

# PAUL UNBOUND

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Number 25



# PAUL UNBOUND

Other Perspectives on the Apostle

Second Edition

*Edited by*

Mark D. Given



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## PREFACE

Plans for a second edition of *Paul Unbound* came about in November of 2017, when Vernon Robbins went to the bookstore to order the first edition for his Paul class and was informed it was out of print. The book was originally published by Hendrickson Publishers in 2010 and marketed very well by them, but in 2013 it was sold to Baker Academic along with many other titles and quickly allowed to go out of print. So I was delighted when Vernon contacted me about the possibility of reprinting the book in the Emory Studies in Early Christianity series. I suggested the possibility of bringing the book up to date if the original contributors were willing to participate and, fortunately, they all were. The updating took the form of an addendum added to each essay that brings discussion of each topic up to date. The bibliographies are updated as well, and the Introduction is revised to take account of the added content.

Above all, I wish to thank the contributors to this volume. Without their dedication and cooperation the first edition would not have been possible. In spite of circumstances ranging from excessive teaching and administrative duties to health issues, they all came through with outstanding essays. And I am doubly grateful for their willingness to do the work necessary to produce this updated edition. I also want to thank Riley Brown, my graduate assistant, who helped with proofreading and indexing. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Vernon Robbins and David Gowler for their invitation to republish the volume, and to Bob Buller, the director of SBL Press, and his staff for all their assistance in making it happen. Acquiring the rights and a copy of the first edition of the book in a suitable file format turned out to be a little more complicated than anyone anticipated. Hopefully, the finished product will have made the effort worthwhile.





## ABBREVIATIONS

### Primary Sources

1QS	Rule of the Community
<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>A.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
Avod. Zar.	Avodah Zarah
b.	Babylonian Talmud
<i>B.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum judaicum</i>
B. Metz.	Bava Metzi'a
<i>De or.</i>	Cicero, <i>De oratore</i>
<i>Doctr. chr.</i>	Augustine, <i>De doctrina christiana</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	Philo, <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	Philo, <i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>QE</i>	Philo, <i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum</i>
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
Shabb.	Shabbat
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
t.	Tosefta
<i>Virt.</i>	Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>
Yevam.	Yevamot

### Secondary Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken (Spät)judentums und des Urchristentums
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum louvaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie

<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSHJ	Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
ET	English translation
<i>ETR</i>	<i>Etudes Théologiques et Religieuses</i>
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBS	History of Biblical Studies
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
<i>IDB</i>	Buttrick, George A., ed. <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 4 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1962.
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
LTQ	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
NASB	New American Standard Bible
Neot	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDB	Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, ed. <i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF	Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, eds. <i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . 28 vols. in 2 series. 1886–1889. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SEÅ	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
ST	<i>Studia theologica</i>
ThSt	Theologische Studien
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum

<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRWSup	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## INTRODUCTION

MARK D. GIVEN

This collection of essays provides the advanced undergraduate, graduate student, or interested layperson with an outstanding introduction to a wide range of fascinating approaches to Paul that are relevant to, yet go beyond, traditional theological and historical concerns. All of the contributors have previously published important work on their assigned topic. The collection grew out of a panel presentation on the topic of “Newer Perspectives on Paul” at the 2004 Central States Society of Biblical Literature Meeting in St. Louis. As chair of the New Testament section, I did not plan the panel with the intention of producing a book, but the range of subjects covered and the quality of the presentations made it immediately apparent to the participants that we should do so. Several of us teach introductory Paul courses, and we could see how desirable it would be to have such a collection of essays available to supplement any standard textbook. It took until 2010 to bring the volume to fruition, but all of the essays were expanded and updated to include scholarship produced since 2004. For this second edition, each contributor added an addendum to his or her essay to take account of scholarship produced over the past decade. Each essay includes an up-to-date bibliography that will be useful to students for further reading and research.

Mark Nanos suggested the title, *Paul Unbound*. It calls to mind the myth of Prometheus, who was bound on orders from Zeus for stealing fire and giving it, along with other gifts of knowledge, to the human race. Certainly Paul was not bound by God—at least not in this sense—but one might playfully suggest that he has often been bound by tradition and theology, and these essays reflect some of the ways in which the study of Paul has been liberated from a variety of traditional or conventional perspectives in recent years. While contemplating Mark’s suggested title, I came upon Dirck van Baburen’s seventeenth-century painting, *Prometheus Being*

*Chained by Vulcan*. This painting reminded me of Caravaggio's celebrated *Conversion of Saint Paul*, and, in fact, Baburen was strongly influenced by the style of Caravaggio. Baburen's painting suggested the following allegory to me. Hermes on the right is the messenger of Zeus and thus represents theological hermeneutics. Hephaestus on the left represents the traditional historical-critical method, which has often served theology against its will. Thus, theological interpretation and traditional historical criticism have joined to constrain Paul, to keep him bound. The contributors to this volume are like an unseen Greek chorus, which, as in Aeschylus's fifth-century BCE play, *Prometheus Bound*, ultimately advocates for the liberation of Prometheus (hence Paul).<sup>1</sup>

The subtitle, *Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, was my idea. It recalls such well-worn phrases in Paul scholarship as "new perspectives," which often meant new theological interpretations, and *the New Perspective*, which is important in several of these essays but is not the main focus of any. This is not to say that theological issues play no role in any of these essays—they do—but it is to say that they do not command the stage.

It is thus fitting that the first essay begins with the observation that "For a growing number of scholars, Paul's primary engagement was not with other Jesus-followers nor with first-century Judaism but with the Roman Empire." Warren Carter's "Paul and the Roman Empire: Recent Perspectives" surveys and evaluates the work of the Society of Biblical Literature's Paul and Politics Group. Echoing Richard Horsley, Carter locates its origin initially in wider academic and cultural contexts, namely, the rediscovery of imperialism in other disciplines, postcolonial criticism, the influence of non-European-American scholars, and some historical Jesus work that has given attention to the Roman imperial world. The group has investigated four interrelated areas: Paul and the politics of the churches; Paul and the politics of Israel; Paul and the politics of the Roman Empire; and Paul and the politics of interpretation. Carter surveys three volumes of essays that pursue these topics: *Paul and Empire* (1997), *Paul and Politics* (2000), and *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (2004). He then goes on to consider other important works, especially those of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Neil Elliot, John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, Peter Oakes, and Davina Lopez. Carter concluded his original essay with several incisive suggestions for further work. His addendum begins by calling attention to significant discussions of Paul's writings in relation to the Roman imperial order since 2010 before turning to four matters: some areas of focus; methodological approaches (especially the use of images and postcolo-



Dirck van Baburen, *Prometheus Being Chained by Vulcan*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Gift of J. von Loehr, Cairo.

nial theory); evaluations; and attention to the post-Pauline (or disputed authorship) writings.

Steven Friesen's "Paul and Economics: The Jerusalem Collection as an Alternative to Patronage" is an apt extension of the topics covered in Carter's essay. Friesen argues that we need to construct a different picture of Paul the activist. Rather than describing him simply as a theologian and rhetorician, we need to examine his economic practices, for his gospel not only challenged fundamental economic *ideas* such as patronage; it also promoted alternative economic *practices* of community sharing among the

poor, based not on contemporary ideas of patronage but rather on Paul's understanding of the example of Christ. Friesen is able to report in his addendum that attention to the economic dimensions of Paul's letters and communities has increased significantly in recent years, although scholarship is still dominated by discussions of his biography and theology. He discusses modifications and improvements to the methods utilized in his original essays and concludes with several suggestions for further research.

The next essay is Jerry Sumney's "Paul and His Opponents: The Search." Sumney reviews the major outlines of the ways Paul's opponents have been understood from F. C. Baur's *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ* in 1845 down through the twentieth century. Methodological issues are the dominant concern of the essay. These include distinguishing between those whom Paul opposes and those who opposed Paul; evaluating types of texts within a letter to determine their usefulness for acquiring data to identify opponents; recognizing the implications of the diverse nature of early Christianity; and the use of reconstructions of other groups within the first-century environment to supply information about Paul's opponents. Sumney concluded his original essay with an examination of two recent studies of Colossians as examples of the ways careful attention to methodology is important and still neglected. His addendum begins by noting that there has been little discussion of how to approach the search for the identity of opponents in recent years. However, he goes on to discuss the weaknesses of recent strictly literary and canonical approaches to the topic of Paul's opponents before calling attention to the greater potential for advancing the topic found in scholarship on women and slaves.

In "Paul and Ethnicity: A Selective History of Interpretation," Charles Cosgrove provides the first broad survey of interpretation of Paul and ethnicity, treating not only Pauline scholarship on this topic but also more popular efforts to grasp Paul's attitude toward ethnic identity. His survey of Pauline scholarship covers the subjects of "The Universal (Nonethnic) Human Being in Paul," "Paul and Anti-Semitism," "'Separate but Equal' in Paul?," "Divine Impartiality in Paul," "Interpretations of Galatians 3:28," and "Paul contra Ethnocentrism." He goes on to survey other fascinating interpretations of Paul and ethnicity, such those of African American thinkers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the radical nationalist translation commentary on Romans for the Zulu people by nineteenth-century missionary Bishop Colenzo; Holmes Rolston's effort in 1942 to interpret Paul in an antiracist way in and for a Southern Christian audience in America; and Daniel Boyarin's interpretation of Paul and ethnicity from a



Jewish perspective. The essay also provides a discussion of post-Holocaust, dispensationalist, and recent non-Christian philosophical interpretations of Paul as they bear on the question of ethnicity. The addendum brings things up to date by concentrating on the scholarship of Caroline Johnson Hodge, Cavan W. Concannon, Simon Buttica, and Karin B. Neutel.

Andrew Das's "Paul and the Law: Pressure Points in the Debate" is the first of two essays that engage, in differing ways, the bewildering scholarly territory of Paul and the law. Das helpfully offers the beginning student a roadmap for identifying key landmarks. He presents an introduction to the New Perspective on Paul as well as ongoing criticisms of it. Along the way, he introduces his own perspective on Paul and the law that is not simply a middle way between the New Perspective and the traditional "Lutheran" one, but what he argues is a *Newer* Perspective that takes seriously the strengths and weaknesses of both. His addendum adds another pressure point to the debate that has received much attention recently: the matter of how one views God's righteousness and justification in the Pauline letters. Much of the debate revolves around the relationship of righteousness and covenant in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the issue of whether Paul has a covenantal theology at all.

Mark Nanos's essay is the longest in this collection and one of the most challenging for students. Its title is "Paul *and* Judaism: Why Not *Paul's* Judaism?" He published a somewhat revised and updated version of it in 2015, and that is the version included here. Nanos observes that the investigation of Paul *and* Judaism has traditionally proceeded as if what was written was Paul *or* Judaism, with the understanding that these referents represent two different religious systems. They proceed as if the two are different and something must be wrong with one or the other. Nanos believes this essentializing of difference and concomitant requirement to find fault will continue to the degree that the ethnic division that Paul's letters draw along a Jew/gentile and Israel/other nations line within a Christ-believing Judaism continues to be approached by his interpreters as if drawn along a Judaism/Christianity line instead. Nanos challenges prevailing interpretations of 1 Cor 9:19–23 that construe it as a "chameleon principle" that renders Paul's law observance a sham, and, while appreciative of the New Perspective's improved understanding of Judaism, he finds it still inadequate in its understanding of Paul. It is still too indebted to traditional constructions of Paul and Paulinism. Nanos, however, insists that what Paul would find wrong with Paulinism is that it is not a Judaism. In his addendum, Nanos demonstrates that his position on Paul is not as for-

eign to the field on New Testament studies as it was when he wrote this essay. While still a controversial minority view, several publications have argued for forms of it, and numerous SBL and international conferences have included sections or sessions on it.

The next essay is Deborah Krause's "Paul and Women: Telling Women to Shut Up Is More Complicated Than You Might Think," which surveys recent historical-critical scholarship regarding women and the churches of Paul. The survey shows that feminist research has challenged Pauline scholars to incorporate the study of the everyday lives of women in Hellenistic Judaism and Greco-Roman culture into the study of the Pauline Epistles. Such studies have moved from examining Paul's rhetoric as unique to placing it within its larger contexts of religion, economics, politics, and culture of his day. As such, women are no longer a separate subject area within Pauline studies but rather a part of the world within which Paul is understood to operate. In this sense, texts such as 1 Cor 11:1–16 or 1 Cor 14:34–36, which have traditionally been studied as evidence of Paul's attitudes toward women, are examined within their larger rhetorical contexts for what they might say about women and their activities within the church and world in general. Krause examines several Pauline texts in light of these newer approaches. In particular, the issue of women's speech provides a focus for the study of how Paul's rhetoric is engaged within a larger discourse of power. Moreover, texts from the Pastoral Epistles (extensions of the Pauline legacy) are examined for the way in which they engage women's speech and activity within the church (e.g., 1 Tim 2:8–15; 5:11–13; 2 Tim 3:6–7). In sum, these texts are interpreted not as evidence for Paul's attitudes toward women but rather for how they reveal struggles of identity and power within the churches of Paul and how these struggles connect with expectations of women and their speech within the larger culture. Krause's addendum begins with the provocative statement that newer scholarship on Paul and women is both less about Paul and less about women. Clearly the scholarly terrain has much expanded, as witnessed by the increase in critical discourse regarding gender, postcolonial, space, and queer theories. Her survey of recent scholarship shows that such approaches are even beginning to appear in journals traditionally focused on historical-critical exegetical concerns.

The final essay is my own "Paul and Rhetoric: A *Sophos* in the Kingdom of God." After providing a brief overview of the history of the subject of Paul and rhetoric, I discuss how classical or new rhetorical criticism is applied to 1 Corinthians. Lastly, I use aspects of interpretation of 1 Cor 1–4

to contrast a classical with a more postmodern rhetorical approach. This final section broadens the subject of rhetoric and power to discuss some of the seductions of Paul's rhetoric. Why would someone want to enter the kingdom of God? Why would someone want to choose it over the empire of Rome? Intriguingly, the values and rewards of the kingdom of God turn out to have some striking similarities to those of this age. Paul's rhetorical questions, "Where is the *sophos*? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?," actually imply another question: Where is the *sophos*, the scribe, and the debater of the new age, the new creation? I argue that the answer is where Paul is, together with all those who will imitate him. The wisdom and knowledge he offers does not seduce with the promise of glory in the kingdom of Rome like that of the *sophos* of this age, but it does seduce with the promise a surpassing eternal weight of glory in a kingdom that is about to appear. In my addendum, I initially draw attention to several volumes published around the time of my essay and afterwards that show that New Testament rhetorical criticism was in a period of reflection and self-assessment at that time. I go on to discuss continuing controversies regarding Paul and rhetoric and the sometimes better and sometimes worse ways rhetorical criticism is appropriated in New Testament scholarship, especially with regard to Paul.

Not every possible other perspective on Paul is represented here. Still, whatever its shortcomings, I hope this volume will prove useful and worthwhile for students and interested lay readers. If so, perhaps a future edition can include yet more perspectives. Indeed, as long as there are readers of Paul, there will be always be other perspectives.

#### Note

1. Aeschylus also wrote a lost play titled *Prometheus Unbound* in which Prometheus was reconciled with Zeus. Interestingly, however, in 1820 Percy Shelley published his own *Prometheus Unbound* in which Zeus was overthrown and the effects of Prometheus's actions led to a transformed humanity that was "Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man / Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless" (3.4.194–195). While Shelley would have had no sympathy with the traditional Paul, the allegorical possibilities for comparing his Prometheus to the "other" Pauls of this collection abound.



# 1

## PAUL AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE: RECENT PERSPECTIVES

WARREN CARTER

For a growing number of scholars, Paul's primary engagement was not with other Jesus followers nor with first-century Judaism but with the Roman Empire. How did Paul evaluate the empire? What guidance did he offer Jesus followers for negotiating it in their daily living? What similarities or differences exist between the structures of Paul's theological thinking and ecclesial communities and imperial perspectives and structures? In this chapter I will look at several significant contributions to this developing perspective on Paul, some critiques of it, and challenges for future work. Because of space limitations, the discussion and bibliography can be only illustrative, not comprehensive.

The SBL Paul and Politics Group

Significant impetus for this work has come from three books edited by Richard Horsley, published between 1997 and 2004.<sup>1</sup> The three volumes contain the work of scholars associated with the Society of Biblical Literature's Paul and Politics group, of which Horsley was at the time cochair with Cynthia Kittredge. The books, comprising some seven hundred pages and thirty-six chapters, along with various introductory pieces and responses, represent the work of about thirty scholars. Some of these scholars have written other articles and books related to Paul's engagement with the Roman Empire.<sup>2</sup> Collectively, the volumes offer a significant challenge to much previous and current work on Paul and advocate an innovative and exciting approach that cannot be ignored in studies of Paul.

## Aims and Agenda

In his introductory essay to *Paul and Empire* (1997), Horsley justifies the investigation of Paul's interaction with the Roman Empire by observing that, before it became the empire's established religion, "Christianity was a product of empire."<sup>3</sup> This imperial origin, though, has been obscured from scholarly investigation by the late eighteenth century's separation of church and state so that biblical and theological studies concentrated on religious or spiritual matters and ignored political and economic dimensions and imperial contexts. Horsley locates the rediscovery of the imperial world in which Paul conducts his mission in relation to similar rediscoveries of empire in other disciplines (literary studies, Hebrew Bible), the emergence of postcolonial criticism, the influence of non-European-American scholars, and some historical Jesus work.

Horsley elaborates the agenda in his introduction to *Paul and Politics* (2000), a volume dedicated to Krister Stendahl for his pioneering work in "bringing greater sensitivity to concrete human relations" and thereby preparing for this work in Pauline studies.<sup>4</sup> In Stendahl's significant essay "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,"<sup>5</sup> Horsley finds five arguments that challenged the predominantly theological and individualized interpretation of Paul:

- (1) the Protestant focus on individual sin, salvation, and justification by faith missed Paul's concern with including gentiles in the messianic community;
- (2) the anti-Jewish bias in constructions of Paul as struggling to throw off law-bound first-century Judaism ignored salvation history and Paul's vision of Israel's salvation;
- (3) the emphasis on generalized theological issues ignored the contingent, specific, and historical address of Paul's letters;
- (4) the concern with theology overlooked Paul's focus on social/human relations to which theology has secondary significance;
- (5) subsequent interpretations of Paul, especially through the lens of the socially conservative deuteropaulines, must be challenged by the original contexts of Paul's letters.

Stendahl's work opened the way for questioning conventional approaches to Paul. Participants in social movements for liberation, such as African-American, feminist, non-European and/or two-thirds world, Jewish, and

dis-eased Western male interpreters, shared a common concern with the diverse and interrelated forms of domination, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and social status. They examined, for instance, Paul's treatment of slavery and women and exposed the use of Paul by colonizing Western missionaries to enforce submission and by Christian scholars to perpetuate anti-Judaism.<sup>6</sup> The SBL Paul and Politics group emerged to investigate four interrelated areas: Paul and the politics of the churches; Paul and the politics of Israel; Paul and the politics of the Roman Empire; and Paul and the politics of interpretation.

Informed by the analyses of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Fernando Segovia,<sup>7</sup> Horsley sketches further implications of "how problematic Western privatized and depoliticized interpretations of biblical texts have become."<sup>8</sup> He points especially to the imperialistic nature of scholarly inquiry that assumed and asserted European/American elite male interests to be universal and that silenced the interests, experiences, identities, and voices of all others; the silence of biblical scholars on major sociopolitical issues of the last fifty years; the inability of the New Perspective on Paul to move outside the traditional opposition of Paul to Judaism; and the continuing neglect of imperial and power dynamics in various other new methods developed in recent decades (social-scientific, postmodernist, cultural studies). He outlines four principles that guide the formulation of political interpretations of Paul:

- (1) Texts and interpretations are sites of struggle among various voices.
- (2) The production and interpretation of texts do not involve only ideas but also power relations, interests, values, and visions; all interpretation has an agenda.
- (3) Both texts and interpreters occupy particular social locations and contexts requiring systemic analysis of wider political-economic-religious structures and power relations as well as of local assemblies. There is a special interest in "readings from below," in the marginalized and oppressed with demystification and liberation in mind.
- (4) Interpreters' identity and social location are hybrid and complex, embracing multiple positions and perspectives involving various interrelationships of class, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Horsley summarizes the approach by saying:

The aims and agenda of the Paul and Politics group are, broadly, to problematize, interrogate, and re-vision Pauline texts and interpretations, to identify oppressive formulations as well as potentially liberative visions and values in order to recover their unfulfilled historical possibilities, all in critical mutual engagement among diverse participants.<sup>9</sup>

### Content and Areas of Investigation

In order to pursue this agenda, scholars must study not only Paul but also the work of classical scholars on the structures, ideology, and practices of the Roman Empire. Thus Horsley's *Paul and Empire* (1997) begins with five essays examining aspects of the Roman world written by classical scholars. Part 1, comprising four essays by Peter Brunt, Dieter Georgi, Simon Price, and Paul Zanker, is entitled "The Gospel of Imperial Salvation." It focuses on the cluster of propaganda claims, practices, and institutions that sustains and creates the Roman imperial world, especially the imperial cult. The four essays describe what Horsley calls in the section introduction "the gospel of Imperial Salvation," the gospel of Caesar, the imperial savior, who had established "peace and security" in the cities of Paul's mission where urban elites had willingly "established shrines, temples, citywide festivals and intercity games to honor their savior."<sup>10</sup> The imperial cult pervaded public life, a political-religious form of power that served both rulers (the allied elite) and the ruled in establishing and recognizing divine sanction for the prevailing order. Religion is thus not separate from nor independent of the imperial order. It participates in and sanctions the political order and societal power relations. To create an alternative to this order of power, as Paul did, is to engage in a politically charged act.<sup>11</sup>

The second section, comprising three essays by Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, John Chow, and Richard Gordon, is headed "Patronage, Priesthoods, and Power." This section also investigates the power relations that "held the far-flung empire of Rome together," by exploring the religio-political (Gordon) and socioeconomic networks of patronage that secured the self-serving power of emperors and allied Roman and provincial elites (Garnsey and Saller, Chow) who strategically controlled the dependent lower orders, undermined bonds of solidarity among the urban poor and peasantry, and limited their access to goods and other benefits. That is, patronage, fusing the "emperor cult with the social-economic system of patronage," was a means of both social cohesion and social control.<sup>12</sup>



The second half of the book interprets Paul in relation to this Roman imperial context. In part 3, entitled “Paul’s Counter-imperial Gospel,” Dieter Georgi discusses Paul’s vocabulary in Romans (*euangelion*, *pistis*, *dikaiosynē*, *eirēnē*) that echoes Roman political theology and frames Paul’s gospel as a “competitor of the gospel of Caesar.” Helmut Koester delineates Paul’s evocation of and opposition to the Roman imperial boast of having established “peace and security” (1 Thess 5:3). Neil Elliott argues that the crucified Christ is the center of Paul’s anti-imperial gospel, that this crucified political insurrectionary has been enthroned as Lord and his parousia (another imperial term) is awaited. Elliott argues that Paul understands “the rulers” who crucify Jesus in 1 Cor 2:8 in the context of Jewish apocalyptic traditions as evil rulers who dominate the current order and who are “being destroyed” (1 Cor 2:6) and subjected to God’s justice.<sup>13</sup> What, then, of Paul’s command to “be subject to the governing authorities” in Rom 13:1–7? In the following chapter Elliott argues that Romans addresses gentile-Christian boasting or claims of supersessionism in a context of Jewish vulnerability to imperial violence involving agitation over taxes. The command for submission offers Roman Christians a temporary strategy of judicious restraint appropriate to a historical context of Jewish vulnerability and parallel to that offered in similar circumstances by Philo and Josephus.

The final section, entitled “Building an Alternative Society,” focuses on ecclesial practices and structures. Horsley argues that Paul cannot be understood as converting from one religion to another or as founding a new religion.<sup>14</sup> Rather, Paul’s Pharisaic roots connect him to movements that sought Israel’s independence from Hellenistic and Roman imperial traditions. Horsley identifies Paul’s communities, or *ekklesiai*, as “comprehensive in their common purpose, exclusive over against the dominant society, and part of an intercity, international movement.”<sup>15</sup> Paul understands the *ekklesia* (“a political term with certain religious overtones”) not as a cultic community but “as the political assembly of the people ‘in Christ’ in pointed juxtaposition and ‘competition’ with the official city assembly” (also identified as *ekklesia*).<sup>16</sup> Forming a social alternative to *pax Romana* and rooted in Israel’s traditions, these communities (not Rome) fulfill the divine promise to Abraham to bless all the nations and enact patterns of more egalitarian socioeconomic interactions that differ from hierarchical patronage systems.

Karl P. Donfried elaborates this interaction of an alternative society over against the Roman imperial order in his analysis of “The Imperial

Cults of Thessalonica and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians.”<sup>17</sup> Donfried locates the hostility and opposition to Paul’s mission, gospel, and community (Acts 17:1–9) in the context of a challenge to the city’s prominent imperial cult and order, rejecting claims that Paul wanted acceptance and integration.

Schüssler Fiorenza, in contrast to those who deny any political implications for the baptismal formula of Gal 3:28 (“no longer Jew or Greek ... slave or free ... male or female”), argues that the formula functions as “a communal Christian self-definition,” shaping the social interrelationships and structures of the community marked by freedom.<sup>18</sup> Paul envisaged a surpassing of the central divisions in imperial society of ethnicity, societal status, and gender. “All distinctions of religion, race, class, nationality, and gender are insignificant,” creating an alternative, more egalitarian community inclusive of slaves and women that denied cultural-religious male privileges and created tension with the larger, hierarchical Roman world.<sup>19</sup>

In the final chapter, Horsley pursues similar emphases on the formation and practices of an alternative society in “1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul’s Assembly as an Alternative Society.”<sup>20</sup> Paul’s discussions of the crucified Christ (1 Cor 1:17–2:8) and the resurrection (1 Cor 15) frame God’s definitive present and future intervention that ensures the destruction of the imperial “rulers of this age” as enemies of God’s purposes (1 Cor 2:6–8; 15:24–28). The remaining discussion discloses the structure of both Paul’s mission and the network of household-based assembly/ies called by Paul to “conduct (their) own affairs autonomously, in complete independence of ‘the world’” (1 Cor 5–6) though with continuing mission in it. The prohibition against eating food offered to idols removes the Corinthian assemblies from fundamental societal interactions, thereby ensuring the groups’ survival “as an exclusive alternative community to the dominant society” and its social and power networks (1 Cor 8–10).<sup>21</sup> Paul also exhorts different economic relations. His refusal of their support exemplifies “horizontal economic reciprocity” (1 Cor 9) that differed from hierarchical imperial patronage relations of benefit to the elite. Finally, the collection of 1 Cor 16:1–4 indicates economic solidarity, horizontal reciprocity, and an “international political-economic dimension diametrically opposed to the tributary political economy of the empire.”<sup>22</sup>

Further exploration of the Corinthian correspondence and communities is evident in other essays in *Paul and Politics* (2000). In “Rhetoric and Empire—and 1 Corinthians,” Horsley identifies the conflictual communication between Paul and the assembly as comprising two competing

discourses, both of which oppose the Roman imperial order, and locates them in the system of power relations constituted by elite political rhetoric (embedded in provincial alliances, advocacy of the imperial cult, and patronage) that sustained imperial and civic order, exerted control, and secured consent and harmony. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, however, is not convinced of Paul's unqualified opposition to the empire.<sup>23</sup> She discusses gender relations and other voices such as the women prophets in order to reconstruct and evaluate the various self-understandings and political interactions within the Corinthian community. She argues that "Paul uses imperial language to both subvert and reinscribe the imperial system,"<sup>24</sup> imitating its patronage, as well as its hierarchical and subordinating political and gender relations. Sheila Briggs notes ambiguities and contradictions in discourse about slavery in the Roman world and argues that Paul's rhetoric, originating from a free-born Christian who shared with others anxiety about upwardly mobile slaves and about being accused of upsetting the social order, is similarly marked (1 Cor 7:24).<sup>25</sup> Sze-kar Wan argues that the collection for the poor in Jerusalem "lay at the heart of Paul's concern with redefining Jewish group boundaries to include gentile converts" (1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9).<sup>26</sup> Paul's metanarrative of eschatological and cosmic universalism inclusive of Jew and gentile critiques both Jewish and Roman imperialism, including, with an emphasis on equity/mutual indebtedness, the divine origin of prosperity and the imperial structure of patronage. Allen Callahan identifies 1 Corinthians as "an emancipatory project"<sup>27</sup> in which Paul offers ecclesial manumission (1 Cor 7, the community buys freedom for enslaved believers), mutuality (communal interdependence in justice [1 Cor 6:1–9]) and economics (1 Cor 16:1–4) as three communal practices to sustain emancipation among this community comprising those without privilege, prestige, and power, against Roman hegemony.

Other essays investigate aspects of Paul's interactions with other communities, especially matters concerning Israel. Pamela Eisenbaum, for example, focuses on Paul's Abrahamic identity establishing "a new kind of family ... made up of Jews and Gentiles."<sup>28</sup> Mark Nanos rejects conventional readings of Galatians that emphasize the struggle as "Christianity versus Judaism" or (in more recent interpretations) as an intra-Christian struggle but styles it as an intra- and inter-Jewish debate concerned with how gentiles are to be incorporated into the people of God.<sup>29</sup> Alan Segal highlights Paul's inclusive focus on "Jews and Gentiles making one community."<sup>30</sup>

N. T. Wright locates his discussion of “Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire” in affirmations that religion and politics are inseparable and that Paul’s gospel challenges imperial cult and ideology.<sup>31</sup> Under the heading “Jesus Christ Is Lord: Exegetical Studies in Paul’s Counterimperial Gospel,” Wright examines four points of collision between Paul’s theological claims and Roman imperial theology in which Paul asserts an alternative sovereignty and loyalty: (1) the term *gospel* evokes Isaiah’s hope for establishing God’s reign and Jesus as “Israel’s Messiah and the world’s Lord”; (2) Jesus’s identity as messianic “King and Lord”; (3) the revelation of God’s covenant faithfulness as justice or putting right of the world that challenges in Romans the Roman goddess and claim to provide *Iustitia*; (4) “Paul’s Coded Challenge to Empire” in a discussion of Phil 3. Wright concludes by noting that Paul’s critique of empire is grounded in his Jewish heritage, that his high Christology is central to it, that this critique is maintained along with a critique of nonmessianic Judaism, that Paul’s challenge cannot be confined to and by the category of “religion,” and that ecclesiology, critique, and collaboration are integral to it.

The third volume, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (2004), contains seven chapters along with Horsley’s introduction that summarizes central emphases in this approach and a response from classical scholar Simon Price.<sup>32</sup> Robert Jewett reads Rom 8:18–23 in the context of and as disputing Roman imperial claims about the renewal of nature.<sup>33</sup> Focusing on 1 Thess 2:14–16, Abraham Smith contextualizes Paul’s mission and communities in continuing conflicts among subject peoples.<sup>34</sup> Neil Elliott examines Paul’s use of imagery from the imperial triumph to present his own anti-imperial mission.<sup>35</sup> Rollin Ramsaran investigates Paul’s contestive rhetoric in 1 Corinthians.<sup>36</sup> Efrain Agosto compares elite letters of recommendation with Paul’s commendatory letters to argue that Paul calls leaders to sacrificial service (not domination) in oppositional communities.<sup>37</sup> Erik Heen rereads Phil 2:6–11 as rejecting the elite quest for honors while God raises and exalts the crucified Jesus as a counteremperor.<sup>38</sup> Jennifer Wright Knust argues that in attacking vice and immorality Paul rejects imperial claims to have restored public morality, but in advocating Christ as the master over sin Paul reinscribes hierarchical, imperial assumptions about sex, gender, and status.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the three volumes various “response” essays engage the contributions and foster further debate by affirming, restating, and contesting interpretations. Antoinette Wire, for example, affirms interest in Paul’s rhetoric in the essays of Horsley, Kittredge, and Briggs,<sup>40</sup> criticizes

Horsley for ignoring the rhetoric of others in the Corinthian assembly who might be more anti-imperial than Paul, commends Kittredge for attending to Paul's imitation of, rather than exclusive resistance to, the empire and its patronage, and agrees with Briggs's analysis that Paul's gospel might have had little social value for most slaves. Wire and Calvin Roetzel affirm Wan's attention to ethnicity and matters of power but question how the collection might subvert Roman hegemony except in the sense that Jewish hopes conflict with Roman imperialism.<sup>41</sup> Wire also wonders, in response to Callahan, how Corinthians can be liberative when Paul wants slaves to remain in slavery (1 Cor 7:24; also Roetzel), women to remarry immoral husbands, and women to cover their heads and be silent in worship. Roetzel also doubts that Paul was as committed to mutualism as Callahan asserts, given Paul's sometimes-threatening assertion of his apostolic authority.

The classical scholar Simon Price, whose work on the imperial cult has been significant for the "Paul and Empire" discussion, takes up two larger issues.<sup>42</sup> He argues that Rome itself cannot be assumed to be Paul's context but the Roman Empire as it was encountered and negotiated in and by (Eastern) provincial cities and their local, elite-centered structures of power. Second, concerning Paul's subversiveness, Price argues that, while this is hard to assess because of limited (classical) scholarly interest, Paul "has 'political' points to make" that embrace also "local social and religious values."<sup>43</sup>

Price's cautions about the important distinction between Rome and Eastern cities are well taken, but his examples demonstrate that the distinction cannot be pressed too far. The provincial assembly of Asia and Philo in mid-first-century Alexandria are demonstrably well familiar with aspects of Augustan court ideology. That Paul and his hearers in Rome or in provincial centers would be familiar with such imperial claims (comparable forms of which had existed in Hellenistic imperial claims) is not unlikely.

Price is also correct to note the general lack of classical scholarly attention to dissident and subversive voices in the empire. Its politics of interpretation has generally focused on elite interests and sources, a generally positive evaluation of Rome's empire, attention to its "successes and consent," as Price notes, and a neglect of social-scientific models of empire, resulting in relatively little attention to the diverse modes of dissent.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, in cataloging "subversive" activity in the empire (bandits, local rebel leaders, cultic activity), Price generally though not exclusively seems to equate subversion with violent public attacks on imperial interests. But James C. Scott's work on expressions of protest and dissent in

peasant societies has demonstrated that oppressed peasant/artisan groups rarely challenge public transcripts and their big traditions directly but prefer self-protective, calculated, strategic actions that indirectly contest public transcripts, while also maintaining little traditions that enhance dignity and envisage and sustain alternative communities and practices.<sup>45</sup> It is among such co-opted yet contestive, confrontational yet accommodated dynamics that we should locate Paul's "political" activity, practices, communities, and visions (as well as find comparable models).

### Evaluation

There is no doubt that these volumes presenting the work of the Paul and Politics group present a major rethinking of Paul and a reading of his letters that is both an alternative and challenge to existing work. It might be helpful to identify some significant features of this work.

This work has shown Paul's engagement with three overlapping and comprehensive societal structures and cultural traditions: the assemblies of Christ believers, Israel, and the Roman Empire. It has also engaged a fourth tradition: the extensive legacy of debate and interpretation concerning Paul. To engage such areas is to wrestle with central Pauline material. To protest that the areas are not specifically theological (Christology, soteriology, eschatology) is to maintain an artificial separation of religion and politics and to miss the point that such matters cannot be isolated from the societal structures and cultural traditions of Paul's worlds.

This rereading of Paul is necessarily interdisciplinary, since the worlds that Paul inhabits and constitutes are multivalent and complex. It draws on recent work on the diversity and complexity of first-century Judaism and on classical studies. Methodologically and in terms of personnel, the work draws together African American, feminist, non-European, and postcolonialist scholars and scholarship. Matters of power, domination, liberation, emancipation, ethnicity, gender, social status, community formation, boundaries, exclusion/inclusion, and imperialism are inevitably to the fore.

Attention to the Roman imperial world has exposed the limits and contributions of Eurocentric male scholarship, of the exclusively Jewish horizon of the New Perspective, and the cultural but not political-imperial focus of "social world" work. Especially significant is the reframing and promotion of the Roman imperial world from background and context to the central entity that Paul and his communities actively negotiate, imitate, and contest.

The extensive agenda and rich interdisciplinary approaches are reflected in the wide range of Pauline topics and texts engaged in the essays discussed above. Some aspects of all seven undisputed letters are discussed. Imperial negotiation, community formation, women, slavery, freedom, imperial cults, eschatology, soteriology, rhetoric, Jewish traditions (apocalyptic, Abrahamic, gentile inclusion), Christology, and the collection for the Jerusalem church are among the prominent general categories engaged in this significant rethinking of Paul. The extensive subject matter illustrates that this inquiry is not concerned with issues peripheral to the reading of Paul.

Evident in the contributions and responses is the active debate among contributors. One debated issue concerns how to style Paul's negotiation of the Roman world. For some he is anti-imperial and builds an alternative world, communities, and practices (Horsley, Wan, Ramsaran, Heen). For others, especially women scholars, he is much more ambivalent, resisting yet imitating and reinscribing imperial structures of gender and status (Kittredge, Briggs, Wright). For Callahan, Paul is accommodationist in that, while revolution is not possible, emancipatory practices and community are necessary and contestive means of negotiation "in the meantime" until the divine intervention and completion of God's purposes (also Elliott's treatment of Rom 13). Both Schüssler Fiorenza and Wire make the point that attention to Paul must not tune out the other voices, especially those of women and slaves, in the assemblies of which his is only one voice. Moreover, Wire notes that such voices and their practices (opposed by Paul) may be more anti-imperial than Paul's expressed wishes and that Paul's rhetoric can be quite imperial in asserting his will.

### Selective Further Discussions

These publications reflect the work of some of the leading scholars who have engaged the question of Paul's negotiation of the Roman Empire. But it would be a mistake to suggest that this has been the only locus of engagement with this question. Various conferences and periodicals have also explored this issue.<sup>46</sup> Various books and studies have focused on aspects of this question.<sup>47</sup> In 2007, for example, the *Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament* offered chapter-length discussions of each of Paul's letters in relation to Roman and contemporary imperial power.<sup>48</sup> In a book-length study, Neil Elliott examines Romans as the interplay between Paul's letter to the churches in Rome and Roman imperial ideology.<sup>49</sup> Recogniz-



ing the constraints that imperial ideology places on Paul and from which he cannot escape, Elliott focuses his discussion around aspects of Roman power, its *imperium* or rule by force, *iustitia* or justice and the justice of God, *clementia* or mercy for the subjugated, *pietas* (that of Aeneas and Abraham), and *virtus* or virtue.

Also noteworthy are contributions that have offered critique of or have developed aspects of this work summarized above. One critique has come from Schüssler Fiorenza, both in a response included in *Paul and Empire* and in several books.<sup>50</sup> She argues, among other things, that these studies of Paul, especially those by males, have tended to identify with Paul, appropriating his authority to themselves, privilege Paul “the powerful creator and unquestioned leader” at the expense of other voices in the assemblies, overemphasize the oppositional stance of Christian writings to the empire, and overlook Paul’s reinscribing of structures of domination. Moreover, they have often focused on the past and neglected the present function of imperializing language for God and obedience-requiring rhetoric for readers. Such language and rhetoric need deconstructing so that contemporary readers and biblical studies, conscious of this reinscription, can engage the public task of resisting empire, “constructing a scriptural ethos of radical democracy, which provides an historical alternative to the language [and praxis] of empire.”<sup>51</sup> In pluriform communities (*ekklesia* or *politeuma*, Phil 3:20) of difference, plurivocality, argument, persuasion, democratic participation, emancipatory struggle, and theological vision for egalitarian movements and against kyriarchal (male, imperial) leadership, a radical critique of oppressive “earthly” structures, shaped by God’s justice and well-being, is possible in the present.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s attention to the empire-inscribing function of Paul’s writing and her formulation of an alternative, contemporary way of proceeding are well-placed, though the latter should not be emphasized at the expense of attention to Paul’s imperial negotiation. This approach to Paul is recent and remains either neglected or strongly contested by parts of the guild and the church. Moreover, it should not be overlooked, as much hermeneutical theory attests, that explicit attention to the inscription of empire in Paul’s writings also embraces contemporary imperialism, whether that of global capitalism or nation-states, given that interpreters do not leave their worlds and interests behind in interpreting texts.

Also engaging contemporary dimensions of Paul’s negotiation of the Roman Empire is John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed’s *In Search of Paul*.<sup>52</sup> This far-reaching and thoughtful reading of Paul takes his imperial



context seriously, and a significant percentage of the book, often drawing on archaeological and classical studies, is given over to helpful delineations of imperial structures and realities. One of the book's subtitles, *How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*, indicates that Crossan and Reed see Paul in essentially antithetical or oppositional relationship to the empire. They contrast in chapter 2, for example, the clash of two visions of peace: one through military victory (the empire's) and one through justice (Paul's and God's). In chapter 3 they draw a contrast between Rome's golden age and Paul's eschatology (1 Thessalonians). In chapter 4 they contrast the blessings of romanization with gospel blessings (Galatians). In chapter 5 two contrasting understandings of divinity emerge (Philippians, 2 Corinthians). In chapter 6 hierarchical patronage clashes with Christian equality (1 Corinthians). In chapter 7 imperial power, with its fundamental distinction between the haves and have-nots, collides with Paul's vision of global unity under God's distributive (not retributive) justice (Romans). Throughout Crossan and Reed emphasize a fundamental contrast between "the normalcy of civilization itself" and Paul's communities that embody new creation in "freedom, democracy, and human rights."<sup>53</sup> With this overarching theme and styling of empire as the "normalcy of civilization," Crossan and Reed take a significant step often lacking in the three volumes edited by Horsley. Their analysis of Paul not only concerns first-century Paul's opposition to the Roman Empire but also engages fundamental questions of contemporary human community and commitments. Empire is also a contemporary phenomenon, and Paul continues to challenge and inform negotiation of it by contemporary followers of Jesus. "A subtext of *In Search of Paul* is therefore: To What Extent can America be Christian? We are now the greatest postindustrial civilization as Rome was then the greatest preindustrial one. That is precisely what makes Paul's challenge equally forceful for now as for then."<sup>54</sup>

Crossan and Reed, along with many of the contributions from the Paul and Politics group, posit a fundamentally antithetical relationship between Paul and the empire. British scholar Peter Oakes explores the relationship between Paul and empire by discussing 1 Thessalonians and Philippians.<sup>55</sup> In relation to terminology shared by Christians and the empire, and to possible systemic interactions in matters such as authority, Oakes posits four possible forms of interaction: Rome and Christianity follow common models from the past; Christianity follows or imitates Rome; Rome conflicts with and pressures Christianity; Christianity conflicts with Rome. Oakes concludes that 1 Thessalonians evidences the fourth option, though

Paul does not seek Rome's overthrow. In Philippians, options three and four are evident. The particular conflicts center on Christology and eschatology, though, in contrast to some other studies (e.g., Donfried above), Oakes does not see participation in the imperial cult as significant. Rather, he argues that Paul redraws or remaps space and time, decentering Rome's power by placing Christ at the center and strengthening suffering Christians with the assurance that they have there a safe place.

Along with his other related work,<sup>56</sup> Oakes's attempt to delineate accurately the nuances and complexities of interaction between Christians and the empire is helpful. Oakes's fourfold model usefully identifies some of the possible interactions, though it is not entirely satisfactory. The first category concerns the origin of common motifs, but investigating the origin of various concepts—whether in biblical traditions or in pre-Roman Hellenistic kingship ideology or elsewhere—contributes little to discerning Christian-empire relations. Whatever its origin, material can function in the present in a host of ways, as Oakes seems to recognize in his comments on *kyrioi* and rituals associated with officials entering Greek cities. The second category recognizes that imitation is a significant part of negotiating imperial power, yet Oakes's conclusions emphasize conflict while imitation largely disappears. A spectrum of overlapping and interconnected strategies seems to be a preferable way of engaging the matter. His conclusion in which his fourth category of conflict dominates needs more nuancing. Oakes's recognition, for instance, of Paul's use of eschatology ignores the imperially imitative quality of eschatology, and his claim that Paul does not express a desire for Rome's overthrow because Paul does not emphasize this dimension is difficult to sustain. James Scott's work emphasizes that marginalized and relatively powerless groups express opposition often in self-protective ways, avoiding explicit confrontations but relying on audiences to elaborate coded and implicit messages. A declaration from Paul that his eschatological scenarios mean the end of specific opposing realities seems rhetorically unlikely. Oakes's notion of "conflict" needs closer definition.

Work by Davina Lopez elaborates a further dimension surfaced in previous work, that of gender dimensions in both Roman imperial representations and in Paul's negotiation of the empire as "apostle to the nations/gentiles."<sup>57</sup> Lopez discusses visual images—a Judea Capta coin, the cuirassed statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, and the statues from Aphrodisias—to argue that Rome commonly personified conquered "nations" subjected to Roman power as women subjected to male power.

“The nations” are defeated, collective femininity, united in being subject to manly Roman power. She argues that Paul’s use of the language of “the nations/gentiles” (*ta ethnē*) is not adequately understood as an ethnic and/or theological division between Jews and the rest but as an imperial/political term depicting the nations subjugated by and to Rome. Paul’s call as an apostle “among the nations” (Gal 1:15) means “being changed into a different *man* and even a *woman* of sorts.”<sup>58</sup> He abandons violent, masculine “power over” persecution, renouncing “his previous affirmation of the power relations made natural by Roman imperial ideology.”<sup>59</sup> He identifies with the subjugated and vulnerable as their mother (Gal 4:19) in a new creation marked by the solidarity of Jews with other nations (“united nations” with common ancestry from Abraham) in resistance to Rome’s imperially divided world of conqueror and conquered. Such an image “challenges and reconfigures [Paul’s] world in gendered terms that stand in contrast to those of the dominant paradigm of his time.”<sup>60</sup>

#### Areas for Further Work

Further work will need to refine the central question of Paul’s negotiation of the Roman Empire. The emerging complex picture indicates the unsatisfactory nature of any attempt to identify or impose a monolithic stance. Specifically, the frequent appeal to Paul’s apocalyptic thinking and use of Jewish eschatological traditions needs problematizing. Such traditions are anti-imperial, as is frequently recognized, but they are also imitative of imperial strategies, including the universal imposition of power and rule and the often-violent exclusion and destruction of opponents. The ambivalence of opposition and imitation is not commonly recognized. A similar examination of Paul’s Christology (Lord? Savior? Son of God? Christ?) and apostolic authority in community formation is also needed. Titles such as “Lord” and “Savior,” as well as claims that Jesus is a counteremperor or victorious over the Roman order, express an equally imperial framework. That is, while Rome’s imperialism must be exposed, so also must Paul’s.

While the work to date draws on various disciplines such as classical and feminist studies, engagement with social-science models seems minimal and may be worthwhile. The models of empire developed, for instance, by Gerhard Lenski and John Kautsky have proved significant in other New Testament work but get less attention in Pauline studies.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, while there has been much attention to rhetoric, especially in terms of elite imperial models, Elliott’s call for a sustained exploration of Paul’s rhetoric in

relation to imperial and colonial rhetoric, as evident, for instance, in the work of Scott, needs attention.<sup>62</sup>

The foregrounding of Paul's negotiation with the Roman imperial world is paradigm-shifting in Pauline studies. Wright's plea, though, that insights from the work of recent decades concerning Paul's Jewish identity and interaction not be lost or neglected in such a paradigm shift is well stated.<sup>63</sup> The challenge seems to be to not overcorrect the lengthy and sustained neglect of Paul's negotiation of the Roman imperial world at the expense of his interaction with first-century Judaism. Paul participates in both worlds. One way ahead lies in the recognition that, like Paul and the believers' communities, first-century Judaisms are also participants in and negotiating Rome's world.<sup>64</sup>

Discussions engage prominently three of the four interrelated areas outlined in the aims of the Paul and Politics group (Paul and the politics of the churches, the politics of Israel, and the politics of the Roman Empire). Receiving less explicit attention, apart from the work of Schüssler Fiorenza, is the fourth area: Paul and the politics of interpretation. Issues concerning women and slavery receive good attention, but there is limited discussion of the deutero-Paulines, let alone of texts from the second century and later. There is much to explore in Paul's legacy and the history of interpretation. Horsley recognizes the irony of an imperial Christ as Lord in his introduction to the third volume when he writes that Paul's use of imperial christological and eschatological images "bequeathed imperial images of Christ to the church that became the established imperial religion under Constantine and remained so in Western Europe."<sup>65</sup> How much of this legacy should be on the agenda of Paul and Politics discussion?

While attention has focused on Paul and the politics of his churches, Israel, the Roman Empire, and the interpretive guild, much less attention has focused on Paul and the politics of contemporary churches. This neglect seems strange, given Paul's significant presence in the church's canon. How might this important rereading of Paul address contemporary faith communities engaging his writings as Scripture?

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#### Addendum: Paul and Empire, 2010–2018

Since 2010, there has been significant discussion of Paul's writings in relation to the Roman imperial order. A search of the ATLA Database for "Paul empire" yields just over a hundred or so relevant items since 2010.

A bibliography entitled “Imperial Cult and Early Christianity” containing entries on Paul exists on the Oxford Bibliographies in Biblical Studies website. An SBL Unit on Paul and Politics meets at the SBL Annual Meeting. Publications include both monographs and edited collections.<sup>66</sup> Important statements of method are found in Brodd and Reed’s *Rome and Religion* and Neil Elliott’s “Paul and Empire 1: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians.”<sup>67</sup> For overviews, see N. T. Wright, “Paul and Empire”; James R. Harrison’s *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome*; and 2011:1–46; and Judy Diehl’s “Empire and Epistles: Anti-Roman Rhetoric in the New Testament Epistles.”<sup>68</sup>

The discussion here cannot be comprehensive. I identify some representative contributions with an emphasis more on bibliography than critical engagement. I highlight briefly four matters: some areas of focus; methodological approaches, especially the use of images and postcolonial theory; evaluations; and attention to the post-Pauline (or disputed authorship) writings.

First, some work has focused on particular letters and other work on particular themes or practices. For example, essays on Romans have been authored by Ekkehard W. Stegemann, Ian E. Rock, Sylvia C. Keesmat, and Neil Elliott.<sup>69</sup> In “Paul Confronts Caesar with the Good News,” Stanley E. Porter explores an intertextual conflict between two narratives: that told by the Greek (Priene) calendar inscription from Asia Minor (9 BCE, *OGIS* 458) concerning the divinely sanctioned Augustus whose rule benefits all and Paul’s narrative of the Lord Jesus in Romans.<sup>70</sup>

In a major study, James R. Harrison focuses on 1 and Thessalonians and Romans to argue that an ideological conflict exists between Paul’s eschatological gospel that anticipated the future reign of the risen and returning Son and the imperial claim of eternal rule expressed in the imperial cult.<sup>71</sup> In discussing Philippians, Angela Standhartinger focuses on Paul’s imprisonment and argues that dangers of letter-writing for both writer and recipient explain Paul’s use of ambiguity in the letter to render it a hidden transcript (Scott) for his recipients.<sup>72</sup> In the same volume, Joseph A. Marchal considers Philippians in relation to the major Roman structure of slavery and the likely presence of slaves and manumitted women and men among the Philippian group.<sup>73</sup>

In his 2016 essay, Elliott identifies social and christologically informed interactions with Roman imperial ideology that pervade all sections of 1 Corinthians; in 2 Corinthians, he concentrates on Paul’s apostolic weakness.<sup>74</sup> In a companion piece in the same volume, Harrison discusses the

negotiation of “Imperial ‘Peace and Security’ in Galatians, Thessalonians, and Philippians.” He focuses attention on “the danger of an idolatrous accommodation with the patronal benefits and values of the Julio-Claudian house on the part of his converts” as well as on “an ideological collision between the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology of Paul’s Gospel and the providential, prophetic, and benefaction perspectives espoused ... by the Roman ruler and his clients.”<sup>75</sup> Among other things, Paul seeks to establish social relations that were alternative to “the self-seeking, hierarchical, and status-conscious society of the Caesars.”<sup>76</sup>

In *Paul’s Triumph*, Christoph Heilig engages the image of the triumph in 2 Corinthians to argue that the image constructs God leading Paul in God’s triumphal procession and shows Paul’s active engagement with his Roman environment. Fredrick J. Long reads “the god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4) “as a counterimperial statement against the profusion of iconography and ideology” promoting the emperor as godlike.<sup>77</sup>

Bruce W. Winter foregrounds divine honoring of the emperors in the imperial cult and examines how 1 Cor 8–10 and Galatians “respond” in different ways to what Winter constructs as mandatory observance.<sup>78</sup> The strengths of Winter’s study are his discussion in chapter 1 of recent scholarship on the imperial cult and his collection of primary resources. The weaknesses are his unsupported claims that observance of cultic honoring was mandatory, that Christians were persecuted if they did not comply, and that Jews were exempt (not mandatory, no exemption).

In *Lord of the Entire World*, Joseph D. Fantin argues that Paul’s use of “Lord” for Jesus is a polemic against the emperor’s position as lord (1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:11; Rom 10:9). This polemic and assertion, though, are not Paul’s primary concern. Abera M. Mengestu explores Paul’s use of “Father” language in part in relation to various divinities and imperial *pater patriae* uses.<sup>79</sup>

A series of volumes edited by James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, *The First Urban Churches*, attends especially to archaeological data and multifaceted life in the cities of the assemblies that Paul addresses.<sup>80</sup> Bar-bette Stanley Spaeth discusses archaeological evidence for the imperial cult in Corinth.<sup>81</sup> For Paul and imperial economics, see works by Bruce W. Longenecker, Peter S. Oakes, Thomas R. Blanton IV and Raymond Pickett, and Warren Carter; for the military in the Pauline corpus, see Christopher B. Zeichmann; for imperial texts, Mark Reasoner.<sup>82</sup>

Second, with regard to methods, in addition to written texts, some works have emphasized images (sculptures, statues, buildings, coins, mon-

uments). Galatians has been a particular focus, in the works of Brigitte Kahl, Davina C. Lopez, Aliou Cissé Niang, and Harry O. Maier.<sup>83</sup>

Christopher D. Stanley has edited a rich three-part collection of postcolonial studies titled *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*: part 1: "What Is Postcolonial Studies?" (essays by Stephen D. Moore, Susan Abraham, Neil Elliott); part 2: "Paul and Ancient Forms of Colonialism," comprising three subsections, "Paul and Colonial Rule" (Jeremy A. Punt, Gordon M. Zerbe, Davina C. Lopez); "Paul, Colonialism, and Ethnicity" (L. Ann Jervis, Christopher D. Stanley, Tat-siong Benny Liew), and "Paul, Colonialism and Gender" (Tat-siong Benny Liew, Joseph A. Marchal, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah, Jennifer Bird); and part 3: "Paul and Modern Western Colonialism" (Robert P. Seesengood, Brigitte Kahl, Jae Won Lee, Gordon M. Zerbe). Other postcolonial contributions are made by Israel Kamudzandu and the prolific Jeremy A. Punt.<sup>84</sup>

Third, there have been reviews of (aspects of) this scholarly work. Christoph Heilig examines the use of James Scott's notion of "hidden" or "coded criticism" and rejects the claim that Paul hides his counterimperial critique because open criticism would expose himself and his congregations to persecution.<sup>85</sup> Heilig affirms, however, that the quest for a counterimperial engagement with Roman power remains plausible.

In a positive evaluation, Michael Bird argues that central to Paul's counterimperial engagement with his Roman imperial context in Romans lies his "apocalyptic and messianic narrative."<sup>86</sup> In discussing Philipians, Lynn H. Cohick finds no "explicit anti-imperial ... program" nor any "colonial inclinations" by Paul.<sup>87</sup> Colin Miller argues that the imperial cult has been overemphasized, though Heilig exposes Miller's "deficient methodology."<sup>88</sup> Anders Klostergaard Petersen argues that the claim of two rival cults (emperor and Christ) has been overstated. He argues that Paul does not directly oppose the imperial cult nor create an "anti-imperial ideology," though aspects of his discourse may contest dimensions of it. The binary in Petersen's title, phrases such as "opposition ... or peace with the surrounding society," and his final reduction of Paul's view to not advocating "deliberate revolt" misses complexities of imperial negotiation.<sup>89</sup>

John M. G. Barclay critiques oppositional formulations to argue that Paul is political in rendering the empire "insignificant"; Paul "does not oppose Rome as *Rome* but opposes anti-God powers."<sup>90</sup> (387). For a postcolonial critique concerned especially with scholarship on Galatians, see Christina Harker's *Colonizer's Idols*.<sup>91</sup>



Fourth, beyond Paul's seven undisputed letters, scholarship has addressed imperial negotiation in Ephesians, Colossians, and the Pastorals, as well as the Paul of Acts; Barreto et al 2017).<sup>92</sup>

To conclude, Elliott affirms three significant methodological insights for this work: attention to the Roman Empire is quite relevant for interpreting Paul; Paul does not exhibit a monolithic attitude to empire; and setting the theological and political against each other is inappropriate.<sup>93</sup> In addition, consideration of Paul's multidimensional negotiations of numerous imperial structures, practices, and personnel belongs in contemporary discourses concerning expressions of empires that have not vanished from the current world.

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- ination.” Pages 195–240 in *The Art of Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images*. Edited by Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Melion, and Roy R. Jeal. ESEC 19. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
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### Notes

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2. The notes in these three volumes often signal further work.
3. Horsley, "General Introduction," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 1–8.
4. Horsley, "Introduction: Krister Stendahl's Challenge to Pauline Studies," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 1–17, esp. 5–10; see also Elliott, "Paul and the Politics of Empire: Problems and Prospects," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 17–39.
5. Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963): 199–215.
6. Horsley, "Introduction: Krister Stendahl's Challenge," 10–15.
7. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Fernando Segovia, "'And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues': Competing Forms of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Discourse," in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, ed. Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1–32.
8. Horsley, "Introduction: Krister Stendahl's Challenge," 11.
9. Horsley, "Introduction: Krister Stendahl's Challenge," 15.
10. Horsley, "General Introduction," 3–4.
11. Horsley, "The Gospel of Imperial Salvation: Introduction," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 10–24.
12. Horsley, "Patronage, Priesthoods, and Power: Introduction," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 88–95, esp. 95.



13. Horsley ("Paul's Counter-imperial Gospel: Introduction," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 140–47) devotes much of his introduction to arguing that "Paul has in mind the concrete political rulers and authorities" (142) and that apocalyptic traditions are very much concerned with historical, political struggles (often ignored by recent approaches to Paul's "social context").

14. Horsley, "Building an Alternative Society: Introduction," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 206–14.

15. Horsley, "Building an Alternative Society," 208.

16. Horsley, "Building an Alternative Society," 208–9.

17. Donfried in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 215–23.

18. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Praxis of Coequal Discipleship," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 224–41.

19. Schüssler Fiorenza ("The Praxis of Coequal Discipleship," 224–41) also discusses 1 Cor 7 and the household code of Col 3 that "takes over the Greco-Roman ethic of the patriarchal household" (237). She omits any discussion of another form of the household code from about the same time as Colossians in Matt 19–20 that imitates, critiques, and provides an alternative to the dominant Greco-Roman form by insisting on mutuality and more egalitarian structures. See Warren Carter, *Households and Discipleship: A Study of Matthew 19–20*, JSNTSup 103 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994); and Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 376–410.

20. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society," in Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 242–52.

21. Horsley, "1 Corinthians," 248.

22. Horsley, "1 Corinthians," 251.

23. Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 103–9, drawing on the work of Antoinette Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

24. Kittredge, "Corinthian Women Prophets," 105.

25. Briggs, "Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 110–23.

26. Wan, "Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 191–215, esp. 192.

27. Callahan, "Paul, *Ekklesia*, and Emancipation in Corinth: A Coda on Liberation Theology," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 216–23, esp. 216–18.

28. Eisenbaum, "Paul as the New Abraham," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 130–45, esp. 132.

29. Nanos, "The Inter- and Intra-Jewish Political Context of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 146–59.

30. Segal, "Response: Some Aspects of Conversion and Identity Formation," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 184–90, esp. 188.

31. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 160–79.

32. Horsley's introduction (*Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 1–23) discusses

the conventional setting of Paul in opposition to Judaism; a spiritualized reading in which Paul is supposedly interested only in religion separated from political-economic matters; the discovery of a Jewish Paul (covenantal nomism) in mission to gentiles (Stendahl); the discovery of the Roman imperial world as not only Paul's context but also as the order to which Paul is opposed and with which his communities of alternative identity and practices encounter conflict; and features of the Roman imperial order, its impact, and its various means of maintaining control (displacement of subject peoples, slavery, patronage, imperial cult, rhetoric), as well as various means of negotiating and opposing its power.

33. Jewett, "The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Reading Romans 8:18–23 in the Imperial Context," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 25–46.

34. Smith, "Unmasking the Powers: A Postcolonial Analysis of 1 Thessalonians," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 47–66.

35. Elliott, "The Apostle Paul's Self-Presentation as Anti-imperial Performance," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 67–88.

36. Ramsaran, "Resisting Imperial Domination and Influence: Paul's Apocalyptic Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 89–102.

37. Agosto, "Patronage and Commendation, Imperial and Anti-imperial," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 103–24.

38. Heen, "Phil 2:6–11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule: *Isa Theō* and the Cult of the Emperor in the East," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 125–54.

39. Knust, "Paul and the Politics of Virtue and Vice," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 155–74.

40. Wire, "Response: The Politics of the Assembly in Corinth," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 124–29.

41. Wire, "Response: Paul and Those outside Power," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 224–26; and Calvin J. Roetzel, "How Anti-imperial Was the Collection and How Emancipatory Was Paul's Project?," in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 227–30.

42. Price, "Response," in Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 175–83.

43. Price, "Response," 183.

44. Ironically, Price ("Response," 176–77 n. 4) urges biblical scholars to consult vols. 10 and 11 of the Cambridge Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 2000) as "primary points of reference," suggesting that "biblical scholars seem hesitant to use them and instead cite less authoritative sources." While the Cambridge volumes are an invaluable resource, it is also true that they pay relatively little attention to modes of resistance and perspectives of nonelites. In addition, the notes in these three Paul volumes hardly evidence a preference for "less authoritative sources."

45. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

46. Conferences include Union Theological Seminary, New York, October 2004 and April 2008. Journal issues include *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 59 (2005); and *Word and World* 25 (spring 2005).

47. For example, Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).



48. Fernando Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

49. Neil Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

50. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), esp. 1–33; and “Paul and the Politics of Interpretation,” in Horsley, *Paul and Politics*, 40–57.

51. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power of the Word*, 7.

52. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’s Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom; A New Vision of Paul’s Words and World* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2004).

53. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, xi.

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## 2

# PAUL AND ECONOMICS: THE JERUSALEM COLLECTION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PATRONAGE

STEVEN J. FRIESEN

It is difficult to write about recent developments in the study of Paul and economy because, as far as I can tell, there have not been very many.<sup>1</sup> No one has examined the topic of economy and Paul's assemblies in a book-length study for a long time.<sup>2</sup> People write a lot about Paul, of course. A recent online search of Harvard's Hollis Library catalogue on the subject category "Paul, the Apostle, Saint" retrieved 250 books published since 1995. The favorite topic has clearly been Paul's theology and thought, with Paul's biography and history running a distant second. There has also been interest in portraits of Paul in Acts or in the disputed letters, and in the rhetoric of Paul. But none of the 250 books had words like "economy," "economic," "money," or "finances" in the title.

This suggests something of the interests of our discipline: we prefer to think about Paul's ideas, his history, and—more recently—his language, but we would rather not discuss Paul's economic practices. That is a curious state of affairs. Consider how much of your own life is intertwined with your economic practice. Or consider how much it would cost to purchase those 250 books about Pauline theology, history, and rhetoric. Paul had expenses, too, so why do we avoid these topics? After all, in the extant letters, Paul wrote more about money than he did about the Lord's Supper, or about baptism, or about the status of women.

