Intertextual Ripples of the Book of Esther
An evaluation of Σταυρωθήτω and Ἰουδαῖς in the New Testament

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# Table of Contents

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** .......................................................................................................................... 9

**ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES** ........................................................................................................... 10

**SUMMARY OF THESIS** ...................................................................................................................... 11

Summary in Dutch ......................................................................................................................................... 11

Summary in English ...................................................................................................................................... 12

**CHAPTER 1: THE BOOK OF ESTHER: RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS** ...................... 13

1.1 The Book of Esther and the Shape of its Reception in Christianity ...................................................... 13
   1.1.1 Introduction to Research Concerns ................................................................................................. 13
   1.1.2 Christian Critical Reception of the Book of Esther .......................................................................... 15
      1.1.2.1 Critiquing the Consensus – Early Christian Literature .............................................................. 18
      1.1.2.2 The Witness of Clement of Rome ............................................................................................ 19
   1.1.3 Research Question ......................................................................................................................... 21

1.2 Beginning to Research the Book of Esther in the New Testament: Methodological Proposals .............. 22
   1.2.1 Methodology and Biblical Intertextuality ..................................................................................... 22
      1.2.1.1 Quotations, Echoes, and Allusion in the New Testament ......................................................... 22
      1.2.1.2 Hays’ Seven Criteria ................................................................................................................ 25
   1.2.2 A New Methodological Approach ................................................................................................. 27
      1.2.2.1 Proposing a New Methodology ................................................................................................. 27
      1.2.2.2 Methodological Terminology .................................................................................................... 30
      1.2.2.3 Cluzographic Intertextuality – First Steps ............................................................................. 34
      1.2.2.4 Cluzographic Intertextuality – Ascertaining the ‘intertext’ ....................................................... 35

**CHAPTER 2: A CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW OF THE PLACE OF ESTHER IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY** ......................................................... 41

2.1 Background to the Context .................................................................................................................. 41

2.2 Overview of The Books of Esther ........................................................................................................ 46
   2.2.1 The Hebrew and Greek Versions .................................................................................................. 47
   2.2.2 Other Versions of the Book of Esther ............................................................................................ 52
2.3 The Use of the Book of Esther in, and shortly after, the Second Temple Period ............... 57
  2.3.1 Issues of Canon/Authority ................................................................. 57
    2.3.1.1 The Canonical/Authoritative Status of the Book of Esther ....................... 57
    2.3.1.2 The Canonical Setting of the Book of Esther ....................................... 62
  2.3.2 The Book of Esther in Jewish Communities and Texts ........................................ 64
    2.3.2.1 Qumran ....................................................................................... 64
    2.3.2.2 Dura-Europos ............................................................................. 71
    2.3.2.3 Egyptian Judaism and 3 Maccabees ..................................................... 73
    2.3.2.4 Praises of the Ancestors in Sirach 44-50 ............................................ 76
    2.3.2.5 Philo .............................................................................................. 79
    2.3.2.6 The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch 1-77) ................................. 81
    2.3.2.7 Summary of the use of the Book of Esther in Different Communities and Texts ...... 82
  2.3.3 Festal and Temple use of the Book of Esther ....................................................... 83
    2.3.3.1 The Celebration of Purim and the Festal Recital of the Esther Scroll .............. 83
    2.3.3.2 Purim in Second Temple Judaism ...................................................... 84
    2.3.3.3 Purim After the Fall of the Temple .................................................... 89
    2.3.3.4 The Book of Esther and the Temple ................................................. 91

2.4 The Book of Esther and Early Christian Literature ................................................. 93
  2.4.1 Early History of Interpretation ......................................................................... 93
    2.4.1.1 Clement of Rome ........................................................................ 94
    2.4.1.2 The Canonical List of Melito of Sardis .............................................. 96
    2.4.1.3 The Martyrdom of Polycarp ............................................................. 97
    2.4.1.4 The Didache .................................................................................. 99
    2.4.1.5 The Ethiopian Didascalia and Apostolic Constitutions ................. 100
    2.4.1.6 Origen ........................................................................................ 104
    2.4.1.7 Aphrahat the Persian Sage ............................................................ 112
    2.4.1.8 Conclusions from Early Christian Texts .......................................... 119

2.5 Conclusions of Contextual Overview ..................................................................... 119

CHAPTER 3: POSSIBLE EXAMPLES OF ‘ESTHER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT’ .... 121

3.1 Methodological Tasks .................................................................................. 121

3.2 Potential Cluzographs .............................................................................. 121
  3.2.1 Ascertaining Potential Cluzographs ......................................................... 121
    3.2.1.1 Outcome of LEH Assessment ........................................................... 122
  3.2.2 Shortlist of Words with the Potential for Estherian Distinctiveness .............. 123
    3.2.2.1 ἅμερας - Blamelessly ................................................................. 123
    3.2.2.2 Ἀφθορος - Uncorrupted .............................................................. 124
    3.2.2.3 Διάκονος – Court Servant .......................................................... 125

4
3.3 Previous Suggestions of the Book of Esther in the New Testament

3.3.1 Introduction to the Scholarly Background

3.3.2 Existing Scholarship

3.3.2.1 Revelation: Haman and the Number of the Beast

3.3.2.2 Revelation: The Dream of Mordecai

3.3.2.3 Revelation: Gift-Giving

3.3.2.4 The Gospel of Mark and the Beheading of John the Baptist

3.3.2.5 The Wedding at Cana

3.3.2.6 The Motif of the ‘Third Day’

3.3.2.7 The Unnamed Festival in John 5:1

3.3.2.8 Accusations against Paul in Acts 18:13

3.3.2.9 Sackcloth and Ashes

3.3.3 Conclusions of the New Testament Overview

CHAPTER 4: “WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS?” – CRUCIFIXION AND THE ENEMY OF THE JEWS IN MATTHEW’S PASSION

4.1 The Book of Esther and Other Scriptures in the Gospel According to Matthew

4.1.1 Jewish Scriptures in Matthew

4.1.2 Scriptural References in Matthew

4.1.3 The Book of Esther in the Gospel of Matthew

4.1.3.1 Previous scholarship regarding ‘Esther in Matthew’

4.1.3.2 Michael Goulder

4.1.4 The Passion of Jesus and the Book of Esther

4.1.4.1 Paulus Cassel: The Book of Esther and John’s Passion

4.1.4.2 Roger Aus: The Book of Esther and Mark’s Passion

4.1.5 Conclusions About Existing Suggestions of ‘Esther in Matthew’

4.2 Recognising an Esthernian Kluzograph in Matthew

4.2.1 A new suggestion of ‘Esther in Matthew’

4.2.1.1 Could a, now lost, Gospel Tradition be a Source Text for Σταυρωθήτω?

4.2.1.2 Could Σταυρωθήτω be a Matthaean Stylistic Preference?

4.2.1.3 Could a non-Canonical Text a Potential Source?

4.2.1.4 Could Matthew be Responding to Esthernian Ripples?

4.2.1.5 Conclusions Concerning the Source for Σταυρωθήτω
4.3 Other Possible Estherian Ripples in Matthew’s Passion ................................................. 207
  4.3.1 Estherian Features in Matthew’s Passion ................................................................. 208
  4.3.2 The Characterisation of Judas .................................................................................. 208
    4.3.2.1 The Additional Material Concerning Judas ......................................................... 208
    4.3.2.2 The Financial Incentive to the Betrayal .............................................................. 210
    4.3.2.3 Initial Summary of the Characterisation of Judas and the Estherian Background to the
          Financial Element of the Betrayal .............................................................................. 217
    Excursus: Esther, Matthew, and Ten Thousand Pieces of Silver ................................. 218
    4.3.2.4 The Relationship Between Haman and Mordecai ............................................. 219
    4.3.2.5 Restricting Judas/Mordecai Parallels ................................................................. 223
    4.3.2.6 Preliminary Conclusions ..................................................................................... 224
    4.3.2.7 Moses, Mordecai, and Jesus ................................................................................. 225
    4.3.2.8 Conclusions on the Judas Additions .................................................................... 227
  4.3.3 Other Uniquely Matthaean Aspects of the Passion Narrative ................................. 228
    4.3.3.1 Innocent Blood ...................................................................................................... 228
    4.3.3.2 The Dream of Pilate’s Wife .................................................................................. 231
    4.3.3.3 Summary of other Uniquely Matthaean Features .............................................. 237
  4.3.4 Estherian Resonances in non-Matthaean Passion Material ..................................... 240
    4.3.4.1 The Mocking of Christ, the Honouring of Mordecai, and Substitute King Rituals ... 240
    4.3.4.2 The Cry of Dereliction ....................................................................................... 244
    4.3.4.3 The Release of a Prisoner ................................................................................... 246
    4.3.4.4 The Question of Jesus in Matt 20:21 ................................................................. 248
    4.3.4.5 Summary of other Uniquely Matthaean Features .............................................. 250

4.4 Summary and Conclusions ......................................................................................... 251
  4.4.1 Matthew’s Response to, and Use of, the Book of Esther ......................................... 251
    4.4.1.1 Summary of Conclusions .................................................................................... 254
    4.4.2 Reflections on the Methodology ............................................................................ 255

CHAPTER 5: CIRCUMCISION AND CONVERSION – THE DEBATE BETWEEN

PETER AND PAUL IN GALATIANS 2:14 ........................................................................ 258

5.1 Jewish Scriptures in the Pauline Corpus ................................................................. 263
  5.1.1 ‘Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul’ ............................................................. 263
  5.1.2 Rhetoric, Hapax Legomena and Paul ..................................................................... 268
  5.1.3 Rhetoric and Hapax Legomena .............................................................................. 271
  5.1.4 Hapax Legomena and Galatians 2 ......................................................................... 276
  5.1.5 The Use of Jewish Scriptures in the Letter to the Galatians .................................. 281
  5.1.6 The Book of Esther in the Pauline Corpus .............................................................. 285
    5.1.6.1 Michael Wechsler: Esther as a Type of Jesus .................................................... 285
    5.1.6.2 Andrea Damascelli: Crucifixion and Galatians 3 ............................................. 288
5.1.6.3 Panagiotis Bratsiotis – Paul and the Prayer of Mordecai ........................................... 290
5.1.6.4 Previous Recognition of the Lexical Parallel between Esther 8:17 and Galatians 2:14 ...... 292
5.1.6.5 Summary of Previous Scholarship regarding the Book of Esther in Paul’s Writings ...... 294

5.2 The Letter to the Galatians .................................................................................................. 295
5.2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 295
5.2.2 Galatians 2:14 ............................................................................................................. 297

5.3 A History of Judaizing ...................................................................................................... 299
5.3.1 Judaizing in Hebrew Literature .................................................................................... 299
5.3.1.1 Hebrew translations of מתייהדים ............................................................................ 299
5.3.1.2 Comparison of מתייהדים and נלשים .................................................................. 302
5.3.2 Judaizing in Greek Literature ......................................................................................... 303
5.3.2.1 Greek translations of מתייהדים ............................................................................ 303
5.3.2.2 Non-canonical Examples of ἰουδαϊκός ................................................................. 309
5.3.2.3 Josephus ............................................................................................................... 311
5.3.2.4 Plutarch ............................................................................................................... 314
5.3.2.5 Ignatius of Antioch .............................................................................................. 316
5.3.2.6 Clement of Alexandria .......................................................................................... 319
5.3.2.7 Origen ................................................................................................................... 321
5.3.2.8 Eusebius of Caesarea ............................................................................................ 323
5.3.2.9 Canons of Laodicea ............................................................................................... 326
5.3.2.10 Athanasius .......................................................................................................... 327
5.3.2.11 Gregory of Nazianzus ......................................................................................... 328
5.3.2.12 Gregory of Nyssa ............................................................................................... 328
5.3.2.13 Acts of Pilate/Gospel of Nicodemus A .................................................................. 332
5.3.2.14 Preliminary Summary of ἰουδαϊκός in Non-Canonical Texts ................................ 333
5.3.2.15 Bel and the Dragon and 2 Maccabees ................................................................. 337
5.3.2.16 Conclusion of Textual Overview ......................................................................... 339
5.3.3 Galatians 2:14, To what does Paul refer? .................................................................... 343
5.3.3.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 343
5.3.3.2 Paul’s Message in the Context of Galatians 2:14 ............................................... 346
5.3.3.3 Circumcision and the Antioch Incident ............................................................... 351
5.3.3.4 Food Laws .......................................................................................................... 353
5.3.3.5 Peter’s and Paul’s Approaches .......................................................................... 354
5.3.4 Contextualising Paul .................................................................................................... 356
5.3.4.1 Rabbi Nehemiah .................................................................................................... 357
5.3.4.2 Josephus on Circumcision .................................................................................... 358
5.3.4.3 Other Rabbinic Views ......................................................................................... 361
5.3.4.5 Ritual Washing and Baptism ............................................................................... 363
5.3.4.6 The Alpha Text Version ...................................................................................... 366
5.3.4.7 Summary and Comparison .................................................................................. 367
5.4.1 Other Potential Estherian Resonances in the Letter to the Galatians .......................... 378
  5.4.1.2 The ἡμᾶς- prefix .................................................................................. 378
  5.4.1.3 Damascelli and the Redemption from the Curse ........................................ 380
  5.4.1.4 Castration ............................................................................................. 381
  5.4.1.5 The Relationship to the Poor ................................................................... 383
  5.4.1.6 Summary of Extra Links with the Book of Esther ...................................... 385

4.5 Summary of Suggestions and Methodological Implications ........................................ 386

CHAPTER 6: COMPARISON OF THE TWO TEST CONTEXTS AND CONCLUSIONS
................................................................................................................................. 394

6.1 Recapitulation of the Proposed Research and Methodology ........................................ 394

6.2 Conclusions Regarding the Book of Esther in the New Testament .............................. 395
  6.2.1 The Book of Esther in the New Testament - Conclusions ............................... 397

6.3 Conclusions Regarding the Cluzographic Methodology .............................................. 398
  6.3.1 Placing the Methodology in the Wider Research Context ............................... 402
  6.3.2 Methodological Conclusions ......................................................................... 406

6.4 Hopes of this Research and Future Scope .................................................................... 408

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BIBLICAL AND OTHER SOURCES ........................................ 411

Bibliography of Biblical Sources .................................................................................. 411

Bibliography of Sources ............................................................................................. 411

Bibliography of Sources (Not in Latin Alphabet) ....................................................... 456
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Abbreviations and Notes

Except for in quoted texts, the abbreviations used are those as given in:
Billie Jean Collins et.al. (eds.), *The SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed.; Atlanta: SBL, 2014)

The generations and generational dates of Rabbis mentioned in rabbinic literature are as given in:

Other abbreviations are as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Alpha Text of Esther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can. Laod.</td>
<td>Canons of Laodicaea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem.</td>
<td>Demonstrations of Aphrahat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INNTR</td>
<td>Institute for New Testament Textual Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MegTaan</td>
<td>Megillath Ta’anith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA²⁸</td>
<td>Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT-NT</td>
<td>Old Testament in the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Θ</td>
<td>Theodotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VL</td>
<td>Vetus Latina</td>
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Summary of Thesis

Summary in Dutch

Summary in English

With little dissension, it has long been axiomatic that the book of Esther had a negligible role in shaping the texts of the New Testament. This thesis seeks to develop a methodology that can evaluate that role, and the subject of ‘Esther in the New Testament’, from a fresh angle. Rather than beginning with New Testament passages, the methodology employed here starts with the Septuagintal version of the book of Esther to trace the journey of the text forward through time, conceiving the text to be like a wave that ripples out. Sometimes a wave encounters an obstacle (and responds differently to different obstacles), whereas other waves continue unimpeded. This research seeks a way of discerning factors in New Testament thought that might behave as obstacles to the book of Esther, such that Estherian textual ripples (termed here as ‘cluzographs’) can be identified in the New Testament. To test this methodology, the thesis identifies words that have the potential to be distinctive to the book of Esther (i.e. words that are uniquely/predominantly used in Septuagint Esther that also feature in the New Testament). The two words chosen as case studies are Σταυρωθήτω (LXX Esther 7:9; Matthew 27:22-23) and ιουδαιζω (LXX Esther 8:17; Galatians 2:14). These case studies support the conclusion that the book of Esther had some influence on both the proclamation of the crucifixion of Jesus in light of Haman’s execution, and on Peter and Paul’s intra-Jewish debate about Gentiles in Gal. 2:14.
Chapter 1: The Book of Esther: Research and Methodological Questions

1.1 The Book of Esther and the Shape of its Reception in Christianity

1.1.1 Introduction to Research Concerns

A legend reports that a bird flew into the room when Esther was born, as an emblem of liberty and intellect. What a pity that the bird did not fly into the studies of many of the commentators on the book of Esther.¹

Paulus Cassel

One would hope that the level of Esther scholarship has improved greatly since Cassel’s day and, in many ways, it has. This does not mean, however, that there is not more room for improvement. One area in particular, the focus of this research, is the understudied topic of ‘the book of Esther in the New Testament.’

In recent years, biblical scholars have seen a growth in interest in the fields of study that are concerned with the reception of Jewish Scriptures and associated writings in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature. This is often abbreviated to OT-NT,² which, although an imprecise term, will be used in this research. This growth is attested by the large number of articles, monographs and other volumes that have been published, as of late, which broach this topic.³ Despite the wealth of literature there are

some texts that have received significantly less attention than others, one of which is the book of Esther. This is the narrative that recounts the rise of the orphaned Jewish girl, Esther, into the Royal Achaemenid Court in Susa, after the deposition of Queen Vashti. Set against this is the threat of genocide against the Jews instituted by Haman. The text concludes with the resolution through the downfall and execution of Haman and the institution of the festival of Purim.4

On the face of it, the lack of engagement with the book of Esther is unsurprising for several reasons. First, the festival of Purim was never Christianised in the way that other festivals were. Similarly, unlike Passover and Shavuot, which are mentioned in the New Testament and in early Christian Literature, Purim is not explicitly mentioned in such texts.5 Second, the way that biblical scholarship has understood the place of the book of Esther in Second Temple Judaism and in early Christianity has inhibited much discussion about the relationship between the book of Esther and the New Testament world. It is almost axiomatic that the book of Esther was absent from Qumran, that it

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4 Such ethnic massacres, whilst unlikely, are not without historical precedent; cf. Herodotus Hist. 1.106 3.79; Cicero Leg. man. 3.7; Kenton Sparks, Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A guide to the background literature (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), pp.380-381.

5 Although, as is noted later, there may be references to the festival of Purim that do not use its name.
was not well used in late Second Temple Judaism, that it is absent from the New Testament, and that early Christianity did not engage with the book of Esther. As Paton says,

The Alexandrian Jews were so conscious of the religious and moral deficiencies of Esther that they tried to remedy them... It is never quoted by Christ, nor by any of the NT. [sic] writers. The early Christian Church made no use of it.\[^6\]

This perspective has been replicated throughout the twentieth century.\[^7\] The concerns raised by Paton will be addressed in this research, with chapter two focussing on the use of the book of Esther in late second temple Judaism and earliest Christianity. Naming the common critical responses to ‘Esther in the New Testament’ helps to provide a framework of the research hurdles that need to be overcome.

1.1.2 Christian Critical Reception of the Book of Esther

In order to work back to, and arrive at, the topic of the earliest Christian responses to the book of Esther, it is helpful to note responses from the past five hundred years, when more opinions have been voiced compared to the early years of Christianity. The critical reading of the book of Esther was notably expressed by Luther but can be traced through the centuries after him. As with Luther, such critical readings


betray several negative views of the book of Esther that are sometimes framed within anti-Judaic comments or lead into anti-Judaic sentiments.8

1526 Esther (which despite [the] inclusion of it in the canon deserves more than all the rest in my judgement to be regarded as non-canonical).9

1543 Oh, how fond [Jews] are of the book of Esther, which is so beautifully attuned to their bloodthirsty, vengeful, murderous yearning and hope.10

1837 [The book of Esther] reveals none of those precious and fundamental doctrines of the Old Testament and is not quoted in the New.11

1908 Alexandrian Jews were so conscious of the religious and moral deficiencies of Esther that they tried to remedy them.12

1937 The book of Esther presents the Jewish question in the sharpest form.13

1950 The book of Esther... is an uninviting wilderness... Most offensive, however, is the discordant note which the book strikes in the ears of those accustomed to hearing the Christian gospel.14

1965 Christianity has neither occasion nor justification for holding onto the book of Esther. For Christianity Luther's remark should be determinative.15

8 For a broader overview of the relationship between the book of Esther and Christian Anti-Judaism see; Tricia Miller, Three Versions of Esther: Their relationship to anti-Semitic and feminist critiques of the story (Leuven: Peeters, 2014); Tricia Miller, Jews and Anti-Judaism in Esther and the Church (Cambridge: James Clark, 2015).
11 J. W. Niblock, Mordecai and Esther; or. The Saviour of the Church; Affectionately Presented to the Ancient People of God quoted in Jo Carruthers, Esther Through the Centuries (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p.13.
12 Paton, Esther, pp.96-97.
1978 Esther is by religious standards not a noble book.\textsuperscript{16}

1987 Jews have tended to love Esther while Christians... have tended either to dismiss it or merely to tolerate it.\textsuperscript{17}

2000 This story is a festival legend that provides the basis of the Jewish feast of Purim. It is a story of persecution and revenge. God is never mentioned. One can see the appeal of the story to more chauvinistic Jews, but it has little to say to Christians.\textsuperscript{18}

2008 The difficulties of the book of Esther are only exacerbated for Christians.\textsuperscript{19}

This cumulative message is not the only perspective that has been put forward – chapter three will explore some of the dissenting voices – but one can see the dominant point of view. The situation may be compared to Lessing’s proverbial “ugly ditch”\textsuperscript{20} as it marks the boundary between the book of Esther and the New Testament and separates the two. This is not to say that there have not been positive assessments of the book of Esther, nor that the sentiments above have not gone unchallenged – Levenson has written a strong rebuttal to the way preconceptions about the text have shaped previous conclusions about its purpose and message\textsuperscript{21} – it is rather just that the negative voices have been more prominent.\textsuperscript{22} Such a predominant view may cause one to wonder why anyone would expect there to be any sign of the book of Esther in the New Testament?


\hspace{2em}\textsuperscript{17}Edward Greenstein, ‘A Jewish Reading of Esther,’ in Jacob Neusner, Baruch Levine, & Ernest Frerichs (eds.), \textit{Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp.225-244 (225)

\hspace{2em}\textsuperscript{18}Although originally published in 1979, this is from the seventh printing in 2000. In a 448-page book, this paragraph is all that Stacey has to say on the book of Esther; W. David Stacey, \textit{Groundwork of Biblical Studies} (7\textsuperscript{th} printing; London: Epworth, 2000 [1979]), p.279.

\hspace{2em}\textsuperscript{19}Carruthers, \textit{Esther Through the Centuries}, p.12.


\hspace{2em}\textsuperscript{22}Luther’s comments have been the cause of criticism, prompting readings of the book of Esther that are more embracing of the text. A seventeenth century French commentary is scathing of the ‘heretics of recent times’
This position is open to critique but, with a few exceptions that will be evaluated in chapter three, such critiques have not been forthcoming in OT-NT research. Modern scholarship has been shaped, explicitly and implicitly, by these (and similar) statements, with little regard for a thorough investigation into the earliest Christian responses to the book of Esther. Such early responses have been presumed to be non-existent, rather than explored. This research will question the notion that this received opinion is representative of earliest Christianity.

1.1.2.1 Critiquing the Consensus – Early Christian Literature

The book of Esther is well known as, what might be termed, a ‘negative text.’ By this, I mean that it is known for what it is not. It is known as the biblical text in which no mention is made of God, of which no manuscript has been discovered at Qumran, and that is absent from the New Testament; the proverbial “book of hiding.” As such, there exists a broad consensus that ‘Esther in the New Testament’ is not an arena for fruitful research.

This has inhibited research that may yet prove to be fruitful and not the barren wilderness that is presumed. As for the three negatives above, the first two do not stand up to scrutiny. As will be shown below, the versions of the book of Esther available to a first-century community (including the authors of the New Testament) did include references to God; the Hebrew may not, but the Greek texts do. If the absence of such references is to be the cause of difficulty to a reader, this could not have been the case to

who have dismissed the book of Esther as falsified history; “C’el ce que nous allons voir dans tout ce livre, qui nous represente, non pas une hiftoire feinte, comme quelques herétiques de ces derniers tems ont été aliez hardis pour le foutenir, mais un hiftoire tres-veritable.” Anonymous, Tobie, Judith & Esther traduits en Francais, avec une Explication tirée des Saints Pères & des Auteurs Ecclesiastiques (Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1688), p.vi.

a first-century Hellenistic reader. Second, regarding the absence of the book in Qumran, biblical scholarship is beginning to revise this position and suggest that a more nuanced conversation is required.24

Commentaries need not explicitly state, as some of those above have, that the book of Esther was unused by earliest Christianity. This sentiment can be implicitly present. As a recent example, in Macchi’s 2016 commentary, the section dealing with ‘Esther in Christianity’, makes no mention of the New Testament but moves straight into mediaeval commentaries, saying that “Esther est relativement peu cité ou utilisé au sein de la literature chrétienne ancienne et patristique.”25 This is not to disparage Macchi’s commentary but to show that in the most recent scholarly literature, the topic does not need to be disputed; there is no need to comment on the obvious.

1.1.2.2 The Witness of Clement of Rome

Whilst chapter two will see how the book was read in the early centuries of Christianity by evaluating the spread of references to it in early Christian Literature, one text can serve as an example to show that the book of Esther was not silent in earliest Christianity. The first letter of Clement (c.95-96 CE)26 provides a clear critique of blanket statements that the book of Esther was not made use of in Early Christian Literature:

Many women, being strengthened by the grace of God, have performed many manly deeds... To no less danger [than Judith] did Esther, who was perfect in faith, expose herself, in order that she might deliver the twelve tribes of Israel when they were about to be destroyed. For through her fasting and her humiliation she entreated the all-seeing Master, the God of the ages, and he, seeing the humility of her soul, rescued the people for whose sake she had faced

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24 See the discussion on the book of Esther and Qumran in §2.3.2.1.
26 David Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p.239.
the danger. (1 Clem. 55:3, 6)27

Esther is affirmed as a model of piety in this first century text, which provides some justification in pursuing a critique of the position that earliest Christianity did not use or know the book of Esther. Here one finds not only a clear reference to the book of Esther from the first decades of Christianity, but also a positive reading of the text, which suggests that the book of Esther was not the ‘morally deficient’ text it was later presumed to be.

Esther scholarship is currently beginning to acknowledge that the book of Esther was more widely used in late Second Temple Judaism than has been previously recognised. At the same time, OT-NT scholarship is burgeoning and it is the intention of this research project to intersect these fields of study. This will be to consider the possibility that the book of Esther may have had more of an influence on earliest Christianity and the writing of the New Testament than has previously been accepted. This research will not presume that the book of Esther can be identified in the New Testament, and may have to engage with its apparent absence after having explored the topic. Similarly, however, it cannot be presumed that the New Testament writers did not have any need or desire to engage with the book of Esther.

The critiques of the prevailing assumptions about the reception of the book of Esther demand that the possibility remain open that the book of Esther can be acknowledged in the New Testament. These critiques also call on the researcher not just to recognise that possibility but to examine it as, through such research, it may be possible to present an understanding of the early Christian reception of the book of Esther that is more thorough than has previously been offered.

1.1.3 Research Question

As the consensus concerning the book of Esther in relation to earliest Christianity is open to critique, this research will seek to probe and explore this opening. A research question that wanted to account for the full earliest Christian reception of the book of Esther would, however, go beyond the reasonable scope of what is feasible here. To confine the research, this will be with respect to the texts that form the New Testament. Early Christian literature and reception of the book of Esther will be essential in framing this exploration, but will not form a focus of the research.

As will be shown later, existing methodologies presuppose some previous recognition of a source text within the New Testament, which is lacking with the book of Esther. For this reason, some methodological work will be required to overcome this concern. Furthermore, a considerable amount of OT-NT research reads backwards from a New Testament text, whereas this research hopes to read forwards from an Old Testament text. In taking this approach, this research asks a different question to a lot of OT-NT research, and as such will require a new, or adapted, methodology to explore this topic. To put it another way, this research addresses an established topic area within the OT-NT sub-discipline, but is asking it with different terms and with a different direction. In the light of this, one surmises that one would require a new or variant methodology to address its concerns. As such, this research will seek to address the following question;

*How might one formulate a methodology to explore and evaluate the possible reception of the book of Esther in the New Testament and conclude ways in which the book of Esther was received by earliest Christianity?*
1.2 Beginning to Research the Book of Esther in the New Testament: Methodological Proposals

1.2.1 Methodology and Biblical Intertextuality

1.2.1.1 Quotations, Echoes, and Allusion in the New Testament

The three principal terms that are commonly used for the ways in which the Old Testament is heard in the New Testament are quotations, allusions, and echoes.\textsuperscript{28} It is important to be clear about how these terms will be used, to avoid any misunderstanding. How these terms are used can cause confusion, and has come under criticism due to scholarly inconsistency.\textsuperscript{29}

The most recognisable are the \textit{quotations} that are found in the New Testament. These are phrases that cause a break in the author’s writing style to reproduce an earlier text. There are often, but not always, introductory phrases that signify to the reader the presence of a quotation. Such phrases may merely acknowledge that the text has authority due to its antiquity, \textit{καθώς γέγραπται}\textsuperscript{30} or they may elaborate to guide the reader to the source (or supposed source), such as \textit{ἐν τῷ Ἱσαὰκ τῷ προφήτῃ}.\textsuperscript{31} Other quotations may be less formally introduced,\textsuperscript{32} but there is a break in writing style when the earlier text is reproduced in the New Testament text.

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\textsuperscript{29} See for example, Stanley Porter, ‘Allusions and Echoes’, in \textit{As It is Written}, pp.29-40 (36); Russell Meek, ‘Intertextuality, Inner-biblical exegesis, and inner-biblical allusion: The ethics of methodology’, \textit{Bib} 95 (2014), pp.280-291 (284).


Second are the *allusions*, which also demonstrate a textual similarity but in a less precise way. These are ‘woven’ into the New Testament text, and may be short phrases or even single words that resonate in particular ways. The significant difference to the quotations (particularly when the allusion is a phrase) is the way the intertext is reproduced. With allusions, the author interlaces the phrase into their own writing, and may adapt the text slightly.

The third group, the *echoes*, may be understood as “suggestive thematic parallels.”33 These are occasions where there are traces of texts, either in the ideas raised, the background context or other such traces; echoes therefore may be said to “activate”34 themes from the Jewish Scriptures. As the New Testament authors were writing in a context that was heavily shaped by the Jewish Scriptures, it is expected that their writings will exhibit elements of this background, even if some of these traces are subtle. Following Hays’ example, Phil 1:19 contains an allusion to JobLXX 13:16 through the phrase τοῦτο μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν, which is found in both texts. In addition to the textual coherence, there are thematic links that strengthen the case for an intentional resonance such as the background context of Paul being a prisoner and Job pleading his case. Paul thus, “assumes the role of righteous sufferer,”35 something that is achieved through the textual allusion and the thematic echo.

How one differentiates between allusions and echoes, or if they are synonymous, is a point of contention;36 “Is that which we call *echo*, like Juliet’s rose, merely *allusion*
by another name?” Related to this, one must bear in mind that the number of such references is far from agreed upon. The “wide disparity in the calculation [of allusions] is due to differences in how scholars define an allusion.” In proposing a methodology, it is essential to have clearly defined terms. This new methodology would be helped by new terms that do not carry the baggage of ambiguous definitions.

Less contentious are the doubts about the book of Esther in the New Testament, be that termed as allusion or echo. Authoritative lists of quotations and allusions in the New Testament of Old Testament books, such as that of the NA, do not normally record any reference to the book Esther (with one or two exceptions that are noted in chapter three). Unlike many other texts from the Old Testament, there are no extant early Christian commentaries on Esther, only brief references; the first commentary on the whole text was achieved by Rabanus Maurus in the early ninth century and, as such, his reflections are far too late to be included in this assessment. With little effect, some modern scholars have made arguments in favour of reading the book of Esther in the New Testament, and their work will be reviewed.

Furthermore, there are suggestions that some phrases that are found in the Old Testament have just become part of the speech patterns of the New Testament author, such as speech about kingdom power in Esth 10:1-2. The fact that two texts share known turns of phrase is not necessarily indicative of the reception of one by the other. These ideas occur in Ps 144:11; Dan 2:37; 11:17; 2 Chr 22:9 and Matt 6:13 and, at best, this shows Matthew referencing the “broad concept reiterated throughout the OT.”

Both may reflect a similar tradition but, as shared terminology is not necessarily indicative of use of intertextuality that can be associated with a specific source text; the methodology will need to explore how that concern can be addressed.

1.2.1.2 Hays’ Seven Criteria

In his *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard Hays proposed a seven-criteria framework for exploring, echoes and allusions, which was subsequently revised. Widely recognised as one of the strongest frameworks for intertextual study of the Bible, these were initially proposed for research into Paul’s use of scripture, but can be transferred to other New Testament texts. Hays proposes seven tests with which to examine any suggested echo of Jewish Scripture:

1. Availability – was the source text available to the NT author?
2. Volume – the degree of explicit repetition of words or patterns.
3. Recurrence – does the NT author often refer to the source text?
4. Thematic coherence – do the source text and NT raise similar themes?
5. Historical plausibility – could early hearers have heard the echo?
6. History of interpretation – have later writers heard the same echo?
7. Satisfaction – Whether or not all of the other criteria are satisfied, does the suggested echo make sense or illuminate the surrounding discourse.

Applying these criteria to non-Pauline texts is not without difficulty (due to the amount of text available from a single author or the varied literary styles of the New Testament) before one encounters the criticisms lodged against Hays. Nevertheless, the seven tests offer a firm starting point that holds the research accountable to academic rigour.

The current consensus stands that there are no quotations from Esther in the NT, and that allusions are few, if any at all. These few will be discussed in the following.

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chapter. A brief demonstration of how Hays’ criteria respond to the book of Esther may help show why this is the consensus.

Availability: Currently there is not the literature that argues that the book of Esther was known and used in Second Temple Judaism. Without any plausible evidence to indicate that the book of Esther was known and used, there can be no serious study into the use of the book of Esther in the New Testament. Studies on the reception of the book of Esther are few, and Septuagint and Talmudic reception provides plenty of opportunities for research. The lack of literature comes from an unfortunate circular logic that proceeds thus: As is stated in the literature, the book of Esther was ‘unknown to early Christianity,’ so there is no reason for the research to be done in the reception of the book of Esther in Late Second Temple Judaism and, for New Testament scholars there is little reason researching the book of Esther in late Second Temple Judaism because there is no evidence of it being used in written texts of this period.

Volume and Recurrence: In order to argue that any particular text is alluded to in the New Testament, Hays calls on the scholar to demonstrate that the author draws on the particular text. Without any unequivocal New Testament references to the book of Esther there is query over any proposed allusions/echoes; with what other references is the proposed allusion backed up? With a text like the book of Esther it becomes impossible to strictly follow Hays’ criteria and argue that there are any allusions or echoes in the New Testament. It may, however, be possible to note multiple textual similarities, having identified a possible starting point. These would strengthen any argument.

The other criteria need a specific context, but the first three raise serious doubts over any potential echoes. Working with this framework, there is a level of circular logic that has restricted research on the place of the book of Esther in the New Testament.
This is a simplification of the state of research but highlights some of the barriers that will need to be addressed; what is the evidence that the book of Esther was available (i.e. that it was not only technically available, in that the LXX translation existed at this stage, but was known to the New Testament authors and that they were familiar with it) and how can one justify arguing for any new textual allusions when there are no comparative allusions with which to build up a picture of how a New Testament author uses the book of Esther?

1.2.2 A New Methodological Approach

1.2.2.1 Proposing a New Methodology

A new methodological approach will, therefore, be required. But what might this look like? Due to the concerns about the language that is applied to Hays’ methodology, some different methodological language and, by extension, a different metaphorical concept may be helpful.

Hays has worked with auditory metaphors; in what ways have the Old Testament texts been heard in the New Testament? This works with a methodology that ‘reads backwards’, starting in the New Testament context and looking to the Old Testament and listening to what is heard. The field of research of ‘Old Testament in the New Testament’ is primarily found within New Testament scholarship and asks questions of the New Testament text. This is sensible – New Testament texts clearly include Old Testament quotations, which raise various questions about the text – but is not the only

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44 Cf. Hays, Reading Backwards. This is, however, more than just the title of his book, but a summary of his methodology. It is his methodology because he presumes that ‘reading backwards’ is a significant contributing factor to the New Testament writers’ use, and appropriation, of Old Testament language. I do not disagree with Hays’ lens and approach, but am merely offering an alternative way of reading that is driven by the fact of the Estherian situation. If there were clear citations of Esther, one would read backwards, but without these ‘reading forwards’ may highlight a different contributing factor to OT references in NT writings.

way of approaching the topic. Unlike some of the more prominent works in this field that use a New Testament text, or sub-corpus (such as the Pauline corpus) as their focus, this research is primarily concerned with the book of Esther. What, therefore, might an Old Testament approach to this field of research look like?

This represents a conceptual shift from, *Which (OT) texts have influenced this (NT) text and why might this be the case?* to *In which (NT) texts might this (OT) text be used and why might that be the case?* I therefore propose using a different metaphor for looking at OT-NT research that better works with the source text rather than the receptor text – reading forwards as opposed to backwards.\(^{46}\) This is more than saying that the Old Testament has something to say to the New Testament context, which is picked up and used by the New Testament author. The latter would still be concerned with what the New Testament author does, and the proposed methodology would need to be concerned with what the Old Testament text does.

I, therefore, propose that for this methodology, one should conceive of the idea of *textual ripples* to describe how the text of the book of Esther may be felt in later texts. In a similar way to echoes, a ripple emanates from a source, being affected the further it moves from that source; be that through reflecting off other obstacles that create some interference, or merely through travelling a long distance. Unlike an echo, where one may be able to clearly discern the sound source, in a ripple the source may or may not be apparent, depending on other factors. For the book of Esther, which has rarely been

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\(^{46}\) For recent examples of research that addresses what New Testament authors are doing with Old Testament texts rather than the potential effect of the Old Testament text on the later author see Kirk, “how writers use other texts” (rather than why other texts feature in an author’s writings). I do not dispute this approach to OT-NT research, but do not consider it to tell the full story; J. R. Daniel Kirk, ‘Narrative Transformation’ in B. J. Oropeza & Steve Moyise (eds.), *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse strategies for New Testament interpretation of texts* (Eugene: Cascade, 2016), pp.165-175 (165).
heard as a source, the change in metaphor may be helpful in recognising elements of the
text that have emanated out into the New Testament text.

Why, though, might a textual ripple of the book of Esther, or any biblical text, be
found in a New Testament text? In this regard, the wave metaphor expands to speak of
the way that waves interact in different circumstances. Waves can experience
interference from other waves that can be seen through constructive or destructive
interference – if the two are in phase, then the waves may ‘add up’ and appear
exaggerated, or if out of phase they can appear to cancel each other out. Either way the
wave does not appear to emanate in a smooth uninterrupted way. Waves can experience
counter-flow or find a blockage in the form of a slit or a narrow passage, which results in
different interference patterns as the wave radiates out. A wave may break as the depth
through which it travels shallows, or a wave may encounter a cliff face create spray and
splash as its trajectory is abruptly affected. Waves behave differently when encountering
features or obstacles on their path of travel. This is not an exhaustive list of wave
interference possibilities, but highlights the variety.

Waves provide a lens to view texts and their impact on other texts. Having been
written, the text is passed on and, as it emanates out through time, is read. Many
contexts do not create interference and, as such, nothing of note occurs. On occasion,
however, the text will encounter something that causes interference, and different
contexts will cause the textual ripple, or textual wave, to develop in different ways.
Constructive interference might exaggerate a text, or combine it with another text to
appear differently. At other times, there will be a cliff face that stops the ripple in its
tracks but produces textual spray. This lens may open possibilities for intertextual
studies. The life of a text, like that of a wave, is not defined by the moment when part of
it is separated (the intertext from the source appearing in a new text or the spray from a
wave splashing onto another surface), although this is part of the story. Following a text like a wave helps to fill in some of the journey up to the point of ‘separation’ (i.e. when the intertext enters a new text) and in doing so shows where and some reason for this.

1.2.2.2 Methodological Terminology

A brief note is required on the terminology used in this methodology, for which I propose coining a new term that is free from the baggage associated with echoes and allusions. In viewing texts as waves, one is provided with the metaphor of textual ripples. These can be called cluzographs (ripples of text; from κλυζω, ‘to ripple over’ and γράφω, ‘to write’), with the benefit that the methodological approach here deployed can thus be termed ‘cluzographic’. This fits with the metaphor that undergirds this methodology and avoids the debates surrounding ‘quotatio, echo and allusion.’

Scientific literature speaks of obstacles that cause interference with waves. As such, I will speak of ‘obstacles’ that cause interference with the book of Esther such that the text might be noticed within the New Testament. The word ‘obstacle’ will be used to refer to something that the ripple encounters. This does not necessarily imply a value judgement that the obstacle is damaging or restrictive. Any ripple will continue flowing unobstructed and can therefore be another ripple amongst many that exist. An obstacle is anything that the ripple encounters that obstructs the smooth uninterrupted flowing.

Having considered this metaphor, I am aware of two, unconnected, examples where similar phrasing has been used in scholarly literature. First, the metaphor of textual ripples has been used in the study of Victorian literature. Shastri uses the phrase in discussing epigraphs as an intertextual device.

The epigraph originates from an author and text different from the one in which it officiates as an epigraph. In this capacity it brings an alternate but in some way also connected world-view into the new text. Carrying a textual identity distinct from the text in which it intervenes, the epigraph has the potential to create a textual ripple.\textsuperscript{48}

There is no way in which the book of Esther may be perceived as an epigraph to any of the New Testament texts, but the metaphor of textual ripple would work well. The book of Esther is seen as a distinct text (for its lack of explicit religiosity, its genre), but nevertheless may be felt in later texts.

The second example is a brief reference by Moyise within an article on intertextuality in OT-NT research in which he is critiquing Beale's apple metaphor. In discussing the difference between ‘meaning’ and ‘significance/application’, Beale proposes conceiving of texts like apples. An apple retains its identity (meaning) regardless of the context, but an apple on a tree has a different ‘significance’ to an apple in a bowl of fruit.\textsuperscript{49} For Beale, the meaning of a text should not be confused with the significance or application of a text, the latter of which is dependent on a variety of contextual factors. I tend to agree with Moyise' critique, however that this metaphor falls short when applied to texts, as Beale’s metaphor works best when the apple is kept whole. Even if the apple (or text) is brought alongside other fruit (or other texts) it is kept whole, but in biblical intertextuality a text is not fully incorporated into a new one. This metaphor may work well with Megilloth studies on the significance of the ordering of the five scrolls, or other questions of canonical placement; what is the significance that this community has the biblical in such an order whereas another community builds significance out of another order? In OT-NT studies, however, when one is concerned


\textsuperscript{49} G. K. Beale, \textit{John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation} (JSNTSup 166; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), pp.51-52.
with portions of a text incorporated into a new text, the source text should be identifiable, but only from a portion. I agree, therefore, with Moyise, who proposes that Beale’s metaphor works better as a fruit salad (an apple can be identified from a piece of apple and in the new context they are recognisable from their source, but nevertheless distinct). Rather than adapt Beale’s metaphor, however, Moyise suggests conceiving of texts as;

more like ripples on a pond, which spread out, intersect with other ripples and form new patterns. Or even less corporeal, texts are like sound waves which ‘interfere’ with one another, producing a series of harmonics and distortions.50

The paradigm of quotation, echo, and allusion, plays around with an auditory metaphor, from the perspective of the listener, and here Moyise puts a toe in the water to push this metaphor further. The echoes that are heard are, in the metaphorical conceptual sense, information that is carried by soundwaves. Disputes arise as to whether it is only modern readers hearing echoes that have been inadvertently created by the New Testament author, or if they have consciously sounded the intertextual gong. The current scholarship stays firmly with the reception of the waves in the “echo chamber”51 of ideas that is made by the waves, but has acknowledged the potential for playing with the metaphor.

For this, the researcher needs to make the positional shift – as encouraged by this research – to begin research with the Old Testament source text, rather than the New Testament receptor text. To make this positional shift, there needs to be some methodological adaptations, and it is these that are to be tested in this research. A

principal adaptation is the idea of obstacles, not noted by Moyise, but a significant contributor to the behaviour of waves.

There is one further example of water being used as an intertextual metaphor, which shows some of the breadth possible by this metaphor. Moyise draws on the work of Farmer who uses “an evocative image of the sea, with its ‘strong undercurrent’ being more influential on the swimmer than the calmer ‘surface waters’.”  

The creative possibilities of exploring water and wave dynamics as a metaphor for intertextuality are a vast, but untapped resource. Farmer and Moyise are helpful in setting this research in the wider academic context, but they have not worked with texts in the way that this research hopes so to do.

The idea of tracing the travel of the waves from their source is not found within current scholarship, but is a natural extension of the quotation-echo-allusion paradigm. Moyise does not test out his metaphor and it is my hope to build on the work that he has begun. I am not fully dependent on his work nor is what is proposed in this research a Moyisian methodology. Nevertheless, this research will apply his theory, in conjunction with insights from other scholars (as named below), to propose something new that can be tested with scriptural examples.

This metaphor leads this research into a new arena for biblical reception and intertextual research. Currently, there is a range of approaches, summarised by Moyise as falling into three categories; intertextual approaches that import the surrounding context from the Old Testament text into the New Testament, narrative approaches that bring forth the narrative framework more so than the immediate context of a verse that is quoted, and rhetorical approaches that focus on what the New Testament author

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wants to do with the Old Testament text, and not the possible extra meaning that is not intended. Whilst having different emphases, all of these approaches are united by being concerned with what the New Testament author does with an Old Testament text, rather than the impact that an Old Testament text might make on a New Testament text by interfering with the New Testament context.

1.2.2.3 **Cluzographic Intertextuality – First Steps**

Not wishing to throw out the proverbial baby with the Haysian bath water, there is clear concern about his criterion of *accessibility*. As a primary stage, there will need to be some contextualisation of how the source text was read in late Second Temple Judaism, and how it was written. Without this it is not enough to say that the text had been written, as a text that is not read will not have much impact on any potential obstruction; the water must be flowing. The idea of following a text as it ripples out needs to have some sense of the strength of those ripples before looking to see any potential obstruction causes interference.

My initial methodological consideration, therefore, will be to offer an assessment of the book of Esther in a late Second Temple context. This will involve 1) a consideration of the extent to which Purim was celebrated in late Second Temple Judaism, 2) an analysis of other texts that may attest to the textual reception of the book of Esther, 3) extra-canonical texts that may indicate awareness of the book of Esther itself or the celebration of Purim. The following chapter, therefore, will include a comprehensive and critical outline of the evidence that exists to suggest that the book of Esther was ‘available’ to the New Testament authors.

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1.2.2.4 Cluzographic Intertextuality – Ascertaining the ‘intertext’

If it can be shown that the book of Esther had the historical potential to make waves in the Second Temple context, then the methodology will need a way of assessing potential ripples and the obstacles that might have caused interference. The second stage of the methodology will need to have a way of highlighting Estherian text that is also New Testamental text, which might also have the possibility of an obstacle.

As no phrases found in the book Esther have been also found in the New Testament, except for ‘half of my kingdom’ (Esth 5:3, 6; 7:2; Mark 6:23), which will be discussed later, I can discount searching for phrases and will focus on single words. New Testament words that, within the LXX, are uniquely or overwhelmingly found in the book of Esther are more likely to lead the hearer to be attentive to the book of Esther, and are thus more likely to be suggestive of examples where the book of Esther can be witnessed in the New Testament.

Following a ‘canonical approach’ that begins with the source text and looks forward to the New Testament, rather than using a New Testament text as a starting point, I propose adapting existing methodological approaches. Not only does Septuagintal vocabulary offer “an exciting field of research where many new discoveries remain to be made,” but there is growing scholarly recognition that intertextuality can take these subtle forms, and single words can be distinctive.

As a starting point, I will examine the vocabulary of the LXX, using the revised lexicon that has been compiled by J. Lust, E. Eynikel and K. Hauspie (hereafter referred

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to as the LEH),\textsuperscript{56} for any words that have a particular affinity with the book of Esther. In the first instance, these will be Septuagintal \textit{hapax legomena} found only in Esther, but might also include words that have multiple attestations in the LXX but where the book of Esther contains the majority of biblical attestations. One example where single word intertextuality is recognised is the use of περίψημα in Tob 5:19 and 1 Cor 4:13.\textsuperscript{57} Despite examples such as this, the suggestion of arguing for a scriptural reference that is heard through a single lexical link from the book of Esther remains controversial. In contrast to the Haysian criterion of volume, which requires several words that the two texts have “in common and are... distinctive,”\textsuperscript{58} this research will need a methodology that can work with subtle literary connections. This is how ascertaining potential obstacles will help; if it can be shown why a text might be used, or even that it would need to be used, by an author then this would increase the arguments for its use in the New Testament.

Hays is certainly not the only person to offer ways into assessing the plausibility of a suggested echo of scripture or raising useful queries. In researching the reception of specific words from the Septuagint Bons, Brucker and Joosten propose asking the following questions:

1. How do Jewish or Christian authors writing in Greek handle the difference existing for some words between the “biblical” usage created in the Septuagint and the usual meaning in Greek?
2. To what extent is it possible to affirm that New Testament writers borrowed their religious terminology from the Septuagint?
3. Which words of the Septuagint continue in later writings with their specific meaning, and which ones go out of use?
4. Is it possible to observe further semantic developments in the use of “biblical” words by Jewish or Christian authors writing in Greek?\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. NA\textsuperscript{28}; Timothy Lim, \textit{The Formation of the Jewish Canon} (AYBRL; London: Yale University Press, 2013), p.198.
\textsuperscript{58} Moyise, \textit{Paul and Scripture}, p.114.
\textsuperscript{59} Bons, Brucker, Joosten, \textit{The Reception of Septuagint Words}, p.v.
It is expected that these will feature within the research and help guide the methodology.

Primarily, however, this work will follow an adapted form of the methodology used by Kowalski for proposing allusions. Highlighting rare words that are common to two texts is a recognised way of supporting an argument for recognising allusions.\textsuperscript{60} Kowalski takes this one step further. In her work on the book of Revelation she recognises that the likelihood of an allusion that is made through a single word is significantly raised when one is considering a \textit{hapax legomenon} in the New Testament that is also a \textit{hapax legomenon} in the LXX.\textsuperscript{61} Rather than work backwards from the New Testament text, and its \textit{hapax legomena}, the approach proposed here is to further this methodology to begin with the \textit{hapax legomena} found in the book of Esther. This is a distinctive feature of the proposed methodology, which, while indebted to previous research and methodology, takes this foundational work in a new direction.

In addition to the use of περίψημα in Tob 5:19 and 1 Cor 4:13, which is an example of single word intertextuality, there are examples where \textit{hapax legomena} are the key intertextual link. One may think of βδελυκτός in Prov\textsuperscript{LXX} 17:15 and Titus 1:16,\textsuperscript{62} δοτής in Prov\textsuperscript{LXX} 22:8 and 2 Cor 9:7,\textsuperscript{63} πτοήσις in Prov\textsuperscript{LXX} 3:25 and 1 Pet 3:6.\textsuperscript{64} To these one may also add ἐπιθυμητής found only in Num\textsuperscript{LXX} 11:34 and 1 Cor 10:6 given the number of parallels between Num 11 and 1 Cor 10.\textsuperscript{65} This research will draw the book of Esther


\textsuperscript{61} Kowalski, ‘Die Ezechielrezeption in der Offenbarung des Johannes’, p.54.


into this wider conversation whilst also attempting to frame a methodology that can be used for such intertextual events.

It is not only Kowalski’s work that lends its support, but these proposals bear some similarities to work done by Benjamin Sommer for whom the focus was “exegesis, allusion and intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible.”66 One must bear in mind both the possibility that shared vocabulary is a coincidence as well as the possibility that there is some form of allusion or literary borrowing. Sommer continues that;

If two texts share vocabulary items that are commonplace in Biblical Hebrew, the parallel between them is most likely coincidental... If the vocabulary is neither common nor part of a known vocabulary cluster, then the possibility of genuine borrowing is strong.67

As Kowalski does, Sommer guides the researcher toward uncommon vocabulary, hence the reason this research will focus primarily on *hapax legomena* in the book of Esther and in the New Testament. Shared *hapax legomena* will not necessarily be evidence of textual reception of the book of Esther, but they will significantly raise the possibility of exegetical allusions that are rooted in the book of Esther.

Working forwards from the book of Esther will hopefully avoid one of the criticisms posited at OT-NT research. Foster has been, justifiably, critical of scholarly literature that presents an Old Testament text as a guiding framework for a New Testament text when the interpretative key is not unique to the Old Testament text. As an example, he critiques Liebengood’s claims that “the eschatological programme of Zech 9-14 functions as a substructure to the theological perspectives of 1 Peter,”68 which are made through a recurring shepherd motif. As the shepherd metaphor is prevalent in

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scripture, Liebengood does not do enough work to satisfy Foster that the shepherd metaphor can be the key that links 1 Peter with Zech 9-14 over and above any other text. Starting with vocabulary that is distinctively Estherian will help to allay such critiques.

Isolated words do raise other questions, however; out of context how can one suggest the plausibility of a cluzograph of the book of Esther based on a single word? Could a word not merely be the appropriate word to use in the New Testament context, and not necessarily indicative of an intertextual relationship, but coincidental that it is also in the book of Esther? Furthermore, although one might be able to bring together the book of Esther and New Testament texts in a way that enables interesting exegesis, how can it be demonstrated that the book of Esther was taken into the New Testament, and that the research does not just present interesting ideas? Such questions are necessary to demand further rigorous research.

Any words that seem to warrant further research will be used as ‘springboards’ to evaluate the wider context of the two texts (the New Testament passage and the book of Esther). This may involve drawing on other quotations/echoes/allusions of Jewish Scripture to see how this corpus of literature is shaping the New Testament passage concerned, the literary style of the passage, the theological themes raised by the passage. In order to do this thoroughly I will need to consult current scholarly works, as well as ancient commentaries and literature drawing on the book of Esther and the New Testament (including Talmudic and early Christian Literature). This broad exploration will help evaluate the likelihood of the influence of the book of Esther on the text of the New Testament, by fleshing out the picture from an initial ‘intertextual contact point’ between the two texts.

Hence, this is an atypical OT-NT methodology as it takes as its starting point the text of the Septuagint and looks forward to how that text might be used, rather than the
more traditional approach of starting with a New Testament text and looking back on what may have been used by the author. This research will need to look at the range of possible influences on any New Testament passage of interest, but by starting with an immersion into the earlier text, will aim to see what, if anything, is striking about the New Testament text on the basis of knowledge of the earlier texts, rather than what is striking about the New Testament text without that explicit background.

As this research is not taking an existing methodology but proposing a new one, this is all that will be said on the methodology at this stage. The research, as a whole, will test out the methodology, which will be assessed and evaluated throughout the whole project and in each chapter. The final conclusion will not only conclude any findings regarding the book of Esther in the New Testament but will present any conclusions regarding the proposed methodology.
Chapter 2: A Contextual Overview of the Place of Esther in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity

2.1 Background to the Context

The ‘Jewishness’ of the book of Esther is frequently remarked upon. This can be on purely textual grounds given that (יִהוֹדָי, “occurs an astonishing 58 times in the book of Esther – by far the highest count (absolute and relative) of all books of the Hebrew Bible.” 69 The ‘Jewishness’ of the text has also been claimed through less precise statements such as, “it is an eminently Jewish book, perhaps even the most Jewish book of all.” 70 How exactly one quantifies ‘Jewishness’ is not remarked upon, although, as noted in the opening chapter with a snapshot of comments from across the past five centuries, this has often been in negative terms.

In plenty of commentaries that have come out of a Christian context, the book of Esther “has been seen as a repository of a vindictiveness, a nationalism, an earthiness and a sensuality that is seen as characteristically ‘Jewish.’” 71 Moreover this has been articulated to demonstrate the “formation of Christian identity by offering the antithesis of Christian identity” 72; the book of Esther encapsulates all that is other to Christianity. Certainly, the book of Esther has been used to create disturbing caricatures of Jews in recent years, perhaps more so than to create a Christian identity; one need only consider

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the final words of Julius Streicher, spoken as he stood on the scaffold, “This is my Purim 1946,” to recognise the disturbing ways the book of Esther has been used in anti-Judaic discourse.

There can be little doubt that a reluctant and critical view has been generally prevalent in modern Christian commentary on the book of Esther, which raises the question of whether the same was true of earliest Christianity. As the early Christian movement increasingly became a community of gentile followers of Jesus rather than Jewish followers, one need not have much imagination to suspect that the events of Esth 9:1-17 may have made for troubling reading. As the narrative presents something other to Christianity, the text itself may have ceased to have been an acceptable text for the Christian movement. In this way, the book of Esther could have been part of the folk background for Jewish adherents to Christianity but not so much for the gentile adherents. The ‘Jewishness’ of the text of Esther may have counted against its acceptance by gentile converts to the early Christian movement.

As already stated, later Christians writers have found difficulties with the book of Esther, and the fact that Purim is not part of Christian festal calendars – and is not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament – has caused a difficulty for Christians reading the text. The text has not been without its critics within Judaism; MT Esther unashamedly presents a Jewish girl marrying and sleeping with a gentile, who offers

73 Randall Bytwerk, *Julius Streicher: Nazi Editor of the Notorious Anti-Semitic Newspaper Der Stürmer* (New York: Cooper Square, 2001), p.1; It is noteworthy that this was recorded in many British newspapers on 16th and 17th October 1946 as Streicher shouting “Jewish Holiday, Jewish Holiday 1946.” One can only presume that it was assumed that Purim, and the Estherian associations, would not have meant much to British readers. cf. [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk].
none of the reticence of the book of Daniel in eating the non-kosher food and drink of the palace.  

One cannot doubt that the book of Esther reflects the tension of dual loyalty felt by “Jews living in a Gentile society.” At the time of earliest Christianity, this means that the book of Esther was relevant, not just for the diaspora, but also for those living in occupied Judaea. When early Christianity started accepting gentile converts, the immediate relevance of such a text may have been less apparent. The dichotomy that is created between the Jews and everyone else in the story that downplays all gentiles would not have endeared the text to the gentile-Christian communities. This is the reason, commonly given, for the additions and omissions in the Alpha Text and in Josephus’ text; they are rewritten with a gentile audience in mind, directly or as a result of increased Jewish-gentile interactions. This could indicate that, rather than dropping out of view when Jews encountered gentiles, the book of Esther was introduced to gentile communities. This is unlikely to be the full picture, however, as many texts could have been troubling in their statements against gentiles, and the witness of the early church shows that the book of Esther was interpreted as a text for the early Church. For reasons that remain speculative, perhaps as a text more on the fringes of what would be termed ‘canonicity,’ AT Esther “represents another attempt to recontextualise the book’s message for the benefit of a Hellenized, or perhaps Romanized, Jewish audience.” This was a text that was particularly prone to being ‘re-contextualised.’

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77 For example, see the witness of Origen in §2.4.1.5.
This interaction will be explored throughout this and the subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, the book of Esther would become, in some contexts, a sticking point in Jewish-Christian relations as the two became clearly distinct groups and Purim would become a time of tension between the Jewish and Christian communities. The Canons of Laodicea in c.363-364CE were concerned with Jewish-Christian relations and prohibited Christians from receiving gifts from Jews. It is hard to know how common-place the practice of gift-giving was, and if this was a reactive or pro-active prohibition. Whether the former or the latter, this practice is strongly associated with Purim, when Jews were encouraged to give gifts (cf. Esth 9:22), and it is probably Purim against which the canons are reacting.79

Sensing a tension between Jewish and Christian communities suggests that the two are distinct, clearly identifiable groups. Such a distinction may be observable by the time of the Canons of Laodicea but is much less clear at the time of the writing of the New Testament. Furthermore, does ‘Jewish’ refer to late Second Temple Judaism(s), or a clear form of burgeoning rabbinic Judaism, or another form of Jewish identity? In a similar vein, does ‘Christian’ refer to a subset group that identifies within a form of Judaism, or something more akin to patristic Christian identity, that might be also found in the letters of Ignatius, where ‘Christian’ is something opposed to ‘Jewish?’80

It is in the midst of these partings of the ways that this research is framed. If one can, albeit in a slightly false manner, conceive of a number of sliding scales with Jewish identity(ies) on one end, to a distinct and separate patristic Christian identity, one can imagine different communities from the New Testament period at different places on

this scale in terms of their self-understanding. Such communities existed in some tension with each other whilst developing and changing themselves.\textsuperscript{81} How the book of Esther may have been received in any of these communities, at different points in time, could vary enormously.

The introduction has shown, through the late first century first letter of Clement, that early Christianity did engage with the book of Esther. As much of the New Testament predates this, however, and that the events recorded are much earlier, there might be a concern over the extent to which the book of Esther was in use in Second Temple Judaism. This could be over its use at all, or whether this was widespread or confined to a few communities; i.e. was Clement's familiarity with the book of Esther representative of a form of Christianity that was inherited from Second Temple Judaism, or was his familiarity with the book of Esther a quirk of circumstance and his context?

This chapter will help contextualise the book of Esther, but a necessary aspect of the methodology is to assess the process of the ‘rippling’ of the text. By virtue of querying the prevailing assumptions that the book of Esther was little used, this section is crucial to the methodology. Knowledge of the dating of the versions of the book of Esther – how long they had been in use, as well as ways in which the book of Esther was read and used in other texts – provides a means of querying the aforementioned presumptions. Moreover, this evaluation will give some shape to the likely strength of Estherian ripples – what one might call the \textit{cluzographic potential} of the book of Esther. A text written in the early first century CE that was largely ignored in the ancient world would have less ‘cluzographic potential’ than a text written the fourth century BCE that

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. Dunn, \textit{Neither Jew Nor Greek}, pp.509-511.
was regularly read and referenced in other writings. Both are possibly rippling in the contexts of the New Testament authors, but are not comparable.

2.2  Overview of The Books of Esther

In considering the reception of ‘the book of Esther,’ one may well ask, ‘which one?’ The book of Esther is not unusual in the fact that variant versions have come to exist. It is unusual, however, when one considers the scale of these variants, such that Dorothy and Fox refer to the “Books of Esther.”82 As there are several versions of the text of Esther, it is important to date these and offer a brief overview of them in order to establish what texts might have been in circulation at the time of writing of the New Testament. The New Testament authors used “all the extant textual forms”83 for their texts, and this may be the case with the books of Esther. Establishing the extant forms, and how long they were extant will offer some picture of their cluzographic potential.

Anyone approaching the textual history of the book of Esther, and attempting to date the various texts, is faced with a daunting and difficult task, with no commonly agreed consensus.84 There are several factors including the various texts outlined above, the possibility of separate Esther and Mordecai stories that have been combined, as well as other strands of the story (i.e. festal aetiology, court novella). Various hypotheses suggest that the book may be the result of redactors combining texts, that the variety

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84 As well as the relevant sections in commentaries, key texts are; David Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The story of the story* (JSOTSup 30; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1984); Dorothy, *The Books of Esther*; Miller, *Three Versions of Esther*. 
may be the result of variants on a theme, or a mixture of the two at various stages of the text’s history. Hypothetically, various traditions (such as an Esther story and a Mordecai story) came together, before variant forms (such as the LXX) ‘broke apart,’ one of which at least was subsequently combined with other material (such as the LXX additions).

It is not the task of this research to address the complexities of the textual history of the book of Esther and unravelling the many possibilities is too great an undertaking for the scope of this project. As such, the following section shall briefly outline the textual traditions, offer something in the way of dating and salient points regarding distinctive features of the textual traditions. This will help contextualise the versions of the book of Esther regarding how long the narrative was in the consciousness of the people who would make up some of the earliest Christians and the possibility of these texts being received into the New Testament. This will also note versions of the book of Esther that post-date the New Testament. In such cases where the earliest extant written form post-dates the New Testament, there is the possibility that they contain pertinent interpretative insights that ante-date the New Testament.

2.2.1 The Hebrew and Greek Versions

The most significant versions of the book of Esther for this research are the Hebrew (as preserved in MT Esther), and two Greek versions, the Septuagintal text (LXX Esther) and the Alpha Text (AT Esther). The clearest difference between the Greek and Hebrew is the presence of additions in the Greek versions, even though the Greek versions are not in complete accordance with each other. It is the dating of these that is most pertinent for this research to build a picture of the time-scale over which knowledge of the text had a chance to build up.
Dalley has highlighted many words and phrases in MT Esther that provide roots of the text in the 7th century,85 although in its current form, this is not possible. The terminus a quo for the Hebrew text is based on the identification of the king. The king (אסחרווש) has long been identified as the Achaemenid king, known by his Greek name, Xerxes I.86 The earliest possible date for the text in its current form is the reign of Xerxes I in the fifth century (486-465 BCE). The text itself implies that the writing of the story does not coincide with the setting, but happened later (Esth 1:1; 9:20). Without indicating exactly how long after, the fact that Esth 1:1 speaks of the events happening ‘in the days of Ahasuerus’ and that Esth 1:2 harks back to ‘those days’ may well suggest that ‘the days of Ahasuerus’ are all in the past. The text therefore suggests that the earliest date of composition/redaction is during the reign of Xerxes’ successor, Artaxerxes who reigned 465-424 BCE.

A terminus ad quem may be established from the information given in the colophon to LXX Esther, if one accepts the legitimacy of this information. If one does not accept the legitimacy of the colophon the terminus ad quem is c.90 CE, when Josephus recorded the book of Esther. This late date only stands if one doubts the details of the colophon. As scholarly consensus recognises the common practice of library records including a colophon to outline the provenance of the text, the terminus ad quem is earlier than Josephus’ text. As Bush comments, “there seems little reason to doubt the veracity of the information given therein.”87 The disagreements concern how one interprets this information.

85 Dalley, Esther’s Revenge at Susa, pp.165-184.
The colophon (Esth.LXX F:11 [10:3l]) states that “in the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus... and his son Ptolemy brought the above book of Purim.”88 There is an ambiguity over which Ptolemy is referred to with most scholarship debating between the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy IX (114 BCE)89 and the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy XII (77 BCE),90 both of whom had a Queen Cleopatra. In addition, Miller also proposes the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy VIII (142 BCE).91 This refers to the year that the translation was taken to Alexandria, which may be the same as translation but may be later than the translation. Even if the latest is preferred this has implications for the Hebrew text. As Bush remarks, “the Hebrew vorlage must be earlier than the first century BC by the amount of time sufficient for it to circulate and become well enough known to warrant a translation into Greek.”92 For the purposes of this research, one can state that the book of Esther had been in existence, in one form or another for, at the very least, a century to a century and a half by the time that the New Testament texts were written. This may be much longer, however. In recent years, the consensus on the Hebrew text has shifted to an earlier, rather than later date.

Earlier dates have been argued on the basis of the Hebrew style and vocabulary, setting the text more generally in the period of the 4th-2nd centuries,93 arguments that are

88 Bush, Esther, p.296.
89 Cf. Moore, Esther, p.lix.
90 Cf. Fox, Character and Ideology, p.159.
91 Miller, Jews and Anti-Judaism, p.75.
92 Bush, Esther, p.296.
not without their critics given that the text may imitate an earlier writing style, and that the writing style does not comfortably fit with any particular period. Some scholarship of the twenty-first century has argued for even earlier production, with dates of the 4th and even 5th century being proposed.

On the basis of the logic of lectio difficilior, it may be safely reckoned that this, or a very similar text, is an early part of the textual history of the book of Esther. As the Greek versions (below) contain extra material, often as a way of including explicit references to God, the simpler conclusion is that these sections are additions to a text (that was preserved as, or closely resembles, MT Esther), rather than being original material that was removed by the tradition that led to MT Esther. It is more likely that a redactor would add references to God into an original that lacked them, than a redactor would remove all such references from a text that included them. As there are no manuscripts that pre-date the Christian era, the picture that can be conjured up on the dating of these texts is, inevitably, hypothetical but the best from the available evidence. Despite this, one can be confident that both MT Esther and LXX Esther were in existence in late Second Temple Judaism.

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Into this discussion is the Alpha Text, formerly considered to be a Lucianic version of the book of Esther.\textsuperscript{97} There is disagreement as to whether AT Esther is a reworking of LXX Esther and thus a later text,\textsuperscript{98} or that it is a translation of an early Hebrew text, and thus an earlier text.\textsuperscript{99} It is not the task of this research to enter this debate, except to conclude whether AT Esther could have been known to the New Testament authors. If AT Esther predates LXX Esther then it could have been known and a precise date is not crucial to this research. If AT Esther postdates LXX Esther a clear sense of dating is more important.

Both de Troyer and Miller agree that the particularities of AT Esther best accord with the political situation at the time of Gaius Caligula (37-41 CE). Miller focusses this to the “violation of the Jews’ religious freedom in Alexandria in 38-39 CE,”\textsuperscript{100} whereas for de Troyer, “the AT is a rewritten form of the LXX with one specific person and one specific historical context in mind... the [Alpha Text] would appear, moreover, to have been written in Rome around 40-41 by a Jewish author who addressed himself to non-Jews.”\textsuperscript{101} Whatever the process by which AT Esther came to be, it would have been in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item For this position see de Troyer, \emph{Rewriting the Sacred Text}, pp.76-89; Kristin de Troyer, ‘Esther in Text- and Literary-Critical Paradise’, in Greenspoon & White Crawford, \emph{Book of Esther in Modern Research}, pp.31-49 (32); Kristin de Troyer, \emph{The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and narrative technique in MT 8:1-17, LXX 8:1-17, and AT 7:14-41} (SCS 48; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), pp.400-403; Miller, \emph{Three Versions of Esther}, p.111; Miller, \emph{Jews and Anti-Judaism in Esther and the Church}, p.35.
\item Miller, \emph{Jews and Anti-Judaism in Esther and the Church}, p.95.
\item de Troyer, \emph{The End of the Alpha Text of Esther}, pp.401-402; see also de Troyer & Wacker, ‘Esther, Das Buch Esther, p.1265.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
existence by the time that the New Testament texts were written. Moreover, it lacks elements that “could be taken either as offensive or devoid of interest by a non-Jewish audience.”\textsuperscript{102} It is taken that the Alpha Text was written with gentiles in mind, accounting for some of the tensions in the earlier versions.\textsuperscript{103}

Not only is this another possible version that was available to the New Testament authors but, if de Troyer’s dating is accepted, shows continued engagement with, and reflection on, the book of Esther in the late Second Temple period. The book of Esther is not a text that was hypothetically available but ignored, but a text that was being retold and transmitted.

\subsection*{2.2.2 Other Versions of the Book of Esther}

In addition to the Hebrew and Greek textual traditions are other versions with their own nuances. First is a likely witness to a third Greek version (c.120-100 BCE) that has survived in \textit{Vetus Latina} manuscripts (\textit{VL Esther}), but that also suggests knowledge of a Hebrew text.\textsuperscript{104} This translation also contains the Greek additions (except for the colophon), but has a lengthened form of Esther’s prayer and some other additional material. Later Christian tradition demonstrates familiarity with \textit{VL Esther} as it is the version that is quoted by Augustine.\textsuperscript{105} Although the third Greek text is hypothetical, as

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Lacocque, ‘The Different Versions of Esther’, p.316.}
\footnote{Fox, \textit{The Redaction of the Books of Esther}, p.87; Day, \textit{Three Faces of a Queen}, p.231.}
\end{footnotes}
it has not been discovered, VI. Esther can provide a window into the interpretation of the book of Esther that existed in the first century.

Josephus provides a first century interpretation of the book of Esther in his c.90CE retelling of the narrative in *Ant.* 11.184-296, where it is sandwiched between Nehemiah’s rebuilding of the temple and the succession of Johanan to the high priesthood. It is the scholarly consensus that Josephus is, in part, dependent on AT Esther as he includes “some typical AT readings.” In contrast to some of the later rabbinic writings that raise questions over Esther’s character (did she keep kosher? etc.), and in contrast to his usual down-playing of heroines, Josephus plays up the character of Esther. He has also omitted details to “focus attention on Esther,” such as her subordination to Mordecai (cf. Esth 2:20; *Ant.* 11.203). He also neglects to include the second gathering of the girls in 2:19, which has “the implication that Ahasuerus, even after making Esther his queen, was not content with her but sought new concubines.” Feldman also directs attention to additional material contained in Josephus’ account. In *Ant.* 11.205, Josephus describes how it was against the law to approach the king without being summoned, and that around the throne were axemen ready to punish any who violated the law. Not only does Josephus leave out material that diminishes Esther’s role, but he embellishes the story to exemplify Esther’s courage. This episode is balanced by Josephus’ emphasis of the role that law plays in the story and that obedience to the Law is to be commended. There is a potential conflict for the readers between imperial law and divinely mandated Law, which Josephus “attempts to mitigate” against.

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106 de Troyer, *Rewriting the Sacred Text*, p.66.
Josephus’ retelling provides a positive spin to the book of Esther, and Esther’s role in the narrative. Similar inclusions and exclusions from the narrative take place with regards to Mordecai, so that both characters are praiseworthy characters to be emulated. Furthermore, Josephus rewrites the book of Esther with his own polemical and apologetic spin. This gives a striking insight into first century readings of the book of Esther and into some of the ways that the book of Esther may be creatively presented.

A Syriac Peshitta text exists for the book of Esther (SYR), which can be dated to c.150-200CE.111 This version is, therefore, of significance for its early witness to an exegetical tradition, probably rooted in a Hebrew text.112 One query is the community out of which it came; was it a Jewish community, a Jewish-Christian community, or a distinctly Christian community? There are arguments for and against each of these positions, and Weitzman offers a helpful overview of these. These arguments need not be replicated here, except for his conclusion that

The translator sometimes identifies himself with the Jewish people. The translation is frequently at odds with rabbinic norms. Some features (e.g. the hours of prayer, explicit emphasis on faith) are familiar to us from the Church rather than the Synagogue. Until we reach [the Peshitta] on the Apocrypha, however, there are no undeniably Christian statements. Finally [the Peshitta] was preserved by the Church alone. To account for all these features, we must posit a line that ran from some non-rabbinic form of Judaism into Christianity. The [Peshitta] translators of the different books of the Hebrew Bible lie somewhere near the beginning of that line. In these translations we may hope to glimpse that Judaism out of which the Syriac-speaking Church grew.113

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113 Weitzman, ‘From Judaism to Christianity’, p.168.
As the book of Esther seems to be one of the later books to be translated into Syriac, the translation may be reflective of a community more au fait with Christianity than some of the other Peshitta texts. This cannot be known, however, and conclusions regarding the nature of the community into which Peshitta Esther was translated, or revised, should be avoided.

Later than the Syriac, is the Sahidic version, the only extant Coptic version of Esther (COPT Esther). The whole of the Bible had been translated into Sahidic by 370CE, but with some books already translated by 270CE, although numerous revisions would take place over the following centuries.114 Dating the extant Sahidic translation of the book of Esther is difficult as the extant manuscript tradition is scant, and it is not known which text tradition is maintained, but it could be as late as the seventh century.115 Although scant, what is extant amounts to 72% of the whole of the text.116 This is substantially greater than some other texts, however, as in the case of Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Maccabees there are no extant manuscripts.117 As is the case with the Qumran Literature, lack of extant manuscripts is not proof that those manuscripts never existed. One may suppose, however, given the number of extant manuscripts for different books that there was less call for texts of Esther in the Coptic speaking communities. The late fourth-century Coptic translation of the Apostolic Constitutions offers a list of books

that are “precious and holy”\textsuperscript{118} (\textit{AC} \textit{Copt} 7.85). At the end of the list of Old Testament texts the author gives a short list of books for “young persons to learn... [in which] is much instruction.”\textsuperscript{119} It is in this list that one finds the book of Esther along with Wisdom, 1, 2 & 3 Maccabees and Sirach. This is a text that is read, and held in high regard, but perhaps not on the same footing as the rest of the Old Testament texts.

Other versions to note are Jerome’s Latin Vulgate (\textit{Vulg}), in which the book of Esther was one of the last to be completed (c.400-405),\textsuperscript{120} and two distinct Aramaic Targumim, Tg. Esth I and II, dated to sixth/seventh centuries and the late seventh/early eight centuries respectively.\textsuperscript{121} The context of these texts may come to bear on the differences found between them and the second Targum, whilst later than the first, bears markers that suggest that it “must have been authored in Palestine because it reflects the persecution of the Jews in their homeland during Christian times.”\textsuperscript{122} A significant emendation occurs in Tg. Esth II 7:9, which includes mention of Bar-Pandera. Supported by Origen’s account of a belief that Jesus’ true father was a Roman soldier named Pandera/Panthera (\textit{Cels}. 1.32), rabbinic literature includes numerous references to Ben-Pandera, the son of Pandera, often identified as Jesus.\textsuperscript{123} Bar-Pandera here may be a reference to Jesus (and will be further examined in chapter four), and if so


this could be significant in this research. Tg. Esth II may bear witness to the position of
the book of Esther amidst Jews and Christians, and how it was interpreted.

