

PAUL'S PRE-CHRISTIAN ZEALOT ASSOCIATIONS: A RE-EXAMINATION OF GAL 1.14 AND ACTS 22.3

MARK R. FAIRCHILD

Huntington College, 2303 College Avenue, Huntington, IN 46750, USA

The article explores Gal 1.14 and Acts 22.3, two statements where Paul is said to be a ζηλωτής. The term is a noun, meaning 'Zealot'. However, interpreters and commentators have always interpreted the term as an adjective, meaning 'zealous'. By understanding Paul's statement as an adjective, interpreters and commentators have dissociated Paul from the Zealot movement which was emerging during this period of time within Judaism. However, Paul appears in these passages to claim that the Zealot movement was a powerful influence upon his formative Jewish life and theology and was a motivating factor in his persecution of the Christians. This article proposes that we seriously consider Zealot influences in the formative years of Paul.

Past research has spent much time investigating the Pharisaic roots of the Apostle Paul.¹ Paul, however, is not particularly fond of the designation 'Pharisee', perhaps due to Jesus' denigration of the Pharisees.² He refers to his past Pharisaic credentials only in Phil 3.5, though Luke places this confession on his lips twice (Acts 23.6; 26.5).³

Another association, less frequently investigated as Paul's background and probably more pejorative, is the title 'Zealot'. Paul

¹H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); William David Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 4, 1980); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

²All of the Gospels attest to numerous controversy stories of Jesus with the Pharisees, where the Pharisees are portrayed as the hypocritical arch-enemies of Jesus. For this reason Paul may not have been anxious to promote this on his résumé. Moreover, even in Phil 3.5 Paul realizes that his former credentials are now of no value as a Christian: 'what I considered gain to me, I now count as loss in Christ' (3.7).

³In recent research on the Pharisees, such as Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973); Ellis Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), many previous assumptions about the Pharisees have been called into question and much remains to be discovered in our understanding of the sect.

refers to himself as a Zealot (ζηλωτής) in Gal 1.14, and Luke has Paul using this designation in Acts 22.3.⁴ But due to the negative connotations associated with Zealots, Paul seldom used the term, and the possibility of Paul having Zealot associations has been uniformly dismissed in the translations of Gal 1.14 and Acts 22.3. However, with recent developments in research on the Zealots and other Jewish resistance movements of the first century, it is now necessary to return to the statements of Gal 1.14 and Acts 22.3 to examine the meaning of Paul the ζηλωτής.

PAUL'S ANCESTRAL ROOTS

Luke claims that Paul's home town was Tarsus of Cilicia. In Acts, Paul is found openly proclaiming his Tarsian citizenship (Acts 21.39; 22.3), and Luke elsewhere locates Paul there (Acts 9.30; 11.25) or uses Tarsus as an appellation (Acts 9.11). There seems to be no good reason for denying this claim, since it would have been to Luke's benefit to portray Paul as a native of Jerusalem.⁵

In his letters Paul sometimes boasts of his heredity, education and zeal (Rom 11.1; 2 Cor 11.22–33; Gal 1.11–14; Phil 3.5–6); however, he nowhere boasts of his home town. It was natural for people to have a measure of civic pride,⁶ but outside of these sections in Acts Paul is mute on the topic. In a passage where Paul offers a faint clue to his origins (Gal 1.21), he nebulously refers to a visit in the regions of Syria and Cilicia, without a hint that Cilicia was his homeland nor a word that Tarsus was his home town. The most logical explanation for this is either that Paul did not consider Tarsus to be his true home town, or that he was not proud of it.⁷

⁴This is discounted by Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989) 180, and by most translations. Even though the word is a noun, most translations render the word as an adjective, 'zealous' (so RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV).

⁵To have a Diaspora Jew champion the Gentile Christian cause would not be as impressive as to have a well-credentialed Jew from Jerusalem. Cf. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 624; so also Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*, vol. 3 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 72–83; and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (New York: Oxford, 1996) 32.

⁶On civic pride in the first century see Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 141–3: 'The disposition to think of one's identity principally in terms of relationship to one's mother-city did not begin to abate until well into the 2nd century AD, only then giving way to a sense of Romanness as "national identity".'

⁷It was not that Tarsus was a backwater of Mediterranean civilization. Quite the contrary, as Strabo (*Geography* 14.5.13) attests:

Paul considered himself to be an alien in the Diaspora, whose true homeland was Palestine. When Paul crowed that he was a 'Hebrew of Hebrews' (Phil 3.5), he was touting his native Jewish distinctives vis-à-vis the diluted Greek-speaking Judaism of the Diaspora.⁸ Likewise, in Paul's reference to his 'contemporaries in my nation' in Gal 1.14 he is noting a kinship with the Jewish nation, not fellow Jews in Tarsus.⁹ Even in Acts when Paul acknowledges that he is a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21.39; 22.3), he is forced to do so to defend himself from the accusation of being the Egyptian rebel (21.38). Once this is established, however, Paul is quick to underscore his native Jewish upbringing: 'I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, but brought up in this city' (22.3).¹⁰ Thus, whenever the issue of Paul's home town is raised, whether in his own writings or in Luke's composition, Paul jumps on the defensive as if he is trying to erase a blemish or bad memory of his past history. One might inquire, why?

Murphy-O'Connor has convincingly argued that two passages from Jerome trace Paul's parents to Gischala and may reflect early Christian traditions.¹¹ The longer and, according to Murphy-O'Connor, more reliable of the two passages¹² comes from Jerome's *Commentary on Philemon*:

The people at Tarsus have devoted themselves so eagerly, not only to philosophy, but also the whole round of education in general, that they have surpassed Athens, Alexandria, or any other place that can be named where there have been schools and lectures of philosophers . . . Further the city of Tarsus has all kinds of schools of rhetoric, and in general it not only has a flourishing population but also is the most powerful, thus keeping up the reputation of the mother-city.

Thus, Paul's shame would not have been because of the city's reputation, which was excellent. Rather, in passages where Paul strongly affirms his Jewish affinities, yet ignores his Diaspora roots (Rom 11.1; 2 Cor 11.22; Gal 1.11–14; Phil 3.5–6), one may detect Paul's embarrassment that his days in Tarsus could be seen as a detriment to his exemplary Jewish credentials. Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 32: 'Such concern to affirm his Jewish credentials betrays the expatriate.'

⁸When Paul uses "Hebrew" he intends to imply a positive relationship to Palestine through the use of a Semitic language; it is not a mere synonym for Israelite' (Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 36); so also Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 91, n. 119.

