All of You are One:  
Paul and the Cohesion of Identity in Galatia

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ABSTRACT

The point of my thesis All of You are One: Paul and the Cohesion of Identity in Galatia is threefold. First, I attempt to reconstruct both Jewish and Galatian historical context before and at the time Paul was writing. In doing so, I place them both as marginalized communities under Roman rule, both in equal danger of being subsumed by Roman culture and religious custom completely.

In light of this context, I then place Paul within it as an individual raised as a Jew but intending to spread his own personal message as a self-defining member of a new community of his own creation. He calls himself an 'Israelite,' bringing to mind the original descendants of Abraham—a deliberate comparison. Paul uses this term to invoke this ideal, but also to use it to redefine his own religious and social category.

The term 'Israelite' is particularly relevant considering the emphasis Paul puts on biblical quotes from Genesis and Leviticus. He draws these quotes from his roots and reinterprets them for his new audience, allowing them to become a part of this newly-defined community that is a merging of Paul's Jewish and his audience's Galatian experiences into a new group that includes all who believe and rejects cultural distinctions. This group, in doing so, also gives them a workable alternative to allowing their cultures to be consumed by Rome by casting off their old culture and accepting instead Paul's new conception of theology—in rejecting previous ritual and distinction.
and instead embracing Paul's lack of distraction in the physical, thereby rendering inconsequential any physical acts of ritual Rome could potentially force upon them as conquered groups.

This message, while problematic in its destruction of cultural heritage, was a solution to the conflicts at the time, and was a sympathetic and unifying message that can carry over into today. Paul was writing to marginalized and oppressed groups, theologizing for their spiritual freedom from their oppressors. This message of liberation from an individual so historically consistently quoted to keep the marginalized from liberation is empowering to readers today, as it was empowering for readers at the time of its writing.
INTRODUCTION

In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, he uses a series of biblical quotes to support a theological shift to include the community of Galatia in his larger and originally Jewish idea of religious community. He uses scripture with the intent to draw on his own religious and cultural experience, which he conflates with the experiences of the Galatians as cultural groups subsumed by Roman rule. He uses this cultural touchstone of Roman oppression to build a new community, to which he offers his alternative conceptualization of the bible and of their collective religious experience as an escape from Roman cultural appropriation. Therefore, Paul's message is ultimately liberating to the oppressed and disenfranchised, which is a message that carries over into today. Paul's letter to the Galatians was arguably the most influential letter that Paul wrote, both within the Church and without it. It has also "played a formative and often lethal role with regard to dominant constructions of self and other, of identity and opposite, of ally and enemy, throughout Western civilization and war making" (Kahl 2010). Paul is a deeply complicated figure in both Christian and larger Western consciousness—one who has often been used to reinforce negative binary opposites instead of to promote unity. "Women and slaves, in particular, have often been told in the name of Paul to submit to their masters and to know their place in the order of things. It is Paul of Tarsus, rather than Jesus of Nazareth, who is most often quoted to confirm the political status
quo and to silence voices for social change as faith-less and dogmatically incorrect” (Kahl 2010). However, these are stances taken not incorrectly, but certainly with different interpretive sensibilities by individuals generally attempting to make a point about Paul’s impact or potential impact on thought today, in the present. These interpretations are less focused on the historical--on piecing together Paul’s actual intent in his writing and more intent on what they see as the interpreted message of Paul’s works.

