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Commitment to the Truth: Parrhesiastic and Prophetic Elements of Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Zaangażowanie w prawdę: Elementy parezji i prorocstwa
w Liście Pawła do Galatów

Abstract

Paul writes to the Galatians in the New Testament to bridge the two realms of cultural Judaism and Roman Imperialism. In this analysis of the letter written to the church of Galatia, we see both Hebraic prophecy and Greek, or Gentile, parrhesia. As the context shows, Paul attempts to persuade a hybrid audience on the edge between the two ancient cultures. Paul diagnoses the church's problems through a prognostic teaching that fulfills a larger Pauline gospel agenda. Future scholars will need to attend to the work of both parrhesia and prophetic rhetoric in Christian texts over the two millennia since Paul's initial fusion.

Paweł pisze do Galatów w Nowym Testamencie, łącząc dwie kultury: judaizm i rzymski imperializm. Niniejsza analiza listu do Kościoła w Galacji pokazuje wykorzystanie zarówno hebrajskiego prorocstwa, jak i greckiej (nieżydowskiej, pogańskiej) parezji. Paweł adresuje list do mieszanej publiczności, żyjącej na styku dwóch kultur. Diagnostuje on problemy Kościoła poprzez prognostyczne nauczanie, które wpisuje się w szerszy kontekst Pawłowej nauki. Późniejsi badacze będą zajmowali się zapoczątkowaną w pismach Pawła współobecnością parezji i retoryki prorockiej w tekstach chrześcijańskich przez następne dwa tysiąclecia.

Key words

parrhesia, prophecy, New Testament

parezja, prorocstwo, Nowy Testament

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1. Introduction

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a valuable text to study as it bridges the ideas of two distinct realms: cultural Judaism and the Roman imperialism in which early Christianity is set. In this analysis, I find that Paul subverts Old Testament law using Greek parrhesiastic rhetoric as a continuance of Old Testament prophetic voice that the Gospel cultivates. In arguing his Truth, Paul is preparing the Gospel for the Council of Jerusalem, while creating a form of Christian rhetoric that will remain influential for centuries in the West. The essay begins by discussing the rhetorics of prophecy and parrhesia, then situating their context in this volatile moment, and finally reading the text in its fusion of these two textual horizons.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, though not an exegete himself, lays the conception groundwork for modern Biblical scholarship. Gadamer encouraged the realization that our interpretation is already "from somewhere" in terms of our subjective position in the world, and no interpretation is "from nowhere," or objective. Therefore, returning to the Bible with a view attending to its original persuasive contexts is crucial to bringing the "horizon of interpretation" as far back as possible to see the world the way the author did (Gadamer 1997, 302). Recognizing the limits of our horizons, we can appreciate the text's history within the context of its time. This analysis is necessary not just at the level of specific audiences (what is often thought of as "rhetorical"), but also with a broader view of how cultures were interacting with one another through major themes of their rhetorics: truth compelled by divinely chosen Jews and truth forced by the bonds of elite, politically-powerful Greeks and Romans. In this way, a rhetorical analysis of the text offered here is more an attempt at understanding a text's fullness rather than an attempt to determine its meaning in any particular direction.

Prophetic rhetoric is a highly nuanced idea. Prophecy at the most basic level refers to a prediction. Contemporary rhetorical theorist James Darsey explores the

radical tradition and genre of prophecy and defines the prophetic voice. Rhetorical vocabulary takes on new meaning in a prophetic context. Prophetic *logos* refers to the speech of a divine messenger, which for prophets is the word of God (Darsey 1997, 16). Prophets are committed to adequately delivering this message. Prophetic *pathos* is built from crisis, stemming from Greek *krisis*, as “decision” or “judgment” (Darsey 1997, 23). Judgment is explained as a result of the fall of humankind, which results in separation from the divine will. This creates the *pathos* of a God who cares and the *pathos* of people who are desperate and separated (Darsey 1997, 23). Prophetic *ethos* constrains the prophet to present himself as a servant of God, rather than as a hero among men. *Ethos* is drawn from the example that is set, rather than the motive of the discourse (Darsey 1997, 28-34).