Further to these texts is the Talmudic tractate Megillah, which is centred on the
book of Esther. This variety of texts for the book of Esther was noted in b.Meg. 18a, and
points to the popularity of this text in that it existed in so many versions; “If one reads
[the Esther scroll] in Coptic, in Hebraic, in Elamean, in Median, in Greek, he has not
performed his obligation.”124 The book of Esther has thus been described as, “not so
much a single unique text, as it is a snapshot of a literary tradition in progress.”125 This
research is therefore interested in how the New Testament and other Early Christian
Literature engages with this ‘literary tradition in progress.’

2.3 The Use of the Book of Esther in, and shortly after, the Second Temple Period
2.3.1 Issues of Canon/Authority
2.3.1.1 The Canonical/Authoritative Status of the Book of Esther

Issues of canon are not without complication, particularly when considering the
book of Esther, as the extant historical evidence is scant. It is generally agreed that
“prior to 100CE... the biblical text was pluriform and dynamically growing [several
authors prefer the term ‘fluid’].”126 This does not mean that there was an ethos of
‘anything goes’; there were texts that were held in common. As an example, the Torah,

124 B.Meg. 18a; Except when otherwise stated, Talmudic references are taken from the Soncino
edition. ‘Hebraic’ is the Soncino translation of עברית the language of the עברים. This is unlikely to refer to the
Hebrew text, which is earlier in the passage noted by the term окרא. As such Rabbinowitz in the Soncino
version suggests that ‘Hebraic’ is a dialect of Aramaic spoken in Babylonia, near the banks (Eber) of the
Euphrates. See also Marcus Jastrow, Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud, and Midrashic Literature (London:
Shapiro, 1926), p.1040.
and Around Qumran’, BT 67 (2016), pp.120-136 (120).
as a unit, is attested from as early as c.400 BCE by the epithet ‘The book of the Law of Moses,’ (cf. 2 Chr 23:18; 30:16; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh 8:1).\(^{127}\)

The Prophets, too, seem to have been restricted to a collection of texts that is recognisable today, since an early date. From approximately 200 BCE some of the prophets had been united as a collection and, although McDonald records Freedman and Blenkinsopp favouring dates in the sixth century BCE for the recognition of the prophetic literary tradition, one may be safer with a more cautious date. It is not possible to know exactly when the prophetic texts would be viewed with the esteem and value that would later be referred to as canonisation, but McDonald’s likely date of the beginning of the second century BCE is not only cautious, but indicative of the fact that by the time of writing of the New Testament texts, this was a recognisable collection of texts.\(^{128}\)

The Talmud records uncertainty over several texts, all of which would be accepted as Ketuvim, which suggests that by the rabbinic era the Law and Prophets “were already fixed, and that people did not disagree on the books that belonged to them.”\(^{129}\) It is with the collection of texts that would come to be called the Writings/Ketuvim, of which the book of Esther is a part, that there was a greater sense of ‘fluidity.’ The Talmudic tractate Yadayim records the efforts made by Rabbi Akiba (fourth generation Tanna, c.110-135 CE) to secure the authoritative status of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, as well as some uncertainties over the Aramaic portions of Ezra and Daniel.\(^{130}\) Although the Ketuvim appears not to have yet been fixed, this does not mean that the texts that would form this collection were not held together (albeit in


\(^{130}\) M. Yad. 3.5; 4.5; S. Sandmel, Judaism and Christian Beginnings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.246-247.
differing forms), before the formal establishment of the group. In all likelihood, those texts that would be formally held together, were already held together informally.

The key concern here, is not the formal canonization of the Ketuvim as a unit, but the extent to which the book of Esther was valued/ regarded as holy/authoritative. The phrase that is common in rabbinic literature is whether a text ‘defiles the hands.’ Leiman offers a comprehensive overview of passages on what defiles the hands, some of which concern the book of Esther.\(^{131}\) Some of Leiman’s theories regarding canonisation (such as his early dating and confident use of the word ‘canonisation’) have encountered criticism,\(^{132}\) but his work on the extent to which the book of Esther was considered to ‘defile the hands’, particularly from earlier Rabbis, is valuable. As might be expected with literature of this type, this does not present a single, distinct, voice on the book of Esther, but a range of viewpoints. Rab Judah (second generation Amora c.250-290CE) declared in the name of Samuel that the book of Esther does not defile the hands (b. Meg. 7a), a remark that has been used to support the view that the status of the book of Esther was not certain at that time and that the consensus did not incline favourably towards it. Alongside this, however, are the passages that do speak favourably towards the divine inspiration of the book of Esther. One may thus acknowledge a distinction made between the authoritative texts that are inspired texts and those that are not.\(^{133}\)

R. Meir (fifth generation Tanna, c.135-170CE) is recorded as saying that the book of Esther was not found in Asia minor.\(^{134}\) This may mean that there was a geographic discrepancy to its spread, acceptance, and canonisation. It would be unwise to think that


\(^{133}\) Lim, *Jewish Canon*, p.5.

one can talk about the canonisation and acceptance of the book of Esther as though it were uniform across all Jewish communities.

The tractate b.Ḥul. 139b recounts a time when the Papunians ask Rabbi Mattenah (second generation Babylonian Amora, c.250-290CE) about where Haman, Esther, and Mordecai can be found in the Torah, to which the Rabbi dutifully gives appropriate answers. Esther can be found in Deut 31:18, Haman in Gen 3:11 and Mordecai in Exod 30:23, where flowing myrrh (מרר) in Tg. Onq. The Papunians town of Papunia was 20-30 miles west of Baghdad. This encounter informs us that the story of Esther was known here but also that the people here were struggling to understand the place of the book of Esther and were asking for help in seeing how this text fitted with the rest of the scriptures. The fact that the Rabbis were happy to answer indicates that there were those for whom Esther was a strong part of their literary bank of knowledge, and one that complemented the Torah well. As has already been mentioned, there is a concern to relate the book of Esther to the Torah, which, as far as Rabbi Mattenah was concerned, is achievable.

As will be demonstrated below, the book of Esther was read in the temple in the late Second Temple period (although it is unknown when this practice began). This was a popular text, a popularity that had a significant impact on its place in the community. Davies says that the history of the book of Esther:

throws light on the interplay (in this case quite dramatic) between the popularity of a book and its canonization. The changing forms of this story show awareness of a need somehow to accommodate it as a classic work of Hebrew literature, but betray the fact that it was already popular enough to need such revision, and thus was already canonized.\textsuperscript{136}

Changing scholarly convention might be wary about the language of ‘canonisation,’ but Davies nevertheless argues confidently about the value placed on the book of Esther. The variant Greek texts are indicative of a text that was already regarded as equally valuable to other more ‘high status’ texts. Texts from a much later date allude to this, such that Maimonides could claim that in the world to come all that would remain of scripture are the five books of the Law and the book of Esther, and that Purim would be alone in still being celebrated.137 Long before this, however, the oral reception of Esther and its popularity through the Purim festival, “afforded a level of popular recognition [to Esther] otherwise reserved for the more ancient Hebrew books.”138

Any firm statements regarding the canonisation of the book of Esther in the first century may only lead to difficulties. The fluidity of the status of texts in this period is indicative of this. Rather than continue with the rigidity of ‘canon’ one has a more workable, and appropriate, set of boundaries if one considers the kinds of texts that might have been considered inspired, authoritative, or valued to such an extent that first century writers might consider them as suitable sources for their own writings. There is clearer evidence to the kind of texts that were used, without the question of whether they had been formally adopted into a canon, a later way of viewing the texts. Such an approach does not open the boundaries so far to include any source text without justification for its use.

With this slightly different way of viewing the texts, one is on much firmer ground in suggesting the suitability of the book of Esther to the discussion of whether

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ripples from it might be felt in the New Testament. The vast majority of references made by the New Testament authors “are from what is often referred to as the rabbinical canon, but there a few citations in the NT of the apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.” The rabbinical view, whilst not unanimous, lends support to the inspired/authoritative nature of the book of Esther.

2.3.1.2 The Canonical Setting of the Book of Esther

Discussions around the canonical setting of the book of Esther, as part of the five Megilloth, are a recent development in biblical scholarship and are still in the early stages. These discussions are concerned with the history of the grouping of the Megilloth, where the book of Esther came to find a place. It is not the place of this research to focus on offering a unique contribution to this field of study, but account for the current state of play to help best set the book of Esther canonically in the first century. These five texts are all associated with Jewish festivals and read as part of the festal celebrations (Esther – Purim; Ruth – Shavuot; Lamentations – 9th Ab; Ecclesiastes – Sukkot; Song of Songs – Passover). Inasmuch as one cannot isolate Genesis or Numbers from the Torah, or Amos from the twelve prophets one may equally take the view that the book of Esther cannot be isolated from the Megilloth.

141 Erickson & Davis’ article should be consulted for a thorough overview of the current scholarly situation; Erikson & Davis, ‘Recent Research on the Megilloth’, pp.298-318. See also Timothy Stone, The Compilational History of the Megilloth: Canon, contoured intertextuality and meaning in the writings (FAT 59; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Embry, Megilloth Studies.
There is nevertheless no certainty that anyone in late Second Temple Judaism would have recognised these five texts as a single unit, as was the case with the Torah and the Twelve. Yemenite manuscripts witness a tradition that, for the most part, only knew three Megilloth (שלוש מגילות), a collection comprising Song of Songs, Ruth and Ecclesiastes.  

There is a Yemenite manuscript that also includes Lamentations and Esther to create the five scrolls, but this is only one manuscript to do so, whereas all other Yemenite manuscripts of relevance to this discussion attest to the three scroll tradition. Even when the five did become a collection, the Yemenite manuscripts are a reminder that this was not universal practice.

The first explicit reference to the five Megilloth as a single unit is in Codex Leningradensis c.1008CE, although this does not necessarily represent the first time they were considered as one. Two different orderings of the five can probably be dated to the sixth-ninth centuries, which are chronological either by alleged authorship, or by the sequence of the festivals. Providing a date for the compilation of the Megilloth is a difficult task as, “the external historical evidence for the Writings is complex and does not provide an avenue into the canonical process that brought these books together.”

Notwithstanding this difficulty and the inability to be certain about a recognised unit before the Geonic period, these books are discussed together much earlier than the formal organisation of the books. In addition to being festal texts, the five have other similarities. They are all Ketuvim and do not come with the weight of Mosaic or

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144 Golb, Yemenite Manuscripts, p.23.
147 Stone, Compilational History of the Megilloth, p.116.
prophetic texts, they are all short texts of similar lengths, they mostly have notable feminine content, they have limited reference to God who is often hidden. Through these similarities they may have been held, or understood in a similar way as such similarities are key in the formation of a literary unit.

The more critical end of the spectrum suggests that these are similarities that have been found in a collection of disparate texts rather than a reason they may have been brought together. Brevard Childs wrote in 1979 that the Ketuvim are a division that “lacks coherence [and that] even those subsections which do exhibit some degree of inner relationship, such as the five Megilloth, derive this unity from a post-Talmudic liturgical practice.” A much more sympathetic view to an early conception of the five as one unit is a growing point of view, grounded particularly in the work of Timothy Stone. The Masoretic ordering does not follow the order of the festivals, and therefore this link should not be considered so strongly. A lectio difficilior reading suggests an early unit, for which festal use has been later applied. If festal use were the unifying force, one would expect them to be in festal order, or corrected to festal order.

2.3.2 The Book of Esther in Jewish Communities and Texts
2.3.2.1 Qumran

The place of the book of Esther in the Qumran community has been much scrutinised for its absence. Since the discovery of the scrolls it has been oft-remarked that Esther “is the only book not to be represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls.” Not only

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this, but “the Dead Sea Scrolls do not contain a copy, citation of, or allusion to Esther.”\textsuperscript{152} This is further exacerbated by the fact that Purim is the only Jewish festival to be absent from the Qumran festal calendars.\textsuperscript{153} Initial conclusions on the place of the book of Esther at Qumran have been based on silence, but the lack of an Esther scroll does not necessarily mean that it was rejected by the community, only that no copy has survived.

This has led to speculation about the book of Esther at Qumran; was the book of Esther unknown to the community, was it known but rejected, or was it known but with no extant copies, “an accident of survival”? Arguing about the lack of extant scrolls being down to chance would still be an argument from silence; what are the reasons to suggest that the community had encountered the text?

Increasingly it is understood that Esther was known to the Qumran community but for various reasons the narrative and the festival failed to be fully accepted. One possible reason for the lack of evidence for the celebration of Purim is that Purim is one of the few biblical examples of potential “Sabbath-breaking,”\textsuperscript{155} and is the only festival to fall on the Sabbath. The hypothesis that the Qumran community found aspects of the book of Esther unpalatable has been suggested, not just for not celebrating Purim, but for the lack of the book itself. The \textit{Community Scroll} “encourages restraint against

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{152}] Lim, \textit{Jewish Canon}, p.175.
\item[\textsuperscript{155}] The other references are 2 Chr 3:2; 29:17-30; Ezra 7:9; 8:31; Esth 9:18-19; Ezek 33:21; David Jackson, \textit{Enochic Judaism: Three defining paradigms} (LSTS/JSPSup; London: T&T Clark, 2004), pp.171, 206-207.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
vengeance,”\textsuperscript{156} yet in Esth 9:2 the reader is presented with some dramatic scenes, that “may explain the absence of Esther”\textsuperscript{157} from the Qumran community.

Such a hypothesis would indicate that the apparent absence of Esther from the Qumran community was not down to a lack of circulation of the text. This hypothesis would suggest that the community had encountered the story and for various reasons, either rejected the text or at least not preserved a copy. Recent scholarship has started to review this position however, suggesting that there are hints of Esther at Qumran. If the book of Esther had been rejected, this nevertheless implies knowledge of, and perhaps familiarity with, that text, and one may wonder what level of knowledge or familiarity can be ascertained.

Some of the earliest propositions that the book of Esther could be identified in the Qumran scrolls concerned scroll 4Q550, tentatively referred to as Proto-Esther.\textsuperscript{158} In the extant fragments of this scroll, one can see “an Aramaic model of Esther,”\textsuperscript{159} where the “hero is a “Jew” like Mordecai.”\textsuperscript{160} This may not indicate an earlier version of the book of Esther, however, just that the Qumran community has a story that fits with Persian court tales. Some such similarities are thus to be expected in texts of the same genre. Notwithstanding this, de Troyer has highlighted an intriguing similarity in the phrase “a golden crown on her head.”\textsuperscript{161} The final part of this ‘on her head’ is not found in the LXX but does appear in both the MT and the AT, which suggests that a Semitic text

\textsuperscript{156} Cf. 1QS V.4-5; X.18; 4QS\textsuperscript{5-4Q258 II.5; Carruthers, Esther Through the Centuries, p.257; Vermes, The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, pp.103, 113, 121.}

\textsuperscript{157} Carruthers, Esther Through the Centuries, p.257.


\textsuperscript{159} Vermes, The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls, p.619.

\textsuperscript{160} M. Chuytin, Tendentious Hagiographies: Jewish propagandist fiction BCE (LSTS/JSPSup; London: T&T Clark, 2011), p.56.

of the book of Esther contained this phrase. As such, one can make the argument that there was potentially some familiarity with the book of Esther at Qumran, so de Troyer;

[This] does not prove the existence of an older story at Qumran. It does prove, however, that the Hebrew text of Esther was known at Qumran.  

More so than literary similarities, de Troyer has shown that textual similarities with a particular strand of the textual history of the book of Esther are indicative of a familiarity with the text of a book of Esther and not just knowledge of the literary genre or broad sense of the narrative.

A second significant early critique was through the suggestion that the author of the Genesis Apocryphon (c. 50 BCE - 70 CE) was familiar with the book of Esther. This is being taken increasingly seriously in recent research. There are textual similarities between 1Q20-1QapGen col.XX.30-31 where the king gives Sarai “much silver and gold and much raiment of fine linen and purple,” and EsthMT 8:15 when Ahasuerus bestowed fine linens and purple on Mordecai. Both texts share the phrase ‘וארגואן בוץ די שגי לבוש’ in reporting this offer of clothing. The suggestion that the book of Esther has been shaped by the book of Genesis is certainly likely as the number of thematic parallels is strong. Intriguingly, the author of the Genesis Apocryphon appears to have picked up on the thematic similarities;

164 Vermes, The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, p.487.
165 Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon, p.58.
166 Koller provides a chart comparing Esth 2 and Gen 12. Both have: a male-female relationship (Esther-Mordecai, Abram-Sarai), a family exiled from its own land, a beautiful woman who is taken by the king on the servants’ encouragement, a hidden female identity at the request of the male, the taking of the woman to the
Rather than constructing an elaborate chart to explain these connections, he deploys the most subtle of tactics, the allusive keywords, to indicate that he sees the relationship between the stories. In our case, the author of the story in the Apocryphon uses the phrase ‘fine linen and purple wool’ as just such an allusive keyword.\(^{167}\)

This example goes some way to support the research methodology. Here the book of Esther can be first ascertained as an exegetical key through carefully chosen vocabulary. These ‘allusive keywords’ are subtle enough not to be unduly bold or disruptive to the text, but distinctive enough that the book of Esther can be seen lurking in the shadows.

The account of Sarai being taken into Pharaoh’s house in Gen 12:15 is greatly embellished in 1QapGen col.XX.2-8; the beauty of the female is emphasised and the palace officials help assist the exaltation of the female and the relative who is honoured.\(^{168}\) A possibility is that this extended version comes from an earlier tradition that was “subsequently abbreviated and laundered because of the scandal implied in Abraham’s ungentlemanly behaviour”\(^{169}\) in the longer version. An alternative is that the shorter version has indeed been embellished. Fitzmyer remarks that descriptions of Sarah’s beauty in 1QapGen col.XX.2-3 find a counterpart “only in the description of Esther in the Greek deuterocanonical parts of the book of Esther,”\(^{170}\) although her description of unrivalled beauty can also be seen in Esth 2:15-17. As all the similarities between the book of Esther and the Genesis Apocryphon are found in the same column, the suggestion that the book of Esther was known to the Qumran community and was an influence in the retelling of Gen 12 is strengthened.

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Koller is right to describe the Genesis Apocryphon as “a ‘corrective reflection’ on the Esther story,”\(^\text{171}\) even if that was not its primary purpose. The book of Esther has provided textual and thematic details with which to embellish Gen 12. For this research, this example shows how the book of Esther could be incorporated in subtle ways that can be acknowledged by an awareness of distinctively Estherian textual features.

This is not the only text to have been found at Qumran to evidence this type of Estherian textual incorporation. In the scroll 4Q171 ii.13-20, there can be found several phrases each of which has a unique parallel in the canonical texts. In particular, in ii.18-19 are the words: “רשה אפרים ומנשה אשר יבקשו לשלח יד בכהן ובمحمد עמהו, העו, “the wicked ones of Ephraim and Manasseh, who will attempt to harm the Priest and the men of his council.”\(^\text{172}\) Katzin has analysed this text and demonstrates the parallels found therein. The relevant detail for this research is יד לשלח יבוקשו, which is otherwise only found in Esth 2:21 and 6:2.\(^\text{173}\) In the Esther texts, these words are used in relation to the plot against the king by Bigthan and Teresh and as such “it would seem that a correlation is being made between that dual person plot and the plotting of the wicked ones of Ephraim and Manasseh in the Pesher.”\(^\text{174}\) The fact that this phrase appears twice in the book of Esther strengthens the claim of a textual ripple as this more keenly identifies this phrase with the book of Esther than a single use would have. This pales in comparison with the fact that the book of Esther provides the only other references. Coupled with the duality of those seeking to lay hands on an official, it would certainly appear that the text of the book of Esther has proven to be of use to this community.

\(^{171}\) Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought*, p.146.

\(^{172}\) Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought*, p.129.


Koller notes similar instances that connect the book of Esther with other extant manuscripts from Qumran. Another phrase found only in the book of Esther is בקשתך ואלתי, ‘request and wish’ (EsthMT 5:7). Koller argues that this has been received in the Psalm found in IIQPsalms 24:4-5, the only other known text in Classical Hebrew to pair these two words in “incline your ear and give me my request, my wish (שאולתי ובקשתי) do not refuse me.” Koller does not make this argument, but as these are the words of one of the faithful imploring God, this might reflect a form of the rabbinic view that the king in the book of Esther (who is the one who grants the wish/request to Esther) can be sometimes identified with God.

One other possible Estherian reference in the Qumran literatures concerns 4Q477, the Decrees of the Sect. Within this text is the subsection 4Q477 Fr.i on the persecution of the sect. The small text only has portions of four lines extant. In 4Q477 Fr.i.2 is the phrase נפשם על לעמוד, ‘to stand for their lives’, which otherwise is only attested in EsthMT 8:11, in both cases with the meaning of defending lives against persecution. The text is too short to know if there is wider exegetical technique. Perhaps the book of Esther provided a model for community defence in the face of persecution, but equally the shared phrasing may be put down to the chance; the context requires this language. Without further support, this should not be considered an example of Estherian textual influence in the Qumran literature.

The ‘cluzographs’ (details of a source text that can be seen to have rippled into a new text) of the book of Esther in the Qumran literature are recognisable through brief

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175 Koller, Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought, p.129.
but distinctive textual parallels. As such they strengthen the case for a methodology that turns to shared *hapax legomena*, brief but distinctive textual parallels that indicate the resurgence of one text in another. Koller describes this example as having a strong claim to “a conscious allusion,”\(^{178}\) but for this research that focusses on the source text (and its transmission), one might say that the book of Esther has had a ‘cluzographic effect’ at Qumran. As this is helping to turn scholarly opinion regarding the place of the book of Esther in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a similar approach may yield results when applied to the New Testament.

### 2.3.2.2 Dura-Europos

The ancient city of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, in modern day Syria, has provided archaeological finds that can be used to interpret some of the reception of the book of Esther. As well as a Temple to Artemis and an early church, Dura-Europos had a synagogue, built in “the year 556 [of the Seleucid era], corresponding to the second year of Philip Julius Caesar,”\(^{179}\) a year which can be dated to 245CE.\(^{180}\) Taking central place in the synagogue is the Torah shrine; set in the wall that faced Jerusalem, this niche housed the scrolls and was the main focal point.\(^{181}\) The wall in which this shrine is found is covered in paintings depicting scenes and stories from the Bible. Immediately adjacent to the shrine, and thus in a prominent position is a depiction of the anointing of Saul to the right of the shrine and a scene from the book of Esther to the left, in which Ahasuerus and Esther are depicted, as well as Mordecai being paraded through the

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\(^{178}\) Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought*, p.129.


streets while Haman looks on forlorn. This, and all the panels, bears witness to the blend of Jewish and Parthian art, and the characters are depicted in Parthian clothing.182

There are various reasons to consider why the book of Esther would be selected to be visually represented. This is a text that has often been visually recreated, and the different approach to the text may well be because the text is different to the other biblical books. As the Tetragrammaton is never found in the Hebrew text, there would have been no worry at Dura-Europos of accidentally depicting God.183 In addition, the book of Esther is generally regarded as being written for diaspora communities, to provide a model of faithful living in the diaspora.184 This is not the only text to do so, but it is one which shows Jews making no attempt to return to Judah but “living a creative and rich life in the foreign environment.”185 Dura-Europos shows a diaspora community giving prominence to the book of Esther, a text about faithful diaspora living. This may serve as a keenly felt model for the community there.

This is an invaluable archaeological find, in that it demonstrates how important the book of Esther had become, at least in the diaspora. Immediately to the left of the Torah shrine was the place where the Shekinah would reside, and this was where the synagogue decorators chose to portray Queen Esther.186 In Dura-Europos in the mid-

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third century, Esther was not rejected, nor was this a minor story, but a significant story that was worthy of being depicted next to the Torah shrine, and being put in a position where it would be seen often. The depiction given, along with another of the friezes offers more information about the reception of the book of Esther.

2.3.2.3 Egyptian Judaism and 3 Maccabees

A clear parallel text to the book of Esther is the text known as 3 Maccabees. Both of these texts (along with the books of Daniel and Judith) may be described as, “an apology put forth by Jewish writers in defence of their religion and independence,” and in them can be found similar themes of widespread threat, relief from the threat and the institution of commemorative celebrations. There is little need to offer too much detail on the similarities; both texts follow a similar plot, include a festal aetiology, have two male characters who are the antithesis of each other (Mordecai and Haman; Dositheus and Theodotus), the description of the young women in 3 Macc 4:6 is reminiscent of Esth 2, in both texts the Jews are triumphant over their enemies.

Alexander is quite clear that the evidence suggests that the author of 3 Maccabees “was acquainted with the book of Esther.” The direction of travel between 3 Maccabees and the book of Esther is not certain, and there are those (such as Bacchisio Motzo) who favour the priority of 3 Maccabees. There are, however, good reasons to think that 3 Maccabees that is written by an author familiar with the book of Esther. It is Esth LXX B [3:13a-g] that appears to be secondary to 3 Macc 3:11-30, although one

could imagine that this addition was a later stage of the textual history. The book of 3 Maccabees has the appearance of being “un pastiche hellénistique d'Esther,”192 which is written in a different style to the book of Esther, a text that was written with minimal Hellenistic influence.

Hacham rightly critiques some arguments that have been put forward for textual dependence such as the repeated κυριε in the prayers (EsthLXX C:2 [4:17b]; 3 Macc 2:2), a feature that is not uncommon in Greek literature and to be expected whether or not there is textual dependence.193 Despite justifiable criticisms, Hacham can nevertheless argue in favour of textual dependence. Critically for this research, not only does he show that there is a textual relationship but that this can be highlighted through words that are unique to both texts.194 There are shared phrases as well, which help, but Hacham begins by showing that the correspondence of hapax legomena is a way of demonstrating a textual dependence between 3 Maccabees and the additional material in the book of Esther.

Having argued for the textual flow from the book of Esther to 3 Maccabees, Alexander poses a question that will be of concern for this research; why, if 3 Maccabees is so reliant on the book of Esther does the author never explicitly refer to it? Alexander’s hypothesis is that the author of 3 Maccabees “reacted negatively”195 to the story of Esther and “in the face of propaganda in favour of two alien festivals (Hannukah and Purim)... decided to promote a local Egyptian festival of deliverance.”196 Chuytin supports the hypothesis of Estherian primacy and that, “the purpose of 3 Maccabees is to abolish the

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carnivalesque Persian Purim feast and to establish in its stead a self-righteous Alexandrian Purim feast.” The author, therefore, is well versed in the book of Esther, but rather than attempting to emulate it encourages the celebration of a local festival. For this methodology, one might see an obstacle here to the transmission of the book of Esther; the convergence of Purim and the Alexandrian context has resulted in a new text that, by virtue of the Estherian momentum, contains Estherian features. As appears to be the case of the Qumran community, the book of Esther is known and used, although the celebration of Purim, as it is presented therein, is not supported. The difference between the two is that in Alexandria there was a movement to propose a different festival rather than no festival. One may consider parallels in later Christian decisions to celebrate Christmas at the time of mid-winter festivals, to keep a sense of the familiar for those celebrating, but to celebrate the ‘correct’ festival and diminish the influence of the ‘original’ festival.

Dating 3 Maccabees would help set in context an example of reinterpretation of the book of Esther and one that suggests that the celebration of Purim was prominent enough to warrant concern from those opposed to the festival. Unfortunately dating 3 Maccabees is a difficult and the “date of composition could lie anywhere within the range of 100 BCE and 50 CE.” This means that, in the diaspora, there is evidence of Estherian influence prior to and at the time of writing of the New Testament.

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197 Chuytin, Tendentious Hagiographies, p.56.
198 Croy, 3 Maccabees, p.xiii.
2.3.2.4 Praises of the Ancestors in Sirach 44-50

The Wisdom of Ben Sira does not mention Esther or Mordecai. Their absence from the ‘praises of the ancestors’ has permeated biblical scholarship and been used to justify a later date to the text. For example;

The book [of Esther] can hardly be earlier than the latter part of the 2nd century B.C. It is striking that no mention of Mordecai and Esther is made in the list of national heroes commemorated in Ecclus 44-50.  

Sir 44-50, therefore, deserves some focussed attention, precisely because it does not make any Estherian references.

This section of Sirach stands alongside other historical surveys, notably Acts 7:2-53 and Heb 11:2-39, but also Ezek 20:4-44; Neh 9:6-37; Pss 78, 105, 1-6, 135, 136; Jdt 5:5-21; Wis 10:1-12:27; 1 Macc 2:51-64 and Jas 5:10-11. Considering the literary reception of the book of Esther, one is confronted by the fact that not a single one of these surveys includes Esther or Mordecai as significant characters; perhaps appropriately for a ‘book of hiding’ they are hidden from memory.

Earlier scholarship assumed that, if the book of Esther had been written, then Sirach would have included Esther and Mordecai in the praises. The absence of both either posed a problem or was clear evidence to a late date of the text. This is no longer tenable. One reason to consider the absence of Esther from the list is Ben Sira’s views on women. Rather conspicuously, chapters 44-50 do not mention any women as notable figures from the past and Sir 25 portrays a fairly harsh perception of women, particularly in verses 13, 15, 19 and 24, the latter of which declares that, ‘from a woman

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sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die.’ This woman is often, though not universally, understood to be Eve, and therefore the sole reference to a biblical woman is offered to portray a damning indictment on women.

On this topic, Jordaan hypothesises that the additions in the LXX (along with Judith and Susanna) were composed as a reaction to Sirach c.190-175. In contrast to the negative view of women, these texts espouse a more positive view that was then subsequently “embraced by Paul and Jesus [of Nazareth].” That these texts came into existence as a result of a reaction to Sirach cannot be known, but the possibility is open that Sirach represents a view that was not held by the composers of the ‘reactionary texts.’ Jordaan does help clarify the negative perception of women as a key reason why Sirach would not refer to Esther.

There are other reasons why the absence of Esther and Mordecai is not as important a concern as might be believed. First it is normative for the people named in these lists to be “confined to the early period of [the biblical history].” As the book of Esther is set late in the chronology of biblical history, it is not so surprising to find that Esther and Mordecai are absent from Sirach’s list, and those of others.

Second, in addition to the absence of women from the list, there are other significant characters who are overlooked, such as Daniel and Ezra. Only twelve people are individually mentioned, a number with poignant resonances that raises the possibility of a clear focus with a particular agenda. What exactly this agenda is, is disputed, although it could well be that these names witness to the survival of Judaism,

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204 Jordaan, ‘The Pendulum is Never Static’, p.179.
206 Coggins, Sirach p.80.
which has the capability to “defeat Hellenism on its own terms.”\textsuperscript{207} The assimilation into another culture that take place in the book of Esther may well have been a barrier to the inclusion of Esther or Mordecai into this list. Alongside this is the apparent focus on piety that occurs with those who are named.\textsuperscript{208} As the book of Esther does not demonstrate clear pietistic actions or orientations, it is not surprising that Ben Sira would find other examples from Jewish consciousness to be clearer examples for his agenda. One cannot make an argument from silence that, as they are absent from this list Ben Sira had rejected or was unfamiliar with this book; all one can say is that Esther and Mordecai were not considered suitable names for inclusion in a historical survey that had a focussed agenda. Rather than provide an obstacle that demonstrates some interaction, here the book of Esther has been diverted away from Ben Sira’s writings.

By the time that the Hebrew text was translated into Greek, the prologue provides evidence of a three-fold organisation of the scriptures, including the Writings. Although not explicitly stated, one would expect to find the book of Esther in this collection. The lack of reference to the book of Esther in the rest of the text is not a great difficulty, as there are no references to the books of Ruth, Ezra nor Daniel, as well as Tobit, Judith, and Baruch.\textsuperscript{209}

One need not be overly concerned why references, even in passing, are not made to the book of Esther in some late Second Temple Literature that could have mentioned Esther or Mordecai. An absence of explicit references does not constitute a rejection of the book of Esther. In communities facing the restrictions on Torah observance there is a corresponding literary emphasis on interpretations of the Torah, as this is a key concern.

\textsuperscript{207} Coggins, Sirach p.83.
\textsuperscript{208} Thomas Lee, Studies in the Form of Sirach 44-50 (SBLDS 75; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), p.29.
\textsuperscript{209} Skehan & Di Lella, Ben Sira, pp.41, 132-133.
2.3.2.5 Philo

Similar concerns abound with the writings of Philo of Alexandria. At first sight, the extant Philonic writings pose a difficulty as they never quote nor refer to the book of Esther. There can be no convincing argument that Philo was unfamiliar with the book of Esther because of the colophon to LXX Esther suggests that, in all likelihood, as a resident of Alexandria, Philo would have encountered the text. Bickerman’s work on the colophon is still a crucial piece of work on the colophon and he states that;

the fact that the Alexandrian author of the colophon used the Aramaic form [to designate the feast as Phrourai] in Greek, without any explanation, shows that the word and, consequently, the feast were already known in Alexandria in 78-77 BC.\textsuperscript{210}

The familiarity with the book of Esther in Alexandria is recorded from approximately fifty years prior to Philo’s birth and so, in this environment, one can be reasonably certain that Philo would have been familiar with the book of Esther.

Familiarity with the text need not require Philo to have written about the book of Esther, presumably his writings are only a portion of Philo’s engagement with Jewish Scripture. Nevertheless, one would ask the question why there is no written engagement in such a substantial corpus of literature, and whether Philo’s writings are, therefore, representative or not of Hellenistic Jewish reception of the book of Esther?

Concern over the lack of explicit reference to the book of Esther in Philo’s writings is heightened by occasions where there are some similarities between Philo and the book of Esther, but without any explicit reference. In Against Flaccus Philo recounts the demise of Flaccus, and remarks that his fate was “caused by his treatment of the Jews.”\textsuperscript{211} This bears similarities to the downfalls of Haman, Nebuchadnezzar and

Holofernes, for their treatment of the Jewish people.\footnote{Flaccus 116; 170-175; Esth 3:13; 7:10; 9:24-25; Judg 3:8; 6:4, 18-19; 9:7; 13:8; 14:5; J. W. Earp, ‘Indices to Vols I-X’, in Philo: Vol. 10 (LCL; Harvard University Press, 1962), pp.29-30.} These similarities do not mean that conclusions can be drawn concerning Philo’s use or knowledge of the book of Esther except for the fact that they both contain similar narratives.

This discussion must be located within Philo’s use of Jewish Scriptures as he drew extensively from the Torah, but not so much from other texts. According to Naomi Cohen, “one is hard pressed to explain [why]... Philo did not address a broader range of biblical works than is evident in his extant writings.”\footnote{Naomi Cohen, Philo’s Scriptures: Citations From the Prophets and Writings: Evidence for a Haftarah Cycle in Second Temple Judaism (JSJSup 123; Leiden: Brill, 2007), p.1.} Despite making numerous references to the Torah, there are no references from any of the books of the Five Megilloth, and only a relatively limited number of references from the Psalms and the Prophets. References from the latter “simply represent citations in support of verses from the Pentateuch,”\footnote{Mireille Hadas-Lebel & Robyn Fréchet, Philo of Alexandria: A thinker in the Jewish diaspora (Boston: Brill, 2012), p.124.} and for the most part come from Isaiah and Jeremiah. According to the Scriptural Index given by Earp in the LCL collection, there are no references at all (in addition to clear citations) to any of the Megilloth, nor to other books that bear similarities to the book of Esther such as Daniel.\footnote{In the index there is one reference to the book of Ecclesiastes, but this is not part of Philo’s writings, and used in commentary to refute an existing proposal that Philo might have referenced the book of Ecclesiastes.} In this context, it is not so much of a surprise to find that the book of Esther is not referred to by Philo. Rather than with the book of Esther, Philo’s writings have closer parallels with the Maccabean literature, and in doing so demonstrate closer concern with the Torah.\footnote{Bond, Pontius Pilate, p.30.}

There are other details that one may have expected to find referenced in the works of Philo that remain notably absent. The commemoration of the purification of...
the temple sanctuary by Judas Maccabaeus – the festival of Hanukkah – is not present in Philo’s works. As with Purim, there is every reason to suppose that Philo was familiar with Hanukkah. Philo does not need to mention this, for one to think that it was part of Judaism as he knew it.\footnote{Cf. 2 Macc 10:8; Hadas-Lebel & Fréchet, Philo of Alexandria, pp.38-39.} Philo’s references to feasts and festivals are confined to those instituted in the Torah, and he may not have referred to other feasts because of his emphasis on the Torah, or this may witness to an accepted reticence over the status attributed to the later feasts.\footnote{Hadas-Lebel & Fréchet, Philo of Alexandria, p.109.} If the latter, despite being familiar with the feasts, Philo does not see it necessary to write against their existence in the festal calendar.

Ultimately Cohen offers the most appropriate summing up in remarking that one cannot infer from the absence of the book of Esther from Philo’s extant writings that Philo did not know this text. The little attention given to texts other than the Torah is not broadly atypical of Hellenistic Jewish literature and that:

the rarity of the appearance of non-pentateuchal Scripture can probably be best explained simply because the contexts of [Philo’s] writings did not call for such quotations, rather than because [he] was unfamiliar with non-pentateuchal books ... The fact that neither Philo, nor very many other Hellenistic authors, mention either Purim or the Book of Esther cannot be taken as proof that it was unknown to them—just that it was not relevant to the subjects of their extant writings.\footnote{Cohen, Philo’s Scriptures, pp.6-7.}

With Philo is a prime case to support to the view that absence of evidence of the book of Esther is not evidence of the absence of book of Esther.

\section{2.3.2.6 The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch 1-77)}

The pseudepigraphal text of 2 Baruch is the compilation of the Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Bar. 1-77) and the Epistle of 2 Baruch (2 Bar. 78-87), and is unusual in that it
is a Jewish text written in (or more probably translated into) Syriac, a predominantly Christian language. This is a useful text to examine for this period as, dated to c.95CE, and certainly prior to 135CE, it provides an insight into the period “between Temple-centred Judaism and rabbinic Judaism.” This therefore offers a text from the period of earliest Christianity from a Jewish community that will most likely have interacted to some extent with early Christianity.

There are no clear references to the book of Esther in 2 Baruch, although some small details have been noted. 2 Bar. 61:3 speaks of the time after much shedding of blood when “peace and tranquillity arose.” Charlesworth has suggested that, here, the author of 2 Baruch is reflecting on the peace and tranquillity that arises after the threat posed by Haman has been quashed and that the book of Esther has had a slight influence on 2 Baruch. This is not a clear enough link, however, to say that the book of Esther was in the mind of the author, only that it could be read into the text. With the absence of further Estherian connections to strengthen this possibility, one is on firmer ground taking a cautious approach and until such time as there is further support, 2 Bar will not be considered as a text that witnesses to the book of Esther.

2.3.2.7 Summary of the use of the Book of Esther in Different Communities and Texts

This overviewing has been helpful in laying out something of the field of the textual reception of the book of Esther in late Second Temple Judaism, whilst critiquing some arguments about its supposed lack of reception. The earlier conclusions about the

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book of Esther having a fluid or mixed status across different groups have been re-affirmed. Not all Jewish communities of late Second Temple Judaism (and the following centuries) have evidenced their use of the book of Esther, but some have.

Although some communities may not have known the book of Esther, or may have rejected it, there is clear evidence that some communities did use it and that some authors did consider it to have enough authority to incorporate it into their own writings. Even in Qumran, where the book of Esther may not have experienced much acceptance, there is evidence that the text was known and used. In sum, the absence of explicit Estherian references in any of the above texts is not necessarily indicative of a rejection of the book of Esther, particularly if the author predominantly refers to Torah or Prophets. This heightens the need for Estherian distinctiveness as authors are unlikely to turn to the book of Esther if there is a pertinent passage in the Torah or Prophets. It is also through Estherian distinctiveness that the book of Esther has been recognised in a number of these texts. The criterion of distinctiveness will be a crucial factor in the cluzographic methodology.

2.3.3 Festal and Temple use of the Book of Esther
2.3.3.1 The Celebration of Purim and the Festal Recital of the Esther Scroll

A significant factor in understanding the reception of the book of Esther in Second Temple Judaism is the celebration of the festival of Purim. If Purim were celebrated, then this would significantly increase the likelihood that the book of Esther was familiar, through formal festal recitations of the whole of the Esther Scroll in the Temple but also through less formal retellings. If there is evidence that Purim was part of the festal cycle in late Second Temple Judaism, one would be hard pushed to argue that the book of Esther was not presented in some format in these celebrations. One can
confidently presume that evidence for the celebration of Purim amounts to evidence for some level of familiarity with the narrative contained in the book of Esther. This evidence may not suggest the form of narrative that was known, but would suggest that some narrative would have been known, be it more akin to LXX Esther or to MT Esther.

2.3.3.2 Purim in Second Temple Judaism

The end of the Second Temple period is an intriguing period to assess the extent to which Purim was celebrated, due to what is said around this era. R. Joshua ben Levi (first generation Amora c.220-250CE) speaks of the annual recital of the scroll of Esther (b.Mak. 23b), and it seems that the festival of Purim had definitely become a significant festival by the end of the second century CE, with Mishnaic texts (dated c.200CE) attesting to this.224 Much earlier than the second century, one can say that, “there are traces of the feast [of Purim] in Palestine about 100 BC, but it could go back earlier in the area too (cf. 2 Macc 15:36).”225 This may reflect patchy observance of the festival of Purim, or it may simply indicate the lack of extant evidence for a more commonly celebrated festival. The time of Jesus, and the writing of the New Testament texts, therefore falls right in the middle of this period where there is an apparent shift from either scant evidence, or possibly patchy observance of Purim to, what is presented as, a significant level of observance. Safrai states that, of the five Megilloth “it is highly doubtful that they were read in the Temple era or for some time after, except for the book of Esther on the Feast of Purim.”226 This is supported by Mishnaic references.

(m.Meg. 1-2; t.Meg. 2:5) although one may wonder what further evidence exists to support this statement to be confident that this was the case.

One may begin with the text of the LXX itself, which sheds light on the situation in the Second Temple period. As much as Esther is a diasporanovelle and has close affinity to those beyond Jerusalem, the colophon suggests the text had a place within Jerusalem and that, unlike other texts of the Hebrew Bible, Esther was translated at the instigation of the Jerusalem community.\(^{227}\)

In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Kleopatra, Dositheos, who said he was priest and a Leuite [sic], and Ptolemy his son brought the above letter about Phrourai, which they said existed, and Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, one of those in Jerusalem, translated it. (Esth\(^{LXX}\) (NETS) F:11 [10:3l])

As LXX Esther has its origins in Jerusalem and was then taken to Alexandria, it would appear that this was a text with a good level of popularity in Jerusalem, but was less popular or familiar (at least of the time of composition) in the diaspora communities in Egypt.\(^{228}\) The colophon is probably a detail added by a library about the provenance of the translation,\(^{229}\) but the facts of its origin and direction of travel from Jerusalem to Alexandria, are indicative of its popularity. The book of Esther must have been a popular and well-known text in Jerusalem from at least the time of the translation; there is little sense in arguing that the Jerusalem community would have invested in making copies of a text that was shunned, and then distributed these copies in the diaspora.


Josephus’ retelling of the book of Esther also provides some information regarding the celebration of Purim. Writing c.90CE Josephus mentions the celebration of Purim; “Even now, all the Jews in the habited world celebrated these days,” and “for this reason, therefore, the Jews celebrate the formentioned days, which they call Phūraioi.” The purpose of including this story is not for the sake of recording stories that are told in Jewish communities but as one of the key sources used by Josephus to construct a history of the Persian period. When making these references to the celebration of Purim, Josephus is not merely rephrasing Esth 9:19, 26-28, that the Jews should keep the festival, but writing a history that such events happened and reporting that this is why such celebrations still take place in Josephus’ day, suggesting that he is aware of contemporary Purim celebrations. He, therefore, gives an account of the celebration of Purim in the first century. Almost certainly this would pertain to an annual observation of the celebration of Purim, although quite what shape the celebration(s) cannot be clearly stated from this evidence.

Rabbinic literature, whilst notoriously difficult to date, includes two texts that can offer some insights to this discussion, The Scroll of Fasting, and the Mishnaic tractate Sheqalim. On the whole, the majority of Sheqalim cannot be dated to before the second century CE, although some portions are known to predate 70CE. One such extract is the opening section which reads, “On the fifteenth [of Adar] they read the Megillah in walled cities.” This is a clear reference to the celebration of Purim in the context of

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Temple activities, and that Purim was celebrated, as in Esth 9:18 and b.Meg. 2a, in walled cities. Trusting the accuracy of this text leads to the conclusion that Purim was celebrated, and that the book of Esther was read, in the late Second Temple period.

The other text, The Scroll of Fasting (Megillath Ta’anith) is an Aramaic text that, rather than regulating fasting, lays out dates when fasting is not permitted but joyous celebration should take place. Various dates that commemorate events of the Second Temple period are given as days of celebration, including MegTaan. 33 which says;

בראביהו عشر יviewModelע ותנשא עשר ביה ימי*out למספד

On the fourteenth of it and fifteenth of it [Adar] – these are the days of Purim, and one is not to eulogize. 233

Not only does this confirm that the days of Purim are the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, but this shows that Purim was celebrated each Adar at the time of composition. The implications of such a clear witness to the celebration of Purim mean that dating is crucial. Lichtenstein puts a date of 67CE, although the revised edition of Schürer’s History of the Jewish People in the Age of Christ could only give a date of “the first, or at the latest at the beginning of the second century.” 234 This implies a preference for a first century date, but without certainty. Fortunately dating has been refined and Noam is confident in providing a date of composition of sometime between 41-70CE. 235 The Scroll of Fasting provides an insight into the Second Temple period and gives a further clear indication of the annual observance of Purim in the Second Temple period. In

addition to these text references here, there is also the book of 3 Maccabees, the existence of which implicitly suggests that Purim was celebrated in Alexandria. Purim is unusual in the festivals associated with the Megilloth in that there is sufficient evidence to be confident that it was celebrated in the late Second Temple period.

At the time of earliest Christianity, it can be said with confidence that Purim was celebrated and done so in various locations, including diaspora locations and walled cities, strengthening the suggestion that the New Testament authors had encountered Purim and the story of Esther. This is a key factor in assessing Hays’ criterion of availability or, to extend the wave metaphor of this research, one can say that there is every possibility that the book of Esther is rippling in and around the context of the New Testament. The New Testament authors are not a long way behind a tidal barrier that stops any waves, which would be possible if the book of Esther were not being read. There is sufficient reason to begin to argue for a considerable level of Estherian cluzographic potential and that this potential was sustained throughout late Second Temple Judaism.

This cannot claim to tell the full story, however, as many of the New Testament texts were authored after the fall of the Temple. Evidence that Purim continued to be celebrated, and that the book of Esther continued to be read, after the fall of the Temple would help address any lasting doubts that the book of Esther was available to the New Testament authors.

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2.3.3.3 Purim After the Fall of the Temple

As the majority of the New Testament texts were written in the period that is chronologically bounded by the fall of the Temple and the Mishnaic texts that witness to the celebration of Purim from turn of the third century, there is a query over the observance of Purim in this period. One may imagine two broad scenarios; the one where the fall of the Temple affects the calendar such that Purim, not being mandated by the Torah, ceases to be widely observed until the late second century, or the scenario where it continues to be celebrated annually. Whichever of these is most likely may have an effect on New Testament reference to the book of Esther, where through Purim, the early Christian community is in conversation with the book of Esther or not.

There is some evidence for the celebration of Purim from the time of the reign of Hadrian. Hadrian was emperor between 117-138CE and had his reign disturbed by the Bar Kokhba revolt. During this time, near the end of his reign, Hadrian imposed restrictions on Jewish activity, which were probably a result of the revolt rather than the cause of the revolt.\(^\text{237}\) The explicitly stated prohibitions included practices such as circumcision and the New Year sounding of the *Shofar*, but also prohibited was the reading of the book of Esther.\(^\text{238}\) As well as suggesting that the book of Esther was fairly widespread by this time, this prohibition also appears to indicate that the reading of the text was a significant Jewish observance, whose prohibition would be felt. It would have been unlikely for the edict to have specified the reading of the book of Esther if this were a minor, localised, tradition.

The Mishnah (m.Meg. 3:6) indicates that the reading of the book of Esther was accompanied by Exod 17:8-16, highlighting Haman’s ancestry and the ongoing struggle with threats from other groups.\(^\text{239}\) Purim is a festival of remembrance and, through the festal celebrations, past events are remembered so that present activity can be affected. Therefore, for Vorster, “The continual celebration of Purim is an indication of how important remembrance was in the development of the faith.”\(^\text{240}\) As the festival of Purim celebrates the overturn of the threat from a gentile government against the Jewish people, it does not take much imagination to see that the festival of Purim could have been a particularly difficult time for the Roman state against the backdrop of the Bar Kokhba revolt. Be the reasons pietistic or nationalistic, the book of Esther, and its recitation at Purim, continued to hold a significant place in Jewish communities in the years following the fall of the Temple.

These texts all offer some insights into the observance of Purim, and the communal recital of the book of Esther in the Second Temple period. Using these texts, several conclusions can be drawn:

- Purim was an event in the late Second Temple festal calendar.
- The book of Esther was familiar to communities that were contemporary to Jesus and the time of writing of the texts that would form the New Testament.
- Observance of Purim and the reading of the book of Esther were not quirks of some disparate communities, but widespread and notable.
- The late Second Temple period was a time when observance of Purim and familiarity with the book of Esther were becoming increasingly common and important to Jewish communities.
- The book of Esther cannot be perceived as a minor, or sparsely used, text at the time of early Christianity.


\(^{240}\) J. Vorster, ‘Down Memory Lane to a Better Future’, *HvTSt* 65 (2009), pp.322-327 (326).
• The book of Esther was not only accessible in a technical sense to the New Testament authors, but was rippling with enough strength that waves and splashes were possible.

2.3.3.4 The Book of Esther and the Temple

There is a relationship between the book of Esther and the Jerusalem temple that merits a brief discussion. This concerns both MT Esther and the architecture of the temple (and the temple complex) that would have been familiar to the New Testament authors.

The temple complex bore witness to the importance of Susa in the life of the Jewish community as the eastern gateway, commonly known as the Golden Gate, was also known as the Susa Gate. This was the gate that looked eastwards over the Kidron valley towards the Mount of Olives – and further towards Susa – and had Messianic connotations. This gate was so named because atop the gateway was a depiction of the citadel of Susa (m.Mid. 1:3). Almost certainly, this depiction bore witness to the fact that those who came to rebuild the temple returned to Jerusalem from Susa (Ezra 4:9; Neh 1:1), but this is unlikely to be the sole consideration. Susa is mentioned twenty times in the Hebrew Bible, and only three of these examples are not in the book of Esther. For those in Jerusalem in the late Second Temple period, the Susa Gate would almost certainly have evoked the story of the book of Esther, whether or not that was its intention.

The text of the book of Esther also connects the citadel of Susa with the Jerusalem temple. The opening of Esth 1 uses language that is highly evocative of the language used to describe the temple. The banquet that frames most of Esth 1 is described as taking place in the בַּיֵּית, the citadel, of Susa (Esth 1:5). This vocabulary is striking as Solomon’s Temple is the only other building to be called a בַּיֵּית in the MT (1 Chr 29:1).242 The author of the book of uses terminology that would likely otherwise bring the temple to mind.

Within the palace was the apadana, the colonnaded pavilion that provided the setting for the banquets. The apadana of the palace of Susa bears architectural similarities to temples, including the Jerusalem temple, where there are two courtyards denoting the sanctity of the site.243 Having brought the reader into the citadel using temple language, the reader is taken into a structure that resembles the temple for a banquet. This setting is then described in Esth 1:6 in vibrant terms that are comparable to the temple and priestly garments (כסף, זהב 1 Chr 29:2; תכלת, ארגמן, בוץ 2 Chr 3:14).244 In order to enter the palace of Susa one would have to cross the threshold, the סף (Esth 2:21; 6:2), although this word is used “most often in connection with the Temple.”245 Whilst these descriptions evoke an image of secular grandeur, it is an uncontroversial comment in Esther studies to observe that the banquets of Esth 1 have been written in a

244 Exod 27:19; 28:2; 2 Chr 3:14; Song 3:10; The Samaritan version of Exod 27:19 is longer than the MT and bears further similarities with Esth 1:6 (including both תכלת and ארגמן [blue and purple]); Abraham Sedakah, *Sepher Shamot* (Jerusalem: 1964), p.42.
way that, if not clearly reminiscent of the Jerusalem temple, bears striking resemblances to it.\textsuperscript{246}

This has implications for considering the faithful in Jerusalem in the late Second Temple period. As the temple architecture bore witness to Susa and the Estherian descriptions of Susa were reminiscent of the temple, the two would have been associated in the late Second Temple period. The temple becomes the place where the story of Purim, the story of salvation\textsuperscript{247}, is played out. It would not have only been at Purim when the narrative of the book of Esther came to mind, but for those in Jerusalem there was a more permanent reminder.

2.4 The Book of Esther and Early Christian Literature

2.4.1 Early History of Interpretation

Although at this stage, with clear evidence of first century knowledge of the book of Esther, it is tempting to move directly into proposing potential points of intertextuality between the book of Esther and the New Testament and evaluating them, there is a methodological reason not to do so. The previous evaluation of late Second Temple Judaism provided a lens by which to see some of the ways in which the book of Esther was rippling shortly before, and at, the time that the New Testament texts were written along with some of the obstacles it encountered. This does not directly show ways in which the book of Esther might be rippling into the minds of authors who have accepted the claims of earliest Christianity. What might be the things in Christian thought that act as obstacles that affect that wave-pattern of the book of Esther? There are references to the book of Esther in early Christian literature that show some of this


early interaction, and provide a lens to see what might have happened in the New Testament texts. This will also help to query the assumptions, already stated, that early Christian writers did not use the book of Esther.

One could consider issues of the canonical status of the book of Esther in early Christianity, although this section will not focus on that topic. Of more direct relevance to this research are the ways that the book of Esther was used, whether this was a text that can be called ‘canonised’ or not. Different communities held the book of Esther in different ways, from accepting it, rejecting it or as being useful, “for instruction in the word of godliness,”248 such as Athanasius who accepted the text as deutero-canonical.249 This overview will not restate the reference in 1 Clem. 55:6 but will look at suggested, and explicit references to the book of Esther in ante-Nicene literature and a couple of other texts of particular interest. For a more comprehensive reproduction of early, and some mediaeval, texts the reader is encouraged to consult Conti’s volume on Esther in the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture.250

2.4.1.1 Clement of Rome

In addition to Clement’s explicit reference to the book of Esther in 1 Clem. 55:6, there is another possible echo of the book of Esther. After a short amount of text, Clement produces an intercessory prayer in 1 Clem. 59:3-4 that “is a pastiche of OT quotations and allusions,”251 that have been piled on top of one another.

249 Athanasius Ep. fest. 39; Quasten, Patrology, p.54.
250 Unfortunately, Conti’s work does not include the additions, and neither does the equivalent volume on the apocrypha; Conti, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Sever Voicu (ed.), Apocrypha (ACCS OT 15; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010).
251 Holmes, Apostolic Fathers, p.123.
In the middle of a section that is a list of quotations are a few words that have a less certain origin. Immediately following references to 1 Sam 2:7, Deut 32:39, Num 16:22; 27:16 and Dan 3:55 are the words; τὸν ἐπόπτην ἀνθρωπίνων ἔργων. This reference to ‘seeing the works of humans’ has been left as original to Clement\textsuperscript{252} or identified as rooted in a biblical text.

Lightfoot put forward three possible biblical texts to account for Clement’s words.\textsuperscript{253} The first of these is Ps\textsuperscript{LXX} 32:13, on the basis that this psalm is used only a few lines previously. Of the three words that are used in 1 Clem. 59:3 in the statement a few lines earlier, that God would destroy the plans of the nations, two are shared with Ps\textsuperscript{LXX} 32:10. Here Clement shows a strong dependency on the Psalm for his prayer, although such textual parallels are not so clear with τὸν ἐπόπτην ἀνθρωπίνων ἔργων, the only similarity being that Ps\textsuperscript{LXX} 32:13 includes the word ἄνθρωπων. Lightfoot appears to recognise this difficulty and proposes two other passages that share the verb ἐπόπτην in a similar context.

These two passages are 2 Macc 7:36 and Esth D:2 [5:1a]. The reference to Esther is the more likely as Clement has elsewhere spoken of Esther, whereas he makes no reference to 2 Maccabees. Furthermore, Esth D:2 [5:1a] comes from a description of the prayer of Esther, and as such is more contextually fitting to a prayer than is 2 Maccabees. A final argument in favour of the book of Esther is that this allusion has been noted by others, and is the only scriptural source of those proposed to be suggested by multiple authors.\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{252} As in Kirsopp Lake, \textit{The Apostolic Fathers Vol. 1} (London: Heinemann, 1912), pp.110-111.


A common comment on the lack of reception of the book of Esther relates to the lack of use by Melito of Sardis (died c.180CE). Ascribed to Melito is a list of canonical texts that does not include the book of Esther. As this list was compiled after a trip with the intention of compiling a list of the Hebrew scriptures, this is taken as evidence that the book of Esther was not part of the canonical scriptures, or even that “Melito... refused to include the book of Esther in the collection of sacred annals.”

The latter view has recurred, ascribing the lack of the book of Esther to Melito who “denied the book canonical status” in preference to suggesting that the book of Esther was not presented to him.

Aside from the difficulties in speaking of canon, there are serious critiques that can be levelled at this conclusion. First, this list is recorded by Eusebius in the fourth century and therefore the omission of the book of Esther (and also of Nehemiah) “may have come from Eusebius’s editing.” There is no firm evidence that Melito himself denied or excluded the book of Esther. Second, there is a possibility that the absence of the book of Esther can be understood as a scribal error. As the final book mentioned in the list is that of Esdras, one would expect the book of Esther to follow, as in other lists, but it does not. Bearing this in mind, it is quite possible that Ἐσθήρ was inadvertently left off the list by a scribe having written Ἐσδρας. This does not mean that Melito did consider the book of Esther to have any authority, or that even he knew of the text, only

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so far that one cannot be certain that Melito (or those from whom he gathered his information) had rejected it.

2.4.1.3 The Martyrdom of Polycarp

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is a text from the second half of the second century that provides the earliest account, outside of the New Testament, of the martyr of a Christian c.155-160CE. This text contains no explicit references to the book of Esther, although for a long time the hypothesis has been floated that there is an implicit mention of Purim. Polycarp is brought into the city to be tried and executed on the day of a great Sabbath. This detail is given twice, first in Mart. 8:1, and then in Mart. 21:1 in what is now agreed not to be original, but a later addition. Identifying the ‘great Sabbath’ has been the cause of debate.

The first two volumes of *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica* both contained articles on the date of the martyrdom, but with different concerns. Randell, who is more interested in the year of the martyrdom, outlined the possible interpretations of ‘great Sabbath’ as; “the Saturday before Easter, the 15th Nisan, the 16th Nisan and an ordinary Saturday made great by some civil and local festivity or the martyrdom of S. Polycarp itself.” He does not engage with which of this is likely, but concludes that the year of martyrdom is 155CE. In the second volume, Turner returns to the subject of the date, but with an attempt at greater precision. Agreeing that the year was 155CE, Turner uses the information in Mart. 21:1 that the great Sabbath was the second day of the month.

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Xanthicus to suggest a time in early spring, the equivalent to February. As Purim is the only Jewish festival to fit with this time of year, he concludes that Purim provides the setting for the martyrdom, “with its memories of Esther and Mordecai, to rouse Jewish popular excitement as we hear it was roused against Polycarp.”

This was then popularised further by Kirsopp Lake, who included the suggestion that Purim provides the context in his edition of the *Apostolic Fathers*.

If they are correct, the implications are far reaching. This would give an insight into the geographical spread of Purim for an era when literature is otherwise lacking, into festal terminology, and into the place of the book of Esther in Jewish Christian relations. Abrahams dismissed this idea in 1924 and, with some exceptions such as Lane Fox in 1986, identifying the great Sabbath with Purim has fallen out of scholarly favour. Turner’s arguments are unduly reliant on, what is now known to be, a later addition. The phrase ‘great Sabbath’ is otherwise found in John 19:31 for the Day of Preparation for Passover. Hartog notes more similarities between John’s passion and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*;

*Mart. Pol. 7.1* relates that the mounted police arrived ‘around [the] hour of supper’ on the day of preparation (Friday). Late in the evening they found Polycarp in an upstairs room. Polycarp then proceeded to pray for two hours (8.3) [sic]. When he had finished, he was taken into the city, ‘it being a great Sabbath’ (8.1). The chief of police (Herod) and his father (Nicetas) met him (8.2).

There are numerous echoes of John’s passion. It would seem that the author wished to present Polycarp, and his execution, in the manner of Jesus and his execution, and this

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267 Hartog has accidentally put 8:3 instead of 7:3 for the verse in which Polycarp prays for two hours; Hartog, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, pp.198-199.
provides sufficient explanation of the reference to the great Sabbath. It is unlikely that
the book of Esther, through Purim, is in the background to this text.

2.4.1.4 The Didache

The *Didache* opens its selection of instructions and teachings with a recitation of
the principal commandments of love of God and love of neighbour, which are the way of
life (Did. 1:1-2). These are followed by miscellaneous commandments that explore the
two commandments (Did. 1:3-5). Whilst the words of vv.3-5 are reminiscent of the
Gospels of Matthew and Luke, “each of the sets of sayings in this section had a separate
history prior to their inclusion in this collection... [but] were consciously arranged,” in
order to expand upon their theme.\(^{268}\) Dating the Didache is not a simple task, with a
range of dates from the mid first century to the third century being proposed, although
there is now a broad consensus that the Didache was put together in stages over a
number of years, in an uncertain location and that a first century date is stronger in
current scholarship than in earlier scholarship.\(^{269}\)

In Did. 1:3b are the words “fast for those who persecute you,”\(^{270}\) which is a
sentiment that is fitting in the context but that has “no parallel in the Synoptic
tradition.”\(^{271}\) The rest of Did. 1:3 find textual parallels with Matt 5:43-48 and Luke 6:28,
32-36, but the phrase ‘fast for those who persecute you’ is the exception. Sources, or at

p.82.

\(^{269}\) There is uncertainty whether Clement of Alexandria quotes from the Didache in 217CE, or if the textual
parallels between *Stromateis* and the Didache attest to another text underlying the Didache; Jean-Paul Audet,
Apostles* (Oxford: Parker, 1885), p.3; Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A commentary* (Hermeneia;
Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), pp.6-8, 52-53; Clayton Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve


\(^{271}\) Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, p.74.
least parallel passages, that have been put forward to account for these words include 2 Sam 12:15-23, Ps 35:13, Q, Tob 12:8, and Thom. 6a, 14a.\(^{272}\) To these, Niederwimmer also includes Esth 4:16, when Esther calls a fast as a response to the threat of persecution.\(^{273}\) Garrow’s analysis argues that 1:3b is part of an early stage in the compositional history of the Didache, with a “previous and separate existence”\(^{274}\) to the text into which it has been interpolated.

This is an unusual suggestion that has not been adopted by other Didache scholars. Although Esth 4:16 does provide an example of someone fasting in the face of persecution, there is little to indicate that the book of Esther may be the inspiration behind this addition. It is well acknowledged that praise, prayer, and fasting had become a triad, and common usage is enough to comprehend this addition. Particularly in the context in Did. 1:3b of blessing those, and praying for those who are persecutors, the reference to fasting has enough in the way of “conceptual and verbal similarities” with Matt. 5:44 to have arisen out of the tradition seen in Matthew. Niederwimmer shows that the book of Esther is a witness to the idea of fasting in persecution and, as tempting as it is to push this to its limit, there is no reason to believe that Did. 1:3b has been shaped by the book of Esther.

2.4.1.5 The Ethiopian Didascalia and Apostolic Constitutions

Two often overlooked texts in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the book of Esther are the Ethiopian *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The full textual history of the Ethiopian *Didascalia* is a complex process that takes in the *Didache*, the *Didascalia*...
Apostolorum and the Apostolic Constitutions. Despite the name, the Ethiopian text should not be confused with the Didascalia Apostolorum, a third century text originally written in Greek and primarily preserved in Syriac and Latin manuscripts. The Apostolic Constitutions is a text from Syria c.380CE that incorporates aspects of the Didache, Didascalia Apostolorum, and the Apostolic Tradition. There is uncertainty as to how the Ethiopian Didascalia fits into these traditions and therefore, exactly when one would date the text. If it has come out of the Apostolic Constitutions, as can be argued from the fact that the aspects of the Didascalia Apostolorum in the Ethiopian text bear more similarities to its form in the Apostolic Constitutions, then the late fourth century would be the earliest possible date. Niederwimmer and Audet prefer a date from the mid-fourth century, which could predate the Apostolic Constitutions. It is certainly possible that a, now lost, Greek text – the Didascalia Apostolorum was originally composed in Greek, but almost all Greek versions have been lost over time – was a source for the Ethiopian Didascalia. This research cannot unravel these uncertainties. As the relevant portions of these texts are shared by the Ethiopian Didascalia and the Apostolic Constitutions, the relevant portions that follow almost certainly date from the second half of the fourth century. Although post-Nicene, these

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278 Audet, Didachê, p.41; Niederwimmer, Didache, pp.17, 26.
279 Reynolds, The Ordinals, p.14
will be mentioned as they provide clear uses of the book of Esther in a tradition arising out of the Didache.

Unlike the Didache and the Didascalia Apostolorum, the Apostolic Constitutions and the Ethiopian Didascalia make two explicit references to the book of Esther. The first is found in a passage extolling the virtues of appropriate feasting and fasting. The book of Esther is incorporated, alongside Judith to say the following;

\textit{AC} 5.20 Esther, and Mordecai, and Judith, by fasting, escaped the insurrection of the ungodly Holofernes and Haman.  

\textit{ED} 30 Esther, and Mordecai, and Judith were saved by fasting from the wicked Holofernes.

The Ethiopic Didascalia rather intriguingly fails to include Haman’s name, which is mentioned in the Apostolic Constitutions. The absence of Haman’s name highlights something that is true of both texts, the harmonisation with the book of Judith. It seems that the book of Esther is familiar and known for a positive message about the virtue of fasting. It also seems, however, that the book of Esther is not well known enough to hold it as a distinctive text, but that it is harmonised with the book of Judith.

In the Apostolic Constitutions, 7.1-32 is based on the Didache, and precedes the second reference to the book of Esther in 7.38. This reference comes during a prayer of thanksgiving saying that God is actively merciful and compassionate. The section below is this liturgical text;

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
AC 7.38  We give thee thanks for all things O Lord Almighty, that thou hast not taken away thy mercies and thy compassions from us; but in every succeeding generation thou dost save, and deliver, and assist, and protect: for thou didst assist in the days of Enos and Enoch, in the days of Moses and Joshua, in the days of the judges, in the days of Samuel and Elijah and of the prophets, in the days of David and of the kings, in the days of Esther and Mordecai, in the days of Judith, in the days of Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren, and in our days hast thou assisted us by thy great high priest, Jesus Christ thy son.  

ED 38  We give thanks to thee for all things. Thou takest not from us thou compassion and thy mercy, for thou art merciful and full of compassion in all generations, who didst receive Enosh, and Enoch, and Noah, (and didst help) in the days of Moses and Joshua, (and) the judges, and in the days of Samuel and Elijah and the other prophets, and in the days of David and the other kings, and in the days of Esther and Mordecai, and in the days of Judith, and in the days of Judas and Maccabaeus and his brethren: receive us also in like manner in our days through thy son Jesus Christ the great high-priest.

As with the first set of passages, both the Apostolic Constitutions and the Ethiopic Didascalia are close to identical, except for a few details (Holofernes/Holofernes and Haman; Judas Maccabaeus/Judas and Maccabaeus) that show more care in the Apostolic Constitutions. Whilst this might bear on the textual history, I will only comment on what this says about the book of Esther in early Christian communities. As in AC 5.20/ED 30, the books of Esther and Judith are held closely together, although in AC 7.38/ED 38, there is less to suggest that they have been harmonised. The repeated phrase ‘and in the days of’ suggests distinctively separate eras or events. The separation of Esther and Mordecai from Judith by the words ‘and in the days of’ indicates that the authors of these texts did not harmonise them. These texts signify that, in the late fourth

283 Donaldson, Apostolic Constitutions, p.475.
284 Harden, Ethiopic Didascalia, pp.180-181.
century, the book of Esther was read in Christian communities in Syria and Ethiopia to affirm the actions of God and the virtues of fasting.

2.4.1.6 Origen

Origen (185-253/4 CE),²⁸⁵ the prolific writer, found inspiration in the book of Esther perhaps more than any other ancient Christian writer. Sometimes he finds textual similarities that provide him with an exegetical key, whereas in other circumstances he draws more so on the narrative of the book.

Sometime after 244CE Origen wrote twenty-eight homilies on the book of Numbers, preserved by Rufinus’ translation.²⁸⁶ The twenty-seventh homily mentions the book of Esther and, rather than quoting it, offers something of Origen’s view on the text. This is primarily a homily on Num 33 but begins with a preface to set the scene of why “we cannot say of the Holy Spirit’s writings that there is anything useless or unnecessary in them, however much they appear obscure.”²⁸⁷ Having made an argument that all creatures have food in accordance with their needs, Origen expands this to include different humans who are nourished according to their needs; a healthy person needs strong food, a weaker person is satisfied with vegetables, and children seek after milk (Hom. Num. 27.1).²⁸⁸ Origen spiritualises this to spiritual nourishment, and the different kinds of nourishment from the word of God. Here he mentions the book of Esther;

²⁸⁷ Hom. Num. 27.1; Rowan Greer, Origen: An exhortation to martyrdom, prayer, first principles book IV, prologue to the commentary on the song of songs, homily XXVII on Numbers (Mahwah: Paulist, 1979), p.247.
²⁸⁸ Greer, Origen, p.245.
That is why, as in the corporeal example, the food some have in the Word of God is milk, that is, the more obvious and simpler teachings, as may usually be found in moral instructions and which is customarily given to those who are taking their first steps in divine studies and receiving the abc’s of rational instruction. Thus, when they are read some passage from the divine books in which there is nothing apparently obscure, they gladly receive it, for example, the book of Esther or of Judith, or even of Tobit, or the precepts of Wisdom.\(^{289}\)

Following this Origen describes the joy with which people may receive the Gospels or the Pauline epistles, but it is these four books that, for Origen, constitute basic spiritual food. His view of the book of Esther as a basic, or introductory text, stands in contrast to a twenty-first century scholarly view that does not perceive the book of Esther in this way.\(^{290}\)

This is not all that Origen has to say on his view of Scripture. In *Princ.* 1. Pref. 8 he states that;

> there is the doctrine that the scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers.\(^{291}\)

His comments in *Hom.* Num. 27.1 suggest that the ‘obvious meaning’ and ‘obscure meaning’ are a continuum where some texts are better characterised by the obvious meaning whereas for others their hidden meanings are predominant. For Origen, the book of Esther is easy to understand and is best characterised by its plain meaning. This is not a criticism of the text as Origen implies that he considers that reading the book of

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\(^{289}\) Greer, *Origen*, pp.245-246.


Esther is a normal, introductory, par for the course for new converts. This is particularly interesting given the later criticisms levelled at the book of Esther; this text does not pose the same problems for Origenist Christians that it does for the post-Reformation writer noted in the first chapter.

One must remember that Christian critical writings have often been directed against the Hebrew text, and Origen is familiar with LXX Esther. The prayers and explicit references to God may have helped him with his reading. One example that shows this is a quotation from EsthLXX C:7 [4:17e] in Exhortation to Martyrdom c.235CE.292 In Mart. 33, Origen briefly discusses how some of the Old Testament narratives represent the lived experience of his time. He suggests that Nebuchadnezzar's threats to throw into the fire those who would not worship the golden idol are still true for those around him, whom he calls “true Hebrews in exile.”293 With this context, Origen continues thus;

Perhaps even now Haman wishes you Mordecais to bow down to him. But you must say, “I will not set the glory of men above the glory of the God of Israel” (Esth C:7). Let us overturn Bel by the Word of God, and let us slay the dragon with Daniel.294

Haman is still alive and well, but so are Mordecai and Esther, who provide a model to follow in the face of threat. This may demonstrate some of what Origen means when he says that Esther is a book in which there is nothing obscure; here is an account of God’s people under threat and they respond in prayer, wishing to demonstrate the supremacy of the glory of God and prepared to perish if that be necessary (Esth 4:16). Compared to Origen’s other writings, Martyrdom appears to “have been written in haste.”295 This is not an example of making many obscure references to show his exegetical skills. One can

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293 Greer, Origen, p.63.
294 Greer, Origen, p.63.
295 Oulton & Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity, p.388.
Suppose that the thoughts and scriptural references found therein were those that quickly came to mind. The inclusion of an Estherian reference suggests that, for Origen, the book of Esther is indeed a familiar text.

Origen makes use of Esth C:7 [4:17e] in Or. 13.2 but, perhaps because this was not written in such a hurry, aligns this with the act of fasting that shapes the prayer (Esth 4:16). On Prayer can be dated to 233/234CE, shortly before the persecutions of Maximin (235-237CE) that lead to reflections on martyrdom.296 In Or. 13 Origen speaks about prayers that are answered, beginning with examples from the life of Jesus (Or. 13.1), before moving into Septuagintal examples in Or. 13.2 where the following passage features alongside references to Hannah, Hezekiah, Judith, Jonah and Daniel;297

Moreover, when the people were about to be destroyed by a single decree because of Haman’s plot, the prayer Mordecai and Esther offered with fasting was heard and engendered in addition to the feasts prescribed by Moses a day of rejoicing given the people by Mordecai.298

Oulton and Chadwick attempt to make the final words accord with 2 Macc 15:36 to say “the Day of Mordecai,” although this is unwarranted and unnecessary.299 Much like the previous Estherian reference, Origen upholds the book of Esther as a witness to good models of prayer, this time including fasting as well as spoken prayer. Later in his discussions on prayer arises the question of to whom one addresses one’s prayer. Again, Origen turns to Esther and Mordecai who both address their prayers to the Lord, something which Origen holds as a good example.300

296 Oulton & Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity, pp.181-182.
297 Cf. 1 Sam 1:27; 2 Kgs 20:1-6; Esth 4:16; Isa 38:1-5; Dan 6:13, 22; Dan300 3:24, 49-50; Jdt 13:4-10; 2 Macc 15:36; Oulton & Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity, p.263.
298 Greer, Origen, p.105.
300 Or. 14.3.4; Esth300 C2 [4 :17b], C14 [4 :17].
Origen’s Commentary on the letter to the Romans, “written around 246... [is] the oldest surviving commentary on Romans.”  

Although there are a few Greek fragments, the commentary that has survived is Rufinus’ translation into Latin, completed c.406CE, and is, despite its length, an abridged version of Origen’s original. In this commentary, Origen makes a few references to the book of Esther, which all present a positive reading of the text.

The first Estherian reference occurs in *Comm. Rom* 4.5.5, when Origen comments on Rom 4:16 – ‘It is by faith, in order that the promise according to grace may be firm.’ He says that a believer’s faith is confirmed by grace and that grace is like a treasure that is found by those who are blessed (*Comm. Rom* 4.5.4). Origen gives the examples of Noah, Moses and Joseph who are blessed and find grace before moving on to Esther, about whom he says;

> Still more is recorded in the Holy Scriptures about this sort of grace concerning the blessed Esther. For it says, “Esther continued to find grace before all who saw her” (Esth 2:15). And the Scripture a little bit after this says, “Esther found grace beyond all the other virgins, and the king placed the queen’s crown upon her” (Esth 2:17). We have taken these things into consideration from the Holy Scriptures – in my opinion not inappropriately – to reinforce what has been said by the Apostle, where her discusses faith and grace. He says, therefore, “For this reason it is by faith, in order that the promise according to grace may be firm” (Rom 4:16).

Origen recognises the place of grace in the narrative and that Esther found grace before all who saw her. It is oft remarked that LXX Esther provides the sole clear examples in

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305 Esth 2:15; Origen *Com. Rom. 4.5.5*; Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 1-5*, p.60.
the canonical texts where χάρις is used to translate ἰδία (Esth LXX 2:9, 17). One may wonder if this has helped bring the book of Esther to the fore in Origen’s contemplations about grace. Later in the commentary this theme recurs as Origen reflects on Rom 12:3-5 (Comm. Rom 9.2.4-5);

For one person has grace both in what he does and in what he says; and someone else, though he speaks more wisely and behaves with greater diligence and effort from time to time, neither in his words nor in his deeds finds grace. After all, as we have already now said elsewhere, it is written that even Joseph found grace in the presence of the chief jailor, and Esther found grace before the king.

