

UNDER GOD?

A QUEER AND FEMINIST SUBVERSION OF SUBMISSION IN ROMANS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	vi
Acknowledgments.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Plan for Project	8
 PART I	
Chapter 1: Situating Rome and Romans.....	14
Sexuality, Gender, and Politics in the Roman World	16
<i>Kyriarchal Sexuality</i>	16
<i>Romans' Sexuality</i>	22
<i>Gendered Bodies</i>	26
History of Romans Scholarship	30
<i>The Political Paul</i>	36
<i>LGBT/Queer Interpretation and Romans 1</i>	47
<i>Feminist Approaches and De-Centering Paul</i>	54
Reconstructing Rome's <i>ἐκκλησία</i>	61
 Chapter 2: Queer and Feminist Theory and Method.....	 67
Queer Theory, Affect, and Political Critique.....	69
<i>Affect Theories and Queer(ness)</i>	75

<i>Cruel Affects and Queer (Anti)Normativity</i>	84
<i>Affective Queerness</i>	90
<i>Queer Affective Politics and Reading Romans</i>	93
Feminism, Queerness, and "ἐκκλησία-1" Assemblages	95
<i>Feminist Theory and Politics</i>	96
<i>Feminism "Meets" Queer Theory</i>	102
<i>Feminist and Queer Assemblages</i>	112
<i>Romans 1:18-32: A Brief Test Case</i>	128

PART II

Chapter 3: Faithful Submission	136
Optimistic πίστις and "Faithful Submission"	139
<i>The Optimism of Roman πίστις and fides</i>	140
<i>Jesus' Submission and πίστις in Romans 3:21-26</i>	149
πίστις ἔθνῶν	163
<i>The Faithful Submission of Rome's ἔθνη</i>	163
<i>πίστις and Paul's ἔθνη in Romans 1:1-17</i>	174
<i>πίστις and Paul's ἔθνη in Romans 3:27-5:11</i>	182
Cruel πίστις	190
<i>Cruel πίστις for Roman ἔθνη</i>	193

<i>Paul's Cruel πίστις</i>	196
Chapter 4: Faithful Subversion	206
God's Equals	210
Drowning Jesus	217
Kyriarchal Christs	221
Assembling Theo-Christology	226
 PART III	
Chapter 5: Ethical Submission	239
Political and Kyriarchal Morality	243
Praiseworthy Submission in Romans 13	250
Roman Homonationalism	268
<i>Exceptional Sexual Mores</i>	269
<i>Rome's Sexual Exceptionalism for Jews and other ἔθνη</i>	276
<i>Homonationalism in Romans 13</i>	290
Chapter 6: An Ethical ἐκκλησία?	307
Egalitarian Ethics	311
Rethinking Rebels	317
Ethnic Ethics	323
“Good” Sex?	332

Ethics in Assemblage.....	342
Conclusion	348
Kyriarchal Assemblages and Queer Affective Critiques	349
Ancient <i>ἐκκλησία</i> -l Assemblages.....	353
Queerness, Affective Historiography, and the Relevance of Romans.....	357
Bibliography	363

ABSTRACT

Under God?
A Queer and Feminist Subversion of Submission in Romans

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This dissertation argues that Paul's letter to the Romans is a participant in two assemblages, one kyriarchal and the other *ἐκκλησία*-l. Its reading of Romans employs an affective historiographical approach developed by blending queer and feminist theories. When Romans is situated within a kyriarchal assemblage, which aligned first-century bodies with the socio-sexual-political dominion of the Roman Empire, submission emerges as a posture and force that pulses through the epistle. Therefore, Paul's presentation of Jesus' *πίστις* as a model for *ἔθνη* to enter a submissive relation with God draws upon Roman uses of *πίστις*, which promised benefits for its conquered *ἔθνη* who submitted to its rule. *πίστις*, which is central to Paul's theo-Christological elaboration of God's justice in Romans 3-5, requires a cruelly optimistic submission to a God who replaces Caesar at the top of a Roman-without-Rome kyriarchy. Similarly, Paul's imperative to submit to Rome's authority in Romans 13:1-7 renders such submission explicit and shows how it can be embodied in the ethical actions of Christ-followers. The exhortation to ethical submission in Romans 13 aligns theo-Christological ethics with the *mores* of Roman elite discourse, especially with regard to sexual moderation, and presents Christ-followers as subjects worthy of rehabilitation and praise from Rome. However, by placing Romans into an *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, which encompasses the ideas, bodies, and sensations that moved within the *ἐκκλησία* of Christ-followers who gathered in Rome, it is

possible to subvert this submission. This subversion occurs when Paul's ideas are considered with the myriad responses that were proliferating among the wo/men in this assembly. Thus, Paul's faithfully submissive ideas can be heard alongside other theo-Christological ideas that were plausibly held by some Roman Christ-followers. Likewise, Paul's homonational ethics are only a few of the practical suggestions among the many plausible ethical actions that Christ-followers considered and practiced that may have simultaneously submitted to and rebelled against kyriarchy. By overlapping these kyriarchal and ἐκκλησία-1 assemblages, this dissertation concludes that the ἐκκλησία in Rome, as one among many gatherings of Christ-followers, represents a site of queerness that affects and changes bodies both ancient and contemporary.

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A swimming metaphor has been productive for this dissertation, which could be called my own attempt at swimming in and against contemporary kyriarchal currents. Swimming, like any endeavor, requires an assemblage of forces, objects, chemicals, and bodies to be done well; similarly, this dissertation has been able to “swim” successfully thanks to an assemblage of persons and forces that extend beyond myself.

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“The challenge now is to practice politics
as the art of making what appears to be impossible possible.”

-Hillary D. Rodham
May 31, 1969
Wellesley College

*Now Hillary Rodham Clinton, who should have been the first woman elected President of
the United States and whose utopian politics of possibility are equally (if not more)
necessary and challenging post-November 8, 2016*

Introduction

This dissertation is fundamentally political, as its title (echoing of the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance) signals. It presumes the theo-political notion of “under God” is a problem that traps possibilities. Under God: justice, equality, and true change are impossible. Therefore, I attempt to dislodge theo-politics, particularly as expressed and influenced by biblical/Pauline interpretation, from this gridlock. I struggle to make the impossible possible.

Of course, I do not struggle alone. “Struggle includes the power to resist but it also seeks the power to change,” writes feminist theorist, the*logian, and biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose work envisions struggle against wo/men’s submission in communal and hopeful terms.¹ Reading Paul’s letter to the Romans has been a particular struggle for queer wo/men due to 1:26-27:

διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας, αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν, ὁμοίως τε κεῖ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες.

Because of this, God handed them over into passions of dishonor. For their women traded their natural usage for that which is against nature; and, likewise, the men, repenting the natural usage of women, were inflamed in their yearning for each other, men who, with men, achieved disfigurement and received their due retribution which was needed of their error among themselves.²

¹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The*logy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 16. As she notes in this introduction to the volume, struggle is a long-present theme within her vast contributions to feminism, and it framed an older collection of her essays: Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklēsia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993). On pp.2-3 of that volume, she observes how many liberal Protestants have questioned her ongoing work that struggles against the Catholic Church’s restrictive positions toward women as well as how many feminists (often with understandable reasons) relinquish the struggle with religion or the Bible. Based in part on personal experience, a similar questioning (framed by a similar relinquishing) is often the reaction of queer bodies (perhaps especially within the field of queer theory) to biblical scholars who continue to queerly probe biblical texts (and perhaps Paul’s letters in particular).

² Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Greek or Latin are my own.

These two verses arguably contain the Bible's most infamous, overt, and encompassing condemnation of same-sex intercourse, and it is its sole explicit condemnation of female homoeroticism. Throughout the passage's interpretive history, Rom 1:26-27 has been used to condemn, oppress, silence, and restrict queer bodies and practices. Despite its harmful history, readers, queer and otherwise, have long struggled with and against its words and insisted that it be interpreted differently. If not repelling them entirely from Romans, the harmful effects have drawn queer impulses to these verses in near exclusion to the rest of the epistle. As it offers a queer reading to Romans, this dissertation largely looks *beyond* Romans 1:26-27 and struggles with question of queerness in the rest of Paul's longest letter.

Beyond queer struggles with 1:26-27, reading Romans—and Paul's letters more generally—is, for many wo/men throughout history and today, a struggle. I include myself among those in this often-frustrated grouping: I am a lifelong struggler with Paul. In fact, it is one of my core assumptions that the only way to misread or misunderstand Romans is to offer an interpretation that does not leave author and readers alike *continuing to struggle* with Paul's letter and the *ἐκκλησία*—the assembly, or assemblage as I will suggest, of Christ-followers in Rome—to whom the epistle is addressed. Struggle, as Schüssler Fiorenza suggests, is an ongoing process that is required for change. Struggle subverts oppression.

This project *engages*—but never solves—struggles with Romans (both a Pauline text and a community/people). It does so by revealing two different assemblages that affect how Paul's letter is heard or read: kyriarchal assemblage (motivated by the hierarchal imperial rule of first-century Rome) and *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage (driven by the

debates and discussions of the gathering of first-century bodies who first heard Paul's letter).³ When they are captured by the merging of theories of affect, feminism, and queerness, assemblages, as I theorize and harness them, are amorphous affective conglomerations that ooze, draw, repulse, move, and shift within, between, and among many bodies.⁴ Assemblages interact with, yet also diverge from, one another. Although they appear starkly different, these two assemblages often overlap in-between bodies and ideas; they are *not* stable, binary opposites.

This project places Romans into both kyriarchal and ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage, mostly treating the two separately, in order to uncover the submissions and subversions held within the letter and the contexts in which it was delivered. These two placements of Romans uncover solutions to problems posed by the letter and, simultaneously, unearth new problems with it. It is only by placing them together that they can offer ways to subvert the current of submission that is present in the letter, a presence which has unleashed and sustained oppression upon countless bodies.

Submission provides a thematic lens for reading Romans, one that is often hidden within its hopeful anticipations of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ("God's justice"). I suggest that such submission pulsates in the pages of Paul's letter, but submission's affect draws focus to particular texts where it is most explicit (such as Romans 13) or most cruel (such as

³ These two assemblages have close resonance and correspondence with the "two worlds" Schüssler Fiorenza describes in her vision: "that of the kyriarchal world of domination, violence, and injustice on the one hand and that of the gender-free divine world of wellbeing, justice, and love on the other." *Transforming Vision*, 20. By articulating these worlds in terms of assemblage (and its connections to queerness), I further her vision that hopes to make that latter world a reality through an ongoing feminist cooperation that offers solidarity in collective struggle.

⁴ My theoretical development is elaborated in chapter 2. My definition of assemblage is closest to that of Jasbir K. Puar, whose theories bear the strongest influence and resemblance to my own development of these concepts. See Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), esp. pp. 191-202, 204-205.

Romans 3).⁵ When these pulses are intentionally wielded by systems of power, ignored, and/or left dormant, they enact or enable oppression. I direct my attention to two instances: submission's implicit appearance as "faithful submission" in Romans 3 and its explicit mention as "ethical submission" in Romans 13. I will also, more briefly, connect these submissive concepts to how they are made possible by appearing at the letter's introduction, in 1:5 and 1:18-32. Further, though so far left untouched here, submission's pulse can also be found explicitly in Romans 8 and 10 and implicitly in many other unexamined spaces in the letter.⁶

This focus on submission drives the placement of Romans into a kyriarchal assemblage. Kyriarchy, a term theorized by Schüssler Fiorenza, identifies the ways in which power—in particular, power as *domination* (the flip-side of submission)—is structured and enforced by a hierarchy through which multiple factors, including gender, race, sexual practice, and class, are defined, ranked, and regulated in order to privilege a few bodies and oppress most others.⁷ By operating along so many axes and encouraging their consideration in isolation, kyriarchy divides and conquers oppressed bodies. Following Schüssler Fiorenza and feminist scholars as well as furthering the specific affective work of Joseph Marchal, I view the submissions and oppressions of kyriarchy as operating as a machinic kyriarchal *assemblage*.⁸ This offers an alternative way of thinking about the intersections of diverse identities held within bodies, and it admits that

⁵ The Greek word for submission, *ὑποτάσσω*, literally means "to place under" but often translates in the active as "to make [an object] submit" and in the passive "to submit [to someone]" or "to be made to submit." See "*ὑποτάσσω*," LSJ, 1897.

⁶ See especially Rom 8:7, 20; 10:3.

⁷ E.g., Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 5-6. See fuller discussion and definition of kyriarchy in chapter 2.

⁸ Again, see full elaboration in chapter 2, but for Marchal's connection of kyriarchy and assemblage see Joseph A. Marchal, "Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics? Restaging Feminist Intersections and Queer Exceptions" *Culture and Religion* 15 (2014): 171-174.

the complexity of kyriarchy's hold can still compel bodies even (sometimes *especially*) when they appear most resistant to it.

Paul's letter to Rome was written, heard, and read in the context of the Roman Empire of the first century C.E., one manifestation of kyriachal assemblage. This imperial context influences the rhetoric of Romans and the reactions it produces within the bodies of its author and audiences, enabling the submissive postures discussed above. The idea that Paul's rhetoric can resist and/or align with the politics and ideologies of the Roman Empire is already admitted in much biblical scholarship and, therefore, is not itself surprising or noteworthy.⁹ The submission that I track and uncover in Romans is *affective*: it is a force (sometimes violent and intentional but, more often, subtle and unrecognized), motivated by kyriachal assemblage, that compels and drives bodies to remain stuck in its sway.¹⁰

I reveal these submissive impulses with the aid of affectively-driven queer critique. The “faithful submission” of Pauline πίστις, seen especially in Romans 3:21-31, becomes apparent when considered through the lens of what Lauren Berlant calls “cruel optimism.”¹¹ Likewise, the “ethical submission” in Romans 13 emerges when Jasbir K. Puar's “homonationalism” is considered in a more ancient setting.¹² This project uncovers previously unseen dynamics and dimensions of submission in Romans by considering the ancient manifestations of concepts first found in the contemporary scenarios with which most queer affective critique engages.¹³ If these submissions—and

⁹ As scholars under Paul and Politics and postcolonial headings have revealed (see more in chapter 1).

¹⁰ Thus, affect theory—and its impact on contemporary queer theories—will be critical to this endeavor, as chapter 2 will explore.

¹¹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). Chapter 3 elaborates this argument alongside Berlant.

¹² Puar, esp. pp.1-78; chapter 5 develops this argument.

¹³ Though “unseen” they have perhaps been *sensed* (affectively) in various formulations.

the kyriarchal assemblage that motivates them—are to be subverted, their affective forces must be considered.

However, I *also* contend that submission—and its pulsing current in Romans in particular—can and must be subverted, or struggled with, in ways that permit new and different conversations to emerge from this letter and its “ἐκκλησία-1” audience, both ancient and modern. Schüssler Fiorenza insists this struggle is not new and that more “democratic” forms of power and community have always existed and moved toward positive socio-political change and equality.¹⁴ Therefore, she also foregrounds the ἐκκλησία of wo/men. This ἐκκλησία of wo/men existed as a historical certainty in the city of Rome, to whom Paul addressed his epistle.¹⁵ This gathering—one among many others in the first century and beyond—manifests what I call ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage, which differs from kyriarchal assemblage by resisting, subverting, and sometimes aligning with its submissive forces.

Following feminist scholars who de-center Paul, especially through the call to move “beyond the heroic Paul” as urged by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura Nasrallah, I argue that Paul’s rhetoric is most submissive as long as he remains the sole or privileged focal point.¹⁶ Therefore, this submission is best subverted by revealing the ways in which Paul’s voice was *one among many* in Rome’s ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage. Some bodies who gathered in the ἐκκλησία of wo/men in Rome may already have been

¹⁴ E.g., Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 332-352. Again, see full history of this concept for Feminist Biblical Interpretation in chapter 1 and its expanded theoretical explanation in chapter 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 369.

¹⁶ See especially, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah, “Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul” in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 161-174; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 149-173.

subverting submission to Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage. Paul’s letter participated in—and probably sparked and weighed in on—*ongoing* discussions and debates in this assembly. This project proliferates some plausible reconstructions of these *ἐκκλησία*-l conversations. By doing so, I continue to make more concrete the historical certainty of the *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men and its struggle to subvert kyriarchal submissions.

By theorizing *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, a mobile and always shifting conglomeration of bodies who think and sense in diverse ways, I emphasize that these conversations and subversions were never settled. People disagreed and debated, radical egalitarian ideas and strict enforcements of submission existed in close—if sometimes tense—proximity. Indeed, some, even most, individual bodies held these tensions within them. Therefore, I suggest multiple ways that these bodies could have responded to Paul’s words or the broader questions that underlie them. In “Faithful Subversion,” I proliferate some ways Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* could have considered “theo-Christology,” or ideas about God that specifically relate to their reasons for following Christ, in ways that differ from Paul’s employment of *πίστις* (especially *πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*).¹⁷ I continue the themes of this subversion in “An Ethical *Ἐκκλησία*?” by considering the complex responses that emerge from enacting these discussions of diverse theo-Christologies—i.e., “theo-Christological ethics.” Through these proliferations, a changing *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage emerges in contrast to the submission of kyriarchal assemblage.¹⁸

¹⁷ I assume those gathered in the *ἐκκλησία* and those whom Paul addresses could all be designated as “Christ-followers” throughout this dissertation.

¹⁸ However, though it contrasts, it is never entirely opposite; *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblages still hold alignments with kyriarchal ones.

In theorizing *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage as a motivator of change, this project ultimately conceives this assemblage—and its ancient manifestations proliferated here—as an example of how “queerness” is an assemblage.¹⁹ As the ensuing chapters elaborate, this use of queerness does not deny its relations to sexuality, but it sees sexuality as one manifestation—often burdened with excessive significance—of a queerness that courses through diverse bodies and that cannot be cleaved from gender, race, class, or anything else that affects these bodies.²⁰ Paul’s letters have long been used to hold bodies in submission in ways that have inhibited diverse queernesses across time. Even though this project focuses on ancient texts, contexts, and communities, its emphasis on queerness shows that its foci are equally contemporary. The analyses that follow prompt us to consider the theo-political implications of submissive affective forces and the kyriarchal assemblages that compel them. Simultaneously, by emphasizing *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage, these analyses remind us that bodies are always working toward change, even if it is slow, imperceptible, and always susceptible to kyriarchal draws. With such reminders, what could be impossible is slowly but continually made possible.

Plan for Project

This project proceeds in three parts, each with two chapters that separately situate the competing assemblages that frame these discussions. Part one continues from this introduction and provides the groundwork for the analyses that follow in parts two and three. Its two chapters place this project within histories of scholarly discourse in and

¹⁹ Puar, 204-205.

²⁰ Gayle S. Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in Rubin, *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 149 (originally published in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* ed. Carole S. Vance [Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984]).

across the academic disciplines of biblical studies, classics, queer theory, and feminism. Rather than describing the current status of these scholarly discussions, these first two chapters establish, within these contexts, my own theoretical and methodological approach to decentering Paul and his letter to Rome within *ἐκκλησία*-1 and kyriarchal assemblages.

Unlike the other two parts, which each correspond to specific segments of Romans, the first part does not feature lengthy exegesis. However, because of the passage's sustained hold on discussions of sexuality and gender, both chapters will address the ongoing issues posed by Romans 1:26-27 (and its context in vv.18-32). As chapter 1 describes the histories of LGBT/Queer readings of Paul it frames the history of interpreting Romans 1:18-32 with the question: can and should anything new be said? This question lingers into chapter two's placement of Paul's ideas into a plausible discussion with other ideas that were proliferating about gender and sexuality in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*. Here, Romans 1:18-32 offers a test case to show how wo/men reacted to its participation in their *ἐκκλησία*. Though the question above is left unanswered (allowing the reading to decide independently), this dissertation ultimately de-centers Romans 1:26-27 from its analysis in order to open spaces elsewhere in Romans for queer and feminist reading.²¹

Also unlike the other two parts, this first one is divided not by the two assemblages but by the largest differences in scholarship from which they draw, the first establishing historical context within classics and biblical studies and the second addressing theoretical contexts within queer theory and feminism. Chapter one,

²¹ This de-centering does potentially open new possibilities for future queer returns to these verses.

“Situating Rome and Romans,” focuses on the first-century historical context of Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* and Paul’s letter to it, and establishes the letter’s context as literary evidence. Stemming from the project’s queer and feminist theo-political approach, this chapter first describes, by drawing from the work within classics, the ways sexuality and gender were *political* constructions in first-century Rome. Following this broader contextualization, it situates biblical/Pauline scholarship’s approaches to Romans alongside these first-century socio-sexual-politics. Chapter two, “Queer and Feminist Theory and Method,” moves from the first century into the twentieth and twenty-first as it describes the broader queer and feminist theories upon which this project draws.²² Drawing especially from Audre Lorde, Gayle Rubin, Jasbir Puar, Lauren Berlant, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Laura Nasrallah, and Joseph A. Marchal, this chapter describes queer affective critique, feminist politics, and the messy relations between queer theory and feminism, and ultimately develops and harnesses my own theory of assemblage and its relations to queerness and affect.

Contextualized and prepared with these theories, Part Two moves more directly to Paul’s letter, with its first chapter exegeting it within Rome’s first-century kyriarchal assemblage and its second decentering it and placing it as a participant in the diverse and dynamic *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. This part features the developing theo-Christologies of first-century Christ-followers, especially analyzing their employments of the term *πίστις*, traditionally translated as “faith.” With regard to Paul’s letter, this part presents an exegesis of Romans 3-5, broadly, with 3:21-31 receiving the most sustained attention.

²² This temporal shift is accompanied by a spatial shift: from Rome (of the first century) to, mostly and certainly dominantly, the United States (of the contemporary era).

Chapter three, “Faithful Submission” deals directly with this section of Paul’s letter, starting with the presentation of Jesus Christ and his πίστις in 3:21-31. I situate πίστις within the propaganda of Rome’s imperial conquest, which benefitted from promises of loyal πίστις to ensure the submissive behavior of its conquered ἔθνη, and I show how these promises of πίστις enable ancient fantasies of upward mobility that produce attachments akin to what Lauren Berlant calls “cruel optimism.” Applying these kyriarchal pulls to Paul’s letter, I show how, continuing from its introduction in 1:5, Paul’s use of πίστις in Romans 3-5 participates in this faithful submission.

Chapter four, “Faithful Subversion” considers alternative responses to Rome’s cruel optimism based on different interpretations of Jesus, God, and πίστις (or lack thereof). Considering the variety of ideas within Rome’s ἐκκλησία, this chapter proliferates several different, often contradictory interpretations of theo-Christology that continue to align with and subvert Rome’s kyriarchy as all of these bodies continue to tread in imperial waters. The chapter concludes by putting all of these voices together in conversation—one that includes Paul’s epistolary voice—and analyzes what emerges in the conversation (or collision) of diverse theo-Christological ideas as they were plausibly expressed in different ways by diverse bodies.

Following the movement of Paul’s letter, Part Three focuses on the ethics of Christ-followers; however, it quickly becomes evident that the “ethical section” of Romans (chapters 12-15) cannot be divorced from the theo-Christological discussions that precede it. Submission’s thematic pulse continues through the epistle closing chapters, as chapter five, “Ethical Submission” shows. In this chapter, the ethical ideas in Romans 13 are exegeted alongside imperial ethics and the socio-sexual-political

structuring of morality. Across Rome's empire, the official discourse surrounding ethics—which include sexual ethics as an inseparable dimension—affected more “popular” mores, including those of conquered ἔθνη and Roman Jews. Jasbir Puar's “homonationalism”—a particular form of “sexual exceptionalism” that allows certain “queer” bodies to become praiseworthy under a national/imperial gaze—can be applied to this ancient context, where many non-elite bodies attempted to conform to imperial ethics in order to benefit and rise on its socio-sexual-political hierarchy. The regulations of sexual and ethical moderation in vv.8-14 prove inseparable from the ethical mandate to submit to the ruling authorities of Roman of vv.1-7 in order to gain praise. Romans 13, therefore, especially highlights how Pauline ethics participate in Roman-style homonationalism.

However, these homonational ethics were neither unique to Paul nor the only ethical ideas held by Christ-followers. Therefore, chapter six, “An Ethical ἐκκλησία?” once again situates Paul's epistolary voice as one participant in the discussions and debates in Rome's ἐκκλησία. This chapter shows how the binary of “submission” or “rebellion” to Rome cannot capture the plurality of ways different bodies followed Christ while negotiating the risks and demands of kyriarchal assemblage. Moving beyond the ethical questions of Romans 13, this chapter considers other ethical responses that could emerge from the differing theo-Christological ideas that were proliferated in chapter four. If Paul's submissive notion of πίστις underlies his homonational ethics, then what different ethical responses might emerge from other theo-Christological starting points? Emphasizing how Christ-followers were already grappling with such questions, this

chapters considers plausible ethical ideas and embodiments that respond to pressing questions of imperial politics, sexual praxis, and ethnic diversity.

This project reads Paul's letters through the lenses of two assemblages: one kyriarchal (largely seen in chapters three and five) and the other *ἐκκλησία-1* (chapters four and six). The conclusion considers major themes that emerge from these largely separate treatments and emphasizes the necessity of overlapping and treating both assemblages together. It shows how affective critique uncovers important, ongoing impacts of Paul's letter to the Romans that continue the work of kyriarchal assemblages when bodies are uncritically submitted "under God." At the same time, it emphasizes the other relations and positions that only become possible when Paul's voice is de-centered and placed alongside many others in a diverse *ἐκκλησία-1* assemblage. Indeed, these diverse theo-political impulses exist not only today but also in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* of the first century and throughout a long history that precedes and follows it.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

SITUATING ROME AND ROMANS

Both Rome's *ἐκκλησία* and Paul's letter to it emerged within the historical period of the first century C.E. and in the socio-political context of Rome's empire as it ascended in power and dominance and conquered many *ἔθνη* to expand its territorial boundaries. The first section of this chapter, "Sexuality, Gender, and Politics in the Roman World," situates Rome's *ἐκκλησία* and Paul's letter in this socio-political climate of Rome's empire and its kyriarchy. This section draws especially from scholarship within the field of classics and emphasizes how gender and sexuality were inseparable from Rome's socio-political system: both were constructed to support and enforce kyriarchy. However, as the second subsection suggests, although imperial norms of sexuality and gender affected and regulated all bodies, the official structures of sexuality cannot capture all of the lived experiences—sexual, gendered, and/or political—of every body living under Roman rule. While this thicker description of what could be called "Romosexuality" rarely mentions biblical texts, describing this wider kyriarchal context is essential to my arguments that show how this Romosexuality produced impulses that compelled diverse first-century bodies, including Christ-followers, to align with its socio-sexual-political norms—what I will later coin "Romanormativity."¹

¹ The term "Romosexuality" comes from the conference theme upon which a volume emerged in Jennifer Inglehart, ed., *Ancient Rome and the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also Inglehart, "Introduction: Romosexuality: Rome, Homosexuality, and Reception" in Inglehart, ed., 1-35. My neologism "Romanormativity" riffs off theirs, along with Lisa Duggan's term "homonormativity" discussed in chapter 2.

However, this project's *biblical* interpretations do not emerge solely from classics; they are also situated within current scholarly conversations in Pauline studies, itself a "branch" of New Testament studies.² It participates across and in-between the boundaries of several areas of inquiry into Paul's letters, and it draws from a long—and sometimes quite arduous—history of scholarship and interpretation of the epistle to the Romans.³ This section gives an overview of scholarship on Romans and Paul within the areas of "Paul and Politics," LGBT/Queer Interpretations, and Feminist Interpretations.⁴ In overviewing LGBT/Queer biblical scholarship, Romans 1:18-32 will come into explicit view, as LGBT/Q approaches to Romans variously interpret this passage to near exclusion. While feminist approaches to Romans have cast their interpretive nets more widely, Roman 16's explicit address of specific women in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* has consistently drawn attention in feminist interpretations. As evidence of women's participations, Romans 16 plays an important role in grounding this endeavor, as seen in the final section, "Reconstructing Rome's *ἐκκλησία*." This section anticipates the theoretical development and applications of *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage and gives an overview of the historical reconstructions of Rome's *ἐκκλησία*. Based on the relative paucity of reconstructive data beyond Romans 16, it draws on feminist scholarship on the politics of invisibility to show the high probability of gendered, ethnic, sexual, political and socio-economic diversity within and among the bodies who comprised this *ἐκκλησία*.

² Which, of course, in turn, is part of the wider umbrella of biblical studies.

³ Of Paul's letters, Romans easily holds the most ink and pages of interpretation, and it arguably could be called the most commented-upon book of the New Testament.

⁴ As an interpretation of Romans, it also unavoidably draws from and participates in conversations from the "New Perspective on Paul," although I do not purport to directly address any questions raised by this important development in the situation and interpretation of Paul's letters. However, many of my conclusions have implications for this conversation, Paul's situation within Judaism, and how early *ἐκκλησίαι* related to first-century *συναγωγαί*.

Sexuality, Gender, and Politics in the Roman World

Since this project considers Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, Paul, and Paul's letters as products of kyriarchal assemblage in this imperial context, I frequently draw upon other (largely textual) sources produced in this context, mostly produced by the elites, either native Roman or, in the case of Philo, Jewish-Egyptian. These examples almost always relate to ancient arrangements of gender and sexuality, though sometimes the relation may be less apparent since these socio-political factors were related, in particular, to ancient arrangements of race/ethnicity and class. While both feminist and queer theories prioritize these "intersectionalities," their primary focus has been on the (excessive) significances of gender and sexuality. Subsequently, this focus remains in the background as the project uses and analyzes these examples. In order to situate the *ἐκκλησία*-l bodies and voices under consideration, therefore, it is helpful to begin with an overview of some ways that gender and sexuality were arranged and experienced in first-century Rome.

Kyriarchal Sexuality

Roman sexuality and its regulation generally arranged sexual acts and preferences in ways that mirrored its socio-political hierarchy.⁵ One's sexual acts could affect one's placement on this scale, thus making it a "socio-sexual-political" hierarchy that encouraged what can be called "Romosexuality" and "Romosexual" behavior. Generally speaking, writers in the ancient Greco-Roman world categorized sexual acts in terms of φύσις, "nature," and, therefore, acts could be *κατὰ φύσιν* ("according to nature" or

⁵ Just as both gender and sexuality are socio-political arrangements today, as queer theory especially has shown (see chapter 2).

“natural”) or *παρὰ φύσιν* (“against nature” or “unnatural”).⁶ While these terms present classification in binary terms, authors often make clear that some acts—generally under the “unnatural” heading—are even less natural than others. It quickly becomes apparent that, though based in a definition of “nature,” what is “natural” is the socio-political hierarchy by which society has come to be “naturally” organized.⁷

The ancient second-century writer Artemidorus’ analysis of sexual acts in dreams shows how sexuality was not a separate sphere from Roman society and politics. Dreams with “natural” acts foretell positive results, while dreams with “unnatural” ones could spell potential disaster.⁸ In either case, the effects these dreams foretell do not correspond with the bedroom: they have implications for “non-sexual” life in Roman society, such as political success/failure, familial happiness, or economic downfall. Indeed, these interpretations of dreams—sexual and not—rarely, if ever, foretell *sexual* results. Regardless of their actual sexual desires and practices, Romans do not appear to have looked to dream interpretation to reveal promises or pitfalls of their sex lives.⁹ Thus, sexuality affected society and politics; society and politics arranged sexuality.¹⁰

⁶ Often alongside acts that are *κατὰ/παρὰ νόμος* (“according to/against law”). See discussions in Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3 (New York: Vintage Books, 1986; repr. 1988), 17-25; John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 17-23; Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 249-258 (esp. pp.250-252), as well as 175-186; Stephen D. Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces In and Around the Bible* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 140-143.

⁷ “This is to say that although it seems natural to us to discuss sex in terms of nature and ‘unnatural,’ the ‘naturalness’ of these categories is itself a sort of cultural illusion. Like sexuality, ‘nature’ (as applied to sex) has a history.” Winkler, 18. See also Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 250-252; Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 140.

⁸ Along these lines, see discussions of Artemidorus in Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 4-36; Winkler, 17-44; Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 175-186.

⁹ Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 175; Winkler, 27-28.

¹⁰ Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 175-177; Winkler, 24-25; Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 4-16. Foucault concludes his analysis of Artemidorus by observing, “We can summarize all this by saying that the guiding thread of Artemidorus’ interpretation, insofar as it is concerned with the predictive value of sexual dreams, implies the breaking down and ordering of such dreams into elements (personages or acts) that are, by nature, social elements; and that it indicates a certain way of qualifying sexual acts in terms of the manner

Artemidorus is not exceptional: his work has become the illustration *par excellence* arrangements of Roman sexuality because his treatment of sexual acts is the most comprehensive.¹¹ Rome's socio-sexual-political hierarchy can be confirmed by other, less systematic, comments and treatments, including graffiti, fragments of papyri, and visual art.¹² Roman sexuality, in its elite presentations and regulation, confirmed the structure of its kyriarchal politics and society: elite men were on top and all others were under them in every sense.¹³ These "others"—who were, in fact, almost the entirety of Rome—fell into various ranks below the most elite, and they often jockeyed for social mobility, wanting to be seen by all others (especially those on top) as most proximate (and ideally identical) to the elite.¹⁴ One's "natural" sexual position or proclivities,

in which the dreaming subject maintains, as the subject of the dreamed-of act, his position as a social subject" (33). See also Moore, 141-145; David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 36-38.

¹¹ Indeed, Winkler terms Artemidorus a "ventriloquist" and concludes, "Thus, Artemidorus in his own way illustrates once more that 'nature' means culture...." Winkler, 43, see further pp.41-44.

¹² Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 29-186; Natalie Boymel Kampen, ed. *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; orig. ed., 1999), 177-245; John R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art 100 B.C.-A.D. 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Amy Richlin outlines the development of this history as it originates in feminist classics; see Amy Richlin, "Zeus and Metis: Foucault, Classics, and Feminism," *Helios* 18 (1991): 160-180; in particular, see pp.167-168; 172-175. See also, Marilyn B. Skinner, "Parasites and Strange Bedfellows: A Study in Catullus' Political Imagery," *Ramus* 8 (1979): 137-152; Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; orig. 1983); Judith P. Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985). See also Brooten, "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women and Female Homoeroticism," in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality*, ed. Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan, and Margaret R. Miles (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 61-87.

¹³ "The highly class-stratified nature of Roman society is an essential component in the construction of Roman sexuality—the two systems can hardly be understood independently." Richlin, "Not Before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the *Cinaedus* and the Roman Law against Love Between Men," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3 (1993): 532. This is confirmed by Artemidorus' systematic treatment: "It needs to be understood, then, that for Artemidorus what determines the predictive meaning of a dream, and hence in a certain way the moral value of the act dreamed of, is the condition of the partner, and not the form of the act itself." Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 18; emphasis added. Along similar lines, but looking specifically at those sexual acts classified as *παρὰ φύσιν*, Winkler observes: "The basic idea seems to be that unnatural acts do not involve any representation of human social hierarchy." Winkler, 38.

¹⁴ We will see how sexual performance in particular plays a role in this jockeying, especially in chapter 5, "Ethical Submission."

therefore, depends on one's position in society and politics (often also framed in natural terms). Less natural or "unnatural" sexuality, to differing degrees, disturbs or defies the socio-political order.¹⁵

In its official and most recorded formulations, Rome's sexual hierarchy is most often concerned with sexuality that affects elite men. Therefore, it largely considers: who penetrates whom and where?¹⁶ The simple answer to this question is that elite men can penetrate whomever they want, wherever they want, and whenever they want; however, their penetrative unrestrictedness is countered by a general imperative that those on "top" should never "bottom"—i.e., be penetrated. Employing Jonathan Walters' phrase, in order to enforce their socio-political dominance in and over all, Roman elite men must be "impenetrable penetrators."¹⁷

A hierarchal "grid" can be laid out that classifies the varieties of penetrations that accord to the preferences of those on top, and a number of prohibitions emerge.¹⁸ These almost exclusively concern the penetration of elite men and those most proximate to them (i.e., the men who may one day be among the elite and the women who may one day produce a new generation of elites).¹⁹ Those who fall outside these proximities and are

¹⁵ Therefore, as examples below will show, particularly "barbaric" (to use the Roman racial slander) ἔθνη conquered by (or in battle with) Rome often have innate proclivities to unnatural and immoderate sexual practice.

¹⁶ The "penetration model" of Roman sexuality, which follows the observations of the feminist scholars listed above in n.12, especially Brooten, "Paul's Views on the Nature of Women and Female Homoeroticism." It is also developed and made the dominant model for discussing Roman sexuality through the work of Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 29-30; Winkler, 11, 33-44; Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 29-28; Williams, 177-245, esp. pp.177-183; Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 29-43; Holt N. Parker, "The Teratogenic Grid," in *Roman Sexualities*, 47-65; Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 144-146; Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014; orig., 2005), 7.

¹⁷ Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 30.

¹⁸ See especially Parker, 48-49; Williams, 178, see further pp.178-197.

¹⁹ Thus, the observations of Winkler and others above that sexuality merely reinforces the "natural" social order. See also Williams, 103-136.

well below the elite tiers of society can be penetrated by the elite with indiscretion, with slaves being the most vulnerable.²⁰ From the view of Rome's elite and their sexual protocol, because these lower and lowest status bodies were naturally unnatural and in terms of sexuality, they could penetrate and be penetrated however they liked among themselves, generally speaking, so long as they did not penetrate into the upper echelons of Rome.

Penetration, however, does not capture the full picture of sexuality and its regulation in the Greco-Roman world; indeed, it does not even cover the ways in which elites proscribed and regulated sexuality from their dominant positions. Sexuality, especially in terms of sexual desire, was also regulated in elite discourses by the terms of "moderation."²¹ A true Roman male of high social regard and worthy of high political position should not want to have too much sex, even if it is natural. His sexual appetite—or desire—should be controlled and orderly, regardless of his outlet for penetration. For the Roman elite, it is immoderation that often captures what is unnatural about sexuality. Desire for too much sex, desire to be penetrated, and desire to defy the social order all betray a lack of elite moderation.²² And if one cannot moderate one's self at a "natural" level, how can one be expected to govern others—family, society, empire?²³

²⁰ See especially Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16-29; Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 82-100; Marchal, "The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul's Letter to Philemon" *JBL* 130 (2011): 751-760; Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 250-252; Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1985; repr. 1990), 215-216.

²¹ Captured especially by Greek terms *ἐγκρατεία* and *σωφροσύνη*; see Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 63-77.

²² See further discussions throughout Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, especially surrounding diet and economics.

²³ Williams, 137-176; Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 65-76; Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 32-47; Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21-29.

These regulations apply to bodies most proximate to Roman elite men, especially those who fall under their responsibility. In particular, Roman sexual protocols are equally concerned with the sexuality of elite Roman women. A similar rule of moderation can be stated for the elite Roman women whom these men married: their desire should not be excessive and should only be for penetration by elite Roman men, ideally their husbands.²⁴ However, according to the kyriarchal model, the status of these women is not the primary concern. Though their unnatural impulses may be taken as indication of non-elite birth and status, immoderation in elite women ultimately reflects the poor control of *a man*, most often her husband or father. The discourse of Greco-Roman sexuality, when based on the perspectives of elite men at or near the top of the kyriarchy, is almost exclusively concerned with maintaining a socio-sexual-political hierarchy that affirms their dominance and places all others into patterns of submission under them.²⁵ Since this construction of sexuality, both in terms of the ideals it upholds and the unnatural behaviors it rejects, does not neatly conform to modern “heterosexuality” and its distinction from “homosexuality,” these first-century sexual protocols and their ideals might better be termed “Romosexuality.”

Thus far, this presentation of such Romosexuality has focused upon how it was constructed and regulated in the elite discourse of Rome’s empire, which therefore works unsurprisingly to establish its ongoing kyriarchal control. It is necessary to establish the more-or-less “official” ideology because these perspectives represent the majority of the texts and materials to which scholars have access. Furthermore, the kyriarchal

²⁴ Williams, 148-151; Knust, 37-44.

²⁵ See Giulia Sissa, *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient World*, trans. George Staunton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 79-88.

assemblage of Rome's Empire communicated to bodies of lower status the desirability of conforming to elite sexual *mores*, even though its elite were unconcerned with the sexual praxes of most of its inhabitants, many of whose "depravity" was presumed incurable and needed to be kept at bay through conquest, control, and promises of upward mobility for attempts at conformity. The draws of kyriarchal power and domination—and its promises of socio-political stability—affect bodies beyond the elite and encourages the enforcement of elite sexual protocols in other, less elite, communities and contexts. The chapters that follow will consider some of the ways these less elite bodies—especially of conquered *ἔθνη*—were affected and governed by this ideology.

Romans' Sexuality

This does not mean, however, that these were the *only* ways people thought about sexuality, and *certainly* this does not mean that, in terms of sexual practice, all bodies (elite and not) conformed to these protocols as they were able and/or willing. Although bodies could not avoid awareness of the prescriptions and restrictions of this kyriarchal view, sexualities—and the bodies that contained and practiced them—were diverse across first-century Rome and did not and could not always conform to Romosexuality. Even among the elite men who defined and benefitted most from these sexual arrangements, their actual practices frequently deviated from the norm, often without consequences when he who made the exception also made the rules (e.g., Roman emperors).²⁶ Beyond the small world of the empire's elite, the number of these deviations—great or small—likely proliferated as the embodiment of sexuality expanded

²⁶ As Suetonius relates of Augustus' exploits with the wives of his political rivals (notably Antony's), see Suetonius, *Lives of Caesars* II.lxix-lxxi. See further discussion in Catharine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 348-351.

in bodily assemblages that also embody diverse genders, races, ethnicities, classes, and geographical locations.

Indeed, as feminist classicists have long established, “subcultures” existed within the Greco-Roman world, wherein wo/men were able to embrace and embody their desires with others in ways that deviated from the cultural norm. Bernadette Brooten, in particular, has established that, despite intense condemnation and erasure, some *women loved women* in ancient Rome. Those three italicized words contain much radicality, perhaps the “loved” even more than the “women.” When discussed (as in Romans 1:26), sexual intercourse between women is not just castigated as (extremely) *παρὰ φύσιν*: it is done so in a way that makes the acts *unthinkable* (from a male perspective).²⁷ Unlike the rich descriptions of various male sex acts (with any variety of partners), sex between women is usually reduced to a single, brief mention, almost as if there is only one way women could fuck—i.e., the men condemning such practices have no experience or concept of the myriad activities that can occur when they are not involved. In ancient Rome, the single instance of *women fucking women* was already quite radical.²⁸

But some women *loved* women. In other words, their desire differed from the penetrative prescription presumed by and for elite men, which is, bluntly: any hole will do, as long as it is not yours. Brooten’s analyses and examples of sexuality among women shows (many!) different sorts of yearnings, some similar to the desire to fuck but

²⁷ “Perhaps, as for many other writers throughout history, female homoeroticism is unspeakable for Paul, making him hesitant to describe it precisely.” Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 240. See also Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 149, 171, 153.

²⁸ Here see what is a rather scathing critique of Brooten’s work by Halperin (a critique with which I disagree and, it merits mention, whose treatment of Brooten’s work as “touristic,” despite her vast scholarly credentials, is unnecessarily dismissive, condescending, and offensive). In it, Halperin distinguishes between “fucking” and “loving” with respect to (ancient) women. See Halperin, “David M. Halperin” in “Lesbian Historiography before the Name?” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4 (1998): 562, see also pp.560-562.

others more like the desire to “love” a particular wo/man (or even wo/men).²⁹ Some, she argues, are proximate to modern lesbianism. If contemporary lesbians love and/or fuck wo/men in myriad ways, then the similarity—in terms of the vast diversity—is quite striking.³⁰ Of course, these women could not always avoid the restrictions and requirements of Romosexuality, even if they wanted to, but there is evidence that some women and their desires deviated from these norms, even when those actions and desires were limited and pulled back by them.³¹

These women were not the only bodies who embodied sexuality in ways that did not conform to the elite’s socio-sexual-political hierarchy. Textual and material remnants contain numerous references to (largely) men with unnatural preferences and desires, including men who prefer to be sexually passive with men, men who desire too much sex, or men who have sex with women in less natural ways (e.g., cunnilingus).³² Although much of this evidence constitutes sexual slander (i.e., it may not be true), Amy Richlin has demonstrated how its persistence, alongside the existence of these terms and ideas, makes a compelling case that these preferences and desires existed in real bodies. She argues for the existence of a “passive [male] homosexual subculture” in ancient

²⁹ See Brooten, 29-186.

³⁰ For any instance of difference between an “ancient lesbian” and a “modern lesbian,” instances of similar difference could be found between two ancient (or two modern) lesbians.

³¹ In similar fashion, the “queer archives” being uncovered today from more recent pasts attest to the ways in which bodies have long resisted sexual norms (especially heteronormativity) despite regulation and attempts at erasure. These archives tell a different story from that which would be constructed from official, normative records and culture. However, as much as these archives show that “deviant” “queers” have long resisted normativity (sometimes in ways more resistant than more recent formulations), these archives always also bear signs of the ways that normative sexuality and its regulation affects their queernesses, defines their resistance, or subtly draws them back into the norm. See Ann Cvetkovitch, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

³² Parker argues that cunnilingus represents an instance of female penetration of male according to male elite ideology. Parker, 51-53.

Rome.³³ In other words, “homosexuality” was embodied in different ways by women and men in ancient Rome. Very rarely, if ever, could bodies have the luxury of being able to pursue homosexual intercourse exclusively; however, this restriction should not negate the probable queernesses of diverse Romans embodying sex/ualities that aligned with and deviated from and even resisted Romosexuality.³⁴

This portrait of Roman sexuality, which will inform the arguments that follow, largely takes form from the insights and insistences of these feminist classicists who study ancient sexuality. Despite the frequent erasure or ignorance of their contributions, these feminists revealed and developed the penetrative model of Rome’s socio-sexual-political hierarchy before and at the same time as it was being articulated by other (male) classicists.³⁵ However, what makes their articulation and contributions significant is that their studies are not limited to identifying the penetrative model that structured the dominant culture: they also reveal the ways in which bodies did not conform to this model and often created “subcultures” that deviated from dominant society. In so doing, they do not deny the differences between ancient and contemporary cultures, but they also expose and acknowledge the similarities and continuities that connect them. In what follows, Paul’s letter to Rome—and the community who received it—will be considered in light of this context for Roman sexuality. In so doing, this analysis considers the diverse and proliferating ways that sexuality must have been expressed among bodies in the first century (especially Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*), but it simultaneously remembers and

³³ Amy Richlin, “Not Before Homosexuality,” 530.

³⁴ The queerness of these sexual embodiments will be elaborate throughout, so that this is apparent by the conclusion.

³⁵ Brooten, “Response” in “Lesbian Historiography,” 627, n.1; Richlin, “Zeus and Metis.”

considers how the propaganda and official discourse of the empire and its elite also affected these bodies and enforced and restricted sexuality.

Gendered Bodies

The diverse embodiments and official structures of Roman sexuality cannot be separated from other factors that affect bodies. When it comes to sexuality, Greco-Roman constructions and perceptions of gender closely relate to its sexual ideologies. Gender in Rome was constructed to privilege and place men over women. However, all Roman “men” were not men equally (as can also be said for Roman “women”). As we have already discussed, the kyriarchal structuring of the empire operated in-between multiple hierarchies including but not limited to gender. It was this system that produced an elite class of Roman-born male impenetrable penetrators who dominated over all other wo/men.

As a result, gender in ancient Rome was never a fixed identity of “man” or “woman;” it was fluid and based on how one was perceived and able to present oneself within Roman society. These perceptions and presentations were influenced as much by systems of sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class and they were by obvious “gender factors” (i.e., anatomy and bodily appearance).³⁶ Anatomy may have limited who was able to penetrate, but a true Roman *vir* was limited to those who actually held the power to assert their penetrative abilities and dominance.³⁷

³⁶ In other words, the lower one is on any individual hierarchal scale, the more likely it is that one is equally low on most of the others. A male barbarian slave is, as we will see, already less “manly” which then justifies his enslavement and (likely) sexual penetration.

³⁷ Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 29-43; Williams, 137-176; Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 135-140; Conway, 15-34; Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), esp. pp.xvii-xxix, 55-81; Diana M. Swancutt, “‘The Disease of Effemination’: The Charge of Effeminacy and the Verdict of God (Romans 1:18-2:20),” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 193-233.

That gender was (and still is) largely based on perceptions rooted in kyriarchal hierarchies means that it was malleable and fluid. It could exist on a “sliding scale” on which wo/men could fall and rise, often (but not exclusively) in ways beyond their control. Real men were those at the kyriarchal top, who embodied not only proper gender roles but also proper roles in terms of socio-sexual-politics.

Sliding down the scale, “men” became less manly, until eventually they were “un-men,” barely (if at all) worthy of being considered a *homo*, let alone a *vir*. Many of these “un-men,” then, are described in feminized or womanly terms as a form of slander. But what about those born “women”? They are also, by definition, “un-men” on this sliding scale. Indeed, it is possible for some of those born women to be more “manly” than some “un-men” born men. However, generally speaking, manly qualities in women are devalued: manly women are monstrous and often (bringing in racial/ethnic hierarchies) foreign and barbaric.³⁸ As “un-men,” Roman women in particular are valued for their submission (to Roman men) and their largely passive roles in promulgating the lineages that allowed the continuation of Rome’s imperial dominance.³⁹ In both cases, gender is malleable in its embodiments and perceptions, but there are ways in which one’s embodiment is also fixed based on bodily distinctions that often (but not always) come from birth.

³⁸ See especially the discussion of the female *tribas* (as almost a third gender) in Swancutt, “Still Before Sexuality: ‘Greek’ Androgyny, the Roman Imperial Politics of Masculinity, and the Roman Invention of the *Tribas*,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 11-61.

³⁹ Gendered slander—often aimed at political rivals—attempts to reveal that perception is not reality. It accuses those who appear to be among the *vir*i to be “un-men”—whether because they are eunuchs who lack the anatomy, *cinaedi* who prefer to be penetrated, or former slaves and non-Romans who lack the social graces. Often, of course, these slanderous reasons combine and compound. Though the slander presumes to reveal reality, in actuality, these accusations merely replace one gender perception with another. See Richlin, *Garden of Priapus*; Gleason, 62-67; Williams, 137-176; Knust, 1-50.

If gender is made into a hierarchy on sliding scales, can some men become (real) women and vice-versa? The simple answer is “yes,” as examples—particularly in medical texts—give evidence that such transformations were thought possible.⁴⁰ But what does this mean for the *gendered body* as it was constructed and perceived in first-century Rome? Was the body “one-sexed”—meaning that it contained essentially same anatomic parts in different formulations that could shift based on sexual practice, ethnicity, or geographical location?⁴¹ Or were there two differently sexed bodies in which shifts could occur (alongside occasional full transitions) but which provided some level of fixity or stability to gendered categories and distinctions?⁴²

Like questions of sexuality and its continuities with contemporary sexualities, the question of the one- or two-sexed (or multi-sexed) body divides classicists, often in similar terms (the one-sexed body offering a different biological understanding that is not continuous with the contemporary two-sex model).⁴³ And, as with sexuality, Romans constructed the sexed and gendered body differently than contemporary society (with its vastly different scientific databases), often talking about the body in ways that make its

⁴⁰ Most notably Hermaphroditus of Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.365ff. See Brooke Holmes, *Gender: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 76-77; see also pp.14-17.

⁴¹ A view made prominent, nearly prevailing, by Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). According to Laqueur’s analysis of these Greco-Roman texts, the ancients viewed all bodies as undifferentiated as far as anatomical sex is concerned, but they did make various assumptions about *gender* based on the body. Still speaking of the Greco-Roman world, he writes, “Nature is not therefore to culture what sex is to gender, as in modern discussions,” he writes; “the biological is not, even in principle the foundation of particular social arrangements” (29). Thus, Laqueur uses antiquity to emphasize two of his major assertions: the one-sex model of the body was the dominant, even exclusive, prior to the modern era (and, indeed has roots in ancient Greece), and gender (not sex) was read onto the one-sex body.

⁴² Notably advocated by feminist classicists: Helen King, *Hippocrates’ Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998); Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴³ See discussion in Holmes, esp. pp.14-75. She asserts, attempting to think beyond such a binary, “Rather these case histories suggest an embodied gendered identity that is fluid *and* fixed, covering a continuum of traits ranging from the contingent to the essential” (16).

biological sex more fluid within a singular and neutral bodily base. However, as Helen King has detailed, for all these examples of transformation and anatomical similarity that make a “case” for a one-sex body, there are equal examples of Romans in medicine and elsewhere who assert the fundamental differences between the bodies of men and women.⁴⁴ Although there was certainly room for and evidence of significant fluidity and gender transformation, there remains a fundamental fixity—an underlying gender binary of man/woman—within Roman constructions of the body.

Beyond the scientific and medical view of the body and its anatomical effects, this fundamental fixity, this firm-if-fluid gender binary also affects the sliding scales of gender in its social constructions and perceptions.⁴⁵ If a manly woman is “monstrous” and a womanly man is an “un-man,” these scales of power and gendered hierarchy require fixed categories of “woman” and “man” that are largely based on the body’s construction (and how it can be perceived). In other words, for a “woman” to be “manly,” she first had to *be* a woman in some fixed sense. Likewise, for a male body to be an “un-man” he must be *feminized* or seen as *feminine*, processes that require a second (and generally inferior) sexed body. Roman society could neither be divided into neat categories of “men” and “women” *nor* “men” and “un-men.”⁴⁶ Though most people were “un-men” in some way, male bodies and female bodies in ancient Rome were “un-men” differently. Both were unmanned due to sexualized, racialized, and classed

⁴⁴ King has recently mounted a full on “trial” of Laqueur’s model, showing the vast evidence to contradict any fixed notion of a one-sexed body in antiquity or in its aftermath. See King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2013).

⁴⁵ Holmes especially stresses issues of fixity and fluidity. Holmes, 14-75, esp. pp.50-55.

⁴⁶ “But there are also difficulties with a ‘one-sex’ to ‘two-sex’ narrative about the history of sex and gender. The most serious of these is that it relies on a polarizing opposition between the ancients and the moderns that ends up underwriting the contemporary binary between sex and gender.” Holmes, 50-51. Furthermore, within such division, it should be noted, the category of “men” (as the elite *viri* at the top of the kyriarchal pyramid) is always stable and unchallenged as a dominant category.

characteristics, but a man was unmanned *despite* his male body while a woman was unmanned *because of* her female body.

Roman gender, both its social constructions and effects on the gendered/sexed body, reinforced Rome's kyriarchy alongside the ideals of Romosexuality. However, since this domination was enforced by kyriarchy (an assemblage, as the next chapter will detail), Roman constructions of gender cannot be separated from the issues of how sexuality was constructed and experienced. Roman sexuality involved and was perceived based on specifically gendered bodies, and Roman gender was affected by how different bodies were sexualized.⁴⁷ Both Roman gender and sexuality were affected by issues of race/ethnicity and class, among a host of other socio-political influences that impact bodies in diverse ways. All of these different effects ultimately worked to produce a dominant class of *κύριοι*, the elite Roman-born penetrating men who ruled over all other bodies and placed them into submission.

History of Romans Scholarship

These issues of Roman imperial politics and their constructions of sexuality and gender are frequently used to engage with Paul's letters, including his epistle to Rome. Before giving an overview of specific approaches (Paul and Politics, LGBT/Q, and feminist) that inform my own reading of the letter, it is necessary to establish some basic details about Romans. The longest and latest of Paul's genuine letters, it is generally acknowledged that Romans was composed in the late 50s C.E.⁴⁸ Unlike the remaining

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 76-125.

⁴⁸ There is a rather wide range of dating for the epistle, that certainly places it within this range but anywhere from 55-59 or even as late as 64, and some older commentaries prefer a date in the earlier 50s, with the assumption that Paul writes this letter from Corinth. While I do not dispute this general dating, it should be noted that almost all of the commentaries appeal to Acts to establish some of the historical details of Paul's travels. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (Anchor Bible 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 85-88;

genuine epistles, Paul had not visited Rome or its ἐκκλησία prior to sending them a letter.⁴⁹ Based on its framing, the letter anticipates a future visit to this gathering and therefore was likely written in part to make Paul more familiar to this group prior to his arrival so that he—along with the wo/men (Phoebe in particular) who travelled ahead of him—might receive a receptive welcome and hearing in Rome.⁵⁰ Though he probably

Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (ECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 3-5; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 18 (Jewett himself prefers a date of in late 56 or early 57); James D.G. Dunn, *Romans* (WBC 38; 2 vols; Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 1:xliv-xlv; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 101; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 2-3 (Moo prefers to date to 57); Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Sacra Pagina 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007, orig. 1996), 8-9 (Byrne gives early 58 C.E. the highest probability within this range); John B. Cobb, Jr. and David J. Lull, *Romans* (Chalice Commentaries for Today; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005), 3; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 2-4. Scholars who give precise dates include: early in 56 C.E., Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (Paideia; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 4-6; Winter 56-57, Ben Witherington, III with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 7; 57 C.E., Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 29-30; 56 or 57 C.E., Elsa Tamez, "Romans: A Feminist Reading" in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 698; Winter 57-58 C.E., Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 4; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 5-6.

⁴⁹ Rom 1:13. See also Fitzmyer, 69; Byrne, 1; Tamez, 698; Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Romans," in *Searching the Scriptures, volume 2: A Feminist Commentary* ed. Schüssler Fiorenza with Ann Brock and Shelly Matthews (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 272.

⁵⁰ See Rom 1:10-15; that his visit will be en route to Spain, see 15:28-29. That the letter serves some sort of introductory function is acknowledged and argued by many. Schüssler Fiorenza argues Romans—in particular chapter 16—functions as a "letter of recommendation" for Phoebe. See Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," *Word and World* 6 (1986): 423-427. With regard to the entire letter, commentators often assert that it functions as Paul's introduction of himself to this less familiar community, paving the way for his future visit. So: "Hence Paul writes Romans for ad hoc purposes: a letter to introduce himself to the Roman community, to seek support and aid from it for his projected trip to Spain, to ask for prayers and perhaps intercession of the Roman Christians with their colleagues in Jerusalem, so that, when he goes there with the collection, he will be rightly welcomed." Fitzmyer, 79 (note that he goes on to assume that, within these purposes, Paul does have some passing knowledge of what is going on in Rome, enough to address certain issues—particularly divisions between Jewish/Gentile Christians—specific to Rome's ἐκκλησία, pp. 79-80). Many make similar assessments while asserting that Paul's letter contains rhetorical purposes and is specifically crafted as an argument for his audience that extends beyond his mere introduction. See Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 17-18; Byrne, 8-19; Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 36-41 (largely emphasizing the rhetorical argument). Jewett argues similarly but calls it "a unique fusion of the 'ambassadorial letter.'" Jewett, 44, see further pp.42-46. On the relation of Paul's argument and to his "Spanish Mission," see especially Jewett, 74-91, who argues that his

heard secondhand reports, he was not already in epistolary communication with this ἐκκλησία or its members, which means that the letter never addresses any specific issues or questions raised by these Christ-followers. As a result, this long and late letter is often regarded as the most “theological” and even “systematic” of the Pauline corpus, a summary of his ideas about following Christ that had developed over his life and travels up to that point.⁵¹

In terms of its content, the letter begins with an epistolary introduction (1:1-15) followed by what is often called its “thesis statement” (1:16-17), and it concludes with chapter’s worth of greetings to various parties within the ἐκκλησία, likely serving as a letter of recommendation for Phoebe and perhaps even Paul himself.⁵² Although the ideas

journey to Spain is the main motivation for writing to and moving toward Rome; see also, Fitzmyer, 70; L. T. Johnson, 6-7; Esler, 115-116.

⁵¹ The majority of contemporary commentators have rejected—or, at least, heavily queried the once-prevailing assumption that Romans was entirely dogmatic, Paul’s elaborate theological treatise (that transcended his and Rome’s historical circumstances). The origin of such querying—which has now fomented into what is termed “The Romans Debate” over the letter’s purpose (perhaps in particular), audience, and form—is attributed to F. C. Baur, “Ueber Zweck und Veranlassung des Römerbriefs und die damit zusammenhängenden Verhältnisse der römischen Gemeinde: Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung,” *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 3 (1836): 59-178. See also, Esler, 3-8. The contemporary “Romans Debate” over the letter’s purpose vacillates around the question of how much (and what) Paul knows of Rome’s ἐκκλησία and to what extent this letter addresses a specific situation and issue. See broadly, then, Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991; orig. 1977); A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Das is most interested in the question of audience. Most commentators adopt a “middle of the road” view, which is that the letter is not a transcendent theological treatise devoid of any connection to specific issues in Rome but it also only knows of any specific issues in passing detail from secondhand reports (such as from Prisca/Aquila) and it sometimes develops ideas that originated in other letters (especially Galatians but also 1 Corinthians) without the need for polemical tone. See Fitzmyer, 68-88; Longenecker, 1-4, 9-18; Jewett, 42-46; Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 16-20; Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 9-104; Dunn, 1:liv-lviii. Some commentators argue Paul knows more specifics about Rome that he uses to craft a specific, situationally-based argument: Keck, 29-32; Schreiner, 15-23; Esler, 40. Hultgren argues it is a theological statement (based on its unusual length) that is only framed with personalized greetings; Hultgren, 5-20. Mark Nanos develops this specificity most fully, arguing that it is addressed specifically to address concern of the “Gentilization” of the gospel among Gentile Christ-followers within the community that has been meeting *within* the synagogue of Rome. Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 21-40. L. T. Johnson splits the difference by saying Paul’s letter is contextual but its theological message transcends its historical context; L. T. Johnson, 3-17.

⁵² See n.50 above.

(or “argument”) that comprise the bulk of the letter (i.e., 1:18-15:33) can be segmented into various topics, sections, or forms of rhetorical argument, I follow scholars, in particular Stowers, who approach the letter as ultimately being a united whole whose transitions to new topics often blend from one idea into the next.⁵³ Although the exegesis that follows hones in on particular segments, they assume these segments form units that can be discussed discretely even as they contribute to the theo-Christological considerations that motivate the letter as a whole.⁵⁴ Such an approach allows for Paul’s ideas to be placed within the differing assemblages that affect how it was heard, ones which may not always have followed any precise segmentation of ideas intended by its author, regardless of how closely he did or did not follow the structures of ancient rhetoric.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, it is important to establish some of the author’s socio-political and cultural contexts. In particular, Paul was a Jew from birth until his death, a now largely obvious fact whose significance had been deemphasized (often referring to Paul as a “Christian” “convert”) for centuries until made more ubiquitous thanks to the impulses of the “New Perspective on Paul.”⁵⁶ Since its interpretive focus has largely been on Romans

⁵³ Stowers, 6-16. Even though he segments the letter in each of his chapters, it is often the case that the final verses covered in segment consider in one chapter will constitute the beginning verses covered in the segment of the chapter that follows (e.g., chapter 7 of his book covers Rom 3:21-31; chapter 8 covers Rom 3:27-5:11; and chapter 9 covers Rom 5-8).

⁵⁴ The ways in which the segments of texts I cover here have been divided and defined by commentators and other Romans scholars are discussed below in the chapters in which these segments are considered.

⁵⁵ Many scholars argue that Paul’s letter employ ancient rhetorical conventions and/or adopts the specific forms of ancient epistolary rhetoric: see Stowers, 6-21, Jewett, 23-46; Elliott, *Rhetoric of Romans*; Witherington, 16-22; Fitzmyer, 89-95.

⁵⁶ So, Dunn, a longtime proponent of the traditional New Perspective, begins his commentary from this observation; Dunn, 1:xxxix-xlii. This “New Perspective” on Paul insists that Paul was *not* a “Christian” who “converted” from a (stable) Judaism to a new religion, and such a scholarly route was prompted by New Testament scholars grappling with how Biblical—and particularly Pauline—interpretation had created an ideology of supersession, wherein Christianity (begun by a converted Paul) perfected what was “lacking” in Judaism. Such an erroneous view created a superiority in Christians and fostered (and continues to foster) anti-Judaism and its attendant anti-Semitism most horrifically seen in the Holocaust,

(in addition to Galatians), it is (nearly) impossible to interpret this letter without acknowledging Paul's situation within Judaism. However, Paul's audiences were not primarily Jewish: he was a Jew whose "mission" was to proclaim "good news" to non-Jews, i.e., "Gentiles" (ἔθνη) in hopes that they would follow Jesus as the Christ.⁵⁷

the event which prompted this revision. This perspective has its beginnings in Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West." *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215. This impulse was followed in E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). Sanders' landmark monograph provided a corrective to key concepts in first-century Judaism—especially the concept of "works righteousness"—which had been caricatured in Christian readings of Paul that relied on such a caricature as a foil. Sanders shows that first-century Judaism has a more robust theological and ritual system that differs from that of Christ-followers but is not "legalistic" or "fixed." However, Paul still *leaves* Judaism for "Christianity" because Judaism "lacks" belief in Jesus as the Christ; or, as Sanders infamously puts it in his conclusion, "In short, *this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity.*" Such a perspective, then, assumes that by the mid-first century C.E., there was a firm split with Judaism and Christianity as fixed groups, such that Jews who believed in Jesus quickly find problems remaining Jews, and—at the very least—must become "Jewish Christians" Dunn carries on and develops the work of Sanders, particularly spelling out Paul's idea of "works of the Law" for Gentile Christians, but maintains a similar division between a fixed Judaism and Christianity, which can be seen in his commentary on Romans. See further Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev.ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008). Dunn's elaboration on the new perspective often portrays the difference (for Paul) between Judaism and Christianity as being a distinction between Jewish (ethnic) particularism and Christian universalism, an idea that can be seen in other developments of this perspective, notably Boyarin, Daniel. *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). However, Boyarin's more recent theorization "border lines" blurs the distinctions and division between Judaism and Christianity in ways that challenge this view (see more full elaboration of this theory in chapter 2); see Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For a feminist development of the more traditional New Perspective, see Kathy Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁵⁷ Paul's status as "Apostle to the Gentiles" is often acknowledged, especially since Stendahl drew attention to the import of this designation. Stendahl, 205. My own interpretation, then, follows the more "radical" version of the New Perspective on Paul that, carrying forward the implications of Stendahl, emphasizes that Paul—in terms of his intended audience (as well as, likely, the majorities of his actual audiences)—was writing to *Gentiles* about following Christ, and he was not concerned with spreading this Gospels to other Jews. Indeed, as scholars such as Stowers, John G. Gager, Lloyd Gaston, and Pamela Eisenbaum emphasize, Paul sees *two ways* to God's justice/salvation, one for Jews (through the laws, traditions, and faith of Israel) and one for Gentiles (made possible through Christ and implied in following him). Paul does not say that Jews cannot follow Christ, but he does not believe Jews *need* to follow Christ in order to participate in God's justice/salvation. Stowers, *Rereading*; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009); Eisenbaum, "Jewish Perspectives: A Jewish Apostles to the Gentiles" in *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, ed. Marchal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 135-153.

On Paul's intended *Gentile* audience in Romans see, in addition to Stowers, Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*; Das, "The Gentile-Encoded Audience of Romans: The Church outside the Synagogue," in *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. Jerry L. Sumney (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 29-46; Witherington, 7-8. As alluded to in notes above, Nanos agrees that Gentiles are Paul intended audience, but he asserts they are meeting in the synagogue; see Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*; Nanos, "To the Churches

Nowhere in Paul's letters is there evidence that Paul thinks Jews (including himself) need to abandon their cultural and religious practices nor does he insist that Jews should follow Jesus.⁵⁸ His letters address the concerns of non-Jews who are following Christ, and these concerns occasionally deal with how these non-Jewish Christ-followers relate to Jewish histories and teachings. As a result, although some Jews may have been included in the gatherings in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, they are not his concern nor his primary/intended audience.

Furthermore, Paul's Jewish context and its influence on his writings cannot be separated from his context within the Roman imperial world. Within the context of the capital city of Rome and its relation to Paul's letter, the fact of Jew's conquered ethnic status is most apparent the fact that the emperor Claudius formally expelled all Jews from the city around 49-50 C.E. (an expulsion commonly referred to as "the Edict of Claudius").⁵⁹ Although Suetonius's reference to this political expulsion potentially points to unrest between Jews and Christ-followers in Rome, nothing conclusive can be said about the relationship between Roman synagogues and its *ἐκκλησία*, especially in terms of any awareness in Paul's letter.⁶⁰ However, the edict of Claudius establishes an

within the Synagogues of Rome" in Sumney, *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 11-28. Other commentators assume a more mixed audience to varying degrees; see discussions in Donfried, ed., 175-242; Fitzmyer 75-80; Moo, 9-13; Matera, 6-8; Jewett, 70-72; Esler, 40, 111-155, 117-120.

⁵⁸ Though he never says they cannot, and it would seem that Paul can be called a Jewish Christ-followers.

⁵⁹ For dating considerations and assessment, see Jewett, 18-20.

⁶⁰ My assessment is closest to that of Nanos, who (along with Witherington) is highly skeptical of using this evidence and the edict as providing any historical basis for reading Romans. Though the event is noteworthy and was likely disruptive for many Roman Jews, was unlikely to have been entire in its scope (like much of Roman actions: symbolic more than wholesale). I too find the evidence (see what follows) too scant to attribute this expulsion to disagreements/dissent between Christ-followers and Jews. While this is not impossible based on the evidence, the evidence is not nearly firm enough to establish historical certainties upon which to base interpretation. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 372-387; Witherington, 11-13; Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 97-98. The only direct first/second century attestations of this event is found in Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, V.xxv.4: *Judaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit* ("Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome") as well as in Acts 18:2 ("There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently

important reminder of the ways in which ethnicity could create both barriers and solidarity under the rule of Rome's kyriarchy.⁶¹

The Political Paul

While within Romans scholarship Claudius' edict has most often been used to establish details about the relations between Jews and Gentiles in Rome (establishing one context for Paul's discussion of ἔθνη and Ἰουδαῖοι), this mandatory expulsion of Jews by the emperor is most relevant to Paul's political message. Paul's situation in relation to empire has received considerable attention from recent scholars, especially those coming from liberationist, anti-empire, or postcolonial perspectives. Such approaches inform the ways in which this project analyzes how Rome's imperial kyriarchy affected Paul's rhetoric and positions. Since these approaches emphasize the *political* dimensions of Pauline epistles, they are often referred to under the umbrella of "Paul and Politics."⁶²

come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome"). In addition to providing background for dating Romans (i.e., Romans must have been written after Prisca/Aquila can return to Rome, among other consideration, assuming the history of Paul's travels and interactions in Acts is accurate), Suetonius' mention of "the instigation of Chrestus" has been the source of much scholarly speculation, as this could be a reference to Christus/Christ—i.e., the disturbances among the Jews of Rome were noticeable disagreements between Christ-followers (Jewish and or Gentile) and Jews. Such an assumption influences Paul approach to Jew-Gentile relations in Romans as well as the need for care not to draw negative attention from imperial authorities (see Romans 13). See discussion in Jewett, 59-61, 764-766; Fitzmyer, 77-79; Dunn, 1:xlvi-lix; Esler, 98-102; Moo, 4-5; Byrne, 11-13; Elliott, *Rhetoric of Romans*, 47-52; Keck 29-30; Matera, 9-10; Hultgren, 9-11; Schreiner, 12-14; Stowers, 23; A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, 6-7; L. T. Johnson, 4; Tamez, 698.

⁶¹ In other words, it is a reminder of how Jews were also considered ἔθνη under Rome's imperial definition (see further discussion and development in chapter 3 below). Indeed, Suetonius' narration of this expulsion is but one (short) sentence in a segment of his history that narrates Claudius' treatment of various foreigners in the city of Rome and across the Roman Empire. On thinking about the expulsion/edict of Claudius the lens of imperial domination, see Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 96-100; Witherington, 11-16.

⁶² This term coming directly from the Society of Biblical Literature program unit which has involved many of the scholars discussed below and from which has come numerous edited volumes, most notable the trilogy edited by Richard A. Horsley. See Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); and Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004).

As scholars admit that Paul's letters respond to imperial domination and oppression (often with parallels to modern politics), they show how, within this context, Paul's rhetoric offers a message of liberation from oppression and works to resist empire.⁶³ Paul's rhetoric often draws from the language of imperial propaganda, including terms like *δικαιοσύνη* ("justice"), *εὐαγγέλιον* ("gospel"), *παρουσία* ("coming"), or *εἰρήνη* (peace).⁶⁴ However, his use of these terms wrests them (sometimes subtly) from their imperial meanings under the power of the liberatory message that comes from following Christ (i.e., the *true* *εὐαγγέλιον*). From such a perspective, Paul's "gospel" was meant to encourage and inspire bodies oppressed by Rome to embrace a new meaning of justice under God's coming reign, and, therefore, his rhetoric works to resist imperial power and domination and inspires followers to make this liberation possible by actively following Christ and resisting Roman power.

In this fashion, Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. emphasizes how Paul's rhetoric—specifically in Romans—proclaims a politics that counters the oppressive, more legalized (as *νόμος*) Roman definitions of justice (as well as those of Jewish culture) with a message about Jesus' divinely-inspired "outlaw justice."⁶⁵ Instead of emphasizing the hidden resistance in Paul's letters, Jennings makes Paul a political philosopher, following

⁶³ Neither Paul nor the participants in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* to whom he wrote seem to be among the imperial elite, and many from the latter group appear to have been of lower or lowest socio-economic status. See especially Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers;" Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentines: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), chapter 16, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," pp. 153-183. The issues of these assessments, as well as other scholarly reconstructions, will be discussed below in the section entitled "Reconstructing Rome's *ἐκκλησία*."

⁶⁴ Helmut Koester and Dieter Georgi receive particular mention for drawing attention to the Roman and political dimensions of these terms. See Georgi, "God Turned Upside Down," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 148-157; Koester, "Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians" in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 158-166.

⁶⁵ Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Outlaw Justice: The Messianic Politics of Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

the rediscovery of Paul by modern political philosophers (e.g., Agamben, Badiou, Žižek.)⁶⁶ As such a philosopher, Paul issues a *political* message, what Žižek calls Christianity’s revolutionary and subversive “core,” that critiques Rome’s empire and its own political ideologies.⁶⁷ Engaging with these philosophers and the work of Jacques Derrida, Jennings argues that Paul’s letter to the Romans critiques the Roman imperial misrepresentation of justice, which uses it to oppress its inhabitants and encourage them to embrace that naturalness of submission.⁶⁸ Thus, Paul’s politics emphasize the radical ministry and death of Jesus, who refused to submit to the imperial justice and was therefore crucified by the state for treason.⁶⁹ However, because Jesus exemplified the gift of divine justice—which opposes the imperial definition—he is raised and made worthy of following by those whose hopes envision a world ruled by *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*, “God’s justice.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Badiou, *The Incident at Antioch: A Tragedy in Three Acts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (New York: Verso, 2000); Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); Žižek et. al., *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011). See further Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). Beyond Jennings, additional theologians and biblical scholars have begun to participate in these conversations as well, bringing more of the tools of the discipline into the philosophical conversation. See Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, eds., *Paul and the Philosophers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff, *St. Paul among the Philosophers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

⁶⁷ Žižek, *Fragile Absolute*. Such an approach, common within the “philosopher’s Paul” (see prior note), tends to stress a Pauline (i.e., Christian) universalism that is distinct from Jewish particularism in ways that are troublesome and do not account for the insights of the (radical) New Perspective.

⁶⁸ Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 1-12. See also his engagement of Romans that more specifically reads it with Derrida: Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul: On Justice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹ Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, see esp. pp.60-70.

⁷⁰ Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, occasionally refers to “justice” in terms of Derridean gift (e.g., pp.88-100), but he fully elaborates this connection (which grounds his reading/commentary/translation of Romans in *Outlaw Justice*) in Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul*, 78-95.

Liberation from imperial domination also has more practical dimensions within Romans, particularly implying forms of resistance to Roman rule. This resistance may be overt, but often it is hidden or cloaked in order to avoid attracting negative consequence if read or heard by imperial authorities or sympathizers.⁷¹ In *Arrogance of Nations*, Neil Elliott, whose work on Romans has long emphasized its resistance to Rome, gives voice to the “hidden transcripts” against Roman rule that can be revealed in Romans, just as they can be found in other resisters of Roman and other imperial rules.⁷² Drawing from the theories of James C. Scott, whose work on subaltern politics emphasizes these hidden transcripts, Elliott’s reading of Romans uncovers overlaps and echoes in Paul’s rhetoric that resonate with imperial propaganda as communicated through Roman origin stories, its imagery, and official representation in public proclamation and discourse. Romans does not, however, merely replicate the empire’s rhetoric: Paul employed “repetition with a difference.”⁷³ Elliott reveals how these repetitions are framed in ways that subvert and critique their original imperial intentions in ways that could only be understood by Christ-followers already familiar with these resistant codes.⁷⁴ Through such a reading of Romans, Paul emerges as a thinker and activist whose ideas inspired and can continue to inspire bodies dominated by imperial power.

⁷¹ As we will see in chapter 5 (“Ethical Submission”), this becomes one way to explain the overt call to submission in Romans 13 so that this pro-imperial passage can be justified within a letter that bears many anti-imperial themes.

⁷² Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 9-23, 27-36. Elliott’s reading of Romans nuances his situation of Paul’s liberatory message from his prior work on Romans. See Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005, orig. London: Bloomsbury, 1995); and to some degree, Elliott, *Rhetoric of Romans*.

⁷³ Elliott focuses on such uses in terms of “public transcripts” versus “hidden transcripts” via the theories of James C. Scott. See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 25-26. See also James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁷⁴ See especially Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 25-58.

Especially in his more recent work, Elliott's "liberating Paul" draws from the work of biblical scholars who attend to the postcolonial context of Paul and the earliest *ἐκκλησίαι* of Christ followers. Postcolonial approaches make more explicit connections between Paul's situation in Rome's empire (framing its oppressions within a wider and longer history of colonialization) and the ongoing uses of these words by both colonizer and colonized in contemporary (post)colonial contexts.⁷⁵ Many postcolonial Pauline approaches draw from the wider oeuvre of postcolonial theories, especially revealing the existence of "mimicry" (repetition of the colonizer's discourse, but always "with a [subtle, often resistant] difference,") or "hybridity" (the ways in which cultures unavoidably blend, change, and transform, in organic and imposed forms, as a result of colonial interactions that are not exclusively "one-way").⁷⁶ Postcolonial studies of Paul—and of the New Testament more broadly—therefore contain considerable diversity in terms of their attention to first-century colonization, the extent of their theoretical engagements, and the specific settings of contemporary colonialism that inform an author's perspective.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ For a detailed overview of postcolonial studies and Paul, see Moore, "Paul after Empire," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 9-23. The history of postcolonial biblical interpretation (as with postcolonial theory) can be said to have several beginnings, as Moore explains, but its use in Biblical Studies emerges around the same time as the previous "Paul and Politics" impulses with, naturally, complex relations that Moore points out. Christopher Stanley's edited volume *The Colonized Apostle*, is the first compendium of essays that treat Paul and postcolonial theory, in contrast to the relatively larger body of studies on the gospels and Revelation; however, as Stanley notes in his introduction, even though prior to around 2008, only four major works engaged the postcolonial Paul, several emerged in 2009-2010, just prior to this volume's publication. See Stanley, "Introduction," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 5.

⁷⁶ Both terms, in addition to "ambivalence," are developed originally by theorist Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). Moore explains them in and their relation with regard to Bhabha concisely: Moore, "Paul after Empire," 10-11.

⁷⁷ Stanley observes "two approaches" within postcolonial biblical studies: "One approach seeks to illuminate the many and varied ways in which the Bible (and the Christian religion in general, particularly in its missionary mode) has been used both to support and to challenged the ideology, activities, and institutions of Western colonialism... The second approach seeks to mine the works of postcolonial authors for insights and methods that might illuminate the operation and influence of colonial rule in the world(s) in which the Hebrew and Christian scriptures were composed, edited, and transmitted." Stanley,

The multiplicity within postcolonial approaches can be seen specifically in postcolonial readings of Romans. Gordon Zerbe connects the politically motivated terms in Paul's rhetoric as examples of colonial mimicry, "parodies or challenges of imperial claims and ideologies."⁷⁸ Applying this to Romans 13, he brings out the tensions between full resistance and strategic submission and concludes that this passage cannot and should not be the quintessential starting point for Paul's politics.⁷⁹ Jae Won Lee exemplifies how hybridity troubles the binary of Paul's so-called "nationalism" and "transnationalism" (or "universalism") and draws postcolonial parallels with her own Korean context. "Based on analogies from my Korean perspective and the testimony of Paul's letters, I find it impossible to believe that Paul embraced the Roman Empire and abandoned his own people."⁸⁰ Still identifying a liberatory message within the letter, Lee situates Paul within wider imperial oppression (and strategic collusion) without ignoring or denying his Jewishness, especially since Jews and Gentiles/ἔθνη were equally oppressed by Rome.⁸¹

Some scholars (more often working beyond Romans) emphasize the postcolonial and/or anti-imperial ideas within these letters while simultaneously employing

"Introduction," 4-5. While useful to see the differences these approaches have and bring to biblical texts, it is important to avoid seeing them as a binary, as many scholars will attempt to do both.

⁷⁸ Gordon Zerbe, "The Politics of Paul: His Supposed Social Conservatism and the Impact of Postcolonial Readings," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 68.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

⁸⁰ Jae Won Lee, "Paul, Nation, and Nationalism: A Korean Postcolonial Perspective," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 224.

⁸¹ Lee's approach therefore addresses some of the issues that occur between "Paul and Politics" and the New Perspective. See further Lee, *Paul and the Politics of Difference: A Contextual Study of the Jewish-Gentile Difference in Galatians and Romans* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), esp. pp.1-28. Lee, as well as Lopez below, better (though perhaps not always perfectly) attend to that fact that Paul was and remained a Jew even as they prioritize his situation (as a conquered Jew) as resistant to Roman oppression in a colonial/imperial context. Similarly, my project also most often focuses on the wider imperial situation of Paul's letters, but it engages the New Perspective, especially its "radical" forms (Stowers, Eisenbaun, etc.) and assumes these as a starting point for Paul's Roman context.

LGBT/Queer and/or feminist theories and methods.⁸² These “intersectional” approaches to Paul and his imperial/kyriarchal situation, by virtue of their methodological border crossings, could be discussed in each of the subsections that follow. Their concerns about empire (and its colonizing impacts)—ancient and contemporary—prioritize its inseparability from gender, sexuality, and race, all of which are affected by imperial domination.⁸³ Thus, Davina Lopez shows how Roman imagery and mythology uses gendered, sexualized, and racialized imagery and mythology to explain and justify the lower status of its conquered inhabitants or ἔθνη.⁸⁴ Applying this context to Paul, who is also among Rome’s conquered, feminized ἔθνη, Lopez argues that his letters recognize these submissions and demonstrate his solidarity with the communities of non-Jewish ἔθνη to whom he wrote.⁸⁵ Thus, Lopez demonstrates an intersectional approach to empire by showing how the gendered and sexualized imagery of Rome affected how Paul crafted his ideas in relation to imperial conquest. to Rome’s empire in Paul’s letters.⁸⁶

⁸² Other Romans scholars apply these theories differently (such as L. Ann Jervis) or pay more attention to their uses and application in contemporary contexts (such as Israel Kamudzandu with Romans 4 and postcolonial Zimbabwe). See L. Ann Jervis, “Reading Romans 7 in Conversation with Postcolonial Theory: Paul’s Struggle toward a Christian Identity of Hybridity” in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 95-109; Israel Kamudzandu, *Abraham as Spiritual Ancestor: A Postcolonial Reading of Romans 4* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Kamudzandu, *Abraham Our Father: Paul and the Ancestors in Postcolonial Africa* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).

⁸³ And feminist, queer, postcolonial, and critical race theories are all concerned—implicitly if not usually explicitly—with issues of empire (as will be seen in feminist/queer approaches below).

⁸⁴ Thereby confirming the highest status of elite, native Romans. Revealing and assessing the multiple layers of visual communication, Lopez shows how the placement in depictions of conquered (usually female) bodies puts them lower than—i.e., under, submissive, or “bottom”—their powerful (usually male) Roman conquerors. Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 17-25, 26-55. See also the employment of such visual analyses to read Galatians in Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

⁸⁵ Pauline “universalism,” therefore make diverse conquered bodies distinct from and set against Rome’s submissive universalism. Lopez, 164-173.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-17, 167-168.

Taking a different intersectional approach than Lopez, Joseph Marchal's overt feminist and queer commitments are never divorced from issues of imperial control and domination, as well as attempts to resist or subvert it.⁸⁷ Unlike the majority of imperial-critical scholars, Marchal is far less interested in championing Paul as a paradigmatic example of resisting Rome and its oppression. Though he does not deny the resistant potentials of Paul's letters, he focuses on the ways in which these letters often align with imperial ideals, especially those related to gender and sexuality—often while also resisting its colonizing suppressions. Marchal's work in particular cannot and should not be limited to postcolonial and anti-imperial perspectives, but issues of Paul and politics broadly ground all of his work, even though it is not the only perspective to ground any of his interpretations.⁸⁸ Paul's ideas cannot be separated from their political (i.e., Roman imperial) context, but this political context is impossible without acknowledging how gender, sexuality, and race are always intertwined in politics.

All of these placements of a political Paul within and against empire situate Paul in his conquered, colonialized, and oppressed contexts among those of lower status under Roman rule, and they sometimes weave in or acknowledge gendered and sexualized aspects of this oppression. Such scholarship often highlights spaces in Romans where

⁸⁷ Marchal's work sits most uneasily in this section, as his commitments to queer and feminist theories (in addition to postcolonial ones) infuse and are quite prominent in his work. Though all of his work fits into a broad anti-imperial "Paul and Politics" category, in this paragraph his *Politics of Heaven* is most prominently in mind, as postcolonial theories feature heavily in this monograph. See Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). His work—both in this monograph along with his many other essays—features throughout this history of scholarship, and, if my history of queer and feminist scholarship does not feature him as prominently, it can be said it is because his theories will be engaged more closely in the following chapter.

⁸⁸ Since Marchal also works closely with Puar's concept's of sexual exceptionalism and assemblage, his work blurs boundaries between feminist, queer, postcolonial, empire-critical, and other analyses provides an excellent example of why Puar ultimately critiques intersectionality (while acknowledging its current importance and necessity). See especially Marchal, "The Exceptional Proves Who Rules: Imperial Sexual Exceptionalism in and Around Paul's Letters," *Journal of Early Christian History* 5 (2015), 87-115; Marchal, *Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics*." See further elaboration of Puar in chapter 2 below.

Paul is not merely an imperial parrot who submits to its domination and oppression while simply replicating its norms and values. The voice and ideas of a more “liberatory” Paul—whether a rebel/outlaw or a more postcolonial hybrid—clearly emerges and exists in his epistles. In many ways, this “heroic” voice of liberation is an important counterbalance to his historically oppressive voice as it emerges in more contemporary postcolonial and imperial contexts.⁸⁹ Paul and his letters have been and are still used to enforce oppressions on racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized bodies.

However, *both* of these voices blend into one in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Often following Marchal’s ideas, this project’s exegetical analyses emphasize almost exclusively the ways in which Romans aligns with imperial rhetoric and discourse, sometimes overtly but more often quite subtly and, as we will see, affectively. These exegetical contributions do not entirely negate the anti-imperial and postcolonial themes and hidden transcripts that can also and simultaneously be found in this epistle (as well as within the ἐκκλησία who read and engaged with it). The theory of assemblage elaborated in the next chapter will help emphasize the importance of *proliferating interpretive possibilities* and holding them together in tension. Anti-imperial ideas appear alongside

⁸⁹ The problems of centering Paul within “Paul and Politics” scholarship will be discussed in full detail below under feminist approaches. However, it would be incorrect to split “feminist” and “Paul and Politics” into two mutually exclusive spheres. Feminist scholars have been included (at least, one to be representative) in many “Paul and Empire” volumes, and feminist biblical scholarship has always prioritized anti-imperial interpretations, particular within scholarship that critiques kyriarchy. (However, as feminists observe, many within the “Paul and Politics” camp ignore these contributions and assume [or presume] to have originated the discussion.) It must be noted now that many feminist voices included in “Paul and Politics” volumes have protested this issue, Schüssler Fiorenza being one of the most persistent, as well as the implicit male biases that often accompany setting Paul against empire. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 69-109; Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Praxis of Coequal Discipleship,” in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 224-241; Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, “Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul’s Argumentation in 1 Corinthians,” in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 103-109; Sheila Briggs, “Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society,” in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 110-123; Antoinette Clark Wire, “Response: The Politics of the Assembly in Corinth,” in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 124-129; and Wire, “Response: Paul and Those Outside Power,” in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 224-226.

the draw of empire and its discourse: neither interpretations that find liberation nor those that have bolstered oppression are warped; neither misconstrue the ideas and affects held within these words.

At this point, something must be said about how this project conceives the communication of imperial discourse and its adoption and adaptation in diverse locations, communities, and bodies throughout Rome's vast empire. The official elite ideologies of empire were communicated through imagery and propaganda, laws and their enforcement, official proclamations, poetry, and procession, and countless other forms of communication, oral, visual, or performed/enacted. These form an imperial "discourse" that was unavoidable living under empire: this discourse enforced ideas of normalcy, promoted hopes of upward mobility, and communicated the socio-political hierarchy to which all bodies should submit.⁹⁰ This discourse influenced language, as these ideas affect the usage and meanings the words and language used throughout the empire.

For example, "peace"—εἰρήνη or *pax*—under Roman rule is defined as maintaining social order and staying submissive to Rome's rule. This peace, as many scholars note, was upheld through warfare and conquest that increase the peace and stability of Rome's elite while imposing this "peace" on those conquered. More often, it was the threat of this violence that compelled many to willingly submit to Rome's peace,

⁹⁰ "Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy." Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1978, repr. 1990), 101-102 In this volume, he argues "sexuality" is a discourse which is always produced in conversation and relation to regimes of power and regulation. Thus, Foucault notes an error in thinking about sex only in terms of agency: sex and sexuality are intimately related to issues of power, particularly in the ways that discourses surrounding sexuality are molded to affect certain structures and relations of power and control over bodies; see esp. p.155. Foucault's development of sexuality as a discourse has been pivotal in the formation of modern queer theory, but his analysis of discourse has been applied more broadly (just as above, though not unrelated to sexuality).

becoming peaceful “friends” of Rome (under its authority) rather than having peace violently imposed. Can such meanings ever be fully wrested from uses of “peace” in the Roman world?

The exegesis below emphasizes the imperial meanings of the terms used by Paul. Under Rome’s imperial rule, such meanings were unavoidable within the language. In other words, his language cannot help but carry imperial meanings, even if they were not his intent. Given the de-centering approach of this project, Paul’s intention—whether his sympathies lie with resistance and liberation from the oppression of Rome or with submitting to its rule with hope of recognition and respectability—is largely irrelevant. In fact, to the extent I do attend to Paul (he is *one* voice among many to consider), I assume his intentions do not easily fall onto a binary of liberation or submission. Like most bodies, he almost certainly fell in the messy space in-between and held ideas in tension: the epistle to the Romans (nor even all seven genuine epistles) cannot capture the complex ideas and perspectives held by Paul. Therefore, Paul’s letter can resist Rome *and* align with it.