Darsey argues that the genre of prophecy was developed by Old Testament prophets, whose aim was to “move the soul, to engage the attention by bold and striking images [T]herefore it is to the imagination and the passions that the prophets speak, rather than aiming at the cold approbation of the mind” (Darsey 1997, 77). Prophets, in a Biblical setting, were moved by a calling from God and felt compelled to speak a message to a particular group of people, considered “Truth” (Darsey 1997, 35). Often, the purpose of the prophet is to persuade people to repent or convert. They seek to “revive devotion, love, to reconcile Israel with God” (Darsey 1997, 35). Prophets would often speak boldly due to the presence of a crisis (Darsey 1997, 69). How well a message is received is dependent upon the authority with which it is given; *ethos* is essential to the success of the prophet’s message (Darsey 1997, 85). Prophecy of this nature is clearest in the cases of Jeremiah, Elijah, and figure of Jesus presented in the Gospels, but stretches across the entire Biblical canon.

Paul adds to prophetic rhetoric the Hellenistic ideal of *parrhesia*, which was best recovered by modern French philosopher Michel Foucault. As contemporary rhetorical historian Art Walzer recounts, Foucault examines *parrhesia* as a mode of telling the truth, in which an orator or philosopher tells truth, often to power, regardless of consequences (Walzer 2013). The *ethos* of friendship is central to the idea of *parrhesia*. The *parrhesiast* speaks out frankly, risking undermining the relationship with the listener. For Foucault, this entails some form of courage employed in order to work within the conditionality of the risk (Walzer 2013). In this manner, a teacher of knowledge is not considered a *parrhesiast* because he does not face any pressing danger or risk in sharing the truth. Similar to prophecy, the *parrhesiast* “has a primary commitment to state the truth as he or she understands it. The commitment is more important than maintaining or enhancing a relationship with the listener” (Walzer 2013). With these expectations, a *parrhesiast*

must promote truth based on ethos and his commitment to the message, he must be frank, and he must be speaking in the presence of danger.

The rhetorics of prophecy and parrhesia represent two cultures coming together, as Jew meets Gentile, and Hebrew meets Greek. Yet there are resemblances between the two archetypes. Rhetors in both traditions are bold and go beyond the normal, “appropriate” means of persuasion. Truth is bigger than the constraining situation, and thus demands something other than what might be expected in a secular context. Emotion is heightened in both, and while a judging audience is certainly able to speculate ill motivation, effective discourse in either tradition must convert the audiences themselves to an entirely-unearthly frame of reference, outside of normal human power relationships. Thus, to separate the two takes fairly significant attention to the context and the nuances of the text.

2. Context of the Letter to the Galatians

Paul creates this hybridity through the very unique historical predicament that frames the letter. Paul writes the church of Galatia in the mode concluded above, destabilizing traditional human power relations between two oppositional cultures, pointing readers instead to a new clarity and a new Gospel Truth. Biblical scholars largely agree that in Galatia, Paul faced a situation in which a rival Christian group, often referred to as Judaizers, had come into the area of churches that Paul had earlier founded with the intention of turning their co-religionists into followers of the Law of Moses. Regardless of Jewish or Gentile descent, Judaizers preached a gospel dependent upon works of the law alongside faith.

Most of Paul’s letters provide a fairly clear recipient, being a specific church or group of Christians in a well-defined area. Galatians, however, is not addressed to either. It is addressed to “the assemblies [ekklesiās] of Galatia” (Oakes 2015, 4). It has proven difficult to delineate the precise borders of Galatia in Paul’s time. The area of Galatia was first classified as a dependent kingdom under the rule of Rome. On good terms, Pompey designated Galatia as a client kingdom.¹ It was established as a province in 25 BC on account of the death of King Amyntas, who previously resided over the region and other territories (Guthrie 1981, 17). After changing hands a number of times, by 5 BC, the area known as Galatia was much more well defined and continued to expand, and in Paul’s time reached to the middle of Asia Minor (Longenecker 1990). It was under Roman rule, yet influenced heavily by Hellenistic ideas.² This expanded territory of Galatia is what gives

1. A client kingdom is a state that is economically, politically, or militarily subordinate to another more powerful state.

2. The Hellenistic Period refers to the time period between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and the emergence of the Roman Empire in 31 BC. The period was characterized by the spreading of Greek ideas across Europe, Africa, and Asia, in terms of culture, art, literature, music, food, etc.

scholars and theologians difficulty in pinning down the recipient of Paul's letter, as it was such a large region.

