

JOHN-PAUL HARPER

Paul and Philo on the
Politics of the Land,
Jerusalem, and Temple

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

Quite appropriately does Moses speak of the fruit of instruction as being not only “holy” but “for praise”; for each of the virtues is a holy matter, but thanksgiving is pre-eminently so – Philo (Plant. 126)

This present study arose out of my PhD work at the University of Stellenbosch that I completed in 2020. As with any undertaking of this nature, it would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of a whole community. I would firstly like to thank my supervisor, Professor Jeremy Punt, for his many helpful observations and careful guidance throughout the course of my study. I would secondly like to thank Matthew Harmon and Esau McCaulley who provided me with manuscripts of their work which were often nearly impossible to get hold of due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I thirdly express special thanks to Professor N.T. Wright for his hospitality in Oxford and for his guidance and encouragement in my studies. Fourthly, I also express my deep gratitude to Professor David Runia who examined my PhD and gave many thoughtful comments and suggestions that helped me refine my argument and ultimately enrich my study. In the area of scholarly guidance, I finally express my gratitude to Professor Jörg Frey and the editorial team at Mohr Siebeck for the opportunity to publish my work and for their many constructive comments that have likewise enriched my study. I especially thank Tobias Stähler for his careful reading of my manuscript and editorial improvements.

In terms of broader support, I would firstly like to express my gratitude to my church community at Christ Church Stellenbosch who supported me and encouraged me as I pursued this path. Stepping back from full-time pastoral work exposed me to significant financial risk and here I am especially grateful to friends and family who supported us financially during this time to make this possible. Furthermore, I express my gratitude to Stellenbosch University for the Retention Scholarship I received, which came at just the right time when I was unsure of the financial viability of ongoing study.

Moving even closer to home, I would also especially like to thank my family for all their love and support during this time. My parents, Paul and Cecile Harper, have always encouraged me with a love of learning and have continued to be a great support. My children, Emma, Adele, and Nathan, were very patient as their father spent many hours in front of the books and computer and

even four-year old Nathan came to know well the phrase, “Daddy is working on his P-H-D.” I am especially grateful to my dear wife Julia who made many sacrifices to give me time and space to work on this study and was my consistent support and strength. I am finally grateful to the God who gave me this opportunity for careful study and even the painful experiences that led me to wrestle with this subject.

Stellenbosch, 2021

John-Paul Harper

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow *The SBL Handbook of Style*.¹ Abbreviations not listed in this handbook are noted below.

- JJMJS* Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting.
- LXX The Septuagint. The Greek text comes from Rahlfs, A. and Hahnhart, R. (eds.) *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*. 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.
- MT Masoretic Text. Unless otherwise indicated, the MT is quoted from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Elliger, K. and Rudolph, R. (eds.) 4th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990.
- NETS *The New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under That Title*. Pietersma, A. and Wright, B.G. (eds.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- NRSV *New Revised Standard Version: Anglicized Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- OTP Charlesworth, J.H. ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 volumes. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.

Unless otherwise noted, English translations of classical, Hellenistic, and Graeco-Roman texts have been taken from the Loeb Classical Library. Likewise, translations of the Old and New Testament come from NRSV unless otherwise noted. English quotations of the Septuagint and Old Greek Scriptures, including the Apocrypha, are taken from NETS. The Septuagint and Old Greek text comes from Rahlfs and Hahnhart (see above, LXX). For the Jewish Pseudepigrapha, I use James Charlesworth's *Pseudepigrapha* (see above, OTP).

¹ Billie Jean Collins and Society of Biblical Literature, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2014).

Chapter 1

Introduction

A. Topic and goal of the study

This study critically compares how Paul and Philo rethought the significant Jewish symbols of Land, Jerusalem, and Temple, drawing particular attention to their political significance. I bring together these two politically engaged Diaspora Jews into a mutually illuminating conversation and highlight aspects of their political theology latent in their appropriation of these symbols. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate aspects of both continuity and discontinuity in their perspectives and to account for these in terms of their respective worldviews and social locations. Here I also relate my findings to contemporary discussions of Paul and Philo's Jewish identity.

