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Paul's Drive for Deviants*

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How did Paul on his own or with a companion or two turn (apparently) ordinary Hellenistic townspeople into deviant atheists? 'A theory of conversion to a deviant perspective' (Lofland and Stark) and the example of Cynic deviancy suggest a plausible explanation.

Clearly Paul had some limited success. Some people did 'turn from idols to be servants of the true and living God, and to wait expectantly for his Son from heaven' (1 Thess 1.9–10). One can find a range of suggestions as to how Paul may have consolidated their adhesion once they had converted, and even suggestions as to how newcomers may have been assimilated into congregations once formed.[1] But it is very difficult to find a satisfactory account of how Paul on his own or with one or two companions secured the initial change, persuading enough Hellenistic townspeople to constitute an initial community of any sort.[2] Such brief suggestions as are offered seem to run counter to the evidence. In particular they mostly fail to take note of just how socially deviant was both the message and Paul's enacted offer of it. Yet what I shall suggest here is that this deviance may itself provide us with a basis for understanding the effect Paul achieved. (This

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1 A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); P. F. Esler, *Community & Gospel in Luke–Acts: The Social and Political Motivation of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987); *idem*, *Galatians* (London: Routledge, 1998); and most of the contributors to R. A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

2 B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), very sceptical of the explanatory force of talk of 'sects', still finds it difficult to countenance a 'somewhat unpersuasive picture of the Pauline sect, starting as a one-man operation after the Antioch incident' (106), responding to F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986).

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is a strand which I realise I failed to cover in my *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*.[3])

Paul himself can say his success was all God's work (Rom 8.28–30), but he still seems to have found it necessary to do quite a lot of hard work himself to make God's work effective (1 Cor 15.10). As is known well, Acts suggests Paul's method was to lead a breakaway from a local Jewish congregation, taking with him groups of Jews and of 'God-fearers'; and Paul certainly seems to have maintained at least occasional contact with fellow Jews (1 Cor 9.20; 2 Cor 11.24). But Paul insists that his main work was with Gentiles, and reminds us emphatically that at least three of his major congregations or groups of congregations comprised people who, as recalled above, had 'turned from idols', with Paul's help, and not before (1 Thess 1.9; cf. Gal 4.8; 1 Cor 12.2).[4] It is widely noted that 1 Thessalonians shows no sign of its hearers being already acculturated to the Jewish scriptures; nor is there any such sign in the recollections of origins in Gal 3.1–5 or 1 Cor 1.18–2.5.[5]

Another suggested solution, again dependent on Acts, has Paul as a public speaker. Yet he himself allows he had no such ability (2 Cor 10.10); and, anyway, he would have been very unlikely to have held civic crowds spellbound unless he had deployed the full expected resources of Greek classical allusions.[6] And there is little value, I would argue, in suggesting his 'charisma' as explanation. In Weber's original model 'charismatic' refers to leadership within an existing group, and is not relevant to the stage before a group has formed. In a weaker and more popular sense 'charismatic' is only another way of saying Paul was persuasive – it still fails to explain how or why.[7]

3 F. G. Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998).

4 Compare A. J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 56. Malherbe also offers a helpful clarification: 1 Thess 1.9–10 summarises the effect, not the content of Paul's preaching; cf. J. M. Lieu, 'Do God-Fearers make Good Christians?,' in S. E. Porter, P. Joyce and D. E. Orton, eds, *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael Goulder* (Bib Int Series 8; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 329; J. M. G. Barclay on 'Paul the anomalous Jew', in *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996) 381–95. For the opposing view, e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1958) 118. R. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), assures us (349), that we do not need to take Paul at his word on this. But neither do we need to discount what Paul clearly writes.

5 'Christos' is a name in both passages, and does not entail awareness of Jewish messianism.

6 On Paul as preacher in Acts, see A. J. Malherbe, 'Conversion to Paul's Gospel', in A. J. Malherbe, F. W. Norris and J. W. Thompson, eds, *The Early Church in its Context: Essays in Honor of Everett Ferguson* (NovTSupp 90; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 230–44, and other references there; C. Wanamaker, '"Like a Father Treats his own Children" – Paul and the Conversion of the Thessalonians', *JTSA* 92 (1995) 46–55.