So the general question of this chapter is: How would our view of Paul's churches change if we took economic issues seriously in our research? Since that is an impossibly large topic, I will confine myself to three aspects of the question. First I make a few comments about how New Testament scholarship ignores economic inequality. Then I discuss briefly the extent

of poverty in the Roman Empire. Finally, I look at Paul's collection of money for the Jerusalem church as an example of how our understanding of the Pauline churches might change if we did not expunge economy and inequality from our analysis.

### Capitalist Interpretation of the Pauline Churches

You have heard it said that scholars in the early twentieth century—following Deissmann—thought Paul's churches came from the lower classes of society but that scholars in the late twentieth century realized that Paul's churches were made up of a cross section of society. But I say unto you, mainstream scholars throughout the twentieth century thought pretty much the same thing on this issue. There was no old “lower class consensus” nor any new “cross section consensus.” Rather, there was widespread agreement throughout the century that most of the people in the Pauline churches came from the lower classes and that a few individuals were financially better off.

I came to this conclusion by going through more than sixty New Testament introductions, including at least four examples from every decade of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The results were astonishingly homogenous: scholars either ignored questions of social and economic status or briefly asserted what the so-called new consensus later claimed to have discovered, namely, that Paul's churches were composed mostly of the lower classes but also of some individuals from further up the social hierarchy.<sup>4</sup>

An examination of specialized studies from the twentieth century confirms the impression gained from the New Testament introductions: there was no old consensus/new consensus paradigm shift. Even Deissmann did not agree with the old consensus he is said to have promoted! Here is how two influential modern scholars described Deissmann, along with Deissmann's actual position.

*Theissen on Deissmann:* “According to A. Deissmann, primitive Christianity was a movement within the lower strata.”<sup>5</sup>

*Meeks on Deissmann:* “Until recently most scholars who troubled to ask Deissmann's question at all ignored the ambiguities of the evidence that Deissmann had at least mentioned. The prevailing viewpoint has been that the constituency of early Christianity, the Pauline congregations included, came from the poor and dispossessed of the Roman provinces.”<sup>6</sup>

*Deissmann's words (in translation):* "The people whose souls were moved by the mission of Paul and his faithful companions were—the overwhelming majority at least—men and women from the middle and lower classes. ... On the other hand, Paul mentions by name certain fairly well-to-do Christians. Those who possessed rooms so large that 'house churches' could assemble there for edification ... cannot have been poor.... It is noteworthy that several women whose names are honorably mentioned in connection with Paul's missionary labours, appear to have been possessed of means."<sup>7</sup>

This is a strange history of interpretation. Scholars held the same position but claimed to disagree, and the one thing they agreed on—that most people in Paul's churches were poor—was the one thing no one wanted to discuss. And even though nearly all scholars throughout the twentieth century agreed that most of the first-century believers were poor,<sup>8</sup> no one thought it was important enough to write a book about poverty in Paul's churches until 1998.<sup>9</sup> Scholars wrote about Pauline soteriology, Christology, chronology, eschatology, opponents, more soteriology, Paul's Jewishness, social status, still more soteriology, and so on. But economic inequality and deprivation deserved nothing more than a sentence or two, as if this were tangential to the real issues.

This suggests that we are not dealing simply with bad information about first-century conditions or about twentieth-century interpretation. Would that the explanation were so easy. It looks to me as though we are dealing with powerful discursive patterns, dark Foucauldian forces, if you will, that encourage us to examine a limited set of data in a limited mode of analysis. I have come to think that what we have called "mainstream interpretation" or "the consensus among scholars" is a misnomer. Those terms are too neutral. We seem to be dealing with an ideological orientation in our discipline that I call "capitalist criticism."<sup>10</sup> Let me explain what I mean by that term by describing four interrelated characteristics of this approach.

The first characteristic of capitalist criticism is that religion has no integral connection to economy. This is a theoretical assumption about the nature of religion. Capitalist critics rarely indicate where they think religion comes from, but they agree that it is not generated by economic relationships. Of course, this is not simply a theoretical question about religion but also a political issue. For with this assumption, Marxist analysis and godless communism are removed from the disciplinary agenda. This rejection of Marxist analysis has also taken economic analysis itself off the agenda.



The second characteristic of capitalist criticism is the assumption that Christianity was not generated by economic factors, and therefore it was not a movement of the urban proletariat in the first-century Roman Empire. The stakes are high in this denial. For if earliest Christianity was generated by the economics of poverty and dispossession, and if it was a movement of the proletariat, then the subsequent history of Christianity is perhaps not a story of miraculous growth but rather one of betrayal and cooptation by the wealthy. To illustrate what I mean, consider how many times you have seen or heard the phrase “the triumph of Christianity” or the “success of Christianity” in early Christian studies. Now think about the number of times you have encountered the phrase “the failure of early Christianity,” “the colonization of the church by the wealthy,” or “the hijacking of the early churches by the powerful.” I am not arguing for the accuracy of these dark readings of early church history. I am only suggesting that our discipline rules them out of bounds as unthinkable historical metanarratives.

The third characteristic of capitalist criticism is the assumption that religion operates according to market principles. The assumption seems to be that people have spiritual needs—or at least spiritual desires—and the religion that responds with the best product gets a larger market share. This market description of religion is one area where we can see a change in twentieth-century interpretation. In Deissmann’s era of industrial capitalism, scholars tended to recognize the existence of economic classes in society. Then they claimed that all people, regardless of class, had the same universal spiritual need. Thus, the same gospel could save lower-class people, middle-class people, and upper-class people without changing their class location.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, however, a new phase of capitalist criticism took shape. The market character of religion shifted away from the framework of economic class to that of individual social status. This is seen most clearly in Wayne Meeks’s landmark study, *The First Urban Christians*. According to Meeks, the Pauline believers we know about tended to be individuals who had achieved high status levels in some areas but not in others.<sup>12</sup> As a result, their overall status in society did not match their abilities, expectations, or achievements. So, Meeks concluded, they probably found in the church some measure of leadership, respect, and status that they were denied in the larger society.<sup>13</sup>

In Meeks’s work, then, we see a new articulation of the relationship between economy and religion, and it looks much like a spiritual consumer’s marketplace. Individuals have social needs that are not met by society, but they can find compensatory satisfaction in religion. The religion that



best meets those needs is the most successful spiritual commodity. In light of the widespread (and well-deserved) acclaim for Meeks's formulation, I think we can say that the so-called new consensus marked a shift in the history of capitalist criticism from an industrial orientation—where religion was thought to transcend class barriers—to a consumer orientation where religion was thought to address the desires of individuals to move up through status barriers.

The fourth and final characteristic of capitalist criticism is that poverty is irrelevant in the interpretation of Christian origins. Part of the reason is that religion tends to be treated as a set of ideas or as beliefs and not as a praxis or lifestyle. But I think the problem runs deeper. I suspect that there is a larger theory of economy, society, and religion at work here, a theory so submerged in our scholarship that it is difficult to spot. Why am I suspicious? First, the so-called new consensus focused only on certain positive functions of religion and showed no appreciation for the oppressive functions of religion. This suggests a serious bias, one that distracts us from economic oppression and from poverty. As a second reason for suspicion, consider this phenomenon: any sustained discussion of the impoverished majority in Paul's churches normally brings charges of ideological bias.<sup>14</sup> Yet for the last thirty years New Testament scholars have mostly ignored widespread ancient poverty and focused instead on the small handful of people in Paul's churches who were perhaps not impoverished. But who calls those studies political or faults them for ideological bias?<sup>15</sup> No one even seems to notice as the poor disappear.

How shall we proceed? Criticizing the discipline is easier than making a positive contribution. I do not claim to have solved these problems. I only suggest a possible approach. It involves a more complicated definition of poverty, a definition that requires us to think both about the concrete measurement of poverty and about the reasons for the existence of poverty.

### What Is Poverty, and How Do You Measure It?

The question What is poverty? is much more complex than it seems at first glance. There is a long tradition of measuring poverty in terms of income, what one has or does not have, and this remains a crucial part of any consideration of poverty.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, however, specialists in economics and in sociology have pointed out shortcomings of measuring poverty in terms of a lack of money. One of the crucial figures to address these problems over the last thirty years has been economist Amartya Sen. Based on

work in the developing world and in other countries, Sen has argued that income is indeed an important part of assessing poverty but that we should not focus only on income. We must take a whole range of indicators into account.<sup>17</sup> The most significant indicators, alongside income, include mortality (both infant and adult), undernourishment, gender discrimination, health care, unemployment, and education.<sup>18</sup>

Sen and others also insist that these indications of poverty—mortality, nourishment, health, occupation, education, and income—are not simply the results of individual choices, as though economic inequality could be blamed on the bad decisions of poor folks. We must also look for structural reasons why people have limited resources, why people are uneducated, why people are underemployed, why some people die of treatable diseases. When we do this, we begin to see the institutions and social systems that are devoted to keeping some people poor. Some sociologists would even argue that one of the primary functions of social structure is precisely to create and sustain inequality.<sup>19</sup> So poverty is more than a consequence of individual choices or unfortunate accidents; it is a social location that is created and enforced by society.

What are the implications of this for studying Paul's churches? One is that we need to address income poverty as one crucial factor in overall poverty. Another implication is that we need to think about systematic deprivation. By that I mean we need to ask how the Roman Empire deprived most people of basic human needs. Then we can consider Pauline practice in relation to these institutions.

This Roman imperial system has already been outlined by Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller in *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture*. Some two decades after publication, the text still provides an excellent framework for thinking about "the Roman system of inequality," as they put it.<sup>20</sup> The range of topics covered by Garnsey and Saller include imperial politics, the military, administration, city statuses, land ownership, agriculture, industry, food supply, economic class and stratification, social mobility, patriarchal family patterns, honor systems, patronage, religion, philosophy, education, and more.

If we think of these as components of the system of inequality within which Paul's churches lived, then there are ways we can explore the topic. First we must ask the income question because it is crucial: how much economic inequality was there in the Roman world and in Paul's churches? But the recent work of economists and sociologists compels us to go further. We must also inquire about the social structure of the empire that

kept people poor and ask how Paul's churches acted within this system. This second task is immense and cannot be handled thoroughly in a study of this size. But we can consider one way into the problem by comparing the patronage system of dominant culture with the Jerusalem collection developed by Paul. First, however, we need to look at income poverty in the Roman Empire.

### Resources, or Income Poverty

In order to work on the question of economic inequality, I created a poverty scale. In the light of the preceding discussion, perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a "resource scale" or an "income poverty scale" for it does not measure the full range of poverty indicators. It deals only with the most substantial one, often called income poverty, which is one necessary facet of our considerations.<sup>21</sup>

The scale has seven categories, ranging from exorbitant wealth to the condition of living in perpetual crisis below the level of long-term subsistence. "Subsistence" is defined here as the resources needed to procure enough calories in food to maintain a healthy human body. The caloric needs of humans are gauged in various ways by scholars, but they usually range from 1,500 to 3,000 calories per day, depending on gender, age, physical energy required for occupation, pregnancy, lactation, and other factors. Human bodies can survive for some time at the low end of this scale, but the lives of people living below the subsistence level are usually shortened by chronic malnutrition and disease.<sup>22</sup>

### Figure 1: A poverty scale for analyzing early imperial populations with descriptive examples

1. **Imperial elites:** imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freedpersons.
2. **Regional or provincial elites:** equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers.
3. **Municipal elites:** most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants.

4. **Moderate surplus resources:** some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, some artisans (especially those who employ others), and military veterans.
5. **Stable near subsistence level** (with reasonable hope of remaining above the minimum level to sustain health): many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freedpersons, some farm families.
6. **At subsistence level** and often below minimum level for sustaining health: small farm families, laborers (skilled and unskilled), artisans (esp. those employed by others), wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners.
7. **Below subsistence level:** some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day laborers, prisoners.

The amount of income needed to procure 8,000–10,000 calories of food for a hypothetical family of four on a daily basis would have varied a good deal in different areas of the early Roman Empire.<sup>23</sup> A tenant farm family in a rural area would have produced much of their own food in normal years, which would reduce our calculation of their cash expenses, but they would still have needed money for taxes and perhaps for rent. Urban workers, however, grew little of their own food and thus would have purchased most of their food or bartered for it in addition to paying taxes (and rent?). One study used the following figures as estimates of such variations.

**Figure 2. Annual income needed by family of four<sup>24</sup>**

Categories from the Poverty Scale (PS) are found in parentheses.

For wealth in Rome (PS3)	25,000–150,000 denarii
For modest prosperity in Rome (PS4)	5,000 denarii
For subsistence in Rome (PS5–6)	900–1,000 denarii
For subsistence in a city (PS5–6)	600–700 denarii
For subsistence in the country (PS5–6)	250–300 denarii

In order to use this resource scale for an examination of Paul's churches, we have to estimate what percentage of an urban population can be described by each category. The excruciating calculations needed in order to answer that question for the large cities of the eastern Roman Empire during the early imperial period are published elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> The result of those calculations is the following profile.

**Figure 3. Percentage of population in categories: Roman cities with populations over 10,000**

The percentages for categories 4 and 5 are more difficult to ascertain than the others and so are formatted in italics.

Population	Poverty scale category
.04%	PS1. Imperial elites
1%	PS2. Regional elites
1.76%	PS3. Municipal elites
7%?	PS4. Moderate surplus
22%?	PS5. Stable near subsistence
40%	PS6. At subsistence
28%	PS7. Below subsistence

This profile surprises some specialists because they cannot imagine such poverty in the Roman Empire. I suggest that this is not a problem with the numbers but rather a failure of imagination. Most people in a Western setting have a more limited experience of poverty and systemic inequality. In order to illustrate this difference, I created the following chart (fig. 4). The chart moves beyond the idea of income poverty and includes other key indicators of inequality: life expectancy, infant mortality, fertility rates, and urbanization. It suggests the gap between the average exposure to poverty of people in a contemporary Western setting with the average exposure to poverty of people in other contemporary societies and people in the early Roman Empire. By this I do not mean to minimize the amount of economic inequality and suffering that exists on all continents of the contemporary world by comparison with the ancient Mediterranean world. But the Roman Empire was probably not significantly different from most preindustrial societies before the rise of modern medicine, where life was

usually shorter, more painful, and more labor-intensive than we tend to recognize in New Testament studies.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 4. Poverty profiles: Roman Empire compared with eight modern societies**

The data for contemporary societies are for 2006. All are from UNICEF<sup>27</sup> except national poverty line.<sup>28</sup>

	Gross National Income (annual, per capita, in US\$)	Urban popula- tion	Fertil- ity rate (births/ woman) <sup>29</sup>	Life expec- tancy at birth (years)	Infant mortality (deaths/ 1,000 births) <sup>30</sup>	Children under- weight <sup>31</sup> (moderate or severe)	Popula- tion below national poverty line
USA	44,970	81%	2.1	78	6	2%	12% (2004)
Japan	38,410	66%	1.3	82	3	—	11% (2001)
Germany	36,620	75%	1.4	79	4	—	—
Mexico	7,870	76%	2.3	76	29	5%	40% (2006)
Brazil	4,730	85%	2.3	72	19	6%	31% (2005)
India	820	29%	2.9	64	57	43%	25% (2007)
Pakistan	770	35%	3.6	65	78	38%	24% (2005/06)
Uganda	300	13%	6.6	50	78	20%	35% (2001)
Roman Empire	HS 240–275 <sup>32</sup>	10–15% <sup>33</sup>	6–9 <sup>34</sup>	20–30 <sup>35</sup>	200–300 <sup>36</sup>	—	—

We can use the poverty scale to create economic profiles for Paul’s assemblies. Such profiles are not precise measurements of the first-century situation. Rather, they are modern assessments that allow us to agree or disagree more accurately because they are framed in terms of discrete, defined categories. I give an example of such a profile in figure 5.<sup>37</sup> My rankings are based on explicit references to financial matters from the undisputed letters of Paul.<sup>38</sup> Here are my main three conclusions, followed by discussion.

1. Paul’s letters provide no evidence that members of the elite categories (PS1–3) participated in the assemblies.
2. Of the individuals about whom we have economic information, at least 1 or 2 and a maximum of 7 can be classified as having moderate surplus resources.

3. Most of the people in Paul's congregations, including Paul himself, had resources near the level of subsistence, either above it or below.

**Figure 5. Economic profile of Pauline assemblies based on undisputed Pauline letters**

PS	Name	Reference	Location
(4)	(Chloe?)	1 Cor 1:11	Corinth
4	Gaius	Rom 16:23	Corinth
4–5	(Erastus)	Rom 16:23	Corinth
4–5	Philemon	Phlm 4–22	Colossae?
4–5	Phoebe	Rom 16:1–2	Cenchraea, Rome
4–5	Aquila	Rom 16:3–5	Rome (or Ephesus?)
4–5	Prisca	Rom 16:3–5	Rome (or Ephesus?)
4–5	Chloe's people	1 Cor 1:11	Ephesus
4–6	Those who have food for Lord's Supper	1 Cor 11:22	Corinth
4–7	Onesimus	Phlm 10–19	Ephesus? Rome?
5–6	Stephanas	1 Cor 16:17–18	Ephesus
5–6	The household of Stephanas	1 Cor 16:15–16	Corinth
5–6	Saints in Corinth	1 Cor 16:1–2	Corinth
5–6	Churches in Galatia	1 Cor 16:1–2	Galatia
5–7	Brothers (and sisters)	1 Thess 4:11	Thessalonica
6	Saints in Corinth	2 Cor 8:12–15	Corinth
6	The assemblies of Macedonia	2 Cor 8:1–6	Macedonia
6–7	Paul	2 Cor 11:1–22; 1 Thess 2:1–12; Phil 2:25–30; Phil 4:12–13	Corinth
6–7	Those who do not have food for the Lord's Supper	1 Cor 11:22	Corinth

1. In the profile I have listed no one in the elite categories (PS1–3), which is in agreement with the assessment of Meeks.<sup>39</sup> Theissen, by contrast, argued

that the majority of Paul's associates who are known to us by name were from the upper classes. He supported this conclusion by isolating four criteria that could indicate membership in the upper classes: civic office, references to households, assistance rendered to churches, and ability to travel.<sup>40</sup> Only the first of these criteria, however, has any relevance as a criterion of elite status, and it is the one that does not apply to anyone we know from Paul's churches.<sup>41</sup> A more relevant set of criteria for upper class participation can be developed from inscriptions and literature about the elite of the Roman Empire. That list of criteria would include such things as imperial office, provincial office, municipal office, high-ranking military service, major religious titles, decrees in one's honor, large benefactions, extensive landholdings, major business interests, households that included many slaves, wealthy parents or grandparents, hosting or attending lavish banquets, or elite education. None of these characterize any believers mentioned in Paul's letters.

2. There are only two named people from Paul's letters who were clearly in the category of moderate resources (PS4): Gaius and Chloe. There are also four individuals plus Chloe's people whom I would characterize as either above subsistence or with moderate resources (PS4–5); some people who could be PS4–6 (those with food at the Lord's Supper in Corinth); and Onesimus who could be anywhere from PS4–7 (from the level of his owner Philemon down to desperation).

3. The vast majority of the people in Paul's assemblies hovered around the level of subsistence, just above or just below. The references in Paul's letters to groups are important in this regard. By my reckoning, the poor saints (defined as those living just above subsistence level, at subsistence level, or below subsistence level) included the following: Stephanas, the household of Stephanas, most saints in Corinth, most in the assemblies of Galatia, most saints in Thessalonica, most of those in the assemblies of Macedonia, and Paul. In addition, some of the people listed in the previous paragraph as possible members of PS4 could just as easily have been at level 5 or below. In fact, we should probably assign most of them there since—given the percentages shown in figure 3—the odds are against most of them being in PS4 because it included less than 10 percent of the population.

It is impossible to quantify these references accurately. It is possible, however, to generate a hypothetical model using numbers consistently even though the numbers are often gross estimates. For example, we could assign all the individuals to their categories, dividing someone like



Onesimus (PS4–7) evenly across four categories and someone like Prisca across two (PS5–6). Then we could assign arbitrary numbers for groups as follows: a reference to an assembly = 20 individuals; a reference to assemblies = 3 congregations; a plural reference to saints/brothers = 10 people; a household = 5 people; and Chloe's people = 3 individuals.<sup>42</sup> As arbitrary but consistent calculations, the numbers in figure 6 do not prove anything, nor are they intended to measure the actual size of these assemblies. They are simply another way of visualizing the profile from figure 5, a way that reminds us that references to named individuals in Paul's letters have tended to overshadow his references to unnamed groups. In our reconstructions we must compensate for the historical invisibility of the poor.

**Figure 6. Hypothetical numbers that model the references in figure 5**

	People mentioned in Paul's undisputed letters
PS1. Imperial elites	0
PS2. Regional elites	0
PS3. Municipal elites	0
PS4. Moderate surplus	9.58
PS5. Stable near subsistence	50.41
PS6. At subsistence	121.91
PS7. Below subsistence	9.08

So far I have suggested that our personal and disciplinary biases have hindered us from exploring economic issues. There is, however, another reason why we have not analyzed economic inequality: we have been misled by the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles. If we construct a similar economic profile from references in Acts and compare them with references in Paul's undisputed letters, the problem becomes clearer.

**Figure 7. Economic profile of Paul's assemblies based on Acts of the Apostles<sup>43</sup>**

PS	Name	Reference	Location
1	[Proconsul Sergius Paulus?] <sup>44</sup>	13:6–12	Paphos, Cyprus
2–3	Dionysios the Areopagite	17:34	Athens

2-3	Not a few of the Greek men of high standing	17:12	Beroea
2-3	Not a few of the Greek women of high standing	17:12	Beroea
2-3	Women of high standing (in the city)	17:4	Thessalonica
4	Crispus	18:8	Corinth
4?	Unnamed jailer	18:22-36	Philippi
4?	Lydia	16:13-15	Philippi
4	Titius Justus	18:7	Corinth
4-5	Jason	17:5-9	Thessalonica
5-6	Paul	18:3-8; 20:34	Corinth; Ephesus

This economic profile based on Acts is radically different from the one based on Paul’s letters. According to Acts, it is possible that Paul was the only believer near the subsistence level! Everyone else about whom we are given some economic information in the narrative could be in the top 10 percent of the poverty scale (PS1-4). The contrast is even clearer if we place the two charts side by side as in figure 8. Note that, while there are no references in Paul’s undisputed letters to any members from the elite categories (PS1-3), in Acts there are believing members of the elites in Thessalonica, Beroea, and Athens, and perhaps on Cyprus as well.

**Figure 8. Comparison: Economic profiles from undisputed letters and from Acts**

Names from undisputed letters of Paul	PS	Names from Acts
	1	(Proconsul Sergius Paulus?)
	2-3	Dionysios
	2-3	Leading men of Beroea
	2-3	Leading women of Beroea
	2-3	Leading women of Thessalonica
(Chloe)	4	Crispus
Gaius	4	Titius Justus

	4?	Unnamed jailer
	4?	Lydia
(Erastus)	4–5	Jason
Philemon	4–5	
Phoebe	4–5	
Aquila	4–5	
Prisca	4–5	
Chloe's people	4–5	
Those who have food for Lord's Supper	4–6	
Onesimus	4–7	
Stephanas	5–6	Paul
The household of Stephanas	5–6	
Saints in Corinth	5–6	
Churches in Galatia	5–6	
Brothers (and sisters)	5–7	
Saints in Corinth	6	
The assemblies of Macedonia	6	
Paul	6–7	
Those without food for Lord's Supper	6–7	

Paul appears at the bottom of the scale in both profiles. There is a great difference, however, in the way he is portrayed. In the undisputed letters Paul records no positive contact with any of the elites; rather, Paul records that the elites tortured him and threw him in prison. In Acts, Paul interacts easily with people in the top 1 percent of the poverty scale: proconsul Sergius Paulus, Asiarchs in Ephesus, the unnamed chiliarch who arrested Paul in Jerusalem, King Agrippa II, the procurator Felix, his wife Drusilla (sister of Agrippa II), Festus (procurator after Felix), the chiliarch Lysias, and Bernice (sister of Drusilla, sister and consort of Agrippa II, later consort of Titus until he became emperor). Whether these interactions took place is not my concern here. The important observation is that the author of Acts portrayed Paul not simply as a poor man but as a poor man who fraternized with some of the wealthiest and most powerful Roman impe-

rialists. If we look beyond the apostle, we see that the profile generated from Acts focuses almost exclusively on the wealthiest category. So the process of diverting our attention away from poverty in Paul's churches did not begin in the 1970s with the so-called new consensus or with Deissmann and his contemporaries in the early twentieth century. The process of making the poor invisible began much earlier, at least as early as the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>45</sup>

### Systemic Poverty and Pauline Practice: The Jerusalem Collection as an Alternative to Patronage Economics

In this final section I provide an example of how a broader focus on inequality and economic practice—one that includes but goes beyond income equality—might help us better understand Paul. My example is Paul's collection of money for the poor among the Jerusalem saints, and especially its relationship to the system of patronage.

The most helpful brief description of patronage comes from Richard Saller. Saller first quoted this broad definition from J. Boissevain.

Patronage is founded on the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients. By patron I mean a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person, who becomes his 'client', and in return provides certain services to his patron. The relationship is asymmetrical, though the nature of the services exchanged may differ considerably.<sup>46</sup>

Saller then went on to highlight salient features.

Three vital elements which distinguish a patronage relationship appear in this passage. First, it involves the *reciprocal* exchange of goods and services. Secondly, to distinguish it from a commercial transaction in the marketplace, the relationship must be a personal one of some duration. Thirdly, it must be asymmetrical, in the sense that the two parties are of unequal status and offer different kinds of goods and services in the exchange—a quality which sets patronage off from friendship between equals.<sup>47</sup>

Since Saller was dealing specifically with personal patronage, his second element needs to be understood in a specific way for the context of this study. Here I am discussing patronage as a system, not as particular personal relationships.<sup>48</sup> So in Saller's second element I treat "personal" not in reference to one-to-one human relationships but rather in contrast to "commercial." In other words, we are looking at a system of asymmetrical

relationships among people that is regulated over long periods of time not so much by legal requirement or institutional oversight as by discursive expectations and ideology.<sup>49</sup> As such, it was one of the most important systems for maintaining social control in the Roman Empire.<sup>50</sup> It was crucial for the maintenance of the Roman system of inequality.

Sydel Silverman provides a suitable starting point for a consideration of patronage and Paul's collection.<sup>51</sup> In the study of patronage, he noted, it is important to distinguish three interrelated facets of the system: the ideology or ideals of patronage (what it was said to be); what patrons and clients thought about their relationships (actual assessments by participants); and the real exchange of goods and services within this system. While the actual assessments of participants are lost to us now, my contention here is that the study of Paul's collection has focused primarily on the ideological level and needs to be complemented by attention to the real exchange of goods and services brought about by Paul's economic practice.

Three recent monographs have discussed the connection between patronage and Paul's collection for the Jerusalem saints, and all of them focus primarily on the ideological level. Stephan Joubert rightly criticized most earlier research for interpreting the collection mainly in theological terms, as though Paul was primarily a philosopher or systematic theologian.<sup>52</sup> Joubert focused instead on the ideology of the social relationships involved in the Jerusalem collection. He termed this an ideology of benefit exchange, which included both patronage and benefaction.<sup>53</sup> According to Joubert, Paul understood the collection as a benefaction by which Paul and his assemblies could assist the Jerusalem believers. But the Jerusalem church, according to Joubert, had already established itself as Paul's benefactor by recognizing his work in Antioch. So the entire complex of relationships around the Jerusalem collection worked within the framework of a benefit exchange in which Paul (and others) could be both benefactor to and beneficiary of the Jerusalem church.<sup>54</sup>

By discussing the collection in terms of patronage/benefaction, Joubert took Paul's activism directly into the heart of the Roman system of inequality. Joubert's conclusion that the Jerusalem collection was a form of reciprocal benefits between Paul, Paul's churches, and the Jerusalem church was afflicted by three important problems. One was the description of benefaction as a relationship in which the parties were benefactors to each other; this violates the fundamental asymmetry of such arrangements. Second, Joubert described the Jerusalem collection mostly within

the expectations of patronage/benefaction, without sufficient exploration of the ways in which the collection did not fit this model.<sup>55</sup> Third, Joubert overlooked income poverty. He developed his descriptions of the practice of patronage/benefaction from elite texts by men such as Aristotle, Seneca the Younger, and Pliny the Younger, aristocrats who discussed financial practices from the perspective of superwealthy families.<sup>56</sup> Because he did not consider the widespread deprivation of most everyone else in the Roman Empire, Joubert assumed that these elite practices would be found also in the assemblies of Paul.<sup>57</sup>

James Harrison discussed Paul's collection in the context of a study of a larger consideration of the use of χάρις ("grace") in Paul's letters and in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>58</sup> His study also worked from the axiom that notions of reciprocity and patronage permeated social interaction. Instead of agreeing with Joubert that patronage relationships characterized the collection for Jerusalem, Harrison argued that Paul's collection was a complicated redefinition of patronage. Paul adopted some terms and rhetorical strategies from the discourse of patron/client relationships but sought to redefine the motivation. According to Harrison, Paul's collection did not rely on standard concepts of grace and their onerous burden of reciprocation. Paul drew instead on the churches' experiences of overwhelming divine grace that required no counter-gift and no returned favor.<sup>59</sup> According to Harrison, this experience of divine love that subverts the dynamics of the reciprocity system was to be the basis for the collection from Paul's churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem.<sup>60</sup>

Harrison's analysis has the advantage of paying more attention to the way that Paul critiqued some features of traditional reciprocity and employed others. The study is hampered, however, by its focus on a cognitive concept ("grace") as the way to explain a social system. Moreover, there is a preoccupation with certain kinds of Christian theology that emphasize God's unmerited grace, for which standard ideas of reciprocity from the Roman Empire then provide the negative foil.<sup>61</sup> Paul's superior theology wins the day, of course.

A more profitable approach is laid out by David Downs.<sup>62</sup> After considering the chronology of the collection and a range of possible analogies in the gift giving of contemporary associations, Downs analyzed Paul's rhetoric related to the collection. The main conclusion of this analysis was the observation that Paul consistently framed the collection in religious language, casting the offering for the saints in Jerusalem as worship rather than as benefaction. Thus the collection was described not in terms

of patronage (Joubert) or as a redefinition of patronage (Harrison), but rather as an alternative to patronage, one that “functions to subvert the values of patronage and euergetism by depicting an alternate mode of benefaction.”<sup>63</sup>

While all three of these studies operate at the level of ideology (the ideals of what the collection was said to be), the third option is most persuasive and can be buttressed by special attention to the economic practices involved. If we examine the flow of goods and services, three factors support Downs’s conclusion that Paul was promoting an alternative to patronage.

First, the contributor was communal: the money came from several groups of people rather than from an individual or family. The patronage system operated primarily on the principle of one wealthy benefactor or one wealthy family (or several families) giving a large sum that would allegedly benefit many less fortunate people. Then the subordinate beneficiaries would honor the benefactor(s) publicly by name. One needs only to take a stroll through an archaeological site of a Roman imperial city, town, or village to see how this focus on the benefactor worked. Public spaces were filled with inscriptions and statues that honored the big giver who was honored for his or her grace (*χάρις*) and goodwill (*εὐνοία*).

Paul, however, outlined a radically different process for the accumulation of the gift in 1 Cor 16:1–4. This accumulation process was communal and did not focus on an individual giver or family. In fact, Paul went to great lengths to distance himself or any individual from the role of benefactor. Assemblies would select representatives, and Paul would accompany them on the trip if they so desired. So the Jerusalem collection did not incorporate the patronage system’s focus on the named contributor.<sup>64</sup>

Second, the collection came from people with modest resources living mostly around subsistence, not from the wealthy or well-to-do. Paul envisioned a system of average saints helping the desperately poor saints. Each saint was to set aside money every week according to how he or she had prospered that week (1 Cor 16:2). The practice here is not that of benefaction, where families with huge amounts of capital or resources distribute a fraction of their surplus. It is an accumulation process geared to people with modest resources (categories 4–6 of the poverty scale). Confirmation comes from 2 Cor 8:12, where Paul reassured the Corinthian saints that the amount of their gift was not important, only their willingness to participate: “For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have” (NRSV). Paul assumed

that Corinthian believers would not be able to give much, and he indicated that, contrary to the ideology of patronage, the size of the gifts did not matter in this alternative system.

Third, Paul promoted occasional economic redistribution, not public largesse that diverted attention from the daily exploitation of the majority. The genius of the patronage system was that the benefactions of the ruling elites made it appear as though the wealthy were giving to the poor, even though it was the poor who made this possible by contributing to the wealthy on a daily basis through the normative structures of the economy. Paul's proposed collection entailed a practice different from that of patronage. In 2 Cor 8:13–15, Paul implied that in the future, the Corinthians might be in need and then the Jerusalem saints and the other assemblies would share with the Corinthian saints.<sup>65</sup> His rhetoric suggested multi-directional, occasional, need-based redistribution, the goal of which was economic equality for everyone involved, even if that only meant resources sufficient for the day at hand.<sup>66</sup>

Thus the economic practice of Paul's collection confirms Downs's analysis of its ideology: the collection for the destitute among the saints in Jerusalem should not be understood as a replication of the patronage system that characterized economic relationships under Roman imperialism.<sup>67</sup> Rather, it was a different system, an attempt by Paul to promote financial redistribution among poor people, gentile and Jewish, in the assemblies of the eastern Mediterranean. It contradicted the normal expectations of patronage and replaced them with an economy of voluntary redistribution among the saints.<sup>68</sup>

There are other topics to explore in the context of systematic deprivation and Paul's churches. We could examine the Lord's Supper as a meal shared among the poor, or Paul's manual labor as a refusal to commodify his apostolic calling. But I conclude with one final observation. All three of the Pauline economic practices just mentioned—the Jerusalem collection as a form of economic redistribution, the Lord's Supper as shared physical nourishment, and the spiritual leader who worked for a living—appear to have failed. While we cannot be completely certain, it looks as though the Jerusalem collection fell apart with Paul's arrest at the Jerusalem temple (Acts 21–22);<sup>69</sup> the Lord's Supper was already a problem in Corinth before Paul wrote 1 Cor 11:20–34; and Paul's manual labor was not even practiced by his contemporary apostles. Perhaps it was necessary for Paul's boldest economic initiatives—the ones that abandoned the Roman system of inequality—to fail in order for an evolving Pauline



Christianity to become over the course of time an integrated part of that system of inequality.

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Addendum: The Future of Ancient Inequality

In the original chapter I noted that few monographs in Pauline studies focused on economic issues, but there has been some movement in that regard in the meantime.<sup>70</sup> Pauline studies is still dominated by discussions of the apostle's theology and biography, but some other topics have received more attention than they did before. There have been publications addressing aspects of the chapter such as Paul's Jerusalem collection,<sup>71</sup> the significance of capitalism,<sup>72</sup> and explorations of other economic theories<sup>73</sup> for the study of Christian origins. Two other edited volumes contain chapters that address several of the topics that appear in the original chapter reprinted here.<sup>74</sup>

Economic stratification is one issue from that chapter that needs to be taken further in order to address two problems. One problem is the term *poverty*, which is quite difficult to define for comparative purposes. As a category, poverty assumes an unstated level of sufficiency that would signal the end of a state of deprivation, but the definition of sufficiency is often unstated and always subjective. Moreover, "poverty" measures against an abstraction rather than against the status of others in a given society, which makes it more difficult to connect the discussion to other aspects of power. Because of these problems, I have become convinced that inequality is a better category for analysis.

The second problem that hampers the discussion of stratification in the original chapter is the use of vague descriptions for broad levels in the scale. The elite levels are fairly clear, and the level of human subsistence can also be calculated with some precision, but the other levels remained inexact. This also meant that the percentages of population allotted to each category were rough approximations.

Around the time of the publication of the original chapter, Walter Scheidel and I devised a schema that addressed these questions and offered an improved assessment of stratification in the Roman economy.<sup>75</sup> We worked with three broad categories—near subsistence, middler,<sup>76</sup> and elite—that are defined in terms of monetary income in order to increase precision.<sup>77</sup>

**Figure 9. Summary of economic stratification in the Roman Empire<sup>78</sup>**

	Income level for category (sestertii/year)	Pessimistic model (rounded percentage of population)	Optimistic model (rounded percentage of population)
Elite	6,000 +	2%	1%
Middler	1,440–5,999	6%	12%
Near Subsistence	Below 1,440	92%	87%

We were able to develop these income categories further with more refined subcategories using used five fixed points.

- ◆ Bare-bones survival: 600 sestertii annually. This describes a very difficult subsistence existence, with “base-level calorie intake and rudimentary provision of clothing, heating, and shelter” for an adult male, an adult female, and two children.<sup>79</sup>
- ◆ Respectability: 1,440 sestertii annually. This describes the border between the top of “near subsistence” and the bottom of “middler” income. It is 240 percent of the bare-bones survival amount and “would have provided a more adequate (but far from luxurious) existence.”<sup>80</sup>
- ◆ Decurion-level income: 6,000 sesterii was the legal minimum annual income required in order to serve in city government. I use the term *level* because there were also families with this income who did not serve in city government.<sup>81</sup>
- ◆ Equestrian level income: at least 24,000 sesterii. There were also non-equestrian families with incomes in this range.<sup>82</sup>
- ◆ Senatorial-level income: at least 75,000 sestertii.<sup>83</sup> There were families that far exceeded this level.<sup>84</sup>

Rather than trying to establish the exact percentages of the population in these categories, it is safer to define the possible ranges by calculating a pessimistic model and an optimistic model. The optimistic model is based on the hypothesis that fewer people were in the most desperate category and that only 1 percent of the population was in the elite category, which leaves more income for the rest of the population. The pessimistic model is based on 2 percent of the population in the elite category, which moves more people into the desperate strata. Positing more than 2 percent of the popu-

lation in the elite categories, however, would require devastating amounts of deprivation for large swaths of the population.

One important advantage of defining the categories in terms of income is that it also establishes parameters that help us estimate what percentage of the population could be in each category. This is possible because the total income of all the people must match the total production of the Roman economy (between 70 and 90 billion sestertii per year). For example, we might conclude that the middler category contained 10 percent of the population, about seven million. In that case, the total income of those seven million middlers must leave enough other income from the Roman economy for the other 90 percent of the population. Comparative economic history also provides ratios to estimate how many fewer people there will be in one category than the one below it.<sup>85</sup>

With these constraints in mind—the size of the Roman economy, the level of bare survival, the amount required for respectable consumption above subsistence, the minimum amounts for elite income, and the relative proportion of people in each subcategory—we can gain more nuance in our understanding of economic stratification in the Roman Empire.

**Figure 10. Economic stratification with subcategories**

Income category	Descriptive label for subcategory	Income defining the subcategory (sestertii/year)	Pessimistic model (app. % of population)	Optimistic model (app. % of population)
Elite 1%–2%	Senatorial level	75,000 +	0.018%	0.015%
	Equestrian level	24,000–74,999	0.14%	0.13%
	Decurion level	6,000–23,999	1.5%	1.1%
Middler 6%–12%	Subelite	5,000–5,999	0.4%	0.8%
	Very high	4,000–4,999	0.6%	1.2%
	High	3,000–3,999	1%	1.8%
	Medium	2,000–2,999	1.5%	2.7%
	Low	1,440–1,999	1.8%	3%

Near Subsis- tence 87%– 92%	Below middler	1,000–1,439	3%	5.3%
	High insecurity	750–999	8%	19%
	Survival	500–749	60%	55%
	Severe crisis	250–499	22%	10%
	Starvation	Below 250	—	—

How does this modeling of economic stratification affect our understanding of Christian origins in general and the character of Pauline assemblies in particular? Longenecker correctly noted the importance of the issue: “At stake, then, is the way we conceptualize the relationship of the early Jesus movement to the society around it.”<sup>86</sup> The arguments about stratification are about the reasons for the emergence of Christianity, and especially about the roles played by economic deprivation and sufficiency. The arguments involve two steps that should be considered separately: modeling stratification in the Roman Empire and then comparison of stratification within the assemblies in relation to that model.

In relation to the first task—modeling stratification—this income inequality model is a step forward because it gives us more purchase on the broad, vague categories between subsistence and elite income from my earlier model. Once we systematically subdivide the earlier categories “stable near subsistence” and “moderate surplus” into income-based subcategories, it becomes clear that people in those strata clustered toward the bottoms of the strata. It suggests that income inequality was even worse than the earlier model implied: the upper range of middlers contained fewer families than I estimated, and there is a more pronounced bulge toward the bottom of the inequality profile. There can be no going back to the days when scholars offered unsubstantiated generalities about widespread prosperity in the cities of the Roman Empire.<sup>87</sup>

This income-based modeling of economic inequality has also made me skeptical about my earlier attempt to disaggregate urban and rural inequality profiles for the eastern Mediterranean. One problem is that it is difficult to account for the movements back and forth between city and country. Where should we locate elite families when most of them maintained estates in the country as well as lavish homes in cities? Or how do we account for the movement of laborers between country and city as urban and rural employment periodically required their labor? At least as prob-

lematic, however, is the speculative nature of assigning separate percentages to urban and rural areas without good evidence.<sup>88</sup>

The second task—comparison of stratification in the assemblies with stratification in dominant society—is more challenging because it requires us to move from the highly abstract income-inequality model to specific cases. Here the problems of data are intractable. Our information about first- and second-century assemblies is both fragmentary and radically specific. One aspect of this challenge is that we have information only about a fraction of the assemblies, and that fraction is unrepresentative because so much of it comes from Pauline groups. Another aspect is that we know some names of a few people in some assemblies, and occasionally we can establish some other fact about someone, but we do not have nearly enough information to know whether or not those individuals were representative of the people in a given assembly.

A third aspect is that we rarely, if ever, have the information we need to make institutional comparisons. Were particular assemblies structured like synagogues and other religious associations, or like trade guilds, or like philosophical schools, or like some other institution? And if we could establish such analogies, we would face the same data problems with the synagogues, associations, and so on.<sup>89</sup>

Faced with these stubborn limitations on our data, we need to be simultaneously innovative and systematic, and I conclude with four suggestions about possible paths forward. First, we might make progress comparing extant texts with each other in terms of their ideologies and practices of inequality. The original chapter moved in this direction by suggesting that the economic profile of the undisputed Pauline letters is quite different from the economic profile gleaned from Acts and by comparing the ideology of assistance in standard benefaction and in Paul's Jerusalem collection.<sup>90</sup> More could be done in the comparison of textual evidence.

Second, there have been efforts to build imaginative constructions of a hypothetical assembly. These are not historical reconstructions but rather disciplined attempts to envisage the sorts of people who might have populated an early assembly. For example, Peter Oakes examined Pompeian domestic spaces and on this basis created a "Pompeian model craftworker house church" containing forty people: a craftworker and household members (spouse, children, slaves, dependent relative) who host the meetings; several householders with smaller domiciles and some spouses, children, slaves and dependents; a few people whose householder is not a part of the house church; a couple of slaves participating independently of their

owners; a couple of free or freed persons attending independently; and a couple of homeless people.<sup>91</sup>

Another imaginative construction for a possible “household-based Jesus group” comes from Bruce Longenecker. His proposal is based on economic profiling and on sociohistorical references in Paul’s letters. Such a group could be built around one middler household (approximately four people, including family and slaves) and one middler artisan. Approximately 25 percent of the group might come from the stratum below the middling range but above bare subsistence (nine people from two families, two other artisans, and one merchant). The rest—about thirty-three people (65 percent)—would be from the stratum of subsistence or below, including perhaps four family groups plus ten members not aligned with families.<sup>92</sup>

While these hypothetical exercises do not pretend to represent any actual early assembly, the effort of imagining them into existence is salutary. One benefit is that it forces us to think specifically and systematically about the range of people who could have made up an assembly. In this way the process complements the high-level abstractions that also must guide our thinking. Another benefit is that it helps us to move away from our fascination with the apostle who was rarely and only temporarily present and encourages us to focus on the more important members of an assembly who interacted, cooperated, and disagreed with each other long after Paul had moved on to other projects.

A third possible path forward would be to bring this income-inequality scale into dialogue with measurements of other types of inequalities that were also important. Economic inequity operated in concert with other forms of injustice—according to gender, according to age, according to ethnicity, according to physical abilities, and so on. A consistent set of categories for discussing economic inequality might allow us to explore an intersectional approach to the use and abuse of power in Roman imperial society and in the assemblies.

I conclude with one final suggestion: we need more theory. While there are disagreements about the specifics of economic distribution in Roman imperial society, most specialists would now agree with Garnsey and Saller’s description of the Empire as a “Roman system of inequality.”<sup>93</sup> As we continue to debate the levels of deprivation and surplus, we should ask more pointedly about the reasons for systemic economic injustice in the Roman Empire and beyond. For this, we need more than detailed descriptions of deprivation. We also need theories about why human communities restrict resources to the benefit of some and the detriment of others.<sup>94</sup> Such

theoretical discussions, I think, will help us clarify what—if anything—Paul had to say about the alleviation of economic deprivation and what—if anything—the early Christian movement offered to those in need.

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### Notes

1. Earlier versions of this material were presented at the Midwest Regional SBL meeting in St. Louis (2004) and at the University of Chicago Divinity School (2006). I thank those who participated in the discussions for saving me from some of my errors. I wish to thank especially Brandon Cline and Trevor Thompson for their thoroughgoing critique of my poverty scale materials and for their generosity as conversation partners.

2. The major exception is Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), which has not found much acceptance in the discipline. Meggitt's book was successful in raising critical objections and introducing new arguments. The positive proposal—that 99 percent of the population in the early Roman Empire lived in abject poverty—is difficult to sustain.

3. I looked for a range of theological viewpoints, including major scholars and lesser-known commentators. For a summary of the results, see Steven J. Friesen, "The

Blessings of Hegemony: The Preferential Option for the Rich in Pauline Studies,” in *The Bible in the Public Square: Reading the Signs of the Times*, ed. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 117–28.

4. The introductions in the second category—those that briefly mention socioeconomic factors—do so in an offhand manner without argument, indicating that their statements are not controversial.

5. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 69.

6. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 52.

7. Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 241–43.

8. Theissen and Meeks are unclear on this point. Theissen dismissed the entire question of poverty with one undocumented assertion about a new level of undefined prosperity outside of Palestine (*Social Setting*, 36). Meeks claimed that the Roman imperial economy brought more prosperity than before without defining what level of prosperity had gone before or how much it improved (*Urban Christians*, 43–44), but then acknowledged that there could have been poor people in Paul’s churches about whom we have no evidence (73).

9. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*.

10. I first proposed this term in “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 336.

11. Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies,” 326–31.

12. Meeks argued that the prominent members of Paul’s churches—the ones we hear about in Paul’s letters—show signs of status inconsistency. By that he meant that status was a complex phenomenon that included such factors as “ethnic origins, *ordo*, citizenship, personal liberty, wealth, occupation, age, sex, and public offices or honors” (*Urban Christians*, 55).

13. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 51–73.

14. For example, note John Barclay, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: A Response to Steven Friesen,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 363–66.

15. There were a few isolated exceptions, such as Meggitt (*Paul, Poverty, and Survival*) and Robin Scroggs (“The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research,” *NTS* 26 [1980]: 164–79).

16. For this tendency in the field of economics, see David B. Grusky and Ravi Kanbur, “Introduction: Conceptual Foundations of Poverty and Inequality Measurement,” in *Poverty and Inequality*, ed. David B. Grusky and Ravi Kanbur (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12, 24–25. For an overview of sociological work, see David B. Grusky, “The Past, Present, and Future of Social Inequality,” in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, ed. David B. Grusky, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 3–51.

17. A good starting point into his work is Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999; repr., New York: Anchor, 2000), esp. 87–110.

18. Natural disasters such as famine and persistent warfare can also play a significant role. Sen refuses to create a specific list of capabilities that could be used in

measuring poverty (*Development as Freedom*, 103). Martha Nussbaum agreed in broad terms with Sen's project but argued that content is necessary. There needs to be a list of the capabilities in order to measure inequality and social justice; see her "Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism," *Political Theory* 20 (1992): 202–46. Her proposal for ten "basic human functional capabilities" can be found on 222–23.

19. Grusky, "Past, Present, and Future," 13–15.

20. Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 125. Because the first edition was published in 1987, when the so-called new consensus was in full bloom, the book also stands as an important contrast to developments in New Testament studies where systemic inequality was not a topic of conversation (at least not polite conversation).

21. For a revision of the scale calibrated in terms of amount of income, see Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, "The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire," *JRS* 99 (2009): 61–91. The resulting economic profile is similar to that of my poverty scale, but the new income categories are more useful for analysis.

22. The best treatment of this topic for the Roman Empire is Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Garnsey estimated the basic daily minimum at 1,625–2,012 calories (19). In his calculations, he was also careful to note variations in caloric need because of gender, age, class, and other factors.

23. I use 8,000–10,000 calories rather than a specific amount (such as 2,500 calories per person) to reflect the range of estimates that different modern specialists employ and to take account of the fact that children in the family would usually consume fewer calories than the adults. My goal here is provide an approximate sense of the scale of the problem without creating a false sense of precision.

24. Adapted from Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 81–85. Their figures are based on a daily need of 2,500 calories for an adult male. The figures also include some nonfood expenses such as housing, clothing, and taxes.

25. Friesen, "Poverty in Pauline Studies," 340–43.

26. See Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy, 1–2030 A.D.: Essays in Macro-Economic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Robert William Fogel, *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death, 1700–2100: Europe, America, and the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

27. See <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress4828a1>. Similar resources are available from the World Bank at <https://databank.worldbank.org/home.aspx>. Tyler Watts assisted in the development of this chart.

28. See <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress4828a2>.

29. This range in terms of sesterces for the Roman Empire reflects the per capita GDP (not GNI), which is perhaps a better comparison because of the importance of global finance in modern economies (Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy").

There is no satisfactory way to translate sesterces from the Roman imperial economy into modern currencies because the function of money is so different in the two systems. One method of indirect comparison is in terms of payment for labor: an average daily wage of an unskilled worker in the Roman Empire is thought to have been around 3–4 sesterces. The price of grain provides another indirect comparison: an annual income of HS 240–275 would have purchased about 460–570 kg of wheat, which would be approximately the amount needed for two adults to survive at a subsistence level for a year; see Colin Clark and Margaret Haswell, *The Economics of Subsistence Agriculture*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), 58–64.

30. This percentage is a rough rendering of Scheidel's estimate that perhaps one-eighth to one-ninth of the empire's population lived in urban areas; see "Demography," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Walter Scheidel et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 79. H. W. Pleket estimated that 10–15 percent of the imperial population lived in cities of 10,000 or more; see "Wirtschaft," in *Europäische Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1 of *Handbuch der europäischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Friedrich Vittinghoff (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 145–46.

31. More precisely, this is the estimated number of births a female will have if current rates prevail and if she survives through childbearing years.

32. Scheidel, "Demography," 41.

33. Scheidel, "Demography," 39. One reason this figure is dramatically lower than in modern societies is because infant and child mortality was so much higher in antiquity. By considering the life expectancy of a child who survives to age 10, we can factor out death at a very young age and arrive at a different comparison: for the modern U.S., life expectancy at 10 is an additional 63 years for males (i.e., to age 73) and an additional 70 years for females (to age 80); in the Roman Empire, life expectancy at 10 was about 35 years (to age 45); see Bruce W. Frier, "Roman Demography," in *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. S. Potter and D. J. Mattingly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 87–88.

34. More precisely, deaths in first year of life per 1,000 live births.

35. Walter Scheidel, "Progress and Problems in Roman Demography," in *Debating Roman Demography*, ed. Walter Scheidel (Boston: Brill, 2001), 23–25; Frier, "Roman Demography," 87.

36. For children below age 5.

37. The creation of this profile was greatly assisted by research grants from the Society of Biblical Literature and from the Research Council of the University of Missouri, Columbia. The grants allowed me to construct a database of the members of the Pauline assemblies. I have published versions of the profile in "Poverty in Pauline Studies" and in "Prospects for a Demography of the Pauline Mission: Corinth among the Churches," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, HTS 35 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 351–70.

38. Acts is excluded from the profile because the narrative is not reliable for this kind of historical information. The deutero-Pauline letters and Pastoral Epistles are also excluded for similar reasons. If we did include these disputed Pauline letters, it

would add to the profile references to Nympha (PS4–5) from Col 4:15, Onesiphorus (PS4–6) from 2 Tim 1:16–17 and 2 Tim 4:19, and the widows (PS6–7) of 1 Tim 5:3–16.

39. Meeks argued that Paul's assemblies did not include the extreme upper or lower ends of the spectrum (*Urban Christians*, 73).

40. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 73–96. Theissen's argument is hampered by an ambiguity in the definitions of key terms, such as "upper classes" and "elevated social status."

41. The only possible exception would be the Erastus of Rom 16:23, but I would argue that the Erastus mentioned by Paul was not a participant in Paul's churches; see "The Wrong Erastus: Ideology, Archaeology, and Exegesis," in *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies in Religion and Society*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, NovTSup 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 224–49.

42. I have intentionally kept these arbitrary numbers low so as not to inflate the profile in a direction that would support my own conclusion.

43. This profile omits references to assemblies in Judea, Samaria, and Syria because these were not Pauline assemblies. I have also not included those from the household of Caesar because the description is too vague to be useful (anywhere from PS1–6 and maybe even 7; Phil 4:22). In addition, Crispus of 1 Cor 1:14 might be the same individual called a synagogue leader in Acts 18:8, but economic references in Acts must be treated with suspicion; see above, 53–56. Finally, Apphia and Archippus are listed close to Philemon in the second verse of that letter, but the relationship is not clear enough to give us any hints about economic status.

44. Sergius Paulus is in square brackets because the narrative does not clearly mark him as a participant in the assemblies. The text says that he believed and was amazed at the teaching of the Lord, but it does not record a baptism, reception of the Holy Spirit, or belief by his whole house.

45. David Downs noted that, while all the undisputed Pauline letters mention funding for his work, the disputed letters do not discuss it; see "Paul's Collection and the Book of Acts Revisited," *NTS* 52 (2006): 50. So the process of obscuring Paul's economic practices may be visible in the practice of pseudepigraphy as well.

46. J. Boissevain, "Patronage in Sicily," *Man* NS 1 (1966): 18, cited in Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

47. Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 1. He followed this with an important discussion (7–39) on the vocabulary and ideology of personal patronage.

48. Terry Johnson and Chris Dandeker, "Patronage: Relation and System," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (New York: Routledge, 1989), 219–45.

49. There has been a good deal of discussion about whether and to what extent we can equate patronage with benefaction. For the early Roman imperial period the two are closely related and sometimes indistinguishable; see Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualizing Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, BZNW 130 (New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 53–89, esp. 66; Holland Hendrix, "Benefactor/Patronage Networks in the Urban Environment: Evidence from Thessalonica," *Semeia* 56 (1992): 40. For the purposes of this study, I simply use the term patronage for this complex of phenomena of patronage/benefaction. With



the term I reference a genus patronage (defined as a modern conceptual category not necessarily identical with ancient linguistic usage), within which we can distinguish several species, such as personal patronage, friendship, municipal benefaction (euergetism), imperial patronage, and so on.

50. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire," in Wallace-Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*; Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 37–38. L. Michael White proposed the examination of social networks as a profitable method of deepening our understanding of the mechanisms by which such control was established and maintained in the imperial period; see "Finding the Ties That Bind: Issues from Social Description" and "Social Networks: Theoretical Orientation and Historical Applications," *Semeia* 56 (1992): 3–23 and 24–38.

51. Cited by Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 37.

52. Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy, and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection*, WUNT 124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

53. For Joubert, "patronage" involved mostly Roman patron-client relationships, and "benefaction" was mostly characteristic of Hellenistic cultures in the eastern Mediterranean, and he intentionally used the latter to describe the collection; see *Paul as Benefactor*, 17–72, esp. 66–70. I disagree with the way he elaborated the distinction, but a full response is not necessary here.

54. Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 113–15, 150–52.

55. Note, however, that Joubert (*Paul as Benefactor*, 216–18) suggests some distinctive features of patronage/benefaction in Paul's thought.

56. Pliny's estimated annual income of about HS1,100,000 would have been about 2,000 times the amount needed for subsistence for an average family. Seneca's estimated income of HS18,000,000 would have been more than 31,000 times the level of a family's subsistence needs; see Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 76–77 and n. 58.

57. He does, however, recognize the existence of poverty that the collection was meant to alleviate; see *Paul as Benefactor*, 111–13.

58. James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context*, WUNT 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), esp. 289–332.

59. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 287–88, 314–32.

60. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 345–49.

61. E.g., Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 347.

62. David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts*, WUNT 248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). I thank the author for sharing these materials before they were published.

63. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 240; see also 248.

64. Sze-kar Wan, "Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 214–15.

65. Some commentators have maintained that Paul could not have envisioned that the Jerusalem assembly would someday contribute to the needs of others and suggest instead that Paul expected the future gift of the Jerusalem assembly to be an eschato-

logical blessing rather than an economic contribution; see Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 2nd ed, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 419–20; Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 266–67. The arguments for eschatological blessing do not make good sense in the context of Paul's discussion, however, and the tide seems to be moving in favor of the economic contribution argument; see Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 2:542; Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 128–29; Frank Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 193.

66. This point is driven home by Paul's quotation of Exod 16:18 from the story of gathering manna in the wilderness: "But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed" (NRSV). Paul cited this example of the Hebrews gathering manna in the wilderness to indicate that, with God's provision and the cooperation of the saints, everyone would have enough for daily needs.

67. Peter Lampe discussed a variety of relationships within the early Pauline churches where typically hierarchical situations were undermined in favor of egalitarian ideals: "Paul, Patrons, and Clients," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 488–523. When Lampe comes to the Jerusalem collection, however, he points out that it did not fit into patronage categories at all (502–5). In light of this, the other relationships discussed in the article could also be described as moving beyond patronage expectations. Lampe calls them "ambiguous" because no one is clearly superior. Perhaps we should not describe them in patronage terms, since they violate the patronage characteristic of asymmetric power.

68. One of the few commentators to notice this was Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 223–24.

69. Downs argued that this section of Acts did not refer to the collection ("Paul's Collection," 50–70).

70. I thank Caroline Crews for assistance with the research for this addendum.

71. David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem in its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

72. Roland Boer and Christina Petterson, *Time of Troubles: A New Economic Framework for Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017). Class struggle has reentered the discussions in Robert J. Myles, ed., *Class Struggle in the New Testament* (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2019); and G. Anthony Keddie, Michael Flexsenhar III, and Steven J. Friesen, eds., *The Struggle over Class: Socioeconomic Analysis of Ancient Christian Texts*, WGRWSup 19 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021).

73. Thomas R. Blanton IV, *A Spiritual Economy: Gift Exchange in the Letters of Paul and Tarsus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Alex Hon Ho Ip, *A Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of the Letter to Philemon in Light of the New Institutional Economics: An Exhortation to Transform a Master-Slave Economic Relationship into a Brotherly Loving Relationship* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

74. Bruce W. Longenecker and Kelly D. Liebengood, eds., *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,



2009); Thomas R. Blanton IV and Raymond Pickett, eds., *Paul and Economics: A Handbook* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

75. Walter Scheidel and Steven J. Friesen, "The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire," *JRS* 99 (2009): 61–91.

76. The widely used terms middler and middling are unfortunate, in my opinion, because they suggest that this was a large middle group of people and/or that people in this category had mean or median incomes. They were not a large group, nor were their incomes average. The terms simply denote the 6–12 percent of the population between the elite (about 2 percent) and those near subsistence (about 90 percent).

77. We used grain equivalency methods for calculating expenditures and necessary income; Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 64–68.

78. The income is for a hypothetical family of four in order to average out the differential production and consumption of men, women, and children.

79. Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 69, where the term "bare bones subsistence basket" is borrowed from R. C. Allen, "How Prosperous Were the Romans? Evidence from Diocletian's Price Edict (AD 301)," in *Quantifying the Roman Empire: Methods and Problems*, ed. Alan Bowman and Andrew Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 327–45 and esp. 329–32.

80. Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 69, using Allen's concept of a "respectability basket," which includes some core consumption items: food beyond basic carbohydrates, cloth, fuel, furniture, implements, etc. (Allen, "How Prosperous Were Romans," 332–35).

81. Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 77–78.

82. Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 77.

83. Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 76–77.

84. Above, n. 56.

85. Scheidel and Friesen, "Size of the Economy," 79–80.

86. Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 57–58.

87. E.g., Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 36; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 43–44.

88. For example, Longenecker (*Remember the Poor*, 53) accepted the figures of the optimistic model and then argued for an even higher percentage of middleers in an urban setting. He does not note that this requires a strange (and unexplained) inequality profile in rural areas in order to make his urban figures work. Here are his suggestions about urban areas and my calculation of the profile this requires for rural areas.

Urban profile: ES1–3 3%; ES4 15%; ES5 27%; ES6 30%; ES7 25%.

Required rural profile: ES1–3 1.2%; ES4 5%; ES5 27%; ES6 59%; ES7 7%.

Why would rural areas—85 percent of the imperial populace—have the same percentage of people just above subsistence, a dramatically lower percentage of people below subsistence and in the middler range, and a dramatically higher percentage of people at subsistence? This urban profile is piecemeal and does hold up as a complete model.

89. Important work is being done in this regard by several scholars who are bringing together relevant information about such groups that has been underutilized in the study of Christian origins. For an orientation to the topics, see Richard S. Ascough,

“Methodological Reflections on Synagogues and Christ Groups as ‘Associations’: A Response to Erich Gruen,” *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* 4 (2017): 118–26; and Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

90. See also Steven J. Friesen, “Injustice or God’s Will? Early Christian Explanations of Poverty,” in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 17–36.

91. Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul’s Letter at Ground Level* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 80–89.

92. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 294–97.

93. Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 146.

94. Studies such as those cited above in nn. 71–72 are a good start.

### 3

## PAUL AND HIS OPPONENTS: THE SEARCH

JERRY L. SUMNEY

Since the publication of F. C. Baur's *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ* in 1845, the question of the identity of those opposed in the Pauline letters has been a subject of much debate among New Testament scholars.<sup>1</sup> Since so many Pauline letters oppose other teachers or teachings, interpreters need to be as clear as possible about what or who is opposed in order to understand the settings of the letters. Given this necessity and the fact that Paul does not fully or objectively describe the people he rejects, it is not surprising to find that hypotheses about Paul's opponents have proliferated, with interpreters imposing multiple hypotheses on every letter. Proposals about opponents not only shape the interpretation of individual Pauline letters but also significantly determine one's understanding of the early church.

### Significance of the Issue

This question has the power to shape our reading of individual letters and our view of the early church more broadly because it tries to identify the specific beliefs and practices of various believers within individual, local churches. Paul's letters give us our earliest evidence about the early church. They are written some twenty years before the gospels and contain inner-group communication as people in the church define themselves over against both the broader culture and members of the synagogue who do not accept the belief that Jesus is God's Son and the savior of the world. Identifying those Paul writes against helps us see what kinds of diversity were accepted in the earliest church and what types of beliefs and practices Paul said were unacceptable.

Furthermore, Paul's choice of letters as his means of contacting and teaching his churches means that he selected a type of communication that addresses the specifics of that community's questions, issues, and problems. This very personal means of communication requires us to know as much as possible about the questions he was answering and the circumstances he was addressing if we hope to understand his message to those churches. Without properly understanding the issue at hand, we will probably misunderstand what Paul told his churches because knowing what the question is usually determines the meaning of the answer. For example, if we read "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat" (2 Thess 3:10 NRSV) as a response to a question about social policy, it sounds as though Christians should not help the chronically unemployed. If, however, we recognize that this statement responds to the claims of a group of teachers who say that because they are spiritually superior to others the rest of the church should give them money to alleviate the need for them to have a job, it sounds very different. Since context is so vital to attaining a reasonable grasp of a text's meaning, identifying Paul's opponents is one of our crucial tasks if we are to understand his letters clearly.

