

## Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel\*

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*Memoriae Krister Stendahl sacrum.*

**Much current NT scholarship holds that Paul conducted a 'Law-free' mission to Gentiles. In this view, Paul fundamentally repudiated the ethnic boundaries created and maintained by Jewish practices. The present essay argues the contrary: Paul's principled resistance to circumcising Gentiles precisely preserves these distinctions 'according to the flesh', which were native to Jewish restoration eschatology even in its Pauline iterations. Paul required his pagans not to worship their native gods—a *ritual* and a Judaizing demand. Jerusalem's temple, traditionally conceived, gave Paul his chief terms for conceptualizing the Gentiles' inclusion in Israel's redemption. Paul's was not a 'Law-free' mission.**

**Keywords:** Paul, ethnicity, Temple, pagans, conversion, Law-free זכרו לברכה

At some point between the years 410 and 415, Paulinus of Nola wrote a long letter to his friend and fellow bishop, Augustine of Hippo. Addressing Augustine as 'the blessed teacher of Israel', Paulinus asked about the

\* I wish to thank colleagues Michael McGarry of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem, and Joseph Sievers of the Cardinal Bea Centre for Jewish Studies, Rome, whose invitations to speak on Paul in his Jewish matrix provided me with the opportunity to gather my thoughts on this subject; and Oded Irshai, Serge Ruzer, Ed Sanders and Gregory Tatum, for their very helpful criticisms of an earlier version of this paper. Thanks too to my student Christopher Stroup for special assistance.

My introduction to the historical Paul came via Augustine, when I as an undergraduate first read Krister Stendahl's luminous essay, 'Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West'. With his deep knowledge of Paul's letters and his appreciation for the patristic refractions of Pauline theology, Krister became an invaluable conversation partner in the three-plus decades since that time, as well as my much-loved mentor and friend. The present essay I offer to his memory, with deepest gratitude, respect and love. זכרו לברכה: Ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἢ ἁγίας αὐτοῦ αὐτῶν.

interpretation of a variety of verses from both testaments (*ep.* 121.1, 2). Especially confounding, Paulinus wrote, were Paul's statements about the Jews in Romans 11. 'As regards the Gospel', Paul had said about his kinsmen, 'they are enemies, because of you [Gentiles]; but as regards election, they are beloved, because of the forefathers' (Rom 11.28).

What good does being 'beloved of God' do for the Jews, Paulinus now asked, if they are damned outright for being the enemies of Christ? Behind this, he continued, stood a more fundamental question: Why had God configured salvation as a zero-sum competition between Gentiles and Jews in the first place? Does not Paul's statement imply that the Gentiles could not have believed unless the Jews, first, had not believed? 'How was God...incapable of acquiring both peoples, rather than having only one or the other?' Paulinus asks. 'If the Jews are beloved of God, how will they perish? And if they do not believe in Christ, how will they not perish?' (*ep.* 121.2, 11).<sup>1</sup>

Augustine, of course, is one of the West's most influential interpreters of Paul. He is also the author of several strong misreadings of the Apostle, and especially of the letter to the Romans. The doctrine of predestination as the plumb line for understanding Romans 9–11; the 'all Israel' of Rom 11.26 as an exclusively Christian eschatological society composed of both Gentiles and Jews; the doctrine of Original Sin as framed by Rom 5.12; the redemption of Jew and of Gentile as equally relying on 'justification by faith'—these teachings all appear in Augustine's reading of Romans. They had evolved in response to the challenge of Manichaean Christianity, and to the formative influence of late Roman Platonism. For this reason, Augustine's Paul more readily fits the fourth-fifth-century Latin West than he does the mid-first-century Hellenistic Diaspora.<sup>2</sup> These teachings contoured Augustine's answer to Paulinus's questions; to varying degrees, they contour still—I think to our detriment—the interpretive work of modern NT scholars in search of the Paul of history.

1 *quomodo iidem et inimici propter nos qui credidimus ex gentibus, tanquam non potuerint gentes credere nisi Iudaei non credidissent; aut ipse unus omnium creator Deus...capax non fuerit acquisitionis utriusque nisi alterum pro altero possideret.* Paulinus's queries come at a moment in their correspondence when both he and Augustine are pondering how a just god could both harden the Jews so that they do not believe and also condemn the Jews for their unbelief. At stake is the understanding of Ps 59.12 ('Slay them not, lest my people forget'), 1 Tim 2.4 ('God wants all people to be saved'), and most especially chaps. 9–11 of Paul's letter to the Romans. See discussion in P. Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008) 324–31.

