

# Paul's Economic Relationship with the Galatians: Burdensome Imposer or Welcomed Guest?

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## Abstract

How did Paul subsist during his travels in Galatia? This article contests Nasrallah's claim that Paul placed burdens and imposed upon the local communities in Galatia in a manner akin to the Roman practice of requisitioning supplies and argues that the Galatians non-coercively welcomed Paul as a host and developed mutual relations with him. We first consider the social practices of Roman requisitions and ancient hospitality as suitable comparanda for interpreting Paul's travel in Galatia. Then we examine two types of evidence clarifying the socio-economic aspects of Paul's initial relationship with the Galatians – i.e., Paul's recollections of his initial encounter with the Galatians (Gal 4:12-20) and subsequent traditions regarding the Galatians' response to Paul. The evidence suggests that Paul's relationship with the Galatians was, most probably, welcomed and mutual, not imposing or burdensome. This historical reconstruction contextualises Paul's subsequent letter and bears upon interpretations of Galatians.

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## 1. Introduction

When the apostle Paul and his ministry colleagues travelled, they faced 'the question of subsistence'.<sup>1</sup> Separated from their primary social networks for material provision, they had to cultivate new social ties to subsist. Considering that Paul relied, to some measure, upon fellow Christ-believers for social

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1. Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Gerd Theissen, 'Legitimation and Subsistence: An Essay on the Sociology of Early Christian Missionaries', in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 27–67.

protection and material resources,<sup>2</sup> we might enquire about the nature of Paul's socio-economic relationship with those communities. Scholars have analysed Paul's relationship with the Corinthians,<sup>3</sup> but what about his interactions with the Galatians? This article considers the financial arrangements and power dynamics at play in Paul's relationship with the churches in Galatia when he travelled through the region.

In *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, Nasrallah offers a post-colonial approach to the material context of Pauline communities.<sup>4</sup> Chapter three, titled 'On Travel and Hospitality: The Letter of Galatians and an Inscription from Galatia', considers Paul's economic relationship with the Galatians.<sup>5</sup> The chapter discusses a first-century inscription from Pisidia (SEG 26:1392) regulating the requisitions that Roman officials and soldiers could demand from communities while travelling.<sup>6</sup> The inscribed edict, according to Nasrallah, illustrates the social discomforts 'of locals who experience confusion or inconvenience (or worse) because of travelers'.<sup>7</sup> For Nasrallah, this social pattern of Roman officials imposing upon locals provides a context for considering the socio-financial impact of the apostles' travel upon the Galatians: 'The Letter to the Galatians can be analyzed locally as well, to consider what kind of impositions – albeit on a different scale – may have resulted from the visits of those who traveled for Christ'.<sup>8</sup> According to Nasrallah, teachers travelling in the name of Christ were 'disruptive and imposing' and their arrival had 'deleterious consequences' for the local populations.<sup>9</sup> The local Galatian community

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2. E. A. Judge, 'The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community: Part II', *JRH* 1.3 (1961): 128–131, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9809.1961.tb00766.x>.

3. Gerd Theissen, 'Social Stratification in the Corinthian Community', in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 69–120; David Briones, 'Mutual Brokers of Grace: A Study in 2 Corinthians 1:3–11', *NTS* 56.4 (2010): 536–556, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002868851000010X>; Ryan S. Schellenberg, 'Did Paul Refuse an Offer of Support from the Corinthians?', *JSNT* 40.3 (2018): 312–336, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X17753331>.

4. Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

5. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 76–104.

6. For the *editio princeps* see Stephen Mitchell, 'Requisitioned Transport in the Roman Empire: A New Inscription from Pisidia', *JRS* 66 (1976): 106–131, <https://doi.org/10.2307/299783>; see also S. R. Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 58–85; L. Di Paola, *Viaggi, Transporti e Istituzioni* (Messina: Dip. Scienze dell'Antichità, 1999), 21–31.

7. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 99.

8. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 99.

9. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 104.

shouldered the burdens of hosting the itinerant missionaries. Nasrallah does not claim that Paul officially appropriated the requisition system to acquire resources but does, nevertheless, interpret Paul's travel in the context of the Roman requisition system. Her chapter includes an extended discussion of requisitions and repeated language about the apostles 'imposing burdens', which together insinuate that Paul related to host communities in a manner similar to that of exploitative Roman soldiers. Her reading raises the central topic of this paper: what was the nature of Paul's socio-economic relationship with the Galatians when he travelled to them? Did Paul commandeer resources and impose burdens upon the local communities, or did he relate to them in a different manner?

Although it is possible that Paul supported himself in Galatia – at least to some degree – using his own market labour, there is no evidence for that practice at this point in his ministry. Even if Paul provided for his own food, he would have required non-material provisions such as lodging, protection, and introductions from the Galatian communities when travelling. Therefore, Paul's economic interactions with the Galatians would likely have followed non-market patterns of exchange. The broad working categories of this paper – burdensome imposer and welcomed guest – are not distinct categories but ends on a broad spectrum offering a general interpretative model for assessing modes of exchange. Paul's socio-economic relationship with the Galatians could have ranged from exacting payment as an authority (i.e. redistribution, requisition) to cultivating a relationship based on mutual gift exchange (i.e. reciprocity, hospitality).<sup>10</sup>

The first two sections examine the ancient social institutions of Roman requisitions and ancient hospitality to problematise Nasrallah's interpretation and clarify their relevance for interpreting socio-dynamics in Paul's itinerant ministry. Then we examine two sources alluding to Paul's socio-economic relationship with the Galatians – that is, Paul's recollections of his initial encounter with the Galatians (Gal 4:12-20) and subsequent traditions regarding the Galatians' response to Paul. The evidence suggests that Paul's relationship with the Galatians was, most probably, welcomed and mutual, not imposing or burdensome. This historical reconstruction informs the nature of Paul's missionary travels into Galatia and his interactions with the Galatians, thus

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10. For an anthropological model about modes of exchange in relationships, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York: Rinehart, 1944), 43–55; Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Pearson, eds., *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957).

providing social context for interpreting Paul's subsequent letter to the Galatians.