But we have discovered that it is written in a certain rather obscure little book that there is a certain angel of grace who even derives his name from “grace.” For he is called Anahel, which is interpreted “grace of God.” That Scripture contained this, that that angel was sent from the Lord to Esther in order to give her grace before the king.307

The commentary should be contextualised within the Marcionite controversy and Origen makes many Old Testament references in this commentary, which help to show his own perspective that all biblical writings present a “theological unity.”308 Although this background may add a dimension to the reasons why Origen would refer to the book of Esther – to include as diverse a scriptural witness as possible to contradict Marcion – one cannot use this to dismiss the references to the book of Esther. Whatever the context, Origen knew the book of Esther, considered it to have some authoritative clout and, given that he introduces Esther in much the same way that he does Noah,

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307 It is not known exactly what text Origen is referring to or from which community it arose. James comments that this passage from Origen bears similarities to Pseudo-Philo (Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum), a text dated to first century Palestine; cf. Pseudo-Philo 37.8; 28.6; Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 6-10 (FC 104; transl. T. Scheck; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), pp.199-200; M. James, The Biblical Antiquities of Philo (London: SPCK, 1917), p.73.
Moses and Joseph (Or. Comm. Rom 4.5.4), appears to expect his readers to be as familiar with the book of Esther as they would be with Noah, Moses and Joseph. Although Origen begins his discussion with these four characters, in 9.2.4-5 he only returns to Joseph and Esther, and devotes more words to Esther. This suggests that he has not spoken of Esther solely for the sake presenting a diverse range of Old Testament scriptures, but because he considers her story to be important for what it says of grace.

In the earlier commentary on the Gospel according to John, Origen makes a single reference to the book of Esther. This commentary took a long time to complete, but the first four books, including the Estherian reference, were composed “in Alexandria in A.D. 230-231.”309 Commenting on John 1:3, Origen is concerned about the possibility of interpreting this verse to suggest that evil was created through the Word. In Comm. Jo. 2.94 Origen says that ‘not being’ and ‘nothing’ are synonymous and that Paul’s expression for those things that are evil in Rom 4:17 also expresses this in saying ‘those things that are not.’

Origen’s concern is to show that those things that are evil and sin are not part of ‘all things’ that were created though the word as they are ‘no-thing.’ Having found a precedent in Rom 4:17, Origen also offers Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:22 [4:17q] as another example;

And in Esther, according to the Septuagint, Mordochai calls Israel’s enemies “those who are not,” when he says, “Lord, do not hand your sceptre over to those who are not.”310

This is his sole other example, except for using Exod 3:14 to show that scripture says that God, who is good, says ‘he who is, this is my name.’ The same argument later appears in the writings of Basil of Caesarea. Although, rather than Mordecai, Basil

310 Origen, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, p.119.
attributes the phrase, ‘O Lord, do not relinquish your sceptre to those who do not exist’ to “the most wise Esther.” Origen does not propose an example of ‘Esther in the New Testament,’ but he is clear that the book of Esther accords with the broader scriptural testimony, and would expect Christians to be reading, and reflecting on, the book of Esther alongside other biblical texts.

A final text to consider is Origen’s On First Principles (c.231CE), which resembles a systematic theology and the first known attempt by a Christian writer to produce such a work. In Princ. 3.2.4 Origen begins a discussion about the “thoughts which proceed out of the heart,” and contemplates the possibilities of memories or ideas coming out of one’s own thoughts, or having been prompted by Godly inspiration or by what he terms ‘opposing powers.’ For Origen, this still leaves an individual with the free will to act, and it is how one responds to these thoughts that is of importance. Origen briefly mentions the Psalms and 2 Corinthians in discussing thoughts, but when he discusses the prompting of memories it is to the book of Esther that he turns;

Certain memories either of good or of evil deeds are also suggested to us, whether through divine providence or through the opposing powers. This is shown in the book of Esther, when Artaxerxes did not remember the benefits he had received from the righteous man Mordecai, and during a weary and sleepless night an idea came into his mind from God that he should send for the records of great deeds that were written in the archives. By these he was reminded of Mordecai’s services and ordered his enemy Haman to be hanged, while to Mordecai himself he granted splendid honours and the safety of the whole race of the saints who were then in imminent peril.

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313 Cf. Matt 15:18-19; Mark 7:21; Butterworth, Origen on First Principles, p.216.
This is an intriguing use of the book of Esther for several reasons. Origen, who in other instances makes much of Esther’s virtues, manages to rewrite the text to remove the eponymous character. From his précis, one would be justified in wondering why this was called the book of Esther. Origen has jumped from the honouring of Mordecai in Esth 6:11 to the honouring of Mordecai in Esth 8:2, 15 as though these events were one and the same and the important banquet scene that exposes Haman’s plan (Esth 7) had never happened. In removing Esther from her own narrative, Origen conflates two different events, as it was not in reading the annals that Haman’s execution was ordered; Mordecai’s honouring does not require Haman’s hanging in Origen’s account here.

Aside from the narrative inconsistencies presented here, Origen uses the book of Esther in an unusual exegetical fashion. Other writers, and Origen also, draw on the book of Esther to speak about fasting and having female models, central distinctive features of the book of Esther. Origen is alone in considering psychological processes and how the book of Esther provides an example of reacting to thoughts and memories. This is not a hidden meaning to the text, per se, but Origen goes beyond reading the text as a historical account of threat, prayer and salvation. There are depths to plumb that can offer insights into the subtleties of the memories that can shape human actions and how these can have far reaching consequences.

2.4.1.7 Aphrahat the Persian Sage

Aphrahat was a Persian Christian writing in the first half of the fourth century, who lived c.270-345CE.\(^{315}\) Although his life extends beyond the suggested time-frame of this sub-section, he offers some reflections on the book of Esther in his ‘Demonstrations’

(short treatises on various topics) that offer an insight into the Syriac Christian tradition. Most extant literature that is contemporaneous to Aphrahat was written in Greek or Latin, so his writings offer a different perspective as they “betray no knowledge of Greek theology or philosophy.” Furthermore, Judaism was much more strongly favoured than the Christian movement in Persia at this time, so Aphrahat “clearly writes from an inferior position,” and, although the passing of time suggests that scriptural reflection has had a chance to develop, his writing comes from a similar ‘status position’ to that of the first and second century Greek Christian writings.

As scholarship in early Syriac Christian history has developed it has become increasingly apparent that it has “roots in a missionary activity from Palestine, and is thus Jewish in its origin.” One cannot know for certain as the evidence does not exist, but there is the distinct possibility that Aphrahat was a Jewish convert, who engages with the story of Jesus to some degree as the earliest New Testament authors may have done; rooted in the Jewish scriptures, identifying as Jew who ‘moves into’ the story of Jesus rather than a gentile convert who learns about Jesus and then ‘moves into’ the Jewish scriptures. It is perhaps not surprising to find a greater engagement with the book of Esther from Aphrahat’s writings than from some of his contemporaries, if he has grown up with the narrative. The fact that Aphrahat represents a “Semitic version of Christianity” that has a stronger interest in Judaism than some of the Graeco-Roman literature justifies including him in this overview.

320 Hidal, ‘Evidence for Jewish Believers in the Syriac Fathers’, p.572
The Demonstrations were written in stages with the first ten written c.337 CE, the next twelve in 344 CE and the final demonstration in 345 CE.\textsuperscript{321} Coming from different stages of his life the later Demonstrations “display a marked anti-Jewish attitude,”\textsuperscript{322} as his own thoughts and have developed and changed. The Demonstrations make numerous scriptural references, primarily from the Peshitta, from which he makes citations from “all canonical books of the Old Testament, except for a few short enough to have been excluded by chance,”\textsuperscript{323} and from the gospel – Tatian’s Diatessaron.\textsuperscript{324}

In his Demonstrations, Aphrahat makes some brief passing references to the book of Esther, but in two of them he makes more extended comments. The first of the passing references is in the Demonstration on Wars (Dem. 5), alongside numerous references to other Jewish scriptures. Aphrahat uses these references to argue that “everyone that glories shall be humbled,”\textsuperscript{325} evidenced in part by the fact that “Haman gloried over Mordecai, and his iniquity turned back upon his own head.”\textsuperscript{326} The idea of Haman getting his come-uppance is found in the first extended reflection on the book of Esther, in the Demonstration on Fasting (Dem. 3). In Dem. 3:10-13 Aphrahat records how Esther and Mordecai were saved in the humility of their fast, whereas Haman’s pride caused him to fall.\textsuperscript{327} Aphrahat diverges to speak about Haman’s ancestry, but


\textsuperscript{322} Bruns, ‘Afrahat’, p.80.


\textsuperscript{326} Gwynn, ‘Demonstrations of Aphrahat’, p.353.

otherwise this section is concerned with the fast and its role in the book of Esther, leading to Haman’s execution.

Aphrahat’s approach in \textit{Dem.} 5 of making a claim and backing it up with numerous references follows in the next two references to the book of Esther. In his Demonstration on Monks (\textit{Dem.} 6), Aphrahat states that “it was through Eve that [the adversary] came in upon Adam,”\textsuperscript{328} (\textit{Dem.} 6.3). He then proceeds to offer numerous examples when ‘the adversary’ has worked through women against various characters including his rumination that “Haman was wealthy and third in honour from [confidante of] the King, yet his wife counselled him to destroy the Jews.”\textsuperscript{329} Aphrahat’s views on women offer some explanation for his focus on Mordecai rather than Esther. Despite his androcentricism he nevertheless appeals to the book of Esther; having an eponymous female character cannot be reason for the apparent lack of engagement with the book of Esther in the New Testament.

Aphrahat’s fourteenth Demonstration aims to exhort his audience in their Christian lives. He begins \textit{Dem.} 14:14 with a call to love (_HANDLE, the Syriac translation of \dagger\gamma\alpha\pi\eta) using quotations from John 15:2. Rom 13:8 and 1 Cor 13:2. He then proceeds to provide examples from scripture where he sees HANDLE being offered to humans. Such examples include Noah being saved from the flood, Daniel being brought out of the pit, and Esther and Mordecai being rescued from the hands of Haman.\textsuperscript{330} \textit{Love overcomes hatred}, Aphrahat declares in a fashion not out of place in some current theology to

\textsuperscript{328} Gwynn, ‘Demonstrations of Aphrahat’, p.365.

\textsuperscript{329} I have inserted an alternative translation into Gwynn’s text as Syriac vocabulary has been better understood since his publication. The Syriac \textit{tēlīthāya (ܬܐܠܝܬܝܐ)} literally means a third but in this context probably does not mean third in standing from the king – as Gwynn suggests – but a third-part; a go-between or mediator. Rather than distancing Haman from the king, albeit only slightly, this heightens how close he is to the king as a mediating confidante; Gwynn, ‘Demonstrations of Aphrahat’, p.366; Connolly, \textit{Didascalia Apostolorum}, p.xvii.

conclude this section of the exhortation. Aphrahat continues this theme in *Dem.* 14:33 with further examples of the lowly being raised as the proud are brought low; Daniel and his friends show up the Babylonian sages, and David replaces Saul as king. In this list, he includes Mordecai taking the place of Haman, and Esther replacing Vashti.\(^{331}\) Neither is exegeted in detail, but they are mentioned in lists of others including such people as David. Aphrahat makes a final reference to the book of Esther in his last Demonstration, *Dem.* 23 - ‘The Grape.’\(^{332}\) Within this discourse, Aphrahat poses questions about prayer, rhetorically asking, to whom can one pray? Again, offering a broad scan of the scriptural witness, he includes Esther and Mordecai in a list including others such as Daniel and Elijah. Aphrahat says ‘you heard Mordecai and Esther in their anguish and you delivered your people’ (*Dem.* 23:54).\(^{333}\) Aphrahat does not show any signs of reticence about the book of Esther, it is a text that accords with the broader scriptural witness.

In the Demonstration on Persecution (*Dem.* 21) Aphrahat offers a more extended consideration of a Christian understanding of the book of Esther. Many of the subsections of this Demonstration narrate the account of a biblical character who was persecuted (Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Jephthah, David, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Josiah, Daniel, Hananiah), concluding the overview with Mordecai. Each character is introduced by the statement that they were persecuted. In this Demonstration, Aphrahat claims to be responding to a ‘reproach’ from a ‘Jewish debater’ but “Aphrahat’s concern is not so much dialogue with Jews, but rather argumentation with Judaizing Christians.”\(^{334}\) Aphrahat achieves his ends by outlining a list of persecutions from the


\(^{332}\) This is so named after Isa 65:8; ‘Aphraates’ in *ODCC*.


Bible and connecting them with the life of Jesus. As such, while lengthy, it is helpful to reproduce the full text of the reflection concerning Mordecai from Dem. 21.20;

Mordecai also was persecuted as Jesus was persecuted. Mordecai was persecuted by the wicked Haman; and Jesus was persecuted by the rebellious People. Mordecai by his prayer delivered his people from the hands of Haman; and Jesus by his prayer delivered his people from the hands of Satan. Mordecai was delivered from the hands of his persecutor; and Jesus was rescued from the hands of his persecutors. Because Mordecai sat and clothed himself with sackcloth, he saved Esther and his people from the sword; and because Jesus clothed himself with a body and was illuminated, he saved the Church and her children from death. Because of Mordecai, Esther was well pleasing to the king, and went in and sat instead of Vashti, who did not do his will; and because of Jesus, the Church is well pleasing to God, and has gone in to the king, instead of the congregation which did not do his will. Mordecai admonished Esther that she should fast with her maidens, that she and her people might be delivered from the hands of Haman; and Jesus admonished the Church and her children (to fast), that she and her children might be delivered from the wrath. Mordecai received the honour of Haman, his persecutor; and Jesus received great glory from his father, instead of his persecutors who were of the foolish people. Mordecai trod upon the neck of Haman, his persecutor; and as for Jesus, his enemies shall be put under his feet. Before Mordecai, Haman proclaimed *Thus shall it be done to the man, in honouring whom the king is pleased*; and as for Jesus, his preachers came out of the people that persecuted him, and they said: *This is Jesus the Son of God*. The blood of Mordecai was required at the hand of Haman and his sons; and the blood of Jesus, his persecutors took upon themselves and upon their children.335

For Aphrahat, “Mordecai’s persecution under Haman foreshadows the different phases of Christ’s persecution.”336 Unlike some more modern commentators for whom the book of Esther jars with the gospel accounts, for Aphrahat the two are natural bed-fellows. Although Aphrahat used the *Diatessaron*, it is the Matthaean elements with which Aphrahat makes his Estherian connections (Matt 27:25; *Diatessaron* 51:5).337

335 Italics in original; Gwynn, ‘Demonstrations of Aphrahat’, p.400.
For a writer who is so apparent in his disdain for women, and who has diminished the role of Esther in the above account, there is an indication that she did stand out for him. Having offered his overview of the Jewish scriptures, Aphrahat restates each of those who have been persecuted, and then concludes that Jesus’ martyrdom and persecution surpass all of these, and then notes a few of the early Christian martyrs. His point is that if one can celebrate and remember the persecutions recounted in the Hebrew Bible, one should also celebrate the persecution of Jesus, which is greater. In the recapitulation of each instance of persecution Aphrahat includes “Mordecai and Esther and the children of their people were persecuted at the hands of Haman.”338 Esther is the sole woman he mentions who has been persecuted and worthy of remembrance. Even Miriam is not mentioned in the recapitulation despite being mentioned in the extended account; Aphrahat sums up that entire episode as “Moses was persecuted and fled to Midian.”339

Although writing a few years into the fourth century, Aphrahat offers an insight into how a Jewish convert to Christianity (if indeed he was such a convert) may have brought together the new faith with the Jewish Scriptures. The book of Esther does not appear to have been a hurdle to overcome, but has provided much grist for his mill. The book of Esther accords with the scriptural witness, with regards to the action of God, in response to prayer, and in how the motif of the exaltation of the lowly is shown. As with other writers, the fast of Esther is an important aspect of the text, but Aphrahat also does something distinctive. He reflects on the book of Esther in a way that ties in his Christian faith and uses it to illuminate the passion of Jesus.

2.4.1.8 Conclusions from Early Christian Texts

The fluidity that is apparent in late Second Temple Judaism appears to have crossed over into the early Christian movement. Some authors make no mention of the book of Esther, although one cannot conclude too much from this, especially as other authors draw on the book, some of whom do so extensively. Of those who do direct their readers back to the book of Esther, the threat to the Jewish people is seen as a foreshadowing for Christian readers who can embody that part of the story. Those who use the book of Esther give the impression that they consider it to be one of their texts; they are not borrowing a text from outside of Christianity to make their points. In these Christian writings, there is an assumption that the readers will be as familiar with the book of Esther as with other texts.

2.5 Conclusions of Contextual Overview

This overview has sought to ascertain the extent to which the book of Esther was in existence, and the extent to which it was used, in late Second Temple Judaism and in earliest Christianity. There are several conclusions to summarise. First, at the time of the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem, the book of Esther was;

- available, and in use, in Hebrew and Greek forms.
- read at the Purim celebrations that took place.
- known and used in Judah and in the diaspora.
- regarded with a degree of esteem.
- being reinterpreted in different contexts.
- being incorporated into new texts.

Furthermore, within early Christian communities, the book of Esther was;

- read with a positive message.
- used to provide examples of female piety, prayer, and fasting.
- creatively brought into tension with the Christian kerygma.
The book of Esther has cluzographic potential, and there are examples of that potential being exploited. One point to note is that this overview confirms the thought that, although Estherian references are certain signs of familiarity with the book of Esther, familiarity with the book of Esther does not always result in Estherian textual references. The evidence from late Second Temple Judaism and earliest Christianity demonstrates that one can be assured that some of the New Testament authors would have been familiar with the book of Esther and pondered how it fitted with their early reflections on the Christ event. This gives an impetus to continue the research to see what particular details might provide a focus for such reflection; the book of Esther was flowing, what might have caused the waves to make a splash?
Chapter 3: Possible Examples of ‘Esther in the New Testament’

3.1 Methodological Tasks

Having established that the book of Esther has cluzographic potential the next stage of the methodology is to hone in on the possible examples where the book of Esther might be identified in the New Testament. There are two tasks to this, the distinctive methodological work in ascertaining potential cluzographs, and the literature review necessary for this research. The first part of this chapter will fulfil the first task and set out the process of discovering what the potential cluzographs of the book of Esther might be (i.e. the distinctively Estherian words that feature in the New Testament), and which ones will be further analysed in this research. The second half of this chapter will provide an overview and evaluation of previous suggestions of ‘Esther in the New Testament.’ Combined, these will paint a picture of what possible examples of ‘Esther in the New Testament’ might be.

3.2 Potential Cluzographs
3.2.1 Ascertaining Potential Cluzographs

The next step of the cluzographic methodology is to identify the words that have the potential to have some distinctively Estherian flavour that are also found in the New Testament. This intentionally leaves some room for manoeuvre as any word would need to be evaluated on a case by case basis as to whether it will be researched further. This criterion of distinctiveness has been supported by wider scholarship in biblical intertextuality (cf. §1.2.2.4) and, in the case of Esther studies specifically, in recognising Estherian features in the Genesis Apocryphon (§2.3.2.1).
The first requirements are that any potential word have a strong resonance with LXX Esther, preferably as a Septuagintal *hapax legomenon*, but words that have a majority attestation in the book of Esther can also be included to widen the possibilities for research. Any word to fulfil these requirements would then need to also appear in a New Testament text. It is through this that there is the possibility, but not necessarily probability, that there is an intertext where the isolated word is used in the New Testament because it is used in the book of Esther.

### 3.2.1.1 Outcome of LEH Assessment

As suggested in §1.2.2.4, my initial work was to use the LEH Lexicon of the Septuagint to compile a list of words found in the book of Esther that are Septuagintal *hapax legomena* or had a majority attestation in the book of Esther. This process highlighted fifty-three words that, in the Septuagint, were *hapax legomena*, or had multiple attestations with the book of Esther providing the majority witness.

This list of words was then cross-referenced with the New Testament to see which of these words were shared between the book of Esther and the New Testament. The vast majority of these fifty-three are biblical *hapax legomena* in that they are only found in the book of Esther with no examples in the New Testament. Only seven of the fifty-three are found in the New Testament, which leaves a more manageable list of words that could be avenues for research, having fulfilled the requirements of having the potential for Estherian distinctiveness and being used in the New Testament. Those words are: ἀμέμπτως, ἄφθορος, διάκονος, ιουδαίζω, σμαραγδίτης, σταυρόω, and συμπίνω.

None of these words is evidence, *per se*, of the book of Esther being used in the New Testament; there are myriad reasons why these words may have been used. Some
comments on each word will whittle the list down to a smaller number of examples that seem the most fruitful places to test the methodology further.

3.2.2 Shortlist of Words with the Potential for Estherian Distinctiveness

3.2.2.1 Ἀμέμπτως - Blamelessly

This Septuagintal *hapax legomenon*, found in Esth<sub>LXX</sub> B:4 [3:13d] is used twice in the New Testament, both times in 1 Thessalonians (2:10; 5:23). The rarity of Ἀμέμπτως might indicate a strong resonance with the book of Esther and, when noted that both New Testament uses occur in the same text, one could be given to think that Paul’s use is rooted in the book of Esther.

As it is, these three verses are not the only verses to refer to blamelessness. In addition to the adverbial form Ἀμέμπτως, there are seventeen examples of the adjectival form ἄμεμπτος (blameless, as opposed to blamelessly) in the LXX, most of which are found in the book of Job, and only one of which is found in the book of Esther. There are five New Testament examples of ἄμεμπτος, only one of which is in 1 Thessalonians.

As Ἀμέμπτως is used on the basis that the context requires an adverbial form, one must look to the concept of blamelessness from the root ἄμεμπτος. When one does so it becomes apparent that, whilst the Esther additions may have a useful part to play in a discussion on the notion of blamelessness, this is not a concept that has a notably strong resonance with the book of Esther. For this reason and the fact that the grammatical structures have guided the text of 1 Thessalonians Ἀμέμπτως shall not be further considered in this research as this is not the best place to test the methodology.

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340 Gen<sup>LXX</sup> 17:1; Esth<sup>LXX</sup> E:13 [8:12n]; Job<sup>LXX</sup> 1:1, 8; 2:3; 4:17; 9:20; 11:4; 12:4; 15:14; 22:3, 19; 33:9; Wis 10:5, 15; 19:21.
3.2.2.2 Ἄφθορος - Uncorrupted

‘Uncorrupted’ (Ἄφθορος) is an example of a word that is a Septuagintal and a New Testamental hapax legomenon, occurring in EsthLXX 2:2 and Titus 2:7. In the context of the book of Esther, this is used in relation to the girls who are being sought for the king after the deposition of Vashti as the king’s ministers say – “Let pure girls be brought for the king, beautiful in appearance.” This is a way of describing their virginity, but may also be chosen to speak more broadly of their behaviour; unlike Vashti, they will not stand up to the king, and are unlikely to pose a threat.

In the letter to Titus, Ἄφθορος is used to qualify how Titus is to model good behaviour particularly in relation to his teaching, where Ἄφθορος stands for sound teaching. In Titus 2:1, Titus is urged to ‘teach what is consistent with sound doctrine,’ and in 2:7 is then urged to – ‘show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity [ἐφθορίαν].’

The attestation in the book of Esther, like other non-canonical examples (Justin, 1 Apol. 15.6; Dial. 100.5) can help hone an interpretation of Ἄφθορος in the context of Titus 2:7, but does not suggest that Esther, and the other girls of Esth 2:2, are being held in mind as specific models of behaviour. As Ἄφθορος is used to create two quite different nuances (virginity, and modelling a high standard of teaching) Ἄφθορος may not provide a helpful case study to test the methodology. The jump from Esther’s virginity to soundness of teaching seems like a greater transition of contexts than is the case with some of the other words. It is for this reason that Ἄφθορος will not be considered further at this time. If, at the end of this research, the methodology appears to be holding water,

this might be a suitable case study to return to see if there is a conversation between these two texts as the inherent ambiguity of meaning (that allows for sound teaching and virginity) may have extra layers to consider.

3.2.2.3 Διάκονος – Court Servant

The word used for ‘court servant’ (Διάκονος) is not a hapax legomenon but nevertheless has potential for Estherian distinctiveness. The clear majority of Septuagintal attestations come from the book of Esther (Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 1:10; 2:2; 6:3, 5; Prov\textsuperscript{LXX} 10:4; 4 Macc 9:17). In its Estherian uses, διάκονος is used for the servants employed in the palace. This is not a rare word in the New Testament and is used to speak of those in authoritative positions in the early Christian movement (cf. Rom 16:1; Phil 1:1), but also in Jesus’ parables (Matt 22:13), to speak of those in household servitude (John 2:5) and in more metaphorical terms (Gal 2:17).

Koet has used the witness from the book of Esther to show how Διάκονος is used throughout the biblical literature to identify those who have particular missions or mandates.\textsuperscript{344} The διάκονος acts on behalf of honoured clients and is given an honouring, rather than a humbling role. Although some interesting arguments could be made by paralleling the servants of the king in the book of Esther with the ecclesiastical function of a Deacon, there is little scope for arguing that Διάκονος is used in the New Testament because it is used in the book of Esther. In both cases this is the appropriate word to use. Whilst not wishing to say that there is no scope at all, this is not the most appropriate word with which to do focussed testing of the methodology.

3.2.2.4 Ἰουδαίζω – ‘Behave as a Judaean’

The verb Ἰουδαίζω is described by the LEH as a neologism, indicating that its use in EsthLXX 8:17 is the earliest known use in Greek literature. As a Septuagintal hapax legomenon it is intriguing for its unique use, but this is potentially heightened if the book of Esther provides a foundational example. In this context, it is used to describe the actions of ‘many of the gentiles’ who, out of fear of the Jews, in some way appear to attach themselves to the Jewish community in Susa.

Paul uses this word in Gal 2:14, in recounting a debate that he has had with Peter. Paul criticises Peter for compelling gentiles to ‘Judaize’, and does so by saying that his actions are motivated by fear (Gal 2:12). Why might Paul use a word that has an Estherian flavour in this debate? Has Paul’s mission to the gentiles provided an obstacle against which the wave of the ‘conversion of the gentiles’ in Esth 8:17 has broken? As his stated primary audience is Peter, who may well have a greater understanding of the book of Esther, this might be a fruitful context to test the methodology.

3.2.2.5 Σμαραγδίτης - Emerald

In describing the interior décor of the banquet scene in EsthLXX 1:6, the LXX translator has used the word σμαραγδίτης (emerald) to portray the brilliance, and opulence, of the banquet. The same word is used in Rev 4:3 to describe the rainbow around the throne in John’s vision, and in Rev 21:19 to describe the adornments to the foundation of the city wall.

As has been argued elsewhere there are problems with suggesting that the book of Revelation has drawn on the usage of σμαραγδίτης in EsthLXX 1:6. First, EsthLXX

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1:6 names a number of stones in its description, only one of which is used in the book of Revelation. If Esth\LXX 1:6 were a source text, one would expect the other stones to be mentioned in the book of Revelation. The lack of the other stones speaks louder than the one that is mentioned. Second, and related to the first reason, there are greater resonances with Plato’s *Phaed*. 110, suggesting that this text may have been more influential on the author’s description, or that Plato witnesses to a broader tradition that has influenced the book of Revelation. With clear reasons against Estherian influence, this is not likely to be a good place to test the methodology.

3.2.2.6 \( \text{Σταυρώσω} – \text{Crucify} \)

Whilst references to crucifixion are plentiful in the New Testament, this is not the case in the Septuagint. Even though a number of Old Testament passages are referenced in the passion narratives, it is only the book of Esther that uses the verb \( \text{σταυρώσω} \), which it does so twice (Esth\LXX 7:9; E:18 [8:12r]) in conjunction with Haman’s execution.

In the book of Esther, the crucifixion of Haman is a significant event that denotes the change in fortunes of the Jews in Susa, which lead to the celebrations that would be commemorated in Purim. As the celebration of Purim highlighted the death of Haman, including the view that he was crucified, one can wonder if this rubbed up against the proclamation that Jesus had been crucified. Of the two uses of \( \text{σταυρώσω} \), the first is conjugated as a 3\(^{rd}\) person aorist passive imperative – let him be crucified (\( \text{σταυρωθήτω} \)). It is interesting to note that the Gospel of Matthew uses this exact form of the verb in 27:22-23, an expression that is unique in the passion narratives. As Matthew’s choice of wording could strengthen any burgeoning associations between the crucified enemy and the crucified Messiah, and knowing that Aphrahat attests to early Christian literature
that explored Jesus’ relationship to Mordecai as one whose crucifixion was planned, this
textual similarity is worth delving into in more detail. This will be a suitable context in
which to test the methodology.

3.2.2.7 Συμπίνω – Drink with

The verb, συμπίνω, that is used in EsthLXX 7:1 to say that the king and Haman
drank with Esther, is a Septuagintal hapax legomenon. This is also a New Testament
hapax legomenon, occurring in a speech given by Peter as he recounts a testimony of the
ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Luke records Peter as saying that he and the
other witnesses ‘ate and drank with [Jesus] after he rose from the dead’ (Acts 10:41).

Although drinking is a key motif in the book of Esther, such a hapax
legomenon that reflects this might have strong Estherian resonances, this is not the full
picture. As this methodology is looking also for obstacles that might lead to wave
interference, there does not appear to be much that would act in such a way in this case.
When Peter is shown to use the word, he does so to offer a proof of the resurrection and
it is hard to see how Esther’s banquet could add depth to this.346 In addition, when the
verb is used in Acts 10:41 it is intrinsically tied to συνεσθίω – eat together – a verb that
does not occur in the book of Esther.347 Any textual link would be strengthened by a
similar use of verbs together, something which does not happen in the LXX. With this in
mind, it seems that this is a case where being a hapax legomenon in both the LXX and
the New Testament is coincidental rather than as evidence of intertextuality. I will not
test the methodology out with these verses.

347 The Septuagintal examples are in GenLXX 43:32; ExLXX 18:12; 2 Kgdms 12:17; PsLXX 100:5.
3.2.3 Conclusions to Take Forward

This aspect of the methodology has made the research project more manageable. Having begun with the whole of the book of Esther, I have been able to focus on two words that have research potential. Both ιουδαιζω and σταυρωθήτω are uniquely found in LXX Esther and in an isolated New Testament passage in contexts that appear to be comparable. The other words will be borne in mind, however. Even though they may not be considered the best words with which to test the methodology at this stage, the wider discussions of ιουδαιζω and σταυρωθήτω may lead to verses that use the other five. This is particularly true of διάκονος, featuring many times in the New Testament. These textual links will be important but, in going forward, wider Estherian links may be needed to flesh out a full picture if it appears that the New Testament author might be responding to the book of Esther. Prior to that, however, is a need for the second task of this chapter, the review of previous suggestions of ‘Esther in the New Testament.’ This will set the context of what suggestions have been made, what merit they have, how they have been argued, and any pitfalls surrounding the arguments.

3.3 Previous Suggestions of the Book of Esther in the New Testament
3.3.1 Introduction to the Scholarly Background

In the New Testament, as with the Qumran literature, there are no explicit references to Esther nor to the festival of Purim. Despite claims to the effect that, “Le Nouveau Testament a délibérément voulu ignorer plusieurs de ces ‘fables judaïques’ (Tit. 1:14), et l’on peut supposer que Le Livre d’Esther... figurait parmi ces écrits,” there have been some suggestions of Estherian influence on the New Testament. NA

postulates five references to the book of Esther in three New Testament texts. Further to these are additional suggestions that have been made regarding some influence of the book of Esther on the New Testament. Such New Testament passages will be discussed below to demonstrate the ways in which scholarly works have approached the topic of ‘the book of Esther in the New Testament.’

In addition to those works discussed below, there have been arguments put forward for recognising the book of Esther in the Gospel of Matthew, passion narratives, and the Pauline corpus. These will be more thoroughly discussed in §§4.1.3, 4.1.4 and 5.1.6 in the context of evaluating σταυρωθήτω and ιουδαιός. Of these there has been little that has gained traction in wider biblical scholarship, although there is some research that is more promising and helps open doors for this research. On the one hand is much of the work on the Pauline reception of the book of Esther, such as the proposals by Bratsiotis, which has not been convincing as the proposed intertextuality is only tenuously Estherian. On the other hand, there are the arguments put forward by Goulder regarding the Matthaean editing to provide a parable (Matt 22:1-14) for Purim, and Kahl regarding the similar contexts and concerns of the book of Esther and Paul. Both provide some routes in to further explore the reception of the book of Esther through σταυρωθήτω and ιουδαιός.

Perhaps the earliest text that associates Jesus and Purim is Giovanni Bovio’s *Cristo Alla Festa di Purim.*

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352 Giovanni Bovio, *Cristo Alla Festa di Purim* (Naples: Giorgio a Forcella, 1887).
politician – wrote a trilogy of plays based around religious characters between 1885-1895, beginning with ‘Christ at the Festival of Purim,’ in 1885. The overriding pretext for the play was to present Jesus as the first socialist, to support Bovio’s political life.

For a play that is tied to the passion of Jesus it is unusual for a playwright to begin with Purim and Bovio uses this medium to imply certain similarities between the two contexts. In the prologue, the voices of a Jewish Shaliah proclaiming the story of Purim are interspersed with Roman legionaries speaking about the Jewish people, such that the Roman Empire is comparable to the Persian Empire. When Haman’s name is mentioned, there is a “a cry from the Jewish people” for a curse on his descendants that is reminiscent of the cry in Matt 27:25. As a play, none of these connections are made explicit, but are implied through the literary style used by Bovio. This is not a piece of academic biblical scholarship, as such, but is important as the earliest published work to explicitly connect accounts from the New Testament with the book of Esther. Furthermore, this work comes from the same period when biblical scholarship began to make suggestions of the New Testament reception of the book of Esther.

A different piece of work, but one to be mentioned in an overview of existing literature is James George Frazer’s series The Golden Bough. In the volume entitled ‘The Scapegoat’, first published in 1913, is a brief chapter on the Crucifixion of Christ, in which Frazer highlights some similarities between the book of Esther and the treatment of Jesus. He suggests that the mocking of Christ resembles the mocking of the king of Sacaea, an event that Frazer has previously suggested provides the origins of Purim.

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355 Bovio, Cristo Alla Festa di Purim, p.10.
Frazer also suggests that, in the accounts of the prisoner release, Barabbas and Jesus are presented as Mordecai and Haman. Frazer’s suggestions should not be taken too seriously on their own as, in his own words, they are “speculation, into which I have perhaps been led by the interest and importance of the subject somewhat deeper than the evidence warrants.”

Frazer and Bovio set the scene for the ‘Esther in the New Testament’ discourse that began in the late nineteenth century and reappeared throughout the twentieth century. Contrary to some commonly held assumptions, there is more literature, albeit of varying rigour, that speaks into this discourse.

The texts to be discussed below are for the most part taken from the index of allusions and citations in NA and the section entitled ‘Relationship of the Scroll of Esther to the New Testament’ from the Lubetski’s Esther bibliography. As the bibliography is broadly restricted to works published in the twentieth century, this will be supplemented by other works, in particular Cassel’s 1888 commentary, as this makes several suggestions of the book of Esther in the New Testament that have not been assessed in modern scholarship.

3.3.2 Existing Scholarship
3.3.2.1 Revelation: Haman and the Number of the Beast

Paulus Cassel makes three suggestions that, he argues, demonstrate that the New Testament writers knew, and used, the book of Esther in shaping their texts, all three of which will be mentioned below. In a commentary that foresaw later consensuses such as

359 Commentaries on the book of Esther seem to have largely ignored Cassel’s commentary with the exception of the appendix where he provides a translation of Tg. Esth II; Cassel, Esther, pp.263-344.
the recognition that "the king אחשורש is really Xerxes the first," he also proposes a novel suggestion that links Haman with the infamous beast of Rev 13:11-18. Cassel begins his argument that the number of the beast is "incontestably found in Hebrew letters in the name הרמשע, Haman the wicked." In gematria these letters produce the total of six hundred and sixty-six as is required by some manuscripts of Rev 13:18: ה – 5, מ – 40, ר – 200, ש – 300, נ – 70, א – 1. Cassel's argument is bolstered by the information given in Rev 13:11 that the beast 'spoke like a dragon,' which Cassel argues alludes to the dream of Mordecai where Haman is envisaged as a dragon (cf. EsthA:4-11 [1:1d-11]). There are some clear difficulties with this interpretation, however, with which Cassel does not engage.

First the phrase הרמשע is Aramaic rather than Hebrew, and Cassel offers no justification for referring to this language. More importantly, הרמשע does not occur in either of the Targumim of Esther, nor in syr Esther. There are near similarities in Tg. Esth. I where the phrase 'wicked Haman' (המרשעא) occurs eight times, accounting for just under half of the occasions that the Targum describes someone as wicked. There are two mentions of 'wicked Ahasuerus' (הארשורש רמשעא) and 'wicked Nebuchadnezzar' (הנבוכדנזר רמשעא) and a single mention each for 'wicked Agag' (האגג רמשעא), 'wicked Amalek' (העמלק רמשעא), 'wicked Queen Vashti' (השתית רמשעא), 'wicked Zeresh' (הזרש רמשעא), and 'wicked Esau' (העשו רמשעא). Haman is the predominant wicked character, but by no means the only one.

Furthermore, the lexicography in Tg. Esth. I differs from Cassel's proposed wording as there is an extra yod. In gematria this would add an extra ten, giving a figure of 676.

360 Cassel, Esther, p.x.
361 Cassel, Esther, p.xxiii.
362 Tg. Esth. 1:7; 3:7 and a single mention each for ‘wicked Agag’ (האגג רמשעא) and ‘wicked Zeresh’ (הזרש רמשעא) and ‘wicked Nebuchadnezzar’ (הנבוכדנזר רמשעא) and ‘wicked Queen Vashti’ (השתית רמשעא) and ‘wicked Esau’ (העשו רמשעא). Haman is the predominant wicked character, but by no means the only one.

This spelling is also what is found in the later Tg. Esth. II 7:9, which is unable to provide support for a textual tradition that uses רשעא.

Second, in MT Esther, various descriptors append Haman’s name, but ‘wicked’ is an exception and not the normal descriptor. There are six occasions where Haman is either described as the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, or with just one of these words, but in most occasions both ancestral terms are given (3:1, 10; 8:3, 5; 9:10, 24). On three occasions Haman is described as the enemy of the Jews (8:1; 9:10, 24), but only once is he described as wicked (7:6). Furthermore, there are no words with the root רשע in the Hebrew text of the book of Esther at all, despite being a well-used root in the MT (The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew records 342 examples, some of which are from non-canonical texts, but most are in the Masoretic Text). Haman may well be presented as a wicked character implicitly, but with one exception (הרע ham in EsthMT 7:6, with a numeric value of 370), the text does not make this claim.

A third critique of this interpretation is the claim it would make about Mordecai. In the dream, both Mordecai and Haman are depicted as dragons. The mention of a dragon in the book of Revelation, if intended to allude to the book of Esther, could allude to either Haman or Mordecai. The author of Revelation is using traditional apocalyptic imagery and there was no Aman redivivus myth suggesting he would return to wreak revenge. Although Cassel’s interpretation is intriguing and inventive, it is unlikely to shed much truth on the New Testament interpretation of the book of Esther.

364 In Tg. Esth. II 7:6, ‘The enemy, the wicked Haman’ is presented as חמש עשרה והמן; and similarly as מחמוד in EsthMT 7:6; Alexander Sperber, The Bible in Aramaic: Vol. 4a, The Hagiographa (Leiden: Brill, 1992) p.198.
366 One may also note, however, EsthMT 8:3 that speaks of the mischief of Haman (רעה ham). The root רשע occurs six times in total in MT Esther, but only once does this describe Haman himself, as opposed to what he has instigated; Esth 7:6, 7; 8:3, 6; 9:2, 15.
and should not be considered to be an example of Estherian influence on the New Testament.

### 3.3.2.2 Revelation: The Dream of Mordecai

Whilst discussing the book of Revelation it is pertinent to mention the allusion given in the index to NA\textsuperscript{28}, Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} A:4 [1:1d] in Rev 4:5. The text from the book of Esther opens the dream of Mordecai saying ‘Shouts and confusion! Thunder and earthquake!’ (καὶ ἰδοὺ φωναὶ καὶ θόρυβος, βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμὸς). The proposed parallel passage in the book of Revelation opens the vision of heaven with some similar vocabulary such that from the throne come ‘rumblings and peals of thunder,’ (καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ). These are common terms used in theophanies and there can be no certainty that the book of Esther would be the source of allusion.\textsuperscript{367} The author of Revelation (and the author of Addition A) is in likelihood using the words and phrases appropriate for the literary genre. Apart from the two words φωναὶ and βρονταὶ, words that are found in other similar writings, there is little to connect Mordecai’s dream with the description of heaven in Revelation. Whilst there is a likelihood that both the book of Revelation and Addition A are drawing on the conventions of the apocalyptic genre, if one wishes to suggest an Old Testament text as an inspirational source for Rev 4:5, the book of Ezekiel provides more compelling links. The word βρονταὶ is part of a motif that builds throughout the book of Revelation until the hail in 16:18-21, a motif with roots in several passages, principally the book of Ezekiel.\textsuperscript{368}

\textsuperscript{367} Cavalier, Esther, p.125.
Perhaps a closer link may be found between these two texts through the dragon references; both Addition A and Rev 12:7-17 portray apocalyptic battles involving dragons and Jobes comments that Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} A:5 [1:1e] and Rev 12:17 demonstrate a “striking similarity of the dragon imagery.”\textsuperscript{369} There are only a few words that are shared between these two texts, and dragon imagery is not unusual in apocalyptic literature.\textsuperscript{370} While it is not beyond possibility that LXX Esther has influenced the book of Esther there is not enough textual coherence nor thematic coherence to be confident.

\textbf{3.3.2.3 Revelation: Gift-Giving}

Richard Bauckham sees “a kind of reversal of Old Testament precedent,”\textsuperscript{371} taking place in Rev 11:3-13. Such reversals include the reference to the tenth of the people and seven thousand (Rev 11:13), which here refers to those who fall leaving a remnant of nine tenths in a reversal of the Old Testament remnant of one tenth that survives (cf. Amos 5:3; Isa 6:13) and the seven thousand who are faithful in 1 Kgs 19:14-18.\textsuperscript{372} Bauckham includes the book of Esther in his discussions of ‘precedent reversal’ for the gift-giving in Rev 11:10. In Esth 9:19-22, gift giving is encouraged as a celebration of the overturning of the threat posed by Haman’s decree, but in Rev 11:10 gift-giving takes place to celebrate the death of God’s prophets. Bauckham proposes that;

the reversal of application is striking. In Esther, the people of God, threatened with genocide by the nations of the world, are delivered and kill all those who would have killed them. They celebrate this victory with rejoicing and exchange of gifts. In Revelation 11, the witnesses, representing the people of God, are slaughtered by the beast, and the nations of the world rejoice and exchange gifts.

\textsuperscript{369} Jobes, \textit{The Alpha-Text of Esther}, p.190.
\textsuperscript{371} Bauckham, \textit{The Climax of Prophecy}, p.281.
\textsuperscript{372} Bauckham, \textit{The Climax of Prophecy}, p.282.
In Esther, the victory of the people of God involves the slaughter of their enemies. In Revelation, the slaughter of the people of God leads to the conversion of their enemies.373

Bauckham’s proposition regarding the book of Esther fits well with his hypothesis about the passage at large. As there are three instances where the particularities of this scene can be shown to offer a reversal of Old Testament traditions, and in cases where this helps explain peculiarities of the text, his hypothesis has merit.

He is not alone in his proposition. Although gift-giving at times of celebration is not unique to the book of Esther and Rev 11:10, the clear level of reciprocity is less well attested. The gift-giving in Esth 9:22 includes both reciprocal gift-exchange and non-reciprocal gift-giving (sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor). That Rev 11:13 expressly states gift-exchange strengthens the Estherian connection.374 Mounce is also convinced of an Estherian link, declaring that the celebration in Rev 11:10 is “a perverse counterpart to the Jewish feast of Purim.”375 If Bauckham is correct, and there is merit to his proposition, his work may add support to the other suggestions of ‘Esther in Revelation’ although this is not necessarily the case. Further work needs to be done that focusses on ‘Esther in Revelation’, but this work is warranted.

3.3.2.4 The Gospel of Mark and the Beheading of John the Baptist

The second of Cassel’s suggestions is one that has stood the test of time and has received much more traction in contemporary scholarship than his suggestions regarding Haman and the beast.376 The clearest New Testament text to appear to have

some roots in the book of Esther is the Markan account of the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). In Herod’s birthday banquet, on account of being pleased by the dancing of Herodias’ daughter Herod promises to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you even half of my kingdom.’ The second clause, δώσω σοι ἑως ἡμίσους τῆς βασιλείας μου, bears close similarity to Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 5:3, 6; 7:2, ἔστω σοι ἑως τοῦ ἡμίσους τῆς βασιλείας μου. This is regarded variously as an allusion or a quotation\textsuperscript{377} but either way, the textual similarity is striking, with only slight changes that do not affect the meaning of the phrase, such that the book of Esther perceived as the source text.

Although a century after Cassel, Aus has written the most extensive reflection on the proposed Estherian background to Mark 6:14-29, and it his work that later writers tend to refer to.\textsuperscript{378} Characteristically for Aus, he proposes a number of similarities between haggadic expansions on Esther and the New Testament passage, but does also propose some points of contact between \textit{LXX} Esther and the Markan account of the beheading.

The word κοράσιον is sparsely used in the New Testament but is used to describe the daughter of Herodias (6:22, 28). Crucially, Esther is also identified as a κοράσιον (Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 2:2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12; Mark 6:22), which provides a further point of textual

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coherence between the two texts. This is further enhanced by the word ἄρέσκω. Herod is pleased (ἄρέσκω Mark 6:22) by the daughter’s dance, and this verb, with sexual connotations is also used of Esther pleasing the king in Esth LXX 2:4, 9. Although both κοράσιον, and ἄρέσκω occur elsewhere in the LXX it is only in these two passages where they occur together. These words could imply that “Herod’s pleasure is sexual and corresponds to the pleasure King Artaxerxes finds in the korasion Esther.” That, in both contexts, a king finds a girl pleasing strengthens the hypothesis that Mark’s choice of vocabulary is not accidental, but inspired by the book of Esther.

Some intriguing texts from the later Christian and Jewish traditions provide some further support. Unusually for Eucharistic liturgies, the Mozarabic liturgy that was used on the feast of the beheading of St John the Baptist makes references to the book of Esther. This was a liturgy in use in “that part of Spain which fell under Moorish rule after 711,” which was in use until being replaced by the Roman rite in the eleventh century. Although dating is uncertain, it is probable that “the MSS of the 10th and 11th cents. faithfully preserve, for the most part, the essential features of the 7th-cent. liturgy.” The liturgy drew upon the prayer of Esther in Esth VL C:28-29, in which Esther declares that she has not eaten at a cursed table, in mensa excrationis. This phrasing is different to that of the Vulgate’s ‘table of Haman,’ in mensa Aman, and suggests some reception of VL Esther in the liturgy. The cursed table/table of Haman

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383 ‘Mozarabic Rite’ in ODCC, p.1129.
has been viewed as “an anti-sacrament, food that would pollute one equally in an ethical as well as cultic sense.”\textsuperscript{385} The fact that the Eucharistic liturgy would contrast this table with the Eucharistic meal would in any instance be interesting. The fact that this reference to the book of Esther only occurs in the liturgy that was written for the feast of the beheading of John the Baptist suggests the possibility that the Mozarabic community did not consider it extraordinary, but reasonable, to hold the book of Esther alongside that of the account of the beheading of John.

This proposition that the Mozarabic liturgists turned to the book of Esther in writing this liturgy is supported by a second reference to the book of Esther. In the introductory words to the Sanctus, the rite for this festival extols the virtues and efficacy of fasting. Again, in a manner not normative in liturgical texts, this includes a reference to the fast of Esther, noting that ‘Per hoc jejunium Aman superbus in lingo suspenditur; through this fast Haman was hanged from a tree.’\textsuperscript{386} These two references reflect the way in which the book of Esther was associated with the story recounted in Mark 6:21-29, and could provide appropriate liturgical text for the commemoration of the beheading of John the Baptist, especially as it is only for this commemoration that the liturgy includes Estherian references.

Perhaps indicative of the tradition that connected the book of Esther with the beheading of John the Baptist is an emendation to the Esther narrative in the Esther Rabbah.\textsuperscript{387} Among the earlier Midrashic works on the book of Esther, Esther Rabbah can be dated to the Amoraic era and would have been redacted before the sixth century CE.\textsuperscript{388}

\textsuperscript{385} Plietzsch, ‘Eating and Living’, pp.27-41 (40).
The midrash includes the addition to the Hebrew text where Memucan adds to the end of ‘if it pleases the king, let a royal order go out from him’ (Esth 1:19), that should your Majesty say the word I will place her (Vashti’s) head on a platter. This midrash continues after Esth 1:21 to read that the advice pleased the king and the officials, and he gave the order and her head was put upon a platter. Dated to a similar period is Tg Esth I 1:19, which also interprets Memucan’s suggestion to be that Vashti’s ‘head be removed,’ should she approach the king, but does not suggest placing it on a platter. There are no rabbinic accounts that provide an explanation for this haggadic interpolation. It is unlikely that this detail in the midrash was written completely independently of the tradition that connected the book of Esther with the beheading of John the Baptist. As such this is a probable witness to an awareness of the mixing of the stories.

For a Haysian paradigm, there is strength to the proposition that the book of Esther provided a source to the Markan account of the beheading of John the Baptist; the book of Esther was available, through the phrase in Mark 6:23 there is volume, and the added use of the words κοράσιον and ἀρέσκω provides an example of recurrence. Through the shared textual genres, and the typologies that are possible, one could make an argument for thematic coherence. To this, there is a history of interpretation that has brought these two texts together in conversation.

There are difficulties with these conclusions, however. The first criticism is to note that Mark 6:14-29 appears to be modelled on several texts, and declaring the book of Esther to be the most significant is hard to judge. From the biblical texts, the Elijah stories provide a repeated motif through the traditional association between John and

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389 Esth. Rab. 4.9, 11.
Elijah (cf. Mark 6:15), but there are also similarities with the book of Daniel, as well as with the beheading of Holofernes following a banquet (Jdt 13:1-10). Beyond the scriptural witness, the traditional conception of the Persian King Xerxes, from whom Ahasuerus is based, is that he is obliged to fulfil every favour requested at a banquet (cf. Hist. 9.108-113). A similar parallel exists in the Tale of Two Brothers, where at a banquet the king is put ill at ease due to the request of a noble lady, and there is also a Roman account when in 184 BCE, in an act that would have him expelled from the Roman Senate, Lucius Quinctius Flaminius “executed a man during a banquet on the whim of his mistress Placentia.” With so many sources on which to draw, or take inspiration, finding a clear single parallel is not possible, but one cannot deny that it is with LXX Esther where Mark has textual coherence.

The parallel with Herodotus is a recurring critique of any parallel with the book of Esther, to which Schwartz focusses his argument in favour of the book of Esther. Before focussing on the parallels with the book of Esther, Schwartz demonstrates some textual echoes of the book of Daniel in Mark 6:21-22. All three texts narrate banquet stories, and Schwartz directs the researcher to the similarities between Dan 5:1 (ἐποίησεν δεῖπνον μέγα τοῖς μεγιστάσιν αὐτοῦ χιλίοις) and Mark 6:21 (δεῖπνον ἐποίησεν τοῖς μεγιστάσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς χιλιάρχοις), which are “particulièrement proche.” In addition to this textual similarity, in both texts the queens enter (εἰσέρχεσθαι; Dan 5:1; Mark

391 The Tale of Two Brothers, an ancient Egyptian story, appears to have influenced the account of Joseph in Egypt (cf. Gen 39) as well as both having parallels in Esther. The relationship between the three is not something for which there is space here to fully evaluate; M. Coogan, A Reader of Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.62; Sparks, Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible, p.267.
392 John Crossan, Jesus and the Violence of Scripture: How to read the Bible and still be a Christian (London: SPCK, 2015), p.163.
6:22) the banquet hall, without being called, as in Dan\textsuperscript{LXX} 5:9.\textsuperscript{396} Schwartz makes an argument that the book of Daniel (in the version of Theodotion) provides some inspiration for the telling of the story, whilst the book of Esther provides its own contribution, particularly in the king’s speech, but also in offering a banquet scene where women are prominent (Esth 1:9; see also 5:1-8; 7:1-2). He concludes that, “Marc a orné son récit avec des détails empruntés à Esther et Daniel mais le fond vient d’ailleurs et se retrouve, pour l’essentiel, chez Hérodote et chez Plutarque.”\textsuperscript{397} He sees a trail that begins with Persian tales and accounts, which are included in Herodotus’ histories. Herodotus has then influenced Greek versions of the books of Esther and Daniel. Mark, therefore, draws upon his available sources for narrating a Greek account of a banquet scene, which ultimately goes back to Herodotus.

For Mark, whose writing is of an “inferior Greek style”\textsuperscript{398} when compared to the other synoptic gospels, it is possible that he is using phrases from the book of Esther (along with the book of Daniel), in part, for their literary quality. These are well written texts that are a means of adding some gravitas and good quality writing to his account, particularly for the speech of the king. Mark is unlikely to write speech for the king that does not fit the register when he has a text available that provides banquet speech from a king. Whether or not this is the case, this example would suggest that the book of Esther may be drawn upon, not for theological insights, but because the text covers a topic, or narrative genre, that is pertinent to a later writer. It is just as likely that Mark and the books of Esther and Daniel all attest to literary customs for banquet scenes, which extend back to Herodotus and Plutarch.

\textsuperscript{396} Schwartz, ‘Récits bibliques et mœurs perses’, p.268.
\textsuperscript{397} Schwartz, ‘Récits bibliques et mœurs perses’, p.276.
\textsuperscript{398} Marcus, Mark 1-8, p.44.
When considering the word κοράσιον, it is a term used twenty-eight times in the LXX,\(^{399}\) with little to suggest it has a distinctively Estherian flavour. When used by Mark it is an appropriate word. As a young girl, the daughter of Herodias turns to her mother for advice (Mk 6:24), which is not surprising for a κοράσιον.\(^{400}\) One does not need to bring in the book of Esther to make sense of this word.

A significant concern, however, is the how strongly another Old Testament passage speaks. As John the Baptist is routinely portrayed in continuation with Elijah, then the account of his beheading, with Herod and Herodias, alludes to Elijah, Ahab and Jezebel.\(^{401}\) This reading can be critiqued on the grounds that the Elijah-cycle has also provided inspiration for the book of Esther and amongst other allusions within the text, the book of Esther alludes to Ahab and Jezebel in two different ways. Jezebel has been seen as an inspiration for Queen Esther, the wife of an ineffectual king,\(^{402}\) but Haman too bears similarities to Jezebel. He sends letters for the annihilation of the Jews, in the name of Ahasuerus using language borrowed from the letters sent by Jezebel, in the name of Ahab, for the death of Naboth (1 Kgs 21:8; Esth 3:12-13).\(^{403}\) Further on in the narrative when Zeresh is introduced, “Haman corresponds to Ahab, and Zeresh assumes the role of Jezebel.”\(^{404}\) It is unlikely that Mark would suddenly shift from an Elijah-cycle lens typological framework to an Elijah-cycle typology framework meted through the lens of the book of Esther, especially when the original framework is sufficient. Hooker compares Ahab and Herod, both of whom are declared sinful through their marriages.

\(^{399}\) See LEH, p.351.


Furthermore, both men are portrayed as weak leaders, who listening to the prophets but are side-tracked by their wives.\textsuperscript{405} Jezebel equally can be identified with Herodias in their desires to have the prophets killed, although the two differ as Jezebel fails where Herodias is successful.\textsuperscript{406}

There are three broad possibilities for this piece of textual coherence. The first possibility is that it is circumstantial that both texts have nearly the same wording. Both texts present a royal banquet scene, a genre of literature that has certain literary customs, attested by both texts, but with no reason to think that the latter has drawn on the former any more than any other piece of banquet literature. A second possibility is that, in writing a pericope of banquet literature, Mark has drawn text from banquet scenes in biblical literature for the purpose of adding a sense of gravitas to his text. A third possibility is that Mark has imported a number of Estherian ideas to intentionally add an extra level of narrative depth to his account in what would be “a neglected but provocative retrieval of the book of Esther.”\textsuperscript{407} It is not the task of this literature review to say the last word on this debate, although I am in broad agreement with Focant who says that Aus’ hypothesis;

\begin{quote}
 n’est pas plus convaincante. Il est probable que l’influence de certains textes de l’AT (2 S 12:1-12; 1 R 21:17-24; Est 7:1-10) ait pu jouer dans la manière de raconteur, mais de manière secondaire.\textsuperscript{408}
\end{quote}

The most likely possibility seems to be that both the book of Esther and Mark’s Gospel are drawing on a wider literary tradition, and that the book of Esther may have helped

\textsuperscript{405} Cf. 1 Kgs 16:31; 21:5-16, 20-29; Hooker, \textit{Mark}, p.160.


further this tradition but is not likely to be the principal source for Mark, and therefore does not qualify as a *cluzograph*.

### 3.3.2.5 The Wedding at Cana

Alongside his thesis that the book of Esther, and its haggadic amplifications, helped frame the Markan account of the beheading of John the Baptist in 1988, Aus also argues for Estherian influence in another Gospel banquet scene, that of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11).

This is a pericope that does not appear to hold together as a unified narrative and is of unknown and disputed origin. These factors have inspired Aus to propose that “Judaic haggadic traditions on the feast(s) of Ahasuerus in Esther 1:1-8” can resolve various discrepancies in John 2:1-11 such as the absence of Joseph (who appears in 6:42), the absence of Jesus’ brothers (appearing in 2:12), the authority of Mary and why there is no public reaction to the miracle.

Both are examples of wedding feasts (EsthLXX 1:5; John 2:1) where the drinking of wine is prominent (EsthLXX 1:7-8; John 2:3, 9), although this itself is not enough to connect the two passages. Aus points towards *hapax legomena* in both John and MT Esther, ἄρχιτρίκλινος (John 2:8-9) and ביתו רב (EsthMT 1:8). Due to the rarity of both terms, Aus contends that the author of the Fourth Gospel has offered his own translation of ביתו רב, which is arguably a more literal rendering than ὁικονύμος in EsthLXX.

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On the whole, this hypothesis has come under a lot less scrutiny and debate than Aus’ suggestions regarding the death of John the Baptist, although Blomberg critiques this argument as “many ancient weddings did have this kind of official.” The vocabulary used in John 2:8-9 is unusual, with only one other attestation of ἀρχεῖα κλίνος, which is not until the fourth century, so it is possible that the author has translated the Hebrew of the book of Esther.

A principal part of Aus’ argument concerns traditions recording in the Esther Rabbah that Ahasuerus’ banquet in Esth 1:3-4 parallels the messianic banquet. In discussing the king’s banquet, Esth Rab. 2:3 relates an account of R. Ḥiyya (Tanna/Amora c.200-220CE) who has a friend who prepares a feast. The friend asks if God could do better, to which R. Ḥiyya responds by saying that, unlike this banquet, God’s will have no limit and with a citation from Isa 64:4. This is related to the banquet in Esth 1:3-4 by R. Hanina (first generation Amora c.220-250CE) in Esth Rab. 2:5 who says that there were Jews at Ahasuerus’ banquet and that he asked them if God could do better, to which they also respond with Isa 64:4, ‘no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him’ and add “if He provides for us nothing better that this feast (in the time to come) we could say to Him, ‘We have already enjoyed the like of this at the table of Ahasuerus.’” This tradition likens the feast of Esth 1:3-4 to the Messianic banquet, and parallels it in scale. Aus’ argument is that, in the first sign at Cana, Jesus’ actions are seen to give a “foretaste of the messianic

412 Aus, Water into Wine and the Beheading of John the Baptist, p.16.
banquet.”⁴¹⁶ It is through the Estherian connections that this aspect of the sign is highlighted.

One may query the extent to which John would have been aware of the tradition that associated the banquet in Esth 1:3-4 with a messianic banquet, given that more than a hundred years separate the Fourth Gospel from the Rabbis recorded in Esth Rab. 2:4-5. It is certainly possible that these traditions extend further back than the early third century, and that the Estherian background would offer a framework for interpreting the miracle at Cana. There can be no certainty, however, that this is the case. This may be an example of Estherian influence on the writings of the New Testament, meted through Esther traditions, but it may equally be creative scholarship on the part of Aus. From this example, it can be shown that wider rabbinic traditions may help offer an insight into the broader interpretative traditions surrounding the book of Esther, but there needs to be stronger chronological ties to support the notion that the New Testament author may have been aware of them.

3.3.2.6 The Motif of the ‘Third Day’

The repeated motif of ‘the third day’ exists in the account of the wedding of Cana (John 2:1), but it was Paul's declaration in 1 Cor 15:4 that offers the strongest connection to the Old Testament; ‘He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.’ This may be understood in its broadest sense, where the death and resurrection of Jesus has scriptural grounding, but without any particular text in

Nevertheless, this phrasing seems to imply that ‘the third day’ specifically, and thus the implications of this phrase, can be found in the Jewish scriptures. Some of the numerous Septuagintal examples of ἡμέρα τρίτη (or variants thereof) indicate that this may be an idiomatic way of speaking of a short period of time, thus indicating that the scriptural import into the resurrection of Jesus is that one would not have to wait long for it to happen.

Of the various references to ‘the third day’ in the Hebrew Bible, for rabbinic tradition, all “are seen to have been salvific,” and are associated together. This is explicit in the rabbinic tradition, but is almost certainly earlier and this would account for the New Testament reference to this motif. Aus focusses on six biblical texts that he considers to have been the most prominent texts behind Paul’s understanding that ‘the third day’ was ‘according to the scriptures,’ (Gen 22:4; Exod 19:11; 2 Kgs 2:17; Esth 5:1; Jon 1:17; Hos 6:2). There can be little doubt that Esth 5:1 could have formed part of this make-up, but this does not mean that the book of Esther was necessarily prominent as the different texts may not have been equally important to the reference.

The Estherian voice into this conversation is that, like Gen 22:4, the third day in Esth 5:1 is 15th Nisan. Throughout the passion of Jesus are a number of parallels with the book of Esther that help to show a wider sense of similarity such that in the case of

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419 Scriptural references are; Gen 1:13; 22:4; 31:22; 34:25; 40:20; 42:18; Exod 19:11, 15, 16; Lev 7:17, 18; 19:6, 7; Num 7:24; 19:12, 19; 29:20; Josh 3:2; 9:17; Judg 20:30; 1 Sam 20:12; 30:1; 2 Sam 1:2; 1 Kgs 3:18; 12:12; 2 Kgs 20:5; 8; 2 Chr 10:12; Ezra 6:15; Esth 5:1; Hos 6:2; Jon 2:1; Novakivic, Raised from the Dead, p.125.
420 See also Esth. Rab. 9:2; Martin McNamara, Targum and New Testament: Collected essays (WUNT 279; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), p.506 (also 429).
421 McNamara, Targum and New Testament, p.520.
Jesus and the case of Esther the third day marks the “beginning of the redemption of all
of the Jews.” Subsequent to this argument, Aus briefly mentions the undisputed
reference in Hos 6:2. I am inclined to agree with Novakovic that κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς implies
a pluriform textual basis for Paul's understanding. One would be hard-pushed to suggest
that the book of Esther could not be one of these. Equally, however, it probably is not a
dominant text, but one part of the tradition that has shaped Paul's understanding of the
importance of a resurrection on the third day.

3.3.2.7 The Unnamed Festival in John 5:1

Speculation has abounded as to the identification of the unnamed feast of John
5:1. A possible contender is the festival of Purim. The lack of explicit references to Purim
is not a problem as neither are there any Gospel references to the New Year festival nor
to the Day of Atonement, important festivals that were observed. The only New
Testament texts to mention the Day of Atonement are Acts 27:9 and in Heb 9:11-14,
only the latter of which gives theological significance to the festival. In Acts 27:9, the
‘Fast’ is mentioned to highlight the time of year and the fact that sailing is increasingly
dangerous. Josephus also is scant in his references to the Day of Atonement, using it
as a chronological point of reference; it was celebrated, but writers of this period seem
unconcerned with providing details. Although not mentioning these festivals seems
like significant omissions, this suggests that the Gospel writers were not overly

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423 Aus, Death, Burial, and Resurrection, p.246.
2009), p.656.
concerned with detailing the feasts and festivals and as such, there is little that can be
drawn from the fact that Purim is not explicitly mentioned.

The question that has gone unanswered is, why does the author (for ease,
hereafter referred to as John) not name the festival? The Fourth Gospel explicitly
mentions Passover (e.g. 2:23; 6:4; 12:1; 13:1), Succoth (7:2), and Hanukkah (10:22), so
the author was familiar with Jewish festivals, but for some reason chose not to make the
name of this festival explicit. There are two broad probable scenarios, either John did not
know which festival was being celebrated or he did know, but chose not to name the
festival. Before exploring the reasons for not naming this festival, it is important to
attempt to establish the likely candidates for the festival. It is axiomatic that the
arguments in favour of each of the festivals are equally arguments that count against the
other festivals.

Passover

Passover is commonly suggested as a background to John 5. Undoubtedly
Passover features throughout the whole of the Fourth Gospel, to emphasise the point
that Jesus is “the ideal or perfect Passover victim.”

This Gospel account directly
mentions Passover more times than the Synoptic Gospels do (John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55
x2; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14), with a possible reference in 4:45 and the unneeded
explicit references in 11:56 and 12:12 (as 11:55 and 12:1 have already stated that the
festival is Passover).

Early Christian writers, such as Irenaeus, assumed that John 5:1
signified Passover (Haer. 2.22.3).

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428 Porter, John, His Gospel, and Jesus, p.206.
429 Joel Elowsky (ed.), John 1-10 (ACCS NT 4a; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), p.177.
As John explicitly mentions Passover many times one must wonder why, if 5:1 takes place at Passover, this is not explicit. The only references to Passover that are not explicit, are when John has already established that the festival is Passover, and ‘festival’ provides a less clumsy writing style (11:56; 12:12, 20). In the case of John 5:1, the author has not established that the festival is Passover.

Bultmann nevertheless argued in favour of Passover, suggesting that the current chapter order is not original. On the basis that Jesus’ journey to the ‘other side of the lake’ in 6:1 ought to correspond to Jesus being by the lake, he suggests a transposition of chapters five and six. This would allow 6:1 to more neatly follow on from chapter four, and thus the festival of 5:1 would follow an explicit reference to Passover in 6:4.\textsuperscript{430} This has been disproved and is no longer accepted, leaving the arguments in favour of Passover weak.\textsuperscript{431} John 5:1 almost certainly does not refer to Passover; if the author had wished to emphasise the Passover connection, the witness from the rest of the Gospel indicates that he would have done so.

\textit{Tabernacles}

The Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), celebrated on 15\textsuperscript{th} Tishrei, is a possible alternative. There is a clear reference in John 7:2, which provides the setting for the events immediately subsequent. As Malina and Rohrbaugh demonstrate, chapter nine parallels chapter five through festal setting, Sabbath healing (5:10; 9:14), age and infirmity (5:5, 9:1), the context of a pool (5:2, 9:7), a court of inquiry (5:9-16, 9:13-34)

and a subsequent encounter (5:14, 9:35).\footnote{Bruce Malina & Richard Rohrbaugh, \textit{Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), p.109.} This may suggest that the exact festival is a further parallel, or could indicate that only the festal setting is a parallel, but with a different festival.

Succoth would fit well with the anonymity of John 5:1 as it was common to refer to Succoth simply as ‘the Feast.’\footnote{Cf. 1 Kgs 8:2; 2 Chr 7:8; Neh 8:14; Ezek 45:25; Rudolf Schnackenburg, \textit{The Gospel According to St John: Vol. 2} (transl. C. Hastings et.al.; London: Burns & Oates, 1980), p.93.} One may well consider that John is simply following common convention here and considers further elaboration to be unnecessary (either as he considers that his audience would understand, or as he considers further identification to be detraction from the main point).

As with Passover, however, this lack of identification does not conform to John’s literary style, as in 7:2 he gives the name of the festival in full.\footnote{Schnackenburg, \textit{The Gospel According to St John: Vol. 2}, p.93.} A second criticism of this is the subtle difference made by the absence of the definite article in John 5:1. If the text specified that there was \textit{the} festival of the Jews (\textit{ἦν ἡ Ἑορτὴ}), there might be a stronger argument to be made from common convention. As it is, there is no article and the text reads that there was ‘a festival’ (\textit{ἦν Ἑορτὴ}) and therefore John 5:1 almost certainly does not refer to the Feast of Tabernacles.\footnote{John Marsh, \textit{Saint John} (London: SCM, 1968), p.247.}

\textit{Shavuot}

Calvin favoured Shavuot/Pentecost as the identity of the unnamed festival in his commentary. On the basis that Jesus set out from Jerusalem soon after Passover, and was in Samaria about four months before the harvest (cf. 4:35), which is then followed
by the ‘feast,’ Calvin concludes that Shavuot best fits this time-frame.\footnote{J. Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John: 1-10* (transl. T. Parker; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), p.116.} This proposition continues to find support.\footnote{Marianne Thompson, *John: A commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), p.120.} Of the three great Pilgrimage feasts, Passover and Tabernacles are both mentioned and as such Shavuot would be a natural fit here as it is not elsewhere named in the gospel, but Jesus is described as having gone to Jerusalem. The major barrier that arises to this line of thought is that John 5:9 also identifies the setting as a Sabbath.\footnote{Thompson, *John*, p.120.} It is possible that the Sabbath occurs during the time that Jesus was in Jerusalem for a festival, but that the Sabbath and the festival have not coincided exactly.

A further critique of Shavuot is that this argument only works if the passage of time from John 4:35 to 5:1 is approximately four months. The ‘after that’ in 5:1 indicates a relatively short period of time, and not several months, making it difficult to identify the feast with Shavuot. Whilst there are arguments in favour of identifying the festival as Shavuot, the weight of evidence swings against this interpretation.

### Purim

unlike Shavuot, is the festival that would naturally fit in the gap. It is this chronology that forms the backbone of Bowman’s argument.

One major criticism to recurring suggestions of Purim is doubt over the level of observance of Purim in Jesus’ day and whether Purim was celebrated in the Temple;

Il n’est pas autrement certain que cette fête eût grande importance en Palestine au temps de Jésus; c’était à peine une fête religieuse, et ce n’était pas un fête du temple.441

As has already been established, there is sufficient evidence to be confident that Purim was celebrated in the Jerusalem temple in the late Second Temple period. Although the evidence cannot state with full certainty that Purim was celebrated prior to 41 CE (the earliest date for Megillat Ta’anith), there is every likelihood that Purim was celebrated in Jerusalem at least a decade or so before this. One would need a great level of cynicism, that goes beyond reasonable academic criticism, to rule out Purim as a potential festival for John 5:1 on the grounds that the textual evidence only demonstrates the firm establishment of Purim by 41 CE. As such it is seemly to evaluate the evidence that supports Purim for the unnamed festival.

The unnamed festival occurs short after the declaration that the harvest is four months away (cf. John 4:35; 5:1). Bowman, like others, identifies this harvest as the grain harvest that occurs at the time of the feast of Pentecost and then works backwards to ascertain a time of year for John 4:35, to then see what, if anything, falls shortly afterwards. This is not novel to Bowman; McClymont followed a similar logic and found that Purim was a strong contender for the unnamed festival in 1922, as a festival less than four months before Pentecost, but also before the Passover of John 6:4.442 Bowman

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is able to be quite specific and places John 4:35 on either 15th Shebat or around the 7th Adar (depending on if this happened on a leap year and if one needs to include Ve-Adar). 443

For Hillelites, the 15th Shebat is the day of the New Year for trees, one of the days of judgement (m.Roš Haš. 1.1-2). 444 In the Samaritan calendar, however, the 15th Shebat is the festival, sixty days before Passover, of Ṣimmuth Pesah. 445 This festival offers some context for the scenes of John 4, and helps justify the chronology of the gospel. Both Purim for the Judaeans and Ṣimmuth Pesah for the Samaritans are guides in fixing the date of Passover, but they also serve different functions for their communities. 446 For the Samaritans, Ṣimmuth Pesah recounted the coming of Moses, but also looked forward to a hoped for saviour known as the Taheb, a Moses redivivus figure who would crucially reveal the truth (cf. Memar Marqah IV.12). 447 The woman at the well speaks of this hope in a coming messiah, which is acknowledged by Jesus in John 4:25-26 such that “he brings the fulfilment of Samaritan messianic hope.” 448 Bowman’s argument that John 4:35 indicates a date of 15th Shebat is reasonable, but is strengthened substantially by his linking of the passage with Ṣimmuth Pesah.

This means that one can reasonably confident that the festival of John 5:1 falls between Ṣimmuth Pesah on the 15th Shebat (John 4:35) and a short time before Passover on 15th Nisan (John 6:4). The only festival that occurs during this time is Purim, which

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443 Bowman, ‘The Identity and Date of the Unnamed Feast’, p.43.
444 It is the Hillelite tradition that has endured in contrast to Shammai who gave a date of 1st Shebat for this festival; Danby, Mishnah, p.188.
is celebrated on the 14th Adar except in walled towns, in which Purim would be celebrated on the 15th Adar. As John 5:1 states that Jesus has gone to Jerusalem, this would indicate the 15th Adar rather than 14th Adar.

This hypothesis loses some of its strength if the gospel gives an incorrect picture of the passage of time, and there is no certainty that John’s chronology is diligent. It is therefore pertinent to note any further arguments in support of the Purim hypothesis, and offer any suggestions why the festival has gone unnamed. Bultmann’s argument for Passover was dependent on the transposition of chapters five and six, which would throw out the chronology that underpins the Purim hypothesis. As has been noted, this proposition has been disproved and current scholarship argues that there is indeed a “logical and chronological flow of thought from chapters four to seven as they currently stand.” Any concerns about the chronological basis for this argument can be allayed.

A significant piece of evidence to support Purim as the festival comes in John 5:9 when the gospel account informs the reader that this has not only all taken place at the time of a festival, but on a Sabbath. This is without doubt the key concern of the author, that the healing takes place on a Sabbath, and is essential for understanding the debate that follows about what is and is not permissible on the Sabbath (5:10, 16-18). The implications of violating the Sabbath are of a greater concern than the implications of the healing. Purim, as a festival that could fall on the Sabbath, offers some nuances to this conversation. Esther and Mordecai are fondly remembered despite going against the prescriptions for Passover, and fast instead (Esth 4:16); they do not follow the accepted prescriptions on what is and is not acceptable. Furthermore, although the text

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449 Zlotowitz & Scherman, Esther, pp.131-132.
450 Blomberg, John, p.108.
is not explicit, it is often read that Esther did not keep food laws or Sabbath laws in her royal position – how else could she have kept her Jewish identity hidden (Esth 2:10)? Just as knowledge of Simmuth Pesah lends an extra level of significance to the account of Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman, so too knowledge of Purim lends a level of significance to the account of the healing by the pool. These last points open the text to another level of interpretation not necessarily otherwise noted. Carter comments that a feature of the Fourth Gospel is that “Jesus uses festival motifs simultaneously to define himself and to (re-) define the festivals.” It is of note, therefore, that the Fourth Gospel should introduce this debate about violating the Sabbath on what appears to be the celebration of Purim, when Jews in Jerusalem would have been celebrating an act of Passover breaking.

Bowman introduces one final thought about the relationship between Purim and John 5:1. He picks up on an article by Güdemann that seeks to ascertain the Aramaic that Jesus may have spoken. Güdemann suggests that the Aramaic phrase would have been וַיִּים פִּילִּים דְּלֵךְ פּוֹרִיָּה טַוִּמַּה and that when Jesus tells the man to pick up his κράβαττόν (bed; John 5:10), the Aramaic equivalent would have been פּוֹרִיָּה. Significantly, פּוֹרִיָּה not only means bed but is the Aramaic for Purim. This is speculation, but for Güdemann this is a clear evidence of Jesus alluding to Purim in the healing that, for him, takes place at the festival of Purim. The conjecture of a pun by Jesus is by no means the strongest argument for suggesting that Purim is the unnamed festival. Nevertheless,
if Aramaic speech lies behind the word produced in Greek in John 5:10, פוריא is the most likely word.

There is one lasting point of contention against this interpretation. A common critique is that Purim did not require the faithful to journey to Jerusalem; “Purim was not a pilgrim feast. It was celebrated in the local synagogues.”458 Whilst it is true that there was no obligation to journey to Jerusalem, this is not a sufficient argument. As an itinerant preacher, Jesus travels throughout the Fourth Gospel and may well have travelled to Jerusalem. One may imagine that the temple celebration of Purim would be a more exciting celebration than in the local synagogue, and have a certain draw for someone with the means to be present in Jerusalem.