This nuanced view will seem to have disappeared five pages into the first exegetical chapter as the affective dimensions of Paul’s use of imperial terms reveal their alignments with Rome’s overarching kyriarchal ideologies. The affective draws of kyriarchal assemblage, named as “cruel optimism” and “homonationalism,” are effective for their subtlety. They affect sensations and feelings; they produce emotions; they proprioceptively influence the mind’s rational thought. Given their origin in contemporary socio-politics, these concepts affect modern bodies, ideas, and language and threaten to hold in gridlock hopes for change. We will see that these affective effects

influence ancient bodies and language in similar ways, despite their different manifestations. Even if Paul uses imperially-structured language against the current empire (as is often the only and necessary option), Rome's kyriarchal assemblage draws back.⁹¹ Unrecognized, it will continue to do so, merely overthrowing Rome (or any other oppressive power) in order to morph into a newer, equally kyriarchal form: "Roman without Rome." By uncovering and admitting these imperial and kyriarchal pulls within Romans, it becomes more possible to consider their affective pulls in the present especially as interpreters continue to struggle with the intersectionality of their motivations toward socio-political change.

LGBT/Queer Interpretation and Romans 1

LGBT/Queer biblical scholarship has especially considered and developed the sexual dimensions of Roman politics as they interpret Paul's letters. Within Romans specifically, the majority of such studies hone their attention on Romans 1:18-32, which could be called the most comprehensive "condemnation" of same-sex intercourse (as it contains the only biblical reference to female same-sex eroticism).⁹² Since this is the most

⁹¹ As Marchal demonstrates in *Politics of Heaven*. Elliott gestures in this direction; see Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 157-159.

⁹² In particular, 1:26-27. See Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 51-64 (the chapter "Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32" was originally published in *Biblical Interpretation* 3 [1995], 332-355); Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 195-302; Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 133-172; Swancutt, "'Disease of Effemination,'" Jeremy Townsley, "Paul, the Goddess Religions, and Queer Sects: Romans 1:23-28," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011): 707-728; Townsley, "Queer Sects in Patristic Commentaries on Romans 1:26-27: Goddess Cults, Free Will, and 'Sex Contrary to Nature,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81 (2013): 56-79; Marchal, "'Making History' Queerly: Touches across Time through a Biblical Behind," *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011): 373-395; Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., "Paul on Exceeding Nature: Queer Gentiles and the Giddy Gardener" in *Jewish/Christian/Queer: Crossroads and Identities*, ed. Frederick Roden (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 19-33; Michael P. Wilson, "Should We Translate St Paul's *παρά φύσιν* as *Contrary to Nature*? Text Versus Received Dogma in the Translation of St Paul," *Theology and Sexuality* 20 (2014): 129-150. Addressing the entire epistle (albeit quite briefly) is Thomas D. Hanks, "Romans" in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest, Robert E. Goss, Mona West, and Thomas Bohache (London: SCM Press, 2006), 582-605. Beyond Romans, there have been more queer inquiries which I will engage when relevant but will not list in detail; however, Marchal offers an excellent overview of queer approaches to Paul, in which he categorizes them as falling under three major umbrellas: (1) "historical-contextual": emphasizing historical difference in sexual conventions; "apologist-

overly sexual passage in Romans—and the most detailed description of same-sex intercourse in a biblical text—the text has long served as proof of the “naturalness” of heterosexuality (ahem: a heterosexuality in which *men use women*) and still today is most frequently cited to disenfranchise those who prefer same-sex intercourse. As a result, LGBT/Queer Pauline scholarship’s inability to “go beyond” Romans 1 has been made necessary by demands of real bodies who have been harmed and held back by this passage (and others like it).

Although my queer subversion of Romans attempts to subvert the hold of Romans 1, which seems to submit queer scholarship to focus on it for fear that ignoring it will perpetuate problems, it cannot bypass entirely this excessive text. However, as it outlines the myriad (and often quite brilliant) LGBT/Queer approaches to Romans 1, it can ask: is there anything else that *urgently* needs to be said about this particular passage?

By now, the vast majority of Pauline interpreters have (long) admitted that Roman sexuality and its construction informs and influences Paul’s sexual comments, just as Roman imperialism informs Pauline politics (as above).⁹³ Indeed, some scholars who assert Paul’s letters are anti-empire find ways in which Paul’s sexual comments resist Rome and its sexuality. With regard to Romans 1, for example, its *complete* condemnation of same sex intercourse between men (regardless of penetrative position)

affirmative”: reclaiming “queer heroes;” and (3) a “queerly resistant” approach that uses queer theory to uncover meanings within texts and their audiences, often using queer theory. See Marchal, “Queer Approaches: Improper Relations with Pauline Letters,” in *Studying Paul’s Letters*, 227. My own approach to Romans would best fall into the third, “queerly resistant,” category.

⁹³ See especially, Brooten, *Love Between Women*; Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*; Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 133-172; Swancutt, “Disease of Effemination;” Marchal, “‘Making History’ Queerly;” and (especially on an overview of broader historical approaches to queerness in ancient texts, with concluding emphasis on Romans 1) Luis Menéndez-Antuña, “Is There a Room for Queer Desires in the House of Biblical Scholarship? A Methodological Reflection on Queer Desires in the Context of Contemporary New Testament Studies,” *Biblical Interpretation* 23 (2015): 399-427.

could condemn Roman overlords who penetrate other males (i.e., their subordinates), thus differing by strengthening the sexual restrictions.⁹⁴ Along such a vein, Elliott and Jennings emphasize how Romans 1 contains veiled but specific critiques of the sexual infidelities and excesses of Claudius and the imperial family.⁹⁵ These interpretations of anti-imperial sexuality make clear that the condemnations of Romans 1 should be considered as deriving from the letter's work toward resisting a specific context of imperial oppression. Implicit in these analyses is an argument that the historical context limits the regulatory implications of these words: the anti-imperial message contextualizes and overshadows the sexual restrictions.

These scholars are neither alone nor first in their emphasis on the specificity of Roman sexuality and its influence on Paul's letters. Scholars who focus their interpretations on Pauline views of sexuality—broadly coming from LGBT/Queer contexts—have uncovered numerous ways in which Paul's sexual comments align with wider Roman cultural views of what is and is not “natural.”⁹⁶ Sexual slander, in particular, and the practices it condemns, typically align with the socio-political hierarchy

⁹⁴ However, problematically, this means those penetrated are equally condemned, despite rarely having any agency in the matter. See Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 49-70.

⁹⁵ Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 77-83. “What is important is that it is suggestive of what was widely believed about the goings-on in Rome.” Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 38, see further pp.30-40. Jennings and Elliott's connection of this passage to the excesses of ancient empire and the ways in which the actions of the Roman “one percent” would have frustrated the majority of lower-status Christ-followers (among many other low-status Romans) make important points about the exceptional nature of Rome's emperors and the frustrations it likely engendered among some bodies, but (as becomes apparent in my own argument) I am interested in how many were willing to *ignore* these excesses so long as there were *possibilities* of upward mobility and socio-economic success (which might, in turn, enable entrance into such an exceptional world). With Jennings especially, I find his interpretation problematic for its erasure of sexuality, especially when it comes to female sexuality and homoeroticism (see pp.38-39, where—when referring to imperial women—such behavior is broadened to include murder of husbands); indeed, Jennings erases the possibility of lesbian relationships in any form as the “sheerest fantasy” (39) without a mention of Brooten, let alone an engagement with the tremendous amount of historical evidence contained in *Love Between Women* that negates any claim that such a possibility is mere fantasy.

⁹⁶ See especially Brooten, 239-258, 275-280; Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 146-169 (left-hand column); Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 55-60.

that castigated the penetrated position as submissive and therefore “soft” and “effeminate.”⁹⁷ Likewise, the condemnation of female same-sex eroticism in Romans 1 (which cannot actually imagine how this could happen) follows its condemnations in wider Roman attitudes. While Romans’ condemnation of male same-sex intercourse can be called more comprehensive the prevailing penetrative hierarchy, the fact that “unnatural” men *repent from penetrating females* (their “natural usage”) makes it less different from Roman sexual protocols, which do permit elite men to penetrate lower-status men but never exclusively (nor with too much passion). In other words, Roman men had a variety of penetrative options, but they were still expected to penetrate women, at the very least in order to marry an elite woman and promulgate elite families.⁹⁸ Thus, while it is possible that some of his sexual ideas strengthened Roman protocols as a resistant act, it is undeniable that Pauline sexuality parrots the prevailing Roman construction.⁹⁹

Admitting these influences of Roman culture on Pauline presentations of “nature” and “natural” sexuality, LGBT/Queer scholars come to several different strategies for reading Romans 1 (and Paul’s letters more broadly). One influential interpretive route emphasizes how Paul’s context within Roman constructions of sexuality *differs* from contemporary understandings of sexuality, both in terms of “nature” and biology and in terms its social, cultural, and political structuring. In particular, contemporary culture does not accord socio-political influence to sexual penetration. Furthermore, sexual preference cannot simply be accorded to social influence, as it is often referred to as a

⁹⁷ On sexual slander and Paul’s letters, see especially Knust, *Abandoned to Lust*.

⁹⁸ As was encouraged in imperial marriage legislation, introduced by Augustus and continued by his successors. See further discussion and its relevance to Romans below in chapter 5, “Ethical Submission.”

⁹⁹ On Paul as a “dummy” parroting Roman cultural norms, see Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 146, 155-156.

biological “orientation.” As such, Paul’s comments on sexuality must be understood as temporally-restricted products of a particular historical context, much as his comments on women and slavery have been understood as having different meanings in the first century than in the twentieth and twenty-first.¹⁰⁰ Thus, present interpretations that tout Pauline condemnations of same-sex intercourse as binding upon contemporary bodies are too greatly infected with modern heterosexism and are flawed in their understanding of cultural and scientific advancement in the present age.¹⁰¹

Though most LGBT/Queer scholars now admit that Paul’s comments on sexuality, especially those in Romans, are largely against or condemning of same-sex intercourse, some do not solely emphasize the ways in which Roman sexuality and its influences on Pauline positions differ from contemporary attitudes regarding sexuality. Though he admits Paul can be a “dummy” who is bound to repeat Roman sexual norms, Stephen D. Moore’s queer reading of Romans 1 begins to peek beyond the chapter’s conclusion and asks what affects this has on Pauline theology more broadly. Moore compels this project’s emphasis on where queer theory and sexuality can be found throughout Romans when he asserts that Paul’s Roman view of sexuality infuses his theology and implies that God is the “impenetrable penetrator” over all “believing” (and non-believing) bodies, including those of Paul and Jesus.¹⁰²

Marchal’s queer and political engagements with Romans 1 (alongside other Pauline passages that specifically deal with sexuality) expand upon the political

¹⁰⁰ I.e., Marchal’s “historical-contextual” approach to queer readings; see Marchal, “Queer Approaches,” 214-216. See especially, Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 61-64, 1-16; Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 264-266.

¹⁰¹ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 51-64.

¹⁰² Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 169-172. The “sexual substratum” of Paul’s theology in Romans 3, as unveiled by Moore (see p.156) will be elaborated and taken further below in chapter 3, “Faithful Submission.”

implications of engagements like Moore's (as well as Brooten's).¹⁰³ Marchal's "queerly resistant" approach to Paul, foreshadowed in his postcolonial/feminist work discussed above, continues to identify the ways in which Paul's rhetoric often aligns with imperial sexual ideology, especially (as we will see in chapter 5) through terms of "sexual exceptionalism." Marchal's resistant work identifies binaries within classical and biblical scholarship (in particular the demands of prioritizing either historical continuity or difference) as well as the ongoing kyriarchal affects of "the Biblical" that give power and authority to the text and (particular) interpretations of it.¹⁰⁴ Marchal's engagements ultimately show that "queer resistance" is not and cannot be exclusively located within Paul, given his kyriarchal alignments, and he points to both the *ἐκκλησία* and theories of assemblages as spaces for queer resistance that unsettle "the Biblical" by producing other affects.¹⁰⁵

Brooten, whose work on Roman sexuality and female homoeroticism in wider Greco-Roman contexts argues against making firm distinction that differentiates ancient and contemporary sexualities, also refuses to distinguish "biblical" and "classical" scholarship. While she delivers a detailed exegesis of Romans 1:18-32, she brings Romans (and other contemporary Jewish and Christian writings) as equal evidence within the broader conversation on Greco-Roman sexuality, largely the purview of classics. Her

¹⁰³ Marchal, "'Making History' Queerly," directs most of its biblical attention to Romans 1. He also engages with Romans 1, alongside 1 Cor 6:9-10, in Marchal, "Exceptional Proves Who Rules," 99-107. His engagements in both develop his "queerly resistant" approach as identified in Marchal, "Queer Approaches," 218.

¹⁰⁴ So Marchal discusses and dissects the "continuist" and "altericist" binary in classical scholarship on sexuality, represented especially by Brooten and Halperin respectively, calling the binary being (stuck?) "Between Brooten and a Halperin Place." See Marchal, "'Making History' Queerly," 376-381.

¹⁰⁵ On "the Biblical" as an affect that works similarly to Carolyn Dinshaw's theorization of "the Medieval" that sticks argumentation in a particular form of historical and textual form, see Marchal, "'Making History' Queerly," 376, 381-387. See also "Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics," 171-174.

lengthy exegesis of Romans is necessitated by the passage's long history of being used to condemn, oppress, and violently harm wo/men, especially women-loving-women; therefore, as she uncovers how Paul's views accord with Greco-Roman views of sexuality, she also points to the flaws in this logic, which are often more obvious when looking at Roman definitions of "nature" than in biblical ones.¹⁰⁶

However, her exegesis' contribution does not rest solely in this crucial exposure. She argues that Paul's views—and, by extension, those of Rome's elite—were not descriptive of all wo/men. Women loved women in a variety of communities and ways in first-century Rome, *and this included ἐκκλησίαι where Christ-followers gathered.*¹⁰⁷ With the diverse range of evidence she compiles, Brooten's argument makes a firm case that these existences are (highly) probable, even if rarer, condemned by authorities, and often erased from recorded view. Indeed, there may be (significant) differences from modern times in how Romans constructed nature and sexuality, but there are also similarities and continuities of bodies, resistances, erotic desires, and ideas that cannot be ignored or dismissed. Brooten's work unveils the alignments of Paul's condemnations in Romans 1:18-32 while always insisting that other bodies were present, resisting, speaking, and acting. This duality informs and anticipates the two ways of reading—the two assemblages—featured in this project.

I argue that these various, largely LGBT/Queer, analyses of Greco-Roman sexuality's resonances in Romans 1 leave little that *urgently* needs to be said. The ways in which Romans 1:18-32 works to sexually submit ἐκκλησία-1 bodies to prevailing kyriarchal constructions have (long) been established. Much more work needs to be done

¹⁰⁶ Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 215-266.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 300-302, 359-362.

to untangle their ongoing submissive effects on contemporary bodies, but that work must include seeing where these effects extend beyond 1:32. Though I revisit the passage again in the following chapter (to test the idea of *ἐκκλήσις*-I assemblage developed there), this project attempts to escape some of the draws of Romans 1 that inhibits queer readers from reading, critiquing, and conversing with the rest of Romans, especially its “less” sexual theologies, Christologies, and ethics.

Feminist Approaches and De-Centering Paul

Although this project distinguishes LGBT/Queer and feminist approaches to Romans, most scholars from either approach have sympathies and draw from insights of the other. Often a particular label (feminist, LGBT, queer) gets affixed—stuck even—to an argument or scholar despite the ways in which their argument and method can mix or fit within both interpretive categories.¹⁰⁸ Brooten, sitting at the border between these two sections, illustrates the difficulty and ambiguity of these labels. Brooten’s *Love Between Women*, with its insistence on prioritizing *female* bodies, particularly those of ancient lesbians, represents a distinctly feminist project in the realms of classical and biblical studies, especially when contextualized alongside the work of (male) scholars whose focus on “ancient homosexuality” features male examples exclusively.¹⁰⁹ However, by

¹⁰⁸ “Method is our madness,” declare Moore and Yvonne Sherwood in *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 31. The entire section bearing this as its title details this “feature”—peculiar within literary criticism—of biblical studies; see pp.31-41. While the authors and many other theory-oriented “biblical scholars” (myself included) may recoil at calling this a “feature,” one must admit some level of admiration (perhaps similar to what one might have for King Midas?) for the field’s capacity “to turn everything it touches into method, even concepts as methodologically unpromising as ‘intertextuality’” (33). Anticipating the theories of the following chapter, perhaps “methodolatry” and biblical studies too could be productively conceived as assemblages that are running almost entirely concurrent at the moment. Even as some scholars (including Moore and Sherwood as well as myself) try to shift the biblical assemblage away from tidy and easy categorized methods, we find ourselves drawn back into the demands of method.

¹⁰⁹ Brooten, then, emphasizes that a focus on *women* vastly alters the conclusions and scholarly models of sexuality and gender in antiquity, biblical interpretation, and early Christianity: “My research is more in line with those researchers who see a continuity between non-Christian and Christian understandings of the

asserting the existence—and it embrace by some wo/men—of homosexuality in the first century, her arguments have been pivotal for LGBT/Queer scholars and activists, especially those who read and interpret biblical texts (and many of whom may also identify as feminists, though not necessarily). Her dual method and situation in-between feminist and LGBT/Queer politics and theories points to some of the historical and ongoing tensions of any project that refuses to eschew either label.

As this introduction transitions from what are largely LGBT/Queer approaches to what are largely feminist approaches, it must be noted that the distinction I draw between these approaches is *not based on object of study*. Both feminist and queer approaches to Romans deal with the same texts, contexts, and histories; but they also both emphasize gender *and* sexuality. In other words, sexuality has never been the primary purview of LGBT/Queer interpretation while gender is that of feminist ones. Both approaches treat issues of gender and sexuality and how they relate to the ancient and contemporary bodies who feel the weight of ongoing oppressions based on their constructions.¹¹⁰

body. A focus on female homoeroticism makes this continuity clearer than would a focus on male homoeroticism, since nearly all extant sources on sexual relations condemn such relations, whereas some Roman-period non-Christian sources express tolerance toward male-male sexual relations, which masks the similarity between Christian and non-Christian understandings of masculinity. Because the reasons for condemning female homoeroticism run deeper than the reasons for promoting marriage or celibacy (on which there was much debate in the Roman world), there is a cultural continuity if views on female homoeroticism” Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 2-3. In contrast, scholars like Halperin, Winkler, and Boswell only discuss male examples; if they do discuss women (as Halperin does in “Why is Diotima a Women”), it is largely to guarantee invisibility by arguing that the evidence we have often excludes them and that, even when they are mentioned or speak, these portrayals have been constructed by and for men. See especially, Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 113-151.

¹¹⁰ The wider tensions, differences, and continuities between feminism and queer theory will be discussed in great detail in the chapter that follows. Notable here is that, if there is any difference in “objects,” it is the different theories/scholarly conversations upon which feminist and LGBT/Queer biblical interpretations draw. Broadly speaking, “queer” biblical approaches are likely to engage with “queer” theories outside biblical studies, especially Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, but also, especially more recently, Eve Sedgwick and Leo Bersani as well as more recent queer developments by the likes of Lee Edelman, Jasbir Puar, or Elizabeth Freeman. “Feminist” biblical interpretations often draw on the past work of foundational feminist and womanist biblical scholars and theologians (like Schüssler Fiorenza, Phyllis Trible, Katie Cannon, Delores Williams, Elizabeth Johnson, or Mary Daly), in addition to feminist and womanist theorists such as Amy Allen or Patricia Hill Collins.

Within this project, the most obvious (if imperfect) distinction between the two approaches lies in how they emphasize their evidence, critique, and conclusions about both gender and sexuality. While both LGBT/Queer and feminist scholars emphasize historical context and critique Paul's words from contemporary spaces of resistance still affected by his influence, more (but not all) feminist scholars emphasize and have long rooted their work in *historical* spaces of resistance to kyriarchy and Paul's relations to them in ways that are continuous with contemporary wo/men's resistance.¹¹¹ Again, Brooten's critique of Paul is grounded in proving the historicity of first-century women who loved women: "lesbians" and "homosexuals," ancient, contemporary, and in-between, existed and resisted. Of course, not all feminist scholars approach Romans or biblical texts with this focus or commitment, and they are still equally and exceedingly "feminist."¹¹² However, this emphasis on historicity and presence, despite wo/men's

¹¹¹ Such a distinction is necessarily and unfortunately reductionist: in other words, it does not *truly* capture the nature or full differences between LGBT/Queer and feminist approaches to biblical text, in part because so many of these individual approaches overlap, often (but not always) intentionally. Thinking affectively, "capturing" method is impossible and always reductionist because methodological approaches are always shifting and interacting. To operate within biblical studies and its methodolatry (a necessary operation for a study of Paul), the imperfect distinction is ultimately unavoidable.

¹¹² The feminist historiographical and de-centering approaches described below largely, if not exclusively, focus attention on chapter 16 when discussing Romans; however, despite different emphases, feminist approaches to Romans more broadly draw from similar political and methodological impulses. Feminist approaches to Romans have, therefore, considered a wide range of passages in Romans and even the letter as a whole (unlike queer interpretation's largely limited focus on chapter 1). The following list represents many—but not all—of the diverse feminist approaches to Romans. More general feminist approaches to Paul can be found in Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, eds., *A Feminist Companion to Paul* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), on Romans, especially the essays by Swancutt (pp.42-73), Luzia Sutter Rehmann (pp.74-84), and Kathleen E. Corley (pp.98-121); and in Sandra Hack Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Polaski, *A Feminist Introduction to Paul* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005). Specific feminist treatments of Romans include Castelli, "Romans;" Tamez, "Romans;" Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Romans" in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3rd. ed., ed. Carol A. Newson, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 547-556; Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds. *Gender, Tradition, and Romans: Shared Ground, Uncertain Borders* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged*; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Sheila McGinn, "Feminist Approaches to Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 165-176; Tamez, "Justification as Good News for Women: A Re-

(textual) invisibility, informs the work of many feminist biblical scholars, and these scholars in particular drive this project's most overt feminist arguments.¹¹³

While feminist critique (most notably, Schüssler Fiorenza's kyriarchy) informs the critique of kyriarchal assemblages alongside the theoretical critiques that draw from queer affect and LGBT/Queer biblical interpretation, this project's feminist commitments are featured most prominently when this project turns to ἐκκλησία-l assemblage. This turn is driven and made possible by Schüssler Fiorenza's development and ongoing theorization of the "ekklēsia of wo/men" as a historically rooted utopian vision. Rooted in her articulation of feminism as ongoing struggle, this concept reclaims the ancient Greek ideals that originally formed the creation of the ἐκκλησία as a democratic political assembly.¹¹⁴ The ἐκκλησία, a critical part of Greek democracy, included anyone in the δῆμος—"people." Ideally, democracy and the ἐκκλησία represent all people with equal

Reading of Romans 1-8," in *Celebrating Romans*, 177-189; Pamela Thimmes, "'She Will Be Called an Adulteress': Marriage and Adultery in Romans 7:1-4," in *Celebrating Romans*, 190-203.

¹¹³ "The passages that directly mention women are not descriptive or comprehensive but indicative of the "submerged" information conveyed in so-called inclusive androcentric texts. Those passages that directly mention women cannot be taken as providing all the information about women in early Christianity." Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers," 423. See further and more recently Johnson-DeBaufre, "'Gazing Upon the Invisible': Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Wo/men of 1 Thessalonians" in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē*, ed. Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 73-108. Johnson-DeBaufre shows how the textual historiographical presumptions and erasures continue despite material evidence that contradicts it.

¹¹⁴ "The original meaning of *ekklēsia* would be best rendered as 'public assembly of the political community' or as 'democratic assembly of full citizens.'" Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction to the Tenth Anniversary Edition," in *In Memory of Her*, xxxii. Schüssler Fiorenza notes that this meaning of ἐκκλησία is used in Acts 19:21-41 (esp. vv.39-41) to refer to a "lawful" assembly within Roman Ephesus (distinct from an assembly of Christ-followers); see p.xlii, n.69. While Schüssler Fiorenza readily establishes this, a glance at LSJ quickly emphasizes her move away from translating or theorizing this term as "church," given its use as assembly with more precise and official designation than a συλλόγος (a more general "assembly" of persons that could be applied to a gathering of rioters) from Homer onward. LSJ, however, still gives the definition as "congregation" or "church" when applied to Jewish and New Testament texts, a problematic distinction that reinforces the gap between Biblical Studies and Classics. Saying that these texts use Greek terms with radically different meanings from other ancient texts implies that Jewish and Early Christian texts are the purview of "religious studies" and therefore cannot provide the same evidence as other "classical" sources. "ἐκκλησία," in LSJ, 509; "συλλόγος" in LSJ, 1673.

voice and participation. However, even in its ancient conception and existence, the Greek *ἐκκλησία* did not live up to its radical potential for full socio-political equality.¹¹⁵ In Athenian Greece (and any time thereafter), the *δῆμος* was not as equal as its theorization demands. In its original form, the *δῆμος* and the political *ἐκκλησία* were limited to men—and specifically free, Greek men.¹¹⁶

Within feminist biblical interpretation, the *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men offers space to struggle with Paul and the hold his nearly singular voice has over depictions of the earliest *ἐκκλησίαι* of Christ-followers. Schüssler Fiorenza points toward a strategy that *de-centers* Paul and brings into view the myriad other voices that participated historically (and continue to participate) in the *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men. Along with Schüssler Fiorenza, others have employed and developed this de-centering approach in relation to Paul's letters and the communities who received them.¹¹⁷ My reading of Romans with an *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage adopts such a de-centering, in ways most closely aligned with its development and articulation by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura Nasrallah. In their essay "Beyond the Heroic Paul," Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah discuss how many interpreters from "Paul and Politics" perspectives keep Paul central by championing or

¹¹⁵ Likewise, in U.S. conceptions of democracy, "we the people" has never truly been all people, "created equal."

¹¹⁶ As Schüssler Fiorenza often reminds; see, for instance, Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 9-10.

¹¹⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 149-173; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 101-109. See further Shelly Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues of Feminist Historiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17, no.2 (2001): 39-55; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Wire, "Response: The Politics of the Assembly in Corinth" in Horsley, ed. *Paul and Politics*, 124-129; Wire, "Response: Paul and Those Outside Power," in Horsley, ed. *Paul and Politics*, 224-226; Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians" in Horsley, ed. *Paul and Politics*, 103-109; Marchal, *Hierarchy, Unity and Imitation: A Feminist Rhetorical Analysis of Power Dynamics in Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); Marchal, *Politics of Heaven*.

reclaiming him primarily as a hero who resists Rome's empire.¹¹⁸ Indeed, even when Paul is not the hero but instead the villain, his voice is centered exclusively.¹¹⁹ The centralizing of Paul can, therefore, also appear within feminist and queer adaptations of "Paul and Politics" interpretations.¹²⁰

Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah describe a binary within Pauline studies that deal with empire. He must either be a parrot of empire, repeating its kyriarchal values in Christo-theological form or the champion of resistance to empire, who provides alternatives for Christ-followers confronting imperial oppressions ancient and contemporary.¹²¹ With its emphasis on submission within Paul's letter, my reading of Romans with kyriarchal assemblage will often be seen to portray Paul in the former category, as though he is a villain subtly submitting other Christ-followers to a "new" theo-Christological kyriarchy that bears little difference to that of Roman socio-politics. As the following chapters will reveal, Paul's parroting (as well as his resistance) is sometimes intentional and sometimes done without complete awareness. Though Paul is neither hero nor villain, rebel nor supporter, these unveilings of Pauline submission and their alignments with kyriarchal assemblage require exposure and analysis because their affective effects continue to draw back, submit, and restrict bodies in subtle ways.

¹¹⁸ Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul."

¹¹⁹ Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah show how Marchal's *Politics of Heaven* evinces such a posture. While his postcolonial and feminist analysis of Philippians nuances empire-critical scholarship, they assess that, despite Marchal's intent, it ultimately "births its opposite: a singularly imperial Paul" whose letters offer "a new form of colonialism." Ibid., 167.

¹²⁰ In addition to their critical assessment of Marchal, they note how Lopez more overtly claims a heroic Paul who stands in solidarity with a community of subjugated *ἐθνη*—a community whose role as *conversation partners* is never featured or discussed. Thus, they conclude, "If we ignore Paul's conversation partners and his shifting self-presentation in response to them, the diverse subjects in the Pauline assemblies become the recipients of Paul's mission rather than the subjects with political agency and imagination." Ibid. 166-167.

¹²¹ Ibid., 166.

This is why the impulse to de-center and move beyond the heroic—or villainous—Paul is critical and why this project does not solely read within the context of kyriarchal assemblages. Once these subtle affective draws are revealed, they (and, by extension, their author) need to be de-centered so that space can be made to see the subtle ways that other ideas existed and prompted change. By placing Paul into the *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men (as another assemblage), his ideas become only a few that existed among many that were proliferating among a diverse and always changing gathering of Christ-followers.¹²² This placement attempts to avoid a binary with Paul on one “side” and the *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men on the other: by insisting that Paul is *not* singular, this means that the voices in this *ἐκκλησία* agreed and disagreed with Paul as much as they did with one another.¹²³

Describing how their approach could affect a reading of Romans, Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah write, “The meaning of Romans might then be varied and its possibilities and limitations more fully unfolded. Such an approach takes Paul’s letters as partial inscriptions of the political visions and debates of the Christ-assemblies rather than as a repository for Paul’s thought alone.”¹²⁴ The *ἐκκλησία* in Rome was not only diverse as they discussed and proliferated myriad different ideas about following Christ, it was also conversing and debating about these ideas *long before* Paul’s letter arrived and was read in their assembly. Such an emphasis suggests that the surviving (textual)

¹²² “More importantly, if we place the assemblies at the center and hear Paul’s letters as one voice among many, we can imaginatively reconstruct and reclaim a richer history of interpretation of Paul, a history populated with subjects struggling in different ways within the varied contexts of empire.” Ibid., 174.

¹²³ “Such a conceptualization of the *ekklēsia* of women as a democratic, public, feminist arena for practical deliberation and responsible choice does not repress but invites debates about different theoretical proposals and practical strategies.” Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 350.

¹²⁴ Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, 166.

remnants of Rome's *ἐκκλησία* were and are “contested spaces.”¹²⁵ Paul's ideas were likely not novel to this group's discussions, and they participated in and proliferated its conversations. Some could have held similar views and others were already shouting vigorously against them; maybe most others sat or stood, and reacted through various sensations and postures from spaces in-between.

Reconstructing Rome's *ἐκκλησία*

Since this project proliferates plausible historical conversations, it is necessary to outline a reconstruction of Rome's *ἐκκλησία* based on the evidence we have (and do not have).¹²⁶ The task of reconstructing Rome's *ἐκκλησία* is made more difficult by the size and diversity of Rome as the imperial center and capital as well as the lack of Paul's engagement with specific issues within it. While most of the cities/regions to which Paul wrote and travelled contained considerable diversity, since these *ἐκκλησίαι* were situated within *ἔθνη* (nations) conquered by Rome, the individual situation—in terms of politics, economics, and society—of an *ἔθνος* (who would comprise that city/region's ethnic majority) can be better assessed.¹²⁷ Assuming that few—if any—elite, native-born Romans were among those gathered in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, the make-up of this assembly

¹²⁵ Ibid., 173.

¹²⁶ In particular, on the “do not have,” we do not have evidence of these Romans writing or speaking back to Paul, unlike the evidence in his other letters which clearly respond to questions within the context of ongoing correspondence.

¹²⁷ So, in places like Corinth, Philippi, or Thessaloniki, it is generally assumed that many (though not all) of those gathered would have been ethnically Greek and specifically inhabitants of those particular cities, familiar with the contexts and conquests they have undergone. A similar thing can be said about the ethnic make-up of Ephesus or Galatia. Notably, I am not the first to attempt to imagine the bodies that inhabited the Roman *ἐκκλησία*, as Peter Oakes has done so, appealing especially to the evidence of Pompeii. His reconstructive readings provide grounding for my own, but his attempt individualizes the perspectives of four individuals who might have been part of the gatherings. I am also less interested than Oakes in considering any of the dimensions or spatial actualities of the house-church (see pp.1-68); however, I appreciate how this sets up his own reimaginative work and helps provide one more avenue to pave the way for my proliferation. See Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 69-97.

could comprise, with equal probability, any number of bodies in terms of their ethnic background, time dwelling in Rome, socio-economic status, and position in terms of freedom/enslavement, gender and sexuality.¹²⁸

Paul's letter does give clues to the specific diversity of bodies who were in this assembly. Generally speaking, it is reasonable to assume—as many commentators do—that Paul's letter to Rome was largely addressed to a non-Jewish audience of ἔθνη, in both the Jewish and Roman senses of the term.¹²⁹ Scholars, in particular Schüssler Fiorenza and Peter Lampe, have analyzed these clues, especially the names mentioned in chapter 16, to assert probable details about the ἐκκλησία that aid reconstructing its discussions.¹³⁰ Analyzing the backgrounds of these names, Lampe notes most of them were given to bodies of lower socio-economic status, and several names were those often given to slaves. This means that many in the ἐκκλησία were current or former slaves (“freedpersons”).¹³¹ Among those without slave names, many of these names bear traces

¹²⁸ At the political and economic center of the empire, many bodies migrated and passed through (by choice, necessity, or force) Rome, and (m)any of them could have found their way into the city's ἐκκλησία of wo/men who were following Christ.

¹²⁹ The question of the Jewish make-up of Rome's ἐκκλησία is hotly debated; the evidence within the letter makes clear that there were Jews present in the assembly to whom Paul wrote; however, based upon its content and Paul's self-appellation as “apostle to the Gentiles,” they seem to be the letter's main audience. While Paul's letters to other communities make clear that questions about Judaism were contested, there is no reason to assume such contestation in Rome—at least as the *only* possibility, even if Paul's letter may appear to assume these conflicts based on his past experience. Given the diverse ethnic representations in the ἐκκλησία, I assume in what follows a general interest in Jewish history and teachings (related to following the God whom Jesus Christ followed), but I also assume that Jews in Rome existed as one ἔθνη among many with different ideas and perspectives that came into conflict and cooperation. On “the Romans debate” and questions of Jewish/Gentile audience, see discussion in n.57 above.

¹³⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, “Missionaries, Apostles, Co-Workers;” Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), chapter 16, “The Roman Christians of Romans 16,” pp. 153-183; Lampe's monograph was originally published in German: *Die Stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987). Both Schüssler Fiorenza and Lampe reject the proposal that Romans 16 was not originally part of the epistle (and that it may not have originally been sent to Rome but to Ephesus). Schüssler Fiorenza, 420; Lampe spends almost a third of his essay, the beginning “excursus,” analyzing the linguistic and text-critical evidence to reach this conclusion. Lampe, 153-164.

¹³¹ Lampe, 170-183.

of non-Roman heritage and ethnicities, meaning that most of the assembly would have been non-citizen Roman ἔθνη.¹³² While a few names bear Jewish background, it seems that most of the ἐκκλησία were non-Jews (also ἔθνη/Gentiles).

The evidence of Romans 16 also indicates the obvious and likely prominent presence of women in Rome's ἐκκλησία. About one-third of the twenty-six names in this chapter are clearly female (including Junia, despite her attempted erasure).¹³³ Schüssler Fiorenza emphasizes, beyond the clarity that women were important and present in this gathering, that this percentage of women is noteworthy considering that, unlike men, women are generally only mentioned when their presence or contribution is worthy of attention (usually negative, sometime positive). If this many women were worthy of such (positive) attention in Paul's letter, then it indicates a significant presence of women beyond those named and a high level of participation, on equal levels to men, within one of the earliest ἐκκλησίαι.¹³⁴

Textual evidence is not the exclusive indication of women's presence. Even though the material evidence for the city of Rome attests to its diverse population, archaeological evidence in Rome—and throughout its territories—consistently makes

¹³² Lampe assesses the ethnic background of the names in Romans and concludes that at least half are clearly immigrants of Eastern origin; however, though the rest could be native to Rome, i.e., "autochthon," he is less conclusive on this second point. *Ibid.*, 167-170. Indeed, names that seem autochthonous may just be "more native" in the sense of belonging to persons whose families migrated several generations prior and eventually adopted more Romans names despite not being citizens or natives.

¹³³ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Co-Workers, Apostles," 427. Brooten is responsible for drawing attention to the fact that the apparently male "Junias" is a scribal error for "Junia," a female name that is actually attested to in first-century inscriptions (unlike the former name which is never seen). Brooten, "Junia... Outstanding Among the Apostles," in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, ed. Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 141-144.

¹³⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Co-Workers, Apostles," 427. Further: "Its references to early Christian women therefore should be read as the 'tip of an iceberg,' indicating what is submerged in grammatically masculine language and how much historical information is lost to us forever. These references, however, must not be fitted into an androcentric model of historical reconstruction but must be appropriated with an understanding of early Christian beginnings that allows for the leadership not only of men but also for that of women" (423).

evident that women inhabited a good number of spaces in the city. “*Wo/men were there*,” Johnson-DeBaufre points out as she recounts just how apparent the fact is in the archaeological remnants she visits with her students.¹³⁵ This obvious visibility, however, is rendered invisible by biblical scholarship even when it appeals to material evidence.¹³⁶ Like in textual analyses, women’s archaeological presence is cast as an anomaly: when women *are* visible, it must be because these spaces were (exclusively) *for* women. Johnson-DeBaufre establishes that the more historical interpretation of material evidence must assume women’s physical (and vocal) presence unless reliably proven otherwise.¹³⁷

Finally, gender invisibility within scholarship can also be found in issues of sexuality: sexuality is only textually apparent when it deviates and only materially visible if it is depicted, in painting, sculpture, or graffiti. As Brooten and others uncover, textual depictions of sexual deviancy and depravity indicate the practices in question likely occurred often enough to require regulation and castigation. The material evidence of graffiti confirms the existence and frequency of many of these terms of practices beyond the (more theoretical) bounds of the more elite authors whose writings and ideas survive.¹³⁸ Unfortunately, unlike material remnants of women, sexual spaces are more difficult to find in archaeological evidence. Further, presentations of material culture portray first-century sexual spaces and remnants as separate from the rest of society, likewise treating the evidence of sexuality as an anomaly.¹³⁹ Any room, any street corner,

¹³⁵ Johnson-DeBaufre, “Gazing Upon the Invisible,” 73.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 83-92.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 92-103.

¹³⁸ See especially discussions of non-elite sexuality and the material evidence of its practice in Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking* (including discussions of its relation to elite regulations and its socio-sexual-political hierarchy).

¹³⁹ Nowhere is this more apparent than in the material evidence from Pompeii, one of the best sources of material evidence for first-century Rome/Italy, given its more reliable preservation. Largely a result of religious prudery, most of the “sexual” images and artifacts from Pompeii have been removed from their

any nook or cranny could have been used sexually. Many spaces are deemed “sexualized” because they contain erotic artwork (and occasionally graffiti).

However, depiction of sexuality does not itself indicate practice. Sexuality could have been experienced and embodied everywhere, and given the evidence of its diverse existence, it is equally important to insist that it did. Just as “women were there,” lesbians, gays, homosexuals, heterosexual, queers were there alongside the Romosexuals.¹⁴⁰ Wo/men loved, and they loved differently and for different reasons.

original location and relegated to a single “Secret Cabinet/Museum” (the “Gabinetto Segreto” in Italian: an important phrase to know, as it is otherwise difficult to find, if one now desires to see this evidence. Not only does this mean an archaeologist/scholar (such as myself) cannot view the imagery *in situ* to consider for oneself how it might have affected the space, but it also fetishizes sexuality in Pompeii, making it exceptionally excessive in the minds of scholars and tourists alike—when more than likely, Pompeians were no more sexually brazen than other Roman inhabitants (we just happen to actually have some of their sexual artifacts). To see the truth of this, one only need spend thirty minutes in the Secret Cabinet to see the giggles and gaga of enthralled tourists marveling at this rare glimpse of Roman sexuality. Indeed, one frequently hears the cry of the tour guide perpetuating the uniqueness and separability of Pompeian sexuality: “Pompeians were much more brazen and overt about their sexual pursuits than the more refined residents of Herculaneum” (or something similar with same effective yet unsubstantiated implication). Beyond the assumption of sexuality as relegated to secret spaces, which is constantly reinforced by archaeological displays and reconstructions, the definition of “sexual” evidence encompasses very contemporary (or perhaps a dated “modern”) notions of what is “sexual.” While perhaps every appearance of a giant phallus needs to be separated from view (if one worries about petit impressionable minds seeing such anomalous human anatomy), there is no evidence such depictions had sexual meanings within Roman culture. Additionally, the racial and racist dimensions of excessive Roman sexuality are not discussed: images of “pygmies” engaged in all manners of brazen sexual practice in public—part of stock images within many elite Roman homes—are likewise displayed as evidence of Roman sexuality at large, in ways that are totally different from current social mores. In fact, these images support the notion of racism in antiquity, showing how non-Roman, and especially African bodies, are commonly portrayed as sexually immoderate. More than likely, therefore, these images function less as erotica and more as elite justification of conquest based on the stereotyping of “barbarians” as unable to rule themselves or conform to Roman mores. Much of this analysis is determined by my own time spent analyzing these depictions and attempting to think with them *in situ* during my own research in Pompeii in September 2015. See also Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking*, where the Pompeian evidence is frequently discussed. For using Pompeian evidence to read Romans, see Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*.

¹⁴⁰ As verified by examples in Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 29-186. These “queers,” broadly speaking, likely thought and looked different in their differing contexts, but they bear continuous resemblances, *strikingly similar in their affect*, with contemporary and other historical queernesses. Though my own arguments and distinctions may differ in certain methods and articulations, they carry the same socio-political impulses and concerns that drive works such as Brooten’s and Boswell, as well as that of other LGBT biblical interpreters, who find import in identifying the ways in which queer bodies have always been present and resistant within biblical texts and their interpretation. See, as major examples, Nancy Wilson, *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995); Robert E. Goss and Mona West, eds., *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2000); Deryn Guest, Robert E. Goss, Mona West, and Thomas Bohache, *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 2006).

Even when they may also have been forced to submit and conform to it, wo/men practiced and preferred sexual acts differently, in ways that conformed to and deviated from the compulsory Roman sexual hierarchy.¹⁴¹

This project, therefore, reconstructs historically plausible conversations within the *ἐκκλησία* in Rome in ways that attend to its diversity, historically certain even when every exact detail is unknowable. Any reconstruction of further details can only ever be in the realm of speculative plausibility. However, to not reconstruct from these certain existences is to continue to erase women and/or deviant sexualities. And, this erasure perpetuates what is most certainly a historical error: that these voices did not develop, contribute, affect, or participate in Roman socio-political life, most especially within Rome's *ἐκκλησία* and its emerging theo-Christologies. Theories of assemblage and queerness complement and foreground these impossibilities and open additional spaces for historical proliferation. In the next chapter, these theories, which inform and introduce my conception of *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, will be developed alongside feminist theories so that together they can continue to make central the debates and discussions of the *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men. As one among many, this project's "assemblaged" *ἐκκλησία*-l reconstruction admits these unavoidable gaps and invisibilities, generates historical and contemporary debates and conversations, and continues to struggle with the questions—ones that are simultaneously theo-Christological and socio-political—posed by Christ-followers, including but not limited to Paul.

¹⁴¹ Following Brooten's insistence in *Love Between Women*, see esp. pp.359-362.

CHAPTER 2

QUEER AND FEMINIST THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter situates my subversion of submission in Romans as an endeavor that is simultaneously feminist and queer. Often rooted in activism, feminist and queer critiques have challenged dominant configurations of power in contemporary and ancient texts and worlds. They typically do so in the hope of enacting socio-political change in the present. However, despite their overlapping foci and often similar aims, queer and feminist inquiries have, from queer’s inception, been characterized by tensions that have produced skirmishes, turf wars, and supersessionism that have threatened to distract both from fully fostering change. However, in line with many theorists this project embodies commitments to both feminism and queerness. Explicating both theoretical approaches and their complex relations, this chapter develops my own theorization of assemblage through which I consider Paul’s letter alongside the *ἐκκλησία* in Rome.

The first major section of this chapter, “Queer Theory, Affect, and Political Critique,” begins with an overview of a few of queer theory’s origins—namely, that foreground its original political and intersectional emphases before discussing its modern political engagements and fluid focus on norms and their subversion. Beyond the footnotes, this overview ignores some of the more privileged origins of queer theory (especially Michel Foucault and Judith Butler) in favor of other origins—Audre Lorde, Gayle Rubin, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, specifically—that are most relevant to my queer and feminist aims.¹

¹ Notably, there are countless other “origin” texts, in addition to queer developments after its coalescing as a field in 1990, that could be discussed within—and are indeed relevant to—my development of queerness.

Stemming from these roots, my theorization of queer political critique especially develops Lauren Berlant's explication of "cruel optimism" and Jasbir K. Puar's development of "homonationalism." Puar and Berlant theorize these critical terms by drawing from and continuing to develop a particular vector of affect theory that stems from the work of Brian Massumi (who himself is developing the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari).² As a result, the following subsections delve into affect theory (especially aligned with Massumi) and its developments by Puar and then Berlant. These

See especially Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol.1; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience," *Signs* 5 (1980): 631-660; Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984; repr.2007); Rubin, "Thinking Sex;" Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006; orig. 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Halperin, *One Hundred Years*. This list expounds on some of the more commonly cited origins. In the essay that "names" queer theory as a field, Teresa de Lauretis accounts a longer history of publications that categorizes these early approaches alongside many others; see Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities: An Introduction" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991): iv.

² See especially Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) which is developed into its current affective deployments by Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). The first chapter of this monograph, "The Autonomy of Affect," was originally published earlier as an independent article with the same title in *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): 83-109. It is this publication that marks the beginnings of this Deleuzian development of affect theory. But even Deleuze and Guattari alone cannot be credited as originating the vector of affect bearing their (or, usually just Deleuze's) name, as their theorization of affect is itself indebted to Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics; On the Correction of Understanding*, trans. Andrew Boyle (London: Everyman's Library, 1959). In their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader*, which marks the formal culmination of "Affect Theory" into a field of inquiry that requires its own intellectual mapping and history, Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg define this Deleuzian approach (with its Spinozan influence) as one of two major "vectors" of affect. The second vector, which holds less (but far from no) influence and relevance over my own use of affective queerness (and is, therefore, largely limited to brief engagements in my footnotes), finds its current foundational text in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) and, perhaps especially, the earlier essay (similar to and appearing at the same time as Massumi's "Autonomy"): Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tompkins" in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tompkins Reader*, ed. Sedgwick and Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 1-28. As its title and containing monograph indicate, this vector is rooted in Silvan Tompkins work on affect; see Silvan Tompkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, 4 vols (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1962). Unlike Sedgwick—who had already established deep roots in queer theory (and thus, her vector has perhaps been more easily applied in queer projects)—Massumi himself ignores the queer capacities of affect and its politics (indeed, judging from *Parables*, p.69, he could be said to be mostly critical of [certain forms] of queer theory). However, Massumian affect exceeds its progenitor, as his theorization and development of Deleuze and Guattari have been essential to Puar and Berlant, among other queer theorists. Arguably, queer theory's development of Massumian/Deleuzian affect may better represent its force and political potentials (much like could be said for the feminist and queer developments of Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage; see further below).

developments coalesce into an affective idea of queerness (following Puar's conception) that I expound upon and relate to reading of Paul's letter to the Romans.

My reading of Romans does not stop at critiquing Paul's perspective, and—just as it equally prioritizes the wo/men of Rome's *ἐκκλησία*—its theory and methods are equally rooted in feminism. The second section of this chapter, “Feminism, Queerness, and “*ἐκκλησία*-I” Assemblages,” begins with a similar (though brief) overview of feminist theory, especially as it relates to Schüssler Fiorenza's theorization of wo/men and kyriarchy. Following this overview, the next subsection considers the implications of calling this a “queer and feminist” endeavor by naming and analyzing the issues and tensions that occur when feminism “meets” queer theory. Despite the risks, I ultimately embrace these tensions, especially by using the affective conception of assemblage, another idea of Deleuze and Guattari that has been developed and deployed in both queer and feminist projects. By developing this notion alongside Schüssler Fiorenza's *ἐκκλησία* of wo/men, I harness my own theorization of assemblage that can exist in kyriarchal and *ἐκκλησία*-I forms. Turning to the first century, such an *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage can “interrupt” Paul's letter with the historical voices of Roman wo/men and enable the proliferation of plausible conversations in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*.

Queer Theory, Affect, and Political Critique

Stemming from diverse theoretical and activist roots, the term “queer” often interrogates, destabilizes, resists, and/or operates outside of dominant modes of social belonging.³ It emphasizes those who are excluded and/or harmed by prevailing political

³ Queer theory's origins (many of which precede the formal coining of the “field” of “queer theory” in 1990 by Teresa De Lauretis) are rooted in political activism and social change, even as they probe the

patterns, whether on a global or more “everyday” scale. However, the political effectiveness of the term requires resistance to firm definition; it must remain a metaphor whose referent is never fixed.⁴ Queerness, then, is often characterized by *subversion*—the destabilization of dominant patterns through a variety of methods and approaches—that uncovers problematic dynamics of socio-political power while considering alternate modes of belonging and relation, modes that often function concurrently with others.⁵

Much queer theory focuses its political energy on sexuality as its primary referent (though never entirely unbound from issues of gender, race, and/or class), and theorists have sought to subvert “compulsive heterosexuality” and illuminate how society operates under the assumption that all persons live like heterosexual couples (i.e., “heteronormativity”).⁶ However, as queer theorists and activists (some of whom may prefer identify as LGBT as opposed to “queer”) have exposed the structures and effects of normalized sexuality and its regulation, it has grown increasingly evident that the

often-dense depths of academic theory. See De Lauretis, “Queer Theory” (the volume/essay was published in 1991, but the essay was originally delivered as a paper at a 1990 conference bearing its title).

⁴ Thus, in their introduction to a volume posing the question “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” its editors assert, “The contemporary mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity—as a mass-mediated consumer lifestyle and embattled legal category—demands a renewed queer studies ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional, not extraneous to other modes of difference, and calibrated to a firm understanding of queer as a political metaphor without a fixed referent.” David L. Eng with Judith Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction: What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” *Social Text* 84-85 (2005): 1.

⁵ “That queerness remains open to a continuing critique of its exclusionary operations has always been one of the field’s key theoretical and political promises.” Eng, with Halberstam and Muñoz, 3. They continue to state that this critique of exclusions and norms must be intersectional and extend beyond a focus on sexuality (as a form of exclusionary focus) to consider other forms of exclusion and identity, most especially in terms of the perspectives of women and queers of color (see especially p.4). Drawing from Puar, Marchal discusses the tendency (and the subsequent critique of it) to frame queer “primarily as oppositional, as anti-normative” (p.167); see Marchal, “Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics,” 167-169.

⁶ As noted above, my presentation of “queer origins” is selective and does not purport to give a historical account so much as it attempts to highlight certain important—and most relevant—aspects among queerness’ diverse beginnings. See Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose, “Introduction,” in *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, ed. Hall and Jagose with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter (London: Routledge, 2013), xiv-xx, esp. p. xvi. See also the earlier introductory text, Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

political change sought through queerness and its subversive impulses could not focus exclusively on sexuality nor upon sexual practices and identities excluded under a heterosexual norm.⁷ Although sex and sexuality remain significant sites to expose present political tensions and anxieties, limiting the focus of “queer” to a sexualized realm hinders its ability to subvert and challenge interrelated norms.

Within these origins of queerness and its intersectionality with other critiques of socio-political oppressions, Audre Lorde identifies a “mythical norm” imagined by those in power in American society.⁸ This norm is “white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, christian, and financially secure.”⁹ Controlling politics and society, these more powerful few expect conformity to the norm in order to experience the great socio-political benefits. Furthermore, by disenfranchising based on any deviation from the norm, those in power magnify difference through identitarian discourse along multiple axes, often meaning those who are oppressed focus exclusively on the way(s) in which only their particular group differs.¹⁰ Lorde’s work acknowledges different sexual

⁷ Especially on the question of queer’s relationship to sexuality, see Janet Halley and Andrew Parker, *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). In their introduction to the volume, the editors summarize: “As the first readers of these essays, we were struck not only by their sustained meditation on sex as a source of delight and trouble, as a subject of serious inquiry, as a political conundrum, and as a spur or occasion for writing. We were also astonished at how often that meditation was itself enabled by a thought of ‘after-ness’: in reporting on the state of queer theory vis-à-vis their own intellectual itineraries, our authors have much to say about the social affects, theoretical demands, and politics of thinking and writing in time.” Halley and Parker, “Introduction,” in *After Sex*, 4. See also discussion of this trend in Marchal, “Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics,” 167-169.

⁸ This norm generally works to keep oppressed those not in perfect alignment with it.

⁹ Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex,” in *Sister Outsider*, 116. Lorde’s contributions should not and cannot be limited to queer theory; indeed, they should not even be said to primarily be concerned with queers or queerness, since she is equally—and often more—concern with issues of racial oppression, along with oppressions based on gender and class. However, her demands for attending to the intersections of all these oppressions—and her work on sexuality as part of that (additionally, see her essay “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” in *Sister Outsider*, 53-59)—are an essential piece of the origins of a queerness that is intersectional.

¹⁰ “Those of us who stand outside that power often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around differences, some of which we ourselves may be practising.” *Ibid.*, 116.

practices/preferences as one axis of difference among many that she discusses, and she insists that the existence and intersections of multiple axes of oppression must be recognized in order to redefine power in a way that allows relations across these differences.¹¹

Further expanding queer's political impact, Gayle Rubin addresses the political regulation of sexuality (in the context of HIV/AIDS advent) and attempts to theorize sexuality's oppression in ways that are not limited by (a particular definition of) gendered oppression.¹² In Rubin's formulation, sex—by which she means the actions of sexuality (not sex as gender)—“is a vector of oppression.”¹³ Thinking with Foucault's employment of discourse, Rubin emphasizes that sexual oppression has social, economic, and political motivations.¹⁴ It interacts with oppressions based on class, race, and gender, but its suppression cannot be limited to analyses of these factors. Given the variety of socio-politically oppressive uses of sex, which often rely on its “shock value,” Rubin concludes, “Sexual acts are burdened with an excess of significance.”¹⁵ Because sexuality is excessively significant in society, it must be controlled by those in power and simultaneously becomes a site of resistance. Sexuality—especially that which is deemed “deviant”—and the taboos around its public discussion produces a particular sensation that prompts its regulation as well as its potentially queer subversive qualities. Whether

¹¹ Lorde, 123.

¹² As will be discussed more below (see the subsection “Feminism ‘Meets’ Queer Theory”), Rubin's essay was written within a feminist conversation that igniting the so-called “Sex Wars” of the mid- to late 1980s, which ultimately fractured feminism into several factions, one of which blended into a seemingly separate queer theory.

¹³ Gayle S. Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 164.

¹⁴ See Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 146-148. Here she especially works with Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. I, which at the time had quite recently been published.

¹⁵ Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 149.

sexual acts are in the foreground or background, politics are fundamentally inseparable from sexuality and its effects.¹⁶

Along similar lines, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's axioms for antihomophobic inquiry confront epistemological methods that contain explicit and implicit reinforcements of a divisive heterosexual-homosexual binary (which, in turn, perpetuates homophobia).¹⁷ Her axiom, "People are different," is especially relevant to queer's intersectional and diverse usages.¹⁸ Elaborating this axiom, Sedgwick declares that identitarian-based categories need to be malleable and account for difference in the form of "making and unmaking" categories.¹⁹ This creates space for shifts that can create new ways to think about queer destabilizations. Such a "subversion" helps foster the more fluid sense of identity that structures more recent theorizations of queerness.

Normativity, however, has its own fluidity. It is also shifts to include and exclude different bodies.²⁰ In the aftermath of U.S. legal and political battles that have resulted in, among other "victories," the permission of same-sex marriage nationwide, certain persons (particularly white gay affluent men) who were once clearly queer—i.e., standing outside heteronormative social structures—now find that their sexual practices no longer exclude them from what were formerly heterosexual institutions.²¹ Lisa Duggan observes

¹⁶ "Like gender, sexuality is political. It is organized into systems of power, which rewards and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others." Ibid., 180.

¹⁷ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. Sedgwick's axioms address questions of gender, history, and identity in order to develop strategies that can counteract dominant (i.e. antihomophobic) methodological approaches, to literature and history in particular.

¹⁸ Her actual axiom, word for word, is "People are different from each other;" but I prefer to use a more emphatic declaration "People are different." Ibid., 22, see further pp.22-27.

¹⁹ They also must affect "the making and unmaking of remaking and redissolution of hundreds of old and new categorical imaginings concerning all the kinds it may take to make up a world." Ibid., 23.

²⁰ Though, to be noted, those who constitute Lorde's mythical norm always remain included.

²¹ Other "victories" include the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act and of the U.S. military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy. This inclusion is, of course, contingent and does not signal the complete downfall of heteronormativity, a point which Puar makes in her analysis of sexual exceptionalism (see chapter 5).

that these present neo-liberal sexual politics produce a “homonormativity” that requires its own identification and critique within queer theory.²² Duggan’s term prompts deeper analyses of the question: in what ways does the normalization of certain homosexual practices merely create a new normal that further effaces other (sexual) lifestyles and practices?²³ In particular, homonormativity signals that, as certain homosexuals are incorporated as “normal” in American politics and society, their inclusion merely redeploys heteronormativity by permitting particular privileged “others” to live according to its established norms.

While such expositions and critiques comprise much of queer theory, this does not mean that “queer” is thoroughly and only deconstructive, a criticism often waged by queer theory’s opponents.²⁴ In addition to producing theoretical insights, all of the early “queer theorists” discussed were not only ideologically committed to enacting social and political change but also engaged activists participating in movements that demand and

²² “New neoliberal sexual politics... might be termed the new homonormativity—it is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.” Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality: Neo-Liberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 50. See also Eng, with Halberstam and Muñoz, 11; Puar, 38-39; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 19. Duggan herself notes, the term is meant to riff off of “heteronormativity,” as originally introduced by queer theorist Michael Warner; however, the term has taken on its own life in recent queer theory. Duggan does not intend the riff to be “parallel” to heteronormativity: “there is no structure for gay life, no matter how conservative or normalizing, that might compare with the institutions promoting and sustaining heterosexual coupling” (Duggan, 94, n.15). See further Michael Warner, “Introduction” in *Fear of a Queer Planet*, ed. Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), vii-xxxi; orig. published in *Social Text* 29 (1991): 3-17.

²³ See further Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

²⁴ See, for example, Martha Nussbaum’s infamous scathing review of Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, in which she in which she claims that Butler’s deconstruction of gender tears down a binary in an act of radical play, but it merely “gestures” to political change and “offers only false hope.” She thus declares, “Hungry women are not fed by this, battered women are not sheltered by it, raped women do not find justice in it, gays and lesbian do not achieve legal protections through it.” Martha C. Nussbaum, “The Professor of Parody” *The New Republic* 220, no. 8 (Feb 22, 1999), 45. It is worth noting that Nussbaum’s claims are unsubstantiated: she considers no evidence of the ways myriad wo/men and/or queers have found hope and liberation from Butler’s theory (among many others of this ilk), simply dismissing this as impossible.

seek to enact social and political change. The change queer theory promotes rarely relies on a simple, achievable vision, and it imagines neither a return to an idyllic past nor a hope for an anticipated future yet-to-come. True socio-political change requires sustained and critical attention to the ever-shifting manipulation of power and control in modern capitalist culture, and it is toward this more deconstructive engagement that queer theory has honed its energy. If, as Lorde insists, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” then queer theory, as one among many movements toward change, must first develop tools for such dismantling before building a society that is altogether new.²⁵

Certainly, then, queer’s stability is found in its insistence on instability; it flourishes in fluidity. Such a usage and an impulse for change makes “queer” difficult to define because it refuses to pin down queer as an identity: a person cannot be fixed as queer anymore than another can be “not queer.” Therefore, it is important to qualify that, although such a definition of queer flaunts its subversive qualities, it would be a mistake to say that queerness is definitionally subversive. Indeed, to claim as much would be to fix queerness to subversion as a referent, fluid as it may be.²⁶ However, this fluidity maintains motion in queer’s direction toward socio-political change (toward which queerness is by no means the sole motivator or participant), and such change may often—even always—seem subversive.

Affect Theories and Queer(ness)

These “queer” sensations of fluidity and subversion—and their relation to “change”—find complementary theorizations with vectors of “affect.” Inhabiting the in-

²⁵ Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider*, 112.

²⁶ See again, Eng, with Halberstam and Muñoz, 1-7 as well as Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (Routledge: New York, 1993), 223-242

between, affect encapsulates potentials for change that are *felt* in the movements and sensations of various bodies.²⁷ As Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg explain in their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader*, “Affect arises in the midst of in-betweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon.”²⁸ It describes the ways in which bodies relate and function in tandem, the ways in which bodies are always sensing and moving and only changing as they respond to the feelings instigated by affect’s autonomic and proprioceptive force.²⁹

Affect theory explores the capacities and the potentialities of bodies, both human and non-human. Difficult to define, “affect” describes a force that is “beyond conscious knowing” by which bodies are compelled or driven to forms of movement.³⁰ As a force (albeit, one that is generally not forceful in a more violent sense), affect is often described as being proprioceptive and autonomic, terms often used in neuroscience to describe brain functions that are involuntary and often imperceptible (at least in the moment).³¹ The forces represented as “affect” often occur within a particular body—or between different bodies—*before* cognition produces change: “body—(movement/sensation)—

²⁷ “What would it mean,” Massumi asks, “to give a logical consistency to the in-between? It would mean realigning with a logic of relation. For the in-between, as such, is not a middling being but rather a being *of* the middle—the being of a relation” (70). Massumi contrasts “foundationalist” approaches to the question of individual and society (presenting “Which came first? The individual or society” as a chicken/egg problem) as privileging time with these approaches that privilege space and position in the form of “such notions as structure, the symbolic, semiotic system, or textuality” (68). He further contrasts affect’s in-betweenness with that of recent theories (including obvious reference to both queer and postcolonial theories) that make use of the in-between in order to define and display their marginality, hybridity, or subversion, a move that ultimately leaves their spatial position in the middle as a determined position with respect to that which is normal, powerful, or central. Such theories represent the “middling beings” that Massumi claims for a theory that emphasizes “being *of* the middle.” See further Massumi 68-70.

²⁸ Seigworth and Gregg, 1.

²⁹ See Seigworth and Gregg, 2; Massumi, 34-44.

³⁰ Like “queer,” affect is quite resistant to any stable definition. It exists in a somewhat sharp differentiation from cognitive knowing; however, they are not precisely opposites: the forces affect names exist “beyond, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing.” Seigworth and Gregg, 1.

³¹ Massumi, 28-34. On distinguishing affect as a force that is not “violent,” see also Seigworth and Gregg, 2.

change,” as Brian Massumi describes it.³² Affect is the connection of the dual forces of movement and sensation that work upon bodies in order to produce some change in state (which can be quite minor in its individual scale).

Affect describes “intensity,” the unassimilable excess that, thinking particularly in terms of language/imagery, functions alongside an image’s content (its qualities) and impacts its effect (including strength and duration).³³ Excessive, affect resists reduction to simplicity, but the benefit of its theorization and study is that it acknowledges the always-dynamic complexity of bodies that are constantly moving and interacting with other bodies. It considers entire fields and the various relations, sensations, and movements that occur within—and sometimes beyond—that field. Uncontainable, these intensities of movement and sensation comprise affect as it drives bodies to change.³⁴

A theoretical focus on affect tries to better capture the complexity of moving bodies that are rarely, if ever, static. This attempt at capture is always doomed to some degree of failure because “capture” implies stasis, locking something into a fixed position. Capture, in other words, is always an endeavor to cease the movement that helps comprise affect.³⁵ Because affect is always moving and creating different sensations, theories of its forces and intensities acknowledge this ultimate failure to fully fix, and they are thereby able to reject any demands or claims to provide a final solution that may be simpler or more stable. Though such solutions may succeed in offering concrete

³² Massumi, 1. Massumi explains the parenthetical (movement/sensation) as the fact that these forces have been largely “bracketed” by cultural theory. See further pp.28-30.

³³ Ibid., 24; see further pp.24-28.

³⁴ On a relational definition of change as an affective part of a “political economy of belonging,” see Ibid., 77-80, as well as pp.68-88.

³⁵ “Rhythm, relay, arrival and departure. These are relations of motion and rest: *affect*.” Ibid., 20.

explanations and methods for momentary, tangible changes, they fail to account for the “muddy, unmediated relatedness” that best expresses human existence and experience.³⁶

Affect theory considers, as best as possible, forces and sensations that escape rationality and cognition: they exceed the mind. Such sensations can be sensed in terms of emotions. Such “feelings” are, perhaps often the most obvious embodied instances of affect.³⁷ In this sense, affectual discourse accounts for how affect is felt and experienced in and by different bodies, which can include—but is my no means limited to—how emotions can attach (to) bodies and affect relations.³⁸ Following Massumi, affect retains its complexity and inability to be captured or fixed. It moves constantly, often in ways

³⁶ And it is out of such messy relations that affect emerges. Seigworth and Gregg, 4.

³⁷ Seigworth and Gregg, 5-6. Puar gives different phrasing and framing to Seigworth and Gregg’s vectors, calling them a “split” in affect’s genealogy: one (the first vector) that emphasizes attachment and feeling (and thus “becomes interchangeable with emotion, feeling, expressive sentiment”) and the other (the second vector) that looks at affect as what escapes various forms of perception. Thus, it becomes “a physiological and biological phenomenon, signaling why bodily matter matters.” Puar, 207-208.

³⁸ Because affect and its intensities are felt, especially in the case of human bodies, affect maintains a close connection to “emotion.” Indeed, many affect theorists—especially those who work along the “vector” of affect based in Silvan Tompkin’s work, which names various affects (e.g., shame, disgust, fear, interest) and identifies them as negative or positive. As mentioned above, this vector in affect theory is exemplified in the work of Sedgwick and Frank. See further Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*. Sara Ahmed’s work on affect, which draws heavily on its connections and relevance for queer and feminist theories, makes a strong connection for connecting affect and emotion, *contra* Massumi, who insists that affect’s sensation is different from emotion. Though Ahmed agrees with Massumi that emotions and sensations are not coterminous, she emphasizes the way in which the two often slide between one another (in a “beside” relationship, perhaps), particularly due to the “intensity of perception” implied by emotions. See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 25, 40n.4.

The idea of affect theory’s dual vectors is employed by Seigworth and Gregg as they introduce and outline the theory in its multiple forms; see especially pp.5-6. Drawing from the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, however, the definition of affect proffered above follows the other of affect’s “vectors,” that for which Massumi serves as a typical starting point. In this view of affect, emotion—especially the body’s emotional responses—is certainly one important aspect of affect, in that it is a byproduct of sensations and movements that in, between, and in-between bodies. In humans, emotions are a tangible expression—a feeling—of affect’s intensity, and they display and bear close similarity to affect given their separation from cognition and resistance to the mind’s control. However, though emotions can be studied for their display and containment of affect, affect cannot be limited to the study of emotion. Indeed, though they contain affect, emotions themselves cannot contain all of affect’s excess. Massumi, 23-30. Massumi draws an even sharper distinction between affect and emotion, emphasizing that the two are distinctly not synonyms: “But of the cleanest lessons of this first story is that emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders” (27). Though, with Massumi, I am hesitant to equate affect and emotion, I draw less of a distinction, following more closely the work of Jasbir K. Puar, whose definition of affect draws most heavily from Massumi while simultaneously emphasizing the politics of emotion and their relation to affective sensations (*vis-à-vis* Ahmed).

that are barely perceivable, especially since they precede, exceed, and escape cognition. This allows affect to be theorized in a number of different directions (indeed, likely infinite), and this multiplicity of direction requires its relation (i.e., its “relevance” though *not* its “applicability”) to other areas of inquiry.³⁹ These relations inspire invention and provoke changes in and in-between affect and a variety of fields, including queer theory.

Affect’s movement complements the fluidity expressed by queerness as described above, and it helps to provide descriptions of such fluidity while permitting “queer” to remain malleable, changing, and ever-moving in its critical focus. Queer’s fluidity blends into affect’s intangibility. Along these lines, Jasbir K. Puar develops affect theory’s work on capacities, belonging, relation, and connectivity in order to sharpen and expand the queer critique begun by Duggan’s homonormativity. For Puar, affect provides an avenue to challenge a particular brand of identity politics that privileges a singular aspect of complex human identities (e.g., sexuality) while ignoring other aspects (e.g., race), often entirely.⁴⁰ Puar’s theorization relishes affect’s complexifying of identity and, in so doing, reimagines the “queer” of queer theory, further unsettling it as an adjectival identity marker (which is equally implicit in its verbal usages). Indeed, Puar prefers to speak of “queerness” rather than “queer,” transforming its force into an affective quality that cannot be possessed or fully embodied. Instead, it creates capacities and relations while

³⁹ I specifically eschew *applying* affect to other fields or objects of inquiry following Massumi’s insistence: “The first rule of thumb if you want to invent or re-invent concepts is simple: don’t apply them. If you apply a concept or a system of connection between concepts, it is the material you apply it to that undergoes change, much more markedly than do the concepts” (17).

⁴⁰ Such privileging produces, in Puar’s language, a “cleaving of race and sexuality,” that defines homonormative—and what she will further show to be “homonational”—politics, activism, and discourse. Puar, 44. (For an elaboration of Puar’s “homonationalism” see chapter 5, “Ethical Submission.”) She discusses this cleaving at several other important junctures throughout the monograph, see especially pp.78, 131. Note that Puar wants to transform identity politics into a “politics of affect” but she acknowledges that identity politics are still necessary and that neither identity nor its politics can be entirely erased through such an affective transformation; see further pp. 204-205.

simultaneously enabling the querying and subverting of fixed patterns of uneven power and control.⁴¹

Via her affective theorization of queerness, then, Puar develops tactics and terminology for queer affective critique that aligns with queer's political dimensions and provides new paths to engage its capacities for creative critique. Though it produces change, affect alone does not promise that this change will be *positive*, and Puar observes that queerness, while more malleable when defined affectively, can still be molded to support homonormativity: "queer as regulatory."⁴² Her theorization of queerness therefore aims its critique at normative alignments in sources typically touted as "allies" of queer politics.⁴³ She situates and develops this queer critique in a U.S. context where the inclusion of certain homosexual subjects (those who mostly match the ideal categories of Lorde's mythical norm) enables a patriotic celebration of diverse inclusion while simultaneously excluding other bodies as perverse and deviant, typically along racial and/or religious lines (the Middle Eastern/Muslim terrorist, in particular).

The affective dimensions of this queerness emerge most clearly in Puar's analysis of the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court Case *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas*.⁴⁴ Puar

⁴¹ "Queerness irreverently challenges a linear mode of conduction and transmission: there is no exact recipe for a queer endeavor, no a priori system that taxonomies the linkages, disruptions, and contradictions into a tidy vessel." Ibid., xv.

⁴² Ibid., 11-23.

⁴³ Ibid., 40; see further pp.xiv-xvi, 37-78.

⁴⁴ Puar, 114-165 (chapter 3, "Intimate Control, Infinite Detention: Rereading the *Lawrence Case*"). This decision ruled that sodomy laws were unconstitutional and was widely heralded as a major victory for gay rights. Following Puar, I will hereafter refer to the case as *Lawrence-Garner*. That the victory is one of "gay" rights (as opposed to choosing to say LGBTQ) has particular valence because, as Puar points out, the acts specifically defined as sodomy involve phalluses, thus creating some conundrum as to whether lesbian sexual acts could be prosecuted under such laws to begin with. See Puar, 122. Puar's point here echoes the 1811 British (well, Scottish) case of schoolteachers Marianne Woods and Jane Pirie, accused of having sexual intercourse but are ultimately acquitted, in part due to denying that such intercourse was possible (along with colonial/racial dimensions with regard to the social class of the teachers and the witness). See discussions of this case—with its relation to Romans 1:26-27, in Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 189-190;

problematizes the notions of “privacy” and “intimacy” deemed essential rights in the court’s decision and discusses the unexamined race and class dimensions in the decision and most analyses of it (mirroring the erasure of Tyrone Garner, a black man, from the case name).⁴⁵ According to the court, sodomy laws are unconstitutional (i.e., not “American”) because they violate individuals’ rights to privacy, specifically within the context of *intimacy*, i.e., they assume, a conventional, stable, monogamous relationship between two persons (traditionally a man/woman, now extended to same-sex pairings).⁴⁶ This definition of patriotic intimacy, Puar shows, elides the “networks of contact and control” that regularize the bodies that can adhere to “its liberal fantasy form” and regulate and discipline deviant bodies for whom “privacy” and “intimacy” are impossible. Thus, in a comparison to the torture at Abu Ghraib (an extreme extension of the bodily violations enforced on racialized others in the name of national security against “terrorism”), sexual deviance and homosexual intolerance become the presumed norms of racial others, whose bodies are constantly scrutinized (“intimate control”) in ways that emphasize a particular heteronormative domesticity in order to avoid further scrutiny, arrest, and/or imprisonment (“infinite detention”).⁴⁷

Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 148-169 (right column); cited by both Brooten and Moore in their discussions of Romans 1:26.

⁴⁵ Puar notes that the erasure of names beyond the first plaintiff is typical in the titling of Supreme Court cases; however, the erasure and its impact cannot be ignored, especially when race is so rarely discussed in references to the case. See Puar, 130-137, as well as pp.117-130.

⁴⁶ Puar, 117-130. Noting the ways in which this “intimacy” has racial assumptions embedded in this definition, she writes, “The ascendancy of whiteness does not require heterosexuality as much as it requires heteronormativity, or its mimicry in the form of homonormativity or what Franke calls the domesticnormative” (128). Here Puar is working with Kathryn Franke’s analysis of the case, see further Kathryn M. Franke, “The Domesticated Liberty of *Lawrence v. Texas*,” *Columbia Law Review* 104 (2004): 1399-1426.

⁴⁷ Puar, 138-151. She observes how the ACLU focused on these issues of detention and deportation from the perspective that it splits and breaks up immigrant families; see Puar, 143-148.

Affect exposes the homonormative intimacy presumed in the *Lawrence-Garner* decision and denied to countless others whose privacy is compromised by a constant threat of surveillance, scrutiny, and looming detention.⁴⁸ Its inhabitation of in-betweenness allows the consideration of affect to attend to the varying forces—usually fleeting and often barely detectable by sight, sensing, or feeling—that are at work or play in various structures of intimacy and surveillance.⁴⁹ The surveillance to which Puar refers serves the state but it is not solely (or even primarily) performed by the government and its official systems. Instead, surveillance of the self and others has become the task of patriotic citizens; it is privatized and a more intimate affair of policing bodies, following instincts, and constantly questioning perceptions of the ordinary.⁵⁰

As *Lawrence-Garner* released the surveillance of sexuality into the private sphere, sanctioning subjects to adhere to and police the boundaries of homonormative intimacy within their own homes, the decision demonstrates how affect moves between and within various bodies trained for such scrutiny, sexual or otherwise. In so doing, sensations of insecurity and security coincide and produce possibilities both for homonormative, patriotic alignment and for deviance from normalcy that must be surveilled and contained. Thus, the attention that Puar gives to homonormativity's connection to patriotic nationalism, a connection maintained by a fantasy of inclusion which is anything but simple or all-encompassing, would be impossible without the

⁴⁸ “Intimacy in its liberal fantasy form is historically the province of heteronormativity and now, as I have argued, homonormativity.” Ibid., 164.

⁴⁹ Puar observes, “Intimacy is a crucial part of an affective economy within surveillance systems that provoke, subsume, and muffle feelings and emotions, but also sensations, hallucinations, palpitations, yearnings of security and insecurity.” Ibid.

⁵⁰ One might ask whether paranoid reading strategies, as discussed by Sedgwick, is a form of affective textual surveillance, always assuming something is wrong, out of the ordinary, and in need of discipline in the form of theoretical critique. See further “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You,” in Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 123-151.

influence of affect's "muddy, unmediated relatedness" and its attention to the multiple belongings and non-belongings of bodies in complex relations with themselves and others. These blurs and tensions—provocations, palpitations, sensations, or feelings—between exclusion and inclusion are based in complex, shifting, and *embodied* identities identified by affect theory.

Furthermore, by situating *Lawrence-Garner* alongside Abu Ghraib and infinite detention, Puar develops affective dimensions of queer critique that can address the "interlocking nexus of power grids" that tend to fix identities in their multiple dimensions (including "race, gender, class, and nation").⁵¹ Her blending of affect and queer theory embodies the tension of what Seigworth and Gregg call "one of the most pressing questions faced by affect theory": "Is that a promise or a threat?"⁵² Showing that the answer is both, often simultaneously, Puar exposes the affective dimensions of U.S. sexual politics. Especially evident in the sexual exceptionalism that weds homonormativity and nationalism (i.e., homonationalism, see chapter 5, "Ethical Submission"), her critique reveals how queerness can align with power as easily and equally as it can subvert it. Queerness thus poses affect's threat as it leaves these harmful effects in its sexually exceptional wake.⁵³

⁵¹ Puar, xiv. Alongside sexual exceptionalism (and its attendant homonationalism [see chapter 5, "Ethical Submission]), Puar identifies and discusses "queerness as regulatory" and the "ascendancy of whiteness" as means of fixing and regulating identity in relation to power. Puar, 2; see further pp.3-32. See also Marchal's work on Puar and sexual exceptionalism in "Exceptional Proves Who Rules."

⁵² Seigworth and Gregg, 10.

⁵³ However, by reformulating queerness as an affective assemblage and asking "What's queer about the terrorist," Puar's work also proves that analyses of affect offers promises as much as it threatens in our contemporary political context (promises that will be described more later). See also Puar, xxiii-xxiv.

Cruel Affects and Queer (Anti)Normativity

Beyond their capacities for queer socio-political critique, the affective dimensions of queerness can confront an offshoot of queer theory's fluidity: its "fear of the ordinary."⁵⁴ "Radical anti-normativity throws out a lot of babies with a lot of bathwater," writes Biddy Martin in her now-infamous critique of the then just burgeoning anti-normativity trend in queer theory.⁵⁵ The title of her essay, "Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary," captures her critique of queerness' definitional subversion: it grants a preferred status to being something other than (and, implicitly, better than) "ordinary," thereby privileging a fluid queer to a fixed feminism.⁵⁶ Though at its publication her points sat uncomfortably with many queer scholars who emphasize queer's transgression and the importance of the "radical difference of queer ways of life" vis-à-vis heteronormativity, Martin's critique echoes the emphasis on the everyday—"ordinary" life—that certain theories of affect bring to queer theory.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ This "fear of the ordinary," expanded further below (see the subsection "Feminism 'Meets' Queer Theory"), is identified and examined in Biddy Martin, "Extraordinary Homosexuals and the Fear of Being Ordinary," in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 109-135.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁶ She concludes, "An enormous fear of ordinariness or normalcy results in superficial accounts of the complex imbrication of sexuality with other aspects of social and psychic life, and in far too little attention to the dilemmas of the average people that we also are." *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁷ Love, "Wedding Crashers" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13 (2006): 127. She goes on to observe that the tension between such radical anti-normativity (exemplified in her quotations of Warner) and "Martin's call for a queer politics that makes space for attachment, kinship, and everyday life remains alive within queer studies" (128). While necessary, the sharpness of Martin's critique can be misread in ways that lend aid to homonormative impulses, but (as Love observes) this presumes a binary between normative ("gay neo-con") and anti-normative ("queer radical") into which "few people can be fit completely" (128). Love's use of Martin emphasizes the essay's affective elements, namely the space it makes for attachment and everyday life. Halberstam is critical of Martin's critique, noting that Martin does not contextualize the situations out of which theorists such as Rubin, and Sedgwick wrote. See Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 134-138. Muñoz calls Martin's critique a "more nuanced form" of "gay pragmatic thought." See Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 21, see further pp.19-32. Ahmed's chapter on "Queer Feelings" cites Martin more positively, noting that movement can be a privilege; Ahmed, 151-152. Halberstam may be more sympathetic (only implicitly in terms of its relation to Martin) to such an idea; or, at least, has observed more recently that movement—particularly to urban centers that may be safer for queer bodies (though such metronormativity is itself problematic)—implies a privilege of mobility

Indeed, her analysis foreshadows affect's investigation of "regularly hidden-in-plain-sight politically engaged work...that attends to the hard and fast materialities, as well as the fleeting and flowing ephemera, of the *daily and the workaday, of everyday and every-night life*, and of 'experience' (understood in ways far more collective and 'external' rather than individual and interior)."⁵⁸ A queer and affective embrace of ordinary emphasizes how such power slides in/between bodies—whether they conform, resist, or do a bit of both—as they live and move in more mundane ways.⁵⁹ Such a focus on the everyday and ordinary, then, is not a refusal to critique normativity; it does so alongside an acknowledgement of the complexities of the desire and the draw to *feel* "normal."

Similarly seeing "normativity" as something more than a position or "privilege," Lauren Berlant shows how "normal" operates as an affective fantasy that impacts bodies and their everyday existence, often without their knowledge.⁶⁰ At some point, we all crave feeling "normal" in some sense. As a fantasy, normalcy offers a vision of the "good life," which assumes specific ideals and forms in Western capitalist culture. Even when the "norms" of such a good life attach ordinary subjects to harmful promises that prevent their flourishing (i.e., "cruel optimism," see chapter 3, "Faithful Submission"), there are *affective* costs to abandoning hope in something that seems better.⁶¹ She asserts, "we

that many queers (especially those without financial means and/or place-based roots) do not have. See Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*.

⁵⁸ Seigworth and Gregg, 7; emphasis added. In the elided segment, they observe that such work is "perhaps most often undertaken by feminists, queer theorists, disability activists, and subaltern peoples living under the thumb of a normativizing power."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Berlant, 167.

⁶¹ In an analysis of the film *Rosetta*, Berlant observes the title character's desire for and attachment to a job, which for her seems a requirement for normalcy. "Even in an extremely informal economy the goodness of the good life now *feels* possible to her and thus *feels* already like a confirming reality, calming her even before she lives it as an ongoing practice." Ibid., 163.

need to think about normativity as *aspirational* and as an evolving and incoherent cluster of hegemonic promises about the present and future experience of social belonging that can be entered into in a number of ways, in affective transactions that take place alongside the more instrumental ones.”⁶² These (fantastical) attachments are experienced as *real* and provide structure to everyday life, structures that can be understood through analysis of the forces that sustain them and the sensations they provoke (i.e., affect).

If affect marks a body’s belonging (or non-belonging), both in terms of a normative “good life” or to an “anti-normative” queer one, then queer critique should attune to affect’s pull upon ordinary and mundane lives and life. For “queer,” this implies that its traditional disruption and unsettling of established norms cannot avoid the broader affective draws that unconsciously attach bodies to some fantasy that promises a “good life,” defined at least in some part by structures of normativity. From Berlant, then, it is possible to expand upon Martin’s insightful critique: perhaps radical anti-normativity does not throw out “a lot of babies with a lot of bathwater” so much as it drowns babies by assuming they can and will swim in whatever water is retained.⁶³

Normativity is, therefore, easier to critique than it is to unsettle. As demonstrated in Berlant’s discussion of being “Nearly Utopian, Nearly Normal,” we are all, to some degree, waking up with a “normativity hangover” that we often crave instinctively.⁶⁴ In this particular chapter of her book, she analyzes two films that feature protagonists who repeat routines that they have established to give them an at least proximate sense of the

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Martin, 133.

⁶⁴ Especially as viewers (and Berlant’s readers, to some extent) experience through the sense of “nearly” in the films *Rosetta* and *La Promesse*. “Both of these works thus end engendering in the audience a kind of normativity hangover, a residue of the optimism of their advocacy for achieving whatever it was for which the protagonists were scavenging.” Berlant, 175-176.

good life, imagined differently by each character. Through their repetition of routines, the films leave “ordinary” viewers with the “residue” of the protagonists’ craving of normativity; like the characters, the audience *needs* the continuation of the routine, despite its dreariness because it trains them, like the characters, to dread the interruption of this fragilely-constructed normativity. Through the affective approximation of the characters’ “rut”-inized sensations, the craving for such a “hangover” exemplifies normativity’s pull as the subtlest (and, therefore, typically the strongest and most insidious) of undertows that slowly pulls subjects into its hold as they “tread water” to float along at life’s surface.⁶⁵ Thus, insightful as queer theory’s disruption of norms may be, the affective fantasies that undergird the normativity it critiques attach themselves to bodies who find such rhythms and attachments *comfortable* (despite their discomfort) if not actively alluring.

Admitting this, Berlant pursues answers to the question: why do subjects, especially those most marginal and missed, cling to bad “good lives” when abandoning them would obviously make space for change? In the two films, as Berlant reads them, both protagonists clearly desire objects that, for them, permit a fantasy of being normal according to the capitalist organization of life (e.g., the titular character Rosetta is attached to having a “real” job that permits her to participate in the formal, exchange economy as opposed to an informal, bartering one). Berlant identifies their attachments as examples of the “affects of aspirational normativity”: “when the world exists between the routinized rut and the ominous cracks, [Rosetta] chooses the rut, the impasse.”⁶⁶ In other words, the sensation of “risk” of abandoning the objects and structures attaching them to

⁶⁵ Berlant, 163-164, 169-173.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

aspirational—or a “proximate”—normativity prevents the characters from removing themselves from the cruelly optimistic impasse that they have entered through the fantastical lives they attempt to live. The rut appears to be a “route,” one on which that fantastical good life “*feels* possible,” even though it ultimately prevents further flourishing.⁶⁷ Uncovering its affective draw and delay, normativity, Berlant asserts, is not a “synonym for privilege,” even as it largely benefits—materially and affectively—those privileged to be able to be most “normal.”⁶⁸ Instead, normativity, through its promise of this “good life,” attaches subjects into its rhythmic rut, trains their bodies to “tread water” and survive (but not thrive), and convinces them to trust its strong sensation of the possibility of the “good.”

These aspirational attachments to (an at least proximate) normativity that Berlant investigates ultimately reveal a creation of *intimacy* that epitomizes the fantasy of the good life.⁶⁹ This “intimacy” is not equated with sex/sexuality or marriage/family: at best, in these examples, sexuality forges or forces an intimacy that is imagined as having a “friend” or supportive partner, a relationship that provides the means for sustaining a subject’s fantastical attachments.⁷⁰ It is a complex cluster of different and ever-shifting

⁶⁷ Ibid., 163-164.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 167

⁶⁹ The creation of such intimacy likely reveals its lack in the lives and experiences of the protagonists in the film, even leading them to crave it and create it where it does not (and indeed, perhaps, cannot) exist. For example, in *La Promesse*, Igor—bound by a promise to a dying migrant man (whose death is attributable to Igor and his father’s predatory business) to ensure the protection of the man’s wife and child—hides the man’s death to Assita (the wife) so that he can be better bound to her as her provider, enabling him to create and sustain a fantasy of himself as having a family (of sorts) not under the manipulative control of his father. See *ibid.*, 164-166. Especially evident in Rosetta’s “awkward” friendship with Riquet, a relation that helps her to acquire a job (the need that represents her primary attachment), the main characters in both films realize that their “good” lives can only be maintained through the intimacy they approximate with others (and which is lacking in their relations with their parents). *Ibid.*, 171-175.

⁷⁰ Though sex or sexual desire may play a (sometimes deeply submerged) role, the intimacy portrayed here is one more attuned to the affects of normativity—for normative intimacy is not only, or even primarily, defined or sustained by proper object choice (i.e., heterosexuality) or proper inhabitation of an ideal monogamy (i.e., homonormativity). So, for example, there is no obvious sexual desire between Rosetta and

desires, each ultimately related to achieving stability—i.e., a life that maintains a precise and perfect balance of economic, social, and political factors—and, thereby, “success” (in a capitalistic definition), that drives the construction of intimacy and its requirements. Thus, intimacy nurtures normativity and its fantastical good life.

These affective connections of intimacy and normativity resonate with Puar’s identification of intimate control in the realm of privacy and security in the context of U.S. political interests. As “good life” fantasies instigate the need for particular intimacies that enable ideal (capitalist) behaviors, intimacy’s normative portrayal fuses with a national network of control that regulates bodies and their rhythms in order to protect the “freedom” to live the good life. This requires bodily attachments to this fantasy in order to achieve and maintain a sensation of privacy and security on both personal and political levels. But, as Berlant shows, attachment to these fantastical provisions requires most subjects to operate their daily lives in an ongoing state of crisis ordinariness wherein their everyday experience of a private and secure sense good life is, in reality, not good at all.⁷¹

The sensation of treading water in such a state of cruel optimism can be compared to the sensation of drowning simulated while waterboarding, one of the torturous

her friend Riquet, and certainly, it is not acted upon in the film, yet (as Berlant notes) she maintains this friendship because of his help in securing her job—and so she “awkwardly” dines with him, submitting to his “pleasure economy” by “imitating what it might be like sometime to have fun with a friend or in a couple.” See *ibid.*, 163, 177-178. This is in stark contrast to Rosetta’s mother, who barter sex in exchange for her needs. Rosetta, as Berlant notes, refuses such an informal economy—in addition to refusing state welfare—and insists on providing for herself via what she deems a “real” job. See *ibid.*, 171-174. However, her “mantra” that she repeats to herself as she falls asleep shows that her “good life” requires having found both a job and a friend: after affirming these facts, she says “I have a normal life” and “I won’t fall through the cracks.” See especially *ibid.*, 161-162.

⁷¹ “Crisis,” Berlant writes, “is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what’s overwhelming” (10). Such an idea in Berlant’s theorization specifically contrasts theories that promote trauma and the (singular) traumatic event as able to explain such sensations in populations. See further pp.9-10, 168-170.

mechanisms used in infinite detention and the intimate control it helps enforce. To be clear, when someone like Rosetta treads water in order to sustain her fantasy, the subtle, ongoing torment of her specific situation is *not* equivalent to the intense pain experienced in the intentional torture inflicted upon suspected terrorists held in U.S. detention centers. However, the eerie echoes of running water that simultaneously threaten yet sustain a not-quite-liveable-life (and yet also not-yet-dead) in each instance emphasize the ways in which affective intimacy resonates between both instances of near-drowning.⁷² This connection reveals that the neoliberal fantasies of security and inclusion, which, as elaborated by Puar, mask their reliance upon networks of control, surveillance, and infinite detention, are integral dimensions of the (homo)normative “good life” that subtly pulls and thereby disciplines subjects, particularly those most socio-politically vulnerable and/or marginal, into the crisis ordinariness of Berlant’s cruel optimism.

Affective Queerness

Affect’s focus on bodies and change shows that sexuality (alongside other identity markers) shifts and flows: it affects and is affected by fantasies of the “good life” and the varying strategies of attaching to them; it regulates and is regulated in tandem with nebulous control networks that promise and/or threaten privacy and security through near-invisible processes of surveillance and detention. Thus combined, the critical force of Puar and Berlant’s affective theorization in relation to queerness allow an affective queer theoretical approach that can critique broader socio-political patterns while admitting that such patterns and problems affect diverse bodies (individually and as

⁷² Puar, 138-143. Puar concludes, “As such, the *Lawrence-Garner* ruling can be thought of as a subsidiary tool in the quest of the ascendancy of whiteness. By *regularizing queerness*, it patrols the boundaries between queer subjects who are invited into life and queer populations who come into being through their perverse sexual-racial attributes and histories.” Puar, 165; see further, pp.141-165.

populations) differently, especially when seen on the more-focused scale of “ordinary” life.

