

THE ROLE OF ALLEGORY, ALLEGORESIS AND METAPHOR IN PAUL
AND ORIGEN

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Introduction

This article will focus on three closely related Greco-Roman literary techniques that are relevant to New Testament exegesis: allegory, allegoresis and metaphor. It will be explained what allegory, allegoresis and metaphor are, how these worked in the literature of the Greco-Roman world and the function they had in philosophical literature, especially Stoic (and later Platonist), as applied to religious narratives. Within the wider Greco-Roman literature, a special place is reserved for biblical allegoresis as practiced in Hellenistic Judaism, particularly by Philo, a contemporary of Paul. It will be argued that allegory, allegoresis and metaphors are present in the New Testament, especially in Paul (concerning allegoresis) and in the Gospels (as for parables and metaphors).

The example within the New Testament which I have chosen to concentrate on and elaborate is Paul's own application of allegoresis to Old Testament figures in Gal. 4.21-31. This passage, along with other Pauline loci, was later deemed foundational by Origen of Alexandria for his own practice of biblical allegoresis, which exerted an incalculable influence on subsequent biblical exegesis. Origen understood very well what Paul was doing and the strategy to which Paul pointed, and related this to the practice of Stoic

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allegoresis of theological myths. This article will finally consider briefly whether Paul was indeed familiar, to some extent, with Stoic allegoresis and Greco-Roman philosophy and literary techniques.

Allegory, Allegoresis and Metaphor in the Greco-Roman World

Ἀλληγορία is ‘the trope which says (ἀγορεύειν) some things but signifies others (ἄλλα)’.¹ This is the definition given in the early imperial age by Heraclitus the grammarian and rhetorician, whose *Allegoriae (Quaestiones homericæ)* was an allegorical interpretation of the Homeric poems.² This definition refers to the first of the two main meanings of allegory, where allegory can be understood (1) as a *compositional method*, i.e. writing an allegorical text, in which the literal level differs from its symbolic meaning(s); or (2) as a *hermeneutical tool*: the allegorical interpretation of a text. This is also called ‘allegoresis’ (from ‘allegorical’ + ‘exegesis’), the term which will be used in this article. Allegoresis in Greco-Roman antiquity was frequently used to find deeper meanings in received texts, often religious ones, and thereby rescue them from charges of anthropomorphism of divinities, blasphemy and errors.

Allegory as a compositional method can be found both in classical literature, from its archaic phases onwards, and in Jewish and Christian literature, from the Bible to ‘Gnostic’ myths. For example, Phoenix’s fable of the Prayers in *Iliad* 9 is very similar to an allegory. And the poet Alcaeus (seventh century BCE) employed the image of the ship representing the polis (F326LP), which Heraclitus cites to show that Homer too may have employed this technique.

Pythagoras seems to have used symbolic language³ and Plato’s myths are allegories—later, Platonists would allegorize not only his myths, but most of his dialogues. The Epicurean Lucretius represented the torments of hell as

1. Heraclitus, *All.* 5.2.

2. See also the definitions by Trypho, *On Tropes*, in Leonardi Spengel (ed.), *Rhetores Graeci* (3 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1853–1861), III, pp. 191, 215–16; Cocondrius, in Spengel (ed.), *Rhetores Graeci*, III, p. 324; Ps. Choeroboscus, in Spengel (ed.), *Rhetores Graeci*, III, p. 244.

3. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 8.21 and other ancient reports on Pythagoras and the Pythagorean tradition.

symbols of the insatiable desires of ignorant people (*Nat.* 3.978-1023). The *Cebetis Tabula* (*Tablet of Cebes*), probably from the first century CE or shortly afterwards, joins allegory to *ekphrasis*, describing an allegorical picture ostensibly preserved in a temple. As in the Sophist Prodicus's tale of Heracles at the crossroad, virtues and vices are personified, and a road is said to lead to Paideia, true Education. In the second century CE, Apuleius in his novel, *Metamorphoses*, narrates the story of Cupid and Psyche, the allegory of the soul's desire for immortality according to Fulgentius's interpretation in the late fifth century. In the same century Martianus Capella, born in North Africa, composed a full allegorical narrative: *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (*Marriage of Philology and Mercury*), a prosimeter, in which Mercury-Hermes symbolizes the Logos and Philology, the love for the Logos, culture and intelligence; the seven liberal arts are personified as maidens. Capella's allegorical work was further allegorized by Eriugena, Bernardus Silvestris and scholars of the Platonic School of Chartres among others.⁴

Allegoresis—the second hermeneutical meaning of allegory—is the allegorical exegesis of given texts, which have, or are taken to have, allegories in them.⁵ Allegoresis was especially applied in antiquity to religiously

4. Allegory in Martianus has been pointed out by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli and Marziano Capella, *Nozze di Filologia e Mercurio* (Milan: Bompiani, 2001), with monographic treatment, edition and translation, commentary, appendixes and bibliography, and the use of allegoresis by the commentators on Martianus by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Tutti i commenti a Marziano Capella: Scoto Eriugena, Remigio di Auxerre, Bernardo Silvestre e anonimi* (Milan: Bompiani—Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 2006), and *idem*, 'Eriugena's Commentary on Martianus in the Framework of his Thought and the Philosophical Debate of his Time', in Sinead O'Sullivan and Mariken Teeuwen (eds.), *Carolingian Scholarship and Martianus Capella* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 245-72.

5. On the distinction between allegory and allegoresis, see Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 67-89; Gerard Naddaf, 'Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy', in William Wians (ed.), *Logos and Muthos: Philosophical Essays in Greek Literature* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), pp. 99-131; Ilaria L.E. Ramelli and Giulio Lucchetta, *Allegoria: L'età classica* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004); David Konstan and Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Allegory (Graeco-Roman Antiquity)', in Hans-Joseph Klauck (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception: I. Aaron—Aniconism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 780-85; Mikolaj

authoritative texts, both by ‘pagan’ philosophers such as Stoics and Middle/Neoplatonists, who allegorized myths concerning divinities, rituals and cultic epithets of deities and the like, and by philosophically minded Hellenistic Jewish and Christian exegetes, such as Philo and Origen, who read the Bible allegorically. Philo and Origen reacted both against an exclusively literal reading of Scripture (advocated e.g. by the Marcionites, who rejected Old Testament allegoresis, therefore deriving a poor concept of God from the Old Testament) and against extreme allegorists, who were present in Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity, especially among ‘Gnostics’—particularly Valentinians. As I have argued extensively,⁶ Origen explicitly appealed to the authority of Philo to defend a mode of biblical exegesis that valued both the literal level and the spiritual meanings, within a philosophico-allegorical, multi-layered interpretation.

Both ‘pagan’ and Christian allegorizers of theological texts aimed at finding deeper meanings and philosophical truths in traditional texts, thereby rescuing them from accusations of superficiality or impiety. The goal was to

Domaradzki, ‘The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis’, *Classical World* 110 (2017), pp. 299-321 (300-303).