Through this comparative study, I aim to demonstrate how these symbols offer important insights into how both Paul and Philo conceptualised authority within their local communities and how they understood these as political communities in relation to others. In particular, I focus on the way their appropriation of these symbols communicate how they conceptualised authority in the local community, within the wider "people of God," and in relation to the Roman Empire. Here I relate my findings to traditional discussions of community leadership and "church order."

B. Research problem

It is widely recognised that the Land, Jerusalem, and the Temple were central symbols¹ of Second Temple Judaism.² It is also widely recognised that both

¹ I use symbols here in the broad sociological sense as that which is invested by human beings with meaning and which, according to Clifford Geertz, "function to synthesize a people's ethos – the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood – and their world view – the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order." *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

² While recognizing the diversity of first century Judaism, I use the term here in Ed Sanders' sense of a "Common Judaism." *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 45–314. I continue with caution to use the common terms "Jews" and

Paul and Philo rethought these symbols in significant ways. Paul, for example, makes little reference to the Jerusalem Temple in his letters,³ but on several occasions applies the designation of “God’s temple” to the ἐκκλησία.⁴ Philo, likewise, has little to say about the Jerusalem Temple as such, insisting that “The highest, and in the truest sense the holy, temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe” (*Spec.* 1.66). Furthermore, both Paul and Philo seem to demonstrate little interest in the Land promised to Abraham and as such appear to have little hope for a politically autonomous Israel centred around Jerusalem.⁵ Indeed, both Paul and Philo have historically been interpreted as “spiritualising” these symbols.⁶

This “spiritualising” approach to Paul has been challenged in recent decades and the question of whether he regarded the ἐκκλησία as replacing or substituting the Jerusalem Temple has also been forcefully raised.⁷ Other scholars have insisted that, while “spiritualisation” is a misleading category, Paul does nevertheless see the ἐκκλησία as a fulfilment of what the Temple pointed towards.⁸ Many prefer the more neutral language of “transference” or simply

“Judaism,” recognising the dangers of projecting modern conceptualisations on ancient categories that are now well recognised. See, e.g., Steve Mason “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512. On the centrality of these symbols see, e.g., Nicholas T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 75–196; James D.G. Dunn, “Judaism in the Land of Israel in the First Century,” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Historical Syntheses*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 251–7.

³ Probably the only explicit references within the undisputed Pauline letters are 1 Cor 9:13 and Rom 9:4.

⁴ See 1 Cor 3:16–17, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16.

⁵ On Paul, see William D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 164–220. Davies observes Paul’s lack of interest in the Land and concludes that for Paul being “in Christ” fulfilled the hope of being in the Land. On Philo, note Samuel Sandmel’s conclusion that, “It cannot be over-emphasized that Philo has little or no concern for Palestine.” *Philo’s Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971), 116.

⁶ On Paul, see Albert L.A. Hogeterp, *Paul and God’s Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthians Correspondence* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 2–8; Nijay K. Gupta, *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul: A New Approach to the Theology and Ethics of Paul’s Cultic Metaphors* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 9–26. On Philo, note Daniel Schwartz’s conclusion: “Very frequently his references to the temple actually undercut it by spiritualizing it.” “Philo, His Family, and His Times,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 26.

⁷ See, e.g., Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Hogeterp, *Paul and God’s Temple*, 2–13; Eyal Regev, *The Temple in Early Christianity: Experiencing the Sacred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

⁸ In speaking of the church’s mission, e.g., Wright concludes: “Paul seems to have believed that the individual churches . . . were each a living Temple in which the creator God,

“metaphor” and stress that the central question is not so much Paul’s meaning at face value, but, as Albert L.A. Hogeterp suggests, “its meaning as applied in the context.”⁹

It has also been recognised in relation to Philo that how one defines “spiritualising” must be nuanced. Although Philo characteristically emphasised the “spiritual” through an allegorical hermeneutic, this does not mean that he regarded the “literal” aspects of the faith as unimportant.¹⁰ Thus, in relation to Philo we may also ask what rhetorical and practical purposes his reframing of these symbols served.