Affective queerness pushes past identity politics.⁷³ As discussed above, a fixed identity poses problems for the critical and constructive attentions of queer theory’s more fluid dimensions, especially for a meaning of “queer” that has come to privilege sexuality as its central focus or identity. Such privileging downplays relations to race, gender, class, and the minute, mundane movements and sensations that affect bodies. Returning especially to sexuality, traditionally the turf where queer theory stakes its “pride,” such affective queer critique further emphasizes that sexuality cannot be cleaved from the messiness of *bodies* that are constantly moving and sensing.

This affective queerness affirms the ongoing relevance of Rubin’s observation that sexuality is still imbued with an “excess of significance” in society.⁷⁴ The excessive significance accorded to sexuality prevents its ordinariness. Has a privileged focus on sexuality also caused queer theory to become burdened by such excess? Indeed, could “queer” be operating under an unspoken threat/promise that *if* sexuality is not (as) significant, then queer theory will become irrelevant or superfluous?⁷⁵ Neither question

⁷³ Pushing past identity politics should be taken to indicate their complete abandonment, for identity and its multiple individual markers requires emphasis in certain situations and contexts; identity politics become problematic when it is overemphasized in interpretation or politics, in particular formulations that attend to singular or fixed markers of identity, as observed in Puar’s critique of networks of control (see especially pp.159-162) and Berlant’s attention to the ordinary complexities of the choices that individual and collective subjects make everyday.

⁷⁴ She observes that such excess is a problem because sexuality is not regarded as everyday: “Although people can be intolerant, silly, or pushy about what constitutes proper diet, differences in menu rarely provoke the kinds of rage, anxiety, and sheer terror that routinely accompany differences in erotic taste.” Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 149.

⁷⁵ Indeed, an often-raised criticism of these expansions of queerness beyond sexuality is a concern that if anything and everything is queer (or has the potential to be while remaining decidedly heterosexual) then nothing is queer. See discussion of this in Halley and Parker, “Introduction,” 6-7. They refer specifically to the review essay of Sharon Marcus, who makes such a point and writes, “If everyone is queer, then no one is—and while this is exactly the point queer theorists want to make, reducing the term’s pejorative sting by universalizing the meaning of queer also depletes its explanatory power.” Sharon Marcus, “Queer Theory

can be answered with a definitive “yes” or “no.” Queer theory remains a wide and interdisciplinary “field” that both relishes in a focus on sex, sexuality, and its excesses and (sometimes simultaneously) attempts to situate sexuality as important yet no more significant than other aspects of life and/or identity.

Affect, of course, exists in the ambiguous space between promise and threat, but, in this case, it can relieve that unspoken concern of queer irrelevance without the excesses of sexuality’s significance. If, broadly speaking, sexuality still retains this excessive significance, then this excess invites affective analysis, which thrives in exposing the infinitesimal forces that eventually burst or bubble over. Excess, in other words, manifests affect; and affect reveals sensations of extraordinariness to be an ordinariness overflowing. Embracing affect’s in-between-ness, queerness can situate its definitional fluidity by allowing its emphases to shift in different and ever-changing contexts while also acknowledging the real sensation of identity’s fixity, even if not it is not fixed forever. By doing so, queer theory does not abandon its important, historical contributions to the study of sexuality and the critique of regulatory norms, but, detaching such foci from a revered or privileged status, it emerges able to account for and theorize the ordinary-but-complex interplays of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other elements that affect identity, society, and politics.⁷⁶ In this way, an affective understanding of “queer” helps to ensure that the answer to that second question is “no” by creating space

for Everyone: A Review Essay,” *Signs* 31 (2005): 196. I am understanding and sympathetic toward such a concern—and certainly as a queer/gay subject myself I am wary of the potential for privileged (largely white and male) heterosexuals to “colonize” queerness for their own gain—but I think such colonization (and its relations to kyriarchal power) is more antithetical to queerness than the term’s expansion beyond and exceeding of its sexual container.

⁷⁶ While not supplanting or dismissing the insights of studying these issues in other fields such as feminism, critical race theory, postcolonial studies, disability studies, fat studies, and numerous other areas of inquiry.

to theorize the “ordinary” alongside—but not equivalent to—the “normative.” Thus, understood affectively, queer and queerness can continue to challenge and change society through movements that are both—even simultaneously—promising and threatening, extraordinary and ordinary.

Queer Affective Politics and Reading Romans

This move toward “queerness” as an affective quality sheds the notion that “queer” must fix an identity governed by particular sexual practices. This fosters the applicability of queerness and its critiques to ancient contexts in ways that do not purport to affix modern “identities” to ancient bodies or communities.⁷⁷ This application raises the question: if an affective understanding of queerness sharpens critique of regulatory norms and politics in contemporary culture, how can it also challenge similar circumstances in the ancient context during which Paul’s letters were written and first read? Through a lens of affective queerness, more complex connections emerge by considering the effects of hierarchies on “ordinary” bodies who likely long for a “good life” under Roman terms: Romanormativity.

Applied to this Roman context, affective queerness—especially in its Puar- and Berlant-ian conceptions—reveals first-century forms of networks of (intimate) imperial control and aspirational normativity. For instance, in a variety of ways the Roman discourse that conveyed sexuality in terms of accordance with culture-as-nature (*κατὰ* or *παρὰ φύσιν*) defined ancient intimacy (whether solely physical/sexual or otherwise) as

⁷⁷ While, as previously discussed, I certainly assume that *some* members of Rome’s ancient *ἐκκλησία* preferred sexual liaisons outside of the normative (largely heterosexual) Roman hierarchy, I do not assume that this is the only factor that determines the community’s queerness, individually or collectively. As such, if I speak of queer aspects of Paul or (more likely) members of the Roman *ἐκκλησία* (or even refer to them as “queer”), I am not making any assertion about specific details about their sexual practices or preferences.

also according with the imperial socio-political hierarchy. Indeed, such an intimate definition, which operated along axes of race/ethnicity, gender, and class in addition to sexuality, could be used by the empire to control (or, alternately, penalize) its subjects and ensure their ongoing submission. Rome's production of such control through various mediums of propaganda (whether intentional or less so) bears similarities to Puar's demonstration of how modern instances of intimate control do so through self-policing of sexual norms that enforce social, economic, and political security (i.e., forms of "regulatory queerness").

In this way, my development of the challenges of contemporary queerness and its critique brings new insights into the historical situation of the ancient Roman Empire, and, in so doing, challenges the theology, ethics, and politics of Paul's letter to that empire's central city. If, as I contend, an imperially-aligned ideal of submission, most notably to and under God, undergirds Paul's letter, then these aspirational normativities and homonational impulses are deeply embedded in this submission. Even if Christ-followers are encouraged to submit "under God," this hierarchical and submissive logic cannot fully escape the networks of intimate imperial control in which these Romans have long been entangled. Furthermore, the impossibility of escape through placement "under God" opens the possibility that such submission leaves followers continuing to tread water as they hope for a divinely promised "good life." Treading water hopefully, they continue to negotiate intimacy and community within a culture of controlled protocols that may still mimic those of the empire's elite. Such a reading of Romans from the lens of affective queerness and ancient imperial alignment prompts the question: *Is God's reign a promise, or could it also be a threat?*

Feminism, Queerness, and "ἐκκλησία-1" Assemblages

This affective queer critique holds potential for despair as it unveils an underbelly of Pauline theology—a theology that is deeply embedded in contemporary culture—American, Christian, queer, and beyond. However, such critique can also move toward new theo-political possibilities. As these connections are further analyzed in the following chapters, it will become even more evident how these forms of queer critique pose new and significant challenges and questions to Paul’s letter to the Romans and its ongoing interpretation. Bleak though they may seem, exposing these affective entanglements acknowledges their powerful draw and force in a way that also shifts toward change. Thus, queerness’s movement as an affective force or sensation cannot be limited to challenge-as-critique (as seen so far).⁷⁸ These changes, however, require a broader lens in terms of both ancient spaces and contemporary theories. As this section elaborates, the site of the ancient ἐκκλησία—as conceived by and through feminist theory—provides such a space, and queer and feminist developments of assemblage can expand queerness’ affective force and its historical movements within this ancient conversational space.

⁷⁸ Although these affective concepts within queer theory point to the critique and destabilization of “norms” and regulatory power, affect theory champions itself as doing something *other than* deconstruction and critique, what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick called “paranoid reading.” In particular, Sedgwick observes the ease with which a hermeneutic of suspicion can be applied to any object within Theory, to the point that it becomes “paranoia.” See Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 123-128. In other words, scholars in the humanities are (over)trained to suspect and mistrust, critique and deconstruct—to the point that such actions become the instinctual way to approach any text (written or otherwise). At a recent colloquium on Affect Theory and its relation to theology, Marchal offered an eloquent response to Sedgwick’s critique of a hermeneutic of suspicion and fostering paranoia, especially from the content of feminist biblical interpretation, where such suspicion has been crucial to feminist work against a kyriarchal text (noting the slogan “just because you are paranoid doesn’t mean they are not after you”—as biblical texts and androcentric interpretations typically are). Marchal, “Response to Ann Cvetkovitch, ‘The Bibliographic Altar and the Archive of Feelings,’” Paper presented at “Affectivity and Divinity: Affect Theories and Theologies” (Fifteenth Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquium, Drew Theological School, Madison, NJ, March 18-20, 2016).

Feminist Theory and Politics

If queer theory has, at least traditionally, centered sexuality as its primary analytical lens (often rooted in or related to the activist struggles of LGBTIQ-identified persons and movement), then feminist theory—often rooted in the political and social struggles of “women”—has, again traditionally, centered gender inequality as its motivating focus.⁷⁹ Feminism has exposed myriad ways in which women, on the basis of sex/gender difference (i.e., from men), have been and continue to be ignored, oppressed, devalued, and silenced across social, political, economic spheres.⁸⁰ Feminism and feminist theory, therefore, centralize women by critiquing systems of women’s suppression and proffering women’s perspectives and interests as “human” issues vital to across society.

Such a broad definition of feminism is fraught with complication, as the specific formulations of feminist theory and practice vary widely and often disagree, sometimes

⁷⁹ In this (introductory) sentence, I put “women” in quotations because what defines a “woman” is—and always has been—a hotly contested questions among different feminist theorists, as will become apparent in the following discussion. Already hinted at in the above section, the problems of delineating such “objects” of inquiry/focus will be expanded and critiqued in more detail later, but such a broad statement is useful for establishing the terms and history of feminist analysis.

⁸⁰ While the sources of such gender-based oppression are diverse and numerous, most feminist theorists acknowledge and critique a longstanding ideology of “patriarchy,” which establishes and confirms male dominance across an array of socio-political institutions. In particular, patriarchal ideology privileges maleness by presenting “men/male” as the natural/neutral category from which “difference” is defined. In other words, patriarchy assumes the natural human is a man, such that terms like “all humanity,” “human interests,” or “human history” mask their situatedness in a particular (male) perspective. Repeated and reified over time, not only does this male perspective become the viewpoint of those who wield the most socio-political power, but it is also presumed to be universally applicable, thus “neutral” or “objective.” As such, feminist theory reveals these patriarchal perspectives that underlie such neutrality and shows how academic fields, scientific/medical research and social institutions, all presume that the generic “human” is, on further inspection, a man. Under such patriarchy, to prioritize or focus exclusively on women (or anything perceived as “women’s issues”)—as well as any other deviation from the socio-politically powerful man—is to be interested, biased, and subjective. See further, Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 1-14; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 102-117; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 23-38; Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999); Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*; rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000).

drastically. “Women” as a category or identity, then, is contested and often too broad for the purpose of specific and contextual struggles.⁸¹ It frequently elides the divisions and stratifications that exist between and among women, especially when gender and gender oppressions intersect with race, class, and sexuality (among other factors).⁸² Therefore, most feminists acknowledge these intersections and understand feminism (and gender-based oppressions) to be inseparable from other movements and interrelated forms of oppression. “I understand feminist theory to enable us to see full circle where otherwise we would see only a segment,”⁸³ writes Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. With such a goal of “seeing full circle,” contestations and debate, not only *against* patriarchy but also *with* other feminists “united” in an ongoing struggle, do not (always) have to be antithetical to feminism’s goals: difference, so long as it is permitted and respected, is essential to achieving an all-encompassing, inclusive vision, especially if no single feminist (or definition of feminism) can see full circle alone. Some degree of disagreement, in other words, is required to move beyond myopia.⁸⁴

Feminist struggles with power have had (and continue) to wrestle not only against patriarchal power wielded to oppress women but also with power differentials *among* women that allow some women greater privilege than others and compound with other forms of oppression based on race, class, sexuality, or ability. In this vein,

⁸¹ Although feminism struggles with the historical and ongoing oppression of women, what defines (or does not define) “women” is, in particular, a contested and multifaceted question within feminism. For example, in feminist struggles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (“first wave” feminism), feminist discourse focused its energy on the political movement for women’s suffrage, trumping other concerns and excluding the voices and bodies deemed irrelevant or even detrimental to this cause, especially those who were not white. Despite insistences to the contrary, the dominant voices of this feminist movement presumed and portrayed (and thereby defined) “women” as racially white and more-or-less socio-economically privileged. These struggles to represent and account for the diversity of women within feminism continue throughout history and remain today.

⁸² See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 107-109.

⁸³ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 2.

⁸⁴ As Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah observe in “Beyond the Heroic Paul.”

Schüssler Fiorenza theorizes several ways to identify, critique, and ultimately unsettle the complexity of oppression that is significantly, but by no means exclusively, based upon sex/gender. Such oppression maintains its power and complexity by portraying gender, as an example of one axis of oppression, as separable from all other axes. Oppression masks how gender always operates alongside the issues and constructions of race, class, sexuality, ability, and embodiedness (broadly speaking).⁸⁵

To this end, Schüssler Fiorenza coins several neologisms that advance her feminist vision and critique, which have been influential to biblical studies and the*logy (to use her term) in addition to feminist theory more broadly.⁸⁶ Her two most trademark terms are “wo/men” and “kyriarchy.” Both signal the complexity of gender and its multiple (and always multiplying) intersections, and they aid in revealing the numerous networks and structures of oppression that benefit from the uncritical acceptance of their arrangements of such complexity.

Given the ways in which “women” is impossible to fix with a stable definition, Schüssler Fiorenza inserts a slash into the term “wo/men” as a marking which (crucially) does not change its pronunciation in oral contexts and still allows for a category of “women” that is distinct from “men.” However, in order to unfix the stability and implications of this distinction, the marking does important work on multiple practical and theoretical levels. The dividing slash in “wo/men” admits and visually represents the differences among women, which are based on a wide variety of factors and which grant

⁸⁵ See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 1-38; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 102-134; Allen 7-29, 119-138.

⁸⁶ “The*logy” stems from Schüssler Fiorenza’s use of G*d, which point both to the unspeakability of the divine as well as the fact that both “God” and “theology,” throughout history, have most often been understood and named as masculine terms.

them different access and relations to power. Thus, some women oppress other women; indeed, some women oppress men.⁸⁷ Visually representing these multiple, often complex divisions and power relations, “wo/men” captures some of gender’s complexity and fractures any simplistic assertion of unity that could be presumed under the category of “women.”⁸⁸

Continuing this acknowledgement of gender’s complex interrelatedness, the second term, “kyriarchy,” identifies and critiques the ways in which power controls and enforces oppressive hierarchies within these messy, intersecting networks of identity. Kyriarchy takes into account the complex ways and numerous axes through which power is arranged in a hierarchy that produces the most socio-political-economic benefits for those at the top, i.e., those who “rule” not only based on gender imbalances but also along the imbalances created in (among others) class-based, racialized, and sexualized distinctions. The term derives from the Greek roots of ἀρχή (“rule”) and κύριος (“master” or “lord”), thus combining to denote “rule of the master/lord.” Though in biblical texts, κύριος is often a title affixed to God—and, more often in Paul’s case, to Jesus—its more common usage in Greek is to refer to those men (and occasionally women) who are heads of households and/or major political leaders. It is most often used (including numerous

⁸⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 107-109. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 6.

⁸⁸ Additionally, in connection with its oral use, “wo/men” can function as a replacement for the generic use of “men” to mean, sometimes but not always, all humans. Marked in such a way to emphasize the ways in which the word “women” encapsulates men, the term *can* include, again sometimes but not always, men. However, especially emphasized by its homophonic pronunciation with “women,” the slashed term does not necessarily include men—as a whole or some subset. Through such ambiguity, it performs a linguistic reversal, necessary in its contemporary historical and socio-political context, as it puts the burden on those who are and have been traditionally holding the power to oppress and exclude to decide whether or not they are—or should be—included in any given usage (a consideration, Schüssler Fiorenza notes, in and to which wo/men have long been trained and accustomed).

examples in New Testament literature) in relation to δούλῃ, slaves whose existence requires ownership by a κύριος as the master of lord of the household.⁸⁹

In using this root for her neologism, Schüssler Fiorenza renders explicit the fact that power is arranged along multiple axes in order to establish a small class of κύριοι (alongside some κυρίαί) at the top, with slowly decreasing of gradations of lord-like authority moving in multiple directions downward on its complex hierarchy of power. Stemming from this κύριος root, kyriarchy foregrounds the authority held and subtly manipulated by various “lords” and “masters” throughout history—from the citizen-male δῆμος of ancient Greek and the imperial elite of Rome to kings, feudal lords, and today’s “one-percent”—and the ways in which their mastery has been sustained by particular ideologies of difference that enable socio-political division.⁹⁰

Extending the more gender-focused “patriarchy,” kyriarchy marks multiple and ever-shifting hierarchical arrangements in politics and society that permit the ongoing submission and oppression of those persons lower, and most especially lowest, on the social “pyramid.”⁹¹ As a term for critique, kyriarchy makes manifest the ways in which gender-based hierarchies and oppressions support and sustain other oppressive arrangements. Likewise, the term suggests how hierarchies sustained by racial oppression

⁸⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 118-124; see also, Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 8-11.

⁹⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 8-11.

⁹¹ The term “patriarchy,” which derives from Greek roots that mean “rule of the father” and thereby has come to denote the power men hold to “rule” over women, has long been employed in feminist theory and activism to the point its meaning and usage have become fairly known and widespread. Although the term has been crucial for identifying imbalanced structures of power based on gendered divisions and differences, it does not acknowledge or delineate the issue (already mentioned in the discussion of wo/men) that power (i.e., “ruling”) can be wielded or held over different wo/men to different degrees due to structural socio-political inequalities based not solely on gender but also on numerous other factors that comprise the complexity of human identities. Thus, as stated above, throughout history and today, some women have held the power to oppress other women and even some men.

or through suppressions of sexual expression likewise enable the ongoing oppression of wo/men.

Kyriarchy further recalls Lorde's identification of a "mythical norm" that conveys a specific ideal "identity" (comprised by many, even countless, components) most closely fitting any given society's elite *κύριοι*. Both concepts identify the complexity of power, especially that which dominates and oppresses.⁹² Such power operates through and in-between (and often thereby dictates) the hierarchal terms of identity along innumerable axes so that bodies inevitably (and often unconsciously) submit to its kyriarchal networks of norms. Thinking in terms of kyriarchy thus expands feminist frameworks in order to account for not only its intersections with other struggles along multiple axes of identity but also the *relationships* between different axes and the ways they can move and shift in different bodies, moments, cultures, and histories.

Therefore, both "kyriarchy" and "wo/men" address feminist theory's ongoing demands for "intersectionality" and its emphasis of the importance to acknowledge, account for, and represent all wo/men and their differences. These wider theoretical perspectives insist that, because not all wo/men are created equal, theory and critique must acknowledge that every body is different and holds within it multiple identities and characteristics that affect perceptions, experiences, and sensations of belonging.⁹³ Though these multiple and multiplying bodies often produce debates and even fractures, the

⁹² On power and domination, see Allen; she argues that power as domination is only one aspect of power, and feminist analyses must understand and critique this aspect alongside others: "The conceptions of power as domination and power as empowerment reify power as a whole into only one of its aspects, and that, as a result, each of these conceptions offers a distorted picture of women's situation. My point here is that these conceptions of power are not so much wrong as they are incomplete. A better feminist conception would be one that resisted the impulse to collapse power into either domination or empowerment but, instead, highlighted the complicated interplay between these two modalities of power." Allen, 8.

⁹³ As will be expounded further below, such sensations of belonging point to connections between affect and these feminist theories.

differences they contain—despite their requisite tensions—must be permitted to intersect and interact as an always present and important difference, captured by the use of “wo/men.”⁹⁴ The widely accepted impulse to prioritize intersectionality foregrounds the feminist struggle to best represent and most fully capture the diversity and complexity of all wo/men in a manner that subverts and constantly strives to eliminate kyriarchy.

Feminism “Meets” Queer Theory

Both feminist and queer theories express socio-political goals related to issues of sex, gender, and sexuality and their relation to oppression and power; however, these two theories have histories of fracture, disagreement, and tension in their interaction and desires for distinct definition and institutional recognition. Indeed, it is partially from within the context of differences within feminism (which reached a particularly harsh and polemical “boiling point” in the 1980s) that queer theory began to emerge as a separate field.⁹⁵ In the process of queer theory’s coalescing, many of its “founders” and “followers” found themselves identifying as still within feminism (most notably Rubin and Judith Butler); however, as “queer studies” gained traction and recognition, a need for firmer definition regularly prompted—even required—an articulation of how “queer

⁹⁴ Therefore, there is no desire to ever remove the slash from women: it forever admits difference while hoping to eliminate power imbalances between wo/men.

⁹⁵ Feminists who “became” queer theorists were often casualties of the Sex Wars, which split feminism over the degree to which sexuality was (always) oppressive. These wars perhaps become explosive in the aftermath of the 1982 Barnard Conference, where Rubin’s “Thinking Sex” was originally presented, a feminist conference which was condemned and protested by “radical feminists.” See further Butler, “Against Proper Objects,” in Weed and Schor, *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, 10-11; Rubin, “Postscript to ‘Thinking Sex’” in *Deviations*, 190-193; Rubin, “Blood Under the Bridge: Reflections on ‘Thinking Sex’” in *Deviations*, 190-223. Queer theory’s roots, however, extend beyond these feminist divides, with roots in an already separate lesbian and gay studies (perhaps especially “gay” in terms of being largely, but not exclusively, male), critical race studies, and activist roots in the form of “Queer Nation” or “Act Up,” and other socio-political groups that acted from a wide LGBTQ perspective oriented toward a queerness that did not always seek to mimic heteronormativity

theory” was distinguishable from feminism.⁹⁶ These articulations, particularly in terms of defining the points where the two fields formally splinter, have affected the relationship between the two separate-yet-related fields.

As queer theory began to coalesce in the early 1990s, feminists whose work was most “sympathetic” to (and was brought within) the emerging field cautioned about the ways in which important feminist insights were being ignored, deemed irrelevant, or misconstrued within queer’s wider development of a theory of sexuality and “radical sexual politics.”⁹⁷ In the process of distinguishing itself from feminism, queer theory tends to define its predecessor(s) through caricature, erasing feminism’s variety and tensions and thereby fixing feminist inquiry to a stable, unopposed set of methods and definitions from which queerness could emerge and develop differently (and, often by implication, better).⁹⁸ As Biddy Martin suggests, feminism’s fixity foments the “fun” of queer fluidity.⁹⁹ Queer theory provides the fluidity that feminism apparently lacks, i.e., what was preventing feminism from fully realizing its theoretical and socio-political

⁹⁶ In other words, answering the question (whether or not it was actually posed): why is queer theory its own, separate field of inquiry instead of remaining under feminism’s umbrella? Such a question is/was especially pertinent when these emerging queer theorists had been regularly engaged in feminist theory and politics and—indeed—much of their newer “queer” work still wrestled with feminist questions related to gender and power.

Furthermore, under such a discussion of “queer” founders whose works were within feminism, it must be noted that certain works—now traditionally and almost exclusively identified as “foundational” “queer” texts—not only were written as feminist works (with no mind toward being affiliated with “lesbian and gay studies” or founding a new “queer” field but also were labeled foundational by *other* theorists as they developed these new fields of inquiry. Notable among such works are Rubin’s “Thinking Sex” and Butler’s *Gender Trouble*—a point these authors make and develop in conversation together: Rubin with Butler, “Sexual Traffic: Interview,” in Weed and Schor, eds., *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, 68-108.

⁹⁷ In her introduction to the collection *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, Elizabeth Weed observes, “Queer theory’s feminism is a strange feminism, stripped of its contentious elements, its internal contradictions, its multiplicity.” Elizabeth Weed, “Introduction,” in Weed and Schor, *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ix.

⁹⁸ Weed is not the only scholar to raise the concern that the queer portrayal of feminism is a “caricature.” See, for example, Martin, “Extraordinary Homosexuals;” Butler, “Against Proper Objects.”

⁹⁹ In addition to her critique in “Extraordinary Homosexuals,” see her development of this concern and critique in Martin, “Sexuality without Genders and Other Queer Utopias,” *Diacritics* 24, nos.2/3 (1994): 104-121.

goals. In other words, by hinting that it moves closer to such solutions, queer theory often implies that it supersedes feminism.

Voicing similar concerns, Butler queries a presumed division of theoretical “labor” that would distinguish queer’s prime object of inquiry from that of feminism.¹⁰⁰ A major facet of Butler’s contention with the division of “gender” and “sex/sexuality” as, respectively, the proper objects of feminism and queer theory is that such a presentation ultimately performs an act of supersession of queer theory over feminism. This supersession is enabled by the caricaturing of feminism as described above: queer theory limits feminist analysis to the realm of gender and then proceeds to fix feminism’s definition of gender.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Butler, “Against Proper Objects.” Here she argues that feminism takes “gender” and lesbian/gay studies (and by extension queer theory) “sex and sexuality” as the foci of their analysis—their “proper objects,” in other words. This division was made most explicit in the editorial introduction to the 1993 *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*; however, it was (and continues to be) implicit in many other queer projects. See Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin, “Introduction,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Abelove, Barale, and Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), xv-xvii. Butler takes the overt explication as an opportunity to expose and critique the pitfalls of the editors’ logic and, by extension, the broader delineation of such proper objects by a number of theorists, especially those of a queer-leaning persuasion.

¹⁰¹ Butler, “Against Proper Objects,” 5. In this piece, she argues further that by claiming its own (more “fluid”) object as “sex and sexuality,” queer theory in fact permits itself *two* proper objects: explicitly that of sex/sexuality as sexual practices but also, at least implicitly, “sex” as in sexual difference in its multiple social constructions that impact sexual practices (pp.4-9). In so doing, queer theory not only cleaves considerations of sexuality from feminism’s purview but also retains the ability to account for and discuss, in a more fluid and therefore more accurate (i.e., “better”) manner, aspects of gender—as “sex” and “sexual difference” that relate necessarily to the broad discourse of queer’s “sexuality.” Through such a logic, queer theory implicitly offers a more contextualized and comprehensive presentation of gender/sex within the context of sexuality and its full socio-political complexity. Whether or not they are intentional, such “queer” assumptions present feminism’s work on gender as improved and perfected by a queer focus on sexuality. Thus, despite their similar goals, such presentations insinuate that queer theory supersedes feminism. See also Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 27.

In another essay, Martin, while praising the insights of what is considered a “foundational” queer text, critiques particular constructions and assumptions about gender (and, by extension, feminism) in Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*. In particular, she attends to Sedgwick’s second axiom: “The study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender; correspondingly, antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist inquiry. But we can’t know in advance how they will be different.” Martin does not dispute the overarching wisdom of this axiom; her concern regards the axiom’s further implications. Namely, in Sedgwick’s elaboration, gender and its construction becomes “fixed” (as feminism above) in contrast to sexuality; as a result, gender becomes “constraint, enmeshment, miring, and fixity”—something that can and needs to be escaped or transcended, particularly through focus on sexuality. Martin concludes, “This will have the consequence of making sexuality, particularly homo/hetero sexual definition for men,

To a degree, this supersession is prompted by a need for a “stable” foundation for queerness, upon which its fluidity could thrive, particularly with benefits of institutional recognition.¹⁰² Its relevance seems to require a *history* that can purport to be an “accurate” and stable account, an origin story—or myth. Indeed, as writes Butler on such “histories”: “The institution of the ‘proper object’ takes place, as usual, through a mundane sort of violence. Indeed, *we might read moments of methodological founding as pervasively anti-historical acts*, beginnings which fabricate their legitimating histories through a retroactive narrative, burying complicity and division in and through the funereal figure of the ‘ground.’”¹⁰³ From such a vantage point, stable histories are not “historical.” Desires for legitimacy and formal recognition trump the acknowledgment of real complexities, always shifting ideas, and dynamic conversations between different people.

Butler’s pinpointing of the “violence” in this division foregrounds the dangers of supersession that are potent within wider projects of narrating histories. Within the context of Pauline scholarship, talk of “supersession” inevitably connotes the discourse that surrounds the emergence of (orthodox) Christianity and its relation to Judaism, in particular Jewish practices of the first few centuries of the Common Era. While certainly

seem strangely exempt from the enmeshments and constraints of gender (read: women), and thus, even from the body.” If the category of gender is largely cast as a fixed constraint needing to be escaped, then, rather than being escaped, constructions and perceptions of gender tend to revert to their historically default definition, i.e., that of the man. And if sexuality involves and attends to bodies, it cannot transcend or ignore feminism’s multiple discussions of gender. Martin, “Sexualities without Gender,” 106-107.

¹⁰² In other words, it requires the particular clarity and conveniences that a concrete “division of labor” and historical narrative of “founding” can provide. This sort of historical requirement is not an archival or multivocal history, as described in current projects of “queer historiography,” which notably include Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Love, *Feeling Backward*; Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Jonathan Goldberg and Menon, “Queering History,” *PMLA* 120 (2005): 1608-1617.

¹⁰³ Butler, “Against Proper Objects,” 9.

the emergence of queer theory and its relation to feminism differ in historical context (among other aspects) from the partition of Judaeo-Christianity, certain striking parallels between the two exist, especially in terms of the scholarly models that attempt to capture and categorize the variety of conversations in and across these fields. The problems created by depicting Christianity as emerging out of—and then “perfecting” or “completing” the teachings of—first-century Judaism (a long-dominant narrative that has notably depended upon interpretations of Paul’s letter to the Romans) have been exposed as being socially and politically dangerous as well as historically inaccurate.¹⁰⁴ Although, today, intentional supersessionist interpretations are more rare (though by no means uncommon, especially outside the academy), an implicit logic of supersession is often found, to varying degrees, in many historical models and interpretations.¹⁰⁵

As seen above, a similarly implicit supersessionism is often detectable in queer presentations of gender and feminism. Using the language of Judaeo-Christian partitioning, the emergence of queer theory in relation to feminism is most often portrayed, in various degrees of explicitness, by assuming something similar to the “Parting of the Ways” model, which, despite its theoretical concreteness and its awareness of the pitfalls of supersession, often perpetuates smaller skirmishes between

¹⁰⁴ Creating a static view of Judaism as a less-perfect Christianity, such a supersessionist model is based almost exclusively on stereotyped and anachronistic Christianized interpretations of New Testament, early Christian, and Second Temple/Rabbinic Jewish texts. Combined with the idea of Jewish persecution of early Christianity (found in Paul and most pejorative in the portrayal—especially in the Gospels—of Jewish responsibility for Jesus’ [Roman] death), such rhetoric has justified discrimination and persecution against Jews throughout history and into the modern era, most horrifically and extremely in the Holocaust.

¹⁰⁵ As scholars, most notably Amy-Jill Levine, have revealed and critiqued, even—sometimes especially—within more progressive (Christian) attempts to read the New Testament, which notably includes some feminist and postcolonial interpretation. See Amy-Jill Levine, et.al., “Roundtable Discussion: Anti-Judaism and Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20 (2004): 91-132; Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006). Paula Fredrikson and Adele Reinhartz, eds., *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

Judaism and Christianity.¹⁰⁶ In the study of Judaeo-Christianity this framework assumes that Christianity began as a movement (often termed “Jewish Christianity”) within Second Temple Judaism, as one (of many) sects that existed at the time. Eventually, as this particular “sect” expanded, developed its theology, textual canon, and practices in ways that more noticeably conflicted with “orthodox” (i.e., Rabbinic) Judaism, “orthodox” Christianity emerged as an entity entirely separate and distinguishable from its (“parent”).¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, such a model assumes and asserts that there is a fixed historical point before which “Jewish-Christianity” (as a “sect” within Jewish thought) could not be fully recognized as differing from Judaism’s “core” and after which two stable “religions”—Christianity and Judaism—can be said to be completely distinguishable.

By comparison, queer theory could be described as having “parted ways” with feminism at the moment(s) when it acquires its own name and then institutional recognition and status. The fixed attribution of “proper objects” and the need to establish a clear queer foundation produces a narrative and rhetoric of “Parting of Ways” similar to that seen in the Judaeo-Christian model. Such a comparison is especially apt given queer theory’s numerous (though by no means exclusive) roots from within feminist theory that

¹⁰⁶ I adopt “Judaeo-Christian” and “Judaeo-Christianity”—and the word “partition”—here following Boyarin (whose precise theory of partition will be discussed below), who uses this term to refer to the complex amalgam of ideas, beliefs, and practices that proliferated within, between, and outside the categories of “Jewish” and “Christian.” He understands this amalgamation as a form of “hybridity” drawing from postcolonial theory and the work of Homi Bhabha. “Judaeo-Christianity, not now Jewish Christianity, but the entire multiform cultural system, should be seen as the original cauldron of contentious, dissonant, sometimes friendly, more frequently hostile fecund religious productivity out of which ultimately precipitated two institutions at the end of late antiquity: orthodox Christianity and rabbinic Judaism.” Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 44; see further 7-26, esp. pp.22-26.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-33. Within this broad outline of such a model, the precise timing, methods, and “sides” of this partition differ (in particular, dating the more-or-less precise century/decade of the “Parting” is widely debated).

occurred within the context of the fractures in feminism.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, as she draws attention to the “significant exclusions” that result from delineating proper objects, Butler attributes such issues to “the difficulty of establishing *a point of departure*.”¹⁰⁹ Fixing proper objects allows for clear differentiation between two groups, thus confirming their “parting of ways” as a historical reality. Unfortunately, despite the stability (often found on both “sides” of a partition), such fixity is the ground for supersessionist ideas, one of the many troubling outcomes and losses of partitioning.

But what instances of hybridity are lost in the partition that creates two stable categories? Such a question continues to trouble the “fixing” of positions, objects, and/or borders through a historically stable “Parting of Ways.” Indeed, Daniel Boyarin sets this question at the center of his analysis of the Judaeo-Christianity’s partitioning by investigating such lost, “hybrid” ideas as those which cross or exist on the partition’s “border lines.”¹¹⁰ This theory reveals the complexity and diversity held in-between the borders that partitioned Judaism and Christianity, much of which was and remains lost when the two religions (or rejection thereof) are cast as existing in stable partition.¹¹¹ Although versions of the border lines between two separate groups can be seen and are being defined by the late second century, for a long time after this (through at least the

¹⁰⁸ While “Christianity” has roots within Judaism and its traditions, its early followers were also among the non-Jewish ἔθνη (“gentiles”) who brought their own backgrounds and traditions to bear on the formation of their ἐκκλησίαι and, eventually, “Christianity.”

¹⁰⁹ Butler, “Against Proper Objects,” 6. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁰ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 1-33. Boyarin’s “border lines” theory refuses to completely or firmly fix the separation of Christianity and Judaism as distinct “religions.” In so doing, he asserts that although “Jewish” and “Christian,” as separate categories of thought/identity, can be dated in existence as early as the second century, their *actual stability* cannot be dated until much later—and even then the borders of the “stable” partition are never entirely fixed or left uncrossed, in ways that can be seen well into and sometimes even beyond the fifth and sixth centuries C.E.

¹¹¹ Boyarin ultimately argues it is the production of Christianity that creates the category of “religion,” a category that Judaism ultimately refuses. See *ibid.*, 7-8, 12-14, 202-225.

fifth century), “border crossers” existed (often being labeled by “orthodoxy” as heretics or *minim*), and their ideas fell in-between the two forming traditions and were only slowly, over these several centuries eliminated or incorporated into one orthodoxy or the other.¹¹²

Boyarin’s thicker description of Judaeo-Christian partitioning portrays a similar complexity in the cauldron of Judaeo-Christian thoughts of the first several centuries C.E. as can be found in the simultaneously converging and diverging feminist-queer stew of the twentieth and twenty-first. By attending to greater complexity in this late ancient context, the conception of “border lines” provides a framework that can help situate other forms of ideas that continue to attempt (across many historical periods including this modern one) to inhabit the border spaces between two distinct, but still deeply interrelated, theories. In this way, the “hybrid” positions—and the difficulty of clearly and correctly identifying and/or labeling such positions—of “queer-sympathetic feminists” (a label I am using, with much consideration and hesitation, for certain positions resembling and including those of Butler and Martin above) reveal similar difficulties experienced by these modern theoretical “border crossers” in ways (and occasionally) rhetorics similar to that of “heresy,” especially as framed by Boyarin.¹¹³

¹¹² According to Boyarin, in order for the two to establish a stable (i.e., “orthodox”) side/position, the partitioning process required the production (and rejection) of “heretics” (and their thoughts as “heresy”). Through his analysis of the discourses of “orthodoxy” and “heresy,” a centuries long conversation in both Christian and Jewish circles (moving circles which at some points overlapped), the eventual “orthodox” views defined their tradition through negating and expelling those seen as having strayed too far afield. These “heretics,” however, were not those who obviously inhabited the other position (i.e., those who could be clearly identified across the border) but were instead those who blurred the categorical boundaries, whose identities were more fluid, and who, therefore, never neatly remained on either “side.” As Boyarin points out, the “heretics” of Christian “fathers” and the “*minim*” of Jewish rabbis may sometimes—even often—have been the *same people*. Heretics are the “border crossers,” in other words. *Ibid.*, 37-73.

¹¹³ To be clear, neither feminism or queer theory would, for the most part, define an “orthodox” position within their ranks to the degree of fixity that “orthodox” Christianity (in the forms of church councils, institutions, and the threat of formal excommunication for those deemed “heretics”). However, there are

In addition to their critiques, these hybrid queer-sympathetic feminist interventions raise specific concerns and questions of what gets “lost” in the rhetoric of stable partitions. Once “queer theory” and “feminism” separate into two distinct methods, their “identities” become fixed as a set of assumptions—e.g., the “object” of inquiry or the method(s) for analysis/critique—and subsequently attached to any project or movement bearing either the “queer” or “feminist” label. Additionally, choosing to identify as both “feminist” and “queer” carries its own, different range of assumptions. Generally speaking, such endeavors often resemble or appear to fit one label more than the other—although such assessments often depends on the perspective of each observer.¹¹⁴ Full sharing of theoretical and methodological tools is therefore lost in the fixing of partitioned identities for feminism and queer theory. This ultimately hinders the potential for intersectionality and fluidity within and between these analytical approaches.

Indeed, though “queer” and “feminist” have become distinct categories, Boyarin’s “border lines” emphasizes the fact that such separation will never be fully finalized. Attending to the ways in which queer theory and feminism have been and continue to be distinguished through a somewhat similar partitioning process, my theoretical approach to Romans draws significantly from the insights, methods, and inquiries of both sides of the border (perhaps emphasizing those whose work already crosses or falls between the

certainly ways in which these contemporary theoretical discourses contain implicit orthodoxies (that guard against theoretical heresiology).

¹¹⁴ In many cases, the result is that one label dominates and/or the endeavor is finally reduced (at least in most minds) to a single identification. “queer” or “feminist.” Whether the assessment is due to a misalignment within the endeavor or its misinterpretation by observers (or, more often, a combination), one theory supersedes the other—and, given the partition’s history, the queer label most often supersedes the feminist (as demonstrated by the dominant and nearly exclusive “queer” identification of both Rubin’s “Thinking Sex” and Butler’s *Gender Trouble*).

borders) in a manner that mixes—but never blends—the two theories. Thinking in terms of a culinary metaphor, what I mean by “mixing not blending” is that blending implies a more complete, sometimes violent, combination (as in objects pulverized in a bladed blender) that is extremely difficult or impossible to separate or distinguish its constituent parts. Mixing, however, implies that the combined objects can retain their (independent) specificity while still interacting with others to still produce a different (usually delicious) flavor in the final product. Certainly, in the mixing of queer and feminist, both my own and on the part of others, it is not always possible to perfectly distinguish which insights are “queer” or “feminist” (some may, indeed, already be a blend), but the aspiration is that both the queer and feminist “flavors” will be retained and identifiable throughout the endeavor.

In sum, amicable relations cannot be assumed to be inherent, even if deeply buried under present tensions, between feminism and queer theory. Indeed, finding or striking agreement(s) between them should not even be the goal of using theories. Feminism and queer theory need *not* always agree in order to be mutually informed by one another. Such movement within interactions and tensions—the ever-shifting dynamics between bodies (including bodies of theory)—returns back to affect and its recognition that such bodies are never static, which is ultimately what enables *change*. Moving in this direction with a feminist and queer approach to Romans, the notion of assemblage, which will be elaborated in the next section, takes up the affective *movement* that this mixing of queer and feminist theories requires.

Feminist and Queer Assemblages

“Bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively. They act and react. They generate what is new, surprising, unpredictable.”¹¹⁵ So suggests Elizabeth Grosz as she conceives a “corporeal feminism” that can account for the complexity of *bodies* not only as gendered, racialized, sexualized and classed entities but also as complex organisms in which all of these factors (and more) combine and interact in a dynamic ebb and flow.¹¹⁶ Connecting bodily complexity to the interactions and tensions between queerness and feminism in the above description, it is noteworthy that Martin insists that queer and feminist analyses must be able to “imagine both possibilities” in the sense that an event/issue can have two seemingly opposite narratives that emphasize different meanings or crossings with respect to gender and/or sexuality.¹¹⁷ Such logic can be extended to say that both theories should imagine multiple possibilities (some of which may contradict) in ways that hold bodies in tension while also expanding and including more, and always different, bodies within their wider view. Grosz’s image of the volatility of bodies portrays some of the different factors and identities that feminism and queer theories both attempt to capture; yet (as affect theory demonstrates) such capture is always an imperfect representation of these ever-shifting dynamics.

An affective conception of identities leads to the feminist and queer deployment of assemblages, “affective conglomerations” originally theorized in the work of Gilles

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xi.

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, vii-xiii, 13-24.

¹¹⁷ Martin, “Sexuality without Genders,” 112. On this particular point, she discusses two possible interpretations of the murder of Venus Xtravaganza in *Paris Is Burning*, with specific reference to that found in Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 121-140 (chapter 4 “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion”).

Deleuze and Felix Guattari.¹¹⁸ “An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a *multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature* as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions. . . . There are only lines.”¹¹⁹ Multiplicity and change—i.e., the imagination of *infinite* possibilities, given bodies’ unbound capacity for interaction—characterize assemblage. In my rendering, assemblages are mobile configurations of bodies, ideas, and forces that have changing and sometimes-porous borders and can move, represent or gather and dispel a body or bodies. These bodies—singular or plural, loosely defined, and certainly not exclusively human or even organic/“living”—inevitably group and regroup (and participate in multiple, simultaneous groupings) as they form numerous networks that deploy “identity” and/or “power,” as two of their effects.¹²⁰ In so doing, assemblages impact experience and

¹¹⁸ See Deleuze and Guattari, 8-9, 88-91. This idea of assemblages as “affective conglomerations” draws from Puar’s development of assemblages. Puar, 211. This development (as with Grosz) relies on Deleuze and Guattari’s theories but employs it in ways that give them increased capacities for affective change within politics related to the meetings and differences of “identities.” The limited engagement in this project with Deleuze/Guattari (largely limited to footnotes) is due to the fact that these ideas of assemblage, while rooted in their original conception, have exceeded their idea in ways that are far more interesting and beneficial for queer and feminist thought but that ultimately have transformed the original theories in ways that make them differ enough to refer directly to these theorists (i.e., Puar in particular) and their conceptions of affect and assemblage. On the issue of “orthodox Deleuzianism” and its productive reframing in a more “heterodox” form, see the discussion in Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 47-48. In addition to Grosz’s and Puar’s rearticulations of assemblages, Weheliye includes Massumi, Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Boston: Polity, 2002); Kara Keeling, *The Witch’s Flight: The Conematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) and Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (New York: Continuum, 2006). See also Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). See also DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

¹¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, 8; emphasis mine. Also quoted in Puar, 212.

¹²⁰ Puar, 215. Furthermore, on that same page, she continues from such observations: “If the ontogenetic dimensions of affect render affect as prior to representation—prior to race, class, gender, sex, nation, even as these categories might be the most pertinent mapping of or reference back to affect itself—how might identity-as-retrospective-ordering amplify rather than inhibit praxes of political organizing? If we transfer our energy, our turbulence, our momentum from the defense of integrity of identity and submit instead to this affective ideation of identity, what kinds of political strategies, of ‘politics of the open end,’ might we unabashedly stumble upon? Rather than rehashing the pros and cons of identity politics, can we think instead of affective politics?”

perception on individual and socio-political levels. Indeed, the fact that they are inevitably messy, complex, and fluid in their movement of bodies and relations conveys *affect*, always moving and changing yet leaving imprints of fixed feelings upon those sensing it.¹²¹

This rendering of assemblage is indebted to Puar's explanation and employment of assemblage in relation to terrorist bodies and her subsequent suggestion of theorizing queerness as assemblage. Situating the turbaned Sikh and the suicide bomber at the limits of liberal ideals of diversity and inclusion (already exposed as problematic in her discussion of *Lawrence-Garner*), Puar probes the constructions and interactions of race, sexuality, and gender that come unhinged in the (mistaken) identity of terrorist figures. She reveals that the Sikh's turban—coupled with racial features and presumptions about sexuality—is not an *appendage* (“the turban is not a hat”) to the male Sikh's body: it is an integral part of his bodily assemblage, one which simultaneously performs his piety and insists upon his non-Muslim/terrorist status as a patriotic (heteronormative) citizen *and* enables his misrecognition as “terrorist” with attendant presumptions of racialized and sexualized perversity.¹²² His bodily assemblage—that blends organic and nonorganic material—holds *both* interpretive possibilities (among infinite, constantly shifting, others) in tension in ways that reveal perception or sensation to be not solely (or even primarily)

¹²¹ See Puar, 211-216.

¹²² Puar's discussion of the issue of misrecognition and “mistaken identity” of the Sikh body as a Muslim body—and (as mislabeled Muslim) suspected terrorist by regulatory power. This enforces a regulatory regime whereby Sikhs are encouraged to distinguish themselves as not Muslims (rather than dispelling the notion that Muslims/Middle Easterners are possibly terrorists). Part of this distinction involves the performance of family values, heteronormativity, and nationalism. All of these assumptions, furthermore, tend to center around the misrecognition of the turban as bodily appendage, part of a Sikh male's bodily assemblage that bears the burdens of mistaken identity. See Puar, 166-202 (chapter 4, “‘The Turban Is Not a Hat’: Queer Diaspora and Practices of Profiling”).

visual but also tactile, interpersonal, and situational.¹²³ Likewise, the terrorist is also an assemblage, a conglomeration of capacities and sensations whose potential explosion—or threat thereof—makes multiple meanings, ones which also affect and help to produce the assemblaged bodies of the Sikh and the homonational queer subject.¹²⁴

If, as Puar observes, “Identity is one effect of affect,” then the groups that coalesce around shared identity-characteristics can be called “reactive community formations,” bodies that bond together as affect moves in and around them.¹²⁵ Puar emphasizes that assemblage provides a complementary alternative to intersectionality and identity-based politics. Neither captures the affective complexity of unstable identities that constantly change as they move and interact differently.¹²⁶ A single, stable identity is a “point,” a fixed position on a line, often where two lines intersect. Considering, at least in part, the lines that move through these points, intersectionality makes it possible for these reactive formations to cross paths. However, by focusing on the fixed points of crossing lines, it produces grids: a more “formulaic” structure useful for seeing or predicting patterns but lacking the messiness of unpredictable twists or curves.¹²⁷ These grids allow many possible intersections to appear and be considered, but they also

¹²³ Puar, 191-196, esp. p. 193.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 216-220; see also 197-202.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 215; 211.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 204-220. In particular, theories of intersectionality perform crucial work in acknowledging the existence of multiple identity characteristics—i.e., race, sexuality, and gender—that intersect in an individual or group, and these theories maintain that no single characteristic should be over-emphasized, especially to the exclusion of the others. In so doing, intersectionality is able to offer a much more complex portrait of an “identity” that eschews traditional “identity politics,” meaning political stances largely based or focusing upon one particular characteristic (often to the ignorance or exclusion of others—i.e., intersections). However, as Puar warns, intersectionality still fixes these intersecting characteristics into a generally stable identity: the single point at which multiple, identifiable lines (i.e., each characteristic) come together. As such, intersectionality cannot fully account for the *multiple, always moving* identities—real and mistaken, each encompassing full series of characteristics—inhabited by the turbaned Sikh and/or the terrorist.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 212.

produce *gridlock*, points where the intersections slow down and halt.¹²⁸ In these gridlocks, where identity-based differences crash in their intersection, “diversity,” in its current liberal ideological definition, affects differences that *feel* irreconcilable.¹²⁹

An exclusive focus on intersectionality in terms of identities, then, could be called a study of effects without consideration of affect. Assemblages offer an alternative that both complements and moves beyond the limitations of intersectionality and identity-based politics. Through their admission that any identity (or its individual characteristics) is but a momentary capture of a body or bodies in flux, assemblages foreground change. Assemblages encompass the infinite identities left behind and about to be produced by affect. They are, therefore, more difficult to think or theorize with because the description they permit is not only messy and difficult but always *changing*. In a slight shimmer, assemblages, like affect, move elsewhere; in a new moment or a different position, they sense and are sensed otherwise.¹³⁰

Instead of capturing a single image, thinking with assemblages offers a multiplicity of images that never exhaust the full potential of those that could be described. The theoretical move to assemblages accomplishes this by laying out a wide-but-never-complete variety of characteristics, feeling, experiences, and interactions—past, present, and possible—that bodies hold. Then, they consider ways that these varying capacities for identity interact and morph alongside one another, and they offer multiple—almost always contradictory—analyses of how these factors affect bodies.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Puar, 211-215, see further pp.162-165. See also Massumi, 8; Grosz, 19-20; Elizabeth A Povinelli, “Notes on Gridlock: Genealogy, Intimacy, Sexuality,” *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 215-238; Marchal, “Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics,” 172.

¹²⁹ Puar, 180-183; see also pp.25-32.

¹³⁰ On the idea of shimmers (taken from Roland Barthes) and affect, see Seigworth and Gregg, 10-11.

¹³¹ Puar, 191-202.

As such, the kind of interpretations that assemblages engender is definitionally incomplete and imperfect, as unstable as the affect that motivates them. Despite this sort of self-unhinging, assemblages create theoretical space for coexisting differences along with the variety of ways they are sensed, experienced, and perceived by bodies. The engagement across and among multiple, conflicting identities in these assemblages rejects the dictum that requires choosing a “side” when ideas or meanings contradict. Instead, by holding contradictory (as well as complementary) capacities “in tension,” assemblages challenge theory to contemplate *how these ideas co-exist within bodies* and *how such co-existence might open new avenues for change*.¹³² Such questions often prove unanswerable in any firm or complete sense, but attempts to answer—or, more realistically, just *struggle* with—them while analyzing multiple possibilities can produce meanings and interpretations with the capacity to change.

Assemblages create and abandon contradictory consensuses that constantly change. Tensions, contradictions, and disagreements, in other words, are no less valuable or productive than unity and consensus. Indeed, their devaluation—experienced in the discomfort or unease with discord and implied in desires for agreement—is a demand and construction of networks of power and control.¹³³ When the contradictions and movements of assemblages are interpreted and regulated by power, they produce opposing turfs with less-porous borders. They create divisions that quell the potential change that can emerge from engaging, rather than dispelling, tensions—the kind of

¹³² Ibid., 216-222.

¹³³ Ibid., 211-220.

change that encourages real community and diversity.¹³⁴ To that end, however, assemblages themselves are not alternative models for power: they are “neutral” in that their capacities can be directed towards either stasis or change. Especially underexamined, their complexity can enable the identitarian gridlock that supports regimes and societies of control.

These ways in which assemblages can work to tangle bodies into networks of control that sustain stasis and systems of uneven power rely upon and help to develop further feminism’s analyses of power and gender. Indeed, Schüssler-Fiorenza’s kyriarchy already captures the idea of complex, intersecting networks of power that lock bodies into hierarchal grids of oppression: “However, this kyriarchal pyramid must not be seen a static, but as an *always changing net* of relations of domination.”¹³⁵ Kyriarchy functions as an assemblage that is aligned with a dominant discourse that divides and conquers in order to keep control in the hands of the powerful elite it produces. Its maintenance of a hierarchy along multiple axes forces and encourages bodies to stay locked on kyriarchy’s *grid*, following one line and its individual intersections instead of seeing divergences, curves, or connections impossible, contradictory, or paradoxical on a flexibly-fixed plane of positions. In so doing, the “rule of the master” advances its portrayal of characteristics like gender, race, class, sexuality as largely separate categories that produce distinct identities, all of which can be aligned on its hierarchical grid that places the *κύριοι*, the elite, on the top lines. Through such separation and ordered definition, kyriarchy directs and controls the intersections between and among different characteristics. This

¹³⁴ Here, I am assuming a distinction between “difference” and “division” essentially: “difference” being the more-or-less natural or organic ways bodies are dissimilar and “division” being the creation of hard lines between differences that establish clear borders and prevent or make more difficult their crossings.

¹³⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 9.

production of “normal” draws bodies onto and into the grid, which permits some movement along already ordered lines and intersections.¹³⁶

Affective dimensions therefore underlie the multiple hierarchical networks that accomplish kyriarchy. In its gridlock, knots can be untangled only to knot up elsewhere; patterns may be thrown out of their organized loop only to feed back and (re)produce a new alignment on the kyriarchal plane. Thus, the kyriarchal assemblage can shift just enough so that minor movements are sensed to be propelling change. Minor shifts are made to seem major, when, in actuality, such small shifts merely foster the flexibility that perpetuates kyriarchy’s control—despite the reality that its network of power encompasses the bodies and forces that could dislodge it. Meanwhile, major shifts become less possible; they occur (or commence) but are made to seem minor or disruptive. If the major shifts of assemblage encourage and *require* contradiction and disagreement, kyriarchy takes advantage of the discomfort with tension and capitalizes (often literally) on the rhetoric of “sides.” The capacity for major movement is redirected into a minor shift, turning back toward stasis: gridlock.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Marchal develops and elaborates similar connections between the intersectionality of Schüssler Fiorenza’s kyriarchy and the transdisciplinary benefits of thinking about kyriarchy and/as assemblage. See “Bio-Necro-*Biblio*-Politics,” 172-174.

¹³⁷ Such gridlock can be seen in Schüssler Fiorenza’s discussion of the multiple axes (as in an intersectional grid) along which power functions, explained in an early formulation of kyriarchy. She writes, “In short, patriarchal power as the power of the master and lord operates not only along the axis of the gender system but also along those of race, class, culture, and religion. These axes of power structure the more general, overarching system of domination in a matrix- (or better patrix-) like fashion. When one shifts the analysis for investigating the axes of power along which this patrix of domination is structured, one can see not only how these systems of oppression constitute the kyriarchal social pyramid, but also *how they criss-cross the identity positions offered to individuals by the politics of domination.*” Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 365-366.

An important feature of the messiness of assemblage is its inevitable “failure.”¹³⁸ “Grids happen,” writes Massumi.¹³⁹ They are unavoidable in an assemblage’s constant shifts: “Indeterminacy and determination, change and freeze-framing go together.”¹⁴⁰ Drawing from Massumi’s insight, Puar stresses the necessary tension between the orderly grid of intersectionality and the chaotic fluidity of assemblages. Grids—and the theories of intersectionality that employ them—are included within *and formed by* assemblages. They happen, their functions are important, they help bodies to understand their relation(s) to power and change. But grids lock, grids need the freer movement of assemblages to establish them—and to deconstruct them. Admitting their capacity for gridlock, theories of assemblage probe the movements that underlie kyriarchal power networks and the ever-multiplying axes through which they function. Assemblages, therefore, complement and expand feminist and queer (calls) for intersectional analysis

¹³⁸ Here I use “failure” to indicate (as elaborated in this paragraph) the ways in which assemblages alone do not hold the capacity to change society *for the better* or to accomplish any particular vision for justice, utopian or otherwise. They merely hold capacity for change, and if socially-oriented justice—as some form of more-or-less utopian vision—is a goal, assemblage theories can help shift change in such directions, but no single assemblage or even collection of assemblages will accomplish it. Failure.

In using “failure” in this way, I want to acknowledge its resonance with queer theories of failure, most notably that of Halberstam, who valorizes failure as a queer art, something queers do, have done, and should reclaim as a sort-of virtue. See Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). I am wary to endorse Halberstam’s queer failure as another manifestation of the failure of assemblages discussed above (though there are avenues to do so). Ultimately, I do not think Halberstam’s failure “fails” enough. Its valorization of failure (and the many queer projects that embrace and take up such a vision) seems to ignore and be different from the experiences of failure of less privileged bodies (and while academics span a range of privilege, to write and publish in academia and to study at the graduate level, despite the debt for many, grants one a privileged status that provides or indicates some small degree of safety net). The queer art of “failure,” then is very different from the sorts of unnamed “failure” that can be seen in the examples of cruel optimism Berlant discusses (see above, as well as the discussion in chapter 3 below), where bodies may succeed at not drowning, but they fail to stop treading water and remain in an infinite holding pattern in an attempt to mimic and eventually attain the good life (an attachment to which, as Berlant reveals, subjects are generally doomed to failure in its most cruel form).

¹³⁹ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

by revealing the affective undercurrents that shift and change as bodies and ideas act and react.¹⁴¹

Despite such dangers, assemblages also contain capacities for changes that can unsettle and rearrange power in a less kyriarchal manner. Although any assemblage, always fleeting and constantly forming, reforming, and unforming, aligns with dominant power even as it curves away from it (creating gridlock even as it moves more freely around it), thinking in terms of assemblages attempts to expose and dismantle some of affective structures that create and support kyriarchal networks, instead of only untying some of their effects. After all, if assemblages slip and veer away from efforts for liberation and positive societal change, they also escape total support of and control by dominant and oppressive power. By letting multiple bodies and ideas move in tandem or in tension, assemblages *proliferate* possibilities.¹⁴² They allow theorists to suggest and elaborate multiple and divergent identities, ideologies, or interpretations and discover the myriad ways they interact with one another. Such proliferation encourages debate—through which more possibilities proliferate—and seeks everything that emerges from these interactions, common grounds as well as disagreements. and contradictions.

In her preference for speaking of “queerness” as opposed to “queer”, Puar calls queerness an assemblage as opposed to an identity marker (“queer persons” or even “queer theory”) or an action to be applied or done to objects or subjects (queering biblical

¹⁴¹ Puar, 211-216.

¹⁴² See Puar, 205-211. In terms of race, Arun Saldhana uses assemblages to propose a similar proliferation of race as opposed to an attempt to eliminate race entirely or to quantify it into separable, discrete racial identities. See Arun Saldhana, “Reontologising Race: The Machinic Geography of Phenotype,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 9-24. Grosz suggests a similar proliferation in terms of “a thousand tiny sexes” with regards to gender, sex, and sexuality. See Grosz, “A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, ed. Constantin Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994), 187-210.

texts or Paul, for instance).¹⁴³ By resisting the grids and binaries that cannot contain contradictions (for fear of disorder or breakdown) and purport to relieve tensions (through isolation), “a queer praxis of assemblage” emerges in Puar’s theorization.¹⁴⁴ Such a praxis “allows for a *scrambling of sides* that is illegible to state practices of surveillance, control, banishment, and extermination.”¹⁴⁵ Once possibilities proliferate, this praxis encourages continual movement and ongoing proliferation, resisting demands for complete agreement, categorization, and unambiguousness. Separate and clear sides permit clarity by creating grids and reducing movement and creativity. By constantly scrambling clear sides, affective sensations and movements can continue to generate more freely—and be studied. Queerness-assemblages attend to these small and sometimes barely perceptible changes and can slowly shift society and undermine kyriarchy even as each assemblage (re)aligns with dominant power, which is also always shifting into newer forms.¹⁴⁶ But, as these “fragile” assemblages are always moving in a “state of becoming,” kyriarchy’s dominant, grid-like assemblage is also moving, slowly fragmenting and being dismantled as part of this process.

In Puar’s version, assemblages and their theorizations in queer, feminist, and critical race discourses become crucial tools for emphasizing “the import of *communities*

¹⁴³ “Queerness as an assemblage moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and not-queer subjects, and, instead of retaining queerness exclusively as dissenting, resistant, and alternative (all of which queerness importantly is and does), it underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations.” Puar, 205.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 221.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ On this movement to queerness and/as assemblage, Puar’s invokes an idea of “queer praxes of futurity,” which points to own affinities with work being done in queer temporalities, particularly the affective of work José Esteban Muñoz on utopias. Puar, 204. Like Muñoz (and perhaps even more so than Muñoz) Puar is critical of Lee Edelman’s insistence on queer negativity (and thus, presentism) as the best rejection of heteronormative “reproductive futurism.” See Puar, 211. See also Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, esp. pp. 22, 90-95; and Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

of belonging.”¹⁴⁷ Communities of belonging describe sites (physical or otherwise) where bodies group based upon an affective sense of “belonging,” which can be sensed from shared characteristics, ideals or goals, or from something less tangible.¹⁴⁸ Feelings of belonging are unpredictable, contextual, and complicated: it is impossible to know when any particular body—with its complex assemblage of characteristics, experiences, and emotions—will sense connection with other bodies.¹⁴⁹ Inclusion and exclusion, belonging and not-belonging are transitory; they affect bodies and are also affected by bodies. As with assemblages, communities of such belongings also fluctuate and are sometimes impermanent: new bodies become attached; bodies within them may lose their belonging-sensation and dissociate, or bodies within may regroup or splinter as senses shift.¹⁵⁰

The ways in which these assemblages prioritize communities of belonging resonates with reconstructions of the first-century ἐκκλησίαι of Christ-followers (including the one to which Paul writes in Romans). Indeed, as I am arguing, the ἐκκλησία was and is a community of belonging that can be thought of as an assemblage. More than an assembly (ἐκκλησία) of human bodies, an ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage holds these participant’s bodies, their voices and ideas, their sensations and responses, and the

¹⁴⁷ Puar, 208.

¹⁴⁸ See Puar, 207-209. On issues of race and national belonging related to this idea—and the ways in which this reveals tensions with Massumi—see also Muñoz, “Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho’s *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs)*,” *Theatre Journal* 52, no.1 (2000): 67-79.

¹⁴⁹ “Perhaps what these slippages between emotion, feeling, and affect are performing in queer critique are continuing efforts to elaborate different modalities of belonging, connectivity, and intimacy response, in fact, to paradigms that have privileged the deterritorialization of control societies to such an extent that identitarian frames appear no longer relevant in the fact of the decentralization of interpellated subjects.” Puar, 208.

¹⁵⁰ Marchal describes this development, in somewhat different terms that are hesitant to embrace all of Puar’s critique of queer and its resistance to norms, as well: “Puar’s work, then, provides the occasion for some kind of re-aggregation, *an eccentric assemblage*, a kind of coalitional reconception of queer, feminist, race-critical and/or postcolonial. If so, the certainly the conditions under which such assemblages and coalitions form and operate require the same sort of critical reflexivity that some previous uses of queer seem to inspire.” Marchal, “Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics,” 171. See also Marchal, “‘Making History’ Queerly,” 393-394.

myriad forces and sensations that could move these groupings. Such a notion is grounded in Schüssler Fiorenza's theorization and reconstruction of the ἐκκλησία of wo/men. By naming the ἐκκλησία of wo/men a "radical *democratic* space" that fosters and foregrounds solidarity among all wo/men, Schüssler Fiorenza reclaims democracy's definition and demands a return to its roots as truly and fully representing *all* voices, interests, perspectives, and bodies.¹⁵¹ This radical democracy, she admits, is in major part a utopian vision: its ideal has never been fully and permanently realized but its possibility is one that has been felt within history and always remains on the horizon.¹⁵² This utopian vision is, therefore, one toward which feminist theories, politics, and the*logies must strive.

Such theorization of this ἐκκλησία in Rome as an assemblage aids the project of reducing the heroic myopia that Nasrallah and Johnson-DeBaufre identify within Pauline scholarship.¹⁵³ Their presentation of Paul's letters "as sites of debate, contestation, and resistance" reflects how communal belonging begins with shared commitments, but it only develops, moves, and creates change by admitting and debating the necessary tensions and disagreement that exist and constantly emerge between different bodies. Like an assemblage, this ancient ἐκκλησία refuses the binary logics of acceptance or rejection and resistance or complicity in favor of a less positional and more complex—

¹⁵¹ "A feminist ethics of solidarity therefore presupposes as sine qua non the democratic agency and self-determination of women." *Discipleship of Equals*, 351; see further pp.332-352 (chapter 23, "The Ethics and Politics of Liberation: Theorizing the *Ekklēsia* of Women"). See also: Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 343-351; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 127-130; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 17-20.

¹⁵² "A radical democratic conceptualization of the 'ekklēsia of women' is at once a historically accomplished and an imagined future reality." *Discipleship of Equals*, 369. See also Elizabeth A. Castelli, "The *Ekklēsia* of Women and/as Utopian Space" in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York: Continuum: 2004), 36-52.

¹⁵³ As seen in Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul," as discussed above in chapter 1.

and therefore far more *realistic*—understanding of conversation, disagreement, and, indeed, debate.¹⁵⁴ Debate, as a conversation that encourages explanation of and engagement with disagreements (often quite serious ones), does not have to separate into “sides” or have a compromised, single result as its goal. From the vantage point of Puar’s queer assemblages and Schüssler Fiorenza’s (as well as Nasrallah and Johnson-DeBaufre’s) *ἐκκλησία*, a debate can involve multiple positions—some of which may shift and change and develop—that may find some common ground but also identify tensions and disagreements that cannot be reconciled. These “heated” conversations are integral for creating and sustaining communities (ancient and contemporary alike) and for continually moving toward positive social change.

Thus, the practical details of a reconstruction of the *ἐκκλησία* in Rome are enhanced by this theorization of an *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage that contains multiple bodies and forces and holds within it tensions, conversations, debates, and movements.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, I argue, this *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage (re)presents a more historical model of the constantly shifting and developing ancient Christ-assemblies while deemphasizing and resituating Paul’s voice as only one “among others.” Further, its historical relevance extends beyond its ancient context so that it enables contemporary socio-historical, theological, and theoretical insights.

¹⁵⁴ “Taking seriously the differences, the rifts, and the discontinuities between our own identities and those of our contemporaries (as well as the overlaps and the possibilities for solidarity) can facilitate our reconstruction of similar difference in antiquity.” Nasrallah and Johnson-DeBaufre, 165. See further examples of such work in Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 82-109; Kittredge, *Community and Authority*; Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*.

¹⁵⁵ My notion of this *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage picks up on Marchal’s denotation of the *ἐκκλησία* as an “eccentric assemblage” of bodies, especially as described in “‘Making History’ Queerly,” 393-394; see also Marchal, “Bio-Necro-Biblio-Politics,” 170-171. I begin to develop this notion in James N. Hoke, “Unbinding Imperial Time: Chrononormativity and Paul’s Letter to the Romans” in *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, ed. Kent L. Brintnall, Marchal, and Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming 2017), see the section “Unbinding with the *Ekklēsia*.”

“The futures are much closer to us than any pasts we might want to return to or revisit,”¹⁵⁶ writes Puar, and so they may be, especially in terms of the present socio-political problems that require urgent attention as time continually moves forward in a linear fashion. However, Maia Kotrosits reminds us that, even if returning to the past is, at best, a distant improbability, ancient (and, I am arguing in particular, Greco-Roman and early Christian) pasts are equally proximate to the present in terms of effects and affects as these futures, which may or may not be eagerly anticipated. After all, as Kotrosits explains, “The affective resonances of texts are markers or symptoms of social and historical forces.”¹⁵⁷

But it is not just texts that convey these affective resonances. Though less tangibly visible and lost or hidden in much historical record, the myriad responses of the wo/men in first-century Christ-assemblies—who participated in this dynamic discussion with each other *and* Paul in an ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage—still pulse on the pages of written texts and in material culture. Their ideas and debates made history. By envisioning different futures, their presence and impact can still be sensed in present-day assemblages of different and debating bodies who are still *struggling* with same-but-different concerns and questions. Furthermore, just as these pasts affect the present and future, the frictions and fractures of this present historical moment (and our concerns about the futures, proximate and distant) affect how we see, sense, and interpret the past.¹⁵⁸

Through this Roman ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage that I am invoking, I attempt to revisit and reconstruct some plausible versions of the ideas and debates that we can say

¹⁵⁶ Puar, xix.

¹⁵⁷ Kotrosits, 11-12.

¹⁵⁸ Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, 173.

reliably and certainly *occurred*, even if we lack any reliable witnesses to attest to the content of these conversations. If conventional historiography might call my reconstructions “imaginative musings” (a label I only deny insofar as it conventionally carries derogatory implications), then such a project perhaps poses the question: to what degree does the exact or accurate content *matter*? If we know these conversations *must* have occurred—but we have no firsthand witness—then we can, at least reconstruct numerous *probabilities*. We *can*, in other words, *imagine*—according to what we know could have happened according to the best available textual and material evidence. A concrete, stable historical record, as stated earlier, is not truly *historical*.

If the *ἐκκλησία*, an assemblage of bodies sometimes in tandem and sometimes in tension, was truly democratic and truly dynamic, then Paul’s ideas *were* one among many. As his letters were read, wo/men commented, inserted, interjected. They cheered and groaned, ignored and embraced, gestured and interjected. His letters were not treatises to be interpreted but ideas to be tried on, played with, or discarded.¹⁵⁹ Likely read orally in such a space, Paul’s letters were *interrupted* in and by the *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. Historically, therefore, they were not the monologues we read and/or hear today. As such, it is imperative to attempt to convey—momentarily capture—some of the movements, discussions, ideas, and debates of the Roman *ἐκκλησία* at the moment(s) in time when they were engaging with this epistle from an unknown apostle or saint (apparently).¹⁶⁰ To do so, I offer several plausible reconstructions of these interruptions

¹⁵⁹ Paul’s intention, of course, matters little, but (for those interested in authorial intent) it could be argued that he knew and intended his letters to participate in debates and conversations as such.

¹⁶⁰ Here I refer to the comedic discussion of Paul’s letters to Corinth by Eddie Izzard, where he (in drag and with much profanity) imagines a frustrated Corinthian response to Paul’s letter. See Eddie Izzard, *Definite Article: Live*, DVD (1996; United States: ANTI, 2004).

as could have been raised by wo/men present in the space, starting with the “test case” of Romans 1:18-32 below. While these individual interruptions could stand independently, I consider the ways in which they interact and exist in tension alongside Paul. In so doing, I highlight the affective impacts of this ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage and the ongoing ripples that can be sensed in the present through which ἐκκλησία-1 assemblages, ancient and contemporary, might provoke change for the future.

Romans 1:18-32: A Brief Test Case

Chapter one’s review of LGBT/Queer interpretations of Romans 1:18-32 left undecided the question: can—and *should*—anything else be said about this infamous excerpt of the epistle? Returning to this question (even if not quite answering it), this theorization of the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage opens avenues for considering this infamous text differently. As the wo/men of the ἐκκλησία first heard and read Paul’s letter, these words added to, participated in, or stood as an outlier to the conversations that these wo/men were already already having. While I do not deny that scholarship seems to have hit a (momentary) maximum in terms of analysis of 1:18-32, I offer a few new alternatives for reading it as a “test case” in order to demonstrate how this model of the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage functions practically.

διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας· αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ..., *Because of this God handed them over to shameful passions, for their females traded their natural usage for that which is against... ἄλις ἤδη, Enough already!* She sighs. Immediately another groan rises in agreement. Meanwhile, from across the room, someone rolls her eyes, and another whispers to her neighbor οἷα φίλει γίνεσθαι, *As usual*. A slight tension fills the room; the

words read are not new, nor is the spiraling madness into which they will later proceed. A few who care little about “the sex question” feel especially uneasy, remembering the frustration into which conversation around these issues has previously descended. They align with the usual Roman ideologies, though some mutter hopefully that they hear a critique of imperial sexual excess in the way this Παῦλος has framed them. That leads to other whispers (suddenly growing louder, perhaps). *Stop hearing critique of Rome in everything, what have they done to us?...Shhh, that kind of talk makes us too suspicious...more sighs and groans...Why can't you critique Rome in ways other than “shameful passions”?* By the time the lector, having had to repeat several words and phrases, reads ἀλλὰ καὶ συνευδοκοῦσιν τοῖς πράσσουσιν *But they also sympathize with those who do such things* (1:32), it is apparent that these words have unearthed a few of the gathering’s ongoing and typical tensions that could only ever be held in a fragile stasis for so long...

Within this scenario, several plausible “positions”—or, better put, ideas—resurface and/or are generated as a result of Paul’s voice in this conversation. Some other voices in the conversation largely agree with Paul’s ideas: like this apostle, they have *no reason to question* the prevailing cultural assumptions about “nature” as it pertains to the prevailing sex/gender system. Many sense, with different levels of anxiety, that arranging sexuality in another other (i.e., “unnatural”) way signals the potential decline of civilization, as demonstrated by prevailing presentations of history, Roman, Jewish, or otherwise. Suffice it to say that, given the general cultural prevalence of Paul’s views in Romans 1:18-32, it is highly probable that some (maybe most) of the audience agreed, in at least broad terms, with Paul’s description of what provokes God’s growing wrath.

Indeed, those who agree most strongly may feel the pulsation of increasing madness (in both the term's senses, "insanity" and/or "anger"). Such madness may bubble out in these bodies especially when they are confronted with others who see—or even *do*—things differently, who (in essence) disagree with the definition or presentation of what is "natural" in a variety of ways and degrees.

(Un)naturally, it follows then that other bodies in the assembly think differently from Paul—meaning, to some extent, they do have *reason to question* the prevailing assumptions about sex and its relation to society. To begin at the other "extreme" from those who accept this presentation, there are those who have reason to question based on personal experience, i.e. those whose sexual practices or desires do not conform to the "natural" socio-sexual hierarchy.¹⁶¹ "Enough already" is the sigh of exasperation that represents this "other side."¹⁶² Regardless of whether they have revealed their sexual proclivities (or they are otherwise known), some of these wo/men, to varying degrees, could raise suspicions about the "naturalness" of the sexual order; some may question why women cannot love—or just fuck—other women, at least hypothetically. Others may point out, in light of the equality promised in their baptismal formula (see Gal. 3:28), the problems of having a hierarchically arranged sexual system. They may raise the question few Romans considered: can sex occur between two *equals*?¹⁶³ If so, how?

¹⁶¹ As my introductory reconstruction elaborated, and scholars such as Brooten have shown, at least *some* in the Roman ἐκκλησία practiced "unnatural" sex, although (as will be considered) such practice does not require rejection of the prevailing definition of "nature" and/or the socio-sexual hierarchy.

¹⁶² I.e., the wo/men whose sexual practices or preferences did not align perfectly with the established order and/or those who understood such practices in ways that lead them to question and reject their condemnation.

¹⁶³ Questions of equality within the ἐκκλησία and as an alternative relation to God—equal to rather than under—will be a recurring theme within my discussions of probabilities in an ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage.

Such questions have more than sexual ramifications: they can imply changes to society and politics as well. If the sexual side of the kyriarchal pyramid is altered to be more equal, this deconstruction prompts other sides held within the assemblage to be questioned and potentially shift. If sexual positions or objects adhere to the power differentials of the socio-political ladder (or redefine/eliminate power dynamics entirely), then are these other power dynamics and positions necessary? Should politics be different? Should there be an emperor, a voting body restricted to elite men, a scale of citizen/free/foreign/slave? Should the empire be “overturned”—or better yet, could it be *shifted* to allow newer, dynamic movements and changes?

While it is possible that such “revolutionary” thoughts could be prompted by “revolutionary” sexual experiences and/or ideas, they do not automatically or necessarily follow, a praxis for which assemblage theory accounts. Kyriarchal assemblages, which produce and maintain power and a dynamic stasis, are effective because of their fluid ability to adapt to revolutionary shifts and to make them feel/seem smaller within their wide ebbs and flows. Someone whose sexual practices did not conform to the kyriarchal mold (an elite woman and an enslaved prostitute “in love” as equals, perhaps) might still prefer to maintain the political status quo (e.g., the elite woman enjoys her wealth). Normativity, as Berlant revealed, has an affective draw that motivates these assemblage dynamics: one can question the status quo just enough to “feel” normal within it—to keep treading water.

Certainly, I do not want to deny the potential existence for “revolutionary thinkers”—those who comprehensively challenged the social-imperial-sexual kyriarchy—within Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage; however, it is, I contend, far more

likely that this “extreme” was rare or even more an amalgamation of semi-revolutionary bodies and thoughts produced through the assemblage.¹⁶⁴ Within Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*, this means that some persons, who were resistant to Roman imperial power and who wanted to overthrow or rethink it, may have heard imperial critique in Paul’s contribution and been eager to point it out in support of questions they had already been raising in the assembly. However, their rejection of Rome does not have to entail rejection of its sexual or social order any more than two women’s rejection of Roman disdain for their unnatural coupling entails a rejection of the empire or their social statuses within it. The variety of possibilities are endless with so many points and lines held within the *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. The probable individual positions proliferate infinitely.

While Paul’s framing may have prompted some voices to articulate their ideas in different or new ways, given that much of 1:18-32 offered little new in terms of prevalent ideas about sex, gender, and society, it is perhaps more likely that the assembly expressed their “usual” comments—or maybe some just sighed, smiled, groaned, or eye-rolled—before continuing to a different conversation with their Pauline participant. Although these responses likely could have been merely a brief (if any) interruption, their elaboration sets up a framework for *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage and serves as a reminder that the *ἐκκλησία*’s discussions were ongoing. Paul’s letter entered into a history of the Roman assembly that existed before and continued to move and develop after his moment in their conversation.

¹⁶⁴ Extremes are, in other words, often produced by assemblages and are often held onto for their stability. Fictive binary “sides” help maintain the status quo.

Ultimately, based on this beginning conversation in an ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage, it becomes more possible (quite probable, even) that Paul’s contributions to the groups thoughts and discussions about sexuality added nothing particularly new. This is not to say that Paul’s ideas here do not matter or affect how this conversation—and the reading of Paul’s contribution as a participant in it—proceeded. Those who approved of what he says in this first “chapter” might be more willing to embrace or consider the parts of what follows which do not conform to their own views. Likewise, those who disagreed with this sexual ideology may now have been “on alert” and therefore looking for ways that these sexual and hierarchal ideas appear else (making them more likely to hear what follows in terms similar to my queer critique of Paul’s imperial alignments). Others may have different reactions or have completely forgotten these words by the time 2:2 is in their ears.¹⁶⁵

Regardless, these early interruptions begin to give us a sense of how Paul’s letter participates as *one voice among many* in an ongoing conversation. As such, this conversation cannot be entirely forgotten or ignored as the dialogue continues onto new topics: πίστις (“faith”) and ethics most particularly for the purposes of the following analysis. With its talk of “honoring” and “thanking” (from δοξάζω and εὐχαριστῶ, see 1:21) and of revealing God’s anger (ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ, 1:18), what, more broadly, does 1:18-32 say about God?¹⁶⁶ How does or will sexuality and the socio-sexual hierarchy relate to following Jesus? Questions beyond those related to sexuality surface as well, both from 1:18-32 and the entire chapter: Who is God more broadly, and how do

¹⁶⁵ It was, after all, mostly likely being read aloud.

¹⁶⁶ In the case of honoring/thanking God in 1:21, 1:18-32 reveals the results of *not* doing so, but this implies that followers in the assembly should honor and thank God.

the members of this gathering relate to or belong to this God?¹⁶⁷ What is Jesus' relation to God, what example does he give the ἐκκλησία; and what does it mean to follow him? What does it mean that Jesus is κύριος ἡμῶν, *our master* (or *Lord*)? What is God's rule—and how does it affect the present “rule” of Rome? How does Jesus and showing πίστις to God affect our roles and behaviors in society? What ethical rules do we live by?

The Roman ἐκκλησία's discussion—and Paul's partial role within it—flows and shifts through theology, ethics, politics, nation, society, economics, race/ethnicity, gender *and* sexuality. These various subjects ebb and flow, cross and collide, are crucial, ancillary, and irrelevant at different moments within the conversational space of the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage. Like the epistle itself, the ἐκκλησία-1 conversation moves on from sexuality but never leaves it behind.

To be sure, the various thoughts and ideas presented here are unattested (since we have no historical record) and represent my own “imaginative” reconstruction of some of this ἐκκλησία's conversations. Having presented these “musings”—which, inasmuch as they draw from historical records to confirm some degree of probability, also certainly reflect my own contemporary experiences, biases, and concerns—I posit that what is *historical* about this reconstruction is *NOT* the individual content of any particular statement, body, idea, or context. It is the *conversation without specific content*—the mingling of different ideas and bodies in the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage—that is profoundly historical. Following Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, it is urgent for history—both for accuracy in representing the past and for its role in determining the future—to reconstruct more than individual heroic ideas and positions and instead examine the far less tangible

¹⁶⁷ And how does this relate to the traditions and histories of Judaism/Israel?

ways in which many ideas in conversation affect and move bodies toward change of historical proportions. Placing these historical musings in conversation, as I have just done and will continue to do through the lens of *ἐκκλήσια*-I assemblage, proffers a plausible representation of historical *conversations*, but it does not claim to be a perfect or final representation. In resurrecting a dynamic ancient conversation, I intend to provoke a contemporary conversation with another assemblage of bodies and ideas, which will disagree with my representations and/or be sparked by them to add their own. The *ἐκκλήσια*-I assemblage that I present here is, therefore, just a beginning; it is definitionally incomplete with infinite space for disagreement, development, and new and different suggestions. In other words, we need to *proliferate* plausible historical reconstructions and conversation.

PART II

CHAPTER 3

FAITHFUL SUBMISSION

Part II considers the specific ways kyriarchal and ἐκκλησία-1 assemblages affected first-century theo-Christologies, the ideas about God and Christ (specified as the person Jesus) that compelled people to follow, and even declare loyalty (πίστις) to, them. This first chapter situates Paul’s theo-Christology, as expressed in Romans 1-5, as an affective participant in Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage. It takes πίστις—most commonly translated “faith”—as its central topic because “faith,” specifically in Christ Jesus and in God, are now firmly established (thanks, in no small part, to Paul/Romans) as the foundation, even the “heart,” of Christian theology.¹

πίστις, as this chapter will show, is not a Pauline invention. Indeed, πίστις (and *fides*, its Latin equivalent) was critical to the maintenance of Rome’s socio-sexual-political hierarchy. Rome’s πίστις/*fides* often involved submission for those of lower status, especially in the case of conquered ἔθνη (“nations”) that had been incorporated into the empire as participants in the *pax Romana*. Written and first heard in this context, Romans 1-5 uses πίστις to incorporate ἔθνη into God’s plan for justice and salvation

¹ Especially once separate from Judaism, Christianity no longer needs to specify a difference between “theology” (ideas about God) and “theo-Christology” (ideas about God and Christ and Christ’s relation to God). More specifically, theology and Christology become essentially interchangeable once Christ/Jesus becomes (part of) God via trinitarian thought. However, such divinized ideas are not firmly established enough in the first century or in Paul’s letters, so a distinction must be drawn between God and Jesus/Christ, even if some may have already begun to blur it (and referring to these ideas as “theo-Christology” permits both separation and blurring.)

under divine rule. Paul’s argument assumes the same submissive postures seen in imperial *πίστις*. *πίστις* in Romans, as in Rome, requires faithful submission.²

In terms of theory, this chapter uses the lens of Berlant’s “cruel optimism” to uncover the affective implications that are motivated by such faithful submission and draw subjects back into kyriarchal assemblage. Berlant’s reframing of “optimism,” which defines it in terms of affective attachment, works similarly to the first-century framing of *πίστις* as a relation that “attached” persons through trust or loyalty. The positive sensations of Berlant’s optimism rely upon promises of upward mobility that will lead to an ultimately fantastic “good life.”³ However, based on the fantastic, often unrealizable nature of these promises, Berlant exposes how optimistic attachments can actively prevent their subjects’ flourishing and, therefore, ultimately prove to be “cruel optimism.” Adapting Berlant’s theory to a first-century context, this chapter uncovers similar fantastic promises within the context of Rome’s *ἔθνη* that make possible an ancient form of cruel optimism: cruel *πίστις*.

In terms of Paul’s letter, Romans 1-5 are a rhetorical “argument” made by Paul, who explains how *ἔθνη* have been incorporated (alongside Jews) into God’s plan for justice and salvation (1:16-17)—made manifest in Jesus’ display of *πίστις* (3:21-26)—by means of their own *πίστις* that follows Jesus’s example (3:27-5:11).⁴ While understanding

² And so, the “heart” of Christianity is also, in other words, part of the bedrock that sustained Roman kyriarchy.

³ In ways that also sustain the cruel affects of comfortable normativity discussed in chapter 2.

⁴ Arguing against numerous, strict divisions in Romans 1-5, Stowers writes, “Paul did not write in paragraphs, and paragraphs should not be assumed as the only way to arrange the sense of an ancient prose text.” Stowers, 231. In particular, Stowers argues that Romans cannot be seen as a generalized “theological treatise” and particularly that 2:17-5:11 is a single, closely united, unit. Similar to Stowers are Keck, 23-25; Cobb and Lull, 22-23. On the rhetorical argument and a detailed overview, see Jewett, 23-46. He divides 1:18-4:25 as the “first proof” and 5:1-11 are then the start of the second; see similarly, Moo, Fitzmyer, 96-98; Byrne, 26-28. Dunn places a hard break between 1:18-3:20 and 3:21-5:21 saying 5:1-21 are part of this

Paul's use of *πίστις* throughout Romans 1-5 is critical to understanding this argument, it is God's plan for justice (and the inclusion of both Jews and *ἔθνη* in it)—*not* the meaning and significance of *πίστις*—that is the central point of Paul's letter and that directs and necessitates its argumentative order and flow.⁵ Therefore, since this chapter focuses first on Paul's *πίστις* and then how that *πίστις* affects Paul's argument, it requires analyzing Romans 1-5 non-linearly. 3:21-26 is where Paul's emphasis on *πίστις* reaches its climax: these verses reveal Jesus' *πίστις* as the crucial element needed for God's plan. Only by starting here, *in medias res*, can the role of *πίστις* and its relations of faithful submission become clear enough to analyze the use of *πίστις* at the beginning and thesis (1:5, 16-17) and hortatory conclusion (4:23-5:11) of Paul's argument.

This chapter proceeds in three sections, each with (at least) two subsections that divide discussions of imperial portrayals of *πίστις* and its relation to *ἔθνη* (first subsection) from the appearance of these portrayals in Romans 1-5 (latter subsection[s]). The chapter's first major section discusses the relationality of Roman *πίστις/fides* and establishes how, in general terms, *πίστις* can be called an ancient manifestation of

“crucial central section.” Dunn, 1:161. Witherington, arguing it is epideictic rhetoric, makes a soft divide between chapters 4 and 5. Witherington, 16-22. Grieb keeps 1:18-3:31 as a unit, with 4:1-25 as a separate part of the “story,” followed by chapters 5-8 as another unit. Grieb, xxiii. A number of scholars put hard breaks into sections for 1:18-3:20, 3:21-4:25, and 5:1-8:9; see Schreiner, 25-27; Hultgren, 23-25; Matera, 12-18.

⁵ “The argument of this book is that from its very first lines, Paul's letter burns with the incendiary proclamation of God's justice, and with a searing critique of the injustice (*adikia*) of those who smother and suppress the truth.” Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 6. See also Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 1-12, 27-29; Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul*, 1-8. However, beyond Romans, *πίστις* and *δικαιοσύνη* are closely connected as virtues, critical to the maintenance of the Roman imperial state. “Together with *dikaioσynē*, it [*pistis*] is foundational to every society.” Teresa J. Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 502. Additionally, “The text does not reveal what the sinner has to do in order to be saved (that is, have faith). Rather it tells how God has shown himself *to be righteous by justifying* the gentile people through Jesus' faithful death.” Stowers, 223; see also pp. 195-198. Furthermore, throughout Romans, *God* not *Jesus* is the central topic, as we will see further below.

Berlantian optimism. It further specifies how, in hierarchal contexts, these optimistic *πίστις*-relations tended to involve submission and hopes of benefit for those of lower status who made faithfully submissive displays. The second section examines the situation of *ἔθνη* conquered by and living in the city of Rome and assesses their hopes for upward mobility—i.e., the fantasies required to sustain optimism’s affect—as a promised benefit of their submissive *πίστις*. The third section returns to *πίστις*’s optimistic attachments and reveals that, given the socio-sexual-political reality of Rome’s *ἔθνη* caught in kyriarchal assemblage, their faithful submission ultimately makes impossible their fantasies (i.e., ancient cruel optimism). Ultimately, by analyzing Paul’s portrayal of *πίστις* in Romans 1-5 against the backdrop of Rome’s *πίστις*-relations with its conquered *ἔθνη*, this chapter argues that Paul’s theo-Christology sustains relations of this same cruel *πίστις* for his audience of *ἔθνη* who hopefully submit to and await a reign of God that is, in essence, Roman-without-Rome.

Optimistic *πίστις* and “Faithful Submission”

This section stems from the ways in which *πίστις/fides* were largely conceived in relational terms in their wider first-century Roman imperial context. Neither an emotional (i.e., a feeling of trust) nor a cognitive (i.e., a mental belief), Berlant’s optimism shows how such a relational conception of *πίστις* is affective.⁶ By showing how *πίστις*

⁶ I will use the term *πίστις*, generally untranslated, to refer generally to first-century conceptions of this term as “trust” or “faith,” as opposed to translating the term, since it is difficult to render with one precise English equivalent (as will be discussed below). It should be noted that when I refer to *πίστις* as a concept in the first century C.E., I am *not* excluding the Latin concept of *fides*, as both terms were roughly equivalent in usage in this period. On this issue, see Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 7-8, as well as 5-15. Because my discussion of Romans will make reference exclusively to the Greek term, I prefer to use the Greek when speaking about the general concept, as opposed to having to render it “*πίστις/fides*” in order to denote their interchangeability. When I do refer specifically to *fides*, it is because I am referring to

affectively attaches bodies, it begins to emerge as a form of ancient optimism, which makes it possible to consider the hope contained in its supposedly mutual benefits as a “risk” within this optimistic framework. The risk is especially apparent in πίστις-relations between subjects of uneven status, which typically required those of lower status to submit to another’s authority before receiving these benefits, which are promised in a highly-anticipated, but usually ambiguously defined, future. Ultimately, as the following subsections demonstrate, when conceived within relations that participate in kyriarchal assemblage, e.g., an emperor and conquered subjects, πίστις in Rome and Romans required faithful submission.

