

Rethinking the “Paul and Judaism” Paradigm:

Why Not "Paul's Judaism"?

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Lund University, May 7, and Linköping University, May 8, 2008

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. Traditionally, the emphasis is on the distance *between* Paul's new religion based upon Jesus Christ *and* Judaism, his *former* religion. The level of continuity or discontinuity assessed differs from interpreter to interpreter, but a shared perception remains assumed, if not 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.¹ One does not hear or read about "Paul's Judaism,"

¹ That there is a geo-ethnic dimension to Jewish identity, hence, Judeanness, is not to be dismissed, but the discussion about Paul focuses on the religious 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 Israelite and Judean heritage, by which Paul's teachings and life are measured. 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. That there was a religious dimension to Judean/Jewish ethnicity properly named Judaism seems to me evident from contemporary sources, and arises in Paul's language in Gal 1:13-14 (discussed below). In the Maccabean literature, Judeans can either leave or return or observe in different ways and to different degrees the traditional religious practices of this people. For example, in 2 Maccabees 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 (cf. 9:13-17). Josephus, *Ant.* 20.34-48, relates that Izates, the king of Adiabene, seeks 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. His interests and practices makes 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 (more discussion below). 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*

or "Pauline Judaism," of "Judaism" or "Jewishness" as the propositional basis of Paul's way of life, or that of the communities he establishes and addresses.

Most interpreters today pronounce that Paul had been a Jew, and also that he remained one. Yet few have or would argue that Paul continued to practice and promote Judaism as an expression of covenant faithfulness after his experience of Jesus Christ. When Paul is upheld to be a Jew it thus signifies a kind of ethnic identity independent of the religious elements of ethnicity related to covenant standing, a Jew or Judean who does not behave Jewishly. He is the leader if not the founder of a new religious movement, one functioning outside the boundaries of Judaism. Although some other Christ-believers, like James and Peter, may be 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.² These new communities consisted primarily of *non*-Jews, with perhaps a few *former* Jews. They represented a new religious movement that was distinguished from Judaism, namely, Christianity, even if that name had not yet been coined.

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).³ Others grant that he observed Torah to various degrees, but not as an expression of faith. But either way, Paul believed that the era of

(43), while the other one (Ananias) is not described in terms of coming from somewhere, but yet as a *Ioudaios* merchant. See 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).

² E.g., Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 89-97, 120-25, argues 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).

³ E.g., Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 197-200.

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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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 on the prevailing interpretations of 1 Corinthians 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 Corinthians 9:19-23 in Pauline studies is significant, and 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*."⁶ Indeed, Heikki Räisänen declares the

⁴ Donald A. Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer--According to his Letters," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, edited by Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 97-120 (113).

⁵ E.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 43; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 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."

⁶ Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer," 113; see also Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 427; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

implications for the consensus view quite clearly: "1 Cor 9.20 f. is absolutely incompatible with the theory of an observant Paul."⁷

This interpretive tradition ostensibly makes plain 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 many refrain from highlighting the negative aspect of this behavior that such a term conveys, it 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 to merely adopt 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-believers by conviction, and to live that way thereafter inwardly as well as outwardly, like himself. 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 the gospel.⁸

That such a policy, calculated to persuade people with entirely different behavioral patterns from each other based upon entirely different premises might, and over time almost certainly would alienate all of them instead, is not often discussed. Yet 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-believing Jews and non-Jews to a more mature life in Christ.⁹ In such settings, where

1997), 577; Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1997), 153-54; Segal, *Paul*, 228, 238.

⁷ *Paul and the Law*, 75 n. 171.

⁸ The consensus view, and see e.g., Peter Richardson, "Pauline Inconsistency: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 and Galatians 2:11-14," *NTS* 26 (1979): 347-62 (347); Mark Douglas Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 7; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 105-17; and those noted in the footnotes discussing this passage below.

⁹ E.g., Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 155.

push comes to shove, Paul is understood to forgo Jewish practices.¹⁰ 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 become like a non-Jew, to non-Jews he would quickly 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. 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, i.e., 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."¹¹ 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.¹² At the same time,

¹⁰ Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 177-78, 185-87.

¹¹ 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 and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2001), 287-308 (308).

¹² The history of a line of Jewish critique turning around Paul's "opportunist" subversion of Torah to gain converts as portrayed by Christian interpreters, often as if a positive trait, subjecting everything to the highest value of evangelism, is discussed by Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, "The 'Essential Heresy': Paul's View of the Law According to Jewish Writers: 1886-1986" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1990), 63-82, and see, Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 151-57, 166-67; David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: The Turning Point in Western History* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 106-

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."¹³

Even when Paul is understood to encourage respect for Jewish behavior among Christ-believers, 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, they 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.¹⁴ In Corinth, although Paul is understood to call for the “knowledgeable” to refrain from eating idol food on behalf of those who object to it as a matter of conscience, or consciousness, it is understood to be but a temporary concession, because in the long run Paul

10. She also discusses some Jewish scholars 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* 28.1 (2005): 69-104.

¹³ Reidar Hvalvik, "Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to the Book of Acts," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, eds. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 121-153 (153); cf. Hagner, "Paul as a Jewish Believer," 113, cited above.