### F. C. Baur and His Legacy

One of Baur's starting points in his search for the opponents of Paul, and so the shape of earliest Christianity, was Hegelian philosophy of history. This presupposition required Baur to identify a thesis and an antithesis that would meld into a synthesis. For Baur, the thesis was Petrine or Jewish Christianity, and the antithesis was Pauline or Gentile Christianity. Baur was so committed to this scheme that he could admit the absence of evidence that a letter opposed Petrine Christianity and still say it opposed this branch of Christianity. After all, there was no alternative!

An understanding of the early Christian movement that presupposes this sort of simple opposition of two and only two types of Christianity has remained long after the Hegelian presupposition was abandoned. For example, in the 1960s Walter Schmithals presupposed this kind of scheme when he argued that Paul's opponents everywhere and always were gnostics. Again, a lack of evidence was no deterrent. Schmithals argued that when Paul does not argue against gnostics, it is because he has not yet recognized that his opponents are such. When Paul understands more clearly (that is, as clearly as Schmithals), then Paul opposed the gnostic teaching that was surely present.

Not only Baur's two-party oppositional scheme but even his identification of the two parties lives on in New Testament scholarship. Gerd Lüdemann argued for a modification of Baur's hypothesis in his 1980 study of Paul's opponents. As recently as 1994, Michael Goulder argued for a nearly identical view and affirmed it with respect to the Corinthian opponents in 2001.<sup>2</sup> Baur's scheme and hypothesis continue to have an amazingly vigorous life despite the critique of such an understanding of earliest Christianity found in Walter Bauer's 1934 work, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, which demonstrated (even with its own faults) a significantly wider range of diversity in the early church.<sup>3</sup>

While the tendency to follow Baur's two-party scheme is pronounced in studies of Paul's opponents that examine the whole Pauline corpus or a large segment of it, interpreters who work on individual letters deviate widely from such proposals. But even these works often rely unintentionally on Baur's powerful and insightful work. Minimally, most interpreters presuppose an anti-Pauline movement, with many finding its roots in Jerusalem and often in James. My reading of the Pauline letters and understanding of early Christianity finds insufficient support for this latter hypothesis. While there are anti-Pauline movements by the mid-fifties, the evidence that would link any anti-Pauline movement to the leaders of the Jerusalem church is meager indeed, and the scant materials cited as evidence are better understood in other ways.

There is insufficient space in the scope of this chapter to provide an extensive review of hypotheses about the opponents of each Pauline letter because the number of hypotheses is so large—for most letters ranging between ten and thirty. (A listing of various views taken on each letter through the mid-1970s appears in J. J. Gunther's *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background* and my recent account of the major hypotheses for each letter may be found elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>) Rather than attempting such a review, I will discuss a few important aspects of how interpreters go about the task of identifying Paul's opponents because the methods interpreters use often determine the results. I will look at two major categories of issues in which interpreters are making progress in sharpening the way they conduct this research and two in which we are making less headway.

#### Issues of Method

To identify those Paul opposes more clearly and so delineate the context of Paul's letters and the shape of the early church with more precision, inter-

preters need more awareness of their presuppositions, more deliberateness in their methods, and more judiciousness in their use of texts. My work on Pauline opponents has attempted to make progress on these methodological issues.

### Defining "Opponent" Carefully

The first methodological issue which needs more attention is that of distinguishing between those who oppose Paul and those Paul opposes. It is important to recognize that not everyone Paul writes against thought they were advocating teachings or practices Paul would reject. There are times when a Pauline letter strongly opposes a teaching or practice when its proponents may have thought they were in agreement with Paul. For example, it seems unlikely that the teachers 2 Thessalonians counters think they are opposing Paul because they draw on him as an authority (2 Thess 2:1–2). The same may be the case in Galatians, where Paul must say that he does not hold their view (Gal 5:11). And nothing in Colossians suggests that those opposed in it knew they were advocating anything Paul would reject. So while these teachers interpreted the faith in ways Paul or his successors found unacceptable, they did not intend to oppose Paul. Recognizing this distinction among those Paul opposed can significantly shape our understanding of particular situations and the contours of the early church.

Acknowledging that some people whose teaching Paul rejects do not intend to oppose him shows that a wide range of early believers recognized his authority, even as some others saw him as a renegade. It also frees us to see that Paul's teaching was understood in multiple ways within his own churches, including among those who intend to remain faithful to him. Some of this diversity was deemed acceptable; other developments Paul was compelled to reject. This indicates that diverse beliefs thrived within the Pauline churches from their earliest days. Part of the reason the debates reflected in Paul's letters arose was that the churches were still defining the range of diversity they would deem acceptable.

### Distinguishing Accusation from Description

Beginning in the 1990s, many interpreters began to exercise more scrutiny about how reliably Paul's characterizations of his opponents reflect what they were really like.<sup>5</sup> These scholars reflect an increased awareness that

polemical texts often contain statements that appear as descriptions but do not accurately describe the actual practices or teaching of the opposition. For example, when 2 Thessalonians says that the other teachers say, "The Day of the Lord has come," this is more likely an easily refutable characterization of their teaching than a direct quotation. So while the author thinks they have an overrealized eschatology (that is, they believe they enjoy more blessings of the end time than the author thinks it is possible for anyone to possess in the present), they probably do not express their view with this language. Similarly, when Paul says that the people who want Gentile believers to accept circumcision in Galatia advocate this practice only to avoid persecution (Gal 6:12), it seems unlikely that personal safety is their sole motivation. Finally, the traveling ministers Paul opposes in 2 Corinthians do not think of themselves as deceitful workers, or even as boasters, as Paul describes them (2 Cor 11:13–15).

Interpreters in recent decades more readily recognize and take account of the fact that Paul's characterizations of those he opposes are often tendentious, particularly in polemical contexts. Similarly, when Paul is defending himself, he often presents the charges others make about him in a dramatic and exaggerated form to lead his readers to dismiss those charges out of hand or to make them easier to refute. Paul's most reliable descriptions of his opponents will more likely appear in sections devoted to teaching that do not have a polemical or apologetic edge.<sup>6</sup> Giving careful attention to the differing purposes of various sections of a letter will keep us from accepting as straightforward descriptions the intentional caricatures Paul gives of his opponents and so will help us sketch them more accurately.

### Treating Letters Individually

It has also become more common, though by no means universal, that interpreters exercise more care in distinguishing among the historical contexts that individual letters address instead of assuming that the opponents of one letter are also the problem other letters address. Few continue to adopt a simplistic scheme that allows for a single set of opponents Paul must fight in every letter, but a number of interpreters do use the situation they perceive in one letter to determine who Paul opposes in another. This happens particularly in the case of treatments of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, documents that contain letters written to the same churches over the course of a fairly short amount of time. Given these connections,

interpreters often assume that anything gleaned from 1 Corinthians can directly inform their identification of the opponents in 2 Corinthians and vice versa. While most scholars do not state this as a methodological principle, it is the practice of more than a few. But this ignores the significant change the letters manifest between internal problems Paul must deal with in 1 Corinthians and the problems generated by the arrival of rival teachers/apostles that he combats in 2 Corinthians. So even in these letters written to the same church over the course of less than five years, the circumstances Paul addresses have changed significantly.

Interpreters must, then, treat each Pauline letter individually before looking for connections with problems Paul countered in other letters. And while we may find links, the example of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians indicates why many interpreters have rightly become more reticent to attribute the beliefs or practices found in one situation to the people Paul opposes in another letter. This reticence sometimes means that our sketch of those opposed remains less sharp, but it also means that our portrait is much more certain and so a firmer foundation from which to interpret the letter. At the same time, this way of proceeding leaves us open to seeing the different kinds of beliefs and practices that developed as various people thought about how to understand and live the faith in the earliest church communities. This allows us to observe the ways various leaders and teachers of the church thought about what would be acceptable and how they argued their case before the full membership.

#### Relating the Surrounding Culture to the Problem the Text Addresses

There has been noticeably less advance in thinking about how to relate the material and intellectual culture of the historical context to the task of clarifying the identity of the people Paul opposes. Two monographs on the opponents of Colossians, those of Troy Martin<sup>7</sup> and Clinton Arnold,<sup>8</sup> exemplify the issues involved with this point of method. These two studies make similar moves methodologically but come to very different understandings of the teaching the author of Colossians opposes. Both Martin and Arnold allow reconstructions of movements they find in the culture to determine prematurely and illegitimately their understandings of the specific teaching Colossians rejects. Both scholars make the connection between the teachers at Colossae and a particular group in the culture by means of vocabulary parallels between Colossians and the group with which they identify the opponents.



*The Example of Troy Martin*

Martin's study has much to commend it. Few studies of Pauline letters read the grammar and syntax of difficult passages with as open a mind as we find in Martin. Such a careful and open examination of the text demands the attention of all readers. Many of his proposals for translations of difficult passages have received too little attention, even though he provides powerful arguments for them.

Martin's basic thesis identifies the teachers Colossians opposes as non-Christian Cynic philosophers. These philosophers, he says, have visited the community and critiqued its beliefs and practices so persuasively that some are thinking about abandoning the church. Thus, the author of Colossians (who is probably not Paul) must respond at length. Martin carefully reconstructs the beliefs and practices of Cynics from their own writings and from what other ancient authors say about them. He then argues that important, in fact unique, elements of their teaching are opposed in Colossians. Particularly, he argues that their "prohibitions against perishable consumer goods and understanding of humility as severity to the body" are unique to Cynics. He then contends that since Colossians opposes both of these things, the people it opposes must be Cynic philosophers.<sup>9</sup> He finds some other corroborating evidence, but these are his most important pieces of evidence.

While Martin may be correct in asserting that the various ideas and practices he mentions are not combined in any other known movement in the ways they appear among Cynics, these individual elements do appear elsewhere. For example, Cynics of various kinds adopted differing types of moderately ascetic practices, and some attained mystical and visionary experiences. But this was true not only for Cynics; many schools of thought, both philosophies and religions, used different types of self-denying practices to attain such experiences. Indeed, some limited ascetic practice was a widely known way to attain mystical experiences.<sup>10</sup> So the severity to the body that Colossians associates with "humility" may have come from a number of sources.

More important methodologically, Martin allows the vocabulary parallels he finds between Colossians and some Cynic teachings to exercise too much influence on his identification of the opponents of Colossians. Because Cynics and the teachers Colossians rejects share some common terms, Martin makes the language and teaching of Cynic philosophy the lens through which he reads the whole of Colossians, and he does this at a

very early stage of his interpretation of Colossians. Once the connection is assumed, he uses all kinds of purely terminological parallels to confirm the identity of these opponents. So, for example, the reference to “human tradition” becomes a reference to the Cynics’ claim to be in a tradition (hardly a unique claim among philosophers) rather than a polemical accusation that denigrates the other teaching. Even if the opponents of Colossians adopted the language Cynics used to describe their self-effacing practices, that terminology alone is insufficient reason to propose that the opponents work from within Cynic thought overall.

The basic methodological problem here is that Martin’s reconstruction of the Cynics determines the meaning of statements in Colossians. This is the same method Dieter Georgi used in 1964 to identify the opponents of 2 Corinthians as divine men.<sup>11</sup> That is, he formulated a reconstruction of a first-century movement within Judaism and then fit 2 Corinthians into that framework because he found some parallels in terminology and general outlook. Few New Testament scholars remain convinced by his conclusions, and most think there were significant problems in the way he made his connections with the movement he found outside the church.

Such uses of reconstructions of historical movements prematurely constrict the meaning of the primary text in its own context. The problems with such an approach become clear when we think about the broad semantic range of many words. Use of terminology parallels is particularly problematic when we cross from the use of a word in philosophic writings to its use in the New Testament. There are sometimes very significant differences in the ways a Platonist uses a word and the way a New Testament writer uses it. Anyone who began reading Greek with the New Testament and then picked up the writing of the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria can testify to the radical differences in the meanings of words in those two contexts. The word Paul uses for “faith” is a good example. Among philosophers, the Greek word *pistis* often means a proof in an argument. It never means this in Paul but, instead, has a different range of meanings that includes faith and faithfulness.

Two examples of English words may also help us see the problem with using vocabulary parallels to say that the same ideas are present or that a group known to use the same word is causing trouble in a Pauline church. The word “problem” takes on very different meanings depending on its context. There is a big difference between talking about a math problem in a textbook and the use of the same word to refer to the difficulties that global climate change will inflict on polar bears. And of course it has yet

another range of meanings when we ask someone what their problem is! The various meanings of “problem” clearly overlap, but they are obviously different. A more dramatic example is the word “set,” a word that may be either a noun or a verb. If we limit ourselves to its meaning as a noun, it may refer to a segment of tennis match, a certain number of matching dishes, or a group of numbers. Hearing someone ask, “Did you win the set?” could be asking about tennis or about a lottery for a box of dishes; only context tells you which meaning is correct.<sup>12</sup> These examples suggest that finding similar terms in two different settings is an insufficient basis for claiming that the usage means the same thing or that there is a connection between the settings.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Example of Clinton Arnold*

Arnold makes the same methodological moves as Martin but comes to a very different view of the opponents of Colossians because his reconstruction draws on a different body of material from the cultural setting of the first century. Arnold holds that the teaching Colossians opposes develops from a mixing of the folk religion of western Asia Minor (today’s Turkey) with Christian beliefs. He reconstructs that folk religion largely from evidence he draws from magical texts and artifacts, particularly when they appear in Jewish contexts. Arnold demonstrates well that angels were important in the religious life of both Jewish and non-Jewish residents of western Asia Minor. For example, people call upon these angels to provide protection from various kinds of evil (from the spirit world and from humans) and to grant healing from illness. Arnold infers from such widespread practices that since angel veneration was prominent in the region, Colossians’ mention of “the worship of angels” (*thrēskeia tōn angelōn*; a phrase that can mean either worship that angels perform or worship that people offer to angels) must mean the opponents of Colossians also venerate angels. He makes this claim even though the Greek word used for worship in Colossians (*thrēskeia*) does not appear in the local materials he cites.

Arnold follows the same procedure when interpreting the difficult word *embateuō*. He first describes a second phase of initiation into mystery cults, particularly those known in western Asia Minor, noting that they commonly involved entering a sacred place and having ecstatic visions. He then argues that *embateuō* is a technical term for this initiatory event, thus adopting the view of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars William

Ramsay and Martin Dibelius. Arnold moves from a lengthy discussion of mystery religion initiations to assuming that because Colossians uses the term *embateuō* in association with visions, it must refer to such mystery cult rites. His supporting evidence includes materials that document a fear of evil spiritual powers among the people of western Asia Minor, a mention of the “elements” (another term that appears in Colossians) in the ancient author Apuleius, and the known use of ascetic practices to prepare for visionary experiences in mystery initiations. Arnold uses these general and terminological similarities to argue that the opponents of Colossians had been initiated into mystery cults and were advocating that others should be. But people throughout the ancient world feared evil spiritual powers and sought protection from them. And many religions, not just the mystery cults, used some ascetic practices to induce visionary experiences.

It is certainly possible that the false teaching Colossians opposes and local mystery cults had some common features. But such similarities, even if they include using the same or similar language, do not render a direct connection probable. Additionally, Arnold draws on evidence that is as much as two hundred years later than Colossians but still assumes that geographic proximity is nearly evidence enough to posit a direct connection.

Arnold followed the same methodological procedure as Martin. Both found some parallels (mostly in terminology similarities) between an external phenomenon or movement and what is opposed in Colossians and then imposed the chosen external frame of thought on the letter. This way of developing a hypothesis involves the interpreter in too much circular reasoning. If we establish a connection between a system of thought outside a Pauline letter and the problem Paul addresses with a few words or phrases they have in common and then confirm that identification of the opponents by reading the letter in light of the presupposition that they are the problem, we have offered little proof.<sup>14</sup> As the history of scholarship has shown, interpreters can attach all kinds of contradictory hypotheses to the same letter using this procedure.

Both Martin and Arnold bring important and interesting data to our attention. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the surrounding culture and even the subcultures of various regions influenced the various ways the early church expressed its newfound faith. But this does not mean that they imported whole systems of thought or all elements of those other practices when they adopted and adapted parts of them. Interpreters must marshal more evidence than a few common words or ideas to demonstrate that such connections are valid.

Like Georgi's earlier treatment of 2 Corinthians, Martin and Arnold begin with the text of Colossians, identify a few key ideas or phrases, and then turn to reconstruct an external school of thought or expression of religion: for Martin, Cynic philosophers; for Arnold, practitioners of regional popular religions. When Martin and Arnold return to the text of Colossians, they each interpret its texts according to the scheme of the reconstruction rather than first in the context of the letter itself. Thus the reconstruction dominates the exegesis.

### *The Methodological Principle*

At least part of the problem with such a method is evident in the radically different proposals that Martin and Arnold advocate. Each can find vocabulary similarities or apparent conceptual contacts with parts of the movement they identify as the trouble. Each then reads everything else through the lens of that outside movement. With such a procedure, one can identify the problem Colossians addresses with a vast number of movements. Methodologically, a reconstruction of a movement external to the letter in question should not be allowed to determine the meaning of particular texts, especially when the text is being used to identify the opponents. Again, that sort of circularity provides no real basis for identifying the opponents of a letter.

A more certain identification of the opponents of Colossians must rely on the text of Colossians without imposing an outside movement on that reading. Reading in this mode, I conclude that Colossians opposes teachers who urge others to adopt practices designed to induce visions in which they see angels worship God and participate in that angelic worship. These teachers assert that anyone without this experience is still in sin and so does not have the relationship with God they need for forgiveness and salvation. In this reading, the other teachers do not advocate the practice of venerating angels. The better reading of the evidence, including the language of seeing and entering used in connection with the mystery religions, is that the other teachers attain visions through moderately ascetic practices. It is in these visions that they see angelic worship. I have argued this view in detail elsewhere, and the readings of Martin and Arnold do not dissuade me from it.<sup>15</sup>

Colossians does not oppose these teachers because they attain visions; that was a common experience for early Christians, and Paul was among those with such experiences. Colossians opposes them because they make

the acquisition of visions a condition for forgiveness of sin and so for a relationship with God. The writer indicates that this is the central problem by framing the extensive liturgical material he quotes in Col 1:15–20 with assurances of forgiveness through Christ and by his emphasis on baptism as the place one receives forgiveness.

### Conclusion

The studies of Martin and Arnold are two recent examples of the need evident in studies of opponents for most Pauline letters, including other studies of Colossians, to give more careful attention to the ways we draw on the surrounding culture to inform our understanding of the problems Paul's letters address. When we do not allow reconstructions of other movements or detailed reconstructions of the early church (e.g., those such as Baur's that posit just two or any specific number of types of early believers) to dominate our identifications of opponents, we will gain more clarity about Paul's opponents and the shape of early Christianity. We will be able to recognize a breadth of diversity among early believers that disallows simplistic and false frameworks such as the "orthodox church" and the "heretics" for the first-century church. We will see more clearly the multiplicity within the range of beliefs that individuals and groups thought were acceptable, and perhaps something of why they drew the lines where they did. Even the long-held simple categories of Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity fail to pass the test of accuracy when we do not start with them as presuppositions. As we pay better attention to the distinctiveness of the settings of various letters and especially to how reconstructions of other movements should (and should not) influence our readings of Pauline letters, we may gain more precision about the people, practices, and teachings those letters oppose. In turn, we will understand both the early church and the Pauline letters more clearly. This is the promise of improving our work of identifying Paul's opponents.

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### Update and Looking Forward

Most of the discussion about Paul's opponents over the last decade has taken place within commentaries on particular letters rather than in more comprehensive studies dedicated to the issue. B. J. Oropeza's *Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul: The Pauline Letters* is something of an excep-

tion.<sup>16</sup> It is part of a three-volume work on apostasy in the earliest church. Oropenza treats Paul's opponents as possible manifestations of apostasy, but as only one possible type of apostasy. He sets out a position on the opponents for each Pauline letter (except Philemon) and discusses how or whether their teaching should be identified as apostasy. He does not, however, propose an identify for any letter's opponents that is substantially different from views previous interpreters have put forward. Neither does he attempt to refine the methods interpreters should use to identify them. So there has been little discussion of how to approach the search for the identity of opponents. Still, there are some notable developments.

One of those developments has been the attempt to rely solely on literary analysis rather than trying to be precise about the historical situation a letter addressed. Narrative criticism has received increasing attention among New Testament scholars. Narrative approaches seek the story that lies behind the explicit argument and that serves as the basis for what an author says in a text. They look not only for what an author says about a particular topic but also for how we can see the author's foundational story through the treatment of that topic. Interpreters have offered a variety of stories as the one that is most basic to Paul. While those disagreements about the precise storyline persist, this avenue of investigation has produced some significant insights that help us understand these letters more clearly. Some who use narrative criticism go so far as to say that we can understand a letter clearly, perhaps more clearly, if we do not try to identify the opponents it addresses. Such a reading intends to focus on Paul's interactions with the church addressed rather than with the opponents he rejects.<sup>17</sup>

While this may sound like an attractive way forward, it presents a number of problems. It sounds attractive because disagreements about the identity of the opponents for every Pauline letter persist. Narrative critics who take this view think that we can perhaps come to clearer and better insights into what Paul says if we can avoid identifying the kind of opponent the letter addressed. But those who attempt this kind of reading do in fact have a view of the opponents that influences the way they read the text. The opponents certainly shaped the ways Paul interacted with the church he was addressing. Paying careful attention to who the opponents are does not mean that the focus of our interpretation of the text turns away from Paul's interactions with the church. Instead, knowing who the opponents are should help us see why Paul interacts with the church as he does and so clarify what he says to them.



In a turn similar to that of some narrative critics, some canonical critics also avoid the topic of opponents by asserting that the text should be read in its setting in the Bible rather than in its original setting. Thus, in the case of 2 Corinthians it does not matter how many letters there were or who the people opposed were.<sup>18</sup> But again, in practice the interpretation given the letter depends on a particular understanding of who the opponents are. The methodological problem is especially apparent when an interpreter claims to read in the context of the canon and then immediately follows that claim with the presupposed description of the opponents.<sup>19</sup>

An approach that shows more promise is giving attention to the presence of women in the arguments about opponents. While the role and status of women is often discussed in attempts to identify the opponents of 1 Timothy, they are absent from discussions of the opponents in view in other letters. Tatha Wiley has argued that the demand for circumcision by the opponents of Galatians would have had significant social implications for women. She sees it introducing separate and unequal spheres into the more egalitarian Pauline church.<sup>20</sup> While her specific identification of the opponents of Galatians and her descriptions of first-century Judaism are questionable, this methodological move is important. Giving attention to the effect on women of a teaching or practice that some opponents advocate may provide us with a better understanding of the situation in the church and Paul's response to it.

What we know of the leadership positions women held in Pauline churches makes it necessary to shift our attention to include how a teaching or practice would change the status or functions of women. Further, the differences between men and women in the ways Greco-Roman literature presents the effect of an experience of a god also demand that we give attention to how the opponents' teaching would lead to conforming to those cultural expectations and what that would do to the status of women in the church. Wiley has shown clearly that interpreters should keep the effects on women in view any time an opponent's teaching involves circumcision and by extension introduces any practices that distinguishes men from women. Giving thought to the place of women in the church might lead us to see new facets of the opponents' teaching. For example, what might the acceptance of the "super-apostles" of 2 Corinthians and their understanding of the way the Spirit grants them power and status do to the ways the Corinthians thought the Spirit should be manifested in women's leadership? Such questions might bring us more clarity both about what is at stake in the disputes among members of the



church in Corinth and about why Paul opposed the “super-apostles” as he did.

Keeping in view the women in Paul’s churches is another way of setting aside a presupposed reconstruction of the earliest church that keeps us from understanding both Paul’s opponents and his churches. The practice of most of scholarship has been to think of what the presence of opponents meant for the men of Paul’s churches. Given the prominent place of women in these churches, it seems likely that we have not understood as clearly as we might why the opponents reject Paul and why Paul sees a group of opponents as problematic. We might at the same time begin to consider how a teaching would affect enslaved people as well. Thinking of Paul’s opponents through a lens that includes their effects on members of the church from groups marginalized in Greco-Roman society is work that is mostly yet to be done.

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### Notes

1. My more extensive treatment of the history of interpretations of Paul's opponents is found in "Studying Paul's Opponents: Advances and Challenges," in *Paul and His Opponents*, ed. Stanley E. Porter; Pauline Studies (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7–58. Parts of the present chapter are drawn directly from that previous work.
2. Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Michael D. Goulder, *St. Paul versus St. Peter: A Tale of Two Missions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth*, Library of Pauline Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).
3. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).
4. J. J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings*, NovTSup 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Sumney, "Studying Paul's Opponents," 7–43.
5. An earlier study that signaled the importance of considering the type of context in which a statement appears and guided others to think about it was that of Nils A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth according to 1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21," in *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. R. Farmer et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 313–35.
6. See the detailed assessment of various kinds of statements in different contexts in Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents; The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians*, JSNTSup 40 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 95–114.
7. Troy Martin, *By Philosophy and Vain Deceit: Colossians as a Response to a Cynic Critique*, JSNTSup 118 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).
8. Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief in Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).
9. Martin, *By Philosophy and Vain Deceit*, 205.
10. See the examples in Thomas J. Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, JSNTSup 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 157–58, on the humility of angels.

11. Dieter Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2 Korintherbrief: Studien zur religiösen Propaganda in der Spätantike*, WMANT 11 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964); ET: *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*; trans. H. Attridge et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

12. Michael J. Gorman gives the word fire as another example. He notes that it means something very different when someone says it while exiting a smoking building than it does when said to a firing squad (*Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, rev. ed. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009], 70).

13. For a well-known treatment of this problem see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–13. See also Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 89–92; and Sumney, "Servants of Satan," "False Brothers," and *Other Opponents of Paul*, JSNTSup 188; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 22–23.

14. All interpretation involves some circularity, as interpreters read the whole in light of a new understanding of a particular passage and then reread the same passage through their new understanding gained of the whole. But the circularity in Martin and Arnold is both too tight and of a bit different sort.

15. See Sumney, "Servants of Satan," 188–213.

16. *Jews, Gentiles, and the Opponents of Paul: The Pauline Letters, Apostasy in the New Testament Communities 2* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012).

17. For example, see Kar Yong Lim, 'The Sufferings of Christ Are Abundant in Us:' *A Narrative Dynamics Investigation of Paul's Sufferings in 2 Corinthians*, LNTS 399 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 29.

18. For example, Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah's Servants: Paul's Theological Reading of Isaiah 40–66 in 2 Corinthians 5.14–6.10*, LNTS 330 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 31–33.

19. Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah's Servants*, 33–35.

20. Tatha Wiley, *Paul and the Gentile Women: Reframing Galatians* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

## 4

### PAUL AND ETHNICITY: A SELECTIVE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

CHARLES H. COSGROVE

The question of ethnicity, its nature and value, has become particularly acute in theological circles in recent years. Although not identical with the concept of “race,” the idea of ethnicity incorporates elements of older notions of race without taking over the scientifically flawed biological ideas that have historically been part of the modern concept of race. Ethnicity is also related to but not identical with national identity, a form of communal self-understanding which, in its modern forms, is sometimes but not always rooted in ethnic identity.

Over the past two centuries, Paul has been invoked from time to time by those seeking to stake out a Christian position on race or ethnicity. Scholarship has also weighed in, directly and indirectly. Some have interpreted Paul as the advocate of a universal conception of humanity that accords no value to ethnicity. Others have found affirmations of ethnic particularity in Paul.

What follows is a selective and illustrative history of inquiry into Paul’s assumptions and teaching about ethnicity that draws on diverse traditions of interpretation: a variety of contributions from Pauline scholarship, a sampling of nineteenth- and twentieth-century African American perspectives, a nineteenth-century missionary commentary on Romans, a selection of dispensationalist and post-Holocaust perspectives in comparison, a recent Jewish interpretation of Paul, and two new philosophical engagements with Romans.



### The Universal (Nonethnic) Human Being in Paul

I will not repeat here the long history<sup>1</sup> of the idea that Christians constitute a *genus tertium* or “third race.”<sup>2</sup> Suffice it to say that the concept has exerted a lasting attractiveness in the West. Nineteenth-century historical scholarship did not subject it to doubt and critical interrogation but embraced it. The influential F. C. Baur, for example, interpreted the Pauline notion of the new humanity as a universalism beyond ethnic differentiation.<sup>3</sup> No one, least of all Baur himself, considered that his descriptions of Paul’s theology might reflect his particular ethnocultural location and ethnocentrism. One did not ask such questions of interpretations in Baur’s day, and the intellectual tools for a critical analysis of ideology in interpretation were just being invented.

The view that transethnic universalism is a Pauline ideal persisted into the twentieth century. Any evidence in Paul tending to undermine this interpretation was chalked up to Paul’s momentary failures to live up to his ideal. In a brief comment on Rom 11:26, C. H. Dodd charged Paul with giving in to his own Jewish patriotism when he prophesied the salvation of “all Israel” according to the elective promises of God.<sup>4</sup> This prophecy, Dodd maintained, conflicts with the larger, universalistic vision of Romans. According to Dodd, “the arguments by which Paul asserts the final salvation of Israel are equally valid (in fact are valid only) if they are applied to mankind at large.”<sup>5</sup> If we understand that Paul’s ideal is a universal humanity, then we should take the thought of 11:26 as expressing the “high destiny” promised to humanity (not just Israel) in “all the great religions.”<sup>6</sup> Paul sees Jewish ethnicity as a form of particularism or “patriotism.” That patriotism and, *mutatis mutandis*, any other similar particularism or patriotism, is replaced by the gospel’s vision of a universal humanity. This is a liberal political reading of Romans, consistent with mid-twentieth-century liberal views about equality and race.

More recently, James Dunn has argued that Paul abandoned the high ethnic self-consciousness characteristic of Jews in his day and did not think of himself as a Jew, except in an inner, spiritual sense.<sup>7</sup> This take on Paul continues a tradition of interpretation represented by Willem van Unnik, for example, in his summarizing comments on Paul and nationalism in a 1955 essay: “we may conclude that while Paul is familiar with national distinctions they are for him totally unimportant; there is no place for nationalistic activity. The centre lies not on earth but in heaven.”<sup>8</sup>



## Paul and Anti-Semitism

The story of the use of the New Testament and the letters of Paul in the ideology of anti-Semitism in the West is well known. In the wake of the Nazi campaign against Jews, Christian theologians began to examine critically not only cultural attitudes of anti-Semitism but also aspects of Christian theology conducive to those attitudes. In the process, they challenged traditional interpretations of what the New Testament has to say about Jews and marshaled New Testament evidence to their side in combating anti-Semitism and opening up lines of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Increasing numbers of New Testament scholars participated in various aspects of this effort, from interfaith conferences to individual scholarship. This work produced a general consensus that Paul's teaching is opposed to any form of anti-Jewish sentiment. Proponents of this consensus worked out a number of exegetical positions in support of it, including variations of the following: that Paul's teaching accommodates distinctive Jewish-Christian self-expression (the right of Jewish Christians to maintain their Jewish identity and not be absorbed into gentile Christianity)<sup>9</sup> and that Paul affirms both the torah for Jews and a new way without the torah for the gentiles as two valid ways of salvation.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, Pauline scholarship has wrestled with how to interpret as a unity (rather than a contradiction) Paul's teaching that the Jewish people have a unique call as Israel, which distinguishes them from the gentiles, and his equally firm affirmation that God is impartial toward all. Some have spoken of a paradox;<sup>11</sup> others have argued that the two are not in contradiction because they are about different issues and hence do not really compete.<sup>12</sup> In a study of "Israel" in Romans, I have suggested that one possible way to interpret the Jewish people's special election in the light of divine impartiality is to understand that gentiles as distinct peoples also enjoy a status in God's eyes similar to what Paul affirms for Jews as a people.<sup>13</sup> This never becomes an explicit theme or point in Paul's letters but may be an implication that we can draw to resolve the logical tension between divine impartiality and the special status of Israel in Paul. In that case, there is a basis in Paul for the idea of ethnic diversity in equality, which is something more than saying simply that gentiles (an ethnically undifferentiated category) are equal to Jews in God's eyes.

Early on, the effort to purge Pauline interpretation of anti-Semitism by means of better exegesis met up with a serious challenge. In a controversial book, *Faith and Fratricide*, Rosemary Ruether, a Christian theologian

and a staunch opponent of anti-Semitism, argued that the roots of Christian anti-Semitism nevertheless *do* go back to earliest Christianity and *are* found in Paul, as well as in other New Testament writers.<sup>14</sup> Ruether's work has either been ignored or rejected by most Pauline scholars, but her observations stand as a reminder that some of Paul's statements about the Jewish people lend themselves to anti-Jewish uses (whether fairly or unfairly). Paul's own views about Israel and the Jewish people are complicated enough and at points what he writes is obscure enough (at least for us) to resist clear exegetical solutions to many of the questions we ask. Historical-critical rigor requires honesty about the multiple ways in which Paul's statements can be reasonably construed.<sup>15</sup>

### "Separate but Equal" in Paul?

In a series of lectures delivered at Union Seminary in Virginia in 1942 and subsequently published in a little-known book on social ethics in Paul, Holmes Rolston examined Paul's teaching about Jews and gentiles from the standpoint of "the order of race."<sup>16</sup> Speaking as a conservative white Southerner and operating on the assumption that a faithful portrait of Paul must rely on all the New Testament letters attributed to him and also on the portrait of Paul in Acts, Rolston reached the following conclusions:

- (1) The racial feeling of the Jews was religious and messianic, the conviction of having a national mission in history as bearers of God's revelation. This racial feeling, expressed in exclusivism, at times became "narrow and selfish."<sup>17</sup> But the ancient Jewish heritage also displays universal concern for all people.
- (2) The racial exclusivism of the Jews has a positive side. "The world owes far more to the Jews who refused to be absorbed in the gentile world than it does to the ten tribes who became lost in the life of Assyria."<sup>18</sup> Although racial feeling often leads to excesses that should be condemned, "[a] people which intermarries will in time become a people absorbed."<sup>19</sup>
- (3) Paul, in his words to King Agrippa in Acts 26:26–27 and in his remarks in Rom 3:1–2, shows that he affirms Israel's messianic destiny, which can be fulfilled in and for the world only if Israel maintains a strong racial consciousness. A "strong racial consciousness and a narrow racial exclusivism" are typically found in a people that believes itself to be the bearer of something impor-

tant to the world. Not only Jews but also Greeks, the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Russians, the Germans, and the Japanese have exhibited such a racial consciousness, conceiving themselves as bearers of some ideal in history.<sup>20</sup>

- (4) Paul preached a universal faith that came in "conflict with Jewish nationalism and Jewish racial exclusiveness."<sup>21</sup> Through Paul, Christianity became more than a "movement within Judaism"<sup>22</sup> and "passed to the Gentile world."<sup>23</sup> "Paul built in the Roman empire a fellowship in which the divisions of race were transcended."<sup>24</sup>
- (5) In his speech on Mars Hill, Paul looks at humanity as a biological unity. But he also recognizes human variety when he says that "God has determined 'their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation.'"<sup>25</sup> This suggests that "Paul would not object to certain races occupying definite portions of the surface of the earth or discharging a peculiar function in history."<sup>26</sup>
- (6) The refusal of whites in the American South and in other parts of the world to be absorbed through intermarriage and cultural assimilation into other races and cultures has not been based only on racial prejudice. It has also "usually represented on the part of the white man the feeling that only by this method could his civilization and his culture be preserved."<sup>27</sup> "It may be that in the end the Anglo-Saxon races in various parts of the globe will have best served the undeveloped races of the earth through their decision to preserve their culture by remaining white."<sup>28</sup> "No Christian white man could defend the racial injustice that goes on within the South today, but we must recognize that underlying this injustice there is a decision of a portion of the white race to remain white."<sup>29</sup>
- (7) Paul calls believers to remain in the state in which they were called, a principle that applies to racial identity on the individual level because the individual cannot change society and also "cannot at once break from his whole racial inheritance."<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, "*Christianity has utterly no inner interest in the preservation for one race of a privileged position as over against another race.* The inner drive of Christianity is always toward the building of a society in which the brotherhood of all mankind is realized."<sup>31</sup>
- (8) "Paul was quite willing to leave the outer form of the orders of society untouched if he was permitted to build within the fellowship of the church a new society in which the unity of all mankind in Christ was realized."<sup>32</sup> "The basic criticism of the church in the

South is not that she has failed to make a frontal attack on the whole of the racial situation. The church would misunderstand the nature of her task in society if she identified herself with this principle of violent revolution.”<sup>33</sup> The true task of the church in society “is to realize in her own inner life the unity of all men in Christ.”<sup>34</sup>

From the preceding it is evident that Rolston wants Southern churches to become racially integrated, Southern society to remain segregated to preserve white culture, and Southern blacks to have equal rights with whites. Mixed into his attacks on American racism are views that most of us today regard as racist. He appears to operate with no feeling for African Americans as a people with a distinctive culture worth preserving but sees blacks as a threat to white culture. He expresses racist fears of miscegenation, as if preserving culture requires racial purity. In this he apparently assumes that race is a viable biological concept, which it is not. He also seems to imply that blacks are culturally inferior to whites, and he operates with some version of white people’s manifest destiny.

### Divine Impartiality in Paul

In a 1964 essay, “The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications,” Nils Dahl commented on the question of racial prejudice from the perspective of Paul.<sup>35</sup> Dahl stressed that Paul’s teaching about justification by faith expresses his view that there is no distinction between Jews and gentiles.<sup>36</sup> This conviction about God’s impartiality is the basis for Paul’s attacks on any behaviors in the church that involve the elevation of one group over another. Hence, Paul opposes favoritism, the treatment of some as second-class Christians, the superior attitudes of the so-called strong in despising the so-called weak, and so forth.<sup>37</sup>

By understanding justification by faith as based in something even more fundamental in Paul’s thinking—his conviction that the gospel expresses God’s impartiality—Dahl aimed to show that racial equality is not secondary to the evangelical ministry of the church. Overcoming racial discrimination belongs within the preaching of the gospel itself as a central part of the church’s mission.<sup>38</sup>

According to Dahl, Paul does not ask Jews or gentiles to give up their ethnic identities. “As Christians, Gentiles should remain part of the ethnic group from which they came, Greek, Galatian, or whatever.”<sup>39</sup> But

the church must embody the principle of impartiality. If it had done so faithfully in the United States and elsewhere, this “would have meant far more than countless pious appeals for tolerance, far more than demonstrations; it would also have made it easier to find political solutions to racial problems.”<sup>40</sup> Perhaps with racial problems still in view but thinking as well of class distinctions, Dahl suggested that the principle of impartiality is contradicted by the church when “full acceptance into a suburban congregation presuppose[s] a certain social standard and certain patterns of behavior.”<sup>41</sup> These and other such social and cultural requirements are the “ceremonial and ritual law of our time.”<sup>42</sup>

#### Interpretations of Galatians 3:28

The baptismal formula of Gal 3:28 has figured prominently in discussions of Paul and ethnicity. In an essay dealing with this passage and its significance for gender distinctions, Judith Gundry-Volf also touched on the question of ethnicity.<sup>43</sup> For Paul, she opined, religio-ethnic and gender distinctions are *adiaphora* (matters of indifference) in Christ. The gospel does not erase but preserves them; in preserving them, however, the gospel also relativizes them. Hence, the expression “no longer Jew or Greek” means both Jew and Greek on equal terms in their distinctive identities. It is important to Paul that gentiles remain gentiles and not become Jews; likewise Jews should not become gentiles (1 Cor 7:18–19). Paul calls not for the obliteration of differences but for a revalorization of them: being a Jew or gentile does not matter for the new creation in Christ. Preserving distinctions under this new value system is important not because the distinctions count in themselves but because to do otherwise would suggest that one ethnic-religious or gender identity counts more than others. If gentiles become Jews or Jews become gentiles in an effort to express the end of distinctions, they would simply be reinstating the valorization of these differences.

Another treatment of Gal 3:28, which comes to similar conclusions, is William Campbell’s argument that Gal 3:28 abrogates inequality, not distinctions. According to Campbell, Paul’s understanding of “male and female” in Christ does not entail a present obliteration of differences but only some kind of equality. *Mutatis mutandis*, the end of “Jew or gentile” does not spell the end of ethnic distinctions.<sup>44</sup> Campbell’s interpretation differs from Gundry-Volf’s in that he sees differences relativized but not turned into *adiaphora*. They remain important in the gospel, and Paul makes room for them in the interest of diversity. Brad Braxton has recently

made the same point about Gal 3:28. I describe his position below in the section on African American interpretations of Paul.

Another New Testament scholar who has discussed the bearing of Gal 3:28 on our question is J. Louis Martyn. In a 1982 essay, Martyn recalled a faculty meeting at Union Theological Seminary in New York when the question of the “make-up” of the faculty was discussed with “an accent on what was phrased as ‘the imperative of appointing more blacks and women.’”<sup>45</sup> Reconstructing the tenor of the ensuing discussion, Martyn remembered that one faculty member invoked Gal 3:28 as support for the proposition that faculty appointments should not be based on considerations of gender or race.<sup>46</sup> But another colleague observed that “in order to perceive that this Seminary Faculty is not in Christ [as Gal 3:28 defines it], all one needs to do is to glance around this room! The discrepancy between the text you have cited [Gal 3:28] and the present ‘make-up’ of the faculty shows that the text is, in fact, a summons to justice.”<sup>47</sup> Pondering Paul’s baptismal formula in the light of this exchange, Martyn came to the following conclusions:

- (1) Gal 3:28 does not sanction the status quo; it is a “counter-culture text.”<sup>48</sup>
- (2) Gal 3:28 “is not a summons to what Caesar calls justice,”<sup>49</sup> even the justice of liberal Caesars.<sup>50</sup>
- (3) Gal 3:28 is a “thoroughly apocalyptic text about God’s victorious call to life in the real world,” but it does not express this call in the imperative mood of command but speaks rather in the indicative mood of God’s new creation.<sup>51</sup>

Martyn called for the church to adopt a “bifocal” reading of the world, in which one sees the world as it is in Christ (Gal 3:28) and also as it is under the continuing influence of the old age. Paul expresses this kind of bifocal vision in his apocalyptic *hōs mē* (“as if not”) in 1 Cor 7. Paul is “a person *who noticed as though not noticing* that some of his colleagues in the Theological Faculty at Ephesus were women, while others were men.”<sup>52</sup> Applying this to the question of ethnicity, we might say that Martyn’s Paul cares about ethnicity as though not caring and does so in a way that has disruptive apocalyptic significance.

## Paul contra Ethnocentrism

In the traditional Protestant picture of ancient Judaism, the Jewish religion is a legalistic program for earning one's own salvation; in Pauline language it is works righteousness. This view was perpetuated in Pauline scholarship until sometime in the early 1980s, when the field as a whole began to embrace E. P. Sanders's arguments against it in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, published in 1977.<sup>53</sup> Since the 1980s, alternative interpretations of Paul, the law, and Jewish piety have been proposed. One of these is the so-called New Perspective, a term introduced by Krister Stendahl and adopted by James Dunn as a programmatic descriptor in his influential lecture, "The New Perspective on Paul."<sup>54</sup>

The New Perspective has become closely associated with Dunn's interpretation of "works of the law" in Paul as badges of ethnic identity. According to this view, Paul did not claim that Jews use works to justify themselves and thus win salvation through their own merits; he opposes "works of the law" as expressions of ethnic distinctiveness. Paul is challenging the "racial" and "ethnic" boasting<sup>55</sup> of Jews, their "ethnic pride" and "nationalistic zeal,"<sup>56</sup> which were based in the law and expressed by fidelity to those commandments that marked Jews off from gentiles (circumcision, Sabbath observance, and dietary laws).

Some have suggested that Dunn's way of interpreting "works of the law" in Paul risks becoming a new form of anti-Jewish interpretation.<sup>57</sup> If Paul attacks ethnocentrism, is this a specifically Jewish trait? Or is it characteristic of many if not most ancient peoples (and nonancient peoples)? It is important to stress that Dunn has no intention of repeating in a new form the kind of anti-Jewish interpretation characteristic of the past. Dunn, although he thinks that Jewish nationalism was pervasive in Paul's day, also stresses that this holds for Paul's time, not all times, and that it was a matter of overemphasis on Jewish distinctiveness by some but not all first-century Jews.<sup>58</sup>

Robert Jewett's interpretation of Paul shares certain features with Dunn's, particularly a social framing of the question of "works of the law" in Romans. According to Jewett, Paul's understanding of the cross "reveals a fundamental distortion of honor-shame relations in which a universal desire for superior status ends up in a hostile assault on God."<sup>59</sup> Paul regards his past self as an example of this. His desire for superior status led him to persecute the church out of misguided loyalty to the Mosaic law. As a believer in Christ, Paul now sees this loyalty as an expression of sin and

a typical way in which sin operates as a blinding and enslaving power in a Jewish cultural context, where sin (or “the flesh”) turns the Mosaic law into “a system of status acquisition.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, at the social level the law becomes a vehicle for national zealotry and religious bigotry against non-Jews, who are regarded as inferior.<sup>61</sup> At the personal level, the individual shares in the pleasure of group honor and is encouraged to seek individual honor through the law and other means. But these are not just Jewish tendencies. The whole Greco-Roman society manifests impulses to zealotry, bigotry, and status seeking.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the Jewish way of using the Mosaic law (and divine election) as a ground of social superiority is simply an example of a pervasive aspect of Greco-Roman culture; everyone is engaged in status seeking, in one way or other, within the competitive system of an honor/shame-based society. Paul sees all of this as a basic perversion of God’s intention for human community. In response, Paul teaches the “revolutionary equality of all nations”;<sup>63</sup> his gospel excludes “boasting of either ethnic or theological superiority.”<sup>64</sup>

William Herzog, building on the work of Stendahl, found an attack on Jewish-Christian ethnocentrism in Galatians and an attack on both Jewish-Christian and gentile-Christian ethnocentrism in Romans.<sup>65</sup> Following Melville Herskovits, Herzog distinguished between a mild form of ethnocentrism that involves no more than a healthy affirmation of one’s own culture and stronger types of ethnocentrism that absolutize their own culture, becoming intolerant of others.<sup>66</sup> Although Herzog did not stress the value of ethnicity (his focus being on resources in the New Testament against racism), the implication of his use of Herskovits’s model seems to be that Paul attacks the strong, absolutizing form of ethnocentrism, not the mild form.<sup>67</sup>

According to John Barclay, Paul does not deny all positive significance to cultural specificities but relativizes them in such a way that “Jews and gentiles are simultaneously *affirmed* as Jews and gentiles and *humbled* in their cultural pretensions.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, in Rom 14, Paul shows himself to be tolerant of cultural differences but not in a way that supports cultural distinctives as a core identity. Hence, the so-called weak at Rome are not likely to be happy with Paul’s position because his “relativization” of the significance of cultural differences “somehow threatens the very seriousness with which they are taken by their practitioners.”<sup>69</sup> Barclay affirmed Daniel Boyarin’s call for a dialectical synthesis that combines shared values in human solidarity with the preservation of differences that make for distinctive cultural identities (on Boyarin see further below) and concluded



that Paul may be a positive resource in contemporary efforts at this kind of multiculturalism.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, he cautioned, an impediment to embracing Paul as such a resource is his christological exclusivism, which seems to set up a new religious particularism in place of the cultural particularism he rejects. This impediment can be overcome, Barclay proposed, if we recognize that Paul's radical teaching about the grace of God at least "partially deconstructs his ... Christological exclusivism."<sup>71</sup> It is hard to imagine that Paul himself would have recognized this as a valid inference, but Barclay was suggesting that interpreters today can draw this inference.<sup>72</sup>

#### Paul and Ethnicity in African American Perspective

Already in the eighteenth century but especially in the years leading up to the Civil War, popular interpretations of the Bible engaged the question of ethnic identity in terms of the concept of race and the question of slavery.<sup>73</sup> Passages from Paul's letters were sometimes discussed in these debates but usually in a kind of proof-texting way that did not pay attention to context or to Paul's own way of framing the questions in his historical and ecclesial situation. Nevertheless, uses of Paul and allusions to Paul could be insightful and provocative. Consider the following words from an 1853 address entitled "Our Rights as Man," by black abolitionist William Watkins. He was speaking to white America:

You are the Jews, the chosen people of the Lord, and we are the poor rejected Gentiles. But the times of refreshing are still coming from the presence of the Lord, and we wait, with anxious expectation, the arrival of the auspicious era; for then, we trust, the fullness of the Gentiles will be brought in.<sup>74</sup>

Here we meet allusions to Acts 3:19 ("times of refreshing") and Rom 11:25 ("the fullness of the Gentiles"). The allusions suggest a typology in which white America is cast as a type of Israel and black America is "the Gentiles." The "times of refreshing" in Acts 3 are coming for the people of Israel on the condition that they repent. But Watkins is not talking about Peter's Jewish audience in the first century; he has in mind white America in the nineteenth century. His implication is that times of refreshing for white America will come only if white America repents its racist attitudes and practices. Likewise, if the fullness of the gentiles stands for blacks, then it is the inclusion—the emancipation—of blacks that must precede any hope for white America, which is imagined (via Rom 11) as blind Israel,

opposed to God's messianic purposes. All of this is ironic rhetorical play, telegraphed in a few carefully chosen biblical phrases to make the point, "Why should *you* be a chosen people more than *we*?"<sup>75</sup> Of special interest for us is that Watkins interprets the Pauline gospel to the gentiles in nationalistic, not individualistic, terms.

A more developed black nationalist interpretation of Paul, also focusing on Rom 11:25, was offered by Theophilus Steward in an 1888 book, *The End of the World; or, Clearing the Way for the Fullness of the Gentiles*.<sup>76</sup> In this study and in two subsequent responses to critics, Steward presented a historicizing interpretation of biblical eschatology, arguing that the "end of the world" spoken of in biblical prophecy refers to the end of the present age but not to the end of history. Steward interpreted Rom 11:25 (together with other eschatological passages) within the framework of a then-popular Christian philosophy of history according to which God guides history and nations toward the earthly kingdom of God. Steward's version of this process has four great epochs: the patriarchal age, the Jewish age, the present age (which he calls the "Roman" age), and the future millennial age, which he expects to appear soon. Steward, reacting to the white racist ideology of Josiah Strong's popular book, *Our Country*,<sup>77</sup> held that the Anglo-Saxon race, far from being the pinnacle and destiny of the civilizing kingdom of God in the world, is in fact the last great impediment to that kingdom. The kingdom will truly dawn only when the fullness of the gentiles comes in, that is, when the Afro-Asiatic peoples embrace the gospel and establish justice and peace. As Steward put it, after "the westward wave of civilization will have reached the ultimate shore and have dissipated itself upon the obstructing beach,"<sup>78</sup> God's promise to bless many nations through Abraham will finally touch the remaining two-thirds of the world. Then, "a new era of righteousness shall prevail, and the peaceful, loving spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ shall reign over all the earth."<sup>79</sup> Again, of special interest for us is Steward's nationalistic way of reading references to the gentiles in Paul. Gentiles are not non-Jewish "individuals" devoid of ethnic identity; they are peoples. But we also note the reverse racism of Steward's vision and especially the ominous expression "clearing the way" with its connotations of a divine ethnic cleansing.

Since the rise of Black Power and multiculturalism, an increasing number of African Americans have come to read Paul out of a dialectic of integrationism *and* black nationalism,<sup>80</sup> nondiscrimination *and* ethnic self-affirmation. For example, many of my African American students interpret Gal 3:28 as supporting the concept "black is beautiful" and as not only pro-

viding a basis for individual equality but also for valuing diverse cultural and ethnic identities in Christ. (But they also report that the churches they come from typically interpret Gal 3:28 as a basis for racial equality but not racial self-affirmation, black pride, and so on.)

Demetrius Williams has noted an ambivalence in African American scholarship toward any programmatic use of Gal 3:28 in Christian theology and community formation.<sup>81</sup> The passage strikes some as a positive principle in its affirmation of equality but a liability in its implication that cultural distinctions no longer hold. "Some African Americans fear that the phrase 'no longer ... but all are one' will lead to the loss of cultural/ethnic identity and uniqueness" in an America where reclaiming and developing African American cultural heritage is still a vital agenda for blacks.<sup>82</sup> Against this reservation, Williams has urged recognition that the use of Gal 3:28 by African Americans in generations past served egalitarian claims without undermining ethnic identity and pride.<sup>83</sup>

In recent decades black evangelist Tom Skinner<sup>84</sup> has insisted in his preaching that Paul's gospel does not eliminate ethnic difference, as if it were an irrelevant category, but includes and affirms it. Skinner criticized those who use Gal 3:28 to ask others to give up their culture while the dominant culture remains in place and regulative. According to Skinner, Gal 3:28 means the end of the worldly, discriminatory connotations that get attached to ethnic and other differences but not the end of those differences themselves. Skinner described Paul as an example of someone who, far from forsaking his cultural identity, was so passionately Jewish that he was willing to be cursed for the sake of his own people. The allusion here is to Rom 9:1–5, where Paul calls on the Holy Spirit as witness to his love for his people according to the flesh. In Skinner's view, Paul's celebration of Jewish identity is not an instance of ethnocentrism but an ethnic self-affirmation that God approves, so long as it is not discriminatory.

In a thoughtful work directed toward the black church, Braxton also treated Gal 3:28 as a warrant for both diversity and equality. Diversity means freedom from the "tyranny of sameness," as he puts it.<sup>85</sup> We should not take Gal 3:28 as a basis for abolishing social distinctions, since Gal 3:28 proclaims "not the obliteration of distinctions but rather the obliteration of *dominance*."<sup>86</sup> Hence, oneness in Christ does not mean "an amalgamated or undifferentiated identity" but rather practices of equality and mutuality "in the midst of our many differences."<sup>87</sup> The miracle of unity becomes evident only when "the social distinctions that define us are present and even accentuated."<sup>88</sup> Differences are therefore not

*adiaphora*. Hence, Gal 3:28 expresses God's gift of freedom in Christ "to say 'Yes' to blackness."<sup>89</sup>

Braxton qualified this interpretation of Paul by noting that when Paul defends gentile equality with Jews he "does not appear to be encouraging the Galatians to say 'yes' to Gentile culture *per se*."<sup>90</sup> Hence, "Paul's assessment of cultural distinction," Braxton suggested, "could be described as a 'negative' understanding, namely one that defined Gentile identity by what it was not."<sup>91</sup> In other words, as a Jew, who thinks of ethnic identity in Jewish categories, Paul aims to preserve non-Jewish identity and, in this qualified sense, "Paul preached a law-free gospel among the Gentiles in order to ensure ethnic diversity in the church."<sup>92</sup>

### Zulu Nationalism in Bishop Colenso's Commentary on Romans

An interesting foray into the interpretation of Romans by an outsider to the guild of New Testament scholarship is Bishop John William Colenso's commentary on Romans. Colenso, an Anglican missionary to the Zulu people of Natal in Africa during the latter half of the nineteenth century, published his Romans commentary in 1861.<sup>93</sup> Written for English-speaking readers (above all the Church of England) from a missionary perspective, the commentary anticipated the twentieth-century emphasis in Pauline scholarship on the significance of justification by faith for ethnic ("racial," "national") identities and relations. Colenso's commentary was a focus of a Society of Biblical Literature seminar in Nashville in 2000 (Romans through History and Culture),<sup>94</sup> and Robert Jewett's recent commentary on Romans is dedicated to the memory of Colenso.<sup>95</sup>

Although Colenso wrote of the Zulu people in patronizing ways at points, perhaps with an eye to his European audience, his commentary was in many respects an attack on European imperialism and a defense of Zulu cultural identity. Colenso argued that no church existed in Rome when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans. It was not to a church that Paul wrote but to Jews and gentile proselytes to Judaism who had come to a basic belief in Jesus as the Messiah but remained attached to the synagogue. The Jewish believers were imbued with racial pride based on their election and their adherence to the law. Paul countered this religio-ethnic prejudice with the doctrine of justification by faith, which expresses God's impartiality toward all peoples. This may sound like F. C. Baur, a nineteenth-century scholar who cast Pauline Christianity as the overcoming of parochial Jewish exclusivism for the sake of universal humanity, a take on Paul that, wittingly

or not, fed upon and encouraged European anti-Semitism. The difference in Colenso is that he expressly aimed his interpretation of justification by faith at European prejudice against Jews, arguing that contemporary Jews are not deserving of the negative caricatures applied to them by Christians and that their resistance to the Christian gospel is understandable given Christians' abominable treatment of them.<sup>96</sup>

References to Colenso's own time are rare in the commentary, but by attending to the social setting of the commentary, the controversies surrounding it, and evidence elsewhere of Colenso's attitudes and aims, Jonathan Draper has discovered an anti-imperialist message between the lines.<sup>97</sup> In this reading, Colenso developed an implicit typological application of Paul's teaching about Jews and gentiles. The imperialist European colonists correspond to the arrogant and hidebound Jews of Romans, and contemporary Jews and the Zulu people are the gentiles against whom Paul's Jews assert their "boast." Hence Colenso's typological application of Romans to his own time was in effect a rejection of all forms of ethnocentrism in any time and place.<sup>98</sup> In working out the logic of Romans along these lines, Colenso did not argue for a notion of universal humanity against national/cultural distinctions. More specifically, he did not fall into the missionary error of assuming that his own culture was universal and, on that basis, invite others to conform to his culture as if Europeanization were God's plan for a universal humanity. Rather, his interpretation of Paul was an important part of Colenso's overall theology, which "encouraged the emergence of a Zulu national identity and cultural revival."<sup>99</sup>

#### Paul and Ethnicity in Recent Jewish Interpretation

Over the years, a number of Jewish thinkers—including theologians, philosophers, and specialists in Jewish antiquity—have applied themselves to Paul. Some have touched indirectly or by implication on the question of ethnicity in Paul. In *Two Types of Faith*, Jewish philosopher Martin Buber argued that while Paul speaks of Jews and Greeks, he never does so "in connexion with the reality of their nationalities."<sup>100</sup> Paul is "only concerned with the newly-established community, which by nature is not a nation."<sup>101</sup> By contrast, talmudic scholar Daniel Boyarin has proposed that Paul's theology is fundamentally about human identity and in ways that clearly implicate ethnic identity.

In *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*,<sup>102</sup> Boyarin described Paul as a seminal thinker in the history of the West whose influential voice

helped set in motion the intellectual and cultural forces that produced the ideal of universal human equality in the West. For Boyarin, this Pauline legacy has been a positive force for good in the world but also has its shadow side. When universality means the devaluation of ethnic and cultural difference, typically in a setting where the social arrangements already favor the preservation of a dominant ethnicity and culture at the expense of other groups, the ideal of an equality of universal humanity becomes all too often a justification for the dominance of a single cultural tradition, which is treated as if it were universal. A rabbinic alternative to Paul, Boyarin suggested, is the affirmation of fleshly Israel in its ethnic difference and particular cultural identity. While rabbinic particularism harbors the danger of degenerating into a racist social system, it offers an important corrective to Paul—the preservation of the particularities of ethnicity against oblivion in the universal of Pauline humanity. Hence, the rabbinic and Pauline visions are equally valuable, equally partial, and mutually corrective.

One of Boyarin's most compelling statements of this thesis appeared in an essay he co-authored with his brother, cultural anthropologist Jonathan Boyarin.<sup>103</sup> Speaking of Pauline universalism and rabbinic particularism as heritages of the West, the Boyarins wrote:

When Christianity is the hegemonic power in Europe and the United States, the resistance of Jews to being universalized can be a critical force and model for the resistance of all peoples to being Europeanized out of particular bodily existence. When, however, an ethnocentric Judaism becomes a temporal hegemonic political force, it becomes absolutely, vitally necessary to accept Paul's critical challenge—although not his universalizing, disembodied solution—and to develop an equally passionate concern for all human beings.<sup>104</sup>

#### Paul and Ethnicity in Dispensationalism and Post-Holocaust Christian Scholarship

Paul's regard for Jewish ethno-religious identity is one way in which he expresses his valuation of ethnicity. Christian affirmations of Jewish ethno-religious identity, based on fresh interpretations of Paul, have been especially important in dispensationalism and in post-Holocaust scholarship.<sup>105</sup>

For dispensationalists, ethnicity has no value theologically except in one instance or form: that of the Jewish people as Israel. Two central tenets of dispensationalism closely linked to a certain way of reading Paul (and particularly Rom 11) are that God's covenant with Israel is irrevocable and

that the Israel of this irrevocable covenant (we might say “true Israel”) is not the church but the Jewish people—in the past and throughout history. This central core of dispensationalism has made the fortunes of the Jewish people in history of vital interest for dispensationalist theology. Dispensationalists think of Israel as a nation and have therefore been keenly interested in the “restoration” of Israel to “the land” (Palestine) and have been committed to Israel’s continuing security and flourishing in the land (which for post–World War II dispensationalists has meant celebration of and political commitment to the state of Israel).

According to dispensationalism, Jews are not to be absorbed into other nations but are to maintain their religio-ethnic identity in order to fulfill their divine calling in history.<sup>106</sup> In the millennium, when Christ establishes the kingdom on earth, the nation of Israel as a whole will be saved and enjoy the blessings of earthly peace, justice, and prosperity. This theological privileging of the Jewish people and the state of Israel continues in dispensationalist circles today and has left a lasting imprint on many evangelical Christians who in other respects no longer think in dispensationalist terms.

I have used the term ethnicity in describing dispensationalism. It is not a dispensationalist term, but it is at least an implicit concept in the way dispensationalists have traditionally understood Israel in God’s economy: as a people with a cultural identity defined by the Mosaic law, a religious identity that necessarily assumes socio-ethnic and, in the view of many dispensationalists, national form. In the late nineteenth century, two influential dispensationalist theologians in the United States had a disagreement over whether the Christian mission to Jews should require that Jewish converts to Christian faith give up the Mosaic law (specifically the Jewish practices of Sabbath observance and dietary laws). Ernst Ströter took the view that it pleases God for Jews to remain Jews in religio-ethnic identity and practice whether they become Christians or not. Arno Gaebelein, who originally held the same position, changed his mind and concluded that the giving up of the Mosaic law is a necessary prerequisite for entering the church. Gaebelein and Ströter parted ways amicably. Ströter left their joint venture, the magazine *Our Hope*, and returned to his native Germany. Both continued to believe that in God’s overall plan, Jews were to remain faithful to the Mosaic law as God’s people under the Mosaic covenant alongside the church as God’s people in Christ.<sup>107</sup>

Long after the advent of dispensationalism, the claim that, in Paul’s thinking, the Jewish people are irrevocably true Israel, not to be supplanted



by the church, was taken up by Karl Barth.<sup>108</sup> A surprising and little-known fact of this history is that Barth's exegetical thinking on this subject was significantly shaped by a German commentary on Rom 9–11 by Ernst Ströter (the dispensationalist scholar mentioned above), a story I have narrated in detail elsewhere.<sup>109</sup> Barth's students, above all Paul van Buren, developed Barth's new theology of Israel,<sup>110</sup> and the idea that the Jewish people have an irrevocable divine election became a central claim of Pauline scholars engaged in post-Holocaust Jewish-Christian dialogue and of others who shared their concerns.<sup>111</sup> If the most virulent Christian anti-Semitism cast Jews as monstrous Christ killers and a milder form regarded them as merely spiritually blind and legalistic, both dispensationalism<sup>112</sup> and post-Holocaust Christian scholarship sought to undo these traditional caricatures.

### Ethnicity in Recent Philosophical Interpretation of Paul

Recently two philosophers, one French and the other Italian, have taken an interest in Paul.<sup>113</sup> In *Saint Paul: La Fondation de l'universalisme*, Marxist philosopher Alain Badiou interpreted Paul as "the founder of the universal subject."<sup>114</sup> Badiou focused on the intersection of two morally crippling paths: the path of relativism (pluralism) and the path of revolutionary disillusionment (the death in our time of all motivating utopias). We live in an era in which universal truths no longer have any claim. Instead each particularity—religious ethnic, national, sexual—has an unimpeachable right to its own truth. As a result, there is no moral or intellectual standpoint from which to critique global capitalism in its march to shape the world in its own image (as it homogenizes culture and depersonalizes human beings).<sup>115</sup> Badiou sketched a philosophical program for dealing with this situation in which he claimed Paul as an ally.