6. Especially in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, ‘Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa’, *SPhiloA* 20 (2008), pp. 55-99, and *idem*, ‘Philo and Origen: Allegorical Exegesis of Scripture’, *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 7 (2012), pp. 1-17. Jennifer Otto, *Philo of Alexandria and the Construction of Jewishness in Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), sees Origen’s appeals to Philo as an effort to define the continuities and distinctive features of Christian beliefs and practices in relation to those of the Jews. This can surely be a component of Origen’s appeals to Philo, which does not obliterate the value of Origen’s recourse to Philo as an authoritative antecedent, which is transparent, including in *Contra Celsum*, since it appears in connection with fundamental exegetical strategies (as I pointed out in detail) which Origen appropriated and come from Philo. This is also confirmed by the attempt, on the part of ‘pagan’ Platonists such as Celsus and Origen, to sever Origen’s allegoresis of Scripture from its most important biblical antecedent (Philo) and rather connect it exclusively to Stoic allegoresis, of which Origen would be a deformation, applied as it was to a ‘spurious’ book such as the Bible (Porphyry). Origen’s move in his appeal to Philo as antecedent should moreover be viewed against the backdrop of his anti-Marcionite polemic: while Marcionites rejected the Jewish heritage, Origen appealed to it, but in its philosophico-allegorical strand, as a basis for his own allegorical theology (see Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Origen of Alexandria’s Philosophical Theology* [in preparation]).

find in Homeric and other theological myths, as well as in the Bible, meanings ‘worthy of the divine’. The interpretation of Penelope’s dream in *Odyssey* 19 is allegoresis, and Joseph’s exegesis of the dream of Pharaoh in the Bible (Gen. 41) is as well. Allegoresis of theological myths began in the sixth century BCE with Theagenes of Rhegium, who identified Homeric deities with physical qualities such as hot and cold, dry and moist, and ethical notions, such as foolishness and amorousness. Xenophanes of Colophon attacked the poets as ‘they ascribed to the gods all those things that among humans are shameful and blameworthy: theft, adultery, and mutual deception’.⁷

The Derveni papyrus (fourth century BCE) allegorizes a more ancient Orphic poem, offering a cosmological reading of it. I pointed out parallels with later Stoic allegoresis,⁸ which may have been prompted also by Plato’s ban on Homer, and by the purpose of finding worthy meanings in Homer’s theological myths. In the *Republic*, Socrates allows that myths may be used in the instruction of children (376E), but would ban the more unbecoming ones, along with the poets who recite them, for the young cannot appreciate their intended meaning (ὑπόνοια, a technical term in allegoresis: 378D7-9). Plato himself, nevertheless, employed myths to convey truths about the cosmos and afterlife, such as the dream of Er in the *Republic*, the myth of the Cave, that of Poros and Penia and eschatological myths in *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*.

In Stoicism and Platonism, allegoresis was part and parcel of philosophy, far from being a mere etymologizing—although etymologies, especially of epithets of deities, were important in Stoicism.⁹ Allegoresis had been used since the early Stoa, from Zeno’s commentaries on Homer and Hesiod onwards. Probably also in answer to Plato’s intention to chase Homer out of his ideal State, as mentioned, the early Stoics were moved to come to Homer’s defense. Zeno wrote *Homeric Questions* in five books. Cleanthes also allegorized archaic poetry, even proposing textual emendations that supported it. In his view, poetry was the most apt way to express the sublimity of the divine

7. Sextus Empiricus, *Math.* 9.193.

8. Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Allegoristi dell’età classica* (Milan: Bompiani, 2007), pp. 897-944.

9. For thorough arguments, see Ramelli, *Allegoria*, chapters 2 and 9; *idem*, *Allegoristi*; *idem*, ‘The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18 (2011), pp. 335-71.

(*SVF* 1.486; 538; 482). He distinguished physics and theology, but at the same time coupled them. Indeed, in Stoic immanentism, physics ended up coinciding with theology, but Cleanthes attached a special importance to the religious level, in a ‘mystical’ perspective.

Chrysippus allegorized Orpheus, Musaeus, Homer and Hesiod in *On Divinities*, Book 2, and theorized philosophical allegoresis in Book 1 (*SVF* 2.1009). He pointed out the relation of allegory to theology, as expressed in poetry, rituals and tradition in general, including visual representations of divinities. He claimed that the expression of truth, of the Logos, takes place through philosophers, poets and institutors of norms and customs, including rituals. Poetry, expressing (mainly religious) myths, and cultic traditions must therefore be interpreted allegorically to detect the truth hidden in it, i.e. the philosophical truth of Stoicism. Chrysippus’s theorization means that allegoresis is part of theology; allegoresis provides the link between theology and physics (or sometimes ethics), which is the heart of Stoic immanentistic philosophy. It is remarkable that in *SVF* 2.1009 Chrysippus also offers a physical or ethical allegoresis of the deities and heroes of myths, thus conferring a systematic character to Stoic theological allegoresis. Allegory, according to Chrysippus, is even the main modality of the study of theology, in all of its traditional expressions, and connects it with physics and ethics, proving an important instrument of cultural unity. This was momentous for Chrysippus, given his extremely broad cultural interests.

Allegoresis of myths was carried out by many Stoics afterwards, such as Diogenes of Babylonia, Chrysippus’s disciple, Apollodorus and Crates. Diogenes wrote a book *On Athena*, in which he rejected anthropomorphic gods and equated Apollo with the sun and Artemis with the moon, whereas Zeus, identified with the *πνεῦμα* that is the foundation of all things, is manifested in various guises, e.g. Poseidon in the sea or Hera in the air. Diogenes’s follower Apollodorus of Athens also wrote *On Divinities* and a Homeric allegorical commentary. Crates of Mallus, the author of commentaries on Homer, coined the self-designation ‘critic’ (*κριτικός*), meaning that he was well versed in philology, grammar, linguistics and literature, but these competencies were framed in a philosophical system, the Stoic one.

Chrysippus’s allegorical theory was of such import that it is still reflected, not only in Apollodorus and Crates, but also in Varro’s ‘threefold theology’ (*theologia tripertita*) and in Annaeus Cornutus in the first century CE. In his handbook of allegoresis applied to the Greek gods (*De natura deorum*), Cornutus declares that ‘The ancients were not people of no account, but were

both able to understand the nature of the cosmos and well capable of expressing philosophical truths on it through symbols and allusions' (*Nat. d.* 35). Allegoresis finds the philosophical truths under the veil of symbols; this is why it belongs to philosophy. For each divinity Cornutus provides an allegorico-etymological interpretation of its names and epithets, its attributes, aspects of its myths and rituals and so on. Physical allegory (Zeus = aether, Hera = air etc.) is prevalent; there are also examples of ethical and historical exegeses. From Cornutus's and Chrysippus's perspective, poetry and the other forms of transmission of ancient theology (rituals, cultic epithets and visual representations) express truths symbolically, which philosophical allegoresis must decrypt. Cornutus is aware of multiple mythological traditions, and cautions against confusing them.¹⁰ Chaeremon of Alexandria, a contemporary of Cornutus, was another Stoic allegorist. But already the Neo-Academic Cicero had put in the mouth of Balbus a Stoic treatise of allegoresis (*Nat. d.* 2.63-71) and followed Plato in composing mythical narratives to communicate ideas about the afterlife, as in the Dream of Scipio in his *Republic*, which emulate the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic*.

The role of allegory in Stoicism was not simply to support Stoic philosophy 'apologetically'. This might have been the case at the beginning of the Stoa, but less so in the day of Chrysippus, and even less in that of Cornutus. Stoic interest in allegoresis and allegorical production grew over time. If allegoresis had merely been meant to prove the truth of Stoicism, one should expect a progressive decline of Stoic interest in allegoresis of myth, when the Stoic system could stand by itself. In such a structured system, at a certain point the support of the allegoresis of Homer and other mythological and cultic traditions would have proved too unsystematic. Rather, I suspect, Stoicism

10. Cornutus has been the object of detailed studies and editions, such as the critical edition by José Torres, *Lucius Annaeus Cornutus, Compendium de Graecae theologiae traditionibus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018); a survey by Glenn Most, 'Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis', *ANRW* 2.36.3, pp. 2014-65, and an edition, with Italian translation, commentary, and monographic treatment, by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Anneo Cornuto* (Milan: Bompiani-Catholic University, 2003); an English translation: George Boys-Stones, *Annaeus Cornutus: The Greek Theology, Fragments, and Testimonia* (Atlanta: SBL, 2018). A critical study of Cornutus, his Stoic ancestry, his technique, and his action in Christian authors has been offered by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Cornutus', in R. Scott Smith and S. Trzaskoma (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

intended to serve the interpretation of theological poems and aimed at integrating into its philosophical system the traditional expressions of theology with a view to the creation of a broad cultural synthesis, including a philosophically legitimized traditional heritage. This meant a reevaluation of myth as bearer of truth, in its various traditional expressions: rituals, epithets, poetry, iconography etc. The Stoics, interested as they were in linguistics, etymology, poetry and literature, intended to validate poetry and other expressions of myth and theology through allegoresis according to their own philosophical system. Such a validation was probably meant to construct a broad and organic cultural unity, systematic and comprehensive, based on the Logos.¹¹ The Stoics' insistence on Homer as the possessor of the truths of the various disciplines aimed at projecting onto the origins of culture that unity grounded in the Logos which was the ideal of Stoicism.

