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## Literatur- und Forschungsberichte\*

Margaret M. Mitchell

### A Guidebook for the Frontier of Patristic Interpretation of the New Testament

Review essay on Martin Meiser *Galater*

This volume<sup>1</sup> is the first installment of a very important new research tool, for which we must thank the publisher, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, the series editors (Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, Joseph Verheyden), and the founders, both living and dead (Gerhard May †, to whom the volume is fittingly dedicated, Kurt Niederwimmer and Basil Studer), who began to envision this series back in 1993. The goals of *Novum Testamentum Patristicum* are to document »patristic Interpretation of the New Testament« as a service to scholarship in five areas: a) patristics and early church history; b) exegesis; c) theology broadly conceived (to place contemporary exegetical and theological concerns in a wider perspective); d) church and world (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant), and e) cultural studies (for the range of disciplines which study the broad impact of the Bible on European and world culture, art and literature) (7–9). These are ambitious goals, to be sure, but inherently worthy and desirable.

Martin Meiser has expertly carried out his task in this first volume, on Galatians. He has traversed the terrain extensively and most impressively – including some figures New Testament scholars and students will never have heard of (such as Justus of Urgel and Facundus of Hermiane), and others, such as the pilgrim Egeria,<sup>2</sup> whom they would not imagine as an interpreter of Galatians – and (to continue in the spirit of Egeria) he has provided a most able guidebook for those who wish to follow. In particular, the Latin commentaries and other works into the medieval period are included here in a depth and breadth of coverage that is unsurpassed. One might argue that the orthodox on the whole get more attention than Marcion, Gnostics, Mani, and other »heretics« but that is a deliberate choice rather than an oversight. It also marks his own particular interests (and that of the series) in the role of Scripture in the development of early Christian systematic theology, especially its Christological, Trinitarian and Mariological dimensions, which are given close and sustained attention. Meiser has scouted out this material extremely well, and has ably carried out this enormous task of chronicling late antique and early medieval exegesis on Galatians (he also has finished it and is still a relatively young man, which inspires awe in us all!). The series editors with justification praise him for being a pioneer for their series, and I can only echo that characterization admiringly. In an American context we might translate the metaphor by saying that Meiser has walked the Appalachian trail from Georgia to Maine (rather than Antioch to Iberia!) in record-setting pace, and collected an enormous bag of souvenir pebbles, sorted them neatly into piles, and laid them out generously for us all to admire, learn from, and enrich our own rock collections. It is indeed an impressive array, a stunning achievement of industry and learning; as a result, even those who have not walked each step of this Appalachian trail of ancient Pauline

\* Die beiden folgenden Beiträge gehen auf eine *panel discussion* während des 2008 des 143. Annual Meeting der Society of Biblical Literature am 23. 11. 2008 in Boston zurück.

1) Meiser, Martin: *Galater*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2007. 373 S. gr. 8° = *Novum Testamentum Patristicum*, 9. Geb. EUR 89,00. ISBN 978-3-525-53988-0.

2) P. 311, on the use of Gal 6:14–18 in the liturgy in Jerusalem on Good Friday (cf. 161.165).

exegesis (and I doubt many, if any, have) can vicariously join in the spectacle, and greatly inform their own interpretive endeavors. And, one further hopes that they may become incited to pull their hiking boots out of the back of the closet, and jump on the trail themselves. Patristic exegesis of the New Testament is the new frontier!

#### 1. The Design and Accomplishment

We should begin with a brief resumé of the contents of the volume. After a 2-page »Vorwort des Verfassers«, 13–42, »Der Galaterbrief in der altkirchlichen Rezeption«, introduce briefly some key principles and, most of all, the exegetical figures who populate the terrain, from pre- to post-Nicaea, which for Meiser extends from Ignatius and Polycarp to Augustine, with a special focus on commentators, from Origen (the first known, but only in fragments in Pamphilus [and via Jerome]), Eusebius of Emessa (fragments of a 10 volume work), Ephraem's paraphrase commentary, John Chrysostom, Marius Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Augustine, Pelagius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrthus, Cassiodorus, and Isidore of Seville (and John of Damascus).<sup>3</sup> After a very brief (2 pages) discussion of »Die Einleitungsfragen in der antiken Diskussion«, the commentary proper begins, under the title »Einzeldarstellung«. In a little more than 250 pages the text of Galatians is discussed, as divided into five major units (Gal 1,1–5 – Präskript;<sup>4</sup> Gal 1,11–2,14 – Die *narratio* des Briefes; Gal 2,15–5,12 – Der argumentative Hauptteil des Briefes; 5,13–6,10 – Der paränetische Hauptteil des Briefes; 6,11–18 – Briefschluss). This represents an epistolary and rhetorical analysis, and seems to be Meiser's own outline.<sup>5</sup> These are in turn divided into sub-sections, and into individual verses or (in some cases) a few verses. Under the citation itself comes a German translation of the lemma, in bold typeface. Then follows a summary paragraph that usually begins with »Applikation« or »Rezeption« (often divided into 3 or 4 lines »Linien« or tendencies), and is followed by »Auslegung« or »Schriftauslegung«, which is usually (if not always) a reading to be found in commentaries.<sup>6</sup>

As an example of the considerable riches this volume holds, let me cite the dense paragraph on p. 155 that yields interpretations of the ἄγγελοι in Gal 3:19 (διὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεστροῦ): Valentinians (*apud* Clement of Alexandria) of spiritual seeds sown by Sophia (with a second echo/»Anklang« identified in *Log Seth* from Nag Hammadi [NHC VII, 2, 64], of angels who at creation gave the commandments to enslave humanity), among commentators, Theodore of Mopsuestia (judging the work of the angels mentioned here, in concert with Heb 2:2, as positive), Cyril of Alexandria (in his commentary on Luke), for whom Moses is the helper of these angels, the Venerable Bede, who sees a reference to the mediated divine throne vision of Exod 25:22, or (another line of argument) the ἄγγελοι are not supernatural beings (»angels«, but »messengers«, possibly Moses, the prophets or John the Baptist (so Ambrosiaster) or even the priests (taken as a possibility by John Chrysostom). Look at the range here, of Greek, Latin and Coptic texts, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Imagine how much time went into this one page, and then imagine that 250 times over. The volume is all the more enhanced by a very comprehensive bibliography of texts and editions, secondary literature, and indexes by which to negotiate the terrain oneself. Meiser's *Galater* is, without doubt, an excellent resource and reference work that scholars and students will pore over for years to come.