According to Badiou, Paul engages the two master discourses of his day: the discourse of Jewish particularism and the discourse of Greek universalism (a false universalism, according to Badiou). Rejecting both, Paul founds a new discourse: the equality of sons, the true universalism in which human beings become coworkers with God.<sup>116</sup> Badiou extended this interpretive framework to all the major topics in Paul: Jew and Greek, law and grace, Spirit and flesh, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, first and second Adam, and so forth. Paul affirms a universalism in which the subject is confronted ever anew by the resurrection event, which expresses the "youthfulness" of the truth (youthful signified by the resur-



rected one being a “son”), a superabundance that opens up the process of a truth procedure.<sup>117</sup> The universal is not a static reality, not a particular expression of the truth; it rejects “closed particularities” (*particularités fermés*) signified by the law.<sup>118</sup> The universal is rather an endless youthful new creation process in which no individual particularity ultimately matters.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, Paul does not negate differences but rather takes them for granted and seeks to bring the process of truth into an ever-widening frontier of differences.<sup>120</sup> In this mission, Paul cultivates “an indifference tolerant to differences.”<sup>121</sup>

Giorgio Agamben took up Paul’s letter to the Romans in *Il tempo che resta: un commento alla Lettera ai Romani*.<sup>122</sup> According to Agamben, Paul’s messianic faith erases identity by suspending all identities in the “as if” (*hōs mē*) of 1 Cor 7:25–31. Yet Paul does not establish an undifferentiated universal humanity. Instead of eliminating the division between Jews and gentiles, Paul multiplies identities by dividing them further. The paradigm for this is Paul himself. “Being a Jew” divides in Paul as both Paul the Pharisee and Paul the apostle, which expresses in a microcosm the larger division of “Israel” and “Israel,” a distinction that Agamben detected in Paul’s assertion that “not all from Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6). In working out the logic of Paul’s use of the name Israel in different senses, Agamben inferred a kind of “rest” (peace) between these two identities of Israel, a rest that replicates itself for all identities.<sup>123</sup> There are no monolithic identities; instead the messianic cut or fracture creates a rest between the divisions of all identities. In this messianic rest one lives “as if” (*hōs mē*).

Badiou’s and Agamben’s readings of Paul are serious; they show acquaintance with Pauline scholarship and the historical context of the letter to the Romans. But they are not exegetical in any conventional sense. Instead they are philosophical meditations in which Paul’s language—and to a certain extent the historical Paul’s thought—provides grist for philosophical discourse. Agamben, for example, presented his interpretation as a commentary on the first ten words of Romans. He ventured into other parts of Paul’s letters, but his aim was philosophical reflection through philological analysis in a way reminiscent of Martin Heidegger. Of interest for our topic is the fact that both Badiou and Agamben, despite their differences of method and result, have attempted to work out a dialectic in which Paul both affirms and transcends difference, including ethnic difference.

### Did Paul Value Ethnicity?

In a study devoted to the question whether Paul valued ethnicity,<sup>124</sup> I have observed that when we pose this question to Paul's letters we likely have in mind one or more of the following ways of thinking about one's own and others' identities:

- (1) regarding one's own identity as superior to that of others (ethnocentrism) and sometimes as entailing a special mission or service to the world (messianic ethnocentrism);
- (2) valuing one's own ethnicity as the people and traditions one loves, but not in a way that becomes ethnocentric (although this may still involve some sort of messianism);
- (3) valuing ethnicity in the interests of fairness by recognizing that every people's ethnicity has a special and unique value for them and deserves to be protected;
- (4) valuing ethnicity in the interests of diversity, the greater human richness that comes from the interaction and contributions of different ethnic groups.<sup>125</sup>

Without rehearsing all the evidence from Paul's letters for how he understood ethnic identity, I will bring my survey of Paul and ethnicity to a close by summarizing a number of my conclusions with respect to these different senses of valuing ethnicity.

As for regarding one's ethnicity as superior to that of others (ethnocentrism), Paul does not regard Jews as morally superior to gentiles because of Jewish possession and practice of the law. But if some Jews accused Paul of disaffection from his people, Paul insists that his mission to the gentiles has not dampened his ardor for Israel (Rom 9:1–5). There is nothing inherently ethnocentric about this affirmation. It assumes some form of what people called *erōs patriidos*—love of one's own people. When Philo and Josephus use this expression, it carries no ethnocentric overtones but describes an affection implanted by God in each person.<sup>126</sup> Paul appeals to the Holy Spirit as witness to his anguish over Israel and his willingness to give himself up and be “cut off from Christ” for the sake of “my brothers, my kinfolk according to the flesh” (Rom 9:1–3, my translation).

Yet one thing that most Jews prized as central to their cultural identity—specifically, the way of life specified by the law—is no longer a defining mark of Paul's own identity. For proof, one has only to look at Phil

3:2–11, where he says that he now counts his former Jewish identity in the law as “garbage” because of the superior value of knowing Christ. In 1 Cor 9:19–23, Paul describes his missionary strategy of becoming “all things to all people.” This does not mean that Paul no longer values the law. He does, insisting that the law is a revelation of the good (Rom 7:12; 13:8–10; Gal 5:14) and a witness to his gospel (Rom 3:21). Perhaps we could say that he no longer values the law as an ethnic identity marker, but even that would be misleading. Paul appears to assume that the Jewish people have a continuing election as Israel.<sup>127</sup> If he also assumes that the law is what makes Israel Israel (a basic Jewish assumption), then the law is a condition of the existence of Israel as God’s elect people. In this way the law as an identity marker is logically entailed in Paul’s conception of the irrevocable election of Israel (see Rom 11:29). Nevertheless, Paul is not worrying about how Jews will continue to maintain their ethnic identity through history. He expects the near end of the age when the “hardening” of the present generation of Israel will be lifted (Rom 11:25–26). When this world ends, the fullness of the new creation will be established, and Jewish identity based in the law will be surpassed.

As for valuing ethnicity in the interests of fairness by recognizing that every people’s ethnicity has a special and unique value for them that deserves to be protected, Paul may have assumed that love for one’s own people naturally entails cherishing those ways in which one’s own group is special and unique. But we see no evidence in his letters that Paul was concerned to honor and protect specific ethnic identities of “gentiles,” whom he typically lumps together under that generic name or under “Greek” as a term for non-Jews. Moreover, the idea that ethnicities, as cultural heritages, deserve social protection is a modern idea, off the intellectual map of ancient Mediterraneans, including Paul. Nothing in Paul opposes it; nothing implies it.

Similarly, when it comes to valuing ethnicity in the interests of diversity (the greater human richness that comes from the interaction and contributions of different ethnic groups), this is also a modern value. Although Paul values forms of diversity (such as the diversity of the body of Christ with different gifts contributing to the unity and health of the whole—1 Cor 12), he does not explicitly interpret the mission to Jews and gentiles in terms of diversity. He nowhere states in so many words that the goal of the gentile mission is to bring different gentile ethnicities into the church in order to achieve a whole made up of different ethnic parts. Moreover, to the extent that the modern way of valuing diversity is utopian (a projection

of an ultimate ideal), it clashes with Paul's own utopian vision, the ultimate eschatological future when all this-worldly difference will come to an end in the full realization of the new creation (Gal 3:28; 6:15; 1 Cor 7:31). It is nevertheless important that gentiles remain gentiles (until the end). And if "the fullness of the gentiles" toward which Paul's mission aims (Rom 11:25) is not simply a numerical quantity but a geo-ethnic diversity representing the peoples of the world, then in this sense, too, the ethnicity of the non-Jew is a value for the time before the end. In other words, representational ethnic diversity, emblematic of the reconciliation of diverse peoples in Christ, is an aim of the Pauline mission. This goal impels Paul to move from one city to the next and even to plan a difficult mission to Spain, the western edge of the earth for an ancient Mediterranean.

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Paul and Ethnicity: The Debate Continues

My original essay's selectivity did not include every contribution to the topic, and one that should have been rehearsed is Caroline Johnson Hodge's *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul*. This has become a standard treatment of the subject and an important representative of the Radical New Perspective on Paul.<sup>128</sup>

Johnson Hodge's study, whose thesis was adumbrated in an earlier article coauthored with Denise Kimber Buell, amounts to a direct rejection of the traditional view that Paul preaches an ethnically undifferentiated universalism in Christ. "For Paul," she says, "ethnic identity is inextricable from a people's standing before God."<sup>129</sup> Paul takes for granted that salvation is tied to Jewish/Judean identity, specifically kinship with Abraham. When he says that salvation is "to the Jew first, then the Greek," he is asserting a hierarchy, not a temporal order,<sup>130</sup> and the problem Paul is "trying to fix" does not concern Jews, who need no new gospel or means of rescue,<sup>131</sup> but gentiles, who "have no standing before the God of Israel, which has left them in bad shape as degenerate idolaters."<sup>132</sup> To fix this gentile problem, Paul conceptualizes an Abrahamic lineage for them. They are thus affiliated with Israel, but this does not make them Jews. They remain what they were, people with different ethnic identities. Moreover, those identities are not of interest to Paul in their particularities, only in the aggregate, as seen from a Jewish perspective, as the identity "gentiles" and "uncircumcised."<sup>133</sup>

A similar take on ethnicity in Paul is advanced in Cavan Concanon's *"When You Were Gentiles": Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth*

and *Paul's Corinthian Correspondence*, which focuses on 1 Corinthians.<sup>134</sup> Concannon agrees with the widespread view that in 1 Cor 9 Paul presents himself as an example to the Corinthians of governing one's behavior in order to advance the gospel. When Paul declares that he becomes "all things to all people," he is describing himself as ethnically malleable; and when he refers to the Corinthian Christ-followers as *former* gentiles, he implies that they, too, are ethnically malleable.<sup>135</sup> His purpose, however, is not to encourage the Corinthians to adopt certain ethnic practices—there being multiple options for that in pluralistic Corinth—but to teach them to govern their own behavior in ways that serve the gospel, in the present instance through deference to the "weak" in matters of food.<sup>136</sup> As for who the gentile Christ-followers are *ethnically*, now that they are no longer gentiles, Concannon's answer is that, by "participating in the cult of a Jewish savior, they are now descendants of ancient Israelites."<sup>137</sup> Given what Concannon says about ethnicity in antiquity, one would imagine that in his view the Christ-followers at Corinth have become ethnic Israelites, as far as Paul is concerned, since Paul operates with the ancient idea of ethnicity as religious identity and practice, including a shared lineage and history that becomes one's own through embracing the god(s) of a particular people. Yet Concannon never says this in so many words, and he appears to embrace Johnson Hodge's idea that non-Jewish Christ-followers *affiliate* with ethnic Israel without becoming ethnic Israelites.<sup>138</sup> He also appears to agree with Johnson Hodge that Jewish Christ-followers experience no disruption of ethnic identity. Loyalty to Jesus as the Messiah means for them only continuity with their ethnic heritage.

Concannon places his own work in the Radical New Perspective family of interpretations.<sup>139</sup> Simon Buttica, although he relies heavily on Concannon's interpretation of 1 Cor 10, develops an argument diametrically opposed to that of the Radical New Perspective.<sup>140</sup> The reason for the agreement on exegesis but disagreement on implications is a matter of how one construes Paul's treatment of the heritage of Israel as in some sense the gentile Christ-believers' own heritage and lineage.

Buttica observes an agreement in the general scholarly literature and in current Pauline studies that ethnicity is a social construction consisting of both *beliefs* ("discourse" is Buttica's term) about such things as the group's name, shared history, religion, a homeland, and so on, and *practice*, particularly those customs that make an ethnos distinctive. Buttica tests the claims of the Radical New Perspective by examining what Paul says about religio-ethnic practices in the church at Antioch (as reflected in

Gal 2), the churches of Galatia, and the churches of Corinth. Arguing that the table issues at Antioch were similar to the issue of circumcision and Jewish festivals at Galatia, Butticaaz observes that in each instance Paul's engagement with these controversies entailed a relativizing of ethnic-religious distinctions, for both the Jews and the gentiles of the church.<sup>141</sup> At Antioch he "did not hesitate to curtail drastically, even to suspend for a time, the ethnic practices of the Jewish Christians";<sup>142</sup> further, in his letter to the Galatians he reiterates his theological response to the Antioch conflict, "denounc[ing] any reintroduction of a historico-salvific privilege of the Jews over other nations," and "proceeds to a universalization of the discourse," "choosing faith as the sole identity marker *coram Deo* for both Jews and gentiles." Hence, regarded from the perspective of the current debate about ethnicity in Paul, "the movement of Paul's argument in Galatians is adopting precisely the paradigm which is being challenged by the champions of 'the Radical New Perspective.'"<sup>143</sup> In short, for Paul, no ethnic practices are essential to belonging to the people of God, not even in the case of Judaic practices for Jewish Christians. Nor are those in Christ a new *ethnos*. "The Pauline reasoning in Galatians is therefore not primarily ethnical but theo-anthropological."<sup>144</sup>

There is a shift of understanding in 1 Corinthians, Butticaaz says, where Paul addresses another question of the table: meat offered to idols.<sup>145</sup> In a focused analysis of 1 Cor 10:1–22, where he sees Paul developing his discussion of the topic of idol meat in collectivist terms as a matter of ecclesial identity, Butticaaz understands the apostle to be making Israel's story the church's own foundational myth. Butticaaz begins with the observation that in 1 Cor 10:1, when Paul introduces the story of Israel in the wilderness, Paul refers to "our fathers," implying that the Corinthians are descendants of the Israelite ancestors.<sup>146</sup> They "are being encouraged to appropriate this foundational past—not so much as an origin that is external and foreign to themselves but as their *own* historical and traditional patrimony."<sup>147</sup> Moreover, with respect to practice, they have a common meal, the eucharistic supper, which expresses both their unity and their loyalty to the God of their Israelite fathers.<sup>148</sup>

According to Butticaaz, this development of Paul's thinking about the collective social identity of those in Christ in effect prepares the way for the later idea of Christians as a *tertium genus*. There is even a suggestive formulation, Butticaaz suggests, in 1 Cor 10:32, where Paul tells the Corinthians not to offend "the Jews and the Greeks and the church of God," implying that the Christ-followers are neither Jews nor Greeks. Butticaaz

does not say that Gal 3:28 defines the church as this third collective identity, for that formula describes a “meta-identity,” whereas 1 Cor 10:32 is a step in the direction of treating the church as a new ethnicity.

The formula of Gal 3:28 as a statement of collective identity transcending ethnic and other differences is the centerpiece of Karen Neutel’s interpretation of ethnicity in Paul. To understand the vision expressed in this formula, Neutel says, it is important to see that Paul develops his ideas about peoplehood in Christ in the context of a wider conversation in the Greco-Roman world about the ideal society: “the cosmopolitan ideal.”<sup>149</sup> Neutel looks at this subject in both Jewish and Greco-Roman sources, keeping as close as possible to the time of Paul. Her conclusions run counter to the contention of the Radical New Perspective that Paul does not disturb Jewish identity. For Paul, Neutel says, circumcision, the fundamental marker of Jewish identity, “was not only of no value to gentiles, it had lost certain aspects of its meaning in general, since, for the first time, in the messianic age, it no longer distinguished those who belonged to God’s people from those who did not.”<sup>150</sup> In God’s eschatological cosmopolis, ethnic differences come to an end, being replaced by a homogeneous unity.<sup>151</sup> This radical vision, in which Jewish distinctiveness is dissolved as far as soteriology and eschatology are concerned—but with certain present implications, too, in that people need to adjust their thinking and behavior in ways commensurate with God’s future world—is unparalleled in discussions of eschatological “inclusion of the gentiles” by Paul’s Jewish contemporaries.<sup>152</sup>

Before the publication of E. P. Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, it was typical for Pauline scholars to speak about the Jewish soteriology of “works-righteousness,” whether that meant an impossible task of legalistic service or a self-righteous pursuit of merit before God. By the mid-1980s the field had largely given up this conception of ancient Jewish life in the torah. Today most Pauline scholars agree about what “works of the law” does *not* mean for Paul, but two opposing views of his conception of ethnic Israel have emerged. The Radical New Perspective, which in important respects has taken up and advanced Krister Stendahl’s two-covenant interpretation, has consolidated itself, while at the same time different statements of a more traditional view continue to appear with fresh argumentation. It remains to be seen whether this debate will resolve itself into a consensus. I suspect, however, that there may be too many passages in Paul that are susceptible to opposing readings.



## For Further Reading

- Barclay, John M. G. "Neither Jew Nor Greek: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul." Pages 197–214 in *Ethnicity and the Bible*. Edited by Mark G. Brett. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
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- Unnik, W. C. van. "Christianity and Nationalism in the First Centuries of the Christian Church." Pages 77–94 in *Patristica, Gnostica, Liturgica*. Part 3 of *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. van Unnik*. NovTSup 31. Leiden: Brill, 1983.



## Notes

1. In addition to the following interpretations from the history of Pauline scholarship, a number of other interpretations presented below under other headings belong equally to the category of Pauline scholarship: the work of Brad Braxton and Demetrius Williams (under the African American section), that of Daniel Boyarin (under recent Jewish interpretation), and some of the contributions discussed under dispensationalist and post-Holocaust interpretation of Paul.

2. The relevant patristic texts can be found in Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904; repr., New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 1:300–314, 336–52.

3. See, for example, F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, 3rd ed., trans. Allan Menzies, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878), 1:47, 59, 73.

4. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), 183–84. See also F. W. Beare, *Paul and His Letters* (London: Black, 1962), 103–4.

5. Dodd, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 184.

6. Dodd, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 183.

7. James D. G. Dunn, "Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity," *NTS* 45 (1999): 180–82, 192.

8. W. C. van Unnik, "Christianity and Nationalism in the First Centuries of the Christian Church," in *Patristica, Gnostica, Liturgica, part 3 of Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. van Unnik*, NovTSup 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 85.

9. William S. Campbell has argued that Paul's universalism rules out anti-Semitism but makes room for valuing Jewish distinctiveness. See the chapter "Religious Identity and Ethnic Origin in the Earliest Christian Communities," in his *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1991), 98–121.

10. See Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 147–49; John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 147. The earliest proponent of this view was apparently Krister Stendahl, who found a basis in Paul for rejecting Christian "religious imperialism" against Judaism and other religions. See Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 132; Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 215.

11. According to Elizabeth Johnson, Paul maintains a "balanced tension" between God's faithfulness to ethnic Israel and God's impartiality toward all peoples. See E. Elizabeth Johnson, "Romans 9–11: The Faithfulness and Impartiality of God," in *Romans*, vol. 3 of *Pauline Theology*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson, SymS 23 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 22.

12. This is how I interpret Campbell's treatment of these themes in *Romans*: Paul's affirmation of Israel's unique call is about divine faithfulness; Paul's stress on impartiality is about the equality of gentiles with Jews; the two themes are also related in that the teaching about the destiny of Israel also counters gentile prejudice against Jews and is

thus functionally similar to the impartiality theme, although it flows from a different theological source. See Campbell, "A Theme for Romans?," in *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context*, 161–99. To my mind, the main difficulty with this and similar views is that they do not ask the prior question, which Paul's emphasis on divine impartiality must have (or logically should have) caused him to ask: How is God's impartiality expressed in relation to the original act of choosing Israel out of all the nations of the earth?

13. See Charles H. Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel: The Puzzle of Election in Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 65–90.

14. Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 95–107.

15. See Cosgrove, *Elusive Israel*, 97–100.

16. Holmes Rolston, *The Social Message of the Apostle Paul: The James Sprunt Lectures, 1942* (Richmond: John Knox, 1942), 124–54.

17. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 125.

18. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 125.

19. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 125.

20. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 126–27.

21. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 130.

22. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 129.

23. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 130.

24. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 135.

25. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 136.

26. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 136.

27. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 146.

28. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 147.

29. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 147.

30. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 149–50.

31. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 151, emphasis original.

32. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 152.

33. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 153.

34. Rolston, *The Social Message*, 153.

35. Nils A. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications," in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 95–120 (originally published in *Norsk teologisk tidsskrift* in 1964).

36. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification," 108 (no. 4). Dahl emphasized the theme of divine impartiality in his comments about racial discrimination.

37. These are highlights of Dahl's discussion of the social implications of justification in "The Doctrine of Justification," 108–13.

38. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification," 119.

39. Although Dahl did not reassert this Pauline principle in his discussion of racial discrimination, I quote it here because it has relevance for how one thinks about Pauline solutions to racial conflict. The statement occurs at the beginning of Dahl's discussion of the social implications of justification ("The Doctrine of Justification," 108).

40. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification," 119–20.

41. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification," 120.
42. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification," 120 (see also 119).
43. Judith Gundry-Volf, "Christ and Gender: A Study of Difference and Equality in Gal. 3:28," in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift*, ed. Christof Landmesser et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 439–77.
44. Campbell, "Religious Identity and Ethnic Origin," 110. Campbell also suggests that, even if Gal 3:28 is open to competing interpretations, the analogy to Paul's discussion of male/female relations in the Corinthian correspondence provides a valuable guide to his views about Jews and gentiles.
45. J. Louis Martyn, "Galatians 3:28, Faculty Appointments, and Overcoming Christological Amnesia," *Katallagete* 8.1 (1982): 40–44.
46. Martyn, "Galatians 3:28," 40.
47. Martyn, "Galatians 3:28," 40.
48. Martyn, "Galatians 3:28," 41.
49. Martyn, "Galatians 3:28," 41.
50. Martyn offered as an illustration of Caesar's justice an assertion by Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun that in order to overcome racism it is sometimes necessary to take account of race. Martyn commented: "Before rushing to apply that remark to the making of Faculty appointments in a *theological* seminary, we do well to realize that it is the sort of thing an enlightened Caesar may say, but it is all that Caesar *can* say" ("Galatians 3:28," 44).
51. Martyn, "Galatians 3:28," 44.
52. Martyn, "Galatians 3:28," 43, emphasis original.
53. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Study of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). For an insightful survey of the debate since the publication of Sanders's book, see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
54. See Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 95; James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 183–206 (originally presented as the Manson Memorial Lecture at the University of Manchester, 4 November 1982).
55. N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in Hay and Johnson, *Romans*, 141; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 240–42; Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Oxford: Lion, 1997), 129.
56. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), lxxii. On the New Perspective and the question of ethnicity, see John M. G. Barclay, "Neither Jew Nor Greek: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 197–214.
57. Neil Elliott raises this question in *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 70–71.
58. This is how I interpret the careful language in, for example, James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Black, 1993), 172; Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law*, 249–50. Stendahl (*Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 132), who in important ways has been an inspiration to the New Perspective, expressly aims to overcome

interpretations of Paul in which Judaism becomes “a code word for all wrong attitudes toward God.”

59. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 158.

60. Jewett, *Romans*, 467, 468.

61. Jewett, *Romans*, 469–70.

62. Jewett, *Romans*, 46–59. See also 296 and 466, where Jewett stresses that Jews are not exceptional in their tendencies to cultural boasting, zealotry, or bigotry.

63. Jewett, *Romans*, 299.

64. Jewett, *Romans*, 301.

65. William R. Herzog II, “The New Testament and the Question of Racial Justice,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 5 (1986): 25–26.

66. Herzog, “The New Testament,” 13–14.

67. In describing Paul’s relativization of culture/ethnicity, Herzog wrote of Paul’s rejection of “zealous” or “malignant” ethnocentrism (“The New Testament,” 24, 29), which I take to be the strong, “distorted” type (see 14), but sometimes simply wrote without a qualifier of Paul’s rejection of ethnocentrism (25, 30). So it is not altogether clear whether Herzog meant that Paul’s relativization of ethnicity preserved the value of what Herzog earlier in his essay (in his introduction) called “wholesome” ethnocentrism (14).

68. Barclay, “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” 211, emphasis original.

69. Barclay, “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” 212.

70. Barclay, “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” 212–13.

71. Barclay, “Neither Jew Nor Greek,” 213.

72. I understand Barclay’s use of the postmodern term deconstructs to have the loose (not technical philosophical) sense that a writing entails internal contradictions of which the author was unaware and hence invites readers to draw inferences beyond those of the author and perhaps even against the author’s own convictions.

73. The following is based on Charles H. Cosgrove, “Paul in African American Perspective,” in *Cross-Cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves*, ed. Charles H. Cosgrove et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

74. William Watkins, “Our Rights as Man,” in *The Voice of Black America: Major Speeches by Negroes in the United States*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), 135.

75. Watkins, “Our Rights as Man,” 139, emphasis original.

76. Theophilus Gould Steward, *The End of the World; or, Clearing the Way for the Fullness of the Gentiles*, with an Exposition of Psalm 68:31 by James A. Handy (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Church Books, 1888).

77. Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1885).

78. Steward, *The End of the World*, 62.

79. Steward, *The End of the World*, 69–71.

80. These are James H. Cone’s terms for two dominant impulses present in the thinking of virtually every influential African American figure. See *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 4 and passim.

81. Demetrius K. Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African-American Experience," in *Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Randall C. Bailey, SemeiaSt 42 (Atlanta: SBL, Society of Biblical Literature), 33–59, esp. 57–58.

82. Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation," 57.

83. Williams, "The Bible and Models of Liberation," 57–58.

84. The following description of Skinner's interpretations of Gal 3:28 and Rom 9:2–3 is based on *Tom Skinner: The New Community* (video; Tracy's Landing, MD: Tom Skinner Associates, n.d.), which presents a group of speeches by Skinner dating probably to the 1980s or 1990s.

85. Brad Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African-American Experience* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 94.

86. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 94, emphasis original.

87. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 94–95.

88. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 95.

89. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 95.

90. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 70.

91. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 70.

92. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 94.

93. John William Colenso, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated, and Explained from a Missionary Point of View* (Ekuhanyeni, South Africa, 1861); repr. as *Commentary on Romans*, ed. with an introduction by Jonathan A. Draper (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Cluster, 2003). In what follows, I rely heavily on Jonathan A. Draper, "Colenso's Commentary on Romans: An Exegetical Assessment," in *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Inspiration*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 104–25.

94. The papers and responses from this seminar can be found in K. K. Yeo, ed., *Navigating Romans through Cultures: Challenging Readings by Charting a New Course*, Reading Romans through History and Cultures Series 3 (London: T&T Clark, 2004). The paper on Colenso is Jonathan Draper, "A 'Frontier' Reading of Romans: The Case of John William Colenso (1814–1883)."

95. Jewett, *Romans*, dedication page. There are also quotations from Colenso here and there.

96. Colenso made a clear distinction between ancient Jews and modern Jews and argued that it is no longer Jews but Christians (and missionaries) who practice bigotry and cruelty toward other peoples (*Commentary on Romans*, 51).

97. In addition to Draper's article, "Colenso's Commentary on Romans," see also his introduction to Colenso's *Commentary on Romans*, ix–xxxix.

98. Draper, "Colenso's Commentary on Romans," 116.

99. Draper, "Colenso's Commentary on Romans," 125. Draper argued that Colenso's affirmation of Zulu national identity and cultural revival was connected to Colenso's interpretation of revelation and justification by faith in Romans. Colenso understood justification by faith as entailing the equality of all peoples, and he affirmed a concept of natural religion as true knowledge of God accessible to all humanity through conscience. These two interpretations contributed to Colenso's conviction that Zulu cul-

ture could express divine revelation in the same way that Europeans thought of their own culture as founded on divine revelation (in Scripture). See Draper, "Colenso's Commentary on Romans," 121–24.

100. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 172.

101. Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 172–73.

102. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

103. Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 693–725.

104. Boyarin and Boyarin, "Diaspora," 720.

105. In what follows, I summarize parts of my larger treatment of dispensationalism and post-Holocaust theology in "The Church *with* and *for* Israel: History of a Theological *Novum* before and after Barth," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 22 (1995): 259–78.

106. For most dispensationalists, there is a place for a Christian mission to the Jews, but in God's providence the majority of Jews will not become Christians.

107. See Cosgrove, "The Church *with* and *for* Israel," 267–68.

108. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, part 2, sec. 34, 4, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936–1969). For scholarship on Barth's view of Israel, see, for example, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, *Die Entdeckung des Judentums für die christliche Theologie: Israel im Denken Karl Barths* (Munich: Kaiser, 1967); Michael Wyschogrod, "Why Is the Theology of Karl Barth of Interest to a Jewish Theologian?," in *Footnotes to a Theology: The Karl Barth Colloquium of 1972*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt; Waterloo, ON: Corporation for the Publication of Academic Studies of Religion in Canada, 1974); Katherine Sondereggar, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992).

109. Cosgrove, "The Church *with* and *for* Israel," 268–69.

110. Paul M. van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*: part 1, *Discerning the Way*; part 2, *A Christian Theology of the People Israel*; part 3, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980, 1983, 1988).

111. See, for example, Bernhard Mayer, *Unter Gottes Heilsratschluß: Prädestinationsaussagen bei Paulus* (Würzburg: Echter, 1974), 290; Franz Mussner, *Traktat über die Juden* (Munich: Kösel, 1979), 59–60; Ottfried Hofius, "Das Evangelium und Israel: Erwägungen zu Römer 9–11," *ZTK* 83 (1986): 297–324; Martin Rese, "Die Rettung der Juden nach Römer 11," in *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère*, ed. A. Vanhoye (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 429–30.

112. David Rausch has been a tireless defender of dispensationalism as a voice against anti-Semitism. He has probably overstated his case, and other historians have assessed dispensationalism more negatively on this point. But it is clear that certain leaders within early dispensationalism managed to rise well above the surrounding cultural prejudice against Jews. For bibliography on the question, see Cosgrove, "The Church *with* and *for* Israel," 267 n. 28.

113. The following discussion is indebted to Alain Gignac, "Taubes, Badiou, Agamben: Reception of Paul by Non-Christian Philosophers," in *Society of Biblical*



Literature 2002 Seminar Papers, SBLSP 41 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 74–110.

114. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: La Fondation de l'universalisme*, Les Essais du Collège International de Philosophie (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997); ET: *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Badiou, "Saint Paul, fondateur du sujet universel," *ETR* 75 (2000): 323–33.

115. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 7–14 (ET, 6–13); "Saint Paul, fondateur du sujet universel," 323–24.

116. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 63 (ET, 59–60).

117. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 63 (ET, 59–60).

118. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 67–68 (ET, 64).

119. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 68 (ET, 64).

120. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 105–6 (ET, 98–99).

121. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 106 (ET, 99); the original is in italics.

122. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000.

123. There exists "a kind of rest between each people and itself and between each identity and itself" (*Il tempo che resto*, 54).

124. Charles H. Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 268–90.

125. Cosgrove, "Did Paul Value Ethnicity?," 271.

126. Philo, *Legat.* 277; Josephus, *A.J.* 1.317.

127. Today most interpreters hold that Rom 11 (especially vv. 17–29) teaches the irrevocable election of the Jewish people as God's people Israel.

128. Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

129. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 43.

130. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 138–39.

131. Johnson Hodge's view that Israel is not in any soteriological predicament would seem to make her an advocate of a view similar to that of the so-called two-covenant hypothesis. Indeed, Johnson Hodge declares in her conclusion that her position largely supports the "Gaston/Gager approach" (*If Sons, Then Heirs*, 153). Regarding the views of Lloyd Gaston and John Gager, see the brief summary under "Paul and Anti-Semitism" in my original essay above, with n. 74.

132. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 65–66.

133. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 48–49.

134. Cavan W. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles": *Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

135. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles," 16, referring to 1 Cor 12:2).

136. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles," 83–84.

137. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles," 19. Concannon develops this interpretation in chapter 4.

138. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles," 158–59, quoting Johnson Hodge.

139. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles," 180 n. 15.

140. Simon Buttica, "Paul and Ethnicity between Discourse and Social Practices,"

*Early Christianity* 8 (2017): 309–35. Note the language in notes 113 and 114, where, in setting forth his interpretation of 1 Cor 10:123, he states, “Here, and for what follows, see Concannon...” (and see below).

141. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 318–20 (Antioch), 320–25 (Galatia).

142. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 320.

143. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 323.

144. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 324.

145. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 325–34.

146. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 330.

147. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 331.

148. Buttica, “Paul and Ethnicity,” 333.

149. Karin B. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul’s Declaration ‘Neither Jew Nor Greek, Neither Slave Nor Free, Nor Male and Female’ in the Context of First-Century Thought* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

150. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal*, 103–4.

151. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal*, 127.

152. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal*, 141–43 and 75 (the quotation). Neutel uses the expression “denial of ethnic difference” to characterize Gal 3:28.



## 5

### PAUL AND THE LAW: PRESSURE POINTS IN THE DEBATE

A. ANDREW DAS

Not a year goes by without a spate of monographs and essays appearing on Paul and the Law,<sup>1</sup> and the controversy shows no sign of abating. In 2004, Stephen Westerholm published *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*.<sup>2</sup> Westerholm intended his lengthy work to serve as an introduction. He began with an overview of some twenty-five different theorists on Paul and the Law over the last hundred years. The array of options represented by these theorists would be dizzying for the beginning student. Even James D. G. Dunn's recent eighty-eight-page introductory essay represents a nuanced reflection stemming from a lifetime of work.<sup>3</sup> The nuances may be difficult for those not already immersed in this discussion. What the introductory student needs is a roadmap that outlines the key landmarks along the way. Where are the pressure points in this scholarly tussle?

#### Paul's Jewish Milieu

The catalyst for the modern discussion of Paul and the Law was E. P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), but the story really begins before Sanders. New Testament specialists had thought that Paul's fundamental problem with the Jewish Law was that people are unable to satisfy its demand for an obedience commensurate with God's own holiness. In the footsteps of Martin Luther, New Testament scholars thought that in Paul's day the Jews were wrongly trying to earn their way into heaven by their good works. Paul responded that justification must be through God's unmerited grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. Several Jewish and English-speaking scholars in the early and mid-twentieth century recognized serious prob-

lems in the reigning paradigm's approach to first-century Judaism, not the least of which was an inadequate attention to the primary sources, but they were unable to shake the confidence of New Testament specialists.<sup>4</sup> Sanders succeeded where others had failed in large measure because his voice came from within the halls of New Testament scholarship.

Sanders's watershed work described a "pattern of religion" in which the demands of God's Law were embedded within the gracious framework of God's election and covenant relationship with the Jewish people. God had provided repentance and atoning sacrifice for restoring that relationship in the wake of human failure and sin. The earnest striving to obey God's Law was a response to God's love rather than some legalistic means of earning it. Within this gracious framework with its provision for sin, no Jew would have had to obey God's Law perfectly. Sanders labeled this pattern of religion "covenantal nomism." One of the major pressure points in the current discussion of Paul and the Law remains whether Sanders was correct in his contention that a gracious framework enveloped the demands of the Law in Second Temple Judaism (515 BCE–70 CE). Sanders's work, while widely hailed, has nevertheless had its detractors. Jacob Neusner, a leading rabbinic specialist, conceded the broad strokes of Sanders's grace-oriented Judaism but faulted Sanders's methodology.<sup>5</sup> Sanders had not demonstrated that the sayings or actions ascribed to first-century rabbis were authentic. Neusner also questioned the value of the common pattern Sanders had discerned in Second Temple literature. Sanders had minimized too many crucial differences: "For what each Judaic system had in common with others proves, as we shall see, systematically inert, hardly active, let alone definitive, in setting forth what to any given Judaism proved its critical point.... what was a given to all systems gave life and power to none of them."<sup>6</sup> John Collins maintained that covenantal nomism was only one of several patterns of religion for diaspora Jews. In apocalyptic literature, for instance, the demands of God's Law were grounded not in the covenant relationship but rather in revelation. In wisdom literature, a universal human nature grounded the demands of the Law. Entry into the community of the wise did not necessarily entail becoming a member of the Jewish covenant community, even if such membership were the ideal.<sup>7</sup> The Second Temple specialists contributing to volume 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* agreed that covenantal nomism, as a descriptive category, is too reductionistic to be of descriptive value. The authors affirmed Sanders's key contention that the variety of Second Temple Judaism defied description as a strictly merit-based system of quid pro quo.<sup>8</sup> Sanders's lan-

guage of an overarching “framework” of grace enveloping the demands of the Law should probably be dropped in favor of viewing God’s mercy and grace as at one end of a continuum, with the demand for obedience at the other end. Jewish literature may be positioned somewhere between these two poles of mercy and demand, with the exact formulation varying from author to author and genre to genre.<sup>9</sup>

### Legalism

Sanders’s work on Judaism forced scholars to grapple afresh with what Paul found problematic about Moses’s Law. Some specialists have continued to maintain that Paul was combating Jewish attempts to earn God’s favor by a legalistic observance of the Law.<sup>10</sup> A second major pressure point is whether Jewish legalism is an object of Paul’s critique. Sanders distinguished getting into Judaism from staying in. While one got into the Jewish people by God’s unmerited grace, staying in required obedience to the Law. Several scholars have observed that the ultimate or eschatological salvation of an individual in Second Temple Judaism would also depend on that individual’s works. Within the Reformation tradition, such “synergism” would compromise the *sola gratia* principle that God saves by grace alone. Westerholm, while granting divine grace and mercy in Second Temple Judaism, distinguished “hard legalism”—a salvation purely by one’s own works—from a synergistic “soft legalism”—salvation by one’s own works along with God’s grace.<sup>11</sup> The problem with Westerholm’s reasoning is that a simple contrast between Paul and his Jewish peers on this point is not possible. Paul likewise affirms human works as the basis for God’s judgment at the last day (e.g., Rom 2:6–11; cf. Phil 2:13).<sup>12</sup> Simon Gathercole joined Charles H. Talbert and Timo Eskola in qualifying the comparison of Paul’s “Christian” with the synergistic Jew: “Paul has an understanding of obedience that is radically different from that of his Jewish contemporaries. We saw above that, for Paul, divine action is both the source and the continuous cause of obedience for the Christian.”<sup>13</sup> This contrast is likewise problematic: Second Temple Jews *did* frequently state that their obedience was a result of God’s empowerment.<sup>14</sup>

On the contrary, Paul claims in Gal 3:15–17 that the Law simply came 430 years after God’s saving promises to Abraham. Paul does not hint of a problem with legalistic striving. In Rom 2, Paul criticizes an imaginary Jewish interlocutor for thinking that Jewish ethnic identity suffices in mediating a place in the world to come. Paul does not seem to be target-

ing Jewish legalism or perfectionism in his critique of the Law. The Law is simply unable to save (e.g., Gal 2:21; 3:21). Paul's conclusions with respect to the Law do not stem from a reaction to synergism but rather are a reflex of his christological reasoning. The primary difference between Paul and his peers is that he understands God's grace to be located exclusively "in Christ" and not in Judaism's Law.<sup>15</sup> If saving grace is operative in Christ and apart from the Law, then the Law cannot mediate access to the world to come for the Jewish people. Paul would certainly condemn legalism, but that condemnation would be a by-product of his reasoning rather than its primary thrust.

### "Works of the Law"

Dunn has proposed a new and very different object of Paul's critique of the Jewish Law, since legalism does not appear to be the target.<sup>16</sup> Dunn noted the recurrent, ethnic dimension of the apostle's reasoning as Paul juxtaposes Jew and non-Jew in the passages where he is discussing Moses's Law and the issues the Law raised for his missionary work among gentiles. The Jews had treated the Law as a boundary marker and had not recognized that the Scriptures had anticipated the inclusion of the gentiles. The Jewish Christians were wrongly requiring the gentiles to live like Jews. Paul responds that the boundary marking God's people is not circumcision, Sabbath, or any of the other "works of the Law" (*erga nomou*) but rather an existence "in Christ." Whenever Paul speaks positively of the Law, it is the Law understood apart from Jewish ethnic identity. Whenever Paul speaks negatively of the Law, his purpose is to identify these ethnic boundary markers or "works of the Law." In other words, the fundamental problem Paul has with the Law does not stem from a pessimistic anthropology in which humans are unable to accomplish the demands of the Law. Paul is opposing Jewish ethnic particularism and presumption as at odds with the universal and inclusive grace of God in Christ.<sup>17</sup> A third major pressure point in the debate over Paul's view of the Law, then, is the contention that the phrase "works of the Law" (*erga nomou*) refers primarily to those aspects of the Law that serve as boundary markers of separation.<sup>18</sup>

Many specialists have expressed doubt whether Paul uses the phrase "works of the Law" with the specialized sense that Dunn proposed. Many scholars have not seen boundary-marking features at issue in every context where Paul employs the phrase.<sup>19</sup> Taking "works of the Law" in a broader sense of the entirety of the Law, apart from a necessary notion of sepa-

ration, neatly avoids these issues. The claim that the boundary-marking features of the Law are primarily in view in *every* instance Paul employs “works of the Law” is perhaps analogous to what James Barr cautioned against years ago (but in this case a phrase rather than an individual word): “The value of the context comes to be seen as something contributed by the word, and then it is read into the word as its contribution where the context is in fact different. Thus the word becomes overloaded with interpretive suggestion.”<sup>20</sup>

In contending that Paul’s phrase “works of the Law” (*erga nomou*), necessarily includes the notion of boundaries, Dunn has placed great emphasis on the use of the corresponding phrase (*mʿsy twrh*) in the Qumran writings, especially in 4QMMT, a document that lists various sectarian legal rulings that serve to distinguish the Qumran community. Dunn flagged 4QMMT C 27 with the full phrase “works of the Law” (*mʿsy twrh*) in support of his position that “works of the Law,” or the shortened “works,” always referred to those aspects of the Law that distinguished the sectarian community. Within the same paragraph, however, 4QMMT C 23 employs “works” (*mʿsyhm*) in relation to the actions of the kings of Israel, including David as “a man of good deeds” (*ʾyš ḥsdym*). When 4QMMT C 26 mentions the forgiveness of David, his adulterous affair would have immediately come to mind for the Second Temple Jew (CD V, 5b–6a; 2 Sam 12:13; 1 Kgs 15:5—note also the proximity to C 27 of C 23–26). These references in the immediate context to the general behavior or “works” of the kings is decisive for the interpretation of the full phrase “works of the Law” (*mʿsy twrh*) in C 27.<sup>21</sup> Taking “works of the Law” in the broader sense of the entirety of the Law, apart from a *necessary* notion of separation, neatly avoids the problems that 4QMMT C 23 poses.

### The Generative Core: Ethnic Exclusivity?

Dunn is certainly correct that scholarship prior to Sanders had largely neglected the intensely ethnic aspect of Paul’s reasoning.<sup>22</sup> No account of Paul and the Law can now ignore that ethnic dimension. A fourth pressure point on Paul and the Law is whether Paul’s ethnic concerns are the fundamental basis for his critique of the Law or whether they are a consequence of other considerations. Sanders is known for the phrase “solution-to-plight.” Several specialists have made the case that Paul the Pharisaic Jew had viewed Christ and the Law as mutually exclusive approaches to enjoying a right relationship with God.<sup>23</sup> After Paul’s encounter with the risen

Christ, the apostle came to the conclusion that salvation must be in Christ and not the Law. Further, if the Law is not God's instrument to save, then surely the Law's boundary markers do not identify a people enjoying salvation on the basis of their ethnic identity. Sanders granted that Paul could be inconsistent in his thinking on the Law because the apostle's position was a direct consequence of his experience of the risen Christ. Dunn's dissatisfaction with the unnecessary inconsistencies in Sanders's Paul led, in part, to his New Perspective. If Sanders is right that Paul begins with Christ as the solution, then the inclusion of the gentiles is not the starting point of Paul's thought but a consequence.<sup>24</sup> In that case, a christological starting point could have other implications as well, especially for the law's demands.

#### Perfect Obedience as a Factor

In denying the traditional, pessimistic "Lutheran" anthropology in Paul, New Perspective interpreters, like Dunn, have emphasized that perfect obedience of the Law is never a factor in Paul and that Sanders had proven perfect obedience not to be a factor in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>25</sup> A fifth pressure point, then, is whether perfect obedience of the Law factors into Paul's thinking or Second Temple Judaism. New Perspective interpreters have perennially confused the gracious framework of "covenantal nomism" with its embedded demand. Sanders maintained that the Law demands strict obedience, even if the practical result of God's merciful provision is that less-than-perfect individuals could enjoy a "blameless" or righteous status.<sup>26</sup> One Second Temple text that Sanders analyzed categorically stated: "All of [God's] commands and his ordinances and all of his law" are to be carefully observed "without turning aside to the right or left" (Jub. 23.16).<sup>27</sup> The author praised the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel for their "perfect" conduct in "all" their actions.<sup>28</sup> The author looked forward to the day when Israel would be perfectly obedient (Jub. 1.22–24; 5.12; 50.5).<sup>29</sup> Sanders conceded: "Perfect obedience is specified."<sup>30</sup> He added: "As we have now come to expect, the emphasis on God's mercy is coupled with a strict demand to be obedient."<sup>31</sup> While God would grant mercy to the elect, the requirement of right conduct "in all things" (Jub. 21.23) was upheld and admonished through these exemplary models. Strict and perfect obedience remained the ideal (Jub. 1.23–24; 20.7). Greater care must be exercised before making categoric statements ruling out perfect obedience in Second Temple Judaism.

Jouette Bassler, in a recent essay, highlighted Gal 3:10 and Rom 4:4–5 as passages that do not conform well to the New Perspective approach.<sup>32</sup> In Rom 4:4–5, Paul appears to draw a contrast between “works” as a matter of human striving and God’s unmerited grace.<sup>33</sup> Paul articulates this contrast without any reference to ethnic boundary markers. Galatians 3:10, the other problematic passage, leaves one of the premises of a logical enthymeme unstated: no one perfectly does all that the Law requires. Bassler has recognized that these passages “yield more naturally to the old perspective.”<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, she faulted recent critics of the New Perspective for lapsing into a legalistic view of Second Temple Judaism: “All of these explanations ... fail to account for the central role of divine mercy, forgiveness, and atonement in first-century Judaism.”<sup>35</sup> Apparently unaware of any other alternative in the debate, Bassler concluded:

We are left, then, with an apparent stalemate. Legalistic (soft or hard) interpretations of Paul’s criticism of “works of the law” fail to do justice to the realities of Second Temple Judaism or to the thrust of Paul’s argument in several crucial passages. The new perspective, on the other hand, requires strained exegesis of some other crucial passages [Rom 4:1–5; Gal 3:10–14].<sup>36</sup>

A solution to the impasse was readily available at the time of Bassler’s essay.<sup>37</sup> Bassler, Dunn, and others have been wrong in assuming that Paul viewed the “divine mercy, forgiveness, and atonement in first-century Judaism” as effective for the salvation of an individual. Paul never grants that an animal sacrifice, as prescribed by the Law, can offer the forgiveness of sins, which comes solely in Christ’s death (Gal 1:4; 3:13).<sup>38</sup> Reconciliation to God has taken place in Christ.<sup>39</sup> Paul never grants to Israel an election that avails to salvation apart from Christ (e.g., Gal 3:27–29: “Jew or Greek”; 6:14–16: “Israel of God”; Rom 10:9–13: “all”). If the Law could save by means of its provisions for failure, then Christ’s death would have been unnecessary (Gal 2:21; 3:21).<sup>40</sup>

Paul is not making the claim that Judaism is legalistic. He has simply reconceptualized God’s grace in terms of Christ and thereby left the Law’s commands without their corresponding provisions for failure and sin. Obedience to the Law is a genuine problem for the Law-observant, since forgiveness and salvation are located solely in Christ.<sup>41</sup> Paul can therefore describe the “wretched” plight of the “I” under the Law who is incapable of obeying the commands (Rom 7:7–25).<sup>42</sup> To follow the Law apart from Christ is to engage in a merely human endeavor, an exercise in empty



“works.” This “newer perspective” neatly resolves Bassler’s stalemate by recognizing not only the elements of grace and mercy in Judaism but also the implications for the Law of Paul’s christological priorities. A more positive appraisal of Second Temple Judaism and a recognition of Paul’s intense concern with the inclusion of the gentiles in God’s salvation are perfectly compatible with a reading of Gal 3:10 and Rom 4:4–5 in the manner Bassler saw as most natural.

### The Meaning of “Nomos”

Heikki Räisänen has demonstrated a wide range of usage for *nomos* (“law”) in the first-century world.<sup>43</sup> Not all the Pauline passages that employ the word “law” (*nomos*) may necessarily refer to the Mosaic Law. The meaning of *nomos* (“law”?) is a sixth pressure point. Three passages—Rom 3:27–31, 7:7–8:4, and Gal 6:2—have proven particularly contentious. Some scholars have thought that Paul is using *nomos* consistently to refer to Moses’s Torah.<sup>44</sup> Others concluded that Paul is playing on the broad range of meanings *nomos* (“law”) could have in the ancient world.<sup>45</sup>

Should the phrase *nomos pisteōs* in Rom 3:27 be translated as the “principle of faith” or as “the Torah (in its witness to) faith”? In Rom 4, which immediately follows, Paul stresses the faith of the Torah’s Abraham; this context favors taking *nomos* as “Torah” in 3:27. The Abrahamic “promise” of Rom 4 would be the equivalent of “the Law of faith” in Rom 3:27.<sup>46</sup> Stephen Westerholm has disagreed: “But are we really to assume that Paul thought his readers would identify ‘promise’ and ‘law of faith’ with the Mosaic law when he explicitly contrasts the ‘promise’ with the ‘law’ in 4:13–14?”<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, taking Rom 3:27’s disputed phrase as “the Law in its witness to faith” would agree with Paul’s affirmation in 3:21 that the Law and the Prophets both bore witness to the promised righteousness of God in Christ. Paul contrasts the Law from the point of view of its works with the Law as a witness to faith in 3:27.<sup>48</sup> In Rom 4 Paul contrasts the Law and the Abrahamic promise. An explanation is readily available for why Paul does not maintain the same terminology in Rom 4 as at the end of Rom 3. The apostle distinguishes the eras of Abraham and Moses in Gal 3:15–18: the promise of a Seed came in the time of Abraham and the patriarchs long before Moses’s legislation. Although Moses’s Law as Scripture bears witness to the promise, the legislation comes from a later era. Since Paul’s topic in Rom 4 is Abraham, he switches to a more appropriate terminology to express the contrast.<sup>49</sup>



Romans 7:21–25 is frequently cited as proof that *nomos* should not always be translated as the Mosaic Law. In Rom 7:21: “So I find it to be *a principle* [*nomos*] that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand”? On the other hand, the verse may also be translated: “So I find *with respect to* the Law [*nomos*], when I want to do good, evil lies close at hand.” Westerholm discounted the second translation of 7:21 with little discussion and concluded instead that in 7:21–25 Paul is playing on the different meanings for *nomos* in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>50</sup> Michael Winger, upon whom Westerholm depended, at one point conceded (tellingly) of this play on the meaning of *nomos*: “there are so many *nomoi* that they can scarcely be kept straight.”<sup>51</sup> Such confusion is unnecessary. Klyne Snodgrass has made a strong case that the Law functions within spheres of apocalyptic power, the very forces at work throughout Rom 5–8.<sup>52</sup> Sin, as one of these powerful cosmic forces, has taken hold of the Law and distorted the Law for its own purpose to work death (Rom 7:7–11). Paul therefore employs the summarizing phrase in 8:2: “the Law in the hands of sin and death” (*nomos tēs hamartias kai thanatou*). The Law has no power of itself. God’s Spirit can take hold of the Law and work a very different result (8:3). “Law” (*nomos*) is best taken as referring to the Torah throughout Rom 7–8.

Paul vigorously contrasts Christ and the Law throughout Galatians: a person is not justified by the works of the Law but rather by faith in Christ (2:16). Christ and the Law represent opposing approaches to justification. Toward the end of the letter, in Gal 6:2, Paul unexpectedly coins the rather jarring phrase “the law of Christ” (*nomos tou Christou*). Perhaps Paul is playing on the word “law” (*nomos*) in 6:2 and means the “principle” (of love) that Christ exemplifies. On the other hand, Christ’s teachings, to which the apostle refers, may explicate *how* the Mosaic Law applies to the Christian life. In that case, Gal 6:2 would be referring to the Mosaic Law as interpreted by Christ: “the Law in the hands of Christ.”

The context offers strong considerations in favor of the translation “the Law in the hands of Christ.” In the preceding verse (Gal 6:1), Paul admonishes the Christian community to help restore those guilty of “transgression” (*paraptōma*). “Transgression” regularly refers in Jewish literature to violations of the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom 5:20). Furthermore, the language of Gal 6:2 explicates the reference to the Mosaic Law in Gal 5:14. Paul uses in Gal 6:2 a Greek word for “fulfill” (*anaplēroō*) alongside “Law” (*nomos*); “fulfill” in 6:2 is a cognate of 5:14’s “fulfill” (*plēroō*), which is likewise used alongside “Law” (*nomos*). Paul’s admonition to mutual Christian service in 6:2’s “bear one another’s burdens” echoes 5:13’s “become slaves

to one another.” Galatians 5:14, for its part, is clearly discussing Moses’s Law. Paul’s reference to fulfilling “the whole Law” (*ho pas nomos*) by love in 5:14 answers the obligation to obey the entire Law in Gal 5:3 (*holos ho nomos*). Paul cites in Gal 5:14 the words of Lev 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (NRSV). Jewish literature employed Lev 19:18 as a means of summarizing all the commands of the Law.<sup>53</sup> Christians are therefore obliged to fulfill the stipulations of the Mosaic Law by loving their neighbors. Paul’s fulfilling the “Law of Christ” (6:2) therefore advances his discussion of the Torah in 5:14.

Scholars have been gravitating in recent years toward a more consistent translation of *nomos* as Torah in Galatians and Romans. Richard Hays initially dismissed a reference to the Mosaic Law in Gal 6:2 but subsequently joined those who contend that *nomos* refers to the Torah throughout Galatians and Romans.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Schreiner experienced a similar change of mind on the meaning of *nomos* in Rom 3:27–31.<sup>55</sup> Hays’s and Schreiner’s “conversions” likely presage the future of this discussion. Harm Hollander’s study has made a strong case that *nomos* in 1 Corinthians does not, in each instance, refer to the Torah. Paul’s use of *nomos* may be specific to a letter.<sup>56</sup> The debate over the meaning of *nomos* leads to a seventh pressure point: Does Paul view the Mosaic Law as a continuing norm for the Christian life?

### The Law as Norm

Throughout Gal 3 Paul is adamant that the Law was temporary and ceased with the coming of faith and Christ’s saving work. Temporal markers dominate this section of Paul’s letter.<sup>57</sup> Westerholm therefore concluded that the Law has come to an end for the Christian.<sup>58</sup> Dunn came to a different conclusion: what has ceased is the wrongful emphasis on the Law’s ethnic identity markers.<sup>59</sup> One may also argue that the Law no longer functions as an enslaving demand that leads to curse.<sup>60</sup> If passages such as Gal 6:2 (“Law in the hands of Christ”) and Rom 8:4 (“the Law in the hands of the Spirit of life”) refer to the Torah, then the Law may be grabbed hold of by the Spirit (Rom 8:4) to produce a Christ-like behavior that fulfills the commands (Gal 5:14; 6:2).<sup>61</sup> Although the debate over the Law’s continuing role has historically centered on Romans and Galatians, Peter Tomson and Brian Rosner have demonstrated that Paul frequently draws upon the Torah as a warrant in admonishing Christian behavior in 1 Corinthians.<sup>62</sup> The exact shape of Law’s role in the Christian life may depend on the passage.<sup>63</sup>

Räsänen's 1983 study proved prophetic in raising many of the issues that continue to dominate discussion of Paul and the Law.<sup>64</sup> The advances in recent research no longer justify Räsänen's conclusion that Paul is utterly contradictory on this topic. Of course, these seven pressure points are by no means exhaustive. One might also inquire whether and to what extent gentiles are "under" the Law.<sup>65</sup> The precise factors that led to Paul's approach to the Law are yet another difficult question. Pauline scholarship clearly remains a field of adventure and intrigue.

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Addendum: An Additional Pressure Point

The New Perspective emphasizes the gentiles' inclusion within God's covenant people, an emphasis that affects how one views God's righteousness and justification in the Pauline letters, another pressure point in this discussion. James D. G. Dunn declares that "God's righteousness could be understood as God's faithfulness to his people. For his righteousness was simply the fulfilment of his covenant obligations as Israel's God in delivering, saving, and vindicating Israel, despite Israel's failure."<sup>66</sup> N. T. Wright agrees: "The righteousness of God" would have one obvious meaning: God's own faithfulness to his promises, to the covenant," that is, the promises made to the covenant people of Israel.<sup>67</sup> This approach is usually placed over against the traditional view in which the "righteousness of God" (*dikaiosynē theou*) refers to a believer's *own* (graciously imputed or infused) status before God. The "covenantal" dimension of the New Perspective begs further discussion.

In the Jewish Scriptures the Hebrew terms for "covenant" (*bryt*) and "righteousness" (*šdq*) rarely appear in proximity to each other. Of the 524 instances of the "righteousness"/*šdq* word group and the 283 uses of "covenant" (*bryt*), the two word groups are proximate to each other in only seven passages.<sup>68</sup> The fact that "covenant" and "righteousness" are rarely employed in the same context serves as a further caution against equating "righteousness" with "covenant faithfulness."<sup>69</sup> The terms appear to function in separate semantic domains. An individual does not "act righteously or unrighteously" with respect to a covenant but rather "keeps," "transgresses," "forsakes," despises," "forgets," or "profanes" a covenant. "All 'covenant-keeping' is righteous behavior, but not all righteous behavior is 'covenant-keeping.'"<sup>70</sup> Because covenant keeping is a *subset* of "righteousness" and because of the meager overlap in terminology, the notion that

“God’s righteousness” must be related to a particular covenant instrument should not just be assumed.

The book of Proverbs employs the language of “righteousness” or its cognates more than any other biblical book (twenty-seven times just in Prov 10–11!), yet Proverbs—as is the case for wisdom literature generally—does not draw on the concept of covenant.<sup>71</sup> Since Wellhausen in the nineteenth century, an explanation has been wanting for “why *bryt* (‘covenant’) appears so infrequently in the prophetic materials and the psalms, where righteousness terminology is rather frequent.”<sup>72</sup> Likewise, righteousness and covenant do not appear to be related categories in the *remainder* of the Hebrew Bible. Abraham pleaded with God to save Sodom should there be ten “righteous” people (Gen 18:23–32), yet the Sodomites did not enjoy any particular covenant instrument with God. Job and Noah did not enjoy any of the Israelite covenants, yet Ezek 14:14, 20 ascribes to them “righteousness.” Conversely, Israel’s special (covenantal) relationship with God was *not* based on their righteousness (Deut 9:4–6).<sup>73</sup>

Charles Lee Irons has made an extensive case for not identifying God’s righteousness in terms of covenant faithfulness.<sup>74</sup> In secular usage, “righteousness” is used predominantly either in the judicial realm or for upright social behavior or virtue. A *subset* of the secular usage involves faithfulness to a promise, contract, covenant, or treaty. Contexts specify the particular instrument in view and thus signal this meaning. Not all “righteousness” involves faithfulness to a covenant or contractual instrument, only a subset. As for the Hebrew Bible, “righteousness” (*šdq* and *šdqh*) is primarily judicial, with saving righteousness meted out in “judgment” as a legal decision upon the righteous and “distributive righteousness” upon their adversaries. “Covenant” (*bryt*) instruments are usually absent from these contexts, but sometimes God brings a covenant lawsuit against the people and metes out judgment accordingly. It is a mistake to import covenantal notions into contexts where they are otherwise absent, since “righteousness” language does not of itself indicate covenantal faithfulness. The predominant senses are ethical and judicial righteousness (cf. Jas 1:20 or the Sermon on the Mount). Once again, the Pauline interpreter must examine contexts for covenantal cues. The word “righteousness” is itself insufficient.

Some recent studies have begun to question whether covenant is a major category for Paul.<sup>75</sup> For instance, to what extent are the “righteousness of God” and “covenant” brought into relation to each other by their mutual inclusion in Paul’s Letter to the Romans? Commentators frequently claim that the “righteousness of God” (*dikaiosynē theou*) early

in Romans (esp. in 1:16–17) bears covenantal associations, even though Paul uses “covenant(s)” (*diathēkē*) only in 9:5 and 11:26–27.<sup>76</sup> Covenantal connotations are therefore *possible* in Romans. On the other hand, it is questionable whether the necessary semantic resonances are present to *activate* such connotations earlier in the letter, especially in the absence of clear contextual cues. Paul turns to God’s relationship with ethnic Israel in Rom 9–11 and makes his case *there* for God’s (covenant?) faithfulness to Israel. “It becomes increasingly obvious that these implications are far from uncontested.”<sup>77</sup> Not surprisingly, Paul employs *diathēkē* at *that* point in the letter. One should not assume that the “righteousness of God” in Rom 1:16–17 means a covenant faithfulness to Israel for which Paul *has yet to contend*.<sup>78</sup> For that matter, God is acting not just on Israel’s behalf but on behalf of *all* humanity in Rom 1–4 (e.g., 1:16; 3:21–24, 29–30; 4:11–12).

Paul stresses that *no one*—even the *Jew*—is righteous; membership in God’s covenant people of Israel is simply not a factor (Rom 3:10). The apostle explains that the righteous are those who *do* the Mosaic Law and are not mere hearers or members of a covenant people (Rom 2:13, 17–29). In 2 Cor 3 Paul explains that the ministry of the Sinaitic covenant is *not* a ministry of righteousness but rather of death (see especially 2 Cor 3:9). As many interpreters have recognized, Paul does not actually define God’s righteousness in terms of covenantal faithfulness, and “given Paul’s general inattention to matters covenantal, it is unlikely that [the term *righteousness*] would do so; and nothing in the contexts in which he uses the term requires such a sense.”<sup>79</sup>

If the word “righteousness” (*dikaïosynē*) or the full phrase “righteousness of God” does not necessarily imply any sort of covenantal conception, the question arises as to what contextual cue *would* suggest a covenant instrument. Hebrew Bible specialists have explained that covenant instruments always entail commandments as stipulations of the agreement. Some have even denied any notion of a relationship in a covenant agreement, although this is a minority position.<sup>80</sup> Others, however, have stressed the element of relationship in a covenant agreement as two parties agree to a fictive kinship.<sup>81</sup>

Even a casual, superficial overview of the undisputed Pauline letters should raise an alarm against uncritical assumptions. Paul does not employ the term *diathēkē* consistently from letter to letter. When he refers to a “covenant” in Gal 3:15–18, assuming he is not referring to a “last will and testament,” he envisions only a single Abrahamic covenant with no

relation to the later Sinaitic Law. In Gal 4:21–31, the single Abrahamic covenant of the prior chapter becomes two concurrent Abrahamic covenants, one associated with God's promise and the other with slavery under the Sinaitic Law. In 2 Cor 3 Paul envisions two covenants yet again. This time the covenants are not concurrent (Abrahamic); one is old and the other is new, and Paul says nothing in 2 Cor 3 about Abraham. These inconsistencies from passage to passage betray the apostle's ambivalence about "covenantal" notions.

A closer inspection of these texts confirms the initial impression. In his Letter to the Galatians Paul appears to be responding to the connection made by the rival teachers between the Abrahamic covenant and Mount Sinai. The rivals' rationale is understandable in view of the intimate association of covenantal instruments with corresponding commandments in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism. Initially in 3:15–17 Paul divorces Mount Sinai from the promises and covenant made with Abraham. Then he returns to the rivals' desired connection between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants in positing two Abrahamic covenants, but he pointedly associates Mount Sinai with Hagar and Ishmael. Paul prefers to speak of God's *promises* to Abraham now fulfilled in Christ and his salvation rather than of covenantal instruments with their corresponding commands.

The apostle in 2 Cor 3 again devalues the "old" Mosaic covenant as an instrument of condemnation and death in favor of a "new" covenant in Christ and his Spirit as an instrument of life. Paul offers a brief glimpse into a potential *new* covenant theology based on the fulfillment of Jer 31 (LXX) and Ezek 36. Nevertheless, he does not seem particularly interested in the new covenant for its own sake; he introduces the concept of covenant only in relation to the inferior Mosaic ministry. He ignores Jer 31's Law written on the heart.

