursive formation. Reframing of memory through other memories has a profound influence on memories and historiography. The influence of traditions on

62 "Jerusalem arrived at its new position by first destabilising the imperial discourse, casting doubt on Roman homogeneity by differentiating the circumcised from the uncircumcised, thereby contesting the imperial and dominant centre" (Wan 2007:255).

63 Adoption was applicable for Gentile *and* Jewish believers alike (cf. Rom 4:9), the only difference being that "Gentiles are now in the process of claiming their inheritance, whereas as Jews have already received it" (Eisenbaum 2000:140).

64 Room does not allow for considering how writing back, re-claiming "history" in its past and present, and future manifestations by the "little people" (cf. Horsley; Sharpe; Shostak; etc.) takes place in Galatians.

other memories is evaluated differently, as either shematising (e. g., Burke 1989:102-05) with positive, heuristic function, or as contamination (Mendels 2004:xiv-xv) with negative, distorting implications.[65] This tension informs Paul's recalling of Abraham-memory for Jesus followers. The appropriation of earlier traditions probably contributed to the ethos of new Jesus follower-groups as well as to the creation of third memory, rendering eventually even a third race.

4. CONCLUSION

The Galatians letter testifies to first-century practices of recycling past traditions through an identity-driven re-membering, of which the most public and therefore probably most influential model was found in Empire's *habitus* or discourse. In a largely oral first-century context, replete with various traditions and cultures, in many instances including those from the Jewish context, the Roman imperial influence was dominant. In this regard, a totalitarian state's enforcement of a specific memory amidst abundant pluralism of past memories in the religious sphere[66] may help to explain Paul's invocation of Abraham memories in Jesus-follower groups in a geo-political context of recycled imperial Roman memories. Paul's recycling of the past through memory and Scripture provides insight in his politics of identity and rhetoric of othering, in his environment's cultural, political and social structure.

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65 While Burke emphasises the reinterpretation of one memory through another, Mendels argues that rather than a reinterpretation the result is a mixture of two memories, and therefore a newly created, third memory (Mendels 2004:xv).

66 Mendels (2004:xvi) relates different ways in which memory functions or is forced to function to the nature of the prevailing context in a nuanced way.

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