In relation to both Paul and Philo, therefore, I will investigate what practical and political aims their reframing of these symbols served for their audiences. I will also explore the degree to which their symbolic use may indicate a marginalisation of their commitment to these as concrete realities. Finally, I will ask what social and theological factors account for their perspectives and at what points these are continuous and discontinuous.

C. Hypothesis

The basic hypothesis of this study is that both Paul and Philo’s interest in the Land, Jerusalem, and Temple as concrete realities is generally overshadowed by their interest in symbolically appropriating these for their respective communities. Moreover, both, in distinctive ways, tended to apply these symbols in universalising ways. I will argue, however, that the *referent* of these symbols also generally differed and that Philo’s appropriation tended to be more individualistic and focused on other-worldly realities while Paul’s tended to be more communal and focused on this-worldly realities. Furthermore, I will argue that, while Philo was more committed to the literal Temple than Paul, neither were especially invested in the hope of a politically autonomous Israel centred around Jerusalem. Finally, I argue that both shared an important charismatic dimension to the way they conceptualised authority, but that Paul’s vision was again more communally oriented.

Philo, I will argue, demonstrates little interest in the concrete referents of these symbols for two reasons. Firstly, being more profoundly Hellenised (in

the God who had dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem, was now dwelling.” *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 437.

⁹ Hogeterp, *Paul and God’s Temple*, 19.

¹⁰ Take, e.g., his embassy to Gaius where it is precisely the “literal” Temple that he wants to protect from desecration (*Legat.* 192). The majority of scholars now recognise that both the literal and symbolic were important for Philo. See, e.g., Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

the sense of being more acculturated to Greek language and education),¹¹ he found in Greek philosophy a means by which to interpret these symbols as expressive of more significant spiritual realities. Secondly, his Diaspora location, under Roman power and far away from the ancestral homeland, also lent itself to interpretations that marginalised the concrete hopes often associated with these symbols. I will argue that Philo's main aim in reframing these symbols was to inculcate virtue and to invest his readers with dignity, despite their marginal position within the Empire. This of course does not imply that Philo himself was not politically engaged (indeed he was), but that his overall theologising lent itself to a more quiescent political theology.

Paul, I will argue, showed little interest in these concrete *realia* because he believed that Israel's story had reached a decisive turning point in the coming of the Messiah. I will argue that Paul generally "universalised" or "transcendentalised" rather than "spiritualised" these symbols and that his inaugurated eschatology played a significant role in his metaphoric usage. This eschatology led to a fundamental reconfiguration of sacred space and time that is evident in his appropriation of these symbols.¹²

I will argue that Paul reframed these symbols in order to give his audience a sense of belonging to a "larger entity" with a concrete hope and to reframe their views of political authority in the present. In relation to the local community and the broader "people of God," I will argue that Paul's use of these metaphors invested considerable authority in the local community and called into question any centralised authority that governed the Christ-movement. In relation to the Roman Empire, I will argue that Paul's use lent itself to a more strident political theology that was less committed to the status quo than was Philo's. Finally, I will argue that Paul's appropriation of these symbols was generally more politicised than Philo's and that this can be attributed to the fact that Paul was challenging the traditional boundaries of the community in more radical ways than Philo.

D. Background

I begin by tracing developments in Pauline scholarship and motivating the comparison with Philo. The decision to generally begin with Paul and move toward Philo is largely pragmatic as it allows me to introduce the key issues by

¹¹ For a definition of acculturation see John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 92–8.