The Optimism of Roman πίστις and fides

“And many other nations [*gentes*, ἔθνη] experienced the faith [*fidem*, πίστewς] of the Roman people during my rule, nations with whom there had never been an exchange of embassies or friendship.”⁷ These words, inscribed by Augustus in his monumental *Res Gestae*, can be found near the end of the emperor’s account of his territorial expansion of Rome, which ensured an era of peace and prosperity for inhabitants across the empire and most especially for Roman citizens (the *populus Romano*).⁸ Completing the account with this general statement about the many other ἔθνη that there is no space to discuss, Rome’s first emperor asserts that through his territorial expansion, the peoples added to the

the use of the term in a specific text, and I am not considering it separately or differently from πίστις at any point in my argument.

⁷ *Plurimaeque aliae gentes expertae sunt p.R. fidem me principe quibus antea cum populo Romano nullum extiterat legationum et amicitiae commercium.* πλεῖστά τε ἄλλα ἔθνη πείραν ἔλαβεν δήμου Ῥωμαίων πίστewς ἔπ’ ἐμοῦ ἡγεμόνος οἷς τὸ πρὶν οὐδεμία ἦν πρὸς δῆμον Ῥωμαίων πρεσβειῶν καὶ φιλίας κοινωνία. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 32:7-10 (Lat.), 8-11 (Gk.).

⁸ In the preceding sections of the text (from roughly §25ff.), Augustus gives a summative account of the various ἔθνη whom he added to Rome’s population, whether by military victory (as in Egypt) or by more peaceful arrangement (such as the establishment of “client kingdoms” as with Judaea).

empire were able to experience the *πίστις* that characterized Roman citizens. In being conquered (whether militarily or diplomatically) by Rome, the experience of “faith” for these *ἔθνη*, as Caesar conceives it, is one of submission. By submitting to his imperial authority, these non-Roman peoples take their place on the hierarchy of imperial politics and ultimately bolster Rome’s overall prosperity, in which these *ἔθνη*—though distinct from Rome’s citizenry—will implicitly share.

By demonstrating the role it plays in establishing and maintaining relations, Teresa J. Morgan’s comprehensive overview and analysis of *πίστις* in Rome establishes that *πίστις* relies on reciprocity: relations based on *πίστις* presume that it will be displayed in both directions, even when only one party’s *πίστις* is mentioned.⁹ *πίστις* and the relations it maintains generally promise benefits to the parties in exchange for their mutual trust and loyalty. The reciprocal promise of benefit for both parties—always making *πίστις* a “two-way street”—emphasizes the relationality that is embedded in any usage of *πίστις* in first-century Rome.¹⁰ To establish trust/loyalty is to create a relationship upon which all parties can depend, and, in the case of a pre-existing relationship, it is essential for the maintenance of that relationship, particularly if it is to

⁹ This aspect of *πίστις* is emphasized by Morgan as she takes a *histoire des mentalités* approach to study *πίστις* and *fides* in the Roman world of the first century, into which she situates the writings of the New Testament. She observes, “But *pistis/fides* (along with justice, mercy, and a few others) is one of those qualities that can only be practised socially: it is inherently relational and characteristically expressed in action towards other human beings (or, occasionally, animals).” Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 472. Throughout the book, she emphasizes the ways in which relationality is central to the concept of *πίστις* through her discussion of various examples, such that, by p.444, she can declare this fact to be “uncontroversial.”

¹⁰ “The inescapable reciprocity of *pistis/fides* means that within relationships of *pistis/fides*, power (encompassing all kinds of status and authority) never runs all one way. This, along with the fact that *pistis/fides* does not depend on other social structures to operate, but can exist wherever two or more people associate, means that it inflects social relations as powerfully as it is inflected by them.” *Ibid.*, 53, see further pp.52-53.

remain good/beneficial for those involved. Therefore, a major feature of *πίστις* in the first-century imperial world was its role in the maintenance and creation of relationships, generally in line with the kyriarchal structure of Roman society.

Accounting for the experiential dimensions and practical benefits that function within its relations, *πίστις* operates beyond a simple cognitive function of “trust” or (especially) “belief.”¹¹ *πίστις* displays an *affective* means of creating and maintaining relations that helped structure Roman society and its various hierarchies. However, *πίστις* is *not* “affective” in the sense of it being an “emotion.”¹² It is affective in affect’s meaning as a proprioceptive force or sensation that occurs in-between bodies.¹³ *πίστις*’s relational force attaches bodies through shifting sensations whose description and definition is ultimately uncapturable. Sometimes it involves trust, sometimes loyalty, sometimes belief; usually it is an oddly shifting combination of (at least) all three.

Binding bodies into relations and sustaining these relations through its sensations, *πίστις*’s affective force can be specified further as the form of attachment that Lauren

¹¹ This “cognitive” definition is probably most apparent in its theological translation as “faith” and its longstanding function as propositional “belief” in the New Testament and its interpretation. However, “the way in which the term ‘belief’ is used in modern English, to translate *pistis/fides* with a strongly cognitive and propositional accent, makes it easy to forget that cognitive processes and propositional belief are primarily expressed in Greek and Latin using the language of *thinking* (*putare, nomizein*, etc.)” Ibid., 75.

¹² Because Morgan comments that “affective” dimensions of *πίστις* are not present in Roman depictions—and, indeed, that such dimensions are largely emphasized by New Testament scholarship in exclusivity—I should note that Morgan’s use of “affective” connects affect closely with emotion (i.e., they are virtually synonymous for her), and she argues that *πίστις* is not an emotion. Ibid., 54. I agree with Morgan’s assessment, but we diverge in how we use the term “affective.” As elaborated in chapter 2, emotions can be affective (i.e., manifest affect), but affect (and forces described as “affective”) are not limited to emotions.

¹³ Thus, I primarily draw from the “vector” of affect theory that sees affect as a sensation or proprioceptive force that occurs between and among various bodies. Lauren Berlant’s use of affect—which informs her notion of optimism which I introduce in the next paragraph—is situated in a similar vector, which draws on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as well as Brian Massumi. My use of affect in this “vector” is not to deny the emotional dimensions of affect, as emphasized by other affect theorists who primarily draw on the work of Silvan Tompkins and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, represented perhaps most clearly in Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

Berlant calls “optimism”: “the force that moves you out of yourself and into the world in order to bring closer the satisfying *something* that you cannot generate on your own but sense in the wake of a person, a way of life, an object, project, concept, or scene.”¹⁴ It denotes a relationship that a person has based on the hope or expectation that this relation will help to bring about something beneficial, especially in terms of one’s everyday, or ordinary, life. By maintaining these relations, optimism *attaches* its subjects to objects of relation, which can be concrete (a person or a physical object) or intangible (a concept like freedom or security). Optimism can often seem positive (i.e., “glass half full”) because the relations and attachments it forges are connected to conceptions of the “good life”: one becomes attached in part via the promise that this attachment will yield satisfaction or improvement in at least some aspect of one’s (daily) life.¹⁵

In its ability to forge and maintain relationships, πίστις in its first-century conception operates along a similar affective structure in order to attach a subject to her/his object, whether a person, sensation, group, or thing.¹⁶ Though πίστις generally involves some degree of reciprocity between subjects in the relations it sustains, it is almost always spoken in terms of existing between a subject and an object. Thus, in Augustus’s description, Rome, the subject, displays its πίστις/*fides* to the ἔθνη/*gentes*, and because Rome shows its trust in these nations after their surrender to its power, Rome becomes attached to these nations through their incorporation into its imperial territory.

¹⁴ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1-2.

¹⁵ Along these lines, Berlant notes, “Whatever the experience of optimism is in particular, then, the affective structure of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way” (2). Already, then (with words like “fantasy” deployed to make the hope less possible), one can see how Berlant will emphasize the ways in which optimism easily becomes “cruel,” i.e., that the fantasy is not just unattainable but also actively hindering one’s ability to achieve its promises.

¹⁶ Indeed: “Optimism is not a map of pathology but *a social relation involving attachments that organize the present.*” Ibid., 14; emphasis added.

Like Berlant's optimism, such attachments via *πίστις* are based upon the hope of benefit and satisfaction: by trusting these nations to remain peaceful and obedient in their faithful submission to Caesar and his empire, the Roman people expect the continuation of their prosperity and peace. Likewise, in its reciprocal relation, the people of these now-submissive *ἔθνη* display *πίστις* to the Roman people, attaching themselves to daily life under imperial rule with the hope of stability and better social status if they arrange their lives as faithful Roman subjects.

πίστις's attachments help structure daily living. Since it generates a relationship between Rome and an *ἔθνος*, both the empire and these subjects must behave in ways that will maintain the relationship. Rome realigns its resources and protection so as to include more subjects. Likewise, the people of an *ἔθνος* adapt their lives to conform with Roman standards of living and its hierarchies in order to prove themselves submissive and worthy of inclusion under the *pax Romana*. Though their particular experiences of this *πίστις*-encounter differ, by being drawn toward these promises of peace and prosperity, both parties participate in an attachment that affects the structure and pace of their everyday lives.¹⁷

The reciprocity and relationality of *πίστις* cannot be taken as an indication of more egalitarian relationships or that all relations of *πίστις* involve some level of intimacy or knowledge between the parties.¹⁸ Certainly, in the case of the *πίστις* shown in the *Res*

¹⁷ "In optimism, the subject leans toward promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with her object." Ibid., 24.

¹⁸ "*Pistis/fides* exists in relationships between social equals and unequals, and it is a quality of both superior and subaltern partners in relationships. It can be characterized as holding all partners together in a shared enterprise (such as the thriving of a household), or as structuring their complementarity: fitting them together like the pieces of a social jigsaw." Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 52. So, for example, the term can be used to describe the trust that develops or is required in a relationship between friends (on a

Gestae, the *populus Romanae*, as “native” Romans, are implicitly of greater status than the ἔθνη, and neither the majority of this *populus* nor the emperor (to the extent he stands for them) have the sort of relational intimacy (which one might associate with more individual examples of πίστις) with these ἔθνη.¹⁹ Yet πίστις’s affect draws and binds these subjects into Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage.

The instances of its usages in master/slave relations is perhaps most telling. A master, at times, must trust a slave to act according to the master’s best interests, even if the slave is given the opportunity to betray the master at a moment of crisis, such as instances where slaves prove their πίστις by saving their master’s lives (even though, the sources imply, this would mean the potential for escape and freedom).²⁰ In reciprocity, a master is assumed and occasionally said to display πίστις towards slaves through positive treatment and perhaps the promise for future freedom.²¹ In cases of uneven power, πίστις

relatively equal social level), or it can be used for describing one’s reliance upon one’s own senses, such as sight or hearing. Likewise, the term can be used in more hierarchical contexts, which range from spousal, familial, and master/slave in the more domestic sphere to imperial, economic, and military in the more political. The relationality of πίστις, therefore, emphasizes its social function, which operates like a puzzle which only “fits together” when all persons take their proper place in society. Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 36-76, 494-495. Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 183-184. Morgan’s work on “popular” ethics and their role in Rome’s “jigsaw” will be featured in chapter 5, “Ethical Submission.”

¹⁹ On the Latin equivalent, *gentes*: “These and similar references to the *gentes* represent the empire as a composite of different peoples, united in their subjection to the *populus Romanus* or *genus Romana*.” Myles Lavan, *Slaves to Rome: Paradigms of Empire in Roman Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 34. Lavan overall assesses and tracks the metaphors used by the empire to convey its relations to its subjects.

²⁰ Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 51-55. On pp.51-52, she notes especially Valerius Maximus, who devotes a whole section to the *fides* of slaves in his *Memorable Words and Deeds* (6.8.2).

²¹ Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 51, esp. note 70. She notes that while slaves are frequently described displaying πίστις or *fides* to masters (indeed, Πίστος is common slave name), it is less common (though not nonexistent) to discuss a master’s πίστις towards a slave. Of course, it bears noting that these relationship descriptions and the πίστις that is said to be experienced within them come from the perspectives of the more elite and certainly freeborn. While these writers often imagine that their slaves are loyal out of respect and natural subservience, it is probable that the (nonexistent) accounts of these slaves would reveal different intentions, likely choosing to remain loyal in larger part due to hope of eventual benefit. A similar power dynamic can be found between an elite patron and his clients of lower status (whether citizens or freedpersons), and hierarchal relations informed by πίστις also occur within families,

keeps its subjects attached in relations that, for the greater party (master, patron, etc.), sustains their authority while often improving their wealth and control and, for the lesser party (slave, client, etc.), permits their basic sustenance while promising rewards for faithful behavior directed upward.

Something similar can be said for *πίστις* within larger-scale political relationships, in particular between an emperor and his subjects, as seen in the *Res Gestae* quotation. In the imperial regime of the first century C.E., all inhabitants of all of Roman territory were subjects under the authority of a single emperor.²² As such, Philo can write in his *Legatio ad Gaium*: *δοῦλοι δὲ αὐτοκράτορος οἱ ὑπήκοοι* (“Subjects are slaves of the emperor,” 119).²³ Philo’s word for “subject”—*ὑπήκοος*—is a form of the Greek word expressing “obedience”: subjects, then, are definitionally obedient and submissive toward their ruler.²⁴ His statement demonstrates the general perceptions of imperial authority that were being negotiated in elite discourse as they adjusted to this new rule by emperor that became firmly established by the end of the Julio-Claudian years.²⁵ Residing as a Jew in (conquered) Egypt, Philo ranks among the (elite) *ἔθνη*, which, along with his disdain for

such as between parents and children or husband and wives. See Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 45-55, 60-65.

²² Unlike in the era of Rome’s Republic, where Roman society was hierarchically structured but ruled by an elite class, none of whom considered themselves subject to the others.

²³ He goes on to emphasize that this is most true of Caligula, whom he portrays as a tyrant, and that it may not be true of his predecessors who ruled more moderately. However, despite this qualification, the statement itself stands as true for Philo, as the qualification merely indicates that those more moderate predecessors ruled in such a way that the subjects were not made to feel as though slaves, even though they were, effectively, in such a position. Philo is not alone among elite Romans in his application of a slave/master metaphor to describe particularly poor governance, as Matthew B. Roller discusses. Indeed, Caesar uses a similar metaphor in the *Res Gestae* to describe the rule of Antony’s faction (§1.1). See Matthew B. Roller, *Constructing Autocracy: Aristocrats and Emperors in Julio-Claudian Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 214-215.

²⁴ “ὑπήκοος,” LSJ, 1871-1872.

²⁵ See Roller, 213-287; broadly, Roller’s project in his monograph is to show the various ways Rome’s early emperors fashioned themselves and presented themselves to the elites so they would accept their new relationship to an emperor/autocrat. See also Lavan, 73-155, on the slave-master metaphor as used (strategically) by Rome’s elite.

Caligula, makes his slave/master comparison unsurprising. While the slave/master relation between emperor and subject was commonly used to describe the empire's relation to inhabitants of its conquered territories (or "allies;" i.e., the *ἔθνη*), elite, native Romans preferred to describe their own hierarchal relation with the emperor using the terms of father/child or patron/client relations.²⁶ However, regardless of the preferred metaphor, the relation chosen always involves a hierarchy in which *πίστις* plays a sustaining role.²⁷ Whether a father to a child or master to slave, the emperor provides protection and stability to his subjects provided that they faithfully submit to and obey his authority.²⁸

This relation of *πίστις* that existed between an emperor and his subjects was crucial to the continued control and prosperity of the imperial state.²⁹ Without public trust in the emperor and his government, tyranny and rebellion were likely to replace the peace

²⁶ On father/child: Roller, 233-264; on patron/client: Lavan, 176-210. On Philo's use of Rome's "public transcript" and its relation to Caligula's reign, see Elliott, 36-37, 52. Note that Elliott does not explicitly mention the Claudian context of Philo's work.

²⁷ See Morgan, 85-95.

²⁸ Notably, talk of *πίστις/fides* for an emperor is more likely to emerge under more tyrannical or unstable conditions. "In these contexts *pistis/fides* is more often deployed to explain the disruption of political life than invoked of positive political relationships; it emerges as a concept which Romans would like to apply to themselves, and would like others to apply to them, but which they constantly fear is failing." Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 93. In other words, *πίστις* can have the hopeful effects of optimistic attachment: if its lack/failure caused the political disruption, its embodiment, even toward an autocrat, will restore stability. (However, its potential cruelty can already be seen in these circumstances, as trust in a tyrant is likely working against any socio-political stability.)

²⁹ Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 83-85. See also, Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 72-75. His discussion of such uses of *fides* and friendship as Rome's public transcript draws attention to the euphemistic nature of Augustan language, which elided the coercion involved in subjection. Elliott ultimately claims, in line with his own emphasis on hidden transcripts of resistance (whose existence I do not deny): "Coercion and consent may have appeared complementary to the imperial mind, but the subjects of the empire could readily distinguish and even oppose the two" (39). As the following analysis develops, I see problems with Elliott's binaristic framework ("oppose" or "submit," "consent" or "coercion") to frame the ideas and daily lives of the diverse conquered *ἔθνη* in Roman society. More than likely, these binary stances blurred within and between bodies, who—living within this imperial kyriarchal assemblage—do not have a bird's-eye-view of their experiences. In other words, they could be simultaneously aware of the coercive nature and affect of imperial dominion yet hope their consent and submission to this emperor will lead to benefits (especially when they see what happens to those who do resist).

and stability that allowed the state to thrive. Imperial propaganda emphasizes the importance of *πίστις* in the relation between emperor and people, both Roman and ἔθνη. One way this was done was through coins, which were disseminated throughout the empire, celebrating the *fides publica*, the “public trust” or “trust of the people.”³⁰ Since this phrase was placed on coins, an indication of wealth, and disseminated across the empire, it connects the public *πίστις* of subjects toward their emperor to ongoing economic prosperity ushered in by Augustus and sustained by his successors—and their imperial rule. Analyzing these coins, Morgan asserts, “The cumulative effect... is to emphasize the interdependence of all the benefits of *fides*. Peace, ensured by armies, together with strong government, brings prosperity, trade, fair prices, and satisfaction to all the subjects of empire.”³¹ In order to realize these benefits, it is necessary for the people—the subjects—to trust, through *fides/πίστις*, the emperor, as the figurehead for the imperial government and its representatives. Thus, official rhetoric of *πίστις* helped sustain the hierarchal relation between the emperor and his various subjects.³² Supported by its everyday maintenance of hierarchal relations (whether between master and slave,

³⁰ The subjective genitive reading of the Latin phrase is most well attested (*πίστις* of the public; or public *πίστις*), but Morgan notes that the coins may actually play on the ambiguity since an objective reading (*πίστις* in the public, on the part of the emperor/state) is plausible. This second meaning could “allow the reader to remember the emperor’s loyalty to the army [and the people more broadly].” Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 83. Elliott also discusses the role of these coins and their dissemination of “public faith” in the empire’s public transcript. See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 38.

³¹ Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 84.

³² The stability that Augustus and his successor promise stands in stark contrast to the crisis experienced in the late Republic. Providing this *πίστις* that was lacking, then, imperial rule productively utilizes the optimism of this attachment to establish the hierarchy of empire that cements Julio-Claudian rule (along with the other lines that eventually succeeded it). Certainly, *πίστις* was used intentionally in imperial propaganda, but I am not suggesting that Augustus and his advisors were cognizant of all these affective and optimistic dimensions of *πίστις*. However, I am suggesting that it is precisely these dimensions and the attachments they enable that help to make *πίστις* useful in this imperial context.

patron and client, or father and child), *πίστις* as the optimistic attachment of subjects to emperor involves faithful submission for all those under imperial authority.³³

Jesus' Submission and πίστις in Romans 3:21-26

Turning to his letter to the Romans, Paul's argument employs *πίστις* to discuss the relation between God and the figure of Jesus. In Romans 3:21-26, Paul elaborates how Jesus Christ models a relation of *πίστις* toward God that makes God's justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) apparent and available for all who display such *πίστις*. He writes: *δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας*. ("God's justice, through Jesus Christ's *pistis*, is for all who show *pistis*," 3:22). This verse offers Jesus' *πίστις* as the means through which (*διὰ*) all others will be able to access and experience justice from God.³⁴ Paul's use of *πίστις*—along with its meaning for many of the *ἔθνη* in Paul's

³³ See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 31-32, where he claims the threat of punishment was more necessary for lower classes in order guarantee/enforce their submission.

³⁴ This interpretation and my translation of Romans 3:21-31 follows scholars who have made the convincing argument that there are firm grounds for taking *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* as a subjective genitive ("faith of Jesus Christ") as opposed to an objective genitive ("faith in Jesus Christ," as another grammatical possibility). The debate over this genitive has a long history, and, although messy, the theological differences in interpretation between the two grammatical options are profound. In particular, Stanley K. Stowers' *Rereading of Romans* argues for this meaning, and thus he insists that the *πίστις* under discussion in Romans, and especially in these verses, belongs to and is the "action" of Jesus—toward God—and is *not* the action/belief of other humans towards Jesus. Thus, the *πίστις* under discussion in Romans 3:21-26 (as well as in many cases beyond these verses) is *Jesus'* and not that of his audience, *ἔθνη*, nor Jews, though it is related to their *πίστις* as it is discussed elsewhere in chapters 1-5. Stowers asserts that the fact that these instances employ a subjective genitive has been "proven decisive." Stowers 194-195. Stowers cites Richard B. Hays as laying the definitive and even decisive argument for this translation; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 2002), which establishes this within Paul's rhetoric and theology in Galatians; see his discussion of Romans on pp.156-161. Heliso affirms that both are grammatically possible but the context of *πίστις* and its usage in Romans affirm a subjective genitive. Heliso, 223-231, 234-242. See also Morna D. Hooker, "Notes and Observations on the 'Faith of Christ'" *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967): 459-465; Hooker, "The 'Faith of Christ'" *Expository Times* 85 (1973-1974):212-215; "Πίστις Χριστοῦ," in Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 165-184; Keck, "Jesus' in Romans," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 443-460; Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 272-278; Williams, "Again *Pistis Christou*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987):431-447; J.J. O'Rourke, "πίστις," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1973): 188-194; Donald W.B. Robinson, "'The Faith of Jesus Christ': A New Testament Debate," *Reformed Theological Review* 29 (1970): 71-81; Ian G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Roman audience—cannot be separated from the term’s general first-century meaning in imperial Rome. All πίστις in Romans centers around a relation with (and attachment to) God.³⁵ As this section shows, Paul’s presentation of Jesus’ πίστις in Romans emphasizes Jesus’ faithful submission to God.

In Romans, Jesus’ πίστις involves Jesus’ death and its role in God’s plan for justice and salvation, which is most explicitly referenced in 3:21-26. Stowers argues that the significance of Jesus’ death here forms the the “mini-climax” of Paul’s argument in Romans 1:18-5:11, allowing the argument to transition from the depravity and salvation

1995); Sigve Tonstad, “πιστις χριστου: Reading Paul in a New Paradigm,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 40 (2002):37-59; Longenecker, “Πίστις in Romans 3:25: Neglected Evidence for the ‘Faithfulness of Christ?’” *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 478-480. For the argument for the objective genitive, see Dunn, “Once More, *Pistis Christou*,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 30 (1991): 730-744; Roy A. Harrisville, III, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: Witness of the Fathers,” *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994): 233-241; Harrisville, “Before ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: The Objective Genitive as Good Greek,” *Novum Testamentum* 48 (2006): 353-358; Brian J. Dodd, “Romans 1:17: A *Crux Interpretum* for the πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 470-473. In terms of commentaries, the subjective genitive is used by Witherington 101-102; Longenecker, 408-413 (though he denies Stowers and Gaston’s assertions of decisiveness); L.T. Johnson, 58-61 (with emphasis on “Jesus’ faithful death”); Keck, 104-105; Cobb and Lull, 37-38; Grieb, 37-38. The objective genitive is preferred by Jewett, 268, 275; Esler, 155-159; Moo, 225-226; Fitzmyer, 345-346; Byrne, 124-125, 130; Dunn, 1:166-167; Schreiner, 181-186; Hultgren, 623-661 (devoting an entire appendix to overview the debate’s intricacies). For other more summative discussions that represent the history of the “debate” as well as its continuation from both views, see Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, eds., *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009). This listing of the various approaches, from a variety of perspectives, show that this debate is complex and has a long history in contemporary scholarship; while I find the arguments—grammatical, exegetical, and theological—convincing, it should be noted that there are equal arguments for the objective genitive that have grounding, especially in terms of Greek grammar, but I find the theological implications and arguments of the objective genitive problematic and based largely a history of Christian theology that has become too dependent on a “faith in Christ” that does not appear to be concretely existing in the first century. Finally, given that the grammatical/exegetical arguments are likely forever indecisive, theological argumentation seems to be the only compelling reason for either choice, but this—unfortunately—is often deemphasized or seen as a less legitimate argument by many scholars (from both sides of the debate).

³⁵ “Romans is from start to finish theocentric.” Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 156. As such, he continues, “In Romans 3, Paul’s fundamental concern is to assert the integrity of God” (159); see further pp.156-161. Hays’ analysis of Romans 3:21-26 affirms the subjective use of the genitive in πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, a phrase also found and used similarly in Galatians. See also Stowers, 194-195, 225-226. Furthermore, “Paul did not believe in faith. He believed in God and emphasized faith—not because faith is powerful but because God is.” Keck, 133. L.T. Johnson also emphasizes God’s primary role in Romans. L.T. Johnson, 50-54, 60-61.

(bringing God's justice to) of the ἔθνη to their incorporation (alongside Jews) into the lineage of Abraham, established by his own example of πίστις.³⁶ Paul writes:

Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἰλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἀμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ

Now, apart from law, God's justice is revealed, and it is attested by the law and the prophets. God's justice, through Jesus Christ's *pistis*, is for all who show *pistis*. For everyone erred and lacks God's glory, but they are freely made just by God's grace through the ransom-payment which was in Christ Jesus, whom God set out as a *hilasterion* through *pistis* in his blood for the proof of God's justice on account of the dismissal of previous errors during God's delay toward the proof of God's justice in the present moment; this results in God's being just and God makes just the person by Jesus' *pistis* (3:21-26).³⁷

As a unit, this mini-climax most clearly conveys that Jesus' πίστις involves faithful submission.

According to Stowers, in 3:21-4:2, Paul reveals the significance of the fact that Jesus came into the world as the Χριστός, or the Davidic Messiah, who had the power to immediately bring about the final judgment of the world upon Jews and gentiles, an event

³⁶ Stowers, 202-206. Here Stowers emphasizes the *continuity* of these verses with Paul's preceding argument: "Whereas 1:18-3:21 argues *that* God by his nature must treat gentiles equally, 3:21-4:2 announces *how* God has in fact acted impartially toward gentiles and thus made known his righteousness" (203). Similarly, Grieb calls this Paul's "first rhetorical climax." Grieb, 35. See also Moo, 91, 219; Schreiner, 178-179. Many indicate that these verses return to Paul's "thesis" (1:16-17, see further below) and returns to God's "righteousness" having dealt with God's wrath. See Jewett, 268-270; Fitzmyer, 342, Byrne, 122-123; Witherington, 99; Longenecker, 398, 391; L.T. Johnson, 50-54. Some make the above points but also emphasize that, as they return to the thesis at a climactic point, these verses arrive abruptly, shift Paul's argument, and are ultimately quite extraordinary. See especially, Hultgren, 151; Matera, 91.

³⁷ Because of the complex, messy history of this passage and the ways in which traditional theology has influenced not only its translation but also how it appears in text-critical editions—including the insertion at a later date of punctuation—I render the Greek without punctuation, representing my own attempt to use the cues of the Greek words to figure out punctuation. Much of my translation, as will become evident in its explication below, draws from thinking with Stowers, 194-226.

that would have been catastrophic for most gentiles, who have no way to be in right relation with God and whom God has in fact handed over to depravity, in the form of various immoral behaviors (see Romans 1:18-2:16).³⁸ Unlike Jews, who can be made right with God through the provisions of the law and receive punishment for wrongdoings in the present, these gentiles will not be punished for wrongdoing until the final judgment, when they will have to account for all these compounded wrongs. However, though Jesus had the power to immediately bring about God's final judgment and reign, he chose to *delay* this power and instead be punished for treason (as a "messianic pretender") by crucifixion at the hands of the Roman state. In so doing, Jesus *trusted* that God (thus, Jesus' *πίστις*) would accept this delay as part of God's plan and promise to bring justice to all peoples (a promise elaborated in Paul's exegesis of Abraham's *πίστις* in Rom 4). The crux of the "good news" (*εὐαγγέλιον*), then, is that Jesus' trust in and obedience to God's promises has affected this delay, wherein all of the unrepentant and wicked are able to follow Jesus' trusting example and repent so that they can also be spared at the coming judgment (which will happen upon Jesus' return).³⁹

Within this context, *πίστις*—and Jesus' *πίστις* in particular—puts its subjects into a relationship with God. Indeed, it affectively attaches them to God by means of a

³⁸ As elaborated in chapter 1, the behaviors condemned of the *ἔθνη* in Romans 1:18-32 are all behaviors which elite Romans would have similarly eschewed and critiqued.

³⁹ This paragraph provides a condensed summary of Stowers' hypothesis: "The Messiah Who Delayed," a hypothesis that he establishes exegetically and is (as my use and exegetical and theological continuation of it show) quite convincing. See Stowers, 213-226. It has largely been ignored or dismissed in Romans scholarship, with its dismissals being brief and based largely on a refusal to reconsider Pauline/Christian theology in light of the hypothesis' major shift of core historical tenets. (Part of the problem may be rooted in the fact that Stowers offers a strong exegetical argument but himself refuses to consider or acknowledge its theological impact.) This "good news" is mentioned specifically in 1:16-17, a segment which will be discussed in the fourth section.

relationship that (as with that of ἔθνη to Rome) involves submission and obedience.⁴⁰

While most of Paul's references to πίστις in Romans refer to the human side of the relation, Paul does occasionally refer to its reciprocity, namely that God shows πίστις toward humans. Therefore, he inquires in 3:3: τί γὰρ εἰ ἡπίστησάν τινες; μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει; (“For what if some people break *pistis*? Doesn't their un-*pistis* nullify God's *pistis*?”). Paul argues that God's πίστις towards humans remains constant, even if they do not adhere to their part of the relation by showing πίστις to God in turn.⁴¹ In 3:3, Paul's understanding of πίστις aligns with first-century understandings of it as an offering or display of trust that establishes and maintains a relation. πίστις in Romans is also optimistic: through God's displays of πίστις, God becomes attached to humans—both Jews and ἔθνη, Paul insists.

Although God has demonstrated that God will uphold and continue to display πίστις despite the fact that some (τινες) do not respect the reciprocity of the relation and display ἀπιστία instead of πίστις, these persons *should* show πίστις to God. Indeed, the revelation of God's justice presumes the πίστις of all Jews and ἔθνη—the πάσαι αἰ

⁴⁰ When speaking of humans (including Jesus), Stowers specifies, “Paul associates *pistis* with obedience to God, and ‘trusting obedience’ is sometimes a possible translation.” Ibid., 199.

⁴¹ Thus, Romans establishes that God has proven God's πίστις to Jews throughout history (and will continue to do so for Jews, as promised, regardless of their actions), and, therefore, (and more importantly for a non-Jewish audience), “Rom 1-3 sets out to show that God's character as revealed in scripture and history leads to the conclusion that he will provide a just and merciful deliverance for the gentiles.” Stowers, 197, see further pp.196-198. Along similar lines with relation to God's πίστις, “This question [in 3:3] cuts to the heart of monotheistic faith: Is God reliable and trustworthy, or not?” L.T. Johnson, 42. See also Witherington, 93-94. Dunn's less radical “new perspective” notes in this verse a tension in Paul's thought between πίστις as a possession of God toward God's people (in Jewish ideas) and πίστις as a possession of humans toward Christ (in “Christian” ideas). See Dunn, 1:132. Most commentators devote less attention to God's πίστις and its importance or relevance in Romans, preferring to turn to consider who is “unfaithful” in relation to it. See Jewett, 244-245; Byrne, 109; Moo, 183-185; Cobb and Lull, 61-62; Longenecker, 343-344; Schreiner, 150-151; Hultgren, 136-137.

πιστεύουσαι (“all who display πίστις”) of 3:22 and 1:16. However, as Paul explains in 1:18-3:20, the ἔθνη—in particular here, those who are not Jews—are incapable of such actions due to their ongoing condition, handed to them by God, of being unable to end (i.e., repent of) their depraved behaviors.⁴² This is where Jesus as the Christ enters. By trusting God to delay the coming judgment, as described above, Jesus perfectly models the πίστις, also required of the ἔθνη, that allows him to maintain a right relation with God and bring about salvation and justice. Jesus’ model provides a path (previously inaccessible to ἔθνη) to pardon of past wrongdoings, for which these ἔθνη previously would have been held accountable at the now-delayed judgment.⁴³ The delay that Jesus enacts thus extends an additional period of time wherein these ἔθνη can properly show πίστις to God, in a manner similar to Jesus.⁴⁴

The latter half of 3:21-26 describes the importance of God’s public placement of Jesus.⁴⁵ Jesus’ public death helps to enact a plan that requires (1) a means for these ἔθνη

⁴² Therefore, without assistance, it is impossible for them to uphold their part of the πίστις-relation with God. Jews, through the Law given to them, have been shown how to maintain their relationship toward God, by attempting to follow the Law and making amends when they err from it. Since Paul insists that God’s intent is salvation (σωτηρία) for all who show πίστις, regardless of ethnic status (1:16), these ἔθνη also need a path to πίστις that assists them in understanding how to maintain such a relation with this God. Otherwise, it is their (human) nature to be unable to do so. So here it becomes critical that Stowers assumes Paul’s encoded audience is *Gentile* and Paul’s message/apostleship is to/for Gentiles. In other words, Paul does not think Jews need to follow Christ, as they already have a path to God’s justice and a means for establishing a πίστις-relation, Paul does not *ignore* Jews, but he knows they (himself included) are already included in this πίστις-relation and have a means to participate in God’s coming justice, one which it is impossible for Gentiles to access. Gentiles, in the present, need a path to God’s justice in a way that Jews do not (because they already have a way). This “two ways” model represents the more “radical” view of the New Perspective on Paul as discussed in chapter 1.

⁴³ Jesus’ death is of most importance in this model. “The best explanation lies in the narrative sketched above: Jesus’ act of forgoing messianic powers and privileges meant, for Paul, that although Jesus was the messiah, his all-important act was his dying for the ungodly and his assumption of the status and role given to him when God approved his faithful act by vindicating him in the resurrection.” Stowers, 215.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 216-218

⁴⁵ This long rather long sentence (spanning vv.23-26) whose length is predominated by a relative clause that contains a string of prepositional phrases and few connecting verbal forms. Indeed, there are no verbs or words that function as verbs (infinitives, circumstantial participles, etc.) from προέθετο (at the very beginning of v.25) until εἶναι (in the second half of v.26) and in this space, there are seven independent

to be made just and thereby incorporated into God's establishment of salvation and justice (διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἀμαρτημάτων, "on account of the dismissal of past errors") and (2) the time for this incorporation (ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, "during God's delay").⁴⁶ Jesus' death, then, enables both the time and the means for God to reveal justice to all people. This display of God's coming justice, Paul emphasizes, permits all persons to enter into a πίστις-relation with God, with Jesus providing a model and a pathway for the incorporation of all ἔθνη (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, 3:22).⁴⁷

Jesus' πίστις, therefore, submits to God's placement and trusts God to display justice. In 3:21-26, his obedience/submission demonstrates that he has a relationship with God and that he trusts God to adhere to God's plan. Jesus' πίστις functions in accordance with Roman conceptions of πίστις and, in fact, Berlant's modern formulation of optimism. For Jesus, according to Romans, the benefit of such an optimistic attachment is the hope that this delay allows for the opportunity for all people to be made just by God. As an "experience," optimism attaches subjects to an object (just as πίστις attaches Jesus

prepositional units. In the sentence, Paul expands on *how* God's justice is being given to all ἔθνη, despite their errors (as explained in 1:18-3:20), as a result of a "payment of ransom" (ἀπολύτρωσις) in the actions of Jesus (τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).

⁴⁶ See "ἀνοχή," LSJ, 148. Stowers prefers to use "held back punishment" for ἀνοχή, which seems overly wordy when "delay" brings out his hypothesis and still captures this holding back (i.e., delaying of punishment). Stowers, 223. On this idea of delay in Second Temple Judaism, see Stowers, 104-107. Generally speaking, translators prefer to give this idea of respite or delay a much more decidedly theological or comforting meaning, using terms like "forebearance" and "patience." See Jewett, 290-291; Fitzmyer, 351-353; Byrne, 133-134; Dunn, 1:173-174; Moos, 237-241; Keck, 111; Hultgren, 159-160. Some commentators mention (especially in its relation to the "forgiveness of sins") or prefer a translation of "clemency." See Longenecker, 433-435; Matera, 94. Jewett is alone in following a contention that 3:25-26 is a hymn fragment. Jewett, 270-271.

⁴⁷ Following his use of the objective genitive, Jewett implies that since this act of "having faith" is clearly displayed by "believers" then it means (following their πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) "having faith in Christ." See Jewett, 278-279; Moo, 226.

to God); meanwhile, “the *affective structure* of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way.”⁴⁸ Thus, Jesus’ *πίστις* maintains an optimistic attachment to God, both in the specific experience of his death as implied in 3:21-26 and in the ways in which this *πίστις* sustains a relation that trusts the promise of *a world becoming different in just the δίκαιος way*.

In 3:21-26, Jesus’ optimism toward this plan emphatically involves submission to God, as the highest authority. Verse 25 explains that, through the *πίστις*-relation established between Jesus and God (*διὰ πίστεως*), God publicly placed Jesus as a *ἱλαστήριον*, an act or object that brings about reconciliation or appeasement.⁴⁹ Stowers notes that the closest parallel in extant literature comes from 4 Maccabees 17:22, where it

⁴⁸ Berlant, 2.

⁴⁹ The meaning of *ἱλαστήριον* is discussed heavily in scholarship, and it has traditionally (and more commonly) been taken to refer to a sacrificial offering according to the Jewish sacrificial system, with Jesus representing a sacrificial (sin) offering of atonement. Stowers (pp.206-213) makes a compelling case against this interpretation by showing how the idea of a *person* fulfilling the role of sacrificial offering in this way does not make sense with any evidence of Jewish thought or practice in the first century. Drawing from the terms cognates and their uses in the Greco-Roman world, Stowers observes, “Even though *hilastērion* does not seem to have been a common word, there is nothing mysterious about its meaning in everyday speech. In fact, the use of its word group was part of everyday language. Its relation to the more common cognate forms would be clear even for a Greek speaker who had never heard the word before; either an adjective meaning propitiatory/conciliatory or, when used as a substantive, a conciliatory/propitiatory thing, place, or act. There is nothing sacrificial about the concept of propitiation or conciliation that the *hilask-* words denote, although the words had associations with the divine and cultic activity. People in everyday speech could use *hilaskomai* in reference to appeasing another person’s anger or conciliating someone (for example, Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.237; Plato, *Phd* 1C; Plut., *Cat. Mi.* 61)” (210). Stressing a broader meaning with similarities to Stowers are L.T. Johnson, 56-58; Witherington, 108-109. Though commentators have rejected the older assumption that this term referred to the “Mercy Seat,” most assume its propitiatory (or occasionally expiatory) function can be specified with the language of atonement and the Jewish idea of the “Day of Atonement.” See Jewett, 284-287; Moo, 231-238; Grieb, 39-42; Fitzmyer, 349-350; Matera, 94-95; Longenecker, 426-429; Hultgran, 57-58, 662-675; Dunn, 1:170-172; Schreiner, 191-194; Byrne, 126-127, 132-133.

is said that God saves Israel through the *ἱλαστήριον* of the Maccabean martyrs' deaths.⁵⁰ "The martyrs example leads to national repentance and Antiochus' defeat, and thus to the propitiation of God's anger.... *The faithful resistance (not their deaths)* of the martyrs certainly wins God's favor, but at the same time the effects of their examples on other Jews and on Antiochus bring about the salvation of the nation from Antiochus."⁵¹ In this instance, their "faithful resistance" submits to God (and not Antiochus) as their highest authority.⁵²

In the context of Romans, then, Jesus' placement by God as a *ἱλαστήριον* provides an example of *πίστις* to God. Such a proper *πίστις*-relation with God will allow *ἔθνη* to appease God's wrath. Jesus' *πίστις* is thus characterized by his obedience to this plan that requires him to die still submissive to God. He performs proper *πίστις* to God and allows God to show God's *πίστις* to him and, by extension, all people.

Related to this segment of Romans, the Christ-hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 further indicates the connection between submission/obedience and Jesus' death and its central role in Paul's theology and Christology.⁵³ 2:8 proclaims of Christ Jesus: *ἐταπείνωσεν*

⁵⁰ Stowers explains that the martyr's death is not sacrificial (an interpretation that assumes later Christian theological views) but serves as an example that permits Israel's salvation. Stowers, 213.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 212-213. Emphasis added.

⁵² However, as we will see in chapter 5, 4 Maccabees may be anti-Antiochus but it is not anti-Rome.

⁵³ The Christ Hymn is connected to Romans 3:21-26 by Stowers, 219-223, who says it particularly emphasizes the theme of "adaptability" in Paul's Christology. This emphasis on adaptability is what gives Paul's framing of Jesus its uniqueness. For summaries on histories of Phil 2:6-11 as a hymn and its terminology and structure, see John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 333-339; Gregory P. Fewster, "The Philippians 'Christ Hymn': Trends in Critical Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Research* 13 (2015), 191-198. Peter-Ben Smit prefers to call 2:6-11 an encomium, arguing, "Given that the term *hymnos* was, at least in the classical period, typically used in text addressed to gods that included prayer, *enkōmion* seems to be the preferable form-critical classification, especially as the text does precisely what *enkōmia* usually did: describing (and lauding) someone by recounting one's origins, deed (*res gestae*) and end." Peter-Ben Smit, *Paradigms of Being Christ: A Study of the Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 87. The comparison of the Christ Hymn (as encomium) to ancient *Res Gestae* is especially noteworthy here.

ἐαυτὸν/γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου/θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ (“He humiliated himself/He became obedient to the point of death/of the cross’s death”).⁵⁴ In this verse, Jesus is called ὑπήκοος, “obedient,” a term that emphasizes his lower and submissive status.⁵⁵ Obedience is the act of “hearing under”—in other words, submission by hearing and then adhering to another’s command.⁵⁶ Such a hearing, then, implies placing oneself (or being placed) at lower level in order to hear and obey; whoever issues a command that requires such obedience has authority. Indeed, this is the same term Philo used above, translated as “subjects,” when he describes them as “slaves of the emperor.”⁵⁷

Likewise, as 2:7 already states, Jesus takes the form of a slave (μορφὴν δούλου λαβών), putting himself below all others in social terms: he becomes the ultimate submissive subject.⁵⁸ Jesus’ obedience, then, is a form of submission that results from his

⁵⁴ The Christ Hymn is often noted as presenting Jesus (especially in terms of his submission to death/crucifixion) as a model or “example.” See especially, Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 190; Carolyn Osiek, *Philippians Philemon* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 55-69; Bonnie B. Thurston and Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon* (Sacra Pagina 10; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 90-91; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 79; L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 168.

⁵⁵ On the connection of Greco-Roman praise of such obedience to its praise of πίστις, see Reumann, 371. See also Bloomquist, 166. Marchal notes that the hymn’s emphasis is on this obedience (especially with respect to Jesus’ death) and its need to be imitated by the epistle’s audience. Marchal, *Hierarchy, Unity, and Imitation: A Feminist Rhetorical Analysis of Power Dynamics in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 134-135.

⁵⁶ As with the Greek term for submission (ὑποτάσσω, “place under”), ὑπήκοος is an adjectival form from the same root as the verb ὑπακούω, “to obey,” formed from the verb “to hear” (ἀκούω) and the same prepositional prefix for “under” (ὑπό).

⁵⁷ In other words, “subjects” are “obedient ones.”

⁵⁸ “Actual slavery, lowest social status, and bondage to the ruling powers of the world were concepts that the Philippians knew well, and are the likely background.” Reumann, 349. Stowers emphasizes that this “form” means Jesus was not actually a slave (comparing to μορφῆ θεοῦ, Phil. 2:6); however, “Jesus’ slavlike loss of rights” are indeed “real.” Stowers, 220. Relating the imagery of slavery to Paul’s command to obey (ὑπακούσατε, 2:12, cp. ὑπήκοος 2:8), Marchal notes, “The communal obedience is compulsory, with ‘fear and trembling,’ as in a slave/master relationship.” Marchal, *Politics of Heaven*, 52. Briggs draws attention to the problems of the hymn’s kyriocentric use of slavery: “It does not challenge the interests or beliefs of slavemasters.” Briggs, “Can an Enslaved God Liberate? Hermeneutical Reflections on Philippians 2:6-11,” *Semeia* 47 (1989): 149. See further pp.142-146, in which she compares Jesus’ “lowering” to that of highborn persons who become slaves in Greco-Roman novels: they are never really slaves, just as Jesus when read in light of 2:9-11. In other words, this hymn does not seem to fully reflect

πίστις-relation with God, and this submission has status implications when the terms describing his death are read in the context of Roman imperial hierarchy. Jesus' submissive status is further emphasized by the mention of his humiliation and his crucifixion. To make oneself humble or lower (*ἐταπείνωσεν*), then, is a form of submission, being placed under (by choice or force) another's authority, an indication of lowness on Rome's hierarchy.⁵⁹ The hymn makes explicit that Jesus' obedient actions are those that makes him lower, even lowest, according to imperial terms.

Expanding on and explaining the degree of this humiliation, the emphasis on the form of Jesus' death confirms the shame and ultimate submission it entails: *θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ*, the cross's death. As a form of capital punishment, Roman crucifixion was particularly brutal and reserved for the worst and lowest of criminals.⁶⁰ Taking slave

the reality of slavery as "social death." The exaltation of 2:9-11 cannot be ignored, but I am especially interested in what the first half of the hymn can proclaim without too quickly skipping to the exaltation and resurrection of the latter verses (see more in the following chapter, "Faithful Subversion," where the Christ hymn returns).

⁵⁹ This verb *ταπεινώω*, means "to lower or decrease in height or size" and was often used to mean "to disparage, humble, or abase"—in other words, to be put in a position considered lower in social and political terms. "Humility was a slave virtue." Thurston and Ryan, 83. See also Reumann, 351-352.

⁶⁰ "During the early principate, crucifixion continued to be used against slaves, *liberti* (freed persons), and *peregrini* (non-citizens), and occasionally citizens were crucified." John Granger Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 359. Cook's monograph details the development of crucifixion and shows its discussion throughout ancient sources to show its history of use. Before applying its context to Pauline epistles, Wenhua Shi discusses crucifixion in its broader Roman context and connects its ignominy to the maintenance of the *pax Romana*. Wenhua Shi, *Paul's Message of the Cross as Body Language* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 20-52. In particular, Shi emphasizes this ignominy meant it was used and associated with the worst crimes and those of lowest status, despite its occasional usage with citizens. On its public nature, and how this embodied display was critical to maintaining peace/order, see pp.41-45. All of this is affirmed and explored in great detail in the now classic work on ancient crucifixion: Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). All of these studies affirm the general assessment that crucifixion was the punishment typically used for the worst crimes, slaves, and low class foreigners/non-citizens, and it would seem logical to conclude (though no one makes the connection) that this would have perpetuated an idea that those of lowest status were most likely to commit the worst crimes (not entirely unlike such stereotypical correlations in modern society and the death penalty). Further, as we see, studies note its occasional usage on citizens (to qualify its application to lowest classes), but it is noteworthy that ancient sources spend much more time on these deaths *because* they must be justified—i.e., if those of lowest status were more "depraved" and prone to commit the worst crimes, then how could someone of high, native Roman status ever deserve such a punishment (and the answer often seems to be because they had some slavish association/influence). On the ignomy of Roman crucifixion in Pauline commentary, see also

form, Jesus does not merely accept the harsh conditions of Roman slavery, he submits to being placed in the lowest of slavish positions, that of an unfaithful slave convicted of heinous crimes and publicly sentenced to death. Jesus' humiliation, then, is submission, being lowered and placed under to the point of being crucified in slave form.

Returning to Romans 3, vv.25-26a conveys this aspect of Jesus' submission to God by emphasizing God's role in setting him out to be crucified. *προτίθημι* (literally "to set before") denotes action of setting or placement in a public or visible manner.⁶¹ Although a rarer meaning, it could be used in contexts of death ("to hand over for burial"), including references to the practice of exposing children.⁶² Regardless, his death represents a public display for which the verb *προτίθημι* would be used. In 3:25, *προέθετο* describes God's placement of Jesus into a situation of death through a treasonous condemnation. Furthermore, through his *πίστις* (*διὰ πίστεως*) toward God, Jesus acts submissively by allowing God to place him however God sees fit in order to accomplish God's plan for justice. This *πίστις* requires his submission, demonstrated by a willingness to be placed by, and therefore, under God. By trusting God in this public placement,

Matera, 102-103. Commentary on Phil. 2 has a similar emphasis and notes that crucifixion was often reserved for slaves (relevant to 2:7). See especially Hawthorne, 89-90; Osiek, 63; Thurston and Ryan, 83. On broader reactions to crucifixion in Jewish sources of the first centuries B.C.E./C.E. and early Christian texts, see David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perspectives of Crucifixion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Chapman's overall argument emphasizes that both types of sources ultimately reflect similar views.

⁶¹ "*προτίθημι*," LSJ, 1536. Its base meaning renders English translations such as "institute, propose;" "display, bring forward;" or (more temporally) "put first." The typical temporal meaning of the preposition *πρό* is largely absent in most uses of this compound, as in composition the preposition more often derives from the local meaning ("in front of"). See Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. by Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920, 1984), 384 (§1694). See further, Jewett, 283-284; Fitzmyer, 349; Byrne, 132; Matera, 98-99; Longenecker, 425-426; Hultgren, 157-158 (with particular emphasis on cultic usage); Cobb and Lull, 67-70. A few commentaries note God's action and that this is God's plan. Witherington, 191-192 (however, qualifies it as "not grotesque"); Schreiner, 193-194 (stemming from the assumption that Jesus is of divine origin).

⁶² "*προτίθημι*," LSJ, 1536. See also Josephus, *Jewish War*, 1:454 for a potentially similar usage with regard to a father and his adult children (however, notably, there is a textual discrepancy and disagreement as to whether *προτίθημι* is the verb used, and LCL prefers the variant.)

Jesus takes a passive role and displays *πίστις* in order to faithfully submit to God's authority in displaying *πίστις* that allows God to place him and relinquishes his own authority and control.

In Romans, God holds all power and authority. The public nature of God's placement and authority—and, by extension, Jesus' submission—is emphasized further by twice describing Jesus' faithful submission as a “display.”⁶³ The repetition of this display language emphasizes that Jesus' *πίστις* and his resulting placement (in God's hand) onto the cross ultimately benefits *God*: Jesus' faithful submission permits God to display God's justice and, by extension, God's power.⁶⁴ Displaying this submissive *πίστις* toward God further proves that God is indeed *πίστος* and will bring justice to *ἔθνη* as well as to Jews.

Acknowledging this *πίστις*-relation and his attachment to God, Jesus reciprocates the relation according to its terms: he submits to God's authority, to God's power of placement. For Jesus, this *πίστις*-relation with God involves being passive to God's authority. Ultimately, he trusts that God will use him display justice. In Romans 3:25, Paul alludes to the brutal humiliation of Jesus' death by indicating that Jesus' *πίστις* and his placement as a *ἱλαστηριον* requires his blood (*ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι*).⁶⁵ This short

⁶³ God's placing action that entails Jesus' death and faithful submission is twice described as *ἐνδειξίς*, a “pointing out” or “indication”—put more specifically into common usage, a “demonstration” or “display.” “ἐνδειξίς,” LSJ, 558. Commentators generally use “demonstration” or “manifestation.” See Jewett, 291; Fitzmyer, 350-351; Schreiner, 194, 196; Byrne, 128; Longenecker, 433.

⁶⁴ Indeed, in the first instance, God's public placement of Jesus is *εἰς ἐνδειξίν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*, “into a display of God's justice.” After two other prepositional phrases, the term occurs again, in an almost similar phrasing: *πρὸς τὴν ἐνδειξίν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*, “toward the display of God's justice.” Also noting the doubling and emphasis are Jewett, 291; Fitzmyer, 353.

⁶⁵ Just as the Christ Hymn highlights, Jesus' *πίστις* requires his submission to the point of death: he must be convicted of treason and sentenced to crucifixion at the hands Rome's empire. Most commentators discuss the blood in relation to the language of atonement and sacrifice, only quickly mentioning the actual crucifixion/death. See Jewett, 187; Moo, 237; Fitzmyer, 348-349 (who translates *ἐν* as “through”);

descriptive phrase indicates these details of Jesus' crucifixion by Rome: "By referring to Jesus' death through 'blood,' Paul underlines the violent nature of his death, the readers knowing that Jesus died by crucifixion."⁶⁶ He trusts that, since his crucifixion as condemnation for treason is caused by God's placement of him as a *ἰλαστήριον*, "with his blood" his death will lead into an ultimate demonstration of justice from God (*εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*). Jesus submits to this brutal punishment reserved for slaves, typically for committing acts of treason that disrupted or threatened imperial order—indeed acts that indicated a grave lack of *πίστις* towards one's overlords, both one's master and the imperial state.

Paradoxially, Jesus proves *πιστός* in his relation to God by appearing *ἀπιστός* in his condemnation to crucifixion.⁶⁷ Jesus' death trusts God's plan and God's authority to the point of ultimate submission to God and to the state. Jesus' *πίστις* is faithful submission. Through this faithful submission, Jesus acknowledges God's ability to enact justice for all people, so long as he (and they) accept God's ultimate power and control, giving God all authority to set (*προτίθῃμι*) their lives in order to realize God's justice, power, and authority for and over all people.

Schreiner, 194-195; Dunn, 1:170-172; Longenecker, 430-432; Matera, 98-99; L.T. Johnson, 57-58. With no citational support, Byrne calls the phrase a "semitic idiom." Byrne, 135.

⁶⁶ Stowers, 210.

⁶⁷ However, this unfaithful appearance cannot necessarily be called an example for Christ-followers to mimic his treason in a subversive move against the empire. Such an interpretation does not seem to represent Paul's use of Jesus' death. Jesus' submission to God is seemingly supposed to represent an *extreme* lowering and humiliation that, in so doing, emphasizes the extent of his *πίστις* toward God, that he is willing to be placed in this extreme situation if it will bring about salvation of all *ἔθνη* (compare, then, to the extremity of the examples of the Maccabean martyrs that results in Israel's salvation).

πίστις ἔθνῶν

Paul’s argument involving Jesus’ faithful submission via *πίστις* is directed to the *ἔθνη* that form his primary audience in Romans. It ultimately involves their incorporation into God’s plan for justice via a *πίστις*-relation that follows the model of Jesus. Living in the imperial capital, these Roman *ἔθνη* were not unfamiliar with participation as *ἔθνη* in relations of *πίστις* that required their submission: as we have already seen in the *Res Gestae*. The situation of Roman *ἔθνη*—including their status and portrayal under empire and its conquest of foreign nations—informs their submission to empire and the *πίστις* they are expected to display in reciprocity for the ongoing display of *πίστις* from the emperor and his people.

The Faithful Submission of Rome's ἔθνη

Though all were under the emperor as his subjects, inhabitants of Rome could be distinguished by various designations along a hierarchy. So, in somewhat simplified form, senators and other elite patricians were above freeborn plebs, who were in turn above freed slaves, who were obviously above slaves. Within and beyond this hierarchy, “citizens” were distinguished from those not granted citizenship, so that only freeborn males were considered as Roman citizens while women, slaves, and former slaves were excluded from the benefits and status of citizenship.⁶⁸ Also excluded from citizenship status were most *ἔθνη/gentes*, who were differentiated from the *δῆμος/populus* of Rome, a mark of both citizenship and territorial belonging, as opposed to being a foreigner.⁶⁹ In

⁶⁸ Clarke provides a concise (and visualized) rendering of these distinctions; see Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 100* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1-13, esp. p.6.

⁶⁹ See Lavan, 32-37.

other words, though some elites among certain *ἔθνη* were granted the privileges of Roman citizens, they were still thought to be separate from those born in the “original” Roman state. Therefore, in the context of the Roman empire, *ἔθνη* is a signifier for “others,” i.e., “the non-Roman peoples of the Roman Empire.”⁷⁰

To be any *ἔθνη* under Roman control was to be considered “conquered,” in the empire’s view.⁷¹ Imperial imagery reinforced its hierarchy of conquest and domination over the *ἔθνη*, often using gender and sexuality to present this ideology, as Lopez has demonstrated. Most notably, the imagery on the massive Sebasteion in Aphrodisias provides repeated examples of this ideology on a rather massive scale: comprising the lower row of panels on either main wall of the imperial worship complex were images depicting Rome’s conquest over many *ἔθνη*, the most famous of these depicting the emperor Claudius (representing a masculinized Rome) towering over and suppressing a defeated Britannia (representing a feminized Britain).⁷² By repeating this imagery with

⁷⁰ Lopez, 26. As will be seen below, Lopez situates the language of *ἔθνος/ἔθνη* within its Roman imperial context (closely related to conquest and territorial expansion, as already indicated above discussing Augustus’ and Rome’s *πίστις* that is experienced by *πλεῖστα ἄλλα ἔθνη*). Ultimately, she argues, “As a result of such a broader, non-idealist analysis bolstered by attention to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and militarism, the meaningful hierarchy for Pauline studies emerges as not Jews/Gentiles but Romans/nations” (26).

⁷¹ Lopez, 26-28. As indicated above, these *ἔθνη*, the ethnic others whose territories came under Rome’s rule, were typically conquered by Rome, often through military defeat as well as through diplomatic agreement as a client kingdom (an agreement not unrelated to Roman militarism, as such arrangements were often a necessary concession to avoid decimating conquest). Indeed, as Lopez highlights, often the “conquest” becomes more militant and more decisive in Roman representation, such as in the case of the conquest of Britain, which is portrayed in a stark image quick and powerful conquest with the emperor Claudius standing over a conquered Britannia on the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias. Despite this portrayal, historical sources reveal that the conquest was ultimately only finalized through diplomacy, with several setbacks for Rome prior to this victory (in addition to uprisings that occurred afterwards). Lopez, 44.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 42-48, see also pp.16-17. The Sebasteion of Aphrodisias, alongside other Roman imperial images, is a visual representation of Rome’s ideology of conquest, as Lopez reveals. Indeed, these images of conquered nations, which reveal gendered dimension within each individual image (particularly, as Lopez notes, always placing the Roman conqueror/elite above [i.e., on top] the conquered [female] nations), are also *as a whole* placed visually below the images portray native Rome, its myths, and the lives of its elite. In all ways on this massive visual representation of Roman imperial power and conquest, *ἔθνη* are under Romans, politically or otherwise.

respect to a multitude of the nations now comprising Roman imperial territory, Rome reinforced its domination over these and other *ἔθνη* now submissive to its rule and further emphasized their difference from native Romans.⁷³

Gender and sexuality help to perpetuate this necessity of imperial rule.⁷⁴ Rome's domination is presented as masculine and penetrative over the feminine and penetrated conquered nations. Roman protocols of properly gendered sexuality—which conformed to its socio-sexual-political hierarchy and always placed elite men on top—informs the panels' positioning of the always male victor standing above and over (on top) of the conquered female. The depiction of the Roman victors often has a sexualized sense, with swords poised to penetrate the conquered females who assume more-or-less sexually receptive positions.⁷⁵ According to Rome's imperial sex/gender hierarchy, these *ἔθνη*, by being conquered and penetrated, are not only unfit to rule themselves but they are unfit to be of the same status as the impenetrable Roman elite. Male or female, those classified as *ἔθνη* are lesser on the hierarchy and should only be placed under (socially and sexually) the proper rule of Roman (imperial) men.⁷⁶

Drawing subjects into kyriarchal assemblages, this gendered and sexualized stability complements and affirms the stability of Rome's racial and class hierarchies, all

⁷³ As Lopez observes, these panels present Roman victory over the nations as decisive military victories that reinforce Rome's right to rule and imply the need for imperial rule and hierarchy as necessary for the provision of peace and prosperity for Rome and for each conquered *ἔθνος*. Ibid., 50-55. This victory and (faithful) submission was essential to producing not only peace but also prosperity for the empire. "The predominant message is that Roman peace comes through conquering the whole world and all of the nations; insisting that all marginalized knees (and heads) shall bow to the centralized single (male) victor" (50). On p.51, Lopez observes how this peace the stability it brings offered benefits to those conquered (at least, those who already had wealth and position).

⁷⁴ Ibid., 50.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁶ Therefore, Lopez summarizes, "Roman peace is achieved through patriarchy: feminine submission stabilizes Roman masculinity." Ibid., 54.

of which entwined and enforced a “peaceful” imperial regime. As such, although Augustus and his successors “faithfully” incorporated these *ἔθνη* into Rome and portrayed themselves offering to these peoples the benefits of Roman life, the empire considered them lesser, as persons needing to be placed under, or submitted.⁷⁷ Furthermore, through the gendered and sexualized dimensions of this ideology, the emperor and those on top reminded these peoples of their conquered position which placed them in submission to Rome and under its elite.

At Rome, the situation of these *ἔθνη* is slightly more complicated to assess. Whereas in provinces like Galatia one can easily assume that the majority of the population were not native, freeborn Romans, at the center of the empire, it is difficult to even estimate the number of foreigners (free or enslaved) present in the city and its immediate surroundings and how their population and situation compared to native Romans, elite or otherwise.⁷⁸ In Roman terms, these foreigners living in Rome, whether they came for a limited time or permanently, were deemed *peregrini* in Latin.⁷⁹ Those labelled *peregrini* represented a variety of social positions, as they could have been free, freedpersons, or slaves, and their reasons for residence (permanent or otherwise) could vary.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ In the early years of his reign, Nero bolstered public projects that “reinforced the inevitability and rightness of the imperial regime.” Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 40, see also pp.40-42. See further Edward Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁷⁸ David Noy discusses the difficulties of estimation, primarily due to lack of firm censorial evidence and the fact that much of evidence of foreign presence at Rome is dependent upon what was recorded and preserved in epigraphs (largely funerary). Further evidence, often about the more general population, can be gleaned from information about the amount of grain supplied to Roman residents, the extent of dwelling spaces (more telling for fourth century Rome), and other similar factors. David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth, 2000), 15-29.

⁷⁹ Noy, 1-4.

⁸⁰ I.e., a slave’s reasons for coming to Rome would largely be determined (though perhaps not exclusively) by her/his owner at the time. Among those of free status, reason could vary based on class and occupation: some may have come to Rome for financial opportunity. *Ibid.*, 85-139.

Despite this variety, it is clear that *peregrini*, as foreigners not coming from the immediate Italian provinces, refers to persons who originated from the foreign, often conquered, *ἔθνη* who have taken up residence in Rome. The difference between *ἔθνη* (and *gentes*) and the term *peregrini*, then, is that *peregrini* specifies those *ἔθνη* who have become foreigners by leaving their homelands to reside in the imperial capital.⁸¹ Regardless of the variation in social status among these *peregrini* in Rome, the term denotes their difference from the citizen class and emphasizes the fact that *ἔθνη*, as foreigners living in Rome—even those who have resided in the city for several generations—are of a different status of those granted Roman citizenship.

As with *ἔθνη* who resided in their home territories, some foreigners could become Roman citizens, but this was the exception and not the rule. Freeborn *peregrini* were likely to remain separated as non-citizen foreigners for generations, making the likelihood of a significant rise in status unlikely (though certainly some foreign immigrants to Rome found material success and were able to finagle citizen status).⁸² The fact of this legal and social distinction emphasizes to these *ἔθνη* who have immigrated to Rome (whether recently or long ago) that they are still lower on the imperial hierarchy, in large reason because their homelands have been conquered and brought under the empire's rule. Whether living in an occupied territory or as a *peregrinus* in Rome, one's

⁸¹ Though these contexts show the term was used elsewhere and can refer generally to foreigners, there is ample evidence of its use in the city of Rome to differentiate natural-born citizens from ethnic foreigners. Noy, 1-4, 31-52; Lavan, 32-37; Esler, 84-86.

⁸² Noy, 23-26, 75-78. Indeed, if a law under Claudius is descriptive of on-the-ground conditions, some *peregrini* may have tried to present themselves as citizens despite not having been legally granted the right. This emphasizes the reality that the distinction between a citizen and a *peregrinus* in Rome could be minimal and non-existent, especially for foreigners who were more able to blend in as Romans (for reasons of means, easier ability, or having lived in Rome for generations). However, even if some *peregrini* were able to become citizens by “passing,” others were not. Noy, 24-26.

origin as part of an ἔθνος, and not a natural Roman, lowered one's social and political status.

This lesser status, particularly justified through the portrayal of ἔθνη as conquered, submissive subjects, was emphasized in the Roman capital at least as much as it was in cities like Aphrodisias.⁸³ Lopez observes that it is conceivable that the Sebasteion depictions in Aphrodisias were similar to those seen in the “images of nations” (*simulcra gentium*) mentioned as having been on the portico in Pompey's theater in Rome (though they are lost), and similar gendered depictions of Roman dominance and ethnic/barbarian submission can be seen on the cuirass of Augustus' Prima Porta statue, which was found close to Rome.⁸⁴ Furthermore, literary descriptions of triumphal processions that occurred in Rome to commemorate Roman victories over various ἔθνη. In these processions, the emperor would parade through the streets of Rome, along with the Roman army, and they were accompanied by some of those captured in the vanquished territories, an embodied representation of the ἔθνη as conquered and submissive to Rome's imperial might.⁸⁵ These captive representatives were not only paraded as captives of Rome's great army but also dressed in a fashion that would have been stereotypical of their ἔθνος,

⁸³ Or in central Turkey, where the only extant monuments of the *Res Gestae* has been found (though evidence suggests similar monuments were erected throughout the empire, including in Rome). In addition to the Sebasteion images, Lopez discusses the *Res Gestae* and its role, as both literary and visual representation, in perpetuating imperial propaganda that presented the ἔθνη as conquered by Rome (in gendered terms). See Lopez, 88-100.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, 38-42.

⁸⁵ Lopez, 113-117. In addition to her general account and analysis, she observes how, in an instance of a procession under Caligula (described by Suetonius), captured Gauls were fashioned into Germans through dress, height, and the changing of hair length and color; see p.116. For the full account of such a procession, Lopez relies on and cites Josephus, *Jewish War* 7:131-153. See also Emma Dench, *Romulus' Asylum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 37-41; Mary Beard, “The Triumph of Flavius Josephus,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* ed. Anthony Boyle and William J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 543-558.

highlighting the foreignness, difference, and lower status of these submissive ἔθνη as compared to the native Roman citizenry.⁸⁶

If the Roman citizens who participated in such a spectacle experienced these processional performances as the conquerors, then what of the *peregrini*—the transplanted ἔθνη—who also would have viewed these processions? Presumably, this embodied ritual would have communicated to these ἔθνη similar messages to those in the panels of nations and other instances that Lopez identifies: Rome has conquered the ἔθνη and forced them into submission to Rome. Their conquered, feminized, penetrated status—as emphasized in the procession—confirms their lower social status and justifies their failure or inability to attain citizen status.⁸⁷

Those *peregrini* who came from ἔθνη that had been conquered in the more distant past may have incorporated themselves into Roman life and a more “citizen-like” mindset, even if they had not attained such a status. From such a view, these *peregrini* might have joined with their “fellow” Romans in celebrating the victory. By also “participating” in Rome’s conquest, these foreigners could see themselves as better incorporated and more “Roman” (i.e., less conquered and penetrated) compared with these more recently defeated ἔθνη.⁸⁸ While these *peregrini* are still below citizen status, they can imagine and present themselves as politically and socially above new groups of conquered others. Regardless, the public performance of native Romans’ recent conquest commemorates previous victories and reaffirms the ongoing socio-political difference

⁸⁶ These processions, then, constitute a performance that enforces the hierarchy of Romans over nations, citizens over foreigners. Lopez observes, “It allows the spectators at the city of Rome to participate safely—on a highly constructed, managed, and censored level—in Roman world conquest.” Lopez, 114.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 114-117.

⁸⁸ Indeed, one expects, some fraction of their ἔθνος would have been conscripted as part of the Rome’s military.

between *peregrini* and the *populus Romano*. Under the eyes of the empire, all foreigners are still distinct from and lower than the citizen class.

Although these ἔθνη are still conquered and of lower status, their ability to show and be shown πίστις as willingly submissive subjects draws them into potential relationships with their imperial conquerers. This reciprocal trust offers ἔθνη the possibilities for satisfying benefits of Roman rule (such as those experienced by many of Rome's [elite] citizens) in exchange for their willing submission to this rule. Therefore, when Augustus declares on his *Res Gestae* that, via his military conquests, he has allowed many ἔθνη to experience the πίστις of Rome's people (i.e., the citizen-body of those naturally-born Romans), he is describing the relationship of the imperial state to these newly conquered peoples. At the mercy of these Roman people, headed and represented by the emperor, the future peace and prosperity of these foreign subjects depended upon how well they were incorporated into the Roman state as conquered ἔθνη. Magnanimously, Augustus suggests that he (and through him, all Rome) is willing to display πίστις—trust and loyalty—to these ἔθνη, even if once considered enemies of the Roman people.

Based on the analysis of Roman πίστις proffered thus far, the experience of πίστις that Augustus envisions for these ἔθνη is one in which Rome trustingly permits their incorporation into the empire. He assumes they will allow themselves to be governed by representatives of the imperial system, obey Rome's laws and customs, and remain peaceful towards the Roman state. In a word, Rome's display of πίστις requires that these ἔθνη submit to empire. Through this relation of πίστις and the faithful submission of the

ἔθνη, the emperor and the citizens of Rome can trust that these foreigners will not rebel or cause problems. The faithful submission of now-Roman ἔθνη preserves the *Pax Romana*.

While it is clear that these ἔθνη experience Rome's imperial πίστις as a result of their submission, Augustus does not speak directly of the πίστις that these conquered persons must show towards Rome. This is not surprising: Morgan observes that most sources avoid discussing the πίστις of both parties within the same text, especially in cases where there is a status difference that might be mitigated if the reciprocal nature of πίστις is stated directly.⁸⁹ However, the reciprocity is implicit. In the case of the *Res Gestae*, reciprocal πίστις from the ἔθνη is implied in the terms of their submission: these ἔθνη display their πίστις by remaining loyal and trustworthy—and therefore, obedient—subjects of the empire. Consequently, to behave in less submissive ways—breaking the πίστις-relation—meant risking military suppression, for those residing in ethnic territories, and/or expulsion from Rome, in the case of *peregrini*.⁹⁰

Whether residing in their homeland or a *peregrinus* in Rome or elsewhere, the lives of these ἔθνη were structured by πίστις, as it both was shown to them by Rome and required them to order their lives in ways that displayed their trust in their imperial rulers. However, the promises implied for these ἔθνη by submissively displaying such πίστις to Rome consist of more than the guarantee of security in terms of military protection and belonging. In their first-century formulation and presentation, relations of πίστις promise

⁸⁹ Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 53.

⁹⁰ In particular, Noy notes the threat of expulsion of foreigners—usually of a particular ethnic group—was common. Noy, 37-47. Such a point again contextualizes the “Edict of Claudius” that expelled Jews, in that such an occurrence was not singular and, again, emphasizes the ways in which Jew in Rome were just like all other ἔθνη/*peregrini* there. This expands the possibilities for how Jews in Rome—and ἔθνη in the ἐκκλησία may have responded to such an expulsion and its ongoing threat within as a “normal” part of their lives (surely a “crisis ordinary” for those affected more by such expulsions).

additional benefits, particularly related to the rhetoric of Roman prosperity, to those who possess their ability to demonstrate this Roman value. Since *πίστις* is characterized as a “Roman” value, proving possession of the ability (individually or collectively) to display it and maintain relations based on it contributes to an appearance of being “more” Roman. This creates the potential for upward mobility, via increased individual status, preferential treatment for a particular *ἔθνη* as a group, or even the bestowal of Roman citizenship.⁹¹

With regard to displays of *πίστις* as a path towards citizenship, a prime example can be seen in the *Tabula Banasitana* from second century North Africa: the inscription displays the official communications granting Roman citizenship to Julian the Zegrenian (*Julianus Zegrensis*) by the emperor (Marcus Aurelius).⁹² The *fides* of Julian and his family is lauded as a primary reason for his deserving citizen status: “since you assert that he is one of the leading men of his people and is very loyal [*fidissimum*] in his readiness to be of of help to our affairs....”⁹³ Demonstrated *πίστις/fides* toward Rome alongside “leading” status within one’s *ἔθνη* proves that a person both is loyally aligned with as well as accepting of their position under Roman rule and, therefore, is able to serve as a leader, modeling the benefits of being exceedingly loyal, for fellow members of their

⁹¹ Here, the promise of potential upward mobility—enforced through the positive examples of an exceptional few who rise significantly through performing proper *πίστις* (alongside the negative consequence of *ἀπιστία*)—engenders hope through these positive consequences even though their effects were actually almost always minimal or non-existent (as we will see further below).

⁹² Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 62-63. Morgan discusses this evidence alongside other evidence of *πίστις* in “patron-client” relations (see pp.60-65). While this relation in a major piece in the context of the request, this example differs from others in which the ethnic status of the client (alongside the patron) is Roman or unspecified. Though still a patron-client relation, it is *also* (and importantly for my argument) an instance of the *πίστις* relations that are established and maintained between *ἔθνη* and the Roman people and, specifically, their emperor.

⁹³ *tamen cum eum adfirmes et de primoribus esse popularium suorum et nostris rebus prom[p]to obsequio fidissimum*. James H. Oliver, “Text of the Tabula Banasitana, A.D. 177,” *The American Journal of Philology* 93 (1972): 336 (Latin text), 339 (translation).

ἔθνος. Such extension of the rights and benefits of citizenship to certain *exceptionally* “faithful” ἔθνη highlights the promises of political and social benefits that can result from πίστις with the *populus Romano*.

πίστις often signals a hope that this trust will engender and maintain a beneficial relation.⁹⁴ Indeed, Morgan also calls the πίστις required to forge such relationships a “hopeful risk” for both parties, who stand to gain significant benefits from a πίστις relationship but have an equal chance of losing what benefits they have if the other party turns out to be untrustworthy (ἀπιστός).⁹⁵ For Augustus and his successors who offered experiences of Rome’s πίστις to many ἔθνη, the emperor and his people take a risk by displaying such πίστις to various ἔθνη, who could take the benefits of Rome’s protection and prosperity to eventually mount rebellion against Rome and/or ally with its enemies. However, having already proven its power and might over these ἔθνη, Rome has the upper hand as the “patron” displaying πίστις because, like an individual elite patron, as the empire has more resources at its disposal for protection and security.

Such hope is more of a necessity in the cases of lower status parties who grant πίστις towards those in higher positions. For these conquered ἔθνη, their faithful submission to Rome, which hopes for both protection and better status, entails a more

⁹⁴ “*Pistis/fides* is also often connected, explicitly or implicitly but clearly, with hope.” Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, 453. On p.64, Morgan observes that πίστις can be seen as a means to forge new relationships, which offer new social networks and benefits to parties involved in the relation.

⁹⁵ Morgan, 64. She observes such hope in an example from Plutarch’s *Precepts of Statecraft* (πολιτικά παραγγέλματα), in which Plutarch advises a young colleague as he considers and prepares to commence a political career. Though the specific example of client/patron πίστις that Morgan uses advocates for a “weak client” as an occasional start to a “glorious public career” (805b), the context of this example as political advice (with several discussions issues of trust in politicians by their subjects) indicates that her observations about patron/client πίστις apply similarly to πίστις in the political climate of Rome’s empire. As the prior discussion of the evidence in the *Tabula Banasitana* showed, these patron-client relations can be seen to apply similarly to the relation of an emperor-patron to his client-ἔθνη (kingdoms).

serious risk, one with a less secure safety net. The Roman people, guided by their emperor, could decide to force these ἔθνη into further, continued submission. Though there is hope in the (implicit or explicit) promises of political and social incorporation of ἔθνη into the Roman state via status benefits (including citizenship), the πίστις required for their fulfillment is riskier since Rome could refuse this incorporation, if it is secure in the knowledge that many of these ἔθνη could not effectively rebel. Ultimately, ἔθνη must retain their hope in these promises by displaying πίστις to Rome or else they risk greater decline under its military might.

By displaying πίστις, the hope for the ἔθνη is that they will be better integrated into the Roman state, given good governance and attention from the emperor when requested, and even potentially granted citizenship and a permanent belonging as full members of the state. In short, by showing πίστις through submission to Rome, there is hope for the social, economic, and political benefits that are only bestowed on true—and loyal—Romans. Thus, the reciprocal πίστις expected of Rome's ἔθνη involves their ongoing faithful submission to the goals of empire, permits the political and socio-economic stability of the *pax Romana* and promises the possibility of benefits for their ongoing obedience.

πίστις and Paul's ἔθνη in Romans 1:1-17

The faithful submission of these ἔθνη to Rome's rule is analogous to the πίστις-relation described of ἔθνη in chapters 1-5 of Paul's letter to Rome. Highlighted in Romans 3:21-26, Jesus' πίστις, which faithfully submits to God, specifically affects the relation between God and ἔθνη. As a portion of *πάσαι αἱ πιστεύουσαι* (see 1:16, 3:22), the ἔθνη are

required to obey and submit to God's ultimate authority in order to display πίστις. Paul's language in Romans 1-5, then, portrays God's justice for ἔθνη as having a Roman essence and reveals God's anticipated reign as ushering in an empire that is "Roman without Rome."

In 1:5, ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, or "pistis's obedience," makes explicit the submissive connotations of πίστις: [Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν] δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ("[Jesus Christ our Lord], through whom we received grace and sending off into the obedience of pistis in all of the nations on behalf of his name").⁹⁶ The receipt of grace and a commission leads its recipients into obedience, which is directed to God, towards whom Jesus was also obedient and submissive.⁹⁷ πίστις describes the obedience into which these Christ-followers should enter: submission directed to God. By displaying πίστις, a person

⁹⁶ Elliott calls this verse "an indication of the political dimension of Paul's rhetoric [i.e., against Rome]." Elliott, 25. Commentators generally situate this within Paul's self-introduction to the Roman ἐκκλησία (who do not know him personally) and say the verse explains Paul's purpose and his call to them. Moo, 51; Longenecker, 77; Schreiner, 33; Dunn 1:24; Byrne, 40; Witherington, 33-34; L.T. Johnson, 23. The bracketed subject of the clause (Jesus) comes from 1:4. Don B. Garlington calls it the "pivotal point" of this introduction because it connects him to this ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, which further represents "his own articulation of the design and purpose of his missionary labors." Don B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 12-13. ὑπακοή is the noun form of ὑπηκοός, the term for obedience and subjection discussed in relation to Jesus' submission in Philippians 2:8 and the slavish nature of all subjects with respect to Rome's emperor in Philo's *Legatio*. As in these contexts, obedience in Romans represents a specific form of submission, a "hearing under," wherein the obedient subject submits to commands that they have heard, implicitly or explicitly, from another, almost certainly of higher status.

⁹⁷ Relating this term to 3:21-26, "...the righteousness of God is enacted through [Jesus'] own faithfulness, his faithful obedience unto death on the cross." Grieb, 37. With no note of submission, some say this is obedience to God, specifically God's grace, however. Byrne, 40; Witherington, 34-35. Some commentators stress this obedience as toward Christ; see Moo, 53; Hultgren, 50. Jewett claims this is a "special sort of obedience produced by the gospel" and situates it as a *favorable* notion in the context of Roman honor. Jewett, 110. Fitzmyer eschews any negative meaning and renders ὑπακοὴν as "commitment" to specifically avoid any confusion of this nature, despite having little lexical grounding. See Fitzmyer, 237-238.

simultaneously demonstrates obedience.⁹⁸ From the outset of Romans, obedience entails submission, and it requires *πίστις*.

This faithful obedience introduced in 1:5 directly involves *ἔθνη*: *ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* (“in all the nations”). Although *ἔθνη* is traditionally translated as “Gentiles,” as a technical ethnic term that differentiates Jews from (all) other nations, it also refers to all nations conquered by and submissive to Rome (including Judea), as seen above.⁹⁹ Even if Paul employs *ἔθνη* as a technical term for “gentiles,” since his audience consisted largely of non-Jews *and* members of conquered Roman territories, it is almost impossible that they would not have heard in the term this imperial meaning of “conquered nations.”¹⁰⁰ Living in Rome alongside a greater number of “native” Roman citizens, including those among the highest echelons of the empire’s elite, both Jews and non-Roman gentiles would have been considered foreigners (*peregrini*) and very aware of their different ethnic status under the gaze of their imperial rulers. According to 1:5, *ὑπακοὴν πίστewος*, faithful obedience to God, is to be practiced among all these *ἔθνη*.

⁹⁸ “Indeed, the semantic range of *pistis* overlaps with that of *hypakoē*, ‘obedience,’ so that Paul can use the terms almost interchangeably in Romans. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 45, see further pp.45-46. Garlington argues that *πίστις* describes *ὑπακοήν* (as an “adjectival genitive”) that can be translated “faith’s obedience” with connections to ideas of submission. Garlington, 30-31, see further pp.10-31. His monograph on this phrase throughout Romans concludes, “*Faith, obedience, and perseverance*, in other words, are not separate entities but three aspects of the same entity” (163). Along similar lines, see Longenecker, 79; Matera, 30-31; L.T. Johnson, 23; Schreiner, 34-36. Such a connection between *πίστις* and *ὑπακοή* aligns with the first-century understandings of *πίστις* outlined above, particularly when it involves a relation between parties of different levels of status. Like slaves towards their masters and subjects toward the emperor, submission to the will of the more powerful party is necessary for the maintenance of a *πίστις* relation.

⁹⁹ Lopez, 166-168. Her conclusion comes from her reading of Galatians in the preceding chapter, “Re-Imagining Paul as Apostle to the Conquered,” pp.119-163. Certainly, such a differentiation appears in the LXX and in Jewish literature roughly contemporaneous with Paul; indeed, when Paul refers to *ἔθνη*, this distinction is implied in the reference, but the term can contain multiple meanings, both within its usage by Paul (as “author”) and as it was heard by a diverse audience in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*.

¹⁰⁰ In addition to Lopez (see preceding note), see also Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 45.

This obedience bears similarity to how these ἔθνη have submitted to Roman rule and experienced the πίστις of its people.¹⁰¹ Whether through violence or the threat of violence (elided from mention in the *Res Gestae*), the πίστις that πλείστα ἄλλα ἔθνη (“many other nations”) experience requires taking a faithfully obedient posture toward the Roman people as a gesture that maintains the reciprocity implied in first-century πίστις-relations.¹⁰² In Romans 1:5, these same conquered ἔθνη have been brought into a similar πίστις-relation—now directed towards God instead of Caesar—through the actions of a different and new master/κύριος, Jesus Christ, whose faithful submission resulted in his raised status.¹⁰³ Paul’s introductory invocation of ὑπακοὴν πίστεως makes clear that, through (διὰ) the actions of Jesus Christ, all these conquered persons not only receive benefits from God (i.e., χάρις and ἀποστολή) but also are brought into a πίστις-relation with God, a relation that necessitates their obedience.

1:16-17 continues the emphasis on πίστις and shows how it is critical to understanding the establishment of God’s justice:

Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι. δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται, ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel because God’s power is for salvation to every one who shows *pistis*, Jew first then Greek. For God’s justice is revealed in

¹⁰¹ “It evokes a scriptural vision in which the establishment of *God’s dominion over the earth* included the subduing of hostile and oppressive nations.” Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 46; emphasis added. For Elliott, this dominion must be in “inevitable conflict” with the Augustan imperial vision; see pp.46-47.

¹⁰² See Elliott’s discussion of the *Res Gestae* as part of the imperial ideology that informs (or constrains) Romans in *Arrogance of Nations*, 38-39, 50-57.

¹⁰³ Indeed, Paul goes on to praise those assembled in the Roman ἐκκλησία because they have already become known for their displays of πίστις toward God. See 1:8: Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ (“Firstly, I thank my god through Jesus Christ concerning you all because your *pistis* is declared in the whole world”).

it from *pistis* into *pistis*, just as it is written, ‘The just one will live from *pistis*.’¹⁰⁴

God’s power of salvation can be compared to similar language used by and of Caesar and Rome’s empire, who are said to have been the saviors (σώτηρ) of many peoples from barbarism, bringing them stability and “better” living conditions.¹⁰⁵ In Rome’s kyriarchal view, whoever has the most power is most able to bring about the salvation of others (over whom, therefore, that person has authority). Salvation is an effect of having power/ability (δύναμις), then it is beneficial to be aligned with such power (whether that power is God’s or the empire’s).¹⁰⁶ Thus, in Romans 1:16, persons should want to be included in the salvation into which God’s power leads.

By extending them salvation, God displays πίστις towards these now-saved people. Therefore, salvation—along with the better life it presumes—requires inclusion and participation in a πίστις-relation with God. It is the possession of παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι,

¹⁰⁴ “Rom 1-3 sets out to show that God’s character as revealed in scripture and history leads to the conclusion that he will provide a just and merciful deliverance for the gentiles.” Stowers, 197; see further pp.195-202. Most commentators term 1:16-17 as the thesis or theme of Roman, setting forth Paul’s main point which he will argue and develop. See Jewett, 135-136; L.T. Johnson, 24-25; Dunn 1:37-38; Moo, 63-65; Keck, 50; Fitzmyer, 253-255; Byrne 51-52; Longenecker, 155-157; Witherington, 47-49; Schreiner, 58-59; Cobb and Lull, 31; Hultgren, 71. The “it” of “in it” (ἐν αὐτῷ) is somewhat ambiguous, despite the ubiquitous assumption that τὸ εὐαγγέλιον is the antecedent, despite its distance from this pronoun. However, most of the nouns in the intervening clause are feminine and therefore cannot be the grammatical antecedent of the masculine/neuter singular pronoun. However, the substantive participle παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι is the most proximate noun that fits the gender/number of this pronoun, which could render “in them [i.e. each person who believes]” for ἐν αὐτῷ. Although I am not convinced this *is* the antecedent (and, ultimately, neither option seriously affects this particular interpretation), the option is worth noting for consideration, as opposed to merely assuming the prevailing scholarly assumption is correct, since it seems most established upon traditional theological grounds.

¹⁰⁵ “In the Roman cultural context, it is important to recall that priestly, military, and administrative forms of power were celebrated as effective means of salvation.” Jewett, 138. See also Cobb and Lull, 33; Longenecker, 164-165. Likewise, Elliott emphasizes how εὐαγγέλιον is an imperial term “reclaimed” by Paul: “For Paul, as for Roman political and diplomatic rhetoric, the *eungelion* is the *announcement* of a sovereign’s impending triumph and, necessarily, the establishment of the sovereign’s claim on obedience.” Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 74-75; see also p.29 on how the language of *pax Romana* as “peace” appears in Paul.

¹⁰⁶ See Jewett, 138-139. Byrne notes power’s distinction as capacity in contrast to weakness. Byrne, 56-57.

“every one who shows πίστις.”¹⁰⁷ As in the *Res Gestae*, then, the hierarchical power dynamics between “savior” and peoples are implicit in God’s power for salvation and the πίστις-relation this offers: the powerful party offers πίστις and protection in exchange for loyalty. Typically, those who are most loyal reap the most benefits of salvation from the one in power. In the scheme of Romans, God has power and control: God is on top, according to the kyriarchal logic of imperial power. Such a power dynamic expands upon the relationship defined by ὑπακοήν πίστεως found among the ἔθνη in 1:5. Since God occupies the “savior-position” at the top, all others must be submissive and obedient in order to display πίστις toward God, as a demonstration of trust in and loyalty to God’s power.

1:17 gives this πίστις-relation more detail and anticipates the climax of 3:21-26. This verse connects πίστις to the revelation of God’s justice (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). In similar fashion to how Caesar’s promises of justice (*iustitia*) and establishment of a *pax Romana* allayed concerns over his new imperial regime, in Romans, God promises a regime change which also centers on establishing “true” justice.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, as with imperial πίστις extended to numerous ἔθνη, God promises to justly extend benefits of God’s rule (as with citizenship status with Caesar) to all peoples who faithfully submit to God’s rule—to those who display πίστις as part of a reciprocal relation with *and under* God.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. 3:22. See Jewett, 139-140. Oddly, discussing how Romans typically does not have an object of belief, Moo writes, “To ‘believe’ is to put full trust *in God* [by means of Christ],” which seems different from his emphasis elsewhere that πίστις in Romans is generally directed in (towards) Christ (and then God by extension only). See Moo, 67-68.

¹⁰⁸ See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 70-85; Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 60-70. On the broader role of δικαιοσύνη in Romans, generally as some form of “righteousness” or “justification,” see Stowers, 195-198; Dunn 1:40-43; Grieb, 20-25; Jewett, 141-144; Fitzmyer, 105-107, 257-263; Byrne, 57-60; Witherington, 52-54; Schreiner, 63-71; Hultgren, 605-615 (making very explicit it should *not* be translated as “justice” in contrast to scholars like Stowers or Elliott); Longenecker, 168-176, 403-408.

Continuing this emphasis, Romans 1 establishes the import of *πίστις* and connects it to the benefits that come from faithfully submissive displays (as in 3:21-26).

πίστις appears three times in 1:17, preceded either by the preposition *ἐκ* (“from, out of, by”) or *εἰς* (“into, to, toward”). The meaning of *ἐκ πίστεως* in the quotation of Hab 2:4 is integral to understanding its usage in 1:17 and, indeed, Paul’s letter: *ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται* (“The just one will live from *πίστις*”).¹⁰⁹ Referring to Jesus, Paul’s citation of this passage alludes to the point he elaborates in 3:21-26: as the Christ, the just one, Jesus displays *πίστις* toward God by submitting to God’s authority and plan to suffer death, trusting that he will live and this will enact a delay of his Messianic judgment.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, in addition to living by his *πίστις* toward God, Jesus the just also lives *ἐκ πίστεως*, from *God’s πίστις*: Jesus trusts that God will remain trustworthy (*πιστός*) toward him as well.

This usage of *ἐκ πίστεως* applies to its meaning at the beginning of 1:17, where God’s justice is revealed *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν*. *ἐκ πίστεως* refers to the *πίστις* Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Jesus Christ’s *πίστις*, cf. 3:22): God’s justice is revealed from Jesus’ *πίστις*, seen in his trust in God’s plan and his submission and obedience to God to the point of death

¹⁰⁹ See also Jewett, 145-147. Dunn argues this quotation begins to prove Paul’s thesis in continuity with Jewish tradition. Dunn, 1:48-49. Within more traditional interpretations, Paul’s use of Hab 2:4 confirms “faith” as a requirement for God’s *δικαιοσύνη*. See Moo, 76-79; Matera, 35-36; Longenecker, 186; Fitzmyer, 264-265; Hultgren, 79.

