

Galen and the Christians
Texts and Authority in the Second Century AD

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Galen of Pergamum, the great physician and medical system builder of the Roman Empire, produced some of the most authoritative texts of the second century AD. Whether the assessment is made on the basis of claim or reception, rhetoric or influence, Galen's oeuvre scores impressively highly. He is also one of the few external witnesses to the presence of Christian groups, and to Christianity's intellectual presence, in the wider cultural landscape of late second-century Rome. His remarks on the subject are, admittedly, few and slight, but their casualness has its virtues, and scholars have been increasingly drawn to the Galenic perspective on a range of contemporary developments, including the rise of the early Christian movement.¹ His comments openly engage with issues of authority within this movement and, less directly, with texts. Any sense of Christianity as, essentially, a religion of the book is absent, but teaching is involved, and doctrine (*doxa*), both of which must come from somewhere. On one occasion Galen refers to the 'school' (*diatribê*) of Moses and Christ, which might well suggest the characteristic combination of texts and authority, within a recognisable social form, all points which have been illuminatingly scrutinised in recent scholarship.²

The approach taken here is a slightly different one. The focus will be more on the second-century setting and on Galen. The key question is how do Galen's Christians fit into his wider strategies of legitimation and persuasion, as pursued in his writings and beyond? Where are they located within wider patterns of text and authority in this world? What is shared and what is separate in the Christian phenomenon that emerges in this context? The question has been given particular impetus recently by the work of Kendra Eshleman, whose book *The Social World of Intellectuals in*

¹ For a general project of this kind, see e.g. Schlange-Schöningh 2003, including discussion of Galen, Asclepius, Jews and Christians (223–254).

² See esp. Alexander 1994, 2001.

the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians is a very welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship which seeks, in a number of ways, to locate Christian writers and preachers within the horizons of the Second Sophistic.³ More specifically, Eshleman argues not only that sophists, philosophers and Christians in the (long) second century all had recourse to a similar set of ‘culturally available technologies of identity formation, authorization, and institutionalization’, but also that there was a similar direction of travel towards ‘orthodoxy’.⁴ The Christians took this project further, and, of course, there are other differences too, of aim and emphasis, experience and concern, between these groups; but Eshleman does want to put the idea, the practice, of orthodoxy into the general mix, not leave it solely to the Christians and, indeed, to give it some particularly Second Sophistic roots.

Galen too has been increasingly drawn into the world of the Second Sophistic, and recent studies of his self-presentational and self-promotional strategies, in particular his participation in and manipulation of the epideictic culture of his time, emphasise this milieu.⁵ These connections will emerge quite clearly, as Galen’s Christian references are discussed in more detail, but any broader trajectory towards orthodoxy is harder to find. Galen’s project is totalising in an imperial rather than doctrinal sense, all encompassing rather than exclusive, though he is as quick to point out others’ errors as anyone. Moreover, though he is full of talk about medical and philosophical *haireseis*, ‘sects’, and about wrongful allegiance to them, his concerns map very poorly onto Christian constructions of heresy, despite the shared vocabulary.⁶

Galen on Christians

Richard Walzer identified six surviving Galenic passages which refer to Jews and Christians: half in Greek, half in Arabic.⁷ The latter material, as Stephan Gero has since noted, is less straightforward than Walzer, a pioneer in the field of what is now called Graeco-Arabic studies, implied.⁸ Gero’s attention is focused on one particular passage, but the

³ Eshleman 2012; previous book-length projects which interpret Christian authors within a Second Sophistic frame include Winter 2002 and Brent 2006.

⁴ Eshleman 2012, 7.

⁵ Bowersock 1969 is followed by e.g. von Staden 1994, 1997; Mattern 2008; and Gleason 2009; with Brunt 1994 as a dissenting voice.

⁶ On which, see von Staden 1982.

⁷ Walzer 1949.

⁸ Gero 1990.

point he makes is more widely applicable. More than just translation stands between Galen's Greek original and the Arabic versions Walzer presents and interprets: these are texts which have also been excerpted, compiled and otherwise reworked. Questions of transmission will be briefly dealt with here as part of a wider introductory exercise which aims to locate these references more precisely within Galen's life and work, to give them a more firmly Galenic, and second-century setting in general, and to focus on issues of text and authority within that more specifically.

