

# Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History

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## How Later Contexts Affect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect is the Mother of Anachronism

*Paula Fredriksen*

Historians look backwards. We all start from our vantage point in the present and work ourselves into an imagined past. But though history is always done backward, life is lived only forward: we all move from our present into the radical unknowability of the future. If in our historical work we want to reconstruct the experiences and circumstances of the ancient people whom we study, we must forswear our retrospective knowledge, because it gives us a perspective on their lives that they themselves could not possibly have had. We, looking back, know how their stories ended; they, living their lives, did not.

All historians, I imagine, struggle with this problem. As an historian of Christian origins, however, I am particularly aware of the long shadows cast backward by events and by patterns of thought or of behavior that fell well after the lifetimes of Jesus, the original apostles, and Paul, and that persistently obscure our view of the movement in its earliest, most Jewish,<sup>1</sup> most radioactively apocalyptic stage. In the present essay, I would like to consider five of these historiographically well-established, historically baneful occasions for retrospection – thus, retrojection – that affect (and to my mind compromise) our interpretations of the mission and message of the apostle Paul. They are founded upon events and/or circumstances that either post-date his lifetime or, if contemporary, are made to carry later theological freight. These are:

1. The cultural and religious difference and distance between Jews of the western diaspora and their gentile contemporaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Current academic usage seesaws between translating *Ioudaioi* as 'Jews' or as 'Judaean'. The arguments to either side make good points, and the current essay does emphasize, for *Ioudaioi*, ethnicity and ancestral practice (as opposed to 'religion'). For an overview of the issues and arguments, Miller, 'Meaning of Ioudaios', and 'Ethnicity Comes of Age'; for the 'Judean' argument, see, e.g., Mason, 'Jews, Judaeans'; also Esler, *Conflict*, 62–74. Against this usage, and advocating for the translation 'Jews', Runesson, 'Inventing Christian Identity', 64–70. I see Mason's points, but find myself persuaded by Runesson's arguments. See too Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 11–15.

2. The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.
3. Gentile Christianity's (or gentile Christianities') foreswearing the Jewish observance of Jewish ancestral custom ('the works of the Law').
4. Paul's both giving and getting synagogue disciplinary punishment in consequence of the early *euangelion*.
5. Majority culture's aggressive repudiation of the church (i.e., the Roman persecution of Christianity).

The various misreadings and false descriptions occasioned by instances of unwitting anachronism are all inter-related. To unpack them, I will initially consider each of my five points separately. In my conclusion, I will make some interpretive proposals for how we might proceed to reconstruct an apostle more at home in his own circumstances than in ours.

### 1. Jews and Pagans in the Western Diaspora

The Jewish community in Babylonia was the product of an exile, the defeat of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. No such exile stood behind the western diaspora. Jews there had resettled voluntarily, pulled in part by the Macedonian diaspora occasioned by Alexander's victories. These Mediterranean Jews in time came to view their diaspora communities as *apoikiai* of the *metropolis* (*mater-polis*), Jerusalem; their cities of residence, however, they viewed as their *patria* and home.<sup>2</sup> Greek, the English of antiquity, became their vernacular; the gods of the *ethnê* no less than the *ethnê* themselves, their neighbors.

How did all these neighbors get along? The humans could be factious. Urban unrest in Alexandria notoriously took the form of inter-ethnic violence. Cities in Asia, in the decades of Rome's bumpy transition from Republic to Empire, sometimes seized Jewish cash contributions to the Temple in Jerusalem for use in temples and liturgies closer to home. Jews reportedly from time to time were expelled from the city of Rome. Pagan ethnographers and Latin satirists complained of Jewish separateness (*amixia*) and of their being socially aloof

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2 For this *mater/pater* interplay, see Philo, Flacc 46. My summary here draws especially on the work of Barclay, *Jews*; and Gruen, *Heritage and Diaspora*. On Jewish communities in Asia Minor in particular, Ameling, 'Die jüdischen Gemeinden'. Roman Jews in late antiquity were no less attached to their hometowns than their first-century Hellenistic forebears had been. When the Jews of Magona, on Minorca, were faced with the choice of conversion or exile in 418 CE, one of them observed that, 'Whoever does not abandon his *patria* will not be able to retain his *fides patrum*.' Letter of Severus 18.19.

(*akoinônētoi*), of their impiety in refusing to honor the gods of the majority (*asebeia*), and of their 'foreigner-hating lifestyle' (*misoxenos bios* or *misanthrôpia*; cf Tacitus' *adversus omnes alios hostile odium*, 'hostile hatred against all outsiders,' Hist 5.5.1). Taken at face value, this evidence can suggest that in the diaspora, Jews lived as a 'people apart'.<sup>3</sup>

Against this conclusion, however, other data mass, data attesting to pagan gentiles (and eventually to Christian gentiles) voluntarily in Jewish places, and to Jews voluntarily in gentile places.<sup>4</sup> These places are at once 'cultural' (thus, ethnic), 'social,' and 'religious' (thus, again, ethnic). Before 66 CE, whether as tourists or as worshipers, pagans could be found at the Temple in Jerusalem, where the largest courtyard was available to them. And in the diaspora, we have inscriptional and literary evidence both of pagan and, later, of Christian presence in Jewish community structures: such data often refer to these gentiles as 'god-fearers' or as 'Judaizers'. Diaspora Jews, meanwhile, abound in pagan places: in the theatres and in the courts, in town councils and in gymnasia and schools, in the baths and at the races. These Graeco-Roman urban structures were all sites of worship, and their activities were dedicated to the honor of the city's presiding god(s).<sup>5</sup>

3 Josephus discusses the seizure of Jewish sacred funds in Asia Minor in Ant 14. The complaints of the ethnographers and the observations of the satirists are collected in Stern, *GLAJJ*; for analysis of insults, Feldman, *Jews and Gentiles* and Schäfer, *Judeophobia*; see also Isaac, *Racism*, 440–491 (anti-Jewish aspersions) and 492–500 (these insults within the broader context of hostile classical ethnographies). On the expulsions from Rome cf Barclay, *Jews*, 282–319 and Gruen, *Diaspora*, 1–53; also Rutgers, 'Roman Policy', 93–127. Augustine, against Faustus the Manichee, quotes the OT on the Jews as 'a people apart' (*ceterarum gentium communione discreta*). He insists there that Jews were always separated from other peoples and untouched by the worship of foreign gods, Faust 12.13. *Pace* Augustine, I will argue against both descriptions.

4 The following paragraphs condense material laid out in Fredriksen – Irshai, 'Christian anti-Judaism'; also Fredriksen, 'Judaizing the Nations', 235–240. 'Pagan' or 'gentile' is no happier a solution to designate all of these other ethnic groups than is 'Jew' for *Ioudaioi*, but I can think of no better option. 'Polytheist' is too misleading to help, because Jews (and, eventually, Christians) shared the conviction with pagans that many gods exist. See Fredriksen, 'Mandatory Retirement', 241–243 for the full argument, which I synopsise above. All of my own articles cited in the current essay may be found in PDF format on my Boston University web page, [www.bu.edu/religion/faculty/fredriksen](http://www.bu.edu/religion/faculty/fredriksen).

5 Tertullian floridly laments – and thus narrates – the embeddedness of these divinities in urban culture in *de spectaculis* and *de idololatria*, while the near-contemporary Mishna Avoda Zara outlines ways for (rabbinic?) Jews to avoid the idolatrous entanglements of urban living; see Fredriksen – Irshai, 'Include Me Out', against the position taken most recently by Binder, *Tertullianus' De Idololatria*. If we can trust our variegated inscriptional material, however, not

What were all of these people doing? They were publically demonstrating respect for the gods of others and, by extension, respect for that god's people. Some gentiles thought that the Jews' god was a lower, cosmic deity, a *daimon* – his involvement in the organization of the lower material universe, his penchant for blood sacrifices, his patronage of one particular ethnic group, and, especially after 70 CE, his defeat by the gods of Rome all suggested as much<sup>6</sup> – but he was still recognized as powerful. Magicians in particular were partial toward him.<sup>7</sup> Donor plaques and mosaics proclaim the benefactions to the Jewish community of sympathetic pagans.<sup>8</sup> And literary evidence from the first century BCE to the fifth century CE, from gentiles both pagan and Christian, speak to this gentile presence the synagogue.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Jews acknowledged the existence and the power of gods other than their own, and showed respect to them (and, thus, to their humans). The

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all Jews were bothered by such involvement, while later writings – Tertullian's high rhetoric; sermons; church canons – complain of Christian nonchalance. On Jews' showing respect for – but not cult to – foreign gods, Fredriksen, 'Judaizing the Nations', 236f and notes.

- 6 On Jerusalem's fall as the god of Israel's defeat, e.g., M. Felix, Octavius 10.4; cf the Christological explanations offered by Tertullian, Apol 26.3; Origen Cels 4.32. Origen will insist against Celsus that 'the supreme god is called the god of the Hebrews even by people alien to our faith,' 5.50, but a great number of Christians – in particular Valentinians, Marcionites, and Manichaeans – distinguished between the two deities, the high god and the Jewish god. In the late fourth century, Augustine's former mentor Faustus could still identify the Jews' god as a demon, Faust 18.2. On the particular link between blood sacrifices and demons – much exploited in Christian rhetoric *contra Iudaeos*, specifically against the Temple cult – see e.g. Justin, 2 Apol 5; Dial 19, 22, 43, and frequently. The idea that high gods neither need nor want sacrifices, but lower gods do, was originally pagan: thus Porphyry's reference to Theophrastes, On Abst 2.27,1–3.
- 7 For one such recipe, see Papyri Graecae Magicae ll. 3007–3085. Origen notes that the names of the patriarchs are 'so powerful when linked with the name of God that the formula "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob" is used not only by members of the Jewish nation in their prayers to God and when they exorcise demons, but also by almost all those who deal in magic and spells,' Cels 4.33. See further Alexander, 'Jewish Elements'.
- 8 This display of respect might have had as much to do with local intra-human politics as with local divine-human ones: distinguishing between the two motivations is impossible from the evidence. Pagan benefactions to synagogue projects account for a significant portion of our inscriptional data, on which see Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*; also Reynolds – Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-fearers*. Recently, Chaniotis, 'The Jews of Aphrodisias', has redated the inscriptions from the third century to the fourth-fifth, raising the interesting possibility that some of the non-Jewish town councilors mentioned might be Christians as well as pagans.
- 9 Pagan complaints about pagans' frequenting synagogues collected in *GLAJJ*; discussion in Fredriksen – Irshai, 'Christian Anti-Judaism', 985–998. Christian comments on pagan and on Christian 'Judaizing' will be discussed below.



existence of these gods was attested, first of all, in Jewish scriptures, most especially in Psalms. The Septuagint's translators acknowledged these deities with some deference, suggesting that relations with them should be handled gently, when they changed the Hebrew of Exod 22:27, 'Do not revile God,' to the Greek of 22:28 LXX: 'Do not revile the gods' (*tous theous*). Commenting on this passage, Philo of Alexandria salutes its wisdom, since 'reviling each others' gods always causes war' (QE 2.5); and he goes on to note that Jews ought also to respect pagan rulers, 'who are of the same seed as the gods' (2.6).<sup>10</sup> Jews invoked pagan gods on votive plaques and in synagogue manumission inscriptions; they showed respect to them in funding dedicated athletic competitions; they participated in Hellenistic kinship diplomacy by conjuring distant unions between patriarchal families and Greek gods. True, Jews generally seem to have drawn the line at actively participating in public cult but, depending on their roles in their cities, they would have been at least present, showing respect and civility, when such cult was offered. Every time we encounter a Jewish ephebe, a Jewish town councilor, a Jewish soldier or a Jewish actor or a Jewish athlete, we find a Jew identified as a Jew who obviously spent part of his working day demonstrating courtesy to gods not his.<sup>11</sup>

Their own god, Jews nonetheless insisted – despite their equal insistence on their god's ethnicity – was also the supreme god. Such a position stood in tension with the canons of philosophical *paideia*, according to which the highest god was radically transcendent, perfect, unmoving, and certainly above any involvement in matter, time, and change.<sup>12</sup> Educated Hellenistic Jews squared this circle through several strategies. They generated allegorical understandings of their own sacred texts, which cushioned depictions of divine activity. They deployed *angeloi* as the high god's agents, thereby also insulating him

10 See van der Horst, 'Thou Shalt Not Revile', 1–8; further on pagan/Jewish social and, thus, religious interactions idem, 'Judaism in Asia Minor'.