Covenants were also a means of establishing a relationship between two parties. In Rom 9:5 and 11:26–27, the covenants remain the prerogative of ethnic Israel in its relationship to God. Paul anticipates the future salvation of "all Israel" in 11:26–27 as the realization of a covenant associated with Jacob. Contrary to frequent claims, Paul does not seem to be referring to a *new* covenant in Rom 11:26–27. As in Rom 9:4–5, 11:26–27 is referring to the heritage of ethnic Israel. That association of covenant instruments with ethnic Israel would explain why Jewish covenant instruments do not figure prominently in Paul's undisputed letters to the gentiles. Conversely, note the absence of the phrase "righteousness of

God” in Rom 11 as Paul demonstrates God’s faithfulness to the covenant promises to Israel.

If by *covenant* one is referring to Israel as a chosen people to whom God remains faithful, then Paul is indeed covenantal in his thought structures. God remains faithful to his promises to Israel and thereby proves his “righteousness.”<sup>82</sup> One may express these concepts, however, without referring to any particular “covenant” instrument. Since no single understanding of covenant characterizes Second Temple Jewish writings, Dunn was right to criticize the all too “casual talk” of “covenant.”<sup>83</sup> Paul’s thinking regarding “covenant” must be discerned from his own writings without recourse to what “must have” been the case.

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### Notes

1. In view of the position taken in this essay that Paul uses *nomos* exclusively for the Mosaic Torah throughout Romans and Galatians, the word *Law* is ordinarily capitalized. The meaning of *nomos* will be discussed later in this essay, but see also my *Paul and the Jews*, Library of Pauline Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 155–73.
2. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).
3. James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective: Whence, What, and Whither,” in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 1–88.
4. For reviews of that history, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 33–59; A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews*, Library of Pauline Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 4–9.
5. In his initial review, Neusner wrote: “So far as Sanders proposes to demonstrate the importance to all the kinds of ancient Judaism of covenantal nomism, election, atonement, and the like, his work must be pronounced a complete success” (“Comparing Judaisms,” *HR* 18 [1978]: 180; see also 177–78). As late as 1993: “I find myself in substantial agreement with both the classificatory language he uses [“covenantal nomism”] and the main points of his characterization of that common piety of ancient Israel in the first century” (Jacob Neusner, *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic Reply to Professor E. P. Sanders*, SFSHJ 84 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], x).
6. Neusner, *Judaic Law*, 53. For instance, the Mishnah may or may not assume covenant and election. It is simply silent on the matter, as its concerns lie elsewhere. Sanders should have let the materials themselves present their own categories. Neusner also faulted Sanders for ignoring the Old Testament origin of these underlying motifs.
7. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 21–23, 35, 79, 189–90, 192, 260, 273–75.
8. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).
9. Chris VanLandingham, a student of George W. E. Nickelsburg, has argued in

a wide-ranging challenge to Sanders that Second Temple Judaism was indeed a thoroughly merit-driven religion, especially in its emphasis on a judgment according to works even for the elect (*Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006]). Rather than return to the pre-Sanders contrast between the grace-oriented Paul and the merit-driven Judaism of his day, VanLandingham contended that Paul is just as merit-driven as his Second Temple peers. Regardless of whether one agrees with VanLandingham's approach to Paul, his work demonstrates how a reconstruction of Second Temple Judaism may radically influence Pauline interpretation.

10. E.g., Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 118–23.

11. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 332–33. Westerholm described Second Temple Judaism in terms of soft legalism (350–51).

12. See the comments in A. Andrew Das, review of *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics*, by Stephen Westerholm, *JETS* 48 (2005): 164–67, esp. 166. The recognition of a judgment according to deeds is a strength of Gathercole's study.

13. Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 102, 135, 214–15, here 264. For a similar contrast of synergistic Jew with divinely empowered, Pauline Christian, see Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 1–22, esp. 20–22, relying on the work of Timo Eskola (*Theology and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology*, WUNT 2/100 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998]; Eskola, "Paul, Predestination and 'Covenantal Nomism': Re-assessing Paul and Palestinian Judaism," *JSJ* 29 [1997]: 390–412), who contrasted the Second Temple's "synergistic nomism" with Paul's position.

14. See the overview of Second Temple evidence in A. Andrew Das, "Paul and Works of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4–5 as a 'New Perspective' Case Study," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 795–812.

15. Westerholm (*Perspective Old and New*) classified my position in the "Lutheran" camp alongside Schreiner, but Schreiner and I fundamentally differ on this crucial matter of legalism. Since I do not think that Paul is combating Jewish legalism or synergism, my position departs from the defining "Lutheran" premise regarding first-century Judaism. Westerholm (213 n. 22) recognized my difference from Schreiner but underestimated its significance.

16. Advocates or variations of Dunn's New Perspective include N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Michael Cranford, "Abraham in Romans 4: The Father of All Who Believe," *NTS* 41 (1995): 71–88; Cranford, "The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3:10 and 5:3," *NovT* 36 (1994): 242–58.

17. Dunn's Christ therefore died to free humanity from the curse of a wrong understanding of the Law: "The curse which was removed by Christ's death therefore was the curse which had previously prevented that blessing from reaching the Gentiles,

the curse of a wrong understanding of the law. It was a curse which fell primarily on the Jew (3.10; 4.5), but Gentiles were affected by it so long as that misunderstanding of the covenant and the law remained dominant. It was that curse which Jesus had brought deliverance from by his death" (*Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990], 229). This particular articulation of the significance of Christ's death within Dunn's New Perspective understandably remains troubling for many. Dunn (*Jesus, Paul, and the Law*, 237) tried to resolve this problem by suggesting that in Christ God's covenant love "now" (eschatologically) reaches beyond the old boundaries to include those previously outside the covenant. If that were the case, Paul could hardly be criticizing a misunderstanding on the part of the Jews, since God's historic relationship with Israel had indeed placed the gentiles outside the covenant, at least until the dawn of the Christ. On what basis would there be a curse upon the Jews prior to Christ? Dunn's Christ, it appears, has brought a curse rather than blessing upon the Jews because of their subsequent failure to recognize his significance for the gentiles.

18. Despite Dunn's emphasis against his critics that he does not limit "works of the Law" to the boundary markers of circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws and that the phrase refers to obedience of the Law in its entirety, he nevertheless maintained in his most recent work: "In speaking of 'works of the law' Paul had in mind this boundary-marking, separating function of the law" (James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective: Whence, What and Whither," in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays*, WUNT 185 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 8; see also 22–26, 43). The boundary markers remain *primarily* in view since they are those aspects of the entire Law that are in particular situations "contentious" (Dunn, "The New Perspective," 26, also 24). Likewise Kent L. Yinger (*Paul, Judaism, and Judgment according to Deeds*, SNTSMS 105 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 171): "Though the meaning of *erga nomou* ['works of the Law'] is broader than a few selected identity markers, the focus of Paul's usage is on circumcision and food laws because it was precisely this subset of religious activity which both Jews and non-Jews recognized as *the distinguishing identifiers* of Jewishness and which Paul understood to be relativized through faith in Christ." As Jewish sectarian groups (e.g., the Qumran community) define themselves over against other Jews, the distinguishing "works of the Law" will be different.

19. Dunn has argued a boundary-marking sense for "works of the Law" throughout Paul's letters. Not all have judged his efforts successful with respect to individual passages; e.g., Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 234–67.

20. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 233–34; see also 218, 222.

21. Dunn ("4QMMT and Galatians," in *The New Perspective on Paul*, 333–39, here 336–37) thought that C 27's use of the phrase "some of the works of the Torah" should be interpreted alongside B 2, but this connection is not rendered explicit by 4QMMT. Too much of the original context of B 2 has been lost to be sure of Dunn's reasoning. Dunn and others have assumed that "works" in B 2 is a noun. It may just as well be a *qal* active masculine plural participle. B 2 could be reconstructed in a parallel fashion to C 23's "Contemplate their deeds": [htbnn b]m'sym š' '[n]h[nw'synw], "Contemplate

the deeds that we have performed” (cf. Gen 20:9; 1 Sam 8:8; 2 Kgs 23:19; Jer 7:13; Eccl 1:14); see Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, “*Works of the Law*” at Qumran and in Paul (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 91.

22. George Howard was an earlier proponent of what would become Dunn’s position. See Howard’s “Christ the End of the Law,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 331–37; Howard, “Romans 3:21–31 and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” *HTR* 63 (1970): 23–33.

23. Thus Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

24. This does not exclude a “solution-to-plight” thought pattern in Paul’s writings as he articulated faith in Christ *after* his initial exposure to the solution; see Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul’s View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, NovTSup 61 (Leiden: Brill, 1989). In his descriptions of his pre-Christian past as a Jew, Paul never identifies a plight. He views his observance of the Law as “blameless” in Phil 3:6. He had excelled in Judaism beyond his peers in Gal 1:14. The failures he cites in Rom 7:7–25 pertain not to his pre-Christian past but rather to *gentiles’* seeking control over their sinful passions and desires in Moses’s Law. On Rom 7:7–25, see A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 203–35. “In Christ,” Paul came to recognize the genuine problem of sin (e.g., Rom 3:10–18, 23).

25. James D. G. Dunn (*The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993], 171) wrote: “The mistake, once again, has been to read into the argument the idea that at this time the law would be satisfied with nothing less than sinlessness, unblemished obedience, that the law was understood as a means to achieving righteousness from scratch. But in Jewish thought to ‘abide within all that was written in the law and do it’ meant living within the provisions of the law, including all its provisions for sin, through repentance and atonement (see particularly Sanders, *Paul*). That was why Paul was able to describe himself as ‘blameless’ before his conversion (Phil. iii.6; see also on i.14); *not* because he committed no sin, *not* because he fulfilled every law without exception, but because the righteousness of the law included use of the sacrificial cult and benefit of the Day of Atonement. That the Judaism, against which Paul here reacts, called for an impossible perfection is not part of the context of the argument at this point and should not be read into it.”

26. For a more thorough review of the motif of perfect obedience in Jubilees, Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocalyptic literature, and the Tannaim, see Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 12–69. I selected these documents for analysis because they were Sanders’s exemplars in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and in his article “The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 11–44. Independently, Friedrich Avemarie took a similar approach to rabbinic literature in *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur*, TSAJ 55 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); see especially his conclusions on 575–84.

27. Translation from James H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985), 2:35–142.

28. E.g., Noah, Abraham, Leah, Jacob, Joseph. In Jub. 5.19: “[God] did not show

partiality, except Noah alone ... because his heart was righteous in all of his ways just as it was commanded concerning him. And he did not transgress anything which was ordained for him." Noah, while the recipient of God's mercy (10.3), did "just as it was commanded" and was "righteous in all of his ways." "He did not transgress." Jacob was also "a perfect man" (27.17). Leah "was perfect and upright in all her ways," and Joseph "walked uprightly" (36.23; 40.8). God told Abraham in 15.3 to "be pleasing before me and be perfect." Abraham was then praised in 23.10, since he "was perfect in all of his actions with the Lord and was pleasing through righteousness all of the days of his life."

29. Frank Thielman (*From Plight to Solution*, 28–45) has demonstrated that sorrow over human inability and failure prompted many Jews in the Second Temple period to look to the future age when God would enable an obedience that had not been possible in this age. Thielman demonstrated the same motif within the pages of the Hebrew Bible.

30. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 381.

31. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 383.

32. Jouette M. Bassler, *Navigating Paul: An Introduction to Key Theological Concepts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 15–16.

33. See the discussion of these two verses and the problem they pose for the New Perspective in Das, "Paul and Works of Obedience."

34. Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 15.

35. Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 16.

36. Bassler, *Navigating Paul*, 17.

37. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

38. Many Second Temple texts suggest a shift away from sacrifice as a means of atonement. See Tob 12:9; Sir 3:3, 30; 45:23; 4 Macc 17:22; Pss. Sol. 3.8. The Qumran community likewise viewed its good works as a substitute means of atonement in the place of the temple (e.g., 1QS III, 6–12; VIII, 3, 6, 10; IX, 4–7); see Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme*, NovTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 93–108. On the lack of atoning sacrifice in Paul, see ch. 5 of Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*.

39. On reconciliation taking place "in Christ," see A. Andrew Das, "Reconcile, Reconciliation," *NIDB* 4:745–48.

40. I belabored Sanders's key categories of grace of covenant, election, and atoning sacrifice in chs. 3–5 of *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*. None of these categories avails for salvation.

41. See the critique of the two-covenant or *Sonderweg* approach with its special path to God for the Jews apart from Christ in Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 96–106.

42. This is underscored by the variation of terms: *katergazomai*, *poieō*, *prassō*. While the "I" wants to do what is good, sin and the flesh prevent the "I" from being able to "do" the good. Ethnic boundaries figure nowhere in the plight of the "I" under the Law.

43. Heikki Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul, and Torah: Collected Essays*, trans. David E. Orton, JSNTSup 43 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 69–88.

44. Paul W. Meyer, "The Worm at the Core of the Apple: Exegetical Reflections on

Romans 7,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 78–80; John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 125–42; Paul J. Achtemeier, “Unsearchable Judgments and Inscrutable Ways: Reflections on the Discussion of Romans,” in *Looking Back, Pressing On*, vol. 4 of *Pauline Theology*, ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay, SBLSymS 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 18–20; J. Louis Martyn, “The Crucial Event in the History of the Law (Gal 5:14),” in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Modern Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish*, ed. E. H. Lovering Jr. and J. L. Sumney (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 48–61. See also the discussions in Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 192–200, 228–32, 242–47; Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 155–73.

45. Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul, and Torah*, 48–68, 89–94; Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 321–30; Michael Winger, *By What Law? The Meaning of Νόμος in the Letters of Paul*, SBLDS 128 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

46. Gerhard Friedrich, “Das Gesetz des Glaubens Röm. 3,27,” *TZ* 10 (1954): 401–17, esp. 416.

47. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 324.

48. The Law, when considered from the point of view of its testimony to faith in/ of Jesus Christ, would indeed preclude boasting in one’s own works, contra Westerholm’s claim (*Perspectives New and Old*, 324) of a “decisive” argument.

49. For a more comprehensive treatment of this approach to Rom 3:27–31, see Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 192–200.

50. At the same time, Westerholm overlooked the key studies on this verse by Meyer, Snodgrass, and Achtemeier.

51. Winger, *By What Law?*, 186.

52. Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Spheres of Influence: A Possible Solution to the Problem of Paul and the Law,” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 93–113.

53. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 112–14; Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 132–33, 135–36. In b. Shabb. 31a, Jesus’s contemporary, the great teacher of the law Hillel, reportedly told an aspiring convert: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary thereof; go and learn it.” Paul’s Letter to the Romans offers confirmation of this point. After listing several of the Ten Commandments, Paul adds in Rom 13:9–10 (NRSV): “[these] and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

54. Compare Richard B. Hays’s earlier work in “Christology and Ethics in Galatians” (*CBQ* 49 [1987]: 268–90) with his later essay, “Three Dramatic Roles: The Law in Romans 3–4,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn, WUNT 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 151–64.

55. Schreiner, *Romans*, 202 n. 3.

56. Harm W. Hollander, “The Meaning of the Term ‘Law’ (ΝΟΜΟΣ) in 1 Corinthians,” *NovT* 40 (1998): 117–35.

57. See *achris* in v. 19; *pro tou de elthein tēn pistin* in v. 23; *eis tēn mellousan pistin* in v. 23; *gegonen* in v. 24; *ouketi* in v. 25.

58. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 431–39.



59. Dunn, *Galatians*, 197–200; so also Norman H. Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 150–76; T. David Gordon, “A Note on Παιδαγωγός in Galatians 3.24–25,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 150–54.

60. Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 151–55.

61. Advocates of the Reformation’s “third use of the law” in Galatians and Romans should recognize that such a position depends on the meaning of *nomos* in these crucial texts.

62. Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, CRINT 3.1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 97–149; Brian Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7*, AGJU 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 176–80. In his contention that Paul does not envision a continuing role for the Law in the Christian life, Westerholm surprisingly overlooked Tomson’s and Rosner’s work.

63. Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 166–86.

64. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

65. See John C. Poirier, “Romans 5:13–14 and the Universality of Law,” *NovT* 38 (1996): 344–58. See Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 120–28, on the pronominal shifts in Galatians and the implications for the relationship between gentiles and the Law. One must not uncritically assume that the first-person pronouns refer to Jewish Christians and the second-person pronouns the Galatian gentiles, especially in view of the serious problems with this position that remain to be addressed.

66. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 342.

67. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 96–97.

68. By way of contrast, “righteousness” language (*šdq* root) is in close proximity (within five words) to “ruling and judging” (*špṭ* root) in 142 instances; see Mark A. Seifrid, “Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism,” in *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 415–42, here 425. James B. Prothro has confirmed the relationship of the cognate verb “justify” (*dikaioō*) to “ruling and judging” but not “covenant”; see *Both Judge and Justifier: Biblical Legal Language and the Act of Justifying in Paul*, WUNT 2/461 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

69. Seifrid, e.g., “Righteousness Language,” 423–25.

70. Seifrid, “Righteousness Language,” 424.

71. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 287–88 and 287 n. 64. The exception is a reference to the God-given covenant of marriage (2:17).

72. Seifrid, “Righteousness Language,” 423, who compounds this observation with the fact that both the “covenant” (*bryt*) and “righteousness” (*šdq*) words groups have fields of meaning concerned with relationships as well as ethical and juridical dimensions.

73. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 288.

74. Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation*, WUNT 2/386 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

75. James D. G. Dunn, "Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology? Reflections on Romans 9.4 and 11.27," in *The Concept of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, JSJSup 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 287–307; and A. Andrew Das, "Rethinking the Covenantal Paul," in *Paul and the Stories of Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 65–92. What follows is heavily indebted to that earlier, much fuller discussion.

76. E.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Dallas: Word, 1988), 41–42.

77. Douglas A. Campbell, "The Meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans: An Intertextual Suggestion," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley, SBLSymS 50 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 189–212, here 210.

78. Ellen Juhl Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study in Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers*, AGJU 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 214, who stresses the gentiles' relationship with God quite apart from Israel's covenant; the gentiles' status is "God-given," with "no explicit assertion of covenantal identity." God's election of Israel is a far more prominent motif in Second Temple Jewish writings than the scattered and variously defined references to a "covenant."

79. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 293.

80. E.g., Ernst Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz: Untersuchungen zum sogenannten 'Bund' im Alten Testament*, BZAW 131 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973); Kutsch, "Gesetz und Gnade: Probleme des alttestamentlichen Bundesbegriff," *ZAW* 79 (1967): 18–35.

81. E.g., Frank Moore Cross, "Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel," in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3–21.

82. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 340–46 (§14.2).

83. Dunn, "Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology?," 290.



## 6

### PAUL AND JUDAISM: WHY NOT *PAUL'S JUDAISM*?

MARK D. NANOS

When New Testament scholars address the topic of Paul *and* Judaism, the conjunction generally signals an adversative: Paul *or* Judaism; Paul *against* Judaism; Paul *outside of* Judaism; or Paul, *not* Judaism. The situation certainly has begun to change since the first version of this essay, but for Pauline scholarship the emphasis traditionally has, and for the most part still remains, focused on the distance between Paul's new religion based upon Jesus Christ *and* Judaism, his supposedly *former* religion.<sup>1</sup> The level of continuity or discontinuity assessed differs from interpreter to interpreter, but by those who defend the traditional interpretive paradigms a shared perception remains assumed, if not always fully argued: the religious life of Paul's communities, Paulinism, and the religious life of Jewish communities, Judaism, including Jewish Christianity, represent two fundamentally different religious systems.<sup>2</sup> Even today, one seldom hears or reads about *Paul's Judaism*,<sup>3</sup> or Pauline Judaism, of Judaism or Jewishness as the propositional basis of Paul's way of life, or of the communities he established and addressed.

Most interpreters today pronounce that Paul had been a Jew and also that he remained one (albeit not without equivocation, discussed below). At the same time, few if any Pauline or New Testament scholars have ever argued that Paul continued to practice and promote Judaism as an expression of covenant faithfulness after his experience of Jesus Christ. For the most part that remains the case today, although since I developed the original essay this has begun to change, especially among scholars who are now developing Paul within Judaism perspectives. Nevertheless, it was and is generally the case that, even when Paul is upheld to be a Jew, this signifies a kind of ethnic identity independent of the religious elements of ethnicity

related to covenant standing: Paul is understood and presented to be a Jew or Judean who did not behave Jewishly. He was the leader if not the founder of a new religious movement, one functioning outside the boundaries of Judaism. Although some other Christ-followers, such as James and Peter, may have been considered to remain within the circle of Judaism, so-called Jewish Christianity, Paul's "churches" gathered not in "synagogues" but in house churches of believers in Jesus Christ that were clearly distinguishable from Jewish gathering places or meetings. That they were usually simply called "gentile churches" demonstrates what remains presupposed.<sup>4</sup> These new communities were (and usually still are) portrayed to consist primarily of *non-Jews*, with perhaps a few *former* Jews. They were understood to represent a new religious movement that was distinguished from Judaism, namely, Christianity, even when it is acknowledged that the name Christian had not yet been coined.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Paul has been traditionally understood to be antagonistic toward torah-identity and practice. Some propose that he was instead simply "indifferent" (*ἀδιάφορος*; although Paul's letters do not contain the term).<sup>6</sup> Others grant that he observed torah to various degrees but not as an expression of faith, certainly not as covenant fidelity. Either way, Paul believed that the era of torah had ended, being made obsolete, or fulfilled, or superseded in the work of Christ. He did not regard Jewish covenant identity or behavior to have any "soteriological" significance.<sup>7</sup> To the degree that he observed torah occasionally, it simply reflected cultural conditioning from which he had not yet been liberated, having been born and raised a Jew.<sup>8</sup> Or it demonstrated the chameleon-like behavioral extremes to which he would go to win other Jews to his convictions. The latter view relies largely upon the prevailing interpretations of 1 Cor 9:19–23, wherein Paul describes becoming all things to all people in order to win them to the gospel of Christ, and specifically of becoming to Jews and to those under law like a Jew and like one under law, and alternatively, of becoming lawless or without law as well as weak to those who are lawless or without law or weak.

The role of 1 Cor 9:19–23 in Pauline studies provides a useful place to define the topics that generally arise in discussion of Paul and Judaism. Donald Hagner speaks for many when he writes: "Paul regards himself as no longer under the law," since he "obeys it now and then. Paul thus feels free to identify with the Gentiles and not to remain an observant Jew. Incidentally, how remarkable it is that the Jew Paul can speak of himself as an outsider: 'To the Jews I became as a Jew'!" This implies a "break with

Judaism,” and “it is clear, furthermore, that observing or not observing the law is an unimportant issue before God. The position taken by Paul is one of complete expedience: he will or will not observe the law only in relation to its usefulness in the proclamation of the gospel. Before God the issue of obeying the commandments is in the category of *adiaphora*.”<sup>9</sup> Heikki Räisänen declares the implications for the traditional consensus view quite clearly: “1 Cor 9.20 f. is absolutely incompatible with the theory of an observant Paul.”<sup>10</sup> This view continues to guide interpreters representing the New Perspective on Paul; for example, N. T. Wright insists, in view of this passage, that the idea Paul remained a torah-observant Jew is not only anachronistic and ignorant but also that a reasonable person would naturally recognize that “*being a Jew was no longer Paul’s basic identity*.”<sup>11</sup>

This interpretive tradition overwhelmingly upholds the view that Paul subscribed to a policy of mimicking the behavior of non-Jews, on the one hand, and of Jews, including fully torah-observant Jews, or proselytes, on the other. I write “mimicking” because, while the negative aspect of this behavior that such a term conveys is not generally highlighted, it nevertheless represents what is signified for “becoming like” in the arguments made. *Becoming like* is not interpreted to mean Paul actually becomes the same as or like each, for he is not portrayed to subscribe to the propositional bases of the behavior he appears to adopt. Those whom he mimics presumably behave as they do to express their worldview and convictions. But he is understood merely to imitate the outward behavioral trappings when in the company of each of these different people or groups: it is not internalized, not of the heart. He does not “become” in the true sense, the sense that he wishes for them to “become” Christ-followers by conviction and to live that way thereafter inwardly as well as outwardly, as Paul does. Paul merely adjusts his conduct to fit the lifestyle of different people and groups in order to gain the trust of each of them in a gospel that intends for them to believe in something other than what Paul’s outward bait-and-switch behavior has made it seem.<sup>12</sup>

What is also not often discussed is that such a policy, supposedly calculated to persuade people with entirely different behavioral patterns and cultural premises, would instead over time almost certainly alienate all of them. Surely some Jews would hear rumors of his non-Jewish eating behavior, for example, when with non-Jews, and others would no doubt witness this behavior. The same is true about non-Jews witnessing Jewish behavior when he was among Jews. This would especially be the case within the context of communal gatherings, which many also suppose this passage

to address, that is, the winning of Christ-following Jews and non-Jews to a more mature life in Christ.<sup>13</sup> In such settings, where push comes to shove, Paul is understood to forgo Jewish practices.<sup>14</sup> Why? Because he did not subscribe to Jewish behavior as a matter of conviction anyway, so he can hardly be expected to choose torah, if that would imply to non-Jews that the gospel was in some way yoked to torah. However conceptualized, Paul's behavior, when interpreted along this traditional line, would eventually be observed by those who found it to be the opposite of what they supposed him to sustain for himself. Hence the effect would be the opposite of that which he intends. To Jews he would quickly appear to be (become) like a non-Jew; to non-Jews he would quickly appear to be (become) like a Jew.

On this popular reading, Paul is understood to have, for example, eaten like non-Jews when in their company and like Jews when in theirs. To "gain" them, he *behaved* "like" them. But he did so disingenuously, especially when playing the part of a practicing Jew,<sup>15</sup> for this policy obscured the fact that Jews who valued torah-observance enough for Paul to adopt this behavior in order to gain their trust would be, if they accepted his message, commencing on a faith journey characterized by the renunciation of torah-faith, yet unbeknownst to them. It follows that, if "converted," they, too, would adopt this chameleon-like expedient behavior thereafter on the same terms, that is, only to dupe other Jews, creating a spiral of duplicity, a culture wherein misunderstanding and continued "immature" or "weak" notions of the value of Jewish practice among Jewish believers in Christ would be self-perpetuating.

John Barclay recognizes this logical element in the traditional construction of Paul but upholds it nevertheless to be the correct interpretation, cleverly comparing Paul's theology with "a Trojan horse which threatens the integrity of those who sought to live according to the law."<sup>16</sup> Many Jewish interpreters, accepting the traditional Christian construction, have observed the duplicity of Paul's strategy, and it has been used to substantiate the arguments of those wishing to expose suspect values at the heart of nascent Christianity.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, many Christian interpreters do not mention the problematic subversion of Paul's integrity this interpretation creates or explain how they reconcile it with the high moral standing otherwise attributed to Paul's life and teaching.

This interpretive approach is also popular among those who seek to reconcile the torah-observant Paul presented by Luke in Acts with the Paul of his letters, where he is generally understood to be indifferent to torah-observance, if not actually opposed to it. For them, Paul's adoption

of torah in Acts exemplifies his missionary strategy as expressed in 1 Cor 9:19–23, wherein he supposedly undertakes torah-observance sometimes in the expedient pursuit of a value championed to be superior, evangelism, regardless of, and generally without discussion of, the moral problematic of duplicity: “The undisputable fact that he was raised as a law-observant Jew makes it reasonable to assume that he often observed Jewish customs in his daily life—as long as they did not blur the gospel. For the historical Paul, traditional law-observance was certainly subordinated to the preaching of the gospel and his concern for the salvation of mankind.”<sup>18</sup>

Even when Paul is understood to encourage respect for Jewish behavior among Christ-followers, it amounts to little more than patronizing. For example, when Paul urges those who were secure in their faith to respect the sensibilities of the “weak in faith” in Rome, the latter are portrayed to be Jewish believers in Jesus who still “fail to trust God completely and without qualification”; that is, they have not freed themselves from torah-practice as integral to Christ-faith.<sup>19</sup> In Corinth, although Paul is understood to call for the “knowledgeable” to refrain from eating idol food for the sake of those who remain conscious that it is sacred, it is understood to be but a temporary concession, because in the long run Paul is believed to actually share the values of those Christ-followers who would eat idol food as a matter of indifference to Jewish covenant food conventions.<sup>20</sup> On the prevailing interpretation of Phil 3:2–7, Paul counted the value of Jewish identity and behavior to amount to nothing more than “crap” (σκύβαλα).<sup>21</sup>

According to the consensus of Pauline scholars, while Paul may have resisted the logical conclusion that he was no longer a representative of Judaism or a Jew in good standing but instead an apostate, one who now represented a new religion, that was an assessment hardly shared by others, including those who represented so-called Jewish Christianity.<sup>22</sup> He may have thought of himself as a “good Jew,” but no other practicing Jews would have. To the degree that Judaism continued to be lived in a meaningful way by Christ-followers—as an expression of personal and communal faith and lifestyle, of *kavannah* (*kawwanah* from the root *kwn*; intention)—this was reserved for so-called *Jewish* Christianity, represented by James or Peter. That was a way of interpreting the meaning of life after the resurrection of Jesus Christ that Paul ostensibly opposed because the Mosaic legislation no longer expressed God’s purpose for humankind, either because with the work of Christ the Mosaic covenant had successfully completed its purpose or because it had failed to do so and was rendered thereafter obsolete.

In short, when New Testament scholars speak of Paul's religious life and values, of Paulinism or *Pauline* Christianity, with its "*law-free* gospel," most mean to signify that Paul taught and practiced a *Judaism-free* way of living based on his belief in Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

### The New Perspective on Paul and Judaism

In recent years, a position recognized as the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) has challenged the traditional characterizations of the Judaism of Paul's time as legalistic and arrogantly self-righteous.<sup>24</sup> Instead, interpreters upholding this view recognize that Judaism was focused on responsible behavior (torah-observance) undertaken in a spirit of gratitude appropriate to the expression of faith (i.e., loyalty) by those called by a gracious God to a covenantal relationship (covenantal nomism). In other words, these observations reflect the ideals prized by Christians in positive terms usually reserved to describe Christianity but traditionally denied to Judaism.

Taking Judaism on its own terms is the welcome advance made by its proponents, largely based on the ability of Krister Stendahl's and E. P. Sanders's arguments,<sup>25</sup> and those made by others since, to succeed where those making similar observations had been previously unable to convince Pauline scholars, and Christians in general.<sup>26</sup> This historically more viable and cross-culturally more respectful development, with its new level of sociological and rhetorical sensitivity, has done little, however, to alter the traditional view that Paul, as apostle, did not practice the Judaism of his day. As was observed above for N. T. Wright, another leading voice of the New Perspective, James Dunn, who generally emphasizes that Paul always regarded himself to be a Jew, nevertheless still writes also that Paul did *not* "think of himself as a Jew," emphasizing that he did not observe torah as a matter of conviction but also that, "insofar as 'Jew' was an ethnic identifier (and insofar as he was an ethnic Jew), Paul wished neither to be known as such nor to identify himself as such. Insofar as 'Jew' denoted a lifestyle, a commitment to the ancestral customs of the Jews, Paul wished neither to exercise such a commitment nor to insist that other Jews be true to their ethnic-religious identity."<sup>27</sup> This trajectory was anticipated in Dunn's initial discussion of the new possibilities for interpreting Paul that he discovered through Sanders's work. Regarding Gal 2:16, Dunn observed that he detected in Paul a "crucial development for the history of Christianity taking place": "the transition from a form of Jewish Messianism to a faith

which sooner or later must break away from Judaism to exist in its own terms.”<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, most New Perspective interpreters still find fault with Judaism, albeit emphasizing different reasons, or at least with Judaism as Paul (mis)understood it. Paul is portrayed to have transcended Jewish particularism, expressed in nationalism, in specific boundary-marking behavior such as circumcision, Sabbath, and food conventions (cf. James Dunn and N. T. Wright), an argument that proceeds as if the marker for ethnic identification (circumcision) can be conflated with the behavioral observances such as diets and days that apply to those so identified, and as if Paul was against boundary-marking behavior per se, which he could not be, since he was creating social boundaries for a group around identification with Jesus as Christ. Or they find fault with Paul, in that he seems to have misunderstood his “former” religion (E. P. Sanders and earlier, e.g., H. J. Schoeps), or to have failed to reconcile it with his new “Christian” religion (H. Räisänen), leaving an irreconcilable contradiction in his theology.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, as several interpreters have noted, what has been named the New Perspective on *Paul* arguably represents not so much a new perspective on Paul as a new perspective on *Judaism*. The effort of Christian scholars to make sense of Paul's arguments in new terms has instead often resulted in a new level of confusion about Paul, or better, about the traditional construction of Paul, a construction of Paul that still generally prevails for the proponents of the New Perspective. Especially problematic is how to reconcile the implications that follow from recognizing Judaism to be grace- and faith-based with the role that Paul's voice has traditionally played in the critique of Judaism, as well as the foundations of Christian theology, wherein defining terms such as faith and grace and works has always taken place in binary contrast to what they were perceived to represent in Judaism, the misguided religion of the other. But if Judaism is based on grace, then why did Paul find something wrong with it? Or did he? What does this imply about the role of Jesus for Jews?<sup>30</sup> Is not *Pauline* Christianity necessarily something other than Judaism? If not, what kind of Judaism was it or should it be?

Naturally, not all Pauline interpreters believe that these positive reevaluations of Judaism are warranted, much less the efforts toward new interpretations of Paul or Christian origins they provoke. Many continue to view both Judaism and Paul through traditional Christian, especially Reformation-ground lenses,<sup>31</sup> or the bifocals shaped by F. C. Baur,<sup>32</sup> through which the superiority of *Pauline* “Christianity” can be clearly seen.<sup>33</sup> It is



also notable that Jewish interpreters of Paul, who do not generally share the traditional Christian perspectives on Judaism, nevertheless often adopt the traditional interpretations of Paul.<sup>34</sup> For the valuations that Christians have championed in this construal of Paul are easily viewed from an oppositional perspective to highlight, interestingly enough, the inferiority of Pauline “Christianity.”<sup>35</sup>

Ironically, the lack of substantial newness in the way Paul is portrayed or understood to relate to what is newly perceived about Judaism is signaled in the research that arguably inaugurated the so-called New Perspective on Paul. In his often-repeated statement, E. P. Sanders cleverly poses the matter in starkly contrasting terms: “*this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity.*”<sup>36</sup> Sanders defines this problem not as a critique of “the means of being properly religious” but of “the prior fundamentals of Judaism: the election, the covenant and the law; and it is because these are *wrong* that the means appropriate to ‘righteousness according to the law’ (Torah observance and repentance) are held to be wrong or are not mentioned.”<sup>37</sup>

To my knowledge, what has gone largely unrecognized in Sanders’s turn of phrase, and in much of the work by New Perspective interpreters, are the traditional assumptions that remain necessary to it. First, Sanders’s statement requires the institutional development of Christianity to make sense, however historically unlikely that remains and regardless of how often the formation of Christianity in Paul’s time is otherwise denied.<sup>38</sup> This results in a great deal of confusion in recent discussions about Paul and Judaism. Initial claims that there was no such thing as Christianity are regularly emptied of significance as the arguments proceed. It becomes evident that the interpreter is still working with a perception of Paul and his communities as something *other* than Judaism. This includes the problem of the continued use of nomenclature such as Christian and Christianity to refer to him, his teachings, and his communities.<sup>39</sup> Second, Sanders’s phrase requires the construction of a Paul who finds something wrong *with Judaism*. It is with the pillars of Jewish identity and religious values that Paul finds fault: election, covenant, torah, and repentance. And he does so from outside Judaism rather than from on the inside, since the problem lies *in* the prior fundamentals of Judaism.

The problem, as Sanders’s Paul sees it, is not with *some* or *other* Judaism, not with *some* Jewish people<sup>40</sup> or ideas or institutions or practices, not with *some* or *other* Christ-following Jews or Jewish groups<sup>41</sup> or *their* ways of interpreting the meaning of Jesus Christ—but with and in Judaism



per se, which his Paul “*opposed*.”<sup>42</sup> Granted, this is not because Judaism was legalistic or based on achieving righteousness by fulfilling commandments rather than by grace, as the traditional views that Sanders criticizes maintained, because he recognized that these were not how Judaism operated. But for Sanders, Paul does not level his critique from *within* Judaism: he is not engaged in prophetic speech based upon an appeal to the noble values of these fundamental Jewish ideals, accusing competing Jewish groups or Judaisms of compromising them. Rather, Paul devalues or challenges the ideals themselves, *and* he does so *from outside* Judaism. In this sense, the New Perspective view of Paul remains similar to traditional approaches, holding variations of the same views as those expressed by many challenging them for ostensibly compromising traditional notions held to be fundamental to certain Christian truths.

Sanders does mention the limitation of referring to “Paul and Judaism” in a way that fails to suggest something other than “Paul and *the rest of* Judaism” but concludes that “the traditional terminology would seem to be justified by his being engaged in a mission which *went beyond the bounds of Judaism*.”<sup>43</sup> For Sanders, Paul’s problem remains *with* or *in* Judaism as a system that does not offer salvation in Jesus Christ. But does it not do so? Is it not precisely *within* Judaism where Paul as well as all of the other Jewish and Judean believers in Jesus Christ understood themselves to find him? Did not Paul persecute (i.e., seek to discipline) a group *within* Judaism for failing to exemplify Jewish values according to *his* Jewish group’s terms, and then later was it not instead this persecuted group’s values that he upheld to be the most representative *of Judaism*—Judaism as it should and will be when the end of the ages has arrived, having now—from his group’s perspective, conceptualized in specifically Jewish communal terms—already dawned? Is it not *Judaism’s* ideals as represented in Judaism’s Scriptures to which he appeals in order that his addressees will “hear torah” aright (Gal 4:21), that is, according to Paul’s interpretation? Was he not disciplined *as a Jew* by his fellow Jews because his activities were deemed by them, and him, to be undertaken *within* Judaism?

Interestingly, Sanders argues as much when discussing Paul’s thirty-nine lashings five times as evidence that Paul remained within the orbit of synagogue authority, for receipt of this disciplinary action logically implies Paul’s continued presence in synagogues.<sup>44</sup> This fact involves voluntarily yielding to the jurisdiction of local Jewish authorities who would not be able to wield such authority over *former* Jews, those who have chosen to leave the community and the practice of Judaism. Reaching across Jewish

communal lines to discipline those outside the community would run afoul of prevailing Roman conventions.

Comparing Views of Judaism for *Non-Jews (Gentiles)* Versus for *Everyone*

I do not wish to downplay the many innovative developments in Pauline scholarship, as a result of which many advances in the study of Paul as well as Judaism have been made (for which I am deeply grateful), and certainly not the contribution of Sanders or Dunn or any of the other scholars whom my discussion engages and from whom I have learned much. At the same time, I would like to focus attention on a few issues that seem to remain unaddressed or, better, confusing in a way that obstructs the gains that might be made in the direction of rereading Paul within the framework of the Judaism (or Judaisms) of his time. My aim is to prod the Pauline interpretive community to paradigmatic change. To begin this process, let us look a little closer at what Sanders wrote.

Sanders compared “how *one* gains righteousness” in Paul’s religious system to that of so-called Palestinian Judaism.<sup>45</sup> He found that the Paul he constructed did not share many of the values of the Jewish systems to which Sanders compared him. Besides approaching Paul as outside Judaism, this is a decisive move that continues to reverberate not only in the work of those who constitute the New Perspective and its variations but in the work of those who oppose it, too, in that he seeks to measure how *one* gains righteousness in these two systems.

That approach poses the topic in universal terms: for *everyone*. However, this formulation does not exemplify how either Paul or the other Jewish groups approached social reality, which for them consisted of Jews and non-Jews, who were understood to stand in a different relationship to God and to each other from birth (see Gal 2:15; 1 Cor 7:17–24; Rom 3:29–30).<sup>46</sup> The question requires a more precise formulation: How does *one not born Jewish* gain equal standing among *the righteous ones* (that is, among those who call themselves Israelites, Jews, children of Abraham, people of God)?

Sanders’s attempt to compare the rabbis to Paul in soteriological terms is problematic for several reasons. The construal is predicated on later Christian ways of framing that which is to be discovered and compared, namely, focused upon salvation, as if that was the self-evident concern of the rabbis in the same way that it was of later Christians. At the same time, that was a reasonable way to approach the topic, because Sanders sought

to inform Christians that the rabbis were not teaching a works-righteous approach to salvation in the way that Christians had attributed that to them. Even so, to pose the matter in the universal terms of "when a man..." subverts the potential for the comparison. The rabbis were seldom asking about the rescue of those from the nations, and Paul was almost always writing about just that particular categorical case.<sup>47</sup> The question, to the degree that male circumcision is central to the discussion should be either "when a *Jewish* man" or in this case, since it is to be compared to the "when a non-Jewish man" context of Paul's rhetoric, "how does a *non-Jewish* man gain standing among the righteous ones." Naturally, apart from circumcision, the implications apply to women as well as men.<sup>48</sup>

When Sanders does look specifically at the question of the inclusion of *non-Jews* as righteous ones, both in this age and in the age to come, he readily admits that, unlike the literature addressing the members of the covenant from which he develops the notion of covenantal nomism, "the Gentiles are dealt with only sporadically, ... and different Rabbis had different opinions about their destiny."<sup>49</sup> Recognition of this fact should profoundly alter the interpretive landscape for comparing Paul and Judaism.<sup>50</sup> That move is further accentuated if one attends to Second Temple Jewish literature rather than the rabbis.<sup>51</sup>

Consider Josephus's account of the two very different opinions about how the non-Jewish King Izates should proceed in the present age to worship God and express pious adherence to a Jewish (Judean) way of life, either by becoming circumcised or not. Contrary opinions were espoused by two different Jewish informants, Ananias and Eleazer, and, interestingly enough, within a diaspora setting during Paul's period (A.J. 20.17–96). Upon his arrival, Eleazer, a Jew from Galilee (and apparently a Pharisee), was quick to inform Izates that, if he wished to respect the torah that he was reading for guidance, he should do what was commanded therein (although this is not self-evidently the case for a non-Israelite/non-Jew and ironically may represent conflating to "a Jewish man" universal!), namely, undertake circumcision. Previous to this, Ananias, a Jew identified as a merchant who was already present at the king's court and who had responded to Izates's similar deduction that he had to undertake circumcision to become a Jew "completely," not only emphatically opposed the circumcision of Izates; he proposed that Izates's resolve to practice a Jewish way of life completely apart from ethnic conversion represented a way of worshiping God that was more highly valued than circumcision, given his present situation (20.38–42). I have not noticed any secondary source

argue that Ananias's teaching against the circumcision of Izates represents a religious viewpoint arising from outside of Judaism or from a "former" Jew, one who no longer observed torah, or that Eleazer's teaching was outside the bounds of Judaism either, even though torah does not state that non-Jews should become circumcised if wishing to be instructed by torah. Rather, the conceptualizations are stretched to encompass the breadth of Jewish views that just such an incident makes necessary.<sup>52</sup> Josephus and his interpreters treat both Ananias and Eleazer as Jews who espoused different points of view on the role of circumcision for conversion, as well as on how God should be properly worshiped by a non-Jew. Both drew their interpretations from Jewish Scripture and tradition, and both did so to address the case of this particular non-Jew, who happened to also be the king of a non-Jewish nation. Both found something wrong with the solution proposed by the other. In other words, it is the interpreter's definitions of Judaism that are challenged by this case: one must find a way to explain this example *within* the boundaries of Judaism rather than suppose that one or the other participant stood *outside* of it or found something wrong *with* or *in* Judaism itself.

Unfortunately, to date the distinction between a proposition discussing righteous standing with God for Jews and one discussing the topic for non-Jews often continues to be obscured by the manner in which the issues are posed. Since this is a subject about which Paul specifically writes and around which a variety of Jewish views can be expected to emerge, delineating this distinction should be central to all such "Paul and Judaism" debates.

### The Role of Ethnic Distinction in Paul's Argumentation

If Paul's rhetoric does not collapse the ethnic boundary defining Jew and non-Jew, then why do interpreters not maintain that difference when seeking to compare Paul and other Jewish voices on any given issue? Thus we do not read of "Paul against torah-observance *for non-Jews* (as if they were under torah on the same terms as are Jews)" but of "Paul against torah-observance," implying "Paul against torah-observance *for all humankind*." The normal shorthand for calling up this paradigmatic understanding of that for which Paul stands is "Paul's *law-free* gospel." That phrase is so common as to seem unremarkable, beyond requiring defense. But should that be the case?

If we were to limit comparisons to those within the realm of Paul's rhetorical (i.e., argumentative) concerns, that is, to the matter of righteous

standing for *non-Jews*, we would find that other Jewish sources also do not believe that non-Jews are obliged to observe torah on the same terms as Jews.<sup>53</sup> We would find differences emerge around the question of the standing of non-Jewish people within the community of the people of God *in the present age*. That would be different still than a discussion about the age to come, because according to some Jewish voices the righteous non-Jew can gain equal or even higher standing then (Isa 66:18–20; Zeph 3:9; Zech 2:15; Tob 13:11; 14:5–6; cf. t. Sanh. 13:2; b. Meg. 13a). Are such views to be classified as “law-free,” or are they qualified as related specifically to non-Jews, those not by definition under torah on the same terms as Jews and thus not to be universalized to “everyone”?

Moreover, Paul's argument is *time specific*—*chronometrical*, a term coined to differentiate what was at dispute in a way that will, I hope, avoid the usual problem of essentializing of the issues.<sup>54</sup> We do well to approach the topic without assuming a priori that other Jews and groups were against the very notion of non-Jews being included among the people of God *when the age to come arrives*, including them remaining non-Jews. What more likely set apart Paul's position was the claim that the awaited age *had arrived* in the midst of the present age. Because Paul's Jewish coalition claims that the end of the ages has *already* dawned, it follows that the reidentification of non-Jews takes place *now*, on the *awaited-age* terms. *That* proposition is unique to the Christ-following Jewish groups.<sup>55</sup> It revolves around a different answer to the question, “What time is it now?,” which dictates a different answer to the follow-up question, “What policies and behavioral norms are *appropriate* now?” The answers for Paul's groups are based on a different conviction about the meaning of Jesus Christ, in particular about the claim that God has already raised him from the grave. It is on *this* matter, on what is appropriate *chronometrically* regarding non-Jews turning to Judaism's God, that we can more accurately seek to compare Paul's Judaism with other Judaisms.

We thus encounter a familiar difference arising between Jewish groups, one that turns around eschatological convictions. The issue is not *whether* the torah obtains but *how* it functions in the present age for non-Jews, in contrast to Jews. Differences of opinion are contested between these groups over where humankind is *presently* standing on God's timeline, and thus about what kind of behavior is appropriate *today*, and, more importantly, in the case of Christ-following groups, over what to do *now* about the identity of the non-Jews who have turned to Christ. That is why Paul was so opposed to these non-Jews undertaking to become Jews, to become

members of Israel, to become circumcised—because if the age to come has arrived, then they join alongside of Israel to worship the One God of all humankind, as expected on *that day* (see below for discussion of how Paul draws from the Shema to make this case).<sup>56</sup> It was because of different answers to these kinds of questions from the ones offered by those who controlled the Jerusalem temple that the Dead Sea Scrolls community of the Righteous Teacher apparently withdrew from the temple worship of its time.<sup>57</sup> It was because of a different and controversial answer to the question of what God was doing among the nations that the Christ-following Jewish groups suffered for upholding that non-Jews were full and equal members of the righteous ones apart from proselyte conversion. Neither group opposed torah-observance, but they disagreed with the way that other Jewish groups interpreted how torah was to be observed, given the *present* circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

Here is a simple suggestion. To be more faithful to the contextual usage of Paul's language, the interpreter of Paul's rhetoric should add, "for *non-Jews*" as well as "*followers of (or: believers in) Jesus Christ*" to the end of virtually every sentence in his letters about these matters, certainly so when he is specifically addressing non-Jews within them.<sup>59</sup> As historical critics, why not keep the specificity of the case before us? A question such as "Why did Paul oppose circumcision?" misses the point. It implies that he opposed it in principle for *all* Christ-followers and thus for Jews as well as for non-Jews. It leads to hermeneutical applications of supposed universal values for *everyone*. Admittedly cumbersome, one should ask instead, "Why did Paul oppose the circumcision of (adult male)<sup>60</sup> *non-Jew followers of Jesus Christ*?" Then theological propositions that appeal to Paul's language have a better chance of reflecting Paul's contextual perspective, and likewise each hermeneutical application can better reflect the tension between what he meant and what it might mean for the later interpreter.<sup>61</sup>

There is no reason to believe that Paul opposed circumcision of children born to Jewish parents and good reason to suppose that he did not.<sup>62</sup> And there is no reason to suppose that he opposed circumcision of non-Jews who were not Christ-followers. At many points the logic of his position suggests that Jewish believers in Christ, including Paul, observed his instruction to remain in the state in which they were called, keeping the commandments of God (1 Cor 7:17–24), which, for a Jewish person, involved guarding the whole torah, by Paul's own admission (Gal 2:15; 5:3; 6:13; discussion below). And it makes sense to suppose that Paul, like the

Christ-following Jews described by James in Acts 21, would be zealous in his observation of halakic behavior and take the steps necessary to demonstrate this fact and dispel any rumors that he did not do so. The Paul that Luke presents, who undertakes a Nazarite vow in the temple, which involved a burnt offering (Acts 21:19–26), appears to signify a later interpreter presenting Paul similarly on this matter.

If Paul does not observe torah, he leaves himself open to the easiest objection to his proposition that Jesus is the Christ that the very Jews he seeks to convince would be expected to level, an objection that has been repeated ever since the construction of Paul and Paulinism as torah-free was invented.<sup>63</sup> If Paul did not himself represent the highest ideals of the Judaism that maintained the hope of just such a day, how could he expect to convince Jews, much less non-Jews, of the propositional claim that the awaited restoration of Israel and of the rest of the nations (of creation itself) had begun with the resurrection of Jesus?

Pursuing clarification of Paul's teaching and the implications for Jews is not the same task as investigating the meaning of Paul's rhetoric for *non-Jews*, the members of the nations other than Israel whom he directly addresses.<sup>64</sup> For example, note that in Gal 5:11 Paul does not argue that he is persecuted for failure to observe torah, for failing to keep a Jewish diet or Sabbath or uphold circumcision for Jews, but specifically for the policy of not teaching non-Jewish Christ-followers to become proselytes, that is, to become circumcised. Note that his letters do not concern themselves with answering other charges.

Many point to the implications of 1 Cor 9:19–23 to undermine the proposition of a torah-observant Paul, as discussed above, but I understand Paul to be expressing a *rhetorical strategy*, not a change of halakic behavior.<sup>65</sup> As noted, the consensus interpretation understands Paul's "becoming like" the different parties to signify "mimicking" each, not actually becoming like them in the sense of sharing their convictional bases for the behavior. Instead, he merely imitates their cultural conventions temporarily in order to seek to gain them to an entirely different set of convictions that will, if accepted, lead them to abandon the continued practice of those conventions thereafter—even though he appeared to them to practice these conventions while holding to the convictions he proposed. That represents a deceptive strategy, pretending to share propositional values in order to persuade others away from those values by way of *behavioral adaptability*. But I propose that Paul's appeal to a policy of "becoming like" signifies his *rhetorical adaptability*, a tactic of "arguing from the premises" of each dif-



ferent interest group to bring them to conclusions about the gospel that they might not have otherwise considered relevant for themselves.<sup>66</sup>

When seeking to win Jews to the message of good in Christ, Paul argues from Jewish premises; that is easy enough for him to do because he shares them. He argues from law-based premises when among those “under law,” a phrase that can be variously understood. When Paul mentions causing himself to become like the “lawless” or “sinner” (*ἄνομος*), often translated “without law,” it is no more likely that he means he abandons halakic behavior or acts like a sinner than it is that Jesus behaved like a prostitute or tax-collector to relate to them.<sup>67</sup> Paul is a self-confessed slave to righteous living. Communicating the message of Christ to sinners does not entail behaving sinfully in order to do so, but quite the contrary: it behooves one seeking to influence them to the message of good in Christ, to membership among the righteous ones of God, and to righteous lifestyles, to behave righteously as a matter of conviction and *at all times among everyone*.

Paul is not here admitting to compromising Jewish behavioral practices when among non-Jews but explaining how he relates the message of Christ to them on their own terms. In the midst of his discourse throughout 1 Cor 8–10, wherein he explains why the Christ-followers in Corinth cannot eat idol food, Paul relates his strategy toward non-Christ-followers in 9:19–23. Just as he explains to the “knowledgeable” in Corinth why they must respect the sensibilities of the “weak” or “impaired” (*ἀσθενής*) and not eat according to their theoretical “rights,” his argument nevertheless aims to convince them not to exercise those rights.<sup>68</sup> They cannot eat at the table of the Lord and the table of daemons; they cannot eat food that they know to be idol food, whether from the market or at someone’s home.

Although Paul solicits the support of scriptural precedent, he does not proceed as he would if a Jew asked him about eating idol food. He does not simply cite torah against eating idol food to make this case, at least not initially. Rather, he argues from their own worldview as Christ-following non-Jews. He begins his argument in terms of their own premises, but he drives them to a very different conclusion than they have otherwise arrived at on their own: they must flee from anything that can be understood to represent idolatry.<sup>69</sup>

Paul does not act like the knowledgeable, but he *argues* in a way that they might. In that sense he “causes himself to become like” the knowledgeable, to convince them to become like himself, one who regards idol food as anathema.<sup>70</sup> This approach is exemplified in Acts 17:16–34, where Luke portrays Paul appealing to a statue (idol) to an unknown god in



order to make his case to polytheists, even though Paul did not believe that such statues should be made. In stark contrast to the rhetorical behavior described in verses 1–3, when Paul came into a synagogue and began from the shared premises of the Scripture and the reign of the One God to convince Jews about Jesus as Messiah, his behavior among the non-Jew philosophers in Athens is described in terms of rhetorically adapting to non-Jew philosophers. He “became like” a polytheist to make his point to polytheists, but in no way did he become a polytheist or practice idolatry to do so. Luke’s Paul appeals to the logic of their own premises to seek to bring them to a very different conclusion than they have drawn. In the case of seeking to persuade non-Jews of the message of good in Jesus Christ, Paul must sacrifice his “right” to assert the perspective of Jewish Scriptures and traditions about the revelation of the One God as if self-evident.<sup>71</sup> Such rhetorical adaptability was to be expected of a philosopher attempting to win adherents, just as it would be, *mutatis mutandis*, of a Jew seeking to win fellow Jews to new claims about the meaning of current events precisely by appealing to Scripture.

### Paul’s Judaism

Let us look at how Paul used the term *Ἰουδαϊσμός* (Judaism/a Jewish way [of living]) to see if my proposition can be sustained in that context. Paul uses this terminology only two times, and both cases are in Gal 1:13–14. He writes that his addressees have heard of “my former behavior in Judaism” (*τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ*) in verse 13, which could be translated “my former behavior in the Jewish way of living” or “my former practice of Judaism/of the Jewish way of living.”<sup>72</sup> The clause appears in the midst of a sentence describing a certain feature of his former way of living Jewishly with which his addressees are presumed to be familiar. That way of living involved specifically that he “was persecuting [*ἐδίωκον*]” the Jewish subgroup communities of believers in Jesus Christ with the intent of “destroying/ruining [*ἐπόρθουν*]” them, to which we will return. In further describing that time, Paul writes in verse 14 that back then he “was advancing in Judaism (or, the Jewish way of living) [according to his former behavior therein] beyond many of my contemporaries in my ethnic group” (*προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου*); that is, “I was being a much greater zealot (or, much more jealous) [than they were] for the traditions of my fathers” (*περισσότερως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων*). Note that Paul writes of his relationship to

the *traditions* in personal as well as comparative terms, as “of *my* fathers,” and not simply “of *the* fathers.” Does Paul betray here that his identity continues to be bound up with the particular interpretive tradition that he still considers himself to represent, albeit in some way that no longer enjoys the approval or at least admiration that he formerly received from them? If so, then is what is “former” his harmful behavior toward the Christ-followers, and also that he was so much more zealous about that, rather than his practice of Pharisaic Judaism, which continues, whatever differences might obtain, to define his way of practicing a Jewish way of life?

Interpreters traditionally have understood Paul to be describing himself as presently no longer living in Judaism. Leaving aside the traditional problem of conceptualizing and naming this as Paul’s *conversion* rather than, as is now widely recognized, his *calling*,<sup>73</sup> Paul’s phrasing here continues to lead interpreters to portray Paul in terms of a binary contrast between being a Jew and practicing Judaism versus being a Christian and practicing Christianity, whatever terms might be used. But the language Paul uses here arguably describes *a certain way of living* in Judaism that no longer characterizes *the way he lives* in Judaism *now*. That is not to deny some change in social relations, which Paul signals. We might advance the discourse by thinking in terms of familial relationships that a person has simultaneously but that can and do change. One may be born a son, a brother, too, and later become a husband and a father, too. It makes little sense to imagine that the new roles eliminate the other identifications and relationships. At any given time one or the other can be more salient, more important, more estranged, and so on, but they do not usually represent either/or options in the way that Paul’s change of convictions and affiliations has been conceptualized, and, for that matter, similar decisions by other Jews of his time to move between or within other Jewish groups or Judaisms.<sup>74</sup>

Paul’s former way of living involved a more zealous approach than his fellow subgroup members apparently pursued to protecting “the traditions of my fathers,” a catch-phrase almost certainly denoting Pharisaic Judaism.<sup>75</sup> It may be the case, although it is not certain, that the specific area in which his zeal for the traditions of the fathers was demonstrated to be greater than his peers was in his taking action against what he considered to be a threat posed by the Christ-following Jewish subgroups. This could imply that he has moved within Pharisaism from a group of Pharisees that approved of his zeal to seek to destroy these groups of Christ-followers to a group of Pharisees<sup>76</sup> (or a coalition of groups that included Pharisees)

that now expressed the aspirations of them. It might also suggest that these groups, whether Pharisaic per se or not, were understood to fall under a Pharisaic orbit of authority.

We should revisit whether it was "persecution" as usually envisaged in terms of physical violence and the like to which Paul was referring. His choice of terms could indicate discursive behavior. The rhetorical behavior could be in a legal sense of accusing or prosecuting or a more general sense of arguing or declaiming.<sup>77</sup> In Pharisaic terms, to which Paul is appealing, he could be indicating that he tried to *discredit* these groups through *argumentation* (perhaps through "precise" [i.e., Pharisaic] textual interpretation) and thereby to "ruin" or "destroy" them. That could involve undermining their confidence and reputation or even seeking legally to deny to them the conditions that made it possible for them continue to assemble as groups. If so, and this would apply as well to the traditional sense of persecution, he sought to bring them into compliance if not conformity to his own present group's point of view, and if not membership then at least recognition of its authority on the matters in dispute.

However translated, it appears to be the case that Paul is making a comparative point, that he has moved from his particular Pharisaic group's appeal to the traditions of the fathers as the ultimate authority for interpreting the matter at issue to Christ-following Judaism's conviction that the ultimate authority on this matter derives from the revelation of Christ. It is less clear, but possible, that Paul now saw himself representing the subgroups of Christ-followers who still subscribed to Pharisaic principles, *mutatis mutandis*.<sup>78</sup> Whatever the case, Paul is not denying that he behaves Jewishly, that he practices Judaism or a Jewish way of life. We should seek to understand his arguments as expressions of Paul's Judaism following this change of conviction about the well-being of the followers of Christ. In his time, believing that Jesus was the Messiah and affiliating with other Jews who shared that conviction involved making a choice between different groups of Jews, but the choices then were *within* Judaism; they did not signify leaving the practice of a Jewish way of life.

Paul claims to have had a revelation that his peers have not experienced,<sup>79</sup> and I understand this to be the background for his dissociating statement that his good-news message and authority as an apostle (ambassador, envoy) are "not from human agency or agents but from God" (Gal 1:1). In contrast to the prevailing views, I think it likely that his references to "humans" and the "flesh and blood" from whom he does not gain approval or seek advice (Gal 1:1, 10–12, 16) are not to the other apostles who knew

Jesus personally but to the specific group of Pharisees he had represented, from whom he had won great approval until he changed course following that revelation (1:13–16). Although he also expresses relative independence from the other apostles for many years, he makes this point to argue for their ultimate unanimity on the matters at hand, even though arrived at independently (1:17–2:10).<sup>80</sup> Hence Paul is not indicating that he formerly lived in Judaism but no longer does so but that he has changed the way he lives *within* Judaism, his social location relative to his former group and its approval, probably the particular Judaism to which he owes allegiance, that is, his former Pharisaic subgroup if not Pharisaism per se.<sup>81</sup> Behaving so as to gain the approval of those peers no longer characterizes the way he *is living in Judaism*—Jesus-Christ-based Judaism, perhaps even Jesus-Christ-based Pharisaic Judaism—*now*.<sup>82</sup> Hence the move toward framing the perspective for investigating his life and letters under the rubric *Paul within Judaism*.

Paul does not specify what the Christ-following Jewish groups were doing that he deemed to be so threatening, so one must develop a proposition to make sense of Paul's earlier life and change of course. Interpreters have generally understood Paul's opposition to be to a lax attitude toward torah observance, perhaps even outright renunciation—proto-Paulinism, you might say.<sup>83</sup> The issues of the letter, and the topic of his calling as described in 1:16, to proclaim God's Son to the nations, suggest that Paul objected specifically to the policy of regarding non-Jews who believed in Jesus Christ to be full members having equal status with Jews (especially with proselytes) without having become Jews, of the claim to be children of Abraham apart from the traditional convention of proselyte conversion to gain that standing.<sup>84</sup> That policy is the one for which he claims to be *persecuted* later (probably better: *hassled, argued with, accused*, maybe even *prosecuted*),<sup>85</sup> namely, for not “still” preaching circumcision of non-Jews (Gal 5:11). While Paul championed this change of policy for Christ-following Jewish subgroups, he probably did not initiate it. Rather, before the dramatic revelation of Christ in him and the call to bring this message to the nations, he had been the most vicious opponent of this policy. This policy of including non-Jews as full members was a propositional truth for Christ-based groups that likely predated his change of course. If so, what probably motivated Paul's zealous response was not a failure by Jewish members of the Christ groups to observe torah per se. They were likely observing, for example, Sabbath and dietary customs and circumcising their sons. At issue, based on an alternative interpretation of torah,

was a change of policy for defining the inclusion of non-Jews as full and equal members *now*. For the Christ-following Jewish groups, inclusion was based on the chronometrical claim that God has in Christ initiated the age to come kingdom already, and thus members from the rest of the nations are (and should be) participating alongside of Israel in the worship of the One God in the ways to be expected when that day arrived.

Unlike the conventions in place in other Jewish groups of the time of which we are aware, the non-Jews in these Jewish groups were being identified not simply as *guests*, however welcome and celebrated. They were instead being treated as *members* in full standing, on the same terms as proselytes, as children of Abraham, yet at the same time not having become proselytes, so they are not members of Israel but representatives of the other nations bearing witness to the chronometrical proposition that the end of the ages had dawned in Christ.<sup>86</sup> They were celebrating a kind of messianic banquet expected in the age to come but doing so already in the midst of the present evil age.<sup>87</sup>

It seems likely that what Paul and his fellow group members objected to were rumors of insurrectionist agendas among some Jewish groups proclaiming the seditious message that there was already a ruler anointed to rule Israel and the nations rather than Caesar. This was made manifest by the new way Jews and non-Jews were interacting within these groups as if the awaited banquet of all nations worshipping together as equals under God's reign had begun. Jews and non-Jews were eating together as equal members of the righteous ones, as brothers and sisters in the family of Abraham. Such a stance threatened to undermine the way that the political exigencies of compliance with Roman rule were understood to be best expressed by Paul's Pharisaic group and other Jewish interest groups to which they answered, such as the temple authorities, who did the bidding of the Roman regime.<sup>88</sup> Hence, as their representative seeking to sustain the ostensible gains of maintaining the status quo, he had sought "to destroy" the Jesus-as-Christ/Lord confessing groups.