Another important allegorical treatise after Cornutus, *Allegoriae (Quaestiones homericae)*, is ascribed to the aforementioned Heraclitus the Rhetor and dates probably to around 100 CE. It offers a systematic interpretation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Heraclitus begins with a defense of allegorical interpretation (1-5) and concludes with a polemic against Plato (76-79). Sections 6-16 argue that the plague in *Iliad* 1 is not god-sent: Apollo is but a symbol of a natural pestilence. Heraclitus then focuses on Athena's intervention in the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon (17-20); the battle among the Olympian gods and the attempted binding of Zeus (21-25), which is the occasion for a cosmological interpretation; and the tossing of Hephaestus out of Olympus (26-27). He treats the binding of Hera as an allegory of the creation of the universe. In the *Odyssey*, among else, Heraclitus comments on Homer's knowledge of eclipses—in line with the Stoicizing tradition of Homer's competence in all disciplines—and concludes with a reference to Athena as wisdom.

The pseudo-Plutarchean treatise *De vita et poësi Homeri (Homer's Life and Poetry)* deals with Homer's rhetoric and his purported knowledge of all sciences, a theme that appeared already in Crates and Stoic commentators. Sections 92-160 are dedicated to the 'theoretical arguments' in the epics, those that demonstrate truths or theorems concerning the basic divisions of

11. See the whole argument in Ramelli, 'The Philosophical Stance of Allegory', pp. 335-71, and *idem*, 'Allegorizing and Philosophizing', in R. Scott Smith and S. Trzaskoma (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Mythography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

knowledge into logic, physics and ethics—the typical Stoic tripartition of philosophy. The author finds in Homer the doctrine of the four elements and Empedocles’s forces of Love and Strife. The story of Circe is treated as a reflection of Pythagorean metempsychosis. Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Stoics are said to have derived their ideas from Homer.

Middle and Neoplatonists abundantly cultivated allegoresis, deeming it—like many Stoics—a constituent of philosophy. Middle Platonist Plutarch’s *De Daedalis Plataeensibus* is an example of Stoic allegoresis. Plutarch, in *Is. Os.* 372E5, affirms that ‘Isis is the feminine principle of nature’, and in *Fac.* 942D-943D Demeter and Kore are allegorized as the earth and moon; Plutarch relied on Stoic allegoresis in many ways. The sacred stories on Isis and Osiris ‘do not resemble the dry fables [μυθεύματα] and empty fictions [πλάσματα] that poets and public speakers weave and spin out like spiders, generating from themselves unsubstantiated premises, but contain as it were puzzles [ἀπορίαι] and narrative accounts [διηγήσεις] of phenomenal properties ... myth here is an indirect expression of reason that deflects the mind to other things’ (*Is. Os.* 358E11-359A2). Porphyry interpreted the Cave of the Nymphs in *Odyssey* 13 as an allegory of the universe; he was also acquainted with Origen’s allegoresis of both Scripture and Plato.¹²

Evidence of allegorical interpretations of ancient texts is preserved also in the scholia to Homer, which draw on Heraclitus and Porphyry and other sources now lost. The Neoplatonist Salustius voiced the position of Platonic allegorists, that myths never happened historically, but are allegories of eternal truths (*De diis et mundo* 4.9). His friend, the emperor Julian, similarly asserted that mythological events never happened, but are to be interpreted allegorically (*Ad deorum Matrem* 170-171). The Neoplatonist Proclus in the fifth century writes that the inventors of myths ‘fashion likenesses of the indivisible by way of division, of the eternal by what moves in time, of the noetic by the perceptible ... represent the immaterial by the material ... and that which is steadfastly established through change’ (*In Remp.* 1.17) Here, the meanings behind the surface of the text symbolically represent not merely physical or ethical doctrines, as in Stoic allegoresis, but truths not otherwise expressible.

12. See Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, ‘Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianization of Hellenism’, *VC* 63 (2009), pp. 217-63; *idem*, ‘Origen to Evagrius’, in Harold Tarrant *et al.* (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 271-91; *idem*, *Origen of Alexandria’s Philosophical Theology*.

Allegory and Allegoresis in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran and Philo

The other main background for allegory in the New Testament lies in allegory in the Jewish world, in the Hebrew Bible and in Qumran literature, to which the abundant use of allegoresis in Hellenistic Judaism must be added. In 2 Sam. 12.1-4, the parable of the poor man who had a single lamb which a wealthy neighbor stole allegorizes king David's sin, who stole Uriah's wife. In Isa. 5.1-6, the vineyard that is taken care of but does not thrive allegorizes Israel.

In Qumran literature there is some allegory: 6Q11 has the *Song of the Vine* (lines 3-6) and both the Qumran community and Johannine literature employ the imagery of light and darkness in an allegorical sense. Qumran texts interpret the Bible in reference to eschatology, and 1QPesher to Micah (1Q14 = 1QpMic) applies Micah's words to the Teacher of Righteousness. *Habakkuk Pesher* (1QpHab) refers Habakkuk's words to the facts of the exegetes' days, concerning the Teacher of Righteousness, the Wicked Priest and the 'Kittim' (the Romans). After each passage of the prophets, we find: 'The interpretation of this is ...' There is always an exegesis, often tending to eschatology, although not often allegorical. There is the same metaphor of the circumcision of the heart, also found in Paul: 'the Priest whose disgrace exceeded his glory because he did not circumcise the foreskin of his heart' (1QpHab, lines 12-14).

Interesting also is 1QMysteries (1Q27 = 1QMyst), where the eschatological mystery of the victory of justice over evil is dealt with: 'evil will disappear before justice as darkness disappears before light. As smoke vanishes, and no longer exists, so will evil vanish for ever. And knowledge will pervade the world, and there will never be folly there.' The victory of light and God over darkness and evil is also announced in *War Scroll* (1Q33 = 1QM), esp. col. I and col. XVIII. It is also possible to find in these texts some typological exegesis, for instance of Melchizedek, which parallels the New Testament typological exegesis of Melchizedek as figure of Christ.¹³

13. Revelation and prophecy in the Dead Sea Scrolls have been investigated by Alex Jassen, *Mediating the Divine* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), and allegory in the Dead Sea Scrolls has been pointed out by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Allegory II (Judaism)', in Hans-Joseph Klauck (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception: I. Aaron-Aniconism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 785-93, and allegoresis in both Jewish and Christian biblical exegesis has been treated in Isaac Kalimi and Peter J. Haas (eds.),

Allegoresis in Hellenistic Judaism flourished with Philo of Alexandria († c. 50 CE), but he had precursors such as Aristobulus, the Essenes, the Alexandrian Therapeutae and others who practiced biblical allegoresis. Philo exerted a massive influence on Origen and other Christian exegetes and theologians.¹⁴ Biblical allegoresis among the Essenes and Therapeutae is attested by Philo, *Prob.* 75-91 (esp. 82) and *De vita contemplativa*, devoted to the Therapeutae. Philo attests that the episode of Joseph in Egypt was allegorized by thinkers who interpreted Egypt as the body and Pharaoh as the intellect and developed a full allegoresis of the whole story (*Ios.* 151). *Aristobulus* (second or first century BCE), described as a Peripatetic by both Clement and Eusebius, applied to Scripture philosophical allegoresis, demonstrating that Aristotelianism derived from Scripture (Clement, *Strom.* 5.14.97.7). According to Aristobulus, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aratus and others also depended on Scripture and drew their philosophy from it, through allegoresis (*Fr.* 4). Biblical allegoresis is necessary, Aristobulus claimed, particularly to explain away divine anthropomorphisms (*Fr.* 2). Aristobulus even allegorized an apocryphal Homeric verse on departing from Acheron in the sense of departure from vice and acquisition of true knowledge (*Fr.* 5).¹⁵

Philo, who influenced Patristic allegoresis enormously, applied a systematic allegoresis of Scripture in the light of Platonism, Stoicism and Pythagoreanism. In the preface to his commentary on Psalm 118, Theodore of Mopsuestia, polemicizing against biblical allegoresis, claimed that Philo was the first who applied ‘pagan’ allegoresis to Scripture. Philo believed that Scripture taught the doctrine of the Ideas¹⁶ and read Scripture as an allegorical exposition of fundamentally Platonic doctrines. On the basis of Philo, *Post.* 14 and *Mut.* 7, Clement, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa buttressed apophatic

Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity (LHBOTS, 439; London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2006).