Historically-focused scholars, however, have made the case that neither the interpretation that Paul was writing to be expressly egalitarian nor the interpretation that paints him as expressly intolerant is exactly correct. It is tempting to assume one or the other, but the main argument that scholars have against these interpretations is the lack of concrete evidence that Paul’s writings were focused clearly one way or the other (Hogan 2008). Paul wrote very carefully to evoke some of the most basic and clear distinctions between individuals--“Jew or Greek,” a racial/cultural divide; “slave or free,” an economic and social divide; and “male and female,” a sexual and gendered divide. But his point is not that these distinctions are functionally meaningless, but that they have been relativized by Paul to make them mean something different. There is little evidence that Paul intended this shift in distinction to be a total immediate cultural breakdown of these categories, but rather that these differentiations, which could be previously thought to indicate relative worth or a sort of privileged
status before God, now lacked that significance spiritually, even though social realities still enforced these divides in practice (Dunn 1998). The negative impact that this letter has had on binary construction and on social justice and change is recognizable, and demands the question, fundamentally, “is there a new way to read and hear Paul as we have not read or heard him before?” (Kahl 2010) This new re-interpretation of Paul is in order, to turn scripture against tradition again and re-invent what Paul means against the widely accepted normative reading. A critical re-imagining of the text is what this thesis has proposed to do, to recall the 'historical' Galatians and Judean communities and the 'historical' Paul and uncover an alternative meaning of Paul that never really grew within the dominant line of Pauline interpretation, particularly after Constantine, who set in motion a history that would convert the Roman Empire to Christianity, and in turn conform Christianity to the ideas of empire (Kahl 2010).

It is, partly, this new reading of Paul that I intend to express in this thesis. To be able to understand and reinterpret Paul, one must first understand his background and the background of the group to which he belonged at the time: a diasporic and quickly-changing Judean community, for which the destruction by and ultimate integration into Rome was all but imminent. It was in this climate Paul had his epiphany and spread his message of a new kind of community, one that could not be defeated by Rome, and he found a particularly receptive audience in Galatia for this
message due to their own cultural context. It is contested, partly due to a lack of linguistic clarity, exactly to which group Paul was writing his Letter to the Galatians, but it is fairly conclusive, as I will show, that it is to a diasporic Gallic community, probably in Asia Minor, that is also under imminent threat of being completely absorbed by Rome. It is this conflation of experiences and ideas that leads Paul to write the letter that he does—but he does not do so as a 'Christian,' but as an Israelite, using quotes from the Septuagint to construct his case for the inclusion of the Galatians as his spiritual brothers and sisters in this new religious and social order that he is attempting to construct as an alternative to normative Roman rule.

To do this, the secondary texts I ended up drawing on most heavily for concepts were Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations by Martin Goodman, A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity by Daniel Boyarin, and Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished, by Brigitte Kahl. Goodman's text is a very richly-detailed book about the events leading up to the Jewish rebellion against Rome. Goodman's main idea in writing his book is to trace the conflict between the Romans and the Jews for the points in history when the bloody ending between the Jews and the Romans could have been avoided. This is not the main thrust of my paper, but I use a car or two from his logic train do indicate parts of the conflict between the Jews and the Romans for my own purposes. Boyarin's book was very useful for expounding on Paul's rhetoric
and his theoretical ideas, and expanding them into usefulness for today, but
Paul ascribes more heavily to the idea of Paul in a Roman/Hellenized contest,
where a large section of my paper is dedicated to the concept that Paul was,
first and foremost, a member of the Jewish community, before he broke
away from it to create his own unique theological interpretation. And,
finally, Kahl, the book that was the lynchpin of this thesis--many of my
points are the same as hers, but she goes about getting to them in a very
different way. While Kahl is more focused on things like iconography and art
history to compare Jewish and Galatian experience, spend less time on
historical context than she does and instead focus very finely on Paul and an
extrapolation of quotes directly from his letter to the Galatians, to make a
very similar point.

There is also an issue of vocabulary--Paul is creating new terms for
things, or reappropriating old ones, and it is not always immediately obvious
which terms mean what. Therefore, for clarity's sake, I will state here;
when this thesis is referring to the 'bible,' the text in question is the
Septuagint--the Greek translation of the first seven books of the Hebrew
Bible that would have been the text Paul had on hand and from which Paul
would have learned since the time of his childhood. I explain, later and at
length, the meanings of the different words for the Galatians, but that is
mostly an issue of linguistic context--the vocabulary for the different Jewish
communities, however, are a bit less clear. When the word Judean is used, it
is to indicate individuals who are still living in Judaea at the time of Paul's writing. The word Jew is indicative of the group that formed the roots of what was beginning to be normative Judaism at the time—a group of which Paul formerly considered himself a part. And finally, the term Israelite, which Paul reappropriates very carefully from the original descendants of Abraham to use as the term for the new cultural and spiritual community that he is attempting to construct here.