3) The latter is cited quite frequently in the commentary, but is not introduced here.

4) Gal 1:6–10, Proömium, is listed on the title page as though a sub-section of Gal 1:1–5; this disposition also leaves that key passage out of the major units of the disposition.

5) The closest to it is Hans Dieter Betz's *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, Fortress, 1979), as perhaps suggested by p. 63 n. 1, but there are also some differences in the disposition (or τάξις) of the argument. Sometimes, but not always, the disposition is anchored in some ancient writings (e. g., Marius Victorinus is appealed to for the *narratio*; but compare on 1:1–5 and 1:6–11, where Theodoret calls the former the προοίμιον, not the latter, as does Meiser [see 43 and 51], and other places where the rhetorical categories are not defended, per se).

6) Most often, but not always, commentaries on Galatians.

## 2. Questions

For all my genuine admiration of and gratitude for this volume, I have questions about the format, and the methodological and hermeneutical assumptions on which it is based. I offer these comments with several aims in view: to guide the readers of this and future volumes in their expectations and use of this valuable research tool, and also to raise issues that might be of use for the development of the future volumes in this series, and other research tools for the study of ancient exegesis.

### 2.1 What is the genre of this book, and why does it matter?

Meiser states in his Vorwort that this commentary is in the design of a »moderne Katene«,<sup>7</sup> but that is not quite accurate, for that would take the form of direct quotations<sup>8</sup> of ancient works (like Staab,<sup>9</sup> or the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture<sup>10</sup> or the Church's Bible<sup>11</sup>), »without comment by the compiler.«<sup>12</sup> Meiser's *Galater* is a different genre, a commentary; hence it consists almost entirely of the comments of an author, not merely quotations assembled by an anonymous compiler. Because of this, the mind of the author matters greatly. That is why Meiser's 2-page Vorwort disappoints, because it does not give us enough of the reasoning that guided this author (our trail-guide) through the complex thicket of ancient Christian literature. The following terse explanation of his procedure begs for further explication at almost every turn: »Versweise, in einigen Fällen auch perikopenweise, wird das relevante Material präsentiert. Die einführende Orientierung über die verschiedenen Rezeptionslinien ist als Instrument der Leserführung gedacht, als schnelle und präzise Information darüber, was im Folgenden zu erwarten ist und was nicht« (11–12, italics added). For example, why are some treated by *pericope* and others not, what material was deemed »relevant,« why does »Schriftgebrauch« usually precede »Schrifterklärung« in the representations, how was a »line of reception« identified, and are the findings mere »Information«, or are they »packaged and interpreted materials«, hence, an argument in themselves? We shall develop these points further in the questions which follow.

### 2.2 What is the relationship between text, translation and interpretation as presented here?

I could find no explicit rationale for having the verses or *pericopae* from Galatians appear in a German translation above the analysis of patristic commentary, how the German New Testament translation was fashioned or chosen, or why in some, but only very few, instances a Greek phrase was given in parentheses.<sup>13</sup> However,

7) »Die Anlage des Kommentares ist die einer modernen Katene« (author's foreword, 11; see also the editors' foreword, 8, which stresses the commentarial format: »... gerade dadurch das Desiderat eines umfassenden patristischen Kommentars zum Neuen Testament deutlich wird«).

8) There are occasional direct quotations given (in translation), but that is not the norm.

9) Karl Staab, *Pauluskommentare aus der Griechischen Kirche: aus Katechismenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben* (NTAbh 15; Münster: Aschendorff, 1933).

10) A series edited by Thomas C. Oden and published by InterVarsity Press.

11) A series edited by Robert Louis Wilken and published by Eerdmans.

12) Mary T. Clark, R. S. C. J., art. »Catena,« in E. Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Garland, 1998), 225. See also B. Neuschäfer, »Catena«, in Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings, eds., *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature* (trans. Matthew O'Connell; New York: Herder and Herder/Crossroad, 2000), 120, who distinguishes two types, the marginal catena and the »text catena«. In both cases they use »verbatim excerpts from individual commentaries, homilies, or other literary forms of exegetical explanation from selected church fathers.«

13) E. g., 125 on Gal 3:5 *δυνάμεις*, 219 on *ἀλλήγορόμενα*, but why not

I assume that the placement of the German translation in bold above the »commentary« is part of modern New Testament scholars' and students' commentarial habits (such as for the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*), and it is obviously also meant to be an echo of the medieval catenae. But employing this practice in this genre (commentary, not catena) can only give a false impression, because whatever text the ancient authors were commenting on (Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac) we can be sure it was not the translation given in German, and they were not, in fact, commenting on the same text, as this suggests.<sup>14</sup> I would urge that we simply cannot leave matters of text and translation out of reception history (and we do not want to!), and that the design of our tools needs to reflect this directly. What I would prefer is to give renderings of each verse or passage in at least Greek and Latin (with apparatus criticus), and an introductory section on translation issues (lexicography, idioms, syntactical ambiguities, stylistic features) and text-critical issues. Interpretation begins with philology (i. e., some understanding of which words are there and what they might mean) and every translation is an interpretation. The dynamic nature of the text of Galatians in late antiquity, and the role of textual criticism (especially in its more recent exciting transformations) in tracing the history of reception needs to be built into the design. Only then can such a commentary have an appropriately astute philological basis, without which the ancient Christian commentators – who were trained in these arts and practiced them on their sacred texts – cannot be fully comprehended or presented. Let me be clear: Meiser is not at all unaware of text-critical issues in the outworking of the commentary,<sup>15</sup> but my concern is that the format does not in a consistent or clear way incorporate them into the design.