Why, therefore, would John not be explicit if it were helpful in adding meaning to the account? The simplest reasoning is that “the material in John 5 is not thematically related to [the festival]... [and it is] little more than a historical marker to indicate Jesus’ presence in Jerusalem.”459 If one accepts the Purim hypothesis there may be more particular reasons not to be explicit. One such reason is the function of the Gospel in relating Judaism to gentiles:

John explains Jewish customs to a Gentile audience. Such passages as John 2:6, 13; 4:9; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55; 19:31, 40, 42 connect Palestinian Jewish worship practices and social customs with later non-Jewish audiences.460

Although the festival of Purim shapes some of the reaction to the Sabbath healing, it is possible that, due to the lack of other associations with Purim (to a Hellenistic audience), making Purim explicit to a gentile audience could be confusing. This is

particularly the case given the wider implications of the story, and the negative responses from some given the lack of mention of the divine or the perceived anti-gentile thrust of the story. What really matters in this pericope is that it is a Sabbath, and that is explicit.\textsuperscript{461} Knowing that it might be Purim adds a level of depth but, given the potential difficulties that could arise, it is not worth making this explicit.

John’s wording of ‘a festival of the Jews’ is commonly seen as a distancing from establishment Judaism.\textsuperscript{462} Although the argument of detachment is reasonable from the style of writing, it is strengthened further if the festival can be identified as Purim, as provides reasons why John may not wish to make this explicit.

In their overview of early Christianity and the Old Testament, Hollander and de Jonge remark that “Christianity needed the Jewish tradition in order to be culturally respectable in the Hellenistic world.”\textsuperscript{463} The book of Esther (and the festival of Purim in particular) could be a point of tension between Judaism and gentile authorities. Whatever level of toleration was given to Judaism in the Graeco-Roman world, the book of Esther weakened this. Whilst the broad Jewish tradition may have assisted the ‘cultural respectability’ of early Christianity, the festival of Purim may not have been a help but a hindrance, and it is natural that John would wish to play down the association for the gentile audience.

A second, and related, explanation concerns the fact that this section follows the Samaritan episodes. The book of Esther presents a strong sense of Jewish/Judaean identity, by far surpassing all other biblical texts for its use of the word ‘Jew/Judaean,’ for

\textsuperscript{461} Ridderbos, \textit{John}, p.184.
example. The previous fifty-four verses of John’s Gospel have, in different ways, given
the message that Jesus is not solely for Judea, but transcends those boundaries, into
Samaria (cf. John 4:1-42) and Galilee (cf. John 4:43-54). Having pushed against the
exclusivist strand of Judaism, Jesus returns to Judea for the celebration of a festival that,
if Purim, potentially creates a conflicting message about exclusivism.

Although the debate will no doubt continue, and suspicions exist for the
feasibility of ever identifying the feast, the support for identifying the unnamed
festival of John 5:1 with Purim would seem plausible and potentially significant, but
ultimately inconclusive. If Purim were the festival, then the particularities of the
festival provide sufficient reason to avoid making this explicitly clear for a gentile
audience. The kind of literary arguments in support of Purim are not made for the other
festivals, helping bolster a case for identifying Purim as the festival in John 5:1.

This identification has several implications for this study. First, this would be
further evidence of the celebration of Purim in Jerusalem (and thus the reading of the
book of Esther) during the life-time of Jesus. If the details of the book of Esther are a
reason why Purim is not identified, then John is familiar with the details of the story and
the customs associated with the festival, and not just that the festival exists. Difficulty in
communicating the festival of Purim to a gentile audience may also help explain why
there would be no explicit references to the book of Esther in the New Testament, but
keep open the possibility of implicit references.

3.3.2.8 Accusations against Paul in Acts 18:13

Given that the book of Esther has a diaspora focus, one might anticipate that there might be some points of contact with the Acts of the Apostles as the New Testament text that is mostly concerned with the Jewish diaspora and the spread of the Christ movement into this world. If, as is commonly believed, the book of Esther had been transmitted into this diaspora world, offering a view that “promotes the idea that Jews can live personally fulfilling, and even socially successful, lives” in the diaspora, how does the early Christian engagement with these communities meet the tension between remaining faithful to Judaism through Esther and adopting the early Christian beliefs and practices?

Paul is twice brought before the authorities under accusations that are reminiscent of the book of Esther. The first of these occurs in Acts 16:21 – ‘they are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.’ This is “a similar kind of accusation... brought against the Jews by Haman” in Esth 3:8. There are, however, no textual parallels between Acts 16:21 and Esth3:8. This accusation in Acts 16:21 is linked to the second accusation, in Acts 18:12-17, where there is a textual parallel.

Acts 18:12-17 record the time Paul was brought before Gallio Annaeanus when he was in Corinth in c.51-52CE. Those who bring Paul to the tribunal claim that he is persuading people to worship God in ways that are ‘παρὰ τὸν νόμον’ (contrary to the law;

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Acts 18:13). This phrase appears nowhere-else in the New Testament and only occurs once in the Septuagint, in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 4:16. Here Esther states that she is prepared to approach the king without being called. This act is ‘\textit{παρὰ τὸν νόμον}’ but sets in motion the chain of events that lead to the salvation of the Jewish people.

There is otherwise little in the passage to connect the book of Esther with this vignette in the book of Acts. There is a slight similarity in that Paul's accusation of acting \textit{παρὰ τὸν νόμον} is refuted by Gallio who speaks out saying that Paul has not committed a wrong (\textit{ἀδίκημα}) in Acts 18:14. The verbal form (\textit{ἀδικέω}) is spoken by Mordecai in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 4:1 framing the scene that culminates in Esther being prepared to act \textit{παρὰ τὸν νόμον}:

Thus for Esther, serving her people – and thereby serving her God – had priority over following the law of her Gentile master. Whether or not Luke is consciously alluding to Esther, it seems likely that he perceived that Paul's allegiance to Christ could be taken as being \textit{παρὰ τὸν νόμον}.

The phrase \textit{παρὰ τὸν νόμον}, while found rarely in the biblical texts is not particularly distinctive or unusual, and is found in other texts, showing the need for the methodology to use extra-canonical texts in considering the level of \textit{distinctiveness}.

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3.3.2.9 Sackcloth and Ashes

The NA\textsuperscript{28} index offers Luke 10:13 as one of its few examples of New Testament allusions to the book of Esther (cf. Esth 4:3).\textsuperscript{474} Common to both texts is the motif of ‘sackcloth and ashes’ (σάκκον καὶ σποδὸν). This phrase is not unusual (Isa 58:8; Jer 6:26; Dan 9:3; Jon 3:5-8), but is the only detail in Luke 10 that associates the passage with the book of Esther.\textsuperscript{475} The reference to Tyre and Sidon in Luke 10:14 does, however, link the passage more clearly with the book of Ezekiel, which also provides further links to Luke 10:13 (cf. NA\textsuperscript{28} Ezek. 26:20; 28:1-23), at least as far as Jesus is presented as speaking as a prophet.\textsuperscript{476}

The textual coherence is a phrase that is ubiquitous in scripture and there is no more a sense that Luke is borrowing from, or referring to, the book of Esther than Paul does in 1 Thess 1:9 through the words ‘living God.’\textsuperscript{477} Although there is a textual similarity between the books of Esther and Luke this example is unlikely to be an example of Esther in the NT and would need more methodological work to provide this argument.

3.3.3 Conclusions of the New Testament Overview

There are a few things to be drawn out of this overview of existing suggestions of New Testament allusions or indebtedness to the book of Esther. Several of the proposed allusions have been based on a few words. One need not have a substantial phrase to argue that an allusion exists. When suggesting allusions, however, it is not enough

\textsuperscript{474} UBS\textsuperscript{4} suggests the parallel passage of Matt 11:21 instead.

\textsuperscript{475} Cavalier, Esther, p.125.


\textsuperscript{477} ‘Living God’ occurs in Esth\textsuperscript{156} 6:13; E:16 [8:12q], but also Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 19:16; Pss 42:2; 84:3; Isa 37:4, 17; Jer 10:10; 23:26; Dan 6:20; Hos 1:10; E. Elizabeth Johnson, ‘Paul’s Reliance on Scripture in 1 Thessalonians’, in Stanley, Paul and Scripture, pp.143-162 (145).
merely to note the textual similarity, broader themes must be argued to demonstrate the ways in which the allusion may function within the New Testament text. Several of the proposed examples, and especially those that have been more strongly queried, are those that have lacked a thorough methodology. These do not pose a problem to ‘Esther in the NT’ research but do call for a methodological framework.

The previous research undertaken by Aus and Bowman indicates that any scholarship into the New Testament reception of the book of Esther may need to engage with rabbinic literature. It is not enough to examine LXX Esther in isolation, as traditions surrounding the book of Esther had sprung up and taken hold by the first century, shaping the reception of the book of Esther in the process. That said, one cannot conclude that referring to rabbinic literature is justified just because Aus and Bowman have found it to be useful. Adele Berlin helps justify the use of this literature in that, although written over many centuries, in rabbinic literature on the book of Esther;

We can speak of a common exegetical tradition, which, according to Segal, probably took shape in the Tannaitic period or before (first or second century CE)... [and thus] the midrashim preserve a very old perspective on the story of Esther, and one that proved enduring.⁴⁷⁸

In addition, Fernández argues for the importance of rabbinic literature as it is predated by an oral tradition and that the New Testament is in conversation with rabbinic literature as a witness to this oral tradition.⁴⁷⁹ There is the risk, however, that the oral tradition develops; one cannot be certain of the forms of exegesis that existed at any part of the oral history. Wherever possible the earliest rabbinic literature will be used, and dates will be given, to provide comparative and, hopefully, contemporaneous reflections.

on the book of Esther to the texts of the New Testament. Where the literature is later, its use is nevertheless justified in that the literature on the book of Esther was rooted in Tannaitic interpretation but should be used cautiously.

In moving forward with this research into the possible cluzographs in Matt 27:22-23 and Gal 2:14, an assessment of the textual similarity will not suffice. In addition to this, I will need to explore broader echoes in the text, the ‘functionality’ of the allusion, and Estherian traditions that might be gleaned from Rabbinic literature.
Chapter 4: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” – Crucifixion and the Enemy of the Jews in Matthew’s Passion

4.1 The Book of Esther and Other Scriptures in the Gospel According to Matthew

This chapter will explore the first of the potential ‘cluzographs’, the use of Σταυρωθήτω – ‘Let him be crucified!’ – in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 7:9 and Matt 27:22-23. These verses, which include this vocal command that leads to the crucifixions of Haman and Jesus, read;

Then Bugathan, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, ‘Look, Haman has even prepared a gallows for Mordecai, who gave information of concern to the king; it is standing at Haman’s house, a gallows fifty cubits high.’ So the king said, ‘Let Haman be hanged (Σταυρωθήτω) on that.’ (Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} (NRSV) 7:9).

Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified (Σταυρωθήτω)!” Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified (Σταυρωθήτω)” (Matt\textsuperscript{NRSV} 27:22-23).

Whilst the verb σταυρόω is used countless times in the New Testament, in the Septuagint it occurs only in the book of Esther, and in the conjugation of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} person aorist passive imperative (Σταυρωθήτω) it can only be found in these two texts here. In the book of Esther there is also a second use of σταυρόω in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} E:18 [8:12r], which narrates that Haman had been crucified. This heightens the distinctive use of σταυρόω in \textsuperscript{LXX} Esther and in relation to the crucifixion of Haman. Many are put to death in the book of Esther but σταυρόω is reserved for the execution of Haman.

As Σταυρωθήτω only appears in Matthew’s passion narrative, the unusual textual coherence between the books of Esther and Matthew prompts the question of a conscious link between these two events. For the methodology of this research this can be worded as, \textit{in rippling out through time has the book of Esther encountered an}
obstacle in the passion of Jesus such that there is a textual ‘splash’ that has left an indelible mark in Matthew’s Passion? Before exploring this question, some ground-work needs to be laid out concerning Matthew’s use of Jewish Scripture and, in particular, previous scholarship that has brought the books of Esther and Matthew together.

4.1.1 Jewish Scriptures in Matthew

It is a well-documented fact that the Gospel of Matthew draws heavily on the corpus of Jewish scriptures and literature known to him: the Old Testament (in Hebrew Bible and Septuagintal forms) as well as extra-canonical literature (as much as one can refer to canonical and extra-canonical literature prior to the determination of the canon). The exact number of scriptural references made by the author of the gospel

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(hereafter referred to as Matthew) is not certain as possible references that are not explicitly signposted in the text continue to be debated.

The NA\textsuperscript{28}, as an authoritative example, lists 690 citations of and allusions to Jewish literature found in Matthew’s gospel, comprising 593 from the Old Testament and 97 from apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature. According to NA\textsuperscript{28} there are only three Old Testament texts not referenced by Matthew; the books of Esther, Obadiah, and Nahum. It is not a surprise to find that Obadiah and Nahum are not individually referenced. As two of the shortest books of the Old Testament (Obadiah being the shortest and, by number of verses, only Haggai is shorter than Nahum), there could only be limited textual engagement with these two of the twelve prophets, for the simple fact that there is less text that could be referenced. Furthermore, several references to ‘the twelve’ in ancient literature (cf. Sir 49:10; 4QXII\textsuperscript{a,b,c,e} [4Q76-82]; 8Ḥev 1 [8ḤevXIIgr]; Mur 88 [XII]) provide good reasons to consider that the twelve minor prophets were conceived of as a whole from as early as the second century BCE and, as such, Matthew does refer to this biblical unit, even if the individual prophets are read differently.\textsuperscript{481} Hence, one can argue that the book of Esther appears to be the only Old Testament text not to have a voice in Matthew’s interpretation of the life of Jesus.

Space and the focus of this research do not permit an evaluation all 690 examples, information on which can be found in relevant commentaries. Instead, I shall offer some brief summaries on the ways in which Matthew engages with the Old Testament, and then move into a discussion of the apparent lack of the book of Esther in the Gospel of

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Matthew and the validity of the perception that the book of Esther is absent from the Matthaean account.

4.1.2 Scriptural References in Matthew

Matthew’s text includes clear and explicit quotations of the Old Testament, almost more than the other three Gospels combined.482 These may be introduced by quotation formulae, such as καθὼς γέγραπται483, making it is easy to identify when Matthew is deferring to an Old Testament text. As Matthew sometimes blends different passages together into composite citations,484 and sometimes obliquely references the source text,485 it may not always be easy to immediately identify the cited passage. There is nevertheless a clear indication to the reader that the text following the introductory formula comes from another source, and through these Matthew demonstrates continuity between the Jewish scriptures and the Christ movement.

Not only are there sometimes introductory formulae, but a Matthaean characteristic is found in the “overt appeals to Christological proofs based on the fulfilment of prophecy.”486 These occur in Matthew through fulfilment formulae but also in other ways (such as with the redaction of parables to fulfil certain requirements). For Matthew, the life of Jesus cannot be understood just on the basis of the scriptures of Israel, but that Jesus is the culmination of these scriptures, so Crowe remarks that;

484 An example would be the blending of Mic 5:1(2) and 2 Sam 5:2 in Matt 2:6; Joel Willitts, Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King: In search of ‘The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel’ (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), p.101.
486 Hays, The Conversion of the Imagination, p.120.
the OT is centrally important for Matthew, and that these Scriptures are formative for the author's thought even in places where no textual citation is present. Therefore, if one is to understand the theology of Matthew most fully, one must consider all forms of OT influence.\textsuperscript{487}

It is with this in mind that I now turn to the existing scholarship regarding the book of Esther in Matthew. It is incontrovertible that there are no quotations of the book of Esther in Matthew’s gospel, nor are there any explicit references to Esther, Mordecai, Purim, Susa, etc. If Matthew’s gospel does witness to some engagement with the book of Esther, such a reference would be subtle and perhaps a different form of influence to those that have been previously studied. A different methodological approach, as proposed by this research, may be of help.

While opening up the possibility of a deeper engagement with Scripture than might be currently acknowledged, Crowe rightly cautions against “baseless and fanciful interpretations”\textsuperscript{488} of Matthew; just because Scriptural influence \textit{may} be present, that does not mean that it is. The methodology being tested here will need to account for this and not jump to conclusions, but securely demonstrate the likelihood of any Estherian influence and how it might function.

4.1.3 The Book of Esther in the Gospel of Matthew
4.1.3.1 Previous scholarship regarding ‘Esther in Matthew’

Despite the general consensus that Esther is not strongly present in the Gospels, if at all, there has been some isolated dissension from this point of view. Following on from the discussion surrounding the influence of the book of Esther and/or the Elijah cycle on the Markan account of the beheading of John the Baptist (§3.2.2.4) a smaller

\textsuperscript{487} Crowe, \textit{The Obedient Son}, p.225.
\textsuperscript{488} Crowe, \textit{The Obedient Son}, p.225.
discussion has arisen about the background to Matt 14:3-12. In Matthew’s account the story has been abridged, and no longer includes the textual similarity with the book of Esther found in Mark 6:23. It is as though Matthew intentionally “lessens the OT reminiscence of Jezebel and Esther.”\textsuperscript{489} Blomberg has nevertheless identified a possible “echo”\textsuperscript{490} of Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 2:9 in Matt 14:6, where Esther and the daughter of Herodias both please their respective kings in language that is similar to Mark 6:22, καὶ ἤρεσεν αὐτῶ/τῷ Ἡρῴδη. One is still left with the impression that Matthew’s account has lessened the possible allusions to the book of Esther. Blomberg’s proposal is tentative and, on its own, does not seem to convincingly argue that ἀρέσκω has a distinctively Estherian flavour to be able to join the two narratives. BDAG remarks that ἀρέσκω was “a favoured term in the reciprocity-conscious Mediterranean world.”\textsuperscript{491} This proposal lacks much to support it and more so than was the case with Mark 6:23, this is more likely a case of using appropriate vocabulary and phrases rather than being an example of intertextuality.

\textbf{4.1.3.2 Michael Goulder}

The most notable dissension to the suggestion that the book of Esther is absent from the New Testament has come from Michael Goulder. His research regarding the parable of the great feast is an example that warrants further discussion. In this parable, recorded by both Matthew (22:1-14) and Luke (14:16-24),\textsuperscript{492} a feast is prepared, but when the servants are dispersed to gather the invitees none are prepared to come, so

\textsuperscript{489} Harrington, \textit{Matthew}, p.217.
\textsuperscript{490} C. Blomberg, ‘Matthew’, p.50.
\textsuperscript{491} BDAG, p.129.
others are then called forth to the banquet in their stead. Matthew’s account of the parable differs significantly from the Lukan account, both in length and in specific details. The differences between the two versions suggest that it is Matthew who has more heavily edited the parable than Luke. This is not surprising, as Luke’s account is critical of those who hold to Torah, in contrast to Matthew’s emphasis on the continuity with Torah. The question then arises, if Matthew has drifted away from the source that underpins Luke’s account, what is the basis for the changes? Matthew has not merely removed unwanted material but has introduced new material, but from what source is this material inspired?

Goulder argues that the discourses in Matthew’s Gospel have been presented in such a way to correspond to, and, in some senses, fulfil the festal calendar of Judaism. As such, a reading of the Gospel begins on 25th Nisan and works through the year so that the passion and resurrection narratives complete the cycle on 14th-21st Nisan. The placing of this story suggests that it is “correctly sited for liturgical use” and is intentionally placed, not only to acknowledge Purim, but as a Christian fulfilment of Purim.

Goulder argues that;

In Matt. 22:1-14 we have a Christian parable modelled on the book of Esther, with a royal wedding [Esth 2:18; Matt 22:2-4], a banquet [Esth 1:3, 5, 9; 2:18; 5:4, 5, 8, 12, 14; 6:14; Matt 22:2-4], chamberlains sent to announce that the feast is ready (a parallel also noted by Jeremias); and the execution of the unworthy guest [Esth 7:9-10; Matt 22:13].

496 Goulder, Evangelists’ Calendar, p.214.
497 Goulder, Evangelists’ Calendar, p.291.
499 Biblical references have been inserted into the quotation; Goulder, The Evangelists’ Calendar, p.214.
Goulder’s arguments have two parts. First are the narrative and textual similarities between the book of Esther and the Gospel of Matthew and second is the redactional setting of the parable in the Gospel. Both factors of his argument have come under scrutiny.

On the first count, are scholars, such as Olson, who argue that Matthew’s imagery is best understood as being sourced from prophetic literature (cf. Isa 26:6-9; Zeph 1:7-10). These passages, however, have fewer similarities with Matthew’s parable than the book of Esther.500 A further proposed source is the Ezekiel Apocryphon, but again, the number of parallels is few, and only offers an allusion through the host being a king.501 A possibility is that any of these texts have influenced Matthew, or highlight a tradition into which Matthew is writing, such as the ‘King-Mashal’ or parable where a king is a significant character.502 Any possible influence of Isaiah or Jewish banquet narratives does not negate the possibility that the book of Esther also plays a role.

Not only are these critiques unable to dispute the suggestion that the book of Esther has narrative coherence, but there are more similarities than those given by Goulder. First, Bock notes that the banquet custom found in Matt 22:4, 19 and Esth 6:14 that invitations are sent out in advance to “get an initial commitment to come before sending a servant out on the day to inform the guests that it is time to come.”503 Second, I would like to extend the list of parallels between the book of Esther and Matt 22:1-14 with other details, including textual coherence, not noted by Goulder and Bock.

503 Darrell Bock, Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the portrait from the gospels (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), p.278
In both texts, prior to the wedding feast getting underway, the king calls forth into a banquet those whom he expects to come (Esth 1:11; Matt 22:3-4), who then refuse to appear (Esth 1:12; Matt 22:3-4), leading to the king being enraged ὠργίσθη (Esth LXX 1:12; Matt 22:7). In the Lukan equivalent, the host also becomes angry (ὀργισθεὶς) but, despite using this form elsewhere (Matt 18:34), Matthew has chosen to word his banquet account using the only form of ὀργίζω to be used in LXX Esther, also for the host of a banquet.

Furthermore, although the Lukan version refers to the servants as δοῦλοι exclusively, in Matt 22:13 the servants are not called δοῦλοι, but τοῖς διακόνοις. This is in a verse that is distinctly part of Matthew’s amendments and, significantly, is a word that has already been noted to have the potential for Estherian distinctiveness.\(^\text{504}\) Davies and Allison propose that this verse “is not part of the allegory but an added piece of eschatological teaching... the servants are distinct from the slaves and represent the same angels that do the judgmental work in the parables.”\(^\text{505}\) There is no need to think of this verse solely as an eschatological addition, however, as it fits within the parable as it is.\(^\text{506}\) In addition, when Matthew elsewhere speaks of ‘wailing and gnashing of teeth’, if he means that angels are involved he makes this explicit (13:41-42; 49-50) or is clear that the phrase fits into a parable on a human level (24:50-51; 25:30). The shift to διάκονος is unusual and is a word used by Matthew for human service (20:26; 23:11 are Matthew’s only other uses). Alongside the other narrative similarities and points of textual coherence, this word may represent a cluzograph of the book of Esther.


Another similarity is with the Matthaean detail about clothes in 22:11-2. Clothing is a repeated *leitmotif* in the book of Esther: Esther and Mordecai are repeatedly introduced by their choice of apparel, Mordecai’s exultation includes clothes that reflect the opening banquet. Of the haggadic amplifications, it is unsurprising that clothing features, most notably in the suggestion that Vashti was called to appear without any clothes. In the book of Esther and its reception, clothing is an important detail. This highlights the Matthaean addition, not found in Luke, that the clothing of the guest demonstrates his unworthiness. Clothing may be a traditional motif (e.g. Dan 5:7, 29; Rev 19:7-9), but the prominence of such a motif in Esther brings a parallel, albeit one with questions hanging over it, into the discourse.

A final consideration in the narrative similarities regards the absence of any explicit reference to God in the Hebrew text of Esther. This has perplexed and intrigued generations of readers, with some offering dubious examples of where the Tetragrammaton might be subtly written into the text in an acrostic nature. An example of this is in Esth 5:4 where *YHWH* is sneakily part of Esther’s speech that causes a change in the direction of the story; *יום המלך והמלך יבוא*.

Such arguments are highly speculative and a more traditional ancient interpretation saw ‘King Ahasuerus’ as referring to the human king, but ‘the king’ with no added name, as a reference to

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God.\textsuperscript{511} This line of thought is attributed to R. Yohanan (second generation Amora 250-290, d.279 CE)\textsuperscript{512} so it is hard to know if this was a tradition that Matthew would have known or if it was a later tradition and absent from Matthew’s thought. This would accord with Matthew’s theology as, in his accounts of Jesus’ parables, “a king usually stands in for God.”\textsuperscript{513} In all likelihood the blurring of ‘king’ with ‘God’ existed in the first century and is implicitly witnessed to in Matthew, and explicitly so in rabbinic writings on Esther. The Lukan equivalent (Luke 14:15-25) focusses much more on the excuses for not attending the banquet and has none of the elements that present the story in contrast to Esther; the host is a ‘great man’ rather than a king (a key word in the book of Esther), and there is no execution of the unworthy guest. The combined volume of parallels with the book of Esther, which are multiple and credible, provide a clear basis for the divergent retelling of the parable by Matthew as an Estherian parable that could be used at Purim.

It is the lectionary suggestion of Purim that is the second part of Goulder’s argument, and a factor that has been scrutinised,\textsuperscript{514} not least for its similarities to the earlier of work Aileen Guilding that has been largely refuted,\textsuperscript{515} Lectionary theories have, in general, been heavily criticised, for the scant evidence to support them.\textsuperscript{516} Be that as it


may, unlike Guilding’s work, Goulder’s theories are still debated and the suggestion that
the book of Esther has helped form the background to Matt 22:1-14 might be salvaged.
Goulder has recognised some of the limits to his approach and taken these on board,
whilst still maintaining that the overriding thesis carries weight.517

It is in Matthew’s account that the reader is told of the servants being killed, a
detail that connects this parable with the preceding pericope. Found in all the Synoptic
Gospels, the parable of the wicked tenants (Matt 21:33-46 // Mark 12:1-12 // Luke 20:9-
19) only appears alongside the parable of the banquet in Matthew. The redaction of
these parables is indicative of the motives of the evangelists. Placing these two parables
in tandem, which only Matthew does, particularly with the deaths involved suggests that
“the Matthaean parable adapts the preceding Marcan Husbandmen to the Purim
theme.”518 A possible reason Matthew’s ordering of the parables is to provide a text to
coincide with the festival of Purim. Purim was being celebrated at the time of the writing
of Matthew’s Gospel, and Matthew is offering an account of Jesus’ life, death, and
resurrection that can be presented to a Jewish community and read alongside a Jewish
calendar.

Goulder is right that the parable of the great feast in Matt 22:1-14 bears marks of
the Esther story, albeit “adjusted to fit the Christian message.”519 His chronology that
found that this parable occurring at 14th/15th Adar asks questions about the number of
Estherian resonances, particularly in the distinctively Matthaean details. If Matthew is
creatively using the book of Esther in his witness to the parable of the great feast, which

pp.137-152 (138-139).
Goulder, pp.1-11 (10).
is a credible hypothesis, he is not alone in this creative technique. Stanton and Orton have shown that Matthew and other Jewish writers are creative (re-)writers of texts.\footnote{520} One should not be surprised to find Matthew bringing fresh interpretation to the book of Esther, not just by taking phrases and replicating them, but by rewriting a parable to offer narrative similarities that echo the book of Esther. This is what one might call a Christianised précis of the story.

This is of critical importance because a re-telling of the parable, to provide a lection that aligns with Purim, indicates two things. First, this demonstrates that Matthew was familiar with the Esther story and that this was a text that made an impact in the way Matthew wrote his Gospel. Second, this would suggest that Matthew’s community are celebrating Purim and are thus also familiar with the Esther story. This should not be a surprise given the popularity of the book of Esther within Judaism of this period. This comparison would indicate that Matthew is paralleling the story of Esther for his own community, where those who attend are “his church members, ‘both good and bad’; and woe betide any Haman-type who is cast out.”\footnote{521} The way Matthew has chosen to record the events of Jesus’ life has been affected by the fact that the book of Esther was known to him and to his community.

This has implications for the methodological processes that are being tested. First, Goulder’s work can be seen in support of the cluzographic approach. The book of Esther, carried by the wave of Purim celebrations, has rippled into the context where a major event has taken place that is affecting the community. The crashing of this wave can be seen in this parable with a reshaping of a parable with Estherian textual splashes and ripples throughout. This is not how Goulder has described his work, but viewing it

\footnote{520} G. Stanton, ‘5 Ezra and Matthean Christianity’, \textit{JTS} 28 (1977), pp.67-83 (70); Orton, ‘Matthew and other Creative Jewish Writers’, pp.138-140.
\footnote{521} Goulder, ‘Sections and Lections in Matthew’, pp.79-96 (93).
from this angle may help to see how it the parable has been shaped. Not only does the cluzographic focus potentially help Goulder’s work but, in danger of circularity, his work helps see how the book of Esther might be viewed within cluzographic research. At least for the way Matthew’s writing has been affected by the ‘Esther wave’, the narrative of the book can be seen, not just a single event; the text as a whole has made a splash. Second, whilst the Estherian references are subtle in the text, there are many spread throughout, and are not confined to one aspect of the parable. Both the parable as a whole and the book of Esther as a whole have reacted together.

Considering this familiarity of the book of Esther, there are concerns as to how his community will respond to the account of Jesus’ life. For example, would the waves of the crucifixions of Jesus and Haman collide, leaving some ‘textual disturbance’? To a Jewish audience familiar with LXX Esther, the only scriptural reference to crucifixion is the crucifixion of Haman, the ‘enemy of the Jews’, and there is a possibility that Jesus may be perceived in light of this. Events from the fourth to the fifth centuries in Jewish-Christian relations, recorded by Socrates of Constantinople, attest to this parallel being drawn, where Jesus was mocked for being like Haman.\footnote{Socrates Hist. eccl. 7.16; T. Thornton, ‘The Crucifixion of Haman and the Scandal of the Cross’, JTS 37 (1986), pp.419-426 (424).} More will be said on this later, but for now this is useful to note that, without a theological framework to understand the crucifixion of Jesus in light of the book of Esther, it was possible to draw comparisons between Jesus and Haman that shaped the reception of the Christian claims about Jesus.
4.1.4 The Passion of Jesus and the Book of Esther

As this chapter will analyse the possibility that the book of Esther may be witnessed in Matthew’s passion narrative, there is cause to outline previous scholarship that has suggested an Estherian background to passion narratives. Cassel posited an echo of the book of Esther in John’s passion and Aus has done the same for Mark’s passion. The validity of their claims may indicate that multiple authors felt that the book of Esther could speak into the passion of Jesus, or that Jesus’ passion spoke into the book of Esther.

4.1.4.1 Paulus Cassel: The Book of Esther and John’s Passion

In his commentary, Cassel is unequivocal in saying that his opinion is that John 19:5 is written with Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:15 in mind. He acknowledges, with incredulity, that his opinion is not widely shared; “It is impossible that John should not have had this passage in mind, and it is strange that modern commentators of the NT have not referred to it.”\textsuperscript{523} Cassel links the passage through textual similarities that Mordecai went forth (ἐζήλθεν) and that Jesus did the same (ἐζήλθεν), dressed in similar attire. Both are wearing a crown (στέφανος), and a purple coloured item (πορφυροῦν). For Cassel, the way John writes about Jesus is framed from Mordecai, but the outcome is turned up on its head;

Jesus therefore came out from the palace of Pilate, as Mordecai from the palace of the Persian king. Mordecai with the golden crown and stately robe, and Jesus wearing the crown of thorns and also a purple garment; Mordecai triumphant, but Jesus mocked and scourged. Mordecai went out to avenge his people by imbruing his hands in the blood of their enemies; but Jesus went out to pour out his life-blood on the cross, in order to redeem all from eternal death.\textsuperscript{524}

\textsuperscript{523} Cassel, Esther, p.241.  
\textsuperscript{524} Cassel, Esther, p.241.
One can see resonances between Cassel’s interpretation and that of Aphrahat in their comparisons of Mordecai and Jesus, although they did not align neatly. For example, the robe in the book of Esther is a στολή whereas in John 19:5 it is a ἱμάτιον.

With Aphrahat’s interpretation in mind, it is possible that Cassel is right to think that the language used to describe the honouring of Mordecai has influenced John’s description of the mocking of Christ. The most significant difficulty with Cassel’s claim is the scant evidence; none of the words he highlights has a distinctively Estherian flavour to them. It is only in the narratival conjunction that some Estherian potential forms. This research does not have the scope to fully explore the place of the book of Esther in the John’s passion narrative, but it is within the realms of possibility that John has written the account of Jesus’ passion using language that is known from the book of Esther.

4.1.4.2 Roger Aus: The Book of Esther and Mark’s Passion

The passion of Jesus is a topic to which Aus returns with an analysis concerning the Estherian background to Mark’s passion in two scenes. The first is the account of the release of Barabbas in Mark 15:6-15 and the second is the mocking of Jesus in Mark 15:16-20. Both depend on breaks to the flow of the story. Aus suggests that v.15b follows v.15 most smoothly, and that v.15 moves neatly into v.20b and that both scenes, which have an Estherian background, have been inserted into a smooth narrative.525

As with much of his other research, Aus considers the Markan account of the release of Barabbas to be Christian haggadic writing. He notices some points of contact between the book of Esther and the passion narrative: the timing at Passover, the

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525 Aus, Barabbas and Esther, p.1; Aus, Death, Burial and Resurrection, p.253.
hanging/crucifixion (although this is his shortest section and he never notes that Σταυρωθήτω is a shared verbal form), and the use of Ps 22 (see §4.3.4.2 for a discussion of this).\textsuperscript{526} Aus does not make the expected comment that in both narratives someone is put to death (or even crucified) in place of another, Jesus for Barabbas, and Haman for Mordecai. Instead, Aus relies heavily on mediaeval interpretations of the book of Esther and on the use of Ps 22 in both the passion and in Estherian interpretation, a tradition which may not be sufficiently early. Aus’ presentation is interesting but lacks the essentials of early comparative sources and a robust methodology. He is, thus, not convincing that the book of Esther has framed the Barabbas scene in Mark 16:6-15. This is not to say that there are no similarities that may be picked up by later writers, just that the Markan account probably has a different source.

The second suggestion, that the book of Esther has helped shape the scene of the mocking of Christ, also warrants discussion. Aus argues that this pericope need not be part of the gospel account as Mark could quite easily continue from 15:15 into 15:21, and thus ponders its origins. There are many who share Aus’ conviction that this pericope is Markan addition, but this is not unanimous.\textsuperscript{527} Providing a brief overview of the positions on the historical reliability of 15:16-20 Collins comments that;

Bultmann argued that this scene is a secondary expansion... to explain and elaborate the mention of whipping in 15b... Others have concluded that this scene was part of the earliest recoverable passion narrative... It is certainly credible that soldiers mocked Jesus, but the details of the scene cannot be assumed to be historically reliable, especially since they develop the literary theme of the ironic kingship of Jesus.\textsuperscript{528}

\textsuperscript{526} Aus, \textit{Barabbas and Esther}, pp.7-14.
\textsuperscript{527} Cf. Ernest Best, \textit{The Temptation & The Passion} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.; SNTSMS 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.96.
\textsuperscript{528} Adela Yarbro Collins, \textit{Mark} (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007), p.723.
Whether or not Mark has received the tradition of the mocking of Jesus, he almost certainly has presented this information from his own perspective with his own motives, and one may speculate as to what they are and how his material indicates what these may be. Aus’ arguments are not dissimilar to those may by Cassel, so will not be restated as the textual similarities are the similar.

Mark’s presentation of the mocking is an ironic way of displaying Jesus’ kingship. Here the royal imagery comes to the fore in Mark’s Gospel and form the crowd, the “taunts are ironically true.” Furthermore;

The irony is developed in almost allegorical fashion in this pericope. The mockery Jesus suffers at the hands of the soldiers represents an extraordinary complex of surface and deep significances… Who can miss the sarcastic pathos of the cloak, or the crown of thorns, or the spittle?... Like the trial, it represents a perfect masque of the truth it parodies.

Without other aspects of an Estherian background to Mark’s gospel, one may wonder why Mordecai would be invoked, in a very subtle way in the scene where Jesus is mocked? Further research into this would be helpful, but as it is there is little to suggest that Mark has been influenced by the book of Esther in his passion narrative. This scene portrays the humiliating experience faced by Jesus without need to resort to Mordecai’s honouring.

4.1.5 Conclusions About Existing Suggestions of ‘Esther in Matthew’

Although there is not much literature, there is scholarship that proposes Estherian influence on the Gospel of Matthew and on the passion narratives. The latter of which, on the passion narratives, has not been especially convincing. This is partly

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529 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, p.56.
down to a lack of methodological framework to analyse the points of Estherian resonance. It is, therefore, of a help that this research is trying to hone such a methodology, but the research is also demonstrating the need for a methodology.

On the other hand, Goulder’s hypothesis that Matt 22:1-14 has been shaped by the book of Esther to be told at Purim, is a hypothesis that has persisted. Goulder has not resorted to very late texts, but has shown how the book of Esther might have been influential on Matthew, as well as why this may be the case. The Estherian links are stronger than Goulder’s writing would suggest. As such the proposed criteria of distinctiveness and obstacle have been supported by Goulder.

The rest of this research will need to be careful about the dates of secondary ancient literature to justify their use. The proposed methodology does not need to be significantly adapted at this stage. All that needs to be said is that Estherian distinctiveness to Σταυρωθήτω will need to be thoroughly evaluated to assess how strong a link can be made between the book of Esther, rather than any other text, and Σταυρωθήτω.

4.2 Recognising an Estherian Cluzograph in Matthew
4.2.1 A new suggestion of ‘Esther in Matthew’

This research does not exist in a scholarly vacuum, therefore, as there are suggestions of the book of Esther being brought into conversation with the Gospel of Matthew and with passion narratives in general. Nevertheless, to begin a discussion on the possibility that σταυρόω in EsthLXX 7:9; E:18 [8:12r], and Σταυρωθήτω (EsthLXX 7:9) in particular, might have had a direct effect on Matthew’s passion is a bold new direction for intertextual research.
There is no suggestion that Matthew’s intention to record the trial of Jesus was based on the book of Esther, which would be easily disputed. This chapter will look at the way in which this record of the trial of Jesus was written as the manner in which an event is recorded can indicate a particular interpretation of that event. This textual comparison invites the researcher to ask the question, *when the Gospel according to Matthew was written, to what extent did the narrative in the book of Esther provide a lens through which to interpret the trial and crucifixion of Jesus?*

Each of the Evangelists present the call for Jesus’ execution in slightly different language (the Fourth Gospel has been included alongside the Synoptic Gospels for the sake of linguistic comparison, although the events surrounding the call for crucifixion are different);

- **Matt 27:22-23**  *Let him be crucified*  Σταυρωθήτω... σταυρωθήτω
- **Mark 15:13-14**  *Crucify him*  Σταύρωσον αὐτόν
- **Luke 23:21-23**  *Crucify, crucify him*  Σταύρου σταύρου αὐτόν
- **John 19:6**  *Crucify crucify*  Σταύρωσον σταύρωσον

All of the evangelists report the call for crucifixion, be it from the crowd, the crowd and ruling priests, or from the priests and scribes. Common to all accounts of Jesus’ passion is that the desire is made known for Jesus to be executed by crucifixion, the so-called “slave’s punishment.”\(^{531}\) It is the differences, however, rather than the similarities that are striking, as the only point of textual similarity lies between Mark and John and even they are not identical.

With Markan primacy in the Synoptic Gospels, one might expect Matthew and Luke to either follow Mark as a textual source, or follow another shared source. As all

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three evangelists use differing approaches here, neither of these options appears to have been followed: Matthew has not followed Mark’s text as a source, nor has Matthew joined with Luke in borrowing text from another source.

In disagreeing with both Mark and Luke, it is conspicuous that the only other scriptural example of a third person aorist passive imperative form of \( \sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omega\ ) appears in \text{Esth}^{\text{LXX}} \text{7:9}. In \text{LXX} Esther the call for crucifixion only occurs once, whereas in Matthew after the call in 27:22 (\( \Sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\varrho\omega\delta\eta\tau\omicron\omega \)), Pilate asks again and the call is affirmed with a second \( \Sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\varrho\omega\delta\eta\tau\omicron\omega \). There are several possibilities to be explored when considering the similarities between the call for Haman to be executed and Matthew’s presentation of the call for Jesus to be crucified;

1. Matthew and Luke both had access to a, now lost, Gospel source. Matthew has followed the text of this source and it is Luke that, for whatever reason, has decided to present the call for crucifixion in a different way.
2. This is a question of writing style; Matthew has a stylistic preference for aorist passive imperatives, and so has amended his source text to give it a ‘Matthaean flavour.’
3. Matthew is drawing from another textual source, which has coloured Matthew’s presentation of the passion of Christ.
4. In his presentation of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Matthew has, consciously or unconsciously, taken inspiration from the book of Esther. The call for Haman to be crucified and the wider themes of the book are colouring Matthew’s interpretation of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, and thus have been influential in his decision of how to recount the events surrounding Jesus.

In the following section I shall explore each of these four possibilities. The previous chapter established that \( \Sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\varrho\omega\delta\eta\tau\omicron\omega \) has the potential for Estherian distinctiveness, but this section will explore that potential. Based on the available evidence does it seem that, when Matthew uses \( \Sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\varrho\omega\delta\eta\tau\omicron\omega \), it is a word that carries Estherian distinctiveness or is it used with other points of reference?
Could a, now lost, Gospel Tradition be a Source Text for \( \Sigma \tau \alpha \upsilon \omega \theta \varepsilon \tau \omega \)

This first hypothesis recognises that Matthew and Luke have a shared textual source in addition to the Gospel of Mark. As Matthew and Luke both disagree here, in addition to disagreeing with Mark, one possibility is that Matthew has stuck closely to this shared source – providing the form \( \Sigma \tau \alpha \upsilon \omega \theta \varepsilon \tau \omega \) – and it is Luke who has decided to diverge from this by saying \( \sigma \tau \alpha \upsilon \rho \omicron \ \alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \). If so, the question would be why has Matthew retained a distinctively Estherian word whilst Luke has resisted both this and Mark’s account?

Comparing such a source to Q, there are occasions where it can be shown that “when Matthew and Luke disagree, Luke generally preserves the order of Q,”\(^\text{532}\) whereas Matthew has a “penchant for rearrangement.”\(^\text{533}\) This might suggest that, when differences occur between Matthew and Luke it is Matthew who has taken the greater effort to redact and edit the source(s) available to him. When Matthew does make emendations, these may serve to offer some uniformity to the text, and to link with the Jewish tradition.\(^\text{534}\) A key concern for Matthew is to demonstrate, to his primarily Jewish audience, that Jesus is the Messiah. This is done from the outset in the infancy narrative (Matt 1:1, 16-18; 2:4), occurs throughout the Gospel (11:2; 16:16-20) and re-emerges strongly in the trial of Jesus (Matt 26:68; 27:22).\(^\text{535}\) Matthew’s Gospel twice replaces ‘King of the Jews’, found in Mark 15:9, 12, with explicit references to the messianic nature of Christ (27:17, 22).\(^\text{536}\) This emphasis on the messiahship of Jesus is an


\(^{536}\) M. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The rejected-prophet motif in Matthaean redaction* (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), p.78.
indication that, in the case of Matt 27:22 and Luke 23:21, it is Matthew that has gone to greater editorial lengths than Luke. Not only is it more common for Matthew, rather than Luke, to be the one to make amendments, but in the passion narrative, and the verse in question, this is borne out too. This is done with regards to a primarily Jewish audience, to consciously reflect the Jewish scriptures and faith.

The suggestion that Luke has taken efforts to alter a source text for the call for crucifixion is less likely than the suggestion that Matthew has done this, but is possible. If Luke has stayed close to the shared source and Matthew has intentionally opted to import a distinctively Estherian word then there is a question as to why, with options available, Matthew has chosen the Estherian term rather than following Mark or the shared source? As Σταυρωθήτω has not come from Mark, it is a deliberate choice for Matthew, whether this is from a shared source with Luke or, more likely, a choice beyond both Mark and the shared source. Matthew, not Luke, is the one who makes emendations in 27:22 with regards to the epithets given to Jesus and is probably also the one who makes changes to the words used to call for the crucifixion of Jesus. The hypothesis that Matthew has taken his language from a shared source with Luke is not only unlikely, and unprovable, but does not resolve the concerns that Matthew has chosen to use a word which is distinctively Estherian.

4.2.1.2 Could Σταυρωθήτω be a Matthaean Stylistic Preference?

If then, as it seems, Matthew has decided to make textual changes and intentionally use ‘Σταυρωθήτω’, the follow-up question is why would he do so, and what is his motivation? This verb conjugation is more complex than the simpler forms found in the other gospels. One line of argument for the exact wording found in Matthew’s
account could be stylistic preference. Matthew uses a third person aorist passive imperative, which differs to the other Gospel writers.

Luz sees no real difference between the meaning between Mark and Matthew and puts the verbal form in Matthew down to the author’s “preference for the second aorist imperative passive.” If so, rather than being distinctively Estherian, the verbal form might be distinctively Matthaean. The use of the aorist imperative passive “may reflect a Hebrew or Aramaic construction,” and thus may fit perfectly well with an attempt by Matthew to reflect this, and give his text a Semitic flavour. The use of an aorist imperative passive is used in Mark 7:34 to reflect an Aramaic original, where Διανοίξθητι (be opened) is given as a translation for ἐφφάθα. Matthew’s use of this verbal conjugation may reflect a similar attempt to translate a Hebrew/Aramaic phrase.

Other stylistic suggestions are placed on the possibility that Matthew offers a more “official” tone to the crowd’s call, reflecting a “legal decision.” This proposition is unlikely; rather than “juridical language... [this] can be taken as effort to devolve Pilate’s guilt onto the crowds instead.” Even so, the question would remain as to why Matthew would prioritise the accurate representation of the words of the crowds at the risk of a bringing to mind the crucifixion of Haman, especially when other phrasing is attested? This is also only a valid question if one presumes that this stylistic use and Estherian influence are mutually exclusive, which is also not certain.

541 Harrington, Matthew, p.391.
As it is, more needs to be said on the verbal stylistics of Matthew’s writing. Below is a graph that helps show the extent to which the Gospel of Matthew most makes use of the third person singular aorist passive imperative, even when all examples from Luke-Acts and the Pauline corpus are taken together.\textsuperscript{543}

This would appear to be a watertight argument. Matthew’s gospel quite clearly demonstrates a preference for the third person aorist imperative passive; almost half of the 19 examples\textsuperscript{544} in the New Testament are found in Matthew’s Gospel. This helps explain why one finds such a verbal form in Matt 27:22 and not in the parallel passages in the other synoptic Gospels. It is to be expected that Matthew would emend the verb to fit with his own style of writing, which is clearly demonstrated.

An anomaly arises with the proposal that Matthew had a preference for the aorist passive imperative, when one turns to the story of the centurion’s servant (Matt 8:5-13 //

\textsuperscript{542} As I was unable to find this information in any literature, to obtain these results I have systematically gathered the Book, Chapter and Verse references of every 3.s.aor.pass.imv verb found in NA28, and collated the information into graph form.

\textsuperscript{544} Matt 6:9, 10; 8:13; 9:29; 10:13; 15:28; 26:42; 27:22, 23; Luke 7:7; 11:2; Acts 1:20; 2:38; Rom 11:9; 1 Cor 7:11; Phil 4:5; Jas 4:9; Rev 22:11 (x2).
Luke 7:1-10). In the request for the servant to be healed, Luke uses an aorist imperative passive, ‘let him be healed’ ἰαθῆτω, but Matthew does not. When Matthew, who supposedly favours this conjugation, relays the same speech he does so with the future indicative passive ἰαθῆσεται ‘he will be healed’.\(^545\) Admittedly, a number of early MSS show a correspondence between Matthew and Luke\(^546\) so one cannot speak with absolute certainty that Luke is at variance with Matthew here, although lectio difficilior would agree with NA\(^28\) that Luke, not Matthew, opts for an aorist passive imperative. Omanson helps clarify this by saying the imperative in Luke 7:7 offers something of an arrogant tone, which was softened by later copyists to accord with Matthew, indicating that Luke has opted for an aorist passive imperative whereas Matthew has not.\(^547\) The effect in Luke could also be that the centurion speaks the exact words he is hoping to hear from Jesus.\(^548\) This peculiarity is heightened by the fact that Matthew uses an aorist imperative passive only a few verses later in 8:13.

The argument of Matthaean preference for this conjugation is further weakened when looking at all aorist passive imperatives. When one looks beyond the third person singular forms, to include examples of second person singular and second and third person plural forms (there are no first-person examples in the New Testament, singular or plural), Matthew no longer appears to be dominant in using these verbs. This is shown in the graph below where all aorist passive imperatives in the New Testament are placed alongside the third person singular forms from the above graph.\(^549\)

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\(^{545}\) Matt 8:8; Luke 7:7.


\(^{549}\) As with the earlier information, when gathering all 3.s.aor.impv.pass. verbal forms, I also collected the references of every aor.impv.pass. verbal form. Having done so I have organised the information for 3.s, 3.pl, 2.s, 2.pl and collated all of this information into the graph shown.
When all examples are accounted for, one cannot continue to claim that Matthew, any more than the other New Testament writers, has a stylistic preference for the aorist passive imperative. Luke takes a clear lead, using nineteen aorist passive imperatives. When the length of each text is taken into consideration there is no change to this conclusion. One finds that there is, on average, one example of an aorist passive imperative verbal form in every 61 verses in Luke, compared to 1 in every 71 verses in Matthew or 1 in every 113 verses in Mark.\textsuperscript{550}

The other suggestion for this conjugation, that has been offered by Harrington, is that Matthew’s editing of Mark intends to emphasise the role played by the religious leaders and the crowds in calling for the execution. For Harrington, the verb “captures the ‘official role’ played by the crowds in passing sentence.”\textsuperscript{551} Whilst being a possible line of argument any imperative conjugation may have carried enough authority in the text. What is clear from this analysis is that it is not possible to state categorically that

\textsuperscript{550} 1 Peter shows the clearest preference for the aorist passive imperative, using one for every 21 verses, but as this section is focussing on the Gospel Passion accounts, this has not been included above.

\textsuperscript{551} Harrington, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew}, p.389.
Matthew has a stylistic preference for the aorist passive imperative. A stylistic preference cannot be the sole reason, if reason at all, for Matthew’s unique Gospel, and New Testament, example of σταυρωθήτω. It must also be stated that, even if the aorist passive imperative forms part of Matthew’s literary style, this does not close down the possibility that the book of Esther is also an influence on Matthew’s writing in 27:22-23, as the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

4.2.1.3 Could a non-Canonical Text a Potential Source?

As there is no strong enough reason to believe that Matthew’s choice of Σταυρωθήτω came from an internal influence, one must look to external factors, and other texts that might have influenced Matthew. Beyond the New Testament and the book of Esther (which will be discussed further down) there are numerous references to crucifixion (σταυρόω) in antiquity. In addition, there are numerous examples to executions using language that is less precise but may also refer to crucifixion, such as ἀνασταυρόω (suspend), ἀνασκολοπίζω (impale), κρεμάνυμμι (suspend/hang), and ἀποτυμπανίζω (expose on a board/beam).552 As Matthew has, for an unknown reason, amended the textual tradition regarding the call for crucifixion, the extant texts and their vocabulary for crucifixion demonstrate a broad arena for creative possibility.

As it is, none of these texts provide any help in discerning why Matthew has chosen Σταυρωθήτω, a rare form that, as far I as have been able to discover, does not appear in any other text in Classical or Koine Greek. I am aware of only one other aorist passive imperative conjugation of σταυρόω in addition to those in LXX Esther and the

Gospel of Matthew.\textsuperscript{553} This example comes from the 43\textsuperscript{rd} letter of Basil of Caesarea (c.329-379CE), a short letter entitled ‘Admonition to the Young,’ in which he writes:

\begin{verbatim}
νεκρώθητι τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, σταυρώθητι τῷ Θεῷ
Be dead to sin, be crucified to God.\textsuperscript{554}
\end{verbatim}

This text does not help this discussion as the text is far too late, and the verb is not the exact form found in Matthew’s Gospel. I am unaware of any non-scriptural texts that could be reasonably considered to have been influential in the choice of σταυρώθητω in Matt 27:22-23.

In addition to the lack of textual similarity in any other texts on crucifixion, there is a further reason non-scriptural texts are unlikely to have influenced Matthew’s text. Graeco-Judaic literature refers to crucifixion as a means of displaying corpses, but not as a means of execution, and therefore do not represent crucifixion as it applies to Jesus.

One near contemporaneous writing to Matthew’s Gospel is the short text known as The Assumption of Moses. This apocalyptic text speaks in grave terms about the ‘king of kings’ who shall “crucify those who acknowledge their circumcision,”\textsuperscript{555} as one of many horrors to face the faithful. Dated to the first half of the first century CE, it would seem that this is a reference to the events that took place under Antiochus IV.\textsuperscript{556} Josephus also references crucifixion at this time and for him they are noteworthy for their extremity as “while still alive and breathing, [the Jews] were crucified.”\textsuperscript{557}

\textsuperscript{553} This is after having searched the Perseus Digital Library of Tufts University, published versions of Classical Greek texts and those reprinted in discussions on crucifixion in the ancient world; D. Chapman, Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010 [2008 WUNT 2.244]), pp.7-32; Cook, Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World, pp.2-49; L. D. Merino, ‘La Crucifixión en la Antigua Literatura Judía’, Estudios Eclesiásticos 51 (1976), pp.5-27 (7-9); http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/


\textsuperscript{555} As. Mos. 8.1; W. Ferrar (transl.), The Assumption of Moses with Introduction and notes (London: SPCK, 1918), p.33.

\textsuperscript{556} P. Winter, On the Trial of Jesus (SJ 1; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961), p.63.

Jewish law had “no provision”\textsuperscript{558} for crucifying while alive, although the laws of other communities did permit this. In the Talmud, b.Sanh. 46b outlines legitimate rabbinic practices, which are contrasted with those of pagan governments, the latter which “first hangs [or crucifies, תולין] and then kills.”\textsuperscript{559} The execution applied to Jesus (and Haman) is not in accordance with rabbinic practice, but clearly demonstrates the local governance is following its own ethics regarding execution. This helps show why the sons of Haman are hanged/impaled post mortem (Esth 9:14), as this is at the imperative of the Jews in the story rather than Ahasuerus. Therefore, it seems that there is a difference between the תולין of Haman and of his sons. One is undertaken by Ahasuerus under Achaemenid mores, and the other by the Jews under their own. In the former case תולין describes the means of execution, and in the latter it refers to the treatment of the corpse, although the actions look similar.

The Hebrew Bible acknowledges this development. In Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 2:23 the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is the apparatus used for the execution of Bigthan and Teresh, and later is the word used to refer to the device built by Haman for Mordecai.\textsuperscript{560} Every single use of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל in Esther refers to a gallows/impalement pole upon which an execution will take place. When בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is used in conjunction with an execution, whilst there is a level of ambiguity to the modern reader, it does not refer to the means of execution elsewhere, but the apparatus used to expose the corpses of those already dead.\textsuperscript{561}

\textsuperscript{558} Winter, On the Trial of Jesus, p.62.
\textsuperscript{560} Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 5:14; 6:4; 7:9, 10; 8:17; 9:13, 25.
\textsuperscript{561} Cf. Gen 40:19; Josh 8:29; Ballentine considers that Josh 8:29 refers to the execution of the living but this is unlikely, particularly in light of Josh 10:26, and the king of Ai would have been killed first and then his corpse would have been hung up on the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. Bryan Paradise, ‘Food for Thought: The Septuagint translation of Genesis 1.11-12’, in J. Martin & P. Davies, A Word in Season: Essays in honour of William McKane (JSOTSup 42; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1986), pp.177-204 (185); Debra Ballentine, ‘What Ends Might Ritual Violence Accomplish? The case of Rechab and Baanah in 2 Samuel 4’, in Saul Olyan (ed.), Ritual Violence in the Hebrew
In Philo’s works, too, the fact that it is those who are living who are crucified is of note. He remarks that murderers would be executed and subsequently their corpses would be crucified (Spec. Laws 3.151-152). In his short treatise Against Flaccus, however, he recounts the anti-Judaic actions that formed part of the birthday celebrations of Flaccus Avillius in Alexandria in c.38CE. Recognising the extremity of the celebrations, Philo records that “Flaccus gave no orders to take down those who had died on the cross. Instead he ordered the crucifixion of the living.” All of this contrasts with remarks on crucifixion like those found in the late first/early second century Shepherd of Hermas (Herm.Vis. 3.2.1) from a strongly gentile community, in which crucifixions had come to be seen as “normal Roman modes of punishment for lower-class persons.”

The difference between rabbinic law and non-rabbinic law concerning hanging as a means of execution or the post-mortem displaying of a corpse that is noted in the Talmud can be seen in the biblical text. The prescriptions in Deut 21:22 concerning execution and hanging place the act of hanging subsequent to the execution, not as a means of execution. Outside of the book of Esther, the only other biblical references to hanging as a means of execution are when this is carried out according to the laws of gentile communities. With two possible exceptions (11QT LXIV.6-13 [11Q19], which swaps the order of execution and hanging found in Deut 21:22, and the supposed execution of the witches of Ashkelon in an “emergency situation...[with no possibility of an

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563 Flaccus 84; Philo, Philo: Vol. 9, p.349.
564 C. Osiek, The Shepherd of Hermas (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), pp.20, 63.
565 Cf. Gen 40:22; Josh 8:29; 2 Sam 21:6-12; see also Ezra 6:11 (מצלע; Schäfer, Jesus in the Talmud, p.167.
ordinary trial⁵⁶⁷) there are no texts that speak of Jewish communities using crucifixion as a means of execution. There is only the reiteration that the execution happens first (by stoning), and then the corpse may be hung up. In addition to the absence of a text that uses an aorist passive conjugation of σταυρόω that could have influenced Matthew, there are no extant texts that show Jewish communities calling for crucifixion as a form of execution.

None of the other abovementioned texts use the conjugation of Σταυρωθήτω. Whilst there are many references in antiquity to crucifixion, this is unsurprising, due to how widespread the method of execution was.⁵⁶⁸ These texts demonstrate different positions on how crucifixion would be applied, and how this was accepted in different communities, but they do not provide a lens through which to read Matthew’s passion intertextually. Matthew’s passion is unusual, both for its use of Σταυρωθήτω but also for the fact that Matthew is a Jewish author writing about crucifixion to a Jewish community and speaks of the crucifixion of a living person.

4.2.1.4 Could Matthew be Responding to Estherian Ripples?

As there are no other texts that can contend to be a source behind Matthew’s unique phraseology or circumstances in 27:22-23, one must take seriously the possibility that the book of Esther is in the background to Matthew’s passion. The fact that the LXX uses σταυρόω to describe the execution method applied to Haman is unusual, although not out of place. In Graeco-Roman culture, crucifixion was widespread, and in Persia, more than elsewhere, it was a punishment “imposed primarily on high officials.”⁵⁶⁹

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⁵⁶⁹ Hengel, Crucifixion, p.87.
Unlike the associations in other contexts to it being a ‘slave’s punishment.’ In order to take seriously the proposal that Matthew’s choice of wording has been influenced by the call for Haman to be crucified, more needs to be said on this after which it would be helpful if other elements in Matthew’s Gospel can be shown to resonate with the book of Esther.

Modern readings may be separating different modes of execution more than the ancient world did, however. Impalement on a gallows was a known form of execution in the Achaemenid Empire and some, such as Levenson, believe that the MT too refers to a form of impalement.\textsuperscript{570} This would then help cement the idea in the minds of the Second Temple interpreters that Haman was impaled/crucified. This interpretation was not universally adopted, but certainly existed at this time.\textsuperscript{571} It is only at the actual act of execution, and once in reporting the execution in the additional material, when LXX Esther uses the verb σταυρόω. All preparations made by Haman are for the hanging (κρεμάννυμι), as are all other references to Haman’s death.\textsuperscript{572} This word κρεμάννυμι is the one used in AT Esther, and could refer to being hanged. When used to refer to capital punishment, κρεμάννυμι is an ambiguous term and is also used to refer to the crucifixion of Jesus and of those who were crucified with him.\textsuperscript{573}

In recent years some scholars have highlighted a long-censored passage of the Babylonian Talmud which speaks of the execution of ישו הנוּטֶרִי (Yeshu the Notzri/Jesus


This account, from b.Sanh. 43a, appears to have been censored for its place in Jewish-Christian relations, and while extant texts are not early, the passage in question likely dates to the second century as a tradition that was considered authoritative “in the early third century.” This is not an attempt to historically record the execution but is a standard Talmudic text, and thus “a didactic retelling of past events with little regard for historical accuracy.” What is relevant to this discussion is the verb used to reference the type of execution, an execution that would have been known to have been crucifixion. For the method of capital punishment depicted here, b.Sanh. 43a1-2 twice says תלאוהו, ‘they hanged him,’ using the same root verb (תלה) that is used in MT Esther for the executions. This would further indicate the lack of clarity given by the verb and the multifaceted meaning of the word meaning, to hang/impale/crucify, just as with κρεμάσσω.

The Pesher Nahum (4QpNah [4Q169]) refers to the execution of living men using the verb תלה in its commentary from the second half of the first century BCE on Nahum. Since its discovery and first translation, there has been uncertainty over the precise meaning in this context, should one understand this to be a reference to hanging or to crucifixion (or even to impalement)? Whilst complete agreement amongst scholars is unlikely, and the ambiguity may not have been of concern to the Qumran community, the consensus is that 4Q169 uses תלה to refer to crucifixion, rather than hanging on a

577 Instone-Brewer, ‘Jesus of Nazareth’s Trial’, p.275.
gallows. Due to the references to Demetrius and Antiochus, crucifixion is the most likely meaning in this context. Dated to the “second half of the first century BCE,” 4Q169 provides a further example, and one that predates the New Testament era, of how a Jewish literary community records the crucifixion of living people as a cruel and unusual punishment.

A similar example where untechnical vocabulary is used to refer to crucifixion can be found in 1 Pet 2:24. None would doubt that the tree ‘ξύλον’ refers to the cross on which Jesus was crucified. More technical vocabulary would be σταυρός, but ξύλον is an acceptable, albeit less precise, alternative that draws on Deut\textsuperscript{LXX} 21:22-23. This demonstrates the blurred line between hanging and crucifying; both are executions on a wooden frame. The close textual link that exists between Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 7:9 and Matt. 27:22-23 may be compared with the phrase ἐπὶ ξύλου. This phrase does occur in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:7 as a translation of עִלֶּץ, as well as in 1 Pet 2:24, but also appears in other texts (Gen\textsuperscript{LXX} 40:19; Josh\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:29). NA\textsuperscript{28} does suggest that Matthew draws on Deut 21:22-23, but when Joseph of Arimathea wishes to take down the corpse before the Sabbath (Matt 27:58), Matthew looks elsewhere for scriptural language to speak of the crucifixion itself.

This ambiguity is reflected in the linguistic background of תלה, which is probably derived from the Akkadian tâlu, and other Semitic equivalents, meaning ‘tree.’ The Hebrew תלה has then subsequently been applied to a mode of execution where a tree is a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[580] Chapman, \textit{Crucifixion}, p.15.
\item[582] Vermes, \textit{The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls}, p.504.
\item[583] Cf. Matt 27:40; 1 Cor 1:17; Heb 12:2.
\item[584] A. Joseph, \textit{A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter} (LNTS 440; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.110.
\end{footnotes}
key component. Modern concerns with the exact means of death (asphyxiation, loss of blood, trauma, etc.) are not found to the same degree in literature that uses ריליה. As both crucifixion and hanging involve the raising of a person onto a tree, this one term can convey both modes of execution, even though the processes involved differ.

The vocabulary for the execution in the Semitic texts has imprecise meanings, just that at different periods of history this would have been viewed either as an extreme form of execution, normally reserved for post-mortem treatment of a corpse, or a horrific but accepted form of execution. Whilst there was a mixed interpretation in Judaism about the means of execution given to Haman, Christians in the first centuries understood Purim as the celebration of the crucifixion of Haman. The crucifixion came to be the symbol that represented the deliverance and salvation of the people.

By the early fifth century there are isolated examples of this correspondence leading to anti-Christian actions, mockery of Christ and violence against Christians, where Christ becomes aligned closely with Haman in the minds of some Jews, as an enemy deserving of mockery. The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus records a horrendous encounter between Jews and Christians, c.415-419 CE when Purim festivities turn into a tie of mocking and abuse of Christians:

The Jews... impelled by drunkenness were guilty of scoffing at Christians and even Christ himself. In derision of the cross, and those who put their trust in the Crucified One, they seized a Christian boy, and having bound him to a cross, began to laugh and sneer at him. But in a little while they were carried away with their fury, and they scourged the child until he died under their hands.

The Christians’ ‘so-called’ saviour is viewed with the same derision as Haman, the enemy of the Jews.

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This is of concern to Socrates as his account from c.415CE follows changes enacted by Theodosius II. Collated in 438CE, the Theodosian Code records legislation that has been passed from the early fourth century and in section 16.8.18 (408CE) this explicitly refers to the potential for seeing Haman as a mockery of Jesus:

The governors of the provinces shall prohibit the Jews from setting fire to Aman in memory of his past punishment, in a certain ceremony of their festival, and from burning with sacrilegious intent a form made to resemble the sacred cross in contempt of the Christian faith, lest they mingle the sign of our faith with their jests.590

As Socrates’ account takes place a few years after the prohibition of having effigies of Haman, this explains why there is no effigy in the *Ecclesiastical History*, but also that there would be memories of such effigies as a normal part of Purim celebrations. This also demonstrates that, as far as Socrates was concerned, Theodosius was justified in enacting the law as the equation of Haman with Jesus was not just feared but was evidenced.

Similar representations of the crucifixion of Haman and Jesus are found in Jewish thought into the mediaeval period. There are examples of Byzantine Jewish poetry that parallel Jesus and Haman, both “executed during Passover.”591 This poetry notes the peculiarity that Jesus was known as ‘Christ,’ but was “nailed with spikes.”592 Jesus – an unusual topic in Jewish poetry – is introduced in the poem to be paralleled with Haman. This is not the sole mediaeval parallel either.

592 Münz-Manor, ‘Carnivalesque Ambivalence and the Christian Other,’ p.833
Tg. Esth II. 7:9 remarks how the trees objected to being used as a gallows for Haman, with the exception of the cedar tree.\textsuperscript{593} This reluctance on the part of the trees is used by \textit{Toledot Yeshu} to describe the reaction of trees to being the wood used in Jesus’ crucifixion. Both texts here use the Aramaic צלב which has the same ambiguities as תלה and κρεμάννυμι.\textsuperscript{594} In this commentary it becomes clear that Haman is still viewed as an “archetype of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{595} The witness of Tg. Esth II 7:9 becomes important in this regard. The reference to Bar-Pandera, widely accepted as a cipher for Jesus, that occurs here shows that Jesus is brought into the Esther narrative at the point of Haman’s crucifixion. This cannot be coincidental, but point to an interpretative tradition that aligned these characters. This highlights the potential difficulty faced by Matthew’s community; what if Jesus is viewed as nothing more than an Hamanesque enemy?

These later interpretations do not directly help an assessment of the reception of the book of Esther in early Christianity, although they do highlight some of the difficulties that arose through the crucifixion. Moreover, they demonstrate that comparisons have been readily made between Haman and Jesus to make different claims to those expected of the evangelists. This reinforces the peculiarity of the work of Matthew in aligning his vocabulary to that of Esther. There is evidence for the kinds of difficult interpretations that Matthew may have had to negotiate.

The act of preaching Christ crucified was not an easy task, and such a difficulty was heightened when the early evangelists came to preach Christ crucified to a Jewish audience. Many objections were raised; the crucified individual being accursed and the

\textsuperscript{593} Grossfeld, \textit{The Two Targums of Esther}, pp.181-182.
\textsuperscript{595} Newman, ‘The Death of Jesus in the \textit{Toledot Yeshu}’, pp.59-79 (73).
problems with a dead Messiah are clear examples of this.\textsuperscript{596} A significant, but often overlooked, barrier to accepting the crucified Christ, however, was the crucifixion of Haman.

Aus does mention the crucifixions in both texts in the context of addressing the similarities between Ps 22 and Mark’s passion, and suggests that Haman’s crucifixion is a positive;

The motif of ‘being crucified’ on a ‘cross’ obviously made the Esther narrative attractive to Jewish Christians in order to help describe Jesus’ being crucified on a cross.\textsuperscript{597}

It seems unlikely that the crucifixion of Haman would have been attractive to the earliest followers of Christianity as it lends itself to a critique of the claims of Christians. The crucifixion of Haman was the only scriptural point of reference to crucifixion (σταυρόω); the only subject of crucifixion in the LXX is Haman the ‘enemy of the Jews’.\textsuperscript{598} There is nothing attractive in proclaiming the crucifixion of Jesus to those whose minds might turn to the crucifixion of Haman and thus see Jesus as the thwarted enemy who had plotted for their destruction. That Haman was portrayed as the enemy \emph{par excellence} can be seen in his ethnic designations in MT and LXX Esther, where he is described as a representative of whichever group was seen antagonistically (an Agagite or a Macedonian). To use the words of Paul, this was a ‘stumbling-block’ to accepting a crucified Messiah.\textsuperscript{599} It is striking then to find that Matthew has adapted the verbal forms of his textual sources to align with the account of Haman’s crucifixion, suggesting the possibility that Haman, and his crucifixion, act as an \emph{obstacle}.

\textsuperscript{597} Aus, \textit{Death, Burial, and Resurrection}, p.246.
\textsuperscript{599} Cf. 1 Cor 1:23.
Conclusions Concerning the Source for Σταυρωθήτω

One of the key first tasks of early Christian preachers was to “deal with the problem of Christ’s death,” something that was complicated by the parallels with the book of Esther. Rather than playing down the connection between Jesus and Haman, to make the message of the crucified Messiah more palatable, Matthew appears to embrace this connection. It is striking that it should be Matthew, the evangelist behind the so-called “Jewish Gospel,” who would emphasise this, and begs the question ‘why?’ One must wonder if in fact Matthew found himself under some sort of obligation to address this challenge; rather than leave it to later interpreters to conflate Jesus with Haman, did Matthew feel the need to face the potential disaster head-on?

In his use of the Old Testament, Matthew demonstrates that he is keen to “link incidents in Jesus’ life with explicit Old Testament texts.” In doing this Matthew did not merely wish to restate those things already written down, but offer “fresh interpretation” to those writings. Therein lies the question, is the similarity between Matt 27:22, 23 and Esth 7:9 coincidental, or an example of this fresh interpretation that links Jesus to the events of the Old Testament. If the latter, what interpretation is being offered to the “scandal” of Jesus’ death on a cross?

Such fresh interpretation appears to exist in the parabolic précis of the book of Esther that is found in Matt 22:1-14, so might there be an Esther connection here too? There is a distinct likelihood that Σταυρωθήτω has been used in the knowledge that it resonates with Esth² LXX 7:9. To explore what Matthew might be doing in embracing the

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Haman connection to Jesus’ passion and see what ‘fresh interpretation’ might be offered will require further enquiry. Researching the surrounding text to Esth 7:9 and Matt 27:22-23 is especially important when one accounts for the fact that the book of Esther was read in its entirety and not in smaller sections; the context of Esth 7:9 is the whole book of Esther and not just the surrounding verses.

Beyond Goulder’s suggestion that Matthew, more so than the other evangelists, already intentionally drew from the book of Esther, other Estherian references would support the idea that the connection between Haman and Jesus goes back as far as earliest Christianity. The calls for crucifixion in Esth 7:9 and Matt 27:22-23 exist within wider passages that must be brought into the discussion of Matthaean reception of Esther. Goulder’s work on Matt 22:1-14 showed that details throughout the book of Esther seemed to appear throughout the parable; are there Estherian details found throughout Matthew’s Passion narrative? Other similarities of a textual, literary, narrative, or theological nature would help show if it is likely that Matthew has responded to the clash of the book of Esther rippling into his evangelistic message, and show how he might have handled this.

### 4.3 Other Possible Estherian Ripples in Matthew’s Passion

Matthew’s passion narrative includes several details that are unique to his account. One must ask if these portions of additional material, in particular, have an Estherian connection. One would hope to find Estherian features throughout the passion, but as these are more of a Matthaean creation, they are of particular interest.
4.3.1 Estherian Features in Matthew’s Passion

The first of the Matthaean additions to the ‘basic’ passion narrative of Mark, the detailed death of Judas (Matt 27:3-10), quite explicitly hearkens back to the book of Jeremiah.\(^{605}\) This does not preclude the possibility that other Old Testament texts might speak in this pericope, but does raise questions about the sources of the other Matthaean passion elements which have no stated source; the dream of Pilate’s wife (27:19), the washing of Pilate’s hands (27:24), the curse proclamation (27:25), the inclusion of the ‘reed’ as an item of regalia in the mocking of Christ (27:29), the resurrection of the dead (27:52-53) and the guarding of the tomb (27:62-66). I have identified several features of Matthew’s Passion that have the potential for an Estherian relationship: the additional material about Judas (especially the Matthaean emphasis on the transfer of money in the passion), the references to ‘innocent blood,’ the dream of Pilate’s wife, the mocking of Christ, the cry of dereliction, and the release of a prisoner.

4.3.2 The Characterisation of Judas

4.3.2.1 The Additional Material Concerning Judas

Judas has a more prominent place in Matthew’s passion compared to the passion narratives of the other gospels and there is material about him that is unique to Matthew’s account. This material includes the direct speech in the betrayal and last supper scenes (Matt 26:15, 25), the attempted return of the money and the death of Judas (27:3-10). The only other witness to any of these details is the Acts, which includes an account of the death of Judas. Matthew is striking in that this death is included in the passion of Jesus.

\(^{605}\) Cf. Jer\(\textsuperscript{xxviii}\) 18:1-3; 39:7-9 (32:7-9); Matt 27:6, 9, 10; Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew, p.53.
One of the ways that Matthew incorporates elements of earlier texts is to simultaneously draw on multiple scriptural references. A close reading of the death of Judas has led to many scholars to realise that this pericope too draws on multiple biblical sources. For example, the ‘quote’ from Jeremiah and the other explicit reference to Jewish law in Matt 27:6 come from several sources. In this, Matthew appears to follow a tradition that was picked up by later Jewish interpreters that alternated ‘treasury’ (םזק) with ‘potter’ (הארצר) Zech 11:13. This would provide an example where later Jewish interpretations may be observed in Matthew’s Gospel; Matthew does not simply reference scripture, but “interpreted scripture.” When approaching the Judas additions, this research will be open to the possibility of other such examples, which may include Estherian links.

A further example of the Judas additions drawing on older scriptures is the death of Judas in Matt 27:5, which is commonly agreed to echo and model the death of Ahithophel in 2 Sam 17:23. This echo is based on the hapax legomenon ἀπάγχω, only occurring in the LXX in 2 Kgdms 17:23 and in the New Testament in Matt 27:5. This is particularly useful for this research as it demonstrates two facts about Matthew’s use of the Old Testament within his passion narrative. First, this is a further sign that Matthew is not influenced by only one text (i.e. Jeremiah), but by the breadth of the Scriptures, and as such, the reference to Jeremiah does not preclude the possibility of another,

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606 Hays, Reading Backwards, pp.48-51.
possibly unnamed, text (i.e. the book of Esther) being a conversation partner in the passion and not being named or identified as such. Second, this example demonstrates that the influence made by the Old Testament on Matthew’s passion can be evidenced by textual coherence that consists of only one, albeit unique, word. This supports the methodological criterion of textual distinctiveness as witnessed through *hapax legomena*; ἀπάγχω is distinctive to 2 Kingdoms, and when it is used in Matt 27:5 it is the distinctiveness that enables the intertextuality to be observed. The uniqueness of a word in the Septuagint can have a far-reaching effect on Matthew’s presentation of the passion. The suggestion that Σταυρωθήτω may be an influence on Matt 27:22-23, through Estherian distinctiveness, is strengthened by the single word parallel between the suicides of Judas and Ahithophel.

4.3.2.2 The Financial Incentive to the Betrayal

The first uniquely Matthaean detail in the information about Judas is the direct speech in the betrayal scene. It is not just the fact of direct speech, but the content of the speech that matters. All three synoptic gospels mention that money was offered to Judas as part of the agreement for the betrayal of Jesus, although each of the evangelists handle this in different ways. Only in Matthew are finances discussed ‘up-front.’