11 The most recent review of Jewish Diaspora acculturation to Hellenism is Bloch, *Moses und der Mythos*. Inscriptional materials are organized and analyzed in Williams, *Jews Among the Greeks and Romans*, and in Levinskaya, *Book of Acts*; also *HJP* 3 *passim*; Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 437–466. On Moschos Ioudaios and his obedience to the gods Amphiaros and Hygieia, *HJP* 3: 65; on Pothros' manumission inscription, Levinskaya, *Book of Acts*, 111–116 (with the full text of the inscription on 239); cf Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 113–123. For Spartan-Judean *suggeneia* established through the union of Heracles with a granddaughter of Abraham's, see Josephus, *Ant* 1:240 and 12:226; 1 Macc 12:21; Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy*, 72–80; Gruen, 'Jewish Perspectives', 361–364.

12 Hence Justin's complaints about – and philosopher's incredulity at – the Jews' insistence that Scripture revealed the activities of the high god, 1 *Apol* 63; cf *Dial* 60. For a comparison of pagan, Jewish, and Christian theological *paideia*, Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 41–78.

from any compromising behavior.<sup>13</sup> Some Jews subordinated pagan gods to their own god by identifying pagan gods with celestial bodies, as did Philo in his commentary on Genesis. The firmament, he says, is ‘the most holy dwelling-place of the manifest and visible gods’ (*theôn emphanôn te kai aisthêtôn*, Opif 7:27): manifest and visible gods are ‘lower’ than the highest, invisible god.<sup>14</sup> And, finally, some Jews subordinated these gods to their own by designating them ‘demons’. ‘The gods of the nations are *daimonia*,’ sang the Psalmist in Greek (Ps 95:5 LXX): a daimon was specifically a lower, cosmic god.<sup>15</sup> Their images, the idols, might be nugatory (1 Cor 8:4, 10:19), but the gods themselves were real (1 Cor 8:5f).<sup>16</sup>

How do these considerations affect how we regard Paul’s cultural context, and thus how we reconstruct his mission and message?

*Paul’s human social world.* First, we should not be taken in by pagan complaints about Jewish ‘separateness’. Learned Graeco-Roman ethnic stereotyp-

13 Hellenistic Judaism employed many divine mediating figures to bridge the gap between God and the world: various angels especially, but also God’s Sophia (‘Wisdom’) and his word (‘Logos’); two books by Segal, *Paul the Convert* and *Two Powers in Heaven*, give good orientations in the relevant material. Justin Martyr was comfortable referring to Christ as God’s *angelos* (Dial 56, 59). Pagans also deployed their cosmic gods as ‘messengers’. The famous Oenoanda inscription presents Apollo speaking of the highest deity (*theos hypsistos*) while referring to himself and to the other lower gods as ‘angels’: ‘Born of itself, without a mother, unshakable, not contained in a name, known by many names, dwelling in fire, this is God. We, his *angeloi* [messengers] are a small part of God ...’ For more on this hexameter hymn and the pagan cult of the highest god, see Mitchell, ‘Cult’; the inscription is given in full on 82.

14 When Paul identifies these gods with cosmic *stoicheia*, he might be making the same move, Gal 4:3–9: these forces are not ‘gods by nature’ (4:8), but subordinate, inferior entities. Synagogue zodiac mosaics similarly represent pagan sidereal divinities, whose very visibility would place them ‘below’ the high (that is, the Jewish) god.

15 Pagan *daimones* could be either good or evil; see Chadwick, on Plutarch and Porphyry, ‘Oracles’; Rives, ‘Human Sacrifice’, 80–83; Kahlos, *Debate*, 172–181. Some Hellenistic Jews (such as the author of Wisdom; also Paul) took *daimones* as exclusively evil, bound up as they were with the worship of images. Cf Augustine’s remark on ‘demons’ as lower [pagan] gods: ‘If the Platonists prefer to call these “gods” rather than “demons”, and to count them among those whom Plato their master writes about as gods created by the highest god, let them say what they want ... for then they say exactly what we say, whichever word they may use for them,’ *De civ Dei* 9.23.

16 Cf Rives, ‘Animal Sacrifice’, below 119 on the derision of the gods of gentiles. I cannot comment on the mentality of Babylonian Jews; but Paul himself, as other Hellenistic Jews, distinguished the gods, who were powerful, from their physical representations.

ing routinely leveled such accusations of anti-social behavior at *all* foreigners.<sup>17</sup> The anti-Jewish material happens to loom especially large in the extant evidence because the later church preserved and amplified so much of it. Often, modern New Testament scholars will repeat these accusations of clannishness and separateness to explain tensions between Christ-following and non-Christ-following Jews (with Paul, pre- and post-Damascus, serving on both sides of the fence), or between James' people and Paul (the famous food fight of Gal 2), or between Jewish and gentile Christ-followers in mixed *ekklêsiai* (as at Antioch or Rome).

But as the rich and variegated remains of Hellenistic Jewish culture, both inscriptional and literary, attest (as do other pagan complaints about fellow pagans who Judaize), Jews participated vigorously in majority culture socially, politically, and intellectually. In many ways, *except for their general demurral regarding public pagan cult* – Jews were *not* all that separate. A high degree of social integration coexisted, for them as for other ethnic groups, with religious – better, ethnic – distinctiveness.

And in the Graeco-Roman city, pagan-Jewish traffic went both ways.<sup>18</sup> The synagogue, a type of ethnic reading-house,<sup>19</sup> was part of the urban landscape,

17 Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, is the definitive study; see also Bohak, 'The Ibis and the Jewish Question', for a comparison of anti-Egyptian and anti-Jewish slurs. Accusations of human sacrifice (another very anti-social behavior) particularly metastasize through various ethnographies, on which Rives, 'Human Sacrifice'.

18 Cf Rives, 'Animal Sacrifice', below 119 n34, who infers from the 'ample evidence for tensions [between Judaeans and people in the Graeco-Roman mainstream] of a sort that are not so easily documented for other groups' that relations were indeed, more often than not, tense. As Isaac both documents and explains, however, Graeco-Roman ethnographic traditions routinely abused all perceived outsiders, often accusing them of the same anti-social behaviors: see his survey of materials on Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and Syrians (*Origins of Racism*, 352–370), on Parthians and Persians (371–380), on Gauls (411–426) and Germans (427–439) as well as on Jews (440–492). And again, anti-Jewish materials loom especially large in the record because they were preserved and amplified by the use that the later church put them to. I would also distinguish between the 'rhetorical gentiles' peopling Jewish anti-pagan writings like Wisdom of Solomon, or the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, and all of this other data, reviewed above, that presents a picture, across centuries, of comfortable social and religious interaction. And while Josephus, in his apology Against Apion, proudly asserts the principled separateness (as well as the social and cultic unanimity!) of late Second Temple Jewish culture, his writings otherwise provide us with abundant evidence to the contrary.

19 Thus Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 13.

not only architecturally (as at Sardis), but socially. Pagan presence in Jewish community activities was voluntary and ad hoc. These interested pagans display a range of behaviors, from occasional drop-ins (such as our magicians, who garble biblical stories when picking up important information in order to invoke the Jewish god in spells) to extravagant patronage (such as Julia Severa's construction of the *oikos* in Acmonia) to co-celebrating the translation of the LXX (Philo, *Life of Moses* 2:41–42) to personally adopting some Jewish ancestral practices (like Juvenal's famous god-fearer, who rests on the Sabbath, *Sat* 14.96).

These people were not half-way 'converts' to Judaism: pagans who crossed that line and who radically affiliated to the Jewish *politeia* were in their own category, occasionally disapproved of by fellow pagans for committing an act of cultural treason.<sup>20</sup> But though some converts to Judaism had probably first been god-fearers, god-fearers as such were not converts.<sup>21</sup> They did *not* renounce their native gods. They associated with Jews *qua* pagans. (Julia Severa was a priestess in the imperial cult; Luke's centurion Cornelius, another synagogue patron, even if fictive, would have been understood to actively worship Rome's gods as part of his position as an army officer; *Acts* 10). And this evidently mutually comfortable social/religious accommodation on the part of the synagogue toward gentiles whether pagan or Christian persisted vigorously (to Commodian's and John Chrysostom's keen regret) well into the post-Constantinian period.<sup>22</sup>

20 For an overview of the older scholarship on pagan conversions to Judaism, see Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles', 535–538 and 110–15. Now see Cohen, *Beginnings*, 140–174; Fredriksen, 'Mandatory Retirement', at 232–237. On conversion as cultural treason, e.g., Celsus' remarks, *Cels* 5.41; cf Domitian's actions against members of the Roman aristocracy for converting, Dio, *Rom Hist* 67.14.1–2; cf Tacitus, *Hist* 5.1–2. Stern thoroughly analyzes Juvenal's jibe in *GLAJJ* 2: 94–107.

21 Cohen, *Beginnings* misidentifies 'god-venerators' (i.e., god-fearers) as ex-idolators 'denying or ignoring all other gods', 171; so too Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 106. On the contrary, god-fearers remained active pagans while adding Israel's god to their particular pantheons.

22 On Christian gentiles in Jewish places, see Fredriksen – Irshai, 'Christian Anti-Judaism', 1005–1007. For Commodian on pagans in synagogues, see below n.83. Chrysostom's infamous sermons of 387, *Against the Judaizers*, catalogue the Jewish practices of John's gentile Christian congregation, who attend synagogue on the Sabbath and the high holy days (1.5; 8.8), go to hear the 'trumpets' (i.e., on Rosh haShanah; 1.5), fast on Yom Kippur (1.2), and join in 'pitching tents' (that is, erecting *sukkot*, 7.1). Wilken notes that John, Theodoret of Cyrus, and the Apostolic Constitutions likewise criticize gentile Christians for frequenting mikvaot: Wilken, *Chrysostom and the Jews*, 75; see too Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 63–66; Stökl Ben Ezra, 'Whose Fast?'