Timothy George, in his *New American Commentary*, claims that "Galatians is one of Paul's most contextually oriented letters," explaining that although the text itself gives little insight into specific difficulties at the church in Galatia, Paul clearly writes about controversies and issues arising in a particular place, similar to his letter to Corinth (George 1994, 40). Thus, over the years, two distinct hypotheses have emerged as the leading opinions in defining the region to which Paul sent his letter: the North Galatia Hypothesis and the South Galatia Hypothesis.³

Regardless of the arguments surrounding each hypothesis, the majority of scholars agree that broadly, the term Galatia refers to a Roman province in the center of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey (Oakes 2015, 4). For the purpose of this analysis it is relevant to understand that this area is one of the regions in which Paul decided to focus his theological presence, trusting that expansion and influence could eventually reach further nations.

The journey by which Paul came to developing a theological presence began on an atypical note. Paul, the Christian apostle, claims to be the author of the text of

3. Timothy George outlines a distinct argument for the North Galatia Hypothesis as follows:

- 1) "Galatians" comes from the Latin word "Galatae," which is an exact transliteration from the Greek, also translating the same word in both Latin and Greek into *Celts* and *Gauls*. Galatians as an ethnic term would point the recipient to be the descendants of the Celtic people. This argument is upheld by certain Celtic characteristics (although no longer uniquely Celtic) that are used to describe the Galatians including "their obedience to the elemental powers, their drunkenness and reveling, and their bitter disputes" (George 1994, 41).
- 2) Galatia should be geographically located near the end of Paul's ministry, as the theology he teaches aligns with a similar time frame of what he teaches in Romans. Both books are centered heavily on justification by faith.
- 3) Finally, the term Galatia appears twice in the book of Acts (16:6, 18:23). In both texts, the phrasing is ambiguous enough to support either the North or South Galatia theory. However, those who support the North Galatia theory side with scholar James Moffatt. Moffatt claims that the original Greek "diēlthon," or "to pass through" means more than a simple movement through an area, but rather suggests that preaching was *involved*. He also argues that "kōlythentes" or "having been forbidden" carries much more weight. Thus, if Paul is prohibited to preach in Asia after visiting the churches in South Galatia, he has no other choice but to turn northwards. Therefore, if taken as though Paul visited both areas suggested in Acts (Phrygia, Southern Galatia) and Galatia proper (North), then this argument provides the evidence that Paul truly did take his ministry into Asia Minor. (Moffat 1911, 118).

The South Galatia hypothesis, although as equally disputed is outlined by George with substantial support:

- 1) This hypothesis locates and identifies clear churches of Galatia: these churches are the congregations at Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, all of which Paul founded along his first missionary journey (George 1994, 43).
- 2) To solidify these claims, scholars often compare Luke's account of Paul's journey in South Galatian cities. To the chagrin of many North Galatia theorists, the cities and churches relatively line up.
- 3) Additionally, many of Luke's accounts in cities considered congregations of Galatians include miracle stories, which is a vital component to Paul's first missionary journey. Examples include a crippled man being healed in Lystra (Acts 14:8-10).
- 4) Finally, Paul is said to have been persecuted countless times in his first missionary journey along the South Galatian cities. In chapter six of Galatians, Paul confirms this as he draws attention to his own wounds.

Galatians (Gal 1:1).⁴ Likely from Tarsus, Paul probably grew up in a Jewish diaspora family and seems to have been raised in a family that held strict traditions of Judaism (George 1994, 23). Paul was a tentmaker and later a scholar in Jerusalem at the Pharisaic school of Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Before his acceptance of the Christian message, Paul persecuted the church. Clearly opposed to the nascent Christian movement and attempting to stamp out this movement, Paul was considered dangerous, and “receive[d] permission from the high priest to take his campaign of holy terror on the road,” moving first to Damascus (George 1994, 30).

Formerly Saul, Paul’s persecution of the church is confirmed throughout Acts as well as by Paul in his own letters.⁵ Although disputed, the direction of Paul’s persecution of the church was often against Hellenistic Jews who converted and confessed that Jesus was the Messiah.⁶ Advancing Judaism was Paul’s biggest priority, fanatically opposed to the early Christian movement (Guthrie 1981, 1).

Acts 9 tells the story of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. He spent the latter part of his life as an apostolic author and missionary. Paul considered his conversion on the road to Damascus as perhaps more of a commission, or calling, than a conversion (Dunn 1993, 3). Paul was evidently eager to make clear that his intentions were to spread the good news among the Gentiles, and maybe more importantly, that his intentions were prophetically given to him directly from God (Gal 1:12). Understanding this calling is important to understand Paul. Paul’s letter was not written lightly, as he did not take the discrepancies in Christianity and Judaism lightly.⁷ It is this passion that often clearly links Paul to the text of Galatians.