The Gospel of Mark provides a basic paradigm for the pericope of the betrayal, and presents Judas voluntarily approaching the chief priests who then ‘promised to give him money’ (Mark 14:11). The implication is that remuneration was the idea of the chief priests; Judas’ intention was to go ‘in order to betray [Jesus]’ (Mark 14:10). Mark offers no explicit driving factor behind the betrayal, but is ambiguous, leaving the possibility

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that Judas may have been motivated, not by “an abysmal moral depravity but by an idealistic nationalism,”†612 where this would trigger Jesus to rise up. These are legitimate possibilities left open by Mark, as the reader is left “in the dark about his motives for betraying Judas.”†613

Luke’s account is starkly different from Mark’s and draws on other material.†614 This is most clear in the explicit assertion that Satan provided the motivation for the betrayal (Luke 22:3). This amendment to the Markan narrative provides a doctrinal statement of possession that goes some way to mitigate Judas from the offence, as one who is used by Satan.†615 Money is given to Judas (22:5), but this is after the betrayal and is by no means the reason for the betrayal. Not wishing to deny that each evangelist includes a financial transaction as a factor in the betrayal, this factor is played down in Mark and Luke. Rather than a clear financial imperative, there is an ambiguity to the initial motivation or the introduction of supernatural possession as a predominant motivation. The money mentioned in these accounts is a bonus that is offered after the betrayal.

When one looks at Matthew, however, the emphasis is different. The ambiguity that exists in Mark’s account has been clarified and there is no attempt, as in Luke, to claim supernatural involvement. The impetus behind the desire to betray Jesus is clearly financial in nature: Judas does not go to the chief priests to betray Jesus but to ascertain what financial benefit he would get if he were to betray Jesus.

In Mark and Luke the decision to betray Jesus is certain before the encounter takes place, subsequent to which ‘money’ is offered. In Matthew’s gospel, the decision to betray Jesus is only agreed after the offer of ‘thirty pieces of silver’ (Matt 26:15). Whilst all of the synoptic gospels recount a financial exchange between Judas and the chief priests over the death of Jesus, it is Matthew’s gospel where this financial element is prominent. The financial element is emphasised, both as the reason (and condition) of the betrayal, and in stating the amount; the financial transaction and the details of it really matter to Matthew. Strengthening this distinctively Matthaean focus, it is only Matthew who records the return of Judas to the chief priests, with the attempted return of the money, and then the death of Judas.

The scriptural background of the details to Matthew’s account of the betrayal is a common feature of biblical commentaries, with many commenters noting the allusion to the thirty shekels of Zech 11:12-13. Also noted is the comparison with Exod 21:32, where the price of a slave is indicated as thirty shekels. A topic not within the scope of this research is the peculiarity of why the, apparent, Zechariah reference is attributed to Jeremiah, and whether there is some sort of obstacle behind that. The book of Esther may provide a further intertext or obstacle as, in Esth 3:9, Haman offers the king, in the excessive manner typical of the book, ten thousand talents of silver, to exterminate the Jews. The exact amount of silver is not identical but, in both texts, an amount of silver is offered for the death of another/others. The betrayal of Jesus in the gospels and the conversation between Haman and Ahasuerus are the only biblical examples of money being offered to put others to death. Matt 26:15 and Esth 3:9 are the only examples

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where the exact amount of money is specified for this. In the Old Testament, many people are put to death on the request of another, or are chased down, such as Elijah and Naboth, but a financial incentive is not specified for their deaths.\footnote{Cf. 1 Kgs 19:2; 21:13.}

In addition, whilst one might be drawn to the allusions to Zech 11:12-13 and Exod 21:32 there is a further reason for considering the book of Esther. These other allusions are suggested due to the similar amounts of money offered, that tie Jesus’ death to being sold as a slave. Reference to the sale being that of the slave trade is absent from MT Esther, but not from LXX Esther. In Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 7:4, Esther claims that it would have been more acceptable for the Jews to have been sold as slaves, but that they have not and she is unable to keep her peace as, instead they have been sold to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. This claim has been adapted in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 7:4 to say that the Susian Jews have been sold to be destroyed and to be made slaves. In both MT and LXX Esther, the Susian Jews are sold to be destroyed, but in MT Esther they are not sold into slavery, whereas in LXX Esther they are also sold into slavery. If Matthew is responding to, or drawing on, the book of Esther, it uniquely provides a narrative of being sold as slaves to be put to death.

It is nevertheless necessary to question the possibility that Matthew had the sale of Joseph in mind. Here Joseph’s brothers conspire to have him killed (Gen 37:18) and subsequently, having sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver (37:28), pretend that he has been killed (37:32-33). The parallels between the sale of Joseph and the sale of Jesus were recognised by Chromatius, the late fourth/early fifth century
bishop who wrestles with the “great mystery”\textsuperscript{620} that Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of gold\textsuperscript{621} whereas Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver.

There are reasons to doubt that this may have been in Matthew’s mind, however. The first concerns the wider early Christian mindset. The book of the Acts is the only New Testament text to clearly reference the sale of Joseph (Gen 37:28; Acts 7:9), so the very fact of a reference is itself an unusual feature in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{622} In his speech (7:2-53), Stephen begins with a narratival historical overview (7:2-34)\textsuperscript{623} in which he includes the sale of Joseph. In this clearest reference to Gen 37, there is no connection made between Joseph and his brothers and with Jesus and Judas. Instead, the emphasis in 7:9-10, and the whole of the speech is that, “God is shown to be active in history... faithful to his promises.”\textsuperscript{624} The members of the synagogue are invited to see this history as their history (7:51-52), and whilst there is a possibility that Jesus is identified in line with Joseph, the purpose of this reference is to demonstrate the ways God is with his people.\textsuperscript{625} Here, in the one clear New Testament text to refer to the sale of Joseph, an opportunity is offered to clearly express a first century interpretation of the betrayal by Judas, an opportunity that is not grasped. Not only does Stephen’s speech not make this interpretation, but rather than being Judas, if there is some parallel with the passion

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Chrom. 24.4; M. Sheridan (ed.), \textit{Genesis 12-50} (ACCS 2; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), p.239.}
\footnote{It is not known from where the figure of twenty pieces of gold came, as the Hebrew, LXX, SYR, VULG and Targum Onqelos all state the price as twenty pieces of silver ( القرآن الكريم , التوراة والهابEsp., viginti argenteis, סכפים בעשרים). See also Ambrose \textit{Jos.} 3:14, which also has twenty pieces of Gold; Sheridan, \textit{Genesis 12-50}, p.239; Peshitta Institute Leiden, \textit{The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, part 1, fascicle 1: Preface, Genesis-Exodus} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), p.82; Alexander Sperber, \textit{Ktby Haqdsh b’Armyt 1} (Leiden: Brill, 1959).
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of Jesus it is the broader group of people handing Jesus over, rather than Judas’ act of betrayal that is suggested (7:52).

The second weakness in the suggestion that Matthew draws on Gen 37 in his presentation of the betrayal is the fact that Joseph was not sold to be killed. Furthermore, Reuben explicitly objects to killing Joseph, and convinced the other brothers that Joseph should not die (37:22). The book of Esther is known to bear several similarities to Gen 37, and the sale is one such similarity, but Matthew’s account of the betrayal is closer to the book of Esther than it is to Gen 37. Just as Naboth and Elijah are unlikely to provide clear parallels as they are chased down to be killed but without a financial incentive or sale, Joseph is sold but without the intention of being killed. The book of Esther is the only text that presents the sale of people in order that they may be killed.

The financial motivation plays out in the ‘interpreted scripture’ contained in Talmudic literature. In b.Meg. 14a is a story about the offer of money made by Haman that may provide a further background to the whole of the Judas additions. This is attributed to R. Abba (third generation Amora, c.290-320CE) so is not as early as would be hoped, but might provide a witness to an earlier oral tradition. In this short parable, Ahasuerus and Haman are compared to two men who each own a field, one with a mound and the other with a ditch. The one with a ditch offers to buy the mound, but the owner refuses the money and is all too happy to have it taken for nothing. The text proffers an interpretation that Ahasuerus was pleased by Haman’s request and refused his money (cf. Esth 3:11). One cannot rule out saying that Matthew and his

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community were aware of this interpretation, or that they may have known an earlier tradition that developed independently in rabbinic literature and in Matthew. Hays has noted an example of this. The words recorded in Matt 18:20 bear an unmistakable similarity to the words of R. Hananiah b. Teradion (fourth generation Tanna, c.110-135CE) in m.‘Abot 3:2);

If two or three sit together and words of Torah [are spoken] between them, the Divine Presence [Shekinah] rests between them. 628

As is often the case with rabbinic literature, these words may come from an earlier oral tradition, and Matthew’s similarity may suggest this. Knowing if both stem from another source is not possible, but each can be used to help understand the other, and rabbinic literature that post-dates the New Testament text can provide a witness to an interpretation also recorded by the New Testament. This example does show that that Matthew is aware of similar traditions to those found in rabbinic literature, and that one cannot conclusively rule out using rabbinic literature, even of a later date. Ultimately, however, one cannot prove that the story contained in b.Meg 14a (or an earlier tradition thereof) would have been known to Matthew.

It is possible, but uncertain, that the story about fields that elaborates upon the financial incentive for the death of the Jews plays a part in Matthew’s telling of the betrayal of Jesus and how the money is subsequently used to purchase the field.

Matthew’s aetiology for the naming of the ‘Field of Blood’ differs from that presented in Acts 1:18-19, in that it is concerned with the pieces of silver and the financial deal with the field. 629 As with the betrayal Matthew emphasises the financial motifs surrounding Judas.

628 Hays, Reading Backwards, p.46.
4.3.2.3 Initial Summary of the Characterisation of Judas and the Estherian Background to the Financial Element of the Betrayal

This section has shown ways in which Matthew’s passion may be indebted to the book of Esther (in its text and the traditions associated with the text) for what it implies about how Matthew understands the person of Jesus. Matthew wishes to proclaim the good news that Jesus the Messiah was crucified and to enable his community to do the same. Hanging over this (pun intended) are many prejudices about what is represented by crucifixion, one significant representation is that of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, who is the only person in the LXX to be crucified. This tension is known to have existed in later Christian-Jewish relations, where anti-Christian feeling ran high at Purim as Jesus was compared to Haman. There remains a concern as to whether Matthew intends to draw, or at least allow for, the parallels that could be drawn between Jesus and Haman, by saying that Jesus, like Haman, was someone against whom the word Σταυρωθήτω was used?

The parallels between the passion narrative and Esth 3:9-11 help as it is Judas, not Jesus, in whom parallels with Haman resonate. Although originally the recipient of the money, Judas attempts to return the money. As a result, he and Haman are united as people who offer specific amounts of money to their relative authority figures in conjunction with the death of others. They are part of the only examples of money being offered for death in the Bible. In both cases, the authority figures refuse the money (Esth 3:11; Matt 27:4-6). Wider exegetical traditions that link this to stories about purchasing fields may further embellish this reading.
Excursus: Esther, Matthew, and Ten Thousand Pieces of Silver

A brief aside may demonstrate a further example of the influence of Esth 3:9 upon the text of Matthew’s Gospel. Following Goulder’s argument that the book of Esther has influenced Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ parables (notably 22:1-14), one might also be drawn to the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:23-35), and particularly the opening section on the first slave (18:24-27). This slave, we are told, owes ten thousand talents, a sum that is utterly preposterous and hyperbolic; it is “the size of a debt beyond all conception.”

In Esth 3:9 Haman offers this exact amount in lieu of what the king would have otherwise received from the Achaemenid Jews, so that the king need not fear that the genocide would leave him out of pocket. In this way, one could see the ten thousand talents in Esth 3:9 as the amount by which Haman believes he would be indebted to the king. Just as the king in Esth 3:11 releases Haman from his financial obligations amounting to ten thousand talents, so too does the lord in Matt 18:27 release the slave from his financial obligations amounting to ten thousand talents. Just as the amount is preposterously large in Matthew’s parable, so it is in the book of Esther, which may provide some background to Matthew’s parable.

Immediately preceding the call for Haman’s crucifixion, Haman is described as wicked (ὁ πονηρὸς ὁ ὑπότος; EsthLXX 7:6), he falls down before Esther, begging and entreating her (Esth 7:7-8), an act that is mistaken as sexual assault (7:8), resulting in his crucifixion. The slave in Matt 18 is initially released from his debt having fallen down and begging his lord (Matt 18:26). As the parable progresses, it transpires that he will too be punished for being seen by his lord as wicked (δοῦλε πονηρὲ; 18:32). If there is

Estherian inspiration for Matthew’s parable, this may indicate that his presentation of Haman conforms to traditional interpretations. This parable could provide a fruitful arena for further research.

Thus far there is an argument that, amongst other references, Matthew can be seen to draw on distinctively Estherian details in the betrayal of Jesus as well as the call for his crucifixion. The unique reference in LXX Esther to the sale of Jews to be put to death and to be made slaves resonates in the uniquely Matthaean material and emphases in the betrayal by Judas.

4.3.2.4 The Relationship Between Haman and Mordecai

The proposal that Matthew draws on Haman in his characterisation of Judas brings forth a further parallel that can be drawn between these two. In the book of Esther, “the most prominent literary idiosyncrasy... is its penchant for doubleness;”631 as lots of events of are paired, helping to highlight their significance. Some examples of this are the fact that:

- there are two queens, Esther and Vashti; two courtiers, Mordecai and Haman;
- twice Esther goes to the king without being summoned; several times there are two banquets and two letters; and finally two days of the Feast of Purim.632

To these one might also add the doubling of the gladness of joy of the Jews, both in Susa and in the provinces in 8:16-17.633 In addition is the balance of the fast of Esth 4:3 and the feast of Esth 8:17, two events that are written with “striking similarity... [such that] the fast of 4:3 finds its antithesis in the feast of 8:17.”634 Other paired events are the

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633 Jahn, Das Buch Ester, p.52.
planned deaths of an individual followed by the death of the plotter; Bigthan and Teresh plan the assassination of Ahasuerus (Esth 2:21) but end up executed (Esth 2:23), and Haman plans the execution of Mordecai (Esth 5:14), but ends up executed instead (Esth 7:10). This pairing is used to highlight the subversion that takes place in the book of Esther; the one who plans someone’s death will themselves end up dead much sooner. Inasmuch as Matthew emphasises the financial incentive of the betrayal, Matthew also makes more of the intentionality of Judas in having Jesus put to death. The suggested Estherian background to the Judas additions re-emerges in the death of Judas, an event not included in the other Gospel accounts. Judas, like Haman (and Bigthan and Teresh), hatches a plot that would lead to the death of another but he ends up dead sooner than his victim does.

In first century interpretations of the book of Esther there is another factor concerning the relationship between Haman and Mordecai. In a recent article, Noah Hacham has highlighted how, in the Alpha Text, Haman was in servitude to Mordecai. This is one of the differences between the two Greek versions; in EsthLXX A:15 [1:1q] the king gave Mordecai gifts for telling him about the eunuchs’ regicidal plot whereas in EsthAT A:17 the king’s response was to give Haman to Mordecai. This subsequently sets the context for the relationship between the two, as Dorothy succinctly annotates – “major tension for the plot.” Such a variant could go unevaluated if it were not for the fact that Haman’s subordination to Mordecai recurs. In Tg. Esth. I 3:2, the servitude of Haman to Mordecai is the reason Mordecai will not bow to him. Similar comments on this relationship are found in Yalkut Shimoni 1056, “Agg. Esth 5:9 p.54,

Tg. Esth. I 5:9 and b.Meg. 15a-b.”⁶³⁸ There appears to have been a common interpretation that Haman was Mordecai’s slave.

Hacham’s purpose in highlighting this is to show a way in which an ancient oral tradition may lie behind some of the later rabbinic interpretations, an important factor in using rabbinic literature. Crucially, in this case “it is not unlikely that this represents a well-known, ancient Jewish tradition, that surfaced at times in sources from different areas.”⁶³⁹ The witnesses suggest that, in the first century, even if one were more familiar with the Septuagintal text, this was an additional interpretation that was being told, and potentially well known.

What Hacham does not say explicitly is that this means that, when Haman makes preparations for the crucifixion of Mordecai, he does so as the subordinate partner. The parallels with Judas and Jesus are evident; the ‘follower’ and subordinate, enacts the process that leads to the crucifixion of Jesus. As previously noted, Matthew’s passion stands out for how much ‘air-time’ is given to Judas, emphasising a message about Judas. Whereas, the simple parallel, through Σταυρωθήτω, aligns Jesus with Haman, the wider interpretations create space to say that Jesus is better paralleled with Mordecai, the ‘master-figure’ whose crucifixion is concocted by the Haman-Judas subordinate.

The confused relationship between Haman and Mordecai also crops up in the famous declaration of b.Meg. 7b that, in the frivolity of the celebration of Purim, it is one’s duty “to mellow [oneself with wine] on Purim until one cannot tell the difference between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordecai.’” Does such an accepted confusion between Haman and Mordecai in terms of who is blessed and who is cursed exist in Matthew’s presentation of Jesus and Judas? If so, this could strengthen the hypothesis

⁶³⁸ These texts are as given in Grossfeld, The First Targum to Esther, pp.112-115.
that one way in which Matthew reacts to the book of Esther is to portray Judas in Hamanesque terms, and Jesus in Mordecaian terms.

Jerome, in his commentary on Gal 3:13-14 blurs any clarity on Jesus’ status as accursed. Drawing on Esth 7:9-10, Dan 3:16-18 and 2 Macc 6:18-31, he argues that Jesus was not in fact accursed, even though Paul seems to clearly articulate this interpretation. Jerome draws out a distinction, from Deut 21:22-23, of those who have been strung up and are cursed and those who have been strung up but are not cursed. The cursed one has been strung up for committing a crime that is cursed before God, whereas the one who is not cursed is the person who has been unjustly strung up. His argument is a hypothetical one that, if Mordecai had been sent to the gallows for his ‘crime,’ he would be remembered as someone who died a “holy rather than cursed man.”

He applies the same argument for Ananias, Azarias, Misael and the seven brothers. He raises this query, which connects Jesus with Mordecai and Haman, of whether or not Jesus is cursed, concluding that the reality is not as clear as Paul would suggest. It is an overlooked detail that the book of Esther provided a lens through which the crucifixion of Jesus could be seen. In doing so, the book of Esther is a positive voice in the conversation and helps shape Jerome’s Christology.

From a Christological perspective, one would wish to begin by upholding Jesus as blessed and Judas as accursed, and yet one does not need to look far to see contrary perspectives. For Paul, the crux of the matter is that Jesus became accursed in order to redeem humanity from a curse (Gal 3:13).

There are elements of this in Matthew’s Gospel as well, albeit in a less explicit fashion. Matthew’s most celebrated discussion of

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‘blessing’ is most certainly the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (5:3-12). Rather than discuss each of the individual statements and how Matthew presents Jesus as embodying these ‘blessings,’ explorations of which can be found elsewhere, I will note two of these and how they may be paralleled in Matthew’s passion.

The penultimate beatitude (5:10) claims that one is blessed for being persecuted for the sake of righteousness, which is followed by a beatitude claiming that gives examples of such persecution, ultimately that one is blessed when reviled by others. The latter beatitude (5:11) is found is also in Luke (6:22), but the preamble is not, this is uniquely Matthaean. The vocabulary here ties closely with the passion narrative, where Pilate’s wife declares Jesus to be righteous (δικαίος; 5:10; 27:19), and Jesus is subsequently reviled by others (ὀνειδίζω; 5:11; 27:44). Allison calls us to take special notice that for Matthew, “it is above all Jesus who is reviled,” and the one for whom the beatitudes apply. In this cursing from others Jesus is, by his own words according to Matthew, blessed. Matthew presents Jesus passion in such a way, in the context of the beatitudes, that there is an ambiguity of whether he is blessed or cursed. As these two extremes are blurred with regards Mordecai and Haman, one can see how Matthew could draw on this Estherian ambiguity in presenting an account of the passion of Jesus.

4.3.2.5 Restricting Judas/Mordecai Parallels

Just as much as there was the possibility of associating Jesus with Haman through the crucifixion, this could have led to the association of Judas with Mordecai. Mordecai

is repeatedly designated as ‘the Jew’ in the book of Esther, and it is curious that the Gospel accounts single out Judas, the one whose name symbolically represents the Jewish people, as the one to betray Jesus.\textsuperscript{645} Both interpretations become problematic in a first-century Jewish-Christian community. If Haman is then brought into the passion narrative, not as Jesus but as Judas, then the parallels between Haman and Mordecai resurface. In a somewhat roundabout way, Matthew heads off the expected (and actualised) criticism that Jesus is a latter-day Haman, by introducing material that makes the claim that Judas is the latter-day Haman and Jesus should in fact be seen as a latter-day Mordecai. Both are representatives of the wider Jewish people (which is increasingly clear of Mordecai throughout the book of Esther; Mordecai is Judaism and Judaism is Mordecai - the Jews are \textit{his} people).\textsuperscript{646} Where Mordecai was spared from his gallows as another went in his place, Jesus goes to the gallows that was prepared for another. Matthew addresses the Haman question in such a way that the only parallel that can be drawn between Haman and Jesus is that they both bring salvation in the context of being crucified on a cross that was prepared for someone else, potentially in conjunction with the appeasement of a kingly/divine wrath. Matthew constructs individual characters, however in such a way, that in this regard Haman is to be paralleled with Judas, and Mordecai with Jesus.

\textbf{4.3.2.6 Preliminary Conclusions}

There are reasonable questions to ask about the possibility of Estherian influence on Matthew’s passion, as well as the source, or inspiration, for the uniquely Matthaean


\textsuperscript{646} Esth 3:6; Fox, \textit{Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther}, p.186.
remarks about Judas. It is possible that one set of answers suffices for both sets of
questions. It appears distinctly possible that, in offsetting a simplistic reading that says
Jesus is Haman, Matthew has written about Judas in such a way that it is he, not Jesus
who bears the greater resemblance to Haman. This would not only serve to divert
Haman away from Jesus but, because of the relationship between Haman and Mordecai,
replace Haman with Mordecai as a typology for Jesus.

4.3.2.7 Moses, Mordecai, and Jesus

One of the uncertainties hanging over the suggestion that Jesus might be viewed
through the lens of Mordecai, is the way in which Jesus is more clearly identified as a
new Moses.647 This is particularly acute in this instance as, “it is commonly recognized
that Matthew is telling the story of Jesus in a way that mirrors the story of Moses.”648 If
there is a clear association that is made between Jesus and Moses, how might the above
hypothesis relate to this? There are connections between Moses and Mordecai that
demonstrate how this can be done.

One of the potential difficulties that hung over the festival of Purim was that it
was not a Mosaic festival, nor was it divinely ordained, and the provisions of the Torah
could not easily incorporate the festival of Purim.649 The LXX appears to have subtly
responded to these concerns. Although EsthMT 9:20 narrates that Mordecai recorded the
events that have taken place, EsthLXX 9:20 embellishes this slightly to say that ‘Mordecai
recorded these things in a book (εἰς βιβλίον).’ This subtle addition speaks powerfully and

647 The recognition that Jesus is portrayed as a type of Moses is well attested; cf. Aus, Death, Burial and
Resurrection, pp.1-168; Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, pp.111-119; Derek Dodson, Reading Dreams:
An audience-critical approach to the dreams in the gospel of Matthew (LNTS 397; London: T&T Clark, 2009),
p.3.
648 Moyise, Was the Birth of Jesus According to Scripture?, p.66.
“fait clairement écho à [Exod 17:14].” In Exod 7:14 Moses is given a divine instruction to write in a book about the end of the Amalekites that Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 9:20 suggests has been fulfilled by Mordecai, the new Moses.\footnote{Cavalier, \textit{Esther}, p.89.}

A possible problem is that \textit{LXX} Esther does not in fact describe Haman as an Amalekite, but as a Bougaion. As Haman is not an Amalekite, Mordecai might not fulfil the divine command given to Moses, and as such this detail may not associate Mordecai with Moses. This is rebutted by Josephus’ account of the book of Esther. As already noted, Josephus demonstrates some dependence on \textit{AT} Esther, which also fails to describe Haman as an Amalekite. Despite this, Josephus is clear that he understood Haman to be an Amalekite (\textit{Ant.} 11.209). Josephus is here a witness that Haman was still known as an Amalekite in communities that were familiar with a Greek of the book of Esther. Although \textit{LXX} Esther does not refer to Haman as an Amalekite, this fact was still known about him. In doing this it becomes possible to make the, albeit somewhat tenuous, argument that Purim is a festival with Mosaic authority that is divinely ordained, and therefore should be celebrated. Support for this can be found in b.Meg. 7a, which defers to Exod 17:14 to allay the concerns of the sages who are hesitant to celebrate Purim. Rather than offering Mosaic authority, \textit{per se}, the letter “cast Mordecai in the role of Moses.”\footnote{Hans Bardtke, \textit{Das Buch Esther} (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972 [1963]), p.316.} There are good reasons to think that, in a late Second Temple mindset, Mordecai was understood through a Mosaic lens, and the one to enact the fulfilment of Exod 17:14.

The book of Esther has been long regarded as rooted in the Exodus tradition, be that as a conscious reworking of the Exodus narrative, or indebted to it in a looser

\footnote{Whitters, \textit{The Epistle of Second Baruch}, p.73.}
A Mosaic-Esther relationship exists with the eponymous character herself. This begins with the, not insignificant, fact that both are adopted (Exod 2:10; Esth 2:7), and continues as they take places of significant in their respective courts. Both act, in conjunction with another (Aaron and Mordecai), in response to threats against their people. Loader summarises by saying that; “It is clear that the Exodus pre-text provides the means to ‘re-enact’ the salient features of the central Jewish feast so as to apply them to the new context of the post-text.”

It is not surprising to find that later traditions conflate Passover and Purim. The Mosaic image is invoked by the book of Esther.

4.3.2.8 Conclusions on the Judas Additions

One of the concerns about suggesting that the book of Esther might be in the New Testament is, what is it doing there? This methodology has taken a ‘cluzographic’ metaphor to suggest that there might be occasions when it has rippled in; it is there because it has encountered an obstacle and left textual splashes. It is also possible that the New Testament author has responded to this wave, and the Judas additions appear to bear witness to an authorial response to the Estherian wave.

The textual coherence in Matt 27:22-23, and the wider narrative, could lead to a simplistic reading that says Jesus is Haman, an enemy whose destruction should be celebrated. This could be extended to say that, as the male figure in a tense relationship with the crucified person, Judas should be identified with Mordecai. To divert readers away from this reading, Matthew has written his information about Judas in such a way


as to strongly identify Judas with the characterisation of Haman as found in the book of Esther and in contemporaneous interpretations of the text. Similarly, through these, Jesus is presented, not like Haman, but in a manner that accords with Mordecai.

The presentation of Judas finds a model in Haman; both are involved in the sale of another, with the likelihood that this sale would result in that person’s death, but with the twist that both Judas and Haman die before the person/people who have been sold. Matthew’s presentation of Jesus finds a model in the presentation of Mordecai; both are sold as slaves to death, with an ambiguity concerning their status as blessed or cursed.

4.3.3 Other Uniquely Matthaean Aspects of the Passion Narrative

4.3.3.1 Innocent Blood

The death of Judas is linked to the washing of Pilate’s hands, another Matthaean addition to the passion narrative, by the phrase ‘innocent blood.’ It is only in Matthew’s gospel that these words are found (27:4, 24). As noted, “the most prominent literary idiosyncrasy of the book of Esther is its penchant for doubleness,” and here is an example of a similar literary style in Matthew’s passion. These two verses appear to work in tandem and are part of a similar framework, not only for the reference to ‘innocent blood’ but for the relinquishing of responsibility through the phrase ‘see to it yourself(ves) (σὺ δψή; ὑμεῖς δψεσθε) in the same verses 27:4, 24. Matthew’s additions in these verses, and in v.25, allow Matthew to present “both priest and people, the whole nation,” accepting responsibility for ‘the innocent blood.’

As Jeremiah is given as a source text for understanding the death of Judas (Matt 27:9), despite the uncertainties about this, one would not wish to deny the fact that Jeremiah provides a few references to ‘innocent blood.’\textsuperscript{659} Nevertheless, Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} E:5 [8:12e] also provides an interesting intertext that, as it is from the voice of a gentile ruler, may speak into both references to innocent blood in Matthew’s passion. In this verse, King Artaxerxes makes the following declaration;

\begin{quote}
Many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs.
\end{quote}

In this additional material, Artaxerxes is shown to be concerned about the power dynamic and how that has implications for the shedding of innocent blood. This is his self-defence where he is aware of the gravity of the events but also speaks to exonerate himself.\textsuperscript{660} In Matt 27, the gentile ruler is keen not to be caused to be responsible for the shedding of innocent blood; it is the Jewish leaders who are persuading him to crucify Jesus. If the book of Esther has had an influence on Matthew, he upends it so that instead of the Jewish people being praised in E:15 [8:12e] for not being evil-doers but being righteous, Matthew could be seen to critique the Jewish leaders for acting as Haman did. Alternatively, if the book of Esther is already in Matthew’s thoughts, then this may be a phrase that has come to mind as he sets down a passion narrative. The uniqueness of the phrase to Matthew’s gospel poses questions about its source, especially as it used twice in scenes about the shift of power and responsibility.

\textsuperscript{659} Jer 7:6; 19:4; 22:3, 17; 26:15.
\textsuperscript{660} J. Levenson, Esther, p.113.
The transfer of power demonstrated in these verses is part of the broader context, and is also a significant theme found in the book of Esther.\(^\text{661}\) In the book of Esther, banquets are not just mentioned to provide context and a setting, but function as a literary [*leitmotif*] as anchoring points for the plot developments, with מְשָׁתָה (feast) being mentioned twenty times in the ten chapters of the book of Esther.\(^\text{662}\) Furthermore, it is through the banquet setting that power struggles are fought, which begins in chapter one where Vashti refuses to acquiesce to the demands of power.\(^\text{663}\) Esther opts for an alternative approach of ‘guile and bravery’\(^\text{664}\) where major power struggles are fought in Esth 5:4-8 and 7:1-10. It is in the latter that there is “a successful relocation of power from Haman to the Jews,”\(^\text{665}\) which culminates in the execution of Haman. In the events surrounding the call for the crucifixion of Jesus, whether intentional or not, Matthew presents a similar relocation of power to the Jews that uses some of the same vocabulary. Just as the power transfer in the book of Esther culminates in a dramatic scene, so too does the power transfer in Matthew’s account of the passion of Jesus, with the infamous declaration of 27:25. The claim that ‘his blood be upon us and on our children’ is a response to Pilate’s washing of his hands and “should be seen as part of the shifting of responsibility which goes on all through the passion story.”\(^\text{666}\) Many commentators would point out the “burlesque”\(^\text{667}\) of Matthew’s passion where gentiles are exonerated.

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\(^{662}\) Cf. Esth\(^\text{MT}\) 1:3, 5, 9; 2:18 (x2); 5:4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14; 6:14; 7:2, 7, 8; 8:17; 9:17, 18, 19, 22; There are only a further 26 occurrences of מְשָׁתָה in the whole Hebrew bible; S. Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, themes, and structure* (SBLDS 44; Scholars Press, 1979), p.31.


of blame, and the Jews in the account take on the blame for the death of Jesus and the power dynamic shifts from the gentile official to the Jews. This takes place through several of the Matthaean additions;

- In 27:19, Pilate's wife is presented as though she, unlike the religious officials, has had a divine vision, causing her, a gentile, to vocally oppose the execution of Jesus.
- In 27:24, Pilate publicly declares his innocence of Jesus’ blood.
- In 27:25, the blame that has gone from Pilate is readily accepted by the crowds in a verse that, like the book of Esther, has come to mar Jewish-Christian relations.668

4.3.3.2 The Dream of Pilate's Wife

As part of the transfer of power, whereby Matthew depicts the crowds and religious leaders taking the blame for Jesus’ death, is the brief mention of Pilate’s wife and her attempt to convince her husband of Jesus’ innocence. Shortly before the call of Σταυρωθήτω from the crowds in Matt 27:22-23, when the crowds accept responsibility, is another piece of uniquely Matthaean material, the dream of Pilate’s wife. The non-canonical Gospel of Nicodemus also makes a similar reference (Acts Pil. A 2:1) but in the New Testament this is a strange addition; from no-where she is brought into the narrative and then not mentioned again.

As Brown notes, “Matthew’s readers would have had as a parallel the image of noble Roman pagan women who were favourable to Judaism.”669 Josephus records such parallels in Damascus where only a few of the wives of Romans there had converted to Judaism (J. W. 2.560)670 and Nero’s wife, Poppaea, “who was a worshipper of God and

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who pleaded on behalf of the Jews,”671 (Ant. 20.195). Historically Pilate’s wife was Claudia, granddaughter of Caesar Augustus.672 In some early Christian literature she is identified as Procla although, for the purposes of this discussion, I will stay faithful to Matthew’s anonymity and refer to her as Pilate’s wife.673

According to Matthew, Pilate’s wife has had a dream, which leads her to warn her husband ‘to have nothing to do with that innocent man’ (Matt. 27:19). This helps lessen his involvement, but highlights the involvement of the Jewish leaders and crowds. Here there is the “haunting issue of responsibility... [and the] increased and widened malevolence in Matthew’s picture of Jewish involvement of the death of Jesus.”674 As a result of his wife’s words, Pilate goes to greater lengths than in Mark to find a way for the crowds to agree to the exoneration of Jesus, with the follow-up of the crowd acknowledging responsibility for the death of Jesus.675

In addition to the fact that this is a further element made by Matthew to the transfer of power in the lead-up to the crucifixion – and therefore potentially has an Estherian resonance – this also fits with Matthew’s inclusion of dreams in his Gospel. The dream of Pilate’s wife “recalls the many dreams in the infancy narrative. All of them are divine warnings about the fate of the messiah.”676 In addition to being part of a continued use of dreams and resonating with the dreams of the infancy narrative, one is confronted with the question whether there is an Old Testament connection that is

672 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, p.694.
674 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, pp.29, 388.
made by the dream of Pilate’s wife, and if such a connection might be to the book of Esther.

There are many references to dreams and dreaming in the Old Testament, with fifteen specific dreams mentioned in the MT, with a further three in LXX. The LXX text of Esther opens with the dream of Mordecai, which is used to top and tail the whole narrative as Mordecai reflects on the dream at the end of book of Esther. By opening the book of Esther with the dream of Mordecai, LXX Esther presents Mordecai as a more significant and important character than MT Esther does. The reader of any of the Greek texts is much more attuned to Mordecai and is presented with a Mordecai who is ‘first and last’ in the book of Esther, and the ‘notable Jew’ through whom God most clearly communicates. This dream is apocalyptic in style and is thus more in line with the dreams found in Daniel and 2 Esdras rather than the details given by Pilate’s wife. Nevertheless, there may be more to be said on this, and the information given by Pilate’s wife is important.

The dream of Mordecai bears hallmarks, through the similarities with the Danielic dreams, of an association with the Maccabean crisis. Particularly when held in this context, the dream of Mordecai offers the message that, “God was with his people and that they, the righteous ones, would triumph in the end.” This is certainly exemplified by having the dream as the opening words in LXX Esther, and the dream’s interpretation constituting the final words of the text. The dream holds this

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677 Gen 20:3; 28:12; 31:10-11, 24; 37:5, 9; 40:5, 8; 41:1, 5; Judg 7:13; 1 Kgs 3:5; Dan 2:1; 4:5; 7:1; 2 Esd. 11:1; 13:1; Estth A 4 [1:1d].
interpretation for the whole book, that God is present and that the righteous ones will triumph.

This is important for Matthew’s passion in a gospel that emphasises the constant presence of the divine (cf. Matt 1:23; 28:20) and the final triumph of the resurrection. With the dream of Pilate’s wife, all of this can be seen to be held in the few words of this Matthaean addition. Pilate’s wife declares Jesus to be ‘righteous’ (δίκαιος), which in Matthew’s Gospel seems to have a similar sense to צדיק in the Hebrew Bible. This indicates that Jesus appeared to adhere to all the criteria that were indicative of a truly religious person and therefore that he “must be innocent of the charges levied against him.” Unlike the earlier question over stylistic use of the aorist passive imperative, there is no doubt that the use of δίκαιος is a Matthaean feature, although this does not mean that other texts could not have influenced this verse. Unfortunately, MT Esther is one of the Hebrew Bible books not to include the word צדיק. When one turns to LXX Esther, however, there are some pertinent passages.

First is the dream of Mordecai which makes a declaration of righteousness. What Mordecai dreams is that ‘every nation prepared for war to fight against the righteous nation’ (EsthLXX A:6 [1:1f]). From the outset, the Jews in Susa are upheld as the righteous ones.

The second passage of note is another addition, Addition E [8:12a-12x], which has already been discussed in relation to the washing of Pilate’s hands (§3.3.1); in both passages the gentile ruler exonerates himself of blame for the shedding of innocent

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682 B. Przybylski, Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought (SNTSMS 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.102.
blood in a transfer of power which puts the blame squarely with someone-else. In EsthLXX E:15 [8:12r] Artaxerxes gives a description of the Jews saying that they, ‘are not evildoers/criminals, but are governed by most righteous laws (δικαιοτάτοις δὲ πολιτευομένους νόμοις).’ This is not dissimilar to the way Pilate’s wife interjects to proclaim the righteousness of Jesus when the other voices around proclaim statements to the contrary. This addition is a clear affirmation for the Jews to continue to live under their own laws (cf. E:19 [8:12s]), through which LXX Esther becomes a text that upholds the practice of Jewish law and so may have had a particular place in Matthew’s community. Addition E provides a point of reference that highlights themes within the book of Esther that also feature in Matthew’s passion. This is most noticeable in the uniquely Matthaean material such as the repeated transfer of blame, the concern over the shedding of innocent blood and the declarations of righteousness.

The dream of Pilate’s wife is not only relevant to this discussion because of the contents of the dream or the impact it has, but is relevant because of Pilate’s wife. As already noted, she may well have brought her contemporaries to mind, such as Nero’s wife. Nevertheless, as Matthew is the sole evangelist to include this vignette, it would seem apt to consider the possibility that her presentation may be reminiscent of Esther as both are the wives of gentile authority figures.

In a context that is otherwise the exclusive domain of males, her interruption is unexpected. Similarly, across the whole gospel that features multiples dreams, Pilate’s wife stands out as a woman having a dream, being given a role in the narrative that is normally reserved for men. Matthew could have easily had one of Pilate’s close male advisors receive, and share the dream, but this is not the case. A subtle but pertinent

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point is that, as the wife of a gentile ruler, she has word sent to Pilate, and information from her is vocally reported.

Debelak notes that, in Esth 7:3-6, Esther “emerges as an information bearer... an act men primarily do in this story.” That both texts should present the wives of the Imperial representatives as information bearers is noteworthy. That this should happen in both cases three verses before the sole extant examples of Σταυρωθήτω in all ancient literature, is a remarkable similarity. The number of verses is inconsequential except to highlight the proximity of these unusual literary features. This alone is not sufficient evidence to conclude that the Pilate’s wife addition is rooted in the book of Esther, there are still other parallels to be drawn (e.g. from Josephus, and Nero’s wife). More information about Pilate’s wife would have been helpful in fleshing out her characterisation and to base too much on this one verse would be unwise. Equally, however, it is possible that Matt 27:19 could have been shaped by Matthew’s knowledge of the book of Esther. It is important to note that one cannot rule out this possibility.

Aus posits a different way in which the book of Esther may have had an influence on Matt 27:19. Rather than paralleling Esther with Pilate’s wife, he directs attention to Zeresh, Haman’s wife. In MT and LXX Esther 5:14 and AT Esther 5:23 Zeresh advises Haman to plan to have Mordecai executed, but 2 Panim Aḥerim 72 (on Esth 5:14) states that “Zeresh advised her husband not to engage in any evil designs against Mordecai,” which Aus understandably parallels with the words of Pilate’s wife about Jesus. This would associate Pilate with Haman. Given that the gospel accounts do not portray the menace of Pilate that is seen from elsewhere (perhaps for fear of the consequences of

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685 Debelak, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, p.44.
688 Aus, *Barabbas and Esther*, p.22.
openly condemning the Imperial representative), this could hypothetically be a concealed attack on Pilate that was hidden within the text. The earliest that this can be dated, however, is to the tenth century. Without an earlier witness, it is difficult to argue that this tradition played a part in Matthew’s passion narrative.

The two Matthaean additions evaluated here (innocent blood and the dream of Pilate’s wife) provide a different format of possible Estherian influence. In the case of the material about Judas, there is a clear obstacle from the Estherian ripples, and Matthew’s framing of this material appears to provide a response in the characterisation of Jesus and Judas. This is not the case with the Matthaean material noted in this section, which does not mean that there is no Estherian influence, just that it is functioning in a different way if it is there. The Estherian links are perhaps a bit weaker, but can nevertheless be witnessed. If Estherian influence is accepted, it might best to consider this as textual spray that has ended up in the passion narrative as a result of more intentional Estherian writing. In responding to the concern about characterising Jesus as Haman, it is eminently possible that the book of Esther is lingering in Matthew’s mind and finding its way into other portions of his passion as he picks up on themes and phrases.

4.3.3.3 Summary of other Uniquely Matthaean Features

The transfer of power from gentile Empire to local Jews, the references to ‘innocent blood’, and the dream of the wife of an Imperial leader, are all Matthaean features that find resonances with a variety of texts. Of these texts, however, it is only the book of Esther that can hold all together. Given the other Estherian resonance in the

689 Bronner, ‘Esther Revisited’, p.177.
passion, one would be wise to wonder whether the Estherian background to some of these has had an influence on Matthew’s passion.

The possibility of an Estherian reference that is witnessed through ‘innocent blood’ invites some remarks on the way Matthew’s passion leads to the statements made by the crowds in v.25. Hamilton claims that this is a central feature of Matthew’s passion and that, “by describing Jesus’ death in terms of innocent blood, Matthew sets his passion narrative within a paradigm of bloodguilt and purgation,”⁶⁹⁰ and thus the Matthaean additions concerning blood must be viewed together. Whilst there is no extant evidence of first-century anti-Judaism that was rooted in the book of Esther, this does emerge over time as Christianity and Judaism become distinct. Cecil Roth demonstrates how, within a few centuries, the blood accusation had evolved and the celebration of Purim was entwined with the blood libel.⁶⁹¹ In the fifth century, the Christianised Roman Empire forbade the burning of effigies of Haman on a cross.⁶⁹² At that time Haman’s execution was still perceived as crucifixion. It would appear that, in the Jewish celebration of the spilling of Haman’s blood, Christians did not see a neutral festival of Purim but contempt for the death of Jesus.

The text of the blood accusation may be an allusion to several scriptural passages (Lev 20:9; Josh 2:19; 2 Sam 16:5-8; 1 Kgs 12:37),⁶⁹³ but in the broader context the Estherian resonances ought to be taken seriously. The transfer of power, and repeated references to blood may indicate a somewhat critical reading of the book of Esther,

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⁶⁹⁰ C. Hamilton, ‘“His Blood Be Upon Us”: innocent blood and the death of Jesus in Matthew’, *CBQ* 70 (2008), pp.82-100 (84).
which did happen in Second Temple Judaism. Zucker says that the wise reader “will approach Esther with caution, but at the same time, the book presents possibilities to engage in serious discussions about power and powerlessness.” It is possible that the book of Esther has further influence on Matthew’s passion through these links. A cautious approach, that is quite likely, is to say that, in reflecting on the characterisation of Jesus in light of Haman, the book of Esther was more prominent in Matthew’s thought that it might otherwise be. As such, one should not be surprised to find Estherian phrases and motifs occurring in his passion. The words ‘innocent blood’ and the inclusion of the wife of a gentile imperial figure appearing uncalled might best be understood as ‘textual spray’ that has indirectly arisen out of Matthew’s other contemplations about the book of Esther. By introducing ‘textual spray’ I propose playing with the cluzopgraphic metaphor. This would accept that the book of Esther has been rippling, collided with an obstacle (the crucifixion of Jesus). As the wave breaks, leaving the cluzograph ‘Σταυρωθήτω’, the wave also leaves spray that comes off the breaking wave. This spray is small drops of water that disperse, and can be seen as small textual details that appear as a result of the breaking wave, but may not have otherwise occurred. One should not deny the Estherian background to these parts of the passion narrative, but they are probably not direct allusions back to the book of Esther.

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4.3.4 Estherian Resonances in non-Matthaean Passion Material

4.3.4.1 The Mocking of Christ, the Honouring of Mordecai, and Substitute King Rituals

Not all of the events in Matthew’s passion narrative that have some Estherian similarities are unique to this gospel, although Matthew has written them in his own manner. The first to be evaluated here is the mocking of Christ, which bears hallmarks of ancient Near Eastern substitute king rituals and may strengthen the suggestion of a Mordecaian portrayal of Jesus.

In Matt 27:27-31, Jesus is stripped of his own clothes, dressed regally, and mocked, before being redressed with his own clothing. In the ancient Near East, there was a practice with a long history that is known as the šar puḫi (substitute king).\(^{695}\) Named for the Akkadian words ‘king’ and ‘to exchange,’\(^{696}\) this ritual involved an individual other than the king publicly taking on the role of king. He would be recognised as acting in the king’s stead, sometimes as a “scapegoat”\(^{697}\) onto whom omens might be attached. As a result, there has been a lot of discussion over whether the royal substitute ritual can help make sense of why the king figure in Isa 52:13-53:12 would be suffering.\(^{698}\)

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\(^{696}\) Black, George, Postgate, A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian, pp.277, 361.


There is evidence that, not only did this ritual take place in Achaemenid Iran, but that Xerxes himself enacted this ritual, and at least one person was substituted at the time that the book of Esther is set.\textsuperscript{699} Due to the similarities this may well provide a context for the events of Esth 6:8 where Haman parades Mordecai. As Mordecai has been dressed in royal robes and has been placed on a horse, he is viewed as though he were a king, much to the dismay of Haman.\textsuperscript{700} Furthermore, substitutes would share the position of the king, and be able to govern to the same degree as the king, which is what is found at the end of the book of Esther where Mordecai is ‘next in rank to King Ahasuerus’ (Esth 10:3).

As the king was the representative of all the people, he would also bear the brunt of any troubles, and so the substitute king would take on the responsibility for these problems, sometimes resulting in the execution of the substitute such as in the celebrated case of Damqi, who was put to death “after a short ‘reign’.”\textsuperscript{701} Significantly, in the case of Mordecai, this is reversed so that it is by being put in the position of a substitute king that he is able to evade execution. It appears that Haman’s suggestion in Esth 6:7-9 is the institution of a šar puḥi with all the benefits of (near) royal status but without the threat placed on some substitutes as the motive is not to avert a threat from the genuine king. In his, now dated, commentary, Keil remarked that the garments, “are evidently the state garments of the first minister, which Mordochai [sic] received at his installation to his office and, as such, are no fresh token of royal favour.”\textsuperscript{702}


\textsuperscript{700} Beek, ‘Der Ersatzkönig als Erzählungsmotiv in der Alts Israelitischen Literatur’, p.31.


dismissals are shown to be wanting by the position in which Mordecai is found in at the end of the book. Mordecai is viewed as more than the first minister. Furthermore, Mordecai is honoured as Haman hoped to be and to be first minister would have not been any change for Haman.

As the narrative progresses, Mordecai is presented as a substitute king. Like Joseph in Gen 41:42, Mordecai is given the signet ring in Esth 8:2, signifying the investiture of a “viceroy... [or] vassal-king” who can act in the name of the king. He is then paraded through the streets again in regal fashion (8:15), before being given an official title for the highest ranked person other than the king. Presumably this is a higher position than the one held by Haman, as Haman was previously in a higher position than anyone-else (cf. Esth 3:1), with all but regal authority, to be a šar pūḫi was the only possible form of advancement. As part of the burlesque of the narrative, instead of Haman receiving this honour it is Mordecai who does.

The mocking of Jesus bears some similarities and it may be possible to view this scene as a similar ritual. This would not necessarily characterise Jesus with Haman but this might be possible if Matthew has unique details that strengthen this association.

The soldiers in Matt 27:28-29 feel the need to dress Jesus in regal clothing and with a regal headdress before shouting ‘Hail, King of the Jews (v.29).’ Matthew’s presentation here intends to remind the reader that Jesus was in fact a king, he may be presented as such through the taunts of others, but he is in fact a king, acting in the

704 Cf. Gen 41:42; Esth 3:10, 12; 8:8, 10; Hag 2:23; Sir 49:11; ANET 295; N. Sarna, Genesis (JPSTC; Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), p.286.
705 Meinhold, Das Buch Esther, p.97.
name of God, often presented as a king.\textsuperscript{707} Matthew is clear that Jesus is a Davidic king who is soon to reign as ‘all authority’ will be given him (Matt 28:18).\textsuperscript{708} The mock crown, robes and staff given to Jesus strongly associate him with a “Near Eastern client king,”\textsuperscript{709} and as such this is a parallel, albeit a subverted one, with Mordecai. Despite there being mock-rejoicing (χαίρε Matt 27:29) rather than genuine rejoicing (ἐχάρησαν Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:15), both are presented with a crown (στέφανον; Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:15; Matt. 27:29) and as such there are hints of Esth 8:15 in Matt 27:28-29, both textually and narratively. The blurring of Mordecai and Haman is presented in Jesus, who is depicted like Mordecai, but with the humiliation given to Haman, something that is more explicit in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 6:13 than in Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 6:13. Neither of these details are unique to Matthew, however, but are found in Mark, which restricts an argument that there is an Estherian source to Matthew’s account in this instance.

The Matthaean addition to the Markan account is to say that a reed, as a mock sceptre, was given to Jesus. In Mark 15:19 Jesus is hit with a reed, but it has not been previously given to him. Matthew 27:29 strengthens the mock-king imagery by Jesus being given this sceptre-like implement. As a mock implement the word for reed (κάλαμος) does not appear in LXX Esther. Although sceptres, as royal symbols, are used in the book of Esther (4:11; 5:2; 8:4), Mordecai is not given one in the scene of his honouring. Although both the Matthaean account of the mocking of Jesus, and the honouring of Mordecai bear similarities to ‘substitute king’ rituals, there is little to directly tie them together. It is unlikely that the mocking scene has been written as a response to Estherian resonances with the passion of Jesus.

\textsuperscript{708} Davies & Allison, \textit{Matthew: Vol 3}, p.598.
4.3.4.2 The Cry of Dereliction

The cry of dereliction that precedes Jesus’ death, *Eli eli lama sabacthani*, originating from Ps 22, has strong connections with the book of Esther. A rabbinic tradition, attributed to R. Levi (Tanna from the transitional period to the Amoraic era, c.200-220CE), claims that Esther sang this psalm as she stood in the court, ready to approach Ahasuerus.\(^7\) The Estherian traditions of this psalm developed so that, by the third-fourth centuries, Rabbis Zeira and Assi are recorded discussing the interpretations of this tradition; “like a hind is desirable to her mate, so Esther too was always desirable to Ahasuerus.”\(^8\) Ps 22 is unique in the psalter for how greatly it moves from extremes of “suffering... and God-forsakenness... to praise and thanksgiving for deliverance.”\(^9\) It is unsurprising therefore to find that this psalm became associated with Esther and the book named after her, which moves from mourning, confusion and lamentation to feasting, gladness and deliverance.\(^10\) Although the tradition that associates Esther with the opening text of Ps 22 is a strong one that goes back at least into the first two centuries, it is possible that this is part of a longer exegetical history, and may have been known to the New Testament authors.

The Esther-Psalms connections extend further. In b.Meg. 4a, R. Joshua b.Levi (first generation Amora c.220-250CE) uses Pss 22:3 and 30:13 to argue that the book of Esther should be read in the evening and then again in the daytime. This helps demonstrate that Ps 22:1 was associated with the whole of the book of Esther and not just Esth 5, and that these traditions were not the exegetical quirk of a single Rabbi.

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\(^7\) Cf. Esth 5:2; b.Meg. 15b.
\(^8\) B.Meg. 15b; b.Yoma 29a.
O’Brien is confident that the prayer of Esther (Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:11-30) is “composed of Psalm 22.”\textsuperscript{714} If correct, there is a distinct possibility that the association between Ps 22 and Esther was firmly entrenched in late Second Temple Judaism, although Matthew probably takes Ps 22 from Mark 15:34. This association would still be pertinent to how Matthew has shaped his presentation of Jesus’ passion (i.e. even if Mark is the principal source for Matthew, this does not preclude Matthew reading an Estherian link if there is one to make). One indication that the prayer of Esther is ‘composed of Psalm 22’ is the epithet of ‘lion’ to signal one’s adversary.\textsuperscript{715} Just as many commenters consider that Jesus’ cry metaphorically refers to Ps 22 and brings in the idea of hope from the end of the Psalm, so too does Esther’s prayer not only recount despair. Links can be drawn between the book of Esther and Ps 22, the latter of which “clearly indicates hopeful expectation of deliverance though [without alluding] to the end of the psalm and its thanksgiving.”\textsuperscript{716} If this is the case then it is not only Matthew who draws on this Estherian link to the passion narratives. The common understanding that Jesus spoke the words of Ps 22:1 strengthens the Estherian link with Jesus’ passion, but in bringing the book of Esther into the passion narrative, this might have helped provoke unwanted interpretations such as the Haman-Jesus connection.

The links between the psalm and the prayer of Esther are not numerous, however, which casts doubts on the possibility that this tradition is quite so early. Furthermore, there is the very real possibility that the rabbinic attempts to associate Esther with Ps 22 are a second or third century response to Christians associating the

\textsuperscript{714} Kelli O’Brien, \textit{The Use of Scripture in the Markan Passion Narrative} (LNTS; London: T&T Clark, 2010), p.153.
\textsuperscript{715} Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:24; Ps\textsuperscript{LXX} 21:14; Cavalier, \textit{Esther}, p.184.
\textsuperscript{716} O’Brien, \textit{The Use of Scripture in the Markan Passion Narrative}, p153.
psalm with Jesus.\textsuperscript{717} There is a relationship between the book of Esther and Ps 22, although there currently is no consensus about how early this tradition is.

It cannot be known if the cry of dereliction was associated with Esther when Matthew wrote his passion narrative. If first century Jews associated Ps 22 with Esther in the way that third century Rabbis did, then almost certainly Jesus’ words on the cross would evoke Esther. If they did not, then Ps 22 has little to say, if anything at all, to this particular discussion.

\subsection{4.3.4.3 The Release of a Prisoner}

Paton, in his comprehensive commentary on Esther, notes a detail about the interpretation of the Hebrew חננה (Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 2:18) that, if it were not for a wider discussion around the parallels between the book of Esther and Matthew’s passion, would not normally warrant further discussion. Paton offers a passing discussion about what might be meant by this word, rooted in נוח (to rest), which has not generally been highlighted by later commenters, although Goldman is an exception.\textsuperscript{718} The root is not uncommon, but the adjectival form in Esth 2:18, חננה, is a hapax legomenon in the MT. This leaves it open to a range of interpretations based on some sort of rest or relaxation. One common interpretation is that a holiday was declared, and thus this was a rest from work, where the subjects of the king could relax, particularly from military service, such as the three years of rest from military service and tribute granted by Gaumata.

\textsuperscript{717} H. Reuling, ‘Rabbinic Responses to Christian Appropriation of the Hebrew Bible: The case of Psalm 22:1 (MT)’, \textit{StPatr} 44 (2010), pp.177-182 (182).

(pretending to be Cambyses’ brother after his death).\textsuperscript{719} An alternative is that this was a financial gift to the people whereby הנחה refers to a release from any debts or tribute that were owed, or a combination of a release from financial and military obligations.\textsuperscript{720}

Paton’s preferred interpretation, however, is “a release from prison (cf. 1 Macc 10:33, Matt. 27:15).”\textsuperscript{721} If not for the extended discussion on the place of the book of Esther in the background to Matthew’s presentation of the passion of Jesus, this might not be wholly relevant; the release of Barabbas appears in all four Gospels. Nevertheless, in the context where several other similarities are starting to occur between the two texts, the possibility that Esth 2:18 speaks of the release of prisoners does become relevant.

Paton’s hypothesis is supported by Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 2:18, which renders this action of the king by the verb ἀφεσις. This is most often understood to refer the freeing of prisoners,\textsuperscript{722} or the freeing from some sort of punishment (particularly for the deliverance of sins in the NT)\textsuperscript{723}, although neither NETS nor the NRSV reflect this but understand this more broadly as the relaxation of taxes or debts. The first full Christian commentary on the book of Esther, Rabanus Maurus’s commentary in the late eighth-early ninth century, spiritualises the marriage of Ahasuerus and Esther to that of Christ with the Church. He adopts the disputed word in Esth 2:18 to refer to freeing from “the weight of sins.”\textsuperscript{724} One cannot read much from a medieval commentary, but this witness shows that Paton’s hypothesis did not originate in the twentieth century.


\textsuperscript{720} Moore, \textit{Esther}, p.25; Berlin, \textit{Esther}, p.30; Levenson, \textit{Esther}, p.63

\textsuperscript{721} Paton, \textit{The book of Esther}, p.185.


\textsuperscript{724} \textit{RM.} 4; M. Conti (ed.), \textit{1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther}, p.379.
This does give the Matthaean account of the release of a prisoner slightly stronger support than Aus had for the Markan account. The book of Esther is a text of reversals; Mordecai takes the place of Haman as second to the king, as Haman takes the place of Mordecai on the gallows for example. Esth Rab. 1:1 records R. Yehuda (a fifth generation Tanna c.135-170CE) noting another key reversal in that, the Ahasuerus who put his wife to death on account of his friend is the same Ahasuerus who put his friend to death on account of his wife. Such reversals shape the whole narrative. It may be Matthew’s account that best fits this paradigm, and not Mark’s, as it Jesus the King of the Jews against Jesus Barabbas; the Jesus who is a criminal is released whereas the Jesus who is innocent is sentenced to death.

Like the possibility of the link with Ps 22 and the book of Esther, whether Matthew considered there to be a link between the passion narrative and a release of a prisoner in the book of Esther is to be strongly critiqued. Despite that, it is worth noting because, if this was how Matthew and others read the book of Esther, this shows another way in which the book of Esther may have been brought into conversations about the passion of Jesus.

4.3.4.4 The Question of Jesus in Matt 20:21

Whilst not part of the passion narrative itself, Davies and Allison have highlighted a small portion of text that bears a similarity with the book of Esther. This is in Matt 20:21, in a scene in which Jesus foretells his passion. As this chapter proposes

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that the book of Esther has been influential in the way that Matthew has written about the passion this is worth a brief mention.

Very unusually, Jesus is recorded asking a question – ‘what do you want?’ Unlike the plural in Mark 10:36, which is posed to James and John (Τί θέλετε;), Matthew has reworked this so that in Matt 20:21 is a singular question posed to the mother of James and John (Τί θέλεις;). This is a slight change in the grammar, but might have more than a slight effect. In the Septuagint, the singular form is only found in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 5:3.

In both texts, these words are spoken to a woman in the context of sharing the kingdom of the one asking the question. Davies and Allison state;

here, especially in view of what immediately follows, the counter-question to one bowed before him makes Jesus sound like a king (cf. Est. 5.3 [LXX: Τί θέλεις; - the king to Esther]).\textsuperscript{727}

It is possible that Matthew is presenting Jesus as a king through an Estherian motif, albeit one that will not be like the gentile rulers who ‘lord it over’ their subjects (Matt 20:24-28). This would be another way, in passion related material, that Matthew toes a fine line between drawing on Estherian motifs to characterise Jesus whilst distancing Jesus from some more problematic inferences. This Estherian link could sow the Estherian seed for Matthew’s readers to anticipate more fully-grown links in the passion narrative. To fully explore the potential Estherian background to Matt 20:17-24 (particularly the conflation of crucifixion by gentiles and the third-day motif in 20:19) would be a suitable place for further research.

\textsuperscript{727} Davies & Allison, \textit{Matthew: Vol 3}, p.88.
4.3.4.5 **Summary of Other Possible Ripples**

This section has explored other possible ripples of the book of Esther and ways in which the book of Esther resonates in Matthew’s passion narrative. Of these some are fairly flimsy, whilst others are supported from several angles. Perhaps the most critical thing to note from this section is that the weakest links are those found in the shared passion material, whereas the strongest links are in the uniquely Matthaean material.

In summary of the evaluation it is possible to propose that, amongst his other concerns in narrating the passion of Jesus, Matthew needed to respond to the difficulty of Jesus’ crucifixion posed by Haman’s crucifixion. In his response, Matthew included material about Judas that was written in such a way that, to anyone who knew the book of Esther and had Haman in mind, Judas would be more readily aligned with Haman than Jesus would be. To drive Haman away from Jesus was the key concern when the book of Esther comes into play. The other side of the coin is that Mordecaian details embellish the characterisation of Jesus. As the book of Esther was on a concern, Estherian resonances permeate the passion narrative, often as ‘textual spray,’ a by-product of the textual ripples and the book of Esther being in Matthew’s mind. These do not play a key role in the narrative, but nevertheless demonstrate some engagement with the book of Esther. This is how ‘innocent blood,’ might be best understood for example. The cluzograph of Σταυρωθήτω is not solitary but features in a well-watered bed.
4.4 Summary and Conclusions
4.4.1 Matthew’s Response to, and Use of, the Book of Esther

At the beginning this section it is worth repeating Hays’ words on Matthew’s use of scripture;

In nearly every paragraph of his Gospel, Matthew seeks to show – whether explicitly or implicitly – that Jesus’ life, teachings, death, and resurrection constitute the fulfilment of Scripture. As we explore Matthew’s Christological reading of Israel’s Scripture, we will encounter frustration if we expect to find a single controlling image or motif as the key to Matthew’s interpretation of Jesus. Matthew is not that sort of systematic thinker, and no one master concept controls his Christology; rather, he interweaves many different images and scriptural traditions to build up a multi-layered portrait of Jesus as the one who fulfils and exceeds all of Israel’s hopes. The result is a narrative account of the identity of Jesus that is irreducibly complex, bearing significations from many different strands of Israel’s story.728

This section is not suggesting that the book of Esther is the sole interpretative key to Matthew’s passion narrative, but it does suggest that the book of Esther should not be excluded from discussions of Matthew’s use of Scripture.

As can be seen in Matt 28:11-15, there were attempts made to circulate stories that presented critical stories of Jesus’ death, by those who were hostile to the early Christian message.729 It is reasonable, and likely, that such stories may have been a factor in Matthew’s need to address ‘the Haman question.’ In this way, the book of Esther may have directly rippled into Matthew’s contexts, but may also have arrived at it having reflected off another surface (other voices critical of the early Christian messages about Jesus’ passion).

728 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, p.139.
The way Jesus was perceived in light of other personalities can be seen in Matt 16:14 where various typologies were claimed for Jesus. The ones that are named are all positive characterisations, even if they do fall short. It is certainly possible that critical voices used less positive characterisations and that after Jesus’ crucifixion the tension may well have arisen as, to the question, ‘who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ one answer was ‘Haman, the enemy of the Jews.’ Matthew may have recognised this possibility and he may have attempted to ‘head-off’ such accusations that Jesus is Haman.

More likely, although currently unprovable, is the possibility that such accusations were already being made by those critical of the claims of earliest Christianity. Alongside the account of 28:11-15, it would be easy to spread a dismissive message that the crucified Jesus was an untrustworthy enemy like the crucified Haman. It is evident that Matthew understood that lies were being circulated in Jewish communities concerning Jesus’ passion and resurrection (Matt. 28:11-15). The example given in 28:13 is one that can be offered and rebutted in few words, whereas the parallel with Haman would take more explaining. This may explain why Matthew does not make a more explicit reference to the book of Esther; for those who aware of the accusation, there is enough material to combat the queries, but without introducing a separate essay on why Jesus is not a latter-day Haman. Matthew appears to have included Estherian features out of necessity to enable him to communicate ‘Christ crucified’ within a first century Jewish setting. The word Σταυρωθήτω is distinctive enough to alert the knowledgeable reader to some engagement with the book of Esther.

Equally likely is that such concerns arose from non-hostile sources; members of Matthew’s community may have asked how they could celebrate Purim with their fellow Jews without disparaging Jesus. It is reasonable to posit that, as the early evangelists
proclaimed ‘Christ crucified,’ there were those in Jewish communities who struggled to understand how they were to understand the crucifixions of both Haman and Jesus, without conflating the two, and asked questions relating to this.

The passion narratives offer a clear obstacle to the rippling of the book of Esther and, as such, there are clear reasons why Matthew would incorporate text, and ideas, from the book of Esther (and interpretations thereof) in his passion narrative. Whatever the source of the questions/concerns about identifying Jesus with Haman, Matthew needed to allay these fears. If not handled, or handled badly, the dominant narrative from the hostile voices could be spoken at Purim. Purim could commemorate not just past events, but continuing events; Haman was an enemy that was crucified bringing salvation and peace, and this continues with Jesus as blasphemer who was crucified calming the Roman fears of this charismatic figure. Matthew can present Jesus’ crucifixion as salvific for all people as Haman’s was, but it could easily be spun the other way to say that Jesus, like Haman, was an enemy whose crucifixion must be celebrated for bringing peace to the Jews under Imperial rule.

With this in mind, it becomes a pressing concern to be able to present some words of Jesus that can be used in the celebration of Purim to strengthen the argument that one can be a Jew who faithfully celebrates Purim without needing to disparage Jesus. This is not conspiratorial hypothesising but can be seen taking place in the account of Socrates Scholasticus. Goulder’s work is of importance here as he has begun to show how the parable recorded in Matt 22:1-14 incorporates Estherian motifs so that it is a suitable lection for Matthaean Christians to read to Purim.

For Goulder, Matthew includes the Estherian motifs for his own community, where those who attend are “his church members, ‘both good and bad’; and woe betide
any Haman-type who is cast out.\textsuperscript{730} As, in the passion narrative, Matthew introduces a wealth of material about Judas that draws on the model presented by Haman, one might adapt Goulder’s claims; woe betide any Haman or Judas character who is cast out. Jesus and Haman are not identical as some might declare. The choice is that one can behave like Jesus or like Haman. If the choice is Haman, then the alignment is with Judas. Jesus and Haman are two characters who are distinct, separate, and not in accordance with each other.

The \textit{hapax legomenon}, Σταυρωθήτω, helps give a pointer in the passion narrative that is subtle and, at the same time, clear that Matthew is responding to the book of Esther. It is subtle in that, it is an appropriate word that, for those unfamiliar with the book of Esther, would not jump out and detract from the main narrative. For those familiar with the book of Esther, however, it is a distinctively Estherian word that stands out as though to acknowledge awareness of the difficult characterisation of Haman and Jesus. It is as though this word encourages the reader to re-read the passion narrative to clarify that Jesus is not to be viewed as Haman, and yet, through their respective crucifixions salvation comes to the Jewish people. Matthew takes, what for him, is the best of an Estherian reading (the salvific crucifixion) whilst negating the worst (the suggestion that Jesus is an enemy); he has his cake and eats it.

\section*{4.4.1.1 Summary of Conclusions}

This chapter is the first attempt to put the cluzographic methodology to the test. Not only does this chapter dispute the idea that the book of Esther is absent from the New Testament, but has several points to conclude;

\textsuperscript{730} Goulder, ‘Sections and Lections in Matthew’, pp.79-96 (93).
• The book of Esther is the only credible source for Σταυρωθήτω in Matt 27:22-23.
• Σταυρωθήτω is distinctively Estherian such that it is not only credible but probable that, when Matthew uses this word, he does so precisely because it is found in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 7:9.
• The crucifixion of Jesus acts as a feature, or obstacle that the book of Esther has rippled into, leaving a cluzograph of Σταυρωθήτω.
• This interaction of the two texts (the book of Esther and early discourse about the passion of Jesus) has resulted in ‘textual spray’ that permeates the passion narrative.
• Matthew includes additional material that, amongst other things, guides the interpreter to see Haman’s characterisation in Judas, not in Jesus.
• By contrast, Jesus is foreshadowed by Mordecai.
• Despite separating Jesus from Haman, Matthew is nevertheless able to uphold the book of Esther as an account where crucifixion has a far-reaching salvific effect.
• Matthew intentionally brings the book of Esther near to Jesus’ passion to reject some of the most problematic interpretations, either to respond to queries from within his community, or to external accusations that Jesus is Haman. To fully extend the metaphor, one might say that, having been confronted by the looming wave that threatens to drown his message, Matthew approaches it and engages in ‘textual surfing’; the wave still has the power to do damage, but as a skilled surfer, he rides it out.

Rather than keep open the potential for identifying Jesus with Haman, Matthew has written his passion account to restrict this. By the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, the reader is no longer able to think ‘Jesus is Haman.’ Haman (in Judas) is already dead and out of the picture and one is left thinking that it is tragic that Jesus did not escape crucifixion as Mordecai was able to.

4.4.2 Reflections on the Methodology

At this point in the research a reflection on the methodology is warranted. This chapter has been the first time that a cluzographic methodology has been tested and, as
such, one might expect some teething problems. These should be noted for progressing into the next stage of research in which the methodology is tested in a different context.

Some of the wider intertextual similarities, beyond the initial textual link, may not have been as unambiguously demonstrated as one might have hoped. This demonstrates the need for another context in which to test the methodology. As the next chapter is to explore the verb ἵναδικζω in Gal 2:14, this may need to be something to hold in mind; if Gal 2:14 can be shown to be inspired by Esth 8:17, are there other Estherian features in the letter and how can these be analysed?

Despite this concern the methodology has, overall, yielded some remarkable, new, proposals regarding Matthew’s engagement with Scripture. In recording the passion of Jesus for his community, Matthew was compelled to reflect on the difficulties posed by the book of Esther and, by virtue of this, there is a textual feature in Matthew’s Gospel – the word Σταυρωθήτω – that has been used because it is used in the book of Esther. The criterion of distinctiveness is the methodological key here in highlighting this proposal. The extent to which wider Estherian features have entered Matthew’s writing may be discussed and disputed (i.e. are they intentional or subconscious by-products of engaging with the book of Esther?) but it seems likely that the book of Esther has had a direct influence on the vocabulary of Matthew’s passion narrative. In this regard, therefore, the methodology can be seen as successful.

A key element of the methodology is the idea that new contexts may act as metaphorical obstacles to the rippling out of a text. As a result, this methodology can only work if it can be shown what that ‘obstacle’ is. This leads to the fact that the methodology can not only show why a text would be incorporated into a new text, but that it must be able to do so. There are other reasons for embedding text, and other methodologies can answer those questions, but this methodology has worked in this
instance by showing how a text has rubbed up against a context such that the source text can be seen in the new text. The fact that the methodology worked by showing not just what text has been incorporated but why it has been incorporated is a success of the methodology. The book of Esther could not ripple past the Matthaean community's discourse about the crucifixion of Jesus without something happening.

There is a risk that the methodology might be seen as being shaped to produce a certain result, and this is another reason why putting it to the test a second time is important. Will it work again, and can it be refined? This evaluation has shown that the criteria of textual distinctiveness and ‘obstacles to the ripples’ work well, but can this be repeated in a new context?
Chapter 5: Circumcision and Conversion – The debate between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2:14

Following on from the initial findings that highlighted words that may offer springboards into this research, this chapter will explore a possible cluzographic relationship between Esth\textit{LXX} 8:17 and Gal 2:14. Unlike σταυρωθήτω, which is a rare conjugation of a well-attested verb, the potential in this case is grounded in the shared use of the verb \textit{ιουδαίζω}, found only in these two verses in all biblical literature, regardless of conjugation. These two verses read:

And many of the Gentiles were circumcised and became Jews [\textit{ιουδαίζον}] out of fear of the Jews (Esth\textit{LXX} (NRSV) 8:17b).

But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews [\textit{ιουδαίζειν}]?’ (Gal\textsuperscript{NRSV} 2:14).

This provides a very different arena of research when compared to the Gospel of Matthew; the lexical parallel in Matthew featured in the middle of the narrative of the passion, whereas in Galatians, the lexical parallel occurs in the snippet of reported dialogue that constitutes a debate between Peter and Paul. By providing this different literary context, the shared use of \textit{ιουδαίζω} may well be a help in honing the methodology, by requiring similar but different approaches.

\[^{731}\text{Katharina von Bora became Martin Luther’s wife. Her response to these comments is not recorded; Martin Luther, Luther’s Works: Vol. 26 (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1963), p.ix.}\]
The books of Esther and Galatians represent extreme opposites in reception history. As noted in chapters one and two, the book of Esther has been viewed, often critically, as the epitome of biblical judaizing literature.\textsuperscript{732} The letter to the Galatians on the other hand has from the earliest reception been the epitome of biblical anti-judaizing literature, described by Tertullian as “the primary epistle against Judaism.”\textsuperscript{733} As such both texts have been brought into anti-Semitic discourse around the topic that befits the word ἴουδαίζω.

Luther’s remark, which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter, indicates the strength of his feeling toward this letter. For him the book of Esther was to be criticised for ‘judaizing too much,’ whereas he cherished the letter to the Galatians in the strongest terms. A man not known for subtlety, Luther likes and dislikes these texts for the extremes that they appear to represent, he perceives these texts as poles apart on the question of the relationship between gentiles and Jews. Although twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship has made attempts to “banish the ghost of Luther from Pauline exegesis,”\textsuperscript{734} his comments on the books of Esther and Galatians provide an in-road into an exploration of intertextuality. Without meaning to do so, through his own prejudices and tastes, Luther has highlighted an arena for research. The books of Esther and Galatians appear to represent extreme positions that, rather than being far apart, come full circle. They both ask questions about gentile-Jewish relations but from different vantage points.

Another way of terming this is through the analyses of the two texts with regards to ethnic identity. Speaking of \textit{ethnicity} has its difficulties as a word that is “in the

\textsuperscript{733} \textit{Marc.} V.2.1; Tertullian, \textit{Adversus Marcionem: Books IV-V} (OECT; transl. E. Evans; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.513.
\textsuperscript{734} Watson, \textit{Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith}, p.35.
process of being defined,”735 but is perhaps more helpful than other similar markers; religion may be best understood as a separate category to ethnicity, and nationality is anachronistic when applied to the biblical world.736 There is something of cultural kinship that forms one’s ethnicity, so Brett;

An ethnic group may indeed be defined as a social group which shares a culture.737 and more extensively, Berge;

Cultures and ethnicities should be seen as sets more like families of resemblances than simple typological trees. It needs to be added, however, that this is not the same as claims to real national primordiality... “Ethnicity occupies something of an intermediary position between kinship and nationality. Ethnic identities have become important historically wherever multiple groups have dealings with each other in a common territory. Ethnicity is thus not simply an extension of kinship, but the way in which collective identity gets constituted when kinship loyalties, traditions... confront a broader arena in which most interaction is not organized by the same kinship and culture as within the group.”738

As will be elaborated upon further down, in the letter to the Galatians Paul takes a strong position against the requirement for one to switch between ethnic groups in becoming a part of the Christian movement; he does not require gentile believers to cease to be gentile, nor does he require an adoption of any particular ethnic group from within the myriad ‘Judaisms’. On this latter point one might turn to Acts 2:5-11 where

736 Wetter, “On Her Account”, pp.18-23. Wright uses ethnic identity and racial identity interchangeably in referring to his key symbols of Second Temple Judaism (alongside Temple, Land and Torah). This muddies the waters somewhat between more physical differences and more cultural differences. This is particularly pertinent when discussing how such symbols carried forward into the Christian movement, and highlights the need for a definition of ‘ethnicity’. cf. NT Wright, The New Testament and the People of God (London: SPCK, 1992), pp.224, 230-232, 365-366.
Luke describes Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judaens, Cappadocians and others as Jews from every *ethnos* under heaven (Acts 2:5). Luke presents a “Jewish multiethnicity”\(^{739}\) that can also be found in the writings of Philo (cf. *Virtues* 281-284).

This highlights the complexity of speaking of Jewish/Judaean ethnicity in the ancient world. What group would the ancients place themselves in if; 

- ethnicity was based not upon the behaviors and customs of a people, but upon the boundaries that a group uses to define itself and distinguish itself from others,\(^{740}\)

Judaism is presented as a distinct group with boundaries as opposed to Greeks or gentiles, but Judaism also contains within it a variety of ethnic diversity, that has some commonality.

Paul does not set being a follower of the Jesus movement as something beyond the boundaries of any ethnic group, nor is it contained within any one ethnic group. For Paul, being a follower of this movement does not involve either leaving an ethnic group or becoming a member of a new ethnic group. In Rom 1:13, for example, Paul uses “ethnic terminology... in the sense of *his readers’* ethnic categories... [which] should be translated not as ‘Gentiles’ but as ‘nations’ or peoples’.\(^{741}\) Paul recognises that the people with which he engages have some boundaries that distinguish them from others, and expects those entering the holy community to be able to do so without forsaking these communities and backgrounds (cf. 1 Cor 7:20-24). In speaking and thinking of the various ethnic groups, Paul “very often thinks in terms of ‘nations’ and not only of

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\(^{741}\) Sze-Kar Wan, “‘To the Jew first and also to the Greek’ Reading Romans as Ethnic Construction’, in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, pp.129-155 (139-140).
individual ‘Gentiles’." This can also be termed as Paul taking a strong position against the gentile adoption of Jewish (or Judaean) ethnic identity, sometimes known as ‘judaizing,’ seemingly culminating in his outburst in Gal 2:14. Paul’s concerns are as much about group identity as they are about any individual identity within that group.