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16, WBC 38b* (Dallas: Word Books, 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).

is believed to actually share the values of those Christ-believers who would eat idol food as a matter of indifference to Jewish covenant food conventions.¹⁵ According to the prevailing interpretation of Phil 3:3-7, Paul counted the value of Jewish identity and behavior to amount to nothing more than "crap [σκύβαλα]."¹⁶

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 rather 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.¹⁷ 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-believers—as an expression of personal and communal faith and lifestyle, of *kavannah* (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*," they by default, if not explicitly, signify a *Judaism-free* way of living—in intent, as a measure of faith, if not always in every detail of practice—because of faith in Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ E.g., C. K. Barrett, ed. *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 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; Assen and Minneapolis: Van Gorcum and Fortress, 1990); Alex T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* (JSNTSS 176; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 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*, Stanley E. Porter, ed. (PAST 5; Leiden: Brill, [forthcoming], a version is available at <http://www.marknanos.com/Polytheist-Corinth-1-15-08.pdf>).

¹⁶ 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* (forthcoming; a version is available at <http://www.marknanos.com/Phil3Dogs-Reverse-1-17-08.pdf>).

¹⁷ John M. G. Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?" *JSNT* 60 (1995): 89-120, for a construction of Paul whose assimilation is understood to leave only himself supposing he is not an apostate.

In recent years, the so-called New Perspective on Paul has challenged the traditional characterizations of the Judaism of Paul's time to be legalistic and arrogantly self-righteous.¹⁸ Instead, interpreters upholding this view recognize that Judaism of Paul's time 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 precious advance made by its proponents, largely based on the ability of Krister Stendahl's and E. P. Sander's arguments,¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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. Even a 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

¹⁸ The position and coining of the phrase by James Dunn is well summarized in "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95-122 (reprinted with additional notes in James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990], 183-214).

¹⁹ Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

²⁰ See e.g., Hans Joachim Schoeps, *The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict*, trans. David E. Green (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 40-52, 165, published in German in 1961 (idem, *Israel und Christenheit: Jüdisch-christliches Religionsgespräch in neunzehn Jahrhunderten* [München and Frankfurt am Main: 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 too 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,'" 69-104.

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."²¹ This trajectory was anticipated in Dunn's initial discussion of the new possibilities for interpreting Paul that he discovered through Sanders' work. For Dunn observed that in Galatians 2:16, 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."²²

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; N. T. Wright). 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

²¹ Dunn, "Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity," *NTS* 45 (1999): 174-93 (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."

²² "New Perspective," in *Jesus, Paul*, 198.

with his new “Christian” religion (Räisänen), leaving an irreconcilable contradiction in his theology.²³

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 like faith and grace and works has always taken place in comparison 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?²⁴ 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 towards new interpretations of Paul or Christian origins they provoke. Many continue to view both Judaism and Paul through traditional Christian, especially Reformation-ground lenses,²⁵ or the bifocals shaped by F. C. Baur,²⁶

²³ Cf. the observations and criticisms of Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 66-72, 108. On the problem of a continued logical negative valuation of Judaism in recent inter-mural 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," *Biblical Interpretation* 13.3 (2005): 255-69.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ E.g., Donald A. Hagner, "Paul and Judaism—The Jewish Matrix of Early Christianity: Issues in the Current Debate," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 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, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001); Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting?: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in*

through which the superiority of *Pauline* "Christianity" can be clearly seen.²⁷ 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.²⁸ For the valuations that Christians have championed in this construal of Paul are easily viewed

Romans 1--5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); D. A. Carson, Peter Thomas O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Vol. 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (Tübingen and Grand Rapids, Mich.: Mohr Siebeck and Baker Academic, 2004); Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and his Critics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. 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, U.K. and Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster, 2007), 194-211; idem, "The New Perspective on Paul: A Bibliographical Essay," on *The Paul Page*, webmaster Mark Mattison: <http://www.thepaulpage.com/Bibliography.html>.

²⁶Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (2nd ed; ed. Eduard Zeller; transl. Allan Menzies; Two volumes in one vol.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003; Original German, 1845; English: Williams & Norgate, 1873-75); James Carleton Paget, "The Definition of the Terms Jewish Christian and Jewish Christianity in the History of Research," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, eds. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 22-52.

²⁷ 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 is 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.

²⁸ 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, and 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 1970's, appeared too daunting a course to pursue. When I learned of the New Perspective and its impact in the 1980's, I could then reconsider offering a new interpretation of Paul, although one that is in many ways significantly different from the Paul 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.

from an oppositional perspective to highlight, interestingly enough, the inferiority of Pauline "Christianity."²⁹

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.*"³⁰ 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."³¹

To my knowledge, what has gone largely unrecognized in Sanders' turn of phrase, and in much of the work by New Perspective interpreters, is the traditional assumption that remains necessary to it. For Sander'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.³² 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

²⁹ 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; and the discussion of Jewish reactions to the prevailing interpretations of 1 Cor 9:19-23, noted above, on which my views are briefly set out below.

³⁰ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552 (emphasis his).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 551-52 (emphasis added).

³² Stanley Kent Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 24-25, similarly notes this problem.

of nomenclature like Christian and Christianity to refer to him, his teachings, and his communities.³³

Moreover, Sanders' 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 for Sanders' Paul is not with *some* or *other* Judaisms, not with *some* Jewish people³⁴ or ideas or institutions or practices, not with *some* or *other* Christ-believing Jews or Jewish groups,³⁵ or *their* ways of interpreting the meaning of Jesus Christ—but with and in

³³ Dunn regularly notes that Paul was not converted to a new religion and that he precedes what can be properly denoted as Christianity (cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* [London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 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 his). And he 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* [eds. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 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*" (Jewish Christianity Consultation of the SBL; San Diego, November 17, 2007; available at <http://www.marknanos.com/SBL-07-Jewish-Chrstnty.pdf>).