**JUDEANS**

From the moment Pompey took over Judea in 63 BCE, relations with the Romans were contentious. Tensions had been high in Jerusalem for some time, but after Herod the Great's death in 4 BCE and the end of his iron rule (which kept Rome from intervening directly in political affairs in Jerusalem), things rapidly began to fall apart (Goodman 2008). Roman soldiers marched on Jerusalem to restore order. Violence, crime and rioting grew worse, and a series of cultural differences and perceived insults drew tensions higher in Jerusalem. Jews were, while clearly not the lowest of the low of Roman society, were considered problematic subjects as best, and there was a great deal of Roman disrespect for Jewish culture in Jerusalem that infuriated its inhabitants (Goodman 2008). There are several instances described in histories of deliberate desecration of the Temple itself, fighting
on the Temple grounds, stealing from the Temple treasuries and, in one instance, the insistence that an emperor's statue be placed in the Temple to worship that were incredible insults to the Jews at the time. Concurrently, there were huge amounts of internal upheaval and unrest in the Roman power structure, Jerusalem lacked any sort of central authority. Though all of the violence and insurrection up until around 60 CE (which is the latest date that Paul's Letter to the Galatians is said to be written) is caused by specific incidents, there is a certain inevitability to each conflict and each overwhelming show of Roman force as they marched troops in from Syria repeatedly to quell insurrection.

However, Paul was not in Jerusalem at this time. He was, instead, an individual of Judean descent in diaspora, traveling and spreading his message. This would not, however, likely have changed how he felt about Roman treatment of the cultural community of his roots. The fact that he was a Judean in diaspora would not have changed Roman attitudes towards him either. Rome treated Judeans and Jews as a cohesive—and explicitly non-Roman—group, regardless of where they were living or traveling. Despite Paul's cultural roots, however, he self-defined slightly differently than many of what Rome would have considered his clear community members.
PAUL

Acts 22:2 describes Paul as “a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law.” However, I am far more inclined to take Paul’s own word for his cultural context and allow him to self-define—his definition ends up being so unique that it is difficult to trust any other source. There are two passages that indicate clearly how Paul placed himself in the cultural structure at the time. He refers to himself in Romans as “an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom. 11:1), and in Philippians as “a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5). Never once does he mention the word “Jew” in these definitions of self. He is, however, unmistakably of Judean descent—he is an ‘Israelite,’ and a follower of what was accepted as the Jewish law.

Daniel Boyarin maintains that Paul is an important Jewish thinker in his own right. Paul “lived and died convinced that he was a Jew living out Judaism” (Boyarin 1994). Paul’s interpretation of religion, therefore, was one option that Jews could take during the first century while still considering themselves Jewish. Boyarin reads Paul as a Jew who is also a cultural critic, and looks at ways in which his critique is important to fellow Jews as well as to members of other faith communities. However, Paul uses “Israelite,” to describe himself for a variety of reasons. ‘Jew’ is the term
used for one who was a member of what passed for the 'normative' Jewish community at the time, which was being run out of Jerusalem by the Temple, of which Paul considered himself a member only nominally. 'Judean' was a term for someone who lived in Judea, which Paul no longer did. But 'Israelite' had neither of those connotations—instead, it harkened back to the original constructions of what was then the Jewish religion, and evoked conceptualizations of the original tribes of Israel.

Paul is not, however, making a shift back—he is instead forging something new in the community he is attempting to create. He draws from rhetoric presented in the earliest books of the Bible and on his own experience to attempt to move forward, forging a new identity and a new community out of the traditions of his past studies and his own personal experiences and beliefs.