2 For the ways that Augustine's understanding of Paul, and especially of Romans, differs from Paul's original meaning, see P. Fredriksen, 'Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self', *JTS* 37 (1986) 3–34; and P. Fredriksen, 'The Philosopher's Paul and the Problem of Anachronism', *Paul Among the Philosophers* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2009) 61–73. All of my own articles cited in the current essay are available in PDF format on my web page: [www.bu.edu/religion/faculty/fredriksen](http://www.bu.edu/religion/faculty/fredriksen).

But some of the less familiar elements of Augustine's Paul derived from a pre-supposition about gods and humans that spanned their two distinct historical moments. This is the idea, and the social reality, that *ethnic distinctiveness and religious distinctiveness are simple synonyms, and native to all ancient peoples*. In other words—and in common with many NT scholars—both Paul and Augustine held that *mos maiorum* or *religiones patriae* or παρόδοσις πατρικῶν functioned both to prescribe appropriate cult and to serve as ethnic boundary markers.<sup>3</sup> Unlike most modern NT scholars, however, Augustine held that this function of marking ethnic boundaries continued to define Israel *secundum carnem* in the first generation of the church, and *rightly* so. I think that Paul would agree. This principle also sustained Augustine's contention that the Temple in Jerusalem always stood at the heart of Paul's religious universe. I think that Paul would agree. And it supported Augustine's conviction that, in the first generation of what would eventually become the church, Jewish Christians, Paul emphatically included, continued to live according to their ancestral practices, while the apostles encouraged gentile Christians, without converting to Judaism, to Judaize. I think that Paul would agree.<sup>4</sup>

From this historical fact—that in Mediterranean antiquity, cult defined ethnicity and ethnicity defined cult—Augustine distilled theology: a Jewish Jesus, a Jewish Paul, and a Judaized first generation of Gentiles served his defense of the doctrines of Creation and of Incarnation. I want to deploy this fact historically, to use it as a cardinal point in my reconstruction of Paul and of his mid-first-century context. For historical reasons, I will end up asserting many of the same positions that Augustine, for theological reasons, also asserted. Unlike Augustine, I will conclude my reconstruction of Paul's mission and message by urging that a whole host of theologically imbued concepts and vocabulary—and especially the phrase 'Law-free mission'<sup>5</sup>—be dropped by scholars who quest for the historical Paul.

3 E. J. Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and in Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995). That Paul worked to overcome or dispose of such boundaries and ethnic distinctions functions for most NT scholars as the defining effort of his mission: see (for only one example) J. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) and the essays edited by him in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1996).

4 On the continuing Torah-observance of the apostles, and particularly of Paul, for the entirety of the first generation of the movement, *de doctrina Christiana* 3.6,10; *ep.* 40.4,6 (on Paul's Torah-observance, against Jerome); *c. Faustum* 12.3 and *passim*. On the laudable and appropriate Judaizing of the first generation of Christian Gentiles, in re Acts 15.29 and Eph. 2.11–22, *c. Faust.* 32.12. On the centrality of the Temple and the positive importance of blood sacrifices, *c. Faust.* 6 *passim*; 22.21. Discussion in P. Fredriksen, *Augustine* (2008), 235–302. The present essay argues that Paul—though for reasons different from Augustine's—also supported these positions.

5 For a similar conclusion though a different argument, M. Nanos, 'The Myth of the "Law-Free" Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews', *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009), 1–21.

## 1.

Gods and humans were the two key populations of ancient society, which could thrive only if gods were happy. Cult was the index of human loyalty, affection and respect. Cult made gods happy, and happy gods made for happy humans. The converse was also true: deprived of cult, gods grew angry. When gods were angry, people paid.<sup>6</sup>

Cult focused on actions, on showing and (no less important) on being seen to show respect for the gods. Peoples inherited their protocols for showing respect, and these protocols defined what we call 'religion'. At the same time, these protocols also designated ethnicity. 'Different nations have different customs', remarked Athenagoras, 'and no one is hindered by law or by fear of punishment from following his ancestral customs, no matter how ridiculous these may be' (*Legatio* 1). True of pagans, true of Jews, as Celsus observed: Jews 'observe a worship which may be very peculiar, but it is at least traditional. In this respect they behave like the rest of mankind, because each nation follows its particular customs' (c. *Celsus* 5.25).