14. See David Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, ‘Philo’s Dialectics of Apophatic Theology, His Strategy of Differentiation, and His Impact on Patristic Exegesis and Theology’, *Философия-Philosophy* (forthcoming).

15. Aristobulus’s biblical allegoresis, an antecedent to that of Philo, is examined by Markus Mülke, *Aristobulos in Alexandria* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

16. Especially in Exod. 33.18 (*Spec.* 1.41.45-48) and Exod. 25.40 (*QE* 2.82; *Mos.* 2.74-76, with an exegesis that will be taken over by Origen).

theology through Exod. 20.21 (Moses enters the darkness where God is), allegorized as a reference to God's unknowability.

Philo's allegoresis, like Origen's, seems partially indebted to Stoic allegoresis, deeply linked to philosophy, but in Philo it is applied to Scripture, not to Greek myths, and assumes a more systematic character. Moreover, the divinity that allegoresis reveals is transcendent for Philo, but immanent for the Stoics. Philo was probably inspired by Hellenic models, but the extensiveness, coherence and systematic approach of his allegoresis go beyond the achievements of the Stoics; moreover, he applied allegoresis to a different text, Scripture, as Aristobulus and other Hellenistic Jewish allegorizers had done. Like the Stoics, Philo made ample use of etymology, especially of Hebrew names, as a support to his allegorical exegesis of Scripture, probably on the basis of earlier etymological lists. David Runia pointed out that the distribution of the etymologies within the Philonic corpus attests to their strong link with allegoresis, since they are much more numerous in the *Legum allegoriae* than in his exposition of the Mosaic law, where allegory is absent and etymologies are few.¹⁷ I note that the same link between allegoresis and etymology can be found in Stoic allegorists, from the Old Stoa to Cornutus. Arithmology too, as a heritage from Pythagoreanism, occasionally helps to buttress Philo's allegoresis.

Philo pursued a synthesis, mediated by allegory, between Hellenistic philosophy and revelation; his attention focused on the Bible and its exegesis. Philo addressed the question of God's anthropomorphism in Scripture and often resolved it by having recourse to allegory. Like Origen later, Philo observed that the Bible leads us to do good either through fear, for those who think that God punishes us in anger and passion, or through love, for those who know that God is not liable to human passions (*Deus* 69). The theme of biblical pedagogy enjoyed a good reception by Clement and Origen, who relied on Philo in many cases.

While Philo's influence on the allegorical exegesis of the Bible in Christian Patristic authors is enormous (it is significant that a supplemental volume of *Biblia Patristica* is devoted to Philo,¹⁸ just as one full volume is devoted to Origen), less visible is his influence upon the subsequent Jewish exegetical tradition. Philo's scriptural exegesis impacted philosopher-

17. David Runia, 'Etymology as an Allegorical Technique in Philo', *SPhiloA* 16 (2004), pp. 101-21.

18. *Biblia Patristica; Supplément: Philon d'Alexandrie* (Paris; CNRS, 1982).

exegetes such as Clement, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, often in the tiniest details. And to allegoresis are attached important philosophical and theological conceptions that passed on from Philo to these Fathers. The result is that both in Philo and in Origen and Gregory, philosophical materials are often inseparable from allegoresis, as I have argued elsewhere.¹⁹

One example regards apophaticism and its biblical foundation. The biblical passage with which Philo (*Post.* 14; *Mut.* 7) and, after him, Clement (*Strom.* 2.6.1; 5.78.3), Origen and Gregory of Nyssa buttress their theory of the unknowability of God is Exod. 20.21, where Moses enters the darkness where God is, which is understood by them as a reference to God's unknowability. Another biblical passage is linked through allegoresis to the reflection on the unknowability of God by Philo (*Spec.* 1.32.50), namely Exod. 33.12-32, where God says to Moses that he cannot see God's face but he will see only God's back. Philo comments that God's existence is easy to know, whereas God's essence is unknowable; yet the quest for God is the best human activity, although humans cannot attain the knowledge of God's nature. Also in *Fug.* 165 Philo allegorizes Exod. 33.23 in the sense that only what is 'behind' God is knowable to humans, not the divine essence.

Allegory in the New Testament and Prompts for Allegoresis

Philo allegorized the Septuagint, but allegory and prompts for allegoresis are present in the New Testament as well, especially in Jesus' parables and in Paul, and inspired allegorical exegesis from early on.²⁰ The verb 'allegorize'

19. Ramelli, 'Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture', pp. 55-99; *idem*, 'Philo and Origen', pp. 1-17; and other works, including within the collective volume *The Reception of Philo of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

20. Several important studies have paved the way for research into metaphor, allegory and allegoresis in the New Testament, starting from Jesus' parables: from Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1899), to Robert Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (London: SPCK, 1957), John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1985) and Hans-Joseph Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), to David E. Aune, 'Allegory', in David E. Aune (ed.), *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2003), pp. 30-33, to Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Jesus of Nazareth', in *OCD*, on Jesus' parables and their relation to allegoresis. The potential influence of Philo on some New Testament

is present in Paul at Gal. 4.24 (ἀλληγορούμενα), in the core passage that I will examine below.

In the New Testament, Jesus' many parables (παραβολαί, 'comparisons'), such as that of the vineyard in Mark 12, are allegories. The Synoptics in particular portray Jesus as a teller of parables. Jesus sometimes explains his allegories to his disciples, for instance in the case of the parables of the sower in Mark 4 and the tares in Matthew 13. Jesus first tells the parable to the crowds in Mt. 13.24-30 and then privately yields to the request of his disciples to 'explain' it through seven statements that resolve the metaphors: 'the field is the world', etc. The parable of the vineyard in Mk 12.1-12 even foretells Jesus' death as the beloved son (v. 6; cf. Mk 1.11). In the exegesis of Mk 4.10-12, the disciples are offered 'the secret of the kingdom of God' (4.33-34), but they prove incapable of allegorical interpretation (Mk 8.14-21). The Gospel readers are instructed by the narrative to see the deeper significance of the events and thus interpret the story allegorically-spiritually (see also Mk 15.16-20, 29-32).

Jesus' self-identifications, particularly in John, are also allegorical: 'I am the gate / the vine / the good shepherd', etc. Some scholars, such as Jülicher,²¹ deemed the allegorical explanations of Jesus' parables a later interpretive expansion in the Gospels. However, allegory was not only Greek; prophetic parables and metaphoric-allegorical images are already present in the Old Testament, for instance in Ezekiel and Daniel.

However, in the New Testament, the main allegorizer is Paul—the only author to use the terminology of allegory, as we shall see in my interpretive example below. Hebrews, often attributed to Paul in Christian antiquity,²²

books, such as Hebrews, is debated; arguments and discussion in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis', *HTR* 105 (2012), pp. 302-50; *idem*, 'Hebrews and Philo on Hypostasis: Intersecting Trajectories?' in Pier Franco Beatrice and Bernard Pouderon (eds.), *Pascha nostrum Christus: Essays in Honour of Raniero Cantalamessa* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2016), pp. 7-49.

21. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*.