Second, in terms of the translation chosen here, the commentarial habit would lead New Testament readers, for instance, to assume this is Meiser's own, and that the commentary below each lemma substantiates it or interacts with it. That is not, however, the case. Meiser here has chosen to use the common German translation, the *Einheitsübersetzung*, but he has also edited it at some key points, but silently (I only know this because I checked them all). As to why he did so, I might be able to intuit in certain cases (as I tracked the mind of the author), but I think it would be much better if he had explained these choices, and, more importantly, *integrated them into or defended them by his analysis of the ancient writers.*

Let me give one example. I regard Gal 1:11 as the thesis (or πρόθεσις) of Galatians (Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), and think that Paul has deliberately employed the phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπον in Gal 1:11 as a *triple entendre*, referring all at once to the *form* of the gospel (not in human rhetoric), the *source* of the gospel (not dependent upon human authority) and the *content*

διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in 2:16 (translated as an objective Genitive), or στοιχεῖα in 4:3, etc.?

14) Among Greek readers, Marcionites and »orthodox«, for instance, have different editions of the letter; in the Latin world are different translations, and also different levels of Greek knowledge that may or may not be involved in the interpretive work.

15) He includes text-critical discussions, for instance, at Gal 2:5 (86), Gal 3:14 (143) and Gal 4:21 (217), but these are not listed as such in the translation (in the former, parens are added around »nicht« in the translation, but without explanation), whereas »Variante« readings are included in the translation itself only once in the commentary, in brackets, on 3:19, where three different variants in this verse are offered (152). But why here and not elsewhere? Why aren't other variants mentioned more prominently (in the case of Marcion's deletions, mentioned in a footnote at p. 127 n. 226, on Gal 3:6–9, but not at Gal 3:15), or at all, as in the case of the ὑμεῖς/ἡμεῖς variant in Gal 4:28 (227)? I understand that choices need to be made; as reader I wished for some more information about the reasons underlying them.

of the gospel (not a human idea or revision, but God's plan, and a spiritual reality), and in my view Paul has in broad terms arranged the argument of the letter according to these headings. When I turned to this part of the commentary (63–65, on »Gal 1,11f., which refers to Gal 1,11–12«), I was eager to see how the patristic authors understand this key prepositional phrase, and if any of them see Paul making a word play here. Only by comparing with the Einheitsübersetzung was I able to see that Meiser made a telling silent correction to it, replacing its »stammt nicht von Menschen« with »ist nicht nach Menschenweise« (63), hence taking the phrase as referring to *form* rather than to *source* (b instead of a).

So after checking I know he is sensitive to the issue; but of course the German translation tells me nothing about the ancients. I wanted to learn how the various interpreters understood the phrase, or its Latin equivalent, *secundum hominem*, but the commentary is not set up quite to do that, because in this case, according to the usual procedure, the commentary turns from the German translation not first to scriptural exegesis, but to usage. In this case that means attending not to wording but to a *theme*, that of the *opposition between human and divine mediation*. First Meiser shows that this theme is used for Pauline apologetics by Tertullian and (»Folgezeit«) in Trinitarian arguments by Novatian, Marius Victorinus and Eusebius of Caesarea. Then he turns to »historical-critical« considerations (the quotes are his),<sup>16</sup> about which divine revelation Paul was speaking of (comments on Dionysius of Alexandria, Mani, and Augustine). Then last, he turns to the exegesis (»In der Schriftauslegung«), but focuses there on how interpreters see the verse functioning as a definitive response to the Galatians' worries or charges about whether Paul was divinely legitimated. Unfortunately, the commentary gives no attention to how they understand the phrase, κατὰ ἄνθρωπον.<sup>17</sup> Nor does this section serve to uphold Meiser's own rhetorical designation of 1:11–2:14 as the »narratio des Briefes«,<sup>18</sup> for the comments he chose to highlight under this theme do not attend to the literary function of verses 1:11–12 in the argument of Galatians proper. All are interesting, but there is a level of detachment from the wording of the text (and its place in the literary structure).

### 2.3 How are »Rezeptionslinien« conceived and identified?

As we have seen, the commentary is organized around such »lines of reception«. In the case of Gal 1:11 f., it appears that »lines of reception« refers to thematic clusters or major elements in various interpretations (here the broad topic of »divine versus human mediation«). There is no attempt made there to draw a direct line connecting Tertullian to Novatian or Eusebius; they are juxtaposed as evidencing the same trend in interpretation.

In other cases in the commentary, however, there is an effort (as there should be, in my view) to identify as lines of reception historical traditions that are passed on, identifiably, by one interpreter to another (such as Jerome's use of Origen, or Theodoret's use of John Chrysostom, or trends of eastern or western traditions). But these are two very different ways of conceiving a »line of reception«, which should be carefully differentiated and, further, substantiated according to conditions for historical proof, in the latter case, or on the very different grounds of convenience, comprehensiveness or suggestiveness (in that of the former). Further, in order to judge

<sup>16</sup> The scare quotes point to the key issue of how ancient historiography and modern are like and unlike. I would term what is being described here »biographical interests«, rather than historical-critical.

<sup>17</sup> Chrysostom (*comm. in Gal.* 1:10 [PG 61.626]), for instance, goes with source (like the original Einheitsübersetzung here).

<sup>18</sup> In contrast, e. g., to the final, *paraenetic* section, which is presented as following the general patristic judgment that it begins in 5:13 (see 255).

claims the commentary makes about the existence of specific historical »Rezeptionslinien«, I think it important to provide the readers of the volume with more information than they are given in the first part (13–42), to place the various interpreters in chronological order and in their historical relationships.

