

Beware the Dogs! The Phallic Epithet in Phil 3.2*

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The scholarly trope that ancient Jews commonly referred to gentiles as ‘dogs’ has coloured exegesis of Phil 3.2 for centuries. This view gave rise to the interpretation that when Paul calls his opponents ‘dogs’, he is ironically inverting the epithet and using it to identify them as Jews. The present article provides a critical assessment of this interpretation and evaluates the data that has been used to justify this claim. I then provide a new interpretation of how Paul is employing the term ‘dog’ in Phil 3.2. On the basis of its broader usage in the Greek-speaking world and the context related to circumcision in Phil 3.2, I propose that Paul is using ‘dog’ as a vulgar, phallic epithet for his opponents.

Keywords: dogs, κύων, Philippians 3.2, circumcision, phallic epithet

Beware the dogs! Beware the evil workers! Beware the mutilation! For it is we who are the circumcision; the ones who worship by the *pneuma* of God and boast in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. (Phil 3.2–3)

1. Introduction

The scholarly trope that ancient Jews commonly referred to gentiles as dogs has coloured interpretations of Philippians 3 for centuries. Since Paul marks out his opponents as ‘evil workers’ and ‘the mutilation’ – invectives that have been understood as denoting his opponents as Jews – scholars have made sense of Paul’s use of ‘dog’ by interpreting it as an ironic inversion of a supposed Jewish slur about gentiles.¹ Thus goes the reading offered by Gerald Hawthorne: ‘Paul now hurls this term of contempt back on the heads of its authors; for to Paul

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¹ E.g. O. Michel, ‘Κύων, Κυνάρπιον’, *TDNT* III.1103; P. Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Philippiens* (CNT 10; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950) 60; F. W. Horn, ‘Der Verzicht auf die Beschneidung im frühen Christentum’, *NTS* 42 (1996) 479–505, at 501.

the Jews who promoted their ethnic identity were the real pariahs that defile the holy community, the Christian church, with their erroneous teaching.² The roots of this interpretive tradition can be traced back 1,600 years to Chrysostom's homily on Philippians 3, in which he writes:

But whom does [Paul] style 'dogs'? There were at this place some of those, whom he hints at in all his Epistles, base and contemptible Jews, greedy of vile lucre and fond of power, who, desiring to draw aside many of the faithful, preached both Christianity and Judaism at the same time, corrupting the Gospel. As then they were not easily discernible, therefore he says, 'beware of the dogs': the Jews are no longer children; *once the Gentiles were called dogs, but now the Jews.*³

For the most part, this is how interpreters have understood Paul's invective ever since. By closing off interpretive opportunities, this widely adopted perspective has pigeonholed readers of Philippians for centuries. Only in the past decade or so have scholars begun to question this often cited assumption by returning *ad fontes* and investigating the data behind this claim.⁴ Recent studies on the place of dogs in the ancient Near East, Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, Greco-Roman world and the New Testament challenge this prevailing interpretation by demonstrating the lack of evidence for such claims and contest the perceived consensus of New Testament scholars on the status of dogs in the ancient world.⁵ Through an investigation of the sources, exegetes can cast off the

2 G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (rev. Ralph P. Martin; WBC 43; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004) 174.

3 John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of St Paul to the Philippians* (NPNF¹ 13.230; emphasis added). See also John Chrysostom, *Homilies against the Jews*, 1.11.1-2.

4 John Reumann notes how scholars often state that Jews referred to gentiles as dogs but remarks that 'there is less documentation than might be supposed' (*Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 461). The main works that challenge this assumption are M. D. Nanos, 'Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles "Dogs" (Philippians 3.2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?', *BibInt* 17 (2009) 448-82; M. Thiessen, 'Gentiles as Impure Animals in the Writings of Early Christ Followers', *Perceiving the Other in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. M. B.-A. Siegal, W. Grünstäudl and M. Thiessen; WUNT 394; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 19-32.

5 For an overview of dogs in the ancient world, see K. F. Kitchell Jr, *Animals in the Ancient World from A to Z* (London: Routledge, 2014) 47-53. For specialist treatments, see J. Schwartz, 'Dogs in Jewish Society in the Second Temple Period and in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud', *JJS* 55 (2004) 246-77; G. D. Miller, 'Attitudes Toward Dogs in Ancient Israel: a Reassessment', *JSOT* 32 (2008) 487-500; C. Franco, *Shameless: The Canine and the Feminine in Ancient Greece* (trans. M. Fox; Oakland: University of California Press, 2014); K. Stone, *Reading the Hebrew Bible with Animal Studies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018) 45-65; F. Tutrone, 'Barking at the Threshold: Cicero, Lucretius, and the Ambiguous Status of Dogs in Roman Culture', *Impious Dogs, Haughty Foxes and Exquisite Fish: Evaluative Perception and*

hermeneutical chains that were imposed by an interpretive tradition which can be traced back to Chrysostom and new, innovative interpretations of the dogs in Philippians 3.2 can be explored. Additionally, a new understanding of the epithet can open up space for new readings of the following invectives in this puzzling passage, and, subsequently, the identity of the opponents. This article seeks to challenge this prevailing interpretation and to offer a new understanding of Paul's employment of the term dog. First, we will discuss the usage of 'dog' in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic texts. Second, we will turn to the Gospels and Mark and Matthew's use of 'dog'. Lastly, we will offer a new direction forward for how we should understand Paul's employment of the term 'dog' in Philippians 3.

2. The Deconstruction of an Ideological Tale: Dogs in Ancient Jewish Sources

To assess the claim that Jews were in the habit of referring to gentiles as 'dogs', one must return to the sources to see if they can sufficiently establish it. The first and only major work to undertake the task of fully evaluating this trope is Mark Nanos' 2009 *Biblical Interpretation* article, 'Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles "Dogs" (Philippians 3.2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?'.⁶ In this article, Nanos concludes that no ancient Jewish sources can offer support for this common claim. Examining pre-rabbinic sources, one finds that the term 'dog' is used to refer to a variety of things: actual dogs (Deut 23.19;⁷ Judg 7.5; 1 Sam 17.43; 24.14; 1 Kgs 14.11; 16.4; 21.19–24; Job 30.1; Tob 6.2; 11.4; Jdt 11.19), enemies (Ps 22.16; 59.6), as a metaphor for a place of lowliness (2 Sam 3.8; 9.8; 2 Kgs 8.13) and as a general insult (2 Sam 16.9; Prov 26.11).⁸ Surprising for some, 'dog' can also be used negatively to

Interpretation of Animals in Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean Thought (ed. T. Schmidt and J. Pahlitzsch; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019) 73–102.