⁹Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 68 n. 115; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 91.

¹⁰Based upon this verse, W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem: The City of Paul's Youth* (London: Epworth, 1962) argues that Paul and his parents moved to Jerusalem at a very early age and he spent most of early childhood there. Martin Hengel, however, believes that Paul's rhetoric is exaggerated here (*The Pre-Christian Paul* [London: SCM, 1991], 23, 38–9).

¹¹Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 37–9; also see Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, 14–15; and Haenchen, *Acts*, 620; contra Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 34; and Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 87 n. 95, who dismiss the traditions without reckoning with their origin.

¹²Jerome's *De viris illustribus* 5 contains the other citation of the tradition: 'Paul the apostle, previously called Saul, . . . was of the tribe of Benjamin and of the town of Gischala in Judaea. When the town was captured by the Romans he migrated with his parents to Tarsus in Cilicia.'

We have heard this story. They say that the parents of the Apostle Paul were from Gischala, a region of Judaea, and that, when the whole province was devastated by the hand of Rome and the Jews scattered throughout the world, they were moved to Tarsus a town of Cilicia.

Jerome does not cite the source of this story. However, the commentaries that he wrote during this time were dependent upon Origen's commentaries. Thus, Murphy-O'Connor and others speculate that Origen's lost commentary on Philemon was the source for this information. Furthermore, the obscurity of the town of Gischala strongly argues in favour of the genuineness of the tradition.¹³

The town of Gischala (Gush Halav) was located in Upper Galilee on an unimportant route to the west of the major travel thoroughfares.¹⁴ The site shows continuous occupation from the eighth century up to the Roman period and was probably an Israelite settlement.¹⁵ Literary evidence indicates that the Hasmoneans or Herod the Great used the site as a fortress to guard the north. The Mishnah refers to several old fortresses that go back to the days of Joshua, including the fortress at Gush Halav.¹⁶ According to Josephus, when Herod the Great came to power he took back some of the fortresses of Galilee from Marion, the king of Tyre, who had invaded the region in the latter half of the first century BC.¹⁷ Later Josephus claims to have assisted John of Gischala in rebuilding the fortress at Gischala.¹⁸ The fortification was formidable enough for Titus to order the walls to be torn down after the town surrendered in AD 67.¹⁹

It was during the early Roman conquests that the Galileans had

¹³Where Origen got his information is even more mysterious. The likelihood that he or any earlier Christian invented the association of Paul's family with Gischala is remote. The town is not mentioned in the Bible. It had no connection with Benjamin. It had no associations with the Galilean ministry of Jesus. And there is no evidence that it had Christian inhabitants in the Byzantine period' (Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 38).

¹⁴For a good discussion of Gush Halav and Upper Galilee see Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 96–101.

¹⁵Eric M. Meyers, James F. Strange and Carol L. Meyers, 'Preliminary Report on the 1977 and 1978 Seasons at Gush Halav (el-Jish)', *BASOR* 233 (1979) 33–58.

¹⁶'The old castle of Sepphoris, the fortress of Gush Halab, old Yodpat, Gamala, Gadwad, Hadid, Ono, Jerusalem and the like' (*Arakhim* 9.6, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* [trans. Jacob Neusner; New Haven: Yale University, 1988] 823). It is doubtful that these fortresses date back to the time of Joshua; however, the reference does indicate the existence of a fortress at Gush Halav in the early Roman period or earlier.

¹⁷Though unnamed, Josephus claims that Marion captured three fortified villages of Galilee which 'lay in his neighborhood' (*Ant.* 14.298). Herod drove Marion out of Galilee and repossessed the three fortresses (*Ant.* 14.298; *J.W.* 1.238). Gish Halav, close to the Tyre border, was probably one of these.

¹⁸Josephus, *J.W.* 2.590; *Life* 45.

¹⁹Josephus, *J.W.* 4.117.

ample cause to build up resentment against the Romans. First, taxation was greatly increased to support Roman imperialism and Herod, eager to win favour and position with the Romans, ambitiously pursued its collection.²⁰ Second, nationalistic Galileans supported Antigonus, a Hasmonean, rather than the Roman crony Herod.²¹ Even after Antigonus's defeat, pockets of resistance continued almost a century later.²² Josephus experienced this at first hand since many of these rebels stubbornly resisted his leadership as a Roman sympathizer who was sent by the Sanhedrin to maintain peace and to keep the tribute flowing.²³ Third, Josephus notes

²⁰ According to *J.W.* 1.220–5; *Ant.* 14.274, Herod learned early in his career with Cassius the benefits of collecting the tribute. R. A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995) 59–60, notes that there were three levels of taxation upon the people: Roman imperial taxation, Jewish taxes to support the temple, high priests and Jewish institutions, and Herod's taxes: 'Herod's taxes must have been unusually heavy in order to support his demonstrative munificence to the imperial family and Hellenistic cities, his extensive and lavish court that utilized several palatial fortresses, his vast program of cultural buildings and military fortresses, and the centerpiece of his building projects, the temples to Caesar and the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.'

²¹ Herod was a sycophant to Caesar, building temples and cities dedicated to the emperor throughout the land. Josephus claims that there was no place throughout the land that did not have something honouring Caesar (*J.W.* 1.407). Additionally, he divested the high priests of any meaningful power and appointed his own supporters as high priests (e.g. the appointment of Ananelus in *Ant.* 15.22).

²² Horsley rightly recognizes that these independent pockets of rebels and brigands had no central leadership, and thus had little or no affiliation with one another: Horsley, *Galilee*, 258–9; *idem*, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) 77–89; also Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985) 190–243. Josephus generally refers to the earlier resistance as λησται (robbers or bandits) and reserves the title 'Zealot' for the phenomenon of the 60s. However, against Horsley, this cannot be taken to argue against an ideology (or just cause) to account for the persistence of these movements. Horsley's belief that the 'fourth philosophy', the bandits, the Sicarii and the Zealots all represent independent and unrelated protest movements is tenuous. That they were independent is likely in most cases; but that they were unrelated is unlikely since ideological bonds kept these movements going. Josephus describes the followers of John of Gischala as both λησται and ζηλωται (*J.W.* 4.197–202 and elsewhere). And in his discussion of the fourth philosophy Josephus claims that it was this ideology (not so much a secession of leadership) that infected the bandits, Sicarii and Zealots. Thus, Josephus lumps all of these protest movements from Judas the Galilean to the time of Gessius Florus under the umbrella of one 'philosophy' (*Ant.* 18.23). In any society where peasant revolts have been suppressed persistent unrest is driven by the ideology (or just cause) rather than central leadership. Cf. the old man at Arbela who slew his seven children, wife and himself in spite of Herod's offer of clemency (*Ant.* 14.429–30; *J.W.* 1.312–13). An ideological cause is obviously the reason for such actions. That is, the actions were a symbol of protest, an obscene gesture of opposition to Herod.