Walzer presents his material in the same order as his main Arabic source, with an extra addition at the end. Ibn Abi Usaybi'a's massive biographical history of medicine, *The Best Accounts of the Classes of Physicians*, composed in mid-thirteenth-century Damascus includes, of course, a rich life of Galen. This incorporates a collection of passages where Galen mentions Moses and Christ. These are taken from Ibn al-Matran, a well-known Syrian doctor, medical teacher and writer of the previous century, a Christian who converted to Islam as court physician to Saladin.⁹ Al-Matran is quoted as reporting that Galen made reference to Moses in *On Anatomy according to Hippocrates* and *On the Usefulness of the Parts*; and alluded to Moses and Christ in the great work *On the Pulse* and *On the First Mover*; as well as in other (unspecified) places. The relevant Galenic passages are embedded in the excerpt, with the exception of the second. Walzer considers it unlikely that the compilation was Ibn al-Matran's own idea (he probably adopted it from an earlier Christian Arabic source) but no more specific suggestion is forthcoming.¹⁰

Since *On the Usefulness of the Parts*, Galen's physiological magnum opus in seventeen books, is well preserved in Greek, that Ibn Abi Usaybi'a does not include the lengthy passage in which Moses features makes little difference. Also surviving in Greek are the sixteen books, divided into four treatises, which were combined to constitute the great work *On the Pulse*, as it appears in the late antique medical curriculum, for example, and in the *Risāla* of Hunain ibn Ishaq, the descriptive epistolary list of all the translations of Greek medical and philosophical texts he (and his circle) made in ninth-century Baghdad.¹¹ In the original

⁹ A much-needed new edition of this key work is being undertaken by a team from the Universities of Oxford and Warwick (<http://krc2.orient.ox.ac.uk/alhom/index.php/en/>), which may well revise this part of the text (as much else!). Walzer 1949, 87–88, provides a translation (from the problematic edition of Mueller).

¹⁰ Walzer 1949, 88–89.

¹¹ *Risāla* no. 16: the Arabic text of the *Risāla* (with discussion and German translation) was published by Bergsträsser 1925; and there is an English summary translation (and further discussion) by Meyerhof

tetralogy, *On the Differences of the Pulse* contains the passage cited by al-Matran, along with a second reference to Moses and Christ; and both are included by Walzer. In the other two instances, the Greek is lost, and though known to have been translated in their entirety by Hunain, the Arabic texts too seem not to have survived, leaving Usaybi'a as the only transmitter of these extracts, in this excerpted form.¹² There are plenty of other references to *On the Anatomy of Hippocrates* in Galen's extant Greek oeuvre, however, including in *On the Usefulness of the Parts* (14.4), though not to this statement in particular. While *On the First Mover*, which must be the commentary on the Aristotelian principle that *The First Mover is Unmoved*, listed in Galen's autobiographical bibliography, *On My Own Books*, together with other works on Aristotle's philosophy, seems to have gained more attention in the later Arabic tradition than it ever did in the Roman world.¹³

The final, sixth, passage in Walzer's set is not from Usaybi'a and, as Gero has noted, is the most problematic in many ways. It derives ultimately from Galen's summaries of Platonic dialogues, either the synopsis of the *Republic* or the *Phaedo* to be more specific, lost both in Greek and in their full Arabic translation.¹⁴ As those alternatives indicate, there are several versions of the relevant snippet in different sources, various, somewhat divergent reports and engagements; and good reason to think that the text Walzer prints has been added to, quite actively reworked, along the way from its Galenic origins. Moreover, though the summaries are listed in *On My Own Books*, in the section on works concerning Plato's philosophy, they too made more mark in Arabic than in Greek; unsurprisingly, since it is uncertain whether any Arabic translations were made of the Platonic dialogues themselves.¹⁵

The inclusion of all the texts which mention Moses and Christ in *On My Own Books* is not only reassuring in regard to authenticity but also helps with the chronology and broader context of these works. Galen was born in Pergamum in AD 129, and his education was initially under the

1926; both use the same numbering system. For the Arabic translation movement more generally, see Gutas 1998.

¹² *Risāla* nos 27 and 125. There is, of course, a chance that the Arabic texts will yet be recovered; many medieval Arabic manuscripts remain uncatalogued and/or unread.

¹³ An Arabic text identified as Alexander of Aphrodisias' refutation of Galen on the unmoved mover has been published by Rescher and Marmura 1967, and see also Pines 1961; though Fazzo 2002 has doubts.

¹⁴ Walzer 1949, 92–93, favours the *Republic*; Gero 1990, 400–2, the *Phaedo*.

¹⁵ See Reisman 2004.

control of his father, the architect Nicon.¹⁶ After giving his son an excellent grounding in arithmetic, logic, geometry and grammar, Nicon steered him first towards the study of philosophy and then medicine. Galen attended lectures on these subjects and listened to a range of philosophers and physicians in Pergamum in his teens, before his father's death in AD 148 enabled him to pursue the best teachers of his day right across the eastern Mediterranean. He initially moved to Smyrna to study with Pelops, and Albinus the Platonist, and then travelled to Corinth and Alexandria. The latter was the great centre of medical education in the Roman Empire, as it had been in the Hellenistic World, but Galen also had a more specific goal in mind: he wanted to learn from Numisianus, the most esteemed living pupil of the great anatomist Quintus. After about a decade away as a student, a very protracted educational period by contemporary standards, Galen returned to Pergamum in AD 157. He was then appointed as physician to the gladiators there, on account of his manifestly superior skill he claims, and successfully held that post until the draw of the imperial capital became too much, and he left for Rome in AD 162.