6 This article has since been republished in M. Nanos, *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism: Collected Essays of Mark Nanos* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017) iv.111–41.

7 A common translation of כלב / ἄλλαγμα κυνός in Deut 23.19 is 'male prostitute' (e.g. NRSV). This interpretation is unlikely and 'dog's price' is to be preferred (Miller, 'Attitudes toward Dogs', 497). While in the broader context of the passage the parallel between female and male prostitutes in 23.18 could carry over into 23.19, this is probably not the case. This usage of כלב is unattested elsewhere and does not have any other ancient parallels. It is likely that a 'dog's price' simply refers to the money associated with selling a dog, and – for unknown reasons – this money is not to be offered in the temple. This interpretation is also attested by Josephus, *Ant.* 4.206.

8 These references are not exhaustive, but merely illustrative of the range of meaning in pre-rabbinic Jewish sources.

refer to Israelites (2 Sam 16.9; Isa 56.10–11). These generic uses of ‘dog’ are also echoed by Josephus and Philo, with no clear instances of the term being used to signify gentiles qua gentiles.⁹ From surveying these pre-rabbinic texts, it is clear that there is no evidence which predates Paul and lends credibility to the idea that ancient Jews were in the habit of referring to gentiles as ‘dogs’.

In addition to these texts, some scholars also cite rabbinic literature to substantiate this trope. For example, in their commentaries, Gordon Fee and Gerald Hawthorne both cite Midrash Tanchuma *Terumah* 3 to support their claim that Jews referred to gentiles as ‘dogs’ because of their unscrupulous behaviour,¹⁰ but a close reading of the text does not support such a claim. In this text, R. Akiba has a dream about two dogs, one named Rufus and the other Rufina. Upon relaying this dream to the Roman governor Tineius Rufus, he accuses Akiba of treason for saying such things about him and his wife. As Akiba goes on to point out, he does not call Rufus and his wife ‘dogs’ because they are unclean, Torah-less gentiles, but he does so to illustrate the folly of their idol-centric cult.¹¹ Just as Rufus abhors being called a ‘dog’, so too does God abhor idols being given his name. The employment of the term ‘dog’ is used here for illustrative purposes and lends no evidence in favour of the motif at hand. Similarly, David E. Garland and Markus Bockmuehl cite m. Ned 4.3 and m. Bek 5.6 in attempts to demonstrate the equation of gentiles with dogs.¹² Both of these texts mention animal carcasses and either selling them to gentiles or feeding them to dogs. While gentiles and dogs are mentioned in the same breath, they are not equated. In m. Ned. 4.3, the concern is about what can be done with a carcass that is unfit for Jews to use; the answer is that it can be sold to gentiles or fed to dogs. In m. Bek. 5.6, the issue at hand relates to making restitution for meat that has been improperly inspected and either sold to gentiles or fed to dogs. Neither of these texts use the term ‘dog’ to refer to a gentile, but they are mentioned alongside one another because Jewish dietary laws did not apply to them and therefore issues pertaining to them and food required specific guidance. In addition to these texts, Nanos’ exploration of dogs in rabbinic literature

9 Philo uses the term ‘dogs’ to describe treacherous and hypocritical enemies who have occupied Palestine and Syria (*Good Person* 89–91). In *On the Special Laws* 4.91, gluttonous banquet behaviour is described as being dog-like. Josephus and Philo both comment on Egyptians’ false worship of dogs (*Embassy* 139; *Ag. Ap.* 2.85). Many of the references to dogs in Josephus’ *Antiquities* mirror those found in the Hebrew Bible.

10 G. D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 295 n. 44; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 174. Both authors also cite the relevant ‘dog’ texts found in Str-B 1.724–6.

11 Pace A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 367.

12 D. E. Garland, ‘The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors’, *NovT* 27 (1985) 141–73, at 167 n. 92; M. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1997) 186.

demonstrates that gentiles are not called ‘dogs’ anywhere in this broad corpus.¹³ In fact, one even finds the opposite to be true; b. Beṣah 25b describes Israel as a dog in a positive sense to comment on her resoluteness.

While the general picture of dogs painted by these texts is negative, Geoffrey David Miller has noted that not all depictions of dogs in ancient Judaism are entirely negative.¹⁴ He particularly calls attention to the books of Job and Tobit, which offer evidence that dogs were possibly a part of Jewish life.¹⁵ In Job 30.1, Job refers to individuals who are not even worthy to be among the ‘dogs of my flock’ (כְּלָבֵי צֹאֲנֵי / κύνων τῶν ἐμῶν νομόδων). While this image of dogs is not positive and is used to paint certain individuals in a negative light, it provides evidence that dogs were utilised by some Jews for herding.¹⁶ A brief survey of the commentaries reveals that scholars tend to overlook this interesting fact, and focus solely on parsing the insult.¹⁷ Josephus also attests to the fact that ancient Jews employed working dogs.¹⁸ In *Ant.* 4.206, he offers his paraphrase of Deut 23.19 and notes that the dog price is related to dogs that are used either for hunting or keeping sheep. In Tobit, dogs

13 Nanos, ‘Paul’s Reversal’, 464–9. Here, Nanos works through the rabbinic texts cited by H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck’s *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (6 vols.; Munich: Beck, 1922–61) and Otto Michel’s *TDNT* entry for κύων/κυνόριον, which have been referenced by scholars as supporting this trope. Nanos, however, does note one occurrence in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 29 that does link gentiles with dogs due to both being uncircumcised, but this is not a smoking gun. This text is problematic due to its late date (~8th century) and the fact that it is not present in all manuscripts. It should have no bearing on how one understands Paul’s language in Phil 3. For a general overview of dogs in the Mishnah and Talmud, see Schwartz, ‘Dogs in Jewish Society.’