¹¹⁰ “Hab 2:4 is a key to the meaning of *pistis* in Romans.” Stowers, 199, see further pp.199-202. Following Stowers, who compares the variations (in the Greek LXX and Hebrew MT) of the passage, the substantive *ὁ δίκαιος* is not a generic referent to any just person but refers to *a specific human being*, namely Jesus as the Christ, “the just one.” Heliso’s monograph on this particular figure in Romans affirms this interpretation that *ὁ δίκαιος* refers specifically to Christ, although his final conclusion admits the other meaning is plausible but less convincing. Heliso, 254, 163-164; see further 122-164. See similar interpretations in L.T. Johnson, 28-29; Cobb and Lull, 35-36. Making general comparisons between the different ancient (and modern) versions of Hab 2:4 is frequent in commentaries; however, *ὁ δίκαιος* refers to generic humans in these interpretations. See Jewett, 145-146; Byrne, 60-61; Keck, 53-54; Moo, 76-77; Fitzmyer, 264-265; Dunn, 1:44-46; Hultgren, 77-79; Longenecker, 182-186

(cf. 3:21-26, Phil. 2:5-11).¹¹¹ The *πίστις* of *ἐκ πίστεως* refers to a different *πίστις* from that referred to by *εἰς πίστιν*.¹¹² From Jesus' *πίστις*, then, God's justice is revealed *into πίστις* (*εἰς πίστιν*), which now refers not to Jesus' relation of trust with God but to that of his followers: their *πίστις* is the *result* of Jesus' model of faithful submission—from his *πίστις* into that of others.¹¹³

In this phrase, as in Hab 2:4, *ἐκ πίστεως* can also allude to God's fidelity that is displayed in Christ's submission to God: Christ submits fully to God's plan *and* God upholds fidelity to this plan and raises him from death. Jesus exemplifies ideal submission in his *πίστις* towards God, thus embodying a perfect *πίστις*-relation between an emperor and his loyal subject. Ultimately, the *πίστις* of Jesus—which reveals God's reciprocal *πίστις* particularly in terms of God's promise to make justice—allows others to follow this model and enter into a *πίστις*-relation with God. It allows every person to display *πίστις* (*πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων*).

¹¹¹ So, writes Stowers, “The first metaphor implies origin, agency, or instrumentality, that is, “out of,” “on the basis of,” or “by means of Jesus' faithfulness” (202).

¹¹² As Stowers emphasizes, the doubling of *πίστις* here signals *two different metaphors* (to use his language), “of physical movement: out of something and into something.” Stowers, 202. Schreiner says the doubling emphasizes the centrality of “faith” (in Christ) for Paul; Schreiner, 71-72. Hultgren agrees both refer to “believer's” *πίστις*, but the movement signals “the progression of the righteousness of God to accomplish what God seeks to do.” Hultgren, 77. Jewett connects this movement to Paul's effort for missionary expansion. Jewett, 143-144.

¹¹³ “The second [metaphor] implies movement into a state, into faithfulness. This makes sense if the key question is not the believer's faith but Jesus Christ's faithfulness in which the believer shares.... The phrase could ten be rendered, ‘The righteousness of God is revealed in it [the gospel] by means of [Jesus'] faithfulness resulting in faithfulness.’” Stowers, 202. Heliso agrees that *ἐκ πίστεως* is Christological (equivalent to the *πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*) and contends that 1:17 is “introducing and providing a framework for the idea of *God's act of salvation through Christ's faithfulness-to-death* (*πίστις Χριστοῦ*), the knowledge of which triggers the human act of faith response.” Heliso, 254, see further pp.165-242. See further L.T. Johnson, 28. Other commentators offer a similar interpretation of this progression of *πίστις* as being two different possessions, but leave room that the first metaphor could refer to *God's πίστις* (not Christ's). See Witherington, 55-56; Longenecker, 176-180. Dunn is firmer in saying it is a movement from God's faith to human faith (in Christ). Dunn, 1:43-44.

Thus, the language in chapter 1 establishes the close relation between *πίστις* and the *ἔθνη* who form Paul's primary audience. In addition to the *ὑπακοή πίστεως* that is encouraged among all the *ἔθνη* in 1:5, 1:16-17 specifies that God's power toward salvation—belonging to all who display *πίστις* (as discussed above)—belongs *Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι*, “first to Jew and then to Greek.”¹¹⁴ Paul's “Jews and Greeks” can be taken as representative of “all the *ἔθνη*,” just as they were certainly included among the *πλείστα ἄλλα ἔθνη* to whom Caesar extended his Roman *πίστις*. While Jesus' *πίστις* is an example that specifically directs non-Jewish *ἔθνη* into relation with God, Paul makes clear that all people—Jews and these other *ἔθνη*—are included under God's justice and expected to display *πίστις* toward God.

πίστις and Paul's ἔθνη in Romans 3:27-5:11

If 1:16-17 forms the “thesis” of Romans, providing a preview of Paul's main points, then it is evident that *πίστις* and the relations it maintains are part of the letter's central theme of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. In 3:27, Paul returns to the impact this has upon the *ἔθνη* and their actions moving forward.¹¹⁵ 3:27-4:22 explains how *ἔθνη* are able to participate in God's promises alongside Jews, who, having an established *πίστις*-relation with God,

¹¹⁴ “The phrase is routine found on the lips of Romans (and Judeans under Roman rule) as they describe *the world's peoples as Rome's subjects*.” Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 51.

¹¹⁵ Generally speaking, 1:18-3:20 covers the various details of the need for justice and the judgment under “God's wrath”—especially needed for non-Jews as Stowers argues since they are not covered by the justice under the Torah. In other words, only non-Jews require something that will make them just when God's reign is established (and hence the need for delay). Several commentaries emphasize the ubiquity of God's wrath for all humans (Jews and non-Jews) due to a general state of “wickedness” or “sin,” for which/whom Christ then becomes the total and solitary “antithesis.” See especially Moo, 91-92; Dunn, 1:51; L.T. Johnson, 30-31.

already participate in these promises.¹¹⁶ Jesus' πίστις that leads to his death as God's ἱλαστήριον provides the means necessary for these ἔθνη, who were previously incapable to of such action, to enter into πίστις-relation with God, thus receiving full share in its "benefits."¹¹⁷

The impact of Jesus' πίστις for this audience and their actions culminates at 4:23-5:11, what Stowers calls the "hortatory conclusion" to this particular segment of Paul's argument.¹¹⁸ Connecting ἔθνη to the effects on Abraham's πίστις, Paul writes:

Οὐκ ἐγράφη δὲ δι' αὐτὸν μόνον ὅτι ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς οἷς μέλλει
 λογιζέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ
 νεκρῶν, ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν

Not only on account of him is it written that it [Abraham's πίστις] was considered [justice] for him, but also on account of us, for whom it is going to be considered [justice], for those who display πίστις to the one who raised Jesus, our Lord, from

¹¹⁶ Looking at the phrases ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ τῆς πίστεως in 3:30, Stowers explains, "In the context of 3-4, *dia tēs pisteōs* refers very specifically to Jesus' atoning death for the redemption of the gentiles, saving them from God's wrath and giving them a share in the benefits of faithfulness." Stowers, 241. He continues, "Paul sums up God's just and merciful action through Jesus with *dia pisteōs*. How Jews relate to this he never says" (241). Stowers' full observation establishes two critical points. First, the phrase διὰ πίστεως refers to Jesus' πίστις even when Jesus is not named with the subjective genitive. Secondly, the relation established by this prepositional phrase specifically relates to ἔθνη/non-Jews. Jews have another means of πίστις-relation (i.e., ἐκ πίστεως) to God that does not require Jesus' death as an example for their inclusion in God's promises for justice. In other words, Paul does not address how Jews relate to Jesus and his πίστις because such a relation is unnecessary in his understanding of bringing everyone into relation with God as part of God's plan for establishing justice.

¹¹⁷ The phrase ἐκ πίστεως, then, refers to the "generative activity" that displaying submissive πίστις toward God can have for God's πίστις-relation with entire populations, which includes the display in Jesus' death as well as Abraham's πίστις which generates a relation between the Jews and God. Chapter 4, then, turns to the πίστις displayed by Abraham (drawing from Gen. 15), whose πίστις also demonstrates his obedience to God in order to inherit the benefits of God's promises, thereby establishing a πίστις-relation between God and his descendants by blood (i.e., all Jews). The example of Abraham in Romans 4 confirms two points that Romans 1-3 has already implied: "First, Abraham is the father of both the descendants by his blood and also those by adoption through incorporation into Abraham's blood descendant, Christ. Second, both peoples are expected to share in and live out Abraham's faithfulness." Stowers, 243. Romans 4 makes clear that the πίστις that Jesus' example provides permits ἔθνη to be adopted into Abraham's lineage and participate in the benefits of a πίστις-relation with God. See Stowers, 237-250. L.T. Johnson says the emphasis of Abraham's example in chapter 4 is on faith in God. L.T. Johnson, 66-69. Notably diverging from these ideas is Moo, who explicitly connects the example of Abraham to a doctrine of *sola fides*. Moo, 243-245.

¹¹⁸ Stowers, 247-250.

the dead, [Jesus] who was handed over on account of our blunders and raised on account of our claim for justice (4:23-25).

Thereby being included in the justice accorded to Abraham and his descendants, these ἔθνη should respond to God's πίστις by displaying their πίστις to God, following Jesus' example of submission, with the promise of receiving the benefits of justice (as opposed to God's wrath).¹¹⁹

Jesus' placement—here, having been passively “handed over” and then “raised” by God—again confirms God's authority and πίστις toward all people, including these Roman ἔθνη, to whom God reveals God's justice.¹²⁰ By again recalling Jesus' placement and death here, it is clear that the πίστις these ἔθνη should display is one that submits to God in a fashion similar to Jesus, trusting God to place them so that God's justice might be best revealed to all people according to God's faithful plan. Like Jesus, these ἔθνη should submit fully under God's power of placement and therefore should acknowledge and obey God's authority, a demonstration of perfect and pleasing πίστις in relation to God's power.

The submissive πίστις that attaches these ἔθνη to God becomes optimistic based upon the promise of benefits from God's reciprocal displays of πίστις. As 1:16-17 already established, God's power to bring salvation (σωτηρία) and offer the revelation of justice

¹¹⁹ It is crucial to observe that the πίστις of those addressed in 4:24 is displayed toward God, as always the primary actor (who handed over and raised Jesus since Jesus submitted to and trusted God's plan). Again, πίστις is not directed to Jesus but always to God.

¹²⁰ Commentators who likewise emphasize God's action in these verses include Witherington, 129; Schreiner, 243; Matera, 118. Longenecker isolates 4:25 in his commentary, making it a “concluding early Christian confessional statement” and emphasizing the passive nature of the verbs (i.e., God's action toward Christ, as above) but only because of human sin. Longenecker, 535-537. However, it is as common to ignore God's role in favor of trying to find or emphasize potential parallels to the Gospel tradition (often arguing Paul is making reference to it); see Jewett, 341-341; Byrne, 161-162; Dunn 1:223-225; Fitzmyer, 389-390 (who also relates these verses to “justification by faith).

(δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ), generated by the faithful examples (ἐκ πίστεως) of Jesus (3:21-26) and Abraham (4:1-22), is for those in a πίστις-relation with God. In other words, these benefits are the inheritances of those who are (now) able to display reciprocal πίστις to God (εἰς πίστιν) through their faithful submission. God's establishment of justice originates from and confirms the fact that God is πιστός and also possess the most power; it reinforces the relation between God and God's subjects.¹²¹

Justice and salvation, then, represent some of the benefits of a πίστις-relation with God, and submission to God's authority best permits all persons to reap these benefits.¹²² Jesus demonstrates this through his faithful submission, which results in his elevation to κύριος status: according to 4:25, God raises Jesus from his ignoble death to these great heights διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν, "on account of our claim [or need] for justice." This justice, needed and hoped for by these ἔθνη, offers a raising, an elevation, for those who receive it. If Jesus' faithful submission to God is what permits his elevation in status, then, in following this example, the πίστις of Christ-followers trusts in and hopes that God's justice will allow a similar rising in their status and situation.¹²³

¹²¹ Indeed, drawing from E.P. Sanders' identification of δικαιοσύνη as a "transfer term," Stowers observes, "It concerns how one gets into a relation with God" (243). While my analysis of πίστις shows how this term does significant work in establishing relations and attachments between God and subject, it is clear from the import of δικαιοσύνη in Romans and its relation to Paul's use of πίστις that God's δικαιοσύνη complements πίστις and frames these relations. See further, Sanders, 470-472.

¹²² Using the language of benefit, Stowers observes, "Abraham and Jesus Christ are essential for Paul precisely as individuals who have made possible divine benefits inherited by whole peoples" (243). Thus, the examples of Jesus and Abraham discussed above are paradigm-shifting examples of proper πίστις and of the benefits one receives from faithful submission: these benefits are the fulfillment of God's promises toward both those individuals and, by extension, the peoples on whose behalf they serve as exemplary.

¹²³ "Paul certainly preached that gentiles should believe in the one true God and what he had done through Jesus Christ, but he did not proclaim that their salvation hinged on their own act of believing." Stowers, 248. As opposed to returning this to the language of atonement (already discussed as irrelevant to Romans above); see Jewett, 343.

Chapter 5 expands the benefits of this relation, showing that the justice that God reveals as a result of Jesus' *πίστις* leads to increasing prosperity, including the promise of peace, for Christ's submissive followers.

δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν [τῇ πίστει] εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἐστήκαμεν, καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ

Thus, being made just from *pistis*, we have peace with God through our lord, Jesus Christ, indeed through whom we have obtained access by *pistis* to this grace in which we are standing and boast about the hope of God's glory (5:1-2).¹²⁴

With God's authority and power affirmed through faithful submission, God's establishment of justice leads to the possession of peace for those who participate in *πίστις* with God.¹²⁵ This peace is *πρὸς τὸν θεόν*, towards or with God: these *ἔθνη* are now promised peace, provided they faithfully (and peacefully) submit to God's power to establish God's justice across the earth, to all peoples, all *ἔθνη*. Thus, according to Paul's theological presentation, peace, alongside justice, is a benefit of this participation in God's promises.

¹²⁴ As noted in the introduction to this chapter, many commentators (however, neither Stowers nor myself, among others) see chapter 5 as beginning an entirely new section of Paul's argument. As such, 5:1-11 (and vv. 1-2 especially) transition to the next point as this section starts. See Jewett, 344-349; Moo, 290-295; Fitzmyer, 393-394; Longenecker, 551-552; Hultgren, 202; Byrne, 162-164. Keck keeps 5:1-11 in the same section of Paul's argument, but says it represents a major turn. Keck, 133.

¹²⁵ "The language of obtaining peace on the basis of justice/righteous action was familiar and regularly used of the pacification efforts of the Roman emperor, who, it was claimed, was being just as he established the *Pax Romana*." Witherington, 133-134. My translation and argument assumes that *ἔχομεν* in 5:1 is indicative, describing something Paul's audience possesses thanks to God, following the decision of the Nestle Aland text (though there is significant discrepancy with several major ancient sources attesting *ἔχωμεν*). Thus, I disagree with Stowers here that this verb is a hortatory subjunctive, although I do agree that this segment of Paul's argument has hortatory force (which does not hinge on the function of this verb). Ultimately, Stowers and I agree that "Romans does not consist of a theological argument (1:18-11:34) followed by ethical exhortations (12:1-15:13). Chapters 1-11 have a strongly argumentative character but the letter is hortatory throughout." Stowers, 249, see further pp. 248-249. The indicative meaning is affirmed by Moo, 295-296; Byrne, 169-170, n.17; Witherington, 133; Fitzmyer, 395; Schreiner, 258; Dunn, 1:245-247; L.T. Johnson, 79; Cobb and Lull, 80. Preferring the subjunctive are Hultgren, 676-680; Jewett, 344, 346.

Paul's language here, and throughout Romans 1-5, relies upon terms that often had imperial connotations in the first-century Roman world. Just as *πίστις* was used by the empire to establish and maintain relations of uneven power between its rulers, people, and conquered *ἔθνη*, terms like *δικαιοσύνη* (and its various *δικ-* cognates)—along with *εἰρήνη* (“peace”), *δόξα* (“glory”), *σωτηρία* (“salvation”), *κύριος* (“master” or “lord”), and *εὐαγγέλιον* (“gospel”)—were used in imperial rhetoric which would have been familiar to Paul and his audience of Roman *ἔθνη*.¹²⁶ If Rome brought justice and salvation to (certain) “suffering” *ἔθνη*, they claimed to do so through the stability of peace—the *pax Romana*—which brought prosperity throughout Rome's territories. This peaceful prosperity was proclaimed (*εὐαγγελίζομαι*) in imperial rhetoric, linked to actual and potential glory, and possessed by those of and elevated to elite status (*κύριοι*). It is these promises that the *pax Romana* and Caesar's *πίστις* have not realized for most *ἔθνη*, who largely remained around the bottom of the Roman socio-political hierarchy.¹²⁷

Roman language, in other words, pervades Paul's theology. The use of these concepts reveals certain alignments with the ideology of Rome's empire, even when Roman rulers are replaced. The benefits that God promises are not especially different

¹²⁶ Georgi has identified the appearance and analyzed Paul's usage of many of these terms in Romans. “By using such loaded terms as *euangelion*, *pistis*, *dikaioσύνη*, and *eirēnē* as central concepts in Romans,” writes Georgi, “he evokes their associations to Roman political thought.” Georgi, “God Turned Upside Down,” 148. Georgi's analysis leads him to conclude that an anti-imperial message can be found in Romans and in Paul's thought: “If the terms chosen by Paul for his Roman readers have associations with the slogans of Caesar religion, then Paul's gospel must be understood as competing with the gospel of the Caesars” (152). While this conclusion of competition is certainly a possible explanation of Paul's use of imperial language, the use of such language as directly competitive assumes that Paul was intentionally setting himself against and therefore in competition with Rome, a notion that I have been problematizing throughout this dissertation. While Paul may make statements that appear to set his gospel against Rome, the assumption that this reflects a more-or-less firm anti-imperial stance ignores the ways in which Paul can also be seen to align with imperial agendas.

¹²⁷ Largely in line with the system we have seen above in terms of their portrayal in Roman society at large.

from those Rome has promised to its subjects. Even if Paul does not imagine an empire with Caesar and other native Romans at the top, God’s promised rule establishes justice and brings peace in Roman terms. Paul’s theology is therefore Roman without Rome.¹²⁸

Paul’s use of such imperial language in Romans has deeper alignments with imperial ideologies when the situation of his audience of Roman ἔθνη is considered alongside this Roman-without-Rome theology. Paul’s explication of πίστις and its extension to ἔθνη via Jesus’ example echoes the approach of Caesar’s conquest that incorporated and included many ἔθνη into a πίστις-relation with Rome. In Romans, the imperial relations that these ἔθνη have are no longer directed toward Rome and its emperor; instead, God emerges as the ultimate authority, the new emperor who ushers in peace and justice for all people. In this scheme, Jesus is set in his final (raised) placement as God’s κύριος, a lord or master. God’s justice and peace—and the submissive πίστις required to receive their benefits—is ultimately oriented to best benefit those at the top, namely God, whose glory (δόξα) is of greatest concern.¹²⁹ Now incorporated into a πίστις-relation with God and God’s divine power and authority, these ἔθνη are told, following Jesus’ submissive example, to display πίστις, a πίστις that bears similarity to the πίστις that ἔθνη were implicitly expected to show Caesar in exchange for his own. Similar their situation under Roman rule, these ἔθνη trust a power with imperial-like authority—in this case, God—to provide them with the benefits they need to survive—and ideally thrive. In

¹²⁸ However, “without Rome” does not need to be, as Elliott (citing Taubes’ political philosophy) reveals, “a declaration of war.” In my view, Paul’s (political) theology is less “anti-Rome” and more “pro-God,” which are not always or necessarily in (binary) opposition—i.e., Paul’s theology really hopes for a (Roman) Empire ruled (by God) in his (and his audience’s) favor. See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 61-62.

¹²⁹ In addition to 5:2, ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ is mentioned several times in the argument of Romans 1-5: at 1:23, 3:7, 3:23, and 4:20. From these usages, δόξα is both God’s possession as the ultimate authority and, by extension, something that faithful followers of God should acknowledge (see especially 4:20).

Romans, Paul’s theology replicates imperial ideology—only with new beings, God and then Jesus, at the top of the hierarchy.

Sitting atop this imperial-like hierarchy, God possesses the power of placement over all these submissive ἔθνη. In this regard, ἐλπίς (“hope”) emerges as critical to understanding the significance of πίστις toward and with God. This hope provides final confirmation that their πίστις is indeed an optimistic attachment. According to 5:2, the “hope of God’s glory” is something the Roman ἔθνη can boast about, as Paul exhorts them to do (καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ).¹³⁰ Exhorting his audience to boast of this hope—and, as Jesus did, to boast of their afflictions that ultimately produce hope (5:3-8)—Paul presumes a “good life” will arise from proper πίστις with God, as his argument assumes throughout Romans 1-5. Since God’s glory confirms God’s power and reputation for justice and peace, the hope for these ἔθνη is that this “true” justice and peace will actually accomplish for them the promise of benefit—namely in the form of upward social mobility and better placement in a coming Roman-without-Rome society ruled by God.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Stowers, 249-250. Jewett provides context and contexts between honor and boasting in the Greco-Roman world; see Jewett, 351-352. Others note this a reversal of Paul’s ideas of boasting in other contexts; see Dunn, 1:249; Fitzmyer, 396-397 (where he, quite problematically, contrasts Christian boasting in Paul to the “Jewish boasting” previously criticized).

¹³¹ This upward social mobility presumes (as it seems Paul’s rhetoric often does) that the fundamental structure of society does not change: i.e., if kyriarchy in an imperial political structure remains the same in God’s reign, it makes sense to expect that God will leave unchanged the foundational socio-economic patterns as well, even though this God may put God’s faithful followers in positions of power and, therefore, better socio-economic positions, *at the expense* of those currently in power who will move to the political and the socio-economic bottom. Paul’s hope in socio-economic mobility is rarely made clear, but it is more apparent than any vision of true socio-economic reform.

Cruel πίστις

If, as discussed above, πίστις can be called an ancient form of what Berlant identifies as “optimism,” then what further parallels might be possible between Berlant’s modern theory of affective attachment and the ancient relations maintained via πίστις—particularly in terms of ancient ἔθνη, Pauline or otherwise? Recalling Morgan’s discussion of the “hopeful risk” involved in πίστις alongside its connections with Berlant’s notion of optimism, it is possible that the optimistic attachment represented by πίστις could become what Berlant calls “cruel optimism.” She describes this concept “as a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be *impossible*, sheer fantasy, or *too* possible, and toxic.”¹³² In other words, the optimistic attachment promises satisfaction and benefits (as discussed above) but, in reality, this attachment actively prevents and works against the subject’s ability to attain such satisfaction, indeed to flourish.¹³³

It is possible, as Berlant acknowledges, to claim that *all* optimism is cruel since its promises are always potentially fleeting and their inability to be fulfilled cruelly inhibits not only the final promised satisfaction but also alternative modes of flourishing during the duration of attachment. Specifically, then, what makes optimism (more) “cruel” is when subjects are attached to promises that both can *never* be fulfilled and the ongoing conditions of the optimistic attachment are indeed what *actively prevent* their

¹³² Berlant, 24.

¹³³ Thus, it bears repeating Berlant: “A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (1).

fulfillment.¹³⁴ Such an attachment leaves subjects stuck in states of unfulfilled promises, always expecting that “this time” things will improve.

Cruel optimism affectively conditions ordinary life. It holds its subjects at an “impasse,” a holding pattern wherein, though the attachment prevents further flourishing, the rhythms of life sustained by such optimism become customary.¹³⁵ In such a state, the impasse allows subjects to retain something “normal,” even if that something also hinders satisfaction and/or prolongs a sense of misery.¹³⁶ The risk or fear of *letting go* of such an attachment—losing that normative pattern—holds subjects in optimism, regardless of how aware they may be of its cruelty.¹³⁷ These subjects tread water waiting for a buoy of assistance that is never going to come.

Often, then, cruel optimism creates and perpetuates a state that Berlant calls “crisis ordinariness,” wherein “crisis” can be experienced beyond and even apart from a momentary or contained event. Instead, a sensation of crisis ordinariness affects life in ways that elongates the variety of experiences contained in a crisis in such a way that they *feel* “normal.”¹³⁸ Indeed, what appears to an observer as a “crisis,” Berlant notes, is often for the subject “a fact of life, and has been a defining fact of life for a given population that *lives that crisis in ordinary time.*”¹³⁹ Like life at an impasse (and sometimes accompanying it), even though the constant strain of the crisis sensation tires and

¹³⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

¹³⁵ “An impasse is a holding station that doesn’t hold securely but opens out into anxiety, that dogpaddling around a space whose contours remain obscure. An impasse is decompositional—in the unbound temporality of the stretch of time, it marks a delay.” Ibid., 199. See further pp.199-200, where she names three broad types of impasse: (1) that caused by forced, often dramatic, loss; (2) that which occurs when one is “adrift in the normative;” (3) one that is improvisational and finds pleasure in lost sureties.

¹³⁶ See Berlant’s discussion of a “normativity hangover” and the affective impulse to “feel” normal in chapter 2 above.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹³⁸ See *ibid.*, 170-180, also 8-10, 81-82.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 101; emphasis added. Indeed, Berlant similarly notes about cruel optimism that it is sometimes more easily noticed by an observer (24).

threatens destruction, its ordinariness permits subjects to attain a sense of normalcy that is affectively hard to lose. As they mold life through these affective sensations that permit some normative experience of comfort (even while such “comfort” proves profoundly uncomfortable), both concepts allow subjects to maintain cruel optimism.

This cruel optimism, including the patterns of impasse and crisis ordinariness that often accompany it, is further sustained by “fantasies of the good life.”¹⁴⁰ In Berlant’s modern context, these fantasies generally amount to capitalism’s normative notions of success (financial, familial, political, and so on) and, more importantly, the *kinds* of lives people who have such success *seem* to lead: a well-paying job with regular hours, a well-behaved and properly-sized family, and participation in socially acceptable leisure activities, for example.¹⁴¹ The “good life” points a life that has attained these goals—or is sufficiently upwardly mobile to attain them in the near future. However, as Berlant indicates, such a concept of a “good life” is often a “fantasy” whose conditions are unattainable, or, even if they are achieved, the result is not as satisfying as the fantasy implies. Berlant observes that the good life “...is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and, at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it.”¹⁴² Cruel optimism, then, continues as such subjects trust in its promises that such a “good” “life” is desirable, whether or not it is actually attainable. Indeed, the need to cling to the affective normativities provided in crisis ordinariness or an impasse often stem from the perception that these norms structure their lives as if they are already living

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁴¹ See Berlant’s description/summary of *Rosetta* especially, as well as and in conversation with *La Promesse*: pp. 161-171.

¹⁴² Ibid., 27.

a/the “good life.”¹⁴³ Whatever the object or fantasy, cruel optimism attaches a subject to it and makes its loss feel and seem more unbearable than the cruelty that attachment to it sustains.

Cruel πίστις for Roman ἔθνη

If modern optimism can become cruel as a result of ultimately unattainable capitalist fantasies of the good life, then can Roman πίστις, functioning under the dominating pulses of kyriarchal assemblage, become “cruel πίστις”—an ancient version of Berlant’s “cruel optimism”? Certainly, the “hopeful risk” that Morgan identifies within any πίστις relation is comparable to the ways in which Berlant notes that all optimism could be called “cruel.” When one shows πίστις in another person or object, any ancient subject hopes for benefit from the relation while risking loss—even total destruction or death—if the other proves unreliable and breaks the bond. The degree of risk may vary depending on one’s situation or status, but the πίστις, like optimism, always requires its subjects to hopefully await the promised satisfaction in an anticipated future. However, as with modern optimism, is some πίστις inherently more cruel, not only never intending to fulfill this awaited benefit but also actively prohibiting present and future flourishing? Can a relation of πίστις hold some of its faithful subjects at an ancient impasse, perpetuating a state of crisis ordinary under Rome’s rule? When is πίστις’s risk actually a faithfully submissive rut?¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ In addition to the example of *Rosetta* (see chapter 2), Berlant discusses the impasses in the context of two films, *Time Out* and *Human Resources*, where characters actively *fake* the good life (performing a lie to their friends/family) despite having already failed to attain it or having lost it. This ultimately leads to an “implosion” for the main character. See “After the Good Life, An Impasse” (chapter 6) in Berlant, 191-222.

¹⁴⁴ Recalling the affective rut of aspirational normativity in *Rosetta* discussed in chapter 2, which is (now more clearly) the rut of cruel optimism.

For persons lower on the Roman socio-political hierarchy—and those from conquered *ἔθνη* in particular—the promises contained by displaying *πίστις* often offer opportunities for upward mobility, forming a Roman version of the capitalist fantasy of the “good life.” Indeed, cruel *πίστις* operates in contexts where upward mobility on the Roman socio-political hierarchy proves to be a fantasy. In theory, as Augustus’ *Res Gestae* suggest, Rome offers its newly secured *ἔθνη* full incorporation into the social and political apparatuses of the state, including the benefits of citizenship status and the possibility to rise on the social ladder to attain elite status. Thus, when extended to *ἔθνη*, the Roman notion of *πίστις*, as a relation based on trust and the implication of benefits, offered hope to these foreigners of lower status that their incorporation into Rome would result in these benefits, permitting them to realize the ideal of elite Roman “good life,” so long as they upheld *πίστις* and submitted to Roman rule.

In practice, however, this rise was difficult—if not impossible—for most to achieve. While the (already) elite among the *ἔθνη*, residing within their home territory, might be granted citizenship status, such status was primarily a confirmation of one’s high societal status in addition to one’s political allegiance to Rome (i.e., the elite leaders within an *ἔθνη* will ensure that those below them remain submissively aligned with Rome). In the first century, it is rare to find *ἔθνη* made Roman citizens *en masse*.¹⁴⁵

For *peregrini*—those foreign *ἔθνη* living in Rome—the conditions for citizenship and, by extension, further upward mobility was equally limited. Manumission from slavery was the most common method for attaining Roman citizenship (and “most

¹⁴⁵ It is not until 212 C.E. under Caracalla that Roman citizenship is extended widely to all the ethnic territories. See also Noy, 77-78.

common” in this scenario can neither be taken to mean “widespread” nor “easy”).¹⁴⁶ Even in this case, a manumitted slave, though now a Roman citizen, retains a lesser “freedperson” status, which limited aspects of social and political involvement and rise; and while one’s children would be freeborn citizens (if born after manumission), the stigma of the former enslavement would carry and limit increases in socio-political status.¹⁴⁷ Despite the *πίστις* these *ἔθνη* may have in being able to realize the “good life,” its promises prove to be a fantasy, difficult if not impossible for the vast majority of non-Roman foreigners to achieve. Sustained by their *πίστις*, the faithful submission of *ἔθνη* to Rome ensures their status as always around the bottom of Roman society, as defined by its imperial hierarchy.¹⁴⁸

“Faith” in imperial politics largely implies submission from the lower status party in exchange for (the hope of) benefits from the higher. In the case of Roman *ἔθνη*, this submission entails accepting and maintaining the proper postures of their conquered status as visualized in stylized depictions that were broadcast throughout these territories and in the city of Rome. Whether incorporated long ago or just defeated and whether living in their home territory or having migrated to Rome or elsewhere, non-Roman *ἔθνη*

¹⁴⁶ As Noy notes, 23-26, 286-287. Service in the Roman army was another route to citizenship, as Clarke notes. However, it was only granted at the completion of successful military service—often a twenty-five-year period and may have required the demonstration of valor on the field (as a form of loyalty to Rome against other *ἔθνη*). See Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 37-41.

¹⁴⁷ Looking at imagery in Trajan’s rule, Clarke looks at how “ordinary” non-Romans (especially those conquered) were encouraged to “read” the imagery in Rome’s forum. Thus, for example, “Trajan’s column projected a success story, where the Emperor’s virtues and the army’s *obedience* to the rules brought about victory *through hard and persistent work*.” Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 41. From this assessment, then, Clarke considers how this message encouraged non-Roman viewers to adopt similar mindsets of obedience that results in hard work within the system as a means to “victory” in the form of social mobility (he also acknowledges it is probable some conquered subjects may resist or find negative interpretations—the vast likelihood being that *both* interpretations existed); see pp.31-42.

¹⁴⁸ Of course, the majority of freeborn, native Romans also inevitably failed to achieve the “good life” seen among and only available to the wealthy elite; however, the conquered position of the *ἔθνη* ultimately makes most cruel the *πίστις* they must show towards Rome and its people.

were always “under” the Roman people; they were always submissive, always conquered, always “un-men.” The relation of *πίστις* that Augustus and his successors offer these *ἔθνη* they conquered requires them to maintain the receptive, feminized, and physically lower positions that Rome forced upon them in defeat: a Briton will always be a version of that female Britannia, held down under Claudius’s sword, poised to be penetrated by the emperor as the ultimate representation of dominant Roman masculinity.

According to Rome’s hierarchy, domination *over*—political, economic, sexual, and social—is a prerequisite for entrance into its upper echelons. In the mindset of the Romans, all *ἔθνη* under its control will always be *under*; they are forever peoples who have been and will continue to be dominated by Rome’s superior political and military power—and are therefore (as the gendered imagery bear witness) always penetrated, always feminized. Such a mindset underscores the practical impossibility of “the good life” for these *ἔθνη*. As such, in order to prove their ongoing fidelity to Rome—to display *πίστις* in return for that offered by its emperor and *populus*—these people must remain submissive and conquered to prove they can be trust not to attempt to dominate or overpower Rome. In other words, *πίστις* requires these *ἔθνη* to always be “under” in the mindset of the Roman hierarchy. Proper *πίστις* for Roman *ἔθνη* requires submission, and this faithful submission is cruel *πίστις*. It prevents upward mobility on the Roman hierarchy and sets the terms that make fantastical the ability to flourish as Rome’s elite.

Paul's Cruel πίστις

Admittedly, the relation Paul envisions for his audience of *ἔθνη* involves God and Jesus Christ as opposed to the emperor and the *populus Romano*; however, these Roman

conceptions of *πίστις* as outlined above, particularly in relation to *ἔθνη*, would have informed how Paul and his audience thought about *πίστις*-relations with other forms of authority, include divine. Therefore, aspects of Paul's theology that express a Roman-without-Rome ideology make possible that *πίστις* in Romans could become cruel. Paul's vision of the establishment of God's justice on earth largely retains the structures and hierarchy of the imperial regime while it replaces those who rule with God and Jesus. In so doing, it is implied that God will restructure the retained hierarchy, making upward mobility possible for these *ἔθνη* (alongside faithfully obedient Jews) upon the coming establishment of God's reign. In order to gain this higher status, *ἔθνη* should (now) demonstrate their *πίστις*, their faithful submission, to God's rule and the newly established hierarchy under God and the earthly *κύριος* Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, as it turns out, this *πίστις*, which Paul promises will allow these followers the hope of a "good life," requires submission. The *πίστις*, exemplified through Jesus, betrays that the relationship envisioned between God and a faithful follower is one where *πίστις* is unequal and hierarchical. It is like one between emperor and subject, master and slave, husband and wife—not one between friends or political allies with equal investment. Indeed, though the promised reward is great, the risk incurred is greater for those who faithfully submit than it is for the faithful God (who, unlike the emperor, does not need the faithful submission of loyal subjects to retain control over the empire). To be submissive in this way means that these loyal subjects of God's empire prove their unsuitability for upward mobility according to the logic and ideologies of imperial hierarchies, which requires that those at the top dominate, whether socially, politically, or sexually. Despite the hope engendered by Jesus Christ's *πίστις*, the submission this *πίστις*

requires ultimately works to inhibit flourishing and the rise of lower class ἔθνη on the imperial hierarchy, whether it is topped by Caesar or God. Jesus' raising is the elite exception that keeps all other ἔθνη in their posture of faithful submission, hoping for a similar rise.

The faithful submission that defines Paul's cruel πίστις becomes especially apparent in the sexual dimensions that undergird Jesus' πίστις in Romans, which subsequently becomes a model for the ἔθνη who are to number among his followers. By showing how the logic of the Roman imperial sexual hierarchy pervades Romans 1:18-32, Moore logically asks why such logic would not extend into later chapters of the letter.¹⁴⁹ He argues, based on the logic of Rome's penetrative hierarchy, that Jesus' submissive position vis-à-vis God in Romans 3 implies sexual passivity and availability to God.¹⁵⁰ God's authority places God above Jesus on this hierarchy, so that Jesus' sexual position is literally under God, the top (an, or the, "impenetrable penetrator" as Walters would say, or the "Bottomless Top" as Moore prefers).¹⁵¹ Identifying this as the "sexual substratum of Paul's soteriology," Moore observes, "Stripped naked and spread out on the cross, run through with sundry phallic objects, Jesus in his relationship to God perfectly models the submissiveness that should also characterize the God-fearing female's proper relationship to the male."¹⁵² This substratum connects the overt appearance of Greco-Roman sexual norms in 1:18-32 to the logic of Paul's overall argument in Romans 1-5, in particular the significance of Jesus' death as portrayed in

¹⁴⁹ Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 169-172.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 156.

¹⁵¹ Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 170, see also p. 169; Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 30.

¹⁵² Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor*, 156.

Romans 3 that is central to this argument.¹⁵³ Moore's analysis thus identifies how sexual submission according to the pervasive logic of the penetrative hierarchy infuses Pauline theology, particularly as it relates to the significance of Jesus' death.

This "sexual substratum" underlines the submission that I have shown to be central to the portrayal of πίστις in Romans. In addition to its political and social dimensions, faithful submission, through displays of πίστις toward an impenetrable God, has sexual implications. Jesus' πίστις, according to 3:21-26, permits God to set him out for God's purposes (προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως, 3:25); Jesus' body is literally entrusted to God to use as God pleases.¹⁵⁴ Even though God does not use Jesus' body for overtly sexual purposes (at least in Paul's accounting), according to Rome's socio-sexual hierarchy, such a trusting relation signals passivity: placement under in one dimension implies that one can be placed under in others. If God is entrusted with the power of placement, then Jesus faithfully submits to being placed into a position that is most beneficial—indeed, pleasing—toward God. Jesus' πίστις provokes God's pleasure.

Since Jesus' πίστις provides a model for his followers—from his πίστις into theirs (1:17)—it follows that πίστις for the ἔθνη addressed by Paul should also be directed toward God's benefit and pleasure. If Jesus willingly places himself under God, so too must those who follow (the model of) Christ. Since πίστις entails such faithful

¹⁵³ Moore identifies his reading as a logical extension of work on the penetrative hierarchy (particularly deriving from Foucault and Halperin) and Bernadette Brooten's exegesis of Romans 1:18-32 in *Love Between Women*. Moore proceeds to protrude further into Romans and applies this logic to Romans 3 with aid from Stowers' rereading, especially his assertion that self-mastery (ἐγκράτεια) was a central concern in the first century, in particular including Paul's audience (and therefore, Paul). See Stowers, 42-82.

¹⁵⁴ In the context of his slave appearance, connection could be made to the sexual use of slaves and its meaning in terms of a divine master (sometimes called κύριος, though not by Paul). Indeed, I use a similar phrase about God's use of Mary in Hoke, "Behold the Lord's Whore? Slavery, Prostitution, and Luke 1:38," *Biblical Interpretation* (forthcoming).

submission to God, then those who follow Christ Jesus must participate in this sexual availability (penetrable under God) that is implicit in Paul's praise of Jesus' faithful submission unto death.¹⁵⁵ Just as Jesus submits and offers his body as entirely penetrable, not only by his imperial executioners but also by the impenetrable, ever-πιστός God of Romans, in Romans these ἔθνη find πίστις being extended to them by God, who increasingly looks like a more powerful and divine version of Augustus as he extends πίστις to πλεῖστα ἄλλα ἔθνη.¹⁵⁶

As with Rome's conquered ἔθνη, who were thought of and portrayed as being sexually penetrable (in addition to socially and politically lower), the "Gentiles"—the ἔθνη—of Romans assume a position of submission to God, following the model of Jesus, who is lifted over them as their κύριος. According to the logic of this kyriarchal assemblage, in order to display πίστις, it follows that, like Jesus, the ἔθνη of Romans are "under God" in the same ways that they are under Caesar, politically, socially, and even sexually. Penetrable and submissive, these ἔθνη assume the posture of Britannia to Claudius, brought into faithful (albeit perhaps more willing) submission to an all-powerful deity.

Like the πίστις offered to ἔθνη (including *peregrini*) by imperial Rome, the πίστις-relation with God described in Romans offers ἔθνη a path toward "the good life" and upward mobility, especially in the form of δικαιοσύνη ("justice"). The imperial language that occurs throughout Romans 1-5 grounds the argument that Jesus' πίστις is rooted in

¹⁵⁵ As Moore's layout of Pauline soteriology suggested.

¹⁵⁶ Thus, the character of these ἔθνη in Romans cannot be separated from the political situation of ἔθνη in the Roman Empire: they both refer to persons who come from nations whom the emperor has conquered, as Lopez argues.

trusting that God has a plan to make just (or, justly benefit) all ἔθνη (“Jews first then Greeks”). This plan, as discussed above, presumes that God will establish God’s own reign in Rome, replacing the reigning emperor while retaining the basic structures of empire and its hierarchies. As with Caesar’s ἔθνη, the πίστις offered by God extends the promise of justice—of a better relation to power and, hence, a better life—to many peoples. As in imperial πίστις-relations, then, God’s πίστις to the ἔθνη produces hope for upward mobility.

This πίστις-relation attaches ἔθνη to God in a relation of optimism, promising them the benefits of justice that have not been realized under Roman rule.¹⁵⁷ The πίστις of these followers trusts not only that God’s justice will be established, that God will reign as an all-powerful emperor with all people under God, but also that, once this system is established, those who have displayed proper πίστις to God will be uplifted in the same way as Christ has. Christ’s faithful submission unto death results in his rising: not just from death but also from lowest status (as a condemned traitor to empire) to highest status as a κύριος under God’s coming reign. In other words, he is raised from death to a life that is not only new but that is also *good*. Following Christ, the hope of these ἔθνη is that they too will be raised from their low position to that of the elite nearest the top, thus finally able to achieve the “good life.”

Unfortunately, just as the πίστις of many ἔθνη and *peregrini* in Rome can be called cruel in light of Rome’s imperial hierarchy, the πίστις that Paul portrays in Rome proves cruel. It retains the submissive forces of kyriarchal assemblage, envisioning a system of

¹⁵⁷ Once again, God’s promises echo Berlant’s theory, offering a fantasy of justice: “just the right way.”

power that places all persons under God and then under Christ. The *πίστις* that properly defines Christ followers requires submission. Receiving benefits from God, all the *ἔθνη* must be led into the obedience of their *πίστις* (1:5); their *πίστις* is definitionally submissive, always a *πίστις* that requires them to be lower than and under the ultimate ruling authority. This literal “placing under” of faithful submission, therefore, has negative implications for socio-economic status in a system of imperial kyriarchy, whether Rome’s or one that is Roman-without-Rome.¹⁵⁸ From such a view, the faithful submission of Romans 1-5 must always be a cruel *πίστις*.

Romans’ sexual substrata, which demonstrates the penetrability of those who display *πίστις*, underscores the cruelty of faithful submission. If Jesus’ faithful submission to God’s plan for justice demonstrated his penetrability, then the faithful submission of his followers among the *ἔθνη* proves they they are even more penetrable, being both under God and under Jesus Christ. If during his first coming, Jesus Christ submissively bent over to be fucked by God, then he (alongside God) will get to top his submissive followers for his second coming.¹⁵⁹ They are indeed faithful bottoms always available to their master-Christ and the impenetrably penetrating emperor-God, who is forever established as a “top without a bottom.”¹⁶⁰ Willingly under God and Christ, their

¹⁵⁸ God’s coming reign, in other words, will produce the upward mobility, in political, socio-economic, and (perhaps) “spiritual” terms, for which these low-status *ἔθνη/peregrini* have been hoping under Rome’s imperial promises (e.g., that of *πίστις/fides* for faithfully submissive *ἔθνη*). That God’s coming reign is discussed in real, Roman terms means that it cannot be severed from Roman socio-economic systems, even if God (and Jesus) are neither Julio-Claudian ruler nor “native Romans.” Regardless of how much Paul’s language may hope for it, his Roman-without-Rome ideology mitigates against a total transformation of the system. In this ideology, as this discussion (and others like it) has revealed, *the only “new” thing God’s reign seems to offer is a different emperor who reshuffles the pre-existing hierarchy* (much like every current Julio-Claudian emperor has promised). God’s reign may be “divine,” but the language used for it imagines the “good life” in political and socio-economic terms that offer hope for lived realities.

¹⁵⁹ Pushing further Moore’s language of Paul’s sexual substrata in *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 146-169.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

faithful submission places them in an endless position of powerlessness and passivity that, according to the socio-sexual hierarchy of empire and its *πίστις*, undermines the hope for upward mobility.

πίστις in Romans 1-5 is cruel, then, because, despite its hope for increased status under God's reign, its portrayal as "faithful submission" under God infinitely inhibits that hope to flourish. Under this imperial and kyriarchal framework, submission and obedience are always connected to those who are less powerful politically, passive and penetrable sexually, and ultimately lower socially. Under such a logic, the hope of *πίστις* attaches these *ἔθνη* who follow Christ to a fantasy of upward mobility that they hope will be achieved with the establishment of God's justice as emperor. However, it is a fantasy that is impossible so long as God's power is presented in kyriarchally and imperially defined terms, as Paul does.

Throughout Paul's cruel *πίστις*, where do he and other Christ-followers find themselves? In a *delay* (*ἀνοχή*)—quite literally an "impasse" in Berlant's terms—in which God's wrath is held back to permit *ἔθνη* to enter God's reign. At this impasse, the ultimate crisis is delayed, as is the promised "good life" that is hoped for in the revelation of God's justice. *πίστις* is the posture that is encouraged for *ἔθνη* following Christ (who also assumed this submissive posture before his exceptional rise to great power) as they wait in this indefinite impasse. Unfortunately, this faithfully submissive posture ensures their ongoing penetrably lower status, prolonging the impasse of an imperially structured life. Thus, this fantasy of mobility contained in Pauline *πίστις* (a mobility that can be occasionally realized in insignificant increments, as in the more general situation of

Roman ἔθνη) merely sustains the submission that leaves them faithfully frozen in their lower position under imperial terms.

But why continue this cruel πίστις? Does Paul's imperial language betray an intentional alignment with the conquest and domination of Rome? Not necessarily.¹⁶¹ As with Berlant's cruel optimism, cruel πίστις is sustained by affective attachments to systems and ideologies of imperial domination that have long become normative, a fact of "ordinary" life that for most subjects is an extended state of crisis. Having created "comfort" in a state of crisis ordinary, these affective attachments cling to senses of stability, to those structures and patterns that have become and feel "normal." Paul, and perhaps some of his hearers, need to retain the familiarity of a πίστις-relation that relies on faithful submission to power.

As she discusses the impasses that often indicate cruel optimism, Berlant observes of her stuck subjects, "Cruel optimism or not, they feel attached to the *soft hierarchies of inequality* to provide a sense of their place in the world."¹⁶² This insight emerges from Berlant's discussion of film characters who pretend to be living the ideal "good life" despite their actual inability to achieve such a life. They perform the social, sexual, and/or political terms of modern capitalist ideology, trusting that it might eventually lead to the flourishing it actually prevents. Likewise, Paul's cruel πίστις in Romans 1-5 provides the holding pattern by which Christ-followers can cling in faithful submission to the hope of flourishing under Roman imperial terms. This cruel πίστις and the imperial ideology it sustains enable an experience of comfortable familiarity during this delay

¹⁶¹ This statement does not forbid the possibility of intentionality on Paul's part, but the question of intent is irrelevant as intent is not needed for such alignments to occur.

¹⁶² Berlant, 194. Emphasis added.

(which one must hope does not turn out to be an infinite impasse). Drawn into kyriarchal assemblage, it ultimately reproduces a “soft hierarchy of inequality” under the “just” rule of an imperial God and the obedient lord/master (κύριος) Christ.

CHAPTER 4

FAITHFUL SUBVERSION

If the imperial context of Paul's *πίστις* proves it to be cruel, then can other theo-Christological concepts or responses be imagined within the *ἐκκλησία*? And could such alternative impulses—in conversation with Paul's suggestions—produce a more hopeful theo-Christological vision when read alongside his letter to the Romans? While the preceding chapter considered how Paul's singular voice can be heard as a participant in the cruel optimism of Rome's kyriarchal assemblage, this chapter de-centers Paul's ideas in Romans and considers them as one participant in an *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. This *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage manifested in the bodies, voices, sensations, movements, and gestures that participated in the *ἐκκλησία* that assembled in Rome. While *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage prompts change and movement in directions that differ from Rome's kyriarchy, these ideas (including Paul's as one among many participants) do not solely exist in opposition to kyriarchal assemblage. However, by containing alternatives to kyriarchy, this *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, as we will see, can produce changes that disrupt its force, even as some of its movements are drawn back into alignment with kyriarchal assemblage.

This assemblage could hold multiple theo-Christological ideas, some of which differed significantly and, as a result, could produce tensions, conflicts, and debates among participants in the *ἐκκλησία*. By suggesting some plausible ideas that could have existed within such an assemblage, a more dynamic theo-Christology—really, an assemblage of theo-Christologies—emerges. This more dynamic theo-Christology has

space to encompass and include Paul's ideas, but it is neither reliant upon them nor based entirely in response (e.g., affirmation or rejection) of them. Certainly, they prompt shifts and changes within an *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, but they are not the only forces or factors that motivate its movement. Therefore, just as Paul's ideas may have affected the minds and bodies of some listeners, his ideas are also changed when they were taken into the myriad ideas and sensations contained in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. In other words, the ideas in Romans 3-5 take their place as one among many in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*.

Since Rome's *ἐκκλησία* had not had prior contact with Paul and had been gathering together well before receiving this letter, some form of this dynamic theo-Christology already existed in the *ἐκκλησία* and its assemblage. Although we have no historical evidence of its conversations and debates prior to or following the receipt of Paul's letter, it is highly unlikely their theo-Christologies (especially since they likely existed in multiple versions) fully matched that expressed by Paul. If Paul's theo-Christology entered into and interacted within a pre-existing conversation, then, in order to reconstruct this conversation *with* Paul's ideas, it would be helpful to situate them alongside these differing formulations. Unfortunately, the different ideas of Rome's *ἐκκλησία* were never recorded and cannot even be reconstructed via rhetorical criticism (as done with other letters, most notably Corinth). This leaves Paul as the solely verifiable theo-Christology that was expressed in first-century Rome.

As my theoretical development of *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage already insisted in chapter 2, we know the dynamic theo-Christology in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* was formed within a conversation that included expressions from different bodies. However, even if we can assert the historical value of a "conversation without content," this lack of

concrete, different theo-Christological expressions continues to allow Paul's still-visible expression to dominate discussions, both ancient and modern. In order to reconstruct a conversation with Paul's ideas among many, then, it is necessary to proffer a more tangible and visible representation of this many-ness. In what follows, I propose several different *plausible* theo-Christological ideas—or, better put, *impulses*—that could have directed, moved, or informed some of the theo-Christological alternatives that swirled together in Rome's ἐκκλησία-I assemblage.

These theo-Christological proposals are necessarily speculative because there is no evidence to verify their expression in Rome's ἐκκλησία—but, by the same token, there is also no evidence to disprove them. However, I contend that each of my proliferations of different theo-Christological impulses holds *speculative plausibility*: although they contain some elements of imagination that cannot be verified, they are based upon evidence that grounds them and makes it plausible that they could have existed, at least approximately. In order to affirm this speculative plausibility, I draw from first-century evidence to show how aspects of these impulses existed in other first-century spaces and argue that this evidence can be interpreted in ways that make my own speculations credible.

In this chapter, the evidence from which I draw comes from a wide and sometime eclectic-seeming range of sources, perspectives, and locations. I will frequently appeal to Paul's letters as evidence, particularly from letters that contain evidence of conversations and ideas originated by other Christ-followers whom Paul cites. In my proliferation of plausible theo-Christological ideas, I especially draw from the expressions about God and Christ that are contained in some the formulas/hymns of early Christ-followers. Thus, I

appeal to the evidence of Gal. 3:28 and Phil. 2:6-11, both of which appear to be fragments of early theo-Christological formulations that existed prior to Paul's letters. While we do not have evidence of the extent of their circulation, it is plausible they reached Rome in some form, and, even if not, they provide evidence upon which different theo-Christological expressions can be based.

While these formulaic fragments contained in Paul's letters provide a basis for differing theo-Christological impulses among first-century Christ-followers, evidence from sources beyond the texts of early Christianity make plausible other aspects of my alternative proliferations, in this chapter, most notably from Philo. These instances show how such impulses could be formulated by various parties across the Roman world and, therefore, were not anomalous to a single movement. If these ideas existed elsewhere and circulated within the vast expanse of Rome's kyriarchal assemblage, their existence lends plausibility to their potential effect on the theo-Christologies of Christ-followers in Rome.

In what follows, therefore, I will suggest three plausible—and potentially less cruel—ideas about Jesus and God that might have been proffered or held within this *ἐκκλησία* in order to consider how Paul's ideas in Romans could have conversed and debated with alternative opinions. The first idea, “God's Equals,” works with Jesus being *ἴσα θεοῦ* (“equal to God,” Phil. 2:6) and considers a plausible egalitarian theo-Christological impulse that could arise from such a hymnic form. Continuing off the implications of this impulse and Phil. 2:6-8, the second, “Drowning Jesus,” considers other Christological interpretations of Jesus' death that may avoid some of the crueler fantasies found in Paul's formulation. The third impulse, “Kyriarchal Christs,” considers

attestations of Jesus as *κύριος* and queries the ways that such an attribution might indicate a variety of theo-Christological impulses, independent of Paul, could still participate in kyriarchal assemblage. In the final section of this chapter, I attempt to represent how these ideas interacted, aligned, and clashed in *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage as I mix these three impulses with those of Paul in Romans 3-5. In so doing, I spell out several plausible impulses that could have emerged, in tandem and in tension, among the diverse bodies that assembled in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*.

God's Equals

The existence of theo-Christological ideas that were oriented toward egalitarianism offer a basis from which some wo/men in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* could have embraced a variety of responses to the cruelly optimistic theo-Christological vision presumed and encapsulated in Romans 3:21-31. These egalitarian impulses could include responses that were more critical of Paul's theo-Christology and its alignments within Rome's kyriarchal assemblage. Egalitarianism denotes movements and ideas that attempt to equalize bodies that are always different. It admits its vision is utopian; egalitarianism exists as an ideal but its embodiment is always changing as bodies change, interact, and exist in different ways.¹ As such, we can speak of "egalitarian impulses" that existed in the first century, today, and throughout history. They are "impulses" because they are mobile: they are striving to be enacted nonegalitarian contexts; their visions of what an

¹ On egalitarianism within feminist historiography and the Jesus movement, see especially Mary Ann Beavis, "Christian Origins, Egalitarianism, and Utopia," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23, no. 2 (2007): 27-49; esp. pp. 31-36, 43-48.

“egalitarian society” looks like are always changing and differ among the diverse bodies that hold them.²

Feminist historiography has long affirmed the historical existence of egalitarianism among the earliest Christ-followers.³ These egalitarian impulses, are particularly encapsulated in the pre-Pauline baptismal formula of Gal. 3:28: οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγν, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“There is no longer Jew nor Greek; there is no longer slave nor free; there is no longer male and female. For all y’all are one in Christ Jesus.”)⁴ This hymn claims the unrealized potential for a world where there are no distinctions based on status, here named as class, ethnicity, and gender. Even though every body is different, all are included as participants in an ἐκκλησία-l assemblage, and the individual

² Historians often deny the existence of egalitarian impulses on the grounds that such ambitious ideals (namely, perfect equality) are impossible in societies that are hierarchical and radically nonegalitarian. Assessing these judgments, Matthews shows their problematic assumption: “Taken together, these positions subject the ancient world to particularly high standards for what constitutes egalitarian strivings and utopian ideals, while assuming that such high standards have been currently met.” Matthews, “A Feminist Analysis of the Veiling Passage (1 Corinthians 11:2-16): Who Really Cares that Paul Was Not a Gender Egalitarian After All?” *Lectio Difficilior* 2 (2015), 8. See also Beavis, 36-42, esp. p.40.

³ See especially Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; Beavis; Castelli, “*Ekklēsia* of Women;” Johnson-DeBaufre, “Dreaming the Common Good/s: The Kin-dom of God as a Space of Utopian Politics” in *Common Goods: Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology*, ed. Johnson-DeBaufre, Catherine Keller, and Elias Ortega-Aponte (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 103-123; Matthews, “A Feminist Analysis of the Veiling Passage.”

⁴ “I have sought to read the baptismal formula as an articulation of the emancipatory vision of a broad-based egalitarian Jewish movement whose language Paul shares but which he seeks to control.... Methodologically one must read Gal. 3:28 as *the tip of the iceberg that indicates what Paul’s text submerges.*” Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 169, see further pp.149-173. See also, Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 205-241; Sheila Briggs, “Galatians,” in *Searching the Scriptures: Vol. 2, A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Schüssler Fiorenza with Matthews (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 218-236; Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, 164; Matthews, “A Feminist Analysis of the Veiling Passage.” For alternative perspectives/histories, which often prioritize Paul and query the hymn’s egalitarian potentials (of which both Matthews and Schüssler Fiorenza are especially critical), see Lone Fatum, “The Glory of God and the Image of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregations,” in *The Image of God and Gender Models in Judeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 50–133; Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 77-90; Brigitte Kahl, “Der Brief an die Gemeinden in Galatien: Vom Unbehagen der Geschlechter und anderen Problemen des Andersseins,” in *Kompendium feministischer Bibelauslegung*, ed. Louise Schottroff and Marie-Therese Wacker (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 603-611.

ἐκκλησίαι where these followers gathered represented spaces where these burgeoning ideas could proliferate, interact, expand, and clash. Such egalitarian impulses are utopian, both as a historical reality and always anticipating a different future.⁵

Such egalitarian ideas might impact theo-Christology by considering other plausible relations between God and Jesus, as a model for followers. If oriented in egalitarian directions, some of these relations could differ from and even counteract Jesus' submissive posture found in Paul's presentation of his placement, under God's authority, in Romans. One plausible relation that could complement the vision of Gal 3:28 is a relation to God expressed in plausibly egalitarian terms: ἴσα θεοῦ, "equal to God" or even "on egalitarian terms with God."⁶ While the Greek adjective ἴσος is frequently used to indicate mathematical equality (often in quite technical terms, such as by Euclid), its meaning extends beyond pure mathematics within socio-political contexts to indicate equality based on rights, division of power, or fairness.⁷ While the term does not solely contain egalitarian impulses, these usages indicate that the term cannot be said to be devoid of such a meaning (i.e., it is lexically plausible). I would argue such a meaning is especially plausible when used or heard by Christ-followers who were working within egalitarian visions like (but not limited to) Gal. 3:28.

Thus, alongside this pre-Pauline baptismal formula, such an idea can be derived from the visions contained in Philippians' Christ Hymn, which likely circulated among

⁵ E.g., Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 353-372; Castelli, "Ekklēsia of Women;" Johnson-DeBaufre, "Dreaming the Common Good/s."

⁶ "Paul's interpretation and adaptation of the baptismal declaration Gal 3:28 in his letters to the community of Corinth unequivocally affirm the equality and charismatic giftedness of women and men in the Christian community." Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 235. See further discussion of Gal. 3:28 below.

⁷ "ἴσος," LSJ, 839.

Christ-followers in various ἐκκλησίαι across Rome's territories.⁸ This hymn proclaims, at its start in Phil. 2:6, of Christ Jesus: ὅς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων/οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο/τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεοῦ (“Who, existing in God's form,/did not consider it something exploitable/to be equal to God”). Even if the followers assembled in Rome did not know the exact hymn quoted in Phil. 2, the ideas it espouses—including Jesus' “equality with God”—are plausibly familiar, just as those held in Gal. 3:28 were. Given this, what might it mean for first-century theo-Christology in the Roman ἐκκλησία if some followers took seriously the statement that Jesus was ἴσα θεοῦ (“equal to God”)?

One plausible interpretation of this idea moves beyond assuming it to solely mean that Jesus is “God-like” in terms of divine powers, knowledge, and abilities; instead, it takes Jesus and God to be equals in a socio-political sense.⁹ In such an interpretation, there is no power imbalance between the two (even if one is fully divine and one is of human origin).¹⁰ In other words, it denies Jesus' submission *to God*. In such an idea, God's power diverges from the Roman imperial model of power, wherein the godlike

⁸ Such circulation would have meant the hymn had several, slightly differing, oral-based versions.

⁹ *Contra* Stowers, 219-220. He argues it means “similar to God in some respects” (drawing comparison to a usage of the phrase in Homer), making it similar in effect to μορφή, used soon after: “Paul's wording quite precisely says that Jesus was godlike or Godlike but not equal to God” (220). However, as LSJ attests, the word was used quite frequently, with multiply meanings for this “equality,” certainly (as Stowers argues) equal in appearance (“like”), but it can also refer to size, rights, power, authority, strength, and generally “equal relations.” I do not deny that Stowers' interpretation one way this can be (and has been) interpreted, but it is not the only way it may have been heard by first-century audiences, given this wide semantic range and usage, and it seems quite restrictive to limit it to this (very traditionally, theologically-charged) meaning based on an example from Homer, who (although influential) used a very different style and version of Greek than that heard on the streets of first-century Rome. See further, “ἴσος,” LSJ, 839.

¹⁰ Here I will defer from fully speculating on whether Jesus is/was a God, except to note that much of the argument and discourse about this (and particularly ideas of Jesus as “fully God”) do not develop in any full sense until well after the first century. To be sure, there is early evidence of Jesus being seen as (always) having divine status/origin, and it is plausible that some in the ἐκκλησία ascribed to such an idea; but it is equally plausible that others saw Jesus as (solely) “fully human.” And it is most probable that most fell in-between the two “poles.” My reconstructions take most seriously the implications of stressing Jesus' humanity, but I do not think they are incompatible with (at least some) ways of thinking of Jesus as a “God” who becomes human.

emperor reigns over all others.¹¹ (No one can be called ἴσα Καῖσαρ.) Thinking of Jesus as God’s equal opens avenues to conceiving God’s power and justice differently, as something that is unlimited and sharable. Such an ideal represents one, among many, plausible theo-Christologies that worked to express some of the egalitarian impulses within Rome’s ἐκκλησία.

According to the hierarchy of Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage, having an “equal” (as opposed to being alone “on top”) makes one vulnerable to exploitation, penetration, and being brought “down.” Thus, Phil 2:6 proclaims that Jesus did not exploit or take advantage—ἀρπαγμός, the act of robbing or seizing power and wealth—of his being equal to God.¹² Such an occurrence would have been unexpected based on Roman (or Greek or Jewish) accounts of human history; he who is on top is he who has most exceptionally exploited power. Jesus embodies a different, egalitarian-leaning ideal that, within δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, sharing power does not necessarily entail a reduction of one’s own status or control in order to raise another. What follows from Jesus’ equality is Jesus’ submission and appearance as a slave: γενόμενος ὑπήκοος and μορφήν δούλου λαβών as the Christ Hymn phrases it. However, it is plausible to hear these ideas to say: *Jesus’ submission is not to God*. In fact, his necessary submission only conforms to Roman conceptions of submission as he submits himself *to Roman imperial rule*,

¹¹ And indeed, the pantheon of the Roman gods has a hierarchy of power and control, which stands above Caesar.

¹² Here assuming the hapax legomenon, ἀρπαγμός, in Phil. 2:6 means—as it is typically interpreted—to refer to exploitation as seizing or exploiting (as in robbery or rape in other ancient examples), although the specifics have been long debated (but seem to point to this general meaning, at least). See “ἀρπαγμός,” LSJ, 245. For, to date, the most recent exposition on this quite “difficult” word—and an overview of scholarly debate and translation—see Michael Wade Martin, “ἀρπαγμός Revisited: A Philological Reexamination of the New Testament’s ‘Most Difficult Word,’” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135 (2016): 175-194; for overview of commentaries on this term, see p.176n.3.

becoming a slave in their eyes and worthy of the most ignoble death for defying the justice of the state.

If Jesus serves as an example or model for other humans (especially non-Jews) to follow into full participation in *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (“God’s justice”), then it is possible that for some the hope he engendered stems from the possibility of equality with God, in social, political, and economic terms. Jesus’ status as God’s equal does not make Jesus a unique “hero” to save the people who are and always will be “below” him in status and capability: he provides a model by which his followers can envision *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* and work together to continue accomplishing it.¹³ This model is one in which all are equal to God and therefore equal to one another: an *ἐκκλησία* that is a “discipleship of equals” *alongside Jesus and God*, a God whose power is not kinglike or imperial.¹⁴ In this interpretation, God’s power is shared power, and *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* means a world where sharing with God means that this shared power, instead of being exploited to benefit some more than others in hierarchal fashion, is something that can realize an actual, utopian “good life” that has more, even if not always perfect, potential to be “good” for different bodies.

How does Jesus’ relation as *ἴσα θεοῦ* affect the fact of his submission to Rome (and its imperial authority) that results in his humiliation/lowering in status (*ἐταπείνωσεν*)? One plausible possibility is that Jesus’ relation with God empowered him to act as God’s equal in first-century society, despite the socio-political ramifications of

¹³ Indeed, one hopes that Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah’s move to reveal voices and conversations “beyond the heroic Paul” might reveal—within these conversations—ideas that get “beyond the heroic [as an extension of the historical?] Jesus.” (And perhaps foreground a similar move in biblical studies and Christian theology.)

¹⁴ On the term, development, and historicity of the “discipleship of equals” see Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, esp. pp.99-104; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*.

his actions within imperial rule. In other words, Jesus provides his followers with an example of how being conquered and forced into submission *does not impact* his equality with God. In such ideas, submission is not a preferred posture for anyone; it is not a requirement for *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. Submission, therefore, does not make anyone “better” in God’s—or anyone else’s—eyes. In fact, such a a conception of “better” is impossible because all, including God, are moving toward a more egalitarian vision that is yet-to-be fully embodied.

Thus, it is quite plausible that some wo/men in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* combined egalitarian impulses with their burgeoning theo-Christological ideas. It is, therefore, plausible that some forms of the ideas proliferated here, i.e., the implications of Jesus being *ἴσα θεοῦ*, informed wo/men’s responses to Paul’s letter to Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*. Within a logic of speculative plausibility, the exact ideas elaborated above may not have been voiced or sensed in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, but they represent partial plausibilities of the diverse theo-Christologies we know existed, with some likely to have taken an egalitarian orientation. However, the difficulty of practicing and agreeing about the details of such egalitarianism—in the *ἐκκλησία* and beyond—should not be underemphasized or ignored. While some may more readily imagine the implications of equality, others would find it difficult to escape the imperial terms and structures that are all they know and have become “comfortable.”¹⁵ Even if they hope to escape this system, they may experience discomfort with the risk of abandoning the familiar imperial waters in which they tread.

¹⁵ “We don’t tend to notice what is comfortable, even when we think we do.” Ahmed, 146. Ahmed’s work on affect and queer theory/phenomenology point to (emotional) sensations of comfort, and how comfort produces “orientation” while discomfort (or its threat) disorients bodies. See Ahmed, 146-148.

Drowning Jesus

It is fairly clear that Jesus' death held considerable significance among his earliest followers. His crucifixion is central to the proclamations of Phil. 2:6-8 (the first half of the Christ Hymn) and the mini-climax of Paul's theo-Christological explanation in Romans 3:21-31. Jesus' death, alongside his attendant raising, is one of the few historical details about him that are mentioned in Paul's letters, and this is the detail that Paul emphasizes most consistently.¹⁶ Given the evidence of *ἐκκλησία*-l debates found in Paul's letters and the plurality of theo-Christological histories and interpretations of Jesus' life and death that proliferated in the first centuries C.E., it is highly probable that participants in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* interpreted the significance of Jesus' death differently, or, at least, they considered and discussed interpretations that differed from Paul's. Given the especially cruel implications of Paul's theo-Christology in Romans 3:21-31, this section considers how interpretations of Jesus' death could have differently drawn toward egalitarian visions like those considered above.

Berlant's image of "treading water" conveys an aspirational normativity that creates conditions for cruel optimism. But when is a struggle an act of subversion or resistance that is slowly "swimming" towards change, and when does it become merely a holding pattern that prevents both drowning and swimming? And (how) would subjects have been able to recognize the cruelty of imperial ideals of social mobility that sustained a rigid, yet flexible-seeming, kyriarchal assemblage through ideals like *πίστις*? Furthermore, if many Roman subjects (and in particular, those in the *ἐκκλησία*) are

¹⁶ Paul exhibits little interest in the details of Jesus' ministry, teaching, and life such as those accounted for by the Gospel tradition, though he does mention in Rom 1:3 that Jesus was born in the lineage of David.

treading in imperial waters, is there an escape from this pattern that does not merely move them into another situation of cruel optimism? Perhaps the most popular theo-Christological answer, sustained over centuries, is to make Jesus the almighty lifeguard who offers a buoy of salvation to these slowly drowning subjects. Jesus' death and resurrection "saves" (literally) by overcoming death for all and promising new life (after death) in God's justice.¹⁷

Another vector for plausible theo-Christological ideas in Rome's ἐκκλησία might address the significance of Jesus' crucifixion less optimistically. The suggestions that follow speculate plausible, if unverifiable, interpretations of the evidence found about Jesus' death in early hymns and Paul's letters in ways that might align with the evidence of egalitarian impulses held within Rome's ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage. The premise of this suggestion considers, in continuation of some ideas proffered above, that if Jesus submits himself to the bounds of Rome's kyriarchal rule, he is a participant alongside the majority of Jews/conquered ἔθνη who are treading water with little chance of ascending the status scale. As such, perhaps the significance of Jesus' death is just that: *he dies*. Instead of cruelly hoping for a buoy or to start swimming, he stops treading water. Jesus drowns.

Indeed, he drowns spectacularly. Instead of slowly sinking further and further underwater, he opts for the faster and more painful "dunk" of crucifixion, an ultimate public humiliation for crimes against kyriarchy. He is now a known traitor, untrustworthy, undeserving of respect or followers after death. Crucifixion's threat represents one of countless well-known negative consequences for resisting the forces

¹⁷ While certainly one possibility that has roots in Romans 3:21-31, the above analysis has shown that such an idea continues cruel πίστις and promises a future justice that still looks rather imperial.

that guided and structured Rome's kyriarchal assemblage. Jesus' death, therefore, can take on significance by refusing to be contained by that threat—or by finding it more promising than threatening. Maybe he does not know (or even suspect) that God will raise him from this death: perhaps he just realizes that choosing to be brutally but (more) quickly “drowned” for swimming against the tide is far less cruel than an otherwise unavoidable “slow death.”¹⁸

So, why would such an idea have been important to some in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, making it worth following this drowner? Whether or not these followers had been aware that they were “treading water,” Jesus death uncovers a less cruel promise that hides underneath Rome's threat of crucifixion: he is *still* (and always was) equal to the God whom he follows. His actions were not performed primarily as protest or rebellion against (the) Empire, even though they may have this effect. His radical, rebellious-seeming choice is to live on egalitarian terms with God (and, therefore, with all others) in a kyriarchal culture that actively resisted such an impulse. Living on such terms risks—but does not require—drowning. Jesus' death is a result of choosing the risk over the rut. As such, followers of this idea of Jesus' death find permission neither to drown themselves nor to rebel recklessly: they find a model to live into and work towards a society based on an egalitarian visions God's justice.

While much of this idea moves away from the cruel optimism of Roman (and Pauline) *πίστις* and hopes of salvation from above, there are still potentials for its

¹⁸ “What does it mean,” asks Berlant, “to consider the ethics of longevity when, in an unequal health and labor system, the poor and less poor or less likely to live long enough to enjoy the good life whose promise is a fantasy bribe that justifies so much exploitation?” (105). For Berlant, “slow death” describes another affective dimension of cruel optimism: “the physical wearing out of a population in a way that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence.” Berlant, 95; see further pp. 95-119 (chapter 3 “Slow Death”).

implications to morph back into cruelty. After all, though Jesus drowns (in what could be seen as an embrace of the “queer art of failure”), eventually he rises—or, more accurately, God raises him.¹⁹ What looked like failure in the crucifixion is revealed to be success in the resurrection. Or, in the tone of traditional Christian theology, Jesus overcomes death’s failure and makes possible something new: the good life after death.

Such a resurrection can become the buoy for drowning subjects to grasp: salvation. How fantastic *is* such a buoy, and is the promise it provides still as cruel as Pauline πίστις? Considering life after death possible is not inherently cruel.²⁰ But it can become cruel if its promise of “the good life” after death mitigates the terror of potential crucifixion. If it relieves the risk of death’s finality, it may also prevent other risks necessary to attained this “resurrected” life: and so, cruel optimism. Cruel though it may be, in a society where many were struggling significantly with the burdens of treading in rough imperial waters, some Christ-followers may have needed such an interpretation. Even if this “buoy” turns out to be a slowly deflating raft, not everyone is ready to drown quickly. The risks (and what gets left behind) are heavier for some.

A potentially less cruel option—which it is possible at least a few in the ἐκκλησία considered in some form—does not rely on this promise of resurrection. Death may still be final. Instead, such an alternative idea prioritizes the *risk* of Jesus’ model: drowning in an attempt to live as God’s equals must be a better life than continuing to tread under

¹⁹ Despite my own hesitation with Halberstam’s embrace of failure (see chapter 2, n.138), aspects of it resonate these implications. However, my critique of Halberstam and my critique of resurrection also have similarities: the failure described is often not final and leads to success in a slightly shifted perspective. Further, I suspect such models of failure are most easily embraced and elaborated by those (myself included) with a greater degree of safety net that prevent failure’s total ruin (or drowning). See Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*.

²⁰ Nor do I wish to speculate in such a way as to confirm or deny its possibly or my opinion of it.

kyriarchy. To be sure, these followers still attach optimistically to a promise for a “good life” that can only be imagined (is any life possible without having some form of optimism in Berlant’s definition?). The good life anticipated here is a socio-political life aligned with *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. It is a good life that requires followers to enact it and make it possible. Jesus’ death quells the cruelty of what is still a good life fantasy by upholding its possibility without falsely promising its immediate realization. Death is still possible, but it is not (only) a threat. Death in the service of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* can also be a promise, if not of new and resurrected life, then of *change*—movements and sensations towards egalitarian good lives on a wider, shared scale. For some, therefore, Jesus’ death hopefully beckons: *try to swim until you drown; don’t tread until it is inevitable.*

Kyriarchal Christs

While drowning may be easier or more possible for some seeking the risky rewards of egalitarian vision, many others, including those who may equally envision an egalitarian world, cannot afford these risks. The ability to drown can be a privilege, and for many, treading water is a necessary survival tactic, one that does not spectacularly detach from submissive postures but also may not necessarily attach to promises that can never be fulfilled by them. Such circumstances, in their plausible variety, affect the theochristological impact of Jesus’ death, its significance, and its impact on his relation vis-à-vis God. If some found in Jesus’ a model for drowning, others might have found strategies for survival that involved appearances of submission to Rome that appear to align with or be drawn back into kyriarchal assemblage. Beyond such strategies, it is equally plausible that many in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* still clung to cruel promises (e.g., resurrection), as the above proposal shows some (including Paul) did.

This section, then, considers some of the plausible interpretations of Jesus' death and its relation to power (God's, Rome's, or otherwise) that seem to veer, to varying degrees, toward kyriarchal assemblage. In particular, it considers the evidence that most Christ-followers seem to have retained kyriarchal language and ideologies for Christ and God, and it proffers plausible ways such language could have functioned within developing theo-Christologies in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, even at times by participants who also sensed and held egalitarian impulses and proclaimed them through their hymnic expressions.

Indeed, if the Christ Hymn contains the idea of Jesus' equality with God, it also concludes by touting an image of submission to Jesus as the Christ—indeed, as *κύριος*.

ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ
 πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ
 ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων
 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται ὅτι
 κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός
 εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

So that in Jesus' name
 Every knee will bend
 Heavenly, earthly, and underworldly
 And every tongue will admit that
 Jesus Christ is kyriarch
 Toward father-God's glory (Phil. 2:11).

The hymn's conclusion permits the possibility for Jesus' death as God's equal to gain its significance through the lens of his raising: he conquers death's finality. The praise of Jesus as *κύριος* represents a flavor (perhaps rather emphatic) within this complex theo-Christological stew, and Paul's use of this *κύριος* language in Romans contributed to the spread and development of this idea. However, is Paul's usage the only way early Christ-followers could have thought of *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*? And (how) could some

followers have used and conceived such language while probably also considering alternative ideas about Jesus' relation to God and/or his death?

It would be impossible to posit that everyone in the *ἐκκλησία* could have abandoned—or even felt some level of discomfort with—kyriarchal language. Beyond the vast evidence of its presence beyond and prior to Paul (including its appearance in the Christ Hymn), when one's daily vocabulary is almost entirely defined by kyriarchy, it is extraordinarily difficult (if not insurmountable) to fully divorce from it.²¹ In a context where being called a *κύριος* signaled revered status and praiseworthiness, such a designation would be rather natural. For some, then, the attribution of *κύριος* may have started (in some spaces) largely as an indication of respectful importance with little or no development of the kyriarchal submission it implies. Its usage can hold a range of plausible, contradictory meanings, some of which may have implications that are more cruel than others.²²

Such an acknowledgment admits the complexity and grip of kyriarchy's assemblage and, in so doing, seeks ways to present this complexity and its simultaneous stimulations of both cruel optimism and change.²³ As a result, some (possibly many) in

²¹ Or to see its potential conflicts with ideas of equality or *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*.

²² Thus, I've argued in the previous chapter that Paul's adoption of kyriarchal language and ideas is among those most cruel.

²³ For example, some scholars have recognized and emphasized the subversive nature of using *κύριος*-type language (largely in Paul's epistolary voice) in and against its Roman imperial context when it portrays Christ as a replacement of Caesar and his elite. Although such a substitution does not undermine the kyriarchal system or eliminate the existence of marginalized and submissive societal "bottoms" it produces, its (cruel) optimism often derives from serious desires for socio-political change and even equality. Unfortunately, and partially due to the retention of such language and its ideologies, these optimisms cannot detach from the comfortable familiarity of inequality's "soft hierarchies." Elliott, incorporating Schüssler Fiorenza's critique of his earlier attempts to liberate Paul (alongside that of Horsley), observes that Paul exemplifies such a complex tension between advocating justice yet using the language of kyriarchy (which, as Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah note, only considers such tensions in relation to Paul and how they may have been manifested within the entire *ἐκκλησία*). See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 89-95; Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 50-57, 158-159; Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, 165-166.

Rome's *ἐκκλησία* could call Jesus *κύριος* while envisioning, advocating, and even enacting egalitarian-oriented ideas and practices within the structure of the *ἐκκλησία* and beyond. They desired an *ἐκκλησία* that embodied God's justice, but that justice held multiple, diverging meanings and visions. For some, Jesus' embodiment of equality with God was also in name their *κύριος*.²⁴

While some in the *ἐκκλησία*-I conversation could have held egalitarian ideas more easily alongside the proclamation *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*, others could have recognized—to different degrees—the tensions and contradictions between them and, therefore, raised questions or thoughts that breached aspects of these broader theoretical considerations.²⁵ These do not have to have been fully articulated, but it is plausible some of these ideas took shape within some expression (in words, tone, or gestures) of unease with a particular term or image; a personal avoidance of the language when speaking/thinking or doing so in a more muted and hesitant fashion; a request to reduce or cease some usage (perhaps not being quite able to explain or justify the request beyond a sensation of discomfort); or simply a sensation or thought of which one is personally (bodily) aware but not ready to be verbalized.²⁶ Other voices may have pushed these issues more directly: a complaint about the fact that one does not like comparing Jesus to their (or

²⁴ In other words, *ὁν καθαιρεῖ τὸν κυρίου οἶκον τὰ κυρίου ὄργανα* “the master's tools do not dismantle the master's house” (recalling Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 110-113).

²⁵ Can someone (i.e., Jesus) be a *κύριος* in title only? Can God be revered like a Caesar without actually having attributed to God the dominant status and authority of a Roman emperor? Questions such as these emphasize important issues that loom over actual conversations, especially as they consider how language interacts with and influences reality.

²⁶ Indeed, it is probable that some conversations that tried to consider or begin to articulate these issues and questions happened in smaller pockets of the *ἐκκλησία* community, within and beyond its physical dimensions. Since not all *ἐκκλησία*-I conversation would occur when the full group is present/gathered (if they entirely were!). With so little known about the “formal” structure of these gatherings, it is possible that forms of “small group” discussions were a part of gatherings.

another particular/general) earthly *κύριος*; pointing to problems of Roman imperial rule and the echoes of it in a particular theo-Christological idea; or asking if there is another reverent expression for Jesus Christ beyond *κύριος* that evokes less discomfort. Each of these possible approaches partially query the kyriarchal system, its influential relation to language, and/or its tension with (*ἐκκλησία*-l) equality in ways that can co-exist in conversation and community with contradictory approaches. They provide potential for challenge even while they may also be simultaneously absorbed into the movement of kyriarchy's assemblage.

Others, for a variety of reasons, may have relied more heavily on the language of Jesus as *κύριος* along with its implicit hierarchal structures and praxes. Thinking alongside the Berlantian notion of attachment to “soft hierarchies of inequality,” some (for good reason) need any buoy of safety or security, despite or often unaware of its cruel roots. As noted above, some of these attachments are necessary tactics that permit survival, even if such survival must occasionally participate in a cruel system while still striving to change it without perishing. Such tactics can also strive toward egalitarian impulses, but some may not be ready or able to abandon—or even question—any or all aspects of the current system, even if such an attachment is cruel and ultimately keeping them trapped in submission.²⁷ To even entertain the ideas or suggestion others may have made loosely could make such bodies quite uncomfortable: the risk is too great compared to the rut. Such uncomfortable sensations and reactions could affect them in a way that prompted argumentative and resistant reactions.

²⁷ However, such a view is more easily seen from outside the situation (or in historical hindsight).

It is also plausible that some had *no* desire or discomfort with this kyriarchal language and system; in fact, they may have wanted to retain it. It is likely some, especially those who were extremely dissatisfied with Roman rule and their submission to it, responded with an unhesitant desire to overturn, to have the kyriarchal good life for themselves while subjecting their overlords to the struggles of treading waters once made to submit under God and Christ.²⁸ The evidence of wealthier wo/men (indicated in some names from Rom 16 as well as from the later historical accounting in Acts) who helped financially sustain early *ἐκκλησίαι* indicates that some did have some level of wealth and status that might be upset by an overturning or sharing of power.²⁹ Although not every wealthier participant necessarily opposed such impulses, the benefits they derived from the status quo provides a plausible reason for sustaining its socio-economic system.³⁰ Such persons could have been be more—even quite—insistent on emphasizing language such as *κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*.

Assembling Theo-Christology

The preceding sections proliferated plausible theo-Christological ideas that could have existed in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* prior to their receipt of Paul's letter. After all, we know the *ἐκκλησία* had assembled independently from Paul and prior to hearing from him, and based on the debates and discussions of other early *ἐκκλησίαι*, it is probable that the assembly's diverse participants held different theo-Christological ideas and that these ideas were shared, debated, and developed along multiple trajectories. Paul's ideas in

²⁸ As eventually occurs as Christianity becomes the dominant religion of Rome's empire (and the many that follow it into the present).

²⁹ See Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers," 432; Lampe, 170-183.

³⁰ One could query to what degree such follows would or would not have been interested in bringing their (lower status) co-followers into their social circles beyond the *ἐκκλησία* (with any number of possible responses from individual/collective bodies).

Romans, therefore, entered into a dynamic conversation. Furthermore, despite the underlying cruel optimism that undergirded upward mobility and fantasies of Roman “good lives” in an imperial situation, Paul’s ideas were unlikely outliers within the *ἐκκλησία*’s conversation, since the letter was saved and circulated: some participants may have agreed with some—even most—of his ideas. However, if a conversation pre-existed the letter and continued after its reading, Paul’s suggestions cannot be taken as representative, so it is crucial to reconstruct, assess, and observe some of the potential ways they interacted with the other plausible theo-Christological impulses that moved in this particular *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage.

Within this pre-existing conversation, Paul becomes a new participant (in absentia) via the theo-Christological ideas expressed in his letter. As these ideas interacted with others (plausibly including, in some manifestation, aspects of those discussed above) it is likely that some discovered new questions to ponder: does Jesus display *πίστις* and what does a *πίστις*-relation with God mean? How is *πίστις* connected to *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*? What hope does (or doesn’t) this provide, especially for low-status *ἔθνη/peregrini*? These newer questions could have proliferated alongside ongoing questions that were given “new” answers or shifts in views: what is Jesus’ (and our) relation to God? What is the meaning of his death? How does this relate to Jesus’ Jewishness? How do these three important aspects of Jesus affect one another—and how do we explain or hold together contradictions that appear between explanations? How do the *εἰρήνη*, *πίστις*, or *δικαιοσύνη* that God offers differ from those promised by Roman *κύριοι*? What does *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* look like?

As these followers explored the interactions of varying theo-Christological ideas, it is plausible that some of Paul's ideas could have been *helpful* in an ἐκκλησία that met within the city walls of the imperial capital. If some of Paul's compatriots (e.g., Prisca and Aquila) had preceded him to Rome, it is plausible that some versions of his ideas relating πίστις to Jesus had already been expressed, debated, or even embraced by some within this ἐκκλησία. From such formulations (which notably could have differed and diverged from Paul's), some participants could have have been intrigued by these ideas; some may have embraced these alternate formulations; others could have rejected them; and more might have been confused or not quite understood how πίστις was significant to following Christ. Hearing Paul's framing of πίστις to describe Jesus' faithful submission to God, it is possible something "clicked" in the bodies of some hearers: suddenly the swirl of shifting ideas on this subject made sense. Paul's voice prompts this shift by adding a vital (but not exclusive or uncontested) piece to their theo-Christological puzzle. Of course, for some Paul's πίστις may have been *more* puzzling: they may not have felt any shift (yet or ever) and may have stayed confused and pondering—or even have increased their sense of confusion.³¹

One plausible source of tension that fueled some ἐκκλησία-I conversation prior to Paul's letter could have surrounded the fact of Jesus' crucifixion (by Rome) and its significance. Paul's thesis in Romans 1:16 begins Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ("For I am not ashamed of the gospel"), a statement that assumes there *is* something shameful about this message that features the death of a treasonous criminal.³² Assuming

³¹ This is not meant to be bad. Different bodies think, respond, and comprehend differently. Indeed, there can be benefits to not understanding and confusion, if they lead to greater clarification over time.

³² Jewett, 136-139; Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 51. See also 1 Cor 1:18-31.

that some in the gathering were less (or not at all) comfortable with any emphasis on Jesus' crucifixion, Paul's presentation of *πίστις* in Romans 3:21-31 could have distracted from that emphasis and provided some alternate routes to think about Jesus' death. Such routes, for instance, could have focused on how his death promises a resurrected "good life" for Jesus and his followers based on this *πίστις* relation with God.³³ It is the *πίστις* that makes the death significant in such an interpretation more than the death itself or its particular manner. In Paul's explanation, the fact that Jesus is *crucified* is less overt: that he entrusts God with his blood is enough mention. While the deeper implications of such a *πίστις*-based interpretation appear enmeshed in the kyriarchy of Roman cruel optimism, these would have been (quite) difficult to perceive.³⁴ Indeed, on the surface, some may have been able to reconcile or hold in tension some of these ideas alongside some degree of an egalitarian vision, plausibly based upon Jesus' equality with God.

Beyond *πίστις*, Paul's voice could have offered useful ideas in other directions of these plausible conversations, perhaps even making helpful suggestions to those skeptical or confused. Some may have appreciated his ongoing attribution of *κύριος* to Jesus and used it to support their insistence upon keeping this profession prominent. Indeed, his use of such language may have helped some who were wary of Paul (not knowing his status or relevance in relation to their community and conversations) to be more receptive to his contributions, which may have prompted shifts in their thinking that aligned (a little) more closely with his. Others (though perhaps less thrilled about this kyriarchal embrace) could have found promising his ongoing emphasis of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*, especially as they

³³ I.e., Jesus displays *πίστις* that God will raise him to a "good" new life.

³⁴ Indeed, cruel optimism is easier to recognize on the outside.

struggled to articulate its meaning and relevance in practical and realistic terms that might distinguish it from their current experiences of “justice.” As they pondered and engaged, some may have discovered ideas to better express their visions of justice; others may, at least, have perked their ears and listened more intently at these mentions. Others may have only appreciated Paul’s emphasis on *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* because it provided them an entry point to stimulate continued conversation and excitement surrounding it and move the group in other directions.

Paul’s ideas in Romans 3-5 also open plausible avenues for the conversations that surrounded the role of ethnicity within the *ἐκκλησία*’s burgeoning theo-Christologies. In a socio-religious context where conquered *ἔθνη* were expected to embrace the Roman pantheon (including its divinized imperial kyriarchy), Jesus, the Christ, as a model for (non-Jewish) *ἔθνη* seems to have offered a theological alternative that did not require complete conformity with Roman rule and its enforcement of ethnic submission.³⁵ Though certainly not the first or only example, Jesus appears to have been an example—the example for first-century *ἐκκλησίαι*—to follow in order to be followers of the historic God of Abraham, Israel, and Judea. If these followers in Rome were almost exclusively non-Jewish *ἔθνη/peregrini*, how would their different, non-Jewish backgrounds influenced their theo-Christologies, especially their development and incorporation of Jewish theological traditions which included the stories of the ancestors (e.g., Abraham, David, or Moses) and God of Israel?

³⁵ Although, as we have seen from Paul’s theo-Christology as explained in the preceding chapter, such alternatives are not necessarily any less kyriarchal or cruel, especially to the extent that they reform Roman notions of submission into another socio-political-religious vision.

These questions could provide background to how Paul's presentation of Abraham and his πίστις in Romans 4. Some might understand, in seeming agreement with Paul's argument (as presented by Stowers) that Abraham's πίστις plays a different role from that of Jesus. Although all ἔθνη are descendants of Abraham, Abraham's πίστις brings Jews into relationship with God, while Jesus' πίστις is the means by which non-Jewish ἔθνη enter into this relation.³⁶ It is further plausible, as Kamudzandu and Elliot have suggested was Paul's intent, that hearers would have connected Abraham's story with that of the founding of Rome by Aeneas.³⁷ Reinforced by Paul's suggestion that all ἔθνη are descended from Abraham (as πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν [“father of many ἔθνη”] in Rom. 4:17, citing Gen. 17:5), these Christ-followers in Rome, to the differing degree they had knowledge of these traditions, could have considered and discuss these stories and figures sources for understanding the God whom Jesus (and now they) followed. However, just as multiple interpretations and theologies based on these texts existed within first-century Judaism, it is quite plausible that numerous interpretations and ideas about these texts and theologies were suggested and debated within Rome's ἐκκλησία, especially if some participants had a degree aware of some of this theological diversity.