Galen had, he says, already begun to write, long before his first stay in Rome, mostly for himself, and at the behest of fellow students and friends (e.g. *Lib. Prop.* 1.2–6 and 2.1–6: Boudon-Millot 2007 136.25–137.24 and 140.12–141.15). These early endeavours were not for public consumption, though much of his juvenilia would subsequently find its way to a wider audience. In particular, Galen was working through a range of methodological matters in these formative years. He was focused on, and obsessed with, the fundamental question of the justification of knowledge: how competing claims about the world are to be judged, and what counts as real, genuine proof – as *apodeixis*, 'demonstration' in a strong, technical, sense? His investigations involved both listening to debates and didactic expositions and studying key texts by himself. He would master the main ideas and arguments in a treatise by making systematic notes – *hupomnemata* – on it, producing a personal commentary on these authoritative writings. As he explains he did, first with the Stoic Chrysippus' books on syllogisms, and then also with various logical tracts by Aristotle and his student and successor, Theophrastus (*Lib. Prop.* 14.9–14: Boudon-Millot 161–23). This all seems to have formed part of the build-up to his first magnum opus, the fifteen books *On Demonstration*, in which he elaborated his own answers to

¹⁶ For Galen's biography, see Boudon-Millot 2012 and Mattern 2013.

these problems in a systematic fashion: cut through the disputes of the Peripatetics, Stoics and Platonists to set out an approach modelled on geometric proof.¹⁷ Probably composed alongside Galen's practical doctoring to the gladiators, this work was intended for a broader readership. Its completion may, indeed, have been what finally propelled Galen, now secure in his epistemological foundations and ready to take on the world, to Rome in search of an audience to match his ambition.

This early, formative period of Galen's career is the most likely context for the production of his Platonic synopses, and also his commentary *On the First Mover*. The synopses suggest projects undertaken for himself, and their composition at a time when his main concerns were epistemological would also help explain the content of the extract, which will be examined in more detail in a moment. The latter, though it does seem to have an external addressee of some sort, certainly dealt with subjects that received more substantial treatment in *On Demonstration*, and so might well have been preparatory to it, part of the intellectual work which accompanied Galen's service to the arena. This is far from certain, and matters are further complicated by the fact that, if given the chance, Galen would work up, correct and develop those of his texts which had moved into the public domain against his original intentions. But the coverage here will be in this order, and it is worth stressing the general point that the engagement with Christianity may well have begun long before Galen reached Rome, and that the Christian groups he was writing about were those of the cities of the eastern Mediterranean as much as of the imperial metropolis itself. He may even have encountered students of Christianity searching out their own key teachers in the same locations as he was looking for his. Clement of Alexandria is a little younger than Galen, for instance, but followed a not dissimilar pedagogic path (*Strom.* I.I.2.I–2).

As mentioned, these two early engagements survive only in Arabic, and rather problematically so, but the content can be usefully summarised and scrutinised to some extent. In both, Christians are a group who share sufficient features with others in his social and intellectual milieu – philosophical (and medical) groupings – to be engaged with on similar terms. They also exemplify certain sorts of flawed practice in this context – that is as coherent didactic and doctrinal enterprises. Indeed, their main role in Galen's oeuvre is that of exemplification, as it is deployed in

¹⁷ The best ideas of the contents of this, the most important of Galen's lost treatises, can be gained from some of the sustained engagements with it in the Arabic tradition, especially the first book of Rhazes' *Doubts about Galen*.

a more generally critical manner, to illustrate, prevent and castigate a widespread set of such failings. These same themes will recur across the piece.

In *On the Prime Mover*, this cultural comparability, overlap of form and purpose, is simply assumed. The ‘followers of Moses and Christ’ teach their students badly, emphasising obedience to, and trust in, their authority, rather than proving their claims through logical methods that start with agreed definitions. Galen had begun a discussion that way, as implied by this isolated extract, but has been let down by his audience, or maybe is moving to prevent disdain for proper procedure in debate by aligning such an attitude with the Christians, it is hard to tell. More explanation is offered in the Platonic synopsis. The Christians – maybe just ‘the followers of Christ’, but certainly not ‘the people called Christians (*nasâra*)’, as Walzer translates from the text he prints – are here characterised as a quasi-philosophical group.¹⁸ They are philosophical in their disciplined, ascetic lifestyle, their contempt of death, and their ethical concerns, but not in their epistemological formation. The reference comes as part of a more general critique of those who stray from the demonstrative method of argumentation and resort to *rumûz*, ‘mysteries’, instead.¹⁹ The Christians then appear as an example of this flawed approach, though they do exhibit these more admirable qualities too.