22. Hebrews, which does not specify the name of its author, was attributed to Paul (for instance by Augustine) or an assistant of Paul in antiquity, although with exceptions, and was included in early collections of the *Corpus Paulinum*, such as P⁴⁶, which features it just after Romans (see, e.g., Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Palaeography and Textual Criticism*

especially chs. 8–10, applies the variant of allegoresis called typology, which will acquire great importance in patristic New Testament exegesis. The materials of the earthly temple cult are said to be a ‘shadow’ or ‘paradigms / models’ of their heavenly counterparts, ‘images / types / reproductions’ (ἀντίτυπα) of the true realities (Heb. 8.5; 9.23-24; cf. Col. 2.17). Besides the interpretive example I shall analyze below, other Pauline passages could support biblical allegoresis, and have been repeatedly invoked in this sense, such as 2 Cor. 3.6: ‘the letter kills, but the spirit vivifies’ (cf. 1 Cor. 2.13 for the method).

In addition to allegory in the Gospels and Paul, in Revelation 17–18, Rome is represented allegorically as the ‘whore of Babylon’. Taking their cue from the New Testament, Christian authors were already composing allegories in the second century. For example, Hermas features symbolical visions and similitudes, and the *Acts of Thomas* 109-13 comprise the Hymn of the Pearl. ‘Gnostic’ mythopoesis can also be considered a form of allegory, but here Platonic models were certainly as prominent as biblical models.

Among the first Christian supporters of the necessity of scriptural allegoresis are *Barnabas*, Justin, Valentinus, Ptolemy, Irenaeus and Melito. The early Christian terminology of allegory is varied: ἀλληγορία, ἀναγωγή (‘elevated sense’), ὑπόνοια (‘under-sense, hidden sense’) and πνευματικά / νοητά (‘spiritual / noetic / intelligible realities’). Origen used ἀλληγορία and

[Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005], pp. 36-38). Tertullian seems to have had or known a manuscript that attributed Hebrews to Barnabas, a Levite, a collaborator of Paul (*Pud.* 20.2). Clement in his *Hypotyposes* hypothesized that Paul composed this letter in Hebrew, and Luke translated it into Greek (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.2-3[13]; 25.12-14). Origen, who indicated other people’s hypotheses of Luke or Clement of Rome as possible authors and received Clement’s hypothesis, accepted the possibility that Paul composed the letter, but concluded that only God knows the identity of the author of Hebrews (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.11-14). Hippolytus excluded Hebrews from the works of Paul (Photius, *Bibliotheca* 121), and ascribed it to Clement of Rome (who seems to have known this letter). Eusebius lists Hebrews among the Pauline letters, but mentions a resistance by the Church of Rome because it was not written by Paul (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.5; cf. 6.20.3). Hebrews is not included in the Muratorian Fragment (whose authenticity and dating, in turn, are open to debate). Jerome, who knew these debates (*Dardanum* 129.3), included the Epistle in the Vulgate, but placed it to the end of Paul’s writings. See also Harold Attridge, *Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), pp. 1-6.

cognates with circumspection, preferring the rest of this terminology, because they were linked with ‘pagan’ allegorical traditions.

Case Study: Galatians 4

Galatians 4.21-31 is central to the use of allegory in the New Testament and one of the most influential prompts for the allegorical interpretation of the New Testament. Even more, in this case, this text is the foundation for all other allegorico-metaphorical interpretations that we find in the New Testament, and, given Paul’s own link, in the Old Testament too, as well as of all typological connections between Old Testament and New Testament. This is a methodological example, which can work as a pattern and a motivation for all other instances of this classical literary theme.

Here is Paul’s text (Gal. 4.21-31):

21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. 23 One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. 24 *Now this is an allegory [ἀλληγορούμενα]: these women are two covenants.* One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written,

Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children,
burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs;
for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous
than the children of the one who is married.

28 Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac. 29 But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the scripture say? ‘Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman.’ 31 So then, friends, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman (NRSV, emphasis mine).

This passage belongs to a letter of the *corpus Paulinum* that no one doubts was written by Paul. It also seems to be a relatively early epistle by Paul, although the thorny issue of the chronology of the Pauline letters need not detain us here.

Paul, as mentioned, is the only New Testament author to use ‘allegory’ terminology. In v. 24 he describes Hagar, Sarah, their children and their story (Gen. 16–21) as ἀλληγορούμενα, a neuter passive participle of ἀλληγορέω: these things are written allegorically and must be interpreted allegorically. Paul immediately explains the allegory: ‘these women are two covenants’, each associated with a mountain, one of the two Jerusalem(s), a status of slavery or freedom, the law or the promise, a child (Ishmael, Isaac) and other children: Hagar’s children, slaves, vs. Sarah’s children, who are Paul and his Galatian public. The Galatians should recognize their freedom as spiritual children of Abraham.

Some early Christian exegetes viewed Paul’s passage as an endorsement of the application of the Greco-Roman and Jewish Hellenistic practice of allegoresis to the New Testament, first of all Origen (*Princ.* 4.2.6; *Cels.* 4.44, etc.). Origen not only adduces Paul in defense of his own allegorical practice, but also indicates that Paul here uses allegoresis and finds allegory in Scripture; he applied the same technique as the Stoics, well known to him, did. Scholars have wondered whether Gal. 4.24 is a typology,²³ or an allegory which gives way to typology,²⁴ but this dichotomy may be misguided.²⁵

Paul’s allegorical passage must be read within the context of Galatians 3–4 and is closely related to Gal. 3.28. Daniel Boyarin, within a study of Paul’s

23. E.g. C.K. Barrett, ‘The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians’, in J. Friedrich *et al.* (eds.), *Rechtfertigung* (Festschrift Ernst Käsemann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1976), pp. 1-16; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 116.

24. E.g. G.W. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTSup, 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), pp. 141-54: typology supplemented by allegory (p. 214); R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1959): ‘Typology has here been strained and distorted in an unconvincing but highly Rabbinical fashion into allegory’ (p. 82).

25. E.g. E. Cothenet, ‘À l’arrière-plan de l’allégorie d’Agar et de Sara’, in Pierre Grelot *et al.* (eds.), *De la Tôrah au Messie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1981), pp. 457-66 (462): typology and allegory are not different. See also below, n. 43.

critique of Judaism, remarked that Paul's radical statement, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor "male and female" in Christ', demonstrates Christianity's concern for all people.²⁶ Due to its important implications concerning human equality, Paul Jewett described Gal. 3.28 as 'the Magna Carta of humanity'.²⁷ Looking at its possible social implications, Klyne Snodgrass described Gal. 3.28 as 'the most socially explosive statement in the NT'.²⁸ Gesila Nneka Uzukwu examined Gal. 3.28 in light of Galatians 3-4,²⁹ and of the whole of Paul's theological argument of promise in Galatians. The story of Abraham in Gal. 3.14-29 and of Sarah in 4.21-31 must be understood in the light of God's promise to the patriarch and the matriarch in Genesis 17: this reading displays the joint role of Abraham and Sarah in bringing about the promise, and underscores the unity of the believers in Christ, which is precisely the point that Paul makes in Gal. 3.28.³⁰ This is why he uses allegoresis.

Galatians 3.28 seems to be a reversal of Aristotle's theory of the three categories of racial, juridical and gender superiority/inferiority 'by nature'.³¹ Paul, more or less intentionally and consciously, is actually turning Aristotle's theories upside down. Aristotle's ideas, directly or indirectly, seem to be an important target of Paul's claims in Gal. 3.28.³² Paul also disagreed with Aristotle's disdain of allegoresis.

26. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

27. Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 142.

28. Klyne Snodgrass, 'Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?', in Alvera Mickelsen (ed.), *Women, Authority and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 161-82 (164).

29. Gesila Uzukwu, *The Unity of Male and Female in Jesus Christ: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 3.28c in Light of Paul's Theology of Promise* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2015).