By the same token, ethnicity plays a significant role in the book of Esther. This is in terms of the gentiles in the narrative (opening with “geographical and ethnological notation” for the extent of the empire, naming the provinces and satrapies and the backgrounds of the banquet guests), the Jews/Judaeans (the book of Esther uses the ethnic terminology of יهوוד more than any other Hebrew text to a significant degree) and in the play off between the two (with Haman being described as the Agagite opponent to ‘Mordecai the Jew’, cf. Esth 3:1). The way the book of Esther uses ethnic markers culminates in the mass ‘judaizing’ of Esth 8:17, which is the focus of this chapter. The vocabulary for this will be looked at later in the chapter.

The extent to which the reception of these texts has been polarised, particularly with regards to their role in ‘judaizing’ makes for an interesting background against which to test the hypothesis that Paul’s unique use of Ἰουδαῖζω is derived from the unique Septuagintal example from the book of Esther. Is the use of Ἰουδαῖζω indicative of the

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744 Bailey, “‘That’s Why They Didn’t Call the Book Hadassah!’: The Interse(ct)/(x)inality of Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality in the Book of Esther’, p.228.
745 That the Greek versions amend ‘Agagite’ to ‘Bougaion’ is indicative of the fact that, while this word is difficult to understand, Haman’s ethnicity needed to be reinterpreted for a Hellenistic context so that he had the ‘correct’ enemy ethnicity. cf. Vialle, ‘Aux Commencements des Livres Grec D’Esther’, p.116; Karen Jobes, ‘How and Assassination Changed the Greek Text of Esther’, ZAW 110 (1998), pp.75-78; Wechsler, ‘The Appellation ΒΟΥΓΑΙΟΣ, pp.109-114.
book of Esther rippling out, and encountering an obstruction in the Antioch incident?

As a preliminary to this question, this chapter will need to set the wider analysis in context. As with the previous chapter on Matthew this chapter will outline the *status quaestionis* of the book of Esther in Paul’s writings. Prior to this, however, will be the *status quaestionis* of the Jewish Scriptures in the Pauline corpus, but with particular attention to their use in the letter to the Galatians. This will help contextualise the scholarship that concerns Paul’s reception of, and use of, the book of Esther, and then more broadly these two overviews will create an arena in which to discuss the proposed chartograph from the book of Esther.

5.1 Jewish Scriptures in the Pauline Corpus

5.1.1 ‘Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul’

This subsection takes its heading from the title of Hays’ volume that has been instrumental in shaping this field of study, although looks more broadly than this one volume. In addition to Hays, there have been numerous monographs and articles addressing the use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Pauline literature, which do not need to be examined in great depth here, although an overview of their conclusions to date will be of use.746

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For the purposes of this chapter, unless otherwise stated to include any of the disputed letters, the Pauline corpus will be understood to be: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans. The majority of Paul's scriptural references, approximately 80% of the total, are from a few texts; the Pentateuch, Isaiah and the Psalms.747 His other references do account for much more of the Hebrew Bible, but by no means all; Moyise outlines Paul's quotations, which do not include any such references from Judges, Joshua, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes (although he suggests one quotation of Eccles 7:20 might exist), Song of Songs, Lamentations, and all of the twelve except for Hosea, Joel, Habakkuk and Malachi.748 From this, as was the case with Philo, one cannot draw conclusions about Paul's ‘canon,’ and specifically whether or not Paul was familiar with the book of Esther from the lack of reference to the texts. Not only would this be an argument from silence but, particularly with Joshua and Judges, such a conclusion would

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747 By Moyise’s list of Pauline quotations, 83% come from the Pentateuch, the Psalms and Isaiah; Martin Hengel, The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its prehistory and the problem of its canon (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), pp.106-107; Moyise, Paul and Scripture, pp.131-132.

748 There is no scholarly sense of the ‘Pauline Bible’. Menken has endeavoured to ascertain the scriptures known to Matthew, but similar scholarship is lacking for Paul; Moyise, Paul and Scripture, pp.97, 131-132; see also Smith, ‘The Pauline Literature’, p.273; Menken, Matthew’s Bible.
be bold to the extent of being “hazardous.” The scripture index to NA\textsuperscript{28} only provides two possible examples of Paul alluding to these texts (Josh 2:15 in 2 Cor 11:32 and Judg 9:9 in Rom 11:17). Both are tentative suggestions, but one would not wish to conclude that Paul was unfamiliar with the books of Joshua and Judges.

On the other hand, one can look at non-scriptural texts from which Paul may have found inspiration. The index to NA\textsuperscript{28} suggests that of the forty-six New Testament allusions to the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, thirteen are found in the Pauline corpus. The relationship between the Pauline literature and the Testaments is disputed, although examples such as the shared imperative to ‘shun fornication’ (1 Cor\textsuperscript{NRSV} 6:18; \textit{T. Reub.} 5:5), appear to demonstrate either Pauline knowledge of the Testament of Reuben, or that both texts are witnesses to a shared source demonstrating “a traditional interpretation of Gen 39.” Watson shows that Paul’s readings of texts as undisputed as Torah are done so in conversation with other texts such as Baruch or Wisdom (e.g. the conversation between Num 17:6; Wis 18:25 and 1 Cor 10:10). This is indicative of the fact that Paul, perhaps more so than his contemporaries, may well have drawn on, or been inspired by, a wide range of texts including those whose canonical status/authority was less well accepted.

Indeed, Paul does not only refer to Scripture to bolster his arguments, but his writings are a commentary on Scripture, drawing on existing interpretations but adapting and developing this commentary through his writing. For Watson;

Paul’s doctrine of righteousness by faith is an exercise in scriptural interpretation and hermeneutics. Paul seeks to persuade his readers that this language and conceptuality is generated by scripture... Although Paul has directed

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\textsuperscript{749} Smith, ‘The Pauline Literature’, p.274.  
\textsuperscript{751} Watson, \textit{Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith}, p.404.
us to the testimony of the law and of the prophets, it is he himself who interprets that testimony.\footnote{Watson, \textit{Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith}, pp.76-77.}

While one would not wish to downplay the importance of the Law and Prophets, what about the other writings? Some of Paul’s letters do refer to the texts that would form the Megilloth, (though only Ecclesiastes and Lamentations).\footnote{Cf. Eccles 1:2 – Rom. 8:20; Eccles 5:14 – 1 Thess 6:7; Eccles 7:20 – Rom 3:10; Eccles 12:14 – 2 Cor 5:10; Lam 4:2 – 2 Cor 4:7.} Although no ripples of the book of Esther have been recognised in Paul, one would be wise to keep open the possibility that they might exist. Paul was an author who was prepared to draw on a wide range of texts, if they were germane to his point. The question that will be important is, ‘\textit{are there occasions where the book of Esther may speak something that Paul considers pertinent?}’ The focus that each text takes to the concept of ‘judaizing’, however different their conclusions may appear to be, could well be just a such an occasion.

There is not a single way in which one can say Paul incorporates scripture into his own writing. He may use a formula to introduce the borrowed text, such as the “conventional”\footnote{Watson, \textit{Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith}, p.43.} ‘as it is written’ (Rom 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 14:11; 15:3, 9, 21; 1 Cor 1:31; 2:9; 10:7; 2 Cor 8:15; 9:9), or he may make “unmarked use of vocabulary and formulations from the LXX.”\footnote{As examples of this one might note the use of Isa 49:1-6 in Gal 1:15-16, Ps\textsuperscript{ai}142:2 in Gal 2:16, Hab 2:4 in Gal 3:11 and Lev 18:5 in Gal 3:12; Martinus de Boer, ‘Observations on the Significance of the Old Testament in Galatians’ in Koet, Moyise, Verheyden, \textit{The Scriptures of Israel in Jewish and Christian Tradition}, pp.211-226 (212).} One may compare Paul’s handling of Scripture in the letters to the Romans and to the Philippians. The former is riddled with Old Testament references, whereas the latter lacks any explicit
citations, but does have Old Testament language embedded into the text.\textsuperscript{756} Although Paul does cite scripture, he does also demonstrate a “rich and subtle use of the Old Testament,”\textsuperscript{757} that goes beyond clear citations. This subtlety can be quite probing as;

In Paul, intense engagements with particular passages are often succinct to the point of obscurity.\textsuperscript{758}

It can be problematic in drawing referents from points of obscurity; “because Paul’s relationship to Scripture is dialectical, the detection of his dependence is often not easy.”\textsuperscript{759} Regarding citations of multiple words, Stanley has been able to conclude that Paul often adapts Scripture for his own purposes, such that “roughly half the deviations from the primary LXX tradition with the letters of Paul can be attributed with confidence to the apostle himself.”\textsuperscript{760} This should not pose a difficulty to this research as it would not be possible to highlight a textual deviation when the textual link is a single word. This is worth remembering, however, to be aware that Paul is prepared to adapt to his own context the scripture that he has received.

A further factor is that, in drawing on scripture, Paul often does so to refer “not simply to the actual words quoted, but to the whole passage.”\textsuperscript{761} Examples of this include his reference to Ps 116:10 in 2 Cor 4:13.\textsuperscript{762} This chapter will need to assess and hone the ‘cluzographic methodology’ to see if, in the intense argument recorded in Gal 2:14, Paul succinctly engages with the book of Esther through a single word, in a way that has hitherto been an obscure example of intertextuality, or not.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{756} Jeffrey Reed, \textit{A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and rhetoric in the debate over literary integrity} (JSNTSup136; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), p.291.
\item \textsuperscript{757} N. T. Wright, \textit{Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision} (London: SPCK, 2009), p.17.
\item \textsuperscript{758} Watson, \textit{Paul and The Hermeneutics of Faith}, p.515.
\item \textsuperscript{759} Brodie, \textit{The Birthing of the New Testament}, p.590.
\item \textsuperscript{760} Stanley, \textit{Paul and the Language of Scripture}, pp.259-260.
\item \textsuperscript{761} Wright, \textit{Justification}, p.17.
\item \textsuperscript{762} Wright, \textit{Justification}, p.17; Margaret Thrall, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: Vol 1} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p.340.
\end{itemize}
Final considerations are the reasons why Paul would incorporate scripture, and if they vary by source text. Such reasons are, as is the case of any writer, varied and include being able, “to provide authoritative grounding for a questionable assertion, to illustrate a point made elsewhere in more prosaic form, to embellish the style of an independent composition, or simply to impress potential readers.” As to the source text, and if there are differences in use, one might expect to find the Torah and Prophets are incorporated to embellish different topics. As it is, however,

although Paul quotes from the psalms as an expression of praise in Romans 15:9, 11, the majority of his uses fall under the same categories as the prophets: proclamation of the gospel; inclusion of the Gentiles; current unbelief of the Jews; future salvation; Paul’s vocation and particular issues facing the Church.

These categories will be worth bearing in mind to see if any of them act as ‘obstacles’ into which Esth 8:17 might ripple, particularly given the circumstances of Gal 2:14. These insights provide some thoughts to bear in mind, for this research into Gal 2:14, but also to how subtle uses of scripture can be methodologically examined.

5.1.2 Rhetoric, Hapax Legomena and Paul

As Paul was situated in a first century Jewish context, one ought not to be surprised that he would draw on Jewish traditions and beliefs. Similarly, from a Hellenistic background, one should not be surprised to discover that Paul's arguments would be shaped by Greek rhetoric. There can be little doubt that Paul would have been “familiar with the rhetorical conventions” of his context. This can be seen in, for example, the speech given by Paul, as recorded by Luke, in Acts 17:22-31. This speech

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763 Stanley, Paul and the Language of Scripture, p.3.
764 Moyise, Paul and Scripture, p.110.
follows “the rhetorician’s model of exordium (v.22), narratio (v.23), diviso (vv.24-28), and conclusio (vv.29-31),” as well as Rom 2-3 and some “brief examples in... 1 Cor. 9; 15:35-36.”

The rhetorical structure of the letter has spurred much scholarship, notably since Betz’ 1979 commentary that explores this topic in great detail. Betz suggests the following structure for the letter to the Galatians:

| Epistolary Prescript | Gal 1:1-5 |
| Exordium | Gal 1:6-11 |
| Narratio | Gal 1:12-2:14 |
| Propositio | Gal 2:15-21 |
| Probatio | Gal 3:1-4:31 |
| Exhortatio | Gal 5:1-6:10 |
| Conclusio | Gal 6:11-18 |

This structure has subsequently formed the basis for Galatians scholarship. Although some slight changes have been suggested to this structure, the basic framework still stands.

As a Hellenistic Jew, Paul is interesting from an exegetical point of view, in that he draws from both the Hellenistic and Jewish traditions. As such he uses “Scripture as an element of his rhetoric” and does so to a high degree in the letter to the Galatians.

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769 See Kern, Rhetoric and Galatians, for an overview of approaches. Witherington suggests that the narration begins with 1:11 rather than 1:12 and has a longer Probatio (replacing the Exhortatio). Such amendments are minor details for this research into 2:14. cf. Witherington, Grace in Galatia, pp.vii-ix.
770 Ciampa, The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2, p.225, see also 271.
It has already been noted how Paul naturally includes rabbinic techniques such as *gezerah shevah*, but this is combined with classical rhetoric.

Commonly associated with speeches, rhetorical analysis is of importance, as “letter literature is more closely related to speech than narrative literature.”\(^{771}\) Kern comments that it has become “practically axiomatic [that]... Galatians begins with classical rhetoric,”\(^{772}\) and he directs the reader to various attempts to outline the rhetorical flow of the letter that broadly follow Martin’s outline above. Recognition of this rhetorical structure has come not just from modern critical scholarship, but was noted by Marius Victorinus, the fourth century rhetorician, and there can be little doubt that this forms the structure of the letter.\(^{773}\) The letter as a whole can be considered a classical apology, “with exordium, narration, proposition, proof and conclusion.”\(^{774}\) The broad consensus is that the verse of relevance to this research, 2:14, concludes the *narratio*, the second section of classical rhetorical speech.\(^{775}\)

Paul’s use of *narratio* is not to flesh out the account with interesting background material but is “supporting evidence for Paul’s claim in 1:11 that the gospel he preached was not from man [sic], but from God.”\(^{776}\) This is in line with Aristotle’s guidelines for use of narration that it should “pertain to one’s own virtue,”\(^{777}\) and is able to support the authority of Paul as the speaker. Throughout the opening chapters, Paul is keen to assert his authority, contrasting the message he preaches as one from God as opposed to the

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\(^{772}\) Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians*, p.90.


\(^{774}\) Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, p.130.


messages preached by other humans. The culmination of this section is with the emphasis on the distinction between him and Paul and the question posed in Gal 2:14.\(^778\)

An alternative, but persuasive conclusion of rhetorical analysis is that the whole section of Gal 1:10-2:21 follows the pattern of the *encomium*, the rhetorical section of giving honour and here used by Paul to praise himself. The verse, 2:14, thus occurs in the *sygkrisis*, the section of comparison, where Paul's honour is presented in contrast to another.\(^779\)

### 5.1.3 Rhetoric and Hapax Legomena

One element of the rhetoric in which Paul was schooled was the care taken over vocabulary. The use of words for their rhetorical effect is a key area in which rhetorical analysis may be of help in the context of this research. A point could be made with greater emphasis by using atypical vocabulary rather than more commonplace words. Words used in this way are more likely to appear as *hapax legomena* either in the New Testament, or at least in the Pauline corpus as a restricted body of literature. Although there is not much extensive scholarship on the rhetorical use of *hapax legomena*, this has been recognised in biblical scholarship in, and beyond, Paul's writings.\(^780\)

The preface to Luke’s gospel, for example, has “traces of rhetorical style,”\(^{781}\) which are predominantly found in his “impressive vocabulary... [which is marked by] many *hapax legomena.*”\(^{782}\) Notwithstanding this, it is Paul who exemplifies this such that Fee can remark that “it is the nature of Pauline rhetoric to have a sudden influx of *hapax legomena,*”\(^{783}\) or Barnett, “it is characteristic of Paul that rhetorically powerful passages... tend to be *hapax*-laden.”\(^{784}\) Betz does not provide a focussed discussion on the relationship between *hapax legomena* and rhetoric but does provide examples where Paul chooses words carefully for the rhetorical impact of the associations that could be made. Two examples are μετατίθημι (Gal 1:6), and ἀκυροῦν (Gal 3:17), which are both used as legal rhetoric.\(^{785}\) In both cases these are Pauline *hapax legomena,* which have a small number of non-Pauline attestations in the New Testament.\(^{786}\)

Using words without a specific context, such as judicial vocabulary, could still produce a “striking rhetorical effect,”\(^{787}\) and is something that Paul did in 2 Cor 6:15-7:1.\(^{788}\) Even such words that are not absolute *hapax legomena* but nevertheless are rare in the New Testament are used in this passage for similar rhetorical stress.\(^{789}\)

Pauls’ letter to the Philippians provides other examples of this rhetorical device where there are “rare words chosen because of aural and rhetorical considerations... rare words may be used for rhetorical effect.”\(^{790}\) Such examples of this rhetorical effect are the...

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\(^{783}\) Fee, *To What End Exegesis?*, p.134.


\(^{785}\) Betz, *Galatians,* pp.47, 158.

\(^{786}\) Acts 7:16; Heb 7:12; 11:5; Jude 1:4; Matt 15:6; Mark 7:13.

\(^{787}\) Danker, *II Corinthians,* p.18.

\(^{788}\) Danker, *II Corinthians,* pp.18, 99.


combination of ἀμεμπτος with ἀμωμος in Phil 2:15 and the propinquity, in Phil 1:18-23, of χαρήσομαι, ἀποβήσεται, αἰσχυνθήσομαι, μεγαλυνθήσεται, αἵρήσομαι, and συνέχομαι. Here these unusual words display homoiteleuton, and although most “are the result of the future passive form, Paul had to choose words with the passive ending to get the effect.”

At the end of this section is the word ἐξαυτῆς, a Pauline hapax legomenon, which “is chosen for rhetorical reasons.” The letter to the Philippians is a useful rhetorical comparison when considering the hapax legomena in Gal 2:14. There are no explicit citations from the Jewish Scriptures in Philippians but, instead, “Paul repeatedly embeds Old Testament language in his epistolary argument.”

This helps paint Paul as a rhetorician who draws from his scriptural corpus to add flair to his writing, with the added gravitas that comes from scripture rather than any corpus of literature. Silva has remarked that Paul “depended on the OT... when pressured and cornered,” by his opponents. The remarks in Gal 2:14 are thus prime material for dependence on the Jewish Scriptures, as Paul argues his case.

As well as using atypical vocabulary for its rhetorical effect, Paul also uses these words for their intertextual rhetorical effect. This balance of rhetoric and intertextuality can be seen in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 in which there is “an unusually high incidence of hapax legomena,” some of which at least are used because of the Septuagintal background that is borne by the letter. In 1 Cor 10:1-13 Paul uses a number of words that, in some cases, are Pauline or New Testament hapax legomena, which are also distinctive to the

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793 Reed, A Discourse Analysis of Philippians, p.291.
book of Numbers, such as καταστρώννυμι (Num\textsuperscript{LXX} 14:16; 1 Cor 10:5) and γογγύζω (Num\textsuperscript{LXX} 11:1; 14:27, 29; 1 Cor 10:10).\textsuperscript{797} Through the use of these words, “the echo of Numbers 11 sounds ominously,”\textsuperscript{798} in the ears of some of the Corinthians. It may be that in this passage Paul is borrowing a midrash that was already in existence rather than coming with an original interpretation.\textsuperscript{799} Whether original to Paul, or borrowed, this passage from 1 Corinthians shows how \textit{hapax legomena} could be used in first century Jewish discourse to echo the Scriptures.

A different Pauline example comes from 1 Cor 9:9, when Paul offers a strained citation of Deut 25:4. As a proposed allusion to the book of Esther might be considered unusual, this is worth noting as the fact that Paul appeals to Deut 25:4, a law concerning the muzzling of an ox, is unexpected.\textsuperscript{800} Although the textual history is unclear, it appears that Paul has used the \textit{hapax legomena} κημόω in this speech rather than following Deut\textsuperscript{LXX} 25:4 and using φιμόω for ‘muzzle.’\textsuperscript{801} Such an example does not provide a clear parallel with Gal 2:14, as Paul has amended the text. The reason for amending the text to a less literary synonym may be two-fold. First, the use of a \textit{hapax} is a rhetorical device, and makes a punchier point. A second reason may be the consideration of his audience and that Paul may feel that “the more populist term”\textsuperscript{802} is more appropriate. This would provide more of a parallel for the possibility of Esth 8:17 in Gal 2:14 as, in both cases in a speech is a reference to a portion of scripture, that uses

\textsuperscript{797} Anthony Thiselton, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A commentary on the Greek text} (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) pp.730, 742.

\textsuperscript{798} Richard Hays, \textit{First Corinthians} (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), p.163.

\textsuperscript{799} Raymond Collins, \textit{First Corinthians} (SP 7; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), p.364.


\textsuperscript{801} Bruce Metzger, \textit{A textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament} (2\textsuperscript{nd} Ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/UBS, 1998), p.492.

\textsuperscript{802} Thiselton, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, p.685.
a **hapax legomenon**, and uses vocabulary that has been chosen to have the greatest impact for its audience (as ἵουδαζω would have an effect on Peter). Either way, Paul makes his argument, which appears strained, in accordance with contemporaneous applications of Deut 25:4 where ‘oxen’ represent any labourers.\(^{803}\) Paul does not interpret in a vacuum, and other interpretations of texts can shed light on the interpretative context in which Paul lived and exegeted. Paul can be shown to use distinctive vocabulary (that appears in the New Testament as **hapax legomena**) as rhetorical devices and intertextual hooks. There is not one pattern by which Paul does this, but in various, context-dependent, ways.

Beyond Paul, Matthew’s use of ἀπάγχω in Matt 27:5 to reflect 2 Sam 17:23 has already been noted, but this can be seen in other New Testament texts as well. In Titus 1:7-9, the author uses words that, while they are found outside the New Testament, are **hapax legomena** in the New Testament (ἀφιλός, φιλάγαθος, ἑγκατής). In addition to these words are others in this passage that are not **hapax legomena**, but are still rare in the New Testament. This sentence about the character of the episkopos is “clearly made to stand out by its structure and its vocabulary as something very special.”\(^{804}\) Here is a case where words that are New Testament **hapax legomena** have been chosen for the rhetorical effect that comes through vocabulary that is uncommon in the early Christian context. A different example would be the preface to the Lukan writings (Luke 1:1-4). This includes five New Testament **hapax legomena** (ἐπειδὴπερ, ἀνατάσσεσθαι, αὐτόπτης, παρακολουθεῖν). These do not offer an intertextual link with the Septuagint, but it is through the **hapax legomena** that the preface is known to be written “in the manner of

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the Hellenistic-Roman historical works, not that of the scientific ones.” Just as the *hapax legomena* in other texts provide the key link to other texts that locate them in an intertextual framework with the Septuagint, the *hapax legomena* here serve a similar purpose, but with a different corpus of literature of a particular genre.

In both Matt 27:5 and Luke 1:1-4, the words that appear as *hapax legomena* have been chosen by the author because of the intertextual function that they serve, as they direct the reader to other texts. The intertextual effect of using rare vocabulary can be to specific texts (such as ἀπάγχω in Matt 27:5 to reflect 2 Sam 17:23) as well as to specific kinds of texts (the genre associations made in Luke 1:1-4). A word so unusual that it is a New Testament *hapax legomenon* is worth further discussion to explore the potential rhetorical and intertextual effects, especially when that word is also a Septuagintal *hapax legomenon*.

**5.1.4 Hapax Legomena and Galatians 2**

In discussing *hapax legomena* and the rhetoric of Galatians, one may ask about the spread of such words in the letter and how this compares to Paul’s literary style. In his study of *hapax legomena* in the Hebrew Bible (which draws on insights from other literature), Greenspahn can state that “*hapax legomena* consistently comprise one-third to one-half of the vocabulary in any given body of linguistic material.” The Pauline corpus concords with these findings. The corpus comprises 32,303 words made up of a vocabulary of 2,648 words, in which Pauline *hapax legomena* number 1,140 words.

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Pauline *hapax legomena* make up 43.1% of Paul’s vocabulary and 3.5% of his entire extant writings.\(^{807}\)

In the letter to the Galatians there are twenty-nine *hapax legomena* (or thirty such words if one includes *προσανατίθημι*, which, whilst only occurring in Galatians does so in Gal 1:16 and 2:6). Of these, there are three in chapter one (four if *προσανατίθημι* is included), eight in chapter two (nine if *προσανατίθημι* is included), four in chapter three, five in chapter four, five in chapter five and four in chapter four. Chapter two is notable for its predominance of *hapax legomena*, above the norm for the letter. The New Testament *hapax legomena* that appear in Gal 2 account for 2.3% of the words in this chapter. This cannot be fairly compared to Greenspahn’s statistics for the Pauline corpus as that accounted for Pauline *hapax legomena* (a higher proportion of *hapax legomena*). Nevertheless, the figure of 2.3% for the chapter is not dissimilar to the 3.5% across the whole extant Pauline corpus, and demonstrates how unusual this chapter is.

There are two individual verses that also stand out – 2:14 and 5:26. Gal 2:14 contains four New Testament *hapax legomena* (*ὀρθοποδέω*, ἐθνικῶς, ἰουδαϊκως, ἰουδαϊζω*), and 5:26 contains three (*κενόδοξας*, προκαλέω, φθονέω*). With regards the first collection, ἰουδαⁱζω is the only one of the four *hapax legomena* from 2:14 to be attested in the Septuagint.\(^{808}\) This strengthens the suggestion that there is something distinctive about ἰουδαⁱζω and its relationship to the two texts of Esther and Galatians. Although not directly impinging the interpretation of ἰουδαⁱζω in the way that the *hapax legomena* in 2:14 had the potential to do so, a few words are warranted on the *hapax legomena* in 5:26 as a similar collation of unusual vocabulary. None of these words are found in the

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\(^{807}\) This information on the Greek text of Paul’s writings comes from Greenspahn, *Hapax Legomena*, p.34.

\(^{808}\) LEH, pp.172, 288, 444.
texts that would be accepted as canonical, but all are found in the deuterocanonical texts. The first, κενόδοξας, is a “philosophical term with deep roots in Epicurus’ epistemology,”809 which is found in 4 Macc 2:15; 8:19; Wis 14:14. The second, προκαλέω, is found also in 2 Macc 8:11 and the third φθονέω, is found in Tob 4:7, 16. All three words are found in numerous other “diatribe texts”810 and are used for the rhetorical punch that they can place through their associations with diatribe literature. When taken altogether these words support the possibility of an intentional connection between ιουδαίζω and Esth 8:17. The other hapax legomena either are not used at all in the Septuagint, or they are distinctive to a particular type of literature and are used for the link that they make with such texts.

In considering these verses, one is reminded of Fee’s words that “it is the nature of Pauline rhetoric to have a sudden influx of hapax legomena.”811 Gal 2:14 is widely recognised as the close of a rhetorical section, or of a subsection.812 Gal 5:26 is “an extremely concise”813 saying that summates the preceding verses, and launches the reader into a more expansive explanation in the following verses, having tied this explanation to wider diatribe literature through the hapax legomena.814 In this way, it is worth noting that Paul uses unusual vocabulary in sentences that are rhetorically climactic, suggesting that the choice of vocabulary has something to do with this rhetorical effect.

810 Betz, Galatians, pp.294-295.
811 Fee, To What End Exegesis?, p.134.
812 See the overview of rhetorical analyses in Kern, Rhetoric and Galatians, p.91.
813 Betz, Galatians, p.294.
In Gal 6:12 Paul uses the New Testament *hapax legomenon* εὐπροσώπεός that, although there is not the space to discuss it in full here, could be a place for further methodological research. In the Septuagint, εὐπροσώπεός occurs only once (GenLXX 12:11) when Abraham tells Sarah how beautiful her face is. Paul does not use εὐπροσώπεός in exactly the same way but the fact that he does use εὐπροσώπεός is of note as it is such a rare word. The lack of similar usage would normally preclude any further intertextual investigation; there is nothing in the text to suggest that, in describing his opponents, Paul would wish to appear as Abraham describing Sarah. Given that Paul does quote from Gen 12-13 in Gal 3:8, 16 one can pose the question ‘can εὐπροσώπεός be considered to be a cluzograph?’ This might be an occasion where the word εὐπροσώπεός has entered Paul’s writings, having rippled out from its source, carried along by Abraham’s righteousness. It is certainly within the realms of possibility that, in reflecting on the story of Abraham, a distinctive word (εὐπροσώπεός) became lodged in Paul’s mind and has appeared later in the letter. There is not the space to consider this in detail to see if this possibility is a probability, but it can be held as a further of example of a potential cluzograph in Paul’s writing. If so, Paul is not intentionally alluding to Gen 12:11 in Gal 6:12 but nevertheless would have used εὐπροσώπεός because it comes from Gen 12 – and has rippled into his writing – rather than solely because it is an appropriate word.

Words need not be *hapax legomena* to be uncommon and have a striking rhetorical effect but words that are *hapax legomena* are, by definition, unusual and may have struck a particular tone in the ears of the early audiences. This methodology may need to account for the rhetorical effect of ἰουδαίζω, both as a rhetorical device as an end in itself, but also for its potential intertextual effect. It is not enough to state that

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815 Longenecker, Galatians, p.291.
ἰουδαίζω is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, there is a question of how commonplace was this word outside the context of the New Testament; is ἱουδαίζω a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament because it is an unusual word, or because it is a common word, but that the contexts of the New Testament writings do not otherwise call for it? As Kelly remarks,

> Modern interpreters must remember that what appears unique from a contemporary perspective does not necessarily reflect language that was actually considered unique to ancient authors or audiences... what appears unique to us might have been more commonplace to ancient audiences and less likely to have triggered allusive patterning for ancient readers.816

These questions and concerns will be explored in the textual overview further down in a historical overview that will examine the other examples of ἱουδαίζω.

This can be seen as a criterion in the methodology – the criterion of distinctiveness. Is the proposed cluzograph rare in literature in absolute (all extant literature) terms, or in relative terms (well attested but rare in a particular corpus of literature)? Kelly’s concerns are primarily with Hebrew Bible work where the wider literary bank is scant, unlike with Greek texts, for which there is a larger bank of comparative literature. This enables the criterion of distinctiveness in absolute terms a more feasible query. In the case of σταυρωθήτω, the root verb is not unusual in absolute terms – many examples exist – but was unique in relative terms. The verb was not a Septuagintal *hapax legomenon*, there are two examples of the verb in the book of Esther, but it only featured in this one text, creating a distinctive association with that text. Furthermore, in the aorist imperative passive verbal form it was distinctive in absolute

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terms. As such σταυρωθήτω can be said to pass the criterion of distinctiveness. In and of itself, this did not prove any intertextual connection, but did justify further research.

The criterion of distinctiveness may be evaluated, therefore, in different ways. Distinctiveness is not a synonym for rarity, although rarity will be one significant way of assessing distinctiveness. A word can be said to be distinctive to a given text if any of the following claims apply; the word occurs for the first time in that text, the word is a rare word in the literature of the language of the text, the word is rare in the literature of a particular genre, the word has an unusually high frequency in any given text. These are all ways of recognising the distinctiveness of a word; multiple categories serve to strengthen the claim of distinctiveness. I intend to continue to test out the category of distinctiveness to see how claims of distinctiveness can be evidenced.

This chapter will need to demonstrate the ways in which ἱουδαίζω may pass the criterion of distinctiveness; is it only in relative terms as a Septuagintal hapax legomenon or are there other ways it is distinctive? Looking into this will hopefully help shape the assessment of the questions concerning the use of ἱουδαίζω and how forcefully it makes a rhetorical strike.

5.1.5 The Use of Jewish Scriptures in the Letter to the Galatians

In addition to the broad use of Scripture in the Pauline corpus, it will be helpful to focus on the use of Scripture in the letter to the Galatians. This will enable this opening contextualisation to account for the particular circumstances of this letter. In proportion to its length, the letter to the Galatians contains more formal citations of Jewish Scriptures than all other texts in the Pauline corpus, except for the letter to the
Romans.\textsuperscript{817} Within the letter, Scriptural references are not made at regular intervals, and Gal 2:11-14 is one such section that is “saturated with scriptural echoes, allusions and concepts.”\textsuperscript{818} Not only does the disputation with Peter contain a high volume of references for its length, but these do not come from any particular portion of scripture, but cover Torah (Gen 15:6), Prophets (Hab 2:4) and Psalms (143:2).\textsuperscript{819} This increases the likelihood of ascertaining other possible scriptural ripples; passages known to demonstrate a high dependence on Scripture are more likely to witness to more (as scripture is serving as a key influence) than passages that do not. Other passages could come from any section of scripture that relates to “the promised age of restoration and salvation”\textsuperscript{820} as it is these schemas that shape the passages rather than being limited to Torah or Prophets. The focus on the salvation of the Jewish people, particularly when set in the “cosmic drama”\textsuperscript{821} of the Greek versions means that LXX Esther is certainly not excluded from Paul’s conversation, and may even be integral to unpacking Paul’s discourse.

In addition to the citations, the letter to the Galatians includes numerous other references to Jewish Scripture. Using NA\textsuperscript{28} as a guide, there are forty-nine scriptural references in the letter to the Galatians. Of these, almost half (twenty-four) are from the Pentateuch, an unsurprising prevalence representing Paul’s deference to the Torah. The remaining twenty-five references are divided almost evenly between prophetic books (thirteen references) and other texts, some of which would become part of the Ketuvim, some of which would not. These last twelve are taken from 2 Chronicles, Job, Psalms,

\textsuperscript{818} Ciampa, \textit{The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2}, p.296.
\textsuperscript{819} Ciampa, \textit{The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2}, pp.157-178, 296.
\textsuperscript{820} Ciampa, \textit{The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2}, p.296.
\textsuperscript{821} Fox, \textit{Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther}, p.272.
Proverbs, Jubilees, Assumption of Moses, Tobit, Enoch, Wisdom, Sirach and 3 Maccabees. If all accepted as genuine allusions (which is by no means the case by all scholars but a full critical analysis is not possible here) then there a few points to summarise;

- The high volume of citations indicates that Jewish scriptures can provide responses to topics that are of interest to the Galatians.
- The range of scriptural references suggests that Paul is prepared to draw on any of the texts available to him, and is not confined to, say, the books of the Law.
- Paul’s use of scripture is not characterised by any particular approach or exegetical technique, but occurs in a number of different ways. This varies from whether there is something in the source text that is pertinent to his argument to whether there is phrasing that is rhetorically useful.
- Paul includes Scripture in his own writing in subtle ways as well as through clear indication.
- Paul used scripture to undergird his theological framework, but also “depended on the OT... when pressured and cornered,” as way of strengthening his points of view.
- Paul would adapt the texts that he knew for his own ends, and these ends were varied.

Further to these remarks are some other details that can be extrapolated by the use of scripture in Gal 3-4. In these two chapters are “three rather dense blocks of biblical argumentation (Gal 3:6-14; 3:15-25; 4:21-21) that play a key role in the development of his position.” The use of scripture in these sections demonstrates traditional exegetical techniques, such as *gezerah shevah,* and shows that the

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825 Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, p.120.

Galatians had some knowledge of Jewish scripture, otherwise they would have been unlikely to have been able to follow Paul’s argument. Equally they are unlikely to have had a thorough grounding in these texts or they would have been able to dispute some of his claims. As Gal 2:14 is the citation of a conversation with Peter, any scriptural references in this verse do not need to conform to the expectations of Paul’s use of scripture elsewhere in the letter as the primary audiences are different.

This overview has highlighted a point of methodology in continuation with the previous chapter; can the researcher ascertain a possible obstacle to the textual ripple? With Matthew’s Passion, there was the potential for Haman’s crucifixion to coincide with Jesus’ crucifixion. In this case, the concern for ‘judaizing’ in each text acts as an obstacle. Through unusual vocabulary, both texts have something to say about the relationship that gentiles may have to Jews, and Paul’s mission to the gentiles may be the ‘obstacle’ encountered by the ripples of the book of Esther. For the methodology, the proposed obstacle should be a justification for further research, to examine if the texts do in fact interact with one another. The proposed obstacle should not suggest a conclusion that the subsequent research heads towards, but can hone a hypothesis. In this case, in addition to having a textual parallel in the word ἰουδαίζω, the wider concepts associated with this word appear to be shared by both texts. Is it such that the texts not only share these ideas, but that the latter text has been shaped by the former?

827 Stanley, Arguing with Scripture, p.135.
5.1.6  The Book of Esther in the Pauline Corpus

Although it is widely accepted that the book of Esther is absent from the corpus of Pauline literature, this is not the full picture. There have been a small number of dissenting voices, prior to this research, whose work will be outlined below.

5.1.6.1  Michael Wechsler: Esther as a Type of Jesus

Wechsler has noted some intriguing parallels between the way in which Esther is presented in the Greek versions and Paul’s presentation of Jesus. He proposes that Paul is a witness to a first century messianic typology where Esther is a type of Jesus. This suggestion is built on several points of similarity.

The 14th Nisan is an important date, starting the fast of Esther and Jesus’ Passover celebration and crucifixion:

Just as Esther’s fast and Jesus’ humiliation (ταπείνωσις, Phil. 2:8) commenced on the same date, so too Esther’s three-day period of fasting parallels to the three-day period of Jesus’ death.828

Wechsler notes how צום ‘fast’ is not only paralleled in Jewish Scriptures with ענוה ‘humiliation’ (Ps 35:13; Isa 58:3, 5), but that the two became completely synonymous in the later Hebrew term for fasting - תענית. Through this, the three-day event of both Jesus and Esther can be presented as acts of humiliation. The Greek vocabulary comes into play in 1 Clem. 55:6 which also couples fasting and humiliation together with Esther; “for with fasting and humiliation [Esther] besought the all-seeing Master of the Ages”.829 Wechsler plays with the idea that the hymn of Phil. 2:6-11 thus shines a light into a Jesus-Esther typology.

Although a loose connection, and one for which there is little in the way of evidence, there is more to support Wechsler’s suggestion. A further point on these words, not noted by Wechsler is the use of ταπείνωσις in LXX Esther. The impetus for the three-day fast in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 4:16 is given by Mordecai in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 4:8 who calls on Esther to ‘remember her humble days (ἡμερῶν ταπεινώσεως).’ This is the sole use of ταπείνωσις in the book of Esther and, whilst not denying the fact that fasting would be a natural decision for Esther, the fast can be seen to be the way in which she remembers these humble days. In this way, the fast of Esther is described in Septuagint Esther, as well as in 1 Clem., as ταπείνωσις, as much as Jesus’ crucifixion is described by Paul using the verb ταπεινώω (Phil 2:8).

The ending of the three-day humiliation is described in similar ways; both experience a change of clothing that is symbolic of a move from death/mourning (Esth 5:1; Matt 28:3). Furthermore, in the book of Esther, the follow-on event from the salvation wrought by Esther is the inclusion of many gentiles into the community that worships YHWH. Similarly, the Pauline writings are informative in stating that;

the salvation occasioned by the presentation of Jesus resulted in the inclusion of Gentiles into the community of those who worship Yahweh, of whom Jesus is the image (Col. 1:15), form (Phil. 2:6), and fullness (Col. 1:19).\textsuperscript{830}

The significant difference between these two events is that in the book of Esther, those who enter the community are circumcised (Esth 8:17), whereas Paul is embroiled in a debate about the place of circumcision arguing the physical circumcision is not a requirement of initiation as there is a spiritual circumcision enacted through Christ (Col 2:11).\textsuperscript{831}

\textsuperscript{830} Wechsler, ‘Shadow and Fulfilment in the Book of Esther’, p.283.
\textsuperscript{831} Wechsler, ‘Shadow and Fulfilment in the Book of Esther’, p.283.
How well do Wechsler’s suggestions stand in light of Hays’ seven tests for echoes of scripture? As is the case with this entire research project the second chapter, which contextualises the book of Esther in its first century setting, stands as evidence for the criterion of availability. The question of volume is hard to ascertain; in any given text of Paul there is little, but Wechsler is proposing a broader reading of the Pauline corpus rather than a focussed section of Paul’s writing. If he is correct, this may be a good example of the cluzographic writing that was proposed in chapter one as an alternative way of recognising the influence of Jewish Scripture on the New Testament. Tkacz shows how Esther could be viewed as a type of Christ, resorting to numerous New Testament references that align with Esther. As well as demonstrating a history of interpretation, there is a sense that parallels were drawn between Esther and Jesus, some ripples of which may be felt in Paul’s writings. This does not mean that there was a conscious writing with regard to Esther in Phil 2:6-8 or Col 1:15-19, just that ways of speaking of Jesus naturally came to share vocabulary with Esther.

Aus’ analysis of the three-day motif (§3.3.2.6) lends credence to the thematic coherence and historical plausibility of the suggested reference. Overall, the speculative nature of Wechsler’s proposals is evident, and creates a major bar to any conclusions that Paul consciously described Jesus in the same way that Esther would be described.

This does not suggest, necessarily, that Paul had a clear, thought-through approach to the book of Esther. What this does do is raise the parallels that can be drawn between the book of Esther and the writings of Paul, that may have been intentional. In doing so Wechsler has opened the possibility that the book of Esther featured in Paul’s thought and Christology, or that he offers insights into an early

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Christian reading of the book of Esther. As was the case with Goulder’s work with the Gospel of Matthew, despite the lack of suggested allusions to the book of Esther in NA, the potential is highlighted for textual ripples/cluzographs of the book of Esther to be felt in the Pauline literature. This is particularly true when the initial research highlighted the word ἴουδαζω as a place to start, as this word is found in this final stage of Wechsler’s analysis in the initiation/circumcision event.

5.1.6.2 Andrea Damascelli: Crucifixion and Galatians 3

In an oft-overlooked article, Andrea Damascelli proposes that Gal 3:13 incorporates an echo of Purim. The pertinence of this article to a chapter on the book of Esther in the letter to the Galatians hardly needs to be stated. Damascelli in no way suggests that the citation in Gal 3:13, ‘cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,’ is not from Deut 21:23; this is axiomatic. What he does raise is a query over the place of redemption. Paul is clear that ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law,’ but recognising a reference to Deut 21:23 poses more questions than it answers. This has been described as presenting something of a paradox, and it only highlights how ‘Christ became a curse,’ and leaves uncertain how this demonstrates redemption rather than just sharing in the cursed state.

Damascelli provides his own response to this by building on the earlier work of Daniel Schwartz who argues for two different Pauline interpretations of the death of Jesus. Following textual parallels, Schwartz argues that, in addition to Deut 21:23, Paul

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is framing his interpretation in Gal 3:10-4:4 from the atonement rituals of Lev 16, argued through Paul’s atypical use of ἐξαποστέλλω (Lev LXX 16:21, 22, 26; Gal 4:4).\(^{836}\) Alongside this is a less explicit explication of the crucifixion in Rom 8:32 that, through the use of ἐφείσατο along with the hanging of the sons, ought to be best understood in the light of 2 Sam 21:11-14, rather than to the Aqedah. In this interpretation, Paul makes a *qal wahomer* argument, such that God did not spare his own son, whereas David did spare someone else’s son.\(^{837}\) Schwartz concludes that;

> To borrow later terminology, we would say that Paul found Christ’s death on the cross “typified” both by the scapegoat ritual and by the hanging (crucifixion?) of Saul’s sons. It may well be that other passages will be found to support one of these answers to our question [of in what way the death might be conceived of as redemptive], or both, or others; just as Paul used various sacrificial images when speaking of Christ’s death in general there is no reason why he might not find more than one biblical “type” for the specific mode of death.\(^{838}\)

Damascelli picks up Schwartz opening up to ‘other passages’ to argue that the book of Esther provides some background to Paul’s interpretation of the redemptive nature of the crucifixion of Jesus. He suggests that Paul “intentionally describes Jesus as Haman,”\(^{839}\) in order to explore this redemptive aspect. Just as Haman’s crucifixion was a key event in the salvation of the Susian Jews, so too Jesus’ crucifixion is a key salvific event and not only a means by which Jesus becomes accursed.

> Not noted in Damascelli’s article but perhaps of key relevance is the association that Jewish tradition made between Purim and the Day of Atonement. Both commemorations recount the use of lots (גורל Lev 16:8-10; Esth 3:7; 9:24), and both


\(^{839}\) Münz-Manor, ‘Carnivalesque Ambivalence and the Christian Other in Aramaic Poems from Byzantine Palestine’, p.833.
festivals could be blurred in folk memory. Lipton highlights a rabbinic analogy “based on a Hebrew wordplay – יומ כיפור, yom kippur (day of atonement) sounds like יומ כיפורים, yom ki purim, a day like Purim.”

Damascelli notices a way in which the crucifixion of Jesus may have been interpreted by the earliest followers of Jesus. Unfortunately, his only evidence is that Deuteronomy does not answer the question of how Jesus’s crucifixion is an act of redemption, only of how Jesus becomes accursed.

5.1.6.3 Panagiotis Bratsiotis – Paul and the Prayer of Mordecai

In Rom 9:3-4 Paul makes a harsh declaration against himself; ‘I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites.’ This is rightly often understood as a reference to Exod 32:32 so that Paul may “align himself with Moses and the great prophetic tradition.”

Bratsiotis put forward the suggestion that the prayer of Mordecai (particularly Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:6 [4:17d]) may help understand some of Paul’s thought here and in Rom 10:1, and as such frame the whole section of the letter to some extent (Rom 9:1-10:4).

In his petition to God, Mordecai prays that it was not out of pride that he did not bow before Haman, ‘for I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet for Israel’s safety’ (Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:6 [4:17d]); ὃτι ηὐδόκουν φιλεῖν πέλματα ποδῶν αὐτοῦ πρὸς σωτηρίαν Ἰσραηλ. Bratsiotis’ argument is that both Paul and Mordecai make declarations so that they may represent ‘their people’ to God and do so through self-deprecation (in the case

\textsuperscript{840} Diana Lipton, Longing for Egypt and Other Unexpected Biblical Tales (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), p.76.

\textsuperscript{841} Richard Longenecker, The Epistle to the Romans (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), p.782; cf. NA\textsuperscript{28}; Bratsiotis, ‘Eine Exegetische Notiz zu Röm. IX 3 und X 1’, p.299.
of Paul through being accursed, and for Mordecai through the humiliation of kissing the feet of Haman). He then suggests some textual similarity between the two;


Bratsiotis is convinced that a careful comparison of these textual points, and the thematic similarities will convince the reader that Paul is under the influence of the Prayer of Mordecai.

Despite convincing himself, Bratsiotis has not been successful in finding support, with many commentators ignoring his article, whilst those who do remark upon it do so to argue against it. 843 The level of textual similarity is slight and is not with words that resonate strongly in the passages (through rarity, or closeness together in the passage). As such, Paul is unlikely to have taken inspiration from Mordecai’s prayer here, and it is unlikely that an early reader would have had a memory of the prayer of Mordecai aroused by Paul’s words.

Whilst there is no verbal similarity between Rom 9:3 and Esth C:5 [4:17d] nor between Rom 9:3 and Exod 32:32, the “thematic coherence, volume and recurrence of this allusion [Exod 32:32] are so strong that most commentators recognize the parallel.” 844Whilst there is always the possibility that Paul may be simultaneously

843 One notable exception is Fitzmyer, for whom both Esth C:5 [4:17d] and Rom 9:3 show that Israel has a place in God’s plan of salvation regardless of belief; Joseph Fitzmyer, Romans: A new translation with introduction and commentary (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992), p.545.
844 Abasciano, Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1-9, p.72.
holding together several passages, Rom 9:3-4 does not appear to be such a case, and the book of Esther is not likely to be in the mind of Paul in this case.

The existing scholarship concerning Paul’s reception and use of the book of Esther has not been convincing. Wechsler and Damascelli have both made suggestions that, although interesting, carry doubts but cannot be proved one way or the other; Paul may have been influenced by the book of Esther as they argue, although this is far from certain. Bratsiotis has been less successful in his endeavours as his arguments have been disputed and dismissed by the academic community. Some may see this state of affairs indicate that pursuing research into ‘the book of Esther in Paul’s writings’ is a fool’s errand. This would not be completely fair, as the lack of conclusive scholarship does not preclude the possibility of fruitful research. This background does urge caution to have a secure methodology, and one that does not work to a specific conclusion, but lets the results shape the conclusion.

5.1.6.4  Previous Recognition of the Lexical Parallel between Esther 8:17 and Galatians 2:14

This research project is not the first to notice that ἰουδαίζω is a point of similarity between Esth 8:17 and Gal 2:14, and those other works need to be noted. In the first instance is James Scott’s 1995 publication on the scriptural and ethnic background to Paul’s missionary activity. He does not offer an expansive treatment of the use of ἰουδαίζω in both texts, but does note it saying;

Paul charges Peter with compelling the ἔθνη to live like Jews (ἰουδαίζεν) in order to be accepted in the community of believers (v.14). We may compare Esth 8:17: “And many of the nations were circumcised and lived like Jews for fear of the Jews.”

The similarities between the two are noted, just as one may bring Josephus into a discussion to demonstrate other instances, beyond the New Testament text, of similar scenarios. Scott neither suggests nor implies that Paul’s language is intentionally derived from the book of Esther, or that the book of Esther in any way shapes an interpretation of Gal 2:14, only that they both are examples of similar, but unrelated, events.

In a similar vein, although more explicitly drawing on the book of Esther is Brigitte Kahl’s, *Galatians Re-imagined*. Kahl acknowledges Paul’s use of obscure vocabulary in the letter to the Galatians as an interpretative lens. She says;

> A number of terms, some of them rarely or nowhere else used in the New Testament, establish a firm intertextuality with Deuteronomy and the Maccabean literature in terms of anti-idolatrous thrust... If the ‘idols’ in Galatians indeed are a ‘coded’ reference to imperial worship and allegiance, Paul would perceive Peter’s enforced ‘judaizing’ of the Gentiles as in fact a gesture of civic/imperial conformism.  

For Kahl, the use of ἴουδαΐζω fits this paradigm as an unusual word that might be a “scriptural echo.” Both texts demonstrate, in the context of fear, gentiles converting as acts of “opportunism and civic prudence.” Kahl and Scott go further than those commentaries that note that ἴουδαΐζω is used in both texts without further comment, and their insights are helpful in considering the circumstances behind the contexts of the texts. Kahl does not provide a methodological framework to assess the likelihood that Paul’s perception of Peter is based on his interpretation of the book of Esther; it is not on her radar to do so. She does, however, offer reasons why Paul may wish to refer to the book of Esther and pushes the door further open to explore the relationship between the two texts.

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Kahl’s work is a helpful insight, therefore, into the assessment of the ‘cluzographic methodology’ proposed by this research. The metaphor of textual ripples requires something of an obstacle against which the wave can break and be recognised. Kahl’s recognition of forms of “civic/imperial conformism” helps to build a picture of what the obstacle might look like, against which the wave of Esth 8:17 might break.

5.1.6.5 Summary of Previous Scholarship regarding the Book of Esther in Paul’s Writings

Although not an extensive list, one can compile a list of scholarship that exists that has posited the idea that Paul has drawn on the book of Esther in his letters. There is little conclusive work, however, with some of this appearing to be speculative and unable to demonstrate that the book of Esther has been used. Bratsiotis’ work has been less successful, as his hypothesis has been generally disproved. Much of this work has picked up on the idea that there are aspects of the book of Esther that might have rubbed up against Paul’s context, such that ripples of the text might be felt (although not in the language of the methodology being trialled here). Whilst ascertaining reasons why the book of Esther might have been used, this scholarship has failed to show that it actually has been used.

On the other hand, are the works that have picked up the lexical parallel that forms the focus of this chapter. Although these works note where the book of Esther may have appeared, Scott does not do the work to ascertain why this may be the case. Kahl begins to do this, but without enough supporting work to show that, although there is a lexical parallel and a thematic similarity, the lexical parallel is in fact evidence of Paul’s reception of the book of Esther. In contrast to Wechsler’s, Damascelli’s and

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849 Kahl, Galatians Re-Imagined, p.279.
Bratsiotis’ work on Esther and Paul, this research can build on some existing insights, but offer a thorough investigation.

5.2 The Letter to the Galatians

5.2.1 Introduction

The letter to the Galatians is a stark piece of polemical writing, in which Paul presents to the Galatians a disputation with his opponents. As the Galatians are not the principle opponents, although influenced by them,\(^\text{850}\) we only have one side of the debate. This poses a difficulty as;

This means that it is not just a question of trying to piece together what is being said at one end of the telephone, but of listening in to one side of a dialogue (between Paul and the Galatians) about a third part (the opponents).\(^\text{851}\)

The verse in question for this chapter is particularly interesting as Paul quotes from a conversation that he has had. This affects who the ‘audience’ is and, although this research is not following Hays’ criteria, impinges on the criteria of ‘historical plausibility’ (could the original audience have ‘heard the echo’). For a Haysian approach it would not matter whether or not the Galatians themselves could recognise any scriptural reference in 2:14, only that Peter could have done so. For the methodology here, even that may not be of vital importance – Paul’s reception of the book of Esther happens whether or not Peter can recognise it, although if there is a mutual comprehension then the reference adds a greater flourish to the text.

A similar example of this concern about the ability of an audience to recognise Paul’s use of Scripture occurs in 1 Cor 10:4. Paul’s identification of Christ as the rock fits


well with Paul’s use of Deut 32, a passage that recounts a Mosaic recitation of a song that repeatedly ascribes a lithic metaphor to God (32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31). Deut 32 seems to have shaped Paul’s though in 1 Corinthians (and Romans) as a “critical subtext” with Deut 32:21 being echoed in 1 Cor 10:22. That Paul’s adoption of the metaphor of ‘Rock’ in 1 Cor 10:4 would be shaped by the references in Deut 32 seems natural, although ‘Rock’ is absent from LXX Deuteronomy. As much as Paul almost certainly was familiar with the Hebrew tradition, an audience only familiar with the LXX would not. As Hays remarks:

To explain to the Corinthians the difference between their Greek Bible and its Hebrew vorlage would interrupt Paul’s argument... rather than digressing to explain the grounds for his imaginative leap, he just leaps. The leap creates an extraordinarily interesting case of metalepsis: the trope of 1 Cor 10:4 is fully intelligible only as a transformed echo of a text cited later in the chapter; moreover, even if the text were explicitly quoted in the language known to Paul’s readers, the echo effect would still not be audible. In this case, it is doubtful that Paul’s readers could have traced the image back to its source in Deuteronomy 32. The Rock echo lies entombed in a Hebrew subtext.

Without a doubt, the rock metaphor has come from Paul’s knowledge of Deut 32, which is the case even though Paul’s audience would not have known this. The lack of audience knowledge does not trouble Hays, as what matters is that Paul has made the intertextual connection. References that an audience would have recognised are easier for the scholar to discern, but the subtle ones can be excavated from Paul’s texts, and this is just such a case.

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852 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, p.211; This is also linked to Ex 17:1-7 Richard Bell, The Irrevocable Call of God: An inquiry into Paul’s theology of Israel (WUNT 184; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), p.185.
853 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, p.94.
854 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul, p.94.
The group against whom Paul is speaking in Gal 2:14, represents an extreme on a scale of scriptural interpretation that contrasts with his own approach. Or, at the very least Paul presents his message and mission as a contrast to that of his opponents. Paul thus argues for a slightly more nuanced approach to the extreme he presents. How he argues his case, and how the verb ιουδαιζω fits into this argument is of particular interest. He begins the narratio by declaring his authority in proclaiming the gospel in 1:11, a theme which continues throughout this section. Paul has a “divine mandate” that undergirds the outline of his message culminating in the climatic account of his rebuke of Peter. In this rebuke, Paul continues to declare his authority through the contrast with Peter, culminating in the climactic words of 2:14.

5.2.2 Galatians 2:14

Gal 2:14 should therefore be considered in this light, not just a narration using any salient vocabulary available to Paul, but a rhetorical climax that uses distinctive vocabulary to heighten the sense of rhetorical flourish. This conclusion on its own does not suggest that scriptural intertextuality should be assumed to be a basis for this vocabulary, but does pose questions about the background of the words used. It does not presume scriptural references, but does keep the door open to the possibility of scriptural intertextuality.

One of the words highlighted by the initial research was the verbal form ιουδαιζειν, ‘to judaize/to judaean-ize.’ In the New Testament, this is a hapax legomenon that occurs only in Gal 2:14. In the LXX ιουδαιζειν is not only a hapax legomenon but is

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855 Ellis, The Old Testament in Early Christianity, p.142.
856 Ciampa, Galatians, p.321.
857 Ciampa, Galatians, p.353; Witherington, Grace in Galatia, p.169.
marked as a neologism in LEH meaning that EsthLXX 8:17 is the first known use of the verb ἵουδαίζω in Greek literature and is thus suggested as the first coinage of the word. The use of this word makes Galatians an appropriate text to test the cluzographic methodology. Written by Paul, probably in the early 50s, the letter to the Galatians is one of Paul’s earliest extant letters. This is pertinent to the discussions around Gal 2:14 as this concerns Paul’s early written reflections on gentile converts to Christianity.

Gal 2:14 is a quotation of a speech given by Paul, although there is no agreement about how long the quoted material is; does it finish with 2:14 or continue? Lührmann rightly says, “we no longer know to what extent it is still a report of his speech in Antioch and how much it has become a direct address to the readers in Galatia. The two are closely intertwined.” Although there is the possibility that the speech ceases at the end of 2:14, and that the following words are commentary for the Galatians, it is also possible that the speech may continue in 2:15, but has a “new beginning” with a “broader audience in view than Peter and those with him at Antioch”? Whether 2:15 is a continuation of the speech or, as Betz and Longenecker propose, the start of the propositio section in the rhetoric of the letter, Gal 2:14 can be considered, to some degree, independently from the rest of the speech, as the climax of a section of the speech, before a new step in the speech.

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860 Dieter Lührmann, Galatians (transl. O. C. Dean, Jr.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 43-44.
863 As the speech to Nicodemus in John 3:10-21 has a broad audience. Matera, Galatians, p.97.
864 Ronald Fung, The Epistles to the Galatians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) p.112; Longenecker, Galatians, p.95; Betz, Galatians, p.18.
Many previous scholars have demonstrated a significant number of Septuagint quotations and allusions in Galatians\(^{865}\) although to date no suggestion that the book of Esther should be included in such a list of Septuagint references in Galatians has gained any wide acceptance. The methodological considerations mean that a historical overview of the uses of ה干部职工 will help build a picture of the distinctiveness of the term, as well as help explore the nuances of the term. Not only is ה干部职工 a hapax legomenon, but it is used to translate a hapax legomenon in the Hebrew text; מתיהדים. Both will be discussed to shape the background to Paul’s literary context and his interpretative milieu.

5.3 A History of Judaizing

5.3.1 Judaizing in Hebrew Literature

5.3.1.1 Hebrew מתיהדים

*And many of the people of the land 'Jewed'\(^{866}\)*

As it appears in Esth\(^{MT}\) 8:17, מתיהדים is a hithpael conjugation of היה, and the sole use of this verb in any conjugation in the Hebrew Bible. In the context of chapter eight, מתיהדים seems to indicate a mass conversion to Judaism, although it may only refer to mass pretence of conversion. As such מתיהדים has been variously translated as; ‘to become a Jew/become Jews (BDB; DCH; Meschonnic), ‘declare oneself to be a Jew’ (DCH), ‘to pose as a Jew’ (HALOT), or as Wetter puts it ‘many people Jewed’.\(^{867}\)


Many, one may think of Wilson, Cohen, and Gordis amongst others, consider the Hebrew text to express pretence that is borne out of fear, and that those described in Esth 8:17 “may only have pretended to be Jews in order to save their own lives.”

Borgen, on the other hand, is one of the scholars who believe that those described in this scene were not pretending, but became genuine proselytes. On account of fear of the Jews, due to the increase in power given to the Jews in Susa, there are those who are circumcised and either pretend to be Jews or genuinely are converted.

מתיהדים is an unusual word in Hebrew literature, not just for the fact that this is a hapax legomenon. This ethnic/religious designator or, more precisely, this way of marking a change in ethnic/religious designation, is unique in Hebrew literature. There are Greek and Latin examples (e.g. pergraecari ‘to become/act Greek’), and Hebrew could have created similar words (a suggested word would be hitiyavven for ‘to become Greek’) but there is no evidence that such words were created.

Bearing this is mind, as well as the fact that מתיהדים is a hapax legomenon, and that there are no other verbal uses of the root, יהד, one must seriously entertain the possibility that this is an authorial creative invention. The author is keen to emphasise the designation of יהודים, which “occurs an astonishing 58 times in the book of Esther – by far the highest count (absolute and relative) of all books of the Hebrew Bible.”

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The author seems to go to great lengths to include the root יְהָד, which lays out the possibility that מַתִּיהֶדָּם is not just an appropriate word, but a carefully crafted word that fits a literary motif.

The repetition of יְהָד, including the verbal form in Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 8:17, does not mean that the people so designated in the text have ever lived in Yehud. Rather, such a term is used to label “Judeans in ‘foreign countries’.”\textsuperscript{872} Throughout the text יְהָד occurs to contrast the Jews/Judeans from others, the repetition only serves to strengthen the distinctiveness of this marker. The יְהָדים, are a “real (albeit constructed) group with many or even all the traits necessary to form an ethnie.”\textsuperscript{873} When it comes to Esth 8:17, therefore, the author leaves the audience in no doubt that ‘many gentiles’ end up behaving in ways that are ethnically and religiously counter to those of their background, but in imitation and conformity to those of Jews/Judeans.\textsuperscript{874}

Whereas some words are \textit{hapax legomena} because no other biblical passage requires the use of that word (they may be names of specific fauna and flora)\textsuperscript{875} and the biblical text records their first known written examples, this is not always the case. There is the distinct possibility that Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 8:17 attests, not only the first known written use of a verbal form of יְהָד, but the first verbal form of יְהָד at all. The peculiarity of מַתִּיהֶדָּם is thus heightened, and raises the potential that later uses of verbs for conversion to Judaism/acting as a Judean might have this passage from the book of Esther in mind. To borrow Steiner’s language, this text would take a prominent role in the “generative


\textsuperscript{874} Wetter, “On Her Account”, p.137.

\textsuperscript{875} Randomly chosen examples to demonstrate this point are: Pistachio בֹּתֶנֶה Gen 43:11; Racing mare רֵמָך Esth 8:10; Nut tree אֶגּוֹז Song 6:11.
environment of consciousness. Not all texts have an equal place in each context, and the uniqueness of the vocabulary heightens its role potential in later texts that use similar vocabulary. With *hapax legomena* in the MT, one way of potentially understanding the finer subtleties of the word is to see how the Greek translators understood the word but as can be seen below there is some variance in different traditions.

5.3.1.2 **Comparison of נלויים and מתיהדים**

The book of Esther is not the only biblical text to speak of gentiles being joined to Judaism or to Judaean ways. A more common designation is ‘Nilvim’ (נליים), those who form “special group of aliens seeking to join the Hebrews.” Such people are presented as those who choose to ‘join to the LORD.’ McKenzie proposes, without much wider support, that this word “may contain a play on the name Levi,” to demonstrate that it is in joining the community that one becomes a worshipper of **YHWH** rather than being born into a particular blood-line. This speculation about Levi is uncertain, but those described as נלויים are accepted as genuine proselytes. The exception that proves the rule is Dan 22:34. Here לוה is used for those who are “insincere sympathizers to Israel” but the insincerity is made explicit in the passage; the general use is of those convert out of choice (Esth 9:27; Isa 14:1; 56:3, 6; Jer 50:5; Zech 2:11; CD 4.3; 1QS 5.6; 4QpNah 3.2.9). Compared to the fear that undergirds the motivation behind those who מתיהדים, such a nuance is not present for those who נלויים.

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877 Max Rothschild, ‘Aliens and Israelites Part II’, *Dor le Dor* 10 (1981/1982), pp.118-121 (118).
The author of the book of Esther could have followed the decision of the author of the book of Daniel and used the verb לוה and been explicit about the motivation of the subjects. The book of Esther predates the book of Daniel, however, and this precedent had not been yet set. The author of the book of Esther appears to have opted instead to create a new word that reuses the יהד motif, and has nuances that cast doubt on the integrity of those ‘converting.’ This may provide the distinctive nature of מתיהדים and settle the uncertainty over whether the ‘many’ became Jews or pretended to do so. As will be further elucidated later, מתיהדים seems to have the nuance of those who do not genuinely convert, in this instance as a pretence borne out of fear.

5.3.2 Judaizing in Greek Literature

5.3.2.1 Greek translations of מתיהדים

Just as the Hebrew text does not use the word נלרים in Esth 8:17, neither does the LXX translate מתיהדים with any of the Greek terms that it uses to translate נלרים.881 In the Hebrew text, Esth 8:17 is the first example of a mass conversion; other similar occasions only recount examples of individuals associating with Israel.882 As such, this unusual context – in conjunction with the LEH’s suggestion that ἱουδαΐζω is a Septuagintal neologism – means that ἱουδαΐζω is an interesting word to consider. The designation of neologism intends to suggest that the Septuagint is the first time that ἱουδαΐζω is used, but only means that the Septuagint provides the earliest known example. As such, Aitken rightly critiques the amount one can infer from the LEH’s designation of ‘neologism,’ as this need not mean that the Septuagint translators created the word, only

881 Προστίθημι is the term used in Esth LXX 9:27; Isa LXX 14:1; Dan LXX 11:34; πρόσκειμαι is used in Isa LXX 56:3, 6; καταφεύγω is used in Jer LXX 27:5 (50:5); Zech LXX 2:15 (2:11), and ἐπισυνάγω is used in Dan LXX 11:34.
that any such word is poorly attested but could have existed earlier.\textsuperscript{883} If, however, 
ιουδαίω can be shown to be a Septuagintal coinage, then this would bolster the 
distinctiveness of the word, but this would be subject to such a case being made. 

There is an absence of literature exploring this question, however, in 
commentaries that focus on the Septuagint text of the book of Esther. In 1901 Jahn 
retroverted the entire Septuagint text into Hebrew, with accompanying commentary. De 
Troyer describes Jahn’s work as, not only “an extremely careless and uncritical 
retroverting into Hebrew, but also the outcome caused by non-scholarly and non-
academic political motivation.”\textsuperscript{884} One should not be surprised to find, therefore, that 
Jahn does not engage in the question of the history of such an unusual word, but rather 
leaves ιουδαίω aside and focusses on the explicit reference to circumcision. This he 
dismisses as a ridiculous addition – “Der Zusatz... ist einer der albernsten Züge des 
Buches”\textsuperscript{885} – not doing much to offer a rebuttal to de Troyer’s analysis of his work. More 
recent commentaries do not provide information on the use of ιουδαίω and if this is an 
original coinage. Both Cavalier, in the \textit{Bible d’Alexandrie}, and Clines remark on the 
differences between \textit{LXX} and \textit{AT} Esther (discussed here further down), preferring that of 
the \textit{LXX}. \textsuperscript{886} De Troyer, in a paragraph focussed solely on the \textit{LXX} version, describes how 
the translator uses both ιουδαίω and περιετέμοντο to translate מתייחסים, that ιουδαίω is a 
hapax legomenon, and that ιουδαίω is clarified by ‘circumcision,’ rather than the two 
being separate verbs.\textsuperscript{887} As with the other commentators, de Troyer does not comment 

\textsuperscript{884} Kristin de Troyer, ‘Septuagint and Gender Studies: The very beginning of a promising liaison’, in A. Brenner 
& C. Fontaine (eds.), \textit{A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, methods and strategies} 
(Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), pp.326-343 (335). 
\textsuperscript{885} Jahn, \textit{Das Buch Ester}, p.53. 
\textsuperscript{886} Cavalier, \textit{Esther}, p.222; Clines, \textit{The Esther Scroll}, p.87. 
\textsuperscript{887} De Troyer, \textit{The End of the Alpha Text of Esther}, pp.268-269.
on the status of ‘neologism’ for ἱουδαίζω. There is no scholarly consensus on this matter, not through disagreement, but through lack of discussion.

Cautiously, I would argue that ἱουδαίζω in EsthLXX 8:17 most probably does represent the creation of the word and is qualified, as Aitken requests, by “its type, nature, and causes.” In this verse, ἱουδαίζω describes either a mass conversion or mass pretence of conversion. The circumstances of this are not common; other mass conversions are attested in Greek literature, but in later texts, and are remarked upon as noteworthy due to their extraordinary nature. As it is, there was no precedent, nor terminology, at the time of the translation of the book of Esther to describe this form of conversion (be that of religion ‘to judaize’ or of behaviour ‘to behave as a Judaean’) in Greek literature. The peculiarities of this are enhanced by the fact that ἱουδαίζω, and the source word מַתִּיעַדְס are hapax legomena. The LXX translator was confronted with an extremely rare word, rooted in the word ‘Jew’ and put into a verbal form, with a need to convey this information. Unsurprisingly, the same is found in Greek, a verbal form of the word ‘Jew.’ As is often the case in the Septuagint, the translator has rendered “the Hebrew term... as faithfully... and adequately as possible by searching for [a] meaningful translation equivalent, which makes sense within the literary context.” It appears that the translator of LXX Esther coined the verb ἱουδαίζω to complete the Greek text of Esther. This is not entirely surprising given the peculiarities of the Hebrew.

There is scholarly recognition that LXX Esther includes an explicit reference to circumcision to clarify what is meant by ‘judaizing’ and that these are not separate

It is my hypothesis that this doubling of the verbs is best explained by suggesting that ἰουδαίζω was coined by the translator and is a genuine neologism. Due to this coinage, which retains a verb semantically similar to the Hebrew, the translator included a familiar term to epexegetically explain the nuances of ἰουδαίζω. The scholarly literature on this is sadly lacking to speak with any more confidence, but it seems likely that ἰουδαίζω is an original word to the book of Esther and the lack of any earlier extant examples is because the word had never been used before rather than that those examples have been lost.

Of note is how different the Alpha Text is to the LXX. Each text translates מתחדשים as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>MT (NRSV) 8:17</th>
<th>LXX (NETS) 8:17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ורבים משמי הארץ מתחדשים</td>
<td>And many of the peoples of the country professed to be Jews</td>
<td>καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἑθνῶν περιετέμνοτο καὶ ἰουδαίζον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And many of the Judeans were circumcised</td>
<td>καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων περιετέμνοντο</td>
<td>And many of the Judeans were circumcised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only is the ‘judaizing of the gentiles’ omitted in EsthAT 7:41, but gentiles are not mentioned. Instead of the mass conversion of MT and LXX, the AT restores covenantal practice for the Jews, which is “strange because it usually assumed that the Jews would have been circumcised.”

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890 Although Reid offers a dissension from the common view by saying that there is ‘no justification for the addition... which limits the understanding of this phrase to a cultic one’; Bardtke, Esther, p.376; Clines, The Esther Scroll, p.81; De Troyer, The End of the Alpha Text of Esther, p.269; Bush, Esther, p.438; Debra Reid, Esther (TOTC 13; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2008), p.138; Gerleman, p.129.

891 For spelling issues and the use of diaeresis (”) see Walters & Gooding, The Text of the Septuagint, pp.92-93.


[Torah], and gladness [a feast day], and joy [circumcision], and honour [phylacteries], but without offering any commentary on Esth 8:17.\footnote{A. J. Rosenberg, ‘The Midrashic Approach to the Book of Esther’, in Cohen, Megillat Esther, pp.7-25 (24-25).} The most likely reasons for this difference centre on the distinctive concern of the Alpha Text. In the first instance is a focus on the necessity of the mark of circumcision. Both Esth$^{\text{LX}}$C:26 [4:17u] and Esth$^{\text{AT}}$ 4:25 have Esther declare that she abhors the bed of the uncircumcised, but Esth$^{\text{AT}}$ 4:15 has Mordecai declare that it was because Haman was uncircumcised that he would not bow rather than because Haman was proud as he states in Esth$^{\text{LX}}$C:5 [4:17d].\footnote{Jobes, The Alpha-Text of Esther, p.179.} The author of AT Esther may well have been concerned about the continuation of covenantal practice in the diaspora and wished to be clear that “God was extending covenantal protection to Jews outside of the land.”\footnote{Jobes, The Alpha-Text of Esther, p.179.}

Second, readers of the Alpha Text have noted how it is a version that may be more appropriate to a gentile audience, lacking details that may be of concern, or lacking interest, to gentiles. Lacocque suggests that a gentile audience explains the difference in Esth$^{\text{AT}}$ 7:4; “He wanted to stir in them a feeling of empathy, not to shock them with a tactless ulterior motive of converting them to Judaism.”\footnote{Lacocque, ‘The Different Versions of Esther’, p.317.}

A third reason for this difference may be found in the Hebrew text. Esth$^{\text{MT}}$ 8:17 states that subjects of מתיהדים are ‘many of the people of the land’ (הארץ מעמי רבים). It is interesting that the Hebrew author has used עם rather than גוי to describe the people. The former, in the singular, came to be the default term for the “holy people”\footnote{Gerhard Kittel (ed.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Vol. 2 (transl. G. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p.365.} whereas gentiles were designated גוי. It is possible that the translator of the Alpha Text interpreted עם as a reference to Jewish communities around the Achaemenid Empire,
those that were ‘scattered and separated among the people in all the provinces’ (Esth\textsuperscript{NRSV} 3:8), rather than the groups of different peoples of any ethnicity. This interpretation would mean that Esth\textsuperscript{MT} 8:17 could be translated as ‘many of the Judaean communities judaized.’ This could have been argued by the translator of the Alpha Text, but is unlikely to have been a widespread view. Translating \textit{עם} by \textit{ἔθνος} is not unknown but becomes the more common translation when \textit{עם} is in the plural.\textsuperscript{899} There is a difference between \textit{עם} and \textit{ἔθνος} and it is the Septuagint rather than the Alpha Text that presents the normative interpretation of this difference.

As was stated in the introduction, Josephus appears to have based his account of the Esther narrative principally from the Alpha Text. As such, the verb \textit{יוּדָאִיְזָה} is absent from Josephus’ account. The relevant phrase from \textit{Ant.} 1.285 reads;

\begin{quote}
\textit{ὡς πολλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἔθνων, διὰ τὸν ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων φόβον περιτεµνόμενα τὴν αἰώνα} \textsuperscript{900}
\end{quote}

many from the other nations also, from fear of the Jews, had themselves circumcised.

Josephus does not merely reproduce the Alpha Text, however, as it is the ‘many from the other nations’ that are circumcised, rather than the Jews of the Alpha Text.

Both LXX and AT Esther refer to circumcision where MT only has \textit{מתיהדים}. This would suggest that, despite the lack of ‘יוּדָאִיְזָה’ in AT Esther, the most commonly understood inference of \textit{מתיהדים} was that this was a euphemism for circumcision, but could have wider implications. Josephus is a further witness to this view, speaking only of circumcision in his account. The uncertainty to this may come from translating the LXX text in such a way as to suggest that circumcising and judaizing are two separate things; many of the gentiles were circumcised and judaized (in that they did both, which are separate). Mason, however, argues that aligning the two verbs together is in fact

correct and the phrase in Esth 8:17 might be best rendered in English through means of a semi-colon, whereby the verb reflects what has taken place, and accounts for the adoption of the customs. Mason thus translates the phrase in Esther as, “many of the Persians ‘were circumcised; they Judaized on account of their fear of the Ioudaioi.’”

The verb ἱουδαΐζω is epexegetical; it acts as a descriptive synonym for ‘to circumcise’ rather than as a complementary but separate action.

As is the case with מתיהדים, there is some uncertainty over the exact meaning of ἱουδαΐζω; does it reflect conversion to Judaism/adoption of Mosaic law, pretence of conversion, or the adoption of typically Jewish practices (such as circumcision), but without any suggestion of a religious identity? The textual tradition of the book of Esther would associate מתיהדים and ἱουδαΐζω with circumcision, but is this a circumstance of the literary context or indicative of a more general use of these words? With מתיהדים one cannot make literary comparisons, as this is the sole example of the verb יד, but this is not the case with ἱουδαΐζω.