Note: ancient peoples, Jews included, did not 'believe' or 'believe in' their ancestral customs. They enacted them; they preserved them; they respected them; they trusted or trusted in them.<sup>7</sup> This same practical stance describes,

6 '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* (New York: Knopf, 1987) 39; 'The best that humans could hope for was that they could keep the gods in a good mood', D. Potter 'Martyrdom as Spectacle', *Theatre and Society in the Classical World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1993) 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 B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2005) 467 and nn. 121–7, for many expressions by Roman authorities of this view. Christians no less than pagans were aware that divine wrath was the consequence of neglecting cult, and they blamed these gods, qua evil δαίμονες, for inspiring persecution against them: see A. Reed, 'The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr', *J ECS* 12 (2004) 141–71. Israel's god could be alienated by neglect of proper cult, too: Once the daily sacrifices were interrupted and the sancta polluted, Josephus reports, the divine presence quit Jerusalem's temple, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.412; 6.300 (hereafter cited as *BJ*); cf. *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.166 (hereafter cited as *AJ*).

7 That is, they had confidence that the ancestral observances that they enacted were in fact pleasing to the god. To translate πιστεῦω as 'believe' too easily conjures for us the sentiments and psychological states of post-Romanticism (e.g. authenticity, genuine affection, individual subjectivity, self-authenticating intensity, and so on). Especially when dealing with early Christian materials, such as the gospels or Paul's letters, πιστεῦω as 'believe' runs head-on into the theological existentialism of Bultmannian hermeneutics, and more generally into the polemical jargon of the Reformation. For these reasons I find that the second choice

too, how ancient peoples—again, Jews included—coped with the gods of others. That the gods of others existed was another commonsense fact, demonstrated by the existence of that god's people. The Bible, prime textual residence of Israel's god, acknowledged the existence of these other gods, who were the deities of the nations. 'All the peoples walk, each in the name of its god', says the prophet Micah, 'but we will walk in the name of the Lord *our* god forever and ever' (Mic 4.5, and frequently elsewhere, especially in Psalms). 'Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?' Moses asked (Exod 15.11). The LXX subordinated these other gods to Israel's god by conjuring the ranked divinities of the Hellenistic universe: 'The gods of the nations are δαίμονες' sang the Psalmist in Greek (95.5 LXX): a δαίμων was specifically a lower, cosmic god.<sup>8</sup> More concretely, and more generally, diplomatic relations between peoples in the Hellenistic and Roman periods were negotiated by generating connections of kinship, discovering an ancient family bond that had been effected by their respective gods. Since the Jewish god did not leave behind offspring as the Greek gods did, his people built kinship lines and, thus, diplomatic relations by mobilizing the progeny of the patriarchs: In this way, for example, Jews and Spartans, through a distant union between a granddaughter of Abraham's with Heracles, became συγγενεῖς.<sup>9</sup>

Israel's god was famously demanding of his people, insisting that he be the sole recipient of their worship. And Jews generally do seem to have drawn the line at λατρεία, excusing themselves (to the irritation of sensitive pagans) from

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given in definition 1.a. of Bauer–Gingrich–Danker—'believe in something, *be convinced of something*'—better protects against anachronism.

- 8 When Ps 95.5 LXX hymned the gods of the nations as δαίμονες, the word seems to function in its original meaning of 'lower divinity', used comfortably as such by pagan authors as well: H. Chadwick, 'Oracles of the End in the Conflict of Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century', *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: Antiquité païenne et chrétienne* (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1984) 125–9; J. Rives, 'The Decree of Decius and the Religion of the Empire', *JRS* 89 (1999) 135–54; J. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 20. Later Christian usage made 'demons' solely evil, as they appear to be already in Paul. On the demons' status as cosmic gods, see too Augustine, *de civitate dei* 9.23.
- 9 'After reading a certain document', announces a Spartan king to the Jewish high priest, 'we have found that Jews and Lacedaemonians [Spartans] are of one γένος, and share a connection with Abraham' (1 Macc 12.21). This συγγένεια appears also in 2 Macc 5.9, and Josephus reports the same tradition, a Hellenistic Jewish fabrication, *AJ* 12.226; for the Abraham–Heracles connection, 1.240–41. For discussion see C. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1999) 72–80; and E. Gruen, 'Jewish Perspectives on Greek Culture and Ethnicity', *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2001) 361–4. Paul of course also avails himself of this idea of Abraham as 'the father of many nations', Rom 4.11–18; more confusingly, Gal 3.7–14; cf. Gen 17.5. See on this last issue S. Stowers, *Rereading Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University, 1994) 227–50.