³⁴ 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."

³⁵ I prefer not to use the terms Christian and Christianity except where it is necessary to the discussion, and refer to, e.g., Christ-believers and Christ-believing Jewish coalitions in an effort to avoid perpetuating this problem, and hopefully, to help my reader do so too, although I recognize that the change of terminology can tax the reader as

Judaism per se, which Paul “*opposed*.”³⁶ 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, including the views expressed by those 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*.”³⁷ 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) groups *within* Judaism for failing to exemplify Jewish values according to *his* Jewish group’s terms, and then later, was it not instead those persecuted groups’ values that he upheld to be the most

well, 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-Jewish (and non-Israelite) other, a way of conceptualizing the world still 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 other than Israel" when ἔθνος is translated, and for the plural, "nations," or "members of the other nations," i.e., other than *the* nation, Israel.

³⁶ Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 156 (emphasis his). Posing the question in a slightly different way, Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Contraversions 1; 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."

³⁷ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1 (emphasis added).

representative of *Judaism*—Judaism as it should and will be when the end of the ages has arrived, having now, however, 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 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.³⁸ 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.

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 re-reading 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.³⁹ 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

³⁸ 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 his).

³⁹ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 12 (emphasis added).

outside Judaism, this is a decisive move that continues to reverberate not only in the work of those who constitute the so-called 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 (cf. Gal 2:15; 1 Cor 7:17-24; Rom 3:29-30).⁴⁰ The question requires a more precise formulation: How does *one not born Jewish* gain equal standing among *the righteous ones* (i.e., Israelites, Jews, children of Abraham, people of God)?

In other words, Sanders errs when posing the soteriological concerns of the rabbis in such universal terms as “when a man.”⁴¹ 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, should be “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.

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

⁴⁰ For recent discussions of the problems with the way Paul's voice has been understood in universalizing terms, including being set in contrast to Jewish particularism as its foil, see e.g., Anders Runesson, "Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity?: Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology" *Studia Theologica* 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); Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* 123.2 (2004): 235-51; Pamela Eisenbaum, "Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism" *Biblical Interpretation* 13.3 (2005): 224-38; William S. Campbell, "Perceptions of Compatibility Between Christianity and Judaism in Pauline Interpretation," *Biblical Interpretation* 13.3 (2005): 298-316; Idem, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (Library of New Testament Studies 322; London and New York: T & T Clark, 2006); Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul's Identity," *Biblical Interpretation* 13.3 (2005): 270-88; Idem, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

covenantal nomism, “the Gentiles are dealt with only sporadically, however, and different Rabbis had different opinions about their destiny.”⁴² Recognition of this fact should profoundly alter the interpretive landscape for comparing Paul and Judaism.⁴³ That move is further accentuated if one attends to Second Temple Jewish literature rather than the rabbis.⁴⁴

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, by becoming circumcised or not, espoused by the two different Jewish informants, Ananias and Eleazer, which, interestingly enough, takes place within a Diaspora setting during Paul’s period (*Ant.* 20.17-96). Ananias not only emphatically opposes the circumcision of Izates, he proposes that Izates’ resolve to practice the Jewish life completely 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 refer to the teaching against the circumcision of Izates as representing a religious viewpoint arising from outside of Judaism, or from a “former” Jew, one who no longer observed Torah. Rather, the conceptualizations are stretched to encompass the breadth of Jewish views that just such an incident makes necessary.⁴⁵ Josephus and his interpreters treat both Ananias and Eleazer as Jews who espouse different points of view on the role of circumcision for conversion, as well as on how God should be properly worshipped by a non-Jew, on the basis of their interpretations of how to apply Jewish Scripture and tradition to the situation of this non-Jew, indeed, king of a non-Jewish nation. Both find 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

⁴² *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴³ Cf. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 23.

⁴⁴ See Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ As a case in point, the note to this comment in the Loeb volume, edited and translated by Louis Feldman, p. 22 n a, discusses a possible rabbinic parallel (no less!) wherein Rabbi Joshua argues in *Yebamot* 46a that circumcision was not required for a convert, just baptism, according to Bamberger and Klausner. In addition, a logical reason for this teaching by a Jew and within Judaism is offered, the policy of exception for circumstances where life would be endangered.

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 versus one discussing the topic for non-Jews, about which Paul specifically writes, and around which a variety of Jewish views can be expected to emerge, and that should thus be central to the “Paul and” debates, continues to be obscured in the way that the issues are posed.

Some Suggestions

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,” inferring, “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 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.⁴⁶ We would find differences emerge around the question of the standing of non-Jewish

⁴⁶ Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 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, *Ant.* 20.41 (34-48); Philo, *QE* 2.2; *Moses* 2.4; *Abraham* 3-6, 60-61; *Virtues* 102, 181-82, 212-19; *Spec. Laws* 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, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 236-47; Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations, Radical Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 162-63, 190-95.

people within the community of the people of God *in the present age*. But this would be different 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 than (Isa 66:18-20; Zeph 3:9; Zech 2:15; Tobit 13:11; 14:5-6; cf. *t. Sanhedrin* 13.2; *b. Megilla* 13a). Are such views to be classified then 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 universalized to apply to "everyone"?