For the first century, then, and especially when we attempt to reconstruct the circumstances of Paul's mission, thus the meaning of his letters, should we not at least ask ourselves: If the Temple accommodated a pagan presence, and if diaspora synagogues routinely accommodated pagan presence and participation in Jewish community activities, then what could possibly be the problem with Christ-following, ex-idolatrous pagans participating in Christ-following Jewish ekklésiai, and in diaspora synagogues more generally?<sup>23</sup> It is a question to which I will return below.

*Paul's cosmic social world.* In antiquity, all gods existed. Part of the evidence for their existence was the humans who worshiped them: in antiquity, gods and humans formed family groups. (True for Jews, designated the 'sons' of their god, as well as for pagans.<sup>24</sup>) Cult was an ethnic designation, and ethnicity was a cultic designation. In short, what we think of as 'religion' ancient people considered inherited 'ancestral custom': *paradosis paterôn, ta patria ethê, mos maiorum, hoi patrioi nomoi*.<sup>25</sup> *Eusebeia* or *pietas*, 'piety', did not measure what we think of as sincerity or strength of 'belief' so much as attentiveness in the execution of these protocols, and for good reason: improper cult made gods angry. Proper cult pleased them, and inclined them to be gracious. So also *pistis* and *fides*: often translated 'belief,' *pistis* indexed conviction, that is, confidence that the ancestral protocols in fact pleased the god; *fides* (often translated 'faith'), an attitude of loyalty to the *mos Romanorum* ('traditional customs of the Romans') and scrupulousness in performing them.

When Paul took his mission *in partibus gentium*, 'to the lands of the gentiles,' then, he encountered these gods as he encountered their people. And since he told their people to stop honoring the gods' images and to cease participating in sacrifices to them, Paul (naturally) got on the gods' bad side. It was a cost of discipleship. These lower cosmic gods, the *archontes tou aiônos toutou*, had crucified the son of Paul's god (1 Cor 2:8); now they persecuted Paul and Paul's Christ-following gentiles, all of whom thereby shared in the sufferings of

23 Such as the situation in Antioch, Gal 2:11–14. Pagans' renouncing cult to their native gods seems to have been the sine qua non of Pauline baptism; I assume (for reasons that I will argue above) that this was equally true for other apostles-to-gentiles in the movement.

24 On Israel as God's 'son', e.g., Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9; also Rom 9:4; on the association of the *ethnê* with their own pantheons, e.g., Mic 4:5. Further on the family connections between peoples, gods and cities, Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy*.

25 As these terms attest, cult was envisaged as a type of family association. Roman adoption (superintended by a *pontifex*) and marriage (e.g., Plutarch, *Moralia* 140D), like Jewish 'conversion', represent the legal creation of fictive kinship bonds, which meant assuming new responsibilities to new god(s) and to new ancestors.

Christ. The *theos tou aiōnos toutou* had blinded the minds of those who refused Paul's message (2 Cor 4:4). The deities formerly worshiped by his congregations in Galatia, he says, are not 'gods by nature' but simply cosmic light-weights, *stoicheia* unworthy of fear or worship (Gal 4:8–9). Such gods in fact are mere *daimonia*, subordinate deities, 'demons,' (1 Cor 10:20f). 'Indeed, there are many *theoi* and many lords,' he tells his Corinthians (8:5–6); but soon, these lower powers – every *archê* and every *exousia* and every *dunamis* – will themselves acknowledge the god of Israel when Christ defeats them and establishes the kingdom of his father (15:24–27).<sup>26</sup> In the End, these superhuman entities wherever they are – above the earth or upon the earth or below the earth – will acknowledge the returning Jesus (Phil 2:10). The *parousia* of Christ, in short, besides raising the dead and transforming the living (1 Cor 15:23, 51–54), would bring about a *Götterdämmerung* for the Hellenistic cosmos.

In light of this cosmic context of Paul's mission, how should we understand his message? To describe him as 'monotheist' and his gentiles' former customs as 'polytheist' surely misses the mark. Like most ancient people, Paul moved within a god-congested universe, and he knew it. If he feels free (unlike Philo) to insult these gods and to defy their power, it is *not* because he does not 'believe' in these other gods, but because he feels emboldened, empowered, and somewhat protected by the *pneuma* of his god. Through baptism he communicates this spirit to the members of his *ekklêsiai* as well, so that they, too, can defy their gods by renouncing their worship.

This defiance took a particular form: Paul demanded that his gentiles stop making sacrifices before the images of their native gods. The Eucharist, for them, would stand in for their former *latreia*; they, spirit-filled, would be God's Temple. Did this mean that Paul had a problem with sacrifice itself? Did his new *ekklêsia* in the diaspora replace Jerusalem's Temple? To answer this question, we have to skip forward in time, to Judea, and the First Revolt.

## 2. The Destruction of the Temple in 70 CE

The Temple and its city had long focused the pride and the piety of the wide-flung Jewish nation. Both had drawn Jews on pilgrimage throughout the Roman world and beyond. The Temple itself had been the beneficiary of an enormous volume of voluntary donations. Its sacrificial etiquette was seen as continu-

<sup>26</sup> For the lexicography on these terms as astral agents, see BDAG; cf the 'principalities and powers' of Eph 6:12. On lesser gods worshipping Israel's god, e.g., Ps 97:7.

ous since the days of Israel's wanderings with the tabernacle: in this sense, the sacrifices had been part of Israel's worship even before coming into the Land. Descriptions of the ways that the altar functioned wove throughout the better part of the Five Books of Moses, and were thus proclaimed in community wherever Jews gathered on the Sabbath to hear their law. Praises of the Temple were enshrined in the psalms and in the prophets. The desire to rebuild it after 70 had in part fuelled the hellish war under Bar Kokhba. Later rabbinical traditions preserved (and expanded upon, and occasionally invented) the details of its protocols. The day of its destruction, the ninth of Av, is still mourned and marked by a fast. In Jewish liturgies and benedictions from that day to this, prayers for its restoration and for the restoration of Jerusalem have assumed a prominent and permanent place.

For the Jews of the ancient western diaspora, though, in day-to-day terms, how traumatic could the destruction of the Temple have been? What *practical* difference did its loss make? For hundreds of years by the year 70, the vast majority of Jews had lived outside of the Land of Israel. (East of the Empire, in Babylon, they had lived for even longer.) Generations of Jews spanning the centuries between the first and second destructions had never experienced living in the Jewish homeland at all, and evidently had accommodated themselves to this fact. Well before the year 70, the vast majority of Jews in the Second Temple period had never gone on pilgrimage; thus – again, well before the year 70 – the vast majority of Jews had never sacrificed at all. In brief, diaspora Jews were long accustomed to honoring their god without offerings and sacrifices, because such offerings in principle could only be made in Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, with the Temple's destruction, nothing changed. Instead, through the cycles of reading their scriptures, diaspora Jews could hear and learn about these sacrifices long before 70. They could and did continue to do so long after the Temple had ceased to exist. I will relate this observation to Paul's pre-70 context shortly.

The relatively muted trauma for the diaspora notwithstanding, however, a small body of interrelated Hellenistic Jewish texts, within *very* few years of the Roman destruction, do focus quite deliberately on the fall of the Temple. I am speaking, of course, about the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. All four writings link the Temple's destruction to the death of their main character, Jesus. Jesus himself, at dramatic moments in Jerusalem, predicts its destruction

<sup>27</sup> I say 'in principle' because, since the mid-second century BCE, another ('extra biblical') temple also functioned in Egypt, at Leontopolis. In consequence of the Jewish revolt in 66–73, the Romans destroyed this temple, too. See discussion in *HJP* 3: 47f, 145–147.

(Mk 13:2 and parallels; Luke's Jesus all but names the Roman legion that does the work, Lk 19:43, cf. 21:20; cf John 2:19 and 11:48). Why did God allow his Temple to be destroyed? Because, these texts answer, the Temple priesthood, in cooperation with Rome, had sought to destroy Jesus. Measure-for-measure, the priests got worse than they gave. Jesus was raised and would return; the Temple, meanwhile, was no more.<sup>28</sup>

Different Gospels present Jesus' relationship to the Temple differently, and trying to divine the historical case beneath or behind those differences – often used as a *pars pro toto* when imagining Jesus' attitude toward his native traditions more generally<sup>29</sup> – fuelled the Jesus Wars in the 1980s and 90s. Despite whatever progress since then that may have been made in reconstructing Jesus of Nazareth as a Jew of his own time rather than as a gentile Christian of the post-70 period or as a left-leaning liberal of our own – and there has been some – certain *idées fixes* continue to control too much of the conversation. Jesus, some scholars still insist, did not like purity rules, which is also why he a) touched sick people, who were themselves impure and b) did not like the Temple hierarchy or, for that matter, the Temple, which was ringed round with oppressive purity legislation. Many scholars continue to examine *à la loupe* the scene at the Temple courtyard, where Jesus has at the money-changers, for evidence of his personal antagonism toward the institution, or at the very least for evidence of his self-assertion over-against the Temple.<sup>30</sup> And the establishment of the Eucharist often emerges as *the sign par excellence* of the historical Jesus' renouncing the Temple sacrifices themselves.<sup>31</sup> (This despite the fact, at least in the synoptic tradition, that the Eucharistic formula is uttered over the cooked flesh of a *korban pesah*, available from only one place in town.)

As Jesus goes, so goes his apostle Paul. The anti-Temple, anti-sacrifice stance attributed to the one is then attributed to the other. If Jesus did not like purity rules, then neither did Paul. (Proof: he mingled with and even ate with gentiles,

28 On the ways that Mark, especially by playing with the concept of 'three days' / 'after three days', links Jesus' death to the destruction of the Temple, and the 'rebuilding' of the Temple to Jesus' Parousia, see Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, 51, 180–185. John leads off with the association of Jesus and the Temple in ch. 2, an elaborately coded death-and-resurrection prediction; and again, via the character of Caiaphas, 'predicts' the Temple's destruction, once more connected to Jesus' death, in John 11:47–53. For an opposing construal of the Gospel texts, see the essay by Andy Overman below.

29 See the essays collected in Kloppenborg – Marshall, *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism*.

30 I review several of these efforts in 'What You See is What You Get'.

31 See Klawans, 'Interpreting the Last Supper'.



whom most Jews shunned, considering them impure.) If Jesus did not like Temple sacrifice, then neither did Paul. (Proof: Christ's death/the Eucharist for him replaces the atoning sacrifices offered in the Temple, 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 8:3; Christ replaces the paschal offering in the Temple, 1 Cor 5:7; Christ himself replaces Temple offerings as a sacrifice of expiation, Rom 3:25.) Finally, if Jesus did not like the Temple itself, Paul stood right beside him. (Proof: Paul's communities are the 'new' and/or 'true' Temple of God's spirit, 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; it is within this new 'Temple' community that these gentiles bring their bodies as a *logikên latreian*: a 'rational – not a bloody! – offering,' Rom 12:1.) And so on.

Paul's (supposed) attitude toward purity, toward sacrifice, and toward the Temple is often extended to inform his supposed attitude toward Torah per se. It then fuels a description of his entire *modus vivendi*, whereby in Christ he becomes an apostate, living like a gentile (1 Cor 9:19–23), no longer honoring his ancestral customs. I will consider these arguments in nos. 3 and 4, below. For now, I focus on Temple, purity, and sacrifice.