So far, the focus has been on philosophical groups and ideas as providing the context in which Galen’s Christians operate. *On Demonstration* was primarily an engagement with Platonists, Aristotelians and Stoics, and the two texts and passages discussed in more detail fit that pattern too. The existence of more or less organised medical groupings has also been recognised, however, and will come more to the fore as Galen’s career develops. One of his Smyrnan compositions was entitled *On Medical Experience*. It is, essentially, his account of a two-day debate between his teacher Pelops and Philip the Empiricist (*ho empeirikos*), in which the latter attempted to demonstrate that the art of medicine could be based solely on experience (*empeiria*), while the former aimed to refute that argument (*Lib. Prop.* 2.3–4 Boudon-Millot 140–20–141.3). Galen wrote down, and reorganised, the main points advanced by both sides, ‘as an exercise for myself; and, he says, has no notion how this text passed out of his possession.’²⁰

¹⁸ Walzer 1949, 15–16 and Gero 1990, 403–404.

¹⁹ Gero 1990, 404–405 discusses the translation of *rumûz*.

²⁰ It is even preserved in an Arabic translation published by Walzer 1944.

Such staged public debates were an integral part of medical culture in the Roman Empire, and clearly participate in the wider epideictic patterns of the Second Sophistic. Christians on the other hand, had to maintain a lower profile, doing most of their arguing in textual form. So, though the Platonic passage gives the impression of being based on direct experience of Christian behaviour, that must remain in doubt. Christianity certainly could be presented as a philosophy, the true philosophy, by its adherents at this time, who might well take their philosophical engagements very seriously. The death of an important exponent of such an approach, Justin, in Rome as Galen's first stay there was ending, shows the risks at least of winning philosophical disputations in front of an audience (Eusebius *HE* 4.16). Still, it also indicates a range of Christian activities in these respects, beyond the textual.

A couple of more particular points about the way Galen describes the participants in this debate are also worth underlining. It is noteworthy that, while Philip is labelled *empeirikos*, identified as belonging to the empiricist 'school' or 'sect' (*hairesis*) that was founded in early Hellenistic Alexandria, Galen's teacher Pelops is unlabelled. Just as when he had been introduced (*Lib. prop.* 2.1: Boudon-Millot 140.16), it was as Pelops 'the physician' (*ho iatros*), in contrast to Albinus 'the Platonist' (*ho Platonikos*). Moreover, while Philip argues positively for the position of his group – that experience alone leads to medical knowledge and to sound medical practice – Pelops merely adopts the contrary perspective – that experience alone is insufficient – rather than advocating an actual alternative, providing his own vision of the medical art. Galen's main medical teacher prior to Pelops, Satyrus, is also unlabelled, so too the more distant pedagogic figures of Numisianus and Quintus. All had anatomical interests, taught Hippocrates, and used the exegesis of Hippocratic texts – the writings associated with the legendary founding father of learned Greek medicine, Hippocrates of Cos – as a key teaching method, but that is all Galen says on the subject (*Ord. Lib. Prop.* 3.5–9 Boudon-Millot 98.3–25). He offers no further identification. In particular, Galen never calls them either 'Hippocrateans' or 'rationalists' (*logikoi*). He does not designate them, therefore, as 'followers of Hippocrates', on the same model as Platonists or, to take some medical examples, also originating in Hellenistic Alexandria, like the Herophileans and Erasistrateans, the followers of the two great, lineage-founding, practitioners of human dissection and vivisection in that city, Herophilus and Erasistratus. Nor does he deploy the broader category of *logikos* for these men, the reason-based significant other of *empeirikos*, though, while the latter title was internally generated, the former category was only ever used

externally, for organisational convenience or polemical effect.²¹ Still, it was associated, by some of those outside reporters, with the practice of anatomy (Cels. *Med.* pr. 13–26).

These two central themes of his pedagogic formation do come together in *On the Anatomy of Hippocrates*, the composition of which is explicitly located during Galen's first stay in Rome, from AD 162 to AD 166, in *On My Own Books* (1.7–10: Boudon-Millot 137.1–21). This treatise, in six books, is part of Galen's more general turn to anatomy and physiology in this period, now that epistemology has been sorted out, and it also contributes to and reflects a presentational strategy that emphasises his Hippocratic credentials in the new city. Three major works will result – *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, *On the Usefulness of the Parts*, and *Anatomical Procedures* – though they (forty books in toto) will not be completed until Galen's permanent return to Italy, after a brief sojourn back in Pergamum in AD 166–168. All are (or were to have been) dedicated to Galen's most important patron of this phase in his career, the consular Flavius Boethus, an Aristotelian with an enthusiasm for anatomy and a family with practical medical needs. While *On the Usefulness of the Parts*, and presumably some of the earlier treatises on more specific areas of somatic operation written for Boethus too are essentially positive endeavours, about expounding, fully explaining, his own views, Galen himself labels *On the Anatomy of Hippocrates*, and its (also lost) partner, *On the Anatomy of Erasistratus*, as 'more combative' (*philotimotos*: *Lib. Prop.* 1.7 and 10: Boudon-Millot 138.3 and 19). The reasons for this are worth setting out briefly, before looking a bit more closely at the linked pair of references to Moses in *Anatomy* and *Usefulness of the Parts*. They help fill in more of the significant background material.