²³ Josephus acknowledges that his primary objective in Galilee was to keep the peace: 'for my first care was to keep Galilee in peace' (*Life* 78). However, the only way to keep the peace in Galilee was to keep sending taxes to the Romans and to maintain civil order; that is, to eliminate the banditry that had been caused, in part, by the heavy taxation. Thus, note Josephus' opposition to John of Gischala's theft of the 'corn which belonged to Caesar, and lay in the villages of Upper Galilee' (*Life* 70–73). In his position to oversee law, order and taxation Josephus saw the rebels as λησται (thieves) who refused to pay taxes and who stole what was collected from others.

that under Roman dominion there were numerous deportations of Jews from Galilee to other lands where they were sold as slaves. Murphy-O'Connor dates these deportations to 61, 55, 52, 4 BC and 6 AD.²⁴ If the people of Galilee were unable to pay the tribute, they would be sold to generate taxation.²⁵

These three factors bore upon the minds of Galilean Jews as anti-Roman sentiments coalesced to forge what Josephus called the fourth philosophy. The ideology was probably widely embraced,²⁶ but concrete actions to back the ideology were infrequently expressed. When individuals or groups boiled over in more involved manners, the response varied from passive resistance, such as a refusal to pay taxes, to active non-violent responses, such as banditry to active violent responses, such as the Sicarii assassins and the 'Zealots' of the 60s.²⁷

Given that Jerome is correct that Paul's parents were deported to Tarsus during a Roman conquest, the passive form of the verb ('they were moved to Tarsus') implies that they were sold as slaves. How long they remained as slaves cannot be known; however, at some point they gained manumission. This may be the key to the puzzling question of how Paul obtained Roman citizenship,²⁸ since it is known that freed slaves of Roman citizens were granted citizenship in addition to their freedom.²⁹

²⁴ Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39. Without doubt, there were deportations throughout this period to quell the rebels and to generate tribute.

²⁵ *J.W.* 1.222; *Ant.* 14.275 note that the cities of Gophna and Emmaus as well as two other unmentioned towns were sold into slavery for failing to make the tribute. Josephus notes that the deportations into slavery were particularly odious to the Jews. In *Ant.* 16.1–5 Herod instituted a law whereby thieves would be sold into slavery to foreigners, contrary to Jewish law. Josephus commented that this occasioned the hatred of the Jews.

²⁶ This is probably reflected in the prevailing hatred for and poor reputation of the tax collectors of this period.

²⁷ Rather than seeing these as distinct entities (so Horsley), it is best to see these groups as different expressions of a sometimes dormant ideology. Thus, in a broad sense, all of these groups could be called 'zealots'. This best accounts for the use of 'Zealot' in the Mishnah (*Sanh.* 9.6), which may refer to Zealots during the Hasmonean period; the NT (Luke 6.15; Acts 1.13; 22.3; Gal 1.14), referring to Zealots among the followers of Jesus; and Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.26), who claims that many called the Sicarii Zealots. Cf. Hengel, *Zealots*, 59–75.

²⁸ Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 37–9, and Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, 14–15. Paul never claims Roman citizenship in his letters. However, Luke reports Paul's claim of citizenship in Acts 16.37; 22.25–8; 23.27; 25.10–12. Though the issue is debated, especially as to how Paul obtained citizenship, most scholars believe Paul was a Roman citizen. See Rapske, 'Paul's Citizenship and Status', in *Paul in Roman Custody*, 71–112; Simon Légasse, 'Paul's Pre-Christian Career according to Acts', in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 366–72.

²⁹ Cf. A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 2, 1973) 322–36. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39, 41, believes Paul received Roman citizenship in this way. Another clue may be the cryptic reference to a zealous Jew of Cilicia who was a member of the Synagogue

With this past history lurking in the background, the pre-Christian Paul possessed some resentment toward the Romans. His Galilean ancestors (particularly at Gish Halav) experienced many turbulent years caused by Roman imperialism and taxation. Over the years many friends, neighbours and relatives lost their land, lives and freedom. Undoubtedly these same factors led to the Zealot aspirations of John of Gischala during the 60s. Should we find it unusual that Paul, a product of the same social and psychological conditions, would develop similar Zealot thoughts?

WHAT IS A ZEALOT?

Josephus uses several terms to describe the various rebel groups that emerged during the first century of Roman occupation in Palestine. Three of these terms, λησται (bandits, brigands, or robbers), σικάριοι (Sicarii), and ζηλωται (Zealots) seem to have acquired a quasi-technical sense. Generally speaking, the λησται were peasants who were forced into banditry³⁰ because of Roman conquests, heavy taxation, loss of land, famine, debt, and the threat of slavery.³¹ These bandits probably had little in terms of a political agenda and primarily attacked and raided the wealthy gentry.³² However, the term is sometimes used loosely by Josephus to describe a variety of rebel groups which, for whatever reasons, engaged in banditry.³³

In Josephus' writings the term ζηλωτής most frequently occurs in

of the Freedmen (Acts 6.9). If this is Paul, the connection with the Synagogue of the Freedmen is more understandable.

³⁰ The word should be distinguished from κλέπτης, which denotes a common thief. The word ληστής is derived from the verb ληίζομαι ('to seize as booty, or to gain by force') and refers to one who plunders by means of piracy or war. 'It becomes a word for any kind of robber (plunderer, highwayman, pirate, etc.), and also for undisciplined soldiers, yet always with the implication of a ruthless use of force in seeking the goods of others' (K. H. Rengstorff, 'ληστής', *TDNT* 4.257-8). Horsley notes that the bandits had the support of the peasantry. They likely did not attack the poor and oppressed masses, but rather the wealthy gentry. The masses saw these renegades as warriors battling an abusive political and aristocratic system. Cf. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 69-76; Horsley, *Galilee*, 264.

³¹ See Horsley and Hanson, 'Ancient Jewish Social Banditry', in *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, 48-87; Horsley, *Galilee*, 264-5.

³² Horsley relates that they were a 'prepolitical' form of social protest which lacked a vision of a larger social programme for the solution of their problems. Cf. *Galilee*, 258-9.