Paul refers to a specific way of living Jewishly, *within* Judaism, that is, among those Jews who looked to the traditions of the fathers for authority. Based upon his arguments throughout Galatians, and especially the dissociating of his authority as directly from God and not human agencies and agents, I believe that Paul seeks to remind the addressees that what he taught them ran against the prevailing views of Jewish groups that looked to "the traditions of the fathers" on the matter at hand, the place of proselyte conversion for non-Jew believers in Jesus as Christ. In the present

age, those who protect this convention among Jewish groups may have the authority to compel compliance, but the non-Jew addressees are to resist that authority and to suffer any consequences required, awaiting God's vindication of their righteous standing according to the chronometrical gospel message he had proclaimed (5:5). Paul argues that he, too, suffers for this policy, but he does not alter his course to gain relief by relaxing it (5:11). Now they are to join him in suffering for challenging the prevailing conventions, looking to the suffering of the one in whom they have believed (3:1; 4:12; 6:14).<sup>89</sup> "Do [they] not hear torah" rightly (4:21), that is, with Paul?<sup>90</sup>

Although Paul believes it should be otherwise, he does not *yet* expect Jewish authorities who do not share his faith in Jesus to legitimate his way of incorporating non-Jews according to the revelation of Christ. He tells this story to serve as an example to his non-Jewish addressees; they should not expect approval of their identity claims by the Jewish authorities either—at least, not yet.<sup>91</sup> Instead, they must resist pressure to comply with or conform to prevailing conventions to gain undisputed standing among the righteous ones: they must "out of faithfulness to the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). This intragroup disapproval extends not only to Paul, however independent his ministry among the non-Jews has been, but to the other apostles of this coalition, too, who stand up for the same principle truth of the message Paul delivered to the Galatian addressees, albeit sometimes a bit too tentatively for Paul's taste (cf. 2:1–21).<sup>92</sup>

In Christ-following-based Judaism, non-Jews do not become proselytes after becoming believers in Jesus Christ, for doing so would undermine the propositional truth upon which their faith is based, namely, that with the resurrection of Jesus Christ the end of the ages has dawned. Incorporating non-Jews into the people of God in the present age as proselytes according to the traditions of the fathers is no longer halakically warranted. That is not because Paul or the non-Jewish addressees are no longer a part of Judaism but because they are members of a particular Judaism or, alternatively, of a Jewish coalition that understands itself playing the role of the remnant representing the interests and eventual destiny of the whole cloth, of every Jewish group and way of living Jewishly. In other words, regardless of how triumphalistic it may be, these Christ-following Jews—and non-Jews!—are to live *on behalf of* Judaism and every Jewish person, not against them (Rom 9–11; esp. 11:11–36).<sup>93</sup> During the present, anomalous period, in which the age to come has begun but not been revealed in full,

many Jews are suffering vicariously on behalf of the non-Jews to whom Paul writes, but they are also being "kept safe," protected by God, which should guide the concerns of these non-Jews to behave righteously and generously toward them.<sup>94</sup>

In this service, Christ-following Jews like Paul do not reject torah but develop halakot that articulate the appropriate way to observe torah now, in view of the revelation of Christ that the representatives of the nations are not to become Israelites but to join with Israelites in a new community adumbrating the restoration of all humankind.<sup>95</sup> Otherwise, Paul's question in Rom 3:29, "Or is God of the Jews only, and not also of members of the other nations?," could not be answered to affirm the inclusion of anyone but Jews. However, Paul's answer was: "Yes, God is the One God of the members of the other nations also." According to Paul's logic, the alternative would have been to argue instead that God is only the God of Israel, that anyone from the other nations wanting to become part of the God's people must become Jewish proselytes, as was the case for the present age before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changed what was chronometrically appropriate, within Judaism, to age-to-come terms.

To put this another way, Paul understands the oneness of God in view of the faith of/in Christ to warrant a change of perspective on the way to incorporate non-Jewish people into the righteous ones, into the family of Abraham, without joining the family of Jacob/Israel. That change, Paul argued, is according to the teaching of torah, according to the declaration of God's oneness, according to the expectations of the prophets.<sup>96</sup> To maintain otherwise is to experience "stumbling" instead of enjoying Israel's special privilege (alongside Paul) of bringing light to all of the nations when that day has come (Rom 11:13–36).<sup>97</sup> It is Israel that has been entrusted with the words of God for the nations; it is thus Israel that Paul claims to represent as an ambassador to the nations (3:2; 10:14–11:12).

It is interesting to note that Rashi, who writes around halfway between Paul's time and our own, finds in the repetition of God's name in the Shema the anticipation of a day not unlike that which Paul argues to have arrived:

The Lord who is our God now, but not (yet) the God of the (other) nations, is destined to be the One Lord, as it is said, "For then will I give to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph 3:9). And (likewise) it is said, "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; on that day shall the Lord be One and His name One" (Zech 14:9).<sup>98</sup>



This logic helps us to understand how all of the parties present in Antioch when Paul confronted Peter could be eating according to prevailing Jewish diets but not arranged at the table according to prevailing conventions that discriminated seating or food distribution or in other ways that demonstrated relative status based upon identity as Jew or non-Jew (Gal 2:11–14).<sup>99</sup> Jews (if males) in this subgroup had been circumcised as infants (i.e., they had *erga nomou*), yet still sought the same righteous status before God as did the non-Jews who did so without having become circumcised (without *erga nomou*), because these Jews were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah promised by a faithful God.<sup>100</sup> Non-Jews were not under torah; they were nevertheless obliged to observe the appropriate halakah for this association as equals to take place. That is an idealistic notion within the constraints of the present age, when discrimination ineluctably accompanies difference.<sup>101</sup> But Paul believed the age to come had dawned, changing the terms, so that discrimination was to be eliminated by way of living according to the Spirit, that is, according to the age-to-come way of life that the Spirit made possible within this community, if they dedicated themselves to walking in the Spirit. Hence, Paul can write of equality of Jew and non-Jew in Christ and of keeping the commandments of God as paramount without negating any of torah. Within this community, the ethnic or national difference between Jew/Israelite and non-Jew/member of the nations, and therefore their different relationships to the torah, remain, but the present-age *discrimination* inherently concomitant with such distinctions should not.

For Paul, it is fundamental to the truth of the gospel that *difference remains*, that social boundaries are acknowledged, but that *discrimination should not*, in this age as in the age to come. It is an age that, according to the gospel, has dawned in Christ and should thus be made evident in the body of those who are committed to that trust when they meet and live together in community. Everyone is to live in a way respecting the different other, in love as the perfect expression of the commandments of God, of torah for Jews, and the law of Christ for Jews and non-Jews, too. Figuring out how to make this work constitutes establishing halakah for Paul, not its elimination.<sup>102</sup> And the difficult reality of exemplifying this chrometrical challenge in the present evil age is realized in Paul's constant appeal to live in "faith working through love," which is defined by torah but energized by the work of God in them through the Holy Spirit. They can thereby embody the life of the age to come, not that of human conventions that instead legitimate discrimination where difference is found, ampli-



fied, for example, by the creation of norms by which to measure each other hierarchically. In Christ's body, they are to be equals in rank but otherwise different, which extends even to the ways that God's Spirit is manifest in their lives, including how their different gifts and ministries are manifest. Like a body, they all represent different parts but contribute those parts to the health of the whole (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12–14). Otherwise, the whole would be but one part. As there is a place for non-Jews in that body, so also there is a place for Jews, *a fortiori*, and thus for torah; logically, on the "irrevocable" covenantal terms Paul upholds (Rom 11:28–29), how could it be otherwise?

### Contextualizing Paul's Torah Observance and Rhetoric for Non-Jews

To evaluate Paul's rhetoric we must decide or otherwise assume what his audience knows about him, often firsthand. Paul's interpreters have proceeded on the basis that his addressees know him to live a torah-free life. However, the opposite hypothesis should be tested. If Paul writes from within Judaism, if, for example, he is torah-observant, then his polemical language would carry very different implications for those it addressed. To name a few important indicators, I understand him to eat according to prevailing halakic conventions for diaspora Jews in each location he visits;<sup>103</sup> to respect the ideals of temple worship in the ways that religiously observant diaspora Jews would, such as attempting to travel to Jerusalem in time to celebrate Shavuot/Pentecost, which marks the receipt of torah by Moses and is calculated from the dating of Passover (Lev 23:15–16), suggesting that his addressees were expected to know when Jewish festivals were celebrated as well as their continued importance to Paul and to others in their coalition (1 Cor 16:8; cf. 5:7–8);<sup>104</sup> and to make a collection for those in Jerusalem suffering economic hardship for upholding the policy of non-Jew inclusion apart from proselyte conversion (Rom 15:25–31; Gal 2:7–10). These attitudes and actions would be compatible with Luke's account in Acts 21 that Paul took a Nazarite vow (which involved a burnt offering) in the temple in order to confirm that he lived and taught according to torah, in the face of rumors that he did not, whether this actually took place or not.

Consider Gal 5:3, where Paul seeks to undermine the addressees' confidence that they have proper motives for assessing the social advantages proselyte conversion appears to offer, at the same time putting in doubt the motives of those influencing them, implying that they have not made a

full disclosure of the obligations concomitant with the reidentification that they are promoting. Paul argues that if these non-Jewish Christ-followers are circumcised they will be responsible to “observe the whole torah.” This has been understood to mean that Paul is against torah observance, that he sees it as a burden to be avoided. But if Paul is torah-observant, and known to be such by the Christ-following non-Jews to whom he writes, it would signal a very different meaning. His warning is delivered to expose and undermine a lack of integrity in the rival message that his recipients are apparently too distracted by the benefits promised to detect. (The message and motives of those Paul vilifies cannot be known and should be approached with suspicion; after all, Paul’s polemic aimed to influence in response to rival influencers he suspected were appealing enough that they might win over his addressees to their course of action rather than his.) That message ostensibly promoted the good to be gained by undertaking proselyte conversion, providing a method to overcome the marginality that non-Jews claiming full standing as righteous ones apart from such conversion might suffer in both the larger (but still minority) Jewish and overarching pagan communities in which they live, communities that do not share their conviction about the meaning of Christ. Paul’s rhetorical approach was calculated to subvert its proponents’ projected neglect to disclose that this step involves more than an identity solution; it also necessarily involves the obligations of torah-identity. The tone of ironic rebuke here and throughout the letter seeks to expose the naïveté of these non-Jews, much as does the ironic rebuke of a parent aimed at a teenager for failure to calculate the long-term cost of the short-term aims they seek to gain by satisfying peer pressure.<sup>105</sup>

To carry weight, this rhetoric bespeaks knowledge of Paul as a torah-protector, since he is a Jewish person by birth, one who has, in keeping with his teaching, remained in that circumcised state in which he was called (1 Cor 7:17–24; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:4–7).<sup>106</sup> Otherwise, his non-Jewish audience would be expected to reply that they simply want what Paul has achieved, the advantage of traditionally accepted social identity for those claiming to be full members within these Jewish groups, without the obligation to observe the torah. Consistent with this observation, Paul instructs his non-Jew addressees to remain in their ethnic status as non-Jews, although, importantly, in a way that represents righteousness according to Jewish norms for defining human behavior (further evidence of his continued perspective from within Judaism). Even the love to which they are called to work out their faith is an articulation of the torah: not by

love working through faith but by "faith" or "faithfulness working through love" (Gal 5:6, 13–14).<sup>107</sup> In doing so, they represent the nations turning from idolatry to worship Israel's Lord as the One God of all humankind (see Rom 3:29–31; 6:15–23; 13:8–14; 15:15–16; 1 Cor 10; 1 Thess 1:9).

One may wonder, then, why does Paul employ rhetoric that seemingly qualifies the advantages of being a Jew and having torah? It is not hard to understand this development if Paul's non-Jew target addressees are suffering status uncertainty and disadvantage because they have accepted the chronometrical proposition that they have become equal members of Abraham's family from the other nations without becoming equal members of Israel via proselyte conversion. These non-Jews have discovered the bad-news social consequences in the present age for believing and acting according to the good-news proposition of the dawning of the age to come. Paul and those whose teaching has brought about this painful identity dissonance and social disadvantage need to qualify their own advantage as Israelites, Jews who have the privilege of the promises, of covenant, of torah and temple and so on (see Rom 9:4–5; Gal 2:15; Phil 3:4–6). That was just what was at stake in the Antioch incident (Gal 2:11–14) mentioned earlier. The problem, Paul tells Peter, is not that the conviction of these Jews about Jesus as Messiah and resultant faithfulness to the gospel has brought them down to the standing of non-Jews, but the proposition that the non-Jews have been brought up to equal standing before God with Jews: these non-Jew are now members of the righteous ones also (2:15–21). From this follows the need to qualify their relative advantages and, by implication, the relative advantages of those Jews who do not accept this reidentification proposition apart from proselyte conversion. Hence, as noted earlier, in Romans Paul asks whether God is the God of Jews only. Of course not, he answers, because God is One (Rom 3:29–30). Note that Paul's argument for the place of non-Jews depends upon the prior assumption of the place of the Jews as God's own. The continued place of Jews, which he goes so far as to call an "advantage" still (3:1–2), is not what is being contested but instead forms the logical basis for extending the concern of that same one and only Creator God of all humankind to facilitating in Christ the inclusion of members of the other nations *also*.

That these comments are not to be taken apart from their rhetorical function as arguments for relative equality among Jews and non-Jews in Christ is logically demonstrated in Paul's many negative answers to the questions he poses in the midst of these arguments: "May it never be" that there is no "advantage" to "being a Jew" and "circumcised," he pronounces

in Rom 3:1, because “the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God” (v. 2), the special prophetic privilege of bringing God’s word to the rest of the nations (cf. Rom 10–11). “May it never be” that we “overthrow the torah by this faith,” he thunders at the end of that chapter’s argument (3:31). Moreover, what many overlook are his many positive statements about the torah that should make the traditional portrait of Paul nonsensical but that have usually been ignored, downplayed, or reasoned away.<sup>108</sup> For Paul not only writes that what matters is the “keeping of the commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19), but also that “the torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (7:12); he even argues that “the torah is spiritual” (v. 14)! How many dissertations, monographs, or even essays have been written on these un-Pauline-like declarations; indeed, how many sermons have ever been delivered on them?

Paul’s rhetoric is rhetorical.<sup>109</sup> When it is isolated from its argumentative context for non-Jews within the first century, from Jewish communal and conceptual concerns, and made into universal-whatever-the-context-truths for every person, for all times, interpretations run a high risk of missing entirely what the historical Paul and his Judaism represented to his audiences, the good news along with the bad. If we approach Paul with the hypothesis that he was a figure within Judaism, indeed, propagating a particular Jewish community-forming viewpoint to diaspora Jews and non-Jews around the Mediterranean coast, and one whom his addressees know to observe torah as a matter of faith, many different possibilities for interpreting his language to be *representing Judaism* emerge. So also do many new possibilities for how we interpret and interact in our own time, not least, for my concerns, the potential for better Christian-Jewish relations.

We can begin to read his letters as expressions of Judaism pre-Christi-  
 anity, however deviant that form of Judaism was and came to be regarded by the other Jewish groups that survived. Paul’s arguments read very differently if we keep in focus that the issue for his targeted non-Jew addressees was their relative identity and behavior within Judaism—among groups and subgroups of Jews who were practicing Jewish ways of life. Because they have not become Jews themselves—regardless of how *Jewishish* they may be learning to think and behave—the idea of claiming acceptance as full members rather than as simply guests within the Jewish community is going to be contested by other Jews and Jewish groups and by their non-Jew families and neighbors. That is why the issues of identity focus on whether or not it is appropriate for them to undertake proselyte conversion (the *erga*

*nomou* that turns a non-Jew into a Jew).<sup>110</sup> The reason that Paul denies this option to his addressees need not be confused with torah-observance for Jews or with some kind of fault along the lines usually proposed, whether works-righteousness, or nationalism, or exclusivism, and so on.<sup>111</sup>

Paul argues for the propositional views of this Jewish group in tension with the views that prevail among other Jewish groups and in the larger non-Jewish society in which all of these Jewish groups functioned as minority groups and subgroups. His arguments often specifically deal with how to identify non-Jews as either guests or members and thus with how they should be obliged to behave, including how Jews are to interact with them. It is to be according to the rules of the anticipated feast for all the nations who turn to worship God alongside Israel in the age to come, which has dawned, according to Paul, in Jesus the Messiah.

### Conclusion

The investigation of Paul *and* Judaism has traditionally proceeded as if what was written was Paul *or* Judaism, with the understanding that these referents represent two different religious systems. That has not really changed with the development of the New Perspective on Paul. In the sense of Paul *within* or *for* or *representing* Judaism (or even a particular Jewish group), little work has been done to date. Interpreters do not often, if ever, write of converts to Paul's *Jewish communities* or *synagogues*, of Paul's *Judaism* or *Pauline Judaism*, of the *Judaism* of Paul,<sup>112</sup> or of the *Judaism* of Paul's communities.<sup>113</sup> Never do I remember reading of *Judaism's* Paul. The two terms signify different and incompatible entities; something must be wrong with one or the other side of the equation, or else they would not be so essentially antithetical. This "essentializing" of difference between Paul and Judaism, and the concomitant requirement to find fault with one or the other, is influenced by the interpreter's ideological vantage point.<sup>114</sup> It will likely continue to be perpetuated implicitly when not explicitly to the degree that the ethnic differentiation that Paul upholds between Jews and non-Jews, between Israel and the other nations, is approached by his interpreters as if drawn between Judaism and Christianity instead (whether using the term *Christianity* or not) or between Jewish and Pauline Christianities.<sup>115</sup>

Christianity has had much invested in the tradition of Paul *against* Judaism, providing a counternarrative against which to measure its own unique fulfillment of God's expectations, whereas the Judaism it has fashioned in this meaning-making is portrayed to have failed. Interestingly,

Jewish interpreters have become invested in the same construction of Paul, although turning the meaning upside down. This is all the more evident since the nineteenth-century reclamation of Jesus as a faithful Jewish figure, when Paul becomes the distorter of Jesus, the antagonist even of the Judaism that he had represented.<sup>116</sup> Since it is so obvious that Paul did not understand his former religion and no longer recognized its value, it was easy to trivialize and blame Paul for the misunderstandings and ill will that Christianity so often expressed toward Jewish people and religion. There was no reason to suppose that those who appealed to Paul's authority had misunderstood him and certainly no reason to look for Judaism at work in the teachings and actions of the apostle or in Paulinism.<sup>117</sup>

I have argued that successfully challenging the implicit as well as explicit negative valuations of Judaism that arise in the study of Paul requires attending to the particular contexts of Paul's language, written to non-Jews. Instead of treating this language as if universal, as if it addressed everyone (for example, Jews in precisely the same way as non-Jews), we should approach his rhetoric as highly situational and specific and not designed to offer a balanced view for everyone, on everything, forever. Sufficient historical-critical work on Paul has made it clear that the particular should not be confused with the absolute anymore than prescriptive rhetoric should be construed to be descriptive. Instead of proceeding as if Paul finds fault with Judaism, we should test the hypothesis that, to the degree that his rhetoric expresses fault, it is with other Jews and groups in position to influence the non-Jews he addressed in ways that he believed threatened their well-being in Christ. Like parental rhetoric regarding a teen's peers, it was designed to be prescriptive for his own, not descriptive of the others whose influence it was designed to undermine.

Paul's rhetoric, addressed to non-Jews, was often developed in conflict with rival Jewish groups and their interpretations of how to best live Jewishly, and usually, specifically emerged in the context of his Jewish coalition's claim that non-Jews, by way of their response to the gospel of Christ, have become included in the ways of life of the Jewish communities within which their Jewish subgroups operated. Claiming that these non-Jews were to now understand themselves living *within Judaism*, and with equal status to Jews apart from becoming Jews, that is, without undertaking proselyte conversion, was certainly a controversial claim.

We would expect different Jewish groups to define differently what faithfulness involves for Jews and what it entails for non-Jews, including any non-Jews who associate with Jews or want to become respected as

fellow members of the people of God. Attending to this dynamic is critical to interpreting Paul's rhetoric and rivalries. His perspective on how to incorporate these non-Jews among the people of God because of his chronological convictions created a very unsettling environment for these non-Jews. The way Paul defined the faithful practice of Judaism for Christ-following non-Jews, which involved not becoming Jews, was contested by other Jewish groups. They presented the options for non-Jews seeking to express faithfulness differently. But Paul was not present to counter their influence. In the letters that we seek to interpret we encounter Paul's effort to (re)address the identification and behavioral concerns of the non-Jews within the Christ-following Jewish subgroups as they sought to become fully integrated into Jewish communities and ways of life, to access communal honor and goods. Paul needed to explain the positions of this coalition and the price that might have to be paid to remain faithful to these propositional claims for the meaning of the gospel of Christ.

Paul faulted some Jews for failure to agree with him that the chronological expectations of Judaism were being realized in the work of proclamation in which he and his Jewish coalition were engaged, for failure to recognize that the end of the ages had dawned in Jesus Christ, and for not joining him in announcing this glad tiding to all of the scattered of Israel and those of the nations in which they were to be found (Rom 9–11; 15:30–32). Even more so, Paul found fault with those who sought to prevent him from making this announcement (1 Thess 2:15–16). He wished a curse upon those who marginalized his fellow non-Jew coalitionists for believing his message, for expecting communal inclusion on an unprecedented level (Gal 1:8–9; 5:12). To me, this seems logically inconsistent with his own need to experience a personal revelation in order to be convinced of such claims (1:11–17), and it does not reflect the ideals to which he seemed to otherwise subscribe. But his polemical rhetoric is also qualified by the fact that he was not addressing his adversaries or developing a guidebook for the centuries; he was trying to persuade his disciples facing the temptation to comply with the apparently far more compelling claims of those whose influence was immediate, while his could only be delivered by letter. He feared that they would be persuaded to choose a path that subverted "his gospel" without perhaps recognizing that this was at stake.

Nevertheless, Paul's criticism was not of Judaism. It was of the failure of some Jews and Jewish groups to be all that Judaism promised to be when the end of the ages had dawned, which he was convinced had occurred.<sup>118</sup> He proclaimed this day to have arrived in the news of good in Jesus Christ,



made manifest in the community of Jews and non-Jews who gathered as equal members to proclaim God's name in one voice. The awaited universal participation of all humankind in this joint praise was what he believed all Jews should agree to now, at least respect—and that they would agree to in due time. That is very different from the later “Christian” concept of Jews “converting” from Jewish identity and behavior and community—from a Jewish way of life, Judaism—to a wholly different if derivative religion named “Christianity.” In the meantime, he wanted the non-Jews who were Christ-followers to be respected as equal co-participants in Abraham's family, in the community of the righteous ones, and he wanted these non-Jews to live together with everyone else within the Jewish communities accordingly.

What separated Paul's particular way of practicing and promoting Judaism was that he believed everyone should be persuaded to respect the implications of this chronometrical proposition *now*. Many other Jews and Jewish groups (or Judaisms) did not believe that the awaited day had arrived. For them, the empirical evidence to warrant this conclusion was simply not experienced or observed (just as had been the case for Paul before his personal revelation). Many believed that non-Jews were welcome as guests, but to be included as equal members in the present age required membership in Israel, which involved completing the rite of proselyte conversion, if it could be facilitated at all. His chronometrical stance was thus, *mutatis mutandis*, just as ethnocentric and particularistic in its application of the universalistic proposition of the meaning of Christ for humanity as that of any Jewish group that did not believe this proposition to be verified, which thus logically maintained the particularistic requirement of proselyte standing for non-Jews to be included on equal terms. Neither proposition made sense independent of Judaism, independent of a particular people and way of living that proposes to know the will of the Creator, and thus to represent the ultimate interests of all humankind.

Paul explained in Rom 11, when confronting potential arrogance on the part of non-Jew Christ-followers, that he regarded his fellow Jews' failure to yet be persuaded of this message or its reception among the non-Jews to represent “stumbling” but that there was no doubt that they were still within the covenant, insisting that they had not fallen (vv. 11–36). He believed that within his lifetime his fellow Jews would eventually be steadied again as a result of his ministry. That ministry also included the role of the non-Jews to whom he wrote. He sought to make them realize that generosity of spirit rather than triumphalism or indignation was warranted. Their lives must represent the righteous ideals of the age to come that they



proclaim to have dawned in Christ: Judaism as it should be lived. They are to understand the momentary out-of-balance-state of these Jewish brothers and sisters not to be a final judgment but rather to represent vicarious suffering on their behalf. Paul believed that bringing this message to the rest of the nations would ultimately result in the restoration of all Israel, as well as the salvation of the other nations, even if he only came to that conclusion with the passing of time and the disclosure of a mystery (vv. 25–26, 33–36).<sup>119</sup>

Whether one judges *Paul's Judaism*—or Pauline Judaism, if you will—to be right about these claims, or in its criticisms of other Jews and Jewish points of view, is another matter entirely. But in my view, what Paul would find wrong in Paulinism is this: *it is not Judaism*.

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Addendum: A Quick Glance in the Rearview Mirror

The investigation of Paul's Judaism—Paul's Christ-following-based version of Judaism, to be sure—is no longer as foreign to the field of Pauline studies as it was a mere decade ago when I wrote the first version of this essay. Although still a small movement, and not without its naysayers, there are several encouraging developments to report.

To begin with, between the completion of this essay and its publication, Magnus Zetterholm's *Approaches to Paul* (Fortress, 2009) included a chapter tracing the research that “radicals” such as myself and a few others had been pursuing since the mid-1990s that challenged the prevailing approaches to Paul *and* Judaism. That same year, HarperOne published Pamela Eisenbaum's *Paul Was Not a Christian*. Then, in 2010, the year that *Paul Unbound* was published, several scholars who had been exploring compatible approaches to Paul and matters Jewish began to meet as a consultation at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Annual Meeting under the title “Paul and Judaism,” cochaired by Zetterholm and myself. In 2014, we gained standing as a section under the title “Paul within Judaism.” The sessions have covered a range of flashpoint topics, been well attended, facilitated lively discussions, and resulted in several publications.

Papers from the sessions in 2010 and subsequent years, along with a few others invited to fill in gaps, were published by Fortress in 2015 under the title, *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, edited by Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm. We coined this title for the perspective to differentiate it according to the historically ori-

ented research agenda articulated in the subheading, rather than starting out constrained to ask questions and pursue answers only if they emerged within the orbit of the received views and prevailing discourses, which had developed largely in the service of various Christian theological agendas over the centuries, long after Paul's time. Papers from the 2013 SBL Annual Meeting sessions were collected in the 2014 inaugural issue of the *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting (JJMJS)*, and subsequent issues have also drawn from the prior year's papers.

In the summer of 2014, the Enoch Seminar organized a consultation in Rome under the title, "Re-reading Paul as a Second-Temple Jewish Author." Many of these papers were collected in a volume edited by Gabrielle Boccaccini and Carlos Segovia, *Paul the Jew* (Fortress, 2016). Inspired by the enthusiastic interaction and host of new questions raised at the review session of *Paul within Judaism* at the 2016 SBL Annual Meeting, the Enoch Seminar investigated the early reception of Paul in 2017, subsequently published in 2018 (Isaac Oliver and G. Boccaccini, eds., *The Early Reception of Paul the Second Temple Jew*, T&T Clark). In 2018, the Enoch Seminar also sponsored a structured conversation between Gabrielle Boccaccini and myself about the covenantal and apocalyptic dynamics involved in reading Paul as a Second Temple Jew.

In a related development, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, sponsored a conference in 2018 entitled "The Message of Paul within Second Temple Judaism." The papers were edited by the host, František Ábel, and published in 2020 by Lexington/Fortress Academic; in 2021 the proceedings of the subsequent 2019 conference in Bratislava were also published by Lexington/Fortress Academic. In a different direction, two sessions at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Association of Jewish Studies in Boston were convened by Jill Hicks-Keeton and Cavan Concannon to discuss how studying Paul from a "within Judaism" perspective might be relevant to those engaged in Jewish studies, under the clever title: "Can Paul Come to the AJS?" Similarly, *Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* published an essay by Stefan Larsson posing this question to Scandinavian Jewish studies departments based upon the Paul within Judaism paradigm: "Just an Ordinary Jew: A Case for Why Paul Should Be Studied within Jewish Studies" (29.2 [2018]: 2–16).

Research investigating Paul from within Judaism is beginning to appear more frequently in journals and books unrelated to conference proceedings. I will not recount the authors or titles here, but I have included references to those of which I am aware throughout my essay, and the list

of recommended titles at the end has been updated accordingly. I added cross-references to various essays of mine that have been gathered together in the four-volume collection that Cascade began publishing in 2017; the earlier revised version of this essay is the first chapter in *Reading Paul within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 1* (2017). Cascade also began publishing a new series of studies entitled New Testament after Supersessionism, and one of the first titles is J. Brian Tucker's 2018 *Reading Romans after Supersessionism*, which examines the letter from a Paul within Judaism perspective. Not without significance, studies designed to challenge this perspective in favor of the prevailing views are beginning to appear. One can hope to learn from them, but at this point they consist mostly of informal fallacies, from misrepresentations and facile dismissals to ad hominem designed to resist the project rather than to undertake to engage the arguments offered. I suppose that is to be expected at first.

Many of us have also been involved in bringing this new approach to Paul to nonspecialists in classroom and university settings, to churchgoers who look to Paul's letters for guidance, and also into inter-faith dialogues and Jewish settings. An especially noteworthy development was initiated by Dick Pruiksma, the Chair of the Council on Jewish-Christian Relations/Protestant Church in the Netherlands. In 2015 Pruiksma began an online discussion among a number of scholars involved in reading Paul within Judaism, to be followed by a conference in 2017 in conjunction with the 500 Years Reformation Commemoration. His council subsequently developed educational materials in Dutch facilitated by a team of some fifty rabbis, professors, priests, and pastors writing introductions for liturgical lessons and news about Christian-Jewish relations ([www.joods-christelijke-dialogo.nl](http://www.joods-christelijke-dialogo.nl)).

The jury is still out! Historical enquiry is never a closed book, and challenges to the received views are often not welcomed—at least immediately. Whether one's initial instinct is to want to find fault or to discover something new can be telling. My sincere hope is, of course, that this essay will stimulate readers to investigate further the merits of reading Paul within Judaism. I welcome comments through the contact tab available at [www.marknanos.com](http://www.marknanos.com), where you can learn more about my publications and lectures.

#### For Further Reading

Boccaccini, Gabriele, and Carlos A. Segovia, eds. *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016.

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- Gager, John G. *Reinventing Paul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Gerdmar, Anders. *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann*. Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
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- Korner, Ralph J. *The Origen and Meaning of Ekklēsia in the Early Jesus Movement*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
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- Larsson, Stefan. "Just an Ordinary Jew: A Case for Why Paul Should Be Studied within Jewish Studies." *Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 29.2 (2018): 2–16.
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- . *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.
- . *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 4*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017.

- . *Reading Galatians within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos*, Vol. 3. Eugene, OR: Cascade, forthcoming.
- . *Reading Paul within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos*, Vol. 1. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017.
- . *Reading Romans within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos*, Vol. 2. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018.
- Nanos, Mark D., and Magnus Zetterholm, eds. *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015.
- Sanders, E. P. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History*. Translated by W. Montgomery. New York: Macmillan, 1951. Original 1912.
- Stendahl, Krister. *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.
- Thiessen, Matthew. *Paul and the Gentile Problem*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Tucker, J. Brian. *Reading Romans after Supersessionism*. New Testament after Supersessionism 6. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018.
- Zetterholm, Magnus. *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

## Notes

This chapter represents a slightly modified version of the original essay in *Paul Unbound* to reflect developments in my thinking and terminology and the bibliography for a chapter consisting of this essay in my *Reading Paul within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos*, Vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 3–59. For this revised version of *Paul Unbound*, I have made necessary style changes and a few modifications and added references to a few publications available since that was completed in mid-2017.

1. The certainty of the traditional paradigm is exemplified by the brevity with which this can be asserted: e.g., Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 251: “the Galatians have to choose between Paul and Judaism.”

2. That there is a geo-ethnic dimension to Jewish identity, hence, Judeanness, is naturally relevant, but the discussion about Paul focuses on the religio-ethnic dimension of the life of the Jewish communities and the various ways that each person or group or subgroup interpreted the scriptures and traditions of their heritage, by which Paul's teachings and life are measured. In English usage, *Jew* and *Jewish* carry ethnic and religious meanings, including connotations of birth, while *Judean* emphasizes

the geographical element. Judeanness can remain salient when discussing Jews from places other than Judea proper, such as of the diaspora, or even Galilee, who are nevertheless still described as *Ioudaioi* (Acts 2:5–11), or Israelites, even when the land was not Israel but Judea (1 Macc 7:13; Rom 9:4; Acts 2:22; 4 Macc 18:5). At the same time, the significance of the geo-political (i.e., the land of Israel/Judea) remains salient in the terms *Jew* and *Judaism* as well, witnessed in the importance of Israel to Jews throughout the world and in contemporary Jewish theology, prayers, and aspirations. Rabbinic literature remained concerned to define proper behavior in the land and temple even when prohibited from living there and the temple was destroyed. Hence, this essay will generally refer to Jews and Jewish and Jewishness or Judaism, unless the geo-ethnic element of Judeanness is perceived to be specifically more salient (note: non-Jews could also live in Judea and thus be Judeans, just as today non-Jews can live in Israel and be Israelis). That there was a religious dimension to Judean/Jewish ethnicity properly named Judaism seems to me evident from relevant sources for discussing Paul's period; it arises in Paul's language in Gal 1:13–14 (discussed below). In the Maccabean literature, Judeans can either leave or return or observe the traditional religious practices of this people in different ways and to different degrees. For example, in 2 Macc 6:1–11 there are those in Judea who are described to be prohibited "even from confessing themselves to be *Ioudaioi*," which would make less sense to translate "Judeans" rather than "Jews." In 9:13–17, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is described as willing to become a *Ioudaios*, which most likely means Jew, not Judean, for he was not giving up his role as the Seleucid king. Philo (*Spec.* 1.186) notes the range of observance among Jews but is not describing their level of Judeanness. Josephus (*A.J.* 20.34–48) relates that Izates, the king of Adiabene, sought to live a Jewish lifestyle guided by Scripture, apparently independent of participation in a Jewish community or role in ruling Judea or a Judean satellite nation or even any idea of relocating to Judea. His interests and practices make more sense to classify as Judaism, even after his circumcision, although the geo-ethnic element is relevant, as witnessed by the concern about how his subjects will react, and later, with almsgiving to Judeans and sending his sons for education there. Moreover, note that the teacher advocating circumcision (Eleazar) is described as coming from Galilee, not Judea, so he is not arguably a Judean, although described as a *Ioudaios* (20.43), while the other one (Ananias) is not described in terms of coming from somewhere but yet as a *Ioudaios* merchant. See Daniel R. Schwartz, "'Judaean' or 'Jew'? How Should We Translate *ioudaios* in Josephus?," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Jörg Frey et al., *Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3–27; Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), esp. 91–112, for response to Mason's arguments, upholding the value not only for using *Jew* but also for using *Judaism* and *religion* in the ways I employ them herein; Margaret H. Williams, "The Meaning and Function of *Ioudaios* in Graeco-Roman Inscriptions," *ZPE* 116 (1997): 249–62; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, HCS 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 69–139; David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Siân Jones and Sarah Pearce, eds., *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-Identification in the Graeco-Roman Period*, JSPSup 31 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic,



1998); Anders Runesson, "Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg, WUNT 226 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,' But Do They Become 'Jewish'? Reading Romans 2:25–29 within Judaism, alongside Josephus," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 1 (2014): 26–53, <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress4828f1> (updated in my *Reading Paul within Judaism*); Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul's Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus's Advisors to King Izates," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 105–52. Among those arguing instead for use of *Judean* throughout, see, e.g., Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 19–76; Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512.

3. The term *Judaism* is used herein to refer to "a way of life developed by and for communities of Jews" to discuss Paul and his contexts, although there are those who uphold that the terminology is anachronistic. We could refer instead to "a way of life developed by and for communities of Judeans" and thus to "Judeanism." I find the use of *Jew* and *Judaism* and cognates quite useful for sharpening focal points for discussions of Paul's thought, teaching, and way of life and the foundational ideas and practices of the communities that he founded and to which he wrote letters. It is the language most often used in New Testament and Pauline studies today, but still primarily to measure the distance of Judaism from Paul's thought, teaching, and way of life, as well as that of his communities. See references in n. 2 above, in the discussion below, and the challenges to the prevailing views in the various essays in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*; Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016); Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism*.

4. E.g., Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), argues that Paul's strategic goal was to create "Gentile Christian communities in sharp separation from the Jewish community" (19 and *passim*); Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 89–97, 120–25, maintains that the policy of creating house churches was by definition a clear differentiation from synagogue gatherings; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 386: "In social reality Paul's churches were distinct from the synagogues, and their predominantly Gentile members unattached to the Jewish community"; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 6–7, argues that Paul represents "a new apocalyptic, Jewish sect," yet writes of him living "in a Hellenistic, gentile *Christian community* as a Jew among gentiles" (emphasis added). I argue that the communities Paul addresses in Rome and Galatia are meeting as *subgroups within* the Jewish communities in *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). See now the development of this matter reframed in terms of associations in, e.g., Philip Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place*

in *Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Richard S. Ascough, "Paul, Synagogues, and Associations: Reframing the Question of Models for Pauline Christ Groups," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 2 (2015): 27–52, <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress4828f2>; Ralph J. Korner, "Ekklesiā as a Jewish Synagogue Term: Some Implications for Paul's Socio-religious Location," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 2 (2015): 53–78, <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress4828f3>; Korner, *The Origen and Meaning of Ekklesiā in the Early Jesus Movement* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Anders Runesson, "The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul," in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 53–77; Runesson, "Placing Paul: Institutional Structures and Theological Strategy in the World of the Early Christ-believers," *SEÅ* 80 (2015): 43–67; Richard Last, *The Pauline Church and the Corinthian Ekklesiā: Greco-Roman Associations in Comparative Context*, SNTSMS 164 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

5. Betz, *Galatians*, 179: "Paul draws a line between being a Jew and being a Christian. Of course, this line of demarcation is polemical, but, as Romans shows (Rom 9–11), it was in no way intended to establish a new religion. Yet the establishment of a new religion is in effect what happened. If the validity of the Jewish Torah ends for the Jew when he becomes a Christian, there is no point or basis for Gentiles as well as for Jews to adhere to the Jewish religion. Since those Christians no longer regard themselves as pagans, a new religion has *de facto* come into existence." See also N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, COQG 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 359–75, 538–69, 1426–49, *passim*, for an example of denying terminologically what is otherwise clearly being argued by other terminology and at the same time even using and defending the traditional terms.

Recent works that focus on challenging that paradigm include Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); the essays in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*; Bernard Brandon Scott, *The Real Paul: Recovering His Radical Challenge* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2015); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); the essays in Boccaccini and Segovia, *Paul the Jew*; Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

6. E.g., Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 197–200.

7. Donald A. Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to His Letters," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 97–120, here 113.

8. E.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), 43; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 103, 198–99, discusses Paul's struggle to reconcile revelation with "his native convictions"; Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer," 114, observes that, while Paul may have continued to behave in some ways like a Jew, it was "by habit, if for no other reason ... as an expression of his ethnic Jewishness, and as a matter of convenience



because of the fact that he moved among Jews so frequently. This conduct no longer had any soteriological significance, however, nor was he under compulsion to obey the commandments. His conduct was now solely under the sway of Christ."

9. Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer," 113; see also see also Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 427; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 577; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 153–54; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 228, 238.

10. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 75 n. 171.

11. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1436, emphasis original; see also 1447: "he [Paul] saw the people of the crucified Messiah as having a Messiah-shaped identity which marked them off from Jew and Greek alike"; see 1434–49.

12. For the consensus view, see, e.g., Peter Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency: 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 and Galatians 2:11–14," *NTS* 26 (1979): 347–62, here 347; Mark D. Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome*, ESEC 7 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 105–17; and those mentioned in the notes below.

13. E.g., Hays, *First Corinthians*, 155.

14. Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 177–78, 185–87.

15. For most of these interpreters, Paul actually did share the propositional base of non-Jews about food, because he is understood to have eaten like a gentile: his behavior was no longer governed by torah. Paul only mimicked Jewish behavior when calculated to be useful for propagating the gospel. The traditional definition of "becoming" is less precise than recognized, for it signifies mere imitation of outward behavior for Jewish practices but embracing of the propositional values for gentile practices.

16. John M. G. Barclay, "'Do We Undermine the Law?': A Study of Romans 14.1–15.6," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, MA: Eerdmans, 2001), 287–308, here 308.

17. Jewish critiques of Paul's "opportunist" subversion of torah to gain converts developed in response to the way this strategy has been portrayed by Christian interpreters, often as if a positive trait, subjecting everything to the highest value of evangelism, are discussed by Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, "The 'Essential Heresy': Paul's View of the Law according to Jewish Writers: 1886–1986" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1990), 63–82; see also Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 151–57, 166–67; and David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: The Turning Point in Western History* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 106–10. Fuchs-Kreimer also discusses some Jewish scholars who do not read Paul in this way. See also Daniel R. Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional View of Paul' and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics," *JSNT* 28 (2005): 69–104; Stefan Meißner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus*, WUNT 2/87 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

18. Reidar Hvalvik, "Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to the Book of Acts," in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 121–53, here 153; cf. Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer," 113, cited above.

19. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, WBC 38B (Dallas: Word, 1988), 798. This

common understanding of Paul's language, e.g., in Rom 14–15, is challenged in Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 85–165, 345–47 (88–95, for “Luther's trap,” where comments such as this one by Dunn are discussed).

20. E.g., C. K. Barrett, ed., *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 40–59 (“Things Sacrificed to Idols”). Challenges to this reading are mounted by Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, CRINT 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Alex T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy*, JSNTSup 176 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Mark D. Nanos, “The Polytheist Identity of the ‘Weak,’ and Paul's Strategy to ‘Gain’ Them: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1,” in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Pauline Studies 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), updated in my *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos*, Vol. 4 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

21. This prevailing view of Paul's polemic is challenged in Mark 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; Nanos, “Paul's Polemic in Philippians 3 as Jewish-Subgroup Vilification of Local Non-Jewish Cultic and Philosophical Alternatives,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 3 (2013): 47–91; Nanos, “Out-Howling the Cynics: Reconceptualizing the Concerns of Paul's Audience from His Polemics in Philippians 3,” in *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal, ECL 17 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 183–221. (The first two essays are updated in my *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*.)

22. John M. G. Barclay, “Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?” *JSNT* 60 (1995): 89–120 (see now also Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016]), for a construction of Paul whose assimilation is understood to leave only himself supposing he is not an apostate. Neil Elliott, “The Question of Politics: Paul as a Diaspora Jew under Roman Rule,” in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 203–43, here 232–43, for a critique of Barclay's methodology for assessing Paul to be an “anomalous Jew.”

23. This nomenclature as well as the exegetical bases for using it, especially related to decisions about Paul's arguments dealing with dietary matters, are challenged in Mark D. Nanos, “The Myth of the ‘Law-Free’ Paul Standing between Christians and Jews,” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v4i1.1511> (updated in my *Reading Paul within Judaism*). For a helpful reframing of the concepts and language related to torah and law when discussing Paul and other Jews of his time, see Karin Hedner Zetterholm, “The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century,” in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 79–103; see also Zetterholm, *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012); Christine Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law? Early Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

24. The position and coining of the phrase by James D. G. Dunn is well summarized in his “The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95–122 (reprinted with additional notes in Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* [Lou-

isville: Westminster John Knox, 1990], 183–214). This development and others impacting contemporary Pauline studies are explained in Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

25. Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

26. See, e.g., Hans Joachim Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict*, trans. David E. Green (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 40–52, 165, published in German in 1961: *Israel und Christenheit: Jüdisch-christliches Religionsgespräch in neunzehn Jahrhunderten* (Munich: Ner-Tamid, 1961), 57–59. Note that the first edition of 1937 contains this same language: *Jüdisch-Christliches Religionsgespräch in 19 Jahrhunderten: Geschichte einer theologischen Auseinandersetzung* (Berlin: Vortrupp, 1937), 49–61, 152. Similar observations are in Schoeps, *Paul*, 168–218, 280–93. There were naturally others who anticipated these positive developments, and some examples, such as G. F. Moore, W. D. Davies, and S. Sandmel, as well as central protagonists of the traditional negative biases, are discussed by Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 33–59; see also Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Langton, “The Myth of the ‘Traditional View of Paul.’” For the earlier ideas and influence of John Toland, see F. Stanley Jones, ed., *The Rediscovery of Jewish Christianity: From Toland to Baur*, HBS 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012); and for that of Johann Tobias Beck, see Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 203–12.

27. James D. G. Dunn, “Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 174–93, here 182. On 179, Dunn argues that “of course Paul did not cease to be a Jew—how could he? Nor did he convert from one religion (‘Judaism’) to another (‘Christianity’), since the term ‘Christianity’ did not yet exist, and the Nazarene movement was still within the matrix of Second Temple Judaism.” He nuances the definition of Jew, emphasizing the religious dimension, and of Judaism, inscrutably from my perspective, to denote for Paul only “the national-religious identity which emerged particularly as a result of the Maccabean crisis and revolt. He meant Judaism identified by its zeal for the law and its willingness to use the sword to prevent the dilution of its national-religious distinctiveness. But that Judaism was only one part (or aspect?) of what we now call Second Temple Judaism” (184). In his conclusions (192), Dunn argues that Paul would not give a straight no to his identity as a Jew, as long as it was qualified “to come from within and not from without, and that the trappings of Jewish identity, most explicitly the practice of circumcision and food laws, could be equally taken on or put off without affecting the integrity of that Jewishness either way.” But he would give a clear no to being “in Judaism”: “the term had become too much identified with ethnicity and separation from other nations; and Paul’s self-understanding on just these points had been too radically transformed by his conversion ... for ‘Judaism’ to continue to define and identify himself or his apostolic work.”

28. Dunn, “New Perspective,” in *Jesus, Paul*, 198. Similar statements by Wright were indicated earlier (n. 11) and are commonly encountered in publications by pro-

ponents of the New Perspective on Paul who otherwise, and often in the same publication, also state emphatically that Paul remained a Jew, in a few cases even that Paul still respected some level of Jewish practices.

29. Cf. the observations and criticisms of Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 66–72, 108; Elliott, “The Question of Politics.” On the problem of a continued logical negative valuation of Judaism in recent intermural Christian approaches pitting Paul against Jewish Christianity, and thus claiming to avoid the traditional Paul against Judaism judgments, see Mark D. Nanos, “How Inter-Christian Approaches to Paul’s Rhetoric Can Perpetuate Negative Valuations of Jewishness—Although Proposing to Avoid that Outcome,” *BibInt* 13 (2005): 255–69, updated in my *Reading Paul within Judaism*.

30. E.g., although beyond the scope of this essay, many debates now turn around the New Perspective emphasis on reading the language of justification by faith to refer to the inclusion of non-Jews as equals rather than addressing personal salvation of “everyone,” as traditionally interpreted, which logically brings up the topic of whether from Paul’s perspective Jews also need to believe in Jesus Christ, in particular, to be saved. I have begun to address this topic in Mark D. Nanos, “Are Jews outside of the Covenants If Not Confessing Jesus as Messiah? Questioning the Questions, the Options for the Answers Too” (paper presented at the Paul within Judaism session of the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, 23 November 2015); Nanos, “‘The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable’ (Romans 11:29): If So, How Can Paul Declare That ‘Not All Israelites Truly Belong to Israel’ (9:6)?” *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 11 (2016): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v11i1.9525> (updated in my *Reading Romans within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 2* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018). See now Mark D. Nanos, “‘All Israel Will Be Saved’ or ‘Kept Safe’? (Rom 11:26): Israel’s Conversion or Irrevocable Calling to Gospel the Nations?,” in *Israel and the Nations: Paul’s Gospel in the Context of Jewish Expectation*, ed. František Abel (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2021), 243–69.

31. E.g., Donald A. Hagner, “Paul and Judaism—The Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity: Issues in the Current Debate,” *BBR* 3 (1993): 111–30; Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001); Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); D. A. Carson et al., eds., *The Paradoxes of Paul*, vol. 2 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). A detailed bibliography of the New Perspective and its critics is available in Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 194–211; Bird, “The New Perspective on Paul: A Bibliographical Essay,” <https://academic.logos.com/the-new-perspective-on-paul-a-bibliographical-essay/>. For the history of this traditional view, see Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*.

32. F. C. Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, 2nd ed., ed. Eduard Zeller, trans. Allan Menzies (repr., Peabody, MA: Hen-

drickson, 2003); James Carleton Paget, "The Definition of the Terms Jewish Christian and Jewish Christianity in the History of Research," in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 22–52; Matt A. Jackson-McCabe, ed., *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); Jones, *Rediscovery of Jewish Christianity*.

33. In sharp contrast to the critique offered here, which largely revolves around the relative lack of newness in the perspectives on Paul that have been offered, those resisting the New Perspective are critical of its newness, of its departure from traditional and especially Reformation interpretations of Paul as well as of Judaism, however minor the changes proposed may be in the case of Paul. The efforts to undermine the New Perspective are frequently occupied with showing that Judaism as Christianity has interpreted Judaism to be through the traditional interpretation of Paul's rhetoric, thereby confirming that Paul has been interpreted properly to be offering a very different religious system than that of Judaism.

34. Although some have grouped me among New Perspective interpreters, this category represents Christians who newly discovered that Judaism is not as it has been polemically constructed in Christian tradition, which does not apply in the same way for a Jewish person who did not hold to the traditional Christian views of Judaism in the first place, or of Paul, and thus did not undergo the changes signified by the label New Perspective. Previous to Sanders, a number of Jews and Christians unsuccessfully sought to inform the Christian tradition that Judaism was and is grace-based, that acts of righteousness are undertaken in terms of covenant loyalty, and so on; thus the change of perspective on Judaism is indeed new and welcome. For me, it made it possible to enter the discussion of redefining Paul without also undertaking the task of redefining Judaism along this line first, which, when I first imagined this task in the 1970s, appeared too daunting a course to pursue. When I learned of the New Perspective and its impact in the 1980s, I could then reconsider offering a new interpretation of Paul, although one that is in many ways significantly different from that of the New Perspective on Paul proper. Since then, I have certainly been engaged in offering a new perspective on Paul, if not also Judaism, on some points, and along with others, now refer to this as the Paul within Judaism perspective, which others sometimes refer to as the "radical New Perspective," among other labels.

35. Cf. Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional View of Paul,'" which includes a discussion of how my work differs from the main lines the traditional Jewish perspectives on Paul have followed (this essay and others tracing the history of Jewish perceptions of Paul are in Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010]). See also Mark D. Nanos, "A Jewish View," in *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*, ed. Michael F. Bird, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 159–93; and see the above discussion of Jewish reactions to the prevailing interpretations of 1 Cor 9:19–23, on which my views are briefly set out below.

36. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552, emphasis original.

37. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*., 551–52, emphasis added.

38. Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 24–25, similarly notes this problem.



39. Dunn regularly notes that Paul was not converted to a new religion and that he precedes what can be properly denoted as Christianity (see James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* [London: SCM, 1991], 116–19, 135). Even after the Antioch incident, which Dunn takes to represent a monumental realization of incompatibility, he still conceptualizes the eventual developments to be “as much a parting of the ways *within* the new movement as *between* Christianity and Judaism, or better, as within Judaism” (emphasis original). He also challenges the idea that Paul should be defined only in discontinuity with Judaism, as opposite to it (James D. G. Dunn, “How New Was Paul’s Gospel? The Problem of Continuity and Discontinuity,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994], 385). Yet Dunn also writes, “we must be careful about defining Pauline Christianity simply as a kind of Judaism” (385; in the same sentence upon which my prior sentence was based). Note that here we see that it is Christianity that Paul is described as doing (although he refers to denoting Jew and Christian as “anachronistic” for Paul’s time on 387), and, moreover, he observes that it is not Judaism. How does one square this with the idea that Paul precedes Christianity and did not convert to a new religion or abandon Judaism? Similar logical problems on these topics are common in New Perspective arguments, just as they remain common in tradition-oriented arguments: after denying that Christianity had begun or that anyone was yet known as a Christian, the conceptualizations expressed in language choices and argumentation do not follow this logic out or express a viable alternative at work. Hagner, “Paul as a Jewish Believer,” 97–120, proceeds similarly, which I critiqued in Mark D. Nanos, “Have Paul and His Communities Left Judaism for Christianity? A Review of the Paul-Related Chapters in *Jewish Believers in Jesus and Jewish Christianity Revisited*” (paper presented at the Jewish Christianity Consultation of the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Diego, 17 November 2007; available at <https://marknanos.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Jewish-Chrstnty-Nanos-rev-SBL2007.pdf>).

40. Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 140, makes a similar observation: “this is what Paul finds wrong with other Jews: that they did not share his revelation in Damascus.”

41. I prefer not to use the terms *Christian* and *Christianity* except where it is necessary to the discussion; I refer to, e.g., Christ-followers and Christ-following Jewish coalitions in an effort to avoid perpetuating this problem. I hope my readers will be encouraged to do so, too, although I recognize that the change of terminology can be taxing, creating cumbersome language—and that these choices are still not perfect. Likewise, I try to minimize the use of “gentile(s)” to label the non-Jew(s), because it obscures the implied “*not*-ness” of the Hebrew and Greek terms for the non-Jew (and non-Israelite) other, a way of conceptualizing the world present in Paul’s choice of language and thus with some relevance to the historical interpretive task. In this same direction, it would be clearer, although even more taxing, to refer to “a member of the nations (or ‘peoples’) other than Israel” when ἔθνος is translated, and for the plural, “nations” or “peoples” and thus “members (or ‘peoples’) of the other nations,” i.e., other than *the* nation (or ‘people’) Israel.

42. Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 156, emphasis original. Posing the question in a slightly different way, Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 52, observes: "What was *wrong* with Jewish culture in Paul's eyes that necessitated a radical reform? And what in the culture provided the grounds for making that critique? The culture itself was in tension with itself, characterized both by narrow ethnocentrism and universalist monotheism."

43. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1, emphasis added.

44. Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 192, interestingly enough, in this later work (although without engaging the earlier contrary viewpoint he expressed), writes of Paul as still attending synagogue, that is, as Jewish in socially measurable terms, and argues that Paul and all of the parties, including his non-Jewish addressees as well as those who opposed Paul's work, understood the "Christian movement" they were involved in to be within "the bounds of Judaism. *Punishment implies inclusion*" (emphasis original).

45. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 12, emphasis added.

46. For recent discussions of the problems with the way Paul's voice has been understood in universalizing terms, often with Jewish particularism as its foil, and offering more positive terms for understanding Paul's relationship with Judaism, see, e.g., Anders Runesson, "Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology," *ST* 54 (2000): 55–75; Kathy Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); Ehrensperger, "The Question(s) of Gender: Relocating Paul in Relation to Judaism," in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 245–76; Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* 123 (2004): 235–51; Pamela Eisenbaum, "Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism," *BibInt* 13 (2005): 224–38; William S. Campbell, "Perceptions of Compatibility between Christianity and Judaism in Pauline Interpretation," *BibInt* 13 (2005): 298–316; Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, LNTS 322 (London: T&T Clark, 2006); Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul's Identity," *BibInt* 13 (2005): 270–88; Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); J. Brian Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1–4* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); Jae Won Lee, *Paul and the Politics of Difference: A Contextual Study of the Jewish-Gentile Difference in Galatians and Romans* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

47. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75.

48. Although I have not dealt with gender issues in this essay, for a helpful reconsideration of this matter from a similar perspective, see Ehrensperger, "The Question(s) of Gender."

49. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 207.

50. Cf. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 23.

51. See Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

52. As a case in point, the note to this comment in the Loeb volume (Josephus, *A.J.* 20), edited and translated by Louis Feldman (22 n. a), discusses (although rejects)



a possible rabbinic parallel (no less!) wherein Rabbi Joshua argues in b. Yevam. 46a that circumcision was not required for a convert, just baptism, according to Bamberger and Klausner. A logical reason for this teaching by a Jew and within Judaism is offered: the policy of caution and the exception for circumstances where life would be endangered.

53. See Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 60–74, for discussion of various expectations for non-Jews, including a natural-law non-Jew who turns from idolatry but is not identified with circumcision and other special laws for Israelites (e.g., observing dietary customs), righteous gentiles, and eschatological pilgrimage scenarios. Examples include Josephus, *A.J.* 20.41 (34–48); Philo, *QE* 2.2; *Mos.* 2.4; *Abr.* 3–6, 60–61; *Virt.* 102, 181–82, 212–19; *Spec.* 1.51; 2.42–48; 4.178; Joseph and Aseneth; t. Sanh. 13:2. Cf. Paula Fredriksen, “Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 236–47; Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*; Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, Radical Traditions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 162–63, 190–95.

At the same time, as the case for Ananias, one of the teachers of Izates, exemplifies—in contrast to the other teacher, Eleazer, who upholds that unless he is circumcised the torah will not benefit him—there are Jews who upheld that members of the nations are called to torah apart from becoming Jews (*A.J.* 20.34–48). Even the outrage expressed by Eleazer arguably demonstrates that he views Izates breaking the very laws he reads in Scripture, if he remains uncircumcised, although Izates is at this point a non-Jew reader. Both cases, however, may demonstrate that Izates is not simply a non-Jew but of a special category, a non-Jew who seeks to worship the God of the Jews, and thus that he is obliged to a different level of torah adherence. See Nanos, “The Question of Conceptualization.” The view that gentiles are in some way obligated to torah observance is also expressed in a few rabbinic texts, although a minority view; e.g., Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael [Bahodesh 1], on Exod 19:2; Sipra to Lev 18:1–5; M. Hirshman, “Rabbinic Universalism in the Second and Third Centuries,” *HTR* 93 [2000]: 101–15; and aspects of this notion are implicit in the very idea of the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15 and the Noahide Commandments (t. Avod. Zar. 8.4). Magnus Zetterholm, “Paul and the Missing Messiah,” in *The Messiah: In Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 33–55, applies the tension between these views to an interpretation of Paul, with Paul taking the side of those who uphold that torah belongs only to Israel; hence, non-Jews in Christ are taught not to seek to observe it as if Jews, in contrast to other Christ-following Jews who are teaching non-Jews in Christ to observe torah because gentiles also are under obligation to torah. See also Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), for Jews and groups who oppose the very notion of converting non-Jews into Jews for various reasons, which differentiates them from the rival Jews and Jewish groups that Paul's rhetoric suggests that he opposed, who apparently promoted proselyte conversion for the non-Jews he addressed in Galatia, for example; also Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*.

54. "Chronometrical" is intended to offer a concise way to communicate the idea that Paul's gospel proposition and the conflicts it often engendered revolved around a time-oriented claim that the end of the ages had begun in the midst of the present age. While other Jews might agree in principle with the idea that a day might come when members from the rest of the nations will join alongside Israel in worship of the One God (and behave according to the standards of righteousness and justice and mercy laid out in torah even if not technically under torah since not becoming Jews/Israel), nevertheless these Jews might still dispute the claim that it has arrived (even the claim that it had merely begun/dawned). This might help undermine the notion that this kind of theological position or change of behavior is somehow essentially not Jewish but uniquely "Christian," as well as superior, and representative of the end of Judaism, or its replacement, and so on. Rather, the issue was whether this kind of time-based claim and associated behavioral changes were appropriate "now." In a similar direction, although not using the term chronometrical, see Paula Fredriksen, "The Question of Worship: Gods, Pagans, and the Redemption of Israel," in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 175–201, here 185–89; Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*; Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews*; for a compatible reading of Romans, see J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supersessionism*, New Testament after Supersessionism 6 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018).

55. Depending on how one reads Acts and Paul, it is a propositional truth shared by the other apostles of this movement; see Mark D. Nanos, "Intruding 'Spies' and 'Pseudo-Brethren': The Jewish Intra-group Politics of Paul's Jerusalem Meeting (Gal 2:1–10)," in *Paul and His Opponents*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Pauline Studies 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 59–97; Nanos, "What Was at Stake in Peter's 'Eating with Gentiles' at Antioch?," in Nanos, *The Galatians Debate*, 282–318. (These essays are updated in my *Reading Galatians within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos*, Vol. 3 [Eugene, OR: Cascade, forthcoming].) Exceptions that appear to prove the rule among other Jewish groups include the Izates story, just discussed, and may be implied in Philo's criticism of some Jews in Alexandria (*Migr.* 92).

56. See Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 179–92; Nanos, "Paul and the Jewish Tradition: The Ideology of the Shema," in *Celebrating Paul: Festschrift in Honor of Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.*, ed. Peter Spitaler, CBQMS 48 (Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2012), 62–80 (updated in my *Reading Paul within Judaism*); and the discussion below of Paul's development of the Shema.

57. Cf. Ps 37:33; 4QMMT C 25–32; 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 1–10 iv 7–9; 1 QpHab VIII, 10–13; XI, 2–8; 1 Macc 10:21.

58. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *JBL* 112 (1993): 459–77, here 467. It is interesting to note the subtle shifts in Dunn's language that betray the way that Jewish groups other than Christ-following ones, such as those exemplified by the Dead Sea Scroll community's conflicts with other Jewish groups, are portrayed around different views of how to properly interpret torah on the matter at hand ("the correct and only legitimate enactment of what the Torah laid down at these points"), but when the dispute is within groups of Christ-following Jews or between them and other Jewish groups, the terms change to how much torah applies ("the extent and detail of Torah obligation" [emphases added]). If

Paul was practicing his faith in Christ within Judaism, however, we would expect him to argue that his position exemplifies the ideals of torah in contrast to other interpretations no less than do the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls or the authors of any other Jewish literature of his time.

59. This is a major topic in contemporary Pauline studies. Many interpreters now highlight that in his letters—including the most important ones bearing on these topics, such as Galatians and Romans—Paul’s rhetoric targets the encoded or implied audience as non-Jew Christ-followers. I maintain not only that Paul is targeting non-Jews but that they are within Jewish synagogue subgroup assemblies (*Mystery of Romans*, esp. 75–84; and *Irony of Galatians*, esp. 75–85). Some suppose that the presence of Jews in these assemblies means that Paul must be directly addressing both Jews and non-Jews. Others maintain that this means there were only non-Jews in the assemblies addressed. In my view, however, targeting non-Jews meant neither that there were no Jews present in the assemblies nor that, if both were present, he had to target both. Paul was setting these non-Jews straight at least in part for the benefit of the Jews present in these subgroups (as well as for those of the larger Jewish communities impacted by the behavior of these subgroups). The idea that Paul designed his rhetoric (in Romans and Galatians, for example) to target the non-Jews also does not mean he did not consider, while creating them, how it would be read or heard by the Jews present or even by those simply impacted by it, whether directly or indirectly, including by way of rumors heard or explanations offered for any changes observed in the behavior of these non-Jews.

60. For at least some discussions, this adds another useful element of specificity.

61. See Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 35–36, 74–75, 125, for the programmatic call to never ask merely “What does it mean?” without adding “...to whom?”; Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” *IDB* 1:418–32.

62. Many suppose that in Rom 2:25–29 Paul dismisses the role of bodily circumcision for Jews. But this language as well as that in Rom 3 represent diatribe, and the questions that follow immediately in 3:1 indicate that Paul is here writing to non-Jews about how Jews should behave in view of their circumcision, with circumcised hearts as well as bodies. If they do not, they fail to represent the real meaning of the circumcision of their bodies. The point is not that non-Jews become Jews, as if they somehow gain the real objective for which Jews are circumcised. And they do not become “true” or “spiritual” Jews; they remain non-Jews. Only Jews are circumcised in order to indicate in their bodies the dedication to God of their whole person, to living according to the precepts God has given for right living, and not merely to teaching them to others. Only they can become in that sense “true” or “spiritual” Jews. That identity is particular to Jews, to those of the nation Israel, whose dedication to the One God includes circumcised bodies as well as it should involve circumcised hearts, unlike non-Jews, non-Israelites, which the addressees remain. Their non-Jewish hearts, however, can be “like” the circumcised hearts of Jews (the circumcised) directed toward God and living right, not merely professing the precepts of right living (Rom 12:1–2); see Nanos, “Paul’s Non-Jews Do Not Become ‘Jews.’”