30. Uzukwu, *Unity*, pp. 32-201.

31. On these categories, see Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially pp. 26-100.

32. Ramelli, *Social Justice*, pp. 40-45.

In Galatians ‘Paul wishes to define the nascent Christian movement within Judaism as a universalistic kind of Judaism’,³³ and to this end develops a Christian historiography focused on the figures of Abraham, Moses and Christ. Related to Abraham is the allegorical narrative about Sarah and Hagar. Van Kooten interpreted Gal. 4.21-31 in light of Paul’s criticism of ethnic and genealogical claims and Paul’s appropriation of the Platonic-Stoic doctrine for dual citizenship. Paul’s criticism of ethnic and genealogical claims aims at showing that the descent from Abraham, which defines real Judaism, runs not through physical lineage—as Jesus also argued—since Abraham fathered Ishmael too, but through *pistis* (Gal. 3.7, 29).

Hence the necessity of an allegorical exegesis of Isaac and Ishmael and their respective mothers, since by allegoresis Paul can invert the perspective of his Jewish opponents, who claimed that they were the true sons of Abraham through their descent via Isaac. Paul claims that the descent from Abraham via physical lineage is in fact the descent from Ishmael, since his mother Hagar represents the present Jerusalem, while those who descend from Abraham via Sarah and Isaac are his spiritual descent, those who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem. These are the members of the Jesus movement, whether Jewish or gentile, and they are all descendants of Abraham. The very location of Mt Sinai—related to the Mosaic law—in Arabia relativizes the carnal descendants of Abraham and makes them spiritual servants.³⁴ The spiritual descendants of Abraham are related to the value of freedom, represented by Sarah. Freedom is a notion so pivotal in Paul’s thought, and it is because of Paul that later freedom will be so central to Origen and his polemic against Gnostic determinism.³⁵ If the pun was on Hagar-Hagra, the Arabic region, this is one more element of similarity with Stoic allegoresis, which so often was grounded in etymology or pseudo-etymology.

33. George van Kooten, ‘Philosophical Criticism of Genealogical Claims and Stoic Depoliticization of Politics’, in Martin Goodman *et al.* (eds.), *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham* (TBN, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 361-85 (361). See also François Vouga, ‘La construction de l’histoire en Galates 3-4’, *ZNW* 75 (1984), pp. 259-69.

34. On spiritual slavery in Paul, see Ramelli, *Social Justice*, pp. 101-20. Like the Stoics, Paul thought that spiritual slavery was bad, unless one was the slave of God, while juridical slavery was an indifferent thing.

35. See Ramelli, *Origen of Alexandria’s Philosophical Theology*.

Van Kooten has adduced parallels in Platonism and Stoicism—Plato, Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom, to whom I would add at least the Stoics Persius (*Sat.* 3 and 6), Musonius (*Diss.* 3b and 3) and Seneca³⁶—against genealogical claims, and argues that Paul may well have been familiar with such claims. Of course, Paul replaces the claims of being of a noble birth in an Etruscan, Roman or Greek family with claims about one’s Jewishness, but I find this to be the same replacement that he seems to operate in Gal. 3.28: from the racial claim of superiority of Greeks in Aristotle to the claim of Jewishness in Gal. 3.28.³⁷ Also, Paul’s discourse about the present and heavenly Jerusalem (Hagar and Sarah), related to his notion of the *politeuma* in heaven (Phil. 3.20, whose connection with philosophical claims I have highlighted elsewhere³⁸), has been traced back by van Kooten to Paul’s appropriation of the Platonic and Stoic doctrine of dual citizenship, from Plato’s ideal city contrasted with the earthly city (*Resp.* 9.592a-b) to the Stoic ideal of the cosmic, divine city, the City of Zeus, often contrasted with the cities on earth, in which virtue is not welcome.³⁹ The link between the Pauline and Christian dual citizenship and the Platonic and Stoic dual citizenship was made already by Clement (*Strom.* 4.26).

The reading of Paul against the background of Stoicism, Platonism and philosophical allegoresis does not exclude a reading such as that of Stephen

36. All commented on in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Stoici romani minori* (Milan: Bompiani, 2008).

37. See Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, ‘Galatians 3:28 vs Aristotelian (and Jewish) Inferiority Categories?’ (paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, 20 November 2017).

38. See my ‘*Nostra autem conversatio in caelis est* (Phil. 3.20). Note su *conversatio* nei classici latini, nelle antiche versioni bibliche e nella patristica’, *Sileno* 31 (2005), pp. 139-58.

39. See Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Dirk Obbink, ‘The Stoic Sage in the Cosmic City’, in Katerina Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 178-95; Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, ‘La Città di Zeus di Musonio Rufo nelle sue ascendenze vetero-stoiche e nell’eredità neostoica e cristiana’, *Stylos* 11 (2002), pp. 151-58; *idem*, ‘Ierocle Neostoico in Stobeo: *Ἰκαθήκοντα* e l’evoluzione dell’etica stoica’, in Gretchen Reydams-Schils (ed.), *Thinking through Excerpts: Studies on Stobaeus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 537-75; *idem*, ‘From the City of Zeus to the City of God: Stoic to Christian “Urban” Religious Philosophy’ (Invited Lecture, Erfurt University, Germany, Max Weber Centre, 29 June 2018).

Di Mattei,⁴⁰ who analyzes Paul's passage in the context of Jewish hermeneutical norms of the first century, and argues that Paul's allegory of the two covenants is more reflective of Jewish reading practices which sought to eschatologize the Torah, such as Paul's reading of Gen. 16.1 through its *haftarah*, Isa. 54.1 (a prophetic passage supposedly read together in the synagogue). De Mattei considers allegoresis only as a *rhetorical* tool⁴¹ and not as a *philosophical* methodology within Stoicism—as I have pointed out above—and therefore downplays its role as a background to Paul. This approach seems somewhat problematic, especially in light of Paul's familiarity with Stoic themes. Paul could analogously have applied Stoic allegoresis to the whole story of Hagar and Sarah and have connected it to Isa. 54.1, allegorizing Isaiah's heavenly Jerusalem as Sarah.

In fact, these two backgrounds for Paul's allegoresis, Greek philosophical and Jewish hermeneutical, do not exclude each other; moreover, they are bridged by the third Jewish Hellenized element that is Philonic allegoresis (outlined above). The question already asked by Richard Hanson, whether Paul stuck more to Alexandrian allegory or Palestinian allegory,⁴² does not need to be taken in a dichotomous, exclusive way. Paul may well have been familiar with Greek allegoresis (since he was familiar with Stoicism and Platonism as is evident from a number of hints), Philonic allegoresis and the Jewish allegoresis described by Di Mattei.

Likewise, commenting on Phil. 2.6-11 read as classical hymn but with the innovation of the praise of humility (which countered the honor / shame values in classical hymns), Michael Martin and Bryan Nash rightly observe that both Greek rhetorical theories on ὑμνος and Jewish psalms contributed to the shaping of this Pauline hymn, and not either one or the other:

One could argue that the use of encomiastic *topoi* to structure the hymn, if recognized, precludes the identification of the Christ-hymn as a

40. Steven Di Mattei, 'Paul's Allegory of the Two Covenants (Gal 4.21-31) in Light of First Century Hellenistic Rhetoric and Jewish Hermeneutics', *NTS* 52 (2006), pp. 102-22.

41. Di Mattei, 'Paul's Allegory', pp. 105-109.

42. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, pp. 80-84. I am not considering here Hanson's misguided conception of Alexandrian allegory as de-historicizing, which comes to the fore mainly in his analysis of Origen. See Ramelli, 'The Philosophical Stance of Allegory', pp. 335-71 and *Origen of Alexandria's Philosophical Theology*, Chapter 4.

psalm, since psalms do not employ this generic feature. Such an argument, though, *assumes a world in which writers and audiences alike could only hold one of the perspectives that, for heuristic reasons, we have labelled 'Greek' and 'Jewish'*. Paul himself is proof enough that such a world did not exist.⁴³

The interpretation of our selected passage from Gal. 4.22-31 in light of Platonic and Stoic elements bears heavily on the correct understanding of Paul's application of allegoresis to the Genesis story of Sarah and Hagar. Paul was likely using the Stoic allegorical tradition, applying a philosophical hermeneutical tool (perhaps already present in his formation within Judaism). Now, this use did not escape Origen, who was very well acquainted with Stoic allegoresis, Middle Platonic allegoresis, Philonic allegoresis and rabbinic hermeneutics, and who indicated that Paul's praxis, precisely in Galatians 4, was foundational for all biblical allegoresis, which he was promoting.

