

## Locating Paul on a Map of First-Century Judaism

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Drawing a map of first century Judaism is an interesting challenge. For the purposes of this paper, I am content to work with the map that has been constructed in recent years, including the variations of emphasis, and so on, that will always exist. By referring to a map of Judaism in the first century, what I mean is simply the range of features of Jewish communal life or Jewishness among the Jewish people of the time, and of special interest for locating Paul, the features common to Jewish life in the Diaspora. These features extend from belief in the One Creator God of all humankind and initiator of the covenants with Abraham and his descendents and Israel through Moses, to Temple and Calendar practices, to Scripture and Torah defined behavior extending from the thoughts of the heart to the acts of the hands, including such well known matters as dietary customs, and relevant to any discussion of Paul, to the role of circumcision as a mark of the Jewish (male) people.

The map constructed by scholars of first-century Judaism today represents enormous improvements on the map from which New Testament and Pauline interpreters have worked in the past. Nevertheless, I am not satisfied with and want to discuss how the portrait of Paul continues to be drawn by most of his interpreters in ways that do not fit him on this map even where its various boundaries remain in flux--other than as an apostate, that is. In prevailing constructions of Paul, he remains a figure who was no longer faithful to Judaism as practiced by any Jews of the first century who sought to live according to the norms of Torah, even if Paul perhaps was the only one who did not recognize this to be the case. In effect, Paul appears to make sense only when plotted on his own Christian, or proto-Christian map. He is not conceptualized to be practicing Judaism, and certainly not to be founding groups with the intention that they practice Judaism.

If I may put this in terms of artistic rendering, it is as if the portrayal of Paul must be approached by his interpreters only as apprentices, confined to working within the structures of the master painters of Paul who have gone before them, perhaps making slight alterations or breaking out of a line here or there, even though the background on which he will be drawn

has been altered almost beyond recognition since the masters created the template from which their disciples work. In other words, is it not telling to find that the paradigms framing contemporary discussions, and the conclusions to which Paul's texts apparently must lead, remain entirely recognizable in the service of traditional Christian theological interests, or of the interests of those who, for various reasons (in support of or in contrast to the traditional portrait), want to keep Paul looking as he ostensibly always has?

The final conclusions about Paul's theological positions have not substantially changed, and specifically, still largely stand in contrast to the views and values of any other Jewish figure on this map. It is as if Paul must be rendered on a separate canvas. This is the case in spite of the enormous changes that have taken place in the exegesis of most Jewish texts and even inscriptions and non-literary material evidence, and thus in the way that the Jews responsible for this evidence (as well as that of any evidence from non-Jews considered relevant) are conceptualized--which is, in contrast to Paul, different in dynamic ways from the way they used to be portrayed, along with the dynamic changes to the way that the evidence itself is interpreted.

In this paper, I want to address the still largely unchanged state of the exegetical enterprise of interpreting Paul's texts, not the drawing of the boundaries of Judaism per se, and discuss new ways to interpret Paul in terms of, instead of in contrast to, Judaism. I propose that we begin to conceptualize and discuss Paul's Judaism, and the Judaism of his subgroup communities, Pauline Judaism, if you will.<sup>1</sup>

## **How Interpretations of Paul's Adaptability Influence How Paul Fits on the Map of Judaism**

In Magnus Zetterholm's recent book, *Approaches to Paul*,<sup>2</sup> which traces developments in research on Paul's relationship to Jews and things Jewish in the last century or so, it is clear that there are to this day very few scholars publishing from the perspective that Paul belongs on the map of Judaism, by which I mean, the Jewish communal way of life, with all of its variation, centered around the practice of the values and rituals upheld in the Torah of Moses

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail, see Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?," pages 117-60 in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

and the Tanakh overall. Even among these few, whom Zetterholm labels Radical New Perspective interpreters (an informal categorical affiliation that would include, not by accident, all of us on the panel today), even fewer approach Paul with the assumption that he promoted the practice of Judaism in the groups he founded or addressed in his letters (i.e., that he intended for them to be expressions of Judaism--of the Jewish communal way of life). Yet fewer still imagine Paul to practice Judaism when he reaches out to win non-Jews, for example, to remain faithful to touchstone halakhic practices such as dietary customs when among the non-Jews he seeks to bring into Christ-faithfulness.

This last point, the notion that Paul compromises Torah-observant behavior to work among non-Jews, is largely predicated on accepting the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19-22. This influential, yet at the same time somewhat easily isolatable case, introduces a relevant issue to demonstrate what I want to communicate in this paper. Thus, exemplifying the insight of conflict theory, let me begin by engaging critically with those whose views are the closest to the ones I uphold myself, my fellow Radicals, rather than with those who advocate the traditional portrait, even if perhaps allowing for slight alterations to the lines long ago drawn to define its borders, but not approaching the evidence with the expectation of (or even open to?) finding something wholly different than what has been constructed in the past.