Moreover, Paul's argument is time specific, claiming something new has transpired in the midst of the present age. It is on the matter of what is appropriate *now* regarding non-Jews turning to Judaism's God that a comparison of Paul's Judaism with other Judaisms exhibits a salient difference of opinion. His Jewish coalition claims that the end of the ages has *already* dawned, and thus, that the re-identification of non-Jews *now* takes place on the *awaited-age* terms. *That* proposition is unique to the Christ-believing Jewish groups.⁴⁷ It revolves around a

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 (*Ant.* 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. 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 de R. Yismael* (Bahodesh 1), on Exod 19:2; *Sifra* 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. Abodah Zarah* 8.4). Magnus Zetterholm, "Paul and the Missing Messiah," in *The Messiah: In Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 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-believing Jews who are teaching non-Jews in Christ to observe Torah, because Gentiles too are under obligation to Torah.

⁴⁷ Depending on how one reads Acts and Paul, it is a propositional truth shared by the other apostles of this movement; cf. 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 and Boston: Brill, 2005), 59-97; Idem, "What Was at Stake in Peter's 'Eating with Gentiles' at Antioch?," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, Mass.:

different answer to the question, "What time is it now? on the basis of a different belief about the meaning of Jesus Christ, and in particular, based on the claim that God has already raised him from the grave.

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 now, and more importantly, in the case of Christ-believing groups, over what to do about the identity of the non-Jews who have turned to Christ. It was because of different answers to these kinds of questions than those who controlled the Temple offered, that the Dead Sea Scrolls community of the Righteous Teacher apparently withdrew from the Temple worship of its time.⁴⁸ It was because of a different, and controversial answer to the question of what God was doing among the nations, that the Christ-believing 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.⁴⁹

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 "*believers in*

Hendrickson, 2002), 282-318. 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 (*Migration* 92).

⁴⁸ Cf. Ps 37:33; 4QMMT C 25-32; 4QpPs^a 1-10 iv 7-9; 1 QpHab 8:10-13; 11:2-8; 1 Macc. 10:21.

⁴⁹ Cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *JBL* 112.3 (1993): 459-77 (467). It is interesting to note the subtle shifts in language that betray the way that Jewish groups other than Christ-believing ones, such as those exemplified by the Dead Sea Scroll community's conflicts with other Jewish groups, are understood to revolve 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-believing 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.

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.⁵⁰ As historical critics, why not keep the specificity of the case before us? “Why did Paul oppose circumcision?” misses the point. It implies that he opposed it in principle for all Christ-believers, 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 *non-Jewish believers in 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.⁵¹

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.⁵² And there is no reason to suppose that he opposed circumcision of non-Jews who were not Christ-believers. At many points the logic of his position suggests that Jewish believers in Christ, including Paul, observed his instruction

⁵⁰ 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, like Galatians and Romans, while there may be Jews in the audience, his encoded or implied audience is the non-Jewish Christ-believers.

⁵¹ Cf. Stendahl, *Paul Among*, 35-36, 74-75, 125, for the programmatic call to never ask merely “What does it mean?” without adding “... to whom?”; idem, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1.418-32.

⁵² 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 chapter 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 that non-Jews do not become Jews, i.e., circumcised in body, in the new age inaugurated in Christ (which includes non-Jews who remain non-Jews representing the nations turning to the One God), in order to gain the real objective for which Jews are circumcised. Nor do they 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.

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-believing Jews described by James in Acts 21, would be zealous in his observation of halakhic behavior, and take the steps necessary to demonstrate this fact and dispel any rumours that he did not do so. Thus, Luke presents Paul to undertake a Nazarite vow in the Temple, which involved a burnt offering (Acts 21:19-26).

If Paul does not observe Torah, he leaves himself open to the easiest objection to his proposition that Jesus is the Christ that can be leveled by the very Jews he seeks to convince, an accusation that has been made ever since the construction of Paul and Paulinism as Torah-free was invented. If Paul did not himself represent the highest ideals of the Judaism which maintained the hope of just such a day, how could he expect to reach Jews, much less non-Jews, with his message 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.⁵³ 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-believers to become proselytes. Note that his letters do to 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 halakhic behavior. As noted, the consensus interpretation

⁵³ Boyarin, *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-Jewish Christians for whom the Jew is the different other. But should that be expected to be the vantage point of Paul?

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 he merely adopts temporarily in order to seek to gain them to an entirely different set of convictions. But I propose that "becoming like" signifies "arguing from the premises" of each.⁵⁴

When seeking to win Jews to the message of good in Christ, he 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 he 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 halakhic behavior or acts like a sinner than it is that Jesus behaved like a prostitute or tax-collector to relate to them.⁵⁵ 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.

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

⁵⁴ 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 (1954-55): 261-75; Idem, "St. Paul and Philo of Alexandria," in *History and Thought of the Early Church*, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982; Original: *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 [1965-66]), 297-98 (286-307); Richard Norman Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 244; Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 81; Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), esp. 1, 240, 273, 327; C. 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. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 197-214, traces some language in the church fathers, esp. Chrysostom and Origin, that points in this direction, although it is not clear that they did not also believe Paul's language included changing conduct too. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 428 n. 36; and 432-33, and Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric*, reject arguments in this direction.