However, through his epiphany as described in Acts, Paul is moved to include other people in his spiritual community. It is not, in his interpretation, the same spiritual community as the 'Jews'--instead, Paul is attempting to include more individuals in his own self-defined community of the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham. As an individual who, in describing his own education, states "I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14), Paul both references his roots in Judaism despite the fact that he has broken from the strict theological ideas present in his
childhood teachings. He also opens the doors for more members to this new community he is building by deliberately expanding his own tradition through interpretation of scripture. In Galatia, he does this not only because it is the way in which he is most comfortable and is able to most clearly express his spirituality, but also because he found a common group in the Galatians—individuals whose experience under Roman rule was similar to those of the Judeans.

**GALATIA**

Galatia is contested space in Biblical scholarship. There are many different theories about the location of the actual geographical place to which Paul was writing, because of the terms Paul uses to describe the community and a distinct lack of sources other than Paul. However, scholars widely accept that the 'Galatia' to which Paul was writing is, indeed, a Gallic diasporic community—groups of individuals who moved from what is now modern-day France to settle instead in Asia Minor beginning between 274 and 272 BCE (Strobel 2009). It was Hellenized after the third century BCE, and much of the warrior culture and the practices of human sacrifice were lost, and the original Gallic aristocracy in Galatia was integrated into the international diplomatic network of Asia Minor. After this, the ruling Romans considered Galatians a degenerated mix of Gauls and the other native
groups of Asia Minor. The Romans then began to use the term *Gallograeci* and *Gallograecia* to describe and characterize the Galatians (Strobel 2009). The term 'Galatian' in English has come to mean the mixed result of these groups—the diasporic Gauls and the original residents of this particular section of Asia Minor.

Paul's word for the community to which he is writing in his own letter are not these, but broader terms. While in Rome at the time of Paul's writing, individuals in Gaul would have been called Galatians, *Galates*, in the *koine* Greek Paul wrote in and used to communicate to his congregations. However, the word Paul uses for the individuals to whom his letter is addressed is not this, but *Galatai*, which can be used to describe Gauls, *Galli* in the Latin master tongue (Kahl 2010). This breakdown of vocabulary and cultural distinction is not unlike that of Judean and Jew that Paul defines himself against. The terms 'Galatia' and 'Galatians', the most solid and concrete contextual markers we have in the entirety of Paul's letter, are insufficient to clearly locate the recipients of said letter. It is a definite possibility that they could have been in Roman Asia Minor, in today's Turkey, but from a purely linguistic perspective, the "assemblies of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2) to whom Paul directs his letter could just have easily been located in contemporary France in the Roman provinces of *Gallia*. This makes it incredibly difficult to locate geographically exactly to whom Paul was writing, which could potentially complicate a detailed examination of the letter in
light of its cultural context. However, Romans made little distinction between Gallic groups, and whether they were in France or in Asia Minor, the Roman rhetoric of oppression and destruction would have been much the same.

Regardless of precise geographical location, however, both the 'Gauls' and the 'Galatians' were seen as a contested group under Roman supremacy. They were considered part of the same ethnic community, and both were necessarily heavily controlled under Roman rule because of the long and bloody history of battle and uprising the Romans had with the Gauls. They were also heavily linked, iconographically and culturally, and therefore the geographic distinctions matter less—they were still one people, at least as far as the Romans were concerned. Much of Roman iconography about Gauls, with titles such as the Dying Trumpeter or sculptures of Dying Gauls or Dying Galatians, make it abundantly clear: the Romans considered Gauls (or Galatians, depending on translation) to be "objects of beauty precisely in their agony as they succumbed to the disciplinary blows of their imperial masters" (Kahl 2010). The Gauls, to the Roman imagination, were long-standing and archetypal enemies, "quintessential barbarian intruders" (Kahl 2010), who demonstrably remained dangerous even after being defeated by Rome. Kahl argues in her book that iconography of the defeated Galatian was such an incredibly popular subject for Roman artists; as Galatians were the quintessential enemies, defeating them was the quintessential victory, and therefore depicting them as being wounded or
killed, presumably by the hands of their Roman opponents, is so satisfying in conveying a single, clear and important message—the inevitability of unconditional surrender to Rome.