Even though these plausible diverse interpretations are inaccessible, it is clear that such a question was a significant topic for discussion among early Christ-followers, both

³⁶ As Stowers notes in his reading of Romans, according to Paul, the relation (begun with Abraham's πίστις) between God and Jews is unaffected by Jesus, who provides a new and separate path (διὰ πίστεως instead of ἐκ πίστεως) for gentiles/ἔθνη—all of this being consonant within the ideas of Abrahamic descent. See Stowers, 227-250, esp. pp.237-250. For more on Romans 4 and its interpretive history in the late twentieth century, see Gerhard H. Visscher, *Romans 4 and the New Perspective: Faith Embraces the Promise* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

³⁷ Kamudzandu, *Abraham as Spiritual Ancestor*, esp. pp. 203-236; Kamudzandu, *Abraham Our Father*, 83-104; Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 121-141.

within the earliest *ἐκκλησία*-1 gatherings and continuing well into the second century and beyond. The fact that Paul retells and quotes the stories and texts of Judaism makes it plausible that, as followers became familiar with the figures and stories about Judaism, they also raised questions about the theologies in these texts and how they applied to following Christ. Within Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, we know that some Jewish Christ-followers, such as Prisca and Aquila, were familiar to this community, based on Paul's greeting of them in Romans 16. It is plausible, then, that, beyond what is contained in Paul's letter, participants in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* were familiar with some texts and theological traditions within Judaism as a result of having assembled to follow Christ (though, notably, it is plausible that some would be more familiar than others).

Since it is plausible that this assembly was already discussing Jewish theology, Jewish ideas about theology and ethnicity in multiethnic contexts could have informed participants in Rome's similarly multiethnic (though mostly non-Jewish) *ἐκκλησία*. If the ancient *ἐκκλησία* of Christ-followers can be considered an assemblage then so can first-century "Judaisms" and, indeed, "Judeo-Christianity" in its periods of (re)formations and apparent partitions. Indeed, as Cynthia Baker has shown, Jews across Rome's empire had already expanded their theological views to encompass the ethnic multiplicities of living in diaspora. Philo in particular discusses Jews, alongside their ancestral beliefs and customs, as participants in the societies and cultures that surrounded them.³⁸ Even

³⁸ Particularly drawing from *Legatio* and *In Flaccum*, Baker concludes of Philo: "...rather, appropriating the colonial apparatus, he articulates a worldwide Jewish identity in the image of worldwide 'Hellenism' and a Jewish map, the boundaries of which match (and exceed) those of either the 'Hellenic' or Roman *oikoumenē* ('inhabited world')." Cynthia M. Baker, "'From Every Nation under Heaven': Jewish Ethnicities in the Greco-Roman World," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*, ed. Nasrallah and Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 91, see further 86-91. Beyond Philo, Baker notes, "In fact, the identification of Jews

Jersusalem, the “mother city” for Jews, encourages the diversity among its inhabitants and visitors from other *ἔθνη* (many of whom are also Jews), whose different cultural ideas and practices interacted with those native to the city.³⁹ Summarizing her analyses of these writers (Philo and Luke receiving the most detailed treatment), Baker observes, “These writers assumed no definitional conflict or categorical contradiction in imagining Jews as *belonging* to a vast multiplicity of *ethnē*...through *genos* (‘birth,’ ‘race’) and ancestral *syngeneia* (‘kinship’).”⁴⁰ Returning to Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*, these examples of embracing of Jewish multiethnic existence across the Roman world may have encouraged its participants from other *ἔθνη* to find ways to embrace their own multiethnic identities and interactions as they developed their theo-Christologies.⁴¹

Within these conversations, participants in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* may have held a variety of responses to Paul’s presentation of Abraham (among other elements of the Jewish theological tradition) and this story’s relation to ethnicity and theo-Christology. It is plausible that some may have found his presentation in alignment with their pre-existing notions about these issues. With respect to Abraham and Jewish theology, some non-Jews may have been more willing to accept or incorporate Paul’s interpretations on this subject given his insider knowledge as a Jew. Others may have been more skeptical; it is plausible to think that some might have wanted to hear his ideas affirmed by other Jews whom they had come to know and trust within (or even beyond) the *ἐκκλησία*, with

by diverse ethnic-geographic signifiers occurs in all manner of Greek and Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) writings by Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman periods” (83).

³⁹ Ibid., 88-91. On pp.91-95, she shows how Acts 2:5-11 offers a similar portrayal.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

⁴¹ Indeed, what Baker says for Luke (writing Acts) could also be applied to Paul and the participants in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*: “What makes perfect sense to Luke leaves his modern interpreters tied up in exegetical knots.” Ibid.

a woman like Prisca being a plausible and prominent example.⁴² Finally, some could have ignored his interpretations and found or developed their own interpretation of these traditions and their theo-Christological relevance, particularly to questions of what it meant to be a multiethnic *ἐκκλησία* of Christ-followers.

It is furthermore plausible that the prior discussions about sexuality from Romans 1 (partially outlined in chapter 2) would have influenced and remained present within the *ἐκκλησία*-1 assemblage in diverse degrees, forms, and echoes. Since Paul addresses sexuality fairly early in his epistle, the reactions and thoughts this stimulated remain and affect the conversations around his approach to *πίστις* and theo-Christology. Just as his ideas about sexuality affected his approach to Jesus' *πίστις*-relation with God in Romans 3, so also do the approaches to sexuality of those in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* affect their theo-Christologies and their reactions to Paul's. In other words, though it is unlikely that anyone fully recognized what Moore calls the "sexual substratum of Paul's soteriology" laid out in the previous chapter, the fact that Paul's opinions on sexuality largely parroted those of Roman imperial society would have made less receptive those who dissented or diverged from them. By extension, they would more probably have been prone to listen for ideas to critique within his theo-Christological arguments that followed Romans 1.

For example, while reactions against Paul's attribution of *κύριος* to Jesus Christ could have arisen solely from the already-present discomforts and objections to this language, some might have made more specific connections to the sexual dominance of Roman *κύριοι*, as experienced under the imperial socio-sexual hierarchy. If Jesus is their

⁴² See Rom. 16:3-4. On Prisca's prominence in this passage and in the early Christian missionary movement, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 178-180; Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers," 427-432.

κύριος, would they be sexually available to him, as was common for those placed into submission under powerful Romans, especially in the case of slaves?⁴³ (Indeed, are they Jesus' δοῦλοι?)⁴⁴ If some participants were already skeptical of Paul's Christology, such questions could especially come more naturally as critique, particularly when considered alongside how Rome's κύριοι would have been visible in their daily lives. It is further plausible that when questions along these lines were raised, others in the assembly found their thoughts shifting toward a less kyriarchal theo-Christology, perhaps (but not necessarily) due to some disagreement with Romans 1 or to a sensation of confusion about Paul's πίστις. Questions around the sexual implications of Jesus' lordship would not necessarily have been on the minds of all who objected to such language, but it does provide one entry point into these ideas and perspectives and demonstrates how theo-Christology, sexuality, and politics would have been inseparable topics in Rome's ἐκκλησία.

These critiques also may not overtly be about or related to sexuality. For example, some might have (vigorously) expressed disagreement rooted in an assumption of a more equal relationship between Jesus and God. Such reactions and ideas would quite probably be proffered by some of those whose thoughts and/or practices around sexuality were less kyriarchally arranged and thus deviated from imperial norms. While not always or

⁴³ In showing how the lived realities of Roman slavery affect New Testament texts/interpretation and the earliest bodies who read and heard these texts, Jennifer Glancy writes, "Sexual access to slave bodies was a pervasive dimension of ancient systems of slavery." Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 21. In addition to the elaboration of this fact in Glancy's monograph, scholarly inquiries since its publication have continued to probe the different dimensions of the sexual use of slaves and its affect on early Christianity. See especially Moore and Glancy, "How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation's 'Great Whore'?" *JBL* 130 (2011): 551-569; Marchal, "The Usefulness of an Onesimus;" Hoke, "Behold the Lord's Whore?"

⁴⁴ On Paul's self-appellation as a "slave of Christ" (part of his epistolary introductions in Rom. 1:1 and Phil. 1:1), see especially, Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 50-85.

necessarily the case, a body that was receptive to a more egalitarian approach to sexuality (i.e., non-hierarchical in terms of aligning social and sexual roles) might already be oriented toward considering a similar approach to God, Christ, and the socio-political visions of their followers (as well as vice-versa). A different sexual embodiment could entail different impulses about socio-political participation and justice, perhaps already being experienced to some degrees within the *ἐκκλησία*.

This analysis of how Paul's theo-Christology (especially centering around Romans 3:21-31) entered into and continue pre-existing discussions within Rome's *ἐκκλησία* has shown ways that different bodies would have aligned and clashed in this discussion, sometimes to extremes. Since such "extremes" (or more fixed positions or "sides") would have been exceptional, I have attempted throughout to point to the ways in which most bodies would have operated between these extremes; indeed, even among those more extreme voices, it is likely their "extremism" would only apply to certain topics, ideas, or expressions. Within *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, all bodies exist *in-between* to some degree, with some gravitating toward "sides" more than others at different times and in different spaces.

Most of those gathered alongside Paul's epistolary presence in Rome were still probably digesting and wondering about Paul's ideas and their own. They were absorbing all of these new ideas and playing around with them. They remembered some points to consider later in more detail. They heard but "forgot" small or large pieces which still remained held within and between their bodily assemblages to potentially reemerge in some form (much) later. In this first-century *ἐκκλησία*-l context, nothing about theo-Christology had been firmly decided, even for those (momentarily) occupying a more

fixed side. This is especially the case since any idea or suggestion was an equal participant and was met with questions, skepticism, enthusiasm, opposition, and apathy.

It is plausible that these ideas informed theo-Christological conversations that occurred in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, and they demonstrate the diverse vectors of thought that could have moved, shifted, and clashed in this first-century *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage. Ultimately, such theo-Christological responses do not offer firm answers to first-century theo-Christological questions that swirled within *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage, except when it says that Rome's *ἐκκλησία* never settled on any answer.⁴⁵ In fact, most (all, even) of the ideas and proposals proffered here have been not been comprehensive explanations but rather “suggestions” that contain speculative plausibility as they are fleshed out with some tantalizing details.

In Rome's *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage, participation and conversation was likely of a fleeting nature: it moved, ebbed and flowed, and changed. In such a context, short suggestions could get taken up by others, moved around, remolded, hidden, and rediscovered. Given the transitory nature of this assembly, it is quite plausible that fleeting ideas and suggestions would have been far more prevalent than watertight, lengthy theo-Christological expositions. The disagreement between diverse and sometimes contradictory thoughts sparked debates and raised passions, but the “in-between” nature of the *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblage and its discussions permits these tensions to exist together, sometimes producing the conflicts we can see in other *ἐκκλησίαι*. From

⁴⁵ To offer anything firm is impossible and historically inaccurate. Indeed, these questions and their answers have always been in such flux and have been constantly shifting in *ἐκκλησία*-I assemblages from the first century through the twenty-first and beyond.

these tensions, new ideas sometimes sprang forth. Regardless, the conversation continued, bodies moved and changed, and ideas (and tensions) proliferated.

In this chapter, my speculative proliferations may seem based on particularly scant evidence, just enough to ground a few plausible theo-Christological speculations that would otherwise remain entirely absent. As ideas and impulses, concreteness and certainty are hard to track; however, the ideas I have proffered remain within the realm of speculative plausibility. Furthermore, they are not intended to represent the entirety of plausible theo-Christological impulses within ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage, but they are intended to permit Paul's impulses to be fully represented as one among many in Rome. Further, these proliferations prompt others to add other speculatively plausible proliferations to the theo-Christological stew that existed in Rome's ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage.

As we turn now, in part three, to how these plausible theo-Christologies prompted ethical responses, there will be more evidence of how Christ-followers acted upon these Christologies that will ground my proliferations of the differing ethics that developed within this ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage. Thus, as these theo-Christological debates and discussions continued, some may have wondered: *What practical implications do these ideas have? And how do these affect how we—as an ἐκκλησία—live and act in a still very Roman society?* Those asking would have found their ethical entry points at the end of Paul's letter, and so we turn to Paul's ethics in Romans 12-15, especially his exhortation to ethical submission in Romans 13, and the ways this perspective and voice continued to participate in the vibrant conversations of Rome's ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage.

PART III

CHAPTER 5

ETHICAL SUBMISSION

While part II focused on the burgeoning theo-Christologies of first-century Christ-followers, part III centers on the actions that derive from these theo-Christologies—theo-Christological ethics, in other words. This first chapter reveals the submissive affects in Romans that emerge when it is situated within Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage. Paul’s ideas in Romans 12-15 exhibit an ethical submission that complements the faithful dimensions of submission drawn out in the first chapter of part II. This transition from theo-Christology to theo-Christological ethics follows the order of Paul’s letter, as its final chapters take the form of ethical exhortation.¹ These final chapters of Romans present advice on proper behavior and good action that is, according to Paul, demanded by God and by the community’s shared experience of Jesus.²

¹ Most commentaries mark this as a new section or part of the letter/argument, emphasizing its exhortative (and ethical) nature. Though previous generations of commentaries (most notably that of Dibelius) portray 12-15 as an “unrelated” appendix to the (important) body of the epistle, more recent commentaries agree that these final chapters are clearly connected to what precedes, even if there is a hard break between 11:36 and 12:1. Grieb, 114-115; Cobb and Lull, 23; L.T. Johnson, 177; Schreiner, 642; Hultgren, 435; Longenecker, 911; Matera, 283-285; Achtemeier, 194; Byrne, 361; Jewett, 724; Witherington, 280-281; Kuo-Wei Peng, *Hate the Evil, Hold Fast to the Good: Structuring Romans 12.1-15.1* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 40-44; Fitzmyer, 98-101; Esler, 308; Moo, 744; Dunn 2: 705. I agree with these commentators that Romans 12-15 is integral to the letter, and it is certainly convenient to mark 12:1 as a transition point to specifically ethical/more practical ideas that derive from following Christ. However, I am not convinced such a “break” is necessarily natural to the letter as it would have been read in Rome: in other words, certainly *we* notice this as “transition,” but it is at least possible that other hearers may not have. Thus, already signaled in their designation as “theo-Christological,” these two “sections” cannot perfectly be separated or separately treated, as they inform one another (as the presence of submission in both affirms).

² See especially Fitzmyer, 637; Keck, 289; Schreiner, 642; Hultgren, 435. Witherington and Byrne concur but each note that such ethical exhortation is typical of Greco-Roman argumentation, either deliberative (Witherington) or epideictic (Byrne). Witherington, 280-281; Byrne, 361. Chapter 12 gives more general-sounding ethical advice, especially related to community living and the body of Christ. Chapters 14-15 address specific Jewish practices (ones Paul has also addressed in other letters), especially eating unclean foods as well as the observance of holidays. A few recent commentators portray these chapters as random and loosely connected (an opinion also seen in the older commentary of Dibelius): Keck, 23; Longenecker, 911. Peng argues strongly against such a view, and shows through his structural analysis that the argument

The ethical submission in Romans centers around chapter 13, though it is certainly not limited to this chapter. However, 13:1-7 exhibits the most explicit demand for submission, ethical or otherwise, to be found in Romans. Despite the interpretive acrobatics performed by scholars who hope to situate this submissive posturing within a liberationist reading of a politically (and generally “heroic”) Paul, the most obvious interpretation of 13:1-7 is that these words are meant to encourage Christ-followers to submit to the current political regime, namely Roman rule.³ Though it is most obvious

of 12-15 forms a coherent whole if one “puts the jigsaw together.” Peng, 40-44. Jewett emphasizes that this advice is not general, but must be considered within Paul’s (imminent) eschatology: it exhorts specific behaviors for a world soon-to-end. Jewett, 724. Tamez argues that 12-15, by emphasizing the acceptance of others both within and beyond the ἐκκλησία, encourages a “mutual respect” that contrasts to Rome’s patriarchal culture and society. Tamez, 715-716.

³ Scholars who argue that Paul is anti-Rome begin their explanations of this obviously contradictory passage by emphasizing that its language and apparent endorsement are out of place in Paul’s letter and thought. Thus, Elliott exemplifies: “The language of submission and fear that appears here is a startling exception to the rhetoric of the rest of the letter; more typical is the declaration to which it immediately gives way, that obedience to God can be summed up in a single obligation, ‘to love one another, for the one who love the neighbor has fulfilled the law’ (13:8-11).” Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 153. Here, Elliott makes a much more distinct separation between “submission” and “obedience” (wherein obedience does not assume some degree of submission to a hierarchy); therefore, phrases like “faith’s obedience” of 1:5 (see my discussion in chapter 3) are not related to the submission of 13:1. See also Knust, 71.

Elliott further provides a succinct overview of this general scholarly recognition and the three most common interpretive explanations: (1) that Paul encourages submission to Roman authorities due to recent uprisings in Rome making it a “volatile” space so that any form of public disturbance coming from these Christ-followers would be unwise; (2) that Paul’s advice in Romans 13:1-7 actually contains a “subtle” critique of Rome that may not have been understandable to the authorities themselves; (3) that these verses are not a subtle critique at all but are in fact highly and intentionally ironic, following the suggestion of T.L. Carter. See Elliott, 153-155. See also T.L. Carter, “The Irony of Romans 13,” *Novum Testamentum* 46 (2004): 209-228. On the suggestion that 13:1-7 is an interpolation, see Jewett, 782-784. Elliott specifies James Kallas, who gives the theory lengthy treatment in “Romans XIII:1-7: An Interpolation,” *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964-1965): 365-374. See also Winsome Munro, *Authority in Paul and Peter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); J.C. O’Neill, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (London: Penguin, 1975).

Examples of the interpretation of 13:1-7 as encouraging total submission to political authority abound, from its quotation/appearance in early Christian archaeological sites (such as a Byzantine-era mosaic in Caesarea Maritima) to its use in a myriad of contemporary examples. Such an interpretation has particularly held sway as the prevailing empires since the first century have Christianized. In recent years, Romans 13 has often been quoted in the face of protests against modern governments, perhaps especially in the United States (in events such as the Iraq War) but also in South Africa under apartheid. Elliott’s description of these verses being cited in 2003, at the beginning of the most recent Iraq war, (“It is the duty of all Christians to stand with their president in a time of war (Rom 13:1-7)”) is not, as Elliott also notes an exceptional experience. See Elliott, 5-6. Commentators who embrace the submissive demands of 13:1-7 as applicable for Paul as much as for modern Christians emphasize that the exhortation to submission/obedience of political authority changes in new contexts but is still imperative. L.T. Johnson (agreeing with my own assessment that 13:1 is not at all surprising within Paul’s theology) discourages

here, submission's affective holds are most often cruel in their subtler manifestations, hidden in language that promises liberation in the form of a "good life" that may still be kyriarchally defined (as chapter 3 showed). Thus, this chapter argues that even though Paul's letter (as a whole or specifically in Romans 13) may be "an unambiguous endorsement of Roman rule," this call to submit to political authority in chapter 13 merely makes explicit the submissive affects that align with Rome's kyriarchal assemblage and captivate its ethical ideas.⁴ As in chapter 3, these subtle submissive

ignoring the obvious meaning of this passage, then, in light of post-Enlightenment sensibilities (a point that perhaps suggests we regress to being less enlightened on this issue). "At the time he wrote Romans, Paul probably saw the empire as the enabler of Christian mission, and therefore as an instrument of God's will for the salvation of all humans" (187). Most notably, Johnson emphasizes that Paul would have thought of the current social order *as natural* and would have had no reason to overturn something established as basic "natural" fact (as I have been arguing and has been more-or-less definitively proven within the sexual aspect of this "natural" social order). L.T. Johnson, 186-188. Along these lines, both Moo and Matera advance a similar idea, particularly emphasizing *marriage* as an *enduring institution protected by the state that is a part of God's plan*. In other words, the state—whether Roman imperial or U.S. "democratic"—should have authority to regulate and establish marriages, and this establishment has presumably always followed God's "natural" definition. Moo's expression is too perfect an illustration not to quote: "As a manifestation of his common grace, God has established in this world certain institutions, such as marriage and government, that have a positive role to play even after the inauguration of the new age." Moo, 810, see further pp.790-791; Matera, 293-294. One wonders how such commentators consider these positions in light of recent expansions of marriage by the authority of the U.S. government.

The majority of commentators take a "middle" stance, to varying degrees: they note that 13:1-7 is not meant to be a "theology of the state" for all times and places as they emphasize Paul's "pragmatic realism" and need to keep peace with outsiders to avoid persecution, especially in light of political unrest and instability surrounding either the edict of Claudius or complaints about taxation in the early years of Nero. Actemeier's comments are perhaps the best example of the tension such a position attempts to hold together: God's sovereign placement of political authorities who govern by making and enforcing rules is not an endorsement of the major injustices some of these laws enact (so, Jim Crow laws, apartheid, the Holocaust, immoral wars); however, good Christians should, following Romans 13:1-7, "obey traffic lights." Actemeier, 204. See Peng, 211 (see further pp.189-211 for his entire appendix of approaches to this passage); Fitzmyer, 602-605; Dunn, 759; 770-773; Witherington, 306-307; Esler, 332-333; Longenecker, 964-965; Hultgren, 474-475.

⁴ Ibid., 155. As I have been arguing, the relationship between Paul's letters and empire are more complex than a pro- or anti-imperial position. Paul can hold reservations about imperial power and its actions (especially specific ones) without desiring to overturn the entire imperial system. In fact, if Paul has any issue with the system, it seems to be mostly related to his lack of authority in it, rather than dissatisfaction with its exploits. As Elliott later notes, "It is impossible to read a single, coherent posture in Rom 13:1-7. The text is an instance neither of straightforward endorsement of Roman power nor of an ironic subversion of imperial claims." Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 156. Though in what follows, I stress the ways in which Paul seems to endorse imperial power in 13:1-7 (as Elliott tends to stress Paul's critiques), I ultimately agree with Elliott's note of ambiguity here and would stress the fact that some of the ways in which I identify Paul's alignments with imperial power and ethics could be called "unintentional," meaning that he has absorbed the propaganda of the imperial authorities and incorporated it into his arguments, creating the posture of ethical submission that I identify as central to Romans 13.

alignments become apparent when they are situated within broader Roman morality. Rome's imperial *mores* were primarily set and defined in elite discourse, but they were disseminated to and embodied in those of lower status, especially upwardly mobile ἔθνη (here including Jews).

The first section of this chapter outlines the *political* nature of morality in its kyriarchal constructions in Rome's empire, highlighting its effects on a more "popular" (i.e., less elite) morality. The second section situates the explicit ethical submission of Romans 13:1-10 as mostly aligning with these constructions. This is done through a fairly close exegesis that draws out the passage's emphasis on the desirability of imperial "praise." The lengthier third section returns to queer affective critique—in particular, Puar's conceptualizations of sexual exceptionalism and, especially, homonationalism—to draw out the subtler dimensions of ethical submission in Romans and first-century Rome.

After a brief introduction to Puar's theory, this final section proceeds in three subsections. First, the broader presence of sexual exceptionalism in first-century Rome is confirmed by discussing the ways in which Roman morality depended upon its construction and regulation of sexual *mores* in order to police the borders of its elite, ethnically Roman citizenry.⁵ The following two subsections focus specifically on homonationalism and its presences in sexually and racially marginalized bodies in the first century by showing how these sexual *mores* disseminated and policed less elite communities who were not formally regulated by them. The second subsection, then,

⁵ Marchal's article has already established that sexual exceptionalism appears in Rome's empire and can shed light on the interpretation of Paul's letters in this context. He points to several ways that sexual exceptionalism is made manifest. This chapter builds upon his astute observations and reveals other ways sexual exceptionalism was and is present in Rome and Romans, most particularly, I expand beyond Marchal by asserting the existence of *homonationalism*, as a particular manifestation of sexual exceptionalism. See Marchal, "Exceptional Proves Who Rules," 95-110.

shows how such self-regulation permitted upwardly mobile first-century Jews (Philo especially but also in 4 Maccabees) to politically position themselves and their “ἔθν-ic ethics” through homonational tactics. Finally, returning to Romans, I argue that Paul’s ethical submission hinges around sexualized language (found especially in 13:11-14) that aligns with Roman *mores*. As such, Romans 13 and its theo-Christological ethical ideas present Christ-followers as praiseworthy, sexually respectable “subjects worthy of rehabilitation” in the eyes of Rome: a clear case of first-century Roman homonationalism.

Political and Kyriarchal Morality

Celebrating the new imperial era ushered in by Augustus, Horace, in his *Carmen Saeculare*, proclaims, “Now, Loyalty/Trust [*Fides*], Peace, Honor and ancient Modesty [*Pudorque priscus*], and neglected Virtue [*Virtus*] dare to return, and prosperous abundance, with a full horn, appears” (56-60).⁶ Horace lauds the return of values that were once upheld by a more ancient Roman state but ignored and diminished in the decline of intervening years.⁷ Unsurprisingly, all of these values become central imperial values within and beyond Augustus’ reign since they are promoted as those qualities which uphold the state and are embodied by the emperor and the elite. Horace’s celebration proclaims that the new imperial regime has ushered in agricultural, economic,

⁶ *iam Fides et Pax et Honor Pudorque
priscus et neglecta redire Virtus
audet, apparetque beata pleno
copia cornu*

Composed for the imperial “Secular Games,” held around 26 B.C.E. (a task for which Horace was selected by Augustus himself), this ode acclaims the promises of the new era and anticipates the great benefits of the nascent Augustan empire. Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, 57-60.

⁷ Such dimensions of Horace’s ode are noted by Edwards, 58-59.

political, and social prosperity; however, it further implies that this prosperity is dependent upon the empire's ability to maintain the standards of these values.⁸

In chapter three, we saw how *fides* (as well as *pax*) was established and maintained through imperial conquest and rhetoric, incorporating various ἔθνη, both territorially and politically, as part of Rome, thus helping to secure the prosperity of the Empire. Alongside these values are ones that are overtly ethical: *pudor* (“shame,” or, in this context, “modesty”) and *virtus* (“virtue,” a gendered concept being form from the root *vir* [“man”]). With the return of these ancient *mores*, Horace communicates that the emperor and his regime support and maintain patterns of proper behavior—ethics, in other words—which allow Rome to prosper.

Unlike the imperial regime, this ethical system is, according to Horace, not new to Rome.⁹ His invocation of imperial ethics also harkens to the Roman ideal of the *mores maiorum*, the “customs/morals of the ancestors.” As Paul Zanker describes them, “Simplicity and self-sufficiency, a strict upbringing and moral code, order and subservience within the family, diligence, bravery, and self-sacrifice: these were the virtues that had continually been evoked in Rome with the slogan ‘mores maiorum,’ ever since the process of Hellenization began.”¹⁰ Alongside the invocation of this slogan, however, was the assumption that these *mores* were always in decline and, thus, the prosperity of society more generally, especially evident in the war-torn years of the late

⁸ Thus, the restoration of these values and their promotion throughout Rome are linked to wealth and prosperity, as indicated by the appearance of “prosperous abundance, with a full horn [*beata pleno copia cornu*].”

⁹ As Horace portrays it, the “modesty” that returns is *priscus*, “ancient,” having belonging to an age long past, and the “virtue” is *neglecta*, “neglected,” also implying that attention was given to it once, in that past age, but not in recent times/regimes.

¹⁰ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 156.

Republic. Zanker continues, “Without a return to the ancestral virtues there could be no internal healing of the body politic.”¹¹ Thus, as Horace’s ode states, the return of the ancestral *mores* would mean the restoration of political and social stability as well as economic prosperity.

As noted above, *virtus* (Gk., ἀρετή) is a gendered value in Latin, being derived from *vir*, and its gendered nature, alongside its role in establishing elite male dominion, is apparent in Roman moral thought.¹² *Virtus* was thought to be a quality possessed by “real”—meaning freeborn and elite—men.¹³ Behaviors that were characteristic of a (true) man who possessed *virtus* included eating habits, proper physiognomy, dress and grooming, household order and control, military bravery and discipline, and “natural” sexual comportment.¹⁴ The ideal of *virtus* (and *vir*) encompassed prescribed norms for proper behavior and excluded those persons who did not or could not live accordingly (namely, all women and most men).¹⁵ As a gendered, elite ideal, *virtus* reinforces kyriarchy and legitimizes and maintains Rome’s conquest and rule.

¹¹ Ibid., 156.

¹² *Pudor* too is overtly related to sexuality and sexual inviolability, as will be seen later in this chapter.

¹³ Edwards, 57. “*Vir*, therefore, does not simply denote an adult male; it refers specifically to those adult males who are freeborn Roman citizens in good standing, those at the top of the Roman social hierarchy. A term that at first appears to refer to biological sex in fact is a description of gender-as-social-status, and the gender term itself is intimately interwoven with other factors of social status (birth and citizenship status, and respectability in general) that to us might not seem relevant to gender.” Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 32. See also Williams, 139. Gleason confirms the need to attain and then retain one’s masculinity, often defending it and defaming others through rhetorical skill. She concludes, “Among the educated upper classes of the empire, a masculine identity was an achieved state.” Gleason, 159. See further, Conway, 15-34; Knust, 28.

¹⁴ Gleason, throughout her monograph, points to the physiognomic and performative (especially via rhetoric) behaviors required of Roman men. In terms of sexual comportment, especially: always being the active/penetrating partner in intercourse and not being perceived as being over-eager in one’s sexual pursuits (as discussed in the introduction) in addition to and not violating the sexual honor (*pudicitia*) of another person of elite status (as will be discussed later in this chapter). See Williams, 137-176; Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 41; Conway, 30-34.

¹⁵ Thus, a limited number of bodies were fully “men” (*viri*). It should be noted that these prescribed norms are largely portrayed in binaristic terms (either one is a man or an unman) and, therefore, it often seems that any single failure makes one among these “unmen,” which includes but is not limited to women. Walters, “‘No More Than a Boy’: The Shifting Construction of Masculinity from Ancient Greece to the Middle

In fact, *virtus* was a particular possession of Romans that was lacking in the various ἔθνη whom they conquered.¹⁶ Myles McDonnell confirms, “*Virtus* is the *special inheritance of the Roman people*, and it was by this *virtus*, this ‘manliness,’ that Roman supremacy had been built. The Romans believed they were successful because they were ‘better’ men.”¹⁷ Thus, as it communicates to individuals the ethical *mores* that govern the ideal, elite man who is able to govern his self, household, and the affairs of the state, *virtus* also represents the distinct qualities of the collective *imperium* of the Roman state,

Ages,” *Gender and History* 5 (1991): 31. See further Francesca Santoro L’Hoir, *The Rhetoric of Gender Terms: ‘Man,’ ‘Woman,’ and the Portrayal of Character in Latin Prose* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 135-146. While women were certainly “unmen,” in this sense, they were also (as discussed in chapter 1) *never going to be male* and therefore, many were “unmen” differently from those males who also never going to be Roman “men.” As Williams notes, elite rhetoric often expresses these ethical norms in particularly black-and-white terms that likely did not perfectly reflect a messier reality. Williams, 177-245, especially pp. 179-191. Additionally, the polemical nature of the texts used as evidence deserves mention. Most of the practices described as “effeminate” are deduced from charges brought by an elite author to another elite subject whom he is trying to discredit. Therefore, though Romans may have rhetorically marked certain behaviors as unmanly and lacking *virtus* through their accusations, since the proof is almost never physical, it cannot be determined whether those accused of such behaviors actually practiced what they are accused to have done—and, indeed, whether other elites (perhaps even including the authors of the texts!) may actually have practiced many of these unvirtuous (but typically occurring in private) behaviors themselves. See Williams, 137-176. Edwards agrees and argues that charges of male effeminacy (*mollitia*) are less reflections of reality than they are socio-political power plays that aim to humiliate an opponent. *Mollitia*, she shows, is especially related to sexual behavior and control: for men, it is applied to those who are sexually penetrated or who allow another man (especially one of lower status) to penetrate his wife. Edwards, 63-97, see also p.52. In establishing manhood as a rhetorical presentation, Gleason note this rhetoric centered on the male body, both defending one’s own body against charges of effeminacy and denigrating the manhood of one’s opponents to do so. Gleason, xix-xxix, 55-81. See further Conway, 21-29 (on pp.21-22 she specifically discusses masculinity and gender as performance with connections to Butler and Foucault); Anthony Corbeill, “Dining Deviants in Roman Political Invective” in Hallett and Skinner, *Roman Sexualities*, 99-128.

¹⁶ “The dominant ideology is the ideology of domination.” Parker, 54. Thus, “a common theme in ancient texts is that true Roman men, who possess *virtus* by birthright, rightfully exercise dominion not only over women but also over foreigners, themselves implicitly likened to women. An obvious implication is that non-Roman peoples were destined to submit to Roman masculine *imperium*.” Williams, 148. Knust draws attention to how language of virtue (and therefore vice) is a “power-laden process.” Knust, 17.

¹⁷ Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3. Emphasis added. Though *virtus* has a Latin derivation and history separate from its typical Greek equivalent (ἀρετή), as McDonnell outlines, the idea of Romans believing that their *virtus* made them “better” men cannot be completely separated from the fact that the Greek term derives from the superlative of ἀγαθός (“best”), as discussed above. See further McDonnell, 105-141.

governed and embodied by elite men, as distinguished from others, in particular foreigners conquered by Rome, in addition to women, slaves, and lower classes.¹⁸

Rome's empire—and Augustus as its first ruler—contrasted its *pax Romana* to the socio-political instability of the war-torn Republic. This instability was often blamed on *moral decline*, and many, like Horace, assumed that a restoration of morality would reestablish the full socio-political dominance of Rome's elite citizenry. For this reason, Augustus drew upon this desire to return and reinforce Roman *virtus* to rhetorically legitimate his imperial rule. In so doing, Augustus crafts the ideology of an ethical system—*mores* (Gk. ἔθνη)—that will reinforce the political and economic stability of not only his rule but also the imperial rule of those who will follow (namely, his offspring).¹⁹

Indeed, Augustus himself publicly declared (on his *Res Gestae*) this moral restoration and inscribed it across his *imperium*. “Since new laws were produced by me, as their promoter, I brought back many models of the ancestors, which at that time were

¹⁸ “*Virtus* could also be related to the concept of *imperium*, the rule or dominion that magistrates exercised over the Roman people, generals over their armies, the Roman people as a whole over their subjects, and Roman men over women and slaves. If a Roman writer wished to wax philosophical, he could even use the imagery of *imperium* to describe the dominion that reason ought to exercise over emotions.” Williams, 146. McDonnell notes that the use of *virtus* as describing a broad conception of morality is not as fixed as scholarship portrays it. Especially before the late Republic (approximately before the first century B.C.E.), *virtus* was often applied to men of valor yet whose moral flaws were noted or were their downfall. McDonnell observes that the notion of *virtus* in a more ethical context emerges in the rhetoric of the first century B.C.E., particularly in its turbulent politics and the lack of *virtus* amongst even elite politicians. It is this ethical notion, then, that becomes much more established in the rhetoric of empire, combining it with the ideals of martial prowess and manliness, as it touts the return of *virtus* to Rome—a *virtus* that, as McDonnell shows, differs from its earlier usages. See McDonnell, 2-9, esp. p.5; 385-389. McDonnell discusses the earlier use of *virtus* as “manliness” or “courage” and its interaction and development with Hellenistic ideas of ἀρετή in his first two chapters, pp.12-104. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 143-145, emphasizes the role of virtue (as an inborn quality of native Romans) alongside fortune (τύχη), drawing from the descriptions of the success and inevitability of Roman domination (i.e., *imperium*) as described in the works of Plutarch, Josephus, and Virgil. He concludes, “The eventual triumph of the Roman people was the inevitable result alike of both fate and their own virtue” (145). On the relation of *virtus* and *fortuna*, see also McDonnell, 84-95.

¹⁹ Thus, it can be said that Augustus' rhetoric of restoring ancient *mores* draws on public sentiment that desires to “make Rome great again,” though perhaps he is more successful in his propaganda than other more recent imperial sycophants employing such slogans.

falling out of use by our generation; and I, myself, handed over to posterity models of many affairs [*rerum*] that should be imitated” (8).²⁰ Here, Augustus deftly presents the legislation of proper behavior under his regime, an ethical system that enforces an altogether new imperial system and hierarchy. Despite the novelty of his laws [*legibus novis*], the emperor (an *imperator novis* himself) asserts that he draws from the example of ancient times, before the dissolution of morality as seen in the Late Republic. Indeed, Augustus moves from this mention of ancestral models to describing the effect of his new legislation moving forward: he now creates news models, by/based upon *himself*, which future generations [*posteris*] will follow (or imitate). Augustus—and his empire—become exceptional vis-à-vis the immoral Republic.²¹ This past ideal permits his regime’s novelty.

Continuing in Caesar’s imperial lineage, these *mores*, and the behaviors they implicitly prescribe, function politically in the establishment of the empire. In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus repeatedly describes the offers he received for political power, which, in his description, he humbly refuses.²² In one example, he narrates, “when the senate and the citizen-body [*δημος*] of the Romans agreed that I should be elected as the sole curator of their laws and ways [*τρόπος*] with greatest authority, I received no offer of authority

²⁰ Edwards, 34-35. The Greek differs slightly: “By introducing new laws, I set right many of the ancient customs that were already being dissolved; and I, myself, handed over (my own?) imitations of many affairs for posterity [*τοῖς μετέπειτα*].” Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 8.4-7. Langlands shows how Suetonius adopts this language of sexual decline to discuss the late Republic and its moral reestablishment under Augustus and the early Empire (as well as his portrayal of its decline at the end of the Julio-Claudian period). Langlands, 348-363.

²¹ The theoretical underpinnings of “exceptional” and “exceptionalism” will be discussed at the start of the third section below (but are not necessary for its use here).

²² The eschewal of empire is equally apparent in American rhetoric, not wanting to admit its imperial resemblances. See Amy Kaplan, “Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 17, 2003,” *American Quarterly* 56 (2004): 1-18; see also brief discussion in Puar, 1-3.

[ἀρχή] that was against the ancestral customs [παρὰ τὰ πάτρια ἔθη]” (6.14-19).²³ Through his “humble” presentation of his route to political power, Augustus’ justification for sole imperial rule (which further serves to justify the continuation of this rule following him) is made by implying that it does not contradict the *mores maiorum*.²⁴ Indeed this new empire is the only way to restore ancient values (or, at least, the best imitations of them) that permit present prosperity.²⁵

These ethical ideals that legitimized Roman *imperium* affected all of the empire’s inhabitants, who were expected to adhere to its values in order to maintain peace. Good or proper living in the empire meant conducting one’s affairs in alignment with the forces of kyriarchal assemblage that maintained Rome’s hierarchy, from the emperor and the elite at the top to slaves and those of lowest status at the bottom. Though Roman authorities would police ethical standards when necessary, moral stability was effectively maintained by promises of stability and benefit for those who maintained the ethical dimensions of *pax Romana*.²⁶ Indeed, as Teresa Morgan observes, “The stability of the Roman Empire, insofar as ethics contributed to it, depended not only on certain kinds of behavior, but on its members fitting in with one another and taking complementary roles in a kind of vast social jigsaw puzzle.”²⁷ Because the “complementary roles” on this “jigsaw puzzle” were stacked since the elite owned or controlled most of the pieces, it was this ethical system that helped enforce imperial and elite control and permitted

²³ The Latin for this particular segment is illegible in the extant remnants of the *Res Gestae*.

²⁴ It seems rather apparent that Augustus himself is anything but humble or objective in his self-presentation, though his rhetoric does present a humble facade.

²⁵ As Nancy Shumate notes, “The production of nationalist narratives always involves the ‘invention of tradition’ in some form.” Nancy Shumate, *Nation, Empire, Decline: Studies in Rhetorical Continuity from the Romans to the Modern Era* (London: Duckworth, 2006), 41. Shumate’s argument connects Roman imperialism to contemporary nationalism and here analyzes Juvenal’s *Satires*. See pp.19-54.

²⁶ Just as political peace was maintained through *πίστις* as discussed in chapter 3.

²⁷ Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 184.

cohesion across the empire in the name of being “good” (*ἀγαθός*) or having “virtue” (*virtus*, or Gk. *ἀρετή*).²⁸ Thus, ethics in first-century Roman society was as much about politics, i.e., maintaining the structure and stability of empire in order to bolster its prosperity (and, as a consequence, that of its citizens), as it was about living “well” or “properly,” as befits *the good life*.

Praiseworthy Submission in Romans 13

Paul’s ethical ideas in Romans 12-15 participate in this “social jigsaw puzzle” of kyriarchal assemblage whose *mores* sustained Roman kyriarchal rule. Nowhere is this submission more explicit than in chapter 13: Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω. οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, αἱ δὲ οὗσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσίν. (“Every soul, submit to the prevailing authorities. For there is not authority except by God, and the present ones have been placed by God,” 13:1).²⁹ As with the empire’s conquest and goals, every soul must submit, or be subject, to the authorities who prevail. This description of the authorities as ὑπερεχούσαις, “the ones who prevail [literally meaning “hold over”]” emphasizes their dominion or domination.³⁰ These “prevailing

²⁸ Indeed, *ἀρετή* is related to *ἀγαθός* as the noun form of its superlative, *ἀριστός*. Just as virtue in Rome was thought to be possessed solely by “true men” (*viri*) of noble status, the adjective *ἀγαθός* is frequently connected with being “well-born” when it refers to persons, this implying that those who do “good” are intrinsically elite or noble. “*ἀγαθός*,” LSJ, 4.

²⁹ Dunn observes that, despite the change from second to third person imperatives, 13:1 still continues the previous exhortations of chapter 12. Dunn, 2:758. This third person imperative is tricky to translate into English because it does not have a grammatical equivalent. Traditionally, this form is translated with “Let,” i.e., “Let every soul submit,” but this translation produces both awkward English (a form of speech not used regularly in conversation or prose). Though not perfect, my translation of “Every soul, submit” (almost as if “every soul” were a vocative and “submit” were a second person imperative) better communicates the force of the third person imperative. The direction of this imperative toward *πᾶσα ψυχή*, “every soul,” broadens the force of the imperative beyond an exhortation/advice directed at the audience, though they are certainly included in the command.

³⁰ Dunn, 2:760-762, notes that this participial form often functions as a substantive for authorities or superiors in its Greek usage. The term combines *ἔχω* (“to hold/have”) with *ὑπέρ* (“over, above”). Deriving in part from a mathematical/numerical usage (a certain number “holding over” another), *ὑπερέχω* often had military meanings, either to denote ability to overpower (and thus prevail) or denoting holding numerical

authorities” most logically refer to the power held by some of the imperial elite, who were called often seen as and called “authorities.”³¹ These persons are, in other words, those who benefitted most, and thus, prevailed, overpowered, or held over—politically, economically, and socially—as a result of the Roman conquest and rule. As we saw above, these elite imperial authorities were also those who set the ethical rules.³²

Following ethical ideas about ἀγάπη (“love”) in chapter 12, Paul’s exhortation make submission explicit. He uses the third person passive imperative of this verb ὑποτάσσω (“to be placed under,” i.e. “to submit”).³³ In ethical terms, this verb denotes

advantage over an opponent. See, for example, its use in Josephus, *Jewish War*, I:45, 124, 412; II:43, 122; IV:197, 199; V:9, 156, 287; note sometimes he contrasts this numerical advantage with a strategic advantage not bound to army size. The participle describes the ἐξουσίαι, “authorities,” the plural form of the Greek term denoting general power or authority that was often used to describe imperial power/authority in the first century. This term, then, refers as much to the types of power that prevail—in particular, the authority and power of empire that have conquered and outnumbered a vast area—as it does to the specific persons who hold this power. “ὑπερέχω,” LSJ, 1863.

³¹ Thus, these authorities are “the Greek equivalents of the Roman *imperia* and *magistratus*....” Fitzmyer, 666. This is evident, despite the fact that 13:1-7 never explicitly mentions Rome or the “state” as he notes on p.662. See also Dunn 2:760; Moo 795-796; Schreiner, 681 (also says ἐξουσίαι is synonymous with ἄρχοντες); Witherington, 310 (along with τεταγμένοι as another term for Roman officials, though he provides no citations for the latter); Hultgren, 471; Longenecker, 955-959 (he specifies them more specifically with relation to authorities located within the capital city); Matera, 294; Keck, 312-313; Esler, 331-332. Mark Nanos has offered an alternative referent for these authorities, asserting that they are the (“non-Christian”) Jewish leaders of the synagogue where his audience met/worshipped as Christ-followers (gentile and Jewish). In this interpretation, Paul exhorts Christ-followers not to cause trouble, attempt to overthrow/challenge the leaders, or disobey protocol (thus connecting to the questions in 14-15). While Nanos’ suggestion has advantages in terms of creating continuity through Romans, especially chapters 12-15 (as he demonstrates), it ultimately seems unlikely, in part due to its dependence on the location of the ἐκκλησία in the synagogue. Furthermore, while he works to connect Paul’s language in 13:1-7 to a Jewish/synagogue context, his analysis is unconvincing in terms of obvious attestations of such language within the synagogue, whereas the broader Roman imperial context is more obviously attested. More generally, the argument relies on assuming that Paul was fairly aware of specific details of the situation of the ἐκκλησία in Rome. See Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 289-336.

³² Affirming the aptness of Marchal’s article, for it is indeed the case that “The Exceptional Proves Who Rules.”

³³ Moo offers the most stringent interpretation of submission, which aligns with my own reading: “To submit is to recognize *one’s subordinate place in a hierarchy*, to acknowledge as a general rule that certain people or institutions have ‘authority’ over us.” Despite our similar readings of ancient submission (most accurate to its first-century meaning in my assessment), Moo is much more willing to accept such submission and God-ordained hierarchy, as his commentary shows but is already apparent in his application of this hierarchy’s authority over *us*, placing his readers under the submission of Paul’s (and Moo’s) kyriarchal God.

Fitzmeyer says submission is with respect to “earthly matters” (665). He also notes the connection to “obedience” (ὑπακούω), noting that submission is “not merely” obedience—implying it is something more.

proper *placement* (as a compound of *τάσσω* [“to place”]): this theme of placement is central to Romans 13.³⁴ Indeed, *proper* placement is *passive*: it means being placed (by another agent) *under* those who prevail with authority: submission. Although in Romans 13:1-5 this submission is contrasted to an opposite placement (rebellion) with political and militaristic connotations, the posture of submission Paul encourages in 13:1-5 undergirds the ethical ideas encouraged in the rest of the chapter (not just into v.7): ethical submission to Roman *mores*.³⁵

Already in this first verse, it is apparent that placement, and particularly placement in a passive sense, frames Paul’s discussion of authority and Christ-followers’ relation to it. But this placement under is *not only* at the hands of Caesar and the Roman authorities *but also* (and most directly) by the God whom all Romans and ἔθνη are under: οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ (“For there is not authority except by God”). “By God” emphasizes God’s role as the active agent in the placement and establishment of a

Moo, 797, makes a similar connection, as does Dunn, 2:760-761. Dunn furthermore assumes such a stance was typical for most early Christ-followers based on its similarity to statements in Titus, 1 Peter, and the Didache (761). While the similarities are undeniable, it is noteworthy that it is likely the authors of Dunn’s examples were already familiar with Paul’s letter to Rome, especially if they were penned in the late first or early second century. Witherington and Byrne also connect submission and obedience but in the *opposite* way: submission is not as extreme as “blind” obedience. See Witherington, 312; Byrne, 387. Hultgren offers a similar distinction, saying that being submissive does not mean servility, just recognizing one’s “legitimate government.” Hultgren, 471. However, as I have been arguing throughout, from the perspective of first-century Roman rule, recognizing Caesar’s legitimacy and authority is to be a servant of (i.e., in a servile position to) Caesar.

³⁴ The verb comes from *τάσσω* (“to place”) with the prepositional prefix *ὑπό* (“under”), thus meaning in its passive form to be subjected or placed under, in other words to “submit.”

³⁵ Most commentaries, noting the “abruptness” of Romans 13:1-7, separate this out as a pericope, and they often note how it is loosely related to what precedes and follows (as ethical exhortations); however, the general consensus is that 13:8 returns to the ideas of 12:9-21 with 13:1-7 as an abrupt interruption. See Fitzmeyer, 677; Jewett, 804-805; Byrne, 393; Moo, 810-811; Witherington, 315; Keck, 311; Schreiner, 690-691. Grieb is nearly alone (along with Witherington) in reading chapter 13 as a single unit, undivided in her commentary; she notes there is no textual support for such separation. Grieb, 122-123. Witherington, 304-305.

hierarchy of authority.³⁶ In the case of Romans 13, God is the ultimate authority, who places everyone (ὕπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμένοι εἰσίν) in their position in the present kyriarchy (αἰ οὔσαι).³⁷

Ideally every soul submits to these authorities, but this is not the only possible placement. Verse two explains: ὥστε ὁ ἀντιτασσόμενος τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῆ ἀνθέστηκεν, οἱ δὲ ἀνθεστηκότες ἑαυτοῖς κρίμα λήμψονται (“As a result, whoever opposes authority stands against God’s appointment, and those who stand against themselves, they will receive judgment”).³⁸ The contrast between submission and opposition (or

³⁶ The use of this particular prepositional phrase here is awkward, as ὑπό with a genitive object typically expresses a personal agent in relation to a passive verb (which is not present in this clause). This awkwardness is often smoothed out by translators of this verse, who most often opt to render it as “from God” (implying the preposition ἀπό or perhaps ἐκ). Indeed, some later variants smooth out or clarify this verse by changing it to ἀπό). Fitzmeyer notes “by God” is technically correct but prefers “from.” Fitzmeyer, 667; also L.T. Johnson, 188-189; Keck, 313. Schreiner prefers “from” but argues that ὑπό and ἀπό were becoming synonymous (an argument that could use firmer establishment). Schreiner, 688. Another option, as rendered by Jewett in his commentary, is “under God.” Jewett, 789. Rendering this phrase as “under God” would be quite fitting considering this dissertation’s title and contention that Paul’s theological system imagines an empire with God on top as the ultimate ruler/authority and all others—human authorities and those of lower status—are, indeed, “under God.” Alas, selecting this more fitting translation would be a However, one would expect θεός to appear in the accusative case, as is typical when ὑπό means “under,” and ὑπό with a genitive object (as here) is almost always attested as “by”—indicating a “personal agent.” Therefore (alas!), despite its *near* possibility, “under God” here is quite improbable on philological grounds, so—despite its awkward sound—“by God” seem both more accurate and preferable. See Smyth, 387-388 (§1698). Moo agrees that the repetition of ὑπό θεοῦ means it is “by God” in both places and a form of passive placement is implicit in the first instance. Moo, 798n.29. See also, Matera, 294.

³⁷ Again, τάσσω appears here as a perfect passive participle (τεταγμένοι) used periphrastically with εἰσίν, to indicate God’s placement. αἰ οὔσαι is the present participle of εἰμί having the ἐξουσία as its antecedent. In other words, God established these authorities’ position and rule in the past and their placement is still in effect in the present.

³⁸ The placement of the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοῖς here is ambiguous, as it could go with either the main verb (λήμψονται) or with the participle (ἀνθεστηκότες). Given the ambiguity, it seems better to put the dative pronoun with the intransitive participle, as this form often takes a dative to specify against what the subject is set. However, as other translations assume, it is possible that τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῆ is the implied indirect object of the participle, carrying over from indirect object of the same verb in the previous clause. See especially Fitzmeyer, 687; Moo, 762-763; Keck, 314-315; Dunn, 2:790. In this interpretation, judgment requires a recipient (themselves) and the judgment on themselves can be both eschatological (from God at the end time) and present (from Rome at God’s behest). In my mind, neither translation is entirely satisfactory, but it seems less necessary to have the indirect object with the main verb, as “they will receive judgment” is just as clear as “they will receive judgment for/by themselves.” In either case, the idea stays approximately the same, that these people/revolters are ultimately harming themselves.

rebellion/revolt, as other possible translations) centers again on *placement* with respect to authorities, featuring another compound of the root verb *τάσσω*.³⁹ Submission, from *ὑποτάσσω*, is to place/be placed *under*; in verse two, opposition is expressed with the verb *ἀντιτάσσω*, to place (oneself) *against*.⁴⁰ *ὁ ἀντιτασσόμενος*, whomever this may be, is the person who does not follow the imperative to submit in verse 1; this person opposes—is placed against—the authorities, *τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ*. She is a rebel, one who attempts to overturn or even overthrow the established hierarchy, and, therefore, is a potential threat to the prevailing authorities who have previously conquered her.

A person or people who place themselves against such authorities, therefore, are prone to be seen with suspicion by imperial leaders, as potential risks to the *pax Romana*, even if they are not a numerical threat in terms of military conquest. By “disturbing the peace,” such groups present themselves as morally unworthy of imperial benefits. Unable to submit and live as proper subjects (by controlling their rebellious urges) they must *be* controlled, regulated, and made lower on the socio-political hierarchy. Philo offers a telling use of this verb in his description of his delegation (with other representatives of the Jewish community in Alexandria) to Gaius Caligula, which was an attempt to sway the emperor to a better policy towards Jews in light of recent anti-Jewish sentiment.⁴¹ He

³⁹ Keck notes Paul’s repetition and emphasis on placement as well, saying he exploits its “nuances” in this segment. Keck, 312.

⁴⁰ Jewett calls *ἀντιτάσσω* “the opposite” of *ὑποτάσσω* (790). Often occurring in this middle form, *ἀντιτάσσομαι* occurs frequently in contexts describing a person or persons who oppose or resist others, especially in contexts of groups who are rebelling against an established authority. Jewett notes that the verb “is used elsewhere in the sense of resistance to duly constituted authority.” Dunn concurs and further notes, “...its typical usage in the LXX is for a resistance which was unavailing before superior strength (Lev 26:37; Deut 7:24; 9:2; 11:25; Josh 1:5; 7:13; 23:9; Judg 2:14; 2 Chron 13:7; Jud 6:4; 11:18) or for a resistance to God which was inconceivable (Job 9:19; Ps 76:7; Jer 49:19 = 50:44; Jud 16:15; Wisd Sol 11:21; 12:12).” Dunn, 2:762. Moo also notes the term is synonymous of the *ἀνθίστημι* (“stand against”) that follows. Moo, 799n.38.

⁴¹ The two specific scenarios that Philo describes at length are (1) Caligula’s desire to place a statue of himself in the Jerusalem temple; (2) the destruction of property and synagogues by other inhabitants of

writes: εἰσελθόντες γὰρ εὐθύς ἔγνωμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ βλέμματος καὶ τῆς κινήσεως, ὅτι οὐ πρὸς δικαστὴν ἀλλὰ κατήγορον ἀφίγμεθα, τῶν ἀντιτεταγμένων μᾶλλον ἐχθρόν (“Immediately upon our arrival, we knew from his glance and his movement that we had come not to a judge but to a prosecutor, much more an enemy of those who had opposed him,” *Legatio* §349). In stating that Caligula was clearly τῶν ἀντιτεταγμένων μᾶλλον ἐχθρόν (“an enemy of those who had opposed him”), Philo conveys the emperor’s prosecuting judgment on the party: they represent the “side” of the recent events in Alexandria that opposed the emperor/imperial rule.⁴² Caligula’s opinion that this party comes from among τῶν ἀντιτεταγμένων, literally the ones who had placed themselves against him, not only shows how this term often denotes rebellion or revolt against (imperial) authority but also conveys an ethical placement against submission to Rome’s (moral) *imperium*.

Philo’s usage gives reason as to why rebellion is antithetical to ethical submission in Romans. Those who oppose the empire and its ruling authority (i.e., the emperor most especially) are viewed with suspicion and in need to prosecution and punishment as “enemies” of the state. For this reason, their needs and concerns are irrelevant to the prevailing authorities, and they themselves are to be considered of lower status, unworthy of the attention or care granted to those higher on the social ladder. Indeed, Philo’s recounting actually proves the ethical submission of Alexandria’s Jews. By placing this

Alexandria, provoking dissent between the various ethnic groups in the region. Though (according to Philo) the violence and destruction was perpetrated by others, the Jews were wrongly blamed by the local authorities as well as, it seemed, by the emperor himself.

⁴² Indeed, at that moment in the story, according to Caligula, they remain opposed to him, given the perfect tense of ἀντιτάσσω here. Compare this use of the perfect to that found in Romans 13:2. Moo calls Paul’s use of the perfect as indicating a “state of rebellion,” which is certainly also the case with Caligula’s assumption about Philo’s embassy; however, something about Moo’s wording makes this state of rebellion seem more permanent (or ethically suspect) than is necessary—i.e., Moo seems to assume (Philo’s) Caligula’s assessment of subjects involved in rebellious events. See Moo, 799.

clearly brash judgment in the eyes/mind of a now-dead and despised emperor, Philo makes clear they are, in fact, not rebellious.⁴³ Likewise in Romans 13, by submitting to both God and God's placed kyriarchy, Christ-followers appear less threatening and, hopefully, worthy of upward mobility.

In setting up these first two verses in this way, Paul presents a binary that is governed by God, the ultimate top of the imperial hierarchy (along with Jesus, the ultimate κύριος), who places all authority.⁴⁴ The binary is simple: one either submits to this authority, those who already prevail with their military might and who, therefore, determine the political, social, and ethical hierarchies, or one opposes it.⁴⁵ The options are to be placed under (ὑποτασσέσθω) or be placed against (ἀντιτασσόμενος), and Paul clearly states that submission is the better, indeed more ethical, option. This is the option that permits the submission to God that Paul has been implicitly encouraging throughout Romans.

However, it is not just this explicit preference for submission that reveals Paul's ethical alignment with Rome's kyriarchal *mores*. Ethical submission is most effective in

⁴³ Indeed, as will be emphasized more in the final section, the *Legatio* was written to support Caligula's successor, Claudius. Philo thus emphasizes that the unpopular emperor (Caligula) has clearly already and unfairly decided his opinion of the (elite) Alexandrian Jews, despite their rational and, indeed, patriotic displays of supporting Rome's empire and its values. In other words, Caligula's poor judgment would have been affirmed by most Roman elites under Claudius, and this example appeals to such sentiments. See Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 85-94.

⁴⁴ God's placement is again featured in Paul's counterexample of ὁ ἀντιτασσόμενος with another form of τάσσω, διατάσσω (to "appoint," "arrange," or "place completely"), here taking a noun form of the passive verb, διαταγή, "appointment," "command," or "ordinance" (literally, "that which has been completely placed"). The opponent stands against (ἀνθέστηκεν) God's appointment or command, τῆ τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῆ, literally what has been firmly placed by God. As we know from verse one, what God firmly places or appoints is the authority against which this rebel is placed. See "διαταγή," LSJ, 414; "διατάσσω," LSJ, 414; Smyth, 375 (§1685.3). Moo notes the connection to τάσσω but prefers "ordain." Moo, 799n.37. Further, Fitzmeyer notes the term's proximity to those used specifically for imperial edicts with the Latin *edictum* having Greek equivalence to διάταξις or διάταγμα. Fitzmeyer, 667; Dunn, 762.

⁴⁵ I identify and discuss this binary in Hoke, "Unbinding Imperial Time."

the subtle ways its notions of “good” (*ἀγαθός*) ideas and actions are drawn into alignment by Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage. Indeed, ethical submission is implied in his suggested actions that permit living this Roman “good life.” Romans 13:1-5’s explicit ethical submission Paul’s talk of placement continues the ethical ideas of chapter 12, which begins by telling his audience to think according to God’s will and discern what is good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*), pleasing, and perfect.⁴⁶ In 13:3, Paul returns to this language of doing good, thereby contextualizing submissive placement within his wider theo-Christological ethics: οἱ γὰρ ἄρχοντες οὐκ εἰσὶν φόβος τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἔργῳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κακῷ. θέλεις δὲ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι τὴν ἐξουσίαν· τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποίει, καὶ ἕξεις ἔπαινον ἐξ αὐτῆς. (“For the rulers are not a terror to good actions but to bad ones. You desire not to fear authority: do good, and you will have praise from it”).

This verse is central to chapter 13 and the ethical submission of the entire letter. It makes clear how Paul’s previous ethical exhortations (and those that will follow) connect to his submissive theo-political system. The verse’s final mandate, “Do good, and you will have praise from it,” neatly summarizes Paul’s goal in expounding on what is good, pleasing, and perfect throughout chapter 12. The person or group who does what is good receives *ἔπαινον*—“praise,” or perhaps, “approval” or “commendation”—from the imperial authority whom God has ultimately placed.

Though Paul defines good actions as God’s will, what is “good” actually appears to be defined by the empire and its ruling authorities. Paul’s ethical advice throughout

⁴⁶ καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς, εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον. “Do not be conformed to [or make your image according to] this age, but be transformed by the mind’s renewal so that you discern what God’s will is, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (12:2). Here one submits to God by adopting God’s (ultimately kyriarchal) mindset and image.

chapters 12-15 would not have been out of the ordinary to most first-century Roman audiences, in other words.⁴⁷ This alignment is most apparent in chapter 13, where Paul specifically exhorts his audience to submit to the imperial authority and to do good according to its system of ethics and morality. By stating that rulers are not a “terror” (φόβος) to good acts (τῶ ἀγαθῶ ἔργῳ) but to bad ones (τῶ κακῶ), Paul turns submission into a position defined by ethics, specifically as doing good and not bad.⁴⁸ If one submits to authority, both imperial and divine, then one also must do good. Alternately, those who do bad (including but not limited to those who rebel/stand against imperial authority and values) draw negative attention and provoke “terror” from those in power (οἱ ἄρχοντες).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ However, this does not negate that some hearers and interpreters can find anti-imperial ideas within it, particularly in certain readings of specific ideas or dictums.

⁴⁸ In addition to ἀγαθός, ancient ethical discourse frequently relies on particular definitions and uses of terms like κακός (“bad”), and ἔργον (“action,” “deed,” or “work”). In my translation of this phrase, I have chosen to render τῶ ἀγαθῶ ἔργῳ and τῶ κακῶ as plural in English, as the neuter singular noun seem to refer more to an ideal than to a single act/deed, and therefore is better captured in English using the plural.

⁴⁹ While Knust confirms that Paul’s statement here is “quite typical,” she emphasizes that the governing assumption is that this applies only to *good* (again, ἀγαθός) rulers and poses the question: “Did Paul think that every ruler, good or bad, was a servant of God whose responsibilities included the execution of God’s wrath against those who do wrong?” Knust, 73. Knust answers that while some argue the answer is “yes,” Paul’s general anti-imperial positions (depicting the non-believing gentile leaders who practiced πορνεία and were controlled by their desires) means that he does not think such a good leader could exist among the non-Christ-followers, giving a negative answer to her earlier question, “But did Paul believe that his rulers were ‘good?’” (72). Therefore, she ultimately suggests that Paul’s advice to submit is meant to be temporary, quelling the desire for an overthrow until God comes at the appointed time. Knust’s comparison to prevailing kingship theories in relationship to 13:1-7 usefully shows the ways Paul’s rhetoric does not deviate from general Roman moral or political thought; however, the answers to questions she raises about what Paul thought about the current rulers (as good or bad) seem dictated by an anti-imperial Paul. Indeed, the πορνεία that, as she argues, characterizes the non-believing rulers seems to be the same (if strengthened) sexual deviancy that these rulers also avoided. As I will argue further below and in comparison with Philo, though Paul may show how Christ-followers (and Jewish law) strengthen the self-control of Roman πορνεία while repeating imperial condemnations of it, this does not necessitate the conclusion (on the part of Paul or his earliest audiences) that Rome’s elite are now amongst the lower-classed ἔθνη with whom πορνεία was most often associated (and from whom Paul distinguishes Christ-followers, especially those who were born into non-Jewish ἔθνη). I ultimately disagree that Paul thought no Roman ruler could be “good” (though obviously God and Christ’s full reign will be *best*), especially because most arguments for such a position require the presumption that Paul must have been opposed to Rome’s empire. The question of what Paul thought about submission to “bad” rulers is more complicated, but I do not think Paul seeks to answer this particular question in Romans. Furthermore, Rome’s elite (especially its philosophers) grapple just as much with this question, as seen in the aftermath of Caligula’s (and Nero’s) reign (also noted by Knust). Knust, 71-74. On Paul, Romans, and Hellenistic kingship theories, see Blumenfeld’s monograph (and their use to interpret 13:1-7 on pp.389-398).

Vice and rebellion (which often could be found together) needed to be regulated, policed, and kept under the control by Rome.⁵⁰ Therefore, 13:3 is closely connected to the verse that follows: θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν. ἐὰν δὲ τὸ κακὸν ποιῆς, φοβοῦ· οὐ γὰρ εἰκῆ τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ· θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι (“For God’s minister is yours for good. However, if you do bad, fear because it does not bear the sword at random. For God’s minister is an avenger for anger to whoever practices vice.”)⁵¹ Together, 13:3-4 emphasize the contrast between good and bad actions and the consequences that ensue from them: καὶ ἔξεῖς ἔπαινον ἐξ αὐτῆς· (13:3, on “good” actions); οὐ γὰρ εἰκῆ τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ· (13:4, on “bad” actions). In both verses, this all-important praise serves contrasts the fear that comes from refusal to submit to the *mores* of imperial authorities. This second statement elaborates the terror: it comes from

⁵⁰ Elliott, following his discussion of irony in Romans 13:1-7 (à la Carter), argues instead that this phrase is evidence that the passage cannot be read in complete alignment with Rome, claiming that it is an ironic reference to propaganda under Nero, in which this emperor claimed *not* to bear the sword like those who preceded him but indeed acted with sword sheathed or not drawn. According to Elliott, Paul, by saying that authority does not bear the sword in vain, makes an ironic reference to this propaganda, though his audience would know that it is actually untrue, as Nero indeed was among Rome’s bloodiest emperors. See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 155-156; see further, Elliott, “Romans 13:1-7 in the Context of Roman Imperial Propaganda,” in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 201-203. While Elliott makes a great connection here, it is less clear how obvious (or intentional) such irony would be: Paul could just as easily be repeating such a slogan without hidden meaning. Further, it seems to be that this interpretation limits “bearing the sword” to just its usage by the emperor to deal with (elite) political rivals, without accounting for its use in policing and regulating vice at a more localized level.

⁵¹ In many ways, verses 3-4 use parallel grammatical constructions to contrast the results of good acts with those of bad ones; several words are repeated across these two sentences. In the first phrases of each, the two verbs ποιέω and φοβέομαι appear, though reversed in order: (1) θέλεις δὲ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι τὴν ἐξουσίαν· τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖ (2) ἐὰν δὲ τὸ κακὸν ποιῆς, φοβοῦ· The plausible (future more vivid) condition in the second construction (found in 13:4), which stipulates what the audience should expect to do if they do bad things, works similarly to the construction seen in the first phrase (found in 13:3). Though the phrase in 13:3 does not take the conditional form, the effect of its statements work in similar, parallel fashion, almost as if a simple/neutral condition: if you desire not to fear authority, [imperative] do good and [future] you will have praise from it. This repetition suggests these two verses form a cohesive unit. The first half focuses on doing (ποιέω) good, the second on doing bad. In both, fear (φοβέομαι), then, motivates doing good and results from doing bad. Though τὴν ἐξουσίαν is not specified as the object of fear in the second half, it is implied that this is who will cause fear to those who do bad. By inverting the order of the verbs in the construction, the unit forms a circular whole. The desire to not fear motivates the imperative exhortation to do good; then, the possibility of disobeying this command by doing bad results in the imperative to be afraid, thus returning to the need to do good.

imperial policing via the sword, and such policing is “random.” It is for those who act badly.⁵²

The ἔπαινος—praise—of 13:3 is the reward of ethical submission: it is clearly what Christ-followers (like all Romans) want instead of φόβος, terror. ἔπαινος generally applies to acknowledgment, rhetorical or otherwise, of noteworthy action.⁵³ This praise can be quite general, but when it comes at the hands of the empire, it implies certain benefits and privileges typically conferred upon more elite subjects who have gained particular notice of the emperor (or those closest to him).⁵⁴ It would appear, then, that by

⁵² Jewett notes τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ also draws from the language of policing, as the technical term μαχαιροφόροι could be used to refer to those who enforced the law. Jewett, 795. Jewett refers to several papyri roughly contemporaneous to Paul that appear to refer to those who enforce the law/bear the sword as “police officers” using this term. In other words, those who wield imperial power are intentional in their decisions to “bear the sword,” or punish, provoke, and police terror. See also Fitzmeyer, 669. Commentators generally agree that this is a broad reference (with multiple connection) to Rome’s authority to punish crimes, especially emphasizing that this reference to “bearing the sword” cannot be limited to the military enforcement and the death penalties implied by imperial *ius gladii*. See Moo, 802; Byrne, 391.; Dunn, 2:764; Schreiner, 684-685; Witherington, 314.

⁵³ It is often the term used to describe panegyric that praised noteworthy figures in older Greek sources (such as in Isocrates, Aeschines, or Demosthenes). Dunn calls it the “goal” of the Greek wisdom tradition. Dunn 2:763. Contrasting it with Roman sexual slander, Knust notes that ἔπαινος in such Greco-Roman rhetoric was critical for ideals of Roman virtue. Such praise frequently appealed to the subject’s *noble origins* as a primary source for being worthy of praise (and, likewise, lower status/birth was not worthy). Knust, 19-20. It has been argued that such praise can be related to the act of public inscriptions and benefactions. See Bruce Winter, “Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15,” in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church*, ed. Oakes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 67-102. While the parallels are striking, this does not seem to be the only or best interpretive context. However, if it is the context, it does not negate this argument: these inscriptions provide useful information about how (elite) benefactors of a city were praiseworthy persons and also were thought to be “good” (in a moral sense) as a result of their beneficence. In other words: public benefaction was one way the elite could prove their moral superiority, but it was not the only way. See also Moo, 802-803n.50. Commentators generally agree that this “praise” is earthly and comes directly from an imperial or more elite source (under God’s ultimate authority, as some emphasize), but many argue that this praise should not be limited to Winter’s specific example of that bestowed upon benefactors. See Byrne, 387-388, 391; Schreiner, 683n.20; Matera, 295. In not limiting praise to that of benefaction, Witherington notes that if this is what Paul has in mind, it is limited to the likely very small minority of Christ-followers of higher financial status. Witherington, 313-314. I agree with Witherington’s assessment, but I would add that one *is* more likely to receive formal imperial praise if one has access to money to make such public displays of (“moral”) beneficence. In other words, there is an upwardly mobile hope implicit in desiring praise: those who are moral enough to be praiseworthy are often those with money (which can also serve as a shield for immorality).

⁵⁴ For example, in his *Jewish War*, Josephus describes the praises given to Antipater by Julius Caesar (on account of his military service and prowess), which included Roman citizenship and, later, political positions. See Josephus, *Jewish War*, I.193-194.

doing good, Paul believes that his audience will gain notice from the empire and its authorities for their moral behavior that conforms to (and perhaps even exceeds) the empire's standards.⁵⁵ In so doing, Paul assumes that this notice will result in praise from those in power, which will hopefully help to confer better social standing and benefits for these Christ-followers.

On the flip-side of Paul's binary, since vice and rebellion were inseparable in Roman ideology, *αἱ ἀντιτασσόμεναι* (whoever place themselves against authority) prove themselves to be no better than barbarians in need of conquering and order. They are of low birth and will never rise on the social ladder to praise and power. Returning to Paul's desire for praise (the antithesis to this fear and force), those who submit are also more likely to be praiseworthy, which implies the ability to move upward on the social scale.⁵⁶ Doing good requires full ethical submission to the *mores* that make one a good—and hopefully eventually even *virtuous*—person.⁵⁷ Thus, it is these ethically submissive subjects who are worthy of praise (and potentially of higher status), while those who rebel and do bad/practice vice are clearly only worthy of terror and suspicion.

The ideology that undergirds this unit follows the ideas of the Roman social hierarchy, especially as it relates to elite conceptions of ethics. Paul's encouragement to do good is both a strategy to avoid fear and prosecution *and* a way to receive praise and positive attention from the imperial authorities. Doing good, via ethical submission,

⁵⁵ As the expansion on exceptionalism below implies, these stricter emphases in non-elite ethics present *exceptional* self-control in Roman terms, of such a standard that would certainly be unexpected and praiseworthy for those outside the elite. (To be brought into the elite, one may need to be excessive in these ethical embodiments).

⁵⁶ This is, ultimately, a very limited move, as we will see further below and as we already saw in chapter 3 and the fantasies that sustained cruel *πίστις* (from which these ethical submissions cannot be divorced).

⁵⁷ As discussed in n.28, *ἀρετή* is a noun form of the superlative of *ἀγαθός*.

therefore, represents another way for Christ-followers to become upwardly mobile under the imperial system.

How do the ethical mandates of 13:3-4 relate to the exhortation to submission and counterexample of rebellion in 13:1-2? Verse 5 connects the dots: Paul's advice to the need for submission: διὸ ἀνάγκη ὑποτάσσεσθαι, οὐ μόνον διὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν. ("Therefore, it is necessary to submit, not only because of anger but also because of [your] consciousness.") This verse reinforces and completes the now-explicit connection between ethics and submission. Certainly, Paul admits that submission prevents wrath (ὀργὴν), but this is not his emphasis; it is not the only (οὐ μόνον), or even the main, benefit.⁵⁸ It is simply an obvious outcome.⁵⁹ The major benefit comes from moral awareness (συνείδησις).⁶⁰ It comes from knowing what is good and being seen as

⁵⁸ Moo concurs and calls fear the "minor reason." Moo, 803.

⁵⁹ The οὐ μόνον...ἀλλὰ καὶ ("not only...but even more/also") construction here emphasizes that the "conscience" is unrelated to the anger: it is the knowledge of knowing what is good (according to the authorities) that should motivate submission to authority from Christ-followers. In other words, Paul's submissive exhortations are not primarily an anti-imperial survival strategy, a way of avoiding imperial wrath as seen in their brutal retaliations and suppressions against rebels (οἱ ἀντιπασσόμενοι).

⁶⁰ With this as the more major reason for submission, Moo notes how this conscience relates back to the mind's "transformation" in 12:2. Moo, 803. In other words, moral awareness submits the transformed mind to God and ultimately, then, to Roman ethics under God. Indeed, writes Byrne: "For Paul, 'conscience' refers to that self-awareness which *submits one's thoughts and actions* to constant evaluation in view of a responsibility pressing in one one from without...." Byrne, 388; emphasis added. Dunn, therefore, notes that it points to the need for a divinely ordered government of some sort. Dunn 2:771. The term συνείδησις is almost always used to evoke the idea of awareness in a moral sense, and is often translated as "conscience," though it can more generally mean "awareness" or "knowledge" in a shared sense. "συνείδησις," LSJ, 1704. In his *Library of History*, Diodorus Siculus twice uses the phrase διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν, both times in reference to a guilty conscience, which drive its possessor mad (4.65.7) or haunts him (29.25), due to an immoral act. See further Romans 2:15, 9:1; 1 Cor 10:25, 27 (both with διὰ), 28, 29, 8:7, 10, 12; 2 Cor 4:2, 5:11. Fitzmeyer, 669; Matera, 296; Keck, 317; Schreiner 685. L.T. Johnson's assessment is quite interesting for his struggle with the implications of this conscience-driven submission: does one submit because it is the "right thing to do" or because submitting to authority is always of a most moral nature. He seems to hope it is the former, for he admits that if it is the latter, then Paul is clearly "wrong." L.T. Johnson, 190. I would say that precisely based upon this use and meaning of "conscience," it is clear that submission for Paul is *more than* "the right thing to do" but it is a natural moral imperative to submit. However, unlike many commentators, I am not at all hesitant to assert that what Paul thinks is probably wrong—or, at least, not perfect in its correctness.

having adopted the ethical values of the imperial authorities.⁶¹ So, Paul argues, this audience should submit and do good because of this awareness/knowledge *beyond* the fact that not doing so will result in anger from and fear of authority. The benefit of adopting this mindset, of submitting to authority and the empire's values, is this *praise*. This praise or commendation is a recognition and acknowledgment, from the kyriarchal top, that these Christ-followers go beyond not posing a moral-political threat. They are model, indeed praiseworthy, subjects who embody the virtues and values of the imperial elite.

But doesn't God trump elite authority, since God stands at the top of the social hierarchy? After all, it is God who placed these authorities at the top of the imperial system, and it is God's ethics—seemingly endorsed in the imperial system—that the Christ-followers must ultimately follow. Though this is true, God's ethical standards, as elaborated in Romans 12-15 and particularly seen here in chapter 13, barely deviate from those already set by the empire and the kyriarchal assemblage that sustained it. By establishing God as above all and as the one who places all authority, Paul establishes imperial ethics as being equivalent to theo-Christological ethics. In so doing, Paul also proves all Christ-followers, as adherents to these theo-Christological ethics must be followers of imperial ethics.

The premise of vv.1-5 is that rulers—those prevailing authorities of v.1—require good behavior and are a terror to those who do bad. Paul's exhortation assumes that ethics are determined by those who have authority and who rule: those with the power to

⁶¹ The benefit comes quite literally from having the same knowledge, *συνείδησις*, as the authorities. Here contrasted with *ἔργη*, this motivating “conscience” means the awareness of proper moral behavior with relation to the imperial authorities. In other words, Paul insists, his audience should know how to “do good” and therefore remain obedient to the ethical standards enforced by the empire and by God.

praise and punish also decide who and what is good and bad. Under Roman imperial rule, good people are those who conform to the social hierarchy. They are those who are good imperial subjects, who *submit* to the rule of the prevailing authorities. Paul's command for submission is not merely a call to accept imperial authority; his advice submits his audience ethically to imperial standards of behavior. Thus, the act of submission, of allowing oneself to be placed under others (ὕποταστέσθω), is an ethical *placement*: Paul does not only encourage his audience to submit as a form of non-rebellion, he encourages them to submit fully by adopting and following the moral codes of the empire. He exhorts ethical submission.

Thus made explicit in 13:1-5, this ethical submission continues into the rest of the chapter (vv.6-14), and informs theo-Christological ethics in Romans 12-15. In this light, 13:6-7 follow naturally upon Paul's exhortation to ethical submission. Being model, moral subjects who submit to the empire's authority and values means paying taxes, thereby financially submitting to the authorities and, by extension, also backing their goals and programs through financial support (willingly given, even if required, sometimes forcibly).⁶² Paying one's taxes is a demonstration of submission, of loyal

⁶² Thus, Paul instructs: διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ φόρους τελεῖτε, λειτουργοὶ γὰρ θεοῦ εἰσιν εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο προσκαρτεροῦντες ("Therefore, because of this, also pay your taxes [lit. fulfill taxes]; for they are God's public servants, who devote themselves, for this same thing"). The command to pay taxes is followed by a statement that is similar to the parallel pair of ἔστιν-statements in v.4, here however using the plural εἰσιν and replacing διάκονος with λειτουργοί, a term with similar meaning in English ("minister" or "servant") but having more distinctly religious usages. In both cases, forms of imperial authority are being described (whether it be to levy taxes or the broader political and ethical submission) by these terms, and submission and obediences to these authorities and their demands have already been exhorted. While λειτουργοί (as well as the preceding διάκονος) both have authoritative meaning outside of biblical texts, they both are often used in religious contexts, λειτουργός being related to the performance of public services and διάκονος referring to officials in various temples and cults. "λειτουργός," LSJ, 1036-1037; "διάκονος," LSJ, 398. Jewett, 794-796, 799-800, also notes the application of these terms to public officials, often performing religious tasks. In other words, their religious meanings do not separate these terms from imperial authority. Fitzmeyer notes these verses continue the principle articulated in the first five verses; however, he makes a surprising move to argue that Christ-followers' existence in civil society—ordered by hierarchy

“patriotism” to imperial authority.⁶³ However, by again referring to these imperial authorities as servants/ministers of God, Paul reaffirms both God’s position at the top of the imperial hierarchy (placing all others under God) and the alignment of God’s idea of “what is good, pleasing, and perfect” with imperial ethics.

13:6-7 transitions from the explicit directive for submission to further ethical advice which stems from their ethical submission to imperial authority.⁶⁴ 13:8-14 continues this line of ethical advice and imperatives, with 13:8 broadening the idea of repayment in 13:7: *μηδενὶ μηδὲν ὀφείλετε, εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν· ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν* (“Owe nothing to no one except for loving reciprocally. For whoever loves completes a different law.”)⁶⁵ The demands to owe nothing else continues the submission to imperial ethics, which penalized those who owed money, taxes or otherwise. Owing money, in particular, conveys lower status and dependence upon those higher on the social ladder; furthermore, since wealth is indicative of elite status, the ability to not owe debts is indicative of some level of financial stability. Such displays of

and requiring submission—*negates the equality of Gal. 3:28* outside the *ἐκκλησία*. Fitzmeyer, 669-670. Even in my own negative evaluation of Paul, I am not quite willing to say Paul *intentionally* abandons the radical implications of this hymn. Many commentators note the context of more general unrest surrounding taxes in Rome around the start of Nero’s reign. Dunn specifically notes a reference in Tacitus that confirms 58 C.E. was a year of such unrest. Dunn, 766. See also Moo, 805-806; Witherington, 309-310. Both Dunn and Byrne say that vv.6-7 are the climax of 13:1-7, in other words, the general submission of vv.1-5 is mostly in the service of exhorting the proper payment of taxes. Dunn, 772; Byrne, 388-389.

⁶³ In somewhat similar ways, Puar discusses modern gay consumerism, particularly with relationship to the assumptions of access to capital involved in the large gay tourism industry, observing that as (white, affluent) queerness aligns more closely with national belonging, the once disruptive aspects of gay tourism are downplayed and replaced by rhetorics of patriotism and loyalty to the American state. Puar, 61-67.

⁶⁴ Thus, 13:1-7 are traditionally formed into a unit in Paul’s argument, as the single segment that directly addresses the ethical relation of Christ-followers to Rome’s authority. Many commentators note that the theme of “owing” very loosely bridges this segment with 13:8 that follows, but this owing is a convenient transition word to move to an entirely unrelated idea (about “Christian” love, quite often). See Witherington, 315; Schreiner, 690-691; Moo, 810-811; Dunn, 2:775; Fitzmyer 677. Grieb does not begin a new unit, as noted above, but she does say owing creates a bridge. Grieb, 125.

⁶⁵ The command to repay debts (*τὰς ὀφειλάς*), citing several specific situations when a person owes money or services to another, leads to this advice to owe (*ὀφείλω*) nothing. Dunn notes this reflects a “conventional desire to avoid debt” and assumes Jesus tradition establishes Jesus as an exemplar for these ethical ideas. Dunn 2:776.

financial access and stability are a form of what Puar calls “mediated national belonging” and, in the first century, continues to indicate hope for elite respect and belonging via ethical submission.⁶⁶ If Christ-followers are known to owe nothing to anyone (except in their love, which might attract further positive attention), then they are again more likely to be viewed as praiseworthy subjects who submit to imperial demands and live debt-free, as do the wealthier elite.

The one thing that Christ-followers should owe to others is τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν, “loving reciprocally” (or, to render the articular infinitive more literally, “to love one another”).⁶⁷ This reciprocal owing of love returns to the themes of love already encouraged in chapter 12 (ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνθρώκριτος, “love is unhypocritical,” v.9). This love, it would seem, is separate from the imperial ethics to which Christ-followers must submit for it is part of—and allows one to fulfill or complete—τὸν ἕτερον νόμον, a *different* law.⁶⁸ Based on his quotation of the Septuagint form of the Decalogue (13:9) and of Lev. 19:18,

⁶⁶ Puar, 27.

⁶⁷ “Reciprocally” seems to better convey the meaning of ἀλλήλους here, a meaning that is confirmed by LSJ. “ἀλλήλων,” LSJ, 69. The use of the infinitive as a noun and as an object of the main verb, ὀφείλω, is best conveyed using the English gerund “loving.”

⁶⁸ This translation deviates from prevailing scholarly opinion, which takes τὸν ἕτερον as the object of the participle ἀγαπᾶν, generally because νόμος always refers to the Torah for Paul and (since clearly refers to Torah here) there is no need to contrast its otherness to an unmentioned Roman law (in terms of an explicit mention of νόμος previously). Fitzmyer, 678; Dunn 2:776; Schreiner, 691-692. I do not deny the possibility of their translation as being on equal grounds to my selection, but this argument seems weak as Roman law is *very* implicit in 13:1-7. Moo’s philological argument is more convincing though clearly not decisive: ἕτερος as an attributive adjective is rare, and Paul always has an object for the verb ἀγαπάω. Moo, 813n.19. Indeed, Jewett agrees with the prevailing notion, but in terms of the Greek, he says both are equally plausible and even admits his choice to be that of preference. Jewett, 807-808. My translation is not totally unestablished, as these commentators make their arguments against those of Willi Marxsen and James Arthur Walther in particular. Willi Marxsen, “Der ἕτερος νόμος Röm 13,8,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* (1955): 230-237; James Arthur Walther, “A Translator’s Dilemma: An Exegetical Note in Romans 13:8,” *Perspective* 13 (1972): 243-246. Witherington uses “other law” but says it does not refer to Torah but to “the rest of the law,” i.e., that of Christ (an interpretation with which I stridently disagree, given the direct quotation of Torah that follows). Witherington, 309n.15, 315. Byrne lies somewhere in the middle, saying that love contrasts with Jewish law, but it could also refer to the second half of the Ten Commandments (those that deal directly with neighbors). Byrne, 393-396. L.T. Johnson’s support for “other law” follows my own and connects it to Torah. L.T. Johnson, 192.

it appears that this different law refers to that found in the scriptures (specifically, Jewish scriptures). In 13:8-10, Paul emphasizes that this “different law”—i.e., differing from that of the imperial authorities—emphasizes this reciprocal and un hypocritical love (*ἀγάπη*) in chs.12-13.⁶⁹

However, just because this law is “different” does not mean that those who complete its commands of love are not also completing the demands of imperial morality. Thus, Paul continues in 13:10 by observing: *ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται*. (“Love does not work vice towards a neighbor”). Here, Paul combines the scriptural/Jewish law of love with the moral terms of empire, in particular that of vice, *τὸ κακόν*, which is used alongside the verbal form of the noun *ἔργον* (used above in 13:3), *ἐργάζομαι*. Paul aligns these Jewish/scriptural values, already known to most Christ-followers, as fulfilling both God’s commands and the laws and ethics of the imperial state (whose authority, we have seen, is placed by God). By aligning ethically with imperial authority, Paul positions Christ-followers to be seen as being most able to embody and remain under imperial values. They become, in other words, model subjects, submissive to authority and living in ways that pose no threat to the state while simultaneously supporting its political project of dominion.⁷⁰

Thus, in Romans 13, Paul’s stance of ethical submission submits to and aligns with Rome’s kyriarchy and its *mores*. As a result of this submission, freedom from

⁶⁹ And it can indeed be summarized in the words of Lev. 19:18: *καὶ εἴ τις ἑτέρα ἐντολή, ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται [ἐν τῷ] Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν* (“And if there is some other commandment, it is summarized in this saying: “You will love your neighbor as yourself,” 13:9).

⁷⁰ Below we will see how Paul’s attempts to show the “exceptional” nature of the Jewish Torah that aligns with (and indeed strengthens) Roman *mores* is *unexceptional* among Jews, many of whom also attempted to curry favor and praise from Rome by showing how their ethics (particularly, for Philo, in the Torah) are excessively Roman.

punishment (φóβος) is the first of many benefits enjoyed by Rome’s exceptional elite. More importantly, as he competes in this imperial arena, Paul molds Christ-followers as superior competitors (especially compared with other ἔθνη) because they are equipped with an elevated moral code that supplements the Roman moral code.⁷¹ Just as in the case of πίστις, praise from these authorities (for exceptional ethical submission) continues to permit the upward mobility to enable and sustain a “good life.” In addition to his general ethical submission as seen in 13:1-10 (and preceded by his ethical advice in chapter 12), his language in vv.11-14 continues these ethical alignments with kyriarchal assemblage, specifically aligning them with the *mores* of Rome’s sexually exceptional elite, topics to which we now turn.

Roman Homonationalism

In the preceding section, we saw how imperial *mores* and their dissemination ultimately served to preserve Rome’s social and political hierarchies. In effect, Roman ethics enact an “exceptionalism” that created an exceptional elite *imperium*.

“Exceptionalism,” Puar explains, “paradoxically signals *distinction from* (to be unlike, dissimilar) as well as *excellence* (imminence, superiority), suggesting a departure from yet mastery of linear teleologies of progress.”⁷² Drawing attention to the role sexuality plays in contemporary versions of such exceptionalism, Puar uncovers a specifically “sexual exceptionalism” that regulates race, gender, class and sexuality in the United States that enforces nationalist politics as a means to national prosperity.⁷³ Sexual

⁷¹ Specifically, the Torah, as the ethical laws Jesus and Paul (as Jews) followed and were most familiar with and from which Paul quotes in 13:9.

⁷² Puar, 3.

⁷³ Puar opens with a discussion of how the U.S., as a modern nation, both eschews and embraces the term “empire” as a description for its politics. Though they do not exactly correspond, Puar’s description of “nationalism/nation” today could easily be substituted for “imperialism/empire” in the first-century context.

exceptionalism, with respect to nation/empire, produces narratives and ideologies wherein norms/ideals of sexual morality simultaneously produce certain bodies as “excellent,” and thus elite and deserving of power and inclusion, and as “distinct” from, and therefore better than, those bodies presumed to be unwilling and unable to adhere to these moral standards.⁷⁴

An ancient form of sexual exceptionalism can be seen in Rome and its socio-sexual-political hierarchy (described in the introduction). In the first subsection, these regulations that defined “natural” sexual behavior are more explicitly connected to the production and maintenance of a sexually exceptional elite class that is distinct and superior in terms of a sexuality intimately associated with ethnicity, gender, and class boundaries. Then, in the second subsection, we will see how, though intended to regulate citizens, these specifically sexual *mores* also disseminated beyond the elite and regulated the intimacy of Rome’s *ἔθνη*, allowing them to align themselves with the imperial elite by embodying its sexually exceptional terms. Such alignments demonstrate a Roman form of what Puar names “homonationalism.” Returning to Paul and Romans 13, the final subsection shows how Paul’s ethical submission to Roman *mores* takes on specifically sexual forms in ways that make it a quite clear instance of this homonationalism.

Exceptional Sexual Mores

The exceptional moral restoration of Rome’s empire was emphasized by appealing to the dangers of sexual immorality. Imperial cohesion and control were

Indeed, I generally can be said to make such a substitution below as I point to how these concepts (already quite malleable in Puar’s theorization) do morph and adapt in a different historical and socio-political setting. See Puar, 1-3. See also Kaplan, “Violent Belongings.” Marchal, “Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 89-91, 95-99.