The evangelists present Jesus' relationship to the Temple in such complicated ways for good reason: they all write in the period *immediately* following 70. If Jesus were who they say he was – son of the god of Israel, his messiah, the harbinger of his kingdom (synoptics), not to mention the deity next-most elevated after God himself (John 1:1) – then how could he *not* have known that the Temple was going to be destroyed? And how could he not have mentioned its coming destruction in the course of his mission? All the different Gospel narratives thus assert that he did. (And so do some New Testament scholars, effortlessly overlooking the fact that Jesus of Nazareth died c. 30 and that the evangelists all write about Jesus Christ sometime after 70.<sup>32</sup>) The Gospel texts, in brief, are layered; and sorting through which layers date to what period is an unavoidable part of the challenge of reading them critically.

But Paul lived his life without ever knowing that, by the Christ-movement's second generation – something in itself that he was convinced would never be – the Temple would no longer exist. Nor did he know that all of the various gentile Christianities would grow up, until the fourth century, in a world where Aelia had replaced Jerusalem. Readings of his letters that see him as anti-Temple, to my mind, thus stand in – and stand him in – the shadow of this knowledge of events in 70 and thereafter. That shadow obscures what Paul is saying.

<sup>32</sup> Thus Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 425f.

Paul's letters are shot through with the language of sanctuary, sacrifice, purity, and holiness. The Temple in Jerusalem figures positively throughout. If he asserts that pagans, filled with God's spirit and now made *hagioi*, are God's Temple (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6.16), this is because he considers Jerusalem's Temple to be filled with God's spirit too. He says so explicitly in Rom 9:4: 'My kinsmen ... are Israelites, and to them belong ... the *doxa*.' The word comes into Latin as *gloria*, thence the vague RSV 'glory'. But the Hebrew behind Paul's Greek is *kavod*, a reference to God's glorious presence specifically in the Temple (cf Mt 23:21), where Israel enacts another privilege, the *latreia/avoda*, that is, the Temple cult.

Paul also imagines and presents his gentiles as an offering, his own work as 'priestly service'. Jerusalem and its Temple form the closing *inclusio* of his final letter, from Rom 9:4 to 15:19. His gentiles have been made both *kadosh* and *tahor*, both *hagios* and *katharos*. 'Sanctified' and 'purified' cannot help but sound vaguely ecclesiastical to us, or like some sort of moral metaphor. The words in fact evoke Leviticus, naming the two criteria for bringing an acceptable offering to the altar. Like a Temple offering, Paul's gentiles (who *do* know God) have been made *hagios*, 'separated out' or set aside from what is *koinos* (gentiles who do *not* know God) and dedicated to God, by the spirit (1 Thess 4:4f). Since they no longer worship idols nor, thus, engage in idolatry's invariable rhetorical accompaniment, *porneia*, Paul's gentiles are no longer polluted by improper worship and by fornication<sup>33</sup> (cf Lev 18–20; Deut 7:25 and 12:29–31). They have been 'purified' ('For God has not called us for *akatharsia*,' v. 7). They themselves are now an acceptable sacrifice.

In short, Paul articulates key aspects of his *euangelion* by referring them to his ancestral traditions, and specifically, in a positive way, to the Temple cult. The spirit-filled community is like the spirit-filled Temple; Paul himself is like an assistant to the *kohen* at the altar; the Eucharist is like a *korban*, as is Christ's death; non-idolatrous gentiles, like acceptable Temple sacrifice, are both *tahor* and *kadosh*, and so on (see esp Rom 15). Why read these analogies as covert comparisons, whereby the newer 'Christian' meaning supersedes the older 'Jewish' one? Paul uses the Temple and its cult to make these analogies because he *values* them: they are his touchstone. Their *continuing* sanctity and probity is precisely what commends them as analogues. Innocent of the future, spared our retrospective knowledge of later first-century events, Paul has no reason to

33 I will discuss the problem with gentile food further below, and the issues with gentile impurity in section 4.

think that the Temple and its altar could ever be (or become) irrelevant to the message of Christ.<sup>34</sup>

When Paul speaks *against* sacrifice – as he does – he speaks specifically against *pagan* sacrifices to ‘demons’ (e.g., 1 Cor 8:4–6, 13; 2 Cor 6:16). (Why he makes this demand I will consider at no. 3 below.) As a late Second Temple period Jew, however, Paul stands within a culture of sacrifice; and we have small reason to think that Paul’s Jewish contemporaries, the Christ-followers living in Jerusalem, would not have availed themselves of the Temple cult. Finally, by using the Temple cult to provide his major metaphors for understanding how non-idolatrous Christ-following gentiles will be incorporated into the impending redemption of Israel, Paul signals his own uncomplicatedly positive view of that institution, its protocols, and its function.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Christ-followers’ Foreswearing Jewish Practice

Paul adamantly insists that his gentiles-in-Christ should not be required to ‘become’ Jews: male gentiles need not be circumcised, and the *ekklêsiai* in general need not worry about the cultic status of their food. He makes his case most fervently (and floridly) in Galatians, but he reiterates these same points regularly elsewhere in his letters, in most summary fashion in Romans. In the incident at Antioch, described in Galatians 2, scholars accordingly see James as Jewishly ‘conservative,’ wanting to impose a level of Jewish observance on Christ-following gentiles, or at least to restrict mixed table fellowship with such gentiles; Peter, first waffling, then siding with James, is caught in the cross-fire; and Paul emerges as a forward-thinking revolutionary championing Christian outreach to gentiles and Christian freedom from the Law. Scholars then extrapolate from this reconstruction as from other places in his letters that Paul himself, since becoming a Christ-follower, was not Jewishly observant either. Paul the apostle is Paul the apostate.<sup>36</sup> Finally, ‘freedom from the

34 For the full argument, Fredriksen, ‘Judaizing the Nations’; see too Horn, ‘Paulus und der Herodianische Tempel’.

35 This positive ‘Christian’ perspective on Jewish traditions and practices is of course lavishly confirmed in Acts.

36 See Segal, *Paul the Convert*: on Paul’s practicing ‘gentile Christianity’, to which he converts, xii, 21, 26, 210; on Paul as an apostate, 144, 223; ‘He decided to live as a righteous Gentile or God-fearer,’ [misconstruing this last term], 210; ‘Observing Torah is excluded for all, not just for Gentiles,’ 130; Paul recommended that ‘the ritual distinctions between Jews and Gentiles be removed entirely,’ 103. I think that such a description – hardly unique to

Law' serves as the hallmark and heart of Paul's gospel, as the main and most important message that he conveyed to his gentiles, and indeed as the defining difference, at this early moment of the movement, between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity'.<sup>37</sup>

Let us start with food, specifically meat from animals offered to the gods. On this question I see Paul as intriguingly flexible. He is adamant that his gentiles must not participate in public cult (1 Cor 10:14–21),<sup>38</sup> and that any baptized gentile who continues to do so is to be shunned (5:9–13).<sup>39</sup> But what about the meat that such sacrifices produced? 'Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience,' (10:25). What about eating pagan meat in a pagan house? 'Eat whatever is set before you without raising a question on the ground of conscience,' (10:27). Idols are nothing, the all the products of the earth are the Lord's – both reasons, Paul says, to go ahead and eat (10:25–27). The only reason *not* to eat is if a fellow Christ-follower hesitates out of scruple. ('But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience – not yours, but his,' 10:28f.)<sup>40</sup>

Paul makes this last point most succinctly in Romans 14, where he again takes up these issues, the freedom to eat and the conscience of the 'weak': 'Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God' (Rom 14:20). It is in this

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Segal – is wrong in whole and in part. Interestingly, those post-New-Perspective scholars who insist that Paul holds to two paths to salvation, Christ for gentiles and Tora for Jews (the so-called *Sonderweg* interpretation), also see Paul as an apostate for the sake of his mission: thus e.g., Gaston, *Paul and Torah*, 77; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 86; Stowers, *Rereading*, 156.

37 It will become so only eventually, in the course of the following centuries, when those gentile Christians who regarded the LXX as Christian revelation had to account (especially to other gentile Christians, such as Marcion, or Mani, or Faustus) for why they held on to Jewish scriptures without following the practices that those scriptures enjoined. This is the larger intra-Christian problem that frames Justin's Dialogue with Trypho.

38 Private or household cult was another matter. Paul's advice that female Christ-followers should stay married to their pagan husbands would mean that they had to continue to participate in domestic cult: see Johnson Hodge, 'Married to an Unbeliever'.

39 If this idolatrous Christ-following gentile had started out life as a synagogue god-fearer, we can better understand his confusions: nothing had prohibited him from continuing to worship his native gods when he frequented a normal diaspora Jewish community.

40 The ethnicity of the person squeamish about sacrificed meat, here and especially as the one 'weak in conscience' in Romans 14, is often identified as a Jew. I do not see the necessity of the conjecture. Indeed, a former pagan would be the one most accustomed to thinking of meat sacrificed to idols as effecting a 'real' exchange with a deity.

chapter, too, where Paul famously states, 'I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean by<sup>41</sup> itself; but it is unclean to one who thinks it is unclean ... Everything is indeed clean,' (14:14, 20). Enter the apostate Paul: no traditionally pious Jew could have such an attitude toward food. Indeed, as some read this passage, Paul's statement in Romans 14:14 'constitutes nothing less than a fundamental rejection of the Jewish law in one of its most sensitive dimensions,' that is, in the Scriptural distinction between clean and unclean foods.<sup>42</sup>

I wonder. I have always thought that, for all we know, Paul may be repeating here for his gentiles what was a practical *modus vivendi* for diaspora Jews: Eat, unless it scandalizes someone else in the community. As for nothing by itself being pure or impure, even later rabbis construed these as assigned, not innate categories.<sup>43</sup> More recently, however, Daniel Schwartz has framed Paul's discussion with a consideration of mKid 3:10.

If someone says to a woman, "I betrothed you," but she says, "You did not betroth me," he is forbidden to marry her relations but she is allowed to marry his relations. If she says, "You betrothed me," but he says, "I did not betroth you," he is allowed to marry her relations but she is forbidden to marry his relations.

At issue is the prohibition of incest. As Schwartz observes,

Here we have, in the full sense of Paul's words, someone who thinks something is forbidden and it is, accordingly, indeed forbidden for him or her, although not for others ... This Pauline stance ... reflects what was common for diaspora Jews and for pharisaic-rabbinic Jews, who were well aware of the artificial and self-imposed nature of the rules according to which they lived.<sup>44</sup>

41 Taking *di' heautou* as 'by itself', not as 'in itself' (so the RSV): for the argument, see Schwartz, 'Someone who Considers', 297.

42 Barclay, 'Do We Undermine the Law?'

43 Thus the later story about Yohanan ben Zakkai's being questioned about the *para aduma*: 'No dead body defiles and no water cleanses; but this is an ordinance of the King of Kings,' NumR 19.8, trans. Judah J. Slotki, London, Soncino 1913, 257f. For Cynic parallels more contemporary with Paul, see Tomson, *Paul and Jewish Law*, 236–254, esp 248f.