### **1 Corinthians 9:19-22: A Case that Exemplifies the Current Exegetical Limitations to Radical Re-readings of Paul**

In a conference paper delivered about a year ago (soon to be published but obviously not yet known except by those involved in the conference and those who have visited my web site, where it is available for download), also delivered in a Pauline Epistles session at last year's Annual SBL meeting, I challenged the prevailing interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19-22.<sup>3</sup> That text, wherein Paul refers to becoming like a Jew to Jews and *anomos* to the *anomos*, and so on, in order to win everyone to Christ, remains the primary source for understanding Paul to

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<sup>3</sup> Nanos, Mark D. "Paul's Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy 'to Become Everything to Everyone' (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)." In *Interdisciplinary Academic Seminar: New Perspectives on Paul and the Jews*. Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium, 2009 (available at: <http://www.marknanos.com/1Cor9-Leuven-9-4-09.pdf>) (forthcoming conference volume, T&T Clark, 2011).

compromise his norms as a Christ-following Jew, including for the representatives of this newly emerging radical perspective.<sup>4</sup>

Here is a case where those who are non-traditional in their interpretation of Paul are constrained by a traditional translation and interpretation of a passage, so that a Paul supposedly now practicing Judaism does not fit very well on a map of practicing Jews. In my view, it is the exegesis of the passage that instead needs to be reconsidered in view of an emerging and coherent portrayal of a Paul who otherwise can be located on the newly conceptualized map of Judaism, new at least for Pauline scholars. After all, the traditional boundaries for drawing a portrait of Paul depend upon exegetical interpretations of this text that were developed with a different conceptual map of both Judaism and Paul, as well as different contemporary drivers for investigating Paul's viewpoints, and thus different options considered reasonable, or of interest, for exploring the context and meaning of his language.

I also note that there are, in addition to exegetical matters, a number of significant moral and utilitarian considerations that stand in the way of the probability of the traditional interpretation, including some that I would expect to concern even the advocates of more traditional portrayals of Paul, and for that matter, of Judaism. For example, the deceitful behavior that is posited in the traditional interpretation, wherein Paul alters his outward halakhic conduct to mimic the behavior of different groups in order to reach them, but does not actually "become like" them in terms of sharing their convictions about the meaning of that behavior, would have been, first of all, unethical, because it would *misrepresent* that which he seeks to persuade people to become members of (i.e., it is a bait a switch tactic that brings people into something other than what it was represented by its spokesperson to be). It would also be ineffective, because this duplicity would be soon recognized for what it is by those whose behavior he had earlier merely mimicked, but now is understood to abandon; in other words, he would be recognized as a hypocrite, one who did not share their convictions, but merely pretended to do so. Moreover, anyone actually persuaded to subscribe to Paul's ostensible values and norms would find out rather soon thereafter that his behavior among them did not represent the beliefs and lifestyles that they are now instructed to uphold, but rather masked Paul's conviction that these were to be grown out of and discarded as immature

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<sup>4</sup> This is traced in Zetterholm's discussion of the interpreters in the chapter, "Beyond the New Perspective," in *Approaches to Paul*, and in Nanos, "Paul's Relationship to Torah."

and misguided. Later, upon discovering the "truth," they will likely experience confusion, dismay, a kind of spiritual schizophrenia, and perhaps abandon this course as very different, even the opposite of, the one they had been *mised* to embark upon.

How the first audience is imagined by the later interpreter (such as us) to have interpreted Paul's language is predicated upon what the audience is understood (by us) to have thought or known about Paul. If the interpreter supposes that the audience knew Paul to have disregarded halakhic behavior when among his audience (such as the interpreter of Paul since the Church Fathers has portrayed the case to be), or instead to have observed such halakhic behavior (which would be expected if he practiced Judaism as a matter of covenant faithfulness), has a significant impact upon how the interpreter imagines that Paul's Corinthian readers and hearers of the letter would have filled in the gaps that emerge in the terse language of 9:19-22. I find upon exploring this text anew, with a new set of working hypotheses and a new map on which to explore them, that this text infers Paul was not likely describing halakhic behavioral adaptability, as usually supposed, but instead that he was describing his argumentative strategy, how he adapted to each audience *rhetorically*. I believe that his audience, if they knew him to be committed to a Torah defined lifestyle, would have logically deduced the meaning of his language in this rhetorical-oriented direction.

Note that Paul does not literally write that he "behaves" like those whom he seeks to reach, and the verb must be supplied; interestingly enough, even those who write "behaves like" do not mean that Paul actually behaves like them, but merely that he seems to do so when among them; i.e., they mean that he "occasionally mimics" their outward behavior. The verb is missing that would be required to explicitly signal that he meant for chameleon-like lifestyle adaptability to be inferred by his addressees. What Paul describes, I submit, is how he appeals rhetorically to each different cultural group from within their own cultural premises.

Acts 17 provides examples that describe what I propose Paul seeks to communicate about his strategy in 1 Cor 9, regardless of the historicity of the account in Acts. In the case of arriving at a synagogue in Thessaloniki, Paul goes to the Jews and argues from Jewish premises, namely, Scripture. Later, upon his arrival in Athens, when he is among the non-Jewish philosophers, he argues from the premises of worshippers of other gods. He does this based upon noticing their statue "to an unknown god," for which he initially (ostensibly) complements them for demonstrating religious sensibilities. But he does not express worship

at this statue. In both cases, he seeks to bring his two very different audiences to the same conclusion, but he works rhetorically to adapt his presentation to their very different cultural worldviews. Neither case suggests that he behaved differently among them on the traditional terms, that he adopted outward Torah-defined conduct in one case, and outward idolatrous conduct in the other.