Galen blames the most senior medical figure in the imperial capital for this state of affairs. Martialos was a renowned physician and an anatomical authority of considerable weight, but Galen avers, still quarrelsome despite having passed seventy.²² They crossed swords directly on several occasions after Galen arrived on the scene in Rome, and there was also a series of proxy skirmishes. Following one of Galen's public disquisitions on an established anatomical question, for instance, which had received high praise from all who had been present, Martialos had asked one of Galen's friends about his sectarian allegiance: from which *hairesis* was he? As has

²¹ See von Staden 1982.

²² The name appears slightly differently in different works; see Boudon Millot 2007, 185–186, n.3 for discussion.

been suggested, this was a reasonably obvious enquiry to make, and, indeed, Galen happily described Boethus as practising his philosophy according to the *hairesis* of Aristotle. But Galen's representative in this exchange responded, waspishly, that his mentor regarded those who called themselves 'Hippocrateans' or 'Praxagoreans' or whatever as 'slaves', while he himself took whatever was good from all of them. Martialos then, reportedly, rephrased his question to ask which ancient medical authority Galen most admired? Having heard that Hippocrates was his hero, Martialos retorted that he had nothing to offer in the field of anatomy, rather, Erasistratus was the most impressive in all areas of medicine, including this. Galen's response was to write six books on all the valuable anatomical insights in the Hippocratic Corpus and three books against Erasistratus' teachings on the subject.

What role Moses played in this discussion of Hippocratic anatomy is, unfortunately, obscure: the extract preserved by Usaybi'a gives little away about the bigger picture. Moses is described as a lawgiver for the Jews. He wrote books but was not much concerned with demonstration, just stating 'God commanded' or 'God said'. Some people, Galen reports, have critically compared those who operate in the medical domain without properly supported knowledge to Moses on this basis; but who these people were and exactly how this comparison works are unclear. Still, there seems to be some continuity between Moses' problematic approach to knowledge and that of his Christian followers, already encountered. And Galen may be borrowing some of his critical moves in this area from others, or, at least, these kind of discursive tactics were, to some extent, shared. There is likely more going on too, and the lengthy sequence in *On the Usefulness of the Parts* offers some possibilities in this regard. For here, the emphasis is on the substance of Moses' views: on the content of God's commands and what that entails about Mosaic notions of divinity and nature. Moses features as an authoritative figure like Epicurus or Plato in these discussions.

Moses' approach to nature is, indeed, better than Epicurus', though no match for Plato's (or Galen's). For he shares with the latter (in contrast to the former) a commitment to the understanding that human beings (and much else) have been fashioned by a provident creator – variously referred to as nature, demiurge or god – but matter (*hylé*) is missing from the Mosaic scheme, matter that imposes crucial constraint on creation.²³

²³ On Galen's creator figure, see Fleming 2009.

This is the point at which my teaching (*doxa*) and that of Plato and the others amongst the Greeks who have correctly handled theories about nature, differs from that of Moses. For him it suffices for god to have willed material to be arranged and straightway it was arranged, because Moses held everything to be possible for god, even if he should wish to make a horse or ox out of ashes. We, however, do not hold this, saying rather that some things are impossible by nature, and that god does not attempt these at all but chooses from amongst the creative possibilities what is best to be done.

καὶ τοῦτ' ἔστι, καθ' ὃ τῆς Μωσοῦ δόξης ἢ θ' ἡμετέρα καὶ ἡ Πλάτωνος καὶ ἡ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν παρ' Ἑλλησιν ὀρθῶς μεταχειρισμένων τοὺς περὶ φύσεως λόγους διαφέρει. τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀρκεῖ τὸ βουλευθῆναι τὸν θεὸν κοσμησάμεν τὴν ὕλην, ἡ δ' εὐθύς κεκόσμηται πάντα γὰρ εἶναι νομίζει τῷ θεῷ δυνατά, κἄν εἰ τὴν τέφραν ἵππων ἢ βοῶν ἐθέλοι ποιεῖν. ἡμεῖς δ' οὐχ οὕτω γιγνώσκομεν, ἀλλ' εἶναι γὰρ τινα λέγομεν ἀδύνατα φύσει καὶ τούτοις μὴδ' ἐπιχειρεῖν ὄλωσ τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν δυνατῶν γενέσθαι τὸ βέλτιστον αἰρεῖσθαι. (*UP* 11.14: Helmreich 1968, II 158.19–159.3)

The issue in question is the uniquely unchanging length of the eyelashes, which is required for them to perform their function – protecting the open eyes from small objects which might fall into them – effectively, without obscuring vision. This arrangement is not just the product of demiurgic command – because the hairs ‘fear the injunction of their master, or reverence the god who commands it, or themselves believe it better to do so’ – as Moses thinks. Rather, it is because, knowing what was needed, the demiurge implanted the eyelash hairs into a hard, cartilaginous, material, which keeps them upright, but also limits their potential growth (as the growth of plants is restricted by being in dry, rocky, soil).