5.3.2.2 Non-canonical Examples of ἱουδαΐζω

Although ἱουδαΐζω is a fairly uncommon word, the books of LXX Esther and Galatians do not provide the only examples. In the texts collated by BDAG and Lampe, there are a further fifteen examples of ἱουδαΐζω, from eleven different authors. These texts date from the first century CE, up to the fourth, and in one case perhaps fifth,

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century. These seventeen examples appear to account for almost\textsuperscript{905} the whole extant early Christian and Patristic literary history of ἰουδαΐζω from its introduction in LXX Esther up until the “era of the Creeds, the Councils down to the Second Council of Nicæa, and the great doctrinal disputes down to the Iconoclastic Controversy.”\textsuperscript{906}

Although some of these texts are several centuries after the key texts for this research, it seems appropriate to note the nuances of ἰουδαΐζω in each of these cases. Where dating is possible, each text will be offered in chronological order, and where precise dating is not possible there will still be a chronological flow, with the fourth century texts featuring last.

The third question posed by Bons, Brucker, and Joosten, introduced in chapter one (§1.2.2.4) reads; 3. Which words of the Septuagint continue in later writings with their specific meaning, and which ones go out of use? If one accepts Gaston’s claim that “while [ἰουδαϊζω] can on occasion be used to describe the forced conversion of Gentiles to Judaism, it more usually designates the adoption by Gentiles of certain Jewish customs without conversion,”\textsuperscript{907} then addressing their question might not seem necessary. If there is a clear way in which ἰουδαϊζω is used, accounting for the odd exception, then one can say that there is no real development in the word, and the examples in the books of Galatians and Esther are concordant with what one would expect. If, however, Gaston’s claim does not stand up to scrutiny, then the contexts of the texts may come into sharper focus for the way they shape the nuance of ἰουδαϊζω in these texts. Moreover, it is methodically important to ascertain the commonality/rarity

\textsuperscript{905} Having used these concordances as a guide I have discovered further examples, which will be evaluated. Nevertheless, the authors named by BDAG and Lampe offer a thorough overview of the different ways ἰουδαϊζω has been used and its various nuances in different contexts.
\textsuperscript{906} Lampe, Patristic Greek Lexicon, p. vii.
of ἱουδαῖος in Paul’s context. The following overview will provide the background to address these concerns.

5.3.2.3  Josephus

In the second book of his history of the Jewish war, Josephus (c.37-100CE) uses ἱουδαῖος twice. Writing c.75-79CE Josephus recounts the uprising against the Roman Empire that began in 66CE when Menahem, the leader of the Sicarii, led a messianic revolt against the Romans. In the first extract – following the capture, torture and execution of Menahem (J.W. 2.448) – Josephus narrates the capture, and massacre, of the Roman garrison that was under the command of Metilius;

οἱ μὲν οὖν οὕτως ὕμως ἀπεσφάγησαν ἅπαντες πλὴν Μετιλίου, τοῦτον γὰρ ἰκετεύσαντα καὶ μέχρι περιτομῆς ἱουδαῖον ὑποσχόμενον διέσωσαν μόνον,

Thus, brutally butchered, perished all save Metilius; he alone saved his life by entreaties and promises to turn Jew, and even be circumcised. (J.W. 2.454)

Josephus offers no suggestion that he considers this to be a reason for rejoicing. The reasons for the ‘judaizing’ of Metilius are less than noble and other texts would suggest that Josephus did not approve of circumcision in such circumstances (see §5.3.4.2).

Rather than celebrating this, Josephus concludes the account of the capture of the garrison by criticising the Jews who did this. The first criticism comes from lack of perspective: “To the Romans this injury – the loss of a handful of men out of a boundless army – was slight; but to the Jews it looked like the prelude to their ruin.” Josephus’ final words on this incident provide the second criticism, which concerns the priorities of the Jews. He says: “to add its heinousness, the massacre took place on the

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Sabbath, a day on which from religious scruples Jews abstain even from the most innocent acts.” Presumably if Metilius is to ‘behave like a Jew,’ the examples that he has to follow are not those that would meet Josephus’ approval.

Josephus records that, while this was happening at the garrison, twenty-thousand Jews were slaughtered in Caesarea, which led to reprisals. This spiralled out of control, with Jews across Syria being put to death and “every city was divided into two camps.” Days and nights went by in fear and;

γὰρ ἀπεσκευάσθαι τοὺς Ἰουδαίους δοκοῦντες ἔκαστοι τοὺς Ἰουδαίζοντας εἶχον ἐν ὑποψίᾳ

For, though believing that they had rid themselves of the Jews, still each city had its Judaizers, who aroused suspicion. (J. W. 2.463)

Like the book of Esther, Josephus links ‘judaizing’ with the practice of circumcision, which is portrayed as an extreme end of ‘judaizing.’ As they are separately named, it seems that Metilius is promising to act in accordance with Jewish custom and law. In some circumstances, this might then lead to circumcision as a sign of full conversion, but Metilius is prepared to do so immediately. In the second example, Ἰουδαίζω appears to be used of those who take the side of the Jews in the battle, and does not necessarily entail any particular pattern of behaviour. For Josephus, Ἰουδαίζω could include the practice of circumcision.

There are two further aspects of Josephus’ writings worthy of comment. First it should be noted that, in Ant. 11.285, Josephus does not use Ἰουδαίζω in his retelling of the Esther narrative. Rather he says;

This is similar to AT Esther in that it translates מתחדשים only through a reference to circumcision but, in this instance, it is those from other ‘ethnoi’, rather than the Jews.

Second is that, in J.W. 6.17, Josephus uses the unusual adverb Ἰουδαϊκῶς, another New Testament hapax legomenon found in Gal 2:14. Josephus compares the behaviour of the Romans with that of the Jews;

For to begin with, there seemed to be no unanimity in their design: they dashed out in small parties, at intervals, hesitatingly and in alarm, in short not like the Jews [καθόλου τ’ εἰπεῖν οὖν Ἰουδαϊκῶς]: the characteristics of the nation – daring, impetuosity, the simultaneous charge, the refusal to retreat even when worsted – were all lacking.917

This section of Josephus’ writing contains evident biases, but also provides an alternative picture of what it meant in the first century to behave like a Jew. Unlike circumcision, which was a widely recognised distinctive feature of Judaism, these qualities are not, and betray more of Josephus’ prejudices.

There are several factors that comprise Josephus’ understanding of Jewishness (or even Judaean-ness); he does not have a single narrow definition.918 This analysis nevertheless suggests that his uses of Ἰουδαϊκῶς and his interpretation of מתחדשים suggest a default understanding of circumcision, but are not restricted to this, and account for a less precise sense of what it means to behave in a Judean/Jewish manner.

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5.3.2.4 Plutarch

The biographical writer, Plutarch (c.46-120 CE), uses ἰουδαίζω once in his extant writings, in his biography of Cicero. Plutarch was writing in the “late first and early second century,” and the following extract comes a little less than two centuries after the supposed original event. In this extract, Plutarch is extolling Cicero’s sense of humour, particularly with regards to the trial of Verres, praetor of Sicily in 70 BCE.

 veteris, polllá χαρίστα διαιμημονέωται καὶ περὶ ἑκείνην αὐτοῦ τὴν δίκην. βέρρην γὰρ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι τὸν ἐκτετμημένον χοίρον καλοῦσιν. ως οὖν ἀπελευθερικὸς ἄνθρωπος ἕνοχος τῷ ἰουδαίζειν, ἔνομα κεκίλιος, ἐβούλετο παρωσάμενος τοὺς Σικελιώτας κατηγορεῖν τοῦ Βέρρου Τί ἰουδαίῳ πρὸς χοίρον.

Many witty sayings of his in connection with this trial are on record. For instance “verres” is the Roman word for a castrated *porker*; when, accordingly, a freedman named Caecilius, who was suspected of Jewish practices, wanted to thrust aside the Sicilian accusers and denounce Verres himself, Cicero said: “What has a Jew to do with a Verres?” (Cic. 7.5)

Plutarch does not elaborate in his account as to what is to be understood by ἰουδαίζω, although this is not a problem in this instance as the surrounding context provides enough information.

As verres is one of the Latin terms for a pig (specifically a boar, whilst *sus* referred to a sow and *porcus* was a more general term), there is a clear joke being made based upon knowledge of kashrut; what has a Jew to do with a pig? Herein lies Cicero’s witticism to which Plutarch refers.

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In his writings, Plutarch refers to the Jewish people more than most ancient writers and is aware of the dietary laws of Judaism. The abstention from pork is particularly notable as pork was a favourite food, and this comes to epitomise kashrut to Plutarch and his contemporaries. Numerous ancient writers concern themselves with trying to understand why Jews abstain from pork.\textsuperscript{922} This would indicate that ἴουδαίζω can refer to the act of abstaining from pork and, by extension, restricting oneself to a kosher diet.

This may not tell the full story, however. The fact that Plutarch translates verres as ‘castrated pig’, rather than simply as pig or boar, is worth further comment on what may be understand by ἴουδαίζω in this context. In Latin, the correct term for a castrated pig is maialis, a term also used by Cicero as an insult in his speech attacking Piso Caesoninus (\textit{Pis.} 9.19).\textsuperscript{923} The word translated by Plutarch, verres is in fact the Latin for an uncastrated boar.\textsuperscript{924} This mismatch suggests one of two options. Plutarch is either simply incorrect in his account and has made an honest mistake, as Krostenko suggests.\textsuperscript{925} Alternatively, he may have intentionally misinterpreted the Latin.

Given the associations made by ἴουδαίζω in other texts, and the interpretation given for verres, as a castrated pig, one must note that, in the Graeco-Roman world, and certainly by the beginning of the second century, “circumcision was placed on a par with

\textsuperscript{922} Strabo \textit{Geogr.} 16.2.37; Petronius, \textit{Satyricon} fr.37; Plutarch \textit{Festal Questions} 4.4-5.3; Arrian \textit{Epict. diss.} 1.11.12-13, 1.22.4; Tacitus \textit{Hist.} 5.4.2-3; Juvenal \textit{Sat.} 6.160; Sextus Empiricus \textit{Pyr.} 3.222-223; Feldman \& Reinhold, \textit{Jewish Life and Thought}, pp.373-377.
The question arises, is Plutarch intentionally setting up such an inference in this text?

He may have misunderstood the joke but, as he was well aware of kashrut and the joke would work by translating verres as χορός, another possibility arises. One cannot rule out the possibility that ιουδαίζω carried a default nuance as a euphemism for circumcision, and that Plutarch mistranslates the Latin on purpose in order that his audience (who would understand ιουδαίζω as circumcision) do not fail to get the joke that blends the distinctly Judaean practices of kashrut and circumcision.

5.3.2.5 Ignatius of Antioch

A collection of seven letters to churches in Asia Minor, written in the name of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch survives and provides an insight into the early Church, its development, and how it understood itself. In Ign. Smyrn. 8:2, for example, is the first known designation of the church as καθολική. These texts can be loosely dated, but not precisely, not least because there is some uncertainty over the life-span of Ignatius with his death traditionally placed around c.107-108 CE following the information furnished by Eusebius, but is often pushed later by a few years. The letters were written at the very end of Ignatius’ life, as he was on his final journey to Rome where he would be martyred, perhaps c.113 CE. Schoedel narrows the broad consensus of “not

928 ODCC gives the life-span as c.35-107, whereas Tabbernee places his death in c.115, and Nautin begins his biography by saying that he was martyred sometime between 110-130; F. Cross & E. Livingstone (eds.), The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (3rd revised ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
later than the third or fourth decade [of the second century],”\(^{930}\) to a more precise c.100-118CE.\(^{931}\) The dating would be less reliant on the dates of Ignatius’ own life if their authenticity were in serious doubt. As the current consensus regards them as authentic, I will not challenge this here.\(^{932}\)

As there were factions within the Christian communities, the letters mention ‘judaizing,’ but the verb appears only once.\(^{933}\) Writing to the Christian community in the Ionian city of Magnesia on the Maeander, Ignatius states that;

> ἄτοπον ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν λαλεῖν καὶ ἰουδαίζειν. ὁ γὰρ Χριστιανισμὸς οὐκ εἰς ἰουδαίζον ἐπιστευθεῖ ἡ ἱστορία τῶν Ἰουδαϊσμῶν, ὃς πᾶσα γλῶσσα πιστεύσα εἰς θεὸν συνήχει.\(^{934}\)

It is ridiculous to profess Jesus Christ and to Judaize; for Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, into which every tongue that has believed in God has been gathered together.\(^{935}\)

Here, Ignatius interprets Isa 66:18 to argue against the judaizers and in favour of Christianity as the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy.\(^{936}\) Other writers have offered Christological interpretations of Isa 66:18 regarding the formation of the church,\(^{937}\) but Ignatius’ interpretation pushes this further to argue against ‘Jewish practices.’ This


contrasts with the earlier position taken by Josephus who had no objection to Gentiles adopting “Jewish ancestral traditions.”

In addition, he critiques the interpretation of Isaiah that appears to be held by the judaizing faction, whose “slogan” is ‘Christianity is based on Judaism’ whereby the gentiles join the Jews in forming “the true Israel.” He instead argues that “Judaism had always based its faith on Christianity.” The way Ignatius frames his argument demonstrates that it hinges on the fact of Christian uptake of ‘Jewish practices.’ The word Ἰουδαΐζω is a key term in the discourse in Ign. Magn. 10:1-3, as it is through this that Ignatius offers a variant interpretation of Isa 66:18.

Other information in the letter furnishes a suggestion on what the ‘judaizing of those who profess Jesus Christ’ entails. The verses of chapter nine, immediately preceding the use of Ἰουδαΐζω, are concerned with the day of worship. Chapter nine is only two verses long and criticises those who worship on the Sabbath;

If, then, those who lived in old ways came to newness of hope, no longer keeping Sabbath, but living in accordance with the Lord’s day, on which also our life arose through him and his death (which some deny), through which mystery we received faith, and therefore we endure that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher; how shall we be able to live without him of whom the prophets also were disciples in the spirit, him to whom they looked forward as their teacher? And therefore he for whom they rightly waited came and raised them from the dead.

In this letter, Ἰουδαΐζω is a substitute for talking about worshipping on the Sabbath instead of on ‘the Lord’s day.’

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941 Trevett, Ignatius of Antioch, p.189.
It would seem that Ignatius had not been able to visit Magnesia ad Maeander, but has met with representatives from the community in Smyrna who have provided an account of how things are with the church (cf. Ign. Magn. 2; 11; 15). On the whole Ignatius is pleased with the report (1:1), but has heard of a growing tendency to abandon worship on the day of resurrection for the Sabbath. The most likely reason is that, as this was a growing tendency rather than a spontaneous one, increased contact between Jews and Christians in Magnesia had begun to manifest itself in worshipping on the Sabbath.\footnote{Paul Trebilco, Jewish Communities in Asia Minor (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.29.} The use of ἰσοδαίζω here as a substitute for a discussion on the day of worship is also able to be a catch-all for any take-up of other characteristically Jewish practices. Ignatius’ concern is not with the day of worship \textit{per se}, but what this represents, which means no longer “living according to the Lord’s life,”\footnote{Schoedel, Ignatius of Antioch, p.123.} and could be part of a chain to denial of the centrality of Jesus in organising one’s life.

\textbf{5.3.2.6 \quad Clement of Alexandria}

Amongst the late second century writings of Clement of Alexandria (c.150-216CE) are the texts that have come together to be known as the \textit{Stromateis}.\footnote{Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Stromateis: Books 1-3} (transl. J. Ferguson; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), p.3.} Each book covers a different topic; the seventh has been referred to as ‘On Spiritual Perfection.’ Of the eighteen chapters of this book, the fifteenth is pertinent to this conversation as it here that one reads a response to arguments placed against Christianity by ‘Jews and Greeks.’ The first charge concerns, “the diversity of sects which shows belief to be wrong.”\footnote{J. Oulton & H. Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity (LCC 2; London: SCM, 1954), p.151.} The accusation is that one should not believe in Christianity on account of the number of
groups that have sprung up; it is too divided to be taken seriously. Clement responds by noting that among Jews and the most esteemed of Greek philosophers there are many sects and divergences of opinion and yet such groups “do not say that one should hesitate to be a philosopher or a follower of the Jews [ἥτοι φιλοσοφεῖν ἡ Ἰουδαῖζειν] on account of the internal discord,”947 within their sects.

The context here helps elucidate what Clement means when he uses Ἰουδαῖζω. As he is talking about those in Jewish and philosophical groups who desire others to join them, the use of Ἰουδαῖζω is a reference to conversion, or at least adhering to Jewish beliefs. There is no indication that Clement is using Ἰουδαῖζω to speak of those who pretend to be Jews, but those who convert and fully embrace the practices of Judaism and are brought into the fold of Judaism.

There is a second example of Ἰουδαῖζω in the extant fragmentary literature of Clement. Fragment 36 is the opening of Clement’s text against the Judaizers that is headed, Κλήμεντος πρεσβυτέρου Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐκ τοῦ ὑπὲρ Ἰουδαῖζόντων (Clement, an elder in Alexandria Against the Judaizers). The text that has survived shows Clement pick up on 1 Kgs 8:27 and John 2:19-22 to begin a discussion on the way God dwells with his people. Clement highlights the way that Jesus spoke of his body being the temple, but also that the church would rise up and that this is how God would dwell on earth. In this context, from the available text, it appears that Clement is drawing a distinction between the ‘Judaizers’ on the one hand who focus on the stones and mortar temple as the dwelling of God, and the non-Judaizers on the other who believe that Jesus was God present on earth, and that the church continues to live out this presence.

There are two aspects to ἴουδαίζω here, denial of the divinity of Jesus as the incarnate presence of God, and denial that the Christian church continues to be the place where God is made present. One might say that in this context ἴουδαίζω is mostly a denial that the church is the body of Christ, but intrinsically tied to a denial of the divinity of Jesus; if Jesus is not divine, then any comment that the church is the body of Christ can carry no weight to the effect that God is made present through the church. In this analysis, I disagree with Lampe who suggests that Clement only uses ἴουδαίζω to speak of those who, “embrace [or] practise Judaism,” and suggest that this fragment shows a different nuance. In this fragment, Clement attests to the beginning of a shift in the way ἴουδαίζω appears to have been used, when compared to the earlier examples.

5.3.2.7 Origen

Origen (c.184-254CE), wrote an extensive commentary on the Gospel of John (c.231CE), which has survived incomplete. The commentary was commissioned by Ambrose, after his conversion from Valentinian Gnosticism, to provide a counter commentary to that which was written by Heracleon (a Valentinian). There are a few direct references to Heracleon, but the commentary does more than refute Heracleon, which it does indirectly. Of the original thirty-two books, only nine survive with a further one hundred and forty short fragments. Amongst these extant extracts are three examples of ἴουδαίζω.

949 Lampe, Patristic Greek Lexicon, p.674.
950 Elowsky, John 1-10, p.xxx.
The first of these, in the main body of the text (32.63) is a direct quote of the Greek text of Gal 2:14. This section of the text is a commentary on John 13:6-11, and begins with several remarks concerning the character of Peter. As evidence of the rashness of Peter, Origen quotes Gal 2:14 to demonstrate what this required of Paul. Origen offers no specific comments on ἰουδαίζω, which is not the focus of his commentary.

The other two examples of ἰουδαίζω give more information. Both examples come from fragments of commentary on John 1:13, and, despite a few differences, are remarkably similar;

Fr. 8 θελήματι γὰρ σαρκὸς εὐαρεστεὶν οὗτοι προτίθενται τὴν σάρκα περιτεμνόμενοι καὶ ἐν τῶ προφανὲς ἰουδαίζειν θέλοντες, μετὰ τοῦ μὴ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς καρδίας καὶ τοῦ ἐν κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαϊσμοῦ.  

Fr. 114 θελήματι γὰρ σαρκὸς εὐαρεστεὶν οὗτοι προτέθεισθαι τὴν σάρκα περιτεμνόμενοι καὶ προφανὸς ἰουδαίζειν θέλοντες, μὴ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (δὲ) τῆς καρδίας καὶ τοῦ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαϊσμοῦ.

The underlined portions are those that differ between the texts, which involve a similar number of deletions and spelling changes. In both fragments, these are the closing remarks that are part of the conclusion to the commentary portion, but Fr. 114 has been trimmed down somewhat. Fr. 114 is about half the length of Fr. 8, but both contain a seven-line section (from which the above citations are taken) that is more or less identical to both fragments. Whether Origen is loosely citing another, now lost, text or is rewriting his own thoughts is hard to say.

954 Preuschen, Johanneskommentar, pp.489-490.
955 Preuschen, Johanneskommentar, p.565.
Both fragments use Ἰούδαίζω to condemn circumcision; the texts broadly translate to say, ‘for the will of the flesh is pleasing to them; they provide the circumcised flesh and, in the judaizing profanity, do not take care of the heart.’ Origen interprets θελήματος σαρκός (John 1:13) to be a reference to circumcision (in a similar vein to Rom 2:29) and uses this verse to repudiate those who make pronouncements to the contrary.

5.3.2.8 Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius of Caesarea (c.265-340CE) has left two examples of Ἰούδαίζω. The first comes from a text that is preserved in Praeparatio Evangelica, written c.315CE. In Praep. ev. 9.20 Eusebius quotes the work of Alexander Polyhistor who himself is quoting and commenting on the poetry of Theodotus (Praep. ev. 9.21), drawing on various other writers as he does so. This is consistent with Praeparatio Evangelica, which has been described as a “vast catena of quotations.” Polyhistor lived and wrote c.80-40BCE, whose most famous extant text was entitled On the Jews, in which he quotes Theodotus and then comments on this in a wider discussion of Gen 34. It is this text that is preserved in Eusebius’ writings and includes one example of Ἰούδαίζω.

The Preparation for the Gospel is a text by an Early Church Father, who is quoting a gentile historian writing about Jewish history sourced from Jewish and Samaritan authors (Theodotus’ background is unknown except that he probably lived sometime around the end of the second century to the early first century BCE). This is

959 They may also be excerpts of On the Jews found in Josephus, Ant. 1.240; Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 1.21.130; Schürer, The History of the Jewish People, Vol. 3.1, p.510.
a complicated scenario and ascribing authorship to any section and knowing the ‘original source’ is profoundly difficult. Schürer says that this mixture “is likely to have produced a great distortion in the content of surviving fragments,” and as such it is difficult to know to whom to ascribe the use of ἰουδαῖζω.

The following text may therefore be the diligently preserved words of Alexander Polyhistor (early-mid first century BCE), in which case the use of ἰουδαῖζω may be original to him or possibly influenced by one of his earlier sources. Equally this may represent a variant tradition that Eusebius has received or could represent a redaction of Polyhistor made by Eusebius in the early fourth century. Dating this use of ἰουδαῖζω becomes extremely difficult:

Ἄδης δὲ σὺν τῷ πατρὶ ελθόντα πρὸς τὸν Ἰακώβ αἰτεῖν αὐτὴν πρὸς γάμου κοινωνίαν· τὸν δὲ οὐ φάναι δώσειν, πρὶν ἂν ἡ πάντας τοὺς οἰκούντας τὰ Σίκυμα περιτεμνομένους ἰουδαῖζαι· τὸν δὲ Ἐμμὸρ φάναι πείσειν αὐτούς. 962

But afterwards [Emmor] came with his father to Jacob to ask [Dinah] for his partner in marriage; but he said he would not give her until all the inhabitants of Shechem were circumcised and followed the customs of the Jews: and Emmor said he would persuade them. 963

If one trusts, therefore, in Eusebius’ diligence (and any intermediaries) in accurately recording the words of Alexander Polyhistor, we are presented with an early use of ἰουδαῖζω, and the only example apart from LXX Esther that comes from the pre-Christian era; without this Gal 2:14 would be the first known textual witness to ἰουδαῖζω since the LXX translation of Esther.

Unless one takes the latest possible date of translation of LXX Esther (78/77 BCE), by no means certain, one cannot doubt the textual primacy of LXX Esther. Even with this dating, the window is very small for Polyhistor to have written before LXX Esther, if indeed Polyhistor did write ἰουδαίζω and if LXX Esther was written at the latest possible date for its arrival in Alexandria. On the presumption that Eusebius has accurately recorded a text from the early first century BCE, Polyhistor’s commentary postdates LXX Esther, and takes the concept of ‘judaizing’ and represents it as intrinsically associated with circumcision, as one would expect from the Greek texts of Esther.

Unlike Gen 34:15, which only mentions circumcision, Polyhistor aligns the practice of circumcision with the concept of ‘judaizing,’ in a similar formulation to that which is found in EsthLXX 8:17. Compare the three texts below;

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GenLXX 34:15</td>
<td>καὶ ύμεις ἐν τῷ περιτμηθῆναι ὕμων πᾶν ἀρσενικὸν</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EsthLXX 8:17</td>
<td>καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν περιετέμοντο καὶ ἰουδαίζον</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praep Ev. 19:22</td>
<td>ἢ πάντας τοὺς οἰκοῦντας τὰ Σίκιμα περιτεμνομένους ἰουδαίσαι</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One can see how it is possible that the two texts, of Genesis and Esther, have come together and, in Polyhistor’s interpretation, have something to speak to each other. What, in Genesis, is only a statement of circumcision, has become a joint statement of circumcision and judaizing. The phraseology of the book of Esther appears to have had some influence on Polyhistor as a way of stating the implications of circumcision.

The second example of ἰουδαίζω in Eusebius’ extant writings comes from his Ecclesiastical Theology (c.337 CE) and is original to him. This work was directed against Marcellus, a bishop accused of Sabellianism. This text is a post-Nicene work that aims to state a Trinitarian theology that is orthodox to the council of Nicaea. The second book of this work is subtitled ‘How should one interpret the Gospel’s Doctrine of the Word,’ and subsequently quotes from John’s prologue.
The use of ἰουδαίζω occurs in *Eccl. theol.* 2:14 when Eusebius criticises Marcellus for exemplifying the practice of flitting between being a judaizer and a Sabellian; Ἀλλὰ τούτων οὐδὲν Μάρκελλος εἰδὼς ποτὲ μὲν Ἰουδαίζων ποτὲ δὲ Σαβελλίζων ἀλλισκεται.⁹⁶⁵ Neither position is acceptable to Eusebius’ Nicaean theology as they both overemphasise the one-ness of God.

## 5.3.2.9 Canons of Laodicea

Little detail is known of the history of the fifty-nine canons that are here called the Canons of Laodicea. Sometimes referred to as the Council of Laodicea, or the Synod of Laodicea, these pronouncements are a collection of canons that date from 343–381CE.⁹⁶⁶ Laodicea became a place for meeting for several “local ecclesiastical synods or councils,”⁹⁶⁷ and these canons seem to have been collated in this time-frame from these local gatherings, although the earliest secondary sources raise doubts over the exact date.⁹⁶⁸

For the most part, the canons express concern over maintaining orthodoxy and orthopraxy; concerns over the priesthood, in membership and conduct, as well as condemning heretical groups. Several of the canons draw clear lines between Jews and Christians and prohibit interaction between the two. One such example is canon 29, which is the only one to use ἰουδαίζω. The text of the canon reads;

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That Christians must not keep judaizing by continuing to rest on the Sabbath, but by working on that day. The Lord’s day should be honoured the most by, if possible, resting as Christians. If any judaizers are discovered they must be anathema to Christ. 

This is the only use of ἰουδαίζω, alongside that of Ignatius of Antioch, to refer to Sabbath rest, and the most explicitly concise conflation of these two things.

While Ignatius speaks loosely of an abandonment of Sabbath worship, the earliest reference to the “systematic description of Sunday worship,” comes from Justin Martyr in the mid-second-century. He states that it is on the day of the sun (τοῦ ἡλίου ἡμέραν) that all come together to worship, as the day of creation and of resurrection. As the canons of Laodicea are dated to two centuries after Justin, one can see that Sabbath observance would have become increasingly uncommon during this time.

5.3.2.10 Athanasius

Among the extant writings of Athanasius (c.297-373CE) are those that give an insight into Arianism. Following the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius wrote the letter De Decretis Nicænæ Synodi; one of his anti-Arian texts. The focus of the letter is to condemn Arianism as a movement that denies the divinity of Jesus, and it is in this context that Athanasius says that the Arians are those who Judaize; καὶ Ἀρειανοὶ δὲ νῦν

Ἰουδαίοι ζοντες. This is the only extant use of ἰουδαίζω in Athanasius’ writings, so one cannot be absolutely certain if this is representative of how he would have understood the word. That said, in this context ἰουδαίζω is concerned with a theological perspective that denies the divinity of Jesus.

5.3.2.11 Gregory of Nazianzus

Gregory of Nazianzus (c.329-390CE) was, like Athanasius, deeply concerned with Trinitarian theology and has left various writings supporting a Nicaean theology. He had his episcopal orations written down and it is one of these that is of concern here. The thirty-eighth oration was preached during his archiepiscopacy of Constantinople either on the feast of Christmas 380CE, or Epiphany 381CE.

Having espoused a concise Trinitarian theology that, when speaking of God, he means ‘Father and Son and Holy Spirit,’ Gregory continues his oration to set this against both ‘Judaizing Monarchianism and Hellenising polytheism’; ἢ διὰ τὴν μοναρχίαν Ἰουδαίοι ζοντες ἢ διὰ τὴν ἄφθονιαν Ἑλληνίζοντες (Or. 38.8). The line between Arianism and Monarchianism is sufficiently fine that it is fair to say that Gregory and Athanasius both use ἰουδαίζω in the same way; to equate ‘judaizing’ with a denial of the divinity of Jesus.

5.3.2.12 Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-395CE) was also a deeply Nicaean theologian. Unlike Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa used ἰουδαίζω on multiple occasions, and so there is a better chance of having a more rounded appreciation of what he understood by it.

Perhaps the earliest text in which Gregory uses ἰουδαίζω is his treatise on faith, *De Fide ad Simplicium*, dated by Moore and Wilson to 375CE, shortly after Gregory was consecrated bishop of Nyssa. It may have been written anytime from up until 383CE, however, thus forming part of Gregory’s literary response to the lack of theological literacy that he was encountering. This is the shortest of Gregory’s ‘minor works,’ and offers no unique theological position, but repeats the theological claims of other texts for Simplicius, a military tribune (a metonymic representation for Christians serving in the military). The relevant section of *De Fide* reads as follows;

Τί οὖν ποιοῦσιν οἱ λέγοντες, ὅτι κτιστός ἐστι; Προσκυνοῦσι τὸν κτιστὸν αὐτὸν ἢ οὐχί; Ἐλ μὲν γὰρ οὐ προσκυνοῦσιν Ἰουδαίζοσιν ἀρνούμενοι τὸν Χριστὸν τὴν προσκύνησιν.

What are they doing when they say that he is created? Do they worship his creation, or not? For if they do not worship him, they judaize by forsaking the worship of Christ.

This use of ἰουδαίζω to speak of the denial of divinity of Jesus is similar to the next of Gregory’s texts. There are two examples of ἰουδαίζω in *Contra Eunomium*, the first in book 11;

"Ὡστε ὁ τὸν Υἱὸν ἀντιδιαστείλας τῷ ὄντι σαφῶς ἰουδαίζει τὴν τοῦ Μονογενοῦς ὑπόστασιν ὑποκλεπτὼν τοῦ δόγματος." He who contrasts the Son with the Existent, is clearly playing the Jew, robbing the Christian doctrine of the Person of the Only-begotten.

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and the second in book 12;

Οὐκοὖν εἰς φίλῳ παραμένει τῷ γράμματι, καὶ κατὰ τὸ ὑπὸ τὸ μέρος Ἰουδαίζει τῇ γνώμῃ, καὶ οὐποί πεπαιδεύεται, ὅτι οὐκ γράμματος ἐστιν ὁ Χριστιανὸς μαθητὴς ἀλλὰ πνεύματος·

As long as a friend remains to the letter, he judaizes in opinion and has not learnt that the Christian is not a disciple of the letter but of the spirit,⁹⁸⁰ which is followed immediately by a citation of 2 Cor 3:6; for the letter kills but the spirit gives life. Gregory is criticising those who read scripture to the letter whereby the interpretation places an overemphasis on the oneness of God.

The first use of Ἰουδαίζω in C.E. 11 is concordant with De Fide by referring to the doctrine of God. The second, in C.E. 12b is unusual, compared to Gregory’s other texts for focussing Ἰουδαίζω on exegetical technique rather than on doctrinal positions. In C.E. 7, Gregory refers to 2 Cor 3:6 in his discussion of Eunomius’ understanding of Lordship, locating his theology outside of what Gregory considers orthodox. Unlike the other Gregorian texts here, this does not explicitly parallel ‘judaizing’ with the denial of the divinity of Jesus. For Gregory, however, Ἰουδαίζω in C.E. 12b does tie into one stage of the formulation of a heretical theology, that of how one reads the scriptures to formulate one’s theology. Whilst not explicit, there is an implicit nuance to Ἰουδαίζω in C.E. 12b that hinges on doctrinal orthodoxy with regards to Trinitarian theology.

As a response to the lack of theological literacy noted by Gregory in his congregations, he composed the Great Catechism for those “engaged in the instruction of converts.”⁹⁸¹ Accounting for the time to write such a large work, this has been dated to the years “immediately following 383.”⁹⁸² Perhaps written after the rest of the

catechism, Gregory attached a prologue to the beginning of the catechism, and it is in this prologue where Gregory uses ἱουδαίζω. After the opening words to the prologue Gregory notes the variety of backgrounds from which converts come;

Not that the same method of instruction will be suitable in the case of all who approach the word. The catechism must be adapted to the diversities of their religious worship; with an eye, indeed, to the one aim and end of the system, but not using the same method of preparation in each individual case.\(^{983}\)

followed by the reference to ἱουδαίζω;

"Ἄλλαις γὰρ ὑπολήψεσιν ὁ Ἰουδαίζων προείληπται καὶ τῷ Ἑλληνισμῷ συζών ἐτέραις...\(^{984}\)

The Judaizer has been preoccupied with one set of notions, one conversant with Hellenism, with others; while the Anomœan, and the Manichee, with the followers of Marcion, Valentinus, and Basilides, and the rest on the list of those who have wandered into heresy, each of them being prepossessed with their peculiar notions, necessitate a special controversy with their several opinions.\(^{985}\)

Gregory then offers a brief summary of each of these beliefs, against which he is writing.

The reference to Judaism is set out as;

καὶ τοῦ Ἰουδαίου τὴν περὶ τὸν μονογενὴ θεὸν ἀπιστίαν

the unbelief of the Jew as to the Only-begotten God\(^{986}\)

There is little that needs to be said here; Gregory uses ἱουδαίζω as a substitute for ‘denial of the divinity of Jesus,’ through what he considers an inappropriate over-emphasis on the oneness of God. This is set against the polytheism that was characteristic of the Greeks, with Gregory’s Trinitarian theology being located somewhere between the two.

\(^{983}\) Moore & Wilson, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, p.473.
\(^{985}\) Moore & Wilson, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, p.473.
\(^{986}\) Moore & Wilson, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, p.474.
The prologue to the catechism, *De Fide*, and *C.E.* 11, all use ἵουδαίζω in this way. The sole anomaly is the reference to ἵουδαίζω in *C.E.* 12 although, as argued above this too fits with Gregory’s concept of Trinitarian orthodoxy.

5.3.2.13 Acts of Pilate/Gospel of Nicodemus A

Two different versions of the Acts of Pilate (Gospel of Nicodemus) exist, sharing the first twelve chapters but diverging after that. Dating these works has proven very difficult, with estimates ranging from the first century to the fifth century.\(^{987}\) Due to the uncertainty of the dating of this text, it has been placed at the end of this list of texts. This said, a more nuanced form of dating suggests that the text’s origins lie in the second century and came together in its current format sometime between the late third and mid fourth centuries.\(^{988}\)

The Acts of Pilate includes a short pericope that only has a canonical parallel with the dream of Pilate’s wife in Matt 27:19. Unlike Matthew’s gospel, however, where she speaks of her dream directly, in Acts Pil. 2:1 Pilate gathers the Jewish leaders together and reports the dream to them. He introduces the dream by saying to them;

οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ γυνὴ μου θεοσεβής ἐστιν καὶ μᾶλλον ἱουδαίζει σὺν υμῖν.
You know that my wife is a God-fearer and prefers to practice Judaism with you.\(^{989}\)

There are few parallels for such a high-status woman in a text set in the late Second Temple period, from which to infer how this might be understood. Nevertheless, one

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may note a parallel with Helena, mother of Izates, who had been “taught to worship God after the manner of the Jewish tradition... and had been brought over to their laws.”

Along with Helena was her daughter-in-law, Samakhos who also converted, although Josephus does not express in detail what their religious life looked like.

The Acts of Pilate are unique in that the subject of the verb ἴουδαίζω is female, and one can presume that, involved in her practice of Judaism, is a suggestion that Pilate's wife has adopted the purity laws that concerned women. The fact that Pilate speaks in a very matter of fact way to the gathered leaders suggests that they are familiar with his wife's adoption of Jewish practices and that she has attended the temple (at least as far as the court of women).

The historicity of this is certainly in doubt, but what matters for this analysis is the way ἴουδαίζω is used regardless of the historical truth of a passage. The Acts of Pilate use ἴουδαίζω to indicate that his wife has converted and no longer shares in a presumed Graeco-Roman religion.

5.3.2.14 Preliminary Summary of ἴουδαίζω in Non-Canonical Texts

Bons, Brucker, and Joosten posed the question; 3. Which words of the Septuagint continue in later writings with their specific meaning, and which ones go out of use? As this lexical overview shows, ἴουδαίζω is a word that develops meaning over time. Having been introduced into the Greek language, through translation, in LXX Esther, no-one could argue that Gregory of Nyssa uses ἴουδαίζω in its ‘Septuagintal’ sense. Below is a table summarising the ways I have argued that ἴουδαίζω is used.

991 Cf. ‘Izates II’ in Encyclopaedia Judaica: Vol. 9, pp.1157-1158.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Nuance of οὐδαίσω</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts Pil. 2:1</td>
<td>I/V</td>
<td></td>
<td>Behaving as a Jew.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephus</td>
<td>J.W. 2.454</td>
<td>c.75CE</td>
<td>Behaving as a Jew (associated with circumcision).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephus</td>
<td>J.W. 2.463</td>
<td>c.75CE</td>
<td>Supporting Jews in wartime.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plutarch</td>
<td>Cic. 7.5</td>
<td>I/II</td>
<td>Adherent of kashrut (with a nod to circumcision).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignatius</td>
<td>Magn. 10:3</td>
<td>I/II</td>
<td>Sabbath worship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clement</td>
<td>Strom. 7.15.89</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Conversion to Judaism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clement</td>
<td>Fr. 36</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus and that the church is the body of Christ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td>Comm. Jo. 32.63</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Direct quotation of Gal 2:14 without comment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td>Fr. Jo. 8</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Circumcision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td>Fr. Jo. 114</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>Circumcision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eusebius</td>
<td>Praep. ev. 9.20.5</td>
<td>-I/IV</td>
<td>Behaving as a Jew (associated with circumcision).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eusebius</td>
<td>Eccl. theol. 2:14</td>
<td>c.337CE</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Laodicea</td>
<td>Canon 29</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Sabbath worship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athanasius</td>
<td>Decr.</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Nazianzus</td>
<td>Or. 38.8</td>
<td>c.380/381CE</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Nyssa</td>
<td>De Fide.</td>
<td>c.375CE</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Nyssa</td>
<td>C. Eun. 11</td>
<td>c.382/383CE</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Nyssa</td>
<td>C. Eun. 12b</td>
<td>c.382/383CE</td>
<td>Following the letter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Nyssa</td>
<td>Or. Cat Mag. Proem</td>
<td>c.383/385CE</td>
<td>Denial of the divinity of Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gaston says that “while [ἰουδαίος] can on occasion be used to describe the forced conversion of gentiles to Judaism, it more usually designates the adoption by gentiles of certain Jewish customs without conversion.”\textsuperscript{994} Having examined the known written examples, however, this statement does not appear to hold much weight. The idea of ‘judaizing’ developed from having positive connotations from within Judaism for those who converted, or at least wanted to appear to live like Jews, into being used by gentiles who wanted to criticise ‘Jewishness.’\textsuperscript{995} The development from ‘living/behaving in stereotypically Jewish/Judaean ways’ to ‘denying the divinity of Jesus’ shows just how dramatic and significant the trajectory is that ἱουδαίος is taken on. There are examples to support Gaston, but these by no means account for the whole of the literary evidence.

The most notable shift in understanding of what it means to ‘judaize’ occurs after the Council of Nicaea. In the post-Nicaean literature, with two exceptions, every time a writer uses ἱουδαίος they do so to identify those who reject the Trinitarian theology that had been consolidated and had become ‘orthodox.’ The use of ἱουδαίος to refer to those who denied the divinity of Christ does not offer any real indication of the relationship between such groups and Judaism. As Boyarin states;

Generally, the orthodox topos that Christian heretics are Jews or Judaizers is seen as a sort of sideshow to the real heresiological concern, the search for the Christian doctrine of God... the naming of heretics as Jews or Judaizers is treated, on such an account, as a nearly vacant form of reprobation for reprobation’s sake... The Jews (for this context, heretics so-named), the Judaizers, and the Jewish-Christians – whether they existed or not is irrelevant in this context – thus mark a space of threatening hybridity, which it is the task of the religion police to do away with.\textsuperscript{996}

\textsuperscript{994} Gaston, ‘Judaism of the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and Related Writers’, pp.33-44 (35).
\textsuperscript{995} Dunn, ‘The Jew Paul’, p.203.
In these post-Nicaean texts ἰουδαίζω is a substitution for speaking about ‘heretics who over-emphasise the oneness of God,’ (to borrow Boyarin’s language) the counterpoint of which is ἑλληνίζω, the substitution for ‘polytheistic heretics.’ Whilst certainly not the most amicable of conversations between Peter and Paul, one cannot say that the dialogue in Gal 2:14 is one of reprobation and accusations of heresy. Their dialogue is one of a different kind where ἰουδαίζω carries different nuances to these later texts.

There is only one use of ἰουδαίζω that explicitly refers to conversion, with two that refer to Sabbath worship. A notable finding for the focus on Gal 2:14 is that the earliest other examples of ἰουδαίζω are associated with circumcision and, in the case of Plutarch, the text is framed to highlight circumcision.

Whilst an analysis of each of these texts offers the fullest picture possible for how ἰουδαίζω was employed in literature this cannot be the complete picture. One cannot know of the oral use of ἰουδαίζω except for when oral examples are recorded in literature (such as Gal 2:14). It is possible that Paul knew ἰουδαίζω through oral, rather than written use. This need not cause too much of a difficulty, however. As argued, LXX Esther does not provide one of many ancient attestations of ἰουδαίζω, but quite possibly the first use of the word due to the translation requirements of the book of Esther. This factor heightens the association between the word ἰουδαίζω and the text of the book of Esther. As has also been argued, Purim was celebrated annually in late Second Temple Judaism, so Paul would have been aware of the word and concept, in the context of the book of Esther. Oral uses of ἰουδαίζω would still have be borne from the book of Esther. The dates in the above overview point to a key factor that when Paul records the word in Gal 2:14, this is only the first, or possibly second, time ἰουδαίζω is known to have been written down since it was used in LXX Esther. Within the first two centuries, the meaning of ἰουδαίζω is much more closely associated with circumcision and conversion.
Hence, in the period in which Gal 2:14 was written, ἱουδαΐζω was used in a manner concordant with its usage in Esth 8:17. Even if there are unrecorded oral examples from this period, the literary evidence firmly indicates that the meaning ἱουδαΐζω had not digressed from its use in LXX Esther. With the possible exception of the example recorded by Eusebius, there are no intermediary literary works that could have shaped Paul’s understanding of ἱουδαΐζω, and no evidence to suggest diverse meanings of ἱουδαΐζω in the first century. As much as the non-canonical texts can fill in a picture of the use of ἱουδαΐζω, they cannot be source material for Paul as they post-date the writing of the letter to the Galatians. The question that remains is, ‘Is Paul consciously drawing on the book of Esther in the debate recorded in Gal 2:11-14, or has his vocabulary just been shaped by the text?’ With no other known sources for such an unusual word, one can pose the question the other way, if not the book of Esther rippling into Paul’s literary world, what was his impetus to use the word ἱουδαΐζω?

5.3.2.15 Bel and the Dragon and 2 Maccabees

Two final texts that may offer some insight into the earliest uses of ἱουδαΐζω are texts in which it does not feature. The first of these is Bel and the Dragon and the second is 2 Maccabees. In BelLXX 28 and Bel9 28 one reads that those from the countryside complain to Daniel that king Cyrus has become a Jew/Judaean. Speculations exist that, if there were a Semitic source to Bel and the Dragon, it may provide a second example of מתייהדים, but this is a risky venture as there is no proof for this whatsoever.997

Of interest is what the Greek does, or at least does not, say. Both the Septuagint and Theodotion’s texts record the people’s words as; Ἰουδαῖος γέγονεν ὁ βασιλεύς. This is a

text that is perfectly set up for a use of ἱουδαῖος but does not use it. To push this too far would be to make an argument from silence, not least because there are possible reasons for not using ἱουδαῖος. One reason why Bel does not use ἱουδαῖος could be the dating of the texts; Bel is given a date of “late second or early first century,” and as such may predate LXX Esther, or the author may not have yet encountered the text (and thus the word ἱουδαῖος). The coinage of ἱουδαῖος seems a natural development, and due to the uncertainty over the first proposal, a more likely reason for the absence of ἱουδαῖος is that it has a particular nuance.

The Babylonians/country-folk of Bel 28 are under the impression that Cyrus has been dissuaded of the efficacy of the Babylonian Gods and convicted of the Judaean God and has therefore converted. In contrast ἱουδαῖος seems to carry a level of uncertainty over the ‘conversion,’ (noted by the number of translations suggesting pretence of conversion) an uncertainty not held by the Babylonians.

Of a similar date to Bel is 2 Maccabees, which presents Antiochus IV declare that he would become a Jew (Ἰουδαῖον ἔσεσθαι; 2 Macc 9:17), ostensibly as way of receiving healing. Antiochus is not as enthusiastic a ‘converter’ as Cyrus, and the stimulant being a God-given illness may raise questions about his motives, but nevertheless he expresses a desire to declare the power of God (2 Macc 9:17). Like Cyrus, he appears convinced of the power of the God of the Jews, such that he might wish to become a Jew.

The books of Daniel and Esther at first sight seem to bear similarities through being court tales, although on closer inspection they represent very different modes of life and of what it means to be a Judaean in that setting. This may be representative of that fact that even though both texts recount conversion into the fold they cannot

998 Moore, Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The additions, p.128.
express this in the same way as they are not equivalent. In the book of Daniel there is a clear sense of what it means to be Jewish, how to live as a Jew following Jewish ways in the diaspora and the convert is a genuine convert who is convicted of this way and adopts this life. In the book of Esther there are questions hanging over the extent to which the Jewish characters care about, or are aware of, food laws and festivals. The converts, too, represent an ambivalent adoption of this way of life. One reason, therefore, for not using ἰουδαΐζω in Bel is that the particular nuances of the word are not appropriate in this context.

5.3.2.16 Conclusion of Textual Overview

In continuation of the preliminary summary of texts, Bel and the Dragon potentially helps clarify a point about ἰουδαΐζω. The textual summary shows that ἰουδαΐζω developed in its meaning and as such one dictionary definition would be inadequate, one must contextualise a text such that the date of a text may refine the definition.

With the letter to the Galatians, the date of this text sets the use of ἰουδαΐζω firmly within a time-frame where one would understand some sort of change of identity to associate with Judaism or Judaean stereotypes of a culture that has not been touched by a distinct Christian identity. Later texts come from within a context that sets up a distinction between Christianity and Judaism that did not exist when Paul wrote his letter.

The absence of ἰουδαΐζω in Bel and the Dragon and 2 Macc poses the question of whether one can refine its definition, based on how it used and how it is not used. The number of texts that use ἰουδαΐζω in the period before the partings-of-the-ways1000 are

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1000 See Dunn for the plural of this term; James Dunn, The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their significance for the character of Christianity (2nd ed.; London: SCM, 2006 [1991]).
few and those that do not use ἰουδαίζω where it would potentially fit well are fewer so any conclusions will be tentative, but provide a working framework.

The pretence of conversion that appears to mark מחרה in Esth 8:17 appears to carry over into the early uses of ἰουδαίζω. In Josephus’ examples, ἰουδαίζω does not refer to conversion, but to adoption of ‘Judaean mores’ and Metilius’ so-called conversion, that is borne out of fear for his life. Metilius does not represent a considered conversion. Plutarch’s use represents a witty accusation of someone who behaves in a way that is understood to be comparable to the behaviour of Jews, but is presented as a conversion. Theodotus speaks of those who were obliged to ‘Judaize’ and as such also does not represent those who wilfully choose to convert. Standing in stark contrast is king Cyrus who is not under any obligation or fear, but is shown the falsehood of the Babylonian Gods, and is understood by his subjects to have thus become a Jew. To a lesser extent, Antiochus fits this paradigm as one who has been shown the futility of his existing belief system and shown the power of God. In both instances, however, the word ἰουδαίζω is not used.

First, this highlights the Estherian distinctiveness of ἰουδαίζω; there are three possible ways of expressing a move towards Judaism, but Paul uses the one that is associated with the book of Esther. Second, could it be that ἰουδαίζω, in its early uses, normally carried the insinuation of an ignoble conversion or adoption of Jewish/Judaean ways, and that this is the sense intended by Paul in Gal 2:14? If so this would make his argument to Peter stronger. He would not only be accusing Peter of insisting that the Galatians convert, but that they do so impiously.

Regarding the rarity of ἰουδαίζω, the extant literary evidence from the first century suggests that it was an uncommon word, in general and not just in the New Testament. In Paul’s historical context, ἰουδαίζω passes the criterion of distinctiveness in relative and
absolute terms. It is reasonable to suggest that Paul uses this unusual word in his speech to Peter for a striking rhetorical effect that Danker, Fee, and others, have shown to be a Pauline rhetorical device. This does not mean that every occurrence of a *hapax legomenon* is a rhetorical device, as any writer includes rare words. Nevertheless, the presence of a *hapax legomenon* might indicate a rhetorical flourish. In Paul’s letters this possibility is heightened when the context is a debate, where one would expect rhetoric to come to the fore.

As to the meaning of ἰουδαίζω, should it be best translated as ‘convert to Judaism’, or ‘pretend to convert to Judaism/pretend to act as a Judaean’? From this research, I would suggest a slight alternative in the middle that does not have a direct English equivalent. The closest might be ‘behave as a Judaean.’ The word ἰουδαίζω seems to be best understood by how others would view the subject(s) of the verb, rather than how the subjects would view themselves. This can be seen in the original – so this research argues – use of ἰουδαίζω in EsthLXX 8:17. The author observes the actions of the ‘many from the nations’ and uses ἰουδαίζω in an epexegetical construct with περιτέμνω. Whether the verbal subjects think that they have become Jews or not is not commented upon; they may will believe that they have become Jews out of fear, but this may not be the view of the author. All that the text is prepared to say is that they are behaving in stereotypically Judaean ways, which, in Susa, means a change of behaviour. Their gentile-ness becomes hidden, at least partially, as Esther’s Judaean-ness became hidden earlier in the narrative.1001 Re’emi suggests that the gentiles “actually adopted the Jewish faith,”1002 but the text is not clear in this regard. What the gentiles have done is modify

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their behaviour, but the text is not prepared to say that there is agreement in that such behaviour is all that constitutes being a Jew. Both Jews and gentiles can behave in stereotypically Judaean ways.

To either suggest that the subjects, in any of the examples of the word, are converting or pretending to convert implies that there is agreement between subject and observer as to what is happening. I do not think this is the case with Ἰουδαίζω, but that the subjects of the verb are doing something – adopting certain practices – that they think means that they have become Jews, and that some other Jews would also accept that they are Jews, but that others would dispute this because of the stimulus that has led to the change in behaviour. Therefore, ‘behaving as a Judaean’ may best translate Ἰουδαίζω, because some would see behaving as a Judaean to mean that one was a Jew, whereas others would dispute this. Such a translation allows for the doubt to be cast over the legitimacy of the transformation, but without requiring doubt to be cast.

It is unfortunate that the direct Anglicising of Ἰουδαίζω ‘Judaize’ cannot be used in this case. In the New Testament (and other first century Greek texts), Ἰουδαίζω refers to what people do to themselves, and thus the subjects of Ἰουδαίζω are presumably those gentiles who adopt Judaean/Jewish ways. The word ‘judaize’, however, has come to mean those who enforce others to ‘behave as Judeans’ rather than its “original sense”1003 of gentiles who themselves behave as Judeans.1004 The English term does not correspond to what is found in the book of Esther or in the first century Greek texts, as these all

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1003 Dunn, Neither Jew Nor Greek, p.19.
1004 See for example, Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents, p.15 with roots back to Ferdinand Baur, ‘Die Christuspartei in der Korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des Petrinischen und Paulinischen Christentum in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom’, Tübingen Zeitschrift für Theologie 3.4 (1831), pp.61-206 (165-166). There are occasions when authors define Judaizers as those who “maintain Jewish habits and rituals alongside their Christianity”, but this serves to show the ambiguity of the term, in a way where such ambiguity is not helpful to this research. Tessa Rajak, ‘The Jewish Community and its Boundaries’, in J. Lieu, J. North & T. Rajak (eds.), The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.9-28 (19).
Paul appears to use ἰουδαίζω in Gal 2:14 with a nuance that is shared by the book of Esther. Moreover, he appears to use ἰουδαίζω for the rhetorical effect that it can deliver. As Paul sometimes uses *hapax legomena* for the combined literary effect of a rhetorical strike as well an intertextual link, can the methodology be sustained to consider this stage of the analysis?

**5.3.3 Galatians 2:14, To what does Paul refer?**

**5.3.3.1 Introduction**

The overview so far has explored the uses of ἰουδαίζω from its inception, its use in Hellenistic Jewish writing and in early Christian writings. What has been indicated is that, in the first century, ἰουδαίζω was, by default, a euphemism for the circumcision of a gentile, but could draw on other stereotypes or practices of Judaism. De Troyer says of this word in Esth*ŁXX* 8:17, “the translator wanted to clarify the notion of ‘becoming’ a Jew by presenting circumcision as a characteristic thereof,”1005 and Cline says that the Hebrew מתייהדים is “not unreasonably represented by LXX as circumcising themselves.”1006 Although the overviews show that Esth 8:17 also shared this default interpretation of gentiles being circumcised, or at least appearing to convert, this was not the sole interpretation. The textual overviews have not discounted the possibility that, in Gal 2:14, Paul is speaking in the same way as he or his contemporaries may have spoken of Esth 8:17, but neither do they conclusively demonstrate that he is doing so. This door has not been closed but remains open, with further exploration required.

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1006 Clines, *Esther Scroll*, p.81.
Although there appears to be a strong relationship between ἰουδαίζω and circumcision, in relation to Gal 2:14 this is not the unanimous view of scholars. One of the conclusions of the textual overview is that ἰουδαίζω is a word for which the meaning was not static, and that one must contextualise the word in its particular text and in chronology to best understand how it is, or might be, used. Unfortunately, a few commenters who critique its use as a euphemism for circumcision do so by including later texts to inform their interpretations.¹⁰⁰⁷ As the historical overview has shown, these later texts do not necessarily reflect the context that is found in Gal 2:14.

Gal 2:12 reads that Peter, ‘used to eat with the gentiles. But after [certain people] came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction.’ This concern over food and table regulations is the most common interpretation of ἰουδαίζω that is not one of circumcision. Both table regulations and circumcision are referenced in this passage, which leaves an interpretative uncertainty. In Gal 2:14, when Paul criticises Peter for compelling gentiles to live like Jews, there is a question to what he refers; circumcision, adherence to food and table regulations, or a mix of the two. Modern commenters fall at different points on this spectrum.

At the one end are those like Räisänen who declares quite confidently that, “in 2:14 Cephas's turning back to observance of the table regulations is called ἰουδαίζειν or ἰουδαϊκῶς ζην.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Such an interpretation gives the impression that this was a cut and dry issue, food regulations and nothing more. Räisänen does not consider the reference to the circumcision faction to be a detail that can drive this interpretation.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Examples include the following, which are reputable and valuable commentaries or articles. James Dunn, The Epistle to the Galatians (Black’s New Testament Commentaries; London: A&C Black, 1993), p.129; Gaston, ‘Judaism of the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and Related Writers’, p.35.
A more blended view may be that of Ronald Fung who agrees that food is a major part, but not the full story. He says that for the gentiles to judaize;

they would have to observe the Jewish food-laws, and ultimately submit to circumcision, and that this was in practice being imposed on the Gentile Christians as a requirement for fellowship with the Jews.\footnote{Fung, \textit{The Epistle to the Galatians}, p.111.}

Fung takes circumcision as the end point of what is meant by \textit{ιουδαίζω}. Judaizing may well begin with the adoption of Jewish food-laws but as a means to an end (circumcision) rather than the end itself. This leads to the other point on the spectrum that interprets \textit{ιουδαίζω} exclusively through the lens of circumcision. For this perspective, one may turn to the words of Philip Esler;

> When Paul asked [Peter] how he could compel the gentiles to 'Judaize', he meant how could Peter force them to become \textit{Ioudaioi}, members of the House of Israel through circumcision.\footnote{Philip Esler, \textit{Galatians} (New Testament Readings; Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), p.137.}

Esler argues in favour of this position whilst noting that, if correct, this may well imply that “Peter and James had unequivocally broken the Jerusalem agreement.”\footnote{Esler, \textit{Galatians}, p.137.} This would be a drastic change of position but does find support in Gal 6:12-16 where Paul unequivocally states that there are those who compel the Galatians to become circumcised.

There is thus a lack of consensus about Gal 2:14, and matters are further complicated by Gal 6:11-16. Paul uses similar language to Gal 2:14 in Gal 6:12 to state that there are those who compel circumcision. Does Gal 6 clarify the circumcision interpretation of Gal 2:14 or does Gal 6 pose more questions?\footnote{The following section (§5.3.3.2) includes an exploration of this in the wider context of Paul’s message.} Why does Paul not say in 2:14 what he says in 6:12; is it because they mean different things, or do they mean...
the same thing but presented in different ways? If the latter, has Paul used ‘ἰουδαίζω’ for its intertextual depth found in the book of Esther, or is it merely rhetorical snappiness?

5.3.3.2 Paul’s Message in the Context of Galatians 2:14

Before discussing some of the issues around circumcision, there is a question of the wider context of Paul’s letter to the Galatians and the shape of his message more broadly. As the missionary to the gentiles, questions have arisen concerning Paul’s relationship to the Law. Recently this topic has been further elucidated by Fredriksen with a discussion about Paul’s message and how he understood the privileges and responsibilities of the gentile believers in Jesus, and by Runesson in re-examining the ‘universalistic-particularistic’ binary of missionary styles. Their findings, in turn, will shape the wider conversation of Paul’s understanding of the relationship between Jew and gentile, including the way in which the book of Esther might be a voice in this conversation. In the context of the question of judaizing texts, anti-judaizing texts and Gal 2:14 in particular, Fredriksen concludes that;

the early Christ-following pagans were in fact enjoined, even by Paul, to judaize...
Paul’s gospel is a judaizing gospel.

This needs some unpacking given that on a first glance it may appear that Fredriksen is arguing that Paul is ‘guilty’ of exactly that for which he condemns Peter in Gal 2:14.

The context in which Paul is communicating his message is one with precedents for what one might call conversion. His context is one in which he also believes, initially, that he is communicating his message awaiting the imminent return of the Messiah. In

Paul’s context, one was born into a position of inheriting ancestral customs and beliefs such that “humans were born into their obligations to their gods.” One could, therefore, convert (in modern parlance) to another religion, but this would mean abandoning one’s ἔθνος to become part of another ἔθνος. One’s history would be shaped by the ancestral traditions of the new ἔθνος rather than the one into which one was born; “Jews could not only be begotten but made.” This represents the most extreme option, whereby one demonstrates “becoming an ‘ex-pagan’.” The categories of ethnic identity and religious identity become greatly blurred at this stage.

More common were the precedents set in mixed gentile Jewish communities. Different communities, particularly those in the minority, would find ways to negotiate the demands and obligations of their own ancestral inheritance with the dominant expectations. For diaspora Jews this would take certain forms; Paul’s proscription of offering food to idols balanced with his permissiveness to share in food in private, may reflect “an established Jewish modus vivendi.” Situations where the boot is on the other foot may be more directly pressing to concerns about Gal 2:14, what about situations where gentiles adopt something of the Jewish/Judaean ancestral inheritance?

Out of societal expectations to show respect, there are known situations of gentiles engaging with Jews in this way. Fredriksen declares;

More conventionally, however, pagans could simply “visit with” Jews, and thus with their god. Before 66 CE, if pagans travelled to the temple in Jerusalem, they collected in its largest courtyard. In their own cities, they could and did appear in their Jewish neighbors’ “ethnic reading houses.” Free to take on as much or as little of Jewish custom as they chose—free, indeed, to continue worshiping their own gods—these pagan drop-ins ranged across a broad spectrum of activity,

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from occasional contact to foe voluntary assumption of some Jewish ancestral practices, to major benefaction and patronage.\textsuperscript{1019}

There was a non-Jewish presence in the temple and the synagogues, with no expectation of full adherence to the Torah. The non-Jews were accepted, to some degree, whilst retaining a distinct identity.

Paul’s message is set against this backdrop, into which he does outline certain expectations and demands. In contrast to the permissiveness of the synagogues, which accepted the distinct ἔθνη who maintained a different ancestral heritage (except for those who took the radical step of becoming ‘ex-pagans’), Paul taught a different message. Paul taught “no more λατρεία to other, lower gods... pagans were to abandon the gods native to them.”\textsuperscript{1020} They were then, rather than changing ἔθνη, to remain as they were but not as precedent expected. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul is writing to people brought up as gentiles. Their identity becomes a point of contention, as to speak of Christianity as a separate identity is as problematic as saying that the gentiles become Jews. Caroline Hodge remarks that;

They are not Jews and, in my view, they are not Christians; and they are not really gentile any longer either. Paul does call them a number of things including beloved, holy ones, faithful ones, brothers and sisters, and a new creation.\textsuperscript{1021}

This identity change did not involve change of ἔθνη. This meant no conversion rites, such as circumcision, but that, through receiving the holy spirit;


they were to live as ἅγιοι, “holy” or “sanctified” or “separated” ἔθνη, according to standards of community behavior described precisely in “the law” (Gal 5:14; 1 Cor 7:19; Rom 2:13, 25-27, on doing the law; 13:8-10, specifically referencing the Ten Commandments; 15:16 on gentile sanctification).1022

This is Paul’s understanding, in the context of the days leading to the return of the Messiah, of how non-Jews are called to relate to Judaism. This can be seen in 1 Cor 7:17-20 that outlines Paul’s desire not “to eradicate ethnic distinctions... [but] ‘a transformation in the symbolic universe of these peoples in the light of the Christ-event’.”1023 For Paul it becomes apparent that the “crucial point... seems to be that no-one should change their ethnic identity.”1024 Those who are Jews should remain Jews and not pretend to be otherwise and those who are gentiles should remain as such.

This has aspects that appear lax compared to those who do ‘convert’ as there is no circumcision or full Torah observance. On the other hand, he is radically stricter than some of his contemporaries, demanding an abandonment of the ancestral inheritance of each ἔθνη, and an up-take in living as the ἅγιοι. The ἔθνη do not become Jews/Judaeans, but equally Paul makes comments that suggest that they become ex-gentiles (1 Cor 12:2). In Christ, they are neither Jew nor gentile, but the ἅγιοι who live in Christ.

Here, I am indebted to Fredriksen, but also wish to offer a different nuance to her conclusions. Instead of suggesting that “Paul integrates pagans into the ἐκκλησία,” as though it is only gentiles who were the only group to ‘move’, who join the Jewish community, it may be more helpful to present Paul’s model in a different way. Rather than gentile joining (or even becoming) Judaean, both gentile and Judaean join together

in the community of the ἅγιοι. Such a community naturally has much of a feel of Judaean tradition not least as it is initially predominantly composed of Judaeans, and exists as a community alongside other Judaisms, with standards outlined by Torah. It is, nevertheless, characterised by the joining of Judaean/Jew and gentile into something different. History would show how, as the demographic balance shifts to majority gentile, the ease with which the community of the ἅγιοι sits alongside other Judaisms lessens to the point where, in different places there commences the partings-of-the-ways.

One may be inclined to enquire if, to excuse the pun, Gal 6 can flesh out Fredriksen’s understanding of Paul’s view of ethnicity and circumcision? In Gal 6:12 Paul makes an explicit return to the topic of circumcision and some of the factors relating to the apparent obligation that some were placing on gentiles to be circumcised. In this section of the letter Paul makes “his first explicit statement that the agitators are trying to compel the Galatians to be circumcised.” The idea of compulsion frames the letter occurring here at the end in Gal 6:12 but also near the beginning of the main body of the letter in 2:3 and 14. These three verses account for three of Paul’s four uses of ἀναγκάζω (the other being in 2 Cor 12:11), and each of these three represent Paul being critical of those who compel, creating a motif throughout the text. Two of these are explicitly against those who compel others to be circumcised, and the third being the compulsion to ‘judaize,’ which is a further indication that circumcision is the prominent nuance suggested by ἰουδαίζω. The different audiences to 2:14 and 6:12 may answer the reason for the difference in vocabulary, but both seem to confirm Fredriksen’s analysis of Paul’s message against those who compel a change of ἔθνη.

1025 Matera, Galatians, p.225.
If this is an outline of Paul’s message, which according to some definitions can be encompassed by the concept of judaizing, what then is Peter’s message that Paul describes as judaizing? Paul is concerned about the situation in Galatia as “the churches were on the verge of abandoning the truth for a ‘different gospel’ (1:6) and thus losing God’s grace (5:4).” The question that shouts out is not, ‘what does ἰουδαιζω mean?’ as the wider first and second century examples show that ἰουδαιζω holds distinctively Jewish practices in tension (i.e. circumcision, food laws and customs, and Sabbath observance), but often with a focus on circumcision or where circumcision is seen as the end point of ἰουδαιζω. Rather one may ask ‘what is meant by ἰουδαιζω when Paul uses it in Gal 2:14?’ This question ties together a variety of factors, some of which have already been covered and some outstanding: the historical contextualisation of the word ἰουδαιζω, Paul’s understanding of the place of gentiles in his eschatological vision, contemporaneous views on the topics of circumcision, conversion, judaizing, and proselytes, and finally interpretations of the book of Esther and the way in which this text speaks into Paul’s situation and may bring.

5.3.3.3 Circumcision and the Antioch Incident

It is not surprising that circumcision would become a point of tension in the community when large numbers of gentiles entered the fold. For the Jews who adopted the claims made by the Christians, circumcision was a crucial element of the faith of which Christianity claimed to be a part. This had developed in meaning through history up until the disagreement in Galatia.

1026 Stanley, Arguing With Scripture, p.119.
In the land of Canaan Abraham was marked out as a stranger by not being circumcised. The mark of circumcision becomes a mark of the covenant and “is an act that demonstrates unwavering faith in God.”\textsuperscript{1027} Subsequently, in the Babylonian exile, this mark is strengthened as a mark of purity in contrast to uncircumcision (ערל) which becomes increasingly referred to and associated with impurity.\textsuperscript{1028}

Against this backdrop came the so-called ‘Antioch incident’ in the early 50s CE.\textsuperscript{1029} For the so-called judaizers in Antioch, circumcision was a key mark of covenant, faith and purity, and abandoning this was a troubling idea. The desire to ‘shut-out’ (Gal 4:17) those who have not been circumcised stems from a strong belief that without circumcision men, at least, cannot have a true covenant relationship with God.\textsuperscript{1030}

The debate around the necessity of circumcision for gentile believers is well recorded and formed a lot of debate in earliest Christianity, as it came to a head between the Petrine and Pauline factions as recorded in Gal 2:11-14.\textsuperscript{1031} The debate certainly was not completed at this time, however, as different early Christian groups found inspiration from different leaders, not all following Paul’s theology. A clear example are the Ebionites and other Jewish-Christian groups who had in their possession texts such as the third century Clementine Homilies, which are clearly taking Peter’s side and offer criticisms of ‘Simon Magus,’ a “thinly veiled cipher for the apostle Paul.”\textsuperscript{1032}

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\textsuperscript{1030} Martin, ‘Circumcision in Galatia’, p.220.
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Although circumcision appears to be the dominant nuance held by Gal 2:14, and of the interpretations of Esth 8:17, one may ask where food laws fit into this, as ἰουδαϊζω does sometimes carry that nuance, and the discussion about circumcision in the letter to the Galatians does come out of a discussion about table regulations.

Whilst Esth 8:17 highlights circumcision, this ought to be held in the context of the book as a whole. Later traditions that draw on the Hebrew text demonstrate an unease about the text’s lack of concern that Esther is presumably eating non-kosher food in the palace.\textsuperscript{1033} She may be contrasted with Daniel, for whom adherence to food regulations matters.\textsuperscript{1034} The Septuagint also acknowledges this difficulty and the translator presents, through additional material, the view that sharing food with gentiles is problematic and that Jewish food laws are important.\textsuperscript{1035} In Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:28 [4:17y] Esther prays, ‘your slave has not eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not honoured the king’s banquet nor drunk the wine of libations.’ In a similar vein, Tg. Esth. I 2:21 is expanded with outlines of how Esther obeyed Mordecai. One such way is that “cooked dishes and wine of the nations she did not taste,”\textsuperscript{1036} suggesting that it not only mattered that dietary laws were followed, but that Esther could keep them.

This concern does not stand separate from the concern over circumcision, however, but immediately follows Esther’s declaration of ‘O Lord... you know that I hate the bed of the uncircumcised and of any foreigner,’ (Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} C:26 [4:17u]). It would be

\textsuperscript{1033} The Rabbis wrestle with this in different ways from arguing that she became a vegetarian (R. Yohanan) to suggesting that she was able to keep Kosher (Rav), to suggesting that did not keep the food laws (R. Samuel); b.Meg. 13a; Koller, Esther in Ancient Jewish thought, p.193. See 193-198 for an overview of various views and discussions.


\textsuperscript{1036} Grossfeld, Targums of Esther, p.48.
reasonable, therefore, to presume that the initial ‘judaizing’ in Esth 8:17 is the circumcision that is referenced explicitly, but that the Septuagintal translator also allows for the interpretation that ‘judaizing’ would continue into the adoption of the food laws, the lack of which has vexed Esther.

5.3.3.5 Peter’s and Paul’s Approaches

When Paul refers to circumcision he does so to highlight different aspects of this act. In Rom 4, for example, Paul draws on the institution of circumcision in Gen 17:9-14 as the ‘sign of the covenant’ (17:11) for the household of Abraham. In this discussion, Paul is grappling with the apparent contradiction between the promise to Abraham to be ‘ancestor of many nations’ (17:5), yet having circumcision as a distinguishing mark to “differentiate his own household.”

Does Paul consider circumcision to be an essential mark for all, from many nations, who come to share in the life of Abraham’s descendants, or is it unique to ‘Paul’s household’?

Paul wrestles with Gen 17 in his letter to the Romans to make sense of the play-off between Abrahamic ancestry for many and the particularity of those who have been circumcised; this is done to make sense of the idea of justification and how that might be worked out leading into Rom 5:1 when Paul argues that justification must be seen in a particular way in light of Jesus. This reference to circumcision is done within a Jewish community, or at least a community where any gentiles are well steeped in Jewish traditions and synagogue life, to make sense of that community’s understanding of its own traditions in light of the life of Jesus.

1037 Rom 4:9-12; Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, p.212.
This reference to circumcision is not the same as that of Galatians. In this case Paul is addressing a gentile community and the emphasis of circumcision is not its place *per se* in justification and as a sign of the covenant, but with regards to conversion and circumcision as a sign of conversion into a particular covenant. Any similar literature, which will nevertheless be useful in setting a context, is “addressed to fellow Jews or is about Jews.”\footnote{Nanos, ‘The Question of Conceptualization’, pp.105-152 (144).} The unusual nature of Paul’s writings must be remembered and differences with contemporaneous literature are to be expected.

As Runesson has argued, a simple binary approach of universalistic or particularistic is unworkable. Rather, he argues for language about religion accounting for three aspects; 1. the ethnic aspect (closed-ethnic, open-ethnic, or non-ethnic religion), 2. the salvific aspect (salvation-inclusive and salvation-exclusive) and 3. missionary aspect (proselytising, ethical-religious and inward).\footnote{Runesson, ‘Paticularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity?’, p.143.} These three aspects can appear in different combinations for different perspectives and may help shed light on the outworking of the tensions faced by, and between, Peter and Paul. Rather than the binary positions of universalistic or particularistic, which fall short in outlining the difference between Peter and Paul’s approaches, these three aspects allow for a more nuanced view that can show points of similarity as well as difference, and fits more broadly within the first century Jewish tradition.\footnote{Annette Yoshiko Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the Parting of the Ways”: Approaches to historiography and self-definition in the pseudo-clementines’, in Becker & Reed (eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted*, pp.189-232 (213).} Given that Paul presents the Petrine faction as opponents in Gal 2:14,\footnote{And elsewhere, such as 2 Cor 11:5; Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents*, p.20.} and that Peter and Paul are often pitted against each other, it is easy to assume that they would inhabit different positions in Runesson’s paradigm. Making such assumptions would be unwise and lacking academic rigour, and
therefore they should be examined. This examination will take place after an overview of the wider first century Jewish context in which they sit, with regards to Jewish interpretation of the book of Esther.

5.3.4 Contextualising Paul

Whatever his social improvisations, Paul’s sheet music is purely scriptural. The content of his convictions, his urgent messianic apocalypticism, is novel; his resources for expressing it, entirely and traditionally Jewish.\textsuperscript{1043}

Fredriksen presents here the balance of factors that impinge on Paul’s writings; he is committed to basing his arguments on the contents of scripture, but this is also meted through the traditions, scriptural interpretations, and convictions of his context. Furthermore, Paul does not only reproduce the traditions that he receives, but “creatively reworks”\textsuperscript{1044} them. For this research, which has argued that it is plausible that Esth 8:17 is shaping Paul’s conception of judaizing, the implications are that this portion of text must be set in Paul’s context. How did other writers understand Esth 8:17, and how can their insights flesh out a picture of the undertones behind Paul’s expression in Gal 2:14, and any creative reworking that may be taking place? This interpretive context is essential for understanding how the book of Esther might have interacted with Paul’s context.\textsuperscript{1045}

\textsuperscript{1043} Fredriksen, ‘Why Should a “Law-Free” Mission Mean a “Law-Free” Apostle?’, p.647.
\textsuperscript{1044} Filtvedt, ‘“God’s Israel’ in Galatians 6.16’, pp.123-140 (126).
\textsuperscript{1045} In adapting Hays’ work, Evans suggests listening not just to scripture, but to “interpreted Scripture.” The metaphors being used here are different but a similar principle applies; Evans, ‘Listening for Echoes of Interpreted Scripture’, pp.50-51; see also Ciampa, The Presence and Function of Scripture, p.285.
5.3.4.1 Rabbi Nehemiah

The Talmudic tractate, ‘Yebamoth’ is mostly concerned with Levirate marriage, but concludes with a short section on conversion to Judaism. In this latter discussion, there is a clear reference to the events of Esth 8:17 that is attributed to R. Nehemiah, (fifth generation Tanna c.135-170CE). R. Nehemiah’s comments come after a period of time when conversion to Judaism had happened on a greater scale than had previously been known.

With the increase in proselytes, the discussion arose as to what criteria there were for genuine conversion and R. Nehemiah is turned to as an authority for saying;

Neither lion-proselytes, nor dream-proselytes, nor the proselytes of Mordecai and Esther are proper proselytes unless they become converted at the present time. (b.Yeb. 24b)

The ‘lion-proselytes’ are those who have converted out of fear following a divine visitation, after the events in 2 Kgs 17:25 when God sent lions among the Samaritans for not worshipping Yhwh. The reference to ‘dream-proselytes’ does not appear to have a scriptural foundation, but is a criticism of those who convert to Judaism on account of a dream (be it theirs or a dream of someone-else). The proselytes of Mordecai and Esther are those in Esth 8:17 who converted ‘because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.’ In each of these cases there exists the possibility that one might declare “willingness to live under the Law”\textsuperscript{1046} without the necessary desire to enter into, and understand, the “sufferings of Israel.”\textsuperscript{1047}


\textsuperscript{1047} Daube, \textit{The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism}, p.117.
Ultimately the pronouncements here are unsurprising; questions were raised over converts when the principal motivation for conversion is fear of not converting. The genuine nature of such conversions was doubted, and the mass conversions of Esth 8:17 form part of this discussion.\textsuperscript{1048} Quite significantly, R. Nehemiah never explains what is wrong with the proselytes of Mordecai and Esther (nor the other proselytes). What can be inferred from this is that R. Nehemiah presumes that his audience will know the background to each of the scriptural passages and understand the critical interpretations about the conversions within them. R. Nehemiah does not need to explain that the ‘proselytes of Mordecai and Esther,’ convert out of fear and that this is an unacceptable reason for conversion; the reference carries this baggage.