14 Miller, ‘Attitudes toward Dogs’.

15 Dogs also played a role in various ANE cultures. On this see, Miller, ‘Attitudes toward Dogs’, 489–94. See also Schwartz, ‘Dogs in Jewish Society’, 248–9, who argues that, while the attitude of Jews and other ANE peoples towards dogs was generally either negative or ambivalent, there were some cultures that venerated dogs (e.g. Egyptian and Canaanite).

16 It is worth mentioning that in the Hebrew Bible the status of an animal as unclean is related to their status as being fit for consumption or use as a sacrifice. This, however, does not mean that they are unfit for use by Jews. Notably, camels and donkeys are both unclean because they do not have split hooves, but both are utilised throughout the Hebrew Bible by Jews for their usefulness as pack animals. Furthermore, the logic undergirding the Levitical and Deuteronomical delineation between clean and unclean is not fully discernible. On this, see J. B. Rosenblum, *The Jewish Dietary Laws in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 8–27. Cf. W. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (JSOTSup 140; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993).

17 E.g. M. H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AB 15; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965) 193; R. Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (Moreshet Series 11; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978) 330. D. J. A. Clines (*Job* 21–37 (WBC 18A; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006) 996–7) is an exception; while he briefly mentions the employment of dogs for herding, he quickly reverts to discussing the nature of the insult.

18 On working dogs in Jewish society, see Schwartz, ‘Dogs in Jewish Society’, 254–62.

are presented in a positive light, as a dog is described as accompanying Tobiah and the angel Raphael on their journey (6.2; 11.4).¹⁹ While little can be ascertained from these two brief mentions in Tobit about the status of the dog – is it a pet, a guard dog, or something else? – its inclusion does provide another data point to demonstrate that not all ancient Jews held entirely negative views of dogs.²⁰

In light of this data, it seems that interpreters of Paul have been uncritical in their repetition of this trope. According to the textual evidence we have, Jews were not in the habit of referring to gentiles as dogs in the ancient world. There is no evidence to substantiate the claim that Paul is now inverting this supposed insult and using it to describe Jewish opponents in Phil 3.2.²¹

3. The Gospels, Unclean Animals and Ethnic Essentialism

In addition to these Jewish texts, some interpreters of Phil 3.2 have also looked to the texts in Mark and Matthew where Jesus refers to a gentile woman as a dog for being evidence that Jews were in the habit of calling gentiles ‘dogs’.²² For example, Moisés Silva cites Mark 7.27 as evidence for this thesis. He comments: ‘For the Jews, however, the term [dog] had a distinctly religious sense: it referred to the Gentiles, those people who, being outside the covenant community, were considered ritually unclean.’²³ Mark 7.24–30 recounts an

19 The textual transmission of these verses is contested, as the inclusion of the dog varies in some Greek and Latin versions. For a thorough discussion of the textual issues related to the dog in Tobit, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003) 203–4, 275. Many interpreters have attempted to explain away the inclusion of the dog in the story as unoriginal or non-Jewish. For a summary of these views, see C. A. Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 40; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 197–8. For a comprehensive argument on why the inclusion of the dog is original and Jewish in origin, see Miller, ‘Attitudes toward Dogs’, 498–500.

20 Miller (‘Attitudes toward Dogs’, 498) translates Tob 6.2 by stating that the dog followed them ‘out of the house’, to demonstrate that the dog shared the same living quarters and may have possibly been a pet. This is incorrect. The text only says that the dog went out with him (ὁ κύων ἐξῆλθεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ) and makes no mention of where they went out from.

21 Nanos concludes his study by saying that ‘it is exegetically mistaken ... to continue to approach Philippians 3.2 claiming that Paul is turning a well-known and common Jewish slur of Gentiles on its head so that it refers to Jews’ (‘Paul’s Reversal’, 467).

22 E.g. Garland, ‘The Composition and Unity’, 167; R. P. Martin, *Philippians* (TNTC; Leister: Inter-Varsity, 1987) 141; M. Silva, *Philippians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005²) 147; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 174. These texts are also used by Markan and Matthean scholars to confirm this perspective: e.g. M. D. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1991) 183; Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 367; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 8–18* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 256.

23 Silva, *Philippians*, 147. The status of gentiles as ritually unclean or impure is contested. For an overview of gentile impurity in Judaism, see J. Klawans, ‘Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism’, *AJSR* 20 (1995) 285–312.

interaction between Jesus and a Syrophenician woman who asks for healing for her daughter, who is plagued by an unclean *pneuma*. After hearing her request, Jesus replies: 'Allow the children to be fed first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs (κυνάρῑοις)' (7.27).²⁴ While the meaning of the illustration is not fully elucidated, because Mark has doubly identified the gentile otherness of the woman, it is likely that in the metaphor the children are Israel and the dogs are gentiles.²⁵

In Matthew's account of this story (Matt 15.21–8), the woman is portrayed as a Canaanite and the ethnic reasoning behind Jesus' words is spelled out in more detail. 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (15.24). He goes on to say, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs (κυνάρῑοις)' (15.26). This text is more explicit than the one in Mark, but the result is similar. Matthew portrays Jesus' mission as being to Israel (sheep) and not to gentiles (dogs). While these texts in Mark and Matthew do rely on ethnic reasoning to demonstrate that there is an essential ethnic difference that divides Jew from gentile, the term 'dog' is not necessarily used here as a slur to belittle gentiles as unclean or to comment on their base and abominable behaviour.²⁶ If that were the case, then these texts would be some of the first pieces of

24 There is considerable debate about how the reader should interpret the diminutive form of κύων (κυνάρῑον) represented in the gospel accounts, or if it is even a diminutive form at all. While some older discussions interpreted it as a diminutive in order to soften the blow of Jesus' words, many recent treatments of Mark 7.27 and Matt 15.26 have abandoned this view. For a range of views, see the discussions in P. Pokorný, 'From a Puppy to the Child: Some Problems of Contemporary Biblical Exegesis Demonstrated from Mark 7.24–30/Matt 15.21–8', *NTS* 41 (1995) 321–37, at 324; J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 463–4; S. Schreiber, 'Cavete Canes! Zur wachsenden Ausgrenzungswalenz einer neutestamentlichen Metapher', *BZ* 45 (2001) 170–92, at 174–80; Nanos, 'Paul's Reversal', 472.