performing public cult acts to foreign gods. But Jews of course knew that these gods existed, and that a sensible show of courtesy went far toward placating both the deity and his or her people. Moses, in Greek, had seemed to counsel handling such relations gently when he advised ‘Do not revile τοὺς θεοὺς the gods’ (Exod 22.28 LXX). Commenting on this verse, Philo remarked that such sensitivity ensured peace between Israel and the nations, ‘for reviling each other’s gods always causes war’ (*Questions and Answers on Exodus* 2.5; he goes on to note that Jews should also respect pagan rulers ‘who are of the same seed as the gods’, 2.6).<sup>10</sup> Despite pagan complaints about Jewish separateness and ‘inter-faith’ insensitivity, a wealth of epigraphical evidence supports what we also know from Hellenistic Jewish texts: many Jews acknowledged the existence of foreign gods, treated them with civility (if not with public cult), and in general fitted themselves alongside their pagan contemporaries in the god-congested universe of antiquity.<sup>11</sup>

Pagans returned the favor, acknowledging and showing respect for the god of the Jews. In the Temple before the year 66 CE, they came as tourists to Jerusalem.

10 See P. van der Horst, ‘“Thou Shalt Not Revile the Gods”: The LXX Translation of Exodus 22.28 (27), Its Background and Influence’, *Studia Philonica* 5 (1993) 1–8. Philo’s politic pragmatism contrasts sharply with the tone taken in Hellenistic Jewish apocalyptic texts, Wis 13–15; similarly, Rom 1.18–32; 1 Cor 15.24.

11 In the third century BCE, Moschos Iudaios liberated his slave at the prompting of two local gods; text and translation of Moschos’s inscription available in E. Schürer, G. Vermes *et al.*, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87) 3.65 (hereafter cited as *HJP*). Niketas of Jerusalem contributed 100 drachmas to subvene a Dionysiac festival around 150 BCE; see *HJP* 3.25. Herod’s building program of pagan (especially imperial) temples is discussed in *HJP* 1.304–11; see Josephus, *AJ* 16.136–49, who also mentions Herod’s paying for the imperial liturgies as well. On Herod’s sponsorship of the Olympic games, *AJ* 16.149. ‘To the Most High God, the Almighty, the Blessed... Pothos, son of Strabo, dedicated in the prayer-house, according to his vow, his house-bred slave Chrysa, on condition that she be unharmed and unmolested by any of his heirs, under Zeus, Gaia, and Helios’, reads a manumission inscription from the Bosphorous, mid-first century CE. The Jewish god dominates its invocation; Greek gods cluster at its close. What is the ethnicity, then, of the donor, Jewish or pagan? See I. Levenskaya, *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 111–16 (with the full text of the inscription on p. 239); also L. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale University, 2000) 113–23. M. Williams assembles translations of the ancient primary evidence for Jews as ephebes, citizens of pagan cities, members of town councils, officers in gentile armies, in *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998) 107–31. Going to the gymnasium and being a member of the ephebate meant that one was a member of the citizen body, thus with obligations to the city’s gods. The first-century CE inscriptions listing the ephebes’ names in Cyrene (Jesus son of Antiphilos and Eleazar son of Eleazar) are dedicated to the gods of the gymnasium, Hermes and Heracles, as J. Barclay notes, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, from Alexander to Trajan [323 BCE to 117 CE]* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996) 235; see too pp. 326–31 on Jewish participation in civic life.

How many? We have no way of knowing, but the lay-out of Herod's temple suggests that the numbers were high. Herod expanded the area around the old sanctuary to some thirty-five acres, enclosing it with a magnificent wall running nine-tenths of a mile along its perimeter.<sup>12</sup> Concentric courtyards of graduated size ringed the Temple's interior sacred space. The innermost court, closest to the sanctuary, was reserved for the priests; the next two, circumscribing the area, belonged respectively to Jewish men and to Jewish women. But the largest court of all, the one that surrounded these others, was the vast and beautiful Court of the Nations—an important architectural feature, I will argue shortly, for understanding a key element of Paul's gospel.

