

JUSTIN K. HARDIN

Galatians and the Imperial Cult

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
237*

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

Herausgeber / Editor

Jörg Frey (München)

Mitherausgeber / Associate Editors

Friedrich Avemarie (Marburg)

Judith Gundry-Volf (New Haven, CT)

Hans-Josef Klauck (Chicago, IL)

237



Justin K. Hardin

Galatians and the Imperial Cult

A Critical Analysis of the First-Century
Social Context of Paul's Letter

Mohr Siebeck

JUSTIN K. HARDIN, born 1976; 2006 Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge; 2004–2005 he taught New Testament Greek at Cambridge; since fall 2005 R. Strickland Assistant Professor of Religion at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), USA.

e-ISBN PDF 978-3-16-151580-4

ISBN 978-3-16-149563-2

ISSN 0340-9570 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

© 2008 by Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that permitted by copyright law) without the publisher's written permission. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

The book was printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Held in Rottenburg.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

This monograph is a slightly revised version of my Ph.D. thesis, which was submitted on 17 March 2006 to the Faculty of Divinity of Cambridge University. I would like first to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor Professor Graham N. Stanton for his able guidance during my years in Cambridge. His wonderful method of supervising allowed me to roam freely, but without allowing me to lose my way. He truly exemplifies what it means to be a scholar, a teacher, and a mentor; and I continue to draw upon his example in my own research and teaching. I am also very grateful to my examiners, Professor J. M. G. Barclay and Dr Justin Meggitt, for their very helpful comments and suggestions. I also want to express my appreciation to the editor of this series, Prof Dr Jörg Frey, for accepting this thesis for publication, and to Dr Henning Ziebritzki and his excellent editorial staff for their able assistance as I formatted the manuscript for publication. To all these above, I am very grateful. Of course, any remaining blunders in this thesis are wholly my own.

John Donne's words, though now so familiar as to seem trite, nevertheless ring true: 'No man is an island of itself' (*Meditation XVII*). I am greatly indebted to a number of people who have shown me continual love and support. Without them, the completion of this project would not have been possible.

I am grateful for the Grantchester Meadows reading group, led by Professor Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, which allowed several of us Ph.D. students to pursue academic interests outside our narrow fields of study. I also thank many other teachers who have challenged me throughout the years and have been worthy of imitation, such as Professors Gerald Bray, J. Scott Duvall, Ken Mathews, and Frank Thielman. I also thank the staff and readers affiliated with Tyndale House, Cambridge, especially the former Warden, Dr Bruce Winter, who made our stay at Tyndale House possible and whose family continues to mean very much to us. I also thank Drs Peter Head, Elizabeth Magba, and David Instone-Brewer, along with the many Tyndale readers who made our time in Cambridge a pleasant one. The Round Church at St Andrew the Great in Cambridge and now University Baptist Church in Shawnee have also been an enormous source of encouragement.

I am thankful to God for blessing me with so many wonderful friends, far too many to name here. Nevertheless, I must mention some who have been especially encouraging over the years. Jill and I will always cherish our

friendship with Dave and Renée Morlan, with Tom and Pip Stace (our first friends in Cambridge), and with John and Alysia Yates (our first friends with children). Dr Joel Willitts, as my desk mate in the Tyndale House library, read much more of my work than he would ever care to admit. Rabbinic tradition instructs one to acquire an associate in the study of the Scriptures (*Avot* 1.6). Joel has been mine. Of course, I must not forget to mention my other Ph.D. companions, Drs Wayne Coppins, Joel Lawrence, David Rudolph, and Todd Wilson.

I also must mention the members of the Clique (Cory Goode, Chuck Stokes, and James Taylor), who, since our seminary days, continue to be such a supportive band of brothers. And I continue to be encouraged with friends and colleagues here in Shawnee, especially Drs Bobby Kelly and Kevin Hall, who have been such great friends and mentors in my first two years of teaching.