25 Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 366.

26 Some interpreters have also focused on the potentially gendered use of 'dog' when directed at a woman. Franco (*Shameless*, 4; 128; 158; 168) highlights the tendency in Greek literature to align dogs with women due to their sharing of similar qualities from a Greek world-view. These qualities, however, are not all negative and can sometimes be used to highlight positive qualities of women. For example, Aeschylus (*Ag.* 606–8) notes that a faithful wife is like a dog who is devoted to her husband. Commenting on the negative attributes of dogs being applied to women, A. H. Cadwallader ('When a Woman is a Dog: Ancient and Modern Ethology Meet the Syrophenician Women', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1 (2005) 35.1–17, at 35.11) discusses the potential wordplay between *gynē* and *kynē/kyōn*, which he understands as having ethological implications for the woman in these accounts, but this seems unlikely in Mark and Matthew given that a different form of the word 'dog' is used. G. Theißen (*Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (NTOA 8; Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 84) notes that the woman plays off the positive aspect of being called a 'dog' by presenting herself as a faithful, persistent and devoted dog. Many scholars who take feminist interpretive concerns into account have highlighted the fact that the woman's

concrete evidence that demonstrates the use of 'dog' by a Jew as a slur for gentiles. Rather, 'dog' is used to distinguish gentiles from Jews and possibly to comment on Jesus' understanding of his present mission to Israel.²⁷ It is an image used in a narrative to separate Jew from gentile, insider from outsider – not a common racial slur. While it may be insulting to be compared with a dog in this kind of metaphor, Jesus does not directly call the woman a 'dog' in an overtly abusive manner, which is actually what Paul does in Phil 3.2.²⁸ As Sharon R. Ringe points out, the logic of the metaphor is primarily that of a household.²⁹ It invokes the image of a logical order based on one's position within a household.

Matthew Thiessen has recently argued that these passages in Mark and Matthew 'demonstrate that they hold to an essentializing understanding of gentile identity. There is an essence to gentile identity that truly, really, naturally inheres in gentiles and fundamentally distinguishes them from Jews.'³⁰ While Thiessen rightly discerns the ontological difference between Jews and gentiles presented in these texts, his conclusion that the usage of 'dog' in Mark and

identity as a woman is important to understanding the text. Not only is the woman marginalised for her status as a non-Jew, but her status as a woman further marginalises her. It is remarkable that she is presented as initiating the conversation with Jesus without being spoken to first and is able to persuade Jesus to change his mind. It is the woman's words (Mark 7.29) and her faith (Matt 15.28) that are portrayed as having power. For representative interpretations that take into account feminist interpretive concerns, see F. G. Downing, 'The Woman from Syrophoenicia, and her Doggedness: Mark 7:24–31 (Matthew 15:21–28)', *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (ed. G. J. Brooke; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992) 129–49; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992) 96–105. While interpretations that are attuned to feminist concerns in these texts are rewarding, given the way Jesus employs the term, he does not seem to be taking into account any potential gendered aspect of the word that has any bearing on this study.

27 Nanos' interpretation of these texts is wanting. He fails to deal with the Markan account and opts to focus on the account in Matthew. When examining the Matthean account, he finds an intra-Jewish dialogue, not a Jewish/non-Jewish one, which is provocative, but seems improbable ('Paul's Reversal', 470–3). Given the Markan parallel and Matthew's expansion of Mark's text in Matthew 15.24, it seems likely that that both authors have Jews and gentiles in mind, not an intra-Jewish dialogue between Israelites and Judahites. Nanos concedes that if his perspective is proven incorrect, this would be – to his knowledge – the earliest usage of 'dog' by a Jew to identify a gentile (474).

28 It is worth mentioning that Jesus' response to the woman is shocking as it pertains to healing her daughter.

29 S. R. Ringe, 'A Gentile Woman's Story', *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Letty M. Russell; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 68. While the form of the word dog (κυνάρσιος) is unlikely to be a diminutive form meaning something like 'puppy' (see note above), interpreting the word from a household context does possibly indicate that this is a family dog owned for working or as a pet. To be sure, regardless of whether the dog is a pet or not, it still occupies the lowest position in the household (cf. Matt 7.6 where dogs and pigs are in parallel).

30 Thiessen, 'Gentiles as Impure Animals', 25.

Matthew constitutes an ethnic slur goes beyond what the texts allow.³¹ Jesus' words acknowledge an essential difference between Jew and gentile – and may even be chauvinistic, insofar as he prioritises Israel over gentiles, and attempts to withhold healing from the woman's daughter – but this does not necessarily mean that his statement constitutes an ethnic slur, as Thiessen and other interpreters have concluded.³² Jesus uses the term in an ontological manner to distinguish gentiles from Jews, but he uses it in the context of a household illustration to explain his present mission to Israel, not to belittle the woman for her ethnic or moral status. Additionally, he does not directly call her a 'dog', but compares her to one as it pertains to her position within the hierarchy of his mission. Unlike Paul's outburst towards his opponents, Jesus' interaction with the woman ends on a positive note based on her persistence and words (Mark) or display of faith (Matthew).³³

There are also additional texts that link gentiles with unclean animals due to their ethnic difference which are worthy of mentioning here. For example, Ralph Martin cites the *Animal Apocalypse* (1 Enoch 85–90, specifically 89.42–58) as an instance of Jews using the term 'dog' to refer specifically to gentiles.³⁴ The problem with this is that dogs are not the only animals employed in the *Animal Apocalypse* as foils to the sheep (i.e. Israel); there are foxes, wild boars, lions, tigers, swine, vultures and others. This text obviously uses various unclean, non-ovine animals to refer to gentile nations for their ethnic difference, but as evidence for the 'gentiles were referred to as dogs' hypothesis, this text leaves the reader wanting. While the author of Luke does not include the narrative about Jesus and the gentile woman in his Gospel, he does comment on ethnic difference in Acts. In Acts 10, Peter's vision of unclean animals is interpreted by him as actually relating to people, not dinner (Acts 10.28). Dogs are not specifically mentioned here, but it is beneficial to note that there is an equation of unclean animals with unclean people (i.e. gentiles). These texts provide further evidence for the presence of essentialising ethnic discourse in Jewish and early Christian

31 Thiessen, 'Gentiles as Impure Animals', 20–1. For a fuller examination of how animal imagery and metaphors can be used to establish ontological differences between different ethnic groups, see Thiessen's discussion of the *Animal Apocalypse* in M. Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 89–94.