## 2. The Roman Transport System and Requisitions

To assess the applicability of Roman requisitions for interpreting Paul's travel and the likelihood that Paul imposed burdens upon the Galatians like a requisitioner, this section examines the legal and social aspects of Roman requisitions. The practice of compulsorily billeting soldiers and commandeering supplies from local populations predated the Romans.<sup>11</sup> During their colonisation of Asia in the second century BCE, the Romans adopted the practice for purposes of moving military personnel and goods across the provinces. As the number and authority of Roman magistrates expanded in the eastern provinces, some abused the system and exploited local populations. Thus, regulations were issued to create a semblance of Roman control and justice. In 59 BCE, Julius Caesar passed a law (*lex Iulia de repetundis*) to regulate the provision of hospitality and requisitions for Roman magistrates in provinces.<sup>12</sup> Augustus's expansion of the imperial transport system reduced, but did not eliminate, the burdens placed upon local populations in supporting travelling officials (cf. Suet., *Aug.* 49.3). In this political context, Augustus' imperial envoy, Sextus Sotidius Strabo Libuscidianus, issued his bilingual edict (SEG 26:1392, dated 14–19 CE) intended to limit and clarify the burdens of communities situated along the *Via Sebaste* in the Pisidian region of Galatia. The decree specifies which travellers maintained the legal right to commandeer resources from local populations:

The right to use this service will not be granted to everyone, but to the procurator of the best of princes and his son ... and to persons on military service ... I want nothing to be provided for those who transport grain or anything else of that sort for their own use. (l. 32–34, 48–50)

This restricting language mirrors other imperial edicts on a critical point: the only classes of people who could requisition transport supplies were political elites and military personnel.<sup>13</sup> The archetypal *lex Iulia de repetundis*, for example, 'had been directed exclusively against magistrates, senators and members of

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11. Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 336; Mitchell, 'Requisitioned Transport', 129 n. 152.

12. Cic., *In Pis.* 90; Erich S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 240–243.

13. Mitchell, 'Requisitioned Transport', 111–115.

senatorial families'.<sup>14</sup> A Hadrianic requisition inscription from Priene sets similar limitations – 'A wagon shall only be given to those who have a diploma' – and even threatens 'If anyone contrary to this shall make an extraction or use force, the names of those who take shall be sent to the provincial governor and my procurator ... and shall be forwarded to me.'<sup>15</sup> Requisition edicts were directed at Roman officials who were in positions to exercise and abuse authority. Non-elite civilians, such as Paul, possessed no right to commandeer supplies and were even threatened with punishment for doing so. Nasrallah claims that Sextus Sotidius's inscription 'indicates the burden that road travel could impose upon those who did not travel', such as Paul upon the Galatians. This reading of the inscription, however, misrepresents the Roman transport system, as though requisitioning supplies was a common practice broadly accessible to anyone with power.<sup>16</sup> Only authorised military and administrative officials could impose burdens while travelling; others were strictly forbidden, and even threatened, from doing so.<sup>17</sup>

One might read Sextus Sotidius's edict against the grain as evidence that many people, including those of lower classes, did, in fact, demand free billeting and supplies without permission. Unless unauthorised personnel were abusing the system, why else would governing officials attempt to clarify who could requisition resources? This reasoning suggests that Christian missionaries might, in theory, have leveraged the system and imposed burdens upon local populations in Galatia. However, there is no indication that non-elites, such as itinerant religious teachers, abused the system. Abuses came from Roman officials who did not possess a diploma but nevertheless tried to exert authority or from officials with diplomas who made excessive demands or underpaid for services (SEG 59.1365 ll. 8–13, 14–16). Lower-class people outside the imperial administrative or military apparatus did not act like requisitioners, perhaps because such people could not impose their demands with violent force. Paul

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14. Gruen, *Roman Republic*, 241.

15. SEG 59.1365 ll. 15–16, 35–42; see Tor Hauken and Hasan Malay, 'A New Edict of Hadrian from the Province of Asia Setting Regulations for Requisitioned Transport', in *Selbstdarstellung und Kommunikation: Die Veröffentlichung staatlicher Urkunden auf Stein und Bronze in der römischen Welt*, ed. R. Haensch (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), 327–348.

16. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 93.

17. Anne Kolb, 'Transport and Communication in the Roman State: The *Cursus Publicus*', in *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire*, ed. Colin Adams and Ray Laurence (New York: Routledge, 2001), 95–105; Anne Kolb, 'Mansiones and *Cursus Publicus* in the Roman Empire', in *Statio Amoena: Sostare e Vivere Lungo Le Strade Romane*, ed. Patrizia Basso and Enrico Zanini (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 3–8.

and other Christian itinerants had no authority, informal or official, to make burdensome requests upon the Galatians as they travelled.