Origen, as mentioned, rarely used ἀλληγορία and ἀλληγορέω. In fact, he employs them only in his treatise against the 'pagan' Platonist Celsus, and few other times in *Commentary on John, First Principles* and *Commentary on Matthew*,⁴⁴ mostly in reference to Paul's use of ἀλληγορούμενα in Hagar's and Sarah's story (Gal. 4.22-31), which he used as a justification of biblical allegoresis in *Cels.* 4.44 and elsewhere. Here, he claims that it is not just he who promotes the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, but 'we have received this exegetical method from wise men before us'—meaning Paul. And he goes on to cite Gal. 4.21-26, warning that the Logos does not want us to emulate Abraham, Sarah and Hagar 'in their physical acts, but to emulate their spiritual deeds'. And these must be sought out by means of allegoresis.

43. Michael Martin and Bryan Nash, 'Philippians 2:6-11 as Subversive Hymnos: A Study in the Light of Ancient Rhetorical Theory', *JTS* 66 (2015), pp. 90-138 (138), emphasis mine.

44. *Comm. Jo.* 1.180; 3.131; 20.74; 166; 329; *Princ.* 4.2.6; *Comm. Matt.* 17.35. Origen calls Paul's exegeses ἀλληγορίαι and typological (τυπικῶς, *Princ.* 4.2.6). On the relativization of the typology-allegory distinction: Peter Martens, 'Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction', *JECS* 16 (2008), pp. 283-317; Jean-Noël Guinot, 'La frontière entre allégorie et typologie', *RSR* 99 (2011), pp. 303-24; Bogdan Bucur, 'The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18', *JECS* 23 (2015), pp. 245-71 (265): 'The allegory-typology distinction reflects the agenda of modern patristics rather than the mind of patristic authors.'

This passage was often invoked by Patristic allegorists of the New Testament, as well as 2 Cor. 3.6: ‘the letter kills, but the spirit vivifies’, and 1 Cor. 10.1-4: the rock from which the Hebrews drank in the desert is allegorized as Christ.

But if Galatians 4 was deemed foundational by Origen for his whole practice of biblical allegoresis,⁴⁵ which in turn exerted an incalculable influence on subsequent biblical exegesis, it is because arguably Origen understood well what Paul was doing in his own first-century, New Testament context, and was relating this to the practice of Stoic allegoresis of theological myths. Origen understood Paul as being connected to Stoicism and Platonism (as Origen himself was), and the aforementioned analysis of Galatians 4 in light of Paul’s criticism of ethnic and genealogical claims and of Paul’s appropriation of the Platonic-Stoic doctrine for dual citizenship strongly confirms this. Paul was appropriating philosophical allegoresis and applying it to Scripture, as Philo and other allegorists had done in Hellenistic Judaism,⁴⁶ and as Origen will do in Christian exegesis. But it was a movement started by Philo in Judaism and by Paul in the New Testament, on the basis of the Greco-Roman literary technique of allegory and allegoresis that is relevant to New Testament exegesis. Prompts for the application of allegoresis, as illustrated above, were present both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

Origen, a Christian Middle/Neoplatonist, is certainly the greatest Christian allegorist. He was inspired by Philo, Paul, Clement, Stoic and probably also Middle Platonic allegorists. The inclusion of allegoresis in philosophy, a typical Stoic feature, returned in Middle and Neoplatonism—which incorporated significant Stoic elements—not only on the ‘pagan’ side, but also on the Christian: Origen included his theorization of biblical allegoresis not in an exegetical work, but in his philosophical masterpiece, *First Principles* (Περὶ ἀρχῶν), since he too, like the Stoics, deemed allegory part and parcel of philosophy. He was very well acquainted with the works of Cornutus and Chaeremon (Porphyry, *Fr.* 39). Porphyry considers Origen responsible for the transfer of the allegorical exegetical method from ‘pagan’ myths to the Bible. He does not mention Clement, nor Philo or other Jewish allegorists.

45. *Cels.* 2.3.8, 4.44.28; *Princ.* 4.2.6; *Philoc.* 1.13; *Comm. Matt.* 10.14.43, 17.34.78; *Comm. Jo.* 20.10.74; *Hom. Gen.* 6.1.25; 7.2.19; 10.2.42; 10.5.22. Origen quite regularly cites Gal. 4.24 and 1 Cor. 10.11 (‘these things happened τυπιχῶς’) together (*Cels.* 4.43-44; *Princ.* 4.2.6; *Philoc.* 1.13 etc.). Cf. also *Cels.* 2.3.8 and 4.44.24.

46. Ramelli, ‘Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture’, pp. 55-99.

The same noteworthy, and likely intentional, omission is already found in Celsus (Origen, *Cels.* 4.51). Besides the Stoics, Origen also knew Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean allegorists, such as Numenius, who, apparently without being either Jew or Christian, allegorized the LXX and parts of what became the New Testament. Moreover, Origen was acquainted with ‘Gnostic’ allegorists, especially Valentinians, such as Heracleon, whose allegorical method he criticized, just as Philo had criticized the Hellenistic Jewish allegorists who preceded him.⁴⁷

To evaluate the possibility of a more or less direct influence of Greco-Roman allegoresis on New Testament authors, it is also important to consider their knowledge of Greek. While for Paul and the authors of the Greek Gospels this is understood, this has been recently suggested also for Jesus, especially by Stanley Porter and Hughson Ong.⁴⁸ Already Martin Hengel suggested that Jesus at least understood some Greek, and Bernhard Lang is also open to this hypothesis.⁴⁹ G. Scott Gleaves⁵⁰ claims that Jesus spoke not only Aramaic, but also Greek, within the multilingual culture of first-century

47. See Ramelli, ‘The Philosophical Stance of Allegory’, pp. 335-71; *idem*, ‘The Relevance of Patristic Exegesis to Biblical Hermeneutics’, *R&T* 22 (2015), pp. 100-32; *idem*, ‘Valuing Antiquity in Antiquity by Means of Allegoresis’, in James Ker and Christopher Pieper (eds.), *Valuing the Past in the Greco-Roman World: Proceedings of the Penn-Leiden Colloquium on Ancient Values*, VII (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 485-507; *idem*, ‘Allegory’, in Paul J.J. van Geest *et al.* (eds.), *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). For further arguments on Celsus’s and Porphyry’s omission and Origen’s exegesis, see the monograph on Origen in preparation, Chapter 4.

48. Stanley E. Porter, ‘Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?’, *TynBul* 44 (1993), pp. 199-235; *idem*, ‘The Languages Jesus Spoke’, in T. Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2011), III, pp. 2455-71; Hughson Ong, *The Multilingual Jesus and the Sociolinguistic World of the New Testament* (LBS, 12; Leiden: Brill, 2016).

49. Martin Hengel, ‘Zum Problem der Hellenisierung Judäas’, in Martin Hengel (ed.), *Judaica et Hellenistica. KS 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), pp. 1-9, 72; Bernhard Lang, ‘Jesus among the Philosophers: The Cynic Connection Explored and Affirmed’, in Anders Klostergaard Petersen and George van Kooten (eds.), *Religio-Philosophical Discourses in the Mediterranean World* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 187-218.

50. G. Scott Gleaves, *Did Jesus Speak Greek? The Emerging Evidence of Greek Dominance in First-Century Palestine* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

Palestine. Gleaves argues from archaeological, literary and biblical evidence which demonstrates the strong presence of Greek in Roman Palestine during the first century CE. According to Gleaves, this makes it probable that Jesus and his disciples spoke Greek and that—contrary to the testimony of ancient Christian authors⁵¹ and the studies of Jean Carmignac and many others—the Greek New Testament, and especially Matthew, were original compositions and not translations of Aramaic sources. Without entering this spiny question, what is particularly relevant to the present investigation is the knowledge of Greek that Jesus may have had, and Paul surely had, and the role this may have played in their knowledge of Greco-Roman literature.