The (relatively) fluid terms *Galates* and *Galatia* ended up being crucial building blocks in the conceptual and ideological construction and justification of empire, and Rome's empire specifically—they were used with a scope and depth of meaning that is normally not present in our interpretations of Paul. Barbaric Galatians being crushed mercilessly, quickly, and appropriately under the Roman heel was a foundational conception of what it meant to be Empire, especially to the Roman mind. Roman for a diasporic community that made Paul connect the Judaic and the Galatian experiences. Kahl makes this argument by tracing art history and iconographic depictions of Galatians, but this thesis draws upon Paul as a more direct source, and examines his use of biblical quotes to trace the conflation of these two distinct identities. Paul was a Judean living in diaspora who was in possession of the bible with its particular message of salvation, and Galatians were a community living in diaspora who did not possess that scripture or those ideas—ideas that Paul believed to be critical to the continuation of both his community and the communities of others. The reason Paul wrote so vehemently to the Galatians is that he did believe that they needed to hear his message—the reinterpretation of the scripture of his own tradition into a liberating, uplifting, and ultimately salvific
message for all.

**SCRIPTURE**

Out of these many layers of cultural context, Paul emerges with a message reconstructed from the teachings of his childhood, tailored specifically to the communities that he is trying to integrate here in his letter to the Galatians. The quotes that Paul uses to connect back directly to the Bible are significant both for placing Paul as an Israelite and for making Paul's point in the letter itself. One of the first ones he uses is from Galatians 3:6-9, "Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness', so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.' For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed." This is a conflation of Genesis 12:3, "[God] will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'”, Genesis 18:18, "seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”, and Genesis 15:6, "And [Abraham] believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.” Paul uses these three short quotes to build a larger,
theologically interpretive idea—one that includes his audience in the group of which he considers himself a member and eradicates the need for circumcision for non-Judeans. Originally the biblical requirement for circumcision is linked to Abraham's call in Genesis 18 as well, but by combining this call with the other two sections about blessing, Paul reprioritizes faith over ritual and thus makes it possible for the Galatian population to be included in the covenant.

Paul attempts here to include the Galatians to whom he was writing in the covenant strictly by belief, which eradicates the need for circumcision of non-Judeans. Paul confluates the passages in Genesis 12:3 and 18:18, saying "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you" by using the phrases "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" and "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him." Here he weaves together the idea that God, as the highest authority possible, informed Abraham directly (as in 12:3) instead of indirectly (as in 18:18). He also uses the word 'nation' used in 18:18 instead of 'family' in 12:3, to more clearly express the idea that this salvation is not just for members of the Israelite tribes, but for all the nations who believe as Abraham did. This synthesis of ideas and passages is critical to Paul's understanding of his vision of a single group identity, which he is attempting to express in this letter. There is a need, expressed both by Paul and by Paul's opponents in Galatia, to make the Galatian members of this particular monotheistic community also into members who are also a
part of Abraham's covenant with God. Paul's opponents do this by suggesting the Galatians follow the ritualized restrictions of the law set out explicitly in the Septuagint. However, Paul's way of doing this is more theologically creative, as we see here. Instead of requiring his followers in Galatia to become Jews by adhering to the more ritualized aspects of the law, and keeping the definition of 'Jew' the same, he instead declares his Galatian congregation already members of his new 'Israelite' community by changing the rules to include everyone who believes as Abraham did under the necessary category, instead of everyone who strictly follows every aspect of the Israelite law. He also states that everyone who believes as Abraham did is necessarily as holy and included as Abraham, since it was Abraham's belief that made him holy in the first place. Therefore, Paul constructs a way to include the individuals who he feels are his spiritual and cultural brothers in Galatia in his own conceptualization of his group, the Israelites, not the Jews, that does not require the Galatians to participate in the physical aspects of Jewish law.