The Lord provides in many ways, and I am grateful to various people and institutions that helped to support us financially during our time in Cambridge. I would like to thank the Faculty of Divinity for the Peregrine Maitland Award (2004–5), which funded most of our final year in Cambridge, and for the Bethune-Baker Fund that enabled me to attend scholarly conferences both here and in the USA. I am also grateful for the generous awards I received from the University and from St. Edmund's College. The greatest financial thanks is due, however, to my parents, who continually sacrificed far beyond what any parent should in order that I could get an education. Thank you, Mom and Dad! And to the best in-laws ever, thanks for your continual love and support.

During the course of this project, Jill and I managed to double the size of our household with two boys. Now at the close, we eagerly await the birth of Annie, who already has her daddy wrapped around her little finger. Ethan and Drew, I cherish with great joy the daily reminders from you that there is much more to life than work. There are bear hunts on which to go, silly songs to sing, and exhilarating Bible stories to animate. I love you both so much. My final and greatest thanks are due to my wonderful wife, who has shown much more love and patience to me over the past nine years than I deserve. Jill, you are by far the best thing that has ever happened to me. It is to you that I dedicate this book. Without your enduring love, it would never have seen the light of day. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Shawnee, 15 October 2007

Justin K Hardin

Table of Contents

Preface	V
Table of Contents.....	VII
List of Figures.....	XI
Abbreviations.....	XIII
Chapter 1. Galatians in Its Social and Religious Context.....	1
Introduction.....	1
A. Recipient-Oriented Studies in Galatians	5
1. Galatians in Its Anatolian Religious Context	5
2. Galatians in Its Imperial Cultic Context	12
B. Aims of the Present Study	16
C. Method of the Present Study	17
D. Procedure	19

Part I

The Imperial Cult in the Roman Empire and in Galatia

Chapter 2. Imperial Cult and Ideology in the Julio-Claudian Period.....	23
Introduction.....	23
A. The Rise and Proliferation of the Imperial Cult.....	26
1. Augustus: Benefactor and Saviour	26
2. Civic Space and Leisure	30
3. Temporal Space: New Calendars and the Golden Age	32
4. Augustus and His Successors	38
B. Reception of the Imperial Cult and Ideology	40
1. The Imperial Cult and Pagan Religion	40
2. Civic Patronage and Competition.....	42
3. Civic Responsibilities and Obligations	42
Conclusions.....	47
Chapter 3. Imperial Cult and Ideology in Galatia.....	49
Introduction.....	49
A. The Creation of a Roman Province.....	50
1. Creating Colonies and Cities.....	52
2. Linking the Colonies the 'Augustan Way'	54
3. Tranquillising the Taurus	55

B. Reception of Imperial Ideology.....	57
1. Urbanising the Colonies: Pisidian Antioch as a Test Case.....	58
2. (Re-)Founding Galatia: Claudius and His Legate.....	64
C. Reception of the Imperial Cult.....	66
1. The North: Ancyra and Pessinus.....	68
2. The South: Pisidian Antioch.....	71
Conclusions.....	79

Part II

Galatians and the Imperial Cult?

Chapter 4. Avoiding Persecution and the Imperial Cult (Gal 6.12–13)?..... 85

Introduction.....	85
A. The Motives of the Agitators in Gal 6.12–13.....	86
1. Securing a ‘Good Status’ in the Flesh.....	86
2. Securing a ‘Good Status’ and the Imperial Cult.....	90
B. The Agitators in Gal 6.12–13: Local Jewish Jesus-Believers?.....	92
C. Paul’s Accusations in Gal 6.12–13: Are They Reliable?.....	94
1. Paul versus the Agitators in Gal 6.12–17 and in Galatians.....	97
2. Persecution in Gal 6.12–17 and in Galatians.....	101
D. Avoiding Persecution and the Imperial Cult?.....	102
1. Jewish Rights and the Imperial Cult.....	102
2. Implications for the Imperial Cult Hypothesis.....	110
Conclusions.....	114

Chapter 5. ‘Days, Months, Seasons, Years’ and the Imperial Cult (Gal 4.10)?..... 116