Even if Paul did somehow possess sufficient social power and/or physical force to demand resources while travelling in Galatia, it was not the custom for individuals or subcommunities to absorb the hard costs. In the Asian provinces, the burden of requisitions was imposed on entire cities and administrative units.<sup>18</sup> Individuals or small associations, such as a local religious community in Galatia, were not the ones obliged to cover state-sanctioned expenses. In the case of Sextus Sotidius's edict, the *polis* of Sagalassos bore the obligations of assisting officials travelling on the section of the *Via Sebaste* that lay within its territory.<sup>19</sup> In the Roman requisitions system, demands were imposed and resources commandeered at the municipal level, not from private subgroups.

In addition to the legal edicts, moral sensibilities restricted exploitative demands upon communities. Even for elite travellers possessing the right to requisition resources, it was virtuous to exercise self-control and not impose onerous demands upon host communities. In a letter to Atticus, Cicero boasted about how little his entourage required from the people in Phrygia:

However, the poor towns are relieved that they have had to spend nothing on me, my legates, or a quaestor, or anyone. For you must know that I not only refused to accept pay, or what is a proper perquisite under the Julian law, but that none of us will take firewood or anything beyond four beds and a roof. (Cicero, *ad Att.* 5.16 (Winstedt, LCL))

In addition, Suetonius reports about the humility of Augustus while travelling. The emperor entered cities at night 'to avoid disturbing anyone by the obligations of ceremony' (Suet., *Aug.* 53.2). These comments, albeit self-serving and perhaps exaggerated, reveal social ideals for travellers possessing the authority to demand requisitions. Greco-Roman virtues constrained abuse of the state transport system; not every Roman-era traveller was a profligate exploiter. Moreover, Paul himself was rather conscious about not imposing burdens upon his hosts at later points in his ministry career (1 Cor 9:11-18; 2 Cor 11:7-12; 12:13-18; 1 Thess 2:9-10; cf. 2 Thess 3:7-9). He even boasted about the fact that he refrained from demanding support.<sup>20</sup> The depth of Paul's concern

18. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 336.

19. Specifically, the section that wrapped around the northwest side of Ascania Lake (Burdur Gölü) (ll. 8-13). For the territory of Sagalassos, see Ralf Vandam et al., 'The Countryside – Where are the People?', in *Meanwhile in the Mountains: Sagalassos*, ed. Jeroen Poblome et al. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2019), 275-283.

20. Schellenberg, 'Offer of Support'.

about his financial relationship with churches suggests that he attached moral and strategic value to the general principle of not requesting support from, let alone exploiting or burdening, local communities.

In light of the laws, customs, and morals structuring the Roman transport system, the apostle Paul did not have the capacity, and is quite unlikely to have attempted, to commandeer supplies from the communities in Galatia during his travel. Sextus Sotidius's inscribed edict raises intriguing questions about the social economics of travel and hospitality in first-century Galatia, but Nasrallah overstates its utility for interpreting the socio-economic aspects of Paul's relationships with the Galatians. Evidence that some Roman elites commandeered resources in Roman Galatia does not indicate that imposing burdens was customary, let alone probable or even plausible, for a Jewish itinerant. Consequently, it is untenable to suppose that Paul had the means and intentions to commandeer resources from Christians in Galatia. The Roman institution of travel requisition is not helpful as comparanda for interpreting Paul's travel and socio-economic relationship with the Galatians.

### 3. The Nature of Ancient Hospitality

In the context of ancient travel, the practice of hospitality (ξενία) involved a sedentary local host (person or community) providing security and substance to a foreign guest (ξένο). The ancient institution of hospitality is germane to our enquiry because Paul, as a traveller from outside the region, would have been a foreign guest (ξένο) among the Galatians. His arrival in Galatia would have evoked the social dynamics of hospitality exchanges. For this reason, we consider the nature and dynamics of hospitality in the ancient world.

Ancient cultures abided by entrenched customs regulating hospitality.<sup>21</sup> The host attended to guests and showed concern for their needs to grant them

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21. For the various dynamics and institutions facilitating hospitality in antiquity, see Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Steve Reece, *The Stranger's Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.13509>; Michael Peachin, ed., *Aspects of Friendship in the Graeco-Roman World* (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2001); John Nicols, 'Hospitality among the Romans', in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 422–437, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188004.013.0020>; William Mack, *Proxeny and Polis: Institutional Networks in the Ancient Greek World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198713869.001.0001>.

proper respect.<sup>22</sup> Hosts were eager to fulfil the social role, even treating guests as divine figures, since receiving guests was a means of acquiring status.<sup>23</sup> Herman's comment about hospitality among elite ancient Greeks reveals its value and desirability: 'The possession of *xenoi* [guests] was not only a status symbol but also chiefly an asset of real value. The worth and power of a man both within his community and outside it was in a sense in direct proportion to the number of *xenoi* attached to him.'<sup>24</sup> Hospitality was an opportunity to gain the benefits of new and/or enhanced social relations. Generosity toward a guest was considered honorific and virtuous.<sup>25</sup> In the ancient world, guests were not necessarily resented imposers (though such thoughts could have been privately entertained). Rather, travellers created opportunities for hosts to demonstrate virtue and acquire honour.

Nasrallah's reconstruction of Paul's relationships with the Galatians proceeds from a negative depiction of hospitality – namely, granting resources to outsiders was an imposed action performed out of necessity. Hospitality reflects an exploitative relationship and becomes virtually synonymous with requisitioning. These critical assumptions echo Derrida, whose analysis of hospitality probed 'the duties that are imposed on hosts and hostesses'.<sup>26</sup> Although abuses of hospitality expectations did occur, the post-colonial reading of guest–host power dynamics misrepresents the nature of ancient hospitality and, thus, mischaracterises the Galatians' relationship with Paul as being marked by oppression and disturbance rather than mutuality. As a result, it misconstrues the social calculus of hospitality in the ancient world.