In the key section that introduces the commentaries on Galatians (37–41) there is a lack of consistency in providing dates, and the arrangement of authors does not always follow chronological order. No dates are given for the first three, Eusebius of Emesa, Ephraem or Chrysostom, but then dates are suddenly introduced with Marius Victorinus, who (oddly) follows Chrysostom (although M. V.'s commentary predates Chrysostom's [363–365 vs. 386–398]), but not for Ambrosiaster (366–384), who follows. A date is given for Jerome's commentary (386), and that of Augustine (394/395, but their comments on Galatians in other writings are not dated), nor for Pelagius (ca. 405) or Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 392–428) or Theodoret (ca. 450) or Cassiodorus (post 554) or Isidore of Seville (612–631, the last of whom did not write a commentary). Chrysostom is clearly out of chronological order, probably by the desire to list together the Latin commentators in the »Pauline renaissance« of the second half of the 4th century in the west, which is followed up by Ambrosiaster, Jerome and Augustine. But this has the unfortunate effect of separating Chrysostom from Theodore of Mopsuestia (his school-mate!) and Theodoret, who stand both without dates and apart from the Antiochene exegetical tradition of which they are a part. And, indeed, there are places in the commentary where this is absolutely crucial, such as the Antiochene interpretation of ἀλληγορούμενα in Gal 4:24, which, it must be noted, consistently from Diodore of Tarsus forward, maintained that Paul did not mean strictly ἀλληγορία by this term<sup>19</sup> (for the word is associated with what »pagan« Stoics do to the gods in the Homeric epics), but a figurative reading for which one could use other Pauline terms (like τύπος), or rebaptized philosophical ones like θεωρία. This »Rezeptionslinie« is of a very different nature than a merely thematic one, and to replicate the contentious debates among the ancient interpreters these »lines« need to be delineated differently.

### 2.4 Are Schriftgebrauch and Schrifterklärung really separate or separable in early Christian life and literature?

As we have noted, the governing analytical and organizational principle of Meiser's volume is the distinction he makes between »application use« (»Schriftgebrauch«) and »exegesis/interpretation« (Schrifterklärung). I am not sure this really or fully works, either in principle or in fact, when we look at the actual record of ancient Christian literature. Ancient exegesis is not confined to commentaries (it goes on also in treatises, apologetic writings, etc., which either make explicit exegetical arguments or are reliant upon some presumed exegetical decisions), and ancient commentaries engage routinely in »application«. Given time limits, a single example will have to suffice to demonstrate this point, so let's take up again Gal 4:24. Because that famous verse and the sub-argument of which it was a part (on the children of Sarah and Hagar) became a *locus classicus* for early Christian hermeneutical self-defense (not only by Origen but by all early Christian interpreters across the empire), it was *always* a matter *both of exegesis for application, and application based on exegesis*. Pauline precedent, as established here, could be appealed to time and again for all kinds of acts of patristic biblical interpretation, but not without an exegesis of what Paul was understood to have meant by the term ἀλληγορούμενα in itself and in context, as the example of Diodore – who invokes Gal 4:24 in the hermeneutical prologue to his commentary on the Psalms – demonstrates.<sup>20</sup>

So why even use this distinction between application and interpretation in the commentary? The justification Meiser gives for this key structural and me-

<sup>19</sup> Here the Einheitsübersetzung (replicated in the commentary) effaces the issue, translating »darin liegt ein tieferer Sinn« (219), which may not alert the modern reader to the ancient issue and its stakes.

<sup>20</sup> A fuller explication of the way Paul functions as the hermeneutical model for patristic authors can be found in Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

thodological principle of the volume is a mere two sentences in the Vorwort: »Unterschieden wird zwischen Schriftgebrauch (Applikation) und Schrifterklärung: Ersterer besteht in der Bewegung von den *res* zu den *verba*; die *res* (Glaubensbekenntnis und Liebesgebot) werden durch biblische *verba* erläutert und bewiesen. Die Schrifterklärung geht von den *verba* aus und sucht zu den *res* zu gelangen« (13–14). This *res/verba* relation is a pithy formulation (with a fraught but unmentioned history of debate including, *inter alia*, Plato's *Cratylus*, the Stoics, Augustine's *de doctrina christiana*, the Reformers, and down through modern and post modern hermeneutics), but it is surely oversimplified and often defied in actual ancient engagement with scripture. The early Christian interpreters fashioned a world-view and ultimately a socio-political culture that takes its reference points from these texts. Neither application nor exegesis is unidirectional, as this suggests, between biblical words and the contents of faith, but the two are intimately and, I would suggest, inseparably linked (the love command, after all, to say nothing of the Λόγος [!] is both *res* and *verbum*).

Despite this theological rationale, there are also signs in the commentary that Meiser himself found the dichotomy between *Schriftgebrauch* and *Schriftauslegung* at points unworkable.<sup>21</sup> For example, his description of ancient commentary acknowledges that the commentaries are not only interested in identifying Paul's opponents, but using his self-definition for their own tasks of apologetics and polemics.<sup>22</sup> And in places the distinction breaks down in the organization of the material, as »Schriftgebrauch« is interposed into sections on »Schriftauslegung«, or other forms of order are interposed for certain sections, such as Gnostic versus »great church«,<sup>23</sup> or divisions among half verses.<sup>24</sup> In a particular way, this distinction becomes utterly unworkable in the »paraenetic section« of Gal 5:13–6:10, for patristic re-usage and interpretation are completely merged in the task of *paraenetic interpretation*.<sup>25</sup> And the forcing of these categories to say that one or the other (Scriptural-use or Scriptural-interpretation) appears first in history or that one is more apposite to one half of a verse than another, seems an over-narrow parsing of the evidence.

#### 2.5 How are relevance or importance measured?

One of the pressures of the commentarial format is the felt need to comment on each verse. One can certainly understand why that is the case (though in medieval catenae not all verses are always covered). But one of the difficulties here is through this medium to try to demonstrate the *proportionality of importance* of different phrases, verses, arguments or passages of Galatians in ancient Christian literary and religious culture. This point comes back to my first, for one wonders how much the choices here replicate the volume of ancient material on a given verse, and how much Meiser's own judgment about what is »relevant« and »important«. <sup>26</sup> For instance,

21) For example, at Gal 3:6–9 (see 126): »Applikation und Kommentierungen dieser Verse sind zweckmäßigerweise im Zusammenhang darzustellen« (126, apparently a reference both to the categories of analysis and to the four verses). But why here and not elsewhere? Is this passage really that unusual within Galatians (especially since it begins an argument on Abraham that continues for much of chapters 3 and 4)?