7 Cf. A. le Grys, *Preaching to the Nations* (London: SPCK, 1998). As Bryan Wilson has commented, in *The Noble Savage: The Primitive Origins of Charisma and its Contemporary*

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Up to this point I am largely in agreement with Jack T. Sanders's negative conclusions in his account of Paul and other early Christians in his recent *Charisma, Converts, Competitors*.[8] From this point on I shall, however, argue to rather different conclusions, though using some of the same sociologists. Sanders includes a helpful survey of a number of such recent accounts, while taking as his preferred lead Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*. Rambo refers us back to John Lofland and Rodney Stark in their 1965 study 'Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective'.[9] Conversion to a deviant perspective is, I shall argue, precisely what Paul was about.

It seems that most commentators, being modern Gentiles, fail to realise just how deviant Paul's message and his enactment of it were in the *Gentile* world of his day. The idea of being a deviant Gentile does not occur to most of us. If deviancy is noted, it is Christian deviancy from Judaism; or it is Christians 'labelling' their dissident members.[10] Yet Paul was precisely inviting people to deviate from important Gentile civic norms.

A few writers have nonetheless drawn attention to the socially objectionable character of most or all forms of early Christianity. Some have noted that early Christians appeared as 'atheists', refusing any show of allegiance to the civic gods and so to civic society, where public participation was integral to one's enactment of support for the body social.[11] As Lucian later said of the Christians, 'They have

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Survival (Berkeley: University of California, 1975) 6, 'even sociologists have come to use the word charisma in a very weak sense'; see also M. Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California, 1968/78) A, ch. 14. I did not find much help in R. V. Pearce, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

8 J. T. Sanders, *Charisma, Converts, Competitors: Societal and Sociological Factors in the Success of Early Christianity* (London: SCM, 2000) 98–104.

9 L. R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven/London: Yale University, 1993); J. Lofland and R. Stark, 'Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective', *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965) 862–75. Stark's more recent *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996) is sadly weak on Paul. I note also both C. Sumner, *The Sociology of Deviance – An Obituary* (Milton Keynes: Open University, 1994) and, per contra, R. A. Akers, *Social Learning Theory and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance* (Boston, MA: Northern Universities Press, 1998).

10 E.g., J. M. G. Barclay, 'Deviance and Apostasy', in P. F. Esler, ed., *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (London: Routledge, 1995) 114–27. E. W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of the First Century* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999) 388, briefly note this possibility, but mostly deploy a variant of deviancy theory in discussing followers of Christ in relation to prior Jewish communities.

11 So D. A. deSilva, '"Worthy of the Kingdom": Honor Discourse and Social Engineering in 1 Thessalonians', *JSNT* 64 (1996) 49–79; Barclay, J*ews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 286–7; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement,* 334; and see Tacitus, *History* 5.4.1; Cicero,

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transgressed totally by denying the Greek Gods and by worshipping their crucified sophist and living under his laws.'[12] The fact that Paul's Corinthian Christians included some who felt free to use civic courts or to eat meat offered to idols would be no adequate counterbalance to their refusal to share overtly in civic cults. Jewish or Gentile Christians who remained acceptable in their local Jewish communities could at least claim imperial permission and an antique national tradition. Other Christians could claim none of these. They were seriously deviant.

Along with many other writers, Sanders categorises Christianity as a religion, as a cult, and takes it for granted that the terms are clear and uncontroversial. Christians competed with similar 'new religious movements' (NRMs) and may simply be assumed to have been accepted and acceptable as part of the contemporary religious supermarket (rather, I take it, as in today's United States of America). That Christians lacked cult centres, altars, sacrifices, priesthoods, public processions, is simply ignored. (Sanders's claimed mentor, Jonathan Z. Smith, urges much more care with comparisons.[13])To a more sustainable comparison, with a philosophical sect, we come in a moment.[14]

Paul's teaching and its enacted presentation were in fact even more deviant than were other evidenced versions of early Christianity. At least early on he accepted and repeated that in Christ there was 'neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, no male and female' (Gal. 3.28). I discussed that passage in an earlier paper published in this journal, and argued that the only other context for such ideas was contemporary Cynicism, where such ideas constitute an explicit counter to civic conformity.[15] I also argued that to put any of this slogan into practice would

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Pro Flacco 28.67; Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 6 and 14; and for a sketch of the likely effect in varied detail of Christian noncomformity, P. Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001) 89–99.

12 Lucian, *Peregrinus* 1.13.

13 J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (London/Chicago: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London/University of Chicago, 1990); Sanders, *Charisma*, 9.