44 Schwartz, 'Something Impure', 308f.

My main point here is that nothing in these passages about food definitely puts either Paul or his gentiles outside or over-against Jewish observance.

If this is the case, then what would be the problem with *ekklêsiai* initially forming as subgroups *within* the penumbra of diaspora synagogue communities? The biblical culture of these tiny new cells is clear, and attending (or, in the case of the Jewish apostles of Christ and of the ex-god-fearers in the *ekklêsia*, *continuing* to attend) the synagogue would have been the easiest way to continue hearing the scriptures, knowing the dates of the Jewish calendar, and so on.<sup>45</sup>

But if initially there were little impediment for the 'mixed' gentile-Jewish *ekklêsiai*'s persisting within synagogue communities, there should have been that much less impediment to the 'mixed' gentile-Jewish *ekklêsiai*'s meeting as a single assembly. What then was the problem in Antioch? I think that much of our interpretive difficulty stems from our seeing in this episode some sort of summary statement of Paul's entire (and supposedly 'Law-free') gospel. We err when trying to draw a big picture from this one factious incident. Galatians 2:9 can be read continuously with Galatians 2:12: James' concern was not general ('Don't ever eat with gentiles!'), but particular ('Keep eating with all these gentiles, Peter, and your mission to the circumcised' – in the diaspora? In Judea and the Galilee? – 'is going to get even harder').<sup>46</sup>

What about circumcision? This particular issue is fog-bound with confusions. Paul's question in Gal 5:11 – 'If I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?' – has been used in support of the idea that Judaism in antiquity was a missionary religion, and thus that Jews (including Paul the former Jewish missionary) *did* preach circumcision to gentiles, in order to convert them to

45 Such an arrangement – gentile members of *ekklêsiai* who also (though perhaps not as a group) still frequent the synagogue – gives a useful interpretive framework for understanding Romans. If synagogues did receive members of such *ekklêsiai*, however, they did not receive them for long: the Jesus movement's most emphatic message to gentiles – *no more latreia to native gods!* – would have put synagogue communities at risk of irate pagan neighbors, as Acts well articulates. I thank Marius Heemstra for helping me to think through this point. See Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 47–60; 165 n23.

46 James was probably not as familiar or as comfortable with mixed populations in synagogue communities as diaspora Jews, like Paul, would have been. Paul and others like him would have been more accustomed to such arrangements, so for them mixed eating would not present a liability to the movement – which is exactly what Paul says in Galatians. For James' concern as specific to Peter, Sanders, 'Jewish Association with Gentiles', 186. He points out *passim*, 170–188, that Jews did associate with gentiles, especially in the diaspora.

Judaism.<sup>47</sup> In championing a 'law-free' mission, Paul was now, in Christ, removing or effacing the 'ritual distinctions between Jews and gentiles' in the new movement.<sup>48</sup> (Gal 3:28 is often pressed into service here, too.) His 'rejection' of circumcision is what distinguishes Paul from the 'Jewish Christianity' of others, like James, or at least from his Christian rivals in Galatia, who advocate circumcision 'in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ' (Gal 6:11). Indeed (so goes this argument) in his repudiation of circumcision, Paul repudiates, in Christ, the whole law. When he speaks of 'the Israel of God,' he means the church (Gal 6:16). When he preaches that 'all Israel will be saved,' he again means the church (Rom 11:26). Paul the Christian is a post-ethnic, post-Jewish Jew.<sup>49</sup>

We start first with the observation that, in the letters that we have, everything Paul says he says to gentiles.<sup>50</sup> Only they could have been candidates

47 See esp Parkes, *Conflict*, Blumenkranz, *Judenpredigt*, and Simon, *Verus Israel*, for three classic mid-twentieth-century statements of the position that Hellenistic Jews ran missions to convert pagans to Judaism; Louis Feldman is that position's most prominent current proponent. John Gager, in both *Origins of Anti-Semitism* and *Reinventing Paul*, applies such a construct specifically to explain Paul's 'Christian' mission. On the unlikelihood of diaspora synagogues running missions to turn pagans into Jews – both for social reasons and for cultural ones (i.e., antiquity's normal association of ethnicities with divinities) – Fredriksen, 'What Parting?' 43, 48–56; eadem, 'Mandatory Retirement', 235–238; eadem, *Augustine*, 26–39; see also McKnight, *Light to the Nations* (for first century materials especially); Goodman, *Mission or Conversion?*

48 Segal, *Paul*, 103; James Dunn sees such a goal as the leitmotif of Paul's mission, *Theology of Paul* and *New Perspective on Paul*, *passim*.

49 These opinions that sharply limit the scope of Paul's view of salvation can be found in the work of scholars as diverse as Boyarin, *Radical Jew* and Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*: the latter's constricted construal of Paul's 'Israel' has remained constant from 1992 to 2013 (*Paul and the Faithfulness of God*). For a review of the various interpretations of Paul's seemingly unambiguous statement, see Zoccali, 'All Israel will be saved'. The author concludes that by 'all Israel' Paul really means only 'all the elect', thus, only Christ-following Israel; cf Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 145. For the view that by 'all Israel' Paul means Jewish Israel, e.g., Munck, *Paul and the Salvation*, 247–281; Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, 138; Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Stendahl, *Final Account*; Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the circumcision', and *SIN*, 22–49; see too Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, esp 121–180 (*panta ta ethnê* and *pas Israêl* is a traditionally Jewish formula for indicating 'all humanity'). For an intriguing and novel construal, Staples, 'What do Gentiles?'

50 This point was emphasized mid-twentieth century by Munck, *Paul and the Salvation*; Stendahl, 'Introspective Conscience'; Dahl, *Studies in Paul*; it was made the interpretive point of departure for the later work of Gaston, *Paul and Torah*; Gager, *Reinventing*; Stowers, *Rereading*.

for circumcision. Paul nowhere says anything about Christ-following Jews' not remaining circumcised (he's not preaching epispasm), nor about such Jews' not circumcising their sons. Paul's principled resistance to circumcising gentiles-in-Christ, further, precisely *preserves* the distinction *kata sarka* between Jews and the various other ethnic groups within the *ekklêsia*. And since Paul expects the Parousia in his own lifetime, he is utterly unconcerned with what coming generations are to do.<sup>51</sup> In other words, while Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free might all be one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28), that unity exists only *kata pneuma*. That is how we should also construe *en Christôi Iesou* here. *Kata sarka*, all of these distinctions still hold, and some of Paul's teachings even reinforce them.<sup>52</sup>

Who are these gentiles-in-Christ, both the ones whom Paul inducts into the movement, and also those others, such as the ones in Rome? Some scholars say that they are 'righteous gentiles,' as refracted through traditions about the Noachide commandments; others say 'god-fearers'; and finally others refer to them as 'converts.' Each term catches some aspect of those gentiles who join the first generation of the Jesus-movement. None is quite correct.

'Righteous gentiles' is a rabbinic category. The rabbis consider the question, 'Can a gentile be righteous and, if so, for what halakhic reasons?'<sup>53</sup> Those who answered the question 'Yes' could fill in the details with the traditions worked out as the Noachide commandments, certain minimal standards of moral behavior enjoined on non-Jews, among which featured the abandonment of idolatry. By contrast, god-fearers, as we have already seen, were (actual) pagans who voluntarily Judaized. They might patronize or otherwise participate in Jewish assemblies, but they were under no obligation to make an exclusive commitment to Israel's god. To whatever degree these people chose to take part in synagogue activities (or, pre-70, in some sort of Temple devotions), they did so *as* pagans. Converts, finally, or *proselutoi*, are ex-pagan pagans. They affiliate radically to the Jewish people, joining the Jews' *politeia* and assuming Jewish

51 1Cor 7:14 is the only time that he specifically mentions children. Paul does not conceive a two-generation movement.

52 Such as his instructions to Christ-following women to remain quiet in assembly (1Cor 14:34), or to be veiled (11:3–16); or his return of a run-away slave to his master (Philemon). On his insisting that gentile Christ-followers *not* be circumcised as preserving the distinction *kata sarka* between gentiles and Jews, Fredriksen, 'Judaizing the Nations'. For the reasons why Paul is so adamant about gentiles-in-Christ not receiving circumcision, see Conclusion, p52 below.

53 See Sanders' discussion of the rabbinic debate, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 206–212; idem, *Jesus and Judaism*, 215; Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 65–69.



ancestral customs including, for males, circumcision. Converts, in brief, are no longer 'gentiles': in the perspective of Jewish tradition, they are Jews of a special sort.<sup>54</sup>

In the period before Christianity, when gentiles were pagans and pagans were gentiles, when the Jewish world was divided up – as Paul's world was – between Israel and 'everybody else' (*ta ethnê*), 'righteous gentiles' could only be theoretical gentiles. Their dwelling place is later rabbinic texts, their 'time' (again, in theory), the quotidian. This rabbinic category seems a poor fit with Paul's spirit-filled, ecstatic, prophesying, exorcist, apocalyptic communities. 'God-fearers' – Judaizing pagans – do not fit at all. The single mention Paul makes of one, the *adelphos* of 1 Cor 5:11, he condemns. *His* gentiles have to make an absolute and exclusive commitment to Israel's god.<sup>55</sup> Does that then make them 'converts'? They'd better not be, argues Paul, most pointedly in Galatians: in Paul's religiously binary system, the only thing for his pagans to convert *to* is Judaism, and this he vigorously rejects.<sup>56</sup>

So what or who, then, before their being baptized into this new movement, were Paul's gentiles? And what or who were all the other Christ-following non-idolatrous gentiles of this first generation? According to Acts, these gentiles had already been associated with the synagogue as god-fearers. Paul's letters themselves do not say, and it is possible to argue that, absent Acts, left with only Paul's letters, no one would assume a synagogue context.<sup>57</sup> I think otherwise, though. The building blocks of Paul's *euangelion*, to be understood, require some familiarity with Septuagintal terms ('David', 'Christ/messiah', 'Kingdom of God', 'Jerusalem', and so on). And the gentiles in Paul's communities, as those in the community in Rome, had until recently been practicing pagans. God-fearers fit both criteria.