Introduction.....	116
A. Gal 4.10 in Interpretation.....	117
1. Gal 4.10 as Jewish Calendar Observances.....	118
2. Gal 4.10 as a Reference to the Imperial Cult.....	122
B. Gal 4.8–10 and the Galatian Letter.....	127
1. Gal 4.8–10 within the Argument of Gal 4.1–11.....	132
2. Gal 4.8–10 and Its Wider Context in Galatians.....	138
C. Gal 4.8–10 and the Social Setting of Galatians.....	142
Conclusions.....	146

Chapter 6. Conclusions..... 148

Introduction.....	148
A. Galatians and the Imperial Cult?.....	149
B. Reflections on Galatians and Pauline Theology.....	151
1. Who Were the Agitators?.....	152
2. Is Suffering a Neglected Theme in Galatians?.....	152
3. What Was Paul’s Attitude to the Jewish Calendar?.....	153
4. Galatians: The End of Heilsgeschichte?.....	153
5. Paul’s Cosmology and Imperial Ideology.....	154
6. The Imperial Cult and the NT?.....	155

Bibliography.....	157
Index of Ancient Sources	177
Index of Modern Authors	185
Index of Subjects	189

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of South Galatia and the <i>via Sebaste</i> at 6 B.C.	55
(Adapted from Mitchell 1993:II.map 6)	
Figure 2. Photograph of the Aqueduct of Pisidian Antioch	60
(Kelsey Archive 7.1224. Courtesy of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan)	
Figure 3. Claudian Coin Showing the Galatian Legate M. Annius Afrinius	66
(RPC 3543 © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum)	
Figure 4. Photograph of the <i>Tiberia platea</i> leading to the Propylon in Pisidian Antioch	72
(Kelsey Archive 7.1113. Courtesy of the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan)	
Figure 5. Drawing of the Augustus Temple in Pisidian Antioch	75
(Woodbridge, from Mitchell 1998:138, Courtesy of Professor S. Mitchell)	
Figure 6. Map of the Imperial Cult in Galatia.....	80
(Adapted from Mitchell 1993:II.map 6)	

Abbreviations

Abbreviations and citation conventions for ancient literature and modern scholarship follow *OCD*³ (2003), *SBL* (1999), and *IATG*² (1992) wherever possible. In addition, the following abbreviations are used, with full bibliographical details in the Bibliography:

Ael. Arist. <i>To Rome</i>	J. H. Oliver, <i>The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century After Christ Through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides</i>
ABD	D. N. Freedman (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANRW	H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i>
At.	<i>Athenaeum: Studi Periodici di Letteratura e Storia dell' Antichità</i>
Beard	M. Beard, J. North, and S. R. F. Price, <i>Religions of Rome</i> (2 vols)
BMC + Emperor	<i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i> (vol 1)
BMC + Province	<i>A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum</i> (29 vols)
Braund	D. C. Braund, <i>Augustus to Nero: 31 BC – AD 68: A Sourcebook on Roman History</i>
Brunt/Moore	Augustus, <i>Res Gestae Divi Augusti</i> , edited by P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore
CAH ²	A. K. Bowman (ed.), <i>The Cambridge Ancient History: the Augustan Empire, 43 B.C. – A.D. 69</i> (2d ed.)
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i>
EJ	V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, <i>Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius</i>
FIRA	<i>Fontes iuris Romani antiqui: leges et negotis</i>
FrGH	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
IATG ²	S. Schwertner (ed.), <i>Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete</i> (2d ed.)
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGRR	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
I.Ephesos	<i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos</i>
I.Italiae	<i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i>
I.Olympia	<i>Die Inschriften von Olympia</i>
Johnson	A. C. Johnson, et al., <i>Ancient Roman Statutes</i> .
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series
Kent	J. H. Kent, <i>Corinth: the Inscriptions 1926-1950</i>
Krzyzanowska	A. Krzyzanowska, <i>Monnaies coloniales d'Antioche de Pisidie</i>

LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LR ²	N. Lewis and M. Reinhold (eds.), <i>Roman Civilization: Sourcebook II: the Empire</i> (2d ed.)
MAMA	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i>
Mart. Ep.	Martial, <i>Epigrams</i> , translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey.
Moretti	L. Moretti, <i>Iscrizioni agonistiche greche</i>
OCD ³	S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), <i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> (3d ed.)
OMS	<i>Opera Minora Selecta: Épigraphie et Antiquités Grecques</i>
OGIS	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
PIR ²	E. Groag and A. Stein, <i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i> (2d ed.)
P.Oxy.	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i>
P.Tebt.	<i>The Tebtunis Papyri</i>
RIC	C. H. V. Sutherland (ed.), <i>The Roman Imperial Coinage, Volume 1: From 31 BC to AD 69</i> (Rev. ed.)
RPC	<i>Roman Provincial Coinage</i>
SBL	P. H. Alexander et al. (eds.), <i>The SBL Handbook of Style: for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SIG ³	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (3d ed)
Sherk	R. K. Sherk (ed.), <i>Roman Documents from the Greek East: Senatus Consulta and Epistulae to the Age of Augustus</i>
Smallwood	E. M. Smallwood, <i>Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius, and Nero</i>
SNTW	<i>Studies of the New Testament and Its World</i>
Stern	M. Stern, <i>Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism</i>
Tertullian <i>De Idolol.</i>	J. H. Waszink, <i>De Idololatria: Critical Text, Translation and Commentary</i>
Thasos II	C. Dunant and J. Pouilloux (eds.), <i>Recherches sur l'Histoire et Les Cultes de Thasos II</i>
von Aulock	H. von Aulock, <i>Münzen und Städte Lykaoniens</i>
Williams	M. H. Williams (ed.), <i>The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook</i>

Chapter 1

Galatians in Its Social and Religious Context

It is clear that our questions can only be solved through careful exegesis and historical reconstruction.
– J. M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 26

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Galatians continues to be studied with virtually as much energy as Paul doubtless expended when it was first penned. Such zeal for this short letter is understandable for many reasons. For example, this letter provides a sketch of the very beginnings of the Christian movement. Indeed, approximately one-third of Galatians is devoted to a rehearsal of Paul's early ministry (the so-called 'dark years'), including the only autobiographical mention of his call/conversion. In this narrative, Paul even reveals something of his relationship with the Jerusalem church, not least when recalling his infamous squabble with Peter at Antioch. Naturally, then, scholars, especially since the time of F. C. Baur, have harvested this narrative for reconstructing both the chronology of Paul's life and ministry and the development of his relationship with Jewish believers and with Judaism more generally.¹ Others have sought to understand this narrative's broader function within the letter.²

Furthermore, since the seminal essay of H. D. Betz on the rhetorical genre of Galatians, scholars have vigorously attempted to classify the letter in the light of the ancient rhetorical handbooks.³ Although few scholars would now defend Betz's original position that Galatians corresponds to the judicial type, several rounds of discussions on this topic have transpired over the past three decades, with the objective of assigning Galatians to a specific rhetorical species, whether judicial, epideictic, or deliberative.⁴

¹ E.g., Bauckham 2005; Nanos 2002c; Taylor 2001; Donaldson 1994; Fredriksen 1991; Dunn 1983; Dunn 1982.

² E.g. Gaventa 1986; Lyons 1985; see now Dodd 1996.

³ Betz 1975; Betz 1979:14–25.

⁴ For the forensic type, see, e.g., Betz 1975; Brinsmead 1982; for epideictic, see, e.g., Hester 2002; and for deliberative, see, e.g., Witherington 1998:25–41; Smit 1989; Hall 1987; Lyons 1985:119–20. For a survey and critique of rhetorical criticism in Galatians, see esp. Kern 1998. Kern's study, in effect, has put a moratorium on the subject by questioning whether it is even possible to identify the structure of Galatians strictly in the light of the

For other scholars, the key task in cracking the Galatians code has been to clarify the identity of the so-called agitators of Galatia, who are traditionally considered to be the implied dialogue partners in Paul's letter. Scholars have continued to debate not only the agitators' teaching via the delicate process of mirror reading, but also who they were, their place of origin, and for what party (if any) they were representatives.⁵ Indeed, even the most widely accepted beliefs among scholars regarding their identity (i.e. that they were non-mistic Jewish believers from Jerusalem) have not been immune to serious attack. In the light of these discussions, a growing number of scholars are recognising that many such previous assumptions, like chess pieces after a hard fought match, need to be reset.⁶