14 See the discussion in J. S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson, *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996). That Tacitus and Pliny the Younger saw Christianity as a '*superstitio*' does not mean they saw it as '*religio*'. A distinction between the two is emphatic in Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.117. *'Religio'* is recognised cultic activity, while '*superstitio*' denotes a depraved attitude towards the gods; compare Plutarch, *Superstition*, *Moralia* 164E–171F. For him δεισιδαιμονία is 'what you think', an enacted attitude, never cultic action as such.

15 F. G. Downing, 'A Cynic Preparation for Paul's Gospel for Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female', *NTS* 42 (1996) 454–62; it then formed part of ch. 1 of *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*, 1–25.

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be seen as deliberately subversive.[16] Perhaps it is worth noting in passing that it seems very odd when scholars universally accept that Paul meant the 'neither Jew' part to be lived out in the entire social life of his communities, yet assume that 'nor Greek' would have had no public implications, and that all the remainder can only have been meant theoretically. Or perhaps at most the rest is taken to have had some purely symbolic enactment in Christian meetings. To say and enact 'neither Jew nor Greek' is to put yourself outside the bounds of even so radical a social critic as Epictetus.[17] You do not mean to fit in with civic society. It may well be that Paul came to soften this stance, or aspects of it, even by the time of writing Galatians; it seems to many that he did so on 'no male and female', and perhaps on slaves too, in 1 Corinthians; but that itself should indicate just how awkwardly radical the whole slogan originally will have appeared. My concern here is to imagine Paul early in his mission, not Paul very likely softening his stance in later pastoral concern (see further below).[18] Civic society depended on people knowing their places, on family values sustained by women and public order maintained by slaves, and on the maintenance of 'cultural capital'. The only further sanction was a punitive visit by the army. Disorder could be very costly (cf. Acts 19.40), and there was strong pressure to conform.[19]

Following Ronald F. Hock, let us, then, imagine Paul arriving in Thessalonica and finding an open-fronted workshop where he can work to support himself, and be in touch with passers-by, as the most likely context for 1 Thess 2.9 and similar passages.[20] By this stage in his mission Paul has already suffered at least some of the beatings to which he refers in 2 Cor 11.23–5. And he sits half-naked; or so he tells us at 1 Cor 4.11 (cf. 2 Cor 11.27).[21] He displays the shamefully slavish way he has been treated, and it seems to be an integral part of his enactment of his

16 As noted independently by S. Briggs, 'Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society', in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 110–23, citing 123.

17 Epictetus in Arrian, *Dissertations of Epictetus* 2.19.20–21 and, e.g., 2.9.20–21.

18 On seeing Paul later backtracking on his earlier radicalism, see Downing, *Cynics*, 267–86, and the penultimate paragraph below.

19 As explained very clearly by R. A. Horsley, 'Rhetoric and Empire – and 1 Corinthians', in *idem*, *Paul and Politics*, 72–102, citing pp. 75–9. In conversation it was pointed out that conversion to Judaism could also count as 'atheistic deviancy'. However, as argued above, full integration of a 'God-fearer' into an established local Jewish community cannot afford us a model for Paul's independent activity. On the term 'cultural capital', see e.g. P. Bourdieu, *Raisons pratique: Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994).

20 R. F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); cf., again, Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 161–2.

21 On this interpretation of 'going naked' as denoting a significant choice, rather than (say) an occasional misfortune, see M. Ebner, *Leidenlisten und Apostelbrief: Untersuchungen zu Form, Motivik und Funktion der Peristasenkataloge bei Paulus* (FzB 56; Würzburg: Echter, 1991) 39–42, making clear with ample citations the offensive Cynic resonances of making a habit of deliberately 'going naked' (albeit, as his citations show, most likely not totally nude).

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message. He draws attention to his social stigma (the very term for which, of course, stems from Paul himself, Gal 6.17). He draws attention to himself by engaging customers and passers-by in conversation, inviting them to follow the Jewish teacher Jesus, executed in the manner reserved for rebels and rebellious slaves. Paul invites any who will listen and talk to join him, identify with him and imitate him in a socially disruptive programme. This is much more than the 'medium level of tension', 'deviant but not too deviant', that Sanders quotes from Rodney Stark.[22] Paul was inviting people to serious social deviance, to 'confrontation' with civic order.[23] (Perhaps it is worth emphasising that this is not a matter of labelling opponents as deviant – Paul is, of course, quite capable of that heavily criticised activity. Here it is a matter of his success in attracting people *into* social deviance.) Clearly it is still a limited deviance, as much serious deviance is. Paul's deviance explicitly excluded theft, murder, incest and any extra-marital sexual union. But it was still, in terms of the culture he lived in, a very serious socio-political deviance.