Similar examples of this kind of "Socratic" approach to persuasion can be provided from many angles, Jewish and non-Jewish. One very interesting parallel case is argued for Odysseus by Antisthenes, a student of Aristotle and a hero of the Cynics. A tradition of interpretation traced to Antisthenes maintained that Homer's description of Odysseus as a *polytropic* man was not to communicate that he adopted deceitful behavior to persuade, as would one who compromises the means of moral integrity in the pursuit of utilitarian ends. Instead, Odysseus varied and adapted his *speech* to the cultures and premises of his audiences, just as did the famously, morally consistent philosopher, Pythagoras, and as should anyone but a fool.

It simply makes sense to test the theory that Paul would logically remain a practicing Jew if his message is represented to answer the hopes of Jews, but also that he remains a practicing Jew among non-Jews for the same reason, because he seeks to persuade them to a Jewish cultural way of thinking about who they are and who they should become in view of the case he seeks to make about a Jew who has died but still lives. It thus makes sense to explore approaches to his texts with the assumption that his non-Jewish target audiences know him to practice Judaism, as well as to be enculturating them into Judaism, into living (as non-Jews) according to the Jewish communal way of life,<sup>5</sup> which will lead to exploring very different exegetical options for translating and interpreting each passage.

It awaits to be seen whether this reading of 1 Cor 9 will prove persuasive enough to convince my fellow Radicals to reconsider the conclusion that Paul himself abandons a Jewish lifestyle as a sacrifice necessary to his mission, although upholding in principle that Jews in-

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<sup>5</sup> "Judaizing" them, if you prefer, in the sense of adopting behavior, but not in the sense of undertaking proselyte conversion. I prefer to stay away from this terminology, both because of its traditional usage to refer to those whom Paul is supposed to oppose as "Judaizers" (which is grammatically mistaken and ideologically charged), and because it can refer to both cultural adaptation of Jewish behavior as well as to undertaking the status transformation rite of proselyte conversion; thus it creates confusion rather than clarity.

Christ should not follow that path, much less anyone else. But this is an example of what I want to communicate today; namely, that the development of new readings of Paul is directly related to the development of and experimentation with new hypotheses about what is probable for the meaning of Paul's texts on a first-century map of Judaism (which includes of course its Greco-Roman context), rather than apart from it, in spite of it, or in opposition to it. This applies to the reevaluation of the conceptualization of Paul's audiences as well as of Paul.

The rereading of this passage in 1 Corinthians does not stand alone, and when combined with other research I have undertaken to date, along with that of several others, including fellow panelists, the results suggest the viability of pursuing a new construction of Paul as a Torah-observant Jew. I have found that Paul's audiences appear to know him to eat halakhically, based on exegesis of Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8--10, and Galatians 2.<sup>6</sup> He is not combating "judaizing" in Galatia or Philippi, I maintain, but seeking instead to bring his communities into more Jewish ways of seeing the world.<sup>7</sup> In 1 Corinthians and Galatians, he marks time by a Jewish calendar and expects his audiences to do the same, indeed, in contrast to returning to an idolatrous one (1 Cor 5:7-8; 16:8; Gal 4:8-10).<sup>8</sup> He collects gifts from the nations to bring to Jerusalem. The focal point of his theological proposition against the proselyte conversion of Christ-following non-Jews and thus for the continued role of ethnic differentiation within the *ekklēsia*--*but not* the present age discrimination that usually accompanies it--he makes based on an appeal to the ideals of the Shema' Israel and the dawning of the promised age to come (Rom 3:29-31).<sup>9</sup> For the sake of time, I cannot list other

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<sup>6</sup> Summarized, with relevant references to the various published essays and monographs, in "The Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009): 1-21.

<sup>7</sup> Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?" *BibInt* 17 (2009): 448-482; [add my paper for this conf. on Phil 3.....]

<sup>8</sup> Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 267-71.

<sup>9</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 179-92; Idem, "Paul and the Jewish Tradition: The Ideology of the Shema," in *Celebrating Paul. Festschrift in Honor of J. A. Fitzmyer and J. Murphy-O'Connor*, edited by Peter Spitaler (Washington D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, forthcoming 2011; paper available at: <http://www.marknanos.com/Paul-Shema-10-27-08.pdf>).

indications of Paul's commitment to a Torah-defined lifestyle that have also emerged in the research I have undertaken to date, as well as in the research of several colleagues.<sup>10</sup>

### **Qualifying Paul's Rhetoric: "...For Christ-following Non-Jews"**

One of the characteristics that leads Zetterholm to group together (this anything but formal grouping of) Radical New Perspective interpreters,<sup>11</sup> is their shared functional emphasis on the categorical difference that results from interpreting Paul's texts by attending to his implicit when not explicit audience, non-Jews. They thus maintain a salient difference should be expected to arise between what Paul writes to non-Jews and what he probably upholds to apply to Jews, to whom he does not write, and about whom, for that matter, he seldom directly refers.