⁷⁴ For a detailed overview of political theories of contemporary American exceptionalism and their relations to hetero- and homonormativities in the United States, see Puar, 3-11.

threatened by the possibility of moral degeneration, particularly among the elite. In contrast to the return of ethical values and the prosperity their restoration ushered in, in another ode, Horace emphasizes the consequences of unrestrained immorality. “The generations, being fecund with flaws [*culpae*], first pollute marriages, then the race and households; thus, destruction, stemming from this source, flows into the fatherland and its people” (3.6.17-20).⁷⁵ The deterioration of society results from the “flaws,” or the immoral behaviors, of each “generation.”⁷⁶ Given that “marriages” (*nuptias*) are corrupted first by these flaws, it is clear that Horace has sexual immorality in mind as he refers to the flaws that threaten to overflow and destroy Roman society, in particular a Roman society that is ordered according to wealth, citizenship, and social status as representative of an ancestral ideal (signified by the flooding of the “fatherland” [*patria*]). Roman anxieties around excessive and unnatural sexuality could diminish the *virtus* of an individual (elite) man but also threatened to violate the purity and dominance of Rome’s elite *imperium*.

Where *virtus* emphasized a male dominance that needed to be established and constantly maintained, the value of *pudor* (the “modesty” of Horace’s other ode) points to the excess that a *vir* must moderate and control. *Pudor* forms the root of the Roman ideal of *pudicitia* (“sexual inviolability” or “chastity”).⁷⁷ *Pudicitia* represented and idealized

⁷⁵ For discussions of this passage, see Zanker, 156-159; Edwards, 45-47; Knust, 40-44.

⁷⁶ These flaws, *culpa* (often used later for “sin” or “wrongdoing”), refer both to general behaviors that deviated from Roman moral standards, idealized in the *mores maiorum*, and to specifically sexually deviant behaviors, as *culpa* often had sexual implications.

⁷⁷ On *pudor*’s relationship to shame and the gendered body in Rome, see Carlin A. Barton, “The Roman Blush: The Delicate Matter of Self-Control” in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, ed. James I. Porter (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 212-234. For a detailed overview of *pudor*’s political import and relation to sexuality, see Langlands, 17-29. Williams discusses this at length in relation to the Roman charge of *stuprum*. With compelling evidence, Williams argues that Roman charges of *stuprum* were not exclusively or primarily brought against those who committed homosexual sexual acts (specifically pederastic acts, which were really only a small subset included under the charge) but that

“the inviolability of the Roman bloodline.”⁷⁸ However, *pudicitia* was easily lost, most especially by taking the passive/penetrated role in intercourse (for men) or by being penetrated by anyone who is not one’s lawful husband (for women).⁷⁹ Those accused of *stuprum*, said to have lost their *pudicitia*, were unfit for political office or social acceptance, according to the arguments of those making the accusations.⁸⁰ In line with Roman ethical *mores*, sexuality was primarily concerned with the maintenance of Rome’s elite class, and therefore its social and political hierarchies, by ensuring that at the top of society—particularly those with political control or influence—were those who were unable to lose their *pudicitia* and, more generally, their modesty or honor (*pudor*).

In this way, sexual pleasures denote a particular site of anxiety for elite Romans who feared social and political decline: decline that ultimately would endanger their distinct status, wealth, power, and control.⁸¹ Unlike the overt danger posed by Rome’s “barbarian” enemies in battle, sexuality represented a more subtle and dangerous threat

stuprum was instead a broader charge brought against men who violated another freeborn’s *pudicitia* (and/or against the person who “allowed” her/his *pudicitia* to be violated). Williams, 103-106.

⁷⁸ Williams, 104. Williams emphasizes that *pudicitia* is “the province of the free” (107) and is the central concern of *stuprum* as a charge; see pp.104-109.

⁷⁹ Williams’ discussion of *pudicitia* portrays it as a quality that can be lost by both men and women as described above; however, it is possible to infer from his presentation that perhaps *pudicitia* is only a quality possessed by men. Williams’ argues that when a woman commits adultery, she loses her *pudicitia*, but his evidence implies that the crime of adultery is largely a crime against the husband—implying that his *pudicitia* is potentially lost through his inability to control his unfaithful spouse. Williams, 109-125. Thus, as Edwards summarizes, “It is impossible to disentangle suggestions that a man’s wife was unfaithful from attempts to suggest that he was politically or socially weak.” Edwards, 57. See further Langlands, 29-32 (her monograph more generally details the extent to which *pudicitia* in relation to “...Roman ethics was concerned with the positioning of the individual within a network of hierarchal social relations” [365]); Knust, 37-47.

⁸⁰ Williams 110-116; Knust, 25-50.

⁸¹ “Some Romans feared for the collapse of social hierarchy in an orgy of promiscuity, a perpetual Saturnalia, but their anxiety was not only aroused by the thought of mixing with low persons. Perhaps more significant was the thought that in pursuing sensual pleasures, members of the elite were indulging themselves in a way that low persons would do if only they had the resources. Sensual pleasure was seen as dangerous, at least in part because its power, its appeal, was universal.” Edwards, 195. These anxieties and their particular emphasis on sexuality emphasize the ways in which sexuality was (and still is) burdened with an “excessive of significance,” as Rubin diagnosed (see chapter 2).

that could “penetrate” the borders of Rome’s elite and, by extension, its *imperium*.

Preserving *pudor* was crucial to preventing a downward spiral that constantly threatened imperial dominion. As seen in the second of Horace’s odes, socio-sexual-political deterioration spreads from marriages to the household and the entire “race” (*genus*).⁸² As one immoral behavior often accompanies another, sexual immorality was an inseparable “piece” of the Roman moral jigsaw.⁸³

Nowhere is Rome’s ethical maintenance of an elite citizenry more apparent than in Augustan marriage reform.⁸⁴ In 18 B.C.E. Augustus enacted the *lex Iulia*, his legislation which regulated various sexual arrangements, most famously marriage but also *stuprum* and adultery.⁸⁵ These laws primarily regulated the sexual behaviors of free

⁸² While these anxieties around sexuality heavily influenced the renewed *mores*, the “flaws” that elite Roman authors perceived included more than just sexual immorality. So, in Roman morality, it was assumed that the most moral elite could control their urges for pleasures (sexual especially, but also in other realms, such as food or drink). “Virtue was a matter of self-control; good behavior which was merely a result of necessity did not count as virtue.” Edwards, 57. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson note, “Mastery—of others and/or self—is the definitive masculine trait in most Greek and Latin literary texts that survive from antiquity.” Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, “Taking It like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 250. Their essay is primarily concerned with the value of ἀνδρεία (“courage,” “manliness,” or “manly courage”) and its portrayal and construction, which relied heavily on the idea of mastery, especially over the self. They discuss the relation of manliness and ἐγκράτεια especially on pp.258-259. See also Knust, 37-39; Stowers, 42-82.

⁸³ Recalling Morgan, *Popular Morality*, 184 (quoted above). See also Edwards, 4.

⁸⁴ Some of his *legibus novis* mentioned in the the *Res Gestae* as quoted above.

⁸⁵ Though both the laws on marriage and adultery bear the name of Augustus’ daughter Julia, the laws were separate texts: the *Lex Julia de maritandis er ordinibus* and the *Lex Julia de adulteriis*. The laws were introduced relatively contemporaneously, around 18 B.C.E. See Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 60-61, 277-278. The latter set of laws (variously titled in sources, but generally called the *Lex Julia de adulteriis*) stipulated permissible punishments, often harsh, for acts of adultery and *stuprum*. This included punishments for the general acts including under the label *stuprum*, specific discussions of punishments for adulterers (typically women who cheated on their husbands and the men with whom the affair was conducted, and provisions to punish husbands who caught their wives in an affair and did not prosecute them (this charge was called *lenocinium*, “procuring” or “pandering”). Treggiari, 277-290. On the adultery law, Edwards emphasizes, “Augustus’ law made adultery seem more, not less, dangerous.” Edwards, 61 (see further her full discussion of these laws, pp.34-62). See also discussions in Williams, 130-136 (see further his second appendix, “Marriage between Males,” 279-286); Richlin, *Arguments with Silence: Writing the History of Roman Women* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 36-61 (this chapter of Richlin’s collection of her own essays updates her original publication, much earlier in her career, under the same title: “Approaches to the Sources on Adultery in Rome” *Women’s Studies* 8 (1981): 225-250); Jane F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen*, London: Routledge, 1993; Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 42; Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, 318-320; Knust, 39-41. The most comprehensive ancient source on

citizens (male and female). Thus, they reiterated proper Roman sexual values and established them as essential to Rome's stability.⁸⁶ It was assumed that if an elite married woman had an affair (especially with someone of lower status or non-Roman), then her husband also lacked the virtue (as well as virility) and self-control characteristic of men of high status and political influence.⁸⁷ Through these laws, Augustus made the regulation of (citizens') sexual behavior a prerogative of the state, just as it regulated more overtly political crimes, such as treason.⁸⁸ "To suppress license was to guarantee political stability," writes Edwards.⁸⁹

The regulation of *stuprum* went hand-in-hand with Augustan legislation on marriage, seamlessly arranging sexual ethics to maintain his kyriarchy.⁹⁰ Roman citizens were expected to marry other citizens, and when mixed marriages occur, the status of the

these marriage laws is their quotation by Ulpian (second/third century C.E.); see also the compilation of ancient sources discussing issues surrounding women and marriage in Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce, and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), 81-218.

⁸⁶ Treggiari, 60-61; see elaboration of its legal details pp.61-77.

⁸⁷ Edwards, 57. Furthermore and more broadly she notes, "Female sexuality was a potent danger for Roman moralists because it might disrupt status distinctions." Edwards, 53, 42-47.

⁸⁸ "The law against adultery bore a disconcerting resemblance to that against treason—and adultery itself took on a much more intimate association with political subversion." Ibid., 61.

⁸⁹ Edwards, 36. Furthermore, as Mary Rose D'Angelo observes, in the nascent and often-fragile political climate of establishing imperial control, these laws enforced a "politics of distraction," addressing growing anxieties around sexual boundaries through stricter regulation and thereby confirming the need for greater imperial control. "Amid a resurgence of nostalgia for the ancient virtues, the *mos maiorum*, they played a role in a sort of politics of distraction, which focused both compliance and resistance to Augustus' programs not on his ongoing reorganization of the Roman 'constitution' but on the neglect of the gods, the supposed deviance of women, children and slaves of the household, and the dis-order of society—the loss of blurring of distinctions among the orders. The more frequently the emperors found it necessary to revise or reassert these laws, the clearer it was that the sinful Romans needed an emperor to save them from themselves." Mary Rose D'Angelo, "εὐσέβεια: Roman Imperial Family Values and the Sexual Politics of 4 Maccabees and the Pastorals" *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003): 142.

⁹⁰ In particular, the *Lex Julia de maritandis* (18 B.C.E.) and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* (9 C.E.) regulated marriages in the Augustan empire. The *Lex Papia* appear to have been introduced in 9 C.E. following the largely ineffectiveness of the policies of the *Lex Julia*, loosening some of the more stringent regulations. However, the parts of these laws with the most effect carry through both under Augustus and are confirmed by his successors. Because, for my argument, the fact that the laws existed and had lasting effects are more important than the specific details of how each demand was phrased/adapted, I will simply refer to the "Augustan marriage laws" to mean the effects and regulations imposed by both, unless specified otherwise. For more details on the two specific codes, their stipulations, and effects, see Treggiari, 60-80.

parties and their offspring are discussed heavily, to sometimes different conclusion.⁹¹

Status, particularly that of being free, was critical to marriage and to citizenship:

“Freedom and citizenship were intertwined” to the point that if one lost one’s status as free (most commonly a result of being taken captive in war), it meant being stripped of citizenship and its privileges, which included the nullification of marriage.⁹² Augustus’ legislation, for the most part, simply strengthened these already existing practices while (like with adultery and *stuprum*) making marriage the business of the empire.⁹³

An important stipulation of Augustus’ marriage laws incentivized childbearing and rearing, and these stipulations were reinforced and reiterated most often in the reigns of successive emperors, including both Tiberius and Claudius.⁹⁴ They created incentives, both political and financial, for having a greater number of children, in particular children who reached adulthood.⁹⁵ Additionally, the laws penalized persons who reached old age without having born any children, and these penalties were particularly strengthened

⁹¹ A person is supposed to have *conubium* (“right to marry”) with their spouse, though restrictions were placed upon this right based on proximity of relationship (one cannot marry a relative). Thus, writes Treggiari, “Broadly speaking, then, any adult Roman citizen had the right to marry any other Roman citizen of the opposite sex who was not within the forbidden degrees or relationship.” Treggiari, 44. See further pp. 43-51.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 44. Indeed, the rhetoric of these laws and the anxieties they addressed overshadows the fact that most evidence attests that they affected few changes in practice. See Treggiari, 77-80; D’Angelo, “Gender and Geopolitics in the Work of Philo of Alexandria: Jewish Piety and Imperial Family Values,” in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Mapping Gender*, 66-70.

⁹³ Treggiari, 63.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77-79. She also notes later refinements under Trajan and Hadrian, attesting to the duration of these laws.

⁹⁵ For example, the laws stipulated better inheritance provisions for both women and men who had raised a sufficient number of children, ideally to adulthood, and, for the holding of certain political offices (such as senior consul), they made the number of children a candidate had a determining factor for selection, outranking age/seniority as the primary determinant. *Ibid.*, 66-75. Pp.69-75 give a very detailed description of this accounting, but for the purposes of this project, it suffices to say that all childbearing was incentivized, but there were greater rewards for the number of children raised to adulthood. For political office, this was true outright for cases of appointment to an office; for cases of election, number of children was the first determining factor for breaking a tie, followed by age (if both candidates had equal votes and equal progeny).

under successive regimes.⁹⁶ These regulations had particular effects in the Roman provinces (where the pool of native citizens was quite limited): intermarriages between Romans and ethnic others were penalized and thus discouraged.⁹⁷ The main emphasis of these childrearing laws was to promote the promulgation of elite citizens by elite citizens, it seems, for these rewards and penalties had the greatest (if not exclusive) impact upon the most wealthy and/or those seeking political office and authority.⁹⁸

In other words, these stipulations of *lex Julia* (and their continuations beyond Augustus) most strongly encouraged the promulgation and preservation of Rome's most elite citizens. They especially attempted to prevent and preclude the "degeneration" of the bloodlines its elite through intermarriage and/or unnatural sexuality. In so doing, as it claimed the restoration of the ethical values of *pudor* and *virtus*, Roman propaganda and legislation established a sexually exceptional elite citizenry at the top of its kyriarchy.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 78-79.

⁹⁷ "Marriages in particular were regulated. Roman citizens could produce citizen offspring only by marrying another citizen. The Roman code also penalized intermarriage between free Greeks (or Syrians) and Egyptians and prescribed the status of children of mixed marriages and of children born to a free person and a slave." D'Angelo, "Gender and Geopolitics," 70. On pp.61-66 she observes that, in terms of the marriage prohibitions, the military was most strictly regulated (soldiers could not marry), and senators and their progeny had specific regulations imposed upon them in terms of not being able to marry from lower classes of free citizens (freedpersons and actors, in particular). Treggiari suggests several plausible reasons for the restriction on soldiers, though none can be confirmed. These include a shortage of eligible women, a preference to keep women in Rome and away from the borders where wars were fought, or a desire to maintain better discipline through military chastity. This final reason, though it cannot be confirmed, does make sense in light of Tacitus' discussion of Roman military discipline in contrast to the revelry of German barbarians. Treggiari, 63-64. On this, see later discussion in this chapter and in Shumate, 81-127.

⁹⁸ Thus, Treggiari observes that the laws' effects were fairly minimal in terms of very direct, practical evidence (i.e., it seems that the laws did not greatly increase the birth rate), but she concludes, "After that, the law may have been more effective in encouraging the wealthy and office-seeking class to marry and have children." Treggiari, 77.

Rome's Sexual Exceptionalism for Jews and other ἔθνη

Imperial laws, such as its marriage legislation, were tools of political propaganda as much as (if not more than) a means of setting ethical standards.⁹⁹ Although the Augustan legislation on both marriage and adultery/*stuprum* primarily regulated the permissible sexual activities of elite citizens with authority, their ethical ideals were disseminated across the empire and were known beyond those most directly addressed. From the eyes of the state, so long as those of lower status (especially non-Roman ἔθνη) did not violate elite *pudicitia*, their sexual practices were irrelevant as they had never possessed much (if any) *pudicitia*.¹⁰⁰ Though Augustus and his successors may only have had the elite in mind with this legislation, the communication of these values across the empire—as with those of *πίστις*—instills Roman elite *mores* within others across the empire's ἔθνη. If the elite can gain position and prosperity through their ethical actions, particularly through regulated and self-controlled sexuality and the preservation of their *pudicitia*, then such behavior may prove equally beneficial to others of lower status, proving their ability to live elite-style lives. In this way, such fantasies of upward

⁹⁹ As we have seen with Augustus' rhetorical portrayal of his law reforms and their effects on the *Res Gestae*: they establish political stability and economic prosperity; they only implicitly curtail crime and immorality.

¹⁰⁰ In other words, these regulations primarily concern those who have *pudicitia* to lose—i.e., elite citizens—and thus preserve of a particular elite, ruling class who have neither lost their honor nor mixed it with someone less honorable. Compare, then, the intention of this legislation and its portrayal in propaganda (securing the political stability of Augustus and his regime) to Puar's discussion of media imagery after September 11 and the start of the “war on terror” to promote American democracy. “From the images of grieving white widows of corporate executives to the concern about white firemen leaving their families to console widows of former coworkers to the consolidation of national families petitioning for bereavement funds to more recent images of broken military homes, the preservation of white heteronormative families has been at stake.” Puar, 40-41. Likewise, with the Augustan legislation and its propaganda, the preservation of a distinct Roman elite class, who rules alongside the imperial regime, was at stake for the new emperor and his successors.

mobility, even though unattainable can be motivational. By proper sexual behavior, one can prove to be the ethnic exception under imperial rule: sexual exceptionalism.¹⁰¹

When taken on by ethnically-other non-Roman ἔθνη, this sexually exceptional imperial context in Rome bears similarity to the wedding of sexual exceptionalism and modern nation that is the focus of Puar's analysis. In using sexuality to further mark as "other" certain gendered, racialized, and classed bodies, national norms are produced that allow certain of these "other" bodies to partially or temporarily blend with the norm, thus creating a fiction of social belonging. "Sexual deviancy is linked to the process of discerning, othering, and quarantining terrorist bodies, but these racially and sexually perverse figures also labor in the service of disciplining and normalizing *subjects worthy of rehabilitation away from* these bodies, in other words, signaling and enforcing the mandatory terms of patriotism."¹⁰² In the context of the modern United States, this means that certain "queer" subjects (most especially white gay cis men of relative affluence) can align their interests with those of the state, presenting themselves as both "model" sexual citizens (i.e., part of a monogamous, married couple) and loyal patriots (i.e., condemning

¹⁰¹ This exceptionalism is already at work in elite narratives where certain lower class bodies (especially slaves) prove Roman enough (through good, often servile, behavior) to achieve freedom and inclusion among the elite. So, writes Knust, "Nevertheless, slaves and freedmen could be 'upwardly mobile,' and an *exceptional* former slave could become a well-known philosopher [i.e., Epictetus]. The fact that such anomalies could occur demonstrates that these categories were not impermeable but were, in factm always dangerously subject to renegotiation." Knust, 27-28. Such an interpretation of these exceptions is legitimate, especially from the elite mentality, but these narratives also perpetuate the *possibility of upward mobility* for slaves and others of low status: if you work hard and are obedient to your master, you can be as free, wealthy, and powerful as these (few) elite exceptions (despite the reality that the chances of a slave rising in her/his lifetime was extremely rare). Indeed, such exceptional examples are usually crafted in the imagination of a more elite author. P.R.C. Weaver discusses in more detail the potentials of upward mobility for slaves and freedpersons and shows how some slaves did move up on the hierarchy and held prominent and powerful positions; however, he admits these numbers are low in comparison with the total number of Roman slaves. Further his examples of the "near-elite" *Augusti Liberti* and the power possessed by certain slaves of the imperial household show just how limited these opportunities were in actuality. P.R.C. Weaver, "Social Mobility in the Early Roman Empire: The Evidence of Imperial Freedmen and Slaves," *Past and Present* 37 (1967): 3-20. Notably, though possessing more power than most slaves, they are still not at the very top of the hierarchy and likely never could be.

¹⁰² Puar, 38. Emphasis added (but "away from" is emphasized in the original).

“terrorist” activities and political activism associated particularly with racial minorities): homonationalism, arranging sexual exceptionalism in explicit relation to nation (as empire).¹⁰³ Through such alignments, these particularly privileged others are able to demonstrate their worthiness of rehabilitation and become worthy of upward mobility on the social hierarchy.¹⁰⁴

A similar deployment of deviancy occurs in Roman discourse. Nancy Shumate has demonstrated how elite Roman literature created the idea of a “composite other,” a figure that differed from the elite ideals with respect to race, gender, and sexuality.¹⁰⁵ Analyzing Juvenal’s *Satires*, she observes that constructing a “national identity” is achieved negatively, making clear that the “silent majority” of Roman citizens (who, in fact, are only the majority in their own minds) are distinguished from the deviant and unnatural actions of others.¹⁰⁶ Gender and sexuality play a critical role in this process, taking the form of charges of effeminacy, adultery, or sexual passivity, in order to establish the elite citizen male as the “norm” over and against these others who practice such “unnatural” or “deviant” acts.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, Shumate observes, “The construction of an enemy of Romanness that he [Juvenal’s speaker] so desperately needs to rationalize

¹⁰³ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁰⁴ Thus, writes Puar, “Race, ethnicity, nation, gender, class, and sexuality disaggregate gay, homosexual, and queer national subjects who align themselves with U.S. imperial interests from forms of illegitimate queerness that name and ultimately propel populations into extinction.” Ibid., xi-xii.

¹⁰⁵ Shumate, 21.

¹⁰⁶ Thus, she concludes, “‘True’ Romanness, in other words, is articulated less as a positive assertion of who ‘we’ are and what ‘we’ stand for than as a defensive declaration of who ‘we’ are not, and what ‘we’ stand against.” Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁷ Shumate, 61-67. It is important to note that Roman imperialism does not necessarily invent the norms, but it uses them in particular ways that reinforce imperial/elite rule. Drawing especially from the sources on Roman sexuality and the penetrative hierarchy, Marchal makes and confirms this point: “Furthermore, if one’s gendered, erotic, ethnic, religious, and imperial status is always at stake, constantly contested, it demonstrates how difficult it is to maintain the distinctions and superiority claimed in sexual exceptionalism. This only reinforces (rather than undermines) the specifically exceptional quality of virtuous hardness and divinely given impenetrability.” Marchal, “Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 99; see further pp. 95-99.

his own failures hinges on an articulation of the categories of ethnicity, gender, and class that renders all ‘outsiders’ essentially the same and functionally interchangeable.”¹⁰⁸

Thus, the general *mores* surrounding sexuality and the social/political hierarchy depended upon elite constructions of “barbarian” sexualized others, who, preferring uncontrolled deviancy, were unable and/or unwilling to practice “natural” (or, as we might say today, “normal”) sexual behaviors.¹⁰⁹ What Puar writes of a the modern distinction between terrorist/patriot applies also to the Roman distinction between barbarian/citizen: “Without these discourses of sexuality (and their attendant anxieties)...the twin mechanisms of normalization and banishment that distinguish the terrorist from the patriot would cease to properly behave.”¹¹⁰ The potential fragility of the Roman empire and its elite is masked by a myth of sexual exceptionalism, the deployment of imperial sexual norms that establish the excellence of elite male citizens as “impenetrable penetrators” and their distinct and superior moral virtue.

However, despite the potential benefits (for certain groups), Puar emphasizes the fictionality of the inclusion that homonationalism proffers. Despite recent victories and advances on the front of gay marriage in particular, Puar warns, “homonationalism is also a temporal and spatial illusion, a facile construction that is easily revoked, dooming the exceptional queers to insistent replays and restagings of their exceptionalisms.”¹¹¹ While

¹⁰⁸ Shumate, 20.

¹⁰⁹ “This inability to exercise the particular imperial sexual comportment is what marks all but the Roman imperial males as ‘non-men,’ or ‘unmen.’” Marchal, “Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 96; see further pp.96-99.

¹¹⁰ Puar, 37.

¹¹¹ Puar, 78. The omitted introductory clause to this quotation described somewhat dated political circumstances, namely “a climate where President Bush states that gay marriage would annihilate ‘the most fundamental institution of civilization’ and the push for a constitutional amendment to defend heterosexual marriage is called ‘the ultimate homeland security’ (equating gay marriage with terrorism, by former Pennsylvania governor [and now two-time Presidential hopeful] Rick Santorum).” Though recent gay marriage victories change the specifics, the potential for backlash remains, as is evident in recent discussions of “religious freedom” laws (particularly surrounding the RFRA passed in Indiana in March

the homonational other can be rehabilitated into the normal social order, the limited, contingent social mobility is not the ultimate benefit of this rehabilitation, which remains in the hands of the already normal elite, who retain their power and control by appearing benevolent and nominally quelling those who might otherwise become rebellious.¹¹² These rehabilitated subjects, in the eyes of their elite superiors, will *always be lower* on the social hierarchy and therefore wield less true political power. All the while, these persons truly “on top” of society perpetuate their own (hetero)normative and largely conservative politics and maintain the rigid social structure that privileges few at the expense of many others. In other words, by “rehabilitating” certain bodies (or making the conditions for such rehabilitation seem possible), the “normal” elite retain their positions at the top with less threat from those (just) below. This is done in particular by intersecting ideologies of ethics (particularly sexual), social standing, and political power. The hierarchy is maintained, and the lowest on the social ladder (whether terrorists or

2015). Joseph Marchal’s blog (“Statehouse Sodomites, and Other Challenges Around ‘Religious Freedoms,’ *Feminist Studies in Religion*, April 6, 2015, <http://www.fsrinc.org/blog/statehouse-sodomites-and-other-challenges-around-religious-freedoms>) on these laws, the ensuing debates, and issues of race and gender surrounding them especially helps to demonstrate how recent gains (and even potential setbacks) are, as Puar notes they would be, “conservative victories at best, if at all” (Puar, 78). That these victories are either partial, illusory, and fragile is further emphasized earlier when she writes, “The spectral resistances to gay marriage, gay adoptive and parental rights, ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policies, and the privatization of sexuality entail that the protection of life granted through national belonging is a precarious invitation at best” (10). Indeed, such precarity looms through the ascendant political campaign of Donald Trump and the fact that his (and any Republican) presidency could threaten the balance of the Supreme Court and make possible a majority that could affirm discrimination of LGBT/Queer persons for the sake of “religious freedom” and even overturn recent gay marriage victories. Further, the fact that the major U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of gay marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015) came after rulings that major sections of the Voter Rights Act were unconstitutional (*Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013) and that Hobby Lobby had the right to deny contraceptive healthcare to its female employees (*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 2014) is but one (most obvious) example of how certain gay privilege is affirmed while issues of race and gender discrimination (disproportionately affecting poorer persons) continue to abound. All this ultimately continues to affirm Puar’s conclusion to this discussion: “The history of Euro-American gay and lesbian studies and queer theory has produced a *cleaving of queerness*, always white, from race, always heterosexual and always homophobic.” Puar, 78, emphasis added.

¹¹² “Through this dynamic the benevolence of the state (and also of the market) can appear boundless while still committed to the anti-gay marriage amendment and the USA PATRIOT Act, as just two examples.” Puar, 26.

barbarian slaves) remain ultimate others in comparison to these certain (and less threatening) rehabilitatable subjects.

Though the Roman imperial system was likewise clearly stacked in favor of an essentially pre-determined elite, this would not have prevented some of these excluded others from believing that they could rise above through imitation, as modern homonationalists do. Similar to the “cruel optimism” of Paul’s use of imperial *πίστις*, the hopes of upward mobility engendered by these exhortations for ethical submission are ultimately a fantasy, but it is a fantasy that is compelling as it sustains kyriarchal assemblage. Certain persons or groups may hope to present themselves as virtuous, able to uphold the same ethical standards as the imperial elite. They may even curry favor and appear to rise above the racial/sexual deviant barbarian/terrorist, this composite other imagined as the binary distinction to the elite male citizen. However, this favor merely reinforces the ultimately impossible fantasy that these others will be able to rise to the status of political elite, a strategy that partially or temporarily includes these others (with few material consequences for the elite) while quelling the potential of revolt.¹¹³ Rome’s ethical system, particularly in its regulation of sexuality, ultimately works to “discipline and normalize” certain “composite others,” creating “subjects worthy of rehabilitation” so that its social hierarchy and political stability remain constant and in control.

This absorption of and submission to Roman elite values and upwardly mobile and homonational ethical positioning can be seen in several sources we have from various *ἔθνη* in the Roman Empire. In particular, several Jewish sources that are roughly contemporary with Paul’s letters do just this. As Mary Rose D’Angelo has shown, these

¹¹³ I.e., so long as “others” compete more than collaborate, the elite minority can maintain a “majority” via homonational “coalitions.”

regulations of sexual activity and their promotion of “family” values were known in Roman provinces with Jewish inhabitants (Judea and Egypt, in particular), and these residents attempted to assimilate these *mores* and the ideologies governing them into their own lives, as seen in various texts from these communities.¹¹⁴

One example is the Maccabean literature, especially 4 Maccabees. In such texts, Jewish heroes embody a *virtus* that is most Roman, and they behave in sexually chaste and self-controlled ways that are emblematic of elite status. The presentation and regulation of gender in 4 Maccabees emphasizes *virtus* and sexual *pudicitia*, thus making evident the ways in which Roman sexual *mores* and hierarchies were absorbed and promoted outside of Roman elite contexts. As D’Angelo demonstrates, the “manly” role of the mother in 4 Macc. is established in her lengthy encomiums and especially her closing speech in 18:7-19, in which she emphasizes her chastity and fidelity to her (absent) husband.¹¹⁵ This emphasis “echoes the twin Roman concerns expressed in the Julian laws as well as numerous literary texts: control of female sexuality against adultery

¹¹⁴ See both D’Angelo, “Gender and Geopolitics” and “εὐσέβεια.”

¹¹⁵ D’Angelo draws attention to how 4 Macc. differs from the earlier (pre-imperial) 2 Macc. by giving the mother a prominent role and emphasizing her chastity to this husband who does not receive mention in the earlier versions of the story. D’Angelo, “εὐσέβεια,” 155-157, see further pp.147-157. Moore and Anderson also emphasize the ways in which 4 Maccabees relies upon Greco-Roman virtues, particularly in terms of mastery and definitions of true “manliness.” Related to the text’s alignment of Jews with Roman *mores*, with Jews being their best embodiment, they conclude, “Observant Jews are a superior race of ‘men’ (even when they happen to be anatomically female), since they are ruled not by reason alone but by ‘devout reason’ (ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμὸς), reason subservient to Torah.” Moore and Anderson, 256. It is worthy noting that the εὐσέβεια of this “devout” reason is the main topic of D’Angelo’s article, which argues that the portrayal of this value in 4 Maccabees (and in the Pastorals) is constructed in alignment with the Roman conception of this “cardinal virtue.” Elliott, dating 4 Maccabees much earlier than D’Angelo (to 38-41 C.E., making it contemporary with the events described in Philo’s *Legatio*, to which he compares 4 Macc.), situates the text—alongside Paul—as anti-imperial and particularly opposing the policies of Caligula. See Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 148-149. Elliott does not mention or comment upon the use of Roman values discussed by the authors cited above. While the earlier dating of 4 Macc. is possible (D’Angelo, 140, n.3, observes that proposals range from the reign of Tiberius into the third century C.E.), D’Angelo’s argument (along with others’) of an early second century composition seems more likely. Further, the situation Philo alongside 4 Maccabees is an unusual comparison, seeing as Philo’s position (as discussed below) opposes a particular emperor’s (one who, at the time of composition, was widely hated) policy and not the entire system.

and *stuprum* (*lex iulia de adulteriis*) and requirement of marriage and remarriage for those of an age to produce children (*lex iulia de mantandis ordinibus*).”¹¹⁶ It presents the mother as an ideal standard in both Jewish and Roman terms.¹¹⁷ In so doing, 4 Maccabees adapts Roman values into its Jewish narrative.¹¹⁸

An especially pertinent example of framing ethnic values and identity alongside Roman elite ideals can be found in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, an elite Jew residing in Alexandria, Egypt. Already introduced above, his *Legatio ad Gaium* was concerned with making sure that the Roman authorities protected the interests of Jews, especially the elite Jews in Alexandria. However, though the *Legatio* narrates the presentation of Jewish concerns and values to the Roman authorities, the text was most likely addressed to this Jewish audience.¹¹⁹ Philo’s negative depiction of Caligula in the *Legatio* is not anti-Rome because it was penned in light of Roman disdain for Caligula

¹¹⁶ D’Angelo, “εὐσέβεια,” 156. Moore and Anderson argue that the mother is portrayed as a “masculine” figure, representing the ideal embodiment of manly virtues, especially self-mastery. Along similar lines as D’Angelo, however, they note that, particularly in the final speech, she is ultimately “feminized” in the narrative. On her silence (when she speaks, it is in Hebrew and not understandable to the authorities), they assert, “Like a respectable Greco-Roman matron, she is seen but not (over)heard. One suspects, nevertheless, either that the author of 4 Maccabees has had second thoughts, fearing that he has painted too masculine a portrait of his heroine, one that risks alienating his elite male readership, and that he is hurrying to tone it down in 18:6-19; or alternatively, that a later editor has undertaken to soften it for him.” Moore and Anderson, 271-272.

¹¹⁷ Moore and Anderson, taking the position that 4 Maccabees is written to an audience needing an alternative to “Gentile domination,” note the issue of its alignment with Hellenistic/Roman values. “Victory is achieved in 4 Maccabees only by accepting and reaffirming the dominant hierarchical continuum along which ruler and ruled, master and slave, male and female were positioned.” Moore and Anderson, 272. Brent D. Shaw shows how 4 Maccabees, along with contemporary Roman and early Christian texts, develops *ὑπομονή* (“endurance” or “patience”) as a value/virtue that embodies ideas of manliness (*ἀνδρεία*) as active self-control (despite the lack of control martyrs have over their own physical bodies). See Brent D. Shaw, “Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996): 269-312, esp. pp.278-280. See also discussion in Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 191-196, where Moore compares 4 Maccabees to Revelation around issues of the construction of masculinity.

¹¹⁸ See also Stowers, 60-62, who argues that 4 Macc (along with Philo and Paul) presents Jewish law (especially the tenth commandment) as presenting an ethic of self-mastery equivalent to Greco-Roman *ἐγκρατεία*.

¹¹⁹ Niehoff argues, “Both the *Legatio* and *In Flaccum* aimed at defending Philo’s pro-Roman politics. He wished to convince his Jewish readers back home that the more radical positions, which has been adopted by many Jews during his stay at Rome, were unwise and doomed to failure.” Niehoff, 39. For her fuller discussion on the probability of a Jewish audience for these texts, see pp.39-42.

and preference for Claudius: one bad emperor (an exception) does not mean Roman imperialism itself is flawed.¹²⁰ As such, Philo can argue, as Maren Niehoff summarizes, “The exceptional cases of Flaccus and Gaius thus prove the rule: true Romans are beneficent and friendly towards the Jews. They bring peace and civilization to all regions of the empire and are to a high degree congenial to the Jews.”¹²¹ The idea of the Romans as bearers of “peace and civilization” was a crucial part of the propaganda of conquest under Augustus and his imperial successors, so Philo’s repetition of it demonstrates his own immersion in Roman ideology in addition to his willingness to conform to it in order to better position himself and his community.

Philo’s pro-Roman stance, which he is attempting to convince his compatriots to adopt, bears evidence for the ways in which Roman propaganda and its moral exceptionalism could be absorbed by various ethnic others (in this case, elite Jews). The acceptance of imperial rule was built, in part, on the imperial foundations of Augustus, as

¹²⁰ “The key to this question may be found in the circumstances at Rome after Gaius' assassination and Claudius' ascension to the throne. Philo was then in the capital and imbibed the cultural as well as political climate of that turbulent period. His views on Gaius were shaped by the contemporary *post-mortem* discourse about him. His interpretation of the dead emperor's conflict with the Jews also consolidated at this time. Both of these were closely connected to the issue of Jewish identity and the propaganda of the new emperor Claudius.” Ibid., 88. Niehoff then observes, noting that the Senate after Caligula was hesitant about continuing imperial rule, “Claudius argued that only Gaius, and the imperial system *per se*, must be blamed for the suffering in Rome. The result was a devastating image of his predecessor” (88). In showing how Philo’s negative opinion of Caligula conforms with similar Roman rhetoric (particularly that of Seneca), Niehoff notes that Philo’s negative statements about Caligula, his hubris and desire to be deified, and his harsh “manias” often do not entirely match his firsthand accounts of the events of his own embassy. Ibid., 86-93. This confirms that Philo’s presentation of Caligula is itself crafted for particular political goals. After the overthrow of Caligula and the ensuing skepticism of the imperial regime from the Roman Senate, Claudius actively worked to defame Caligula, originating the argument that Caligula was the exception to the (imperial) rule. Meanwhile, Claudius created his own image in line with that of Augustus, promoting the idea of himself as a good, peace-and-prosperity-bringing ruler and thus relying on the Augustan propaganda discussed above to secure his reign. Ibid., 89. By repeating this rhetoric and representing imperial authority in these ways, Philo uses the ideology of his time to align and conform the politics and ideologies of his community to that of the Roman imperial authorities because he believes both that they offer the best protection/stability and that such an alignment will prove socially beneficial in terms of an increase in status for himself and other Jews.

¹²¹ Niehoff, 136.

disseminated in Horace's odes and in the *Res Gestae*: with Augustus himself as a model emperor, this political regime had proven to bring peace, prosperity, and moral order to many people. Thus, writes Niehoff, "Rome had created a common cultural framework for the whole empire. This unified the different regions and enabled Philo to consider himself, as well as other members of the Eastern elites, as serious partners in a far-reaching and beneficial project of government."¹²² Philo's politics show not only that he desired that he (and his Jewish audience) be perceived as model Roman subjects but also that he believed in the imperial promises of peace and prosperity for these subjects, provided that they adhered to the moral standards of the elite authorities, i.e., proved worthy of rehabilitation.

According to Philo, adhering to these moral standards should be no problem for upright Jews because Jewish morality often matches—or, indeed, exceeds—the standards of Roman ethics. "Philo's construction of Jewish values positioned the Jews within a distinctly contemporary and Roman discourse," observes Niehoff. "Ethnic boundaries were thus shaped and reinforced by a sense that the Jews are congenial and in certain respects superior to the leading nation of the whole *oikoumene*."¹²³ In particular, Philo's descriptions of Jewish law promote the idea that the law requires Jews to live under the standards of highest virtue (τὴν ἄκραν ἀρετήν).¹²⁴ This "virtue," it turns out, is fairly Roman in Philo's presentation; as with his opinions of Roman emperors, his

¹²² Ibid., 116.

¹²³ Ibid., 76.

¹²⁴ In *Specialibus Legibus*, he asserts that these exceptional laws [νόμοι ἐξαιρέτοι] of the Jews "are revered out of necessity, seeing that they train the highest virtue" [σεμνοὶ δ' εἰσὶν ἐξ ἀνάγκης, ἅτε πρὸς τὴν ἄκραν ἀρετὴν ἀλείφοντες.] (*Spec.* 179).

interpretation of Jewish law presents it as in conformity with the construction of Roman elite moral standards as discussed above.

Niehoff's analysis shows how the Roman value of *ἐγκράτεια*, the self-control critical to maintaining *pudor/pudicitia*, is central to Philo's interpretation of Jewish law, in particular those regarding holidays, food, and—most importantly—sexual relations.¹²⁵ Speaking specifically of those who commit adultery, Philo writes, “Such persons must be punished with death as the common enemies of the whole human race, that they may not live to ruin more houses with immunity and be the tutors of others who make it their business to emulate the wickedness of their ways” (*Spec. Leg.* 3:11). Philo's condemnation of adultery speaks particularly to the dangers of sexuality that lacks self-control, and this passage in particular recalls Horace's description of moral decline and lack of self-control under the late republic. Like with Horace, Philo sees the “disease” of adultery spreading to infect others, ruining houses, and potentially the whole human race.¹²⁶

While Philo and Roman moralists may share disdain for adultery, Philo's ideal of sexual *ἐγκράτεια* proves to be much more stringent than that of the Roman elite ideal, for Philo ultimately only approves of sexual pleasure if it leads to procreation.¹²⁷ Any other sexual act he deems as prohibited and unnatural. However, even if Philo's (biblical) ideal for proper sexual behavior is more stringent, it is significant that this ideal is still framed in the terms the regulated proper Roman sexual behavior. In other words, Jewish self-

¹²⁵ “Philo argues that *enkrateia* informs all of Mosaic legislation and distinguishes the Jews in virtually every aspect of daily life.” Niehoff, 94; see further. pp.94-110. In this presentation, Philo appeals especially to the sixth commandment that forbids adultery; see pp. 95-105.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹²⁷ “The Jews, Philo implies, are masters in the art of *aphrodisia*. Striking the right balance, they direct the sexual impulse to a noble purpose.” *Ibid.*, 102; see further pp.100-102.

control is equivalent to Roman self-control.¹²⁸ The standard of self-control, which also governed Roman conversations of pleasure (sexual, culinary, or otherwise) as discussed above, therefore communicates to elite Jews both proper ethical behavior and the ways in which such behavior helps them to present themselves to the political elites. Thus, Philo's discussion of ethics can be seen as further elevating his community's status as they navigate the hierarchies of the Roman Empire and attempt to land on top.¹²⁹

Philo's presentation of Jewish values (or identity) particularly resonates with the tactics of homonationalism in Philo's distinguishing Jews from other *ἔθνη* in the empire, Egyptians (famously conquered by Augustus after defeating the forces of Cleopatra and Antony in 30 B.C.E.) in particular. Niehoff demonstrates how Philo not only aligned the principles of Jewish law with Roman ethics but also attempted to position Jews as equal to Romans on the social hierarchy by proving them to be more Roman than other ethnic groups.¹³⁰ Niehoff argues that, relying on Roman stereotypes and disdain for Egyptians (among whom, of course, the Alexandrian Jews lived), Philo emphasized the "otherness" of Egyptian politics and values and the sharp binary that divided Roman from Egyptian. At the same time that Philo emphasizes Jewish loyalty to the empire and its respect and reverence for its good authorities (i.e., Augustus, Claudius), he also mentions the ways in

¹²⁸ A comparison can be made here between Philo's presentation of Jewish law and Paul's in terms of the "different law" in Romans 13:8 (discussed above). Note that, to my knowledge, no one has argued that Philo's strengthening of Roman sexual morality represents an implicit imperial critique and positions Philo as anti-Rome.

¹²⁹ Thus, Niehoff observes, "Philo implied that this definition of Jewish identity was similar to that of the Romans;" and further, "Jewish identity was thus defined in both positive and negative terms, setting the Jews apart as well as playing them among the elite of world civilization." Niehoff, 75. Similarly, Stowers shows how Philo emphasizes this self-mastery in his presentation of Jewish law as a means "to sell the advantages of the Jewish *politeia* to gentiles on that basis" (64). For Philo, again, "the Jewish law is superior because it produces self-mastery" (59). See further Stowers, 58-65.

¹³⁰ See especially Niehoff's third chapter, "Jewish Values: Religion and Self-Restraint" (pp. 75-110); the chapter establishes, "The values if the Jews thus emerge as superior to those of other nations and place them at the top of a distinctly masculine Western civilization." Niehoff, 110.

which the Egyptians have less loyalty and that their influence can be seen upon bad emperors, like Caligula. “The acute discrepancy between Egyptian and Roman reactions to Gaius’ aspirations provides the first indication that Philo aligned the Jews with the Romans. These two nations once more found themselves on the same side of a basic divide.”¹³¹

Philo stresses the *sexual* otherness of Egyptians, as well as other ἔθνη such as Greeks and Persians. While stressing the stringent sexual morals and self-control of the Jews, Philo simultaneously contrasts this self-control with Roman stereotypes of Egyptian sexual perversity and the prejudices Romans had towards the sexual license found in Greek thought. In so doing, not only does Philo further align Jewish and Roman moral values, but he also strengthens this connection through specifically sexual stereotypes. Philo’s alignment relies on the binary between barbarian/citizen discussed above, where one is either morally and sexually self-controlled or one is depraved, deviant, and ultimately penetrable. Like the modern terrorist, Philo’s Egyptians (and Greeks) become simultaneously the ethnic and sexual other, reifying the terms of the citizen/barbarian binary and thereby making space to take advantage of the opening for other ἔθνη (such as the diasporic Jew) to prove worthy of citizenship.¹³² Philo’s tactics are an apt ancient instance of the “transference of stigma” typical of sexual exceptionalism and homonationalism.¹³³

¹³¹ Ibid., 86. In particular, Philo mentions that Caligula’s most heinous acts have clear roots in “foreign” Egyptian practices and, indeed, that Egyptians, unlike the Jews and the Romans, were favorable supporters of Caligula.

¹³² These ethnic distinctions blur into religious stereotypes and prejudice, particularly surrounding the idea that Egyptian religion worships snakes.

¹³³ While Philo’s (elite) Jewish community are *not* homosexuals, as members of an ἔθνος subject to Rome (almost doubly so as Jews living in conquered Egypt), they were similarly othered in ways that make them “queer” to Rome’s native elite. Therefore, we can compare Philo’s strategies in general to Puar’s examples of homonationalisms in the wake of September 11; Puar, 40-51. In particular, she observes the binary

Philo notably never mentions Romans as he constructs this hierarchy and presents Jewish values as the most elite in terms of “virile self-restraint.” However, he identifies Romans as those elites at the top and works to position his Jewish community alongside them, adopting Roman self-control while insisting that the ideal is historically Jewish. This strategy encourages his audience to think of themselves as elite Romans and to prove themselves as moral exceptions, not belonging to the more degenerate values of the Egyptians.

In creating this distinct contrast, particularly through this rhetoric of sexual exceptionalism, Philo’s emphasis on the “Romanness” of Jewish values better positions himself and his community at the top of the hierarchy. Thus, writes Niehoff, “He constructs a hierarchy ranging from ‘barbarian’ to civilized nations. The Jews are placed at the top. They represent the elite of the Western world which promotes the value of virile self-restraint.”¹³⁴ Clearly, Philo does this by emphasizing the stark difference between the decency of Jewish sexual ethics and the depravity of other non-Roman ethnic groups, thus distancing his Jewish community from these others. “The factioning, fractioning, and fractalizing of identity is a prime activity of societies of control, whereby by subjects (the ethnic, the homonormative) orient themselves as subjects through there disassociation or disidentification from others disenfranchised in similar ways in favor of

created between the model homosexuality of American hero Mark Bingham in contrast to the fully deranged terrorist Osama bin Laden (couched and portrayed in stereotypical Orientalist terms). “Indeed, exemplary of the transference of stigma, positive attributes were attached to Mark Bingham’s homosexuality: butch, masculine, rugby player, white, American, hero, gay patriot, called his mom (i.e., homonational), while negative connotations of homosexuality were used to racialize and sexualize Osama bin Laden: feminized, stateless, dark, perverse, pedophilic, disowned by his family (i.e., fag). What is at stake here is not only that one is good and the other evil: the homosexuality of Bingham is converted into acceptable patriot values, while the evilness of bin Laden is more fully and efficaciously rendered through associations with sexual excess, failed masculinity (i.e., femininity), and faggotry.” Puar, 46.

¹³⁴ Niehoff, 94.

consolidation with axes of privilege,” notes Puar.¹³⁵ Philo’s disassociation is similar to this homonational deployment that attempts to align itself with the privilege and power of the normative elite.

Homonationalism in Romans 13

Certainly, Paul was not Philo, particularly in terms of social status, location, and styles of biblical interpretation/writing. However, Philo’s alignment of Jewish and Roman moral standards and his acceptance/approval of the imperial hierarchy illuminate ways in which Paul’s rhetoric of ethical submission can be interpreted.¹³⁶ Like Philo, Paul is writing to an internal audience of fellow Christ-followers (although not exclusively—and possibly not at all—Jewish), and his advice includes concerns about his audience’s relation to imperial authority, exhorting submission to it. In so doing, both writers utilize strategies of ethical alignment, particularly regarding sexual *mores*, that can be compared to homonationalism. Puar observes that homonationalism can appear in such different contexts, and even, I argue, across a wide temporal span: “There is no organic unity or cohesion among homonationalisms; these are partial, fragmentary, uneven formations, implicated in the pendular momentum of inclusion and exclusion, some dissipating as quickly as they appear.”¹³⁷ While the two ancient Jewish writers remain distinct, since neither author knew of the other and their contexts were quite different, their strategies bear striking, if only partial, similarities. Thus, the example of Philo’s homonational

¹³⁵ Puar, 28.

¹³⁶ Stowers agrees, see pp.56-70. L.T. Johnson also appeals to Philo’s embassy as an example that provides context to 13:1-7, in particular that Jews of Paul’s era often “turned confidently to the emperor for help.” L.T. Johnson, 187-188.

¹³⁷ Puar, 10.

strategies help to shed light on the ways in which homonationalism can appear in Paul's ethical advice in Romans.

Paul's ethical exhortations in Romans ultimately convey an exceptional impulse, opening the space for sexually exceptionalism and homonationalism to appear in them.¹³⁸ Paul's exhortation to submission in 13:1-10, as elaborated above, plays a critical role in aligning his theo-Christological ethics (and presumably those of his fellow Christ-followers) with the values of the elite authorities who control the imperial state. By submitting to—placing themselves under—these prevailing authorities and, ultimately, God, Christ-followers act as model, ethical subjects who present themselves as holding themselves to the same standards as the authorities. Such a presentation, at least ideally, will prove that these are persons who are capable of comporting themselves as do the elite, thus making them “worthy of rehabilitation,” in other words, deserving to be included as part of the elite authorities.¹³⁹

By exhorting his Roman audience to be submissive, ethical subjects whose good deeds deserve praise, Paul encourages alignment with imperial *mores* in ways that present Christ-followers as citizens and not barbarians. The praise Paul seemingly craves, then,

¹³⁸ Looking at Paul's most famous sex passages (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Thess. 4:3-8), Marchal makes a similar assertion about how Paul's arguments correspond with Roman sexual exceptionalism. For example, he observes, “Even if Paul and many in his audience would not be contending with other imperial elites close to the kyriarchal apex of the empire, even if he or they could alternately be viewed as ‘unmen,’ ‘nonmen,’ or ‘half-men’ from certain Roman imperial perspectives (both of which seem to be historically likely), their arguments and actions can still prove themselves to be compatible with imperial sexual exceptionalism.” Marchal, “Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 103, see further pp.99-109. I am expanding Marchal's connections to include less overtly sexual Pauline passages (specifically the entirety of Romans 13) and further asserting that Paul's sexual exceptionalism can be specified as “homonationalism.” Such a specification has important and relevant interpretive implications.

¹³⁹ With God at the top, Paul *may* ultimately assume that his audience will prove themselves to be *more* worthy of elite status than the current prevailing authorities and that, eventually, they may replace or supplant the present ones. However, Paul does not discuss the submission in these terms; furthermore, even if he envisions a change in control (i.e., Christ-followers being at the top) he does *not* assume a change in regime. His ideal still seems to operate with the assumption that a basic social and ethical hierarchy will remain.

represents one of what Puar describes as “affective modes of belonging to the state” as it appears to acknowledge (positive) interest from the state and a willingness to incorporate these persons into the upper echelons of society and power within it.¹⁴⁰ Propelled by kyriarchal assemblage, ethical submission is a strategy of homonational alignment, an alignment that trusts in the promises of upward mobility and the hope that praise and recognition are a sign of rehabilitation and belonging to a more elite position. However, as Puar emphasizes and Philo’s ethnic othering demonstrate, homonationalism depends on a particular use of *sexual* exceptionalism with respect to nation/empire. While Paul’s submissive placement language in 13:1-5, alongside vv.5-10 and chapters 12-15 more generally, attempts to align his audience as both obedient subjects who lead generally moral lives, his advice in 13:11-14 depends upon specifically sexualized language and binaries.¹⁴¹ It is this sexual element of ethical submission that makes it a first-century version of homonationalism.

Thus, in Romans 13:11-14, Paul encourages his audience to remain sexually upright via the terms of Roman sexual *mores*. This segment begins:

¹⁴⁰ Puar, 26. Puar continues to notes that these are “modes that assuage the angst of unrequited love.” Extending Sara Ahmed’s work on love (“national love”), Puar observes, “For Ahmed, national love is a form of waiting, a lingering that registers a ‘stigma of inferiority’ that epitomizes the inner workings of multiculturalism. Unrequited love keeps multicultural (and also homonormative) subjects in the folds of nationalism, while xenophobic and homophobic ideologies and policies fester” (26). See further, Ahmed, *Cultural Political of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004). 122-143, pp.130-131 are cited by Puar. In this chapter, Ahmed reveals how the affective feelings sensed in the emotion of “love” coalesce into an ideal of “national love,” which manifests itself in discourses of multiculturalism to “love the other” (already resonant with ideals of love in Romans 12-13); however, in the context of modern nation-states, which project a “fantasy that return is possible” via hope in a future generation (131), this natural love is ultimately invested in an idealized vision of whiteness. One of Ahmed’s conclusions, then, offers a chilling response to the idealized *ἀγάπη* (often called “spiritual” or “Christian” love) often said to be found (as one of the most important teachings) in Romans: “Love is not what will challenge the power relations that idealisation ‘supports’ in its restriction of ideality to some bodies and not others. In fact ‘to love the object’ is close to the liberal politics of charity, one that usually makes the loving subject feel better for having loved and given love to someone presumed to be unloved, but which sustains the relations of power that compel the charitable love to be shown in this way” (141).

¹⁴¹ Many commentaries begin a new section at v.11 as well. See Jewett, 804; Byrne, 393; Moo, 810-811;

καὶ τοῦτο εἰδότες τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι ὥρα ἤδη ὑμᾶς ἐξ ὕπνου ἐγερθῆναι, νῦν γὰρ ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἡ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεύσαμεν. ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν. ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους, ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός

So, knowing this is this time that for our salvation is now nearer than when we believed. The night progressed; the day draws near. Therefore, put away the actions of the dark; wear the armor of light (13:11-12).

These words communicate important ethical and political messages outside of a (potentially) imminent eschaton.¹⁴² The nearing salvation (σωτηρία) carries with it the rhetoric of imperial conquest, bringing to mind the figure of the emperor (appointed by God) who established and enforced this ethical system and social hierarchy, thus bringing peace and prosperity—“salvation”—to the “barbaric” ἔθνη.¹⁴³ This coming salvation offers the peace and prosperity of imperial elite subjects to those who submit themselves

¹⁴² It is worth noting that Esler challenges this prevailing assumption (see below) that this section is “eschatological” in tone/force: “The imagery of future salvation serves to tell them who they are or should be in the present, not to warn them that the future is near.” Esler, 337, see further 335-338. His point is well-taken in light of my own argument about the present meaning of this passage, but I do not necessarily deny the eschatological urgency: I do de-emphasize it for the purposes of my own interpretation, as much has already been said on this topic. See Fitzmyer, 681-682; Dunn, 2:785-786; Moo, 818; Witherington, 317; Schreiner, 696-697; L.T. Johnson, 193-194; Matera, 299; Kirk, 196; Michael Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 141-149. Not all commentators limit eschatological urgency in Romans to these three verses. Byrne notes that 13:11-14 returns to the eschatological impulse in 12:1-2. Byrne, 397-398. Keck calls the entirety of Romans 12-15 a “daybreak ethos” (clearly with these verses in mind for such framing) since Paul’s apocalypticism in Romans cannot be limited to its overt nature in these three verses. Keck, 289, 329. Georgi notes that eschatological language also occurs in Roman political ethics, so the apocalyptic tone of Romans 13 does not eliminate its alignments with Roman ethics. Georgi concludes that though there is “common ground” between Roman political ethics and Pauline ethics, Paul’s version represents a “critical alternative” to Roman imperialism. See Georgi, *Theocracy in Paul’s Praxis and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 76-77. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 143-150, emphasizes the apocalyptic context for Romans in general, and 12-15 specifically, connecting it with Jewish apocalyptic texts, all of which he contends are resistant to Roman rule. In particular, Elliott makes comparison to both Philo and 4 Maccabees, noting of Paul’s rhetorical move at the end of Romans: “It has a situational and ideological specificity, as do the comparative dissociative gestures made by Philo and the author of 4 Maccabees” (149). While the resistant notes of apocalypticism can also be present, there is clearly also alignment with imperial values and even politics, ones that are also present in the Jewish sources to which Elliott compares Romans. Indeed, Elliott’s readings of both Philo’s *Legatio* and 4 Maccabees do not consider the alignments with imperial virtue that have been discussed above.

¹⁴³ See especially Georgi, *Theocracy*, 29-30. Koester emphasizes the political usage of the apocalyptic term *παρουσία*, used in 1 Thess 4:13-5:11, which does not appear in Romans, but its meaning is connecting to the idea of salvation here. However, he connects the political ideology of Romans 13:11-14 as similar, even more radical, than that of 1 Thess. Koester emphasizes more resistant Paul who presents a utopian alternative to Roman ideology through his reframing of its terminology. See Koester, especially p. 166.

both to God and to the emperor—meaning, in Romans 12-13, those who live ethically submissive lives that conform to imperial *mores*, which are also approved by God.

Here, then, Paul’s ethical encouragement hinges on a binary metaphor of night (νύξ) and day (ἡμέρα) or, alternately, dark (σκότος) and light (φῶς), thus ethically placing “bad” behaviors in the night/dark and “good” behaviors in the day/light.¹⁴⁴ The ἔργα τοῦ σκότους (“actions of the dark”) recalls the earlier contrast in 13:3 between a good action (τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἔργῳ) and a bad one (τῷ κακῷ), marking the night as a time for vice and evil (κακός) of all varieties. From the mindset of the Roman elite, the dark hours of night also appear to be those most prone to vice, when respectable women and men remained in their homes. Such an assumption can be seen in the defamations of elite women, like Messalina or Julia of the imperial households, who were accused of extreme sexual license, sneaking out of their marital beds to defile themselves (and, by extension, their husbands) as prostitutes or with any man (of obviously lower status) who will attempt to satisfy their “insatiable” lust.¹⁴⁵ So, as he employs this moral binary, Paul encourages an

¹⁴⁴ This language is typical of apocalyptically tinged texts, or what Fitzmyer calls “apocalyptic stage props.” Fitzmyer, 682. Dunn notes that Paul’s employment of this nighttime language signals a distinctive development of eschatological language. Dunn, 2:787. Elliott emphasizes the apocalyptic tone of the “approaching day,” noting that this discussion emphasizes the coming “wrath” that will fall upon the imperial rulers who have oppressed Paul and his followers, among others. Elliott calls these terms of reversal an example of how Paul is still steeped in kyriarchy, a point with which I agree, in that Paul does still envision God’s reign in kyriarchal and imperial terms, as detailed in previous chapters. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 158. Here Paul “encourages” rather than “exhorts”—his ideas using a hortative “we” as opposed to the second person imperative. Moo’s ethical interpretation of Paul’s language connects the night and day binary to what could be called capitalist productivity: one must sleep through the night to rise at early daybreak to be a most efficient (and, in his view, better paid) worker. Moo, 820-821. On the eschatological nature of 13:11-14 more generally, see also L.T. Johnson, 193-194; Byrne, 399-402.

¹⁴⁵ Juvenal’s description of [Valeria] Messalina, Claudius’ wife, notes that she would crawl out of bed as soon as the emperor, her husband, fell asleep and would go to a brothel. “Listen to what Claudius put up with. When his wife realized her husband was asleep, she would leave, with no more than a single maid as her escort. Preferring a mat to her bedroom in the Palace, she had the nerve to put on a nighttime hood, the whore-empress. Like that, with a blonde wig hiding her black hair, she went inside a brothel reeking of ancient blankets to an empty cubicle—her very own. Then she stood there, naked and for sale, with her nipples gilded, under the trade name of “She-Wolf” [*Lyciscae*] putting on display the belly you came from, noble-born Britannicus. She welcomed her customers seductively as they came in and asked for their

awakening from sleep that coincides with night's end and the day's dawn, again encouraging an ethical placement away from immoral darkness.¹⁴⁶

In contrast, Paul encourages “wearing the armor of light,” in other words, acting in morally good ways that befit the day.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, this respectable living (in the day) contrasts with specific vices, several sexual, which Paul names in the second half following clause: *μη κώμοις και μέθαις, μη κοίταις και άσελγείαις, μη έριδι και ζήλω*. (“not in revelry and drunkenness, nor in sexual pursuits and licentiousness, nor in rivalry and

money. Later, when the pimp was already dismissing his girls, she left reluctantly, waiting till the last possible moment to shut her cubicle, still burning with her clitoris inflamed and stiff. She went away, exhausted by the men but not yet satisfied, and, a disgusting creature, with her cheeks filthy, dirty from the smoke of the lamp, she took back to the emperor's couch the stench of the brothel.” Juvenal, *Satires*, 6:115-135. See even fuller description, 6.114-132. She is often referred to as *meretrix Augustali*, or the “imperial whore.” On Messalina, see further Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, 317; Sandra R. Joshel, “Female Desire and the Discourse of Empire: Tacitus' Messalina,” in Hallett and Skinner, *Roman Sexualities*, 221-254; Glancy and Moore, 562-569. Likewise, Julia's (daughter of Augustus) prostitution, ironic in aftermath of Augustus' legislation, is portrayed as a vice of the evening, though she appears a respectable member of the imperial by day. Seneca writes, “The deified Augustus banished his daughter, who was shameless beyond the indictment of shamelessness [*impudicam*], and made public the scandals of the imperial house—that she had been accessible to scores of paramours, that in nocturnal revels she had roamed about the city [*pererratam nocturnis comissionibus civitatem*], that the very forum and the rostrum from which her father had proposed a law against adultery, had been chosen by the daughter for her debaucheries, that she had daily resorted to the statue of Matsyas, and, laying aside the role of adulteress, there sold her favors, and sought the right to every indulgence with even an unknown paramour.” Seneca, *On Benefits*, 6.32.1. See also Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 61-62; Edwards, “Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome,” in Hallett and Skinner, *Roman Sexualities*, 89-90.

¹⁴⁶ This placement employs a form of another placing verb *τίθημι—ἀποτίθημι*, “put away.”

¹⁴⁷ Paul relies on a similar metaphorical binary in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, as part of a passage that also combines eschatological, imperial, militaristic, and ethical language, with vv.4-8 emphasizing a similar night/day binary. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 the eschatological language is more abrupt and urgent than it is in Romans 13:11-14. The day that “draws near” in 13:12 is quite tame compared to the inescapable “sudden destruction” (*αἰφνίδιος ὄλεθρος*) that springs upon those saying “peace and security” (*εἰρήνη και ἀσφάλεια*) a Roman political catchphrase, according to Koester) in 5:3. Koester, “Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology,” 162. The dulled apocalyptic tone of Romans 13:11-14 eliminates entirely any language of destruction or potential overthrow, in line with the political stance of vv.1-7. However, as I have argued elsewhere, strategies of homonationalism already appear in the eschatological rhetoric of 1 Thessalonians (especially when coupled with the sexual language in 4:3-8 as well as gendered imagery such as labor pains in 5:3); thus (apocalyptic) language that imagines a new political regime can still replicate the rules and *mores* of the current empire. See Hoke, “‘Peace and Security,’ ‘Holiness and Honor’: Pauline Homonationalism in 1 Thessalonians,” in *Contentious Bodies: Queering Pauline Epistles and Interpretations*, ed. Marchal (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming). Several commentaries also draw attention to the connections between 1 Thess. 5:1-11 and Romans 13:11-14; see Fitzmyer, 682; Keck, 329; Thompson, 149; Dunn, 2:789-790. Witherington makes an important distinction between the two epistles and their eschatological impulses: 1 Thess was penned at the (more chaotic) end of Claudius' reign while Romans at the (hopeful) start of Nero's. Witherington, 307.

jealousy,” 13:13b).¹⁴⁸ Now Paul names specific examples of the bad deeds he has been naming, ones that belong to the negative *νύξ/σκότος* side of this binary, ones that are done by those who practice vice (*τῶ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι*, 13:4).¹⁴⁹ This listing recalls the always-compounding number of vices that characterize those on the wrong side of the moral binary, as in Roman elite ideology.¹⁵⁰

Likewise, elite authors portray Roman discipline/sobriety in contrast to the behavior of barbarians, who cannot control their desire for drink and, therefore, drink to excess with disastrous consequence. Connecting the moral language with the militaristic in Roman thought, Tacitus contrasts Romans to the “barbarian” German other, showing how the “typical” drunkenness and revelry of the German armies makes them inferior and conquerable to the superior (in terms of might and moral moderation) Roman army.¹⁵¹ Such a view, which depends on the Roman moral preference to refrain from

¹⁴⁸ As will continue in my own emphasis below, most commentaries draw attention to the fact that the vices on this list are characteristically perceived as prone to being nighttime activities. Fitzmyer, 683; Dunn 2:789-790; Moo, 824-825; Witherington, 318; L.T. Johnson, 195; Schreiner, 699-700; Matera, 300; Kirk, 197; Thompson, 145-149.

¹⁴⁹ Knust also (briefly) notes the connection between the ethical submission of 13:1-7 to these specifically sexual vices: “The saints ought to submit to the rulers, since, as doers of good rather than doers of evil, they should have no reason to fear them. Paul characteristically defined ‘good’ (*agathos*) here as rejection of desire and “bad” (*kakos*) as overindulgence in activities related to desire, especially sexual intercourse.” Knust, 72. Edwards notes that Seneca connects such pleasures to softness (i.e., effeminacy), which is typically found among slaves and especially within taverns (drinking) and brothels. Edwards, 174.

¹⁵⁰ “Charges of sexual vice tended to appear in lists rather than separately. If a man was condemned for his extravagance, he was also likely to be condemned for adultery, effeminacy, corruption of boys, or some other related charge. If a woman was accused of sexual licentiousness, she was also likely to be accused of excessive adornment and concern for her appearance.” Knust, 32. See further, Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 260-262.

¹⁵¹ Shumate, 96-97. Describing an attack on the Germans after scouts reported it was the night of a festival, Tacitus writes in his *Annals*, “The clear, starry night was in our favor; the Marsian villages were reached, and a ring of pickets was posted round the enemy, who were still lying, some in bed, others beside their tables, without misgivings and with no sentries advanced. All was disorder and improvidence: there was no apprehension of war, and even their peace was the nerveless lethargy of drunkenness” (1:50). Indeed, Shumate summarizes his description of German drunkenness: “Sentries and other indications of awareness of the impending danger are nowhere to be found; instead, they drink until they pass out at their tables or in bed, creating a scene of carelessness and disorder that from the Roman point of view would be inappropriate even in peacetime” (97). One could say, based on Tacitus’ telling, that the day of the imperial lords came upon these Germans as a thief in the night.

excess drink, like that of the sexual other who must be conquered and controlled, justifies the conquest, and lower social status, of the “barbarian” ethnic others: they are not only easier to defeat due to their lack of disciplined military strength and planning but also less morally capable of self-control and thus unable to rule themselves or be elite citizens.¹⁵²

Similarly, through his day and night contrast, Paul aligns the moral discipline of Christ-followers as being similar to that of the superior Roman army, the wearing or donning of “armor of light” (ἐνδυσώμεθα τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός, Rom. 13:12) denoting the moral uprightness that should be adopted by Christ-followers in the same way that the Roman military comports itself as it brings peace, prosperity, and salvation (σωτηρία) to other ἔθνη. Paul’s militaristic language conveys a similar contrast to that made by Tacitus, thus representing another alignment with elite imperial ideology and connecting Christ-followers’ values with that of the prevailing authorities.

Furthermore, this emphasis on drunkenness (and the encouragement to avoid it) is intimately associated with imperial *mores* concerning sexual morality. Jennifer Knust observes how both excessive drinking and sexuality come to be portrayed as un-Roman and representative of other ethnic groups, in particular as characteristic of Greeks. “Interestingly, some Roman authors claimed that wasting money on prostitutes and wild drinking parties was a Greek trait, a characteristic of ‘Greek leisure’ (*otium*), something that had unfortunately infected Rome.”¹⁵³ Although the descriptions of sexual vice tended to be most graphic (belying their particular anxiety around sex), persons and entire ethnic

¹⁵² In a detailed analysis of Tacitus’ corpus, Langlands shows how he connects the Germans to sexual immorality via *impudicitia*—the opposite of Roman *pudicitia*, which was under threat from these barbaric enemies. Langlands, 320-348.

¹⁵³ Knust, 33. She further observes, “Nevertheless, from the Roman point of view, luxury was a foreign vice.”

groups who were viewed as unfit for elite belonging typically engaged in multiple vices, compounding the reasons and examples of their moral degeneracy and thus their reasons for lower status, at least in the view of elite Roman authors.¹⁵⁴ Thus, drunkenness and revelry, characteristic of Paul's nighttime immorality and of the anti-Roman barbarians (e.g., Tacitus' Germans), begins the list of vices that are necessarily avoided by those who live in the (respectable) day and who don the armor of light.

Following the discouragement of these vices is the disdain for those that are specifically sexual: *κοίτη*, meaning "bed" and generally used as term for general sexual acts, and *ἀσέλγεια*, which had close connections to desires (*ἐπιθυμία*).¹⁵⁵ Attributing these behaviors, like drunkenness and revelry, to the night, these illicit sexual deeds (and lack of ability to control the urges to commit them) again betray a lower class impulse, one seen in both barbarians and in Romans condemned and dishonored as sexual deviants. Christ-followers can and should avoid these sexual behaviors, unlike Messalina and Julia, the famed "prostitutes" of imperial families who committed *stuprum* in their uncontrolled evening sexual frenzies, or the typical foreigners and lower classed others who committed such acts as an example of their lack of *pudicitia*.¹⁵⁶ Such comportment

¹⁵⁴ Along similar lines, Marchal observes, "The colonizing (mostly) male authority can claim his superiority, virtue, and civilization by extolling sexual norms (of his own establishment) that the erotically savage or debased colonial people apparently do not embody. Their aberration proves the necessity, even the elevated benefit, of imperial-colonial forces." Marchal, "Exceptional Proves Who Rules," 96.

¹⁵⁵ *κοίτη* is the act of bedding, as well as the derivation of *coitus*. "*κοίτη*," LSJ, 970. In this sense, we can recall Romans 1:18-32, where the sexual excess and lack of control leads to a downward spiral of immorality, with vices compounding as quickly as Paul can list them. *ἀσέλγεια* generally means "licentiousness" or "wanton violence." "*ἀσέλγεια*," LSJ, 255.

¹⁵⁶ I am arguing that the sexual distinction made by Paul here is not to prove better than Rome's elite; indeed, it conforms to discourse in order to sexually distinguish Christ-followers from the typical *stuprum* found amongst lower classes. This is nearly identical to that Roman ideology that requires the tales of these imperial women as warnings that exemplifies the dangers of giving into unrestrained desire (a concession too typical of lower classes). Moral discourse emphasizes these elite "falls" because they are effectively cautionary in the face of socio-sexual-political anxiety. Thus, Joshel notes of Tacitus' descriptions of Messalina, "Such excess connotes a collapse of social categories as well as epistemic ones: the top of society becomes the bottom, and the object of illicit desire is conflated with its results." Joshel, 231.

demonstrates their control of their sexual impulses, implying that, by submitting to the imperial regulation of sexuality and ethics, they possess the *pudicitia* typically found amongst the elite authorities.

Paul's mention of these specifically sexual terms indicates the sexual exceptionalism that underlies his exhortation to ethical submission. As the Roman elite sexually distinguished themselves from lower classes by their pure *pudicitia*, Paul's discouragement of sexual liaisons and wild licentiousness also distinguishes the sexual values of Christ-followers as being controlled and pure, as those who live in the respectable daytime. In so doing, if adopted by Christ-followers as Paul advises, this ethical submission to both Roman authorities and Roman values places them in a position to be seen and considered as praiseworthy—indeed, respectable—for their values. Such consideration, presumably, could lead to elevated status and authority.¹⁵⁷

These connections become more explicit in Paul's encouragement that precedes this list of specific vices to avoid: *ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ εὐσχημόνως περιπατήσωμεν* ("Like in daytime, let us live respectably," 13:13a). Paul stresses the fact that daytime is the time

Despite the portrayal of the choice in giving to excess by elite women, few brothel workers (in addition to other lower classed "deviants") had choices when it came to their sexual practices. Commenting on Juvenal's portrayal, Glancy and Moore caution, "Yet this does not imply that Roman sex workers were widely believed to be in the sex trade to satisfy their erotic longings." Glancy and Moore, 567.

¹⁵⁷ Especially given the emphasis on Paul's "pragmatic realism" that is reflected in most commentaries in some form (see n.3 above), at this point one might still wonder to what degree mere tolerance is the goal of ethical submission to Roman *mores*. In other words: just how much elevated status could a Jew or other *ἔθνη* plausibly hope for in the early years of Nero, still potentially recovering from fallout from Claudius' edict? Hopefully, at this point in the argument it is clear that the answer might simultaneously be "not much at all" and "tons." As Berlant's cruel optimism and Paul's cruel *πίστις* show, often fantasies of an elevated "good life" fly in the face of reality and have a stronger affective grasp precisely when circumstances feel direr, when the crisis of Claudius edict has become more-or-less ordinary 7-10 years later. As this chapter has shown, the context of Roman sexual exceptionalism further fans the flames of such ultimately impossible hopes, making it *feel* more possible to attain a "good life" via potentially praiseworthy ethical submission. Furthermore, see Stowers, 74-82; he also argues (with different aims) that Paul's use of self-mastery—with echoes of that in Philo and 4 Macc—is a strategy of upward mobility for a community that was upwardly mobile.

for living *εὐσχημόνως*, “respectably,” deriving from the combination of “good” (*εὖ*) and “form” or “appearance” (*σχῆμα*). With its emphasis on elegant appearance, the adjective and adverbial forms of the term typically took meanings to describe decency, and, particularly in its later (first century C.E.) usages, to have implications of honor and nobility.¹⁵⁸ Paul’s encouragement to “live respectably”—as one does in the daytime—continues to urge Christ-followers to behave in ways similar to that of the Roman elite. The emphasis that *εὐσχημόνως* places upon appearance (*σχῆμα*) further demonstrates the opportunities for being noticed and perceived as “good” (*εὖ*, but also, implicitly, *ἀγαθός*) that this ethical submission to imperial *mores* creates. In particular, this respectability and its potential for positive notice recalls and continues to stress the potential for *ἔπαινος* (“praise”) from the prevailing, imperial authorities, which comes from doing good, in 13:3. The homonational alignment of Christ-followers’ ethical submission and the moral values of the elite imperial authorities continues to foster potential for upward mobility and higher social status for this group.

Paul concludes this section of ethical advice by exhorting his audience to embody the positive contrast to the uncontrolled immorality, sexual in particular, of these lower-class others. He writes: *ἀλλὰ ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίας* (“But wear the lord Jesus Christ, and do not do the intentions of the flesh for desires,” 13:14). Paul employs the language of wearing, like

¹⁵⁸ “*εὐσχημόνως*,” LSJ, 734. “To be noted, once again, is the fact that Paul has no hesitation in calling on his readers to observe the conventional respectability of his day; he does not press for a Christian ethic distinctive in every element; see also on 1:28; 2:7, 10; 12:17; 13:3, 5, 10.” Dunn, 2:788-789. Byrne says the use of this term seems to commend “bourgeois” behavior (and not “Christian virtue”). Byrne, 402. Keck contrasts the term with all of the nighttime vices of 13:13b. Keck, 332. On a similar vein, Matera says it means living “without shame” (to be clear: meaning not performing any vices that would cause shame). Matera, 300. See also Hultgren, 492.

with the donning of armor, to urge the metaphorical donning of a person, presumably indicating they should “wear” his appearance (as an actor dressing for a role).¹⁵⁹ With this advice, Paul instructs his audience to act like Jesus Christ, their κύριος. These actions include the moral behaviors encouraged previously, indeed as already done by Jesus Christ, presuming his superior ethical behavior making him worthy of the κύριος title.¹⁶⁰

Through this language of “wearing,” Paul emphasizes the performative and visible aspects of this ethical submission. As with the “respectable” living in v.13, a notion of proper *appearance* undergirds this advice. “Dressing” as Jesus implies more than just an imitation of correct moral action; it indicates that, like clothing or armor, this action is supposed to be *visible*, something that others can notice, and, again, potentially praise. This does not mean that such a “performance” (emphasizing dress and

¹⁵⁹ As noted by Jewett, this usage of ἐνδύω with the name of a person is used by Dionysius of Halicarnassus when speaking directly of actors “dressing the role of that Tarquin” (ἀλλὰ τὸν Ταρκύνιον ἐκεῖνον ἐνδύμενοι). Jewett, 827; Witherington, 318. Dunn notes that language of taking off vices and putting on virtues is common in wider Greco-Roman ethical discourse; he says further that “taking off” vices is a more “Greek” idea and “putting on” virtues is more “Jewish.” Meanwhile, both ideas, when applied to Christ, have a deeper “spiritual” meaning. Dunn, 2:787-790. See also Moo, 823. Language of wearing Christ also appears in Gal 3:27. Many commentaries note this connection and speak of Paul’s usage in Romans as being a reference to baptismal language; see Fitzmyer, 683-684; Witherington, 317; Byrne, 400, 403; Keck, 333; Hultgren, 492-493; Matera, 300. Thompson argues this passage—and by extension the ethical language of 12-15—exhorts conformity to the ethical behavior of Christ, which is central to early Christian obedience. All of these exhortations, then, originally derive from the Jesus tradition. Thomson, 149-160.

¹⁶⁰ While many commentators (Thompson most notably) appeal to the ethical teachings of Jesus (largely meaning those from the Gospel tradition) as the ideas behind Paul’s ethical exhortations, there are few references to any specific “Jesus tradition” apart to Paul’s appeals to following/imitating Christ (often alongside himself). The parallels to Gospels are ultimately echoes at best, and there are not nearly enough specific references to Jesus’ lifestyle or teachings to reconstruct these ethical exhortations in alignment with specific content of these teachings that would have been familiar to Paul and/or Roman Christ-followers. In other words, it is *possible* these followers knew and drew from Jesus’ ethical examples in these ways, but it is *equally* probable they did not.

We *do* have evidence from Paul’s letters of one element of the Jesus/Gospel tradition: Jesus’ death and crucifixion by Rome. Following Christ’s ethical example as portrayed in Paul’s letter, then, means following his acts of treason and (an ethical as well as faithful) submission to death. Paul, as I have been arguing, does not emphasize this meaning (in the way some anti-empire scholars have interpreted). However, I do not deny the possibility that Jesus’ act of treason could be an ethical example of resistance to some early Christ-followers; indeed, I place such an idea (and resistance to it) into the voices of wo/men in Rome’s ἐκκλησία as chapter 4 began to show and chapter 6 will continue to consider alongside Paul’s ideas here.

appearance) of proper ethics is not also to become a daily habit and lifestyle for Christ-followers, but this language of dress and “good appearance” (εὐσχημόνως) demonstrates an impulse to visibly present Christ-followers as elite-like in their behaviors for the authorities at the top of the hierarchy (both human and divine).¹⁶¹

After this first imperative (with its emphasis on good appearance), Paul’s final exhortation of chapter 13 returns to sexual prohibition, telling the audience not to do the “intentions of the flesh” (τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν) “for desire” (εἰς ἐπιθυμίαις).¹⁶² Paul uses flesh (σάρξ) in a generally negative way, often in binary opposition to the spirit.¹⁶³ In Romans 8, for example, Paul contrasts the mindset (φρόνημα) of the flesh and of the spirit, asserting that it is the flesh that *does not submit* to God’s law. In 8:7-8, he writes: διότι τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν, τῷ γὰρ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑποτασσεται, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται· οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες θεῷ ἀρέσαι οὐ δύνανται (“Because the mindset of the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it is unable. And those who are in the flesh are unable to please God.”). In Paul’s usage of this term in 13:14, the implication recalls this passage: as those with the φρόνημα τῆς σάρκος (“mindset of the flesh”) in 8:7-8 are unable to “please God” by submitting, those who do the τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν (“intentions of the flesh”) are unable to please God by submitting their ethical

¹⁶¹ Like gender, in other words, ethics are performed, routinized, and ritualized into habitual bodily norms that conform bodies and communities to particular standards, and their influence and effects/affects cannot always be easily discarded. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 190-191.

¹⁶² Commentators observe that πρόνοιαν ποιεῖσθαι is a Greek expression for foresight. Fitzmyer, 684. Schreiner discusses this in connection with the vices of the night of 13:13b and calls it a total renunciation of the whole person. Schreiner, 700.

¹⁶³ Moo says this “flesh” denotes “human nature” and a “licentious behavior.” Moo, 826. L.T. Johnson makes sure to expand the force of the chapter’s final verse to not only include the specific vices of 13:13b, which apparently are (still) caused by uncontrolled addiction and craving. “He does not mean simply the failures of weakness such as those that come from addiction and craving, but all those malign manifestations of arrogance and self-aggrandizement that are associated with idolatry and sin.” L.T. Johnson, 195.

behavior.¹⁶⁴ Though both the “mindset” (φρόνημα) of chapter 8 and the “intention” (πρόνοια) of chapter 13 are related in terms of their use of the mind/thought, Paul’s use of πρόνοια signals the process of ethical thought and planning that is the emphasis of this section of the letter.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, in 8:15, Paul further associates this mindset of the flesh with slavery, those wo/men (often foreigners) who belonged at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Slaves especially lacked the control to make decisions over their own bodies in the way that free persons did, elite citizens especially.¹⁶⁶ In particular, as we have seen here in the Roman elite ethical hierarchy, slaves—one of many composite others at the bottom of society—were thought to be in their position because they lacked the ability to adhere to the proper *mores* practiced by the free elite. Though their sexual passivity and loss of *pudicita* was forced upon them, it is such “composite others” at the bottom of the social hierarchy who embodied the Roman images of lack of self-control, who, to use Paul’s terms, would follow the intentions of the flesh in 13:14. The intentions of the flesh, according to Paul, lead toward ἐπιθυμία, “desire,” a term that almost always carries implications of sexual longing.¹⁶⁷

This idea of a “mindset of the flesh” that leads to “desire” draws upon ethnic distinctions and stereotypes similar to those assumed in elite morality.¹⁶⁸ Having the

¹⁶⁴ As Paul notes in his introduction to his ethical advice in 12:1-2, the goal of adopting an ethical mindset is to do not only what is “good” (ἀγαθόν) but also what is “pleasing” (εὐάρεστον), particularly in terms of God’s will (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ).

¹⁶⁵ πρόνοια derives from combining πρό (before) and νοῦς (mind) to give the idea of foresight, planning or thinking before—thus, “intention.” See “πρόνοια,” LSJ, 1491.

¹⁶⁶ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 9-26; duBois, 101-113.

¹⁶⁷ Cp. 1 Thess 4:5. See also Rom 1:24, 6:12, 7:7, 8; Gal 5:16, 24; Phil 1:23.

¹⁶⁸ Notably, in 1 Thessalonian 4:5, in a series of ethical instructions emphasizing sexual purity, Paul exhorts his audience to act “not in desire’s passion as is in the case of the *ethne* that do not know God” (μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν), employing typical sexual invective upon

mindset of these desires is indicative of lower class behavior and broader immorality (as sexual immorality and other vices tended to compound); it is behavior of those who do not or cannot submit to the prevailing authorities and will not be praised for their ethical submission. Therefore, in order to embody ethical submission and gain status via praise and respectability, Christ-followers must visibly align their behaviors—especially their sexual behaviors—with that of the elite and at the expense of other groups of stereotyped ἔθνη who are lower on the social hierarchy and unable to follow these *mores*.

Recalling the donning of the armor of light in 13:12, these exhortations in 13:14 resume the idea that Christ-followers should model themselves (not only in action but also in appearance) after the imperial authorities, the conquerors and the κύριοι, including Jesus as the ultimate κύριος, who sits at the top just under God. Just as in the case of submissive πίστις, God, having placed both Jesus and then the imperial authorities, is pleased by ethical behaviors that submit to God’s authority. However, as they adhere to the *mores* that enforce its kyriarchy, these ethical behaviors are *still* Roman (this time, it seems, *with* Rome). In Romans 12-15 as in Romans 3-5, God remains the ultimate impenetrable penetrator who, rather than overturning the imperial system and its social hierarchy, merely creates an avenue by which Christ-followers can rise above others, those who are already low in status.¹⁶⁹

other ἔθνη in distinction from his own audience of Christ-followers. I more fully develop the argument that 1 Thess. 4:1-8 and 4:13-5:11, taken together, are evidence of Pauline homonationalism in Hoke, “Peace and Security.” On the sexual invective in 1 Thess. 4:3-8, see also Knust, 51-54, 63-64. In a slightly different vein than my own, Marchal discusses imperial sexual exceptionalism in this section of 1 Thess. in “Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 107-109. Additionally, on pp.104-107, Marchal further discusses and identifies how the vice list in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 is similarly located in a discusses that relies on ethnic othering of Gentiles as sexually deviant in 1 Cor. 5-7 (a section of text that is also includes references to an “apocalyptic” day of the Lord).

¹⁶⁹ As seen in chapter 3 with Rom 1-5; see again, Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor*, 168-172. See also Marchal, “Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 103-104.

Just as imperial rule and conquest was not upset by means of faithful submission, Paul's ethical advice for self-control, submission, and respectability—particularly in terms of sexual behavior—reifies the imperial hierarchies which were enforced by rigid ideologies of morality linked to national prosperity. By proving their ability to behave according to elite *mores*, Christ-followers both submit to the prevailing authorities (13:1) and do good in order to receive praise (13:3). This good behavior particularly entails conforming to the elite ideals governing sexual morality (13:11-14), as opposed to those who rebel (13:2), do bad (13:4), and are sexual others (13:13). In so doing, Paul's exhortations to ethical submission in chapter 13 (alongside his advice in chapter 12) rely upon the conditions of sexual exceptionalism made possible by imperial morality.

As Puar breaks down examples and strategies of homonationalism in a modern American context, she describes its deployment as follows: “In homonormative narratives of nation, there is a dual movement: U.S. patriotism momentarily sanctions some homosexualities, often through gendered, racial, and class sanitizing, in order to produce ‘monster-terrorist-fags;’ homosexuals embrace the us-versus-them rhetoric of U.S. patriotism and thus align themselves with this racist and homophobic production.” In similar, though also distinctly different, ways, Roman imperialism—and its *mores* and propaganda—produced a notion of an ultimate barbarian, a “composite other,” based on racial, gender, class, and sexual stereotypes that are akin to the modern “monster-terrorist-fag.” In so doing, as this chapter has shown, the possibility remained open under the Roman imperial regime for certain others to be sanctioned as subjects worthy of rehabilitation by submitting to the imperial regime and adopting its “us-versus-them” ethical binaries, thus aligning themselves with the *mores* and politics of empire. Though

the specific strategies and contexts differ from the examples that Puar provides, Roman imperialism and ethics clearly provide formations for forms of homonationalism, from Philo to Paul, among many potential others.

Therefore, Paul's ethical advice at the end of Romans, especially in chapter 13 (but also in the advice given in chapter 12), employs its own brand of homonationalism. Paul encourages Christ-followers to submit to authority and to live by its ethical codes, particularly demonstrating respectable sexual behavior and self-control. He relies on binary terms (good/bad, day/night, submission/rebellion) to align his community's ethics with the superior Roman values as opposed to those of rebellious, deviant (barbarian) others. By "doing good," Paul seeks imperial praise for the *ἐκκλησία*, praise which in turn signifies a hope for belonging and acceptance by the empire and its elite. Though certainly a strategy for upward mobility for the *ἐκκλησία*, this homonational ethical advice is doomed to failure, as the fantasy of homonationalism presents the possibility of belonging only to ensure that those already on top remain secure in their positions of power and privilege.¹⁷⁰ Ethical submission, then, may please God, but its material and social benefits are less certain. This is especially the case for potential members of the Roman *ἐκκλησία* who may have been unable (due to their own gendered, ethnic, or social statuses) or unwilling to submit to these imperial *mores*. It is alongside these voices (and others in the *ἐκκλησία*) that the questions of ethical submission and imperial authority must be posed in order to consider what else might have been "good and pleasing and perfect" behavior for these early Christ-followers.

¹⁷⁰ Just as the tactics of faithful submission in chapter three proved cruel due to their predetermined, if unrecognizable, failure to produce upward mobility and a "good life."

CHAPTER 6

AN ETHICAL *ἐκκλησία*?

The preceding analysis of Romans 13 illustrated how a theo-Christology rooted in a kyriarchal relation under God—as established in Romans 3-5—typically (and almost necessarily) produces a similarly kyriarchal approach to ethics. But what are other courses of action that Christ-followers might practice or encourage as they discussed together the practical implications of their beliefs? As with Paul’s theo-Christological ideas, the participants gathered in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* would have discussed and debated his ethical suggestions alongside their already developing theo-Christological ethics. Furthermore, as with their theo-Christological impulses, participants in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* would have already been thinking about, discussing, debating, and even enacting theo-Christological ethics prior to receiving Paul’s letter. As one participant among many in this ethical conversation, Paul’s suggestions in Romans 12-15 may add to, change, and/or produce tensions within these pre-existing *ἐκκλησία*-l dynamics.

As before, I propose several ethical impulses that could have stemmed from their dynamic theo-Christology (a stew of multiple impulses as discussed in chapter 4) and guided the actions of participants in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*. As in chapter four, these ethical impulses are speculatively plausible: though ultimately unverifiable, they *could*, in some form, have been represented in the ethical movements held within Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. However, this plausibility can be confirmed by evidence that similar impulses existed in the first century: among Christ-followers in other *ἐκκλησίαι* (where we also see that, in general, ethics were frequently discussed and debated), in material

evidence found in Rome's vicinity (especially Pompeii), and in writings that describe ethical responses of Roman ἔθνη (here including Jews) who did not follow Christ. Since these ethical impulses often offer responses to more concrete questions (e.g., gender roles, adoption of ethnic practices, sexual expression), when compared with the evidence of different theo-Christologies discussed in chapter 4, there is also more concrete evidence of different responses within these sources to ground the following proliferations.

The evidence of diverging theo-Christological ethics among first-century Christ-followers once again comes largely from within the Pauline corpus. Beyond the early hymnic formulae he quotes in Gal. 3:28 and Phil. 2:6-11, this chapter's proposals draw evidence from rhetorical reconstructions of other ethical positions to which Paul clearly responds in his other letters, written to ἐκκλησίαι with which he already been in both physical and epistolary conversation. Paul's first letter to Corinth, therefore, will be a particularly helpful resource for these different ideas. In this letter, Paul both identifies and responds to disagreeing positions in ways that have allowed scholars to reconstruct some of the theo-Christologies and ethics of some of the influential Corinthian wo/men whose ideas and practices clearly, at times, diverged from Paul's.¹ Furthermore, while the ἐκκλησίαι in Corinth and Rome certainly differed and were geographically removed, Corinth perhaps offers a particular relevance (especially relative to other Pauline epistles)

¹ Most notably, see the reconstructions and development of feminist rhetorical criticism for 1 Corinthians by Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*. Other reconstructive work on 1 Cor that follows this tradition include Marchal, "The Corinthian Women Prophets and Trans Activism: Rethinking Canonical Gender Claims," in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 223-246; Cavan W. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles": *Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

to Rome, since it was a port-city that featured a great degree of interaction with both Rome and its other territories/ἔθνη.² Although, for these reasons, 1 Corinthians is most frequently cited here, I also appeal to other Pauline letters (including 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, and Philippians) when they do occasionally offer glimpses into dissenting views and different practices.