63. Cf. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 73–74.

64. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 17, evaluates Paul's critique of Judaism as dissatisfaction with Jewish difference: "the quintessentially 'different' people for Paul were Jews and women." Leaving aside the topic of women, as a "Jew from birth" (Gal 2:14), which Paul claimed to be, the "different" should be expected to be non-Jews, and indeed Paul's rhetoric addresses how non-Jews, who are different from Jews/Israelites, now fit into God's universal plan for humanity (the rest of the nations) by way of Israel's service and Messiah. I think Boyarin's point is correct, however, with regard to the constructed Paul of traditional Paulinism, which has been populated by non-Jew Christians for whom the Jew is the different other. But should that be expected to be Paul's vantage point?

65. For full discussion, see Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy 'to Become Everything to Everyone' (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)," in *Paul and Judaism: Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Didier Pollefeyt and Reimund Bieringer, LNTS 463 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 106-40; Nanos, "Was Paul a 'Liar' for the Gospel? The Case for a New Interpretation of Paul's 'Becoming Everything to Everyone' in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23," *Review and Expositor* 110 (2013): 591-608; (these essays are updated in my *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*).

66. Understanding Paul to signify rhetorical conduct to various degrees (although not proposing that Paul maintained torah-observant behavior or that he specifically is communicating that he appealed to their various argumentative premises), see Henry Chadwick, "All Things to All Men" (1 Cor. IX.22)," *NTS* 1 (1954-1955): 261-75; Chadwick, "St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria," in *History and Thought of the Early Church*, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Variorum, 1982), 297-98; originally published in *BJRL* 48 (1965-1966): 286-307; Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 244; Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy*, *NovTSup* 81 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), esp. 1, 240, 273, 327; Caroline Johnson Hodge, "If Sons, Then Heirs," 124-25; Margaret M. Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation and 'Condescension' (συγκατάβασις): 1 Cor 9:19-23 and the History of Influence," in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 197-214, traces some language in the church fathers, esp. Chrysostom and Origin, that points in this direction, although for them this included changing conduct, too. Fee grants that Paul *may* have accommodated the content of the message for different audiences but concludes that 1 Cor 9:19-23 itself is about conduct, not content (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 428 n. 36, 432-33). Given holds that Paul's *modus operandi* was to accommodate rhetorically in both content and conduct (e.g., *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 36-37 and 97), but his discussion of 1 Cor 9:19-23 focuses almost exclusively on conduct and reflects the consensus interpretation (103-15). See additional discussion below.

67. See also David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016).

68. For full discussion, see Mark D. Nanos, "Why the 'Weak' in 1 Corinthians 8-10 Were Not Christ-Believers," in *Saint Paul and Corinth: 1950 Years since the Writing of the Epistles to the Corinthians; International Scholarly Conference Proceedings (Corinth, 23-25 September 2007)*, ed. Constantine J. Belezos, Sotirios Despotis, and

Christos Karakolis (Athens: Psychogios, 2009), 385–404 (updated in my *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism*); Nanos, “The Polytheist Identity”; see also Christopher D. Land, “‘We Put No Stumbling Block in Anyone’s Path, So That Our Ministry Will Not be Discredited’: Paul’s Response to an Idol Food Inquiry in 1 Corinthians 8:1–13,” in *Paul and His Social Relations*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 229–83.

69. Apparently Paul did not anticipate that former polytheists would reason that, since they no longer believed idols represented gods, there was no reason to abstain from eating food that was being or had been offered to them, regarding it to be profane, perhaps even that doing so with indifference demonstrated the strength of their new convictions. Although Jews had long ago declared that idols did not represent real gods, this nevertheless was accompanied by the very different conclusion that anything associated with idolatry is by definition out of bounds and that eating idol food would instead show their lack of conviction; see Nanos, “The Polytheist Identity.”

70. *Pace Given, Paul’s True Rhetoric*, 105–17. Although I appreciate the argument against interpretations that seek to protect Paul’s integrity, on 111, after he concludes that Paul’s “becoming like” signifies eating or otherwise behaving like each of the groups (in concert with the prevailing views), nevertheless, Given’s interpretation does not represent “the realm of being” rather than “that of seeming” any more than do the viewpoints he criticizes (Glad in particular). For Given imagines only the behavior of mimicking: not subscribing to the philosophical basis of the various behaviors, not *being* like them, but merely *seeming* to be like them. On 112, Given uses “appearing as” synonymously with “becoming like.” At the same time, I do not think that Given’s reading need be far from the one I propose, if dropping *acting* like but keeping *speaking* like, for on 117 he concludes that Paul shapes his “insinuative rhetorical strategy similar to that imagined by Luke with respect to Jews and Gentiles.”

71. Although on this interpretation Paul is still involved in a persuasive enterprise and thus does not necessarily actually believe in the premises that he adopts as the basis for initiating arguments but merely seeks to manipulate listeners by beginning from their own premises, such rhetorical behavior does not require the compromise of integrity that the traditional interpretation of his change of behavioral conduct necessitates. Philosophical and religious arguments between people and groups approaching a topic with different points of view are understood by each to proceed by way of the tactic of beginning from the opposition’s presuppositions and premises in order to undermine their conclusions and lead them to one’s own. There was a lively debate stretching back to Antisthenes about whether Odysseus should be interpreted along this line, as exemplifying a *polytrophe*, one who adapted his figures of speech to his various audiences, such as the Stoics and Cynics sought to do, rather than as an unethical chameleon who changed his behavior in a way that compromised his moral character. The details are discussed in Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah.” See W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1992), 90–101; Fernanda Decleva Caizzi, ed., *Antisthenis Fragmenta* (Milan: Instituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1966), 24–28, 43–44. For application to Paul, although not to the same conclusion I am drawing, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 91–119; Glad, *Paul*

and Philodemus, 21–22, 26, 28–29, 251, 272–73. For an in-depth comparative analysis of Paul's rhetorical style, especially in conversation with the styles of Epictetus and Philodemus, see Paul M. Robertson, *Paul's Letters and Contemporary Greco-Roman Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

72. See notes 2 and 3 for my use of *Judaism* and related terms.

73. Since at least Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 7–23, made the case, Paul's phrasing has been understood to echo the language in Isaiah and Jeremiah's direct callings by God to particular service in spite of the resistance they encounter thereafter from their peers (Isa 49:1; Jer 1:5, 7).

74. Paul's language is analogous to a Christian speaking of his or her *former way of living as a Christian*, when remaining a Christian, but of a different kind. This language is then employed to represent, for example, moving between denominations, between faith traditions such as from Catholic to Protestant or vice versa, or between subgroups of a denomination, such as to or from charismatic or some other similar subgroup identity within a larger denominational body, or to a different set of responsibilities, or to different convictions about or degrees of commitment to certain matters, and so on—*within Christianity*.

75. Josephus, *A.J.* 13.297, 408; 17.41; cf. Albert I. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic Paradosis," *HTR* 80 (1987): 63–77. Paul refers to himself explicitly as a Pharisee in another context where he also mentions his zeal to persecute the Christ-followers (Phil 3:5–6).

76. According to Acts 15:5, there were Christ-followers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, and Paul is portrayed as affiliated with Pharisaism in his proclamations of Christ (23:6; 26:5). In Phil 3:5–6, this claim arguably aligns with the self-identity he still asserts to express that, although advantageous in Jewish communal comparative terms, it does not make him better than those Christ-followers who cannot make the same claims to comparable status, which for them is not the problem of not being a Pharisee among Jews but of not being a Jew at all. His self-deprecation appears to target cases where the non-Jews may be suffering marginality in Jewish communal terms for not having become proselytes and thus to be paying for failure to substantiate their claims to full membership on the prevailing terms (Phil 3:3–11, esp. v. 5; Nanos, "Paul's Reversal"; Nanos, "Paul's Polemic in Philippians 3"; Nanos, "Out-Howling the Cynics"; cf. Gal 6:12–15; Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, 226–33). See now Nanos, "Re-framing Paul's Opposition to *Erga Nomou* as 'Rites of a Custom' for Proselyte Conversion Completed by the Synecdoche 'Circumcision,'" *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting* 8 (2021): 75–115, <https://tinyurl.com/SBLPress064828b2>.

77. The use of "persecute" and cognates is problematic for several reasons, and we should consider using different language here. Persecution can connote anything from violence to innuendo, and it is generally a term used by the "victim" to express that what one is suffering is illegitimate. From the perspective of the one accused of persecuting, this behavior will more than likely be perceived and described in more positive terms, as just or deserved, representing "discipline," "punishment," "protecting interests," and so on. Paul is here, from hindsight, describing former behavior that he now judges to have been seriously wrong.

On a lexical level, the term translated "persecuted" is a form of διώκω, which usu-



ally refers “to pursuing,” “chasing” or “chasing away,” not necessarily to physical violence as usually envisaged (see LSJ entry; cf. the suggestive insight by Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2016], 158 n. 43, who pursued different implications but inspired me to return to my argument regarding the Pharisaic element in Paul’s language to consider these additional implications). It can refer to “pursuing an argument” when used with regard to people. It could also indicate “to prosecute” or “to accuse” in a legal context and still largely fall within the realm of verbal rather than physical activity per se (of course these can overlap, to be expected if, e.g., rights to assemble to uphold a certain policy are lost in a legal dispute). Perhaps the Christ-followers understood themselves to fall under the jurisdiction of Paul’s particular Pharisaic group’s authority in some way, which would not preclude that of the temple (cf. Acts 9:1–2) but might be more complicated in intergroup political terms than Acts 9 is usually read to indicate. Acts 23 and 26 also present the disputes about and with these Jewish groups in terms of legal, political, discursive dynamics, now against Paul, and Paul also speaks of his later situation in Gal 5:11 with διώκω, where it also could indicate being accused or prosecuted if not simply pursued in argument over his policy of not circumcising these non-Jews, and again could indicate an intra-Pharisaic-type dispute, now from the other, and minority, position on the matter. Note that, unlike the lists that include physical punishments in 2 Cor 11:23–33 (where διώκω does not appear), in Gal 1:13, 23, and 5:11 Paul does not disclose the nature of the διώκω, but it has to do with disputes over propositional claims, i.e., “proclaiming the faith” (1:23), not “still preaching circumcision” (5:11).

The word ὑπερβολή, usually translated “violently,” is used to express that he did so with “excess” (LSJ), which would not suggest a translation denoting physical violence if διώκω was not understood to indicate that. The normal sense of rhetorical behavior that is comparatively in “excess” or “immoderate” or even “hyperbolic” with respect to the matter at hand aligns with his claim in v. 14 to be *more zealous* than his peers within his own Pharisaic group (a group whose interpretive reputation is characterized to be “*precise* [ἀκριβής] about the ancestral traditions” [Josephus, *A.J.* 20.43; cf. *B.J.* 1.110; Acts 26:5], and quarreling over proper behavior based on their special interpretations is a trope throughout the gospels).

The term translated “to destroy” is πορθέω, which here could connote “to ruin” in the discursive or legal ways (however intensely, even savagely) suggested by this reading of διώκω (LSJ).

78. Cf. Segal, *Paul the Convert*.

79. Elliott, “The Question of Politics,” 217–22, in discussion with the work of Alan Segal and Paula Fredriksen, interprets Paul’s vision as evidence of his apocalyptic as well as Pharisaic contexts, one in which it would be natural to have such visions of the resurrection of the righteous and of heavenly figures as divine agents and to draw ethical and political conclusions from the experience.

80. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, esp. 146–89, argues that Paul was a “freelance expert.”

81. The reference to the “flesh and blood” with whom he does not confer has traditionally been understood to refer to the apostles who knew Jesus in a human



sense that Paul did not share, but that is unlikely, in my view; rather, Paul believes they all work from shared grace and revelation (see 2:2, 7–8; 1 Cor 15:5–8). Although he arrived at his understanding without consulting the Jerusalem apostles, when he did go to them later, he admits he was seeking their approval (Gal 2:1–2). Thus, rather than a redundant reference to flesh and blood and the other apostles, I suggest they are two different parties he did not immediately consult: neither his former group of Pharisees nor his new group leaders, the apostles in Jerusalem. In the first case, Paul is referring to not having conferred with the leaders of his Pharisaic group. Flesh and blood may refer to the traditions handed down among the Pharisees that are attributed to the fathers and constitute their own special group rulings or perhaps may imply that the rabbinic policy of the rule of the majority of sages was characteristic of his Pharisaic group already. If the first option, he did not subject his new convictions to their deliberation; if the second, he did not return and thereby violated these Pharisees' policy of not contesting the views of the elders, which his new conviction would be expected to challenge (cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 18.12). Paul is indicating that he did not immediately seek to win formal approval of this revelation and call to bring this message to the nations from the Pharisaic group among whom he had previously held high esteem. For the Galatians, the likely rhetorical purpose is to relate to them in their own circumstances: if they follow Paul's teaching and resist proselyte conversion, they will need to stand alone against the opinions of the local Jewish communal leaders, too. Paul understands this, having stood alone for this truth claim. But it is also the position of the other apostles to which he calls them, even if he initially arrived at this understanding independently. He seeks to relate his experiences to the vulnerability of his Galatian audience: he wants them to know that he understands what it is to stand alone and be marginalized for the gospel's proposition, just as his Galatian audience is now experiencing. It is what all Christ-following group leaders uphold (cf. Nanos, "Intruding 'Spies'"; Nanos, "What Was at Stake?"; Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*; Nanos, "How Could Paul Accuse Peter of 'Living *Ethné*-ishly' in Antioch (Gal 2:11–21) If Peter Was Eating according to Jewish Dietary Norms?," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6 (2016): 199–223, updated in my *Reading Galatians within Judaism*. On the rabbinic policy of majority rule, see b. B. Metz. 59b; on the topic of interpretive authority and the role of revelation during this period, see Sir 24; 39:1–8; 1QS 5; 8; George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Revealed Wisdom as a Criterion for Inclusion and Exclusion: From Jewish Sectarianism to Early Christianity," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and E. Frerichs (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 73–82; Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews*, 21–47.

82. Martin Goodman, "A Note on Josephus, the Pharisees and Ancestral Tradition," *JJS* 50 (1999): 17–20, makes an interesting case for recognizing that the Pharisees were not characterized only by distinctive theological ideas such as resurrection but that they upheld proper behavior according to ancestral customs that were not necessarily Pharisaic. If so, this would fit well with the issue at hand in Paul's opposition to the traditional convention for non-Jews to gain membership via proselyte conversion. It is not just Pharisaic tradition that is being challenged but general Jewish tradition, which the Pharisees uphold more zealously than other interest groups (from Paul's point of view).

83. Traditional views and an interesting proposal are described by Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles," 248–55.

84. The topic of Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*.

85. The above discussion of the nuances of the word διώκω as well as concepts related to "persecution" apply here as well; see n. 77.

86. I am suggesting here an alternative that Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles," does not discuss, although a variation of one she dismisses (251) on the grounds that it was not objectionable for Jewish groups to include gentiles. The difference is that she is dealing with a proposition that these gentiles remained merely *guests*, while I am proposing that the gentiles in these groups were being identified and treated as *full members* in a way that other Jewish groups reserved for proselytes. At the same time, I do not believe that they were being classified by Paul as proselytes (*contra* Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*). Rather, it was important to Paul's proposition that they remain representatives of the other nations, but in membership standing on a par with proselytes, indeed, with natural-born Jews as well, so that the "new creation" community consisted of members of Israel *and* the rest of the nations with one voice worshipping the One God of all humankind (see Rom 3:29–30; 10:12; 15:5–13; Gal 3:28; cf. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 179–92; Nanos, "Paul and the Jewish Tradition").

87. See Mark D. Nanos, "Reading the Antioch Incident (Gal 2:11–21) as a Subversive Banquet Narrative," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 7 (2017): 26–52, updated in my *Reading Galatians within Judaism*.

88. Cf. Nanos, "Intruding 'Spies,'" 59–97; Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome, A.D. 66–70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

89. Cf. Dieter Mitternacht, "Foolish Galatians?—A Recipient-Oriented Assessment of Paul's Letter," in Nanos, *The Galatians Debate*, 408–33.

90. Note that Paul does not write "Do not hear torah," as if torah was no longer the authority on the matter at hand, i.e., as if its role for Christ-followers was finished (which undermines the usual interpretations of Paul's statement earlier, in 3:23–25, when taken to mean that the role of torah is finished with the coming of Christ).

91. Paul's hostile rhetoric betrays that he believes those influencing his addressees should instead accept the truth claims of his proclamation of the gospel (see Gal 1:6–9; 3:1; 4:17–18; 5:7–12; 6:12–13; cf. Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, 226–33) and that they will, when the course of his two-step ministry of proclaiming Christ to the representatives of Israel in each location, followed by decisively turning to the nations also ("the fullness of the nations begins"), has reached its climax, when the rest of those of Israel will reconsider, for he is convinced that "all Israel will be saved (i.e., 'protected')" (Rom 11, as explained in Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 239–88; Nanos, "The Gifts and the Calling").

92. Nanos, "What Was at Stake?"; Nanos, "Intruding 'Spies.'"

93. Mark D. Nanos, "'Broken Branches': A Pauline Metaphor Gone Awry? (Romans 11:11–36)," in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 339–76, updated in my *Reading Romans within Judaism*.

94. Mark D. Nanos, "'Callused,' Not 'Hardened': Paul's Revelation of Temporary

Protection until All Israel Can Be Healed,” in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 52–73, updated in my *Reading Romans within Judaism*; Nanos, “The Gifts and the Calling.”

95. When Sanders writes, “He [Paul] seems to have ‘held together’ his native view that the law is one and given by God and his new conviction that Gentiles and Jews stand on equal footing, which requires the deletion of some of the law, by asserting them both without theoretical explanation” (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 103), because of the inscrutability of 1 Cor 7:19 in Sanders’s system, his view overlooks the option I am trying to articulate here. From the oneness of the particular Lord of Israel and the universal God of all the rest of the nations, one can claim equal footing for Israelites and members of the other nations without requiring “the deletion of some of the law.” By regarding the torah to be particular to Israel, to Jewish observance, the need arises for halakic developments to incorporate non-Jews as equals within this subgroup/coalition. Likewise, when Sanders states that circumcision, Sabbath observance, and dietary restrictions, although clear to Paul as prescribed in Scripture, “are not binding on those in Christ” (103), he again does not make the distinction that I uphold, that is, that they are binding on the Jew in Christ but not on the non-Jew. Moreover, making halakic decisions for Jews who live in view of faith in Christ that may require some deviation from prevailing conventions being upheld by other Jewish groups is not the same thing as deleting laws. The making of halakah is a dynamic enterprise, which Sanders knows well.

96. Cf. Pinchas Lapide, “The Rabbi from Tarsus,” in *Paul, Rabbi and Apostle*, ed. Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 48–49.

97. Paul seeks to provoke his fellow Jews to jealousy “of his *ministry*” (v. 13), not because non-Jews are being included per se but because they are not participating in this awaited task (i.e., “ministry”) of bringing light to the nations, too (Rom 3:2; 10:14–17; cf. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 247–51; Nanos, “The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 283–304, here 300–304, updated in my *Reading Romans within Judaism*. The assessment of those Jews who have not yet joined Paul in his faith in Christ as stumbling but not fallen bespeaks the position of one who views himself and his coalition to be upholding the righteous standing of Israel in the sense of the remnant preserving the certain destiny of the whole cloth. The issue for Jews, unlike for non-Jews, is not getting-in, contra Sanders, but staying in, now by way of response to Christ. Even the culpability for failing to yet make that decision is mitigated by the admission that God is involved in a complicated scheme to include the nations that will eventually include the restoration of all Israel, for which some of Israel is vicariously suffering presently, while some of Israel is engaged in bringing about the eventual complete restoration.

98. Translation from Norman Lamm, *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism as Exemplified in the Shema, the Most Important Passage in the Torah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2000), 31. See also Sipre on Deut 6:4 (Piska 31), “But Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: out of all these gods we have chosen only you, as it is said: ‘The Lord is my portion, says my soul’” (from Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 200 n. 27, citing D. Hoffmann, ed., *Midrasch Tannaim zum Deuteronomium* [Berlin,

1908/9; repr., Jerusalem, n.p., 1984], 190–91). Cf. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 179–92; Nanos, “Paul and the Jewish Tradition.”

99. Nanos, “What Was at Stake?”; Nanos, “How Could Paul Accuse Peter”; Nanos, “Reading the Antioch Incident.”

100. Too often the tenure of Paul’s argument in Gal 2:16–17 is undermined by failure to account for the fact that he does not put the *erga nomou* (that still distinguishes the Jews from the non-Jews in Christ) into contrast with *pistis*; Paul argues for “this *and* that” (“except through [‘unless accompanied (by)’] Jesus Christ’s faithfulness [ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ] ... even we”); see Nanos, “How Could Paul Accuse Peter,” esp. 215–21. Paul’s arguments throughout Gal 2 provide good examples for eschewing the use of *Christian*, *Christianity*, *church*, and similar anachronistic terms is helpful if trying to understand his language in historical context.

101. See Michael A. A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London: Routledge, 1988).

102. Contra Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 144.

103. Certain texts that have been traditionally understood to suggest that Paul opposed a Jewish diet for himself and, by implication, for other Jewish believers in Christ imply instead that Paul observed Jewish dietary customs and was understood by his non-Jewish addressees to do so. See my arguments related to Rom 14 in Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, esp. chs 3 and 4; related to the Antioch incident, in Nanos, “What Was at Stake?” and “How Could Paul Accuse Peter”; related to idol food at Corinth in Nanos, “The Polytheist Identity”; and overall in Nanos, “The Myth of the ‘Law-Free’ Paul.”

104. The implications extend to Paul’s metaphorical references: Cecilia Wassen, “Do You Have to Be Pure in a Metaphorical Temple? Sanctuary Metaphors and Construction of Sacred Space in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Paul’s Letters,” in *Purity, Holiness, and Identity in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Carl S. Ehrlich, Anders Runesson, and Eileen Schuller (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 55–86. Paul’s treatment of these non-Jews in temple holiness terminology is also relevant here; see Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52, here 244–49; Caroline Johnson Hodge, “The Question of Identity: Gentiles as Gentiles—But Also Not—in Pauline Communities,” in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 153–73, here 164–67.

I understand the calendar Paul opposes in Gal 4:10 to be a polytheistic calendar, one that does not contain the distinctive mark of the Jewish calendar, “weeks,” by which Paul’s groups should mark time (Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, 267–68; drawing from Troy Martin, “Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal. 4:10 and Col. 2:16,” *NTS* 42 [1996]: 120–32).

105. The topic of Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*; Dieter Mitternacht, *Forum für Sprachlose: Eine kommunikationspsychologische und epistolär-rhetorische Untersuchung des Galaterbriefs*, ConBNT 30 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1999).

106. See J. Brian Tucker, “Remain in Your Calling”: *Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

107. This is but one of many indications throughout Galatians that Paul is not challenging a rival proposition upholding torah-observance for his addressees or proposing a sharp distinction between faith or faithfulness and works of righteousness,

for then he would have presumably been more careful to write "love working through faith" here and to avoid the many other instructions about striving to undertake to behave righteously, or else not be counted among those who are of the kingdom of God (5:21). This implication is even present when Paul warns them that adopting proselyte conversion involves the obligation to observe the whole torah (5:3), for his warning implies that the rival message is not properly emphasizing (if even teaching) torah-observance but rather focusing on the benefits to be gained by proselyte conversion. Paul thus seeks to undermine that approach as being based on a half-truth to serve the interests of the influencers. These and other elements pointing in this direction are discussed at length in Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*.

108. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*; and John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), have criticized this tendency similarly.

109. Cf. Lauri Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law*, WUNT 124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

110. *Erga nomou*, usually translated "works of law," functions in Paul's arguments as a synonym for "circumcision." Circumcision is also used as a metonym in Paul's arguments to signify the role of what came to be called proselyte conversion, the process by which non-Jews undertake the *rites* (hence, acts or works) by which, according to the traditional interpretation of the torah, they can become children of Abraham's covenant on the same standing with (male) Jews from birth, who are circumcised as children. In my view, then, *erga nomou* is Paul's way of referring to the process by which, in the Jewish communities that Paul's addressees are in anyway, non-Jews can become Jews in addition to becoming faithful to God in Christ; hence, a better translation would be "rites of a (or: the) convention [of circumcision]" or "rites of a (or: the) convention [for becoming a Jew]". In all but one case (Gal 2:16)—where in order to argue that Christ-following non-Jews have equal standing before God (and thus, before each other) to highlight that even though Peter and he have *erga nomou* (having been circumcised as infant sons) they nevertheless also believe in Christ's faithfulness—Paul does not use the phrase to refer to observing torah *per se* (although for Jews torah enjoins the circumcision of their males sons) or even to ritual aspects of torah practice *per se*, neither of which non-Jews are obliged to observe as if Jews. Contra Dunn's view, it also does not signify observance of special boundary-marking behavior such as Sabbath and food laws, which are for those already defined as torah-people (Israelites, Jews), which Paul's addressees are not. At the same time, these non-Jews are being taught by Paul to behave according to torah-based norms, which would have involved observing Sabbath and dietary norms to assemble in these Jewish subgroups. That reality turned a clear line of differentiation on technical terms into a less-than-clear one in practical terms, which likely contributed to the confusion that gave rise to the exigencies he sought to address in these letters and to the (mis)understanding of his later interpreters that he was against torah-observance *per se*. For detailed discussion why *erga nomou* specifically signified circumcision in Paul's argument and also as used by Josephus to describe the issue for Izates, see Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization"; Nanos, "Re-framing Paul's Opposition to *Erga Nomou*."

111. Often interpreters run together the categories of identity and behavior, of circumcision and torah-observance for Jews as well as non-Jews, for example, when

discussing what Paul opposes in Galatia. But Paul's argument is not about torah-observance, and he even appeals to it as that which follows after the identity-transformation involved in proselyte conversion (circumcision), as discussed above, indicating that it is not torah-observance that is at issue in Galatia but identity-transformation by the rites of the convention that makes it possible for non-Jews to become Jews in some Jewish groups.

112. In this direction, see Markus Barth, "St. Paul—A Good Jew," *HBT* 1 (1979): 7–45; John G. Gager, "Paul, the Apostle of Judaism," in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 56–76; Jörg Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity," in Frey et al., *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, 285–321.

113. In a forthcoming introduction to Paul, Anders Runesson and I have been working with the phrase "Apostolic Judaism" to denote the larger movement among Christ-followers, including Paul and his coworkers and communities as well as the other apostles such as James and Peter and their communities.

114. See Eisenbaum, "Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism."

115. Nanos, "How Inter-Christian Approaches."

116. See discussions of this dynamic by Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, CSHJ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional View of Paul'"; Pamela Eisenbaum, "Following in the Footnotes of the Apostle Paul," in *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezon and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York: Routledge, 2004), 77–97. The trend continues in recent works: e.g., Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*; Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

117. Interestingly, the traditional portrait of Paul against torah has also played a role in disputes between Jewish groups about the relative merits and demerits of so-called progressive policies toward torah; see Jonathan D. Brumberg-Kraus, "A Jewish Ideological Perspective on the Study of Christian Scripture," *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1997): 121–52; Daniel R. Langton, "Modern Jewish Identity and the Apostle Paul: Pauline Studies as an Intra-Jewish Ideological Battleground," *JSNT* 2 (2005): 217–58. The implications of reading Paul as a torah-observant Jew for modern Jewish-Christian relations are addressed in Nanos, "The Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul," and other publications noted throughout this essay.

118. Cf. W. D. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," in *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 123–52, here 136, 142.

119. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 239–88; Nanos, "Challenging the Limits That Continue to Define Paul's Perspective on Jews and Judaism," in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, Romans through History and Culture Series 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 217–29, updated in my *Reading Romans within Judaism*.



## 7

# PAUL AND WOMEN: TELLING WOMEN TO SHUT UP IS MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

DEBORAH KRAUSE

The most important development in critical scholarship on Paul and women is that the subject itself is defunct. At the base, what is defunct in all biblical research is the treatment of Paul as a decontextualized religious figure whose stand on various topics from women to the law to homosexuality merits intense investigation to arrive at some precise conclusion of how Paul thought about them. In this sense, much of what is new about “Paul and women” is in keeping with what has been new in the study of Paul and his letters for the last century or more, namely, the work of understanding the man and his writings within the complexities of their historical, rhetorical, social, cultural, political, economic, and religious contexts.

Just as scholars have developed more culturally engaged critical analyses of Paul’s letters, so also the study of women within ancient literature has been influenced by developments within the fields of feminist criticisms, gender studies, and women’s history. Scholars in these disciplines have engaged Paul’s writings and rhetoric about women not as a segregated issue within the literature of Paul but as a part of his cultural, religious, political way of being and context. These projects have shifted from the more traditional approach of selecting pertinent passages to the “problem” of women in Paul’s letters (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 14:34–36) to a more comprehensive investigation of the relation of Paul’s letters and the churches they represent with the history of women within the Hellenistic world. As such, newer approaches to the subject of Paul and women have moved from investigations into particular problematic passages and determinations of whether Paul is “pro” or “anti” woman (whatever that would



mean) to a more thoroughgoing investigation into the histories of women within Hellenistic cultures and in relation to the cultural, religious, and political realities at work in the communities of Paul's churches. In this sense, the study of Paul and women has developed from investigations that seek to establish Paul as a male chauvinist or a feminist to investigations that seek to determine what his letters might reveal about the everyday life of women within the Hellenistic world and early Christian origins.<sup>1</sup>

In Christian belief and practice, Paul is an enduring authoritative figure in matters regarding the church and its administration. His letters, while originally intended to address particular issues within terminal congregations, were circulated and copied as sources of instruction and wisdom for the church in general. This generalized version of "Paul" more than the historical figure or his particular letters has been the target of feminist critical engagement. This is so because what "Paul" says about women is not consistent. At one time he seems to uphold women's leadership and full participation within the community of faith (e.g., Rom 16:1), and at other times he seems to deny women's leadership (e.g., 1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:8–15).

Early feminist treatments of the subject made most headway in refuting "Paul's" prohibition of women's leadership in the church, for instance, by placing his rhetoric in its social and historical context.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, early feminist treatments of the subject of women and Paul critically engaged what had become a generalized perspective on Paul and his views on women. Paul's likely authentic letters were divided from those letters written decades later in his name.<sup>3</sup> Seemingly contradictory claims, such as the call for women to be silent in 1 Cor 14:34–35, were argued to be interpolations by later redactors of the Pauline tradition. In this sense, the historical-critical study of Paul's letters has been an essential tool for apologists who have argued for women's full leadership (e.g., ordination) and personhood within church and society. In this perspective, the historical Paul is championed for his inclusion of women within the ministries and leadership of the church. Only the later interpreters of his tradition (within the practice of pseudepigraphy) are seen as responsible for commanding women's silence and submission to men.

In this period of study on the subject of Paul and women, the question of whether Paul believed women to be of equal status to men within the church was asked of the surface of the text. The primary goal of such investigation was to determine whether commands against women's leadership (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:8–15) were the historical Paul's words.

This surface investigation of the subject of Paul and women changed in 1983, with the publication of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins, *In Memory of Her*.<sup>4</sup> In her study of Paul's letters and the letters of the Pauline tradition, Schüssler Fiorenza examines Paul's letters as tendentious rhetorical constructions from which women's history must be mined. As such, whether she is examining the pre-Pauline baptismal formula of Gal 3:28 (and its altered application in 1 Cor 12:13) or the roles of various named women within Paul's letters (e.g., Phoebe, Rom 16:1) Schüssler Fiorenza treats Paul's letters not as representative of the conditions of women within the early church but as rhetorical constructions within the convention of letter writing that coincidentally—unwittingly—convey artifacts of women's history, a history in the first few centuries of the Common Era in which there was much contention about women's roles and place in church and society.

Patriarchalization of the early Christian movement and ascendancy of the monarchical episcopacy not only made marginal or excluded women leaders in the early church but also segregated and restricted them to women's spheres, which gradually came under the control of the bishop. Nevertheless it must be emphasized again that the writings suggesting this kind of patriarchal dynamic are *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive*, since the male clergy were often dependent upon wealthy and influential women even into late antiquity. Ideological prescription and social reality do not always correspond.<sup>5</sup>

With Schüssler Fiorenza's work came a shift to the approach to the subject of women in the letters of Paul. No longer a debate about whether the historical Paul silenced women or curtailed their leadership, the study of women in Paul's letters became a project of reading between the lines to hear the embedded histories and implied perspectives at work in prescriptive rhetoric. The shift was no doubt indebted to the historical work of Walter Bauer in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, which proposes that, rather than an original orthodoxy from which later Christianity fell, the early church was originally and regionally diverse in belief and practice.<sup>6</sup> Such an insight produces the capacity to discern the prescriptive rhetoric of Eph 5 or 1 Tim 2 as representing particular perspectives within diverse and contentious Christianities of the late first- and early second-century church. Between the lines of the prescriptions one may hear alternative stories of women's lives. For example, calls for women's submission likely arise from contexts in which women were asserting their

authority, and commands for women's silence likely come from contexts in which women were talking. In other words, you do not tell someone to shut up unless she is talking! Needless to say, this historical lens offers Schüssler Fiorenza and others the opportunity to discern that, in spite of the claims of certain early Christian texts, women were leaders of Pauline communities and that these women were often in conflict with Paul and those who interpret his legacy within the canonical epistles.<sup>7</sup>

In concert with the historical work of Schüssler Fiorenza, Bernadette Brooten in 1985 called for a study of women and Christian origins that would shift from examining "male attitudes toward women" to a vision of putting women at the center of historical study to understand their lives.<sup>8</sup> Brooten picked up this work in her study of women in early Judaism, and Schüssler Fiorenza, Luise Schottroff, and many others pursued the study of the everyday life of women in relation to early Christianity. These studies are ongoing, evidenced particularly in the work of Margaret MacDonald in her contribution to the Ross Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo edited volume *Women and Christian Origins*. This work has moved to examine the lives of women in the ancient world—of Hellenism—in relation to their religions, Judaisms, Christianities, Greco-Roman religions, as whole people within complex cultures. Such advances within the study of early Christian origins have pursued the study of Paul and women in Paul's letters along two important fronts: rhetorical and discourse analyses of Paul's letters.

An early innovative and ambitious engagement of Paul with regard to his use of rhetoric in relation to women is Antoinette Wire's *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*.<sup>9</sup> Rather than the traditional approach of exegeting the "problem" passages for women in 1 Corinthians, Wire interprets 1 Corinthians as Paul's rhetorical struggle with women prophets within Corinth. As if responding directly to Brooten's challenge to place women at the center of exegetical examination, Wire radically shifts the focus of the study of women and Paul from 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 14:34–35 to the letter as a whole. Using a method understood as the new rhetoric and sociological analysis, Wire sees Paul's letter through a model of conflict, with his writing targeted to persuade and discredit those whom Wire reconstructs as women prophetic leaders within the Corinthian church. Wire's work offers a new angle on Paul that sees his message not as a necessary or natural articulation of the gospel of Jesus Christ but rather as a particular theological construction with particular investments that engaged other theological and ecclesial articulations of his day. Wire

engages Paul's emphasis on the cross and suffering of Christ as one aspect of his particularity. She wonders how this teaching would have been heard by women within the Corinthian church who had begun to taste the new social freedom that baptism into Christ had afforded them. With regard to the subject of women, the study of Paul has been enriched by Wire's insights. Rather than a sideline or particular problem issue, women were a vital part of the early house church and missionary movements. Seeing the complexity of the Corinthian women in relation to Paul is one important way to recover the diverse and contentious nature of early Christianity.

Contemporary with Wire's publication, Elizabeth Castelli engaged Paul's letters as constructions of power.<sup>10</sup> Rather than a sociological analysis of Paul's rhetoric, Castelli engages Paul's use of mimesis from the angle of ideological criticism and cultural criticisms, influenced in particular by the work of Michel Foucault. Much like Wire, Castelli understands that Paul's rhetoric is not "natural" or "necessary" but constructed. As such she scrutinizes his use of the call to imitate him as he imitates Christ as a particular construction of power within his churches. This construction of power, Castelli argues, is forged in an ideological commitment to sameness that resists difference and seeks to deny the presence of tension and conflict. Such may be Paul's desire, Castelli avers, but in fact his letters protest "too much." In this sense she explores Paul's letters as sites in which can be discerned a struggle for social control and political conformity within a larger cultural context of heterodox identities and competing ideologies. With Castelli, as with Wire from a different angle, the study of Paul's rhetoric and its relation to women comes firmly into the social and political realm.

The issue of identity with regard to women in the letters of Paul is further complicated and broadened by Daniel Boyarin in his important study *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*.<sup>11</sup> Boyarin, like Castelli and Wire, examines Paul's letters as rhetorical constructions that reveal his own commitments and location as a particular kind of theologian and ecclesial leader within the complexities of his culture/world. Boyarin as a Jewish scholar is particularly interested in how Paul constructs his understanding of identity with regard to his christological claims and his understanding of Judaism. This understanding, much like Castelli's analysis of Paul's discourse of power regarding imitation, takes on Paul's understanding of the "universal" new human that is born in one's baptism into Christ. Boyarin argues that Paul's understanding of this "human" obliterates difference—both Jewish and female—as it denies the realities of enfleshed

existence and seeks an ideal, spiritual, universal expression that is for Paul, of course, normed as Christian and male. In this regard Boyarin, as Castelli, complicates the traditional apologetic of Paul's inclusive vision in Gal 3:28: in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus. Such a vision may seem to create a basis for socially egalitarian community, but as such a culturally unbiased and socially homogeneous expression is not possible "in the flesh," since it denies the heterogeneity and multivocal reality of human community. In this sense, even where Paul has seemed to be an ally toward women's full inclusion within the rhetoric of early Christianity, critics such as Boyarin offer a caution about the social and cultural implications of this radical vision. Sometimes what looks to promise equality can in fact function as a structure of conformity and, even more, a historical reality that obliterates ethnic, religious, biological, or sexual difference.

In a recent and important contribution to the social construction of gender in 1 Corinthians, Jorunn Økland articulates the contrast of approach between seeing Paul as a unified subject who authors his letters out of his ideas about women, the law, grace, and so on, to understanding 1 Corinthians within the "broader discourses" of Corinthian culture of which Paul is a part.<sup>12</sup> In such an approach, contradictions in Paul's writings are not so much problematic as they are full of potential for better understanding the complexities of the cultural context in which Paul is writing. Like Castelli and Boyarin, Økland understands Paul's texts as replete with meaning beyond his control. With regard to women's lives, this approach is not so much concerned with what Paul thought about women as it is with what Paul's writings reveal about gender construction within the cultural context of Corinth. "Real" historical women, just as the "real" historical Paul, fade from view as the rich complexity of gendered social discourse as it relates to the Corinthian community comes to the fore.<sup>13</sup> In exploring the discourses of gender and space in Corinth, Økland discerns that what seem to be contradictions in Paul's rhetoric about Corinthian women and their place and activity may in fact be indications of the fluidity of social relations and gender roles. In 1 Cor 11, women are identified as having prophetic roles within sanctuary space. In 1 Cor 14, they are commanded to silence in the assembly. In 1 Cor 12, Paul constructs a metaphor of the unity of the membership as a body, but the metaphor is gendered as male. Ultimately Økland discerns that women occupy a potentially subversive "no man's land" in Corinth, and Paul's affirmation or denial of the space and role of the real women named in 1 Cor 11–14 (and Rom 16) does not

exist because of Paul's inclusive ideas about women but because Paul is flexibly and contextually navigating gendered constructions of social space in which women's place is not settled.<sup>14</sup>

Margaret Y. MacDonald's engagement of historical issues related to women's lives in *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion* and her essays on Paul and the canonical interpreters of Paul in the Kraemer and D'Angelo volume mentioned above offer a rapprochement between the theoretically driven analyses of Castelli, Boyarin, and Økland and the more historical work of scholars such as Schüssler Fiorenza and Schottruff.<sup>15</sup> MacDonald places the rhetoric of Paul about women and their activities in conversation with the rhetoric of critics of early Christianity, such as Celsus, in order to understand how the historical fact of women's leadership within early Christian prophetic movements, house churches, and missionary movements became such a problem and embarrassment to writers such as Paul and his interpreters.<sup>16</sup> In this analysis, MacDonald assesses how the broad Greco-Roman cultural bias that women's religious experience was prone to excess and hysteria influenced the development of early Christian movements and found expression in their writings. In this sense, traditional apologies for Paul's restriction on women's teaching in 1 Cor 14:33–34 or of the restrictions on women's ecclesial leadership in the Pastoral Epistles are challenged. Rather than seeing this Christian rhetoric as reflecting a necessary evil of the cultural accommodation of the church to its larger culture, MacDonald sees the rhetoric as participating in the construction of women's religious excesses alongside the broader popular cultural rhetorical construction of women's experience. In the ancient world, male rhetoricians regularly characterized women of Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Christian religious communities as excessive. Importantly, this insight holds that Christian women were not unique in their assumption of religious leadership. Women of different religious expressions both assumed religious leadership and were disparaged in their popular cultural discourse for it. Seen in this context, Paul's letters, and those of his interpreters in Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, are expressions of their culture (not exceptions to it), and as such they reflect the ongoing cultural, political, and social struggles of the culture. The Pauline letters thereby function as a site for the excavation of Christian women's histories—not in some ideal utopian sense but in the sense of recovery of the complexity of women's everyday lives in relation to their religious experiences. MacDonald examines how women such as Chloe and Junia, Phoebe, Euodia, and Syntheche are placed within this

complex cultural mix to appreciate not only how Paul's rhetoric would have sounded to them but also how in between the lines we might see and understand something about their history.

The newer approaches to Paul in scholarship regarding women represent a broadening of the field of analysis from a few select texts to the culture in general. As such, all the topics covered in this volume pertain to the subject of Paul and women. From this perspective, the texts of the canon are more than mere descriptions of the life of the early church. They are more than the sum of their author's thoughts on the problem or issue of women. They are contentious discourses about the nature of human community in relation to religious experience and the institutions that order it. The history of the church is an ongoing argument about women, yes, and men, sexuality, authority, identity, and many other vexing human problems. Paul's letters reveal this argument from an early part of the church. Letters within the Pauline tradition (e.g., Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) demonstrate how this argument developed into the late and early second century.

#### WOMEN'S SPEECH IN THE PAULINE TRADITION

There are two direct prohibitions of women's speech within in the Pauline writings: 1 Cor 14:34–36 and 1 Tim 2:11–12. Until recently, much scholarly analysis of these texts surrounded questions of whether the prohibitions are authentic to the historical Paul. The goal of such investigation has been to cast doubt upon whether Paul actually made these claims, particularly in light of the seemingly contradictory evidence of women's leadership within his churches (e.g., the reference to women prophesying in 1 Cor 11:5 and the commendation of Phoebe to the Roman church as a deacon of Cenchreae in Rom 16:1). As such, some scholars have argued that 1 Cor 14:34–36 is in fact an editorial interpolation into 1 Corinthians by the author of 1 Timothy.<sup>17</sup> Through this insight, advocates for women's leadership within the contemporary church have been able to marginalize the prohibitions of women's speech in the church to the particular claim of the late first- or early second-century church leader who wrote the Pastoral Epistles. In this vein, interpreters have been able to claim that women's leadership within worship and administration of early churches is well evidenced and that prohibitions to women's speech in church are not original to Paul's churches but a later development of a part of the church in its accommodation to Greco-Roman culture.



As outlined above, recent scholars of women's lives within Paul's letters have broadened the concern of their research from determining the intention of the historical Paul to understanding Paul's writings as expressions of the culture and history from which they come. In this interpretive approach, prohibitions to women's speech are examined as social-political rhetorical claims that function less to describe the state of churches within the Pauline tradition on the subject of women and more to intervene in broader ongoing arguments within these churches and cultures about human social relationships, identity, authority, and religious experience. When read in this vein, the claims from 1 Cor 14:34–36 and 1 Tim 2:8–15 are, as Schüssler Fiorenza has said, prescriptive and not descriptive of women's experience. In this light, the texts take on a depth and texture that calls for investigation of more than simply the single voice and will of their author. It calls for a reading of the context (literary and historical) of the text and for a hearing of what is not said, what is between the lines of the text.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34–36

The text is preceded in 1 Cor 14:33 by a universal context for the teaching on women's silence ("as in all the churches of the saints," NRSV). Nowhere else in 1 Corinthians or his other letters does Paul set this broad a vision of the church as a context for a teaching. As the text concludes there is another universal claim in 1 Cor 14:35: "it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (NRSV). As totalizing as these introductory and concluding claims against women's speech in church may seem, if you place them together they begin to trouble one another somewhat. If women's silence in church is a norm in "all the churches of the saints," then how is it known that for women to speak in church is shameful? The combination of claims begins to suggest that perhaps the writer is less confident about his claims to "all the churches" than he may seem.

In addition to shaken certainties about what is practiced in "all the churches," the passage reveals a division in thinking between the public and the private behavior of women and men. What is remarkable about this delineation is that it seems to suggest that women are perfectly capable of knowing and understanding (they have the "desire to know") but that this desire is only appropriately acted upon by women in relation to their husbands within their homes and not the churches ("let them ask their husbands at home"). In this division the letter writer reveals that the issue with women's speech is not that it is ignorant but that it is disruptive—

disruptive of the public space of church leadership. For this reason, the writer of the letter sends the women and their desire to know home. The direction is parallel to Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 11:22, where in challenge to those who come to church for the Lord's Supper and get drunk while others go hungry, Paul corrects: "Do you not have homes to eat and drink in?" (NRSV). Order in the church is maintained through the division of the community between church and home, between public and domestic arrangements of power and relationship. While universal claims are made and authoritative laws are cited to prescribe women's silence, Paul constructs particular spaces of "church" and "home" for the maintenance of a particular kind of order. Paul's rhetoric appeals to that which is universally true but constructs that which is particularly necessary to enforce it.

Seen in this light, the teaching in 1 Cor 14:33–34 is not about women's incapacity to know and learn but about a strategy for containing their speech related to their knowing and learning in a realm removed from the administration of the church. As a discourse of power the text reveals the struggle for controlling speech within Corinth (or some later part of the church) and the challenge of the speech of women to the established order of the church. In spite of the author's intention to ground the command to women's silence in church as a universal ("as in all the churches"), the text read as discourse begins to reveal the particularity of his concerns about women's speech and his strategies to control it.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 2:8–15

As noted above, the predominant scholarly engagement with 1 Tim 2:8–15 from the subject of Paul and women is to argue that Paul did not write it. As an artifact of ancient pseudepigraphy, the writing (along with 2 Timothy and Titus) claims the name of Paul in order to direct and inform the interpretation of the Pauline tradition in the late first- or early second-century church. As such, the command to women's silence and the exegetical rationale for the command in 1 Tim 2:13–15 are viewed as not original to Paul's churches and as evidence of the later accommodation of the church to Greco-Roman culture.

When the text is examined, however, from the perspective of a discourse of power, like 1 Cor 14:33–34 it reveals less the certain rhetoric of the prohibition of women's speech and more the tense negotiation of women's leadership and presence within the church. As with the claim in 1 Cor 14:33 that women should direct their desire to learn toward their

husbands within the domestic realm, 1 Tim 2:12 notes, in the midst of the command to silence, that women are capable of learning. Moreover, when the writer exclaims, "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man" (NRSV), he reveals that women may well teach and have authority in other arenas. The trouble that teaching outside of the realm of the church may cause for the writer seems to be suggested in 1 Tim 5:13 when he characterizes the activity of younger widows (women unattached to men) as "gadding about from house to house, and they are not merely idle, but gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say" (NRSV). Seen from the context of a rhetorical construction within a negotiation of power, 1 Tim 2:8–15 reveals a leader of the church attempting to constrain an activity that is already on the loose. Rather than a historical portrait of women cowering within their homes, submissive and silent, the text, read within its literary and historical contexts, reveals a contentious community with competing claims to leadership and religious authority of which women were a vital part.

#### CONCLUSION

Newer scholarship about women in the Pauline tradition represents an expansion of the subject from the intention and person of the apostle Paul to a broader exploration of women's lives within the Hellenistic world. The letters within this expansion are not so much a reservoir of Paul's ideas about women as they are artifacts of discourse about human relationships, gender, religious experience, and power at work in Paul's churches and the world in which they lived. Seen in this light, the letters of the Pauline tradition are not friend or foe in the cause of women for their full inclusion in leadership in the church. Rather, they are witnesses to the struggle that women and men have engaged to define the nature of the church's leadership, the shape of human community within the church, and the intersection between religious experience and the authority to speak of it. We can see from the Pauline tradition that these challenges were far from settled within the early church. We know from contemporary practices of Christian rhetoric in all its diversity that these challenges are far from settled today. In this new vein the letters of the Pauline tradition and the rhetoric of the contemporary church are witnesses to an enduring struggle within which women and men who hope for a more humane, inclusive, and just church will not necessarily take comfort but through which they might take courage.

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Addendum: Neither Paul Nor Women: Ten More Years of Scholarship in the Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Transgression of "Paul and Women"

To put it bluntly, newer scholarship on Paul and women is less about Paul and less about women. That may be too blunt. It is less certain about the subject of Paul and less certain about the subject of women. In the past decade, scholars have continued to transgress and expand these subject areas. Exegetical treatments of texts once seen as problematic or promising for women (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:34–26) are read in light of broader issues of gender identity, social performance, and power. Publications that engage Paul do so less in terms of his singular authoritative location to prescribe women's behavior and more in terms of his own subjectivity and the contested nature of his identity and location.

Scholarly engagement of critical theoretical discourse informs these developments, particularly gender, postcolonial, space, and queer theories. No longer "emerging trends," these approaches now occupy space in journals traditionally focused on historical-critical concerns.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, scholars whose work has focused on historical-critical methods are integrating critical theoretical perspectives into their exegetical analyses.<sup>19</sup> Such work is changing the subject of Paul and the subject of women. Just as Paul is no longer seen as a unitary "thought leader" regarding women, so also women are seen less as a discrete and unitary category of humans whose interests, challenges, and needs can be assumed in ancient or contemporary contexts. These developments in the study of Paul and women yield a period marked by greater interdisciplinarity and attention to intersectionality.<sup>20</sup>

Recent scholarship on ancient women's lives illustrates interdisciplinary development in New Testament studies and the study of Paul. A 2006 publication addresses the lives of women in Paul's (and other early Christian) communities within the context of house churches. In *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch draw on literary evidence (including Paul's letters), archaeology, architecture, and funerary art to survey what can be known about how early Christian women worked and lived. Their combination of rhetorical and historical material analysis marks an advance in the study of early Christian women. More recently Carolyn Schenk (2017) has continued this approach in a study of the religious authority of early Christian women as evidenced in both early Christian rhetoric and funerary art.

Further expansion of the analysis of material and literary history is evident in the scholarship of Laura S. Nasrallah and Brigitte Kahl. Continuing the work of reading material historical evidence in conversation with critical theory (e.g., Davina Lopez, *The Apostle to the Conquered*, 2008), these scholars attend to diverse rhetorics of power in relation to Paul's writings. In publications that explore topics that intersect with women's lives, such as early Christian prophecy, ancient architecture, war, and Roman imperial rhetoric, Nasrallah engages critical theoretical categories from space theory in ways that further illumine the social realities Paul's communities.<sup>21</sup> Kahl rereads Paul's rhetoric about being an apostle to "the nations" in light of Roman imperial rhetoric in art and architecture within the context of Galatia.<sup>22</sup> While their work does not focus on women per se, their attention to dynamics of power and rhetorics of domination within the contexts of Paul's communities provides a framework in which to reconsider Paul's rhetoric and to consider women's lives amidst the lives of others (e.g., the enslaved, colonized, displaced) who have been, to use Kahl's term, vanquished.

The ascendance of critical theoretical approaches for the study of Paul and women is clear in the plethora of publications that claim the category of gender as either a subject of study or mode of analysis.<sup>23</sup> Some publications carrying this term bear little critical theoretical content from gender studies in their readings.<sup>24</sup> Substantively or not, gender would seem now to be the expected, perhaps even saleable, term d'art. Beyond the titles, however, many newer publications illustrate how traditional feminist-critical approaches to Paul have moved into analyses in which elements of gender construction and/or performance is engaged in relation to other critical theoretical categories of colonial/postcolonial subjectivity related to sexuality, race, and ethnicity. This development yields studies that are less focused on women and more engaged with how Paul's rhetoric bears witness to dynamics of power and how systems of domination bear out in the lives of people within his communities.

Joseph A. Marchal continues his prodigious interrogation of Paul's rhetoric with analyses of texts informed by feminist, space, queer, and post-colonial theory. In addition to authoring several monographs, Marchal's 2012 edited volume, *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, bears witness to how scholars are integrating critical theoretical approaches into rhetorical and historical analyses of Paul's letters. Recently Gillian Townsley published a queer reading of 1 Cor 11:2–16 that further illustrates how texts of traditional "Paul and women" concern

are powerfully illumined by critical theoretical engagement concerning gender and sexuality.<sup>25</sup>

As critical theoretical approaches have changed the study of women in the past ten years, they have also changed perspectives on Paul. Scholarship in this vein attends to issues of identity, colonial subjectivity, power, and gender performance and has dislocated Paul from a position of isolated authoritative figure and into his colonial and imperial context. Consequently, Paul's rhetoric is seen less as evidence for what he thought and more as evidence for the systems of power in which he (and members of his churches) lived and worked. The title of a 2011 volume of essays, *The Colonized Apostle*, illustrates this relocation well.<sup>26</sup> A central section of the volume is dedicated to three essays that address "Paul, Colonialism, and Gender." Each essay offers a feminist postcolonial reframing of Paul's rhetoric, revealing its logics of colonial mimicry and disrupting its dominating colonialist legacies of interpretation (e.g., the heroic Paul).<sup>27</sup>

In a recent sociorhetorical analysis of the pre-Pauline baptismal formula (understood as an early creed) in Gal 3:28, Stephen Patterson considers how belonging (an essential element of Roman imperial subjectivity) was particularly fostered in Paul's (and other Jesus-movement) communities.<sup>28</sup> While Patterson's exegetical analysis is not directly engaged with critical theoretical methods, he is in conversation with scholarship that has been. As he concludes, he addresses Daniel Boyarin's challenge (discussed in this original essay) to the phrase "you are all one" as a potentially coercive obliteration of difference in the quest for unity.

"There is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male and female" ... was composed on the basis of a cliché: I thank God I was born a native and not a foreigner, a Roman not a barbarian, a Jew not a Greek. I thank God I was born a man not a woman, free not a slave. Why? Because in the caste system of the Roman Empire, native, freeborn men had all the advantages, all the power. The creed must have been, finally, about imagining a world in which that was not longer so, in which female slaves could be leaders of free men, where foreigners and native born stood with equal power and equal rights. "You are all one" signifies solidarity.<sup>29</sup>

Biblical scholarship of the past ten years has continued to transgress the question of Paul and women. While some may see this as lost ground in the quest to know Paul's mind on the matter, there is another way to see it.<sup>30</sup> Interdisciplinary and critical theoretical approaches to Paul's communities and his rhetoric have created a space in which to develop

intersectional attention to the complexity of power relations, identity formations, and dominations among colonially occupied people under Roman imperial rule. In addition to illuminating dynamics of power in the ancient world, this scholarship has cast light on dominating legacies of interpretation of the Pauline writings. Demetrius Williams has named the project of such a space as “rehumanizing” readers (in this case against racism) of Paul’s texts.<sup>31</sup> In such a space, an essential precursor to human liberation can be fostered, namely, that of empathy, solidarity, and community in the midst of difference. Here’s to ten more years of scholarship in such a realm.

#### FOR FURTHER READING

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### Notes

1. Several essays trace these developments. Excellent overviews of this history of scholarship are Luise Schottroff, "How Justified Is the Feminist Critique of Paul," in *Let the Oppressed Go Free: Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament*, trans. Anne-marie S. Kidder (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 35–59; and the volume of essays edited by Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'angelo, *Women and Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women through the Undisputed Letters of Paul," 199–220; and "Rereading Paul: Early Interpreters of Paul on Women and Gender," 236–53.

2. For an example of an important early feminist treatment of the subject of women in Paul toward an apologetics for women in ordained ministry positions, see Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966). Importantly, Stendahl's contribution underscores the fact that feminist criticism is the purview of all scholars who are committed to human liberation and is not essentially circumscribed to women. In other words, not all women are feminists, and men are perfectly capable of being both male and feminist.

3. Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon are referred to as the undisputed or authentic letters of Paul. The remaining letters written in Paul's name are to a greater or lesser extent understood by critical scholars to be parts of the pseudepigraphical tradition, representing writings in Paul's name by interpreters of the Pauline tradition in the generations following Paul (e.g., Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus).

4. What is most important to me about Schüssler Fiorenza's work is that it is now a standard of early Christian history. No longer is it treated as a women's book or a feminist book; it resides on the shelf with other historical treatments of Paul and the early church. Even male colleagues of mine who teach critical introductions to the New Testament use the volume as a textbook, not simply as women's history but as a viable historical reconstruction of the early church in general. In this sense, the influence of feminist scholarship is transforming the practice of biblical scholarship in general.

5. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 310.

6. First published in German in 1934 as *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Bauer's work in English is *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christianity*, trans. Robert Kraft (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

7. An example of a work in this same vein is Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), in which MacDonald compares the rhetoric of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus with that of the noncanonical Acts of Paul, particularly around the legend of Thecla. The comparison exposes that the tensions between the lines of mandating of women's silence and prohibition of their teaching (1 Tim 2:8–15) is in direct contrast with Thecla, whom Paul ultimately commissions to preach and teach the word.

8. Bernadette Brooten, "Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction," in *Feminist Practices of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 65–91.

9. Antoinette Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). Evoking Wire's reinterpretation of Paul's Corinthian correspondence in light of women's religious and social experience is the recent exploration of Galatians by Tatha Wiley, *Paul and the Gentile Women: Reframing Galatians* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

10. Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

11. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

12. Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 22–23.

13. Økland, *Women in Their Place*, 217–23.

14. Økland, *Women in Their Place*, 222–23. Ongoing research in the exploration of gender and social discourse in Paul's letters can be found in works such as Joseph A. Marchal's *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

15. Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

16. For a similar type of treatment of women in Paul's writings and the ancient world, see Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women in the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Gillian Beattie, *Women and Marriage in Paul and His Early Interpreters* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

17. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*, 85–89.

18. E.g., Joseph A. Marchal, "Female Masculinity in Corinth? Bodily Citations and the Drag of History," *Neot* 48 (2014): 93–113; Marchal, "The Usefulness of Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Salves in Paul's Letter to Philemon," *JBL* 130 (2011): 749–70.

19. E.g., Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Female Body as Social Space in 1 Timothy," *NTS* 57 (2011): 155–75.

20. *Intersectionality* is a term coined by feminist race-critical legal theorist, Kimberlé W. Crenshaw in 1989 to describe overlapping oppressions Black women face in adjudicating discrimination claims in the US court system. Its use has broadened to address how frameworks of power relations overlap, aggregate, and impact the most marginal in society.

21. Laura S. Nasrallah, *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: Studies in*

*Religion and Archaeology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

22. Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Reimagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

23. There are many collections of essays that engage the subject of gender in relation to Pauline and other early Christian writings. For example, Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, eds., *Gender, Tradition and Romans: Shared Ground, Uncertain Borders* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, eds., *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking beyond Thecla* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009). Additionally, scores of articles claim the approach. For example, Jeremy Punt, "Pauline Brotherhood, Gender and Slaves: Fragile Fraternity in Galatians," *Neot* 47 (2013): 149–69; Teresa Hornsby, "The Dance of Gender: David, Jesus, and Paul," *Neot* 48 (2014): 75–91; Johnathan Jodamus, "Gendered Ideology and Power in 1 Corinthians," *Journal of Early Christian History* 6 (2016): 29–58.

24. For example Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016).

25. Gillian Townsley, *The Straight Mind in Corinth: Queer Readings across 1 Corinthians 11:2–16*, SemeiaSt 88 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

26. Christopher D. Stanley, ed., *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011). See also Timothy Luckritz Marquis, *Transient Apostle: Paul, Travel, and the Rhetoric of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); and Joseph A. Marchal, ed., *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below*, ECL 17 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

27. Joseph A. Marchal "Imperial Intersections and Initial Inquiries: Toward a Feminist Postcolonial Analysis in Philippians"; Melanie Johnson-Debaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul"; and Jennifer Bird, "To What End: Revisiting the Gendered Space of 1 Cor 11:2–16 from a Feminist Postcolonial Perspective," in Stanley, *The Colonized Apostle*, 146–86.

28. Stephen J. Patterson, *The Forgotten Creed: Christianity's Original Struggle against Bigotry, Slavery, and Sexism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

29. Patterson, *The Forgotten Creed*, 158.

30. See the visionary essay on seeing New Testament studies (inclusive of Paul) in another way through the metaphor of diaspora: Margaret Aymmer, "Sojourners' Truths: The New Testament as Diaspora Space," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 41 (2015): 1–18.

31. Demetrius Williams, "African American Approaches: Re-humanizing Readers against Racism and Reading through Experience," in *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, ed. Joseph A. Marchal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 155–74.



## 8

### PAUL AND RHETORIC: A *SOPHOS* IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

MARK D. GIVEN

The past thirty years or so have witnessed an explosion of rhetorical studies of Paul.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I will first provide a brief overview of the subject of Paul and rhetoric. Then I will describe how classical rhetorical criticism is typically applied to 1 Corinthians. In the final section, I will discuss some of the distinctive characteristics of a postmodern rhetorical approach and apply some of them to an issue in the interpretation of 1 Cor 1–4 in order to illustrate how classical and postmodern rhetorical approaches differ. A classical rhetorical approach is content to describe “the rhetorical situation” Paul faced, mostly from his own point of view, and to foreground the rhetorical means he used to address it. A postmodern approach is not content with this mainly descriptive task and includes attention to ideological issues pertaining to rhetoric, power, and interpretation itself.

#### Paul and Rhetoric

Rhetoric was the queen of the arts in the ancient Greco-Roman educational system.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle (384–322 BCE) wrote a treatise on it, and many rhetorical handbooks were composed in the following centuries.<sup>3</sup> The mark of a well-educated person was the ability to express oneself well, and the teaching of rhetoric was associated especially with the sophists. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd ed.) defines the sophists as

itinerant teachers who went from city to city giving instruction for a fee. The subjects of instruction varied somewhat in content, but always had a relation to the art of getting on, or of success in life.... Under the Roman Empire, particularly from the second century onwards, the word

acquired a more specialized meaning and became restricted to teachers and practitioners of rhetoric, which by this time was tending to become a purely literary exercise practiced for its own sake.<sup>4</sup>

The sophists were often attacked by philosophers because, among other things, they tended to be philosophical relativists, but even many philosophers acknowledged that rhetorical skill was necessary.<sup>5</sup>

The subject of Paul and rhetoric rightly begins with Paul's own reflections on it. His earliest surviving letter, 1 Thessalonians, reveals his awareness of the differing rhetorical styles of itinerant teachers as well as their differing motives, not all of which were pure (1 Thess 2:1–12). In a 1970 article, “‘Gentle as a Nurse’: The Cynic Background of 1 Thessalonians 2,” Abraham Malherbe argued that Paul, very much like Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40–ca. 120 CE), presented his *modus operandi* as that of a philosopher, consciously distinguishing himself from a sophist.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the Corinthian correspondence demonstrates beyond any doubt that Paul was well aware that he was being judged according to classical rhetorical standards and found wanting by some.<sup>7</sup> An excellent study of this aspect of the situation in Corinth is Bruce W. Winter's *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*, originally published in 1997 and now in its second edition.<sup>8</sup> While I have some reservations about Winter's approach to Paul's rhetoric, he performed the valuable service of demonstrating that the ideals of the Second Sophistic, a powerful resurgence of the sophistic movement in the early Roman Empire, were already thriving in Alexandria and Corinth by the mid-first century. This, of course, increases the likelihood that they were thriving in other urban centers as well and that Paul could not have escaped interacting with them. Whether or not Paul had an advanced formal rhetorical education, in light of Winter's study there can be little doubt that he had interacted with other church leaders who used sophistic rhetoric and was capable of using some of their techniques, if only to combat them. More fundamentally, though, there can be little doubt that Paul had some basic training in rhetoric, and this is supported by the long history of biblical scholarship that has applied rhetorical analysis to Paul's letters.