¹² Paul can already say of the ἐκκλησία in Corinth "You are God's temple" (1 Cor 3:16), while the "Jerusalem" he is concerned about remains at present "above" (Gal 4:26). Furthermore, the "Land" remained for Paul a universal future reality to be inherited (Rom 8:17–25).

way of the disproportionate amount of scholarship on Paul.¹³ This also gives me the opportunity, from the perspective of New Testament studies at least, to move from the generally more to less familiar.

The last several decades have seen an intense interest in the concrete social and political contexts in which Paul first exercised his ministry. This can be seen, for example, in the careful “city by city” approach to his letters, in which everything from archaeological to numismatic to literary evidence has been investigated in order to gain a better localised picture of each urban context Paul addressed.¹⁴ It can be seen further in the numerous recent studies on Paul’s attitude to “empire” and how he understood his own mission and communities in relation to the political context of first century Rome. Much of this recent study has focussed not merely on Paul’s theology in an abstract sense, but also on his concrete praxis. At the same time, emphasis in many circles has shifted away from attempts to discover the world “behind the text” towards studying the world “of the text” and “in front of the text,” i.e., how Paul’s text functions rhetorically to achieve its purposes and how he has been interpreted throughout history.¹⁵

Within this scholarly enterprise, there has also been a growing recognition, coming from broader cultural movements, that questions of meaning cannot ultimately be answered with any kind of detached neutrality or objectivity. We always face the danger of either projecting contemporary political questions back onto the first century, or else of constructing a Paul who merely fits our own political agenda (whether conservative, liberal, progressive or otherwise).¹⁶

As this discipline has matured, there has also been a growing recognition that some of the earlier studies that sought to situate Paul on a simple spectrum of “for” or “against” a construct called “empire” were insufficient.¹⁷ Furthermore, questions of how power was exercised in Paul’s own communities and

¹³ Chronologically and conceptually one could of course argue that Philo is prior to Paul and better represents the core of Diaspora Judaism. I am grateful to Prof. David Runia for making me reflect on this question of order.

¹⁴ See, e.g., James R. Harrison and Larry L. Welborn, eds., *The First Urban Churches*, 5 vols., *Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series* 7, 8, 9, 13, 16 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015–2019). Along with many recent studies, they follow Edwin A. Judge’s dictum that the Pauline churches ought to be studied, “city by city, institution by institution.” *Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E.A. Judge*, ed. David M. Scholer (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 135.

¹⁵ See an introductory history in, e.g., Anthony C. Thiselton, “New Testament Interpretation in Historical Perspective,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10–36.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 17–30.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1271–1319. Note also Jeremy Punt’s conclusion that, “Framing Paul’s political stance in radical, binary opposite positions

how he himself exercised power have increasingly been raised. The realities in question are complex, and the methodology and even terminology (“politics,” “empire,” “power,” “authority” etc.) need to be carefully defined. Finally, the questions that are asked and the way the research is framed will also be critical if we are to avoid the twin dangers of anachronism and ego/ethnocentrism.

Keeping these challenges in mind, this study will focus on first century political categories that Paul himself drew upon in his letters to address aspects of these questions. When it comes to community formation, there is an increasing realisation that such political categories are useful lenses through which to explore what Paul understood he was doing.¹⁸ Bruno Blumenfeld, among others, has drawn attention to the political resonances behind Paul’s use of terminology like ἐκκλησία, κοινωνία and the numerous “building” metaphors (ἐπικοδομέω, ἀρχιτέκτων etc.) that we find scattered throughout his letters.¹⁹ He argues that Paul is fundamentally a political thinker who “draws borders, organises crowds, sets rules, creates a government, gives a constitution.”²⁰

Although significant work can and has been done by exploring the political dimensions of Paul’s rhetoric²¹ and terminology (not least ἐκκλησία²² and “the body of Christ”²³), the danger of resting too much weight on individual terms remains. A further danger lies in attributing aspects of Paul’s thought to an exclusively Hellenistic or Jewish background. Most scholars today recognise the importance of both contexts, as well as the importance of focussing more

has proved to be too one-sided and unsustainable.” “Pauline Agency in Postcolonial Perspective: Subverter of or Agent for Empire?,” in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 54.