Beyond Paul's letters, other Greco-Roman writings and material culture confirm the plausibility of these ethical impulses and show that these impulses were not singular outliers nor unique to Christ-followers. Jewish authors, especially Philo and Josephus, offer evidence of the debates and discussions among first-century Jews that responded variably to Roman authority and demonstrate the different ethical practices and interpretation held within Second Temple Judaism. Beyond Judaism, examples from other religious cults, particularly that of the seemingly egalitarian-oriented devotion to Isis, also provide evidence for the plausible ethical impulses proffered in this chapter. Finally, evidence of material culture—e.g., objects left behind, wall paintings, and graffiti, especially as found in the remains of Pompeii—offers insights into the lived experiences and ethical impulses of more ordinary Romans, most notably in the case of sexual practices.³

Drawing support from this evidence, in the sections that follow, I develop some plausible ethical impulses that may have directed the bodies in Rome's ἐκκλησία and the ethical perspectives they discussed and even practiced together in relation to their theo-

² See, for example, the descriptions in Concannon, 47-74; more generally, he assumes that the participants in Corinth's ἐκκλησία were largely ethnic hybrids. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged as the location from which Paul was writing this letter to Rome.

³ The remnants in Pompeii represent the most frequently cited material evidence for many reasons, most notably, its preservation in first-century form and its relative proximity to Rome.

Christologies. Since these ethical ideas also converse with the diversity of developing theo-Christologies, the proposals that follow will frequently continue from some of the impulses previously proffered. The first section, “Egalitarian Ethics” takes up the ethical implications of egalitarian theo-Christologies, particularly with regard to gender, and considers how Roman Christ-followers, like some other movements in the first century, could have embodied different formulations of egalitarianism. In “Rethinking Rebels,” a second impulse returns to Roman ethics of submission and considers the variety of plausible responses that include but are not limited to total, outright opposition. The third and fourth sections (“Ethnic Ethics” and “‘Good’ Sex?”) consider how ethnic background and questions of sexual practice respectively impacted approaches and embodiments of theo-Christologies while also acknowledging how race/ethnicity and sexuality cannot be entirely separated in these discussions. Such inseparability among these different ethical impulses becomes most apparent in the chapter’s final section, where all of these different suggestions are considered in conversation with one another and with Paul’s ideas in Romans 12-15.

As they describe various ethical impulses that could have existed in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*, the following sections think of these impulses as ethical “guide-vectors,” which follows the affective ideas discussed in chapter 2 and emphasizes motion and change. By thinking about ethics in terms of moving vectors that change constantly, the following impulses identify ethical binaries (e.g., “rebellion” or “submission”) that too often simplify the complexities of ethical ideas, especially when they are interacting within diverse bodies and communities. This variety of vectors helps to capture the dynamics of the mobile and multiplying ethical responses that pulsed within Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*-l

assemblage. Ultimately, as this chapter will suggest in its conclusion, such a pulsating assemblage of differing ideas could have resisted the draws of Pauline homonationalism and moved toward some embrace of queerness.

Egalitarian Ethics

How could a theo-Christological orientation toward egalitarianism, along the lines of that suggested in chapter four's consideration of ἴσα θεοῦ, affect the ethical ideas and responses in Rome's ἐκκλησία? If no longer considered "on top" or even permanently in the center, it is plausible that God's ethical examples could have been something other than a "bullseye" on a distant target, which one must hit precisely or else "sin."⁴ Along such a vector, God does not need to assess human adherence to these standards, and God's sensations of anger, patience, or compassion do not require or result in commendation, condemnation, or clemency. This sharing of power and its egalitarian-oriented vision of δικαιοσύνη became the examples to follow, and it is plausible that some participants in Rome's ἐκκλησία would have attempted to find ways to put such impulses into action.

In terms of ethical embodiments of such egalitarian ideas, there is evidence that wo/men in other ἐκκλησίαι moved toward more egalitarian practices while they were assembled. Broadly speaking, such movements did not restrict the participation of Christ-followers based on gender, ethnic, or social status. Thus, in Corinth, women claimed authority to prophecy and speak in the ἐκκλησία: according to 1 Cor 11:2-16 and chapter

⁴ Drawing here from the fact that the Christian term for "sin" comes from the Greek ἀμαρτάνω, which often could be used in the sense of "to err," but in its wider history, it comes from the meaning "to miss the mark," in particular, as a term meant in the context of spear-throwing, i.e., not hitting the target/bullseye. See "ἀμαρτάνω," LSJ, 77.

14 (especially vv.34-36), they asserted their bodily presence (with heads uncovered) and made their voices heard in worship and conversation.⁵ Additionally, 1 Cor 7:21-24 suggests that some of the Corinthian Christ-followers were enslaved. Paul advises them, *δοῦλος ἐκλήθης, μή σοι μελέτω· ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι* (“If you were called as a slave, do not let it concern you; rather, even if you are able become free, make all the more use”), it is plausible that some slaves took their egalitarian experiences in the *ἐκκλησία* to mean, quite logically, that it should extend to their freedom beyond its walls.⁶ Such actions in Corinth’s *ἐκκλησία* point to concrete ways some Christ-followers may have embodied egalitarian ethics.

While some Christ-followers seem to have moved toward an egalitarian *ἐκκλησία* in deed as well as word, their movement was never perfect. While the evidence above shows that many wo/men did embody certain forms of egalitarianism, we know that they did not go unchallenged. Particularly in Corinth, at least according to Paul’s rhetoric, there was a considerable amount of debate over these more egalitarian practices, even to the point of producing firmer “factions.”⁷ Given that Paul responded to reports of these practices, it appears that participants from some of these factions—presumably those less comfortable with how egalitarianism was being enacted—complained and/or appealed to Paul for assistance.

⁵ Wire, 116-134, 140-149.

⁶ On questions of social status of the wo/men in Corinth, see Wire, 62-69. On issues of Paul’s rhetoric in this passage as it relates to ancient slave bodies, see Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 67-69; Nasrallah, “‘You Were Bought with a Price’: Freedpersons and Things in 1 Corinthians” in *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah A. James, and Daniel N. Schowalter (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 54-73.

⁷ *πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ συνερχομένον ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν...* “For first I hear that, when you come together in *ekklesia*, divisions exist among you” (1 Cor 11:18).

However, the imperfection of Corinthian egalitarianism extends beyond the debates it produced: 1 Cor 11:21 suggests that social distinctions were not entirely erased, and this fact had become especially evident when the ἐκκλησία dined together: ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν, καὶ ὅς μὲν πεινᾷ ὅς δὲ μεθύει (“For, when eating, each receives in advance their own meal, and one hungry while the other is drunk.”) While never perfectly realizing a fully egalitarian community, these practices pushed the ἐκκλησία in a more egalitarian directions; they seem to have sensed potentials held within theo-Christological statements like Gal 3:28.⁸

These egalitarian impulses were not unique to Christ-followers and their ἐκκλησῖαι; there is evidence of various egalitarian-leaning practices within other communities in the Roman world. The cult surrounding the worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis, whose veneration spread across the Greco-Roman world, appears to have encouraged egalitarian ideas among its followers, both in terms of women’s participation and with regard to socio-economic status. “Distinctions of rank and status are not altogether absent, but they often seem based on the achievement of devotees and not on externally determined status criteria. Some degree of egalitarianism exists,” writes Ross Shepherd Kraemer.⁹ While such egalitarian may have been ideal, especially since devotees needed some degree of wealth to attain these “achievements,” it was possible for anyone to attain this status, including some wealthier slaves and freedpersons.¹⁰

⁸ See Wire, 123-128. Note Paul quotes a similar formula (notably without the “male and female” part) in 1 Cor 12:12-13. It is plausible that, even if these wo/men in Rome did not know Gal 3:28 in its exact form, they were familiar with its egalitarian impulses through other hymns or ideas that circulated among early Christ-followers.

⁹ Ross Shepherd Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women’s Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 78.

¹⁰ Ibid.

A similar egalitarian ideal, with similarly imperfect embodiments, existed with respect to gender among devotees of Isis. Evidence suggests that both men and women practiced devotion to Isis across the Greco-Roman world, and even the most conservative accounting for numbers attests to a fairly high percentage of female devotees.¹¹ An early second century aretology to Isis, *P.Oxy* 11.1380, praises her because “thou didst make the power of women equal to that of men.”¹² Such a praise makes clear that some, though not necessarily all, female devotees of Isis found egalitarian inspiration in their practice. However, as Kraemer notes, the story and ideas contained in the story of Isis also permit a more conservative, less fully egalitarian presentation of women’s power and agency. Isis’ actions in her story are connected to her devotion and love for Osiris, and some of her veneration is attributed to her fidelity to her husband, despite his own infidelity (which she forgives) and the hurdle of his death (which does not prevent her from bearing a son).¹³ However, despite these limitations, the evidence of devotion to Isis does attest to an egalitarian impulse and a notion of equal power that appealed to many women and drew them into this cult through a message of fuller participation.

Another imperfect example of egalitarian religious impulses appears in Philo’s *Vita Contemplativa*. This text describes a community of Jews (“Therapeuts”) who leave their lives (homes, wealth, families, etc.) to form an ascetic community centered around full devotion to God by focusing on worship as individuals and in community. Although

¹¹ See Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 75-76. Here she discusses how the number could actually be greater than the percentage of recorded attestations, since women’s presence are usually downplayed or unrepresented in official documentation.

¹² Kraemer, *Women’s Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 456.

¹³ So, as Kraemer observes, emphasis is put far more on Isis’ role as wife in the context of marital fidelity and only secondly (with decidedly less emphasis) on her maternal role. This differs from many female goddesses and their cults, notably that of Demeter. See Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 74-75.

there is some priority given to age, the system he describes hints at more egalitarian practices, and he makes it clear that distinctions are not drawn according to social status. There are no slaves, and he suggests that the community serves one another.¹⁴ In terms of gender, as he describes their communal practices, he notes that women co-exist with the men and practice the same routines, albeit often (but not always) in separated spaces. Thus, he notes of their communal dining: “And they dine together with women...” (§68).¹⁵ As evidence, Philo’s description is far from an ideal instance of egalitarianism, since his account is idealized (and possibly fictional), he presents the participants as having come from higher socio-economic, and the presence of men and women leans toward complementarity as much as egalitarianism.¹⁶ However, despite such caveats, the community’s actions come closer to egalitarianism than those more overly structured by kyriarchal hierarchies, and Philo’s presentation does show that egalitarian ideas were possible within Jewish thought; his presentation makes plausible the existence of egalitarian-oriented Jewish communities that would have been roughly contemporary with the forming of Christ-following ἐκκλησίαι.¹⁷

Connecting this evidence of attempts to embody egalitarian ideas, often imperfectly, to Rome’s ἐκκλησία, it is plausible that some attempted to embody the theo-

¹⁴ However, this description is not without Philo’s own bias, and it seems that no one serves like a slave because the entire community comes from among those who previously inhabited. He writes, διακονοῦντες δὲ οὐχ ὑπ’ ἀνδραπόδων, ἡγούμενοι συνόλως τὴν θεραπόντων κτήσιν εἶναι παρὰ φύσιν (“They are not ministered to by war-captured-slaves; they absolutely consider the act of acquiring attendants to be unnatural,” *Vita Contemplativa* §70).

¹⁵ In the rest of this passage, Philo emphasizes the virginity (and age) of these women participants, which seems to be a prerequisite for such cohabitation and participation in his description.

¹⁶ See Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59-116.

¹⁷ Kraemer concludes, “And it is worth noting that Philo’s description coheres with instances across many cultures of celibate women engaging in privileged activities ordinarily limited to males in those same cultures.” *Ibid.*, 116.

Christological ideal of ἴσα θεοῦ within this space, and this would have prompted much discussion and debate. If God does not stand above and over the ἐκκλησία, then God does not need to be the sole being “on high” who is responsible for approving of standards of behavior that determine “proper” actions. It is plausible, then, that similar (if not exactly the same) egalitarian practices were formed in response to the emerging theo-Christologies in Rome’s ἐκκλησία. If God was thought to be on more egalitarian terms with the ἐκκλησία’s participants, God’s example could encourage and inspire numerous ethical responses and ideas that anticipate and move toward communities living equally and justly, in ways that slowly redefine the kyriarchal definitions of such terms.¹⁸

If a few thought in these terms, they might have preferred to provide a different prepositional description of their relation to God: perhaps something like *παρὰ θεόν* (“alongside God”) or *παρὰ θεῶν* (“with/among God”). As an equal, alongside Paul and each embodied voice in Rome’s ἐκκλησία, God participates more fully in the movements and debates of the ἐκκλησία-l assemblage. Such a relation changes ethical positions, rules, and norms—which imply a static desire for perfection—into ethical guide-vectors: these are *guidelines* that are *moving*. They change, get developed, and become embodied differently in diverse places and times within this ἐκκλησία-l assemblage. The guidance they offer shifts as the ἐκκλησία, a community of very different bodies that carry different ideas from different backgrounds, move toward a dynamic egalitarianism that is experienced in small sensations even though it is still unrealized in any fullness.

¹⁸ Notably, such ideas should not be assumed to be unique or original to Christ-followers in the ἐκκλησία; they were also present in Jewish ideas in and before [and after] the first century, as they were being debated and developed in tandem and in what could be called “συναγωγ-al” assemblages.

Thus far, these ethical considerations have hardly moved into the realm of practice. As versions of such ideas proliferated, converged, and clashed in conversation within the first-century ἐκκλησία in Rome, they would have made space to think more specifically about ethics. These conversations attempted to account for the bodies present (and some bodies absent) and seek actions that responded to their shifting and developing theo-Christologies in a communal context. They enacted (or attempted) movement toward a more egalitarian gathering (though what that meant may have differed), who met with a God who changes and shifts alongside them. By removing the demands and imposition of divine regulations and rules from above, an embodied ethics—imperfect and incomplete—could emerge as perfection-on-the-move. Instead of assuming a static sense of perfection as a goal, they sought a perfection captured by the example δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ provides: one that shifts and changes while the ἐκκλησία-l assemblage attempts to embody it.

Rethinking Rebels

Given that the wo/men of Rome's ἐκκλησία lived lives deeply immersed in the empire's kyriarchal assemblage (with different experiences of its affective effects), how did they respond when imperial virtues collided with some emerging ἐκκλησία-l impulses? A rebellious reaction certainly could have emerged within some bodies.¹⁹ Ethically, this could result in advocating for rebellion, active resistance, eschewal of imperial virtues and their rewards, and other forms of action against Rome's rule. Beyond

¹⁹ In various degrees. Such a reaction is certainly confirmed in historical records and writings, as we know rebellious sentiment existed among Jews (especially leading up and culminating in the rebellion of the Jewish War in 66 C.E.) and other ἔθνη who did revolt against Rome. The existence of such perspectives in relation to Paul and early Christianity are affirmed by, among others, Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*; Horsley, *Paul and Empire*; Horsley, *Paul and Politics*; Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*.

Christ-followers, historical evidence affirms that some Romans, largely among conquered ἔθνη, advocated for various forms of resistance. Most often, such resistance was recorded when violence led to visible unrest or upheaval that could not be ignored or construed differently.

For example, we have evidence of Jewish resistance and unrest with regard to Roman rule in the first century C.E.—unrest that ultimately produced an armed revolt in Jerusalem in 66 C.E., aimed at expelling Rome and regaining independent Jewish rule of the area. Though prompted by growing and intensified pressures, this spectacular revolt—a very obvious instance of a large group coalescing around and embodying full rebellion against their ἐξουσία ὑπερεχούσαι—was preceded by decades of differing forms of Jewish dissent and debate regarding Rome’s authority, a build-up especially apparent in Josephus’ lengthy account of the war supplemented by his broader and even more thorough history in the *Jewish Antiquities*.²⁰ On his account, Susan Sorek writes, “In the final years before the war with Rome, Jews has become divided in their attitude to Roman authority.”²¹ By accounting for (even if sometimes briefly) different factions and sects among first-century Jews in the context of their eventual revolt, Josephus’ narrative argues for thinking about Jewish ideas of rebellion or accommodation/submission as a continuum where few perfectly adhered to either pole.²² While it appears some Jews were

²⁰ At various points these two accounts overlap descriptions (such as those of Jewish sects), though sometimes with divergences and discrepancies. See further, Susan Sorek, *The Jews Against Rome* (London: Continuum, 2008), esp. pp. 1-13, 27-44; Tessa Rajak, *Josephus*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2002), 65-103. On the diversity within Judaism and some ways of thinking of the ideas and practices of ordinary or common Jews as different from those of the few distinct and plausibly small sects, see especially the essays in Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz, *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

²¹ Sorek, 11

²² As Sorek shows, the ruling aristocracy comes closest to being fully submissive (though not always) while the Zealots gain the most attention for their revolutionary stance. But even among the Zealots there were divisions and differences as to how to resist authority. See *ibid.*, 39-44.

willing to submit fully to Roman authority (most notably those who stood to benefit most from it and attain its good life) and others publicly protested it, some Jews, plausibly most, held ideas in-between these two poles, as they navigated and negotiated the ideas and responses of various sects and divisions within Judaism.²³

A similar variety of responses to Rome's dominion in the form of its socio-political hierarchy can be seen in evidence surrounding Roman slaves. As discussed in chapter 1, there is a high degree of probability that some participants in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* were slaves or former slaves. There is evidence of active and even violent resistance of slaves towards their masters. Tacitus discusses an instance of a slave who kills his master, and Roman law discusses the matter more generally as a threat that needed to be addressed and prevented.²⁴ Periodically, enough slaves were able to unite and revolt more wholesale, including three slave revolts of note in the late Republican era (135-134 B.C.E., 104-100 B.C.E., and 74-73 B.C.E.) and an uprising in 70 C.E., at the point of political turmoil in the aftermath of Nero's reign.²⁵ Beyond this, it seems more localized resistance allowed groups of slaves to escape and band together in communities that would inhabit in less populated areas and survive, in part, by banditry.²⁶ Evidence further attests that flight was a common form of more active resistance, usually when individual

²³ On the varying relations of Jews to Roman imperialism, see especially Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). 87-98.

²⁴ Allen Dwight Callahan and Horsley, "Slave Resistance in Classical Antiquity," in Callahan, Horsley, and Abraham Smith, eds., *Slavery in Text and Interpretation, Semeia* 83-84 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 147-148. These examples, then, do not report that the provocation for slave resistance is particularly poor treatment. Rhetorically, the recounting of such instances (real or embellished) works to support Rome's slave system and provides argument for its brutality (i.e., masters reading this could be less likely to promise rewards or freedom, for fear of such retaliation).

²⁵ Callahan and Horsley, 145, 147.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 139-143.

slaves found their ways to escape and either join these communities or flee to densely populated areas where they could pass as freedpersons or perhaps even those born free.²⁷

Beyond such overt tactics, research on Greco-Roman slavery has uncovered forms of slave resistance that were subtler and did not attract the attention and harsh penalties of armed resistance or escape. Though large-scale slave revolts did occur, in the grand scheme of Greco-Roman slavery, they did not occur with great frequency; indeed, within the Roman era, the highest concentration of slave revolts is attested in the mid- to late Republican era. However, the texts that discuss slaves and their resistance are written almost exclusively from the perspective of freeborn men (i.e., their *κύριοι*/masters). These accounts mask the resistance of slaves, especially if that resistance does not take rebellious form. Thus, while attestations of organized rebellions are relatively rare in the early Empire (though they are by no means insignificant), there is evidence within the masters' discourse that complain about slaves working slowly, mention punish for forms of disobedience, and craft literary tropes of the "lazy, disobedient slave."²⁸ This frustration of masters (as their accounts of these slave shows), scholars of ancient slavery suggest, likely indicates that slowness and disobedience formed strategies of resistance, strategies that could be individual and/or communal.²⁹ The bodies and ideas behind this

²⁷ Ibid. As a result, slaves might be tattooed or collared for easier identification; archaeological remains have unearthed collars offering a reward for the return of a fugitive slave; some indicate their master was a Christ-follower. See also Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 13.

²⁸ See Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 102-129. See also the trope of the "faithful slave" in the Gospels (e.g. Matt 25:14-30).

²⁹ Keith R. Bradley, "Servus Onerosus: Roman Law and the Troublesome Slave," *Slavery and Abolition* 11 (1990): 135-157. After elaborating these various situations and resistant responses, he proposes, "The contention I make from the legal evidence surveyed is that Roman slaves constantly and continuously resisted slavery through a broad variety of non-cooperative ways that ranged from sabotage of property (arson, theft, falsification of record books, damage to animals) through vagrancy and time-wasting to feigning illness" (150). See also Callahan and Horsley, 134-139; Bradley, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 121-123; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 133-139.

more subtle resistance have not (and likely cannot) be recovered, but this demonstrates the variety of forms resistance can take, some of which may *seem* submissive when contrasted to an armed revolt.

This evidence, limited though it may be, attests that resistance among Jews and slaves in the Roman world took different forms; and it shows that while some subjects held rebellious ideas that they attempted to enact, others found less overt ways to express and embody their concern and discomfort with their forced submission to Rome's kyriarchal rule. Particularly from the Jewish evidence, we see how communities of a subjected ἔθνος debated and disagreed amongst themselves as to the best approach for responding to Rome's rule. As slaves responded to their forced subjection with similar variety, it is quite plausible that they imagined, discussed, and debated different responses with one another, especially when such responses eventually led to organized rebellion. Within such an assemblage of bodies, experiences, and ideas, ethical practices move, change, and occasionally coalesce around actions of total submission (without even subtle resistance) or rebellion. In the more scientific language of assemblages, mass rebellious action is a form of "phase shift": it is caused by internal movements and changes in a particular direction; their shifting-points are that are affected by forces such as pressure and other internal and external factors.³⁰ The evidence that less overt ideas about resistance were being considered and enacted suggests that the bodies and ideas in

³⁰ The idea of "phase shifts" comes from Manuel DeLanda's elaboration of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblage: essentially, like various factors (e.g., temperature, pressure) shift and and change within an element that cause it to changes state (solid, liquid, gas) at certain points, even though these different internal factors may shift and change constantly, various parameters move and shift in an assemblage, but the changes are only noticeable at certain critical points—i.e., when the phase shifts. See Delanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 19-20.

these assemblages may have been moving and embodying forms of rebellion and submission simultaneously.

These instances provide insight into how participants in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, particularly as they responded to Paul's ideas such as those in Romans 13:1-7, may have debated issues of rebellion and submission beyond their polar extremes. As in the cases above, it is quite plausible that these discussions would prompt a myriad of different ideas and ethical responses. Though some in the *ἐκκλησία* experimented with egalitarianism's potentials, its full (or even slight) realization, especially beyond the assembly, was often only possible in minuscule steps. Furthermore, even among those resisting Rome, the most stridently rebellious discourse can still replicate kyriarchal ideology if it desires merely to overturn the identity of the rulers: the oppressed can force the oppressors into submission in a very similar hierarchy "under God" (the book of Revelation being one stark example). Again, the assemblage of kyriarchal, imperial power works to retain bodies in its hold, especially with its threat of punishments for diverging from and promise of rewards for conforming to its ethical norms. When emerging theo-Christologies produce ethical responses from within such a complex ethical system, plausibility suggests that some may have been more willing to risk rebellious postures; others may have needed to be less overt in order to survive; and others may have been content to stay submissive or perhaps even felt they benefitted from Rome's rule.

For some in the *ἐκκλησία*, this could have manifested with anger and other impatient bodily responses. Kyriarchy frustrates. This less heartening final plausibility is not to quell the potential promises of socio-political ethics in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*. Rather, it

names the difficulties of their movement, the reality that such equality has existed but has never been fully and permanently achieved, and the difficulties all of this imposed on real, ancient bodies as a result.

Any action or idea could be rebellious and submissive simultaneously, depending on ever-shifting placements of diverse bodies and the perceptions thereof. Existing in a dynamic discussion, all of these socio-political probabilities uncover messier realities beyond the poles of “rebellion” or “submission.” They break down this binary and show why it so readily appears and remains. Rebellion emerges as just one among many ways to change and dismantle kyriarchy. By dismantling such ethical binaries, these *ἐκκλησία*-l guide-vectors contain potentials to move away from the regulatory norms that, as we have seen with Romans 13, threaten to “homonationalize” queer bodies and ideas. However, since such regulation requires ethics that involve racialized and sexualized bodies and politics, these other dimensions also require attention within the theo-Christological ethics of Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*.

Ethnic Ethics

The *ἐκκλησία* brought together participants who came from a plurality of ethnic backgrounds. As previously discussed, this affected their theo-Christologies. These diverse and mixed ethnic heritages would mean that different participants would enter conversations about *ἐκκλησία*-l ethics with a similar plurality of practices and approaches. However, in Roman’s scholarship, the interactions between different ethnicities and the practices they may have adopted or rejected are almost exclusively considered in terms of

a binary between Jew and all other ἔθνη (“Gentiles”).³¹ This section will argue that ἐκκλησία-1 ethics can be viewed as crossing and moving beyond this binary because there was a high degree of diversity within and mixing between the two categories.

Paul’s letters to other ἐκκλησίαι, which also consisted nearly exclusively of non-Jewish ἔθνη, attest to this plurality of practice, particularly when it comes to practices related to “idols,” i.e., following the deities of other ἔθνη. In both 1 Cor 12:2 and 1 Thess 1:9, Paul alludes to how participants in these ἐκκλησίαι were “enticed” (1 Cor) by (“idols”) from which they have now “turned away” (1 Thess).³² In both assemblies, it is unclear to what degree these practices have been fully abandoned: Paul speaks of them as

³¹ When addressing ἐκκλησία-1 discussions of ethics and (Jewish) ethnicity, focus hones upon and (almost exclusively) prioritizes the binary positions of fairly complete adoption or rejection of Jewish practices. Or, more often, particular sets of Jewish practices that get reduced to “Judaism” as representative of its “core” ethical teachings/demands. Romans 14:1-15:13 makes the most overt references to such specific practices, in particular eating meat, drinking wine, and observing holy holidays. Romans assumes a division in approaches to these practices according to being “weak” (ὁ ἀσθενῶν) or “strong” (οἱ δυνατοί, also used to refer to those who are powerful/most able), with the weak corresponding to those who adhere to these practices (all having roots in Judaism) and the strong as those who do not. The more-or-less “standard” approach, often assuming derivation from his experiences dealing with similar (specific) questions in Galatia and Corinth, is to assume that Paul’s “weak” corresponds to “Jewish Christians” (i.e., followers who are Jews, which can include some “god-fearing” Gentiles) and “strong” to “Gentile Christians” (i.e., followers who are from non-Jewish ἔθνη and almost always exclusively “gentile”). See Fitzmyer, 686-708; Jewett, 829-885; Dunn 2:794-853; Moo, 826-884; Schreiner, 703-760; Witherington, 325-349; Byrne, 403-433; Cobb and Lull, 175-179; Longenecker, 986-1019; Matera, 305-326; L.T. Johnson, 196-207; Hultgren, 495-534; Keck, 334-358. Following Stowers’ assumption that Paul’s intended audience in Romans is exclusively gentile (though located within a synagogue), Nanos suggests the “weak” refers to the *non-Christ-following Jews* in the synagogue. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 85-165. While I agree that Paul’s audience is largely gentile, I am less interested in distinguishing firm positions or identities for the strong and the weak (somewhat in line with Stowers, 321-323), although Paul may have more specific identities in mind. In terms of the realities within the ἐκκλησία (in Rome but likely as much in Corinth or Galatia), there was more likely much ambiguity between positions and many different opinions and practices regarding the adoption (or rejection) of these—and other—specifically Jewish practices (an assumption continued below). Ultimately, I find the following comment of Nanos most instructive: “What we find is that the behavior of those called ‘weak’ is characterized by their *opinions* of how to practice their faith as differentiated from the behavior patterns of the ‘strong’ (14:1-3, 4ff.), however, it is not their behavior or opinions that are regarded as ‘weak,’ but their faith.” Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 103. In other words, it is Paul’s rhetorical framing that produces the binary and connects what are ultimately *different opinions about ethical practices* (based in Christo-theological ideas); but they do not necessarily correspond to fixed theological positions (especially since few if any existed).

³² See Concannon, 31-32, 100-105, 115.

have occurring in the past, but this reflects his own preferences and ideas. His rhetoric (“when [in the past] you were ἔθνη”) assumes the worshipping of idols has ceased now that these participants are following Christ and worshipping the God of Israel; however, while his rhetoric may have helped to shape reality, it does not necessarily describe reality.

There are some hints within Paul’s letters, alongside other material evidence, that some Christ-followers may have adapted or retained elements of their ethnic customs as part of their practices as participants in the ἐκκλησία. For example, as Natalie Webb has suggested based on Paul’s use of magical and cursing imagery in his letter to the Galatians (esp. in 3:1), that Paul crafts his language of the cross to appeal to Christ-followers who were prone to use various physical symbols (e.g. the phallus) to ward off evil (especially the “evil eye”).³³ If Paul transforms this “pagan” practice, it is plausible that early Christ-followers from among this ἐκκλησία’s ἔθνη used the symbol of the cross, in depiction or as physical objects, for apotropaic effect.³⁴ Beyond Paul’s letters, evidence from curse tablets and spells also attests the blending of the language of curses and magic, whether to ward off evil spirits (as Webb found in Galatians) or set them upon others, with the traditions of Judaism and appeals to of the God of Israel.³⁵ Both within ἐκκλησίαι and beyond, when it comes to religious practice, there are indications that

³³ Natalie R. Webb, “Powers and Protection in Pompeii and Paul: The Apotropaic Function of the Cross in the Letter to the Galatians” in Bruce Longenecker, ed., *Early Christianity in Pompeian Light: People, Texts, Situations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 93-121.

³⁴ Webb does not weigh in on this plausible implication of her argument and might disagree. Her suggestion leans more into the implication that the (singular) event of the cross replaces the need for physical apotropaic symbols: the event/concept of the cross functions apotropaically. See *ibid.*, 114-120.

³⁵ See especially Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 184-187. §86 is a curse meant to protect private property, which blends “pagan” curse language and deities with allusions to the Septuagint, leading Gager to say he is “in some sense a ‘Judaizing’ Gentile” (185).

actual practitioners frequently incorporated inherited practices with new ones they encountered and adopted.

This suggests that, through diverse ethnic interaction, persons from various *ἔθνη* adopted the traditions of other *ἔθνη*, including Jews, and found ways of blending their own ethical customs, beyond religious practices, with these traditions. When it comes to questions of sexual ethics (discussed in more detail in the next section), Paul often contrasts his ideals for sexual ethics to those that exist among *ἔθνη*.³⁶ When he tells Thessalonian Christ-followers (those who came from *ἔθνη* and had followed idols, 1:9) to approach issues of sexual praxis “not in lust’s passion as is in the case of the *ἔθνη* that do not know God” (1 Thess 4:5), he attempts to construct another strong border between *ἔθνη* ethics and those of Christ-followers—a border that was plausibly more porous in practice (especially given his rebuke of how sexuality is being practiced elsewhere, most notably in Corinth).³⁷

If prior ethnic practices of sexuality needed to be discussed through such regulatory borders, it is quite plausible, then, that some *ἔθνη* in Rome did not fully abandon other ethnic practices that may have governed approaches to diet, gender, and/or behavior towards others, alongside these blended approaches to religious and/or sexual practices. While the issue of diet among Christ-followers is frequently considered in terms of Jewish difference from all other *ἔθνη* (for reasons discussed further below), the

³⁶ A homonational tactic, as we saw above, since Rome also considered its sexual ethics to be superior and contrasted them to the depravity that existed among its various conquered *ἔθνη*.

³⁷ Paul’s contrast of how Christ-followers should behave sexually as opposed to *ἔθνη* in 1 Thess is specifically related to the ambiguous advice “that each of you knows to acquire one’s own vessel in holiness and honor” (4:4), a statement that has generally vexed scholars attempting to determine its specific referent. See discussion in Hoke, “Peace and Security.” For the purposes here, the fact that the advice clearly pertains to sexual ethics matters more than what Paul means by “acquiring a vessel.”

divisions in Corinth over dining practices (1 Cor 11:20-22) suggest issues surrounding food consumption beyond the Jew-Gentile binary. While (as discussed above) these divisions are often considered as demonstrations of socio-economic difference, could it not *also* be plausible that the issue relates to differing approaches to dietary ethics or preferences that relate to the diversity in ethnic heritage? Such questions and examples from these other ἐκκλησίαι suggest that an assembly of participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds means that these Christ-followers, including those in Rome, were negotiating questions of ethics with these blending and blended perspectives in mind.

Questions of adopting Jewish practices (often called “Judaizing”) inform Paul’s ethical advice in Romans 14-15. His concern for this issue also arises in his polemical rebuke of Galatian Christ-followers who opted to be circumcised (also addressed more briefly in Phil 3:2-3), and it also appears in terms of dietary questions (related to *kashrut*) in 1 Cor 8 and 10:14-30. Along with questions of holiday/Sabbath observance, the ethical questions of circumcision and diet/*kashrut* are those most attested, at least judging from Paul’s letters as evidence, to have been concerns of first-century ἐκκλησίαι.³⁸ Even if some Christ-followers did not have any personal knowledge of or interaction with practicing Jews, these three Jewish practices had, to some degree, become representative of Jews in the Roman world. In the writings of Roman observers, these three practices attracted comment (usually that of ire and confusion) and appear to have been fairly well-known.³⁹ That said, Jewish ethics extend well beyond these three practices, and it is plausible that most wo/men would have been familiar with other aspects of Jewish

³⁸ In addition to the texts described above, see Romans 14-15, where Sabbath/holiday observance is discussed in vv.5-6, alongside questions of diet.

³⁹ See references and discussion in Erich S. Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 318-319.

ethics, to differing degrees, especially if they interacted with practicing Jews, either in the context of a synagogue, as neighbors, or fellow Christ-followers (e.g., Prisca).

Furthermore, it is plausible that some wo/men held biases and stereotypes about Jews and their practices. While some (at least in Galatia, Philippi, and Corinth) clearly adopted commonly-known Jewish practices, the fact that such adopted was a source of ethical tensions and debates in these *ἐκκλησία* (prompting Paul's input) means that others in these assemblies were not comfortable adopting them. It is plausible that such discomfort had roots in the ire that accompanied the stereotyping of Jews represented primarily by these practices in Roman discourse.⁴⁰ They may already have been prone to reject Jewish practices based on sensations that such adoption would signal their ethical and/or socio-political decline. However, these stereotypes do not have to lead to negative evaluations of Jewish (and other) ethics. If Rome's ethnic hierarchy held some ethical systems with greater esteem than others, it is equally plausible that some felt that appearing "more Jewish" (in ethical and ethnic terms) would signal a rise in status, even as it was a decline for others. By considering this assemblage of *ἔθνη* and approaches, a dynamic ethical conversation emerges that can account for debates around Jewish theological ethics while opening them to the broader context of ideas and reactions held in bodies of considerable ethnic and ethical diversities.

Given this ethnic diversity and differing degrees of familiarity and prejudice, when it comes to the adoption or rejection of specific practices, most wo/men's ethical perspectives, here vis-à-vis Jewish ethics, are again better represented as vectors. With

⁴⁰ See Gruen, 318-319. In this essay, he argues that "Judeophobia"—i.e. a fear or even hatred of Jews as an *ἔθνος*—was not apparent in this era, wherein Rome generally tolerated Jews as much as, and in some case much more than, any other *ἔθνη*. However, he admits these stereotypes existed and often created ire, which points to the limitations of this tolerance.

certain exceptions (notably circumcision for men), these practices could be temporarily adopted and abandoned by different bodies at different times, and their reasons for doing so could vary.⁴¹ As they considered and even “tried on” certain practices, some wo/men’s ideas shifted; others might have adopted some practices while rejecting (or, less polemically, simply choosing not to adopt) others. Some may have been ambivalent on these questions; they saw little harm in both perspectives (practice or rejection thereof) existing together in the *ἐκκλησία*. In all cases, their reasons developed, changed, or became more firm in and through conversations.

If, as I have been assuming, this group’s regular participants consisted largely (if not exclusively) of non-Jewish *ἔθνη*, then their *ἐκκλησία*-l views of Jewish ethics need to be considered as one piece of a wider conversation that represented more considerable ethnic diversity that would have affected disagreements and discoveries.⁴² Jewish practices—as the embodied ethics of a particular *ἔθνος*—existed *alongside other ethnic practices* embodied within Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*. These Jewish practices under scrutiny, for example, may have contradicted or made difficult the cultural practices or ethics of some *ἔθνη* while complementing those of others.⁴³ Within the scope of this wider ethnic plurality Jewish practices very likely represented only a portion of the stew of embodied

⁴¹ Indeed, if debates on these topics were heated, it seems quite probable that some might have attempted to follow the practices (in public or private) to see how the ethical arguments and ideas were experienced and affirmed within their own bodies. Ethics, in other words, seem different in theoretical discussions than when they are actually attempted to be practiced.

⁴² In other words, if not clear already, *ἔθνη*-as-Gentiles/non-Jews is still an extraordinary broad category as an ethnic distinction, and it represents a vast number of very different ethnicities across a wide geographix expanse. Given such a range, some of these *ἔθνη* would bear more (even close) similarity and has proximate ethical practice to Jews/Judeans.

⁴³ Though Paul’s exhortations to abandon ethnic ethics on theological grounds (i.e., move away from idols and other gods) may also imply full abandonment of these ethical systems, it seems improbable that every person from every *ἔθνη* abandoned these ethics in practices (likely including the worship of other gods...).

practices of Roman Christ-followers, and—therefore—these other embodied practices were also topics for discussions and debates about their theo-Christological ethics.⁴⁴ Certainly, the specific issues surrounding Jewish ethics remained important in Rome (perhaps especially in the discussion that followed hearing Romans 14-15), but emphasizing these specific differences to the exclusion of others risks missing the variety of ethical vectors that moved, shifted, and clashed in an assemblage of ἔθνη gathered in ongoing conversation.

Ethnicity mattered in the ἐκκλησία: Jewish alongside Greek, Egyptian, Phrygian, Dacian, Ethiopian, and even Roman. As a result of its importance, tensions were unavoidable produced. Considering that all of these various ἔθνη had been incorporated under Rome’s rule via some form of conquest, their approach to this variety of “ethnic ethics” would have been affected by Roman kyriarchy. As elaborated above, the empire valued different ἔθνη in hierarchal terms that were based in part on ethical distinctions; this fostered competition and displays of exceptionalism between various ἔθνη desiring upward mobility.⁴⁵ We saw in Tacitus and Philo the repetition of Roman stereotypes against particularly dangerous or depraved ἔθνη, like Germans and Egyptians. As these stereotypes circulated, they influenced ordinary Romans. Though Christ-followers from different ἔθνη participated together in the ἐκκλησία, it is also fairly plausible that they would, to varying degrees, have still been influenced by these various ethical stereotypes

⁴⁴ It is worth noting that, if Paul’s letters do hone in on Jewish ethics most lengthily, this is likely because of his own “expertise” and experience as a Jew on his specific vector within an assemblage of first-century Jewish theologies and ethics. Of course, the time spent on Judaism and its ethics is also partially due to the fact that Christ-followers adopts a theology that follows the God of Israel and of the Jews/Judeans, and therefore, to a fair degree, Jewish theology (broadly speaking).

⁴⁵ As seen above (and explained by Niehoff) with Philo’s presentation of Jews as an attempt to “jockey” for better socio-political standing under Rome’s Empire, especially under Claudian rule. Philo’s attempts were not exceptional among the various elite of Rome’s ἔθνη.

regarding other *ἔθνη* as they were considering what constituted acceptable ethical practices in their assembly.

What can this complexity reveal about specific ideas and vectors within Rome's *ἐκκλησία*-l ethics? For the debates around Jewish practices (as presumed by Paul in Romans 14-15), motivations for disagreements extend beyond those that are solely or primarily theo-Christological. People interacted and reacted differently to these practices based on their backgrounds and experiences. They may have adopted some Jewish practices, been ambivalent toward others, and/or rejected them for reasons based on their prior experiences or affective responses to new ideas. Additionally, their embodiments, ideas, and reactions would have shifted over time through changes their experiences and interactions in communal conversations.

Both Jewish practices and Roman virtues were situated in an *assemblage* of ethical values and cultural practices that participated and conversed in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*. Despite many specifics being lost, a variety of ethical ideas and practices would proliferate from from these probabilities. All of these ideas contributed to *ἐκκλησία*-l dynamics as they debated theo-Christological ethics.⁴⁶ With the presence of any new or different practice comes the existence of multiple reactions—positive, negative, and many in-between—that were always subject to change and refinement. Within this diverse, debating assemblage of *ἔθνη*, Christ-followers experimented, created, fixed, and/or cast aside innumerable ethical practices that were beginning to be embodied as parts of their simultaneously shifting theo-Christologies.

⁴⁶ It is always possible that some of these lost specifics were incorporated and changed and could be uncovered in their traces that remain in textual or material evidence, a task unfortunately beyond the scope of this particular reconstructive endeavor.

“Good” Sex?

Sexual ethics likewise beg to be considered in non-positional terms and, therefore, ones that are less fixed: vectors again. As sexual vectors in the *ἐκκλησία* proliferate along lines of theo-Christological ethics, a myriad of issues fall under their purview: practices, preferences, relationships, and dynamics of power and control. They bear a close and inescapable relationship with gender and gendered dynamics along complicated borderlines. Since Roman discourse commonly portrayed particularly “depraved” sexuality as rampant among *ἔθνη* (some more than others), experiences and perceptions of sexuality in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* cannot be severed from its participants’ upbringings and experiences as *ἔθνη*. “Ethnic ethics,” as can be seen in the ethical codes of Jews (as one of Rome’s *ἔθνη*), included sexual *mores*. Indeed, in other letters, Paul explicitly equates sexual deviance (loosely categorized as *πορνεία*) with (all) *ἔθνη*, who are clearly meant as a negative example (see 1 Cor 5:1; 1 Thess 4:5).⁴⁷

Evidence hints that many ancient bodies enjoyed sex—or, at least, they wanted to; and some of these bodies found pleasure in “unnatural” acts, positions, and preferences.⁴⁸ Indeed, by warning against the dangers of pursuing pleasure unrestrained, the elite Roman values of *ἐγκράτεια* (self-control) and *σωφροσύνη* (moderation) are based upon an unspoken admission that sexual pleasure *is* pleasing: deviant sexuality would not be tempting or alluring if not for its potential for uncontrolled and unmoderated pleasure that

⁴⁷ I discuss Paul’s use of *ἔθνη* as a negative example in 1 Thess 4:5 as another example of Pauline homonationalism in Hoke, “Peace and Security.”

⁴⁸ Yet we know some Roman enjoyed sex, because they are condemned for doing so; furthermore, graffiti in places like Pompeii attest to a more lived discourse of sexuality that includes reference to enjoying “unnatural” “excesses.” See Williams, 151-170, 291-301.

overtakes and consumes one's body.⁴⁹ Beyond the philosophies espoused in elite discourse, we have material evidence, most notably in the form of Pompeian graffiti, that depicts inhabitants of Rome frequently pursuing a variety of sexual exploits, and often enjoying doing so. Among the Pompeian graffiti includes *ubi me iuvat, asido* ("When I want to, I sit on it. [with an image of the phallus]"; located in between the entrances to two buildings) and *hic ego bis futui* ("I fucked here two times," located on a building facade accessible from a public street).⁵⁰ Especially since they do not identify the (grammatically male) speaker, these proclamations visibly admit to pursuing sexual pleasures, which can involve being penetrated, as an embrace of their desire for it (especially in the case of "when I want to").

While this Pompeian evidence of ordinary Romans is mostly from men, evidence from Egypt includes love spells that display women's attempts to attract, in sexualized terms, the attentions and desires of other women. As Brooten discusses, these spells are often formulaic and were most likely written by men for the women who commissioned them.⁵¹ The following attempts to bind the desire of one woman (Paitous) to the other (Nike): Ὀρίων Σαραποῦτος ποιήσον καὶ ἀνάγκασον Νίκην Ἀπολλωνοῦτος ἐρασθῆναι Παιτοῦτ[ος,] ἦν ἔτ[εκ]ε Τμεσιῶς ("Orion Sarapous, make and force Apollonous' Nike to

⁴⁹ Thus, overshadowing or including the impulses of the "rational" mind. On such warnings and how they support and comprise ethics of self-control and moderation see Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 65-76.

⁵⁰ Williams, 294-295; 428n.25; 429n.29. See further Williams, 151-170, 291-301. As evidence, the Pompeian graffiti is not without its limitations and biases, most notably our lack of any knowledge of its "authors," particularly in terms of class, gender, or ethnicity. It is presumed to be overwhelmingly male-written, given the particular perspective espoused. Even those which seem to come from a female voice (many coming from the brothel), are arguably written by men, especially since they tend to function to affirm a particular man's sexual prowess. For example, *Felix bene futuis* ("Felix, you fuck well," found in the brothel) presumably comes from the "voice" of a female prostitute, but it serves Felix's interests quite well, making it plausible he is actually the one who inscribed it there. Williams, 296-297.

⁵¹ Brooten, *Love between Women*, 96-105.

passionately desire Paitous, whom Tmesios bore”).⁵² The existence of such spells affirms that women desired women for sexual passion/pleasure as much as companionship (if not more so).

While it is plausible, as Brooten argues, that these spells hope to invoke a more longterm, loving attraction between the women involved, the other side of the tablet that bears the first spell specifies in a second spell that it only wants to bind Nike and her desires for a short-term period: ποίησον Νίκην Ἀ[πολ]λωνοῦτος ἐρασθῆναι Παντοῦτος ἦν ἔτεκεν Τμεσιῶς, ἐπὶ εἴς μῆνας (“Make Apollonous’ Nike passionately desire Pantous, whom Tmesios bore, for five months”).⁵³ This limited binding makes more plausible the notion that women pursued sexual pleasures with other women beyond the confines of a permanent relationship.⁵⁴

Alongside this wider evidence that attests to the enjoyment of sex in various forms in first-century society, we have traces that some Christ-followers also enjoyed sex, even that which was called deviant by the prevailing authorities. In particular, 1 Cor 5-7 consistently addresses the threat of πορνεία and its power to pollute the ἐκκλησία in Corinth. As Wire’s reconstructive method shows, Paul’s rhetoric in this letter is constructed as a response to what is happening on the ground in this ἐκκλησία, at least

⁵² Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 91-92. My translation of the Greek modifies Brooten’s slightly: most notably, I translate ἐρασθῆναι as “desire passionately” instead of using “love.” While “love” is the typical gloss for this verb, this English term has multiple meanings, extending beyond and often made distinct from sexual desire, and its lexical usage and definition clearly emphasize the desirous and passionate qualities of “love” that can differ from the meaning Brooten attributes to it within her argument. See “ἔπραμαι,” LSJ, 680. While it is plausible that Paitous intended this to attract Nike’s love in this way, it is equally plausible that she merely sought a more limited sexual attraction, as the other side of the tablet implies (see further in discussion below).

⁵³ Brooten, 91-92.

⁵⁴ *Contra* *ibid.*, 92-93, who does not fully deny this plausibility but prefers to suggest that Pantous may desire this as a “trial period” for the women before entering a longer relationship or that external factors would prevent their relationship to last any longer.

according to what he has heard via letter or hearsay.⁵⁵ If Paul exhorts *φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν* (“flee sexual immorality,” 1 Cor 6:18), this reaction, among others in these chapters, “may reveal that it is in vogue.”⁵⁶

That specific forms of what Paul deems *πορνεία* are being practiced by members of Corinth’s *ἐκκλησία* is confirmed in 5:1-6, where Paul explicitly identifies it in the instance of a man living with his father’s wife: *ὅλως ἀκούεται ἐν ὑμῖν πορνεία, καὶ τοιαύτη πορνεία ἣτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὥστε γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν* (“On the whole, sexual immorality is reported among you: such sexual immorality which is not even among the *ἔθνη*, to the extent that someone has his father’s woman.”) What is significant here is that, at least from what Paul has heard, enough of the wo/men in Corinth had accepted this situation that they had not already expelled or condemned those involved. Despite prevailing notions of *πορνεία* and despite the fact this this situation is, it appears, more heinous than any depravity seen, imagined, and thrust upon *ἔθνη* (by Paul and by Rome), the *ἐκκλησία* has not rejected this sexual situation.⁵⁷ It is plausible that they have even affirmed or embraced it under their theo-Christological slogan: *πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν* (“I am allowed to do anything,” 1 Cor 6:12).⁵⁸ Furthermore, while Paul may have selected the more extreme examples to discuss in detail, the chapter’s opening words make clear

⁵⁵ Wire, 1-11.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 72; she compares his reactions to a “No Fishing” sign, which “can signal where there is good fishing” (72).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 73-76, discusses this passage and raises issues concerning whether both members of this couple (the man and his father’s wife) were participants in the Corinthian *ἐκκλησία* or whether it may only be the man (since the directives appear to be meant in response to his presence).

⁵⁸ A more word-for-word translation would be “Everything is allowed for me,” but my translation better gets at how such a slogan—at least somewhat idiomatic—would be repeated in less stilted English. On such statements as slogans, see *ibid.*, 13-14, 75-76.

that *πορνεία* more generally exists in multiple manifestations among the *ἐκκλησία*'s participants.⁵⁹

In 1 Cor 7, Paul's tentative embrace of sex-within-marriage reflects an imposition of or appeal to return to Roman ideals of controlling passions, particularly through moderation. This further supports the plausibility that some wo/men in Corinth were pursuing passion unrestricted. If *κρεῖττον ἐστὶν γαμῆσαι ἢ πυροῦσθαι* ("It is better to marry than to burn," 1 Cor 7:9), Paul proposes it as the only appropriate channel for the Corinthian wo/men's desires, which have been excessive to the point of producing *πορνεία*.⁶⁰ These excessive desires potentially have been produced because some have been attempting to refrain from having sex, as 1 Cor 7's discussion of withholding sex in marriage could imply. However, this does not account the *ἐκκλησία*'s apparent acceptance and even embrace of participants who practice various forms of *πορνεία* discussed in 1 Cor 5-6, desires for which marriage is a suitable, albeit heteronormative, alternative when completely refraining from sexual pleasure proves impossible.

In terms of Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, which, to be sure, was not identical to Corinth, the fact that some other Christ-followers appear to have embraced a variety of embodiments of sexual ethics within the context of their emerging theo-Christologies, opens space to consider the similar plausibilities in the case of Rome's Christ-followers. Some participants in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* could have, in somewhat similar ways, explored a plethora of practices and approaches in relation to sexuality. Alongside vectors that envisioned and prioritized egalitarianism within the *ἐκκλησία* and society, it is plausible

⁵⁹ The adverb *ὅλως*, from the adjective *ὅλος* "whole, entire," is often used in such descriptive contexts as "on the whole" in the sense of "speaking generally." "*ὅλος*," LSJ, 1218.

⁶⁰ See Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 65-76.

that such ideas prompted movements, often slow, towards more egalitarian expressions of sexuality within some bodies. In terms of sex acts, such equality might take the form of seeking *mutual pleasure*, as opposed to assertions of dominance and focus on the (more powerful) “penetrator.”⁶¹ Regardless of its precise form, prioritizing pleasure can be oriented as a rather radical ethical perspective in the context of a culture that cautioned against “good sex” as lacking moderation and, therefore, debase and lowly.⁶² On a vector that emphasizes shared pleasures (which might also extend beyond sexuality), ethical “goodness” requires fewer mandates that force goodness to be noble or natural. “Good” sex pleases *all parties involved*, ideally.

Just as radical equality in theo-Christologies did not immediately produce a socio-political utopia, an ethical orientation toward practicing equality as mutual pleasure did not create some “queer” utopia where Christ-followers easily and often practiced perfectly pleasing sex with their partners. As before, actual embodied change would move much more slowly: sex is messy between individual bodies, and even more so when sexual experience (and shame) is intimately entwined with kyriarchal forces. When practiced by actual bodies, mutual-seeming sex acts can still retain their hierarchal nature, and acts that seem pleasing and/or mutual in theory may produce problems or awkwardness when practiced in real bodies. Pleasure is perspectival and produced in

⁶¹ For more on prioritizing mutual pleasure as an erotohistoriographical approach to Romans 13, see Hoke, “Unbinding Imperial Time.”

⁶² As stated above, “sexual” equality could also pertain to sex-as-gender, in which case the *ἐκκλησία* offered a space for women’s full and equal participation, as discussed in chapter 4 above. Further, as chapter 2 pointed out (as well as the discussion of sexual and gendered bodies in the history of ancient sexuality in chapter 1), there are porous lines between ancient gender and ancient sexuality, and both affected one another—along with issues of race. Thus, penetrative sexual acts and sexual agency are the purview of male, Roman bodies, while female, barbarian bodies are prone to penetration and/or excessive sexuality that is less “manly.”

relation. Its mutual experience takes time, patience, and experimentation that may be less “good” and never perfect. Recalling Sedgwick’s queer axiom: “People are different.”⁶³

In terms of some Christ-followers in Rome, it is plausible that several desired sexual pleasure (in various ways and forms) and at least a few connected such pleasure to their theo-Christologies. This may have prompted ethics of sexual equality instead of those that center on God’s pleasure as the “top.” In practice, this would have permitted some to pursue their sexual impulses more (though not entirely) freely or openly, especially if their praxes defied kyriarchy’s nature: women loving—or just loving fucking with—women, for instance.

Such prioritization of mutually-oriented pleasure does not require every participant to adopt or embrace sexual praxes within their lives. Even as the Corinthian ἐκκλησία appears to have had some participants who embraced a “subculture” of πορνεία in various forms, it appears that others had taken the ideal of sexual permissibility as license to refrain from sex entirely, even among some wo/men who were married (1 Cor 7:1-16.)⁶⁴ Although it seems there were debates between these different participants in terms of preferable approach, the evidence attests to the fact that both perspectives co-existed in the community. Such an “orientation” toward non-praxis could, for some, have been because sexual acts were *not* pleasurable, due to past experience or a more innate asexuality.⁶⁵ While general scholarly consensus has accepted the plausible option that those refraining from sexuality were expressing a form of asceticism (i.e., refraining from

⁶³ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 22.

⁶⁴ See Wire, 72-97.

⁶⁵ As in wider queer theory, more exploration could be given to asexuality and queerness in the first century, and “asceticism” in the ancient world seems to provide a good place for such inquiry, in a way that could see “ascetic practice” as an embodiment of sexuality related to asexual practice and preference. On wider theoretical issues, see Ela Przybylo and Danielle Cooper, “Asexual Resonances: Tracing a Queerly Asexual Archive” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 20 (2014): 297-318.

being overcome by any sort of pleasure: sexual, dietary, emotional, etc.), consideration could be given to the plausibility that those who refrained from sex pursued pleasure in other forms.⁶⁶ In other words, while some participants may have found in Christ an affirmation to embrace their sexual desires through expressions of mutual pleasure, others may have found permission to refuse to engage in the same activities because they did not provoke pleasures.

While some *ἐκκλησία*-bodies may have enjoyed such pleasurable pursuits, the sexual practices of Christ-followers were still limited and regulated by Rome and the affects of its kyriarchal assemblage. Even though Rome's legal regulation, enforcement, and propaganda around sexuality targeted and protected elite and citizen bodies (often exclusively), these ideologies grasped bodies across the socio-political plane, especially holding those with optimistic attachments to upward mobility.⁶⁷ Such impulses would have pushed back against a more mutual ethic of sexual expressions. Beyond this, visions, ideas, and actual practices of sexuality would have been freer for some more than others. As Puar argues in contemporary contexts, bodies are often regulated by "intimate control" that encompasses not only official scrutiny and policing but also a lack of privacy and access that is assumed in many ideals and arguments for freer pursuits of pleasure.⁶⁸ Though different in ancient contexts, a similar point can be made: spaces for

⁶⁶ In other words, the decision to not have sex is determined by preference/desire not from religious devotion (an assumption that incorrectly presumes that refraining from sex means quelling an innate desire [that for many is not always innate] and, therefore, the only reason to do stems from moral/religious conviction).

⁶⁷ As seen in the previous chapter with regard to Romans 13.

⁶⁸ I.e., an ethic of "anything is permissible behind closed doors" requires having doors to close. Certainly, Roman authorities were unlikely to sexually police those of lowest status (unless they were defiling elite bodies), especially considering these *ἄβνη* were already considered sexually immoral and "unnatural" by definition. However, the social, political, and economic factors that influenced and constrained less elite lives would have had a regulatory effect on sexual practice. Compare to the regulation of intimacy in Puar, 114-165 (discussed in chapter 2 above).

sexual praxis for bodies of lower status would often have been more public and less “intimate.” While such factors may have spurred some to pursue pleasures, whether more publicly or by those with access to “intimate” spaces, it likely also produced hesitations, resistance, and pushback.

These complicated risks and factors of embodied sexual ethics, therefore, bring vectors of more mutual and egalitarian-reaching sexual pleasure back into discussion alongside, with some tensions, other vectors moving in Rome’s ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage. Because of sexuality’s excessive significance, discussions of sexual ethics would have pulled bodies in strong and different ways. Many followers would have been attached to “Romanormativity,” unaware of its kyriarchal and imperial arrangements and affects.⁶⁹ This draw might be most apparent in those who stridently adhered to prevailing (“conservative”) sexual ethics and whose socio-politics perhaps leaned toward upholding kyriarchy more broadly. Furthermore, different ethnic upbringings would have engendered different experiences, ideas, and stigmata concerning sexual mores.

In addition to the indications that some participants in various ἐκκλησίαι (Corinth most notably) were pursuing so-called πορνεία that deviated from this “Romanormativity,” Paul’s letters imply that other participants have expressed discomfort with these pursuits, if not within the ἐκκλησία then beyond its walls. Paul has received the details of the situation described in 5:1, and it is fairly plausible that this is, in part, because some participants have raised complaints, as they appear to have with other issues Paul addresses in the letter. The same disagreements and complaints to Paul can be seen in his need to address marriage and more asexual preferences. Quite plausibly, there

⁶⁹ See also Inglehart, “Introduction,” 1-35.

was desire from some for a degree of kyriarchy when it came to sexual matters, which include questioning the extent of gender-based egalitarianism (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2-16).

Beyond Paul's letters, the evidence of lived sexual experience in Rome also attests to the ways that kyriarchy pulls bodies toward the Romanormative. Although graffiti attests that ordinary Roman had pleasing sex, the vast majority of the graffiti appears to come from various male perspectives. While much of the written graffiti exclaims pleasure, it is unidirectional: the penetrating male's pleasure is what matters. Meanwhile, the person penetrated is not considered: whether or not they too exclaimed pleasurable is unimportant. Furthermore, there is a significant amount of sexual graffiti that functions as slander: in proclaiming one's own pleasure, another is implied to be less capable. The writers position themselves in ways that presume their sexual topping implies a socio-political topping as well. Though graffiti affirms that some ordinary Roman men enjoyed sex, they simultaneously reaffirm the value of being an impenetrable penetrator.

Even among those bodies who broadly sensed equality's potentials, some would find limitations on issues of sexuality. Sexuality's excesses frequently produce sensations of disgust toward certain sexual thoughts or embodiments, especially when put into embodied practices.⁷⁰ Like sex itself, these discussions would have been messy and affected bodies differently. Though productive, tensions heightened as ideas swirled with embodied responses in and to praxis. Gathered within this complex, diverse *ἐκκλήσια*,

⁷⁰ See Ahmed, 82-100 (chapter 4, "The Performativity of Disgust.") Ahmed largely talks about the performance of disgust in the context of racial prejudice in contemporary society, but it applies equally to disgust around non-normative sexuality (which, as Puar shows is often combined with racialized—especially Muslim/terrorist bodies, to emphasize disgust). Such disgust was also produced by Rome elite discourse surrounding both sexuality and its *ἕθνη*; see also, Moore, "Vomitous Loathing and Visceral Disgust in Affect Theory and the Apocalypse of John," *Biblical Interpretation* 22 (2014): 503-528.

theo-Christological approaches to sexual ethics would have been unsettled and unsettling as bodies moved and shifted through communal conversations about following Christ. Ultimately, as they struggled together, they broached—but left ultimately unanswered—the question: *Can sex ever be “good”?*

Ethics in Assemblage

The preceding sections considered, as separable dimensions, some of the plausible ethical topics that participants broached in Rome’s ἐκκλησία. These considerations revealed some of the complexities that existed beyond various binary positions, including rebellion versus submission; Jew or Gentile; ascetic and libertine. If this ἐκκλησία-l assemblage in Rome existed in affective “in-between-ness,” extremes (or “poles”) were plausibly produced, voiced, and embodied. However, as evidence within other ἐκκλησῆσαι in addition to Jewish and Roman communities indicated, they did not exist alone and did not pull or permanently grasp bodies onto points. When produced in conversation, more extreme ideas are always moved by the diverse bodies who play with them and mix them together with others. Ultimately, in-between-ness draws and pulls bodies away from polar sides *and not vice-versa*. These pulls are mostly slow and imperceptible, as is the nature of affect and change.

Ultimately unrepresentable, in-between-ness is best represented as the movements that occur as ideas are expressed, questioned, and never fully fixed. Debates and discussions do not always (and perhaps only rarely and when necessary) end decisively. So, while some might have pushed for the ἐκκλησία to rebel against Rome, it is plausible that others asked different questions: what could τὸ ἀγαθόν (“goodness”) mean when following Christ? Or why should this term be upheld or embraced (by Paul and/or by

others)? Such in-between-ness might query who, within an egalitarian-oriented vision, makes decisions and then when, how, and why. These questions may have reminded some already-decided and decisive bodies that nothing is decided now, yet, or ever. Even those holding more decisive-seeming opinions likely changed them. Some who held firmer ideas on one topic may have been the same voices drawing ideas in-between on others. Bodies—all different and complex—shift and move. Only a rare few are consistently “extreme” or always “in-between.”

If *ἐκκλησία*-I ethics existed in the tension of pulls from assemblaged in-between-ness, how did these debates affect embodied practices? How was this gathering becoming an “ethical *ἐκκλησία*”? While nothing firm can (or should) be proffered, these bodies would have put these theo-Christological ethical ideas into practice within the *ἐκκλησία* (as we know they did in others) and quite plausibly beyond it. Some practices could have been performed in contradiction to others, creating or displaying the tensions and rifts that are inherent when bodies interact in community.⁷¹ Many may have temporarily “tried on” various practices related to ethical ideas, retaining some or abandoning them depending on their embodied effects. As Paul makes or implies negative evaluations of certain sexual practices, some practiced precisely these things and openly admitted to practicing them (and/or embraced those who did, as in Corinth) while others abstained and perhaps voiced criticism or judgment of such open depravity. As bodies diverged and expressed themselves in word and deed, some might have found permission or support for shifting their thoughts and practices in response.

⁷¹ Appearing in ways like the rifts and disagreements in Corinth or even Galatia, as discussed above.

Likewise, within the complexities of orientations toward Rome and its power, rule, and conquests, actual ethical practices may have differed from the hopes they held for change, especially as followers struggled with risks and rewards tied to their survival in kyriarchal waters. Some stronger voicers may have advocated ideas and practices within the *ἐκκλησία*'s safer space while only embodying them mutedly beyond it.⁷² Outside influences and experiences—persecution, other “rebels” or dissenters, friends, or possession of power—may have affected actual practices and the ideas held that were based upon them. Some may taken rebellious actions or positions in more public spaces (as did other rebels and dissenters in Rome) while others may have seemed more submissive while embodying a more subtle ethic of resistance. Meanwhile, others could have preferred to wait for change in submissive postures, hoping from praise from God and God’s appointed authorities, thereby finding support in the exhortations of Paul (along with others) to submit to Roman authority and align to its ethical hierarchies.

Likewise, as they responded to and embodied (or did not embody) Jewish teachings, it is plausible that outside factors persuaded and discouraged: Jewish friends, synagogue participation, neighbors expressing anti-Jewish sentiments (as can be seen among many Romans). Again, ideas and embodiments might differ: some may have attempted to robustly follow Jewish teachings (including diet, holidays, and circumcision) with the “zeal of a convert” (as seems to have happened in Galatians); others (like many Jews) might have striven to follow some Jewish ethics and found the practice more difficult.⁷³ It is plausible that many experimented with practices, changed approaches frequently, failed and succeeded, or were largely ambivalent. Attempts,

⁷² And even the *ἐκκλησία* was likely a safer space for some bodies more than others.

⁷³ Thus, most Jews acknowledged that they would err; see Stowers, 176-193.

experiments, and experiences of embodiment affected and changed plausible ideas and their ethical enactments: the evidence of difference and debates in these *ἐκκλησίαι* suggest fluctuation in bodies and practices.

All of these issues do not neatly separate: deciding an approach to Jewish teachings would affect one's position and perceptions vis-à-vis Rome. Likewise, sexual ethics and choices in Rome's system were always socio-political choices, and, of course, Jewish ethics also would influence a variety of sexual embodiments.⁷⁴ Regardless of the particular debate, bodies practice ethics in conversations that expressed different plausible suggestions and "firm" positions, all the while being drawn back into in-between spaces as practices shifted. As debates progressed and diverged, bodies would continue to raise and return to questions: what is "egalitarianism"? what do "submission" and "rebellion" look like? what is "goodness"? and who decides? Struggling together as they practiced and experimented with embodied ideas, these wo/men would have been constantly reminded of the unsettled nature of their oft-debated theo-Christological ethics.

And where is Paul as one among the many wo/men participating in Rome's *ἐκκλησία*? The ethical analysis of part III began by uncovering ways by which, when heard in Rome's imperial context, Paul's ethical exhortations (especially in Romans 13) work to present potentially "queer" Roman Christ-followers as "homonational" subjects. Paul's ethical suggestions at the end of his letter represent a few firmer ideas that

⁷⁴ Though largely more conservative in their sexual ethics, diversity can be seen among some of Second-Temple Judaism's major extant texts and authors, including Philo and Josephus. See a compendium of texts that address sexuality in William Loader, *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes toward Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011).

circulated among the many suggestions and practices held within Rome's *ἐκκλησία*, ideas which plausibly include those proliferated above. It seems plausible to say that participants tried on some of Paul's ideas, played around with and reformed some, and ignored others. As Paul's homonational ethics enter into a diverse, dynamic discussion, it is possible that some agreed or objected entirely. However, as seen in each ethical consideration above, full agreement or opposition limits the options to binary poles that seem unlikely to accurately capture every plausible response, whether voiced, thought, felt, or gestured. Perhaps most agreed with certain pieces of Paul's suggestions, dissented to a few, and sensed indecision, indifference, or confusion with others. Some may have found support for their own ethical exhortations while others were groaning, rolling their eyes, or hoping the letter was reaching its end. Ultimately, this plausible, though not entirely tangible, discussion de-centers Paul; his more "homonational" voice becomes one among many diverse ideas and bodies who were thinking, moving, speaking, and acting together, but not always in the same directions.

Ultimately, I am contending that Rome's *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, which contains all these different bodies, ideas, forces, reactions, movements, and plausibilities, participates in "queerness." However, an obvious question may still (appropriately) linger: how are these *ἐκκλησία*-l bodies "queer"—or where's the "homo" in *homonationalism*? Already, I have discussed how "Roman homonationalism" implies different sexual arrangements than those meant by the contemporary "homos" (i.e. gay, white, affluent men) of Puar's U.S. homonationalism. But both signal similar sexualized and racialized alignments with national/imperial politics and ethics that regulate

queernesses across times and spaces via kyriarchal forces. But does this similarity make bodies in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* "queer"? If so: which ones, and how?

For some bodies (ancient and modern), "queer" is an identity that can and is chosen. However, under kyriarchy and its socio-sexual-political grid(lock), some bodies might seem "queer" despite being unaware of or resistant to such an identification.

Depending on circumstances (but especially in contexts of non-citizen *ἔθνη* of lower or lowest statuses) sexuality could be a way of asserting bodily control, but it could also signal just how little control one has over one's body and socio-political situation.⁷⁵

Whether or not these bodies fully fit or embrace a "queer" designation or "lifestyle," they can all still embody *queerness*.⁷⁶ Indeed, this queerness emerges from the conversational tensions and in-between-ness of *ἐκκλησία*-l expressions of queer resistance and homonational alignments that partially framed the theo-Christological ethics of Roman Christ-followers. Moving, shifting, proliferating, and changing in this *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, the queerness of these first-century bodies can perhaps expose unseen norms that continue to regulate contemporary uses of "queer."

⁷⁵ And, for many, it was more than likely both.

⁷⁶ For such a development of queerness (as assemblage), as conceived by Puar, see sections on "Affective Queerness" and "Feminist and Queer Assemblages" in chapter 2 above.

CONCLUSION

“The futures are much closer to us than any pasts we might want to return to or revisit.”¹

When reading Romans—whether the focus is on its situation within Rome’s kyriarchal assemblage or an *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage of Christ-followers—it is impossible to deny a desire to revisit and return to first-century pasts. Would it not be fantastic to *ask* Paul of his authorial intent? Or to hear the actual discussions in Rome’s *ἐκκλησία* and see how they responded after receiving this epistle? Could we not see—even feel—how Rome’s kyriarchy affected these bodies? And how the experiences in an *ἐκκλησία* spurred new sensations and movements? Such fantasies optimistically attach biblical scholarship to ancient bodies and pasts, including this endeavor of queer subversion. As with any instance of optimism, these fantastic endeavors always risk cruelty, perhaps especially if they hope solely to uncover impossibly lost pasts and forget these much closer futures toward which Puar and affective queerness gaze. As this queer and feminist subversion of submission concludes, toward what more proximate futures can it gaze and hope to shift?

This subversive endeavor has been a story of two assemblages, one kyriarchal and the other *ἐκκλησία*-l. These two different-yet-connected assemblages have situated Paul’s Letter to the Romans into contexts out of which two ancient ways of hearing and reading the letter have been (re)constructed. Although, to preserve a coherent structure, they have been treated separately (with nods to their tensions and overlaps with one another), assemblages, even starkly different ones, are inseparable. They connect, slide, bump, collide, ooze, contract, exceed, and envelop in messy relations of affective in-

¹ Puar, xix.

between-ness. In order to fulfill its subversive aims, as this endeavor concludes, consideration must be given to the implications and effects these ways of reading have when put together.

First, however, the two strategies will need to be separated one final time so that some of the productions of these ideas and approaches can be identified and placed together in this assemblaged mixture. Therefore, this conclusion will proceed by first assessing the role of queer affective critique and its role in revealing Roman kyriarchy's affective influences on first-century society and culture, including Paul's epistle to Rome. Then, once again, attention will turn to the bodies of Christ-followers gathered in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* in order to probe the implications of reconstructing their dynamic conversations as an assemblage and the effects of an affective queerness that is based in and relies upon feminist historiography and theory. Finally, this endeavor will close by emphasizing how placing *together* these assemblages and their different ways of reading is essential to submission's subversion, and it draws out some implications that the crossings, tensions, and parallels of historiographies—biblical, Greco-Roman, queer, feminist, and affective—bring to bear on diverse presents and futures.

Kyriarchal Assemblages and Queer Affective Critiques

Queer affective critique, as a set of theoretical developments that expose normative and regulatory impulses that subtly motivate contemporary societies and politics, has provided the theoretical lens through which Paul's postures of faithful and ethical submission vis-à-vis Rome could be revealed. In the case of "faithful submission," the conquest-fueled nature of Roman *πίστις/fides* situated Pauline *πίστις* in Romans 1-5 (especially 3:21-31) within the context of the submission of *ἔθνη* who were incorporated

into Rome's empire under the pretense of mutual trust: submissive obedience to Rome's rule would result in upward mobility, i.e., increased socio-economic status and political influence. πίστις, when embodied in submissive and conquered ἔθνη in Rome generally and Paul's epistle specifically, proved to be an ancient iteration of Berlant's cruel optimism.

Submission in Paul's letter to the Romans, however, extends beyond this "faithful submission" to a kyriarchal God followed by an equally kyriarchal yet perfectly submissive Christ. By Romans 12-15 (and especially chapter 13), this submissive posture morphs into "ethical submission. Here, the ethical *mores* that governed Roman culture, which worked to enforce Rome's socio-sexual-political hierarchy, were shown to regulate bodies by implying promises of praise and reward for bodies or communities deemed to exceed sexualized and racialized expectations of ethical depravity (generally presumed of those of lower status). Such sexual exceptionalism, entwined within bodies whose diverse ethnicities and sexualities were already constrained by Roman kyriarchy and its propaganda, made possible a first-century example of Puar's "homonationalism." Setting the ethical end of Romans into such a context, this queer critique revealed how Paul's exhortations submitted to Roman *mores*—sexual and other—as a means of gaining "praise" from its kyriarchal authority: one (less exceptional) instance of ancient homonationalism.

These analyses demonstrate the ways that, though distinctly different from their contemporary origins, "cruel optimism" and "homonationalism" took form and affected first-century Roman bodies. Both existed and even flourished, thus emphasizing the continuity of kyriarchy as an assemblage wielded by power to grasp bodies into

submission, often without their full awareness. As such, despite the modernity of their typical theoretical purview, the terms of queer affective critique, along with their ensuing ideas and implications, can be equally and critically relevant to understanding ancient settings and the evidence that survived them. Ancient bodies, especially conquered *ἔθνη* and *peregrini* gathered in Rome, struggled to survive imperial kyriarchal conditions that promised nearly impossible possibilities of upward mobility. These mostly implicit promises echo the strategies adopted by contemporary “queer” bodies, who inhabit diverse racial, gender, sexual, economic, and political situations and may or may not resonate with such a label. Whether under Roman imperialism or late capitalism, these bodies are treading water in a kyriarchal assemblage that perpetuates fantasies of the good life while affectively enforcing exceptional conformity to particular racialized and sexualized norms. Equally diverse and distinct when situated solely within their particular temporal moment, these bodies—from first and twenty-first centuries and anything before, after, and in-between—can exist differently while bearing similarities, resonances, and continuities, often rooted in struggle.

Since these readings have engaged in *queer* affective critique, sexuality has not been and cannot be ignored, even as these critical movements work to reduce the draws of its excessive significance. In its ancient contexts, sexuality has been treated as one significant piece of a socio-sexual-political hierarchy that enforced and sustained Rome’s kyriarchy: sexual norms conformed to a construction of “nature” that reified Romanormativity. Elite Roman-citizen men were on “top” in any sense of the word, and all others submitted “naturally” in proper positions under them. Any movement to overturn or go against natural normativity was castigated, often violently, for defying

nature. Though terms, perceptions, and permissions around sexuality have shifted, the norms that regulate current sexual arrangements are likewise tied to issues of status/class, race/ethnicity, gender, and politics. Sexual acts then and now—whether called “queer,” “non-normative,” or *παρὰ φύσιν* (“against nature”)—almost always carry uneven socio-political penalties. This fact calls attention to critical continuities: “sexual acts” have always been and continue to be “burdened with an excess of significance.”²

As an assemblage that morphs and shifts as power and domination changes hands and adapts to changes in bodies, times, spaces, cultures, and technologies, kyriarchy creates, continues, and thrives through these excesses. Though queer critique’s exposure of sexual regulation and norms does critical work for projects seeking socio-political changes, as long as sexuality is treated in isolation as a requisite focus or privileged object, its excess remains a subtle, often unavoidable, draw back toward assemblaged kyriarchal power. Queer affect continues this still necessary critique of regulatory sexualities, but it also carries queer theory’s intersectional impulses by probing the imperceptible forces that compel, repel, and move in-between bodies.

The vectors of queer affect that Puar and Berlant elaborate are especially capable of reaching into ancient and biblical texts and contexts. But the ancient affects that they conjure (and perhaps momentarily “revisit”) further shift and develop these vectors and hone the force of queer affective critique. They expose how these distant pasts and their textual remnants continue to affect the present in their ongoing placements of bodies under God. Our presents and our futures are driven by near and distant pasts, and all are shaped by kyriarchy and its assemblage, an assemblage whose force has been molded by

² To restate, emphatically, Rubin’s assertion in “Thinking Sex,” 149.

Roman rule, Paul's letters, and the interpretations, theologies, and politics affected by them. Even if these pasts cannot (and even should not) be returned to, ignoring their perpetual affective effects allows the continuation of the kyriarchal assemblage that held first-century bodies under Rome's imperial rule, has held countless other bodies in its shifting but persistent grasps, and continues to captivate contemporary, "queer" bodies.

Ancient ἐκκλησία-l Assemblages

In contrast to Paul's traditional monvocality, which exacerbates effects of kyriarchal assemblages, the ideas he expresses in this letter—which do contain visions of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ("God's justice") and potentials for change even as they align with Rome's kyriarchy—have been shown to simultaneously participate in an ἐκκλησία-l assemblage. Following scholars who decenter the "heroic Paul" and consider him as one voice among many in an ἐκκλησία of wo/men, the ideas and ideologies of submission uncovered in Pauline perspectives participated in a conversation among the diverse bodies and ideas gathered in Rome's ἐκκλησία. In the proliferations of these impulses, discussions, and debates, a plurality of plausibilities emerged. Sometimes they clashed, competed, and contradicted; sometimes they complemented and contributed. Almost always, they interacted in all of these ways (and more) concurrently.

As these ideas were reconstructed and proliferated, common themes became apparent and often persisted through different ideas and topics under consideration. Egalitarianism, in particular on that includes God, represents a consistent theme that contrasted with Roman and Pauline ideologies of submission and their kyriarchal implications. To be equal with God, τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεοῦ, as the hymn of Phil 2:6 declares Jesus was, permits plausible interpretations along vectors that can conceive divine power

(and the *δικαιοσύνη* it promises) in a variety of socio-political terms. One idea this vector produced was a God who shares power as exemplified in Jesus, the Christ, whose death for treason to Rome therefore demonstrated the high and painful risks of defying kyriarchal power *and* the benefit of living towards the promise of shared power as God's equal—even if the rewards of this hopeful vision for *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* remain unrealized. To reiterate the Berlantian metaphor: Jesus' death helps prove this risk is no worse than Rome's rut. Such riskier theo-Christological impulses may have affected actions of those who held them, as they sought ethics that were willing to take risks (in varying degrees) to partially embody egalitarian impulses: mutual pleasure, socio-political movements, dynamic participation, a more democratic *ἐκκλησία*. These ideas—along a vector that spans infinite plausibilities—orient a system of thoughts in different directions, just as other theo-Christologies, which set up God as an emperor and Christ as a *κύριος*, reflected or reinforced pre-existing socio-political relations of submission that otherwise oriented theo-Christological ethics.

If these egalitarian impulses seem utopian, they are. Their shimmers, on vectors that were always moving, represent a historical reality that always anticipates a changed future: egalitarian impulses existed, but never in fully realized form.³ Change is slow and often imperceptible; as shown above, kyriarchal assemblages have a tight and tangled hold on bodies, communities, societies, and world. As *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblages form, overlap, and ooze within and through these kyriarchal ones, both pull upon and change the other. Kyriarchy constantly reasserts its holds, drawing bodies back into its sway, perhaps especially those most vulnerable. In particular, kyriarchy structures systems of

³ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 369. Johnson-DeBaufre, “Dreaming the Common Good/s.”

risks and rewards with promise-threats that are just great enough to encourage bodies to keep treading. If embodying egalitarianism often requires risk before reaching reward, certain bodies (often of lowest status) risk more devastating consequences when they fail.⁴ Even outside such promise-threats, the intensity of kyriarchy's affective forces often exert most strongly when bodies move toward change too quickly. Kyriarchy and its language creep back, for instance within hopes of overturning oppression with a kyriarchal Christ and imperial God. Though affective (and effective) change moves quite slowly—with, therefore, necessarily frustrated sensations—these slower and less perceptible changes orient bodies to new and, ideally, non-kyriarchal forms of *δικαιοσύνη* that can truly embody radical equality.

Bodies in Rome's *ἐκκλησία* were diverse, in terms of not only their socio-political status but also their genders, sexual preferences, and ethnicities (and all of the interrelations in-between). In particular, the different perspectives of conquered *ἔθνη/peregrini* living in Rome were diverse both within a particular *ἔθνος* and especially so within an assembly of many *ἔθνη*.⁵ These *ἔθνη* were addressed specifically by Paul's letter and almost certainly comprised the majority these gathered Christ-followers. These perspectives, among others, affected ideas, especially those related to theology, Christology, ethics, sex, and the *ἐκκλησία*'s relation to Jews and Judaism. Its ethnic diversity contributed to the differences in ideas proliferated in their ongoing discussions,

⁴ Which, given the slowness of change, a degree of failure is inevitable. Success and failure are always, of course, perspectival. Of course, one could argue lowest class bodies already have least to lose, as opposed to those who could "fall further." This is true and may have influenced some bodies for precisely these reasons (a fact I do not deny), but (as we have seen) the Roman system of punishment built in more leniency to protect those of greater status (especially its own native citizens).

⁵ As hinted at above, ancient race/ethnicity could also be thought of in terms of assemblage, especially Jewish "συναγωγ-al assemblages" with respect to the *ἐκκλησία* and the formation of Christianity.

and (as Puar insists) its contribution cannot be cleaved from the so-called “queerness” of the ἐκκλησία as an assemblage.

Since assemblages are fleeting and impermanent by nature, such discussion is inherently difficult to depict, at least with any so-called historical “certainty,” as it resists reconstructive effort. Paul’s epistolary voice simultaneously aids and limits this effort. Without the evidence of his letter(s), we would have quite scant basis for reconstructing ethical ideas and topics that may have been on the minds of Roman Christ-followers. However, this beneficial evidence contains costs because it automatically structures. The ideas proffered here, though different, all find their basis in Paul’s letter; their order follows his; and these proliferated impulses largely respond to his expressions. It is plausible that their interruptions were longer: reading the letter could have taken hours, days, even weeks. Of course, responses—voiced, gestured, thought, and sensed—were already proliferating prior to the epistle’s delivery and continued well after its final ἀμήν. While this admission exposes the limits of this particular reconstruction, it retains space for ongoing and infinite proliferations within ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage and its in-between dynamics.

Ultimately, the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage produced in the first-century city of Rome, which overlaps as a part of a wider first-century ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage, *conversed*. The de-centering move “beyond the heroic Paul” does not assert a “better” position; its import does not come from revealing or asserting any idea or even ideas that represent the historical ἐκκλησία. The crucial emphasis, the historical “fact” is the discussion: it is the multiple and multiplying debates and dialogues that we know historically happened, not their content or meanings thereof. With optimisms that were more and less cruel, these

conversations concurrently moved toward kyriarchy and equality, rebellion and submission, natural and unnatural ideas voiced by Jews, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans, and everything and anything in-between.

This ἐκκλησία, therefore, embodied *queerness*, it contains a proliferating variety of queer bodies. Some of these bodies openly practiced “unnatural” sex in ways that might be akin to contemporary “homosexuals” or “queers.” Others were queer by birth or status, in ways that were as sexual as they were gendered, classed, or racial/ethnic. Queerness, as its own messy assemblage, draws diverse bodies in different ways at different times, and it fuses with, repels, and runs through ἐκκλησία-1 assemblages in myriad ways.⁶ Ἐκκλησία-1 queernesses proliferated visions and ideas that countered and moved away from kyriarchy’s assemblage, even as they also retained languages, postures, and ideologies of submission within them. Through dynamic discussions, the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage of Rome (and beyond) slowly sensed potentials for change as their ideas moved and proliferated (and, indeed, continue to do so).

Queerness, Affective Historiography, and the Relevance of Romans

Romans matter(s). Which Romans do I mean? The duality of verbal tense names the ambiguity of meaning in the designation “Romans.” In shorthand, it can refer to Paul’s epistle, but it also refers to bodies as inhabitants—even then: inhabitants of where (and when)? Any body within the city walls of Rome? Imperially-recognized citizens? Any inhabitant of the territories under Roman imperial rule? Romans before, during, or after the first century? The meanings multiply. In the case of my assertion, the answer to

⁶ It also does so with kyriarchal assemblages, producing ideas of both queer oppressions and resistances within its contexts and histories.

the question is “yes.” All of them matter, and Romans of the first century, in their multiplicity and their historical assemblages, affect contemporary bodies and queernesses.

This subversion of Romans has almost exclusively focused on first-century bodies and the assemblages that moved, held, and gathered them; however, assemblages cannot be contained, certainly not within a single historical moment or period. We can speak of Christ-followers in Rome as their own *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, one that overlapped, clashed, and fused with other “Roman” *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblages, all of which influence new bodies gathering together to follow Christ—eventually crystallizing into “Christianity”—in new and constantly changing *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblages. Like Romans, *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage contains a singular and plural meaning: the conglomerations of bodies, impulses, forces, responses, and sensations that exist across infinite locations and spaces *and* those specified by a specific period and/or locale. This assemblage affects contemporary society—as much as contemporary theories and language have helped uncover ideas and debates held within the historical bodies who gathered in an *ἐκκλησία* in the city of Rome. The issues, theo-Christological, ethical, and others, that fueled *ἐκκλησία*-l discussions were always left open for debate; though the specific questions and perspectives (or at least their phrasing) have shifted, nothing has been decided. Continuing slowly over time, these debates and discussions moved *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage into contemporary society. Biblical studies and theology, the academy, and society must attend to the affect of *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage in order to convey history with better accuracy and move toward change.

This attention is urgently required because, if this subversion has demonstrated the importance and ongoing affective effects of ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage, it did so while admitting kyriarchy's force, the pull its assemblage, its power to draw back. If the ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage uncovered here is singular and plural across time and space, then so is the kyriarchal assemblage that pulled Paul and every body gathered in Rome's ἐκκλησία back under its submissive sway. Kyriarchy's assemblage has benefitted and continues to benefit from impulses to heroicize Paul. We have seen how Paul's rhetoric aligns (even if unintentionally) with cruel optimisms and homonationalisms made possible within the kyriarchal assemblage of Rome's empire. Heroic Pauline monovocality perpetuates these alignments that adapt into modern formulations, even when Paul is said or seen to oppose them. Considering the countless ways that biblical interpretations—especially of a heroic Paul—have not only perpetuated but also given power to kyriarchal assemblage throughout history and into the present moments and likely futures, the contributions of this ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage are vital.

The plausible-yet-imperfect reconstructions of Rome's ἐκκλησία-1 assemblage show how the most accurate historiography must be affective and, therefore, always proliferating and never perfect in its professed accuracy. Historical accuracy is not found in nailing down exact details of theological ideas or creeds, ethical dictums and behaviors, in first-century Rome—historical accuracy must admit that the ἐκκλησία was (and is) *still* forming and therefore messy. These probabilities become factual not by their content but by their inclusion and prioritization of a greater number and diversity of voices whose existence *was* and is verifiable. The ideas of first-century Christ-followers changed by the second as their bodies moved in this swirling mixture of theo-

Christological diversity. Admitting this ultimate imperfection of motion and affective uncapturability, any reconstruction of *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage and its dynamics that increases the plausible contents of their movements and debates is “historical.” And every new proliferation—wild and tame, small and great, philological and ideological—contributes to history and moves it toward (but never alone achieves) perfect accuracy.

The task of reconstructive proliferation is not limited to those who identify as “historians,” especially in the sense of those those able to do research to affirm the plausibility of their suggestions. Assemblages are neither spatially nor temporally restricted; they encompass a wide *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage that conversed and converses beyond Rome’s city walls—into Roman territories, other locales and epochs. That assemblage grows, expands, shifts, and always moves through history and into today. Every idea contributes to a discussion in an assemblage: it moves bodies, drawing some along its vector while repelling and clashing with others. Bodies take up ideas, develop them, move them and sometimes abandon them. But every and any body, voice, and perspective affects *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage. In these movements, clashes, abandonments, and discussion, *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage makes spaces, often messily and not always easily, for new bodies, ideas, and change. Slowly, *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblages makes possible the impossible.

Throughout this dynamic but slowly moving change, *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage embodies queerness. Queerness, as its own complex assemblage, makes possible, among many others, the plausibilities of Rome’s *ἐκκλησία*-l discussions reconstructed here. As its own changing but always-present assemblage, queerness provides lenses that help modern bodies see and understand the myriad ways that ancient bodies interacted

similarly-yet-differently from contemporary embodiments of queerness in its vast and proliferating diversity. Queerness, therefore, provides new perspectives on the ideas and movements of first-century bodies and helps contemporary bodies to encounter them in the contexts of their ancient affective realities.

However, *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage and its ancient roots also transform how we experience and embody queerness in contemporary settings. The queernesses of these first-century bodies and their collective conversations counter the kyriarchal assemblage that has been holding bodies in its draws since long before its Roman imperial formulations. Still treading water, we, as contemporary bodies, urgently seek an escape from kyriarchy's grasps and hope for some radical changes such as those expressed in visions of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ*. Without the insights proliferating from *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage, we leave Romans to trap us in postures of cruel *πίστις*, submissively trusting some source from above to prompt the change that can rescue us before we finally drown.

While the *ἐκκλησία* who received Paul's letter was composed of Christ-followers, the affect of *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage is not restricted to those who follow Christ (nor does its positive change require it). To speak of the epistle to the Romans necessarily involves the ancient and contemporary *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage it reveals, which—like queerness— affects diverse ideas and even resistant bodies.⁷ However, *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage's oozy extension beyond Christ-followers shows how it is *not* the only assemblage that is moving toward change and radical equality. Already we have seen how it overlaps with *συναγωγ*-al assemblages and queerness-as-assemblage, but it can never and should never

⁷ Just as the kyriarchal assemblage of Christian empire has affected—often negatively—the bodies of those who do not identify as Christ-followers.

encompass them. Impulses toward change, justice, or egalitarianism did not originate in the ἐκκλησία or even in the first century, but these impulses were sensed by these bodies and moved them in diverse directions. Therefore, like Paul’s voice within it, ἐκκλησία-l assemblage is *one among (infinite) many* moving slowly and never simply toward change.

This promise of change inspires continued work, sometimes risky, in order for its hopeful optimism to avoid cruelty. It requires more proliferations, more ideas, and more diversity. As these proliferations move ἐκκλησία-l assemblage, the change it prompts may involve sensations of loss, especially of the optimistically held ideas of “faithful” Christ-followers. When we remove the “ethical” or the “faithful” foundations that seem essential to “Christianity,” one experience of risk can be such loss: that there will be no “core”, no “center” nothing to perpetuate it. Perhaps some of this loss is necessary, after all, things may need to be lost to make space for new and/or found ideas. The risk of loss may be better than the present rut.

Already, as this subversion has risked shedding some of these foundational ideas, it has found one new, if less stable, “center” in ἐκκλησία-l assemblage. Indeed, when certain core tenets lose their grip we find that following Jesus has not lost its core, even though that core has lost the tangibility of stable definition. Instead, we find that its core has *always been* an ἐκκλησία, an assemblage of wo/men embodying queerness while following, sharing, debating, screaming, clashing, moving, and changing.

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