The exemption for ‘the present time,’ concerns the days after the Hadrianic Wars, when there was no concern that conversions were for fear or personal gain.\textsuperscript{1049} R. Nehemiah gives clear voice to the argument that מתיחדים should be understood as those who do not genuinely seek conversion to Judaism. His reference to this form of conversion carries an implicit interpretation that can be understood by his community. This strongly raises the possibility that, when Paul uses ἱουδαίζω, it also imports a similar level of baggage of those who convert out of fear and are thus not genuine converts.

5.3.4.2 Josephus on Circumcision

Although the words of R. Nehemiah come from approximately a century after the letter to the Galatians, there is reason to believe his words were not a radically new addition to the conversation concerning conversion. According to Josephus, conversion out of fear and duress – accompanied by forced circumcision – was known beyond the

\textsuperscript{1048} Borgen, Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism, p.51.
book of Esther. He recounts, with a critical voice, forced conversions and circumcisions; Idumeans were thus converted by John Hyrcanus I, the Ituraeans by Aristobulus I and parts of Syria and Phoenicia by Alexander Jannaeus. These events were key in bringing about discussions about the distinction between genuine proselytes and those who were not. \(^{1050}\) Josephus records his disagreement with forced circumcision;

The Jews would have compelled them to be circumcised as a condition of residence among them. I, however, would not allow any compulsion to be put upon them, declaring that everyone should worship God in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience and not under constraint.\(^{1052}\) (Life 113)

Like Paul, in the letter to the Galatians, Josephus is critical of the compulsion of circumcision (τούτους περιτέμνεσθαι τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀναγκαζόντων). In this instance, Josephus makes it clear that this is not just verbal pressure that is being applied to the potential ‘converts.’ He claims to step in, to prevent any violent, forceful pressure being the ‘compulsion’ (βιάζω). Josephus does not use the language of fear explicitly, but it is clear from his writings that the circumcisions would take place in the context of fear.

Here Josephus and R. Nehemiah are in agreement and do not object to genuine conversion (e.g. Ant. 13.258), but cast doubt over the conversion, as marked in males by circumcision, that is borne out of any motive other than a genuine desire to convert; fear is not a reason for conversion. One may also wish to note the scene in Acts 15:5-11 as an example of the debate concerning conversion and circumcision.\(^{1053}\)

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In *Against Apion* Josephus provides further remarks that demonstrate concordance with the views of b.Yeb. 24a;

It will be seen that [our legislator] took the best of all possible measures at once to secure our own customs from corruption, and to throw them open ungrudgingly to any who elect to share them. To all who desire to come and live under the same laws with us, he gives a gracious welcome, holding that it is not family ties alone which constitute relationship, but agreement in the principles of conduct. On the other hand, it was not his pleasure that casual visitors should be admitted to the intimacies of daily life.\(^{1054}\) (*Ag. Ap.* 2.209-210)

Here Josephus provides further support to the belief that life under Jewish law is itself a positive thing,\(^{1055}\) and that converts should be welcomed, but that there should not be an ‘open door.’ Like R. Nehemiah, Josephus is concerned about the motives behind conversions. One must have come to their own mind that Judaism is correct, and recognise the seriousness of conversion; it is not to be entered into lightly.

Similarly, Josephus records the conversion of Izates bar Monobaz, the first century king of Adiabene. Following his mother Helena, he converted to Judaism, and was prepared to undergo circumcision. His desire to be circumcised triggered a debate about the necessity of circumcision; his mother felt it inappropriate for a king to be seen to be following foreign rites. In an attempt to find a differing view, Izates subsequently turned to Ananias of Adiabene (a prolific proselytiser and perhaps, although not certainly, the same Ananias of Acts 5:1-11).\(^{1056}\) Ananias, however, agreed with Helena that circumcision was not essential and that Izates could “worship God even without


\(^{1056}\) R. Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The historical James, Paul the enemy, and Jesus’ brothers as apostles* (Nashville: Grave Distractions, 2012), pp.67, 360.
being circumcised if indeed he had fully decided to be a devoted adherent of Judaism, for it was this that counted more than circumcision”\textsuperscript{1057} (\textit{Ant.} 20.41).

Josephus demonstrates that there was disagreement amongst Second Temple Jews, as Izates is eventually circumcised on the encouragement of Eleazar, “who had a reputation for being extremely strict when it came to the ancestral laws.”\textsuperscript{1058} Josephus does not offer much in the way of his own views on who was correct beyond reporting that there was not a unified view. The only exception is to report that Eleazar was particularly strict, from which one may conclude that Josephus did not object to converts being exempted from circumcision. Izates practiced a way of life that accorded with forms of Judaism of his time, but cannot be considered to be a Jew as he has not been circumcised, something that is accepted by the text without criticism.\textsuperscript{1059}

In a similar vein to Josephus' account of Izates, Paul's concern is not for those who are Jews, but for “Christ-following non-Jews.”\textsuperscript{1060} Debates concerning the necessity of circumcision were not new to Paul, as contemporaneous literature attests, although for Paul this debate is approached anew in light of Jesus.\textsuperscript{1061}

\subsection*{5.3.4.3 Other Rabbinic Views}

As can be seen from the debates between Peter and Paul, there was no single view on the necessity of circumcision in the process of conversion, and R. Nehemiah is not

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\textsuperscript{1057} \textit{Josephus: Vol. 10}, p.23.
\textsuperscript{1058} \textit{Ant.} 20. 43; \textit{Josephus: Vol. 10}, p.23.
\textsuperscript{1059} Nanos, ‘The Question of Conceptualization’, p.119.
\textsuperscript{1060} Nanos, ‘The Question of Conceptualization’, p.121.
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the only viewpoint given in *Yebamoth*. Later in the tractate, in b.Yeb 46a, is an outline of the varying points of view;

R. Hiyya b. Abba stated in the name of R. Joḥanan: A man cannot become a proper proselyte unless he has been circumcised and has also performed ritual ablution; when therefore, no ablution has been performed he is regarded as an idolater...

Our Rabbis taught: If a proselyte was circumcised but had not performed the prescribed ritual ablution,

R. Eliezer said, ‘Behold he is a proper proselyte; for so we find that our forefathers [understood to be those who departed from Egypt as heathens and received the Torah on Mount Sinai when they were, so to speak, converted to Judaism] were circumcised and had not performed ritual ablution. If he had performed the prescribed ablution but had not been circumcised,

R. Joshua said ‘Behold he is a proper proselyte; for so we find that the mothers had performed ritual ablution but had not been circumcised.

As was the case with the Greek literature that used ἰουδαίως, it may be of help to set this information in chronological order, stating the rabbinical era (Tannaim or Amoraim) and generation for each Rabbi.

R. Eliezer T3 (c.80-110CE) Ritual ablution is not essential, but circumcision is essential.

R. Joshua T3 (c.80-110CE) Circumcision is not essential if one has undergone ritual ablution.

R. Nehemiah T5 (c.135-170CE) Correct motivation for conversion is essential.

R. Joḥanan A2 (c.250-290CE) Both circumcision and ritual ablution are essential.

R. Hiyya b. Abba A3 (c.290-320CE) Agrees with R. Joḥanan.

This information shows that there was no consensus on the actions associated with conversion in the years following the fall of the temple. Not only is there little rabbinical agreement on the necessity of circumcision for proselytes, but that even with the earliest Rabbis there is disagreement over the necessity of circumcision and that closer to Paul’s time is when there is the most disagreement.
At the time that earliest Christianity was debating the requirement for male converts to be circumcised, similar disagreements existed amongst Rabbis. This is not surprising as both burgeoning Rabbinic Judaism and earliest Christianity are communities of first and second century Jews debating how converts relate to them and can associate with them.

If one accepts a parallel between ritual ablution and baptism (see §5.3.4.5 below), R. Joshua’s arguments sound remarkably similar to an early Christian perspective that if one is baptised, there is no requirement for circumcision. In Col 2:11-12 this perspective is articulated in the suggestion that through being baptised one can consider that one has undergone a spiritual circumcision, without need of the physical act. One may also consider the experience of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-38), who was baptised without circumcision. The language of Col 2:11-12 of putting on the body of Christ is reminiscent of Gal 3:27 which speaks of being baptised into Christ and being clothed with Christ. This immediately precedes the declaration that there is no longer Jew or Greek in Gal 3:28, for which one may infer that the distinction of circumcised or uncircumcised is, in light of the baptism, unimportant.

R. Nehemiah is the only voice that draws on Esth 8:17 to discuss the requirements of conversion, but by addressing inner motivation, rather than the physical processes required, he is concerned with different focus to the other Rabbis. His suggestion that just being circumcised is not the only factor is not, however, unusual.

5.3.4.5 Ritual Washing and Baptism

As noted above there are some similar reflections between some New Testament writings concerning the place of ritual washing (טבילה) in the process of converting to Judaism, and the understanding of baptism in the process of initiation into early
Christianity. Such similarities are heightened when these acts of washing are set alongside the place of circumcision in early Christianity and the views of R. Joshua.

The difficulty in knowing whether or not a Jewish immersion rite for proselytes was the background to Christian baptism is the fact that the above discussion from b.Yeb. 46 is the earliest evidence of this rite. There are other insights that can help build up a picture, however.

In the first instance is the information that can be gleaned from the Septuagint, and its use of βαπτίζω, which is used to describe ritual washing in 4 Kgdms 5:14; Jdt 12:7; Sir 34:30. Most notably, βαπτίζω is the term used to translate טבילה, which would come to be the root word for ritual ablution (from a generic immersion in water), to describe Naaman’s self-immersion in the river Jordan in 2 Kgs/4 Kgdms 5:14. This at least provides support for the fact that the Hebrew terminology for ritual ablution is paralleled by the Greek terminology for baptism.

In the second case is the information that can be gleaned from the Qumran literature. Amongst the Qumran scrolls was the Copper scroll, dated to the Roman period (63BCE -73CE) 3Q15.1.4, which refers to טבילה for the ‘cave of immersion.’ The exact function of this place of immersion is hard to ascertain, as it may have been a place for daily washing, or it may have been preserved for initiation rituals into the Qumran community.

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In the third instance is the information that can be gleaned from elsewhere in the New Testament, in particular the letter to the Hebrews. Heb 6:2 is unusual in the New Testament in its use of βαπτισμός (cf. Mark 7:4, 8; Heb 6:2; 9:10), rather than βάπτισμα, the noun more commonly used in reference to John’s baptism (cf. Matt 3:7; Mark 1:4) and the initiation practice mentioned in the New Testament (e.g. Rom 6:6; Eph 4:5). The term used in Hebrews is more commonly used to refer to forms of Jewish ritual washing, but the initiatory rite of baptism appears to be implied in Heb 6:2. This may suggest that ritual ablution was identified with baptism, rather than seeing them as separate practices.

This still leaves some questions, as to why the author of the letter does not use a singular term but a plural. On this Johnson remarks, in a manner that is widely accepted,\footnote{Cf. Ben Witherington III, Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A socio-rhetorical commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), pp.210-211.}

The usage in [Heb. 6:2] suggests the ritual initiation of baptism, but the plural is puzzling. We must remember, however, that a single person could conceivably have undergone, in sequence, a proselyte baptism, circumcision, John’s baptism, and baptism into the Jesus movement. An instruction concerning baptisms, therefore, could well involve the distinctions between other washings and baptism into Christ.\footnote{Luke Timothy Johnson, Hebrews: A commentary (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), p.159.}

Following R. Joshua, if one has undergone ritual ablution there is no need to be circumcised. Drawing this perspective alongside, on the one hand, Paul’s concern for the gentile not to change ἔθνη and, on the other hand, the concerns over one’s reason for ‘converting,’ raises some interesting suggestions for Paul’s mission. Hodge proposes the view that baptism was a “rite of adoption,”\footnote{Hodge, ‘The Question of Identity,’ p.162.} such that the gentiles, would not become Jews/Judeans, nor would they remain as other gentiles, but were adopted into the holy

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community (Gal 4:1-7).1069 This was not a second-rate community or one of several stages of initiation that would be completed by circumcision; baptism was sufficient.1070 Rather than changing one’s ἐθνη, as would happen with circumcision, the alternative rite involving water, would enact the adoption of the gentile into the community, without changing ἐθνη.

- There is a clear precedent to say that those who have undergone ritual ablution/baptism, have no need of being circumcised.
- There is a clear precedent to say that circumcision should only take place for the ‘correct’ motives.
- Circumcision involves a change in ἐθνη, which Paul wishes to avoid.
- Baptism/ritual ablation bestows a sense of being holy, which Paul wishes to emphasise.

5.3.4.6 The Alpha Text Version

As has already been remarked upon, the Alpha Text of the book of Esther presents a unique interpretation of Esth 8:17. It is not necessary to replicate that discussion but only to add any salient considerations in light of the wider interpretative context.

This concern over motivation for circumcision/conversion may have influenced the translator of AT Esther. Rather than declaring that many from the nations were circumcised and judaized, this text uniquely has the Jews as the subjects of circumcision. Jobes has suggested that this is a message to the diaspora that “God was extending covenantal protection to Jews outside of the land.”1071 While not denying the validity of this argument, there may be a second factor.

If the author of AT Esther was concerned about gentiles being circumcised after converting for dubious motives, in line with the other authors mentioned above, they may well have wished to downplay the ‘judaizing of the gentiles’ in order to emphasise the covenantal relationship marked by circumcision for the Jews. For this author, circumcision is good but it is not for everyone, and in AT Esther it matters that there are those who are uncircumcised. Unless further research can demonstrate Pauline familiarity with AT Esther, one cannot know, but it may be possible that Paul is drawn more to the AT Esther interpretation whereas Peter holds to a more LXX Esther interpretation. Whether or not this is the case, Lacocque’s suggestion concerning the focus the Alpha Text is worth restating. The author is writing for a gentile audience and, “wanted to stir in them a feeling of empathy, not to shock them with a tactless ulterior motive of converting them to Judaism.”

5.3.4.7 Summary and Comparison

There was a certain level of “uncertainty in Rabbinic tradition over מתייהדים” and the texts above show that there was continued debate concerning the motives for circumcision and conversion to Judaism. R. Nehemiah is the only person to explicitly refer to the book of Esther in this debate, and other written discussions on the topic, such as Josephus’ account of Izates do not make explicit reference to the Hebrew Scriptures. It cannot be proved beyond a doubt, but it would seem likely, based on the evidence of R. Nehemiah, that the book of Esther did shape the views of those in late second temple Judaism who were critical of conversions that were borne out of fear or obligation, rather than a genuine heart for conversion. This sense of obligation and fear,

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highlighted by R. Nehemiah, from Esth 8:17, as well as 2 Kgs 17:25, is the same query that is found in the other earlier writings.

The Talmudic text attributed to R. Nehemiah cannot be definitively dated, and certainly not to the first century. Nevertheless, the remarks given find parallels with Paul’s approach, and the concern over circumcision through fear (cf. Gal 2:12). Given that Paul “argues from within a Jewish frame of reference, presupposing Jewish customs, scripture, language and law,”¹⁰⁷⁴ one can reasonably conclude that Paul is arguing, not a radically new theology, but from a recognised position. This position is found in an explicit written tradition in b.Yeb. 24b, but was concurrent with Paul and Josephus.

Hays suggests that Paul’s claim in 1 Cor 7:19 that ‘circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but what matters is keeping the commandments of God,’ could only have “seemed bizarre and scandalous to Paul’s Jewish contemporaries,”¹⁰⁷⁵ as circumcision was one of the commandments. This would appear to only be partly true: some of Paul’s contemporaries would have been scandalised by this, but those who stood in the traditions of R. Joshua and R. Nehemiah would have been less troubled by this position. There was no universal Jewish perspective in the first century. Paul argues a recognisable Jewish position, made also by his near contemporaries. Their witness shows that this position was also rooted in the scriptures of Judaism, including the book of Esther. The point of view that one could not be considered a genuine convert if the motivation was through fear, was not universal.

As with many topics of discussion in late Second Temple Judaism and in rabbinic Judaism, there were multiple points of view, which can be seen in Talmudic literature as well as in the New Testament; the debates on circumcision (e.g. John 7:19-24; Rom 2:25-

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29; Gal 2:11-14) would not have happened if there was a clear, single, point of view.
What matters to this research is that one position that was held was that which is recorded in b.Yeb. 24b, and that this position finds expression, in part, through Esth 8:17. This happens as the language used to describe the ‘conversions’ reacts to the obstacles of widescale ‘conversion’ and enforced conversion in the first centuries, before and of the common era.

It would seem that there is an increasing likelihood that Paul may have ‘embedded’ Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:17 into his diatribe that is recorded in Gal 2:14 as he too finds this text to make waves into his context. The purpose of embedding this text would be to snappily draw in the argument about ‘genuine conversion,’ without explicitly detailing each stage of the argument. This suggestion demonstrates conformity to Paul’s style as a rhetorician, as well as to contemporaneous Jewish exegesis concerning the book of Esther.

A final word in this summary will be to see how Peter and Paul might fit into Runesson’s model of how religions relate to others (§5.3.3.5). In a move away from the dualistic model of particularistic vs. universalistic, he adopts a threefold model of ethnic, salvific, and missionary aspects of relation to others, with each category having two or three options.

The first, ethnic, aspect has three positions; closed, open, or non-ethnic. In this first aspect, the evidence would suggest that Peter would tend toward an open-ethnic position. He does not take a closed-ethnic position as this is characterised by saying that the religion is bound so much to one’s ethnicity, that conversions are not possible. Peter allows for converts, but does he do so from an open-ethnic position (ethnicity and religion are still intertwined, but conversion to a new religion, and ethnicity, is possible) or from a non-ethnic position (blind to ethnicity; the religion has no ethnic aspect, but a
gathering around common beliefs). Peter would fit most comfortably in the open-ethnic position; ethnicity is important, and conversion is possible, primarily through circumcision for men.

Paul is more complicated. In saying that the gentile males must not be circumcised, a non-ethnic position does not stand. Does his position represent a closed ethnic view (conversion is simply not possible, hence the language of adoption), or an open-ethnic view (ethnicity is important, but conversion is possible to people of different ethnicities)? For Paul this might mean that gentiles can, but should not, be circumcised enacting this change from gentile to Jew would miss the point of creating a holy community of different ethnicities through baptism, although it matters that ethnicity is maintained), or a non-ethnic position (people of any ethnicity can gather around a common belief, because ethnicity is not noted and is irrelevant; circumcision is a ‘must not’, because it misses the point that ethnic identity does not matter)? It is interesting to highlight that Paul can be perceived to have taken, what appears to be, a stricter position than Peter as well as a more relaxed position. This may be where much of the complexity surrounding Paul lies; he is difficult to place firmly against any of these positions. Ultimately, however, I think he can be held most readily within the open-ethnic position. Paul demonstrates that one’s ἐθνῆς is important, and that it matters that one retains one’s identity in this regard. This pushes him away from the non-ethnic position, which does not account for ethnicity. His concern that one does not change one’s ethnic identity seems to be based more on the fact that it misses the point of why there is a mission to the gentiles, but also because gentiles who associated with Jews became ‘ethnically ambiguous’ who were “regarded as a Jew by gentiles, but as a gentile
by Jews.” Paul tries to avoid this ambiguity and fits into an open-ethnic position, in promoting the view that religion as he sees it, is more than a common belief, and involves a change through a rite, but this is a rite – baptism – that is shared by Jewish and gentile adherents of the Jesus movement. Both Jews and gentiles could share in this as Jews and gentiles.

Later Christianity would move to the non-ethnic position, and it can be seen how this developed out of Paul's position, especially as gentile believers outnumbered Jewish believers, but Paul himself did not express a non-ethnic position. Runesson makes a similar argument that Paul falls somewhere between the closed and open ethnic positions. He does so from texts such as Gal 5:2-3; 1 Cor 7:17-18 and Rom 9-11. Similarly, he argues against the non-ethnic position from Paul's descriptions of gentiles, in Rom 11:1-5, 17-21, as the offshoot of the olive tree. Paul and Peter, therefore, both profess open-ethnic positions, but not the same open-ethnic position.

What about the second aspect, that of salvation; do Peter and Paul present Salvation-Inclusive or Exclusive positions? Peter may be understood to tend towards the exclusivist position, in that there is no salvation beyond Judaism; others may enter the fold, but this is essential. In considering the missional aspect, he engages in an inward-mission to impress on members of his own faith a change that is required. This is not because he does not see the value of proselytizing mission, but that that is not his role. He does not condemn others for joining, as they have a salvific need to do so, but he does not focus on that aspect of mission.

Paul too may be understood to be found in the salvation-exclusivist camp. Runesson makes the following argument;

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Paul represents a *salvation exclusive* stance, modified in the case of Jews who do not believe in Jesus (cf. Rom 11.25-29). Actually, Paul has inverted the general Jewish eschatological expectation that, in the end, all (or at least quite a lot) of the Gentiles will join them. Instead, it is now the Jews who do not believe in Jesus that play this role in the eschatological drama, but with a much stronger effect: when the time has come they will join the saved people (the Gentiles being saved because of the rejection of the Jews who did not believe in Jesus) and it is this inclusion in itself that brings life to the dead (Rom 11.15). Paul’s salvation-exclusivism appears to be balanced with an eschatological expectation of God’s power to attract those Jews who do not share Paul’s faith.\(^{1078}\)

This shows the flaws in the particularistic-universalistic binary; even when following Runesson’s expanded model with eighteen different permutations, rather than two, Peter and Paul only differ in respect to their separate functions to be missionaries within Judaism or amongst the gentiles. They do not disagree on this point, but recognise complementary missional roles. Nevertheless, they still disagree, and do so strongly.

This is a place where wider knowledge of the differing Jewish positions on circumcision helps to elucidate the differences between Peter and Paul, but what is interesting is bringing them together. A more simplistic reading might see them as opponents representing binary positions; Peter bad, Paul good. Rather than being poles apart they are remarkably similar; both tend to the salvation exclusivist camp, both agree that ethnic identity is important and that non-Jews can convert to Judaism, as well as that mission to gentiles is possible and important. They nevertheless disagree on the means by which gentiles can share in the life they know, and why this would be the case. Knowledge of the book of Esther and how it was read in the first and second century Judaism helps to explain the differences between them. Peter, and those with whom he associates, consider circumcision of males to be essential, so much as to enforce it. Paul

\(^{1078}\) Runesson, ‘Paticularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity?’, pp.136-137.
on the other hand, in a manner that is concordant with contemporaneous interpretations of the book of Esther, considers it to be essential that gentiles are not circumcised; this would amount to a potential ‘misuse of circumcision’ that would not create Jewish/Judaean converts, only fearful pretenders. It takes the book of Esther to identify the nuance that shows the point of difference between Peter and Paul, such that without access to the book of Esther one could potentially misunderstand the nature of their disagreement. On the whole they are in agreement, but the book of Esther shows how, where, and why they part ways. It is the use of ἢῳδατζω in Gal 2:14 that evidences this; this word is the cluzograph from the rippling of the Esther narrative.

By highlighting the way that the book of Esther appears to have helped shape Paul’s position, this research is able to bring together the different fields of research. The topic of Paul’s missionary activity is often seen as purely a matter for New Testament studies, into which Old Testament-New Testament studies only speaks with regards to Paul’s explicit citations, and to the Torah institution of circumcision. The research undertaken here shows that Paul’s choice of wording in Gal 2:14 is not just a matter of textual interplay, but permeates into wider concerns about Pauline theology and how his theological nuances have been shaped. In other words, the methodology being worked out here, has helped ascertain an example where Old Testament-New Testament research can enter the conversation of Paul’s missionary activity. This not only lends support to Paul’s perspective, but shows how an unexpected text may have had a significant effect on Paul’s theology.

5.3.5 Conclusions of Assessment Thus Far: Defining ἱουδαῖζω

In an attempt to bring these ideas together, I return to the earlier question, what is meant by ἱουδαῖζω when Paul uses it in Gal 2:14? The Pauline model for the gentile followers of Jesus may be summarised as;

1. There shall be no more λατρεία to the gods of one’s ancestral inheritance.
2. There is no requirement to change one’s ἔθνη.
3. There is a requirement to live as ἁγίοι by following the community standards outlined in the Law.

By most dictionary definitions of ἱουδαῖζω, what Paul advocates fits the bill. This cannot be the full picture as he condemns Peter for obligating the gentiles to Judaize (ἱουδαῖζω). Paul’s understanding of ἱουδαῖζω must, therefore, be something different to the Pauline model extrapolated by Fredriksen.

The key difference does appear to come down to the fact that, whereas Paul did not consider circumcision (a change in ἔθνη) to be a requirement, Paul’s impression was that Peter did. Paul appears to have perceived Petrine sympathy with restrictions on table fellowship as non-acceptance of gentile believers and the first step on a path that only led to circumcision of the gentiles. This key difference must be the context in which one understands Paul’s use of ἱουδαῖζω. The fact that he accuses Peter of doing this, suggests that there is a shared understanding of why ‘ἱουδαῖζω’ would be a negative thing, without which Paul’s argument would have fallen on deaf ears. Whether or not Peter would have enforced circumcision, Paul’s perception was that he would have done, and his use of ἱουδαῖζω in this conversation might suggest that Peter could recognise Paul’s vantage point.

The situation in Galatia where gentiles were being encouraged to ‘judaize’ created a difficult position for Paul as;
the practices that they were being encouraged to adopt were rooted in the sacred texts of Judaism. Thus, Paul concluded that the most effective way to shake them up was to argue directly from the same authoritative Scriptures.”

It is unusual to suggest that Paul has turned to the book of Esther, or is in some way indebted to this text. Despite this, it would seem not only possible, but even plausible that the book of Esther provided Paul with scriptural authorisation for his argument against the circumcision of the gentiles who turned to this new ἔθνη?

Both the Hebrew מתייהדם and the Greek Ἰουδαίζω have been variously translated with different nuances based on different interpretations. Sometimes they are understood to indicate genuine conversion, whereas others would argue that instead, an insincere, fear-based imitation of Jewish/Judaean practices is meant. With the fear element, a pretence seems more likely, which means that, not only does R. Nehemiah have justification in offering a critique of ‘the proselytes of Esther and Mordecai’, but that Paul is arriving at the logical conclusion of this interpretation. If fear is the reason for circumcision, such that those being ‘Jewed’ are only pretending and imitating, then they are living a deception. Better to remain a gentile who is gathered into a holy community than a pretender who is not a Jew nor a gentile nor living a holy life.

This is further suggested by Additions A and F, which frame the Septuagintal text. Rather than frame the narrative as one in which reconciliation between Jewish and gentile communities is found through the ‘judaizing’, these additions frame the text within the context of the tensions between Haman and Mordecai. In LXX Esther, therefore, the “struggle between Haman and Mordecai is viewed not as a personal one but as part of the eternal conflict between Jew and non-Jew.”

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1080 Stanley, Arguing With Scripture, p.120.
Esther, more so than the Hebrew, create a community distinction that is hard to reconcile, and the events of Esth 8:17 are not portrayed as a joyful unification.

Intriguingly it might appear that Peter ultimately agrees with Paul, or that Paul’s argument was hard to refute. There is no full transcript of the conversation, only Paul’s snippet quotation, so one must be cautious in making too strong an argument out of Paul’s silencing of Peter’s voice. Be that as it may, one may rightly ask why Paul would make an argument if he did not think Peter would be receptive to it. If Paul is, like other first and second century Jews, interpreting Esth 8:17 negatively – (mass) forced conversion is not to be condoned – then his use of this argument suggests that it is one to which Peter might be receptive.

In both texts ἰουδαίος is used to cast doubt over the legitimacy of the conversions. With rhetorical snappiness, Paul seems to clinch the argument by saying ‘how is it that you compel others to judaize’? The less crisp version might well have been ‘From the witness of the book of Esther, you and I both know that forcing circumcision is at best a dubious practice and at worst deceitful as your ‘converts’ are not considered to be rightfully Jewish.’ Due to the distinctiveness of the word ἰουδαίος, Paul does not need to quote more than this one word. It carries the baggage of the context of the book of Esther, as well as contemporaneous interpretations to suffice on its own. Importantly, Paul does not cut ties with Peter, but their disagreement is a place for them to debate together.\(^{1082}\) Whether Peter was swayed or not, this is an intra-Jewish conversation and debate about those beyond Judaism. It does not show Paul to have abandoned Judaism as he zealously remains a Jew.

5.4 The Book of Esther and the Letter to the Galatians

So far in this research I have hoped to provide a credible and reasoned argument as to why it may appear that Paul has brought the book of Esther into his argument regarding circumcision and conversion in Gal 2:14. Paul was writing in a context in which the book of Esther was known, and the likelihood is that he too was familiar with it. Paul was engaged in a debate in which different interpretations of Esth 8:17 could have spoken; if one interprets the ‘judaizing’ as a good thing, then this is to be followed, but if the ‘judaizing’ is a pretence then ‘judaizing’ would be something to be avoided. Paul’s approach to the circumcision of gentiles appears to be mirrored in rabbinical approaches, one of which is explicitly rooted in Esth 8:17, and follows the negative interpretation of Esth 8:17.

Ciampa’s analysis of scripture in Gal 1-2 suggests that there are subtle echoes that precede a:

much more explicit use of many of the same scriptural texts [such that] later scriptural citations and allusions frequently do not only cite or allude to Scripture, but also echo the echoes already made in the first two chapters.\(^{1083}\)

If, therefore, Paul’s context has provided a sufficient enough obstruction to ripples from the book of Esther such that distinctive Estherian vocabulary has spilled into Galatians, one may reasonably enquire if there are other ripples later in the letter. This appears to have been the case in Matthew’s passion narrative. Is it so here? These other ripples would be other details that connect with the book of Esther suggesting that Paul may be using it as an authoritative text in his argument,\(^{1084}\) or that it is prominent enough to have made some sort of splash. Recognising other ripples would also feed into a

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\(^{1083}\) Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2*, p.272.  
discussion of Hays’ tests of *volume* and *recurrence*. The existing literature shows some ways in which Paul may have responded to the book of Esther in his writings, but without any firm conclusions. Are there any ways in which the book of Esther may be felt elsewhere in the letter to the Galatians? Other details will now be discussed.

5.4.1 Other Potential Estherian Resonances in the Letter to the Galatians

5.4.1.2 The ἤουδα- prefix

The book of Esther is characterised by recurring motifs, one of which is the repetition of words with the root בַּעַד. Set alongside this is the point that has already been made that the books of Esther and Galatians represent the extremes of the judaizing/anti-judaizing spectrum. A point of interest, therefore, in addition to the use of ἤουδαίζω in both texts is the prevalence of ἤουδα- words in the letter to the Galatians. Specifically, one would want to know if the volume of ἤουδα- words is distinctive to the letter to the Galatians in the Pauline corpus, and, if so, could this be a sign that the book of Esther was framing some of Paul’s thoughts?

Not including the references to persons named Jude/Judas, there are seven separate words in the New Testament that begin ἤουδα-; ἤουδα, ἤουδαία, ἤουδαίζω, ἤουδαίκος, ἤουδαίκως, ἤουδαίος and ἤουδαϊσμος. Of these seven, only ἤουδα and ἤουδαίκος are not found in the Pauline literature. The remaining five words used by Paul all appear in the letter to the Galatians and in the cases of ἤουδαίζω (Gal 2:14), ἤουδαίκως (Gal 2:14) and ἤουδαϊσμος (Gal 1:13, 14), the letter to the Galatians provides the only New Testament uses of these words.

The ἤουδα- words in Galatians account for a little more than a quarter of Paul’s entire demonstrable known use of such terminology (i.e. 27.27% of Paul’s use of ἤουδα- vocabulary occurs in the letter to the Galatians). In contrast, however, the letter to the
Galatians accounts for approximately only one tenth (9.98%) of the Pauline corpus.\textsuperscript{1085} If one calculates the number of ἰοὐδᾷ- words in each Pauline text and sets this against the number of verses in that text one can calculate how often one would expect a ἰοὐδᾷ- word in that text. There are no such words in Philippians of Philemon but for the other Pauline letters, the results show that ἰοὐδᾷ- words are distributed thus;

- Romans – once in every 36.1 verses (12 occurrences in 433 verses)
- 1 Corinthians – once in every 54.6 verses (8 occurrences in 437 verses)
- 2 Corinthians – once in every 128 verses (2 occurrences in 256 verses)
- Galatians – once in every 16.6 verses (9 occurrences in 149 verses)
- 1 Thessalonians – once in every 44.5 verses (2 occurrences in 89 verses)

Although the letter to the Romans contains more ἰοὐδᾷ- words, this number is not proportional to its length. The letter to the Romans is the closest ‘rival’ to the letter to the Galatians for is preponderance of ἰοὐδᾷ- words, but even in this text ἰοὐδᾷ- words are used less than half as frequently as in the letter to the Galatians. It can be seen quite clearly that the letter to the Galatians contains a disproportionately high number of ἰοὐδᾷ- words in the Pauline corpus. Although not to the same degree as the book of Esther, the letter to the Galatians does seem to be characterised by a distinctive volume of use of words that are rooted in ‘Jew/Judaean’.

A second question will be harder to answer as precisely; is there any likelihood that this usage is rooted in some sort of Pauline reflection on the book of Esther, without entering a circular argument that bases this likelihood on the argument that ἰοὐδᾷζω is evidence of this? As can be seen from the remarks made by Martin Luther and Tertullian, the books of Esther and Galatians appear to represent entirely opposing view-

\textsuperscript{1085} This figure is calculated based on numbers of verses. Although versification is not original to the text, they are all roughly a similar length, and the variance amongst them is similar to the different texts (i.e. there is not one text with distinctively short or long verses). The number of verses in the Pauline corpus is 1,493. The number of verses in the letter to the Galatians is 149, a text almost exactly one tenth the length of the entire corpus.
points, but do this through a shared prominence of ἵουδα- vocabulary. Paul’s use of this language may well be understood to be a polemical device to formulate a backdrop against which ἵουδαιζω resonates more clearly with the book of Esther than it would otherwise have done. If ἵουδαιζω was a passing reference, then it would not have been so clearly central to Paul’s letter; the large number of similar words highlight the use of ἵουδαιζω.

The most probable outcome is that this cannot be conclusively proved, only that an increase in parallels between the two texts corresponds to an increase in the probability that Paul’s context has provided an obstacle over which waves from the book of Esther has crashed. The correspondence of ἵουδα- words would thus be one piece that can build up this picture.

5.4.1.3 Damascelli and the Redemption from the Curse

It may be helpful to re-include Damascelli’s hypothesis regarding the book of Esther and the letter to the Galatians. He was concerned by the Deuteronomic reference in Gal 3:10-13 and how this showed how Jesus became accursed, but not how he was able to act in a redemptive way. Damascelli then brought in the book of Esther as a possible way in which Haman’s crucifixion provided a redemptive model for the Jewish community. Damascelli’s argument was lacking clear evidence that the book of Esther was in Paul’s ‘pool of inspiration,’ and could only argue that if so, the book of Esther may speak into Gal 3. As this chapter has argued that it is reasonable to consider that the book of Esther has shaped Paul’s thoughts, Damascelli’s argument may be strengthened.
In Gal 5:12 Paul’s anger erupts in the phrase, ‘I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!’ For this, he uses the word ἀποκόπτω, which is also found in the context of self-castration in Deut\textsuperscript{LXX} 23:1. This passage has been suggested as providing some context for Gal 5:12, “Paul’s scathing words in 5:12 perhaps should be understood against the background of Deut 23:1.”\textsuperscript{1086} One encounters some difficulty with this, however, as Gal 5:12 does not fit so comfortably with the Deuteronomistic context of who can be admitted to the assembly (Deut 23:1-9). In contrast, Paul does use Deut 23 to shape a discussion of admission to the assembly in 1 Cor 5:3-5.\textsuperscript{1087} Given that Paul reaches the dramatic words of 5:12 as an extension of circumcision, if his words are shaped in some degree by Deut 23:1, to which there are reasonable doubts, there may be more to this verse.

The earlier assessment of ἰουδαίζω in Esth 8:17 and in Greek literature revealed a couple of points that may suggest broader engagement in Galatians with the book of Esther. First, both the Greek translations, while responding to מַתְחַרְדָּש differently, align the verb ‘to Judaize/Judaean-ize’ with the practice of circumcision. Second, Plutarch, who also associates ἰουδαίζω with circumcision, and writing in the same period as Paul, also connects this practice with that of castration. This is a reasonable leap as they could be easily conflated in the ancient world.\textsuperscript{1088} It may therefore be of great importance that the letter to the Galatians provides the sole New Testament reference to castration (Gal 5:12).

Paul’s words may have been particularly pertinent to the Galatians, for whom a local cult was the Mother Goddess cult that was attended by castrated men;

This graphic denunciation sums up a Pauline leitmotiv: those who ascribe an essential role in salvation to circumcision, and who promote the teaching among Christian churches, are as mistaken and offensive as were the emasculated priests of the Mother Goddess cult.1089

In Paul’s understanding, being circumcised because you feel obliged to do so as a convert to Christianity is an untenable position. There is no difference between being a gentile who becomes circumcised in order to follow Christ, as a Jew who chooses to be castrated; in the Hellenistic world, there is little difference between these two actions.

This is like a sarcastic remark with the intention of suggesting ‘if you’re so bothered about taking a knife to one’s genitals, why not go the whole way yourself.’1090 In Paul’s worldview it is not correct for the gentiles to be circumcised just as it is not correct for the Jews to be castrated. Conversions that take place due to fear were understood to be worthless,1091 but Paul takes this further and suggests that it would be not only worthless but incorrect and damaging for the gentiles to be circumcised out of fear. Similarly, it would be not only worthless for the Jews to self-castrate, but in their own context Deut 23:1 shows that this would be damaging.

Paul may be making this argument in this manner because of the way it would have made an impact in Galatia, where there was a mother goddess cult, but is this argument also shaped by his reading of the book of Esther? By virtue of being set in the Persian court, eunuchs play important secondary roles in the narrative.1092 There is...

1091 Haller, *Die Fünf Megilloth*, p.133.
nothing in the letter to the Galatians, however, to offer firm links between the role of the eunuch in the book of Esther and Paul’s argument to the Galatians. One can see how, if the book of Esther is already shaping Paul’s writing, it may be in the background to Gal 6:12, albeit indirectly.

Although this may appear somewhat tenuous, there are questions still to ask. Is this a secondary ‘domino’ ripple, or something of a side effect from the ripple in Gal 2:14? By a knock-on effect of Esth 8:17 rippling into Paul’s context one can see that this could have shaped Paul’s thinking on this subject, so that he expresses that gentiles should not be circumcised (as a result of the Esther ripple), and that Jews should not be castrated (as an extension of the initial ripple). This is plausible but ultimately unprovable. One can pose the question differently; it’s not that the book of Esther has directly caused castration language, but without the initial ripple, what has caused Paul’s choice of argument in 6:12, could it not be an indirect effect of the book of Esther?

5.4.1.5 The Relationship to the Poor

The opening section of the letter to the Galatians contains a clear rhetorical distinction between Peter and Paul where Paul asserts his own authority by making the contrast between both figures. Joseph Fitzmyer points to an intriguing term in the letter to the Galatians that, whilst being used on numerous occasions in the gospels, is only used four times by Paul (πτωχός in Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 6:10; Gal 2:10; 4:9).

Though there is provision for the needy among the Jewish Christians of Acts (2:45; 4:34-35; 6:1) it is striking that the term hoi ptōchoi is never used there. Paul uses it in Rom 15:26 and Gal 2:10 and one has been inclined to regard the term as a designation for the Jerusalem church. Indeed, it has often been suggested that it is the equivalent of ḥbywnym.1093

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Paul’s use of πτωχός in Gal 2:10 occurs in another reference to the distinction between Peter and him; Peter et.al. would go only to the circumcised, whilst Paul and Barnabas would go to the gentiles, but that they must remember the poor (τῶν πτωχῶν), which they declare they are eager to do (cf. Gal 2:9-10). Their call to do this is founded on the fact that Peter, James and John ‘recognised the grace’ given to Paul and Barnabas. Paul’s language here is recognisably Pauline, unlike πτωχός, which is not.\footnote{Betz, Galatians, p.99.}

Found in various Septuagintal texts, πτωχός is found twice in the book of Esther, first in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 1:20 when the king instructs all women, rich and poor, to bestow honour on their husbands, but significantly also in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 9:22. Here πτωχός are those who are among the recipients of gifts in the Purim celebrations. The Judeans are instructed to send ‘portions to their friends and to the poor’ (Esth\textsuperscript{NETS} 9:22). This event is in contrast to that of Esth 8:17 when many of the gentiles are circumcised; rather than effecting a change on others out of fear, the Purim celebrations celebrate the overturn of fear by offering practical help.

Paul is most likely referring to the collection for the Jerusalem church (cf. 1 Cor 16:1-4), and as such in this instance πτωχός refers to those there who are in need.\footnote{Betz, Galatians, p.101.} It is possible, although one cannot be certain, that this nevertheless sheds light on Paul’s reading of the book of Esther. It is feasible that, for him, the book of Esther contained two contrasting responses to a salvific act, the one that is manifested in the conversion of others into conformity exemplified by Peter, and the other that responds to salvation by turning to the poor.
Summary of Extra Links with the Book of Esther

This section has demonstrated that there are elements of the letter to the Galatians that may strengthen any resonances of the book of Esther, but are unable to decisively demonstrate a link. Held together they may collectively provide links but this tends towards something of a circular argument where each suggestion is dependent on others and none, except for the reference in Gal 2:14 stands on its own.

Ciampa found that it was not unusual for Paul to make subtle references to scriptural passages in the letter to the Galatians prior to making more explicit references.\textsuperscript{1096} That he does not do so in this case is not the difficulty that it might appear to be. The precedent set by Paul’s use of scripture elsewhere in the letter may help explain why the only clear cluzograph comes from a \textit{hapax legomenon} and why there is little else that can be conclusive. The Galatians have knowledge of the predominant narratives of scripture. As Stanley says their knowledge of scripture is “primarily the stories about Abraham and the giving of the Torah,”\textsuperscript{1097} but probably not some of the other narratives. The Galatians are unlikely to have been particularly familiar with the book of Esther, and as such Paul does not make it explicit that he is using this text to shape his argument; those texts that are clear are the ones that they would know. Peter, on the other hand, is in a different position and, as he is familiar with a wider set of scriptures – and contemporaneous interpretations of them – Paul can use the book of Esther to shape an argument to him that is deeper and contains a simultaneous mix of ideas.

\textsuperscript{1096} Ciampa, \textit{The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2}, p.272.
\textsuperscript{1097} Stanley, \textit{Arguing with Scripture}, p.135.
4.5 Summary of Suggestions and Methodological Implications

This chapter has considered the factors surrounding the possibility that Gal 2:14 may contain a ripple of text from Esth 8:17. As this has taken place, the methodology for assessing this has developed and been shaped by the research, such that this methodology may be of use more widely after this research.

The sticking point at the start of this chapter was the general lack of acceptance that the book of Esther might have featured in Paul’s writings. Early on this chapter, however, I ascertained that, in the letter to the Galatians, Paul draws heavily on Jewish scripture to help support his rhetoric and responses to the topics that are arising. To know if there is a possible intertextual relationship between the books of Esther and Galatians, ideally there would need to be both a lexical or textual parallel and a reason why the subject matter of the book of Esther would be relevant to the Galatian situation.

On the one hand, the lexical parallel would be able to increase the likelihood that there is a reception of the text, but does not prove this, as other texts may also be a source text, or it may be coincidental; why would this text be used? On the other hand, a presentation of similar subject matter would increase the possibility of texts being brought into the discussion, but without a lexical/textual parallel there is little proof that this is taking place. Both are necessary to show use and reason of use.

The initial stages of research focussed on hapax legomena to restrict lexical parallels to words that resonate more strongly with any particular text. Previous research by other scholars has helped demonstrate that shared hapax legomena between two texts increases the likelihood that the earlier text has been received by the second; this likelihood is only increased when each text is held in a larger corpus of literature and still demonstrates hapax legomena, (e.g. a Septuagintal hapax legomenon that is also a
New Testament *hapax legomenon* rather than just an Esther *hapax legomenon* that is also a Galatians *hapax legomenon*).

In the case of ἰουδαίαζω, it stood out as an example of a Septuagintal *hapax legomenon* that was also a New Testament *hapax legomenon*. Furthermore, however, not only does ἰουδαίαζω call to mind the book of Esther for its rarity in biblical literature, but this is compounded both by its rarity in general, perhaps only being used once in extant literature that exists for the period of time between the books of Esther and Galatians, and also in the fact that Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:17 appears to be the first time ἰουδαίαζω is ever used in any literature.

The subject matter of the books of Esther and Galatians is different in each case, but both texts do offer reflections on the relationship between Jews and gentiles, and what it means for gentiles to adopt Judaism/Judaean ways of doing things. As Kahl highlighted, both texts present this is in the context of ‘civil and imperial prudence based on fear.’\textsuperscript{1098} In the context of fear, both texts question the motives underlying the ‘conversions’ that appear to take place. Both texts question, and leave an uncertainty, whether the converts actually become Jews or not. In both texts there is a concern for mass ‘conversion’ rather than individuals or small groups.

Interpretations of the book of Esther that respond positively to the events of Esth 8:17 would have been held at odds to Paul’s own views on the subject of fear based ‘conversions.’ Contexts where Jewish communities are dominant cultures (when compared to at least one other group, but not necessarily the dominant group), act as potential obstacles for the ripples from the book of Esther. This can be seen in the book of Esther, when the fear based ‘conversions’ happen when the power shifts in favour of

the Susian Jews. This can be seen in the statements of R. Nehemiah and his context and, as this research argues, by Paul as well against his fellow Jews in their dealings with gentiles who are sympathetic to their message. This would appear to be a recognisable interpretation of the book of Esther as there is no suggestion that Peter responds to Paul by holding up Esth 8:17 as a positive event. We only have Paul’s side of this conversation, but Paul presents his speech as clinching the argument; Peter presumably also shares, or is at least familiar with, the critical view of the fear-based ‘conversions’ in Esth 8:17. Paul's words act as rhetorical argument in favour of Paul's position, but also as a warning to Peter of the trajectory that he risks being on. The intra-Jewish nature of this debate limits the possibility that Paul would have been misunderstood. For Peter, the Estherian background to ἴουδαίζω would have spoken of the role he was playing in these fear-based ‘conversions’, by evoking the broader Estherian narrative.

By approaching the topic from a different angle, the methodology has helped overcome the difficulties posed by the lack of acceptance that the book of Esther was a literary source for Paul. Unlike other methodologies, which attempt to show how Paul has exegeted and unpacked a passage from Scripture, or how he has developed an allusion – something there is little evidence that he ever does with the book of Esther – this methodology shows how the book of Esther may nevertheless come to feature in his writing. This text has rippled out from its source point and, through its forward momentum, has interacted with Paul’s context it has left its mark. Paul has not actively alluded to the book of Esther – the lack of other Estherian referents in Galatians limits any such suggestion – but neither does it appear that the shared use of ἴουδαίζω is coincidental. The shared contexts of mass gentile involvement with Judaism, concern for ‘imperial prudence’ and R. Nehemiah’s similar interpretation of Esth 8:17 mean that coincidental usage is difficult to argue. This methodology provides a middle route,
which describes neither intentional use nor coincidental use, but claims that the book of Esther has rippled into a new text.

It matters that ἰουδαίζω comes from a scriptural text, as the anticipated reference to the book of Esther adds weight and gravitas to Paul's argument; the language is distinct innovation of “biblical vocabulary” and thus carries a particular baggage. Of Gal 2 Ciampa says;

Paul's relating of his scriptural rebuke of Peter is like displaying one of his interpretive trophies and leads perfectly into a more explicit and expository interpretation of Scripture directly addressed to the Galatians in the following chapters.

Ciampa does not enter into a conversation about whether the book of Esther could be one of Paul's texts in this rebuke but his conclusions about Paul's use of Scripture open something of the way Paul may incorporate Esth 8:17. It is certainly possible that, in this 'interpretative trophy', Paul is audaciously allowing the book of Esther to rear its head as a way of saying 'Look, not only can I use Torah, Prophets and the Psalms, but even the book of Esther helps me argue my point.' It is not a contrived use of the text as the book of Esther ripples into the discussion without any difficulty, but rather than resist it Paul lets it make an appearance to show off his interpretative competences. This may also explain why there are no other clear points of connection between the books of Esther and Galatians. As it is not the guiding scriptural key to the letter at large, Paul does not need to make any more connections. The word ἰουδαίζω is strong enough to stand on its own as polish to the interpretive trophy, although smaller medals (such as Paul's argument about castration) might have been produced as by-products.

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1099 Joosten, 'The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and its Historical Context', p.10.
With what is happening in Gal 2:11-14, and the implications of these verses, Hill suggests there are two possible responses and that, to some, the events in these verses;
signal the triumph of Paulinism, the full recognition of Gentile equality, and the acknowledgement, for Jews as well as for Gentiles, that the law had been superseded by the work of Christ. To others, the passage records the moment at which the great and irreversible split between Jewish and Gentile, conservative and liberal wings of the Christian church was made final.\(^{1100}\)

This research disagrees with both of these perspectives. Although the increasing numbers of gentiles in Paul’s faith assist in the partings of the ways, neither of Hill’s two perspectives account for the fullness of Paul’s context. Paul appears to be neither supersessionist, nor does Gal 2:14 mark the kind of split that Hill presents. Paul presents an argument that is not unique to him, but is expressed by contemporaneous Rabbis. Paul’s context is not exactly the same as theirs, but it is far too strong to suggest that Paul considers this to be a break from Judaism, he presents a familiar Jewish perspective to debate other perspectives. In so doing he, like his opponents, draws on Jewish scriptures to forward his argument. This research argues that, contrary to what has been previously argued, one of these scriptures is Esth 8:17.

This methodology has attempted to explore whether ἵουδαίζω in Gal 2:14 has come from Esth\(^{\text{LXX}}\) 8:17. Short of Paul explicitly mentioning the book of Esther, the results of this chapter cannot be absolute. This does not mean that this chapter is only dealing with possibilities. Instead, what this methodology aims to do is to assess the probability and ask if it is probable and not just possible that the book of Esther, identified through the word ἵουδαίζω, has informed Paul’s writing in Gal 2:14.

A significant implication for the methodology that has arisen out of this chapter comes out of the historical overview. As the methodology takes the metaphor of a wave/ripple, future uses of this methodology should hold in mind the potential need to produce a historical overview in tracing the journey made by the textual ripple. This was less relevant for σταυρωθήτω as there were no other texts at all that used this word. In the case of ἵουδαίζω, seeing how the word developed in meaning was important in providing a definition as well as noting the number of uses between the hypothetical source and ‘obstacle’ texts. If there were multiple uses of ἵουδαίζω between Esth 8:17 and Gal 2:14 that had distinctively shaped the word, then the possibility would arise that Paul’s reference point is one of the intermediary texts.

An example of this in recent years might be the Prayer of St. Francis, ‘Where there is discord may we bring harmony.’ Whilst many people associate these words with St. Francis, they were famously spoken by Margaret Thatcher as she moved into Downing Street in 1979. These words took on a Thatcherite association for a number of years that affected how Christians would use the prayer, if at all, in case the Thatcherite association spoke louder than the Franciscan association. Although Thatcher’s use of these words created certain associations with this prayer that would dominate, they would not last, and uses of the prayer in the twenty-first century are as likely, if not more so, to have been ‘reassigned’ to St. Francis.

Another significant aspect of this methodology is the criterion of distinctiveness. When approached from different angles, ἵουδαίζω can be claimed to be distinctive to both texts. Based on the extant literary evidence, ἵουδαίζω is an unusual word that is not only distinctive for its rarity, but the likelihood is that it is distinctive to the book of Esther because it was coined for this text. As the historical overview could set the use of ἵουδαίζω in Gal 2:14 within a historical framework that would lead back to the book of
Esther, rather than to a secondary text, it can be said that when Paul uses Ἰουδαῖος he uses a word that has a distinctively Estherian flavour.

A further factor concerns Paul’s reasons for using Scripture or for allowing Scripture to ripple into his own writing. The contemporaneous interpretations of Esth 8:17 provide a witness to the use of this verse in intra-Jewish debates about the circumcision of gentiles. Significantly not only are there Rabbis arguing against the circumcision of gentiles but one of the scriptures used to support this position is Esth 8:17. For Paul to include this verse in his own argument against the circumcision of gentiles is not novel, but a feature of the debate into which he enters.

This chapter therefore argues that when Paul uses Ἰουδαῖος in Gal 2:14 he does so because it is found in the book of Esther and carries a Scriptural potency. Unlike the rabbis who use Esth 8:17 Paul does not incorporate this text to flesh out an exegesis of this verse. As Ἰουδαῖος has rippled out from the book of Esther it has encountered Paul’s debate with Peter about the circumcision of gentiles, and the aspect of fear within this. Rather than turn away from this, Paul allows the word Ἰουδαῖος into his argument because of all that this distinctive word brings into his argument.

Francis Watson speaks of the “three-way conversation... between three bodies of literature: the Pauline letters, the scriptural texts to which they appeal, and the non-Christian Jewish literature of the Second Temple period,”1101 from which Paul’s interpretation of the Law and Prophets is born. The research done here into Gal 2:14 and the book of Esther may help start to further similar discussions around the role of the Ketuvim in Paul’s interpretation of Torah. One may ponder, not just how non-

1101 Watson, Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith, p.2.
canonical literature provided interpretative inspiration but how Paul used Scripture to interpret Scripture.
Chapter 6: Comparison of the Two Test Contexts and Conclusions

6.1 Recapitulation of the Proposed Research and Methodology

Dans le christianisme de l’Antiquité, il est clair que le livre d’Esther n’est pas au cœur du débat théologique et qu’il joue un rôle très mineur.1102

Jean-Daniel Macchi

Macchi’s words above, published during the time of this research, are not far removed from those of Paton, one hundred and eight years previously, albeit somewhat more nuanced: “[The book of Esther] is never quoted by Christ, nor by any of the NT. [sic] writers. The early Christian Church made no use of it.”1103 What has been shown in this research is that the common perception about the place of the book of Esther in earliest Christianity is due a revision.

This chapter will reappraise the methodology and compare the two test cases of research. The conclusions of these two aspects will be set forth, which include, but are not limited to, the assertion that the book of Esther played a greater role than has been recognised. In order to critique the belief that the book of Esther was, to all intents and purposes, absent from the New Testament exegetical tradition, it was felt necessary to provide a methodology to guide this assessment. As such there will be two halves of this concluding chapter. First will be conclusions regarding the book of Esther in the New Testament, and second will be conclusions regarding the proposed methodology.

1102 Macchi, Le Livre d’Esther, p.133.
6.2 Conclusions Regarding the Book of Esther in the New Testament

As outlined in the opening chapters, despite a number of attempts by some scholars to argue that the book of Esther can be recognised within the texts of the New Testament, there has been a general consensus that this is not the case. In part, this has been a generalisation of the lack of explicit citations of the book of Esther in the New Testament to suggest that the book of Esther is entirely absent. Of the existing proposed examples of ‘Esther in the New Testament’, some can be dismissed due to the critiques of subsequent scholarship. These examples have not helped the argument that the book of Esther can be recognised in the New Testament as they have fed a narrative that says that the book of Esther was not used by the earliest Christians, and the only way to dispute this is with novel, and sometimes outlandish, claims. Cassel’s proposition that ‘wicked Haman’ is the inspiration for the number of the beast is one such claim, which, when scrutinised, has very little supporting evidence.

Further factors to have inhibited research into ‘Esther in the New Testament’ come from the supposed absence of the book of Esther in Qumran and from early Christian Literature. To have a biblical text absent from major corpora of literature, both Jewish and Christian, raises doubts about its place in the New Testament world. As these supposed absences do not stand up to scrutiny, the foundations for such doubts about ‘Esther in the New Testament’ vanish. In their place is a research opportunity to reappraise the perception that the book of Esther is absent from the New Testament, the results of which would either provide new foundations for doubting the use the book of Esther in the New Testament or would provide supporting evidence that can take ‘Esther in the New Testament’ studies further.
As is highlighted in the research, the book of Esther has been used to advance Christian anti-Semitism through certain readings of the concept of ‘judaizing.’ It must be reiterated that none of the references to the book of Esther in earliest Christian Literature make this claim but is a later, and predominantly (post-)Reformation, reading heavily influenced by Luther. Paul’s writings have similarly been used to cultivate Christian anti-Semitic discourse, primarily through ways later readers have understood his thoughts on ‘judaizing.’

This research has exposed the tragic irony contained by these readings. Neither the book of Esther nor the letter to the Galatians use ἴουδαίω to provide anti-Judaic readings. Moreover, Paul uses the book of Esther to critique forced conversion, but not to dismiss Judaism. Paul’s arguments do not represent a radical departure from Judaism, but conform to attestable debating positions within Judaism that are borne out of Estherian exegesis. To discover this is not only interesting from an OT-NT perspective, but helps flesh out a picture of Paul as a contextual exegete.

Whereas the research into Paul’s use of the book of Esther was only able to ascertain one instance of Estherian reception in Gal 2:14 (and a possible side effect, or ‘textual spray’, in 6:12), the research into the Gospel of Matthew yielded very different results. Not only did the wider passion narrative appear to have Estherian connections, but these helped highlight other Estherian influences on the Gospel, such as the reference to ten thousand talents in Matt 18:23, and to strengthen tentative Estherian links that have already been noted, such as the question posed by Jesus in Matt 20:21. The Estherian details in the passion narrative have helped flesh out a picture of some of the unique features of Matthew’s Gospel. It is in the uniquely Matthaean material where the Estherian features are clearest, which suggests that the book of Esther has had a

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much greater influence on Matthew than has previously been acknowledged, and that this influence is Matthew more so than the other evangelists. Furthermore, the initial research into Σταυρωθήτω helped enable the possibility of other links. The textual coherence here, helped in recognising subtle examples of textual coherence elsewhere. With no other Estherian influence on Matthew, the likelihood of arguing the case that Esth 3:9 provided a stimulus for Matt 18:23 was slim, but is strengthened by the Estherian elements in the passion narrative.

6.2.1 The Book of Esther in the New Testament - Conclusions

Before making conclusions about the methodology that has been tested (with a view to how it might be taken forward into new research) there is value in stating the conclusions of this research with regards to the topic of ‘Esther in the New Testament.’ This project set out to reappraise this disputed topic and can conclude the following;

- The book of Esther was more widely accepted in the world of the New Testament than much literature would suggest.
- Purim, including the recital of the book of Esther, was an annual event in late Second Temple Judaism indicating that Palestinian Jews would have been familiar with the text and the over-arching narrative.
- Contrary to some assumptions, early Christian literature indicates that the book of Esther was read positively, in its own right and in relation to the gospel message.
- The early Christian world adopted the characters from the book of Esther and used them in typologies and as models for faithful living.
- Some of the New Testament writers appear to have been familiar with the book of Esther, and reacted to it.
- There is no uniform model of the reception of the book of Esther.
- Debates and topics in early Christianity (the place of crucifixion in salvation and the circumcision of gentiles) are the ways in which Esther reception may be most clearly witnessed.
- Matthew’s passion narrative bears signs of Estherian influence.
• Pauls’ letter to the Galatians bears signs of Estherian influence.
• Matthew uses the verbal form Σταυρωθήτω in Matt 27:22-23 because of its use in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 7:9, and not out of coincidence.
• Matthew uses the book of Esther to shape his portrayals of Judas and of Jesus to prevent Haman being associated with Jesus.
• Paul uses Ιουδαίζω in Gal 2:14 because of its use in Esth\textsuperscript{LXX} 8:17, and not out of coincidence.
• Paul’s reception of the book of Esther conforms to contemporaneous debates about circumcision and the scriptures used to resource those debates.

These conclusions do not show why the Estherian references in the New Testament would be subtle rather than clearly sign-posted. There are two broad possibilities. First, the book of Esther may have posed exegetical difficulties in a context with an increasing number of gentiles. In these circumstances, enough Estherian language was used for those well versed in the book of Esther, but not so much that the ripples from the book of Esther would drown out the broader message that was being presented. The problem with this is that the early Christian witness from outside the New Testament does not present difficulties in reading the book of Esther in the period in which the New Testament texts were written. Moreover, Origen indicates that the book of Esther was considered one of the more ‘basic texts.’ If this were true of the earliest Christian communities, then clear sign-posting and explicit exegesis might not have been necessary.

6.3 Conclusions Regarding the Cluzographic Methodology

What has become increasingly apparent throughout this research is that much writing about the place of the book of Esther in the New Testament has lacked a methodology. This is true of the earliest modern writings, such as that of Frazer and Cassel but is also true of some of the more recent literature, such as Scott or Davies and
Allison. In their own ways, each of these writers have added to knowledge and scholarship, and provided valuable insights into the Estherian background to the New Testament, insights that would have benefitted from a clear methodology to justify, or test out, their claims.

One of the concerns in formulating a methodology that followed the book of Esther into the New Testament was the eisegetical problem. In an attempt to create a methodology to answer the question ‘Does the book of Esther appear in the New Testament texts, and if so in what ways?’ there is the potential to fall into the pit hole outlined by Wright;

If you read your own question into the text, and try to get an answer from it, when the text is talking about something else, you run the risk, not only of hearing only the echo of your own voice rather than the word of God, but also of missing the key point that the text was actually eager to tell you, and which you have brushed aside in your relentless quest for your own meaning.\textsuperscript{1105}

It is my hope, and belief, that the methodology used in this research has been able to avoid the potential dangers outlined above. Although the bulk of this work has focussed on two areas in which I argue that the book of Esther can be felt in the New Testament, it has also highlighted areas where the book of Esther may have been felt but almost certainly does not appear.

Approaches to OT-NT research that begin with the New Testament text need to look backwards to see what texts might have something to say. Implications that the New Testament authors had a physical copy of the Septuagint to hand have been rightly discredited; the authors drew, for the most part, on what texts they had in mind. This approach can dismiss the role of texts such as the book of Esther as a relatively minor text. Starting with the Old Testament text, however, and building up a picture of how,

\textsuperscript{1105} Wright, \textit{Justification}, pp.25-26.
and when, it was used, offers a more thorough appreciation for the possibility that it might be a source text, by ascertaining its ‘cluzographic potential.’ Rather than contemplating the texts that might be drawn upon by a New Testament author, the consideration becomes the contexts in which the book of Esther might be an appropriate, or the only possible, source and then looking to see if there is evidence of this taking place. What are the circumstances that allow the book of Esther to come forth as a possible source for early Christian exegesis? This question is a reason why early Christian references to the book of Esther were explored alongside late Second Temple Jewish references, as they demonstrate some possible contexts and circumstances for the book of Esther to ‘make waves’.

The criterion of distinctiveness has helped restrict pre-empting the results as there was no guarantee that any words that were distinctively Estherian would occur in the New Testament. Furthermore, if there were any, there was no guarantee that there would be enough in the New Testament context to put forth arguments for Estherian influence, rather than coincidence.

As an example, one may think of the word διάκονος. This word features heavily in the book of Esther, and is frequently used in the New Testament with no suggestion of Estherian influence. The exception is in Matt 22:13 when it features in a parable replete with Estherian imagery, so much so that it appears that the book of Esther has splashed Estherian features throughout Matt 22:1-14 including the word διάκονος. This also shows that there are circumstances when words which are distinctively Estherian (when considering the Septuagint, rather than all Greek literature) do not indicate ‘Esther in the New Testament’ as most New Testament examples of διάκονος do not suggest this.

A number of the previous suggestions of Estherian allusions in the New Testament (cf. the appendix to NA²⁸) are readily dismissed because both the book of
Esther and the New Testament are witnesses to a wider tradition (such as ‘sackcloth and ashes’) rather than suggesting that the book of Esther could be a source. The criterion of distinctiveness helps to strengthen the possibility of the book of Esther being a source rather than another witness to a tradition that is a source. Biblical scholars know that, for any research topic, there are certain works that need to be engaged in the research. As an example, research into the rhetoric of Galatians needs to include some engagement with Betz’s commentary, amongst other secondary sources. The researcher will, of course, draw on other scholarship, from their academic libraries and their own bookshelves. Whatever other texts are used, it will be crucial that Betz is amongst them; ‘Rhetoric in Galatians’ without Betz would leave a hole in the research and would leave the reader suspicious. The biblical texts, and their use in the New Testament can be conceptualised in a similar manner. Each of the New Testament writers draw on the Old Testament, and each will have their preferred texts, and use them in idiosyncratic ways. There will be some topics, however, that require specific texts to be included, regardless of the preferences of the author. To introduce the topic of living by faith, for example, almost sets a requirement on the author that they will engage with Hab 2:4.

This research does not intend to suggest that the New Testament texts were written as modern research projects are written. I use this metaphor to show how, and why, certain texts might be used, be that through necessity as well as through the author’s personal preferences. The question of interest to this research topic is not whether authors have a preference for the book of Esther but, are there circumstances that require the author to engage with the book of Esther? Such circumstances are conceptualised as the obstacles with which the textual ripples of the book of Esther interact.
In order to answer this question, the methodology needed to follow the distinctive features of the book of Esther into the world of the New Testament to see if there are any such circumstances that might require some engagement with the book of Esther. Of the textual features used in the New Testament that were distinctive to the book of Esther, there were two for which possible obstacles could be ascertained. The combination of the criteria of ‘textual distinctiveness’ and ‘contextual obstacle’ have worked well in conjunction with each other. One may not necessarily need both, but the combination has helped to test the methodology in its early stages.

6.3.1 Placing the Methodology in the Wider Research Context

The proposed cluzographic methodology fits within existing scholarship and dominant methodological paradigms, but in doing so offers an innovative departure from the existing forms of OT-NT research. The idea of textual ripples has occurred, notably by Moyise, but in conjunction with the auditory metaphor that dominates in New Testament approaches to OT-NT research, where one can listen to the sound waves that resonate in the echo chamber of the New Testament. Adaptations were necessary for this research and, while a few approaches here differed to existing research, there were two principal adaptations to methodologies that use ‘texts as waves’ such as the auditory metaphors (e.g. Hays’ ‘echoes’ metaphor).

The first adaptation to the broad concept of ‘texts as waves’ was the positional shift from the wave receptor to the wave source. It is novel to use, as a starting point, the presumption that any text would be rippling into a context and would have the potential to be a conversation partner, regardless of the wishes of the New Testament author. This

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did not presume that the book of Esther would be used, just that it had the potential to make waves; a ripple can ripple past something, and can interact with an obstacle, depending on the position of the obstacle. This did presume that the book of Esther had the potential to be used. The worked examples show that making this conceptual shift does matter. It is less likely that someone starting with Matthew or Galatians would have worked back to the book of Esther in a manner that could argue convincingly that it was a source text rather than a witness to shared vocabulary. It mattered that this research began with a text, and ascertained its distinctive textual features, to provide justification for intertextual potential.

The second adaptation was to move back to the idea waves travelling through water as opposed to sound waves. In most circumstances the metaphor is comparable, except for the distinctive feature of ‘obstacles.’ It is perhaps easier to conceive of different forms of obstacles that might be encountered by waves travelling through water compared to sound waves; the idea of textual splash arises more naturally from water rather than sound waves.

The focus on obstacles does help show how this research is different to existing methodological approaches that come out of ripple metaphors. Using sound waves resonating in the echo chamber, the research concern is the constructive or destructive interference of the two (or more) texts, and as such the concern is primarily the reader’s (or listener’s) perception. It may be possible that the author has helped craft a likely reading, but has set up an echo chamber where the texts will be heard differently and the audience may or may not hear what has been intended – any musician will be aware of the importance of the right acoustics for an audience to hear what is desired, without which, different members of an audience may have heard different things by being placed differently in the auditorium.
By following the text into an obstacle against which it may have reacted, the concern is how a source text might appear at the moment of interference. This primarily focussed on what the author is doing with a text and why, with less regard for whether a reader or listener would be aware. It may be the case that it matters that a reader or listener can pick up on the source that has inspired the intertextual craft of the author, but it is of less importance that they can. This is the equivalent in OT-NT research of ‘if a tree falls in the woods and there is no-one to hear it, does it make a sound?’ If a New Testament author creatively responds to the book of Esther, but no-one can hear it, has the book of Esther spoken?’

In proposing a methodology that begins with an Old Testament text the metaphor of textual ripples provides a different angle to existing research. The New Testament research is predominantly concerned with the ripple that has arrived, and less concerned with its journey into the New Testament context. This research was concerned with the journey, and precisely what might cause the ripple to behave in different ways, in the form of obstacles.

The Haysian criteria of ‘history of interpretation’ has been cautiously applied in this research as the methodology considers other voices later in the tradition to be separate from the wave interaction with the New testament context. The suggestion that Mark 6:23 quotes the book of Esther shows how this criterion could be misapplied; there are several ancient texts that combine Esther and the Markan account of the beheading of John the Baptist but, rather than an example of ‘Esther in the New Testament,’ this is more likely to be an example of ‘traditional banquet motifs in Esther and in Mark.’

Despite these cautions, both of the newly proposed cluzographs find resonances in ancient literature, but in quite different ways. Writers from Aphrahat to Socrates Scholasticus have contemplated the relationship between Jesus, Mordecai and Haman
through the act of crucifixion. In the texts of Aphrahat and Socrates, as in Matthew’s Gospel, are Jews who are responding to the account of the crucifixion; Aphrahat was either born into a Jewish family, or at least into an environment with a significant Jewish presence, and Socrates recounts an event involving Jews at Purim encountering Christians near to Good Friday. As the example of the Markan account of the beheading of John the Baptist cautions, later interpretations do not provide certain evidence that Matthew’s gospel evidences an obstacle over which the book of Esther has splashed. They do, however, increase the possibility that Matthew encountered discussions around a similar topic.

For evaluating Matthew's use of the book of Esther, support has come from authors writing in a Christian context, but in the case of Paul's use of Esther in Gal 2:14, extracanonical support can be found in rabbinic writings. The wider exegetical tradition alone does not prove that Paul is on the same interpretative journey as R. Nehemiah and, as was true with Matthew, other arguments are needed to show that Esther might be in the New Testament. The contextual similarity between R. Nehemiah and Paul does strengthen the argument that Paul is doing something similar, and R. Nehemiah’s writings scupper the argument that there is no precedent for using the book of Esther in the way that Paul appears to do. In both Matt 27:22-23 and Gal 2:14 awareness of the wider exegetical tradition bolsters the argument that the book of Esther is framing the New Testament text.

This wider literature served different purposes however, which should be borne in mind in concluding the proposed methodology. In the Matthaean test case, the wider literature (principally Aphrahat’s twenty-first Demonstration and the account presented by Socrates Scholasticus) bolstered the claim that knowledge of Haman’s crucifixion had implications for the proclamation of the crucifixion of Jesus. This literature helped to
develop and enhance a sense of the obstacle of crucifixion. In the Pauline test case, the wider literature (principally R. Nehemiah) showed how a brief reference to the book of Esther, and in particular an implicit reference to Esth 8:17, could bring forth wider Estherian exegesis, in this case about incorporating gentiles into Jewish communities. This literature primarily helped develop and enhance a sense of the distinctiveness of the Estherian language, and the exegetical power of distinctive language. Wider literature is important, but one must be aware that different forms of literature will support an argument in different ways. The use of extra-canonical literature cannot be a separate and concise criterion in the methodology, but must be part of other criteria.

6.3.2 Methodological Conclusions

In testing out the proposed methodology, and in reviewing the findings in this chapter, the two criteria of ‘contextual obstacle’ and ‘textual distinctiveness’ have been highlighted. These are not the only aspects of the methodology, however, and need to fit within a wider framework that could be taken away and applied elsewhere. As such I propose the following as a model;

1. A textual ‘shipping forecast’ to shape the criterion of ‘Cluzographic Potential’
   a. Demonstrate that a potential source text was being used in the anticipated receiving community to show that it was rippling such that it might come to mind.
   b. Ascertain what the textual boundaries are; is the potential source text an Old Testament book in its entirety or a narrative found with a subsection of a book?
   c. Are there particular aspects of the reading of the text to be aware of, with regards to potential obstacles, such as geographical or calendrical factors that affect the way the text is read?
2. The criterion of ‘Distinctiveness’
   a. Potential cluzographs should be distinctive to the source text. The context may affect whether this needs a word that is distinctive to that text within the Septuagint, or within wider literature as well.
   b. This requires a critical analysis of the ways in which the proposed cluzograph might fulfil the criterion of distinctiveness; is the word a *hapax legomenon* in the Septuagint or in a wider Greek literature in the historical context of the reception text?; is the proposed cluzograph a Septuagintal neologism?; is the proposed cluzograph a well-attested word but distinctive in some other way to the source text?
   c. Some of the ways in which distinctiveness may be examined will need ‘submethodologies’ to be thorough, depending on the nature of distinctiveness (the examples shown in this research include assessments of unique verbal forms, querying neologisms, and tracing the chronological use of a word).
   d. If a word in the New Testament is likely to have a distinctive and strong association with a previous text, this increases the likelihood that the source text was in mind when the word was written. For example, a word that is both a Septuagintal *hapax legomenon* and a New Testament *hapax legomenon* may demonstrate this. The criterion of distinctiveness helps to lessen the likelihood of coincidence.

3. The criterion of a ‘Cluzographic Obstacle’
   a. When the proposed cluzograph is used in the New Testament, what is the context?
   b. Can it be argued that the context of the New Testament text had the potential to be an obstacle to the rippling of the source text?
   c. What is the wider exegetical tradition; can the argument of an obstacle be strengthened by contemporaneous interpreters?

4. Volume
   a. Hays’ criterion of volume is relevant. If there is interference in the wave pattern of the source text as it encounters the obstacle there is the possibility of textual splashes.
   b. If there are any possible textual splashes, how do they function in the text?
   c. If there are no textual splashes, why not?

5. Explanation
   a. Can the combination of these factors provide an explanation for how the source text enhances an understanding of the New Testament text?
6.4 Hopes of this Research and Future Scope

It was hoped that the cluzographic methodology might do several different things. First, it was hoped that this might provide a structure for focussing on an Old Testament text and its transmission into the New Testament context rather than primarily focussing on the New Testament text. Second, it was hoped that this methodology might yield new findings concerning the book of Esther and its Wirkungsgeschichte. Third, it was hoped that, although the book of Esther would be the focus, this research might provoke further research and suggest places where research might be fruitful.

Drawing on the existing approaches to OT-NT research, this methodology made a positional shift, to initially focus on a proposed source (Old Testament) text rather than the receptor (New Testament) text. This involved testing out methodological adaptations as existing approaches that began with the New Testament text would be insufficient. Testing these adaptations out in two different contexts has been helpful in seeing what is possible and those things that might be key in one context, but not in another. The first hope has been achieved; it has been possible to set forth a methodological structure for doing OT-NT research that begins with the Old Testament text.

In testing this structure out on the book of Esther, it was hoped that this research might yield a fresh perspective on the use of the book of Esther in earliest Christianity. The bulk of this research has done this and is able to put forward, and defend, the claim that Matthew’s passion and Paul’s letter to the Galatians both contain vocabulary that is not only shared with the book of Esther but has been used because it is shared with the book of Esther. The research has been successful in achieving its second aim of offering

The research does not rise or fall on the basis of finding scope for further research, although this was a hope. The research can be progressed in two ways, first in relation to ‘Esther in the New Testament’ studies, and second in ‘OT-NT’ studies more broadly. On the first of these, as the research developed a number of contexts have been highlighted where this research, and methodology, might be taken further and further refined. Notably, in Matthew’s Gospel, there are features that warrant further research such as the possible Estherian influence on Matt 18:23-35 (particularly with the similarities with Esth 3:9) and on Matt 20:17-28 (and the similarities with Esth 5). In addition to these, there are some other ways in which this research might be taken further. With regard to the book of Esther, the primary stages of research ascertained multiple words with Estherian distinctiveness. Some of the other words (particularly \textit{ἀφθορος} \textit{Esth} \textit{LXX} 2:2; Titus 2:7) could be analysed in full to see if the presumption that they might not be cluzographs in the New Testament is true or not.

The second way of developing this research concerns the standard methodology. Other books of the Old Testament, particularly those with few references in the New Testament could be analysed for distinctive vocabulary and put through this methodology to see if it works in other contexts, and can be further shaped. As the book of Esther was always read in its entirety, the whole book provided the context in which any Estherian reference would be known. If a similar methodology is to be used with another text, it will be crucial to know how that text was read. It is important to do a contextual overview to discover the boundaries of a text that might interact in a cluzographic manner. This might be the entirety of a book, as was the case here, but
might be a smaller division. For example, one could probably do a similar project with the book of Ruth as has been done here, but perhaps not with the book of Judges, which might need to be subdivided into the account of Gideon, or the passages about Samson for example. To reiterate the principal hope of this research, it is hoped that the book of Esther will no longer be dismissed from New Testament, and early Christian, discourse, in the way that it often has been.
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442


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