¹⁸ See, e.g., John M.G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, WUNT 275 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 81–106. In this essay, Barclay argues for a “political” analysis of Paul’s strategies that compares his “constitution” of the church in Corinth to Josephus’ presentation of God’s law as the “constitution” of the Jewish people. See also Brad J. Bitner, *Paul’s Political Strategy in 1 Corinthians 1–4: Constitution and Covenant*, SNTSMS 163 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 33–39. Bitner argues for the broad first-century category of *politeia* through which to explore Paul’s letters as political discourse aimed at establishing an alternative civic ideology.

¹⁹ Bruno Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 95–119.

²⁰ Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 109.

²¹ See, e.g., Larry L. Welborn, “On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Ancient Politics,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 85–111. Welborn explores parallels between 1 Cor 1–4 and Greco-Roman *homonoiā* speeches.

²² See, e.g., Young-Ho Park, *Paul’s Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly*, WUNT II 393 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Ralph J. Korner, “Ekklesiā as a Jewish Synagogue Term: A Response to Erich Gruen,” *JJMJS* (2017): 127–36; Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 95–119.

²³ See, e.g., Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Yung Suk Kim, *Christ’s Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Timothy L. Carter, “Looking at the Metaphor of Christ’s Body in 1 Corinthians 12,” in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 93–116.

on Paul's engagement with his various contexts rather than attempts to uncover the exact genealogy of his ideas.²⁴ Within this analogical approach, the importance of distinguishing between Paul's own intentions and how he would have been heard by his first audience is also widely recognised. Finally, I suggest that any proposed meaning ought to deepen our understanding of the flow of Paul's letters as we have them, as well as our understanding of his theologising and praxis as a whole.

E. Why Land, Jerusalem, and Temple?

In this study, I suggest that an important avenue for exploring Paul's political theology is his use of the significant Jewish symbols of Land, Jerusalem, and Temple. While important work on this has been done,²⁵ it seems to me that the fundamental political insights one gains from this examination have not always been fully appreciated. Furthermore, these symbols have often been treated separately and therefore the full weight of the conclusions has not always been felt. The "umbilical" relationship between these symbols in Second Temple Judaism, where they are often conceptualised as concentric rings representing varying degrees of God's holiness and presence,²⁶ is widely recognised.

The first reason that these symbols have not always received due attention in Pauline scholarship is the fact that they do not appear to surface very often in his letters. A second reason is a long history of spiritualisation in which it was regarded as self-evident that for Paul these symbols merely pointed to spiritual realities with little temporal or political significance.²⁷ This has changed in recent decades, however, with the recognition of the latent dualism often assumed in such constructions.²⁸ When it comes to these symbols, few today

²⁴ Wright comments on this: "To broaden this either/or just a bit: we need to enquire not just about the derivation of Paul's ideas, as an older history-of-religions project tried to do, but more specifically about Paul's engagement with his various worlds." *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 44.

²⁵ I undertake a thorough review of the secondary literature on each of these symbols in my second chapter.

²⁶ See, e.g., *m. Kelim* 1:6–9: "There are ten degrees of holiness. The land of Israel is holier than all the [other] lands . . . The walled cities are still more holy than it . . . Within the wall [of Jerusalem the locality] is still more holy . . . The Temple Mount is more holy than that."

²⁷ See Hogeterp, *Paul and God's Temple*, 2–8; Gupta, *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul*, 9–26.