32 See e.g. J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching* (trans. H. Danby; Boston: Beacon, 1925) 294; T. A. Burkill, 'The Historical Development of the Story of the Syrophenician Woman (Mark vii: 24–31)', *NovT* 9 (1967) 161–77, at 172–3; J. C. H. Smith, 'The Construction of Identity in Mark 7:24–30: the Syrophenician Woman and the Problem of Ethnicity', *BibInt* 20 (2012) 458–81, at 472–6.

33 The account in Mark is more abrupt than the one in Matthew where Jesus explicitly commends the woman for her faith. On the cryptic nature of the ending of the pericope in Mark, see Smith, 'The Construction of Identity', 474–81.

34 Martin, *Philippians*, 141.

texts, but neither of them contributes to the legend that Jews often used the term 'dog' as a slur towards gentiles.

In light of this data, Thiessen utilises instances in Mark and Matthew (and Acts) as instructive for Paul's use in Phil 3.2. While he acknowledges that this is anachronistic, he does so because he believes the texts in the Gospels are more clear than the one in Philippians and, therefore, they should be examined first so as to illuminate the possible meaning of Paul.³⁵ Thiessen then offers a fresh reading of Philippians 3 in which he sees Paul using the term 'dog' in the same way as the gospel writers: to denote that the object of his invective is a group of (judaising) gentiles.³⁶ While a few scholars have concluded that Paul is here describing gentile opponents, none argues along the lines of essentialising ethnic discourse and the use of unclean or non-ovine animals to describe non-Jews.³⁷ As noted by the texts in the *Animal Apocalypse* and Acts above, the use of unclean animals to describe gentiles did occur in Paul's world, although there was no singular animal that was favoured.³⁸ If Thiessen is correct, then Paul's usage of 'dog' in Philippians 3 would be the earliest textual evidence that demonstrates a Jew specifically calling gentiles 'dogs' as an ethnic identifier.³⁹

While I agree that the opponents are judaising gentiles, I am not confident that the information from the Gospels should be used as an exact correlate for what is

35 Thiessen, 'Gentiles as Impure Animals', 20.

36 'I suggest that we ought to place Paul's reference to dogs within the same context as that of Mark, Matthew, and Luke – a mission to gentiles. But, rather than interpreting this passage as Paul's ironic deployment of the term *dog* against Jews, I think Paul refers to a group of rival missionaries who are actually non-Jews themselves' (Thiessen, 'Gentiles as Impure Animals', 26). What Thiessen means by 'a mission to gentiles' is imprecise; while he is referring to Paul's comments about the rival missionaries – who are gentiles – Paul is not employing the term in a mission to rival missionaries, but to gentiles in Philippi. Additionally, while Luke does use ethnic animal-language in Acts, he does not use the term 'dog' specifically.

37 Both Batement (H. W. Batement IV, 'Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?', *BSac* 155 (1998) 39–61) and Grayston (K. Grayston, 'The Opponents in Philippians 3', *ExpTim* 97 (1986) 170–2) conclude that Paul is reacting against gentile opponents, but only Grayston sees 'dog' as only being able to have a gentile referent. Grayston operates from the standpoint that 'dog' was a common Jewish slur for gentiles and that it is better to read this text in a straightforward manner rather than as an ironic inversion. 'It is commonly said that ironically he turns against the Jews the very term of abuse that they used for "unclean Gentiles", but the suggestion is incredible. Everyone would assume that he was a Jew abusing Gentiles, not a Jew abusing Jews' ('The Opponents in Philippians 3', 171).

38 Thiessen offers a long-form discussion of these texts in *Contesting Conversion*, 89–96; 124–6; and in M. Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 24–5.

39 Thiessen perceptively notes that while Nanos' reading of 'dogs' in Jewish literature is correct, on his own reading of the Gospels and Paul, there is significant evidence to demonstrate that some Jews (Paul, Matthew, Mark and Luke) did use the term 'dog' to ethnically slur and identify gentiles ('Gentiles as Impure Animals', 26, 31).

going on in Philippians.⁴⁰ It appears that the Gospels are using the term somewhat differently from how Paul is using it in Philippians 3; Mark and Matthew use it ethnically – but not as a slur – whereas Paul’s usage is unabashedly abusive. Unlike the account in the Gospels, it is not immediately clear if Paul is using ‘dog’ as an ethnic identifier or something else. The core problem with this interpretation is that in light of the lack of evidence for the ‘Jews called gentiles dogs’ trope, it is likely that an ethnic employment of ‘dog’ would not have been grasped by the Philippian audience. If Paul is using the term as an ethnic identifier, who would have picked up on this? It is possible that an ethnic meaning may have only been perceptible to Paul’s fellow Jews who shared his particular brand of Jewish *Weltanschauung*.⁴¹ Additionally, since the recipients of the letter themselves are non-Jews, how would ‘dog’ as an ethnic identifier not apply to them? Or, if they were to perceive such ethnically charged language, would they take offence at it?⁴² While it is possible that Paul is employing ‘dog’ ethnically in Phil 3.2, it is important to note that if he is using it in this manner, this would be a much subtler use than in the Gospels and would seemingly only apply to a specific subset of gentiles – judaising gentiles who also encourage other gentiles to judaise. In light of these points, it seems unlikely that ethnic identification is what Paul has in mind by his reference to dogs.