⁵⁵ See also David Jacob Rudolph, "A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Selwyn College, University of Cambridge, 2006; forthcoming in revised version, Mohr Siebeck).

the midst of his discourse throughout chapters 8–10, wherein he explains why the Christ-believers in Corinth cannot eat idol food, Paul relates his strategy toward non-Christ-believers 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.⁵⁶ 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 non-Jewish Christ-believers. 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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ This approach is exemplified in Acts

⁵⁶ See Nanos, "The Polytheist Identity."

⁵⁷ Apparently Paul did not anticipate that former polytheists would reason that since they no longer believed idols represented gods, that 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."

⁵⁸ *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, but against the minority view that this signifies rhetorical accommodation), nevertheless, Given's interpretation does not represent "the realm of being" rather than "that of seeming" anymore 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

17:16-34, where Luke portrays Paul appealing to a statue (idol) to the Unknown God in order to make his case to polytheists, even though Paul did not believe that such statues should be made. This exemplifies "becoming" like a polytheist to make his point to polytheists, but in no way becoming a polytheist or practicing idolatry to do so. He appeals to their logic of their own premises to seek to bring them to a very different conclusion than they have drawn. He seeks thereby to win them to the message of good in Jesus Christ.⁵⁹

Let us look at how Paul used the term Ἰουδαϊσμός (Judaism) to see if my proposition can be sustained in that context. Paul uses the word we translate Judaism only two times, and both cases are in Galatians 1:13-14. He writes of "my former way of living in Judaism" (τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ). 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 familiar. That way of living was specifically as one who persecuted the Jewish subgroup communities of believers in Jesus Christ. In further describing that time, he writes that he advanced in the Judaism of his former way of life beyond many of his contemporaries in his ethnic group (προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου), because he

dropping *acting* like but keeping *speaking* like, for on 117 he concludes that Paul shapes his "insinuating rhetorical strategy similar to that imagined by Luke with respect to Jews and Gentiles."

⁵⁹ 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 the listener 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 polytrope, 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. See W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1992), 90-101; Fernanda Declava 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 Press, 1989), 91-119; Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 21-22, 26, 28-29, 251, 272-73.

possessed more zeal for the “traditions of my fathers.” Note that Paul writes of his relationship to the *traditions* in such personal terms, as “of my fathers,” and not simply “of *the* fathers.” Does Paul betray here that his identity continues to be bound up with a particular interpretive tradition that he still considers himself to represent, albeit in some way that no longer brings the approval that he formerly enjoyed from the members of this group?

Traditionally, interpreters have understood Paul to be describing himself as now no longer living in Judaism. 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*. His former way of living included a more zealous approach than that of his fellows to protecting “the traditions of the fathers,” a catch-phrase almost certainly denoting Pharisaic Judaism.⁶⁰ And it may be, 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-believing Jewish subgroups. This could imply that he has moved within Pharisaism, from a group of Pharisees that approved of his zeal to destroy these groups to a group of Pharisees⁶¹ (or a coalition of groups including Pharisees) that now expressed the aspirations of those groups. More likely, it signifies that he has moved from his particular Pharisaic group's appeal to the traditions of the fathers as the ultimate authority on this topic to a different group's ultimate source of authority in Jesus Christ, to Christ-believing Judaism.⁶²

⁶⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.297, 408; 17.41; cf. Albert I. Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic Paradox,” *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987): 63-77. Paul refers to himself as a Pharisee in the context of referring to his zeal to persecute the Christ-believers (Phil 3:5-6).

⁶¹ According to Acts 15:5, there were Christ-believers 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). This arguably aligns with the self-identity he still asserts to express that this identity, although advantageous in Jewish communal comparative terms, does not make him better than those Christ-believers who cannot make the same claims to identity. 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 for conversion (Phil 3:3-11, esp. v. 5; Nanos, “Paul's Reversal”; cf. Gal 6:12-15; Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002], 226-33).

⁶² Cf. Segal, *Paul*.

Paul claims to have had a revelation that his peers have not experienced, and I understand this to be the background for his dissociating statement that his good news message and authority as an apostle 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 his contemporaries from whom he had won great approval, until he changed course following the revelation of Christ (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). 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 Pharisaic group.⁶³ Behaving so as to gain the

⁶³ 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 (cf. 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, 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 which 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 the Pharisees already, but that he did not subject his new convictions to their deliberation, or that he avoided returning and thereby violating the Pharisees' policy of not contesting the views of the elders, which his new conviction would be expected to challenge (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 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. The purpose of this for the Galatians is likely 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. His rhetorical purpose is to relate 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-believing group leaders uphold

approval of those peers no longer characterizes the way he is *living in Judaism*, Jesus-Christ-based-Judaism, now.⁶⁴

Paul does not specify what the Christ-believing Jewish groups were doing that he deemed to be so threatening, thus interpreters must fill in 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.⁶⁵ 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 equal members without having become Jews, as children of Abraham apart from the traditional convention of proselyte conversion to gain that standing.⁶⁶ That policy is the one for which he claims to be persecuted later, namely, for not "still" preaching circumcision of non-Jews (Gal 5:11). While Paul championed this move, he probably did not initiate it. Rather, since before the dramatic revelation of Christ in him and the call to bring this message to the nations, he was the most vicious opponent of this policy, it is likely that this policy of including non-Jews as full members was a propositional truth for Christ-based groups that predated his change of course. If so, what motivated Paul's zealous response was not a failure by Jewish members of the Christ groups to observe Torah per se. They were observing, for example, Sabbath and dietary customs, and circumcising their sons. At issue was a change of policy based on an

(cf. Nanos, "Intruding 'Spies'"; Idem, "What Was at Stake?"; Idem, *Irony of Galatians*. On the rabbinic policy of majority rule, see *Baba Mezia* 59b; on the topic of interpretive authority and the role of revelation during this period, see Ben Sira 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*, eds. Jacob Neusner and E. Frerichs [Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985], 73-82).