These interpreters draw a sharp distinction between the reasons that Paul dissuades non-Jews who are Christ-followers from undertaking proselyte conversion (symbolized in Paul's letters by the metonym "circumcision"), and his probable view of the role of circumcision for Jews who are Christ-followers, including for himself, if he should have sons. In contrast to non-Jews, it is probable Paul maintained that Jews should continue to practice infant circumcision of their children, that is, that all Jews should practice Torah as a matter of covenant fidelity, for they are Israelites and remain within the Mosaic covenant.

1 Cor 7:17-24 and Romans 9--11 are major texts to which interpreters taking this course point, and there are a number of other texts where explicitly or implicitly this makes sense of Paul's views on Jews in-Christ remaining different from non-Jews in-Christ, for Jews continue to be, by definition (as Jews and Israelites), under the Mosaic Covenant, that is, responsible to

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g., Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Real Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 232-52.

<sup>11</sup> This does not represent a formal agreement among the Radicals as if there is some confession for admission; it is not a formal group; but this is a shared trait among those whom Zetterholm grouped together in his chapter and labeled Radicals. Note also that the Radicals described by Zetterholm, to whom I am here referring, may be different from those participating on this panel or in this discussion of Paul and Judaism, and may not share this or any other view. We have simply agreed in this section to begin our discussion from the perspective that Paul is practicing Judaism (which we should remain open to finding out to be mistaken), and then to seek to define what that means and the explore the implications, instead of with the question of whether he is practicing Judaism.



uphold all of Torah (e.g., this is the logic at work in Paul's argument against non-Jews undertaking circumcision if they do not understand this concomitant obligation in Gal 5:3, since they know Paul to be circumcised, and thus he would have to logically be upholding all of Torah to make this case). As I have discussed, this largely shared viewpoint is punctuated by a caveat for most of the Radicals, namely, that Paul, although a Jew himself, behaved otherwise (perhaps in the sense of being willing to suffer this sacrifice), as an exception to the rule, because of his mission to the nations.

One of the important implications of this methodological consistency arises because Paul's letters are approached as specifically addressing non-Jews and their concerns, or his concerns about them, instead of addressing Jews and their concerns directly (of course, indirectly, it is the concerns of Jews, most specifically of the Jew Paul, that are at issue, although directly about how non-Jews are to think and behave because these non-Jews have joined Jews in a shared Jewish communal way of life). That makes Paul's letters very unique evidence from which to work when discussing a first-century Jewish map. Why? Because virtually all of the other Jewish literature with which to compare Paul and his ideas and behavior is addressed to fellow Jews (sans Josephus), or is about Jews.<sup>12</sup> As simple as this insight may be, its significance for the enterprise of locating Paul on the map of first-century Judaism can hardly be emphasized enough.

It is amazing to recognize how the notion that everything Paul writes represents a universal statement equally applicable to Christ-following Jews and non-Jews continues to govern most interpretive conclusions about Paul even among New Perspective interpreters of Paul, although it is widely recognized to be a categorical error, at least when discussions focus on the matter of methodology instead of interpreting a particular Pauline text. But it is a most fundamental issue to apply this methodology consistently to the reading of Paul and the

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<sup>12</sup> In the case of Josephus, who does address non-Jews in his histories, it is still different than Paul, and in an instructive way (and not simply that Paul writes letters, not histories). Josephus seeks to inform non-Jews mostly about how Jews think and behave in the midst of non-Jews, a minority people within the non-Jewish culture of the Roman empire, rather than instruction about how non-Jews should think and behave, except to modify their views about Jews after the anomalous behavior that gave rise to the Revolt against Rome. Paul, instead, seeks to inform non-Jews how they fit, or should fit, into the Jewish minority groups into which they chosen to belong, and these are non-Jews whom Paul sees himself responsible to instruct as their leader, usually as the founder of their community.

matter of how he fits upon a first-century map of the practice of Judaism, or does not do so. A brief review of a few very influential interpreters involved in redrawing the map of Judaism as well as constructing Paul will demonstrate how important this simple matter is, and thus, I hope, why I think the influence of its implications has not yet been recognized as it should be for constructing Paul and locating him on the map of first-century Judaism.

E. P. Sanders is one of the most informed and talented interpreters of Judaism as well as Paul, thus making his construction of Paul as well as construction of the map of Judaism highly relevant to this discussion. As is well known, his work along with that of Krister Stendahl and a few others, inspired the development of the so-called New Perspective on Paul. Few can claim to know more about either the topics of Paul or Judaism. Nevertheless, when Sanders discusses Paul's soteriology, he compares "how *one* [or: "a man"] gains righteousness" in Paul's religious system to that of so-called Palestinian Judaism.<sup>13</sup> Guess what? Paul's view is found to be very different than that of the rabbis. How could it be otherwise?