Depending on the acceptance of either the North or South Galatia Theory, the timeline for Paul’s letter differs.⁸ Although disputed, for this analysis I will argue that Paul wrote this letter shortly prior to the Council of Jerusalem, usually dated AD 49 and mentioned in Acts 15. At this council, elders of the church discussed

4. Although the letter to the Galatians is disputed on many accounts, it cannot be argued that Paul is not the author without negating his authorship of all other epistles. (Longenecker 1990).

5. Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11; I Cor. 15:9; Gal 1:13, 23; Phil 3:6;

6. Hellenistic Jews refers to the group of people who combined Judaism beliefs with Greek culture and tradition. One of the largest disparities from the Jewish faith was accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

7. Paul even spent some time in Arabia immediately following his conversion. The amount of time or purpose is unknown, however many believe he was seeking time for reflection and furthering his relationship with God. (Guthrie 1981, 1).

8. If siding with the North Galatia hypothesis, then the letter was written to unknown congregations, insinuating the likelihood that this letter was not written before Paul’s visits to Galatian country cited in Acts. Most likely this means the letter was written during his third missionary journey while he was living and working in Ephesus, covering the years AD 53-56. Contrarily, considering the belief that Paul is writing to the defined churches in the South Galatia region, the question of when it was written depends on the timeline of Paul’s missionary journeys. Paul visited these towns twice; thus, this letter could have been written anytime after then. The pertinent question for this hypothesis is how soon after he visited was the letter written. Many believe Paul wrote this quickly after visiting, and confirm their timeline with the book of Acts and the Council of Jerusalem.

a highly controversial and confusing issue, namely circumcision for Gentiles as a requirement to be admitted to the church. The decision to annul this requirement was a victory for Paul. For this viewpoint, it is highly unlikely that Paul would write such a desperate plea for the Galatians to accept his argument for admitting Gentiles without circumcision if he had this ruling to back him up (Neil 1967, 14). Overall, the maximum possible date range for the date of the letter to the Galatians is about AD 46-67.⁹ The time range is pertinent in assessing the urgency Paul felt in relaying his message of teaching for purposes of keeping his voice heard among the churches. In order to adequately disabuse prescription-based faith, and to prepare the church for the impending council decision, he needed to speak and act quickly.

Dunn identifies this intensity as a tension, drawing upon multiple distinct points of tension around and within the letter. He writes:

The tension between Paul's past (as a zealot and persecutor) and present (as evangelist and apologist for the church he once sought to destroy) is also the tension of the letter. The tension between Paul's commission as standing within the tradition of Israeli's prophet commissions, but as a commission to the Gentiles, is also the tension of the letter. The tension between Paul and the Jerusalem leadership is also the tension of the letter. It was precisely as a Jew who was also apostle to the *Gentiles*, that Paul wrote (Dunn 1993, 5)

With a situation that yields such friction, Paul's attempt to disabuse the Galatians about the necessity of Old Testament law offers a unique approach to conversion. Additionally, Paul is writing in the genre of a letter, which means that this letter is "not merely a speech enclosed between epistolary script and subscript" (Martyn 1997, 20). It is possible that Paul only wrote a letter because he was not able to be there to communicate in person, thus his message is limited by the constraints of epistle writing. More likely, though Paul is using a form that allows for ultimate rhetorical hybridity between the personal and the transcendent.

3. Galatians as an Epistle

According to J. Louis Martyn, if Paul were able to communicate orally in person to the people of Galatia, it would have been in an argumentative sermon preached in the context of a service of worship (Martyn 1997, 21). He argues that the gospel letters are, however, "not fundamentally a matter of rhetorical persuasion," instead located outside the criteria developed in secular governmental contexts (Martyn 1997, 22). Essentially, most rhetoric relies on all instructors and actors within the rhetoric to be participating within what Martyn calls one single

9. "We can narrow it even further to max at AD 61 if we agree upon the thought that Paul wrote this after his imprisonment in Rome." (Oakes 2015, 4).

“cosmos” (Martyn 1997, 22). Most rhetorical debates or conversations are won or dominated by the instructor or actor who most frequently and correctly calls upon the “commonly held body of law.” Paul, on the contrary, is claiming that God has invaded the cosmos. With this invasion, comes a most literal destruction of the law for the Galatians, transforming a transcendent encounter to a literal message. Martyn claims that this creates a “newness of rhetoric,” no longer arguing within the frame of legality and any assumed integrity of the cosmos. And so the form of the letter can paradoxically bring the transcendent ideas of God to an urgent and earthly situation (Martyn 1997, 22).