²⁸ See Gupta, *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul*, 27–54. By "spiritualisation" I mean here an emphasis on the "spiritual" within a "cosmological duality" of Platonic construction. For various meanings of "dualism," see Nicholas T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 252. For a nuanced account of "spiritualisation" in relation to Paul's cultic metaphors specifically, see Stephan Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 47–69.

would disagree with William D. Davies' basic conclusion that, "such a Jew as Paul, we can be sure, would have *felt* the full force of the doctrine of the land, Jerusalem, and the Temple."²⁹

I would suggest that Paul alludes to these symbols more frequently than is often realised³⁰ and that Paul's conviction regarding how these relate to Christ is in fact a powerful driving force behind his mission. N.T. Wright has recently argued, for example, that Paul's worldwide mission "was part of the enactment of the revised and reborn symbol of the land" and that "Paul's apostolic task was, so to speak, tabernacle-construction, temple-building."³¹ These insights are not entirely new, however, as a previous generation of Pauline scholars had already recognised the centrality of the metaphor of "upbuilding" the church and how these metaphors were rooted in Jewish Temple traditions.³²

What has not always been adequately explored is the political dimensions of these metaphors. Whether one is thinking in contemporary or ancient terms, there is little more politically charged subject than that of land. Furthermore, it hardly needs to be mentioned that Jerusalem and the Temple were politically significant places in the first century.³³ Jerusalem and the Temple were, after all, closely associated with the hope of the Messiah³⁴ and both played a significant role in the Jewish War.³⁵ Michael Knibb points out, for example, how the Temple, "very often appears as an object of rivalry and contention"³⁶ in many Second Temple Jewish texts. Temple building, moreover, was often closely related to claims of political legitimacy both in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world.³⁷ Furthermore, the close relationship between the Temple and the Spirit

²⁹ Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 166 (emphasis original).

³⁰ On the cultic metaphors see, e.g., Gupta, *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul*.

³¹ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 367; 1493.

³² See, e.g., Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 429–38.

³³ Lee Levine comments, e.g., "Often packed with pilgrims during the festivals, the Temple court also served as a convenient venue for the exchange of political views and the airing of declarations, criticisms, and grievances. Sometimes a particularly fervent speech would be delivered, inflaming passions and sparking violence." *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 B.C.E.–70 C.E.)* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 235.

³⁴ See William Horbury, *Messianism among Jews and Christians: Twelve Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 189–226; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 90–107.

³⁵ Josephus, e.g., describes how in the last stand against Rome, "The Jews had fled to the temple . . . for they held that the entry of the Romans into the sanctuary meant final capture, while the latter regarded it as the prelude to victory" (*B.J.* 6.71–74).

³⁶ Michael A. Knibb, "Temple and Cult in Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal Writings," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 401.

³⁷ Note, e.g., Simon R.F. Price's comment on the Graeco-Roman context: "after 33BC only Augustus and members of his family built temples in Rome . . . Temple building placed the emperor in a unique relationship with the gods." "The Place of Religion: Rome in the

and therefore with power and authority in the Jewish tradition also warrants such an investigation. In this area I agree with the relatively recent scholarly affirmation that in the ancient world the realms of “religion” and “politics” were woven into a far more seamless fabric of meaning than they often are today.³⁸

In what ways did the political aspects of these symbols then inform Paul’s theologising? I will argue that these symbols never lose a significant political dimension in Paul’s appropriation. One need only notice, for example, that Paul’s insistence of the community in Corinth, “You are God’s temple” (1 Cor 3:16), is set in relation to the political struggles between factions within the community; or that Paul’s discourse on “Jerusalem above” (Gal 4:26) is set in the context of a sharp political dispute over who can claim to be the true heirs of the promises to Abraham.

The political import of these texts has also not always been lost on later interpreters. In the bitter political struggles of the Reformation, for example, both Luther and Calvin had no trouble identifying the Roman Catholic church with the present “Jerusalem” whose authority Paul rejects. Note Calvin’s strong words when commenting on believers having “Jerusalem above” as their “mother” (Gal 4:26):

This is a title of wonderful and the highest honour. But the Papists are foolish and worse than puerile when they plead this to annoy us. For their mother is an adulteress, who brings forth into death the children of the devil. How foolish is the demand that the children of God should surrender themselves to her to be cruelly slain! Could not the synagogue of Satan at that time have boasted with far more honest claim than Rome today?³⁹

Early Empire,” in *The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.–A.D. 69*, 2nd ed., CAH X (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 831. Consider also Josephus’ report of Herod’s speech to the Jewish elders in which, “[He] recounted all his strenuous efforts on their behalf, and told them at what great expense to himself he had constructed the Temple, whereas the Hasmoneans had been unable to do anything so great for the honor of God in the 125 years of their reign.” (*A.J.* 17.161–162).