³³ Thus, the term is applied to Sicarii: *Ant.* 20.163-5, 185-6; *J.W.* 2.254; the Zealots: *J.W.* 4.138, 197-202; the 'fourth philosophy': *Ant.* 18.7; and the followers of: Menahem (leader of a Sicarii band), *J.W.* 2.441; messianic (royal) leaders, such as those that emerged during the time of Judas the son of Hezekiah, Simon, and Athronges, *Ant.* 17.285; Simon bar Giora, *J.W.* 2.653; and John of Gischala, *J.W.* 2.587.

references to the rebels who entered Jerusalem around AD 67.³⁴ Josephus does not apply this term to all rebels, bandits, Sicarii, or movement leaders. The Zealots evidently appropriated this term as a title to describe themselves,³⁵ just as the Sicarii came to acquire their title by the use of their daggers.³⁶ As with the bandits, the Zealots likewise had their origin among the peasants. When the Roman war machine began grinding up Galilee in AD 66 the refugees from the north had to choose between death, slavery, flight or armed resistance. Many chose to flee to Jerusalem and participate in banditry for survival. As a consequence, many in the Zealot movement were also sometimes called λησται. Once in Jerusalem, many of these fugitives banded together and acquired the name 'Zealots'.³⁷

The rebel group referred to as σικάριοι (Sicarii), in contrast to the ζηλωται and the λησται, was probably not a peasant movement.³⁸ The Sicarii were political assassins who had a very specific programme for the resolution of their problems.³⁹ Their primary activity was not banditry, as with the λησται, but political assassination. The Sicarii targeted Jewish rulers who cooperated with and furthered the programmes of the Romans.⁴⁰

Josephus utilizes these designations to differentiate between the groups; though even in Josephus' writings the groups were not totally distinct bodies.⁴¹ Josephus sometimes notes that the

³⁴ Hengel, *Zealots*, 62; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, 217.

³⁵ Josephus, *J.W.* 4.161: '... the Zealots; for that was the name they went by, as if they were zealous in good undertakings', and *J.W.* 7.268-70: 'people that were called Zealots ... they gave themselves that name from their zeal for what was good'.

³⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.185-6: 'The Sicarii, as they were called, who were robbers, grew numerous. They made use of small swords ... like the Roman sicae ... and from these weapons these robbers got their name.'

³⁷ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 216-41, maintain that these Zealots were not the cause of the revolt, but rather a product of the revolt. This group was not a long-standing sect within Judaism. In accordance with the group's self-descriptive title, Josephus used the word ζηλωτής as a technical term for this peasant resistance movement which originated around AD 67.

³⁸ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 200-16.

³⁹ Their ultimate purpose was to eliminate Roman rule in Palestine by intimidating, threatening, kidnapping and killing Jews who cooperated with Roman policies.

⁴⁰ These Sicarii probably did not attack the Romans themselves, but rather 'the collaborating Jewish ruling elite: the priestly aristocracy, the Herodian families, and other notables' (Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 205).

⁴¹ Horsley and Hanson identify two other peasant movements during this time: royal or messianic movements (*ibid.*, 88-134) and popular prophetic movements (*ibid.*, 135-89; see also Horsley's 'Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus: Their Principal Features and Social Origins', *JSNT* 26 [1986] 3-27) and another non-peasant movement, the 'fourth' philosophy mentioned by Josephus. A common element in most of these movements, according to Josephus, is the presence of the λησται, indicating either that the groups were somewhat mixed sociologically or that persons from various socio-economic levels participated in brigand activ-

Sicarii were robbers (λησται) and likewise claims that the Zealots who entered Jerusalem were populated by similar robbers (λησται).⁴²

For Josephus, the terms he used to identify the various groups worked fairly well as he tried to maintain distinctions between the movements. However, outside of his writings it is not clear that everyone else employed the same technical terminology. This is especially true for the designation 'Zealot'.

A careful reading of Josephus suggests that Eleazar son of Simon, Judas son of Chelcias, Simon son of Esron, and Ezechias son of Chobari each had a following of Zealots before they banded together in the city.⁴³ In the NT Luke uses the title ζηλωτής twice to identify Jesus' disciple Simon,⁴⁴ and Hengel cites examples from the Talmudic literature where others used the name.⁴⁵

Even in Josephus' writings, one of the earliest references to 'Zealots' is in his reference to the Maccabean upstart Mattathias. 1 Maccabees, one of Josephus' sources,⁴⁶ states that Mattathias was passionately moved to keep the covenant of our fathers (διαθήκη πατέρων) and the Torah, not only for himself, but also for the community (2.20–1). This passion to maintain the sacred traditions compelled Mattathias to kill the apostate Jew and the king's official (2.24–5). Three times in the passage the author of 1 Maccabees uses the verb ζηλώω to describe Mattathias's passion. Twice it is stated that 'he burned with zeal for the Law (ἐζήλωσεν τῷ νόμῳ)', and in the last instance the verb is changed into a participle as Mattathias cries out: 'All who are zealous for the Law (Πᾶς ὁ ζηλῶν τῷ νόμῳ)'.

In recording this event Josephus rewrote the words of 1 Maccabees and changed the participle ζηλῶν into the noun ζηλωτής: *Ant.* 12, 271: εἴ τις ζηλωτής ἐστὶν τῶν πατρῶν ἐθῶν, 'If anyone is a Zealot for their ancestral customs'. This change is significant because in his works Josephus generally attempted to conceal past 'zealot' history.⁴⁷ This pivotal demonstration of zealous piety which

ities.

⁴² The λησται and the Sicarii: *Ant.* 20.163–4, 185–6; *J.W.* 2.254; the λησται and the Zealots: *J.W.* 4.138, 197–202.

⁴³ *J.W.* 5.5–7.

⁴⁴ Luke 6.15 has Σίμωνα τὸν καλούμενον ζηλωτὴν and Acts 1.13 records Σίμων ὁ ζηλωτής; parallels in Matt 10.4 and Mark 3.18 have the Aramaic equivalent: ὁ καναναῖος. Cf. Hengel, *Zealots*, 69–70.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 66–9. 'It is an honorary title which goes back to Old Testament models and which members of that movement gave to themselves' (74–5).

⁴⁶ The Hebrew version of 1 Macc was probably available to Josephus, but most scholars agree that he probably used a Greek version and felt free to emend and reinterpret it. See Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees* (AB 41; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) 14–15, 55–61.

inaugurated the Maccabean revolt may have become a pattern of pious action for years to come.⁴⁸ The zealotry of Mattathias was first, zeal for the purity of the ancestral traditions, and second, zeal that drove him to slay infidels who posed serious threats to the security of those traditions.