Related to Paul's indebtedness to Stoicism, scholars should consider Paul's assimilation of Stoic ethical notions, but also Cynic ideas: 'Cynic ethics influenced Christian asceticism from Jesus onwards'.⁵² This line of inquiry has been forwarded by Torsten Jantsch, who has compared Rom. 1.18-32 and 2.14-29 with Diogenes, *Epistle* 28, a typical Cynic epistle.⁵³ In this connection, legal slavery may have been a matter of moral indifference in the Stoic sense—just as it was for the Stoics themselves: it was an *ἀδιάφορον*, 'indifferent thing', like circumcision, ethnic identity, social class and gender—the (Aristotelian) categories of discrimination listed and overcome in Gal. 3.28. The presence of the Stoic concept of 'law' (*νόμος*) in Paul, particularly in 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 1, has been argued for by Niko Huttunen, who also compared Epictetus's notion of *ἀδιάφορα* to Paul's doctrine.⁵⁴ Paul's taking over Stoic ethics is also advocated by Runar Thorsteinsson, especially

51. Analyzed in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Fonti note e meno note sulle origini dei Vangeli: Osservazioni per una valutazione dei dati della tradizione', *Aevum* 81 (2007), pp. 171-85, and *idem*, 'The Birth of the Rome-Alexandria Connection: The Early Sources on Mark and Philo, and the Petrine Tradition', *SPhiloA* 23 (2011), pp. 69-95.

52. J.L. Moles, 'Cynics, "the doggish"', in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, March 2016, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.1978. On Cynicism, see Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, *Le cynisme, une philosophie antique* (Paris: Vrin, 2017).

53. Torsten Jantsch, 'Kynische Argumentation im Römerbrief: Römer 1–2 und Ps.-Diogenes, Epistula 28 im Vergleich', *NTS* 64 (2018), pp. 44-63.

54. Niko Huttunen, 'Stoic Law in Paul?', in Tuomas Rasimus *et al.* (eds.), *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), pp. 39-58.

with regard to Romans 12–15.⁵⁵ Stanley Stowers argues that Paul depends both on a Platonic doctrine in his moral psychology and on a Stoicizing notion of *pneuma*,⁵⁶ emphasized by Troels Engberg-Pedersen too. Indeed, one of the foremost supporters of Paul’s thorough engagement with Stoicism is Troels Engberg-Pedersen⁵⁷—a scholar who also detects a profound Stoic influence on the Fourth Gospel and its own concepts of Logos and Pneuma.⁵⁸

The main supporter of the thesis that juridical slavery or freedom was for Paul an ἀδιάφορον is William Deming, who has grounded his argument primarily on 1 Cor. 7.20-23, 25-38.⁵⁹ As I said, Stoic influence on Paul’s thought is recognized by scholarship, perhaps sometimes with exaggeration, but it is certainly possible that Paul knew the concept of Stoic ‘indifferent things’ (ἀδιάφορα) and reworked it. If Paul embraced the Stoic view regarding slavery, it would follow that to his mind slavery was to be conceived as neither a

55. Runar Thorsteinsson, ‘Stoicism as a Key to Pauline Ethics in Romans’, in Tuomas Rasimus *et al.* (eds.), *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), pp. 15-38.

56. Stanley Stowers, ‘The Dilemma of Paul’s Physics: Features Stoic-Platonist or Platonist-Stoic?’, in Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 214-30.

57. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Stoicism in the Apostle Paul: A Philosophical Reading’, in Stephen Strange and Jack Zupko (eds.), *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 52-75; *idem*, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

58. On philosophy in Paul, with special regard to his notion of πίστις, see now George van Kooten *et al.* (eds.), *Saint Paul and Philosophy: The Consonance of Ancient and Modern Thought* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017). On John and Greek philosophy, with an argument for Platonic influences, see George van Kooten, *John between Greek Mythology and Philosophy* (forthcoming).

59. William Deming, ‘Paul and Indifferent Things’, in J. Paul Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 384-403. On the valorization of ‘preferable indifferent things’ to select and ‘appropriate acts’ (καθήκοντα) among ἀδιάφορα in Middle and Roman Stoicism and the connection between καθήκοντα and Stoic οἰκείωσις in Musonius and Hierocles, contemporaries with the New Testament, see Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Hierocles the Stoic* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), especially the introductory essay, and *idem*, ‘Hiéroclès: extraits du traité Sur le mariage de Stobée’, in Jean-Baptiste Gourinat (ed.), *L’éthique du stoïcien Hiéroclès* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2016), pp. 157-67.

good to be chosen, nor an evil to be avoided, since good is only virtue and what is related to it, and evil is only vice. It is moral enslavement to passions that is evil; juridical slavery is an ἀδιάφορον. However, it is not a ‘preferable indifferent’ to be elected, according to the Stoic classification, but an ἀδιάφορον to be rejected if the opportunity presents itself, at least according to the most common interpretation of 1 Cor. 7.21-22. Therefore, in this case slavery would be a ‘non-preferable indifferent’ to be avoided when possible.⁶⁰

From a similar perspective, Greek philosophical and Jewish antecedents (as discussed above) about the non-exclusivity of the Hellenistic and Jewish influences do not exclude each other with relation to Paul. So, van Kooten rightly analyzed Paul’s anthropology against the backdrop of both ancient Judaism and ancient philosophy.⁶¹ In the case of Galatians 4, I think, philosophical allegoresis of theological texts played a role, as well as Jewish allegorical interpretations. It would be very interesting to know whether Philo or other Hellenistic Jewish allegorists could influence Paul in any way. The interrelation between Greek philosophy and Paul (and early Christianity) has been, and is going to be, one of the most significant and promising research areas in religious studies. Christianity never ‘became’ a philosophy after its ‘Hellenization’: Scripture itself was already ‘Hellenized’ and philosophical—think of Wisdom and Paul himself.⁶² His Hellenization included the reception of allegoresis.⁶³

60. Ramelli, *Social Justice*, pp. 101-20.

61. George van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

62. Ramelli, ‘Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism’, pp. 217-63. In Gal. 4.3, 9 Paul uses Stoic terminology in his ‘conversion’ discourse; see Neil Martin, ‘Returning to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου: Enslavement to the Physical Elements in Galatians 4.3 and 9?’, *JSNT* 40 (2018), pp. 434-52. Here στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου refers to the fundamental components of pre-Christian living.

63. On Paul’s use of popular literary, rhetorical and philosophical conventions from the classical tradition, see also Warren S. Smith, ‘St. Paul’s Letters and Classical Culture’, *Ancient Narrative* 15 (2018), pp. 1-24: ‘His familiarity with and use of popular convention do not require that Paul studied deeply in any rhetorical school but merely imply that he studied topics introduced universally in Greek schools and drew on material which would have been available to anyone moderately steeped in Greek culture, which Paul clearly was’ (Smith, ‘Paul’s Letters’, p. 1).

Conclusion

The principles I exemplified in the application of ancient allegoresis are indispensable for understanding the hermeneutics of the New Testament authors more generally.⁶⁴ The example I chose, due to its importance and representativeness, is central to the use of allegory in the New Testament and one of the most influential prompts for the allegorical interpretation of the New Testament. This text is the foundation for all other allegorico-metaphorical interpretations that we find in the New Testament, and, given Paul's own established connection, in the Old Testament too, as well as of all typological connections between Old Testament and New Testament. This was especially clear to Origen, who regarded Paul as his hero and inspiration in many ways, and to other patristic exegetes.

Smith does not include allegory and allegoresis among the 'classical conventions' taken over by Paul.

64. See the whole argument in Ramelli, 'The Relevance of Patristic Exegesis', pp. 100-32. I especially emphasize the integration of historical reading and noetic exegesis, the hermeneutics of multiplicity, the present relevance of scriptural passages, the tenet of the unity of Scripture, the Bible as supertext, philosophical investigation applied to scriptural hermeneutics and the relationship between philosophy and biblical hermeneutics, as well as between theology and philosophy and a parallel with philosophy of religion.