Of course, much energy has been expended on Galatians in an effort to grasp Paul's complex theology, particularly his view of the Mosaic Law. Indeed, in Galatians, 'comments on the Law burst upon the reader with such force that they are almost overwhelming'.⁷ Many scholars have nevertheless remained undaunted. There has been much fresh analysis here in recent years, especially in the wake of the new perspective on Paul, and the debate continues to surge forward.⁸

In all these endeavours, it is clear that pride of place in studies on Galatians has conventionally been awarded to Pauline matters, whether it be his ministry and chronology, his form of writing, his battle with opponents, or his view of the Mosaic Law. These steady winds, however, have recently begun to shift in new and refreshing directions. In his magisterial commentary on Galatians, J. L. Martyn signals this change of forecast at the outset of his project. According to Martyn, Paul's letter can only be properly understood when we focus not on Paul in the first instance, but on the original readers. He therefore invites interpreters to take a seat among the Galatian audience in order to hear the letter, as it were, with 'Galatian ears'. Only then, he argues, will we be in the best position to witness the various acts that have unfolded in the Galatian drama.⁹

Graeco-Roman handbooks on rhetoric. Although most scholars would continue to affirm that the rhetorical situation deserves attention, one must bear in mind that Galatians is not merely a rhetorical text, but a pastoral letter, thus sharing both rhetorical and epistolary features (see further the helpful essays of Nanos 2002b:323–31 and Fairweather 1994).

⁵ See, e.g., Tyson 1968; Barclay 1987; see now esp. Das 2003:17–29; Nanos 2002b:esp. 73–198; Sumney 1999.

⁶ See esp. Nanos 2002b:73–198 and the essays collected in Nanos 2002a.

⁷ Thielman 1994:119.

⁸ See, e.g., Silva 2004; Das 2003:17–48; Rapa 2001; Dunn 1997; Martyn 1995; Thielman 1994; Scott 1993; Wright 1991:137–74; Dunn 1991; Tomson 1990; Donaldson 1986.

⁹ Martyn 1997:42. Where I depart from Martyn, however, is with his application of this technique, since his ultimate aim is to hear the voices of the agitators (Martyn's 'Teachers')

Martyn's method, to be sure, seems natural enough. After all, the letter was not actually a direct response to the agitators, even if they were clearly the impetus for the readers' defection from Paul's gospel.¹⁰ Indeed, investigating the social and religious background of Paul's readers in order to shed light on the nature of Paul's argument is one of the fundamental tasks of historical-critical exegesis. In contrast with other Pauline letters – the Corinthian and Thessalonian correspondences, the letter to the Philippians and to the Romans immediately come mind – however, the local social and religious setting of Galatians has largely remained neglected.¹¹ One might therefore reasonably wonder why the inequity.

This neglect has traditionally been due to the severe limitations of our knowledge of this region. Although Sir William Ramsay's archaeological explorations at the turn of the twentieth century filled a vast lacuna in scholarship on central Anatolia, his research was largely incomplete and often hopelessly conjectural (as witnessed by how often he radically revised his own conclusions during his three decades on the field). Our inability to read Galatians against hard evidence in Galatia has therefore remained one of the fundamental assumptions among NT scholars, a view that Betz summarized well some three decades ago:

There are no archaeological findings, no walls, no inscriptions, monuments, or any other historical records which could answer the question where exactly these churches were located, what the cultural and religious milieu was in which they existed, or what became of them after they had read Paul's letter.¹²

Of course, as Betz suggested, the limited application of Graeco-Roman backgrounds in Galatians studies is also the result of the letter's uncertain destination. Indeed, NT scholars have supposed that there must have been a world of difference between the largely Celtic inhabitants of ethnic Galatia and the provincial residents of the South. Because of the fierce debates regarding the destination of Paul's letter, scholars were hesitant to utilize any external evidence in order to shed some light on the historical context of Galatians.¹³

To be sure, a handful of interpreters have sought to read Galatians against its social and religious setting. Ramsay, as is well known, utilised evidence from southern Galatia in order to bolster his claim that the letter was sent to the churches in the South as recorded in Acts 13–14.¹⁴ In spite of his insistence that we know little about the cultural and religious setting of Galatians,

through mirror reading (see further Martyn 1985b). For some helpful guidelines on mirror reading, see the foundational essay of Barclay 1987.