Paul's arrival in Galatia did indeed activate social obligations. However, the expectations of hospitality were not necessarily burdensome or resented impositions. They could be socially positive and desirable. Through hospitality encounters, hosts gained the opportunity to cultivate advantageous dyadic

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22. Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'The Law of Hospitality', in *The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 110.

23. Cf. Acts 14:8-18; 28:6-10; Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005); Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004258006\\_002](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004258006_002).

24. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship*, 36.

25. Homer, *Od.* 3.52–53; 6.119–121; 13.200–202; Gen 18:1-16; 19:1-11; Wis 19:13-18; Philo, *Abr.* 114; Matt 10:11-15; Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9; Heb 13:2; 1 Clem. 1.2; 10.1–12.8.

26. Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77.

connections.<sup>27</sup> Hospitality was often extended to guests as a display of the host's status and agency, not simply out of oppressive obligation.

In Galatians 4:13-14, Paul directly comments on the impact of his travel upon the Galatians.<sup>28</sup> He arrived with some physical infirmity (δι' ἀσθενειαν), which constituted a 'trial' for the Galatians (τὸν πειρασμὸν ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, v. 14). Nasrallah reads this statement as an admission by Paul 'that even he was an imposition to those whom he addresses'.<sup>29</sup> This reading, however, misunderstands the point of Paul's rhetoric. At some level, the Galatians did bear a financial 'burden' when assisting Paul (and perhaps even social ostracism for associating with the disfigured outsider). However, the Galatians' 'trial' (πειρασμός) refers to the 'test' they faced upon Paul's arrival, which revealed their true character. This dynamic is illustrated in the well-known stories of Odysseus. The hero often entered a new community as a stranger/guest (ξένος) to discern the residents' character.<sup>30</sup> The term πείρα indicates Odysseus's attempt to 'examine' his host to see whether or not they were pious and righteous.<sup>31</sup> Paul's arrival with an illness proved to be an examination and revelation of the Galatians' noble character. He commends them for passing the 'test' with high marks. Paul's statement about the Galatians' 'trial' (πειρασμός) is not an admission of his imposition but, rather, an acknowledgment of the Galatians' proven generosity in welcoming and hosting him.

Paul's travel to Galatia most certainly created hard costs that the Galatians bore. That burden, however, appears to have been undertaken voluntarily as an expression of status-generating hospitality, not imposed as an act of exploitation. Having clarified the ancient institutions of requisitions and hospitality and their applicability to Paul's relationship with the Galatians,

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27. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 63-89; Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 85-108.

28. The syntax of 4:14a is unclear, as the accusative τὸν πειρασμὸν appears as the direct object of οὐκ ἐξουθενήσατε οὐδὲ ἐξεπύσατε. A literal translation reads 'you did not despise or loathe your temptation/trial in my flesh' (cf. NASB). Therefore, most translations and commentators separate the verbs and the object clause into two sentences. This requires inserting a verb with τὸν πειρασμὸν, the object 'me' to the verbs, and concessive language linking the two clauses, thus 'though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me' (NRSVue; cf. NIV, NET).

29. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 100.

30. Agathe Thorton, 'Testing', in *People and Themes in Homer's Odyssey* (London: Routledge, 1970), 47-51.

31. Cf. Homer, *Od.* 9.174-176; 17.363; Thorton, 'Testing', 47-51; Carol Dougherty, *Travel and Home in Homer's Odyssey and Contemporary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 5-7, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198814016.001.0001>.

we now probe the textual evidence in both Galatians and later sources to reconstruct the nature of Paul's socio-economic relationship with the Galatians.

#### 4. Paul's Remembrance of the Galatians' Response in Galatians 4:12-20

The very existence of a community in Galatia that accepted and identified with Paul's message is perhaps the strongest evidence that Paul's interactions with the Galatians were not extortionary or oppressive. If Paul had marched in and demanded financial support, he would have been unlikely to have received such a response to his teaching. Based on Paul's retelling of the Galatians' response to his initial visit (Gal 4:12-20), he appears to have initially established positive relations with the communities in Galatia. The passage refers to four favourable actions that the Galatians undertook toward Paul. We discuss each term's meaning as it relates to our question and then consider their collective value as historical evidence of Paul's relationship with the Galatians.

In the section's opening statement, Paul states 'You have done me no wrong' (οὐδέν με ἥδικήσατε, Gal 4:12). This statement could be read as a blanket dismissal of any hurt, like an offering of amnesty from Paul for a potential offence.<sup>32</sup> However, considering the temporal scope of the surrounding verses, Paul's claim appears to be a specific reference to the earlier period of his initial arrival – the Galatians did not harm Paul when he first arrived. Betz finds such a remark to be 'asyndetic' and 'puzzling'.<sup>33</sup> Yet, the assertion becomes significant when one considers the dangers that ancient travellers faced. Communities could be suspicious of unknown foreigners, treating outsiders as threats to avoid or vulnerable targets to despoil.<sup>34</sup> The fact that Paul found their lack of harm remarkable indicates his own perceived vulnerability as an outsider. This fits the profile of a guest relying upon hospitality more than a Roman official demanding requisitions. Paul viewed their welcome as proof of their genuine relationship with him. His language recalls Aristotle's comment that the essential bond between friends is 'mutual trust (τὸ πιστεύειν), the inability to do any harm (ἁδικῆσαι)' (*Eth. nic.* 8.4.3 (1157a)). The Galatian believers' positive response to Paul upon his arrival was a stark contrast to the harm and

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32. David A. deSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 379, <https://doi.org/10.5040/bci-0004>.

33. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 223.

34. Cf. 2 Cor 11:26; Cicero, *Off.* 1.151; Apuleius, *Metam.* 1.7; 2.18; 8.17–18; see also Lincoln Blumell, 'Beware of Bandits! Banditry and Land Travel in the Roman Empire', *Journeys* 8.1–2 (2007): 1–20; Silvia Montiglio, *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

persecution he encountered from his hostile opponents and thus confirmed their mutual relationship.

The same rationale continues in verse 14, where Paul notes 'You did not scorn or despise me but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus' (οὐκ ἐξουθενήσατε οὐδὲ ἐξεπτύσατε, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ ἐδέξασθέ με, ὡς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν). The term 'receive' (δέχομαι) and its cognates describe the behaviour of hosts in hospitality relationships.<sup>35</sup> The action of welcoming guests confers respect, which is the antithesis of despising and scorning.<sup>36</sup> In the ancient world, poverty and sickness implied disfavour from the gods; such shameful defects were despised.<sup>37</sup> For example, Christians in Corinth had interpreted Paul's frailties as being incompatible with a position of status, such as that of an apostle.<sup>38</sup> Despite such general prejudices, the Galatians did not dishonour or malign Paul. Rather, they honoured and esteemed the disfigured apostle. They welcomed Paul as a divine emissary, as though he represented Christ (2 Cor 2:14-17; 5:18-20; 13:3-4). Paul's remembrance of the interaction recognises the Galatians for the extravagant honours they bestowed upon him. This gesture of sincere guest-friendship represented their acceptance of his divine commissioning and thus his message about Christ.

The Galatians had initially recognised Paul as a person divinely commissioned with authority. However, after that initial visit, the outside agitators sowed doubt, and the Galatians lost confidence that Paul was sent as a divine agent. The pointed and rhetorical question in verse 15 – 'So then, where is your blessing?' (ποῦ οὖν ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν) – indicates a shift in the Galatians' evaluation of Paul. The expression 'your blessing' (ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν) can be interpreted in several ways depending on the grantor and the

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35. Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.1.1; Longus, *Daphn.* 4.5; Dio Chrysostom, *Ven.* 7.52, 82, 83, 88; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 8.4.1; 8.8.11; Tob 7:8; Wis 19:14; Jos., *Ant.* 5.145; 8.326; Luke 10:38; 19:16; Acts 17:7; 28:7; Rom 16:1-2; 1 Cor 16:10-12; Col 4.10; Did 11:1-2, 4-6; 12:1-2; 1 Clem. 12.3; 28.2; 54.3; Ign. *Rom.* 9.3; Ign. *Eph* 6.1; Herm. *Sim.* 9.27.2

36. The verbs ἐξουθενέω and ἐκπτύω are also paired in Joseph and Aseneth 2.1: 'Now Aseneth despised all men and regarded them with contempt' (trans. Sparks). She did not receive suitors who pursued a relationship with her. The onomatopoeic verb ἐκπτύω literally means 'to spit (out/upon)'. This might have been a common apotropaic behaviour to ward off evil spirits, but it manifests primarily social disgust and inferiority – thus, 'despise'.

37. Homer, *Od.* 17.430-504; deSilva, *Galatians*, 380.

38. Cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10; Timothy B. Savage, *Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19-53.

recipient of the blessing.<sup>39</sup> The surrounding verses elaborate on the Galatians' estimation of Paul, so it seems best to understand 'blessing' (μακαρισμός) as the Galatians' disposition toward Paul.<sup>40</sup> Paul asks, in a sense, 'What happened to your earlier view that I was someone favoured by God?'<sup>41</sup> Despite Paul's disfigurement, the Galatians acknowledged him as an honoured and privileged person worthy of esteem. They would have been willing to extract and gift their own eyes – a precious organ and valuable possession.<sup>42</sup> Regardless of subsequent misgivings in their relationship, the Galatians' initial reception of him suggests that they had readily recognised Paul as a person of divine favour, not suffered his imposition.

When another missionary group courted the Galatians, Paul helped the Galatians choose wisely by citing a proverbial statement appealing to notions of honour and goodness: 'It is always good to court in a noble way' (4:18; καλὸν δὲ ζηλοῦσθαι ἐν καλῷ πάντοτε). Whom did Paul have in mind as the subject of the verb ζηλοῦσθαι?<sup>43</sup> For recent interpreters, this refers to Paul's noble zeal

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39. Betz, *Galatians*, 226–227 prefers the secular translation of 'praise' with a possessive genitive: 'What has become of your praise (that you had earned)?' Cf. ESV, 'your blessedness'. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 210 reads it in a reflexive sense, as 'self-congratulations' – that is, the Galatians congratulated themselves with the arrival of good news. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 421 similarly reads it as the intense elation and joy characterising their reception of the gospel. The reading favoured above takes the phrase as a subjective genitive. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 176 reads the genitive as objective: the Galatians felt 'felicitation' in Paul's teaching; cf. Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* at 4.15.