That way of framing the comparison, in universal terms of gaining righteousness as if it was the same for *everyone*, is neither the topic of the rabbis' discussions, nor of Paul's. They both conceptualized the issues in terms of Jews or non-Jews, and thus, differently. The topic of gaining righteousness requires a more ethno-religious formulation to make sense of the views of either party, whether to compare or contrast the results. As Sanders knows better than most, the rabbis are usually discussing how *Jews* are to behave righteously, whereas Paul is usually if not always discussing how *non-Jews* are to behave righteously, *and sometimes*, how non-Jews *are to join* Jews in the family of the righteous ones. It is only in this latter case that we should expect to find soteriology arising in the terms that this category usually bespeaks when discussing Paul.<sup>14</sup>

This point is in fact a central feature of Sanders' own arguments elsewhere regarding the difference between getting in and staying in. What this means for Jews and for non-Jews is,

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<sup>13</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 12 (emphasis added); "when a man" on 75.

<sup>14</sup> When Sanders does look specifically at rabbinic texts regarding the question of the inclusion of *non-Jews* as righteous ones both in this age and in the age to come, he clarifies that unlike the literature addressing the members of the covenant from which he develops the notion of covenantal nomism, "the Gentiles are dealt with only sporadically, however, and different Rabbis had different opinions about their destiny" (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 207).

however, very different. For non-Jews, the issue should be restated something like this: How does *one not born Jewish and thus not within the covenant get into and thereafter stay in* covenant standing among the righteous ones (i.e., that is, among those who are born Jewish, also known as Israelites, children of Abraham, people of God)? For Jews, it should instead run something like this: How does *one born and raised Jewish, that is, within the covenant, stay in or regain* covenant blessings among the righteous ones.

The problem of universalizing the portrayal of Paul and finding thereby that it does not parallel the portrayal of Judaism also arises when Sanders' writes about Paul's view against Christ-followers undertaking circumcision: "In the surviving literature he [Paul] treats circumcision both as rejection of Christ and as indifferent (Gal 5.1-4; 6.15; 1 Cor 7.19)."<sup>15</sup> When Sanders makes this statement he is not involved in developing a full exposition of Paul, but the point is important precisely because he is engaged in a comprehensive construction of the map of Judaism, and this case is mentioned to show how Paul does not fit on this map with respect to his views on circumcision. But Paul is discussing a specific case. He seeks to argue that circumcision cannot be undertaken by adult, non-Jewish men who have already gained their standing as righteous ones through turning to God in Christ. Why? Because if they now would seek to "*get in*" by becoming proselytes they *would be logically denying* that they have already *gained* that standing.

Why Paul thinks that non-Jews must remain non-Jews in Christ is another matter, but the logic he applies leads also to the position that Jews who turn to Christ must remain Jews. Thus for Jews in-Christ, who are already circumcised, Paul's argument makes no sense, and does not apply. In short, it is a category error of significance to conflate Paul's position on Christ-following non-Jews with Paul's view of circumcision in general, universal terms, especially regarding the circumcision of sons born to Jews, Christ-followers or not, and then compare that conclusion to the views of other Jewish groups when discussing Jews, not non-Jews.

One of the few discussions of the circumcision of non-Jews in Jewish literature arises in 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

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<sup>15</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law From Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1990), 283.

(Judean) way of life. Two Jewish informants, Ananias and Eleazer, strongly disagree about whether Izates should become circumcised or not. This case, interestingly enough, takes place within a Diaspora setting during Paul's period (*Ant.* 20.15-96).

Ananias not only emphatically opposes the circumcision of Izates, he proposes that Izates's resolve to practice the Jewish life completely represents a way of worshiping God that is *more highly valued* than circumcision (20.38-42). I have not noticed any scholars conclude that Ananias's teaching against the circumcision of Izates means that Ananias should be seen as a "former" or even an "anomalous" Jew,<sup>16</sup> or one who no longer observes Torah, or that this implies that he was against circumcision per se; that is, that his policy for a non-Jew should be universalized to represent him to be opposed to the circumcision of Jewish infant males. Rather, the boundaries of the conceptual map of Judaism are expanded to encompass the breadth that such otherwise seemingly unique Jewish views require because they are obviously examples upon the Jewish map, in part because of the unusual contextual nature of the case.<sup>17</sup> This case is widely recognized to deal with the topic of the conversion of a non-Jew, and even more specifically, of a non-Jew who is the ruler of a foreign land.<sup>18</sup> Should not similar sensibilities be applied to most if not all of the language about circumcision, and the related topics that arise in Paul's letters?

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 applications of Jewish Scripture and tradition to the situation of this non-Jew, even more interestingly, of this king of a non-Jewish nation. Both Jews and advocates of Judaism find something wrong with the solution proposed by the other.

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<sup>16</sup> The viewpoint of Paul adopted by John M. G. Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?" *JSNT* 60 (1995): 89-120, who concludes that Paul is the only one who does not recognize that he is in effect an apostate.

<sup>17</sup> As a case in point, on p. 22, note a, in the Loeb volume of Josephus, *Ant.* 20, edited and translated by Louis Feldman, a possible rabbinic parallel (no less!) is provided, 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.

<sup>18</sup> Note too that there is no Jewish communal life, at least the presence of Jews besides these two, to explain the interest of Izates or his mother and her entourage in the practice of Judaism.