It is not obvious why Moses' views should feature in this sequence, in particular; the general point is one that could have been made almost anywhere in the treatise, and the constraining work of matter is a more or less constant theme, moving in and out of focus, but always present. There are no specific references to eyelashes in *Genesis* that might lie behind the engagement, and scholars have struggled to find any but the vaguest biblical parallels for making animals out of ashes.²⁴ It was, however, crucial that Galen included eyelashes in his account. Every somatic detail, from toenails to eyebrows, was explicable on his model, as he made good on his claim to take Aristotle's maxim that ‘nature does nothing in vain’ more seriously, more literally, than its author. *On the Usefulness of the Parts* explicitly builds and improves on, extends and completes Aristotle's and

²⁴ Though van der Eijk 2014, 351–355 suggests Christian obsessions with hair may be to blame, and see also Tieleman 2005.

Plato's views in this domain. So, on the same pattern, it may have been important that, if anyone had mentioned Moses in any kind of teleological debates, he too should be encompassed, surpassed in this totalising endeavour. A certain rhetoric of completeness thus brings eyelashes and Moses together; but not much more. Still, the main point for this discussion is that one of Christianity's founding figures has become a bit more substantial as a result. As befits a key authority in a quasi-philosophical grouping, he is half-comparable to Epicurus, Plato and the rest. His ideas can be discussed on the same terms, but he is not located 'among the Greeks'. It is not his error that excludes him from this category, for Epicurus is far more wrong, but something else.

Galen's final two surviving references to Christians come in a single treatise, *On the Differences of the Pulse*. This was most probably composed in the years directly after the completion of *On the Usefulness of the Parts*, and the whole anatomical-physiological project more broadly, so in the late AD 170s. Galen was moving on to other important areas of the medical art, taking a more practical turn in his writing, towards disease and cure, diagnosis, prognosis and therapeutics. Pulse lore was an established part of the medical domain in these respects, one which Galen had staked out some initial claims to when he first arrived in Rome, and now needed to really dominate.²⁵ A bigger and better exposition, a fuller explanation of the workings and function of the pulse, of its varieties and of diagnosis and prognosis based on understanding that typology, was thus produced, in sixteen books overall; more comprehensive and coherent than anything which had preceded it, better joined up both within itself and with the rest of Galen's system.

This shift of emphasis meant that a different set of authorities came into view. Prominent recent physicians, key writers on particular aspects and areas of medicine had to be engaged with, not just the more distant, foundational figures. In this case the most authoritative figure in the field up till then was Archigenes of Apamea, an eminent physician in the 'pneumatic' school, active in Rome under Trajan. This medical lineage had been founded in the first century BC by Athenaeus of Attaleia, a student of the great Stoic philosopher Posidonius; and seems to have arrived in, or at least made its mark on, the imperial capital, with Agathinus the Spartan, the teacher of Archigenes, under the Flavians.²⁶ The grouping was named from their adoption of the Stoic notion of *pneuma*, as an

²⁵ Harris 1973 and Barton 1994, 33–68.

²⁶ Flemming 2012, 75–76.

anonymous medical handbook probably composed around the middle of the second century AD states:

But the followers of Athenaeus and Archigenes declare that both all the natural [states of the body] and all diseases are constituted and controlled by the all-pervading *pneuma* alone, this produces the primary affection; from which they take the name *pneumatics* (pneumatikoi).

οἱ δὲ περὶ Ἀθηναίων καὶ Ἀρχιγένην μόνῳ τῷ διήκοντι δι' αὐτῶν πνεύματι καὶ τὰ φυσικὰ συνεστάναι τε καὶ διοικεῖσθαι καὶ τὰ νοσήματα πάντα, τούτου πρωτοπαθοῦντος γίνεσθαι ἀπεφάναντο, ὅθεν καὶ πνευματικοὶ χρηματίζουσι. ([Gal], *Intro.* 9.6 (22.12–17 Petit)).

It is also worth noting that the same handbook, in setting out the traditional sectarian division of the *iatrike techne*, and listing the key names under each heading, had put Archigenes at the end, attached to the 'eclectic' label (4.2). Athenaeus is classified among the 'logikoi' (4.1), but Archigenes, like others of his generation, had taken a more open-minded and flexible approach of 'choosing' and 'combining' aspects from everywhere.