40. The other Pauline uses of 'blessed' (μακαρισμός) are Rom 4:6,9 (cf. 1 Clem. 50.5–7), in which God 'reckons' and grants μακαρισμός upon people. The term parallels righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) in Paul's argument and so refers to God's (unexpected and unmerited) declaration of acceptability or pronouncement of favoured status. Sib. Or. 13.117 uses μακαρισμός to convey a similar status reversal: 'To the dying, the living say a blessing (μακαρισμόν) by mouth and pronounce death beautiful (καλόν).' For an argument that μακάριος means 'considered honourable', see K. C. Hanson, 'How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproaches', *Semeia* 68 (1994): 81–111.

41. BDAG, s.v. μακαρισμός, 'pronouncement of being in receipt of a special favour'.

42. The hyperbolic nature of Paul's image does not negate any physical referent to Paul's eyes, contra Betz, *Galatians*, 228; deSilva, *Galatians*, 382, who say we should not assume this was a clue that his eyes were afflicted. In Lucian's oft-cited story (*Toxaris*, 40–41), the point works only because the two friends actually extracted their physical eyes.

43. The infinitive could be read as middle (NIV, NKJV) or passive (ESV, NRSV). We opt for the middle sense in light of Paul's argument referring to the Galatians' prior behaviour.

for the Galatians in contrast to the agitators' dishonorable zeal for them.<sup>44</sup> However, older interpreters read the statement as Paul's exhortation for the Galatians to pursue and imitate him.<sup>45</sup> In light of Paul's repeated mention of his physical presence with them (vv. 13-14, 18, 20), the 'zeal' in question likely refers to the Galatians' response to Paul. As Lappenga has argued, 'The description of the Galatians' initial reception of Paul in vv. 13-14 is precisely the description of the activity described by the phrase καλὸν δὲ ζηλοῦσθαι ἐν καλῷ πάντοτε.'<sup>46</sup> The proverbial statement in verse 18 points back to the eager hospitality the Galatians extended to Paul in person. Thus, Paul commends the Galatians for zealously courting and welcoming him upon his arrival. In their initial encounter, the Galatians had displayed zeal toward the travelling apostle 'in a (truly) noble manner'.<sup>47</sup>

To summarise Galatians 4:12-20, Paul recalls that upon his initial arrival in Galatia, the local communities did not malign or harm him (ἁδικέω), welcomed him as a divine figure (δέχομαι), considered him to be a person favoured by God (μακαρισμός), and zealously pursued him as a noble person (ζηλώω). The description of their initial encounter indicates that the Galatians welcomed, even pursued, a relationship with the newly arrived traveller. The redundancy of Paul's rhetoric reveals the depth and extent of their hospitality. In that case, the interaction was mutual and non-coerced, not an imposing burden with deleterious consequences.

Paul's recollections in Galatians must admittedly be read with caution when one is reconstructing past events. With its impassioned comments and polemical remarks, the letter of Galatians is foremost persuasive rhetoric.<sup>48</sup> Yet, we can have reasonable confidence in the historical value of Galatians 4:12-20 for discerning Paul's initial relationship with the Galatians, as he was

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44. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 212; Martyn, *Galatians*, 423; deSilva, *Galatians*, 385.

45. Vulgate ('*Bonum autem aemulamini [deponent] in bono semper*'); John Chrysostom, *Gal. Comm.* at 4.18 (PG 61:660); Jerome, *Gal. Comm.* 4.18 (PL 26:384); Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535, Chapters 1-4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, vol. 26, Luther's Works (St Louis: Concordia, 1963), 429; Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 177.

46. Benjamin J. Lappenga, 'Misdirected Emulation and Paradoxical Zeal: Paul's Redefinition of "The Good" as Object of Ζῆλος in Galatians 4:12-20', *JBL* 131.4 (2012): 789, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23488267>.

47. Philosophers thought people should envy/imitate/court/pursue (ζηλοῦσθαι) the good/noble/honourable (καλός); cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.11.2 (1388e); Isocrates, *Hel. enc.* 8-11. Paul's language about courting and pursuing ἐν καλῷ works to redefine Greco-Roman assumptions about what is 'noble' and to be considered of worth.

48. John M. G. Barclay, 'Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case', *JSNT* 10.31 (1987): 73-93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X8701003105>.

writing to the counter-party in the relationship. The letter recipients were participants in and witnesses to the interactions that Paul described. Paul's appeal to the Galatians' initial hospitality works rhetorically only if it reliably reflects their shared history. Fabrication or misrepresentation could easily have been discredited by the Galatians themselves.

Furthermore, Paul's rhetorical emphasis on weakness and suffering in the letter suggests that he arrived as a dependent, even marginalised and inferior, person. Paul references his physical stigmata, which the Galatians had themselves witnessed (Gal 4:13). Paul's ailment (ἁσθένεια) was likely the result of ill-treatment in ministry, the marks of suffering and persecution from opponents.<sup>49</sup> The violent aggression of opponents likely caused unappealing physical disfiguration and perhaps even an eye injury.<sup>50</sup> The Galatians had themselves witnessed his physical ailments, which Paul defines as a public portrayal of the cross (3:1).<sup>51</sup> Paul also mentions his ongoing persecution (5:11) and refers to 'the marks of Jesus' on his body (6:17). His disfigured body was an embodiment of Christ's crucifixion for the Galatians to behold (cf. 2 Cor 4:10; Phil 3:10). Paul's multiple references to suffering and stigmata assume the Galatians were aware of his mangled condition. A person who extracts resources from others would surely not face debasing circumstances, let alone boast of them. Based on the evidence in Galatians, Paul appears to have arrived in Galatia as a vulnerable ξένος who benefited from the Galatians' surprisingly positive reception.