Josephus began to sketch the nebulous beginnings of a movement, based upon this 'Zealot' ideology, which he was reluctant to classify as a sect. The movement had spasmodic leadership extending from Judas the Galilean through his sons and grandsons, but it was the ideology, not the disjointed leadership, that kept the movement afloat.⁴⁹ In a key passage dealing with the origins and theology of the movement Josephus concluded: 'Thus, in this way, the new and changed understanding of the ancestral traditions largely maintained a movement of destruction for those involved.'⁵⁰ Consequently, it was this radical and violent understanding of obedience to the Torah that accounted for the persistence of the movement.⁵¹

Elsewhere in this passage Josephus speaks disparagingly of the movement, first by using condescending terms, second by emphasizing the novelty of the movement, and third by noting the pernicious nature of the 'philosophy'. Josephus clearly separates this new phenomenon from the older sects⁵² when he uses ideological terms such as 'philosophy (φιλοσοφίαν)', 'a foreign philosophy (φιλοσοφίαν ἐπείσακτων)', 'this way of speaking (τοῦ εἰπεῖν)', 'a formerly unknown philosophical manner of thinking (ἄσυνήθει

⁴⁷ Hengel notes that Josephus was trying to suppress evidence of a direct link between early Judaism and the Zealot movement (*Zealots*, 155). See also E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992) 409: 'Josephus wished to isolate the revolt as an aberration and to claim that only "brigands" and the like, or holders of some strange fourth philosophy, opposed peaceful existence under the rule of Rome.'

⁴⁸ Cf. J. Julius Scott, Jr., *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 211, who believes that the title 'Zealot' may have come from Mattathias's battle-cry.

⁴⁹ Yet one cannot entirely ignore the influence of Judas's family in keeping the ideology viable. If one accepts Josephus' genealogical comments as true, Judas the Galilean was followed by a number of descendants who had a part in leading anti-Roman activities: Jacob and Simon, who were crucified by Tiberius Alexander (*Ant.* 20.102); Menahem, leader of the Sicarii (*J.W.* 2.433); Eleazar ben Jair, another leader of the Sicarii (*J.W.* 2.447; 7.253); and possibly Judas and Simon, sons of Jair. Cf. Hengel, *Zealots*, 330–7; Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 283.

⁵⁰ *Ant.* 18.9: οὕτως ἄρα ἡ τῶν πατρῶν καίνισις καὶ μεταβολὴ μεγάλας ἔχει ῥοπὰς τοῦ ἀπολουμένου τοῖς συνελθούσιν.

⁵¹ Sanders likewise reasoned that the fourth philosophy should be considered more of an ideology than a party, calling it 'a radical religio-political ideal that could be called forth by various people to justify extreme action at what they regarded as moments of crisis' (*Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 283).

⁵² In his earlier writing (*J.W.* 2.117–66) Josephus does not even classify this movement as a sect in the same sense as the Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees. In *Ant.* 18.4–25, however, the movement is listed alongside the others, but is clearly distinguished as being an anomaly.

πρότερον φιλοσοφίας τοιαύτης) and 'contemptible way of thinking (καταφρονήματος)' to describe it.⁵³

This ideology was not privy to any social class or established religious sect.⁵⁴ The broad appeal of these convictions may be noted in a tradition found in Hippolytus' discussion of the Essenes. In distinguishing between four parties of the Essenes, Hippolytus makes the following statement:

If a member of the second party hears that someone has been speaking about God and his laws, but is not circumcised, he lies in wait for him and when he finds him alone threatens him with death if he does not let himself be circumcised. If he does not obey, he is not spared, but is killed. It is for this reason that they have received the name Zealots (ζηλωταί). But some call them Sicarii (σικάριοι). The members of another tendency call no one Lord other than God, even if they are tortured or killed.⁵⁵

Hippolytus is dependent upon Josephus for much of this material on the Essenes. However, this strange reference to the Zealots among the Essenes is lacking in Josephus and is puzzling. Some scholars believe that Hippolytus is here utilizing a source that antedates Josephus, or that Josephus and Hippolytus are both employing a common source differently.⁵⁶

It is important to observe here the connection with the tradition of zealotry mentioned above, that first, these Essene Zealots were extraordinarily zealous for the Law (a point which is demonstrated in Hippolytus' fuller description of the Essenes), and second, that at least some Essenes shared the Zealots' fervour to shed blood in order to maintain compliance with the Law. As some of the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate,⁵⁷ the Essenes certainly echoed the rhetoric of holy war. However, there is no indication, other than this

⁵³ *Ant.* 18.6, 9, 23, 24.

⁵⁴ Although the economic pressures mentioned above would have made the movement almost irresistible to the poor.

⁵⁵ Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies* 9.21.

⁵⁶ Hengel surveys the research on this section of Hippolytus (*Zealots*, 71 n. 359). Hengel, himself, believes that Hippolytus had access to other early sources on the Zealots which he inserted at this point.

⁵⁷ Most notably the War Scroll: 'In three lots shall the sons of light brace themselves in battle to strike down iniquity' (1QM 1.13), also 'They shall all hold themselves prepared . . . of God and to spill the blood of the wicked' (1QM 6.16), from *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (ed. Geza Vermes; New York: Penguin, 4, 1995) 126. Also in several of the Cave 4 fragments: 4Q471 1.3–5: 'they say, "Let us fight His wars, for we have polluted . . . your enemies shall be brought low, and they shall not know that by fire . . . gather courage for war"', and 4Q448 2.7, which speaks positively about 'those joining in the war of . . .' (Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* [New York: Penguin, 1992]).

passage from Hippolytus, that the Essenes actively engaged in zealous murder.⁵⁸

What may also be reflected in Hippolytus' statement is the understanding that the Zealots may not have been an exclusive sect within Judaism. Hippolytus' zealots were clearly Essenes. Those espousing Zealot ideology may have come from various backgrounds including other established sects of Judaism. These adherents probably maintained their sectarian associations while harboring these Zealot convictions.⁵⁹

One may be able to discern Zealots among the Pharisees as well. Josephus described the fourth 'philosophy' as having Pharisaic teachings⁶⁰ and claimed that some of the founders and devotees of this new ideology were Pharisees.⁶¹ In fact, a case can be made that Josephus covered up Pharisaic involvement in anti-Roman movements and that their subversive or Zealot activities were greater than generally assumed.⁶²

At this point it may be helpful to note that this tradition of zealotry was *not* directed against any ethnic group or any particular system of government (such as the Romans). Rather, zealotry

⁵⁸ Eisenman and Wise, *Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*, argue that the Cave 4 scrolls have 'very clear connections with the Zealot movement' (11). However, the clues of Zealot influence are probably fewer than they claim and the presence of a few Zealot-like comments sprinkled about the scrolls does not argue against the primary Essene character of the community and make Qumran a Zealot outpost. Rhetoric is stronger than action and there is no evidence to indicate that the statements of the scrolls went beyond rhetoric and erupted into violence. In fact 4QMMT (4Q397–399) 7–10 may be read to indicate that the community separated itself from those who advocated rebellion:

You know that we broke with the majority of the people and refused to mix or go along with them on these matters. You also know that no rebellion or Lying or Evil should be found in His Temple. It is because of these things we present these words and earlier wrote to you, so that you will understand the Book of Moses.