### Classical New Testament Rhetorical Criticism

A good place to pick up some of that history is Hans Dieter Betz's 1986 essay in *L'Apôtre Paul* entitled “The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology



according to the Apostle Paul.”<sup>9</sup> The first part of this essay is a survey of rhetorical readings of Paul stretching back to the church fathers. It is clear from this survey that the application of classical rhetoric to the study of Paul is hardly a recent phenomenon. For example, the Protestant Reformers were well aware of the rhetorical qualities of Paul’s discourse.<sup>10</sup> A later particularly strong example of investigating classical rhetorical features in Paul is Johannes Weiss’s “Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik,” published in 1897.<sup>11</sup>

Augustine’s early treatment of the subject is especially intriguing. A careful reading of the fourth book of Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine* (426 CE) will quickly dispel the oft-repeated opinion that the church fathers did not see any evidence of rhetorical sophistication in the New Testament.<sup>12</sup> Augustine pursues two strategies. On the one hand, with respect to the Bible as a whole, he admits that most of its authors do not exhibit rhetorical training, but he presents many examples of impressive rhetoric that he considers the product of natural gifts and/or divine inspiration. On the other hand, he spends a lot of time on Paul, referring to him as “our great orator,” giving many stylistic examples to demonstrate his rhetorical prowess. He also says,

But perhaps someone is thinking that I have selected the Apostle Paul because he is our great orator. For when he says, “Though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge,” he seems to speak as if granting so much to his detractors, not as confessing that he recognized its truth. If he had said, “I am indeed rude in speech, but not in knowledge,” we could not in any way have put another meaning upon it. He did not hesitate plainly to assert his knowledge, because without it he could not have been the teacher of the Gentiles. And certainly if we bring forward anything of his as a model of eloquence, we take it from those epistles which even his very detractors, who thought his bodily presence weak and his speech contemptible, confessed to be weighty and powerful.<sup>13</sup>

Augustine is convinced that Paul had more than a nonprofessional’s knowledge of rhetoric, and he certainly considers Paul rhetorically gifted. This opinion comes from someone who had studied and taught rhetoric, whose own writings are masterful rhetorical compositions, and whose own oratory moved people to tears, groans, and applause (*Doctr. chr.* 4.24.53; 4.26.56). On the issue of whether Paul might have been a rhetorically gifted writer but a poor speaker, Augustine takes Paul’s concession to his critics concerning his speech making abilities to be rhetorically sophisticated

irony. A very literal translation of the passage preserves the ambiguity involved: “But even if I am an amateur in speech, yet I am not in knowledge” (2 Cor 11:6). Augustine takes the first half of the sentence to be only a hypothetical concession to his opponents. Most modern commentators take it to be a real one. However, even some of them are not convinced that Paul intends to admit that he lacks oratorical skill. Although the word *idiōtēs* has usually been translated “rude,” “unskilled,” or “untrained,” it is probably best translated “amateur.” Winter has demonstrated that this term could be used of people who had studied advanced rhetoric but chose not to practice it as a profession.<sup>14</sup> So Paul may not intend to concede anything about his oratorical abilities but rather to brag about how he is willing to share his knowledge without the pretentiousness of the “super apostles,” who boast in their speaking abilities and probably expect remuneration for them like professional sophists (11:7–21).

If one grants this possibility, then whether or not Augustine was correct about how Paul only hypothetically conceded his lack of oratorical skill, a very literal translation of the earlier passage to which he alludes makes good sense: “For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.’ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present” (2 Cor 10:10–11 NASB). Paul here employs the venerable contrast between word and deed, and he appears to be making the counterclaim that “such a person” will soon find out that his personal presence and speech are also weighty and strong.<sup>15</sup> The book of Acts presents Paul as a skillful orator. It is not at all clear that this is in contrast to Paul’s own assessment of his oratorical abilities.

Early as well as later medieval, Enlightenment, and early modern perspectives on New Testament rhetoric were mainly formalistic. Interpreters mostly commented on isolated stylistic matters such as the use of rhetorical figures. That was to change in the late twentieth century with the explosion of classical rhetorical analyses of Paul that focus on argumentative structures and rhetorical strategies. Betz’s work is fundamental, along with that of George Kennedy. Betz’s 1979 *Hermeneia* commentary on Galatians really got the ball rolling.<sup>16</sup> Not everyone agreed with all the details of Betz’s rhetorical analysis of Galatians—Kennedy included—but few could deny that Betz was on to something with his thesis that Paul’s letter was “composed in accordance with the conventions of Greco-Roman rhetoric and epistolography.”<sup>17</sup> Richard Longenecker would say a little over ten years later in his own Galatians commentary that “what Betz has done,

in effect, has been to push a good thesis too hard and too far.”<sup>18</sup> But Longenecker’s approach to Galatians is thoroughly rhetorical and a testimony to just how good that thesis was.

One of Betz’s critics was the classicist George Kennedy. However, what Kennedy was to do for rhetorical criticism of the New Testament turned out to be even more influential. In 1984 he published *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* with the express intent of giving New Testament scholars a well-defined method for applying rhetorical analysis to any given text.<sup>19</sup> Kennedy’s method relies heavily on ancient categories, especially those of Aristotle, but combines them with the more modern formulations of Bitzer, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and others. It is an example of the “new rhetoric,” which blossomed in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> His methodology released the floodgates. It has been combined profitably with a descriptivist sociological approach, most notably by Ben Witherington III, who has poured forth a flood of useful and instructive sociorhetorical New Testament commentaries.<sup>21</sup>

Many New Testament rhetoric conferences have been held in the years since Kennedy’s book was released, and many of the papers collected in numerous published volumes regularly show their debt to Kennedy’s inspiration. In 2008, former students of Kennedy edited a volume of essays titled *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, which honors the ongoing influence of their teacher on New Testament rhetorical criticism.<sup>22</sup> It is also an excellent resource for current bibliography.

### Postmodern Rhetorical Criticism

There is quite a bit of ferment in New Testament rhetorical criticism, so I do not want to give the impression that it is a unified approach. In terms of volume of scholarship, the classical or “new rhetoric” approach has dominated rhetorical criticism of the New Testament. However, a more interdisciplinary and theoretically informed postmodern rhetorical criticism also exists.<sup>23</sup>

Vernon Robbins is a New Testament scholar who has had considerable methodological influence on New Testament rhetorical criticism, especially since the late 1980s. Whether or not he would call himself a postmodernist, his approach reflects some postmodern perspectives. In 1994, he published two books that represent an advanced stage in the evolution of his multidisciplinary sociorhetorical method.<sup>24</sup> The longer of the two, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology*,

is the more theoretical and most suitable for graduate students. The other, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*, is a basic and practical how-to manual.<sup>25</sup> While Robbins's sociorhetorical approach has some things in common with that of Witherington, the greater multidisciplinary content and the attention to ideological issues sets it apart. Robbins's method examines the inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture of New Testament texts. The reader should consult his works for a fuller explanation. Also, in 2003 former students of Robbins edited a volume of essays entitled *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, which is a valuable resource.<sup>26</sup>

However, even Robbins's approach has not gone far enough for some who have been discontented with New Testament rhetorical criticism for being out of touch with the way the study of rhetoric has evolved in the modern university. We might mention especially J. David Hester Amador, a student of Wilhelm Wuellner, who in 1999 published an aggressive critique of mainstream New Testament rhetorical criticism titled *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power*.<sup>27</sup> There is a strong influence from Michel Foucault on this work, and that may be taken as emblematic of what Amador and a few others would like to see, that is, a more explicitly postmodern ideological turn in New Testament rhetorical criticism.<sup>28</sup> Amador is especially attracted to the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, the celebrated feminist biblical scholar who has often combined rhetorical and ideological criticism.<sup>29</sup> Antoinette Wire's rhetorical approach to 1 Corinthians also reflects postmodern ideological concerns.<sup>30</sup> I will have more to say about the characteristics of a postmodern rhetorical approach in the final section. For now, I will conclude this brief overview of Paul and rhetoric by observing that we can be assured that New Testament rhetorical criticism will continue to thrive, evolve, and be all things to all people.

### Classical Rhetorical-Critical Reading of 1 Corinthians

In this section I will provide an overview of what classical rhetorical criticism typically looks like when applied to 1 Corinthians as a whole. A full rhetorical analysis of the letter would require a book, so this will only be a sketch. While not all rhetorical interpreters follow Kennedy's methodology precisely, given its enormous influence I will use it for illustrative purposes. As summarized by Duane Watson,

His methodology has five interrelated steps: (1) determine the rhetorical unit; (2) define the rhetorical situation; (3) determine the rhetorical problem or stasis and the species of rhetoric, whether judicial (accusation and defense), deliberative (persuasion and dissuasion), or epideictic (praise and blame); (4) analyze the invention, arrangement, and style ("invention" is argumentation by ethos, pathos, and logos). "Arrangement" is the ordering of the various components, such as the *exordium* (introduction), *narratio* (narration of the facts), *probatio* (main body), and *peroratio* (conclusion). "Style" is fitting the language to the needs of invention and includes such things as figures of speech and thought; and (5) evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of the rhetorical unit in meeting the exigence.<sup>31</sup>

### Step 1: Determining the Rhetorical Unit

Discerning the overall arrangement of a discourse involves discerning the various rhetorical units throughout. But when looking at a Pauline letter as a whole, determining the rhetorical unit has been somewhat controversial.<sup>32</sup> Some rhetorical-critical interpreters tend to stress that these are rhetorically informed epistles, not formal speeches, so expecting to find a close structural match between a letter of Paul and the typical arrangement of any particular species of ancient rhetoric (judicial, deliberative, or epideictic) is misguided. Other rhetorical-critical interpreters, however, do tend to approach the letters as speeches with epistolary frames. In this case, the usual formal features of the letter introduction (prescript, blessing, and thanksgiving) and closing (travel plans and greetings) are often understood to display some intimate relationship with the introduction and conclusion of the body of the letter, which is in turn understood to closely resemble a speech. It may well be that there is truth in both perspectives and that one or the other may be more convincing depending on which letter is under analysis. For example, Galatians may sound more like a speech within an epistolary framework than does 1 Thessalonians. One of the most often heard criticisms of some rhetorical-critical analyses of Paul's letters is that they take the descriptions of the arrangement of various types of speeches discussed in the ancient rhetorical handbooks and apply them woodenly. This is no doubt true of some poor examples of rhetorical-critical analysis, but it is certainly not true of all. On the issue of the relationship of the epistolary frame to the letter body, my analysis of 1 Corinthians is indebted to Margaret M. Mitchell. Throughout her outstanding monograph on 1 Corinthians, Mitchell demonstrates how Paul melds the epistolary genre with the deliberative species of rhetoric.<sup>33</sup>

## Step 2: Defining the Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation of 1 Corinthians might be summed up as an unholy and divided church. These concerns are already foreshadowed in the prescript of the letter, where Paul addresses the “church of God that is at Corinth” as “those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (1:2 NRSV). This prescript anticipates a concern with both the moral/ethical issues and the lack of unity Paul has found out about through oral (1:11) and written means (7:1). From Paul’s perspective, the divisions are caused by pretentious arrogance and selfishness. When one contemplates the range of problems he had to address in a single letter, one appreciates how easily this letter could have turned into a heap rather than a building.<sup>34</sup> It is a testimony to his rhetorical skill that it did not.

## Step 3: Determining the Rhetorical Problem and Species of Rhetoric

In some rhetorical situations, there is the additional complication of one or more rhetorical problems. In this case, the rhetorical problem is that the factionalism in the congregation was very likely undermining Paul’s authority. With some members claiming to belong to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Cephas, and some to Christ, would Paul be able to give advice and commands to those who do not look to him as their example? This is probably why he dealt with this most extreme case of division first.

The species of rhetoric in 1 Corinthians is certainly deliberative. Judicial rhetoric is mostly encountered in the courts and has to do with accusation or defense with respect to past actions. Epideictic or demonstrative rhetoric has to do with praise or blame, usually in the present. Deliberative rhetoric has to do with persuasion or dissuasion with respect to future actions. While Paul will occasionally use a judicial or epideictic tone in the letter, his overall purpose is the deliberative one of trying to persuade the Corinthians to choose a better course in the future with respect to several matters.

## Step 4: Supplying Rhetorical Analysis

The arrangement of 1 Corinthians is quite compatible with the expectations for the deliberative species. What follows is my analysis of the rhetori-

cal structure of 1 Corinthians. My debt to Mitchell is readily apparent, although I do depart from her analysis in some significant ways.<sup>35</sup>

- I. Epistolary Opening/Rhetorical Introduction (*exordium*; 1:1–9)
  - A. Prescript (1:1–3)
  - B. Thanksgiving (1:4–9)
  
- II. Thesis (*propositio*; 1:10)
 

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” (NRSV)
  
- III. Arguments (*argumentatio*)
  - A. Heading One: Divisive Leadership Issues (1:11–4:21)
  - B. Heading Two: Divisive Ethical Issues
    1. “Incest” (5)
    2. Lawsuits (6:1–8)
    3. Fornication (6:9–20)
    4. Marriage (7)
    5. Misuse of Freedom regarding Idol Meat (8–10)
  - C. Heading Three: Divisive Worship Issues
    1. Improper Conduct of Women Prophets (11:2–16)
    2. Improper Conduct at the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34)
    3. Improper Use of Spiritual Gifts and Disorderly Worship (12–14)
  - D. Heading Four: A Divisive Doctrinal Issue (15:1–57)
  
- IV. Conclusion (*peroratio*; 15:58)
 

“Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (NRSV)
  
- V. Epistolary Closing (16:1–24)
  - A. The Collection (16:1–4)
  - B. Travel Plans (16:5–12)
  - C. Final Appeals and Greetings (16:13–24)



The epistolary form of 1 Cor 1:1–9 is obviously that of a Greek letter opening (prescript and thanksgiving), but its rhetorical function as an *exordium* is also readily apparent. An *exordium* (Greek: *prooimion*) is the introduction of a speech where its subject and purpose are announced. While Mitchell prefers to reserve the designation “rhetorical *prooimion*” for the thanksgiving, her exegesis confirms that Paul is already anticipating the main theme of maintaining unity within diversity in the prescript.<sup>36</sup> An *exordium* may prepare the way for a formal statement of the thesis (*propositio*; Greek: *prothesis*) of the speech, and that is indeed what happens in this case.

The *exordium* is also important for establishing the character (*ethos*) of the speaker and may include an effort to make the audience well disposed toward the speaker by praising them (1 Cor 1:4–7). This is often referred to as a *captatio benevolentiae*, a “taking captive the goodwill” of the audience. Paul’s authority in the congregation is threatened by factionalism, so it may seem strange that he did not make his *exordium* longer and concentrate more on building up his *ethos* in the *exordium*. However, he probably thought that the only way to restore his authority would be in the context of arguing against the factionalism.<sup>37</sup> Thus, it is no accident that this issue will be addressed first in the body of his discourse.

Before that first argument, however, comes the thesis (*propositio*) in 1 Cor 1:10. The thesis is a succinct call for agreement, a unity of mind and purpose, rather than division. While this thesis seems tailor made for the immediately following argument concerning factions, by not building that specific problem into the thesis, Paul leaves it open enough to serve admirably as the thesis of the entire letter. Interestingly, the conclusion (*peroratio*; Greek: *epilogos*) of the letter is similarly succinct and generalized, making it an appropriate complement to the thesis.

Next comes the *probatio* (Greek: *pisteis*) or “proofs.”<sup>38</sup> Kennedy uses this term, but some scholars prefer to use *argumentatio*, the “arguments,” as I have done.<sup>39</sup> Like Mitchell, I think Paul put considerable thought into how he would organize the long list of diverse subjects he had to address. While I use simplified terminology for the “headings” and construe their functions somewhat differently than she does, I agree that there are four major headings or subject groupings in the *argumentatio*. For reasons discussed below, the problems with factionalism needed to be addressed first under “Heading One.” The next five subjects can be grouped together under “Heading Two” as addressing “Divisive Ethical Issues.”<sup>40</sup> “Heading Three” addresses three “Divisive Worship Issues,” while “Heading Four”

takes up a “Divisive Doctrinal Issue,” the resurrection of the dead. Why did Paul choose to deal with this problem last? Some interpreters have argued that he probably did so because misunderstandings about resurrection and the body could have been the source of several of the moral and ethical problems in the church pertaining to the body. Another possible reason for the placement of Heading Four is its relationship to “final things.” Here we might compare Romans, in which, in my opinion, the *argumentatio* section ends with a discussion of eschatological matters in chapter 11.<sup>41</sup>

As noted earlier, the conclusion (*peroratio*) of 1 Corinthians is, like the thesis, succinct and generalized. Indeed, the ancient rhetorical handbooks often recommend brevity in the conclusion.<sup>42</sup> Of 1 Cor 15:58, Mitchell rightly states,

The conclusion is short and to the point, and amounts to a restatement of the central argument of the letter: seek the upbuilding of the church in concord, even when it entails sacrificing what appears to be to your present advantage, because this is the appropriate Christian behavior of love (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ κυρίου [“the work of the Lord”]) which will lead to eschatological advantage (οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ) [“is not in vain in the Lord”]).<sup>43</sup>

I would add two things about this brief *peroratio*. First, just as the thesis is generalized enough to serve as the thesis of the entire letter while having an especially close relationship with the first argument, the conclusion is generalized enough to serve as the conclusion of the discourse of the entire letter while having an especially close relationship to the last argument. Ultimately, the resurrection gives hope that one’s work in the Lord is not in vain. Second, this conclusion serves as an excellent transition into the first topic of the “Epistolary Closing.” The collection for the saints is an example of “the work of the Lord,” a “labor that is not in vain.”

After the *peroratio* comes the “Epistolary Closing,” in which Paul speaks of the collection, travel plans, final appeals, and greetings.<sup>44</sup> There are aspects of the travel plans and final appeals that recapitulate the concerns of the thesis and the first major argument. The mention of Timothy and Apollos (1 Cor 16:10–12) and the commendation of the household of Stephanas (16:15–18) remind us Paul’s will concerning the leadership issues, and 1 Cor 16:13–14 echo again themes in the thesis and peroration.<sup>45</sup>

A full rhetorical analysis would require analyzing Paul’s invention and style throughout the letter. This cannot be carried out here. Invention consists of various persuasive appeals based on *ethos* (the character of the

speaker), *pathos* (stirring of the emotions), and *logos* (reason). I will touch on Paul's use of these in the next major section. As for style, most modern rhetorical-critical interpreters make such observations haphazardly, since the focus tends to be on the structure of the argument. The major commentaries are often a good source for such stylistic observations, especially some of the older British and European commentaries on Paul's letters.

### Step 5: Evaluating Rhetorical Effectiveness

The final step is to "evaluate the rhetorical effectiveness of the rhetorical unit in meeting the exigence." This includes discussion of Paul's rhetorical strategies. Some scholars have a tendency to laud Paul with accolades for his wisdom and persuasiveness, but in most cases we have no way of knowing how successful he was. If, as in the case of 1 Corinthians, there is evidence he did not fully succeed, the blame is often laid upon his obtuse or recalcitrant children. However, Mitchell's verdict is refreshingly blunt: "Paul's rhetoric of reconciliation in 1 Corinthians was a failure." She identifies two main reasons for this.

First of all, it is clear from 2 Corinthians that Paul's rhetorical strategy of appealing to himself as the respected example to be imitated was not well received at Corinth, but was instead negatively interpreted as Paul's "self-commendation." Secondly, as a deliberative argument for concord, Paul's 1 Corinthians was an inherently risky undertaking. Instead of reuniting the Corinthian factions, Paul seems, by his argument in the letter, to have "incurred the enmity of both." So 1 Corinthians was a failure in its original historical setting.<sup>46</sup>

Mitchell's example confirms that some classical New Testament rhetorical criticism can be quite critical where Paul is concerned. One is left to contemplate the possibility that Paul could have done better. Nevertheless, more postmodern interpreters would not find even this level of critique satisfactory. They would say that we need to ask questions that are more penetrating about Paul's rhetoric—and our own.

### Postmodern Rhetorical-Critical Reading of 1 Corinthians

Some of the problems with the classical or "new rhetoric" methodology are expressed well in the "Rhetorical Criticism" chapter of The Bible and Culture Collective's *The Postmodern Bible*.

In spite of its contributions to the retrieval of an ample classical rhetoric, the new rhetoric continues in its own way to make similar reductive gestures. It reduces rhetoric to poetics, stylistics, and literary criticism generally ... to communication studies or social studies, or to text linguistics or discourse analysis (Johanson). Another way to restrain rhetorical criticism is to reduce it to social description or to historical reconstruction.... Rhetoric does indeed overlap with the other sciences, but the "realm of rhetoric" (Perelman, 1982) has its own integrity and its own constraints.<sup>47</sup>

William Wuellner, the unidentified author of *The Postmodern Bible's* chapter on rhetorical criticism, is quite appreciative of the "new rhetoric" because it anticipates several postmodern concerns.<sup>48</sup> However, because it does not go far enough, what he calls for are "new" rhetorical critics who will practice postmodern rhetorical criticism. Perhaps the main characteristic of postmodern rhetorical criticism according to Wuellner is greater "self-reflexivity."<sup>49</sup> While I cannot reproduce every characteristic of what he means by this here, the following excerpts will give a taste of it:

A new rhetorical theory needs to emphasize the inescapable social, political, religious, and ideological constraints that are operative before, during, and after reading. Ideology in this context may be thought of as the rhetoric of basic communication, of what counts as true or goes without saying. These new readings may then be able to take place within discursive constraints that previously could not be exposed as restrictive because they were operative simply as "truth."<sup>50</sup>

Against the backdrop of postmodernism the "new" rhetorical critic needs to study "discursive practices" and try to understand them "as forms of power and performance" or "as forms of *activity* inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers" (Eagleton, 1983:205–206).<sup>51</sup>

"New" radically self-reflexive rhetorical critics, then, will practice rhetorical criticism in a practical way as cultural criticism. They will expose, but also employ rhetorical power instead of perpetuating cultural norms in the name of some allegedly objective and neutral hermeneutical or rhetorical science (Lachmann; Lentricchia; Loubser; Robbins, 1993; Wuellner, 1978b; see our chap. 2). In doing so, the new rhetorical critics will be participating in resistance from below to the prevailing norms of society.<sup>52</sup>

One further aspect of postmodern approach to the rhetorical tradition needs to be included, namely, a critique of rationality.... The power released by effective speech not only affects the hearers in ways the speaker could not anticipate; it also makes the speaker say things he never anticipated saying (the phenomenon of “getting carried away by one’s own rhetoric”).<sup>53</sup>

Finally, rhetorical performance takes place within many interpretive communities, each with its own institutional investments.... There needs to be a high degree of critical self-reflection about these rhetorical communities, but nowhere more so than in the academic community.<sup>54</sup>

My past work on the Corinthian correspondence exhibits a number of these characteristics of postmodern rhetorical criticism.<sup>55</sup> I will not reproduce that work here. Instead, I have chosen to illustrate some of these characteristics of postmodern rhetorical criticism by applying them to two key aspects of a brief passage in 1 Corinthians that is often understood to express Paul’s entire philosophy of rhetoric or antirhetoric:

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (1 Cor 2:1–5 NRSV)

The first thing I would point out in light of Wuellner’s characteristics of postmodern criticism is that most members of the academic rhetorical community who interpret this passage are also members of faith communities. In many cases, the institutions in which they teach and do research are church-related. Such scholars are particularly susceptible to a canonical bias, although, since the Bible is a classic text in Western culture more generally, even “secular” scholars are not unaffected. The assumption is that, if Paul says something, it must be intended to embody truthfulness rather than “truthiness.”<sup>56</sup> This is surely one of the main reasons that it does not even occur to most classical rhetorical interpreters to ask if Paul is giving an entirely accurate account of his activities among the Corinthians or what “forms of power and performance” might cause him to give a skewed one.<sup>57</sup>

In the confines of this chapter, I cannot carry out a full analysis of the passage, but I will concentrate on two key aspects of it, because if one can demonstrate a reason to be suspicious of them, suspicion is cast on the whole thing as possibly being loaded with rhetorical hyperbole. Could the rhetorical situation Paul is addressing in 1 Cor 1–4 have caused him to “say things he never anticipated saying (the phenomenon of ‘getting carried away by one’s own rhetoric’)”?<sup>58</sup> Paul claims he knew nothing but Christ crucified when he was among them, and, according to the usual rhetorical—or antirhetorical—interpretation of the passage, he did not rely on rhetoric to persuade them so that their faith would not rest on human wisdom.<sup>59</sup> But is it really likely that he relied on nothing but a message of Christ crucified? Furthermore, granted that he means to contrast human with divine wisdom, does he really want the Corinthians’ faith not to rely on human resources at all? Before we can answer these questions, some further background is necessary.

Paul: Sophist or *Sophos*?

As already noted, in *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, Winter provides a fascinating portrait of sophistic activity in first-century Alexandria and Corinth. This provides an illuminating backdrop for reading Paul’s letters to the Corinthian church, most especially 1 Cor 1–4 and 2 Cor 10–13, but also for the Corinthian correspondence as a whole. In his book (141–260), Winter uses the modifier “anti-sophistic” and the noun “anti-sophist” dozens of times to describe Paul’s rhetorical stance. Certainly in many obvious ways, Paul was quite different from an ancient professional sophist. However, as we shall see, on a deeper level there are striking similarities as well.

Calling Paul a sophist is a perilous proposition.<sup>60</sup> The original title of my dissertation, later published as *Paul’s True Rhetoric*, was not “Paul the Sophist” but rather “A Sophistic Paul.” I was careful to explain that, while Paul’s rhetoric was somewhat sophistic, he was not technically a sophist. I used the analogy that, while a large number of previous studies have established Greco-Roman philosophical influences on Paul beyond any doubt, scholars still find it more proper to speak of Paul as philosophic rather than as technically a philosopher. Similarly, I said my study would demonstrate that Paul’s rhetorical strategies show him to be rather sophistic, though not a sophist. Indeed, I chastened E. A. Judge—Winter’s dissertation advisor—for using the title “sophist” in so sloppy a way as to apply it to Paul and other itinerant teachers who, as he admits, “would have hotly rejected it.”<sup>61</sup>

As H. P. Lee put it in his translator's introduction to *The Republic*, the sophists "taught most things; but since success in life is what most men want, and since the ability to persuade your neighbour is always an important element in success ... they all taught rhetoric, the art of self expression and persuasion."<sup>62</sup> There are two characteristics of the Greco-Roman sophistic profession as described here that do not fit Paul. First, he does not charge a fee for his services. Indeed, he takes great pride in offering his services to the Corinthians for free. Second, he does not teach subjects relevant to success in life in the empire or the type of rhetoric that would promote such success in that domain.

Yet I would contend that there is still something rather sophistic in how Paul went about his business. Paul seduced potential students with a training for a much more glorious success in life, namely, success in the life to come, in a new kingdom that was dawning and would soon appear in all its glory. Therefore, while I still stand by my critique of Judge's reasons for calling Paul a sophist, I now think that there are other reasons that justify it as long as one is speaking of a "sophist of the new age," a *sophos*, and some of them are found precisely where Winter finds his evidence for calling Paul an antisophist, 1 Cor 1–4.

Paul did not claim to be a sophist, but he did claim to be one who is *sophos* (wise): "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise [*sophos*] master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it" (1 Cor 3:10 NASB). There is a well-known contrast running through 1:17–3:23 between the wisdom (*sophia*) of the world and the wisdom of God. "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1:25 NRSV). Those who are wise according to worldly standards are fools. This leads to the paradoxical thought that, "if you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise" (3:18b NRSV). But by what means does one become truly wise in this age and the next?

### Royal Seductions: The Rhetorical Power of Paul's Gospel

My purpose here is simple. I want to remind us that, despite what Paul says in 1 Cor 2:1–5, there is evidence elsewhere that he was hardly persuading his audiences with nothing more than the scandalous and moronic paradox of a crucified Son of God (1:23) and the good news that they, too, are invited to suffer the same fate. It serves his rhetorical purpose in 1 Cor



1:11–4:21 to say that “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified,” but evidence that his message consisted of more than that is readily available.

For example, 1 Thess 1:9–10 is often used as evidence for the type of message Paul must have used to persuade gentiles. It would appear that Paul must have begun by arguing against idolatry and for belief in the one God of Israel. He then proclaimed that this God has a Son whom he raised from dead and will send from heaven to deliver people from God’s coming wrath. There is good reason to accept this reconstruction, since Acts 17:22–31 presents Paul making a quite similar appeal to a group of Athenian philosophers at about the time 1 Thessalonians was written. Intriguingly, and most revealingly for our purposes, neither the summary of 1 Thess 1:9–10 nor the sample of Paul’s preaching in Acts 17 mentions the cross or crucifixion. Instead, both stress the resurrection and coming judgment. This type of argument is based on two types of invention, *logos* and *pathos*. Paul appealed to reason to try to persuade pagans that there is one God, and he appealed to emotion, that is, fear of judgment, to try to convince them that they should believe in this God and his Son. Who would not want to avoid the wrath of God? This hardly appears to be a message that does not rely on rhetorical means of persuasion at all, if that is what 1 Cor 2:1–4 is taken to imply.<sup>63</sup> And it hardly consists of nothing but a crucified Christ.

But there is more. As Paul says only a little later, “You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess 2:10–12 NRSV; cf. 2 Thess 1:5). Here the appeal is to *ethos*. Even if on the basis of 1 Cor 2:1–5 one were to try to make the case that Paul did not use his *ethos* to persuade people of the truth of the gospel, which is doubtful, he is obviously appealing to it to maintain their continued allegiance. Moreover, Paul, no less than a typical Greco-Roman philosopher or sophist, is promising positive benefits from accepting his message. They may not attain glory in the kingdoms of this age, but they will have a much superior glory in the kingdom come.

It is not enough, however, simply to accept the message. One must live a certain kind of life to be worthy of the kingdom. That kind of life was modeled by Paul and his colleagues while they were among the Thessalonians, and he longs to be among them again to “restore what is lacking in [their] faith” (1 Thess 3:10 NRSV). Faith has definite content for Paul. It

includes a way of life that when followed can, as he says, “strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (3:13 NRSV). Paul asks and urges that, “as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more” (4:1 NRSV). And he goes on to remind them of several specific instructions in the rest of 1 Thess 4 and 5. Since all of this can be accomplished by the power of God’s Spirit working with them, Paul can conclude with the invocation, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:23 NRSV; cf. 1 Tim 6:13–15). This is an intensely apocalyptic and intensely ethical letter from a sophist of the kingdom of God. As with the sophists of this age, imitating his example and following his instructions will produce a great reward.<sup>64</sup>

Did Paul depart from the rhetoric just described and use a different means of persuasion in Corinth, one focused entirely on the cross? It does not seem likely in light of 1 Cor 15. Here Paul reminds them of the message he proclaimed when he was among them, a message that included the cross *and* the resurrection (15:3–4). Did it also include the dawning of the kingdom, judgment, and the future reign of Christ (15:24–25)? Perhaps not, but is it likely? As 1 Cor 4 attests, in Corinth the hope of a coming kingdom and glory were not enough for some. Their powerful spiritual gifts convinced them that they were already reigning and participating in the glory to come. Paul chides them royally in 4:8 when he says, “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might [share the rule] with you!” (NRSV).<sup>65</sup> But a careful reader of the Corinthian correspondence could not fail to recognize that Paul is reaping what he had sown in Corinth. Indeed, he is still sowing it. In this very argument, Paul continues to encourage the thought that truly spiritual types are superior to others. In 2:15 he says, “Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny” (NRSV). Of course he means to claim the honor and authority of the title “spiritual” for himself and deny it to those Corinthians whom he immediately characterizes as “people of the flesh” (3:1 NRSV), but obviously this strategy could backfire. Some might see this statement as not only a reinforcement of the position that the rule of the “spiritual” ones should not be challenged but also a reminder that, by his scrutinizing of them, Paul is confirming that he is really not one of them.

Thus far, we have challenged the tendency to take Paul's word about his exclusively cross-centered message at face value. There is evidence in 1 Thessalonians, Acts 17, and 1 Corinthians itself to suggest that his message also included the resurrection and judgment and that he used *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* to make his case. So is there a reason pertaining to "issues of power and performance" that could have caused him to make exaggerated claims in 1 Cor 2:1–5? Indeed there is.

The relationship between Paul and Apollos is crucial for understanding 1 Cor 1–4. As Paul says in 4:6, "I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, 'Nothing beyond what is written,' so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another" (NRSV). What made this lesson necessary? The following reconstruction of the events could explain it. Paul started the church in Corinth; 1 Cor 1:26 suggests that he worked mostly among the poorer and less-educated elements of the city. It is a basic rule of rhetoric that one adapts one's message to one's audience, so already we can see an additional reason why Paul would not have used "lofty speech and wisdom" among them. He would have been talking "above people's heads."<sup>66</sup> Further, 1 Cor 1:26 might also suggest that Paul had only a little success with the educated and powerful. However, Paul was followed in Corinth by Apollos, a native of Alexandria, who is described in Acts as "an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24b NRSV). Paul planted, and Apollos watered (1 Cor 3:6). Perhaps Apollos was a more impressive speaker than Paul was, but an overemphasis on this possibility is probably misleading. To judge from where Paul puts the emphasis throughout these chapters, what really attracted some to Apollos was his superior wisdom (*sophia*). In response to this situation, Paul pursues two strategies. One is to assert that he and Apollos are equals as God's servants and coworkers (3:5–9). The other is quite different and is especially relevant to viewing Paul as a *sophos*. Paul claims to have wisdom that only he can provide.<sup>67</sup> This is a powerful seduction. While he sticks with his claim not to preach the gospel "with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power" (1:17b NRSV) until 2:5, he then makes a remarkable shift, stating that

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. (1 Cor 2:7 NRSV)

Some have tried to read the following verses as if by “wisdom” here Paul means only the message of the cross. But that interpretation runs aground when one reaches 3:1–2, where Paul plainly claims that he did not give them the meat reserved for “the spiritual” because they were people of the flesh, mere babes. And he insists they are still not ready for it.

Here one can see how Paul is exercising rhetorical power over against those who have become enamored with Apollos. If the Corinthians want to become truly spiritual and experience Christ’s power, they will have to return to Paul’s guidance, or, as stated later, they will have to recognize that they have only one father (originator, authority figure), Paul. So he concludes by saying, “I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church” (4:16–17 NRSV). This will put them back on the path to that secret and hidden wisdom that leads to glory.

There are yet more incentives for following Paul’s ways. In 3:10–15 he builds up a scenario in which some believers’ works will be burned up on judgment day. These will “suffer loss” (3:15a NRSV), although they will be saved. Others, however, whose works are of the quality of “gold, silver, and precious stones” (3:12a NRSV), “will receive a reward” (3:14b NRSV). Furthermore, those who are truly spiritual are already given the authority to judge others according to Paul’s instructions in 5:12 concerning the errant brother. But this is child’s play compared to the much more powerful judging that will take place when the kingdom comes. Paul asks,

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? (6:2–3 NRSV)

Then Paul goes on to shame them by asking, “Can it be that there is no one among you *wise* enough to decide between one believer and another...?” (6:5 NRSV). Or, we might paraphrase, Is there no *sophos* of the coming age among you? All of this leads right into the same type of kingdom language we encountered in 1 Thessalonians, where a long list of wrong ways of life will bar entrance into the kingdom (6:9–10). As 1 Cor 15 makes perfectly clear, this would be a bad thing:

Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he

must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (1 Cor 15:24–25 NRSV)

In 1 Corinthians, Paul presents the way to glory and the kingdom as a difficult struggle, one that requires a good model to imitate, and Paul offers himself as that model.<sup>68</sup> Paul's rhetorical questions in 1 Cor 1:20, "Where is the one who is wise [*sophos*]? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?" (NRSV) invite another question: Where is the *sophos*, the scribe, and the debater of the new age? They are where Paul is, together with all those who will imitate him. The wisdom and knowledge he offers does not seduce potential students with the promise of a glory to be achieved in the kingdom of Rome, a glory like that desired by the *sophos*, the scribe, or the debater of this age. But it does seduce with the promise of an eternal weight of glory in a far superior kingdom that is about to appear.

I conclude with G. B. Kerford's description of another kind of wise man, one perhaps not unworthy of comparison with Paul the *sophos*:

From the beginning *sophia* was in fact associated with the poet, the seer and the sage, all of whom were seen as revealing visions of knowledge not granted otherwise to mortals. The knowledge so gained was not a matter of technique as such, whether poetic or otherwise, but knowledge about the gods, man and society, to which the "wise man" claimed privileged access.

From the fifth century B.C. onwards the term "*sophistēs*" is applied to many of these early "wise men"—to poets, including Homer and Hesiod, to musicians and rhapsodes, to diviners and seers, to the Seven Wise Men and other early wise men, to Presocratic philosophers, and to figures such as Prometheus with a suggestion of mysterious powers.<sup>69</sup>

Paul, like Prometheus,<sup>70</sup> was a dispenser of mysterious knowledge and power for the benefit of humankind, but his true identity has often been bound by theological, academic, and rhetorical restraints: Paul was a *sophos* in the kingdom of God.

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#### Addendum

As I said in the original essay, "we can be assured that New Testament rhetorical criticism will continue to thrive, evolve, and be all things to all people." So what has happened in the rhetorical study of Paul in the

decade since it was published? I will not present a comprehensive bibliographic survey here—that was not the nature or purpose of the original essay either—but I will draw on some important recent resources as I make some observations that pertain to the ongoing practice and influence New Testament rhetorical criticism in general and its application to Paul in particular.

It is now clear to me that New Testament rhetorical criticism was in the midst of a period of retrospective self-reflection and evaluation when my essay was published in 2010. Indeed, the year 2010 itself witnessed the publication of several collected essay volumes that manifest this tendency.<sup>71</sup> The most comprehensive example of the phenomenon came four years later with the publication of *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism*.<sup>72</sup> According to the publisher's description of the book,

Rhetorical criticism is now an established discipline in New Testament interpretation—but “rhetorical criticism” means very different things to different practitioners. *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* gathers critical appreciations of five pioneers of rhetorical criticism—Hans Dieter Betz, George A. Kennedy, Wilhelm Wuellner, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Vernon K. Robbins—and responses from the pioneers themselves or their representatives ... to highlight their distinctive approaches and to describe their legacies for contemporary interpretation.

First, while it is fair to say that rhetorical criticism is an established discipline in New Testament interpretation, it is not as established as many would like think. I will explain this point below. Second, it is certainly true that “rhetorical criticism” in the context of New Testament interpretation is diverse. My brief essay divided it broadly into classical and postmodern approaches, but a more comprehensive treatment such as *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* provides a better sense of the complex methodological landscape, and I highly commend it. Still, loosely speaking, one can see how Betz and Kennedy and their “traditions” represent a rhetorical approach rooted in classical rhetoric and historical criticism, while Wuellner, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Robbins and their traditions represent an approach that is rooted in broader concepts of rhetoric and is more interdisciplinary. The sociorhetorical interpretation of Robbins is certainly thriving, as is the feminist-rhetorical scholarship inspired by Schüssler Fiorenza. One could argue that the more postmodern concept of rhetoric with its attention to “rhetorics of power” has fared the better of

the two, if one grants that it informs much of current ideological criticism. That is to say, much of what Wuellner envisioned in his *Postmodern Bible* chapter on rhetorical criticism is thriving, whether or not participants in that scholarship think of themselves as mainly rhetorical scholars.<sup>73</sup> Still, much more is possible. Todd Penner and Davina C. Lopez's essay in *Genealogies* is especially helpful in encouraging more self-reflexivity rooted in critical theory among biblical rhetorical scholars. As they observe in their conclusion, "Humanism and democracy and liberation are ongoing life-long endeavors, but ones that can only take root when we move beyond our current rhetorical and situational limitations."<sup>74</sup>

Turning, however, to classical rhetorical criticism, it is fair to say that its relevance for the study of Paul, and the New Testament more generally, remains controversial. Some New Testament scholars see it as a valuable, important, and established addition to standard methodological approaches. For example, Michael Gorman's popular exegesis textbook, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, regularly gives attention to it.<sup>75</sup> One could also mention Walter F. Taylor Jr.'s excellent textbook, *Paul, Apostle to the Nations: An Introduction*, which acknowledges "rhetorical study" as a standard approach to Paul and incorporates formal rhetorical perspectives into the discussions of each letter.<sup>76</sup> For the New Testament more generally, the finest example of a graduate-level New Testament introductory textbook that regularly incorporates both classical rhetorical and sociorhetorical approaches is David deSilva's *An Introduction to the New Testament*.<sup>77</sup> More will be said about it below. However, other New Testament scholars have remained unconvinced that Paul had much rhetorical education and have stressed that he wrote letters, not speeches. Therefore, for them, searching for features in his letters that are discussed in ancient rhetorical handbooks is inappropriate and illegitimate.<sup>78</sup> This controversy played out in a rather heated exchange between Stanley Porter and Ben Witherington in the pages of the *Bulletin for Biblical Research*.<sup>79</sup> Porter has long been a leading voice among those who argue that Paul's letters are letters and should only be interpreted as such, while Witherington has been a vocal proponent of treating Paul's letters as speeches sandwiched between an epistolary opening and closing. While I am admittedly more persuaded by Witherington's overall position on Paul and classical rhetoric than Porter's, it seems to me that champions of seeing Paul's letters as either mainly letters or mainly speeches are both prone to error. There are problems with trying to plug all of Paul's letters into letter types and conventions that were not well-established until well after his time, and there are problems



with consigning the beginnings and ends of his letters to the “epistolary features” and treating everything else as speech types and structures found in the rhetorical handbooks. As I have said elsewhere, some of Paul’s letters resemble a speech more than others. Galatians and Romans most certainly do.<sup>80</sup> However, the best course is to argue that all of Paul’s letters are speech-letters, a hybrid genre for which Paul probably deserves some creative credit.<sup>81</sup>

The controversy about how much “rhetoric” is actually present in Paul’s letters overlaps with debates about his level of education as discussed below, but it also overlaps with the whole issue of what rhetoric is. Sadly, there is evidence everywhere that many New Testament scholars still measure the amount of rhetoric in a New Testament document by the amount of conspicuous ornamentation found in it. A lack or deficit of ornate style is then equated with a lack or deficit of rhetorical education. There are problematic assumptions in play here.

I can illustrate what I mean by the continuing tendency to equate rhetoric with an ornate style in New Testament scholarship by turning to a representative recent graduate-level New Testament textbook. While rhetoric comes up occasionally in Holladay’s voluminous *Introduction to the New Testament*, it is not until one reaches Hebrews that rhetoric is foregrounded.

What made Hebrews an especially fitting sermon was not only its seriousness of purpose but also its refined oral style. Knowing that the art of persuasion is more than having a way with words, the author of Hebrews reveals a broadly informed understanding of rhetorical style. His respect of style is everywhere apparent—in the grandly conceived plan of the work; in its finely turned phrases and carefully chosen words; in its musical sounds and lively images; and in its richly exploited deep metaphors.<sup>82</sup>

Hebrews is “a stylistic tour de force,” and “the author’s rhetorical giftedness contributed to this monumental achievement.” Later, an entire section of the Hebrews chapter is dedicated to “Rhetoric in the Service of the Gospel.”<sup>83</sup> The problem here is not that any of this is untrue; the problem is that, by focusing on rhetoric in the New Testament only in the case of an author whose language consistently draws attention to itself through the employment of the full arsenal of rhetorical ornamentation, the message is sent that less ornate means less rhetorical. I do not want to appear to be singling out Holladay. This lack of attention to rhetoric and reducing it to matters of style is common in most New Testament introductions, while some continue to ignore rhetorical criticism altogether.

David A. deSilva's introduction provides quite a contrast.<sup>84</sup> While deSilva does say that "none of Paul's ... writings come close to the rhetorical finesse and stylistic polish of Hebrews," and the "the author of Hebrews uses every rhetorical ornament in the handbooks and displays an astounding array of argumentative techniques," he does not at all leave the impression that this makes Paul less rhetorical. That is because deSilva is operating with a much broader and more accurate concept of what rhetoric is, including rhetorical perspectives common to sociorhetorical interpretation and ideological criticism. He introduces such rhetorical perspectives and approaches throughout his textbook in the process of introducing various "exegetical skills."

When pondering Paul's education and whether it included training in rhetoric, one often encounters statements to the effect that rhetorical training was long, difficult, and elite, not the sort of thing a man like Paul would have experienced. One still often encounters the blanket statement that the church fathers, many of whom were "men of *paideia*," were embarrassed by the rude quality of Paul's discourse.<sup>85</sup> It is hard to know where to start in critiquing this problematic "common sense." In the original essay, I refuted the position that Paul's rhetoric was always an embarrassment by quoting Augustine, who referred to Paul as "our great orator" and who analyzed numerous passages to illustrate his eloquence.<sup>86</sup>

But what of rhetorical education? We should notice that Augustine, a highly honored former teacher of rhetoric himself, also discusses the rhetorical training of Christian preachers, and the opinions he expresses there are strongly influenced by the views of Cicero.<sup>87</sup> Augustine's expert opinion does not agree with the commonly stated notion that becoming a good orator required years of intensive study and laboring for years with the guidance of rhetorical handbooks. He recommends that, ideally, rhetoric should be studied for as short a time as possible and preferably while young. He grants that the textbooks are of some help, but the best way to become a good orator is to listen to good oratory and practice it. Someone who must labor at the task, making constant reference to "the rules," will never become proficient. Talent is clearly a decisive factor. In effect, someone who must work long and hard at eloquence "never had it and never will." Echoing the speakers in Cicero, *De or.* 1.87, 91, Augustine says that eloquent men "observe the rules because they are eloquent; they do not use them to become eloquent." By the way, I find it potentially significant that Augustine chose to lavish attention on Paul, rather than the author of Hebrews, as "our great orator." Is it possible that Augustine found Paul's

less florid tastes in ornamentation more appropriate to his subject matter and audience than those of the author of Hebrews? This topic deserves more attention than I can give it here, but it is clearly a subject that needs to be reexamined.

Also pertinent is the fact that scholarship on the *progymnasmata*, that is, the “preliminary exercises,” has advanced steadily in recent years, with implications for rhetoric and the New Testament. One of the most impressive products of that research is Mikeal C. Parsons and Michael Wade Martin’s *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament: The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition*.<sup>88</sup> This book leaves me more convinced than ever that a knowledge of the *progymnasmata* is relevant to reading Paul, and that it is probable he had some formal education that included doing such exercises. Of course, no one is likely to ever *know* precisely how Paul or any other New Testament author was educated, so Parsons and Martin are appropriately cautious about quickly assuming that any New Testament authors had a *progymnasmatic* education. That being said, I think they are also right to conclude that there are multiple ways authors may have learned these techniques, saying, “The correspondence between progymnastic theory and Mediterranean practice ... is not unidirectional or strictly direct.”<sup>89</sup> Indeed, one does not get past page 2 of this book before confident conclusions about the level of Paul’s education are problematized. There we read, on the basis of research done by Cribiore and others, that “the implementation of the tripartite educational system varied from locale to locale. The school of Libanius in Antioch, for example, ran all three levels of education concurrently, perhaps even in the same classroom.” A little later, Parsons and Martin liken the result to “something of a cross between the proverbial one-room schoolhouse and the Montessori educational philosophy of the mixed-aged classroom.” As they continue, it becomes clear that the preliminary exercises formed something of a bridge “between the study of grammar and the engagement of rhetoric proper.” Furthermore, they say, “What is important about these writings is that some of the exercises in the *progymnasmata* are clearly intended to embrace both written and oral forms of communication.” These observations lead to a quotation of the chapter’s epigraph from Theon that I hope will become etched in the mind of anyone who thinks seriously about this issue: “‘Training in the exercises is absolutely necessary not only for those who are going to be orators, but also if anyone wishes to practice the art of poets or prose-writers, or any other writers. *These things are, in effect, the foundation of every form of discourse*’ (Prog. 70.24–30).”<sup>90</sup>

I recently had the pleasure of writing a review of Adam White's *Where Is the Wise Man? Graeco-Roman Education as the Background to the Divisions in 1 Corinthians 1–4*.<sup>91</sup> Even though Paul does not use the term *paideia* in those chapters, White persuasively demonstrates that Paul is drawing on a series of educational metaphors as he draws a contrast between himself and Apollos. This raises the question of why Paul was so familiar with this sort of educational discourse. Is it not plausibly because he had experienced at least an elementary level of Greco-Roman *paideia*?

Or should we even be delimiting the subject of Paul's *paideia* this way? In the last five years or so, the topic of Jewish *paideia* has begun to receive fresh and welcome attention. I am thinking, for example, of Jason M. Zurawski's 2016 dissertation, "Jewish Paideia in the Hellenistic Diaspora," and the 2017 essay collection titled *Second Temple Jewish "Paideia" in Context*, edited by Zurawski and Gabriele Boccaccini.<sup>92</sup> I cannot elaborate on this topic, but suffice it to say that such research contributes to the plausibility that Paul was not untouched by Greco-Roman *paideia* because Judaism was not untouched by Greco-Roman *paideia*.

It is not that I think the arguments of those who doubt that Paul had much if any rhetorical training are absurd. Paul does admit in 2 Cor 11:6 that he is an amateur in speech (*idiōtēs tō logo*), and some of the church fathers did use this admission to explain infelicities in his expression. However, two things need to be said immediately. First, as already discussed in above, there are pertinent passages in Augustine about Paul's rhetorical abilities that tend to get overlooked by those who want to talk mainly about passages in the fathers that are critical of Paul's rhetoric. Second, some of the discussions I have seen are inadequate in the sense that the scholars themselves do not think like rhetoricians; that is, they do not seem to grasp how natural it would be for Paul to decide not to use an ornate style redolent of *paideia* even if he was capable of it and how that decision could contribute to the plausibility not only of his natural talents but also some degree of rhetorical education. Here I am not talking only about *theological* reasons for why he would have made such a decision, reasons explicitly found in the Corinthian correspondence and repeated in the fathers, but *rhetorical* reasons rooted in his understanding of the importance of accommodation to various kinds of audiences, audiences that surely must always have been mixed in terms of educational level and preponderantly nonelite.<sup>93</sup> How *should* one speak to such an audience given the example of God's condescension to all people in Christ? The importance of accommodation is given explicit attention by

Augustine as he talks about Paul, and, of course, this topic leads the much bigger topic of God's accommodation to human understanding, a topic I like to call rhetotheology. That subject, however, will have to wait until another time.

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### Notes

1. My title alludes to E. A. Judge's forthright designation of Paul as a sophist in his classic article on "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community: Part 2," *Journal of Religious History* 1 (1961): 125. As we shall see, calling Paul a *sophos* is not exactly the same thing, but there are intriguing similarities.

2. For a brief but informative discussion of the importance of ancient rhetoric, see Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 39–43.

3. For a full yet very readable survey of rhetoric from the pre-Socratics through the Middle Ages, see George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Kennedy also includes useful discussions of rhetoric and religion, especially Christianity.

4. For full reference and discussion, see Mark D. Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome*, ESEC 7 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 10.

5. Bowersock observes, "It was, in fact, possible for the professions of philosopher and rhetor to be conflated and confused. They had many tasks in common, and both were obliged to use the spoken and written word. Accordingly, as Philostratus recognized, eloquent philosophers might be numbered among the sophists" (G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969], 11). For more on the feud between philosophy and rhetoric and its relevance to the study of Paul, see Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 1–37.

6. Abraham Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989). See Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 13–15, for a discussion and table that present Malherbe's comparison.

7. It is important to realize that it is unlikely that all the Corinthians thought that Paul's rhetoric was inadequate. Rhetorical tastes varied. Some scholars fall into the trap of thinking that there was only one possible ideal for an orator, that "the Corinthians" as a whole thought Paul failed to measure up to it, and that their assessment was accurate. This represents a chain of misleading oversimplifications. For examples of highly

successful sophists whose personal characteristics were far from the Greco-Roman upper-class ideal, see Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 2 n. 3.

8. Bruce W. Winter, Philo and Paul among the *Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

9. Hans Dieter Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," in *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style et conception du ministère*, ed. Albert Vanhoye, BETL 73 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 16–48.

10. Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric," 17.

11. Johannes Weiss, "Beiträge zur paulinischen Rhetorik," in *Theologische Studien*, ed. C. R. Gregory et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1897), 165–247.

12. See George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 11, 30, 93–94.

13. *Doctr. chr.* 4.7.15 (NPNF 1/2:579).

14. Winter, *Philo and Paul*, 225–28.

15. Cf. 2 Cor 13:2–4 and 1 Cor 4:18–21.

16. His 1972 monograph on Paul and the Socratic tradition is also important. Unfortunately, it was never translated into English. See Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner "Apologie" 2 Korinther 10–13*, BHT 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972).

17. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), xiv.

18. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), cxi.

19. See above, p. 268 n. 12. The book remains in print. I have used it as one of the textbooks in an undergraduate senior seminar on rhetoric and the New Testament, and some students have told me that they learned more about effective communication from it than from their required general education communications course.

20. For further discussion, see Wilhelm Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism" in The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 156–61.

21. E.g., his *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, to which I later refer.

22. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson, eds., *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

23. See esp. Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism," 149–86.

24. Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

25. I have used it quite successfully with advanced undergraduates. Robbins has even used some of it with his Sunday school class.

26. David B. Gowler et al., eds., *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

27. J. David Hester Amador, *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power*, JSNTSup 174 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

28. See also Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism," 149–86.

29. See especially Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

30. Antoinette Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). See now Joseph A. Marchal, ed., *After the Corinthian Women Prophets: Reimagining Rhetoric and Power*, SemeiaSt 97 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021).

31. Duane F. Watson, "New Testament Rhetorical Criticism," in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 192.

32. Also disputed is Kennedy's contention that rhetorical units within a discourse can have their own rhetorical situations and, in some cases, their own dispositions, that is, *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, and so on.

33. Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

34. For a delightful quotation of Godet concerning this point, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 184.

35. For Mitchell's outline, see *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 184–86.

36. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 192–94.

37. For more on this viewpoint, see Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, 93–95. Joop Smit also emphasizes the ethos-building purpose of 1 Cor 1–4 in "What Is Apollos? What Is Paul?" In Search for the Coherence of First Corinthians 1:10–4:21," *NovT* 44 (2002): 231–51. He concludes that "in the last analysis the drift of 1 Cor. 1:10–4:21 can be summarized in a single rhetorical term: in this passage Paul is reestablishing his ethos" (251).

38. Both Mitchell and Witherington consider 1 Cor 1:11–17 to be a *narratio* (narration of relevant facts) between the thesis and arguments, but I find these verses to be too well integrated with the first argument to stand alone.

39. See Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 219.

40. Mitchell's fuller title for this heading is appropriate: "The Integrity of the Corinthian Community against Outside Defilement: Advice on Divisive Issues within the Group." See also Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

41. In my article "Parenesis and Peroration: The Rhetorical Function of Romans 12:1–15:13," I argue that Paul's arguments end in Rom 11 and the peroration begins in Rom 12. Although brevity is often recommended for perorations, it is not the rule in real speeches. Deciding what is the peroration of Romans or any other discourse should be decided based on the variety of functions perorations can perform, not their length. See Mark D. Given, "Parenesis and Peroration: The Rhetorical Function of Romans 12:1–15:13," in *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 206–27.

42. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 291, provides some excellent examples of very short perorations similar to that of 1 Corinthians.

43. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 290.

44. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 313–17, includes 1 Cor 16:1–12 in the *probatio*. He considers 15:58 to be the peroration of chapter 15. Seeing an intimate connection between 15:58 and the immediately preceding argument is natural, as I suggested above, but viewing the contents of 16:1–12 as an argument is not. Witherington himself refers to 16:1–12 as a “potpourri of various items” (313). Indeed, the fact that it is not an argument is another reason to consider 15:58 the peroration of the whole discourse.

45. On 1 Cor 16:13–18 as a recapitulation within the epistolary closing, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 294.

46. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 303.

47. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 161.

48. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 156.

49. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 166.

50. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 166.

51. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 166, emphasis original.

52. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 167.

53. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 167.

54. “Rhetoric,” in *The Postmodern Bible*, 167.

55. Given, *Paul’s True Rhetoric*, 83–137.

56. The second definition of “truthiness” in Merriam-Webster’s dictionary is “the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true.” It was Merriam-Webster’s word of the year in 2006. Although not coined by the comedian and political satirist Stephen Colbert, the word became extremely popular after he used it on the first episode of *The Stephen Colbert Report* in October 2005.

57. Indeed, I suspect some interpreters of Paul continue to resist recognizing his training in and use of rhetoric because the “weapons of rhetoric” normally include the intentional use of ambiguity, cunning, and deception even by the “good man” fighting for a good cause. See Mark D. Given, “On His Majesty’s Secret Service: The Undercover *Ēthos* of Paul,” in *Rhetoric, Ethic, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the Heidelberg 2002 Conference*, ed. Anders Eriksson et al., ESEC 11 (Harrisburg, PA: T&T Clark International, 2005), 196–213.

58. See above, p. 250.

59. Some interpreters are not convinced that speech itself is the focus here but rather its content.

60. For a basic definition of a sophist, see pp. 237–38 above.

61. Judge, “The Early Christians,” 125.

62. Plato, *The Republic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), 15. Also, see the definition on pp. 237–38 above.

63. This is where Winter’s treatment of Paul’s rhetoric becomes very unconvincing. Winter argues that 1 Cor 2:1–5 means not only that Paul was antisophistic in his presentation of the gospel but that he was anti-*ethos*, anti-*apodeixis* (i.e., anti-*logos*), and anti-*pathos* as well (*Paul and Philo among the Sophists*, 159). However, from the standpoint of rhetoric, the notion that anyone can present anything without utilizing

*logos* is absurd. For that matter, so is the notion that people could take themselves so out of the process of communication that *ethos* would not be utilized at all. It is quite clear that Paul would agree, as demonstrated by his discussion of tongues and prophecy in 1 Cor 14:1–25. Paul strongly prefers prophecy because it is intelligible and useful for such things as edification, exhortation, and consolation (v. 3). Prophecy can also convict or convince an unbeliever (v. 24), which sounds like a use of *logos*. *Ethos* is also a concern in this discussion: “If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” (NRSV). Paul would prefer that they appear to be rational people.

64. See Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

65. Cf. 2 Tim 2:11–12: “The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself” (NRSV).

66. See discussion of *hyperochē* (1 Cor 2:1) in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 208.

67. For the probable apocalyptic Jewish wisdom aspects of this claim, see Robin Scroggs, “Paul: SOPHOS and PNEUMATIKOS,” *NTS* 14 (1967): 33–55.

68. “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:24–27 NRSV).

69. G. B. Kerford, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 24.

70. For more on Paul and Prometheus, see the introduction, pp. 1–2 above.

71. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe, eds., *Paul and Rhetoric* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), opens with an essay by Lampe providing helpful methodological reflections and includes two essays by Duane Watson and one by Troy Martin on “The State of the Art” that identify ongoing problem areas. The volume also contains relevant essays on the “Relation of Rhetoric to Other Disciplines.” Vernon K. Robbins, *Sea Voyages and Beyond: Emerging Strategies in Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*, ESEC 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018; orig. 2010) is a collection of some of Robbins’s previous essays accompanied by his responses to critics, as well as reflections on the development of sociorhetorical interpretation through the years. It also contains a long and helpful reflective opening essay by David B. Gowler titled “The End of the Beginning: The Continuing Maturation of Socio-rhetorical Analysis.” Finally, James D. Hester and J. David Hester, eds., *Rhetorics in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfillment*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (New York: T&T Clark International, 2010), displays a respectful but critical impatience with the history and state of New Testament rhetorical criticism and attempts to advance an agenda not so rooted in form and historical studies. The Hesters are very much inspired by Wuellner’s work, and while one might argue that the flourishing of various types of postmodern biblical criticism concerned with “rhetorics of power” demonstrates that his vision of New Testament rhetorical

criticism is thriving, Wuellner had envisioned more autonomy for rhetorical criticism in New Testament studies than has ever been the case. He also conceived of a “rhetoric of the sublime” that has mostly languished. On these topics, see esp. James D. Hester and J. David Hester, “The Contribution of Wilhelm Wuellner to New Testament Rhetorical Criticism,” in *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Troy W. Martin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

72. Troy W. Martin, ed. *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014). Another volume displaying similar retrospective/reflective dimensions was *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, included in the original essay (see p. 241).

73. See, for example, Joseph A. Marchal, ed., *Studying Paul’s Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012). Note also that the book does include an essay specifically on “Rhetorical Approaches: Introducing the Art of Persuasion in Paul and Pauline Studies,” by Todd Penner and Davina Lopez.

74. Todd Penner and Davina C. Lopez, “Of Mappings and Men (and Women): Reflections on Rhetorical Genealogies,” in Martin, *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism*, 245–69.

75. Michael Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

76. Walter F. Taylor Jr., *Paul, Apostle to the Nations: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012).

77. David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2018).

78. A good survey of scholarship both favorable to and critical of using classical rhetoric to study Paul is provided by Carl Joachim Classen, “Can the Theory of Rhetoric Help Us to Understand the New Testament, and in Particular the Letters of Paul?” in *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric: Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Bryan R. Dyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 13–40.

79. Stanley E. Porter, “‘When It Was Clear That We Could Not Persuade Him, We Gave Up and Said, ‘The Lord’s Will Be Done’” (Acts 21:14): Good Reasons to Stop Making Unproven Claims for Rhetorical Criticism,” *BBR* 24 (2016): 533–44; Jason A. Myers and Ben Witherington, “Response to Stanley Porter,” *BBR* 24 (2016): 547–49; Stanley E. Porter, “Ben Witherington on Rhetoric One Last Time (I Hope),” *BBR* 24 (2016): 551–52.

80. My essay titled “Parenesis and Peroration: The Rhetorical Function of Romans 12:1–15:13,” in Porter and Dyer, *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric*, corrects a serious defect in previous arguments that Romans is largely structured like a speech and further advances this perspective. One of the best similar analyses of Galatians is Joop Smit’s “The Letter of Paul to the Galatians: A Deliberative Speech,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 1–26. However, few if any of Paul’s other letters so clearly display a so-called standard speech structure (*dispositio*). Indeed, while I still agree with much of the analysis of 1 Corinthians set forth in the original essay above, I would be the first to say that the letter is not as obviously “speech-like” as Galatians and Romans.

81. See discussion and references in Mark D. Given, “Parenesis and Peroration,” 207–8.

82. Carl R. Holladay, *Introduction to the New Testament, Reference Edition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 690.

83. Holladay, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 698–701.

84. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*.

85. See, for example, Ryan S. Schellenberg, “τὸ ἐν λόγῳ ἰδιωτικὸν τοῦ Ἀποστόλου: Revisiting Patristic Testimony on Paul’s Rhetorical Education,” *NovT* 54 (2012): 354–68.

86. See the similar observation of Frank W. Hughes in “Paul and Traditions of Greco-Roman Rhetoric,” in Porter and Dyer, *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric*, 86–87.

87. See Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.6–13.

88. Mikeal C. Parsons and Michael Wade Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament: The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018).

89. Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 3.

90. Parsons and Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 1, emphasis added.

91. Adam White, *Where Is the Wise Man? Graeco-Roman Education as the Background to the Divisions in 1 Corinthians 1–4*, LNTS 536 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

92. Jason Zurawski, *Jewish Paideia in the Hellenistic Diaspora: Discussing Education, Shaping Identity* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2016), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/133300>; Jason M. Zurawski and Gabriele Boccaccini, *Second Temple Jewish “Paideia” in Context*, BZNT 228 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017).

93. See Margaret M. Mitchell, “Pauline Accommodation and ‘Condescension’ (συγκατάβασις): 1 Cor 9:19–23 and the History of Influence,” in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).





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