Archigenes, together with others in the pneumatic lineage, is a key figure in all Galen's writings on the pulse; and he is very much the centre of attention in the two middle books of *On the Differences of the Pulse*, which are relevant here. It is his classification of the different kinds of pulse which Galen seeks to replace, which means first revealing all of its flaws and inadequacies, then showing how his own typology meets these objections and is much better overall. But, actually, what emerges as Galen's own scheme does not look very different from Archigenes', despite all the criticism. Archigenes appears to be someone whose authority Galen wishes to both borrow and undermine – whom he wants to distance himself from while closely resembling.²⁷ This is a presentational strategy which demands rich and versatile rhetorical resources to stand even a chance of success, great critical range and considerable sleight of hand. The Christians feature as part of this repertoire of reproach, first directed at Archigenes himself, and then at contemporary medical and philosophical culture more broadly. The reproach is again essentially methodological, which is a good tack to take in these circumstances, since it does not, of itself, invalidate the conclusions.

²⁷ As was presumably enacted in more detail in his eight books of 'commentary and critique' on Archigenes *On the Pulse* (Gal. *Lib. Prop.* 8.6: 159.5–7 Boudon-Millot).

Archigenes began his treatise on the pulse badly, Galen alleges.²⁸ He opened with the statement that the pulse has eight primary qualities: size, strength, speed, frequency, fullness, evenness, order and rhythm. These are the main headings under which he will classify pulses – as fast or slow, even or uneven and so on – in his text. Galen has some worries about the categories, but his main target at this point is the inadequate justification provided for this initial assertion, this foundational move. Archigenes offers no proof, no demonstration, that the initial division should be into this number; he simply says that he is following common usage by those respected in the field. This is useless, though – a formulation which meets none of the demands of formal demonstration, displaying instead a lack of training in logic and a lack of technical skill, for it falls between the two epistemologically recognised stools of either claiming that everyone agrees on something or claiming that the particularly qualified do.²⁹ Archigenes' opening premise is thus left unsupported and vulnerable: starting reading is 'like coming into the school of Moses and Christ, and hearing about undemonstrated laws' / ... ὡς εἰς Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ διατριβὴν ἀφιγμένους, νόμων ἀναποδείκτων ἀκούη (*Diff. Puls.* 2.4: 8.579 K).

These kinds of failure, an inability to proceed logically and to engage in proper processes of reasoning, are more widespread. Having moved on to take issue with Archigenes' exposition of the 'weak pulse', not the notion itself but some of the related details, Galen decides to widen his attack to include almost everyone.³⁰ His superior mastery of the issue is illustrated by a spectacular prognosis he made on the basis of a weak pulse, which confounded all his rivals. When asked to explain how he arrived at his conclusions, Galen declined. Such an enterprise would be pointless, he averred, since he is surrounded by those whose unthinking and irredeemable school allegiance, their 'sect-mania', renders them impervious to reason and genuine dialectic:

For one might more easily teach novelties to the followers of Moses and Christ than to the physicians and philosophers who cling fast to their 'sects' (*haireseis*).

θᾶπτον γὰρ ἂν τις τοὺς ἀπὸ Μωϋσοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ μεταδιδάξειεν ἢ τοὺς ταῖς αἰρέσεσι προστετηκότας ἰατρούς τε καὶ φιλοσόφους. (*Diff. Puls.* 3.3: 8.657 K)

²⁸ This argument takes up most of *Diff. Puls.* 2.4 (VIII 567–83 K), and the engagement with Archigenes continues through the rest of this book and the next.

²⁹ That is to claim either an Aristotelian *endoxa lemma* (*communis opinio*) or the view of the 'wise' (*sophoi*).

³⁰ *Diff. Puls.* 3.3 (VIII 649–57 K).

There is then some significant repetition across most of the passages, in Arabic and Greek. The sequence in *On the Usefulness of the Parts* is a bit different, but these last two, surviving as part of complete texts in their original language, allow the main overall themes to emerge more clearly. Comparison with the Christians is a weapon in Galen's critical armoury, along with many others, and like them also, was probably shared more widely in his cultural milieu. Its negativity is expressed in two, overlapping, ways. The Christians are characterised by both logical failings and lack of demonstrative rigour and by loyalty and obedience to the doctrines which have been dispensed, but not proven, to them. They are totally committed to their project, to their authorities, and not open to thinking differently. In this, however, they are not distinctive, rather the reverse. They may be standard-bearers for this position, in the world of Galenic rhetoric, but it is, sadly, a very popular one, found in many medical and philosophical schools of the time. Indeed, these 'sect-maniacs' are worse than the Christians in these respects. So, as Loveday Alexander has pointed out, while Galen does operate with what might be summarised as an opposition between 'faith' and 'reason', it does not map onto a division between 'Jerusalem' and 'Athens', between the Judeo-Christian and Hellenistic traditions, as Walzer suggested.³¹ Almost everybody is located under the former heading, while only a few – Galen and his friends – really and fully embrace the rigours of 'reason'.