In other words, it is the interpreter's definitions of Judaism that are challenged by this case: one must find a way to explain this example within the boundaries of Judaism, rather than suppose that one or the other participant stood outside of it, or found something wrong with or in Judaism itself, unlike the framework applied to the interpretation of Paul. That proceeds from the assumption that Paul must find something wrong with Judaism itself, albeit variously defined, rather than simply to find something wrong with other Jewish interpreters and interpretations of how to properly observe the ideals and norms of Judaism. This brings up a related example I want to touch on briefly to demonstrate just how differently Paul continues to be approached by his most well known interpreters when discussing the case of non-Jews, in contrast to how Jews discussing non-Jews, or even rival fellow Jews, are discussed.

In an article focusing on the need to consider the *intra*-Jewish context of some of Paul's polemic, especially in Galatians, James Dunn nevertheless makes a move that obscures rather than develops the promise of this important contextual consideration. Dunn's language shifts when discussing Jewish groups other than Christ-following ones, such as exemplified by the Dead Sea Scroll community's conflicts with other Jewish groups. These Jews are understood to fight with each other over "the *correct* and only *legitimate* enactment of what the Torah laid down at these points," in other words, their arguments, even polemics, represent different views among those who practice Judaism about *how to properly interpret Torah* on the matter at hand.<sup>19</sup> When the discussion turns, however, to disputes within (*intra*) or between (*inter*) groups of Christ-believers, or between them and other Jewish groups, Dunn conceptualizes the issues for Paul very differently, at least his choice of language suggests that to be the case. Then the topic of their disagreements is instead about "the *extent* and *detail* of Torah obligation." In other words, the tension between Paul and others arises around the question of *how much* or *even if* Torah applies.

However, if Paul is understood to speak from within Judaism, 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

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<sup>19</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *JBL* 112.3 (1993): 459-77 (467); emphasis added.

his time.<sup>20</sup> Each would be expected to argue their cases from Torah, and not in terms of whether Torah applied, or to what degree it applied. The focus would remain on the intra-Jewish nature of Paul's polemic, as indicated in the title of the essay, and not slip into a perspective that is shaped by the notion that Paul is doing something other than Judaism, trying to decide how much Torah applies to a case, or even more distantly, whether Torah applies.

To wrap up this point, I submit that we consider training ourselves to add a contextual tag onto virtually every statement we make about Paul's standing on these kinds of matters. Usually it should be something like, "... *for Christ-following non-Jews*," although occasionally it will need to specify some other group identity, depending upon the referents of Paul's argument, such as, "*for non-Christ-following Jews*," and so on. Moreover, while hardly making for elegant or punchy writing, it would be useful to also signal regularly that we are talking about a social context within subgroups of the Jewish communities, i.e., to state that this is Paul's view on a topic, by adding: "*for Christ-following non-Jews who are participating in Jewish communal life*." If we practice the same discipline, *mutatis mutandis*, when evaluating any one else's statement to which we seek to compare or contrast Paul, then perhaps a good deal of the traditional portrayal of Paul as an apostate or an anomalous figure in terms of the Jewish map will be undermined in fairly simple terms. The rest of the task, to actually engage in the exploration of Paul's texts with new hypotheses instead of the traditional paradigms constraining the options beforehand, is much more challenging.

### **Ideological Resistance to Locating Paul on the Map of Judaism**

That task of interpreting Paul is governed not only by the way that the traditional interpretation of him functions for Christian scholars who internalize his voice to guide their own lives, that is, who can be identified ideologically as Paulinists. It is also shaped by the interests of Christian and Jewish scholars who may not look to Paul's voice as instructive, but rather, with distance, maybe to contrast the values they themselves uphold, perhaps viewing him with dislike if not disdain. They may instead see Paul's ideology as undesirable, or worse. For them, Paul becomes a site for othering Christianity (or certain aspects of Christianity, or

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<sup>20</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity," *NTS* 45 (1999): 174-93, tellingly concludes that Paul would not have understood himself to be practicing Judaism (192).

rival Christian groups) at the points where its values are derived from Paul. Paul can function as an example in contrast to Jesus, or to some other figure celebrated for values with which the traditional portrayal of Paul is easy to contrast as inferior. Who wishes to surrender such an easy target? Certainly not most Jews, who, in general, are quite pleased to have this *shlumiel*, this "misfit" on any map of Judaism at best, based on the very traits for which he is traditionally celebrated by Christians (or rival Christian groups). How convenient. Judaism (or one's own Christian group) is not Pauline Christianity, and Pauline Christianity is not Judaism (or one's own Christian group); nice and simple. Who would want to mess with that?

Perhaps it would be worth considering because it might not have been the case historically (which we should be committed to getting as right as we can, which is a value that those who hold to a high view of Scripture would be expected to embrace over a traditional interpretation that may be undermined thereby)? Moreover, the traditional portrayal of Paul against Judaism has not led to very satisfactory results for relations between Christians and Jews, or even among Christians over the years (for whom reference to Christian rivals as Jews or Judaizers, based on conceptualizations of Paul's polemical targets, often represents the ultimate charge). To this day, the traditional portrayal of Paul continues to constrain developments in Christian-Jewish dialogue: it is a place where differences and historical animosity become the focus rather than similarities and the potential for mutual respect based upon, instead of in spite of, the voice of Paul. The many differences, certainly not those that have emerged in these two religious systems over two millennia, need not and should not be surrendered to engage in careful historical investigation.