The Greek diaspora lacked Jewish temples, but it supported many Jewish assemblies. Whether designated as a συναγωγή, a προσευχή, a *collegium*, a πολίτευμα or a σύνοδος, such foundations have been recovered from Italy to Syria, from the Black Sea to North Africa. Wherever there were Jews, it seems, there were synagogues.<sup>13</sup>

No less often, interestingly, where there were synagogues, there also seem to have been pagans. Some of these pagans were patrons of synagogues and major donors to Jewish activities: spelled out in mosaics and inscribed on donor plaques, their generosity was publicly proclaimed by Jews honoring their benefactions. Interested pagans built synagogue structures or lavishly decorated their interiors; they sponsored Jewish philanthropic initiatives; they participated in Jewish prayer and study, and took part in Jewish fasts or feasts.<sup>14</sup>

12 For the physical layout of the temple and the ways that it architecturally encoded Jewish purity rules, see especially E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63 BCE–66 CE (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992) 55–76.

13 On the wide dispersion of synagogues and their archaeological remains, see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue* (exhaustively); also E. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2002) 105–32.

14 Julia Severa, a priestess in the imperial cult, was honored by an inscription for having built a synagogue; Capitolina, a wealthy woman and self-described god-fearer (θεοσεβής) furnished mosaics. On these and other pagan benefactors, Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 111, 121, 479–83; on god-fearers and proselytes in Aphrodisias, J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987). The third-century date that the authors originally assigned to the inscription has been challenged, and scholars now contemplate dates well into the Christian period: A. Chaniotis, 'The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and Old Problems', *SCI* (2002) 209–42. A later date raises the intriguing possibility that some of the non-Jewish donors might have been Christians as well as pagans. Pagan 'god-fearing' was a 'wide and loose category' (Levinskaya, *Acts in its Diaspora Setting*, 79), not a technical designation for a clearly demarcated or defined group (such as προσήλυτος would be for 'convert'). All of these studies cite numerous pertinent collections of inscriptional materials. Acts routinely depicts gentile godfearers together with proselytes and Jews in diaspora synagogues, 13.16; 14.1; 16.14; 17.1–4, etc.; on Gentiles in Alexandria joining in Jewish celebrations, e.g., Philo *Life of Moses* 2.41–42.



Scholars, repeating the language of our ancient evidence, refer to such pagans as ‘god-fearers’ or as ‘Judaizers’. The terms are elastic, which fits the imprecision of our data. Occasional pagan involvement stands at one end of a behavioral spectrum; the explicit and voluntary assumption of some Jewish customs stands at the other. The point, for our present purposes, is that all of these pagan sympathizers, to whatever degree they chose to participate in Jewish communal life, did so *as pagans*. They also continued in their native cults. No formal constraints from the Jewish side seem to have abridged what was an *ad hoc*, improvised and voluntary arrangement. And such pagan involvement in synagogue life continued well on into the Christian period: indeed, the third-century (or, perhaps, fifth-century) Christian writer Commodian complained that Jews welcomed the pagan *medius Iudaeus* into the synagogue without making the least effort to proselytize him (*Instructiones* 1. 37.1–10).<sup>15</sup>

Refusal to worship the gods was the public behavior that pagan critics universally associated with Jews. It offended them. Nonetheless, majority culture by and large tolerated this singular aspect of Jewish behavior precisely because it was a demand of the Jewish god, and was therefore ancient and ancestral. This same ancient premium on ethnic loyalty which excused Jewish non-participation in public cult, however, also fed a special category of pagan anti-Jewish hostility. Eyeing god-fearers with mockery and distrust, fellow pagans objected to their assumption of some Jewish practices, wary of where it might lead. Again, Celsus: ‘If the Jews maintained their own law, we should not find fault with them, but rather with those who have abandoned *their own traditions* and professed those of the Jews’ (*c. Celsum* 5.41). The father starts keeping the Sabbath and avoiding pork, grumbled Juvenal, and the next thing to happen is that the sons become circumcised, keep Moses’ laws and despise the laws of Rome (*Satires* 14.96–106).