¹⁰ Elliott 2003:3.

¹¹ See, e.g., Ascough 2003; Wright 2002; Oakes 2001; Winter 2001; Reasoner 1999.

¹² Betz 1974 (the German original is now reprinted in Betz 1994:46–62).

¹³ See Barclay 1988:45.

¹⁴ Ramsay 1900.

Betz's commentary on Galatians drips with references to Hellenistic backgrounds.¹⁵ R. Jewett and J. M. G. Barclay, among others, have discussed more generally the nature of Gentile religious and social factors that may have contributed to the Galatian crisis.¹⁶ Although they insist that one must take one's bearings from the information within the letter, these scholars all recognize that some questions might well be answered by searching not only the text of Galatians, but also the social and religious setting of Paul's readers.

The landscape of Galatians scholarship now looks much different, although many have yet to appreciate the change of scenery. Fresh archaeological research in central Anatolia has been undertaken by B. Levick¹⁷ and now S. Mitchell.¹⁸ These scholars have advanced studies in this region considerably, providing a coherence that was found lacking in Ramsay's often-provisional conclusions. Documentary texts from western Anatolia (i.e. west of Galatia) and dating to the Roman era, moreover, have been assembled and published.¹⁹

Unlike previous generations of Galatians studies, which confined any historical discussion of Galatia to the introductory matters of the destination of the letter, studies on the attention to the original readers of Galatians have begun to gather pace. B-L. Oh, whose 2001 King's College, London, Ph.D. thesis represents this shift in scholarship, has rightly pointed out that 'the traditional reading of the letter in the light of a hypothetical reconstructed Jewish background for the agitators tends to overlook the possibility that the Galatians' own outlook and conduct might have been a contributing factor to the crisis Paul faces'.²⁰ Thus, attending to the background of the Galatian readers may affect how we understand certain sections of the letter.²¹ What is more, turning our attention to Paul's readers may yield fruit for grasping more precisely the nature of the crisis itself.

It will be helpful, then, to assess the available external evidence, especially the archaeological data from Galatia, which may help us to understand this complex letter. Our task is thus to determine to what extent we might turn beyond the text of Galatians in order to ascertain what fruit might be yielded for interpreting Paul's letter to the Galatian churches.

In this endeavour, however, we must first discuss briefly these recent approaches to the study of Galatians. Then we will be in a better position to establish what questions need to be considered in our study to achieve a better understanding the nature of the Galatian crisis. Of course, our chief aim is not

¹⁵ Perhaps one of his most influential discussions in this regard is his view that Gal 4.8–20 is a string of *topoi* that belongs to the Hellenistic theme of friendship (Betz 1979:220–40).

¹⁶ E.g. Jewett 1971; Barclay 1988.

¹⁷ Levick 1967.

¹⁸ Mitchell 1993; Mitchell and Waelkens 1998.

¹⁹ For a bibliography of these published inscriptions, see Arnold 2005:432.

²⁰ Oh 2001:18.

²¹ Oh 2001:12.

only to piece together more clearly the Galatian crisis, but also to yield a fresh reading of Galatians, and, in turn, to gain a deeper perspective on Paul's theology and the challenges it would have presented to his first converts in central Anatolia.

A. Recipient-Oriented Studies in Galatians

Recent scholars who have centred attention upon the addressees have taken two widely diverging tacks regarding the specific social and religious background that would enlighten Paul's letter. The first group has investigated the letter against an Anatolian religious setting, the second against the backdrop of the imperial cult. We must therefore review briefly and evaluate these two trends in order to determine which course carries us to a more satisfactory destination.