The historical Paul's views, regardless of how they are interpreted, will not be shared by everyone, certainly not by those who do not share his convictions about Jesus Christ, such as myself. However, I submit that the gains made in the direction of interpreting Paul within Judaism will offset the losses for both the Christian and Jewish communities as well as between rival Christian groups (and especially between Catholics and Protestants), albeit not without the need to surrender some well-worn paths of othering, along with a few clever clichés.

I have time to take up only one example, from the Jewish side of this resistance, since that is from where I approach Paul. Similar resistance, including different kinds of it, can be traced in other Jewish interpreters as well as in a variety of Christian interpreters of Paul.

Amy-Jill Levine's treatment of Jesus as a misunderstood Jew serves as a poignant example of the prevailing approach to Paul in Jewish scholarship.<sup>21</sup> For her, it is clearly Paul who shares a good deal of the blame for Christianity failing to fit on a map of Judaism in the way that Jesus himself can so easily be seen to exemplify. It is Paul who misunderstood Jesus, and subsequently, those who are influenced by Paul.

This approach to Paul is not Levine's invention by any means, but has become a prevailing approach to Paul among Jews, and many Christians too, since the reclamation of Jesus as a Jewish figure beginning in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> This Paul is not only an apostate from Judaism, he is its enemy, even when making his ostensibly most charitable comments about Jews in Romans 11. For example, Levine criticizes Paul for writing of his fellow Jews that they are "enemies of God" in the midst of a passage where Paul is instead often celebrated in Christian-Jewish dialogue (v. 28).<sup>23</sup> I could not agree more--if that was what we knew Paul to communicate. But we do not. Instead, there are no Greek manuscripts that include "of God" in this sentence.

Of course we all at times work from translations, especially when we dip into a topic, but in this case it is the foundation of a very important contrast the author wants to stress. Is this not a case where the *traditional construction* of Paul as anti-Jewish should be challenged, rather than Paul himself? Isn't this a chance to chastise the translators of major versions such as the NRSV for choosing to include this horrific, misleading language without manuscript evidence, and in plain contrast to the spirit of Paul's argument? Is it not the ideology of Paulinism instead of Paul that should be the focus of her critique? In other words, is it not Paul who should be described here as "misunderstood"?!

Returning to the exegetical case, there are additional reasons to question the interpretive tradition's *misunderstanding* of Paul, rather than perpetuating it, and all the more importantly, doing so in contrast to understand Jesus. The word translated here as enemies is an adjective, set in direct contrast to God's disposition to them remaining to those who are

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<sup>21</sup> Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Daniel R. Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional View of Paul' and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics," *JSNT* 28, no. 1 (2005): 69-104.

<sup>23</sup> Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew*, 83-84, 218.



nevertheless "beloved," so that "alienated" would probably be a better translation equivalent. That would be in keeping with what Paul has been describing about the temporary state of stumbling over the declaration of Christ to the nations in the arguments leading up to this phrase. This state is further qualified as "for your sake," set in contrast to their continued covenant standing nevertheless, "for the sake of the fathers." It should not go overlooked that, at the heart of his argument, Paul analogizes the temporary suffering of his fellow Jews to the vicarious suffering of Jesus: it is on behalf of themselves that God has created this precarious, albeit temporary role for those Jews who do not "yet" share their loyalty to Jesus as Christ (Messiah).

In this approach, it remains clear that it is important to Paul to communicate to these non-Jews that the present, temporary, non-persuaded state of many of his fellow Jews is to be seen sympathetically (albeit patronizingly, at best, from the perspective of those who are being discussed). In the verses that follow (vv. 30-32), the call for sympathy becomes an argument for empathy, since these non-Jews had also previously been non-persuaded (of the One God rather than other gods). But that development is masked in the prevailing interpretations of Paul's language. Although Paul's argument works around the topic of *apeitheia*, which signifies a state of being "unpersuaded," these cognates are instead translated in Bibles today as if Paul had written "disobedience." That translation decision suggests that the "truth" was known and rejected, rather than representing a truth claim of which they had not "yet" been convinced--while the more literal approach would allow room for Paul and his audience to respect that one should not confess what they do not believe to be true, that such a decision would be unfaithful to what they have been persuaded of by God to date.

In other words, these non-Jews are being challenged, rather insultingly, not to think in the judgmental terms he fears that they are tempted to indulge. These Jews remain in the covenant, regardless of their temporary dissonant state, for they are "beloved for the sake of the fathers" with whom God made promises, promises which Paul is certain God will never turn away from fulfilling (vv. 28-29). But that message has been misrepresented in the translation, leaving Paul misunderstood by Levine, and now by her readers too.

Moreover, by choosing to consider a new exegetical stroke for constructing a portrayal of Paul, if you will, it is not hard to subvert two other examples Levine brings forth in order to show just how far Paul is from serving as an example from which better Christian-Jewish

relations can hope to proceed. These examples are that Paul refers to his fellow Jews as "*broken off*" branches and "*hardened*."