Nevertheless, Eisenman and Wise are correct that we must take these statements seriously and conclude that Zealot ideology found a home among some in the community.

⁵⁹ After examining the passage from Hippolytus, Allen Jones comes close to this conclusion without directly saying it when he notes 'the Zealots also had some sort of relationship with the Essenes' (*Essenes: The Elect of Israel and the Priests of Artemis* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985] 38).

⁶⁰ *Ant.* 18.23.

⁶¹ *Ant.* 18.4 mentions Saddok, a Pharisee; and in *Ant.* 17.149–54 the most celebrated Torah scholars ('experts in the laws') who were responsible for tearing down the golden eagle were probably Pharisees. Cf. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 385, who holds this view along with others. Sanders notes that the term 'experts' (ἐκκριβοῦν) is a word which most often refers to Pharisees.

⁶² Josephus was himself a Pharisee and clearly favoured that party. Sanders accuses Josephus of suppressing 'references to the Pharisees that would connect them with insurrection in several instances' (*Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 409). After comparing some of the speeches in Josephus, Sanders even suggests that there may have been some Pharisees among the Sicarii (407–9).

was directed against any group that posed a threat to the exercise and promotion of Torah observance. Thus, we should not find it unusual that Paul, trying to overcome the negative stigma of a Hellenistic homeland, would want to prove his zeal in such radical ways.

Horsley is correct in his observation that we cannot continue to look upon the Zealots as a unified sect of Judaism with a distinctive theology and continuous leadership extending from the Maccabean period to the end of the second revolt against Rome. Furthermore, much of the banditry reported by Josephus was due to economic hardship and taxation, rather than the ideology of religious zeal. However, contrary to Horsley, there does seem to be a tradition of zealous religious ideology that was cultivated during the Maccabean period, incubated during the early Roman period and caught fire during the first revolt. This ideology transcended sectarian boundaries to the degree that the evidence indicates that Essenes, Pharisees and the unaffiliated masses were attracted to it.⁶³ This tradition occasionally expressed itself in violent outbursts such as were witnessed during the Maccabean uprising, the days surrounding Herod's ascent to power, Paul's persecution of the Christians and the war with the Romans.

A contemporary analogy to this may be the patriotic and religious militarism that is accommodated not only in many Christian denominations, but also in an assortment of different religions. This militarism finds expression in a variety of passive or active ways, extending from support of a large national defence budget or of the right to bear arms (handguns or assault weapons) to quasi-religious militia groups and various religious terrorist acts. It was this sort of mentality that Paul confessed to be the driving force behind his persecution of the early Christian church.

GAL 1.13-14

In Gal 1.14, when Paul claims to be 'an extraordinary Zealot for my ancestral traditions', the terminology is so close to the words of

⁶³ Hengel asserts that zeal for the Law and zeal for God were 'not an aspect that was exclusively confined to the Zealots as a clearly defined party. It was something that concerned the whole of Palestinian Judaism at that time' (*Zealots*, 177-83). Before AD 70 this zeal was frequently vented through acts of divine vengeance. Jubilees 30.18 claims that Levi was chosen for the priesthood because 'he was zealous to practice justice and judgement and revenge on all those who rise up against Israel'. Likewise in 1QH 14.14: 'According to the measure of my closeness [to God], I was zealous against all evil-doers and men of deceit.'

Mattathias, the leader of the Maccabean revolt, that one is forced to conclude that Paul is expanding upon a Zealot tradition that extends back to the Hasmonean period.

Gal 1.14, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτής ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων: 'being an extraordinary Zealot for my ancestral traditions'.

Ant. 12.271, εἴ τις ζηλωτής ἐστὶν τῶν πατρίων ἐθῶν⁶⁴: 'If anyone is a Zealot for their ancestral customs'.

If Paul was anywhere near as knowledgeable of the traditions as he claimed to be, he would certainly have been familiar with these words.

The zealotry of Mattathias was first, zeal for the purity of the ancestral traditions, and second, zeal that drove him to slay infidels who posed serious threats to the security of those traditions. In Gal 1.13-14 Paul cites these same two concerns: zeal for the ancestral traditions and actions driven toward the persecution of Christians who threatened the security of those traditions.⁶⁵

Paul's terminology in Gal 1.13-14 makes his association with the Zealot movement clear. When Paul asserts that he was advancing beyond (ὑπέρ with an accusative) his many contemporary Pharisees and links this with his persecution of the Church (ὑπερβολήν - 'beyond measure, or excessively'),⁶⁶ his claim is for zealous action as a demonstration of his rank. Similarly, Paul's use of περισσοτέρως⁶⁷ in v. 14 encourages a Zealot understanding of ζηλωτής.⁶⁸ All Pharisees could claim to have zeal in a general sense.⁶⁹ However, when Paul claimed to be περισσοτέρως ζηλωτής, the claim was exaggerated. With this expression Paul was claim-

⁶⁴ The LXX records these words differently in 1 Macc 2.27 and uses the verbal form of the word for Zealot: Πᾶς ὁ ζηλῶν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ ἰσθῶν διαθήκην, 'All who are zealous for the Law and support the covenant'.

⁶⁵ Légasse defined this zeal as 'the charismatic fury which impels the faithful Jew to fight for God's cause by means of violent actions against the impious members of his own people'. The prototype for this sort of action according to Légasse is Phinehas (Num 25.1-9), Elijah and the Maccabees ('Paul's Pre-Christian Career', 383).

⁶⁶ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 67 n. 109.

⁶⁷ As Betz notes, the adverb 'should be taken as an "relative"'. Also, 'The "excessive" nature of his persecutions of Christianity demonstrates the high degree (περισσοτέρως) of "zeal", which he had for "the traditions of his forefathers"' (*Galatians*, 68).