He does not, however reject the law entirely. Another quotation Paul uses is "For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14). This is a direct quote from Leviticus 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." This passage makes clear that Paul is not rejecting the law entirely, but
reinterpreting it. He uses this passage also to engender the sense of community in his letter—the idea of treating everyone equally, be they of Gallic or Judean descent, is crucial to the concepts of egalitarianism Paul is attempting to build. Paul is not rejecting the Hebrew Scriptures or the law that he knows entirely, but he submits here that belief and the way that the individuals in the Galatian community treat each other is more important than any of the commandments about circumcision or dietary restrictions. Instead, the breaking down of his enumerated societal barriers that is critical, and this sameness and synthesis of individuals into loving each other as they would love themselves that aids both in tying Galatian experience back into the concept of Paul's Israelite identity and in pushing it forward into a new sense of community that Paul is attempting to build. His vision of this community is one that would both strengthen the mutual experiences in both communities and offer an alternative spiritual solution to their previous communities being taken over and absorbed by Rome.

However, the way that this quotation does the multi-layered job of underlining and emphasizing so many critical themes is very neat. The quote reemphasizes the egalitarian and mutually supportive aspects of many of the other main points in this letter. It also creates a very strong tie to the inclusion of both the law and Paul's Jewishness into this new, even playing field of the theology that Paul is crafting—the fact that he holds this one piece, the idea of loving one another as oneself, up as the whole of the law.
that must be followed according to him is significant. But this construction also includes the Galatians in the group who must follow this particular section of the law—indicating that the whole law clearly isn’t to be tossed out, yes, but also that the parts that are necessary to follow are necessary for everyone who is a member of this community. Paul is more focused on the idea of belief as the thing that truly matters—the law is an acceptable thing to follow, but it is not the point, and if believers are too focused on the other, unimportant aspects of what the law is asking them to do, then they can miss the point entirely. Instead of focusing on the ritualized aspects of the law, Paul emphasizes the strengthening of the community he is attempting to build by writing this letter, to reinforce the mutual experience of both Galatia and Judea into a cohesive unit in an attempt to offer both an alternate spiritual solution. He is struggling to build a new theology that includes loving your community members as you love yourself, while making the point that Galatians and Judeans are clearly members of the same imperiled cultural community under Roman authority, and stretch past that conflation into a theology of salvation for both groups.

Paul's use of scriptural support culminates in one of the most heavily-discussed passages in Paul's canon—Galatians 3:28. The passage reads, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This, also, is a reference back to Paul's Bible—back to the very beginning of the bible, in
fact, to Genesis 1:17, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” There is a great deal of contention as to exactly what this passage means, and what Paul means specifically when he is writing it. The concepts presented in this passage are, conceptually, a huge social upheaval. The idea that all of the main markers of social status—race, community outside the Early Jesus Movement, class, legal status, gender—had been eliminated is a radical one (Hogan 21). Because it can be interpreted so radically and in so many different ways, and because it seems to stand out as such a critical part of Paul's argument, cultural context is important to understand, because that is what Paul was building the ideas that is presenting here, to therefore approximate what Paul meant when he wrote that verse, and how that extends into the rhetoric of the rest of his letter. This passage of Paul's is considered by some scholars (Hogan 2008) to be a part of the baptismal liturgy of the Early Jesus Movement that Paul is appropriating. One of the arguments for this particular interpretation is the parallels between Galatians 3:27-28, 1 Cor. 12:13 and Col 3:10-11, all of which deal with the dissolving of the self into a larger whole through renewal in Christ, and discarding all worldly distinctions. These passages also all seem to stand out from the contexts of the rest of their letters in both language and concept. Both the consistency of their wording and message and the fact that these passages seems so removed from the rest of the context of their letters lead scholars
to believe that Paul is quoting some early movement baptismal liturgy. Despite appearing in three radically different contexts, these passages all contain material about rebirth and use similar phrasing. The phrase "male and female" in particular in Galatians 3:28 that does not seem to be connected to any other rhetoric of Paul's that appears in that letter (Hogan 2008).

This rhetoric is important to Paul's message, and the idea that he is integrating it into his own ideas speaks strongly of his desire for rebirth and resurrection, through the idea of baptism. The thread of egalitarianism is also important for Paul's worldview. This egalitarianism is critical to every marginalized member's understanding of salvation, as Paul's principles for membership to this community and for salvation itself were the same for women and for men, across distinctions of class and race. The words represent a neutral baptism, during which the community is made whole and equal (Wiley 2005). The idea of renewal and community that baptism engenders is critical to Paul's theology and to his argument, and therefore fits very neatly as another nuance in his rhetoric. The implications of birth and renewal may appear often in the Early Jesus Movement, and be adopted into Paul's rhetoric; this idea of everyone in Galatia being baptized into one community fits well into the rest of his rhetoric about a singular, relatively egalitarian group.