4. A New Proposal: An Overlooked Meaning of κῶων

In light of this data, any further meaning attributed to the usage of ‘dog’ in Phil 3.2 is still opaque; as it stands now, it is merely functioning as a biting insult of

40 Here, Thiessen and I depart from Nanos’ interpretation of the identity of the opponents in Philippians 3. In a recent article, Nanos proposes the hypothesis that the opponents may have been Cynics (M. D. Nanos, ‘Paul’s Polemic in Philippians 3 as Jewish-Subgroup Vilification of Local Non-Jewish Cultic and Philosophical Alternatives’, *JSPL* 3 (2013) 47–91, which has also been republished in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*, 142–91). While Nanos’ article is erudite and challenges common assumptions about Paul’s rivals, I find his conclusion that the opponents may have Cynics unconvincing in light of the data presented in Philippians. For additional support for the claim that Paul’s opponents here are judaising gentiles, see M. Murray, ‘Romans 2 within the Broader Context of Gentile Judaizing in Early Christianity’, *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (ed. R. Rodriguez and M. Thiessen; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016) 163–82, at 173–5.

41 I.e., an essentialising stream of Judaism that sees an insurmountable genealogical gap between Jew and gentile. On this stream of Judaism, see Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 87–110; C. Hayes, *What’s Divine about Divine Law? Early Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) 141–8.

42 Elsewhere in Philippians, Paul refers to the Philippians as his brothers (ἀδελφοί, 1.12; 3.1, 13, 17; 4.1, 8, 21) and as his beloved (ἀγαπητοί, 2.12; 4.1). This distinguishes them from the opponents and could have further prevented them from identifying with ethnic dog-language if any of them did have the capacity to perceive it.

reproach.⁴³ But is there more going on here? Since the ‘gentiles were commonly referred to as dogs’ hypothesis has been proven false in light of the textual evidence, this allows the interpreter to look for new and refreshing ways to approach the data. Cristiana Franco notes the flexibility with which ‘dog’ can be employed as an insult in the ancient world; no one meaning can account for the variety of uses of the term as an insult, rather, it takes on meaning from its broader textual and social contexts.⁴⁴ Why, then, does Paul call them ‘dogs’ when he already uses two other insults in his warning? Does ‘dog’ add anything to these other invectives? One obvious answer is that κύων (‘dog’) begins with a kappa, as do the following invectives – κακοὺς ἐργάτας (‘evil workers’) and κατατομή (‘mutilation’) – which creates alliteration and possibly adds rhetorical force to Paul’s warning.⁴⁵ There is, however, one more element in play here that has gone unnoticed by scholars. Due to the fact that this insult occurs in a polemic about circumcision, it is surprising that no interpreter of Philippians has commented on the fact that κύων was also used in the ancient world as a slang term for penis.⁴⁶ This oversight can be attributed to the history of scholarship on this passage, which was preoccupied with identifying Jewish opponents based on a supposed slur about gentiles.

In Greek comedy, the penis is referred to as a dog in various colourful ways. In Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, the phrase ‘skin a skinned dog’ (κύνα δέβειν δεδορμένην), is used by Lysistrata to refer to the manual stimulation of a penis.⁴⁷ Similarly, Suetonius defines the term κύνειρα as ‘the one who pulls

43 This broadly fits with the usage in the Hebrew Bible and Greco-Roman literature. Koester (H. Koester, ‘The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment’, *NTS* 8 (1962) 317–32), Batement (‘Opponents at Philippi’, 55) and Nanos (‘Paul’s Reversal’, 117–20) note that ‘dog’ was a common insult in the ancient world, not a particular one of Jewish origin against gentiles. See also the description of dogs in Philo, *Moses* 1.130–1; LJS s.v. κύων II.

44 Franco, *Shameless*, 7–16. Her research primarily highlights the way that ‘dog’ is used as an insult when an author is highlighting ethological concerns. See also Tutrone, ‘Barking at the Threshold’, who highlights the liminality of dogs in the ancient world. While dogs were often utilised for work or noted as being companions, they are generally not something you want to be called or compared to.

45 Fee, *Philippians*, 296 n. 49.

46 Nanos briefly mentions a possible interpretation related to male prostitution (cf. Deut 23.19, see n. 7) in which dog could imply ‘the penis that has been dogged, that is, suffered a flesh wound from sexual activity’, but he does not expound upon this interpretation (‘Paul’s Polemic’, 71). On the usage of κύων as a slang term for penis, see F. Skoda, *Médecine ancienne et métaphore. Le vocabulaire de l’anatomie et de la pathologie en grec ancien* (Paris: Peeters/Selaf, 1988) 307 n. 17; J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 127; K. K. Kapparis, ‘The Terminology of Prostitution in the Ancient Greek World’, *Greek Prostitutes in the Ancient Mediterranean 800 BCE–200 CE* (ed. A. Glazebrook and M. M. Henry; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011) 222–55, at 236–7.

47 Henderson (*The Maculate Muse*, 133), citing Aristophanes (*Lys.* 158), also comments that κύων could refer to female genitalia, but this is incorrect. From the broader context of the

the dog' (τὴν τὸν κύνα εἰρύουσαν), referring to a prostitute who manually stimulates her clients.⁴⁸ In Plato Comicus, the penis and testes are referred to as 'the dog and dog-leaders' (κυνὶ τε καὶ κυνηγέταιν).⁴⁹ The fifth-century CE lexicographer Hesychius of Alexandria provides ἐξέδειραν as a gloss for κυνέπασαν, meaning 'to pull back the skin' (i.e. to get an erection).⁵⁰ Since κυνέπασαν is a compound of κύων and σπάω, the basic meaning of term is 'to draw the dog' (i.e. like drawing a sword), referring to the foreskin retracting and revealing the glans when erect.