⁶⁸ Betz is contradictory here. He notices the excessive nature of Paul's statements in vv. 13-14 but backs off from the conclusion that Paul is claiming to be a Zealot: 'Such conduct was not extremist or a form of mindless fanaticism, but was in conformity with the contemporary expectation of what a faithful Jew ought to have been.' Thus, Betz on the one hand claims that Paul's actions are 'excessive', but on the other that such actions were the normative expectations of faithful Jews (*Galatians*, 67-8). Yet the passage makes no sense unless Paul is here clearly differentiating himself from the actions of ordinary Jews.

⁶⁹ In this general sense Hengel states: 'Zeal for the law was, after all, an integral part of Pharisaical piety for the law before 70 A.D.' (*Zealots*, 180).

ing to be a radical Zealot, exceeding his Pharisaic contemporaries.

PHIL 3.5-6

Paul is alluding back to his Zealot ideology in another autobiographical segment in Phil 3.5-6 which closely parallels Gal 1.13-14. Adding to a list of credentials which includes 'circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews', Paul composes a parallel construction with three κατὰ clauses:

- according to the Law: a Pharisee;
- according to zeal (ζήλος): a persecutor of the church;
- according to righteousness which is in the Law: blameless.

These were the credentials of a zealous Jew eager to locate himself within a tradition of zealotry to eradicate threats to the faith.⁷⁰ The two factors of zeal for the Law and willingness to kill infidels are both found in this section.

If Paul is hinting at Zealot associations in Phil 3.6, why did he not use the word ζηλωτής (Zealot) as he did earlier in Gal 1.14? The answer to this question lies in Paul's circumstances at the time he wrote this letter. Four times in the Epistle to the Philippians Paul specifically mentions that he is incarcerated (1.7, 13, 14, 17).⁷¹ At other places Paul refers to the uncertainty of his future (1.19-20; 2.17, 23). Thus, at the time of writing Paul did not know if his impending trial would result in an acquittal or a conviction. Knowing the Romans' concern for peace in the empire, Paul did not deem it frugal to use the highly charged term 'Zealot' given his imminent trial. He could not be sure that the letter would not fall into the hands of his enemies or Roman officials. If the letter was seized and used against him at his trial, the open admission by Paul of his Zealot past would have been hard to explain and could have led to his conviction. Thus, Paul wrote this letter from prison as though Roman officials were looking over his shoulder. Even though ear-

⁷⁰ The list of credentials in vv. 5-6 are endorsements for Paul's confidence in the flesh. Thus, the zeal (ζήλος) which led Paul to persecute the Church and murder Christians was seen, not negatively as unbridled malice, but rather positively as a righteous reaction specifically directed to root out the perceived infidelity of the Christian movement. Cf. Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 134.

⁷¹ It matters little whether Paul is in prison in Rome (as traditionally thought), or in Ephesus or Caesarea (as some modern scholars hold). The fact that Paul refers to the Praetorium (1.13) and the household of Caesar (4.22) makes it clear that Paul is being held under Roman jurisdiction.

lier, in writing to the Galatians, Paul openly acknowledged his Zealot past (ζηλωτής), at this point he cloaked the statement in a less distinct guise (ζήλος).⁷²

ACTS 21-22 AND THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST PAUL

When Paul returned to Jerusalem and entered the temple precincts a riot broke out which occasioned his arrest. According to Acts 21.33-4 the Chiliarch who arrived on the scene from the nearby Antonia Fortress tried to ascertain the facts of the fracas. At this point Luke reports that members of the mob were tossing out a variety of accusations.

From verses 28-9 Luke identifies three religious charges of blasphemy or desecration that were hurled at Paul. He was accused of blasphemy against the Law, blasphemy against the temple, and he was accused of profaning the temple by bringing a Gentile inside the retaining wall around the temple. These charges, however, may not have been enough. The crowd evidently also accused Paul of insurrection (or zealotry), a charge which would have been taken much more seriously by a Roman garrison entrusted with the peace of the temple precincts.

That the Chiliarch assumed this charge to be true⁷³ is evident from v. 38: 'Then you are not the Egyptian⁷⁴ who in former days

⁷² Hengel denies that texts such as Gal. 1.14; Phil 3.6 and 22.3 suggest that Paul had Zealot affiliations by noting that Luke was careful to dissociate Christians from the Zealot movement and by claiming that Paul would never have been given powers to act against the Christians if the priests knew he was a member of the Zealot party (*Zealots*, 180). Yet these arguments are not convincing. In the first case, it may be true that in Acts Luke is concerned to downplay the early church's involvement in Zealot activities; however, that does not mean that such activities were non-existent. Luke, perhaps writing an ἀπολογία to defend Christians, was not anxious to establish such connections, and it is for that reason that indications of Zealot involvement are largely absent in Acts. However, upon Paul's arrest in chapters 21-22, the charge of Zealot insurrection is levied against Paul and Luke is forced to deal with the accusation. In the second case, as I have already noted, Paul would not have had to give up his Pharisaic associations to harbour Zealot ideology. If the text of Acts is historical, the high priests evidently harboured this same zeal against the nascent Christian movement. Additionally, as many scholars have contended, Paul may have been acting on his own, since it is not clear that the Sanhedrin had any authority over citizens in Damascus (cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 65-6).

⁷³ Rapske wrongly assumes that the Chiliarch came up with this conclusion himself (*Paul in Roman Custody*, 136). However, Luke asserts that in response to the commander's questions, the crowd offered plenty of accusations (21.33-4). It is doubtful if the commander would make such a rash assumption on his own. The surprise echoed in 21.38, 'then you are not the Egyptian . . .?', suggests that the tribune had reasons to believe that Paul was the insurrectionist. Rapske himself notes that persons taken into custody were not scourged to obtain self-incriminating evidence (as Paul was in 22.24) unless there were good reasons to believe the charges (p. 139). Thus, rather than acting upon an impulsive hunch, the tribune seems to be responding to accusations proffered by the crowds.

stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Sicarii (σικαρίων) out into the wilderness?⁷⁵

Luke has Paul responding to the Chiliarch (21.39) and to the people (22.3) by emphasizing his Jewish identity (Ἰουδαῖος) and his citizenship of Tarsus, in order to distinguish between himself and the Egyptian. But, since Paul's record of zealotry within Jerusalem could not be denied (he was responsible for the death of Christians – Acts 8.1–3; 9.1–2), Luke records an amazing concession where Paul admits that the accusation is true.⁷⁶ Here, Paul claims that 'I am a Zealot for God' in words very similar to those found in Gal 1.14:

Gal 1.14 περισσοτέρως ζηλωτής ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων

Acts 22.3 ζηλωτής ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ

In spite of the fact that ζηλωτής is a noun, most interpreters have softened the impact of the word by translating it as 'zealous'. That Luke is filling the word ζηλωτής with Zealot connotations is clear from the context: Paul acknowledges his enthusiasm for the Law (22.3), his willingness to persecute Christians to the death (22.4),⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Josephus refers to this person as a prophet who led 30,000 people into the desert and then ascended the Mt of Olives in an attempt to take the holy city (*J.W.* 2.261–3). When his forces were defeated, the Egyptian fled. Hengel states that 'The people probably believed in a miraculous escape and expected him to return' (*Zealots*, 231 n. 13). Most scholars assume that Josephus' reference to 30,000 men was a misreading ($\Lambda = 30,000$) of the more accurate 4,000 ($\Delta = 4,000$).