In setting Paul's epistle alongside the Sagalassos inscription, Nasrallah finds, throughout Galatians, Paul's rhetorical attempts to reframe his interactions with the Galatians as fundamentally different from the other imposing travellers. However, her reading of other instances of imposing misconstrues the background and aim of Paul's argument, thus illustrating the exegetical issues at stake in historical reconstructions of Paul's travel in Galatia. Nasrallah interprets the account of Peter's travel to Antioch in Galatians 2:11-14 as 'Paul accus[ing] Cephas of imposing and disturbing locals'.<sup>52</sup> The view

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49. A. J. Goddard and S. A. Cummins, 'Ill or Ill-Treated? Conflict and Persecution as the Context of Paul's Original Ministry in Galatia (Galatians 4.12-20)', *JSNT* 16.52 (1993): 93-126, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X9301605205>; cf. Gal 5:11; 6:17; Acts 13-14; 2 Tim 3:11; A. Andrew Das, *Galatians* (St Louis: Concordia, 2014), 455-462.

50. Among modern interpreters, ophthalmia has been the most frequent explanation for Paul's weakness. Paul did seem to have an eye condition, but it was likely a visible symptom of his ailment (ἁσθένεια), not the primary referent of it.

51. John Anthony Dunne, *Persecution and Participation in Galatians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 164-167, <https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-155418-6>.

52. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 100-101.

faces two issues. Firstly, it misidentifies the city. Based on similarities between Galatians 2 and Acts 15, it has been an undebated consensus that the Antioch in Galatians 2:14 refers to Antioch ad Orontes in Syria,<sup>53</sup> yet Nasrallah supposes it refers to the Pisidian Antioch in Galatia. Peter most probably did not travel to Galatia and thus did not impose upon anyone there. Secondly, Paul accuses Peter not of imposing upon the locals but of withdrawing from them. Paul wished that Peter had accepted the local community's hospitality, but he instead maintained distance. In short, the incident in Galatians 2:11-14 is about interethnic commensality in Syria, not travel and hospitality in Galatia.

In another instance, Nasrallah reads Paul's rhetoric in Galatians 4:17 about his opponents' zeal and exclusionary intentions as 'political ... like the language of the Sagalassos inscription', and thus an indication that 'those who travel as part of the Christ movement impose upon the local Galatians who wish to affiliate with Christ; they come into town to pursue the Galatians, but then toy with the locals, Paul accuses, creating a situation of possible exploitation of local hospitality'.<sup>54</sup> However, Paul frames his opponents not as travellers who impose material burdens upon local guests but, rather, as religious gatekeepers enforcing Torah observance and circumcision among the Galatians and, thus, peddlers of a false gospel.<sup>55</sup> Galatians 4:17 relates to religious prescriptions, not travel burdens, so it hardly represents Paul's rhetorical attempt to reframe aspects of his own travel. Paul's language in Galatians 2:11-14 and 4:17 does not denounce other travellers as imposing in order to serve as a foil for his own behaviour. In sum, there is no clear evidence in Galatians of any traveller, whether Paul or others, leveraging social power to impose burdens and exploit hosts, likely because it was a non-issue in his encounters with the Galatians, who welcomed and esteemed the disabled itinerant.

## 5. Later Traditions About Paul and the Galatians

Paul's letter to the Galatians, when contextualised within the conventions of ancient travel and hospitality, offers the clearest evidence that Paul's relationship with the Galatians was positive and mutual. Paul's ongoing relationship with the Galatians and the narrative of Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18) supplement and corroborate this picture. These later sources reflect an early and well-established memory of the Galatians' mutual relationship

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53. Betz, *Galatians*, 104-105; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131-133; Martyn, *Galatians*, 231-232.

54. Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul*, 101.

55. Martyn, *Galatians*, 422.

with the apostle. We examine each for what they reveal about the nature of Paul's relationship with the Galatians.

Paul maintained ties with the Galatian church after the initial visit to Galatia. Their enduring association serves as one point of evidence in favour of a positive, non-imposing relationship. 1 Corinthians 16:1 indicates that the Galatians participated in the broader network of Pauline churches by contributing to a financial collection for the saints in Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> If the travel itineraries of Acts are historical, which seems plausible,<sup>57</sup> Paul returned through the region on two occasions to strengthen the churches he had started (16:6; 18:23).<sup>58</sup> The ongoing interactions suggest a mutual and voluntary relationship.

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56. Paul mentions only his instructions and does not state the Galatians' actual response. Elsewhere Paul references other churches as positive models of giving in order to pressure the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:1-5), which suggests that the Galatians are mentioned as positive examples. The lack of any mention of Galatians in 2 Cor 8-9 or Rom 15 should not be interpreted as an indication that the Galatians did not support the collection and had severed ties with Paul. Firstly, there is no reason to expect Paul to mention each community, such as the Galatians, or other communities involved in the collection. The silence should not be over-interpreted. Secondly, 2 Corinthians and Romans were most likely written shortly after 1 Corinthians during the same missionary journey, so there would have been little time (and no intervening Pauline visit to Galatia) for the Galatians to have pulled their support of the collection. In a related matter, according to the narrative in Acts, two people from Galatia – Timothy from Lystra and Gaius from Derbe – became travel companions with Paul in ministry (Acts 16:3-4; 20:4). In that case, their involvement in Paul's ministry would have strengthened his ties with the Galatian churches from which they originated.