Another key example where κύων is used to refer to the penis is the κυνοδέσμη, the 'dog leash', which was used in athletic competitions as a primitive way to bind up the penis and ensure that the glans was not exposed. Paul's use of athletic imagery elsewhere in his writings could demonstrate a potential awareness of the κυνοδέσμη and the phallic connotations of κύων.⁵¹ Depictions of the κυνοδέσμη are common in athletic vase paintings and statues – dating from the fifth century BCE to the first century CE – where it is typically portrayed as a thin piece of leather tied around the tip of the foreskin and secured to the waist.⁵² The κυνοδέσμη was also used for aesthetic purposes as a means to stretch or elongate the foreskin via traction.⁵³ Regarding the κυνοδέσμη, the second-century CE grammarian Julius Pollux states: 'The cord with which they tie up the foreskin, they call the dog leash.'⁵⁴ Also writing in the second century CE is the grammarian Phrynichus Arabius, who further spells out the etymological reasoning for calling this cord a 'dog leash'. 'The

passage, 'skinning a skinned dog' refers to women getting their husbands' attention by teasing and arousing them through manual stimulation.

48 This is cited by Eustathius in *Com. Od.* 2.147. The original quote from Suetonius is from one of his lost works, *Concerning Profanity*, but the fragmentary text containing this reference can be found in J. Taillardat, *Suétone: ΠΕΡΙ ΒΛΑΣΦΗΜΙΩΝ. ΠΕΡΙ ΠΑΙΔΙΩΝ (Extraits byzantins)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1967) 51. On κύνειρα, see Kapparis, 'Terminology of Prostitution', 236–7.

49 Pl. Com. 174.16.

50 Hsch. κ 4573; also, *com. adesp.* 1057.

51 1 Cor 9.24–6; cf. Gal 2.2; 5.7; Phil 2.16; 3.13–14.

52 For a brief overview of artwork that depicts the κυνοδέσμη, see F. M. Hodges, 'The Ideal Prepuce in Ancient Greece and Rome: Male Genital Aesthetics and their Relation to Lipodermos, Circumcision, Foreskin Restoration, and the *Kynodesme*', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 75 (2001) 275–405, at 381 n. 22, 382 n. 23. Recently, M. Haworth ('The Wolfish Lover: The Dog as a Comic Metaphor in Homoerotic Symposium Pottery', *Archimède* 5 (2018) 3–23) has noted that the use of dogs in homoerotic Attic black-figure vases also comedically links dogs with penises.

53 Hodges, 'The Ideal Prepuce', 381–3.

54 Pollux, *Onomastikon* 2.4.171; trans. W. E. Sweet, *Sport and Recreation in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook with Translations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 130.

thing with which the people of Attica who have their glans exposed bind their penis. They call the penis “dog” (κύων).⁵⁵ Hesychius also notes that the word can reference the penis: ‘... the male member, and the barking animal, and the shameless one, and the star, and the sea animal’.⁵⁶ Elsewhere in medical and etymological texts, the frenulum, which is the elastic piece of tissue on the underside of the penis that connects the foreskin to the vernal mucosa, is also referred to as κύων.⁵⁷

Given that the context of Paul’s polemic is about the opponents’ claim to a circumcised identity (Phil 3.3), it seems possible that Paul could here be invoking a phallic definition as a kind of vulgar title that he is conferring on these potential agitators.⁵⁸ While some may be sceptical of the idea that Paul would employ vulgarity in his letters, this type of language is not out of character for Paul.⁵⁹ Just a few verses later, in Phil 3.8, Paul describes all things as σκύβαλον in comparison to gaining the Messiah. While most translations soften the force of σκύβαλον by rendering it as ‘rubbish’, ‘garbage’, or ‘refuse’, the KJV’s rendering of ‘dung’ is closer to the original meaning, although it still dampens the intensity of the word. A recent article by John David Punch explores the range of meaning of σκύβαλον, and in it he persuasively argues that Paul uses it as a foul and obscene expression carrying the meaning of either ‘crap’ or ‘shit’.⁶⁰ Paul uses it to catch his audience’s attention and elicit a strong response from them.⁶¹

55 Phrynichus, *Sophistae praeparatio sophistica* (ed. J. de Borries; Leipzig, 1911) 85, cited by E. J. Dingwall, *Male Infibulation* (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielsson, 1925) 70.

56 Hsch. κ 4762. Hesychius (κ 4594) gives δεσμός ἀκροποσθιάς (‘tip of the foreskin cord’) as the gloss for κυνοδέσμη. Nanos also cites Hesychius on the meaning of κύων, instead focusing on the ‘shameless one’ to provide evidence for his reading that the opponents Paul is warning about may have been Cynics (‘Paul’s Polemic’, 77).

57 Oribasius, *Collectionum medicarum reliquiae* 50.3.1; LSJ s.v. vii; See also Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 127.

58 Given that κύων can reference both the penis and – more specifically – the foreskin in some of these examples, Isaac Soon has pointed out to me the possibility that Paul not only uses it as a phallic reference, but also as a reference to the opponents’ true identity as naturally foreskinned gentiles (cf. Rom 2.27). Thus, κύων could also be functioning as a kind of circumlocution for ἀκροβυστία, which would enhance Paul’s contrast with περιτομή in Phil 3.3 and is supported by Paul’s contrast between ἀκροβυστία and περιτομή elsewhere in his epistles (Rom 2.25–7; 3.30; 4.9; 1 Cor 7.18–19; Gal 5.6; 6.15; cf. Eph 2.11; Col 3.11).

59 On the use of obscenity in the ancient world and early Christian texts, see J. F. Hultin, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech in Early Christianity and its Environment* (NovTSup 128; Leiden: Brill, 2008); cf. J. Jónsson, *Humour and Irony in the New Testament* (BZRG 28; Leiden: Brill, 1985).

60 J. D. Punch, ‘Σκύβαλα Happens: Edification from a Four-Letter Word in the Word of God?’, *BT* 65 (2014) 369–84. This reading is also affirmed in R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 122. Contra Hultin, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech*, 150–4.