22) P. 37, with a footnote, which recognizes that Paul's own self-definition against »Judaism« functions for their self-definition against »Judaizers«, Arians and Anomoeans, but that recognition is not allowed to mitigate the distinction. The problem with the statement given is that, while it is true that the theological interests of the Christian authors did not prohibit their interest in the historical moment of Paul's writing and of his readers, they also were not separable from the way in which they approached the latter.

23) The organization of the section on Gal 5:13, e. g., is confusing, because unlike categories are aligned (1 [gnostic], 2 [»great church«] and 3 [»Schriftauslegung«]), become 1, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, with 2.1–3 being thematically, not methodologically, divided, mixing exegetical attention, such as the semantics of δουλεύω, with application, to Trinitarian polemic). It is interesting that at that moment the terms *Schriftgebrauch* and *Schriftauslegung* are italicized for emphasis! (255; they are not usually italicized as such).

24) On Gal 5:10 we have a division of the verse in two (10a and 10b), with the judgment that *Schriftgebrauch* applies predominantly to 10b and *Schriftauslegung* to 10a. Is the verse really so divisible, and are the two tasks so separable?

25) For instance, on Gal 5:19–21, Basil's *moralia* and *regulae brevius tractatae* are listed under point 2, »Exegetische Arbeit am Text« (275–277).

26) Such choices obviously have to be made in any such undertaking, and Meiser is to be praised for the wealth of material he has included here.

to return once more to an earlier example, a total of about two and a half pages (214–216), is devoted to the role of the participle ἀλληγορούμενα (and apostolic exegetical practice) in Gal 4:21–31, but ten are given to the Christological and Mariological uses of Gal 4:4 (179–189). One has to ask here, whose definition of importance is being represented? There is no one right answer to this question, but more explanation of the rationale for the choices would itself be a hermeneutical contribution to the reader who seeks to assess the material and the way in which it has been here interpreted. That relates also to the five audiences envisioned by the series editors. My impression is that overall church historians, theologians and those interested in church and world are more in mind than, say, literary historians, but this example is a place where all converge, for the history of ancient *allegoresis* is extremely important to literary critics and cultural historians, and Paul, because of Gal 4:24, is a part of it, whether a cause for embrace or embarrassment in the history of reception.<sup>27</sup>

#### 2.6 When does the history of reception of Galatians begin?

According to the present volume, it begins with Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna (14, »Nachapostolische Briefliteratur«).<sup>28</sup> With this categorization Meiser enshrines the assumption that the history of reception of Galatians begins outside of what will (later) become the canonical New Testament. But this is questionable, and it represents a lost opportunity to discuss some of the most vibrant lines of research in contemporary scholarship, into »inner-biblical interpretation«, and the use of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers<sup>29</sup> (some documents of which are contemporary with late New Testament texts, which are also »post apostolic«). What about the interpretation of Galatians in the deutero-Paulines (e. g., Col 2:20 with Gal 4:3, 9<sup>30</sup>) or even in Romans<sup>31</sup>, or in James<sup>32</sup>, or in Acts<sup>33</sup>? Even if Meiser is inclined to doubt such an influence, the issue requires more attention. This, too, goes to audience, for these are the texts that most New Testament scholars and exegetes know best, outside of the canonical New Testament.

27) See, e. g., Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 127.

28) I would also argue that the presence of Galatians in other writings in the apostolic fathers, such as 1 Clement, merits more discussion than a single footnote (14 n. 9).

29) E. g., Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett, eds., *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers and The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford University Press, 2005, hence probably too late to be included here, but the issue has long been on the table, of course).

30) Discussion in Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum*, (BHT 58; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 117, etc. For more recent developments in the methodology of studying Pauline intertextuality, see, e. g., Annette Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus: Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe* (NTOA 52; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

31) That Paul reworked arguments from Galatians in the later letter to the Romans is widely recognized. Of course, this is itself a huge issue that could take over the commentary, but some mention of it might help scholars and students to think more broadly about the whole issue of text-reception.

32) James 2:14–26 is often regarded as a response to Pauline teaching about Abraham, faith and works, which obviously points to Galatians 3–4 (and Romans). For discussion of this controversial topic (of direct or indirect influence), and a different proposal, see Margaret M. Mitchell, »The Letter of James as a Document of Paulinism?« In R. L. Webb and J. S. Kloppenborg, eds., *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James* (T & T Clark, 2007), 75–98.

33) The issue of knowledge of some Pauline letters by Luke has been thrown back on the table recently by Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 2006).

### 2.7 *When or how does it end?*

I found the ending, with a scant seven lines of comment on Gal 6:18, anticlimactic. Aside from the decision about how this commentary should end (or any commentary should), the larger evaluative question this raises is: how is this volume on the history of reception of Galatians in late antiquity – with all of its careful attention to fine points as well as scope – larger than the sum of its parts?

For all the splendid detail and documentation here, the reader may yearn for some more synthetic discussion, especially at the conclusion, situating this commentary and the commentators it surveys in the full context of Galatians interpreters, charting how we got from Paul to his late antique and early medieval readers, on the one hand, and from them toward the Reformation, early modern, Enlightenment and (post)modern periods.<sup>34</sup> After all the terrain he has traversed, this is a missed opportunity to hear from the author. Once the verse by verse or *pericope by pericope* discussions have been presented to the reader, it would have been highly illuminating to have some more analytical comments at a higher level of abstraction and integration about the challenges and opportunities Galatians offered to its patristic interpreters, and about the delimiting factors of their use of it. For instance, are there consistent patterns of interpretation and use in the east and in the west (among Greek and among Latin commentators)? Does the interpretation of Galatians as catalogued here reveal elements of early Christian exegetical practice that have been neglected in traditional accounts or in recent revisionary ones, such as those by David Dawson, Frances Young, Elizabeth Clark (in general, the volume misses the opportunity to engage such important works, which is lamentable in both directions)?