⁶⁴ Martin Goodman, "A Note on Josephus, the Pharisees and Ancestral Tradition," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50.1 (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).

⁶⁵ Traditional views and her interesting proposal are described by Fredriksen, "Another Look," 248-55.

⁶⁶ The topic of Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*.

alternative interpretation of Torah for defining the inclusion of non-Jews as full and equal members based on the claim that God has in Christ initiated the age to come kingdom with just such expectations for members of the rest of the nations to join alongside Israel in the worship of the One God.

Unlike the conventions in place in all Jewish groups of the time of which we are aware, these non-Jews were being identified not merely as *guests*, however welcome and celebrated, as in other Jewish groups. They were instead being treated as *members* in full standing, on the same terms as proselytes, children of Abraham, and yet at the same time not proselytes, not members of Israel, but representatives of the other nations bearing witness to the proposition that the end of the ages had dawned in Christ.⁶⁷ They were celebrating a kind of messianic banquet expected in the age to come within the midst of the present evil age.

In other words, 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 other 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 worshiping 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

⁶⁷ I am suggesting here an alternative that Fredriksen, "Another Look," 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*). 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 (cf. Rom 3:29-30; 10:12; 15:5-13; Gal 3:28; cf. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 179-92).

answered, such as the Temple authorities, who did the bidding of the Roman regime.⁶⁸ 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-Jewish believers in Christ. In the present age, those who protect this convention among Jewish groups may have the authority to compel compliance, but the non-Jewish addressees are to resist that authority and to suffer any consequences required, awaiting God’s vindication of their righteous standing according to the message he had proclaimed (5:5). Paul argues that he too suffers for this policy, but he does not alter his course to seek the relief that could be gained 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).⁶⁹ “Do [they] not hear Torah” rightly (4:21)—that is, with Paul?⁷⁰

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 yet expect approval of their identity claims by them either.⁷¹

⁶⁸ 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 and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁶⁹ Cf. Dieter Mitternacht, "Foolish Galatians?—A Recipient-Oriented Assessment of Paul’s Letter," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 408-33.

⁷⁰ 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-believers 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).

⁷¹ Paul's hostile rhetoric betrays that he believes those influencing his addressees should instead accept the truth claims of his proclamation of the gospel (cf. 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

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 intra-group 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).⁷²

In Christ-believing-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 halakhically 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 which understands itself in 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-believing Jews—and non-Jews!—live on behalf of Judaism and every Jewish person, not against them (Rom 9–11; esp. 11:11-36).⁷³

In this service, these Christ-believing Jews do not reject Torah, but develop halakhot 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.⁷⁴ Otherwise, Paul’s

Israel in each location, and then 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, and “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11, as explained in Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 239-88).

⁷² Nanos, “What Was at Stake?”; Idem, “Intruding ‘Spies.’”

⁷³ Mark D. Nanos, “Broken Branches: A Pauline Metaphor Gone Awry? (Romans 11:11-36),” Paper presented at *Romans 9–11 at the Interface Between the ‘New Perspective on Paul’ and Jewish-Christian Dialog*. Göttingen, Germany, May 1-4, 2008 (forthcoming in a conf. vol., Mohr Siebeck, 2009/10).

⁷⁴ 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” (Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 103), because of the

question in Romans 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, and 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 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. To maintain otherwise is to experience “stumbling” and “hardening” 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).⁷⁵ It is Israel that has been entrusted with the words of God for the nations (3:2; 10:14–11:12).

inscrutability of 1 Cor 7:19 in Sander'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 halakhic 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 halakhic 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 halakhah is a dynamic enterprise.

⁷⁵ 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, *Mystery of Romans*, 247-51; Idem, "The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul’s Letter to the Romans," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 283-304 [300-4]). The charge of disobedience and the assessment of those Jews who have not yet joined Paul in his faith in Christ as stumbling, but not fallen, bespeak 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 non-Jews, is not getting-in, contra Sanders, but staying in, now by way of response to Christ. Even the culpability for failing

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).⁷⁶

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).⁷⁷ Non-Jews were not under Torah; they were nevertheless obliged to observe the appropriate halakhah 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.⁷⁸ 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 the Spirit made possible within this community, if they will dedicate 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

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 (cf. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 239-88).

⁷⁶ Translation from Norman Lamm, *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism as Exemplified in the Shema, the Most Important Passage in the Torah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2000), 31. See too Sifre on Deuteronomy 6:4 (Piska 31); and *Midrasch Tannaim zum Deuteronomium*, ed. D. Hoffmann, (Berlin, 1908/9; repr. Jerusalem, 1984), 190-91 (from Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 200 n. 27): "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.'"

⁷⁷ Nanos, "What Was at Stake?"