Of the studies I have engaged with, I find Rambo's development of Lofland and Stark, noted earlier, the most helpful. The latter told how a Miss Yoon-Sook Lee joined a South Korean millenarian sect led by a Mr Chang, 'Lord of the Second Advent', but Miss Lee then moved to a university in the north-west of the USA in 1959. After two years she had gained five converts, with whom she moved to another town, and by 1964 there were 150 adherents. Now this – the start of the 'Unification Church' of Sun Myung Moon – is on the sort of scale we tend to imagine for Paul, although there are, of course, differences in detail. Out of Rambo's and others' discussion of Lofland and Stark I propose the following slightly simplified scheme (the capitalised words pick up Rambo's headings):

(A) *Plausibility*. We need ideas of what might plausibly count in CONTEXT as a change for the better.
(B) *Realistic Change*. We need a CONTEXT where such 'change' could seem a realistic possibility.
(C) We need *Effective* ENCOUNTER, inter-subjective contact.
(D) We need *Loose Enough Prior Attachments*, perhaps people actually in QUEST, maybe in some sort of ongoing or induced CRISIS.
(E) We need a *Readily Assimilable Life-style*, activities, conceptual system, rhetoric, social action and INTERACTION, all visibly enacted, clearly readily available, for COMMITMENT, emotional, intellectual, verbal, locational.

22 Sanders, *Charisma*, 125, citing R. Stark, 'How New Religions Succeed: A Theoretical Model', in D. G. Bromley and P. G. Hammond, eds, *The Future of New Religious Movements* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1987), 11–29, citing 13.

23 I note N. T. Wright complaining that my *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* fails to address 'the confrontation between Paul and the pagan world', in 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire', in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 160–83, citing 163–4.

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(A) *Plausibility*. If a programme of deviancy is to count as a change for the better, its ideas and practices have to be thinkable. It is very difficult to entice people if you have first to teach them a new vocabulary, a new 'imaginary', a new repertoire of social interactions, especially if you are an outsider.[24] Further, if you are enticing to deviancy you need acceptable ways of categorising as 'good' what most call 'bad'; it must be not just labellable and feasible, but attractive. So in our culture young car thieves talk of 'a burn-up', 'putting the car through its paces', 'having fun', where others talk of criminal irresponsibility. (Of course, with our current pick-'n-mix approach to observance of the law, respectable advertisers of automobiles and alcohol are themselves just as adept at similar kinds of recategorisation which are designed to encourage deviancy.)

In my *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* I have argued the conclusion already touched on, that the most effective preparation for many major aspects of Paul's message would have been provided by variegated Cynics, who had been around in the eastern Mediterranean for some 300 years. What they said about Greek and barbarian, slave and free, male and female; about law; about freedom; about simple lifestyles; about the relationship of disciples with the teacher; and even about God and the gods, together create a context in which Paul could speak to concerns which had live currency. It was Cynics who continued to advocate as advantageous many of the civic deviancies that formed part of Paul's own programme (distinct from theirs though his programme was in many ways). Paul could get started because Cynicism made it possible to understand, and understand as attractive, important elements of what he proposed.

Wolfgang Lipp has argued, further, that for someone to gain a following for their deviant cause, or themselves, there need to be publicly visible marks that allow this person to be recognised as a potential leader of the appropriate kind: for a leader of deviancy, signs of establishment hostility are important (the martyr effect).[25] Paul's shamefully lacerated back ostentatiously on display in his cobbler's shop fits the bill exactly.

(B) *Realistic Change* – an active response – must seem a valid option. Cynics urged change – a quick change – and showed that it was possible, not simply

24 Rambo, *Conversion*, 44–5; Lofland and Stark, 'Becoming a World-Saver'; cf. Akers, *Social Learning Theory*, 102–3; R. Harré, *Social Being* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). It was suggested that the towns and cities Paul visited may well have contained a large number of outsiders who would not be noticeably further 'out' after responding to Paul. My own reading of such patrician writers as Dio of Prusa on riots and Pliny the Younger on maintaining order does not indicate the presence of already actively alienated minorities; nor does Paul at all obviously suggest he was drawing on such.