These gentiles are now *ex*-god-fearers, however, because as Christ-followers they have turned from their native gods. This image of the nations 'turning' – a good prophetic locution – appears both in Paul and in Acts 15. It derives from Jewish apocalyptic traditions, preserved variously in prophetic texts and in intertestamental writings. At the End of time, so say these passages, the nations

54 Fredriksen, 'Circumcision of Gentiles', 533–543.

55 Again, his thinking of public cult means that Paul is speaking mainly about men; cf Johnson Hodge, n38 above.

56 On the problems inherent in designating Paul's gentiles 'converts', Fredriksen, 'Mandatory Retirement', 233–235.

57 Thus Sanders, *Paul*, 23, and 'Paul's Jewishness', 66f and n23–24, following Hock, *Social Context*.

will *turn from* their native gods, they will destroy their images, and they will *turn to* the god of Israel. 'Turn (*epistraphate*) to me!' (Isa 45:22 LXX, addressed to 'the nations'). 'All the nations will turn (*epistrepsousin*) in fear of the Lord God ... and will bury their idols' (Tob 14:6). 'You turned (*epestrepsate*) to God from idols'; Paul tells his gentiles in Thessalonica, 'to worship the true and living god.' 'We should not trouble those of the gentiles who turn (*epistrepousin*) to God', says James (Acts 15:19 RSV; cf. 15:3, where *epistrophên* is translated wrongly as 'conversion').<sup>58</sup>

In other words, Jewish apocalyptic traditions provide the textual location of gentiles who eschew their idols, who turn to make an exclusive commitment to the god of Israel, and who do *not* assume Jewish ancestral practices, that is, 'the Law' (circumcision, food laws, Sabbath, and so on). Such 'gentiles' are an apocalyptic trope; they do not appear as a social reality until the Jesus movement begins to establish itself in the diaspora. This apocalyptic tradition, then, is what informs the first generation's (improvised) 'gentile policy,' which James, Peter and John confirmed for Paul when he went up to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10), and which was operative even in gentile *ekklêsiai* founded independently of Paul (such as the one at Rome). Knowing what hour it was on God's clock (Rom 13:11), racing in the (for all they knew) brief wrinkle in time between Christ's resurrection and his Parousia (1Cor 15), seeing in the pneumatic behavior of their new gentile members confirmation of their own eschatological convictions, these Jewish apostles welcomed baptized gentiles as *adelphoi* – brothers adopted into God's people *kata pneuma*, still distinct and different *kata sarka*, as is the case with all human adoption. In brief, Jewish apocalyptic thought challenged the normative ancient association of divinities with ethnicities. Instantiated in the earliest mission, this decoupling of gods from their humans, as we will shortly see, would have real social effects.

Three important inferences from this observation:

- (1) What does the gentiles' 'Law-free' inclusion in the mission tell us about the Jewish observance of Paul and of his fellow Jewish apostles in the movement? Absolutely nothing. The source of the gentiles' 'law-free-ness' was Jewish apocalyptic expectation, not apostolic apostasy. To make the same point slightly differently: to hold that Jewish ancestral traditions were not incumbent upon non-Jews would have been a tautology in antiquity (and remains so today): only Israel is responsible for Israel's law (Rom 9:4). And this position held true even when – or especially when –

<sup>58</sup> Fredriksen, 'Judaizing', 241–243.

the non-Jews who joined the Jesus movement were viewed through the convictions of Jewish apocalyptic prophecy.

- (2) What does the gentiles' 'Law-free' inclusion in the mission tell us about Paul versus his circumcising apostolic opponents? In light of these prophetic traditions about the gentiles' eschatological inclusion in God's kingdom, Paul the apostle emerges as a *Jewishly traditional figure*. He too preserves the ethnic distinctions between Israel and the nations: no circumcision for gentiles. He too holds that gentiles do not need to *join* Israel (via conversion), only to *join with* Israel (by eschewing their native gods and disavowing their idols; Rom 15:8–12). It is Paul's anonymous competitors, those who seek to evangelize via circumcision, who are the innovators; their mission to gentiles to convert them to Judaism is the *novum*.<sup>59</sup> Paul, and the others like him (James, Peter, John, Barnabas) hew to a traditional, indeed a normative, line.
- (3) What does the gentiles' 'Law-free' inclusion, via pneumatic adoption, tell us about Paul as an ancient religious thinker? Paul's Jewish apocalyptic convictions, even in their post-Damascus iteration, were also traditional in terms of the broader Mediterranean construction of divine/human relations: gods and their humans form family groups. If the nations, through an eschatological miracle, now worship Israel's god alone, then even though they remain *ethnically distinct*, they are *spiritually adopted*; they now, like Israel, can also call God 'Abba, Father'.

If it is indeed the case, as I have argued here, that a 'Law-free' mission to gentiles, since based in and on Jewish apocalyptic expectations, implies nothing about the level of Jewish observance on the part of those apostles bringing the message – if indeed the gentiles' inclusion gives us no reason to speculate that these apostles were not Jewishly observant themselves – then we meet with another problem: Why then did Paul initially persecute the *ekklêsia*? And why, later, did the synagogue persecute Paul?

59 Pace Louis Feldman, I think that these circumcising apostles represent the only known instance in antiquity of active Jewish missionizing to convert gentiles to Judaism. Munck argued against the existence of Jewish missions, *Paul and Salvation*, 264–271; see now Goodman, *Mission or Conversion*; also Fredriksen, 'What parting?' 48–56. Most of the Jewish apostles of the new movement were *not* trying to convert gentiles-in-Christ to Judaism *tout court*. For my conjectures on the circumstances and motivation of those few who were, Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision', 558–561.

#### 4. Paul's Giving and Getting Synagogue Disciplinary Punishment

Paul presents himself as a former persecutor of the *ekklêsia*, while at the same time proclaiming his excellence both as a Jew (Gal 1:13f; see too v. 23) and as an apostle to gentiles (1 Cor 15:9f). Taking the evidence of the epistles over that of Acts, thus also taking 'persecution' to mean, not 'execution' (Luke's picture) but flogging (2 Cor 11:24),<sup>60</sup> we can infer the following: that sometime within a few years of Jesus' execution, the gospel reached the synagogue(s) of Damascus, which contained Judaizing pagans ('god-fearers') as well as Jews. These apostles then formed a Christ-following *ekklêsia* ('assembly') – I see no reason to think that this assembly would cease voluntarily from associating with the larger community in the synagogue – which was constituted both of Christ-following Jews and of these synagogue-going pagans. These pagans, meanwhile, in receiving the gospel, accordingly made the commitment to cease worshipping their native gods. Paul<sup>61</sup> then would have participated in having (only) the Jewish members of this *ekklêsia* flogged to the maximum degree (*kath' hyperbolên*, Gal 1:14) allowed by the Law, that is, thirty-nine lashes.<sup>62</sup> Later, as an apostle, he was to receive the same punishment himself (2 Cor 11:24). Why?

Different scholars have offered different explanations. Some have conjectured that the message of the new movement – a crucified messiah – would have occasioned deep religious offence, since such a messiah would have died a death 'cursed by the law' – Deut 21:23, by way of Gal 3:13. Others infer legal offense: these itinerant apostles (often associated with the 'Hellenists' of Acts), lax in their own law-observance, offended the host synagogue as 'sinners' (Deut 25:1–3 LXX), and thus were subjected to 'the' thirty-nine lashes (*makkot arbaim*). Others conjecture that the Damascus synagogues would have been offended by the apostles' social intimacy with 'impure' gentiles – eating together, praying together – without requiring that they be circumcised, that is, convert to

60 For the argument, see Hultgren, 'Paul's Pre-Christian Persecutions'.

61 Paul must have been in some official capacity within the synagogue to do so: he could not have administered disciplinary lashing on his own authority.

62 As Sanders famously observed, punishment implies inclusion, *Paul, the Law*, 192. This means not only that the objects of Paul's actions would have been Jews (whether the sojourning apostles, the Damascene Christ-following Jews, or some combination of both), but also that the *ekklêsia* would have formed *within* the synagogue community: had this group separated from the synagogue, the synagogue would have had no authority over them. This observation holds true also for Paul's own later experience, receiving thirty-nine lashes five times (2 Cor 11:24): he would not have received this punishment, and accepted it, had he not continue to move within synagogue circles.

Judaism. (Paul suggests that he is persecuted because he no longer preaches circumcision, Gal 5:11; perhaps he had had the same issue, from the other side, during this earlier moment in Damascus.) Some others, finally, argue that the message of a crucified messiah would have put the host community at political risk, alienating the local Roman government. The wider Jewish community would have responded by repudiating the message by subjecting those promulgating it to disciplinary flogging (*makkot mardut*).<sup>63</sup>

These same reconstructions serve to explain why Paul, later, was himself persecuted: his message of the crucified messiah caused religious offense, as would his personal laxity about the law, perhaps even his principled apostasy from the law. Paul's social practices in re gentiles 'shatters the ethnic mould' of synagogue Judaism; the new social entity of the *ekklêsia* 'transgresses the boundaries of the diaspora synagogue'; 'Paul's assimilating practices and his lax (or at least inconsistent) observation of the law earned him suspicion, opposition, and even punishment' in the synagogue.<sup>64</sup>

All of these reconstructions, but especially the last, require that the early Christian message be somehow in principle irreconcilable with traditional Jewish practice. The *ekklêsia's* ready inclusion of uncircumcised gentiles (*sic*) is held up as one of the proofs of this. As I have already argued, however, we cannot infer anything about the Jewish apostles' level of Jewish observance on the basis of the *ekklêsia's* gentile members' *not* keeping most of the Jewish observances: these gentiles are included because of a strong and articulate apocalyptic trope regarding gentiles at the end of the age, which is where the first generation of the movement thought they stood. 'Gentile impurity' is an unlikely source of offense or concern to Jews for a number of reasons. The Levitical purities/impurities that shaped access to the Temple – in other words, that were part of Jewish law – were not relevant to gentiles: these states of impurity, highly contagious, related solely to Jews (even, primarily, to priests). And the very architecture of Herod's Temple lets us know that gentile impurity was not contagious, therefore of no direct consequence to Jews: Jews walked through the Temple's outer court – and therefore bumped into gentiles – whenever they made their way to their own areas of worship. The synagogue, itself not a site of sacrifice, was not regulated by purity codes.<sup>65</sup> Finally, as I hope that

63 All of these explanations are presented with bibliography, analyzed, and (save for the last position) dismissed in Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision', 548–556. The last explanation was advocated *loc. cit.* 556; *retractandum est*. See also below 177.

64 Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 393.

65 For a detailed discussion of Jewish purity laws and customs in the first century, Sanders,

I have by now demonstrated, diaspora synagogues frequently received pagan gentiles (*sic*) *qua* god-fearers into their midst: Why would or should *ex*-pagan gentiles (*sic*), now part of a synagogue sub-group, offend them?

Paul himself suggests that circumcision (thus, 'Christian' policy toward admitting gentiles) has something to do with the reason why he is persecuted ('If I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?' Gal 5:11 – note that he does not say by whom). And he suggests that his circumcising apostolic competition advocates circumcising Christ-following gentiles so that they themselves might avoid being persecuted ('Those who would ... compel you to be circumcised [do so] ... only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ,' Gal 6.12 – note, again, that he does not say by whom). As long as we restrict this persecution to *makkot*, lashing, and as long as we see the issue of circumcision as one simply of concern in intra-ethnic situations (such as gentile association with Jews), we restrict both the identity of the 'persecutors' to Jews and the reason for the 'persecution' to issues internal to Judaism.

But Paul names more than synagogue harassment in his list of woes in 2 Cor 11: he is also persecuted by Romans (beaten with rods, v. 25), by contrary weather and the elements of nature (the domain of the lower, cosmic gods; v. 25f), 'in danger from my own people and *in danger from gentiles*' as well as in danger from 'false brethren' (that is, I assume, from other apostles-in-Christ whose 'gentile policy' is different from Paul's, v. 26; cf. Galatians, *passim*). Who are all these 'persecutors'? And why in particular would pagans react violently to circumcision, whether because other gentiles circumcise or because some – that is, the Christ-following ones – *do not* circumcise? To answer these questions, as well as our questions about the reasons for intra-Jewish punishments, we will have to jump ahead to no. 5.