⁷⁸ Cf. Michael A. A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

non-Jew/members of the nations, and therefore their different relationships to the Torah, remain, but not the present age discrimination inherently concomitant with such distinctions.

For Paul, it is fundamental to the truth of the gospel that difference remains, that social boundaries are acknowledged, but that discrimination does not, in this age, as in the age to come, which, according to that 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. For 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 halakhah for Paul, not its elimination.⁷⁹ And the difficult reality of exemplifying this 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, embodying the life of the age to come, and not that of human conventions that instead legitimate discrimination where difference is found, amplified, 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, extending 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 Gentiles in that body, so too there is a place for Jews, and thus, for Torah.

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 halakhic conventions for Diaspora Jews in each location he visits,⁸⁰ to respect the ideals of Temple

⁷⁹ Contra Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 144.

⁸⁰ In my view, 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

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 (1 Cor 16:8);⁸¹ to make a collection for those in Jerusalem suffering economic hardship for upholding the policy of Gentile inclusion apart from proselyte conversion (Rom 15:25-31; Gal 2:7-10); and, according to Luke's account, to take a Nazarite vow in the Temple, in order to confirm that he lives and teaches according to Torah, in the face of rumors that he does not (Acts 21).

Consider Galatians 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 re-identification that they are promoting. Paul argues that if these non-Jewish Christ-believers 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 he is himself Torah-observant, and known to be such by his Christ-believing Gentile audiences, it would signal a very different meaning. It would seek to expose and undermine the lack of integrity in the rival message. That message promotes the ostensible good to be gained by undertaking proselyte conversion, and thereby to overcome the marginality that non-Jews claiming full standing as righteous ones apart from such conversion, suffer in communities that do not share their conviction about the meaning of Christ. Paul's rhetorical approach subverts its proponents' projected neglect to disclose that this step involves more than an identity solution, but also necessarily involves the obligations of Torah-identity. The tone of ironic rebuke here and throughout the letter seeks to expose the naïveté of his non-Jewish audience,

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 related to idol food at Corinth, in Nanos, "The Polytheist Identity").

⁸¹ 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, by which Paul's groups should mark time (Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*, 267-68; Troy Martin, "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal. 4:10 and Col. 2:16," *NTS* 42 (1996): 120-32.

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 under peer pressure.⁸²

Moreover, 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). 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-Jewish addressees to remain in their non-Jewish state, 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: note, not by love working through faith, but by "faith" or "faithfulness working through love" (Gal 5:6, 13-14).⁸³ In doing so, they represent the nations turning from idolatry to worship Israel's Lord as the One God of all humankind (cf. Rom 3:29-31; 6:15-23; 13:8-14; 15:15-16; 1 Cor 10; 1 Thess 1:9).

One then wonders, 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-Jewish addressees are suffering status uncertainty and disadvantage because they have accepted the proposition that they have become equal members of Abraham's family

⁸² The topic of Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*; and Dieter Mitternacht, *Forum fur Sprachlose: Eine kommunikationspsychologische und epistolar-rhetorische Untersuchung des Galaterbriefs* (CBNT 30; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1999).

⁸³ 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 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 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 teaching Torah-observance, but simply the benefits to be gained by proselyte conversion, which Paul seeks to undermine as a half-truth. These and other elements pointing in this direction are discussed at length in Nanos, *Irony of Galatians*.

without becoming equal members of Israel via proselyte conversion, because now God is shown in Christ to be the One God of members of the other nations as well as of Israel. 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, etc. (cf. 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). The problem, Paul tells Peter, is not that the faith of these Jews in Jesus Christ has brought them down to the standing of non-Jews, but the proposition that the non-Jews have been brought up to equal standing with Jews (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 re-identification proposition apart from proselyte conversion. Hence, Paul asks in Romans, is God the God of Jews only? Of course not, he answers, because God is One (Rom 3:29-30). Note that Paul's argument here for the place of non-Jews depends upon the prior assumption of the place of the Jews as God's own. That is not what is being contested, but instead forms the basis for extending the logic to 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. "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.⁸⁴ 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"

⁸⁴ Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, and John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), have criticized this tendency.

(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.⁸⁵ When it is isolated from its argumentative context for non-Jews within the first-century, and 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 them, 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 throughout the lands north of the Mediterranean, and one whom his addressees know to observe Torah as a matter of faith, many possibilities emerge.

We can begin to read his letters as expressions of Judaism pre-Christianity, however deviant that form of Judaism was and came to be regarded to be by the other Jewish groups that survived. If we keep in focus that the issue for his addressees was their relative identity within Judaism without having become Jews, but seeking full member rather than merely guest standing within the Jewish community, then the issues of identity that circle around undertaking proselyte conversion (the "work of law" that turns a non-Jew into a Jew),⁸⁶ and why Paul denies this option to his addressees, need not be confused with Torah-observance for

⁸⁵ Cf. Lauri Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law*, WUNT 124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁸⁶ I understand "works of law" to function as a synonym for "circumcision," and both of these terms as metonyms in Paul's arguments to signify the role of proselyte conversion, by which non-Jews undertake the rite (hence, act or work) 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, works of law = circumcision = proselyte conversion. Contra the traditional view, works of law does not refer to observing Torah, which non-Jews are not obliged to observe as if Jews, and contra Dunn's view, it does not include observance of special boundary marking behavior such as Sabbath and food laws, which are also for those already defined as Torah-people, that is Israelites, Jews, which Paul's addressees are not. It is however, boundary marking in the sense of referring to the process of identity transformation, the behavior associated with completion of the rite of conversion (circumcision, in agreement with this point by Dunn), referring to the behavior that renders a non-Jew a Jew (a non-Israelite an Israelite), in keeping with the topic in view throughout Galatians, after all. But that is different from the behavioral requirements that follow conversion, when they are re-identified as Jews, and thus, as obliged to observe Torah fully, just like all other Jews (cf. Gal 5:3).