Martyn’s anti-rhetorical stance refers us to the anti-rhetorical rhetorics of *parrhesia* and prophecy, even as he does not use those terms. In other words, a most transcendent and eternal question can be argued in a form that closely mirrors the sermon given to the smallest of assembled, insular communities. Uniquely, Paul bridges that gap of gospel and governance by utilizing both Hebraic prophetic mode of the gospel and Greco-Roman, or Hellenistic, practices of rhetoric, as he urgently speaks his Truth.

Still, Paul disregards typical epistle-writing constraints. With urgency and fervor, he attempts to disabuse the Galatians from the idea of circumcision or works as a means of salvation. By challenging the expected epistle writing norms of deference and softness, Paul champions the dire and clear gospel extreme: to accept the promise of grace without any ancillary offers.

The *ars dictaminis*, the art of letter writing derived from ancient Greek and Roman rhetorical traditions, tries to mirror oral immediacy in a format that expresses the will of someone who is not physically present (Carmargo 1991, 18). Because of his absence, a *dictator*, or letter writer, needed a permanent record of his words that could be used to answer any challenge given to him. *Dictatores* concerned themselves with *dispositio* and *elocutio*, most likely because the letter was perceived most frequently as a piece of oration. This incongruence in letters is seen most fluidly through the “illusion of an oration [that] was sustained through their standardized format” (Carmargo 1991, 18). With a modification of the Ciceronian oration, the standard parts of the letter are fixed at five: *salutatio*, *exordium* (also called *captatio benevolentiae*), *narratio*, *petitio* (or *argumentio*), and *conclusion* (Carmargo 1991, 22).

For a typical epistle, the *salutatio* is given the most comprehensive treatment (Carmargo 1991, 22). This portion of the letter carried a large social function, as there was a need to fix the *salutatio* to the social status of the sender and receiver. The details of the greeting set the tone for greeting decorum, paying close attention to relevant social hierarchy (Carmargo 1991, 22). The second part of the letter primarily served to wish the recipient good will in order to prepare him for the

subsequent message or request. In New Testament epistles, this section often included a prayer of thanksgiving for the recipient (Just 2010). The final three parts of the letter are less detailed and often combined or omitted depending on the purpose of the letter and the constraints of the sender and receiver relationship.¹⁰ The entirety of the letter received a variety of stylistic expectations from *dictatores*, perhaps most relevant and distinctive was *brevitas*. It was essential to combine clarity with brevity, “because an excess of the latter produced the vice that opposed the former” (Carmargo 1991, 24). For a New Testament epistle, the *narratio* includes the initial exhortation and a thesis, the *petitio* includes theological discussions and ethical admonitions, and the *conclusio* includes practical matters, individual greetings, a personal postscript, and the closing doxology.

Paul deviates from the norm throughout his letter to the Galatians.¹¹ Paul, arguably the *dictator* whose collection of letters has circulated most widely over time, strays from much of the standardized *ars dictaminis* and writes with a sense of urgency. In his letter to the Galatians, he begins in a fairly typical fashion. He begins his *salutatio* by acknowledging himself as the sender, and establishes credibility by placing emphasis on his apostolic credentials (Gal 1:1), acknowledging his social hierarchy. He next names the recipients and fulfills the formulaic greeting, “who gave himself for our sins” (Gal 1:4), crediting the highest status to Christ Jesus. This acknowledgement is detailed in order to set the tone for the letter. However, by verse six, Paul already deviates from the norm and begins to craft the unexpected. Skipping the important and usually subsequent thanksgiving section, he precedes his message with an overwhelming sense of urgency and disappointment and jumps quickly into his initial exhortation. He does not mention any goodwill for the recipient, besides “grace and peace to you” which Paul uses to begin all of his other New Testament letters.¹²

Shortening the *exordium* suggests that Paul is eager to express his message, perhaps prompted by the impending Council of Jerusalem. His *narratio* essentially encompasses the first two chapters of the book, receiving more detail than is typical for an epistle. Spending most of his time establishing credibility for himself and for his message, Paul arguably strays from the expected norm of brevity. In the very first verse of the book, Paul states that he was “sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the father” (Gal 1:1). He continues this appeal

10. For example, a simple request may not require a *narratio*, and an order from a master to a servant would omit the *exordium* (Carmargo 1991, 23).