⁷⁵ Haenchen asks the right question, but posits the wrong answer when he observes: 'How the tribune hits upon the idea that his prisoner is precisely "the Egyptian" is puzzling.' Haenchen suggests that the conversations are entirely fictional. That is, Luke has constructed the dialogue in order to acquit Paul of insurrectionist motives. 'Anyone who takes this conversation historically embroils himself – as we have seen – in sheer impossibilities' (*Acts*, 620–2). Likewise, Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 71. Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987) 237–41, also sees the section as largely Lukan redaction. However, Lüdemann sees many traditional elements that have been woven into the text (e.g. Paul's origins in Tarsus, his Roman citizenship, his Jerusalem education and his persecution of the church). Here and elsewhere (*Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989] 52–9) Lüdemann argues for the 'great historical value' of the narrative in Acts 21 leading up to this dialogue.

Even if the dialogue is a Lukan creation, it does not follow that the accusation against Paul was as well. The reference to the Egyptian assassin is peculiar and argues in favour of its authenticity. Josephus reports the activities of this 'prophet' in the midst of sections dealing with the Sicarii and robbers (*J.W.* 2.258–65; *Ant.* 20.160–78) and notes that he had insurrectionist intentions.

⁷⁶ Hengel recognizes the word associations between 21.38 (σικαρίων) and 22.3 (ζηλωτής), but refuses to see this as a concession on Paul's part (*Pre-Christian Paul*, 71).

⁷⁷ Hengel observes many of these same items and is tempted, but reluctant, to connect Paul with the Zealots: 'Of course that does not mean that the Pharisaic Jew was closely connected with the "Zealot" movement of a Judas of Galilee, but it does mean that for God's cause and for

his mission of hostility to Damascus (22.5), and his part in the lynching of Stephen (22.20).

Paul's statement in 22.3 is also paralleled by an earlier statement attributed to James in 21.20:

Acts 21.20 πάντες ζηλωταὶ τοῦ νόμου ὑπάρχουσιν

Acts 22.3 ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ

In 21.20 James warns Paul that there are thousands of Jews who have believed 'and they are all Zealots of the Law'. The distinction between ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων in Gal 1.14, ζηλωταὶ τοῦ νόμου ὑπάρχουσιν in Acts 21.20 and ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ in 22.3 should not be overblown. Zealotry for ancestral traditions, the Law and God would not have been perceived differently. In fact, Paul equates his zealotry with that of those who are seeking his arrest: ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ καθὼς πάντες ὑμεῖς ἔστε σήμερον, 'being a Zealot of God just as you [emphatic construction] all are today'.⁷⁸ With these statements Luke is intentionally uniting James's assertion with Paul's claim.

The section reads like a forensic defence (ἀπολογία) in response to well-grounded accusations⁷⁹ and may have been formulated by Luke in response to questions regarding Paul's Zealot associations. The defence does not bother to refute any of the blasphemy charges,⁸⁰ but rather focuses upon the issue of zealotry. As Luke has it, Paul acknowledged these charges to be true, but was quick to add that this was part of his distant past and was little different from what was happening at the time of his arrest.

CONCLUSION

Over time the term 'Zealot' acquired a technical sense and was

the hallowing of the law he was prepared to use force if necessary, even to the point of killing the lawbreaker' (*Pre-Christian Paul*, 70–1).

⁷⁸ Since Paul cannot entirely discount his accusers' charges 'he more subtly seeks to identify with them as a fellow zealot for God and the Law, indeed a fellow persecutor' (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] 667).

⁷⁹ The section begins with the ἀπολογία (22.1) and concludes with a verdict (22.22). Haenchen (*Acts*, 624) claims that this speech introduces the concluding theme of Acts as ἀπολογία, and Conzelmann (*Acts of the Apostles*, 186) notes that the vocabulary of an apology emerges in these chapters. See also Jerome Neyrey, 'The Forensic Defense Speech and Paul's Trial Speeches in Acts 22–6: Form and Function', in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (ed. C. H. Talbert; New York: Crossroad, 1984) 210–24; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 703; Witherington, *Acts: Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 668.

⁸⁰ Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 186; Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 703. This suggests that the only issue of real concern was the charge of zealotry.

occasionally used as a title. The word came to refer to an extremist who was passionately committed to maintaining the Law. This passion expressed itself in an assiduous attempt to keep the community free of defilement, and could be manifest in violent purges of the community. Thus, Phinehas, the prototype Zealot,⁸¹ and Mattathias fiercely defended the ancestral traditions by means of bloodshed. Many who held this view thought that paying taxes to the Romans was slavery and was banned by the commandment to serve no other master.⁸² They also objected to the Roman policy of forced slavery for those unwilling or unable to pay the heavy taxation. The Zealot expressions of banditry and murder that resulted from these circumstances, though themselves in violation of the Torah, were justified as ways of protesting and purging the desecration of the Torah.

Paul echoed this mentality, perhaps because of his family's involvement in the oppression and deportations of Galilee. At a time when Paul was attempting to distinguish himself as a Zealot, a new threat to the ancestral traditions emerged in the form of Christianity. Paul's testimony, reflected in Gal 1.13–14 and Phil 3.5–6 and in Luke's corroboration in Acts 22.3, makes a connection between the use of ζηλωτής and Paul's persecution of Christians as a way of purging the community. Thus, in addition to the appellation 'Pharisee' we understand that Paul and Luke saw the title 'Zealot' as a further defining designation for the apostle.

⁸¹ Hengel, 'Zeal for the Law in Connection with the Tradition of Phinehas', in *Zealots*, 149–77.

⁸² *Ant.* 18.4; *J.W.* 2.118.