Conclusions

There is a sense, however, in which Galen's project is crucially one of misdirection, not about the Christians particularly, but both about his own approach to authority, ideas and identity, and the approaches to these same matters which dominated his milieu more generally. Authority, for example, operates in a range of ways in Galen's own texts, as well as those of the followers of Moses and Christ, or Epicurus, or whoever.³² He may claim that he never treats Hippocrates, 'as a witness' (*QAM* 9), only accepting and adducing his opinions on account of the soundness of his proofs, but Galen's practice is more variable.³³ Citation of names, foremost among which is that of the 'divine Hippocrates' (and then the 'divine Plato'), is a persuasive staple, and, while, their reasoning may also be reprised, it also

³¹ Alexander 1994, 64–68.

³² Alexander 2001.

³³ See e.g. Flemming 2000, 272–285.

occurs without reference to any arguments.³⁴ There certainly are times when authorities are to be taken at their word, command assent and respect as such.

The second point of misdirection is perhaps more important, however. For there are good reasons to doubt Galen's overall characterisation of his time as dominated by 'sect mania'; rather, indeed, there are grounds to suspect that the opposite might be the case. If he fits right in with, rather than standing out against, contemporary patterns in these respects, that might actually leave the Christians exposed, looking more distinctive than recent scholarship suggests.

For Galen certainly represents a wider imperial trend in medicine, following an earlier philosophical development, variously termed 'eclectic' or 'syncretic' in the sources and much modern scholarship, while Elizabeth Asmis prefers 'personal' in a helpful recent essay.³⁵ Whatever label is applied, the phenomenon is one in which the best doctrines are selected from amongst all those available, from all the schools and sects, and fashioned into a coherent position. This was Archigenes' approach, for example, as mentioned, and, indeed the approach of other *pneumatikoi* too, becoming sufficiently widespread to be included in medical handbooks. Other medical writers have been similarly labelled on the basis of the content of their extant oeuvre, such as Rufus of Ephesus, as have a number of philosophical figures from the late Hellenistic era onwards, in addition to Potamo of Alexandria, who is explicitly named thus by Diogenes Laertius (I.21).³⁶ Rufus, indeed, demonstrates a very similar combination to Galen on multiple levels – Hippocratism and anatomy, reason and experience, for instance – and Archigenes appears to conform to much the same pattern also. So, perhaps all Galen can realistically claim as his own is the provision of systematic epistemological foundations for what was already going on.

It would, however, be an exaggeration, to assert that 'personal' philosophy or medicine dominated the scene by the mid-second century AD. 'School philosophy', to use Asmis' contrasting term, was making a comeback, and the contemporary medical current which Galen hated the most – the *methodikoi* – seems to have had a more distinctive sectarian identity, and pursued a different presentational strategy with great success. Moreover, Galen is surely right that many people took their medical and

³⁴ De Lacey 1973.

³⁵ Asmis 2014, discussing earlier scholarship on the subject.

³⁶ Flemming 2000, 185–96 and Hatzimachali 2011.

philosophical identity, and allegiance, from their father, teacher or friend (*Ord. Lib. Prop.* 1.3–4; Boudon-Millot 88.13–89.7), rather than from systematic scrutiny of, and commitment to, the different ideas involved, and that it was mostly a matter of location and upbringing with very little thought or critical judgement. This may well be because matters of sectarian loyalty were just not very important to most people, particularly in the world of medicine. These were labels of convenience, useful ways of organising medicine's past, and roughly categorising the present, but not deeply felt; and the success of a medical career, even one that included teaching, was generally determined on other grounds. Doctrinal debates within medical groupings could become heated at times, and people did leave, move between sects, but no expulsions are reported.

So, where does this leave the Christians? There is, then, a sense, certainly in the last passage, in which Galen could be said to align sectarian identity more with traditional civic religion than Christianity – a matter of family and city, of social connection and embeddedness – not conscious choice, deciding to think otherwise. However, even in these rather abstract terms, Christianity is not really 'eclectic' or 'personal' either. There is, Eshleman has suggested, a way in which Christians shared in the construction of a single encompassing category of past philosophical wisdom and knowledge (broadly construed), without sectarian boundaries, and which was variously understood to be subsumed, defeated and/or transcended by Christianity.³⁷ But what Galen helps demonstrate is that, in itself, the establishment of a unified intellectual domain does not lead to the construction of a homogeneous movement, with increasingly hard edges of orthodoxy, but rather can just as easily maintain multiple *haireseis*, schools and currents, all under a common, in this case medical, rubric.

³⁷ Eshleman 2012, 199–212.