11. I have chosen to use the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible due to wide usage as well as its comprehension level in the English language. The original text is in Greek, and more precisely “Hellenistic” or Koine (koine, “common”) Greek, adding a layer of depth to the meaning of each word or phrase. (Oakes 2015, 10).

12. Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, Philemon 1:3

into chapter 2 by repeating that he is responding to a “revelation,” which implies a divine sending (Gal 2:2). Appealing to his own prophetic salvation story, he tells the Galatians that he has been set apart by grace, and that he has been called by God to tell the message to the Gentiles (Gal 1:13-16). This personal argument is an important part of his claim of credibility and prophetic voice.

Although he has already expressed this notion, he continues to establish credibility by recounting the extent of the people and places with which he interacted after receiving his calling, claiming that he did not immediately consult with men, nor did he spend extended time with the leaders of Jerusalem (Gal 1:17-24). Continuing into chapter 2, Paul affirms the content of his message by relaying the confidence and acceptance he received from the leaders of the Jerusalem church, who appear to be held in “high esteem” (Gal 2:2, 2:6). Paul further identifies these leaders with a metaphor for James, Peter, and John, referring to them as “those esteemed as pillars” (Gal 2:9), which insinuates their foundational positions in the Jerusalem church. With this relatively lengthy set up, Paul concludes by arguing that the leaders of the church added nothing to his message, affirming the credibility of the gospel that he preaches (Gal 2:6).

Paul moves fluidly into the *petitio* section of his letter, crafting his argument in a radical way. His urgency expresses a need to correct the Galatians before the gospel Truth is lost. He defends his gospel through the message of faith alone rather than works of the law. His argument against legalism is interspersed throughout the text and presented in a variety of ways. Though it is typical to provide an example at this point in a letter, Paul employs an unconventional and unusual example, if we understand Paul’s argument to be partly a fusion of Hebrew and Jewish faiths. Carrying the title “father of Judaism,” Abraham is not the likely precedent for merging differences in Gentile and Jewish relations. Paul argues that God has always worked through faith, by extending grace and salvation to Abraham when he believed God (Gal 3:6).

Although Paul uses typical Ciceronian epistolary rhetoric, this mode of analyzing the text is not enough considering his deviation from norms. Not only is it radical, Paul’s letter is even less prudent than a genre reading suggests. Skipping sections of the letter and offering urgency paves way for the formation of an established relationship between Paul and his reader. Paul seems deeply familiar with the Galatians. He creates this image of son-ship under God, as he refers to the Galatians as “brothers and sisters” nine times throughout the text.¹³ Additionally, he extends the image beyond a familial relationship with Paul himself, and makes claims about the Galatians’ relationship with God. Calling them “children of God” (Gal 3:26) and “no longer slaves, but God’s child” (Gal 4:7), Paul encourages his

13. Gal 1:2, 1:11, 3:15, 4:12, 4:31, 5:11, 5:13, 6:1, 6:18

audience to see and approach God as a father. He uses unique language of the “adoption into sonship” (Gal 4:5), which implies that his audience was *chosen* to be sons and daughters.

Taking the image even further, Paul’s diction includes “heir” (Gal 3:29) to describe the Galatians, which implies an inheritance, a lineage, and the love and trust that come along with that. To finalize his point, Paul makes the boldest claim when he parallels his audience to Jesus (Gal 4:7). He expresses that anyone can have the same relationship with God that Jesus does. His claim insinuates kinship that extends beyond blood and creates a purpose for unity. The image of being a son of the living God, one by inheritance and lineage just as Abraham has been given (Gal 3:7), and one just as Jesus experiences (Gal 4:1-7), forms a strong case for unity under God, the common father and provider. Additionally, this familial language sets up an ideals-based community that Paul is appealing to, rather than the assumed law-based community of typical Hebrew prophets.

Despite this supposed familiarity assumed by parrhesia and the kind of truth telling among relatives, Paul’s prior distance is enough that the Galatians have turned away from his previous teachings, reinvoking a prophetic thread of blame and censure. Paul still offers ethical admonitions and general warnings with the risk of undermining the relationship. Preparing the gospel for the Council of Jerusalem, Paul makes a strong argument against what is well known today as legalism. He contends for freedom from the law as a means of salvation by utilizing the images of slavery and imprisonment. For example, Galatians 4:21-31 details the metaphor surrounding this image of freedom, including a free woman and a slave woman. These women represent the two separate covenants, one given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and one given on Mount Zion to the nation of Israel in the New Jerusalem. Paul explicitly states that the covenant given to Moses, if taken literally in the present day, will lead to bondage and sin. However, the promise of the salvation in Christ is still true. He refers to the Jerusalem covenant as free, making a subtle hint at the new covenant promising heaven in the New Jerusalem (Gal 4:26).¹⁴ The familial proximity of parrhesia, given through the new covenant of Jesus, is broken by the prophetic freedom reenergized by that same covenant.