1. *Galatians in Its Anatolian Religious Context*

We must begin our analysis with S. Elliott, who has written the most sustained attempt to resolve several exegetical quandaries in Galatians by understanding what she argues is the pagan cultic background of Paul's readers, namely, devotion to the Mother of the Gods.²² She begins her monograph by raising several interpretative questions regarding two crucial sections of Paul's letter, the allegory of 4.21–5.1 and Paul's discussion on the Law's function in 3.19–4.11. She wonders, for example, how Paul would have expected the readers to understand his rather nebulous mountain analogy in such a pivotal section of the letter. Elliott also enters the raging debates regarding Paul's apparently negative portrayal of the Law, namely, that in subsuming the Mosaic Law under the στοιχεῖα (4.3, 9), he rendered the Law as functionally equivalent to paganism.²³

Elliott believes that these sorts of questions can be resolved only by investigating the Galatians' former devotion to the Mother of the Gods and her subservient partner Attis. In order to make the necessary links between Paul's letter and the cult, Elliott thus traces the history and activities of the Mother cult in Anatolia.²⁴ She first argues that the Mother of the Gods was worshipped in the context of a divine judicial system, as 'the Anatolians lived in constant awareness of the watchful eye of their deities, believing in their

²² Elliott 2003; Elliott 1999.

²³ Elliott 2003:16–55.

²⁴ Elliott tacitly follows Murphy-O'Connor's argument that the readers of the letter were drawn from various house churches in the northern city of Pessinus, where there was a famous temple dedicated to Cybele. For an explicit comment regarding her view on the destination, see especially Elliott 2003:6 n. 15.

power to protect as well as punish by an active righteous rage'.²⁵ Elliott then argues that the Mother of the Gods was not perceived primarily as a fertility cult, but as a guardian of both her territory and the inhabitants within her jurisdiction. Her counterpart Attis, who was often depicted as castrated or androgynous, was subordinate but nevertheless an essential model to the Mother's priests, the *galli*, who imitated the castrated state of Attis.²⁶

After some one hundred seventy pages of painstaking discussion on this background, she then returns to the letter with the hope of bringing clarity to the rhetorical situation in general, and to the allegory in Gal 4.21–5.1 and Paul's negative portrayal of the Law in particular. Regarding the crisis in Galatia, Elliott believes that the castration rituals of the *galli* are crucial for understanding both the readers' attraction and Paul's antagonism to circumcision. Here Elliott argues that Paul forcefully opposed the circumcision of the Galatians not because he thought the practice to be inherently wrong, but only because he feared that his converts, if circumcised, would fall back under the power of the Mother goddess.²⁷

More specifically, Paul formulated the allegory of the two mountain mothers in Gal 4.21–5.1 with this Anatolian context in mind since the Mother of the Gods was often depicted as the Mountain Mother. Elliott believes that the Galatian readers would have associated the Mother goddess with Hagar of Mount Sinai. On this reading, then, Paul had put together a powerful rhetorical punch that would have persuaded the Galatian readers to reject the agitators' message.²⁸ What is more, the ethical section in Gal 5–6 reinforces this territorial dichotomy, as Paul introduced the Two Ways tradition into the argument not only as exhortation, but also as a metaphorical framework that expressed the dualistic domains of the flesh and the Spirit.²⁹ Because the Galatians would have associated the Mountain Mother and her fleshly initiation rites with the flesh of circumcision, Paul's argument would have been patently obvious. Circumcision would draw them back under the sphere of slavery, not unlike their former slavery under the Mother's influence.³⁰

Although Elliott never fully returns to all the exegetical questions she raised regarding Paul's argument in Gal 3.19–4.11, she concludes by expanding her discussion of the Two Ways tradition to the flesh and Spirit dichotomy in Gal 3.1–5. Here, reminiscent of R. Jewett,³¹ she contends that the castration ritual of the *galli* provides the necessary background for Paul's terminology of

²⁵ Elliott 2003:88.

²⁶ Elliott 2003:134.

²⁷ Elliott 2003:13.

²⁸ Elliott 2003:256–7, 282–3.

²⁹ Elliott 2003:291–312.

³⁰ Elliott 2003:14, 254–5.

³¹ Jewett 1971:206–7.