Judaizing was a slippery slope. It could lead to Judaism. Pagans occasionally chose to affiliate themselves so extremely with Jewish ancestral practices that they became ex-pagans. In a culture where what we call ‘religion’ was seen as an innate, not a detachable, aspect of identity, this phenomenon scarcely made sense: it was tantamount to changing one’s ethnicity. What we term ‘conversion’ was understood by ancient contemporaries as forging a political alliance, entering the Jewish πολιτεία and, as Celsus complains, assuming foreign laws and

15 ‘Dicant illi tibi si iussum est deos adorare’, *Instructiones* 1.37.10. On god-fearers, see, exhaustively, B. Wander, *Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten* (WUNT 104; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), but cf J. Lieu, ‘The Race of the God-fearers’, *JTS* 46 (1995) 483–501; most recently, Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2007) 467–82 (‘Sympathization’ [sic]). On the continuing gentile presence (both pagan and Christian) in synagogues well into the Christian period, P. Fredriksen and O. Irshai, ‘Christian Anti-Judaism: Polemics and Policies, from the Second to the Seventh Century’, *Cambridge History of Judaism* 4 (2006) 977–1034, at 985–98.



traditions.<sup>16</sup> (For that reason, it struck some observers as a species of treason.<sup>17</sup>) Worse than turning their backs on their human kin, however, was the fact that such people also turned their backs to the gods who were theirs by birth and blood. They thereby disrupted the fundamental relationship between gods and their humans. Such behavior not only insulted the pagan community: It endangered the pagan community, because it insulted that community's gods, and angry gods made for sorry humans. Remarkably, however, pagan culture by and large accommodated contemporaries who underwent such a drastic change of status, and 'converts'—προσήλυτοι—made up some of the diaspora synagogue's population as well.<sup>18</sup> The greater number of non-natives in Jewish assemblies, however, would probably have been god-fearers. And as long as these god-fearers continued to honor their own ancestral customs and their own gods, the larger pagan urban community tolerated their honoring the Judean god, too.

With this as its context, how do we understand Paul's gospel?

## 2.

Modern scholars habitually describe Paul as a 'monotheist', and they are right to. But Paul is an *ancient* monotheist. This means that, while Paul's allegiance is firmly fastened on the god of Israel as the highest and most powerful god, Paul is perfectly aware of other gods as well. Unlike Philo, Paul is not courteous toward or about these gods: in fact he insults them, and he wants his pagans to have nothing to do with them. These gods represent Paul's cosmic opposition, and he looks forward to the day of their defeat.<sup>19</sup>

16 E.g., Philo *Special Laws* 1.51; see S. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999) 126; on conversion to Judaism more generally, pp. 140–74. Cohen's 'category 5' misdescribes 'god venerators' (i.e. god-fearers) as 'denying or ignoring all other gods', 171: on the contrary, god-fearers remained active pagans who added Israel's god to their particular pantheon. Further thoughts on the concept 'conversion' when dealing with early Judaism, P. Fredriksen, 'Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins whose Time has Come to Go', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 35/2 (2006) 231–46, at 232–7.

17 For an analysis of Juvenal's jibe, see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974) 2.94–107. The emperor Domitian executed some members of the Roman aristocracy for 'atheism', that is, for spurning their own gods on account of treasonable loyalty to 'the customs of the Jews', Dio *Roman History* 67.14,1–2. Tacitus complains that such people, abandoning *religionibus patriis*, disown their own gods, country and family, *History* 5.1–2. See further the discussions in P. Schäfer, *Judeophobia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1997) and in J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University, 1983).

18 On god-fearers and proselytes, literature cited in n. 14 above; inscriptions pertaining to these two populations may be found in Williams, *Jews Among Greeks*, 163–72.

19 In antiquity, all 'monotheists' were polytheists, because all gods existed. Ancient monotheists assumed a divine architecture, where a single god stood at the pinnacle of sanctity and power. Ancient monotheism, in other words, is about the organization of the divine realm, and not about its absolute population. On the problems with using the word 'monotheist' to describe

Meanwhile, he complains about their effects. The θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου had blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4.4; Pagans? Jews? cf. 2 Cor 3). The ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, if by this phrase Paul intends astral powers, have crucified the son of Paul's god (1 Cor 2.8). The divinities formerly worshiped by his congregations in Galatia, he says, are not 'gods by nature' but mere cosmic lightweights, στοιχεῖα unworthy of fear or worship (Gal 4.8–9: note that Paul demeans their status, but does not deny their existence). Such gods, in fact, are mere δαίμονες, subordinate deities, 'demons' (1 Cor 10.20–21). 'Indeed, there are many θεοὶ and many lords', he tells his pagans in Corinth (1 Cor 8.5–6); but soon, these lower powers, currently worshiped through images, will themselves acknowledge the god of Israel when Christ defeats them and establishes the kingdom of his father (1 Cor 15.24–27). In the End, these beings, wherever they are—above the earth or upon the earth or below the earth—will also bend their knees to Jesus (Phil 2.10).<sup>20</sup>