Paul warns his audience, utilizing chiasmus, “for the flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh” (Gal 5:17), arguing

14. More examples of reference to freedom: Paul uses slavery as a metaphor again in chapter 5 stating, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). Another image that Paul continually appeals to is the image of *imprisonment* to describe those who are bound under the law. This appeal is interesting first because Paul himself has been in prison, as we know from the letter of Acts (Acts 16:16-40). Paul writes that, “Scripture has locked up everything” (Gal 3:22). By personifying scripture, Paul brings to life his metaphor of the people who are “held in custody” by law (Gal 3:23). He further personifies sin as a jail-keeper (Gal 3:22) and argues for faith as the tool of power to get out of this prison. With this exaggerated metaphor, Paul is framing his argument against legalism. He moves freely between images and explicitly defines the fact that there is no other gospel (Gal 1:6-10).

that being led by the Spirit removes you from the power of the flesh, and grants freedom from the law. Paul explicitly outlines acts that are to be admonished (Gal 5:19-21), and follows this with his extremely iconic metaphor, the Fruit of the Spirit. Using the image of fruit insinuates a good and *ripe* outcome, encouraging a repentance back to the Law, but in the language of a friendship and shared values.

Although ending on the positive values as fruits, Paul's message to the Galatians is full of fierce and moving images, standard for prophetic norms. His message is unconventional and untimely, anti-rhetorical as he subverts Old Testament law and Jewish traditions such as circumcision. With this subversion, Paul risks upsetting the Galatians and compromising his relationship with them. This anti-prudential approach needs not just the fire of prophecy, that worked within closed Jewish communities, but also the parrhesia of a wise and trusted councilor through the medium of letters.

4. Parrhesia and Prophecy

Lack of prudence, however, is not the only parrhesiastic element of Paul's letter. Paul's letter to the Galatians follows the constraints of parrhesia offered by Foucault. First, Paul speaks in the mode of truth-telling. One of the most common expectations of a parrhesiast is that they believe they are speaking the truth without ultimate concern for audience comfort. The first four verses of the letter establish the authority in truth that Paul seeks by referencing his revelation from God.¹⁵ In New Testament letters, it would be typical to argue that Paul presents himself as a parrhesiast in the *exordium*. However, given that Galatians has a shortened and unusual *exordium*, the notion must extend further to encompass the purpose of his text. In skipping the thanksgiving section, Paul removes the stigma that he might be a mere flatterer, but rather proves he is a speaker of pure Truth for the good of others. The first chapter establishes the need for frank truth in the message to the Galatians.

The most effective way that Paul establishes this basis of truth is through the central idea of ethos through both a well-defined relationship with the recipient and a clear commitment to the message by the speaker. Paul appeals to his relationship with the recipient by continually referring to them as "brothers and sisters"¹⁶ and creating a common bond as heir under Christ (Gal 3:29). This familial language is slightly different than tribal rhetoric of Hebrew prophets. Arguably, this repeated language of Paul's, available through a broadly read public letter, is basis for later Christian belonging centered on values rather than ethnicity. Additionally, Paul

15. Gal 1:1-4. This is additionally referenced in Gal 1:11-12, 2:2.

16. Gal 1:2, 1:11, 3:15, 4:12, 4:31, 5:11, 5:13, 6:1, 6:18

shows his commitment to his message mostly through the recounting of his journey to Christianity from Judaism. He details the literal places he traveled and the extent of his trips (Gal 1:13-2:5), which shows the effort that Paul invoked to fully develop his message. Also, Paul twice makes a personal appeal, one that ties his own desires to the outcome of the situation (Gal 4:12-16, 6:11).¹⁷

The second constraint of parrhesia is the expectation to be frank. With a straightforward tone and no attempt to mask the urgency of the situation, Paul employs plainspoken text. He speaks without hesitation as he expresses his concerns for the Galatians turning to a different gospel (Gal 1:6-9). One of the most candid things Paul does is call the Galatians “foolish” (Gal 3:1, 3:3). Furthermore, he speaks of the curse that bonds those who live under the law (Gal 3:10). Paul is frank in his commands to change. He is direct when he lists certain sins that are considered acts of the flesh and in opposition virtues that are of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-26). His encouragement to the Galatians to walk by the spirit is blunt (Gal 6:1-10).