61 Punch, ‘Σκύβαλα Happens’, 372; 380.

Further on, in Phil 3.19, Paul states that his opponents' 'god is the belly (κοιλία) and the glory in their shame (ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν)'. There is a strong possibility that Paul is using κοιλία and αἰσχύνη euphemistically to refer to his opponents' circumcised genitals.⁶² In effect, he is accusing them of phallus-worship.⁶³ Additionally, in Gal 5.12, Paul states his desire for the ones imposing circumcision on the Galatians to cut their penises off.⁶⁴ In short, Paul is no stranger to harsh and obscene language. As always, context is crucial in all of these instances; Paul is not flippantly throwing around imprecations, rather, he is riled up by the gravity of these situations and he lets his emotions show. For Paul, when it comes to circumcision, its wrongful adoption by and imposition on gentiles, and the boasting therein, there is no time for pleasantries. As in the instance in Gal 5.12, Paul takes his opponents' claims and intentions and magnifies them in an absurd manner. If they want to encourage circumcision and undergo the procedure themselves, why don't they go ahead and cut the whole thing off! Similarly, in the Philippian opponents' quest to be recognised as 'the circumcision', Paul confers on them another phallic title, 'the dogs'. Here, Paul uses this canine language as a 'four-letter word' in the same way that modern vulgarities use animal-language in crude references to genitals.

The other invectives used by Paul – evil workers and mutilation – can further lend credibility to the hypothesis that Paul is invoking the phallic meaning of 'dog' here. Denoting his opponents as 'evil workers' highlights that in their attempts to wrongly keep and promote the law – namely circumcision – amongst the Philippians, they have actually become transgressors of the law.⁶⁵ Furthermore, by calling them 'the mutilation', Paul is not offering a wholesale rejection of physical circumcision, but commenting on gentiles adopting and promoting

62 F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTSMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 76; C. Mearns, 'The Identity of Paul's Opponents at Philippi', *NTS* 33 (1987) 194–204. For other instances of κοιλία referring to genitals, see LXX 2 Kgdms 7.12; 16.11; 1 Chr 17.11; Ps 131.11. Similarly, ἄσχημοσύνη ('shame') is also used in the LXX to refer euphemistically to nudity and genitalia (LXX Ex 20.26; Lev 18.6–19; cf. 1 Cor 12.23; Rev 16.15).

63 It is possible that phallus-worship would have been known by the Philippians since there was a temple for Egyptian deities in Philippi, including Harpocrates, who is often depicted like Priapus with an oversized, erect phallus. Cf. Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 4.6.1–4. For a list of inscriptions in Philippi that reference Harpocrates, see P. Pilhofer, *Philippi*, vol. II: *Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi* (WUNT 119; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009²) 242–3.

64 Craig Keener offers some brief commentary on Paul's use of euphemism here. He gives a crude, literal interpretation of what he believes Paul is trying convey in Gal 5.12: 'I wish their knives would slip and they'd sever their own dicks' (C. Keener, *Galatians* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 242). Keener (242–3) also notes Epictetus' (*Diatr.* 3.1.31) use of a similar euphemism. See also Jónsson, *Humour and Irony*, 230, 267–68; Hultin, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech*, 148–50, 153–4.

65 On the misapplication of the law of circumcision, see Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, 95–6.

circumcision. In Paul's mind, this constitutes mutilation because it is contrary to their nature as foreskinned gentiles (ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία, Rom 2.27).⁶⁶ When these invectives are read alongside one another, it becomes clear what Paul is doing in Phil 3.2. Each component of his tripartite warning takes aim at the agitators' obsession with and promotion of judaising circumcision. In 3.3, Paul then sets himself and Timothy over against the agitators as the 'the circumcision', making sure that this honoured title is not misused by the mutilated, evil-working dogs.⁶⁷

5. Conclusion

As recent studies have shown, in the ancient world the usage of 'dog' as an insult can take on various meanings depending on the context. Authors were able to employ the term in various ways and context would guide how the insult was to be understood. What we see in Phil 3.2 is Paul using the term in his own way – as a phallic epithet, scorning those who falsely claim the title 'the circumcision' – but within the broader usage of κύων as a slang term for 'penis'. Paul is not inverting, subverting or reappropriating a common Jewish slur for gentiles and turning it back on Jews; there is no evidence to warrant such a reading. Given the polemical context of this text and its core issue of circumcision, Paul's reference to κύων is a means by which he identifies the object of his warning. Not only is it a word of reproach, but it also demonstrates where these opponents focus their attention and what the Philippians should be on the lookout for. Those who come proclaiming and enforcing circumcision are not 'the circumcision' but 'the dogs', which serves as a vulgar, phallic epithet. This biting insult aids Paul in building his case against those whom he sees as a threat to the saints in Philippi.

66 Conversely, Paul refers to himself and Cephas as 'Jews by/from nature' (ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι) as opposed to being 'sinners from gentiles' (ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί). Unlike the metaphors used in Matthew 15 and Mark 7, Paul's φύσις references are straightforward descriptors of (Paul's) reality in which there are natural, ontological differences between Jews and gentiles. The nature of an individual is linked to their ethnic lineage and fatherland. I am indebted to Logan Williams for directing me to this fragment from Euripides that also attests this idea: ἡ φύσις ἐκάστω τοῦ γένους ἐστὶν πατρὶς ('The nature of the race belonging to each [man] is [his] fatherland', *Dramatic Fragments* 1113; however, the authenticity of the fragment is debated).

67 The identity of the 'we' in Phil 3.3 is often understood as referring to the 'Christian' *ekklesia*, but in light of this data, it should simply refer to Paul and Timothy, the Jewish authors of the letter (and possibly Epaphroditus; Phil 2.25; 4.18). The next use of the first-person plural pronoun in Phil 3.17 further supports this, as it more clearly refers to Paul and Timothy. Cf. D. W. B. Robinson, 'We Are the Circumcision', *ABR* 15 (1967) 28–35, at 35; Thiessen, 'Gentiles as Impure Animals', 28–9. Additionally, the importance placed on imitation in this letter and the stark contrast Paul creates between himself and his opponents further supports this reading. Cf. B. Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I': Personal Example as Literary Strategy* (JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999) 180–95.