³⁸ Simon R.F. Price, e.g., comments that one of the major reasons we fail to understand the New Testament is “our assumption that politics and religion are separate areas.” *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2. See also Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 246–78.

³⁹ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 88. See also Luther, who comments on Gal 4:27: “We are not bound to the ceremonies of Moses: much less to the ceremonies of the Pope” or a little later on Gal 4:29: “So at this day they accuse Luther to be a troubler of the Papacy, and of the Roman empire . . . If I speak, the Pope is troubled and overthrown. Either we must lose the Pope, an [earthly and] mortal man, or else Christ which is eternal, and with him eternal life. Let the Pope perish then.” *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1953), 428; 432.

Calvin clearly draws on this text to resist the claim that there is any centralised authority that governs the Christ movement. But how did Paul himself regard the authority of “Jerusalem”? The above observations lead us to ask further questions like why Paul could say “You are God’s temple” while the Temple in Jerusalem still stood, but would not apply that same transference to Jerusalem itself?⁴⁰ Or what practical and political implications did Paul envision for those who have the “Jerusalem above” as their mother-city (Gal 4:26)?

This of course also raises the question of Paul’s political hopes and eschatology and we will have to tie together these themes with other aspects of Paul’s thought. For now, my purpose has simply been to argue that one can make a *prima facie* case that these symbols had contemporary and political significance for a Diaspora Jew like Paul.

I will make the case that each of these symbols offers an important insight into how Paul conceptualised authority at various levels. The Land raises the ultimate question, “To whom does the earth belong?” and it should not surprise us that Paul’s perspective here might shed light on his attitude towards Rome.⁴¹ Jerusalem raises the question of whether there is any centralised authority that governs the people of God. Finally, the Temple addresses aspects of the former questions and the question of the authority of the community itself vis-à-vis its members. Broadly speaking, therefore, I will argue that the structure of authority in the local community, within the wider “people of God,” and in relation to the Roman Empire can be discerned through Paul’s appropriation of the symbols of Temple, Jerusalem, and Land respectively.⁴²

It is not always clear, however, how Paul’s thought in this area related to other perspectives in the Jewish Diaspora broadly.⁴³ It is in this regard that it

⁴⁰ Note an interesting potential contrast with the Matthean Jesus who, almost certainly alluding to Jerusalem as a “city on a hill” says of the community, “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.” (Matt 2:14).

⁴¹ In commenting on Paul’s “apocalyptic” perspective, Ernst Käsemann highlighted how important this question was to Paul: “Apocalyptic, finally, is the disquieting question which not only moves the apostle but apparently faces every Christian, a question bound up with his task and his existence: who owns the earth?” *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 24–5.

⁴² I work here with Geertz’s thesis that a culture’s symbols embody their “most comprehensive ideas of order.” *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 89 (emphasis mine).

⁴³ Jill Hicks-Keeton argues that, while Paul’s Jewish context has received significant attention in academic scholarship, “‘diaspora’ (or ‘diasporic’) – is by comparison under-theorized in the study of Paul and Hellenistic Judaism.” “Putting Paul in His Place: Diverse Diasporas and Sideways Spaces in Hellenistic Judaism,” *JMJS* 6 (2019): 3. For arguments that highlight the importance of this category for understanding Paul see Ronald Charles, *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 1–41. Note also Sanders’ conclusion that: “To understand Paul we must see that he was a Diaspora Jew and that he was not a Pharisaic scholar.” *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 22.

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