Thirdly, Paul exercises parrhesia as his primary mode of persuasion by working within the constraints of impending danger. To begin, Paul is speaking with such fervor that he risks undermining his relationship with the Galatians. He does this through the way he admonishes their actions and calls them to a higher standard. Additionally, Paul risks his own personal danger and reputation by defining his message. Given the atmosphere necessary for parrhesia, it is important to note Paul’s dangerous situation with the Romans, which ultimately led to his arrest. Recounting the trip to Jerusalem, he explicitly expresses his opinion and chastens those who have turned away from his Truth (Gal 2:6-10). Paul’s view on circumcision drastically contrasted with church leaders in the area, offered without fear of the response. In this manner, Paul begins to set a precedent in Western Civilization of challenging authority, even when not within the confines of an “appropriate” rhetorical norm.

The final, and perhaps most interesting way that Paul takes a risk is by acknowledging the danger that is imminent for the Galatians. He is using this impending danger as a mechanism of persuasion. He writes about the zeal with which the external influences are trying to win the Galatians over (Gal 4:17-20). He warns them of the danger of bad zeal and bad prophets, a statement that was most likely not what the Galatians wanted to hear. In comparison, Paul presents himself as a good prophet and a good friend. Managing both of these identities, Paul uses appeals

17. Paul references the law and how it relates to his message. Explaining that the law was given as a guardian until one is under Christ, Paul further establishes the truth in this message (Gal 3:15-29). Additionally, he uses the image of Hagar and Sarah to portray the differences in living through the flesh and living through the spirit, a crucial part of his message. This extended metaphor works to present Paul’s message as parrhesiastic, as it is appealing to the basis of truth that Paul seeks to establish.

of parrhesia by relying on a friendship, repairing the lack of prophetic deference outside the homogenous Hebrew communities that awaited prophetic leadership.

Regardless, Paul certainly delivers a prophetic message, and his mode of rhetoric becomes similar to Old Testament prophecy at times. Overall, he calls upon a higher Truth. Consistently claiming a revelation from God, Paul crafts his message about his Gospel Truth, independent of what customary Jewish practices preached.¹⁸ Because of his apostolic calling, Paul relies upon the word of God to build his message, which gives him the highest form of prophetic logos: speaking for God. For Paul, this idea is one of the most important. Martin Luther comments about Paul's commitment to his calling as follows:

When I was a young man I thought Paul was making too much of his call. I did not understand his purpose. I did not then realize the importance of the ministry...we exalt our calling, not to gain glory among men, or money, or satisfaction, or favor, but because people need to be assured that the words we speak are the words of God. This is no sinful pride. It is holy pride (Luther 1949).

Paul's commitment to the Truth derives from the prophetic logos of his letter.

Additionally, Paul's message is necessary because of a separation or deserting from an original truth. This "crisis" is provoked from a decision by the Galatians to deviate from their previously righteous path, causing Paul to communicate prophetic pathos, urging the Galatians to repent and reorient to God. Presenting this information, Paul takes a risk of denial and persecution. His willingness to suffer for his message demonstrates a nobility and commitment to God that reflects a prophetic ethos. Lastly, Paul's passionate delivery and presence of the Spirit provide moments throughout his letter that enhance prophetic modes of rhetoric. Paul uses emotional language that creates a harsh tone such as "astonished," "pervert," "deserting," and "curse" (Gal 1:6-10). He consistently speaks for the Spirit in portraying his message in ways that directly castigate and distance the audience, rather than entrusting his path with theirs.

Paul amalgamates two distinct ideas, creating a hybrid that foregrounds parrhesia as a Christian mode, with anti-prudent, prophetic rhetorical features. This essential gospel paradox defines the discourse tradition across Europe for centuries of use. Dating back to the 5th century, Augustine attempts to plant erudition and rhetoric as antithetical to the prophetic mode of the gospel, Paul had already laid a path. Crossing the modes of parrhesia and prophecy, Paul anticipates modern Christianity that allows prophetic reprimand to mix with universal benevolence and frank advice. Such paradox allows for unity across tribal communities built on law and tradition with value-centered communities. Through this, Paul opens the

18. Gal 1:1-4, 1:11-12, 2:2

door for scholars to read prophecy and parrhesia—to disentangle the complicated inconsistencies of Christian discursive rhetorics and their origin in the fusion of horizons between Jew and Gentile.

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