How do ancient interpreters understand Paul's rhetoric, and how do they replicate or repudiate it in their own? How do exegetes of Galatians construct the most salient context for reading it, what the ancients would call the *ὁλόθεσις* (the whole letter, the *corpus Paulinum*, with Acts as a major factor, within the full «biblical records»), and how does that affect interpretive outcomes (and vice versa)? How does the relationship between what Nils Dahl helpfully called the «particularity» and the «universality» of the Pauline letter<sup>35</sup> that is Galatians get played out in its late antique reception? How does that impact the way in which they apply Pauline polemic or apologetics to their own respective situations? To what degree do commentators use Romans and other Pauline letters to interpret Galatians? With what other «cluster-texts» is it most often paired, and what is the effect of that?<sup>36</sup> How does literary analysis inform theological analysis for ancient interpreters, and vice versa? How does ancient interpretive practice inform the modern (I agree on the humility that rightly comes from seeing that our insights are rarely new, but where do we go from there?)? And, coming back to the purpose of the series and this kick-off volume: How do the tasks of collection and evaluation relate to one another? On what basis might we judge what we see in the ancients, and how should it affect what we do? Again, I would like to know more of the *mind of the compiler*, Meiser, who has amassed such a huge wealth of experience from the extensive research that went into this volume, and has great potential for informing these larger questions.

So let me end where I began, with the lauds properly due to this scholarly book which, despite these questions (ones that in many cases are inherent to the enterprise, with its multiple voices in antiquity and multiple audiences today), performs an inestimable

<sup>34</sup> This is done in a stunning fashion in John Riches' volume, *Galatians through the Centuries* (Blackwell's Bible Commentaries; Malden, MA-Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Nils Astrup Dahl, «The Particularity of the Pauline Epistles as a Problem in the Ancient Church,» in *Neotestamentica et patristica*, FS Oscar Cullmann (NovTSup 6; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 161–171.

<sup>36</sup> Here we need a tool that is a kind of *Biblia Patristica* that includes not just the citations of the «atoms» (of individual lemmata) but also allows scholars to see the «molecules» (of text passages that are frequently invoked in tandem by ancient exegetes, and hence constitute new text-clusters).

service to us who are interested in early Christian biblical reception. There is no doubt that Meiser's *Galater* is a major achievement and will remain a valuable tool in the ongoing work of engaging early Christian biblical interpretation for years to come.

Martin Meiser

### My «Galatians» in (self-)critical review

Different eras, different fields of reception research and different intended readers shape the distinct profiles of the four recently published commentary series concerning the history of reception and interpretation of Biblical texts, viz. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, *Blackwell's Commentary Series*, *The Church's Bible*, *Novum Testamentum Patristicum (NTP)*. There is no competition between these series; indeed, they complement each other. But the newly awakened interest in reception history also stands in need of critical self-reflection. Margret M. Mitchell's critique of my commentary on Galatians is to be appreciated as an impulse in this direction.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. On the tenor of the inquiries

Mitchell's critical inquiries seem to me to demonstrate a common tenor that is expressed above all in her last point (2.7). In my commentary on Galatians Mitchell wishes for a more intensive methodological reflection of my way of proceeding, clearer information about the intention which guided my work and a greater amount of hermeneutical reflections embedding the presented material in overarching – and current – contexts of discussion of various kinds.

I would first like to couch my reply to this in an image. Coal, in modern times, is useful in two main ways: We can burn it in a power station in order to produce electric energy, and we can use it in order to make steel. The one thing is the production of energy, which can then have a beneficial effect on exegetical work, writing sermons, working on cultural studies topics, etc. The other thing is to make steel, even high-grade steel, which can then be used in order to engage in discussion with other scholars, for example on allegory and typology. But what differs fundamentally from both of these things is this: to be the miner and to prepare the coal for transport either to the power station or to the steelworks. But just that was my modest aim.

The following remarks relate to Mitchell's review in a way that is feasible and meaningful from the perspective of this objective.

#### 2. The outline of my commentary

a) Mitchell first raised the problem of genre with regard to this book. The intention behind the reference to «catena» in my foreword was only to give the reason for the outline of this book: After an introductory overview, the individual pericopes and verses and parts of verses are commented on with regard to ancient Christian reception; each section is introduced by a summary concerning the contents of the following. Two reasons were decisive for this outline: 1. Ancient Christian authors sometimes take up only one verse or even only one part of a verse for the sake of application, irrespective of the Biblical context; 2. We felt the necessity of providing quick information for the readers; therefore we decided to give the intro-

<sup>1</sup> I very sincerely thank Dr. Kelley Kucaba for the intensive editing of my English and Prof. Angelika Reichert for the intensive discussion of my article.

ductory overview.<sup>2</sup> The problem of whether to use pericopes, verses or parts of verses as the basis for presentation is a real one. In the footsteps of the ancient sceptic Pyrrhon of Elis I presented the material along the line of what seemed to me most commensurate with ancient Christian reception. Sometimes I stated the reason for my decisions, but it is true that more such explanations would have been useful.<sup>3</sup>

b) Mitchell's second question deals with the problem of text, translation, and interpretation. In the NTP group we discussed whether we should offer a translation for the reader or the Greek or Latin text, but in the latter case the problem emerged as to which particular ancient version should be included and what form a critical apparatus should take. Due to the limited space we could not reproduce the wealth of variants presented in a forthcoming volume of *Editio critica maior* of the Greek New Testament or in the »Vetus Latina«. For ecumenical reasons we chose the »Einheitsübersetzung«. In some cases, however, a change in wording proved unavoidable. These, of course – in this Mitchell is right – should have been noted and a brief reason given.

c) Mitchell's third question deals with the distinction between thematic clusters and »historical traditions that are passed on, identifiably, by one interpreter to another«, a distinction that becomes important, for example, in the Antiochene interpretation of the ἀλληγορούμενα (Gal 4:24). To be sure, the Antiochene provenience of Diodore of Tarsus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mop-sueste and Theodoret of Cyrus was not unknown to me,<sup>4</sup> but a greater amount of information would certainly have been helpful, especially for non-theologians.