57. Several have theorised that Luke utilised some itinerary document as a source of his information. W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 6-8, 148-151 hypothesised the independent existence of a 'travel document' composed under the authority of Paul lying behind Luke's narrative. Martin Dibelius, 'Stilkritisches zur Apostelgeschichte', in *Eucharisterion für H. Gunkel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), 27-49 discerned evidence of an itinerary document indicating the places Paul visited and brief notes. Richard I. Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts: Unraveling Its Story* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 2008), 160 also favoured such itineraries as a source for sections of Acts 16-21.

58. The geographical descriptions τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν and τὴν Γαλατικὴν χώραν καὶ Φρυγίαν are unclear. It appears as though the author envisions Paul (re)visiting the eastern portion of the Phrygian region that lay within (the southern portion of) the Galatian province, which would comprise the communities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and neighbouring Lystra from his initial journey in Acts 13-14. Cf. Ramsay, *Church in the Roman Empire*, 77-81; Charles K. Barrett, *Acts 15-28*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 766-767, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472555939>; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 3: 15:1-23:35* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 2324-2336.

If Paul had originally commandeered resources and exploited the Galatians, the relationship would likely have soured and ended.

Acts 14:8-18 recounts the Lycaonians' reception of Paul and Barnabas in a manner echoing local traditions of extravagant hospitality. When the Jewish itinerants heal a sick person, the crowds shout, 'The gods have come down to us in human form!' The people of Lystra view the miracle workers as epiphanies of Zeus and Hermes. Thus, the priests bring oxen and garlands to present a communal sacrifice in their honour. As is often noted, this Lukan narrative echoes a well-known moralistic story about hospitality.<sup>59</sup> The Roman poet Ovid recounts a similar legend about an elderly couple named Baucis and Philemon in Phrygia.<sup>60</sup> Despite their simple lifestyle, the couple extends a generous welcome to two travellers, who turn out to be Jupiter and Mercury disguised as humans. To accentuate the Lycaonians' hospitality, Acts 14:8-14 echoes the popular Baucis and Philemon narrative, including its plot (i.e. pious humans extending hospitality toward deities in disguise), divine characters (i.e. Jupiter and Mercury were the Roman equivalents of Zeus and Hermes), and even general geography (i.e. regions of Phrygia in Galatia).<sup>61</sup> Ancient histories would draw such narrative parallels as a way of interpreting events and framing their meaning.<sup>62</sup> Acts recalls the Lycaonians' initial reception of Paul as a pious act of hosting divine figures. Regardless of questions about the event's historicity and dating of Acts, the stylised narrative was an early Christian memory about the Galatians' eager reception of Paul and Barnabas when they first arrived in the region.<sup>63</sup>

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59. Ernst Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: John Knox Press, 1971), 427; Charles K. Barrett, *Acts 1-14*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1994), 677, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472556660>; Keener, *Acts*, 2146-2148.

60. Ovid, *Metam.* 8.614-724.

61. C. P. Jones, 'A Geographical Setting for the Baucis and Philemon Legend (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.611-724)', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 96 (1994): 203-223, <https://doi.org/10.2307/311324>; Justin Taylor, 'St Paul and the Roman Empire: Acts of the Apostles 13-14', *ANRW* 26.2:1214-1216, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110878554-003>.

62. G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979), <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520312401>.

63. Archaeological remains offer another potential line of evidence for the Galatians' own positive remembrance of Paul. An abundance of early funerary inscriptions in Lycaonia for people named Παῦλος suggests that the communities addressed in the Letter to the Galatians maintained a positive social memory of Paul in the generations after he visited the region. Cf. Cilliers Breytenbach and Christiane Zimmermann, *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas: From Paul to Amphilochius of Iconium* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 73-91, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004352520>.

## 6. Conclusion

In response to Nasrallah's argument that Paul imposed upon local communities during his travel to Galatians, this article has reassessed the nature of Paul's socio-economic relationship with the Galatians. The initial two sections considered the nature of Roman requisitions and ancient guest-hospitality as they might have related to Paul's interactions with the Galatians. Then we analysed texts illuminating the nature of Paul's socio-economic relationship with the Galatians – i.e. Paul's description of his initial encounter with the Galatians (Gal 4:12-20) and subsequent traditions regarding the Galatians' response to Paul. The cumulative evidence indicates that Paul related to the Galatians more as a welcomed guest who relied upon their hospitality than as a superior who imposed detrimental burdens. Therefore, we might question the applicability of Roman requisitions to Paul's travel in Galatia and the related implication that he commandeered resources from local communities. The evidence from Galatians itself suggests that ancient hospitality is the proper dynamic to envisage in this case. The Galatians who hosted a vulnerable traveller in Paul did so not because of coercion but in fulfilment of a familiar cultural practice.

At stake in our reading of Paul's relationship with the Galatians – whether it was 'friendly' or exploitative' – is not just historical facts but the social context and, thus, interpretation of Paul's subsequent letter. The nature of Paul's initial interaction informs our reading, for example, of 2:11-14 and 4:17, as discussed in section four above. Although the full implications of this reconstruction upon the interpretation of Galatians are beyond the scope of this essay, the historical conclusions argued here explain the rhetorical passion and Paul's theological rationale in Galatians 4:12–20. For Paul, the Galatians' positive response not only enabled his proclamation of the gospel, but it also demonstrated their acceptance of the gospel of Christ crucified and reception of God's Spirit.

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