

## SARCASM IN PAUL'S LETTERS

In this book, Matthew Pawlak offers the first treatment of sarcasm in New Testament studies. He provides an extensive analysis of sarcastic passages across the undisputed letters of Paul, showing where Paul is sarcastic, and how his sarcasm affects our understanding of his rhetoric and relationships with the early Christian congregations in Galatia, Rome, and Corinth. Pawlak's identification of sarcasm is supported by a dataset of 400 examples drawn from a broad range of ancient texts, including major case studies on Septuagint Job, the prophets, and Lucian of Samosata. These data enable the determination of the typical linguistic signals of sarcasm in ancient Greek, as well as its rhetorical functions. Pawlak also addresses several ongoing discussions in Pauline scholarship. His volume advances our understanding of the abrupt opening of Galatians, diatribe and Paul's hypothetical interlocutor in Romans, the 'Corinthian slogans' of First Corinthians, and the 'fool's speech' found within Second Corinthians 10–13.

MATTHEW PAWLAK is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Tübingen. He completed his PhD in Theology and Religious Studies in 2020 at the University of Cambridge. His research has appeared in major academic journals across the disciplines of New Testament, Jewish Studies, Hebrew bible, and humour studies.

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# Sarcasm in Paul's Letters

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To Dad, Robin Pawlak,  
for introducing me to sarcasm and to Paul.  
To Mom, AnnaMaria Pawlak,  
for pages 86, 170, 189  
and so much besides.

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## PREFACE

Where not otherwise indicated, all translations of non-English languages are my own. All biblical references marked NRSV are from the 2021 updated edition (NRSVue).

The article 'How to Be Sarcastic in Greek: Typical Means of Signaling Sarcasm in the New Testament and Lucian' (Matthew C. Pawlak, *HUMOR* 32.4 [2019]: 545–64) uses an earlier version of the dataset underlying the linguistic analysis of ancient Greek sarcasm found in Chapter 3 (§§3.1–3.2). The analysis presented in this book differs from the article in its scope, aims, language, and conclusions. While the article remains useful, the material in this book is more systematic and detailed, drawing on a significantly larger dataset.

Material in Chapter 4 (§4.1) of this book overlaps with the article 'Is Galatians an Ironic Letter? Θαυμάζω, Ancient Letter Writing Handbooks, and Galatians 1.6' (Matthew Pawlak, *Novum Testamentum* [2021]: 63: 249–70; doi:10.1163/15685365-12341694), although the chapter and article are ultimately different in purpose and scope. The article is an open access article, copyright Matthew Pawlak 2021, distributed under the terms of the CC BY 4.0 licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>). I direct readers interested in the relationship between the opening of Galatians and ancient epistolary conventions to the more detailed treatment of this subject in the article.

The chart on p.137 has been reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder from: King, Justin, 2018, *Speech-in-Character, Diatribe, and Romans 3:1–9: Who's Speaking When and Why It Matters*, BIS 163, Leiden: Brill, 269. Copyright 2018 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

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Quotations marked NETS are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, copyright 2007 by the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Inc., used by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations follow the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Handbook of Style, second edition. Abbreviations of classical texts follow the conventions of classics – Perseus abbreviations. Further abbreviations are as follows:

BDF	Blass Debrunner Funk
Chrysostom, <i>Comm. Gal.</i>	Alexander, Gross (trans.), n.d. 'The Commentary and Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians and Ephesians,' pages 8–321 in <i>Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon</i> , edited by Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series (NPNF) 13, Edinburgh: T&T Clark (in-text reference is to NPNF page number).
Chrysostom, <i>Epist. Rom.</i>	Migne, J.-P. 1857, 'In Epistulam Ad Romanos (Homiliae 1–32)', pages 391–682 in <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus (Series Graeca)</i> , MPG 60, Paris: Migne (Greek; accessed via TLG; in-text reference is to page number as indicated in TLG).
Jerome, <i>Comm. Gal.</i>	Cain, Andrew (trans.) 2010, <i>St. Jerome: Commentary on Galatians</i> , Fathers of the Church series (FC), Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press (in-text reference is to section of Galatians addressed).

xiv *List of Abbreviations*

	Morris, J.B., and W.H. Simcox (trans.), n.d. 'The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans', pages 604–997 in <i>Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans</i> , edited by Philip Schaff, NPNF 11, Edinburgh: T&T Clark (in-text reference is to NPNF page number).
MT	Masoretic Text
NETS	A New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIV	New International Version
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (updated edition)
Origen, <i>Comm. I Cor</i>	Jenkins, C., 1908, 'Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistolam i ad Corinthios (in catenis)' in 'Documents: Origen on I Corinthians', <i>JTS</i> 9 & 10:9:232–47, 353–72, 500–14; 10:29–51 (Greek; accessed via TLG; in-text reference is to section as indicated in TLG).
Origen, <i>Comm. Rom.</i>	Scheck, Thomas (trans.), 2001, <i>Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1–5</i> , FC, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press (in-text reference is to section in Scheck's edition).
TCNT	Twentieth Century New Testament
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
VTG	Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum

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I am convinced that at times there is nothing better for revitalizing one's academic work than thinking about anything but one's academic work. For this refreshment I am indebted to a community of outstanding friends, with a special shout-out to Antoine, Carolina, Jarred, Jordan, Peerapat, Peter, and William. Theresa was there for me literally from day one, and for everything she has been to me, I could never be grateful enough.