25 W. Lipp, 'Charisma – Social Deviance, Leadership, and Cultural Change – A Sociology of Deviance Approach', *Annual Review of the Social Sciences of Religion* 1 (1977) 59–78; see also B. S. Davis, 'The Meaning of προεργάφη in the Context of Galatians 3.1', *NTS* 45/2 (1999) 194–212.

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imaginable. Other philosophies tended to demand an indefinitely long (and expensive) and intellectually demanding apprenticeship. Cynics offered a short cut to the excellence they proposed.[26] You did not have to wait for civic society to change, you could enter the Cynic kingdom, share the Cynic citizenship, step into the new lifestyle, on the spot. A change to disreputable garb can be enough; Diogenes' eating in public is still cited as shocking, in the short chreiai; for a woman or a slave (or one who is both) to press an argument with a freeman would have sufficed.[27] Paul, too, seems to have invited people to just such an instant, deviant break with convention. The intellectual implications could be worked out later. Simply to associate with this disruptive outsider would be significant to both convert and observers, as would withdrawal from domestic 'piety' – and, among women and slaves, any refusal of tokens of submission to superiors. Paul did not need to invent a model of such a swift conversion to a publicly manifest deviant way of life while still physically located in a local community. It was an option for immediate change he could expect people to recognise.[28]

(C) *Effective (face-to-face and challenging) Encounter*. Life was lived in public areas, market places, temple forecourts. Philosophers taught in the open. In many instances anyone could eavesdrop. But the initiative was usually with the customer. If we believe Paul as herald of good news took the initiative, actually challenged individuals calling at or passing by his shop, again a model for such behaviour was provided by the Cynics. Epictetus makes the contrast explicit. He had for a time exercised a Cynic 'boldness', but had soon desisted.[29] Paul in his open-fronted shop, his battered deviancy 'on display' (1 Cor 4.9), was well placed to make the kind of face-to-face contact needed to allow his disruptive message to strike home, offering the kind of encounter conventionally associated with other proclaimers of variant forms of such civic deviance which shared not a few common features with his.

26 On the distinctive 'short cut', cf. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *L'ascèse cynique* (Paris: Vrin, 1986) 22–8; and *idem*, 'Le cynisme à 'époque impériale', *ANRW* 2.36.4 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990) 2720–823, referring to 2759–63 and 2806–12; see also Downing, *Cynics,* 42–3.

27 Downing, *Cynics,* 34 and notes; and, e.g., ps.Diogenes, *Epistle* 38.5 (e.g. in A. J. Malherbe, ed., *The Cynic Epistles* [Missoula: Scholars, 1977] 162); Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 6.58; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse* 14.

28 Downing, *Cynics,* 42–3; also cf. Sanders, *Charisma*, 101–2. I signal a major disagreement here with T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000). Paul's understanding of subsequent pastoral care may well have elements in common with Stoicism (or, for that matter, with Epicurean psychogogy); but conversion for Paul is swift, as among Cynics, not a long haul, as with Stoics (and other contemporaries). On Epicureans, cf. C. E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychogogy* (NovTSupp 81; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

29 Epictetus, *Dissertations* 2.12.17–25; cf. ps.Diogenes, *Epistle* 6; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 32.9, 72.4, 80.2; Lucian, *Philosophies for Sale* 10.

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There are many recorded accounts of philosophical conversion from Greek antiquity, but proportionately more, and often more striking, in our Cynic sources than elsewhere. On a rough count, there are as many in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, book 6, on Cynics (six) as in all the remaining nine books together; with Zeno initially following the Cynic Crates (7.7–8) tipping the total balance to Cynics.[30] Noteworthy conversion is more characteristic of Cynic tradition than of anywhere else.

(D) We need *Loose Enough Prior Attachments*, perhaps people actually seeking something new, maybe in some sort of ongoing or induced crisis. This is, frankly, the hardest complex to substantiate. Paul does not give us psycho-social profiles of his converts, for my Lofland–Stark typology or for anyone else's. Life was tough for the poor, frustrating for the better-off, fraught with illness for all. But we can't specify: we do not know that Paul's converts suffered distinctive tensions that they were seeking to deal with prior to encountering Paul. One suggestion has been 'status inconsistency' among the few wealthier converts,[31] and one might then propose a 'sour grapes' motive in accepting an invitation to deviancy: 'If the polis will not acknowledge me I will refuse to acknowledge it.' But we have to accept we have no pressing evidence, and none of the models employed is secure enough to supply evidence out of thin air.