Jews, or with some kind of fault along the usual lines discussed, whether works-righteousness, or nationalism, or exclusivism, and so on.⁸⁷

Paul argues for the propositional views of this Jewish group in tension with the views that prevail among other Jewish groups, often specifically 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 Christ.

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. 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*, of Paul's *Judaism* or Pauline *Judaism*, of the *Judaism* of Paul,⁸⁸ or of the *Judaism* of Paul's communities.⁸⁹ Never do I remember reading of *Judaism's* Paul. The two terms are different, and something must be wrong with one or the other side of the equation, or else they would not be so essentially antithetical.

⁸⁷ 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 with 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.

⁸⁸ An exception of note is the title of John G. Gager's essay, "Paul, the Apostle of Judaism," in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, eds. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 56-76.

⁸⁹ 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-believers, including Paul and his co-workers and communities as well as the other apostles such as James and Peter, and their communities.

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.⁹⁰ It will likely continue to be perpetuated implicitly when not explicitly to the degree that the ethnic division within Christ-believing-Judaism between Jews and Gentiles, between Israel and the other-Nations, that Paul maintains, 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.⁹¹

Christianity has had much invested in the tradition of Paul against Judaism, providing a counter-narrative 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, and antagonist even of the Judaism that he had represented.⁹² 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 take him or those who appealed to his authority seriously, and certainly no reason to look for Judaism at work in him, or in Paulinism.⁹³

⁹⁰ See Pamela Eisenbaum, "Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism," *Biblical Interpretation* 13.3 (2005): 224-38.

⁹¹ Nanos, "How Inter-Christian Approaches."

⁹² See Heschel, *Abraham Geiger*; Langton, "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*, eds. Jose I. Cabezon and Sheila G. Davaney (New York: Routledge, 2004), 77-97. The trend continues in recent works: e.g., David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: The Turning Point in Western History* (New York: Doubleday, 2005); Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

⁹³ 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* 4.1 [1997]: 121-52; Daniel R. Langton, "Modern Jewish Identity and the Apostle Paul: Pauline Studies as an Intra-Jewish Ideological Battleground," *JSNT* 28.2 [2005]: 217-58). The implications of reading Paul as a Torah-observant Jew for

I have argued that successfully challenging the implicit as well as explicit negative valuations of Judaism that persist in most work on this topic, especially among Paulinists who embrace this view as ideologically important, depends upon attending to the particular contexts of Paul's rhetorical concerns for non-Jews, instead of universalizing them to everyone, Jew and non-Jew alike. Sufficient historical-critical work on Paul has been done to recognize that the particular should not be confused with the absolute. In this context, I hope I have at least raised awareness that the concept that Paul finds fault with Judaism, instead of with rival Jewish groups and ideas, with rival interpretations of how to best live Jewishly, and specifically, with any one or group denying the proposition of the truth of the gospel for non-Jews' inclusion *in Judaism* through Christ apart from proselyte conversion, is itself problematic.

Paul faulted some Jews for failure to agree with him that the 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 to all 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-Jewish coalitionists for believing his message, and thus expecting communal inclusion on an unprecedented level (Gal 1:8-9; 5:12).

Paul's criticism was not of Judaism. It was for the failure of some Jews and Jewish groups to be all that Judaism promised to be when the end of the ages had dawned.⁹⁴ This day he proclaimed 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 by way of including non-Jewish Christ-believers to be equal co-participants in Abraham's family, in the community of the righteous ones, and to live accordingly. What separated his particular way of living in Judaism was that he believed that

modern Jewish/Christian relations are addressed in Mark D. Nanos, "A Torah-Observant Paul? What Difference Could it Make for Christian/Jewish Relations Today?" Paper presented at the Christian Scholars Group for Christian/Jewish Relations, Boston, June 4-6, 2005 (available at <<http://www.marknanos.com/projects.html>>).

⁹⁴ Cf. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," in *Jewish and Pauline Studies*, 123-52 (136, 142).

everyone should be persuaded by this proposition now. Yet many other Jews and Jewish groups (or Judaisms) did not believe that awaited day had arrived. They 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. His stance was thus, *mutatis mutandis*, as ethnocentric and particularistic in its application of the universalistic proposition of the meaning of Christ for humanity as that of any Jewish group which did not believe this proposition to be true yet, and thus maintained the particularistic requirement of proselyte standing for non-Jews to be included on equal terms. Neither proposition made sense independent of Judaism, 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 explains in Romans 11, when confronting potential arrogance on the part of non-Jewish Christ-believers, that he regarded his fellow Jews rejecting this message or its reception among the non-Jews to be "stumbling," but still within the covenant, insisting that they have not *yet* 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).⁹⁵

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, this is what Paul would find wrong in Paulinism: *it is not Judaism*.

⁹⁵ Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 239-88; Idem, "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*, eds. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (Vol. 1 of *Romans through History and Culture Series*; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 217-29.