In recent work on Romans 11, I have found reason to challenge the traditional translation of Paul's reference to branches as "*broken off*" in his tree allegory, since the Greek can be understood to be describing broken branches in the sense of *bent*. Similarly, instead of "*hardened*" Israelites, the Greek word here, *pōrōsis*, refers to growing a *callus*, and is not the same word used to refer to Pharaoh's heart, which is *sklēros*. Callusing is a positive, temporary development in plants and animals to provide protection for a harmed part until healing (i.e., restoration or salvation) can be accomplished.<sup>24</sup>

This is not the venue for discussing the details, but the cases have been made. The suggested translation and interpretive options are more in keeping with the overall flow of Paul's argument, that is, that something temporary is going on among Israelites that might not be self-evident to the non-Israelites to whom he writes. Paul states that his rhetorical intent in this argument is specifically not to disqualify his fellow Jews from continued covenant standing, but to challenge any temptation these non-Jews might entertain to think in such negative, self-serving terms. It seems to follow, then, that the interpreter of Paul should explore every translation and interpretive option that develops rather than obscures that message. Where inconsistency in Paul's argument seems to arise, there is need to examine just what that might suggest, perhaps even how it might subvert Paul's otherwise stated objectives, perhaps betraying a different perspective for him than what he wishes to project.

In short, there are options to explore to put Paul on the map of Judaism, for one who wishes to explore them, rather than keeping him where he has long been, absent from and opposed to Judaism. Engaging in this pursuit, or not, represents a choice.

## Final Remarks

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<sup>24</sup> Mark D. Nanos, "Broken Branches!: A Pauline Metaphor Gone Awry? (Romans 11:11-36)," pages 339-76 in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9--11*, edited by Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); idem, "'Callused,' Not 'Hardened': Paul's Revelation of Temporary Protection Until All Israel Can Be Healed," pages 52-73 in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation*, edited by Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

In true conflict theory terms, I have focused my criticisms on representatives of the so-called new perspective and radical new perspective, as well as a fellow Jewish interpreter: it is these conversation partners whom I want to challenge to thoroughly reconsider the evidence for constructing Paul from within Judaism. I sincerely hope that I have not thereby alienated them. Of course, I would like those who represent more traditional views of Paul to be challenged to reconsider the choices necessary to their constructions of Paul, and the purposes that construction continues to serve.

Regardless of whether we share Paul's point of view or not, I propose that we should consider plotting Paul on the map of Judaism now drawn by experts as a Torah observant Jew who seeks to bring the nations into a relationship with the God of the Jews as the One God of all humankind. That decision was based on his conviction that in Jesus Christ the end of the ages has dawned, making it now the proper time for a mission to reconcile those from the nations to their Creator. And the demonstration of this proposition, utopian as it may be in the midst of the still present evil age and its constraints, is nowhere more importantly made manifest than in the gathering of the people of Israel and those from the rest of the nations--remaining different, yet equal in standing--to worship the One God of all. It is in pursuit of this goal that Paul believed the Spirit of the age to come is made manifest among them. Moreover, this communal way of life was a part of his strategy for convincing his fellow Jews that the awaited age has arrived, which will follow when they witness those from the nations turning from other gods and sinfulness to the One God and righteousness in response to the preaching of a Jewish messianic figure. They will then join Paul in proclaiming this news. For this ideal to be realized, Paul and his associates believed that they needed to bring the members of the nations into the way of life that takes place within the Jewish communities wherever they are located. In other words, Paul thus sought to found Jewish subgroup communities that practiced Judaism.

If Paul was responsible for founding Jewish communities, albeit populated with some if not mainly non-Jews, and if he was insisting that they remain non-Jews in order to represent the proposition that the awaited day has arrived when all of the nations, and not just Israel, would worship the one God, but, nevertheless, if at the same time he also instructed these non-Israelites to take up the Jewish communal way of life within the constraints of the present age--then he would be beholden to them thereafter to help them navigate the complex and often

unpleasant outcomes that result from committing themselves to upholding this propositional truth claim. Their patron, Paul, would need to help them negotiate the impractical implications and concomitant suffering that would ensue. This would arise from among the members of the larger Jewish communities who did not share their convictions or accept their appeals to the meaning of a crucified Judean to legitimate such claims. And it would come, all the more so probably, from their fellow non-Jewish family members, neighbors, and civic leaders for their withdrawal from familial and civic cult activities, as if they had become Jews; but not having done so, this behavior represents not only disrespect and the prospect of negative social consequences for everyone, but a threat to the gods, and thus to everyone's best interests on many levels. At the same time, he would need to instruct them how to live faithful to the proposition to which they are committed, and encourage them to do so in spite of the present obstacles and the very different way that things might appear to be. Not surprisingly, these are just the elements we encounter in Paul's extant correspondence.<sup>25</sup>

Should we not at least experiment with this approach, or those advanced by my fellow panelists and others seeking to read Paul from within Judaism, and measure the results? Then we will be, I submit, in a better position to judge "how"--instead of only "whether"--Paul can be best located on a map of first-century Judaism.

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<sup>25</sup> This is especially the topic I undertake in *Irony of Galatians*, 203-83.