Change of any kind is, one probably has to assume, undertaken as seeming to be from worse to better. But, for all we know, it was only through Paul that his converts became sufficiently dissatisfied with things to consider change. Rambo allows for this kind of 'induced' crisis, while also downplaying the overall importance of crisis as such.[32] Abraham J. Malherbe has pointed out the ways some philosophers, Stoics and Cynics in particular, tried to unsettle listeners morally, emotionally, intellectually, make them dissatisfied with their lives and attitudes.[33] Perhaps Paul painted a persuasive picture of 'the wrath to come'. I would myself only note that by the first century dissatisfying people enough to induce a drastic

30 Non-Cynic: Xenophon, Menedemus (Elian), Plato, Polemo, Bion, Epicurus (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.48; 2.126; 3.5–6; 4.16; 4.47; 10.2). Cynic: Antisthenes, Diogenes, Monimus, Crates, Metrocles, Hipparchia; and Zeno (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.2; 20–21, 82, 87, 94, 96, 7.7–8). *The Cynic Epistles* include a number of conversion stories (ps.Crates, *Epistle* 20; ps.Diogenes, *Epistles* 2, 9, 30, 31, 38; *Socratic Epistle* 24).

31 W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University, 1983) 22–3. If 'the strong' were clearly the socially powerful, 'status inconsistency' would be more persuasive. I have argued, rather (with reference to other authors), that this is 'strength' in a Cynic sense; Downing, *Cynics*, 118–20.

32 Rambo, *Conversion*, 46–7.

33 Malherbe, 'Conversion', 230–44; cf. his *Paul and the Thessalonians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 21–8; *idem.*, The *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 128. On 'creating liminality' see A. Kirk, 'Crossing the Boundary: Liminality and Transformative Wisdom in Q,' *NTS* 45/1 (1999) 1–18.

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change to an immediate new lifestyle but one short of overt armed revolt, is attempted otherwise only by Cynics.[34] Stoics, Epicureans, Platonists are all socially conformist.[35] Dissatisfaction with aspects of civic life as lived was already articulated *and notably enacted* only by Cynics. I have argued that Paul could but have been aware of the extent of overlap between his enacted critique of Greek city life and that of the Cynics.[36] Whether that persuades or not, we can at least conclude that such dissatisfactions were stirred and invigorated, by Cynics, already in Paul's world. Paul did not have to create an articulated and enacted dissatisfaction from cold.

(E) We need a *Readily Assimilable Lifestyle*, activities, conceptual system, rhetoric, social action and interaction, all visibly enacted, clearly also readily available. Paul was there, in his open-fronted shop, and you could quite literally and physically join him, publicly commit yourself to his deviant stance by staying there, standing or sitting, listening, joining in the conversation, following his prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, maybe hesitatingly offering your own, maybe learning to sing as Paul sang. (Cynics differed on 'theology' as on most matters; there was a 'family resemblance' among them, not uniformity. Some were notably pious.) [37] You might go and get some food and stop to share an evening meal – and already risk the hostile response of family, friends, owner, neighbours, colleagues. You had Paul to imitate, and the programme was already clear in his behaviour and ready in his mind to be elaborated, along the lines we discern in 1 Cor 8–14.[38] If you were the first in town to offer commitment, Paul would find somewhere to baptise you. If you were a householder you might invite Paul round. You were the beginnings of a deviant group.

This argued conclusion needs at least two further clarifications. Sanders, following Ramsay MacMullen among others, argues for the importance of miracles in persuading people to convert. It is quite clear that Paul did expect healings of some sort, and glossolalia, to occur in established congregations, with himself at times actively involved (1 Cor 12.9; 2 Cor 12.12; Gal 3.5; Rom 15.19), and that may well have helped consolidate the community, as well as attract further newcomers. Glossolalia as an evangelistic tool in itself we may safely, however, discount, since Paul himself does so explicitly (1 Cor 14.16–17). However, perhaps the references to 'the power of God', or to 'the power of the Spirit', in Paul's recollection of his early preaching in Corinth and in Thessalonica respectively (1 Cor 2.45; 1 Thess 1.5) indi-

34 Downing, *Cynics*, 42–3, 88–90; and, e.g., Epictetus, *Dissertation* 4.8.34–43.

35 Downing, *Cynics*, 214 and n. 33, 267–86; and, e.g., Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 1.45, 123; 2.2; 3.5–6.