### 3. The beginning of the reception of Galatians

Where is the starting point of reception? In her sixth question Mitchell proposed discussing in our series its beginning within the New Testament itself, in the case of Galatians within the Pauline literature and within James and Acts. In our project, however, we decided to be guided by the ancient, not the modern point of view. According to Origen Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans in a higher degree of spiritual perfection than the letters to the Corinthians<sup>5</sup> – he does not include Galatians in this comparison. The question of the order in which Paul wrote his letters was seldom discussed. John Chrysostom dates the letter to the Galatians before the letter to the Romans. Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>6</sup> proposes dating Galatians after Romans. But these questions are of no real importance for the exegesis. Concerning the issue of the reception of Paul in Acts, we have to keep the hermeneutical presuppositions of ancient Christian exegesis in mind: Texts like Acts 13:38; 14:15–17; 17:22–31; 20:18–35 are regarded as Paul's, not Luke's. The ancient Christian point of view concerning the relationship between Paul and James can be exemplified by the work of the Venerable Bede: According to this exegete James wants to wipe out a misunderstanding by some people concerning Rom 3:28,<sup>7</sup> and that is a process of reception of Paul by James; yet for Bede the consensus

between Paul, James and John with regard to the command of love is a case of Biblical harmony. Therefore it would be inappropriate to impose the lenses of modern critical scholarship on Bede's exegesis.

### 4. Application and explanation

Most important in my view is Mitchell's fourth question concerning application and exegesis, »Schriftgebrauch« and »Schrifterklärung«. To be sure, the problem *verba et res* is a very difficult thing. Further, commentators are indeed also engaged in polemics and admonitions to the readers of their own time, and the process of reception is very often based on a specific way of exegesis. Application and explanation are by no means to be strictly separated from one another since they both are grounded in a global hermeneutics. Yet I see different nuances: Their aim is different, and the practice of dealing with texts is different as well.

This is not peculiar to Christianity, but has its Greco-Roman roots in the dual nature of the reception of Homer. The mythographer Herakleitos<sup>8</sup> and Dio of Prusa<sup>9</sup> praised Homer as a source for moral instruction – despite Plato's verdict<sup>10</sup> – but Zenodot and Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarch dealt with Homer concerning issues of philological and literary criticism.<sup>12</sup> Jewish life is in general oriented to writings that are regarded as normative for the distinct groups within Judaism, but Demetrius, in the third century B. C. E., transfers the Hellenistic genre of »Questions and Answers« to the interpretation of the Torah in order to find answers to questions that occur to a careful reader, and the Hellenistic genre of »Questions and Answers« is used by ancient Christian authors as well. Origen and many exegetes along with him justify their spiritual interpretation of the Bible by quoting Gal 4:24,<sup>13</sup> but the Antiochene exegetes and Jerome deal with the *term* ἀλληγορούμενα.<sup>14</sup> It happens that precisely the text from Diodore's of Tarsus *comm. in psalmos* that is quoted by Mitchell (footnote 19) cannot be appreciated without distinguishing between application and exegesis. Some authors use Gal 1:8 with its curse in order to attack other authors as heretics, whereas other exegetes ask why Paul uses such a harsh formulation. Some authors quote Gal 1:1 in order to prove the co-equal divinity of Jesus Christ or of the Holy Spirit, other authors like Ambrosiaster ask why Paul in his situation over against the Galatians uses this wording and no other.<sup>15</sup>

To extend this issue beyond Galatians: Jerome offers insights into textual criticism in referring to possible sources of mistakes in transmission; for example, confusion between  $\gamma$  and  $\gamma$ <sup>16</sup> is an explanation for some variants analogous to the modern way of explanation. Cassiodor, in his commentary on Psalms, refers to Ps 33 (34):21 *custodit Dominus omnia ossa eorum* (»The Lord will guard all their bones«) not as literal but as spiritual truth. His argument is

8) The Venerable Bede, in Iac., CC.SL 121, 197.

9) Herakleitos Quaest. Hom. 7–78, Platonismus in der Antike, Vol. 2, Heinrich Dörrie (ed.): Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1990, 44.

10) Dio of Prusa, Or. 53.11.

11) Plato, *de re publica* 398ab, 599b.

12) Cf. Hartmut Erbse (ed.), *Scholias Graeca in Homeris Iliadem* (Scholia Vetera), Berlin 1969 ff.

13) Sometimes other authors as well use Gal 4:24 in order to justify an allegorical reading of a story which is not really interesting in the literal sense, cf. The Venerable Bede, *expos. in Act.* 20,7–110, CC.SL 121, 81.

14) John Chrysostom, *comm. in Gal.* (PG 61, 662); Theodoret of Cyrus, in Gal., PG 82, 489 D – 492 D; Jerome, in Gal., CC.SL 77 A, 139.

15) Ambrosiaster, in Gal. 1,9,1, CSEL 81/3, 10.

16) Jerome, in Os. 1,2,10, CC.SL 76, 23; id., in Am. 1,1,3, CC.SL 76, 212f. 216 f.; id., *comm. in Eccl.* 8,6, CC.SL 72, 316; id., in Ier. 3,55,1, CC.SL 74, 150.

2) Cf. the similar structure of the »Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture«.

3) Concerning Gal 2:19 f. I tried to find the proper way in light of the fact that sometimes both verses, sometimes only one of them is quoted – the wealth of material justifies a splitting in any case.

4) Prof. Mitchell also rightly criticized the order of the explanations of the commentary on Galatians by John Chrysostom.

5) Origen, in Rom., *prooem.* Origenis (lat.).

6) Theodoret of Cyrus, *opp. Paul.*, *praefatio* (PG 82, 41 BC); John of Damascus, in Gal. (PG 95, 821 B).