## 5. Rome's Persecution of the Ekklesia

I begin with several observations made earlier in this paper: in antiquity (1) all gods exist, their existence witnessed in part by the existence of their humans, and (2) gods and humans formed family groups, hence cult is an ethnic designation and ethnicity is a cultic designation. This means that an anthropological definition of empire ('the greatest number of peoples under a single government') can be restated theologically: 'the greatest number of gods under a single

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*Jewish Law*, 29–41, 131–254 (Pharisees), 258–271 (diaspora communities); on impurity and gentiles, Klawans, 'Notions of Gentile Impurity'.

government.' To these two generalizations I will now add two more: (3) cult makes gods happy, and happy gods make for happy humans; conversely, lack of cult makes gods unhappy, and unhappy gods make for unhappy humans. Finally, (4) any god is more powerful than any human.

Mediterranean culture was extremely commodious when it came to accommodating various cults – which is why the religious situation of the Empire can rightly be described as chaotic.<sup>66</sup> 'Religions' (various ancestral practices) simply existed, because their people did. To label all this religious breathing-space 'tolerance' is to misdescribe it with a word drawn from our own later civil societies. Ancient empire embraced a practical religious pluralism.<sup>67</sup> If all gods exist, and if any god is bigger than any human, such a posture simply made good sense.

So why did this apocalyptic Jewish movement that formed in the wake of the mission and message of Jesus encounter such resistance, from pagans as well as from Jews, as it spread in the diaspora? Why should pagans have persecuted the church? Pondering this question, historians have often invoked the term *religio licita*; it supposedly describes a statutory distinction between Christianity and Judaism. Rome, so goes the argument, recognized Judaism as a 'legal' religion; it did not so recognize Christianity.<sup>68</sup>

There are several problems with *religio licita*. The first, and perhaps the least significant, is the false impression that it gives of actually being a term of Roman law. It is not. Rather, its origins trace back to Tertullian. In his Apology, Tertullian complains that pagans say to Christians, *Non licet esse vos!* You're

66 See Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*; Beard – North – Price, *Religions of Rome*, for the imperial city itself.

67 On the ways that Antiochus IV Epiphanes does *not* represent an exception to this 'rule', see Ma, 'Relire', esp 71–84.

68 This paragraph and the two that follow draw from my earlier essay, 'Mandatory Retirement', 239. Marius Heemstra rightly points out, both in his essay in the current collection and in his larger study, *Fiscus Judaicus*, that in the wake of the tax's establishment, 'Judaism' must have figured as a term in Roman law. I agree; but its 'legal status' for that purpose relates to a tax category, not to a category of 'legitimate cult'. So too Isaac, *Origins of Racism*, 449. For a review of the scholarship on the question, and a consideration of the hypothesis that Christianity was the subject of a special law, see Rives, 'Persecution of Christians'. On Christian martyrdom as a 'discursive practice' – identity-confirming narratives – and the difficulty of using martyrological literature to reconstruct actual Roman persecutions, see Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom*, 1–22. Pliny's Ep 10.96 remains a difficulty: is the problem Christian incorrigibility, or their refusal to honor the Emperor?

not legit!' (or, less colloquially, 'It's not legal for you to exist', 4.4). By contrast, the Jewish religion is '*certe licita*' (21.1). From these slight beginnings, *religio licita* has grown into a mighty academic *idée fixe*, invoked to explain why the Empire went after the church but did not go after the synagogue.<sup>69</sup> From there, historians chase after the wild goose of trying to figure out why Christianity was not a 'legal' religion, when we have no record of any laws that render it specifically illegal – nor any record of any laws identifying any 'religion' as specifically legal.

Apart from its (implicit) appearance in Tertullian, *religio licita* is nowhere attested in any ancient source. But its usefulness as a term of historical analysis is compromised not because of this slight attestation per se, but because of its utter wrong-headedness in obscuring the fundamental connection in antiquity between cult and ethnicity. People's ancestral traditions were neither legal nor illegal: they simply were (e.g., Athenagoras, *Legatio* 1). 'In the Roman world, religion and ethnic loyalties were inseparable.'<sup>70</sup> 'Religious pluralism' simply describes the native and normal condition of ancient society. Why did it fail in the case of (gentile) Christianity?

The fact that ancient gods ran in the blood meant that people were born into their obligations to particular deities, both family gods and urban ones. If these pagans became Christ-followers, they in principle ceased honoring these gods with cult – which would anger these gods. Because these non-sacrificing pagans of the Christian movement refused to honor their gods, the Tiber might overflow or the Nile might not, the earth might move or the sky might not (Tertullian, *Apol* 40.2). 'No rain, because of the Christians!' (Augustine, *civ Dei* 2.3). In other words, the problem with gentile Christians, in the eyes of the pagan majority, was not that these people were 'Christian,' but that they were deviant gentiles. That is to say, the problem was that, whatever the new religious practices that these people chose to assume, they were nonetheless, in the eyes of their own family members and neighbors, still obligated to the gods of the city and of the Empire as well – and those gods, once alienated, would be angry. The main cause of pagan anti-Christian aggression was fear of heaven – or, in brief, piety.<sup>71</sup>

69 E.g., Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 220, 429.

70 Isaac, *Origins of Racism*, 500.

71 'From Britain to Syria, pagan cults aimed to honour the gods and avert the misfortunes which might result from the gods' own anger at their neglect,' notes Robin Lane Fox. 'Any account of pagan worship which minimizes the gods' uncertain anger and mortals' fear of it is an empty account,' *Pagans and Christians*, 39; 'The best that humans could hope for was that they could keep the gods in a good mood,' Potter, 'Martyr-



Conversion to Judaism – which had the same effect in terms of sacrificing as becoming Christian did – was tolerated, if resented, because Judaism itself was familiar, and widely recognized as ancient and ancestral, the two criteria of respectable cult.<sup>72</sup> By these same criteria, however – especially early on, in the middle decades of the first century – ‘Christianity’ was, precisely, nothing.<sup>73</sup> Not requiring complete affiliation with Judaism via circumcision, insisting that family and urban cults nonetheless be renounced, the early apostles walked these Christ-fearing pagans into a social and religious no-man’s land. These apostles themselves as well as their gentiles may not have been too worried – after all, Christ was on the verge of returning, of gloriously summing up the ages, and of submitting the cosmos and everything in it to his divine father (1 Cor 15). But the pagan majority in these diaspora cities *was* worried. The gods’ anger would affect everyone. In other words, ancestral obligation, not particular beliefs – what people did, not what they thought – was what mattered.<sup>74</sup>

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dom and spectacle’, 134. Roman piety combined with patriotism, since the proper execution of traditional cult ‘is not only of concern to religion, but also to the well-being of the state,’ Cicero, *de Legibus* 1.12.30. See Isaac, *Origins of Racism*, 467 and 1121–127 for citations to many Roman authorities’ expressing this view. Tertullian in *de Idololatria* provides a wonderfully thick description of the god-saturated ancient city, and how most activities, whether public or domestic, involved interactions with the images of gods. Christians no less than pagans were aware that divine wrath was the consequence of neglecting cult, and for this reason they blamed these gods, qua evil *daimones*, for inspiring persecution against them: see most recently Reed, ‘Trickery’. Israel’s god could be alienated, too: Once the daily sacrifices were interrupted and the sancta polluted, Josephus reports, the divine presence quit Jerusalem’s Temple, *War* 5:412; 6:300; cf *Ant* 20:166.

72 Which is not to say that pagans were neutral on the topic of conversion to Judaism; see above n20.

73 ‘Since they were neither Jew nor pagan, they were isolated, without a recognizable social identity’, Sanders, ‘Paul’s Jewishness’, 67; see too n26. For the same reason, we have no Jewish term for these people either (above, p36f): they fit no foregoing social category. Paul calls them either *hagioi* (‘sanctified’ or ‘set-apart’ ones), or *adelphoi* ([adopted] ‘brothers’), or (since this is what they are), *ethnê*. Fredriksen, ‘Judaizing the Nations’, 242–244, 247–250; cf Johnson Hodge, *If Sons*, 43–66, 202 n1.

74 For this reason, *inter alia*, I cannot agree with Rives’ concluding speculation, ‘Animal sacrifice’, *infra* p125: ‘Christian rejection of animal sacrifice was thus much more absolute and comprehensive, while Judaeian rejection merely conditional. It was perhaps for this reason that the Christian refusal to sacrifice was a central issue in Roman hostility to Christians, whereas the Jewish refusal, so far as we know, had no repercussions.’ Jews’ not sacrificing to gentile gods put nothing at risk; gentile Christians’ not sacrificing to gentile gods put everything at risk.

The problem with gentile Christians, in the eyes of the majority, was that they were deviant pagans.<sup>75</sup>

Jews who were Christians in later centuries are invisible in the evidence for pagan persecutions: Jews had long had the option not to sacrifice to the gods of the majority.<sup>76</sup> (For this reason, reports Eusebius, a gentile Christian during a period of pagan persecution had considered converting to Judaism, in order to be spared harassment as a gentile, CH 6.12.1.) But in the early decades of the new movement, Jewish apostles *were* targeted – hence Paul’s being beaten with rods three times, a Roman punishment – precisely because they were raising pagan anxieties by drawing some pagans away from their ancestral practices, something that the synagogue had never done with their god-fearers. For this same reason – the early movement’s success at turning the synagogue’s god-fearers to the exclusive worship of the god of Israel – diaspora synagogues subjected Jews like Paul to disciplinary flogging, *makkot mardut*.<sup>77</sup> Such a destabilizing and inflammatory message, seen as radiating out of the synagogue, could make the Jewish urban community itself the target of local anxieties and resentments. Alienating the gods put the city at risk;<sup>78</sup> alienating the pagan majority put the synagogue at risk – especially when the behavior occasioning that risk, an exclusive commitment to the god of Israel, was so

75 See further Fredriksen, ‘Mandatory Retirement’, 238–241; *Augustine and the Jews*, 25–39, 88–98; Goodman, ‘The Persecution of Paul by Diaspora Jews’, 376–387.

76 For this reason, I think that Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 25–47 misreads the story in tHul 2 about R. Eliezer’s being called before the hegemon for *minut*, i.e., Christianity. The story, which leans upon Christian martyrologies for its structure, is a fabrication told to make an intra-Jewish point about *minut*, specifically the (Jewish) followers of Jesus. In real life, Roman governors did not concern themselves with Jewish sectarians (among whom might number Christian Jews; cf Acts 18:12–15) – but they did concern themselves with Christian *gentiles*, because these last, in refusing to honor the gods, posed a threat to the common weal.

77 ‘The forty lashes’ (*makkot arbain*) was a punishment meted out for violation of a biblical prohibition (mMakk 3). *Makkot mardut*, on the other hand, was discretionary lashing, with no fixed number of lashes except for its upper limit, thirty-nine; see Hare, *Jewish Persecution*, 42–46. The earliest attestation of *makkot mardut* is in the Mishna, but some of the traditions upon which the Mishna rests antedate the late second/early third century. Perhaps then (to close this circle), 2 Cor 11:24, which does not have the article in Greek (*hoi*, cf ‘the forty lashes less one’, RSV) is our earliest attestation of *makkot mardut*.