However, the quote itself is also clearly (or, at least, clear in
translation) a direct reference to the bible that Paul is using, by the change in his use of conjunction if nothing else—the words he uses for 'male and female' are specifically a reference to the Hebrew Bible, (Wiley 2005) and while it cannot be proven that this was used in the early baptismal liturgy of the time, that does not negate that this passage is also part of a quote taken from the bible, though it was difficult to turn up scholarship that referenced those two defining ideas of the passage in conjunction with each other. However, this quote is significant whether Paul is taking it from liturgy of the time (which still would have been quoting it from the bible) or whether Paul is going back to the bible as a source directly. This passage is still an example of Paul connecting his idea of a critical breakdown of social barriers to the beginning of the world and the very creation of community itself. Using male "and" female not only makes it a biblical quote, but also evokes the birth and original creation of humankind, emphasizing heavily Paul's idea of new community and rebirth into a new theological conceptualization. This link is indicative of both Paul's desire to connect the concept of the Galatian community and theology to that of his own Judean roots as he references the texts of his own tradition, and of Paul's reaching towards the newness of what he is attempting to create with the breaking down of these barriers between social distinctions.

Through all this inclusion and renewal, Paul attempts to take the culture of Judeans living in diaspora with their bible and bring this text to
Galatians living in diaspora who do not have access to its message of salvation. To do this, he uses his reinterpretation of the bible to create a brand new community from these two diasporic groups, both of whom are in imminent danger of being defeated and culturally subsumed by Rome.

Paul's Letter to the Galatians is external to the Roman imperial order and its concepts of the dissolution of individuality into a single, specifically non-Roman group, which is its own kind of salvation from Rome itself. Paul's message was delivered as the power of resurrection to these defeated peoples, and was the hope of a destiny constructed as something other than dying collectively and being subsumed by the Romans or living and conforming to Roman imperial law. Jews, while not the epic enemy that Romans saw in the Gauls, were certainly problematic as far as the social order was concerned—they were outsiders to Roman normalcy in similar ways that the Gauls were. This similarity pulls together the idea of Paul's Jewish experience with the Gallic/Galatian experience, bringing them into a single messianic experience as felt through the Early Jesus Movement—the Galatians and the Jews, ultimately, had no choice but to submit to Rome—except this one; to accept the message that Paul was delivering to them of escapes that had never been subjugated by Roman rule. To choose a higher power that is outside Rome, and a crucial sense of community that is outside Rome, and therefore powers and communities that are necessarily very liberating. Therefore, Paul's message becomes a sort of escape for both the
Jews and the Gauls, who were defeated and controlled by the Romans in similar ways, and therefore needed a similar escape. They found this escape in Paul's philosophy of extra-Roman community, and in one-ness with a God other than Caesar. In this new community individuals discovered not only an alternative culture to which they can belong in lieu of their defeated groups, but also a liberation from Rome—the shedding of the necessity for physicality that Paul described through his quotes makes any ritual Rome could force upon them meaningless.

**CONCLUSION**

This breaking down of social distinctions, however, is potentially deeply problematic. That Paul also had the misfortune, for various cultural reasons, to believe that equality meant 'sameness,' and that is one of the main issues or flaws within his social thought. Paul, of course, does not mean *literal* complete sameness—that everyone dress, eat, and speak exactly alike. In fact, as stated, what he intends is quite the opposite—Paul’s issue was with individuals who thought those types of sameness were of the utmost importance. Boyarin argues that this almost places Paul at a kind of level of cultural tolerance (Boyarin 1994). However, this tolerance also deprives individuals of their *right* to be different and “dissolves all others into a single essence in which matters of cultural practice are irrelevant and only faith in
Christ is significant” (Boyarin 1994). To tell this to Jews, at that time and still today, that it is utterly insignificant whether or not they circumcise their sons or that there is no difference between Jews and gentiles, is not a very culturally tolerant way to broaden a religious dialogue. Paul believed he was redefining Jewishness—and gentile-ness, and all other forms of identity to which Galatians could possibly ascribe, when it comes down to it—but this erasure of culture is problematic, certainly for those outside of the community to which Paul was preaching, but to those inside of it as well.