7) The Venerable Bede, in Iac., CC.SL 121, 198.

that the fate of the martyrs would contradict a literal interpretation.<sup>17</sup> This argument emphasizes the aim of congruence between reality and text and has its analogy in the efforts of Alexandrian philologists to produce a Homeric text »fitting« to reality. Eusebius of Caesarea comments on Ps 69:23 (»Let the table become a trap for them«) as follows: 1. This does not correspond historically to David's life.<sup>18</sup> 2. This must be interpreted in a special way if it is to be interpreted as the speech of Christ: It is neither wish nor commandment but prediction. Eusebius wants to avoid the contradiction to Jesus' commandment of loving one's enemies (Mt 5:44).<sup>19</sup> Again we have to underline the analogy to pagan prosopographic exegesis; in addition, the commandment of love aroused anti-Christian polemicists, who made critical remarks for example about Paul's rebuke against his adversaries in Gal 5:12.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, some elements of ancient application can also be stimulating for our modern exegesis. This can be illustrated by the word group »cross«: Distance to the world and self-denial are constantly recurring motifs in ancient Christian devotional literature. Important Biblical references are Gal 2:19; 5:24; 6:14, combined with Mt 16:24. This ancient Christian combination may appear strange from the standpoint of modern exegesis. On the other hand, a glance at the concordance yields a surprising result: The word group σταυρός, whenever it does not explicitly refer to the historical cross of Jesus in Jerusalem, is always found in a context with which the topic of self-denial can be associated in one way or another. This ascertainment implies that, in modern Pauline exegesis, more attention must again be paid to this topic together with the role-model function of Christ.

#### 5. The proportionality of importance and the criteria for selection

Mitchell inquired into the criteria that guided the selection and the weighting of the presented material. Admittedly, the problem of proportionality in selection is a real one. What were my criteria for inclusion and exclusion? Quality played no role as a criterion for selection, either in our modern or even in the ancient sense. Further, I did not exclude receptions that are inconsistent with our theological and ideological criticism; for we must also present the problematic interpretations in order to avoid any misuse of our agenda, which is to take into account, and not suppress, the voices of ancient exegesis in modern interpretation. – The criteria for selection were threefold: a distinct manner of reception, a distinct theme of reception, and influence. The criteria for excluding receptions were twofold: 1. superfluous repetition, 2. disproportion between the necessary efforts to clarify a reception for our readers and the actual intellectual gain. Therefore not all material concerning Old Testament allegory could be presented, for example.

Mitchell pointed out that there is by no means an interpretation for every verse or part of a verse in medieval catenae. The matter is similar, one should add, with regard to many ancient Christian commentaries. In any case, it was my aim to inform the reader whether or not there existed any act of reception to an individual verse. Second, it was not my intention to underrepresent Gnostic or other so-called heretic material – I collected what I could find, yet we all know, for example, that a proper reconstruction of Marcion's teaching is difficult; I used the cautious reconstruction of Ulrich

Schmid at this point.<sup>21</sup> Third, my short comment on Gal 4:21–31 as a whole centres on the explicit references to Gal 4:24 – the theme of typology and allegory is a very broad one and is very often based on other Biblical references. To my mind, reasons of space make it impossible to treat the topics of typology and allegory fully within the framework of such a commentary to the degree of differentiation due to them (cf. my comments on Cassiodor and Eusebius above) and with the inclusion of recent debate. But this concerns the question of the objective of the commentary series as a whole.

#### 6. The wealth of material and the aim of this commentary

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that the fate of the martyrs would contradict a literal interpretation.<sup>17</sup> This argument emphasizes the aim of congruence between reality and text and has its analogy in the efforts of Alexandrian philologists to produce a Homeric text »fitting« to reality. Eusebius of Caesarea comments on Ps 69:23 (»Let the table become a trap for them«) as follows: 1. This does not correspond historically to David's life.<sup>18</sup> 2. This must be interpreted in a special way if it is to be interpreted as the speech of Christ: It is neither wish nor commandment but prediction. Eusebius wants to avoid the contradiction to Jesus' commandment of loving one's enemies (Mt 5:44).<sup>19</sup> Again we have to underline the analogy to pagan prosopographic exegesis; in addition, the commandment of love aroused anti-Christian polemicists, who made critical remarks for example about Paul's rebuke against his adversaries in Gal 5:12.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, some elements of ancient application can also be stimulating for our modern exegesis. This can be illustrated by the word group »cross«: Distance to the world and self-denial are constantly recurring motifs in ancient Christian devotional literature. Important Biblical references are Gal 2:19; 5:24; 6:14, combined with Mt 16:24. This ancient Christian combination may appear strange from the standpoint of modern exegesis. On the other hand, a glance at the concordance yields a surprising result: The word group σταυρός, whenever it does not explicitly refer to the historical cross of Jesus in Jerusalem, is always found in a context with which the topic of self-denial can be associated in one way or another. This ascertainment implies that, in modern Pauline exegesis, more attention must again be paid to this topic together with the role-model function of Christ.

#### 5. The proportionality of importance and the criteria for selection

Mitchell inquired into the criteria that guided the selection and the weighting of the presented material. Admittedly, the problem of proportionality in selection is a real one. What were my criteria for inclusion and exclusion? Quality played no role as a criterion for selection, either in our modern or even in the ancient sense. Further, I did not exclude receptions that are inconsistent with our theological and ideological criticism; for we must also present the problematic interpretations in order to avoid any misuse of our agenda, which is to take into account, and not suppress, the voices of ancient exegesis in modern interpretation. – The criteria for selection were threefold: a distinct manner of reception, a distinct theme of reception, and influence. The criteria for excluding receptions were twofold: 1. superfluous repetition, 2. disproportion between the necessary efforts to clarify a reception for our readers and the actual intellectual gain. Therefore not all material concerning Old Testament allegory could be presented, for example.

Mitchell pointed out that there is by no means an interpretation for every verse or part of a verse in medieval catenae. The matter is similar, one should add, with regard to many ancient Christian commentaries. In any case, it was my aim to inform the reader whether or not there existed any act of reception to an individual verse. Second, it was not my intention to underrepresent Gnostic or other so-called heretic material – I collected what I could find, yet we all know, for example, that a proper reconstruction of Marcion's teaching is difficult; I used the cautious reconstruction of Ulrich

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