78 Historians of Rome seem to have an easier time seeing this than do historians of Christianity: see, e.g., Barnes, ‘Legislation’; Millar, ‘Imperial Cult’, 145–175; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 419–434.

universally and uniquely associated with Jews themselves. (Acts 19:21–41, the riot at Ephesus, vividly depicts such a situation.)

To return to our question of no. 4 above, then: This real and serious threat – aggressive pagan anxieties caused by fear of their gods’ anger – was the reason both for Paul’s giving this synagogue discipline (when he was an agent of the community in Damascus) and for his getting this synagogue discipline. The reasons for each phase of his persecutions had nothing to do with apostasy.

### Concluding Questions

Historians of Christian origins inevitably know more about Christianity than did the ancient apostles who spread the *euangelion* in the middle decades of the first century. We know, first of all, that despite the convictions of this first generation – a conviction that unites them, *mutatis mutandis*, with the historical Jesus<sup>79</sup> – Christianity would go on to have a long future. We also know that, within a very few years of Paul’s mission, the Temple in Jerusalem would cease to be a focus of active Christian piety. And we know that Christianity would continue to develop vigorously and variously as a movement that was increasingly gentile and, eventually, anti-Jewish. All of this knowledge can unobtrusively shape how and what we see.

I have argued here that we have good reason to construe Paul as a diaspora Jew of the late Second Temple period who fits into his inherited cultural/religious context by way of continuity rather than by way of contrast. Were we to take this proposition seriously, we would need to recast much of how we think about what we do. I close with a short series of examples.

(1) How useful is the metaphor of ‘the parting of the ways’ for imagining the development of ancient Christianity?<sup>80</sup> The Fourth Gospel, Ignatius, *Barnabas*,

79 On the apocalyptic teachings common to Paul and to the later gospel traditions – thus, perhaps, tracing back to the historical Jesus – see Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 74–119.

80 My contesting this paradigm has to do with its heuristic utility: I think that it confuses more than it clarifies. But as this paper has argued throughout, I also think that Jews and gentiles within the Christ movement were ethnically distinct from the beginning, and remained distinct: see Townsend, ‘Who were the First Christians?’ For this reason, Roman observers had little reason to confuse the two groups, and Christ-following Jews would appear to such outside observers as Jews *tout court*. (So too the conclusion reached by John Barclay in this volume, ‘Jews and Christians.’) For a recent review of scholarship on

Valentinus, Marcion, Justin: well before 200, there are clear signs of (some) gentile Christians' viewing Jews and Judaism as 'other'. Pionius (c. 250), Origen (c. 230), the canons of the Council of Elvira (c. 300), John Chrysostom (387): well after 200, there are clear signs of continuing intimate social and religious contact between (some gentile) Christians and Jews. If we follow the literary stemma of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition, we will come away with one impression; if we attend to some of what such authors complain about, and what church canons rule against, we will come away with another.<sup>81</sup> The problem with the paradigm of 'the parting of the ways' is the clarity that it (falsely) both presupposes and promises.<sup>82</sup> Further, if synagogue communities themselves continue well into the post-Constantinian period to receive gentile *pagans* (*sic*),<sup>83</sup> should we really be so surprised that they receive the other sort of gentiles (namely Christian ones) as well?

(2) How should we regard the effects of the series of Jewish revolts against Rome? I queried above how deep the impact of these revolts could have been on Jews in the diaspora. Their most immediate and powerful impact was on those whom we think of as 'Christian' authors: the evangelists, for example, and John of Patmos, for the first revolt; later, Justin, Tertullian, and the entire sweep of the *contra Iudaeos* rhetorical tradition for the Bar Kochba revolt.<sup>84</sup> And even this

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the 'parting of the ways' paradigm, see Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians*, 3–24; see also Lieu, 'Parting of the Ways'.

81 See Fredriksen, 'What Parting?'

82 See esp essays assembled in the anthology edited by Becker and Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted*, and their introduction, *ibid.* 1–33.

83 Tertullian (c. 200), ad Nationes 1.13.3–4: Some gentiles keep the Sabbath and Passover, and yet continue to worship at pagan altars too. Commodian (3rd c.), Instruct 1.24.11–14 mocks those who 'live between both ways,' who rush from synagogue to traditional altar, *medius Iudaeus* (37.1). He adds that Jews are wrong to tolerate such behavior (*Dicant illi tibi si iussum est deos adorare*, 37.10). Cyril of Alexandria (5th c.), De ador 3.92.3 speaks of men in Phoenicia and Palestine who, calling themselves *theosebeis*, consistently follow neither Jewish nor Greek religious custom.

84 By which I mean that these later Christians, looking through the prism of the Bar Kokhba revolt to the destruction of the Second Temple and thence to prophetic texts in the LXX, proclaim (endlessly) that, with the (Second) Temple's destruction, God has sent the Jews into exile; whereas in fact, diaspora Judaism had been established for centuries by that time, and Jewish settlement long continued thereafter in territorial Israel, as even Augustine noted, De civ Dei 16.21; Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 79–88. On this idea of the Temple's destruction inaugurating the second exile – an important theme in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho that ends up enshrined in the Babylonian Talmud – see Yuval, 'The Myth of Jewish Exile'.

impact is more rhetorical than social – were things otherwise, again, we would not have all our rich and variegated evidence for continued and continuous Jewish/Christian/pagan social amity in late antiquity.

(3) To Paul in particular: we overemphasize, I think, the degree to which he felt (or actually was) persecuted by the diaspora synagogue. Often, that overemphasis leads us to overemphasize as well, or to construct, a much greater degree of difference between Paul's Jewish practice and that of (his host?) diaspora synagogue communities. We need to take Paul at his word, and so widen our view of his persecutors. He feels no less oppressed 'by the gentiles,' as he says in 2 Corinthians 11, and by wind, weather and water, those media of the lower gods. And he feels much *more* persecuted by his divine cosmic opposition, all of those planetary and astral powers whose active existence our attachment to the idea of modern monotheism makes harder to see. Furthermore, the argument that I have made here – that a message emanating from the diaspora synagogue that pagans should stop honoring their own gods if they would be spared the coming wrath of Israel's god (1 Thess 1:10) would have roiled the religious ecosystem of these Graeco-Roman cities – provides economy of explanation. All of Paul's persecutors – other Jews, pagan gentiles both Greek and Roman, hostile cosmic entities – unite against him for this same reason: his insistence that Christ-following pagans refuse cult to their native gods.

(4) Historians often refer to Paul's mission to gentiles as 'Law-free'. I have done so here. But should we? That puts so much emphasis on the wrong issue, in a way that has had such a distorting effect. Part of our use of the phrase 'Law-free' is due, of course, to the lingering prism of the Reformation. But in providing a context within Paul's own life for such a concept (or slogan), we can end by positing a Paul who is himself 'Law-free', indeed even apostate. If we let go of the paradigm, we might more easily see an observant Jew, an apostle who continues to associate with synagogues (2 Cor 11:24), and a member of a movement whose gentiles continue, for as long as their host synagogue communities will let them, to frequent the diaspora synagogue as well.

The phrase 'Law-free', further, reinforces our failure to perceive how much of what Paul is doing *is* actively Judaizing. We can hold him partly accountable: he angrily accuses Peter of trying to 'Judaize' the Christ-following gentiles in Antioch (Gal 2:14), and he condemns him for it. 'To Judaize' normally indicated either full conversion to Judaism (that is, fully adopting Jewish ancestral practices) or godfearing (adding the Jewish god to one's native pantheon). Paul explicitly condemns both of these options (full conversion to Judaism, Galatians *passim*; godfearing, 1 Cor 5:11). Yet Paul's core message in terms of behavior

was not, 'Don't circumcise!' It was: 'No more *latreia* to native gods!' The Jesus movement, out of apocalyptic conviction, required its gentiles to enact precisely that behavior that majority culture – and Jews as well – universally and exclusively associated with Jews. This is hardly a 'Law-free' demand. It is, in fact, a Judaizing demand.<sup>85</sup>

(5) Finally, and I think most fundamentally, we must always weigh seriously Paul's own firm conviction that he lived and worked in history's final hour. His intense eschatological orientation is absolutely foundational, shaping everything that Paul says. And his conviction is all the more remarkable when we consider that, by the time that we hear from him, mid-first century, the Kingdom is already late.

We easily lose sight of this fact, of course. We look backwards, and for good reason see the epistles as early, a mere couple of decades after Jesus' execution. But our view is not Paul's. He lived his life forward, one day at a time. When the god of Israel had revealed his son to Paul (c. 34? Gal 1:14), Paul had understood what it meant: the onset of the general resurrection, thus the establishment of God's kingdom, could not be far behind. But Paul gives this interpretation in a letter written some twenty years after the fact (1 Cor 15). Why – how – can he still be so sure? And in another letter, written even later, we find him again asserting the nearness of the End: 'You know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to awake from sleep. Salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand', (Rom 13:11f). Why – how – can he still be so sure?

This is the context – Paul's unwavering apocalyptic conviction – within which we should set his equally unwavering insistence that gentiles-in-Christ need not, indeed *must* not, be circumcised. Such 'eschatological gentiles' had long been an imaginative construct, their exclusive commitment to the god of Israel one of any number of anticipated End-time events. Through the mission of the Jesus movement, they had become a social reality.

Various scholars have attributed Paul's position on circumcision to Paul's seeing the works of the Law as antithetical to grace, or to the gospel, or to salvation in Christ (or even – a nod to Bultmann – as antithetical to 'authentic existence'). And these supposed theological descriptions then easily transmute into biographical ones: Paul the Pharisee becomes Paul the ex-Pharisee, Paul the renegade apostle vis-à-vis Jerusalem, indeed, Paul the full-blown apostate.

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85 Fredriksen, 'Judaizing the Nations', 251f.

But suppose that Paul's insistence that Christ-following gentiles not be circumcised has nothing to do with his personal practice of Jewish ancestral custom, and nothing to do with any supposed antagonism between the *ekklesia* and the synagogue? Suppose, instead, that it has everything to do with his vision of the Risen Christ, with his call to be an apostle to the nations, and with his sense of his own mission? The very existence of such gentiles who had turned from their idols and who had made an exclusive commitment to the god of Israel was a profound and an ongoing validation of Paul's work. They confirmed him in his conviction that he did, after all, know what time it is on God's clock. They are the reason why he can assert, decades after joining the movement, that 'salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed'. If he could just bring in the full number of the nations, the final events could unwind (Rom 11:25–36). Paul's furious impatience with the circumcisers in Galatia measures the importance of these gentiles to his entire worldview and to his own sense of self.

What does this twinned commitment, to the fast-approaching End time and to these anomalous Christian pagans, tell us about Paul's level of personal Jewish observance? Absolutely nothing at all.

The so-called 'new perspective on Paul', germinating in mid-twentieth century Scandinavian New Testament scholarship, inaugurated fully in Anglophone studies in the 1970's and 80's, led to a deepening appreciation of Paul's relationship with Judaism. The paradigm shifted from Paul *against* Judaism to Paul *and* Judaism. That perspective is shifting yet again, from Paul *and* Judaism to Paul *within* Judaism.<sup>86</sup> A daunting task of re-imagining lies before us. The letters must all be retranslated. The word books must all be recast. The commentaries must all be redone.

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86 See the essays assembled in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*.

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