36 Downing, *Cynics*, 22–5, and *passim*.

37 Cf. *ibid.*, ch. 7, 204–49.

38 On the centrality of the enactment of the message, and on emotional engagement, see Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 157, 184–7.

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cate miracles as the means of persuasion, as Sanders supposes?[39] Yet in 1 Cor 1.22 Paul has just noted that Jews demand signs, Greeks wisdom, and he eschews both, choosing rather the subversive nonsense of proclaiming a dishonoured convict. I think we have to take Paul at his word here: miracles were not part of his initial approach.[40]

Then, does the invitation to inaugurate community, albeit deviant community, importantly differentiate Paul's programme from the varied programmes of contemporary Cynics, and so contradict my suggestion that such Cynics provided him with elements of a cultural enactment, including its language, one that enabled him to get his offer under way? Popular generalisations today about Cynic individualism, their supposed rejection of any community, are repeated without, apparently, the need for evidence or argument. In this context I can only cite again Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé's section on Cynic communities in her *ANRW* article. The *Cynic Epistles*, Dio Chrysostom and Lucian and others all take collectivities of Cynics for granted.[41]

However, here no more than in my *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* do I argue for anything like a total identity of Paul's variants of Christianity and any particular variant of Cynicism. What I did argue in the book was that variegated Cynicism provided Paul with a language of words and ideas and their enactments for *important aspects* of what he wanted to share. What I have been arguing here, much more briefly, is that Cynicism provided, even before that, for potential converts, a vocabulary of ideas and enactments that would allow them to make some sense of his invitation. This also takes up, positively, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's insistence that we take seriously the arguments going on against Paul in the Corinthian congregation. It seems clear, as I have also argued in *Cynics,*

39 Sanders, *Charisma*, 101. It is clear from comments that our own contemporaries in our pluralist, 'live and let live' society may find it hard to see the foregoing as significantly 'deviant'. One only has to look at people's dress and deportment in crowd scenes of just two generations ago to recognise our ready failure to imagine past conformities. That the Cynic anecdotes in Diogenes Laertius and elsewhere remained so widely current in many diverse contexts shows that in late antiquity it was also much easier to shock than we may find easily imaginable.

40 Of course, he may have changed his tactics later (Rom 15.19).

41 M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, 'La faune cynique', in 'Le cynisme à l'époque impériale', 2736–8, where the author notes, among other passages, ps.Crates, *Epistles* 28, 29; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse* 32.9; Lucian, *Peregrinus* 6.24, 26, 36, 37. On similarities of ethos, see for instance, in detail, A. J. Malherbe, '"Gentle as a Nurse": The Cynic Background to 1 Thessalonians 2', *NovT* 12 (1970) 203–17, repr. in *idem*, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 35–48; on ethos more widely, see Downing, *Cynics*. Then again, on miracles, once the community was formed, it is clear that although Cynics took good health as a sign of the success of their programme, we have no evidence for any expectation of miracles in our records of Cynicism before the second century, and then only a possible allusion in Lucian, *Peregrinus* 28. I am suggesting significant resemblances, not identity.

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Paul and the Pauline Churches, that some members at least thought they had been invited into a seriously deviant community, and were dissatisfied with the large helping of social conformity that Paul now seemed to be seeking to impose.[42]

I have, then, tried to present an account that allows us to interpret such success as Paul had in terms of a reputable model of conversion to deviancy, an account which allows that Paul's message and Paul's initial enactment of it were, in many important respects, seriously socially deviant. A recognisable pattern of articulated deviant behaviour among Cynics afforded Paul the social basis and opportunity for an effective evangelistic programme of action.

42 In particular, Paul is curtailing some of the freedom they thought his Cynic mode had invited them to enjoy (Downing, *Cynics,* 93–107); cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Paul and the Politics of Interpretation', in Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics*, 40–58, citing in particular pp. 51–2. I also note happily that R. Grant, *Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), quite independently of me (and, I have to say, of most other NT scholars), sees the radicals at Corinth as Cynic in outlook: 27, 29, 45–49 (even if his Paul is already more Stoic than mine is at this stage).

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