This does not, however, mean that Paul’s gospel was one of intolerance. Paul’s melding sameness version of tolerance is flawed—just as its opposite, the idea of the “special value of particularity” (Boyarin 1994)—is equally flawed. In Galatia, the tension is between Paul and Paul’s idea of perfect identity and sameness, and the individuals after him in Galatia preaching a different gospel of following the law, and therefore reasserting a specific cultural particularity. Boyarin seems to be wrestling with the idea that “the claims of difference and the desire for universality are both—contradictorily—necessary; both are also equally problematic. The challenge of Paul’s positive call to autonomy, equality, and species-wide solidarity cannot be ignored or dismissed because of flaws within it or because of reactionary uses to which it has been put, but just as surely the insistence on the value of ethnic—even genealogical—identity that the Rabbis put forth cannot be ignored or dismissed because of the reactionary uses to which it
can and has been put” (Boyarin 1994). However, that dissolution of culture—of distinct Israelite and Galatian culture—is precisely what Paul wanted. Paul is offering both Judeans and Galatians another option besides their original cultures, which—at that time in history—were teetering on the brink of Roman defeat. This option is palatable only because the only other foreseeable outcome of the conflict between their original cultures and Rome is defeat by Rome. These cultures are already similar in the idea that they are both diasporic communities struggling under Roman rule. Paul intends to bring them together entirely as a cohesive unit. These similarities are what pull together the idea of Paul’s Israelite experience with the Gallic/Galatian experience, to bring them into a single messianic experience as felt through the Early Jesus Movement—the Galatians and the Jews, ultimately, had no choice but to submit to Rome—except this one. To accept the message that Paul was delivering to them of escapes that had never been subjugated by Roman rule—a higher power that is outside Rome, and a crucial sense of community that is outside Rome, and therefore powers and communities that are necessarily very liberating.

This new cultural context and new reading of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians gives, necessarily, a new lens through which to look at interpretations of Paul today. It becomes necessary to conceptualize Paul, not just as a 'Christian' thinker, but as a member of the Jewish tradition as well. And in this interpretation, it becomes possible to reappropriate Paul
not only as a Jew, but as a member of an oppressed community also. Paul was writing a message of liberation to the downtrodden and othered individuals in Galatia, and that message can be expanded into the present day. It is true Paul has been used to rationalize oppress the underprivileged, such as women and slaves. The privileged have used Paul to rationalize actions that oppress and destroy non-dominant cultures, as Kahl mentions. In my experiences as a religious scholar, and as a member of academia in general, I have ended up reading a great deal by and about Paul of Tarsus, positive and negative, from a variety of different angles, flattering and not-so-flattering. I have always been interested academically in the idea of Paul as a historical figure—far more than in any other 'historical' construction of a biblical figure. The way he is often described seemed to me to be as deeply conflicted individual attempting to build a community out of a varied and confusing collection of conflicting groups as fast as he could, and those were a set of difficulties that were always very compelling to me. Using Paul's message of cultural egalitarianism, problematic as it can be, to extend to those who believe as Abraham did today, to those who love their neighbor as themselves today, and to those who strive for a social consciousness where race, class and gender matter less makes a great deal of sense—in fact, it is a logical progression. The fact of the matter is that Paul was an underprivileged, othered, and oppressed individual who was writing this letter to underprivileged, othered, and oppressed individuals in an attempt
to bring their communities together to strengthen them and to give them a liberating and uplifting alternative to cultural destruction and oppression by more privileged parties. This is a timeless and powerful message, both for Galatians at the time of its writing and for individuals today.