Paul's confidence that these gods will soon be defeated, and his efforts meanwhile to turn his pagans from them, are both aspects of his apocalyptic convictions. These were expressed in the accents peculiar to the early Jesus movement, which was itself apocalyptic. That is, the convictions and commitments of its disciples—the very way that they defined the mission and message of Jesus, made sense of his resurrection appearances and articulated beliefs about his second coming—all drew upon larger traditions of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology.<sup>21</sup> Some of those traditions addressed directly the fate of non-Jews once Israel's redemption dawned. These traditions were mixed: some negative, some positive, both sometimes appearing in the same text. But the tradition that mattered to the new movement was the one that foretold the nations' inclusion, together with a reassembled Israel, once God's kingdom dawned.<sup>22</sup>

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ancient people (be they Jews, Christians or pagans), Fredriksen, 'Mandatory retirement', 241–3. For Paul's many references to other gods, Dunn, *Theology*, 33–8.

20 For the definition of ἄρχων as a subordinate and evil divine entity, see *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed. W. Bauer, with F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979) definition 3; δύναμις, definition 6; ἐξουσία, definition 4.β; στοιχεῖα, definitions 3 and 4.

21 On the specifically apocalyptic linkage between the mission of Jesus and the later mission about him, Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 1999) 74–154 (as refracted through Paul), 261–6 (Acts).

22 For a review of both inclusive and exclusive passages, see P. Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another look at Galatians 1 and 2', *JTS* 42 (1991) 543–8, with references; on the ways that this conviction about eschatological Gentiles informs the early mission, Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 125–37 (Paul), 261–6 (original disciples). 'There simply was no unified view whatsoever on the religious status of non-Jews, either now or in the future. The range of diversity is striking', notes Donaldson, *Judaism and Gentiles*, 512. On the Gentiles' participation in Israel's eschatological salvation, see further pp. 499–507, and the quotation in n. 25 below.

This inclusive eschatological Jewish tradition about receiving pagans into the Kingdom might seem little different from the inclusive non-eschatological Jewish practice of receiving pagans into diaspora synagogues. But there was a crucial difference, one that throws the diaspora Jesus movement into sharper relief. The synagogue's προσήλυτοι were no longer pagans: they were Jews of a special kind. The synagogue's god-fearers or Judaizers, however, were 'active' pagans. Barring what we call conversion to Judaism, *all* sympathetic outsiders were pagans. They worshiped the gods native to them, however many other gods (including Israel's god) they might add on. *But the Kingdom's pagans were a special and a purely theoretical category*: they were ex-pagan pagans or (to use the wiggle-room made available by our two English words for the single Greek ἔθνη), they were ex-pagan Gentiles.<sup>23</sup> When the lord of the universe reveals himself in glory, say these Jewish apocalyptic texts, the nations will destroy their idols, repudiate their gods and worship Israel's god together with Israel.

The anticipated destruction of their idols did not imply that, at the End, these pagans converted to Judaism. Conversion entailed the full assumption of Jewish ancestral practices and especially, for men, circumcision: apocalyptic texts fall short of claiming that. In the event, the nations do *not* convert; but they do 'turn'—στρέφω with an assortment of prefixes in the Greek texts. When God redeems Israel, the nations will *turn from* the lesser gods whose images they worship and *turn to* the god of Israel. 'Turn to me!' cries God to the nations (Isa 45.22 LXX: ἐπιστρέφητε). 'All the nations will turn in fear to the Lord God... and bury their idols' (Tob 14.6; ἐπιστρέψουσιν).

But this 'turning' to Israel's god is not the same as converting to Judaism, as Paul himself insists. His pagans are not to 'become' Jews. But they are to live as if they were eschatological pagans—which, by his lights, they are. During the brief wrinkle in time between the resurrection and the Parousia, Paul's pagans are to worship only Paul's god, the god of Israel, empowered to do so by that god's risen son. 'You *turned* to God from idols, to worship the true and living god', Paul tells his Gentiles in Thessalonika, 'and to wait for his son from heaven' (1 Thess 1.9 ἐπιστρέψατε).<sup>24</sup> By being 'in Christ', these pagans are

23 Modern English uses two words, *Gentiles* and *pagans*, where the Greek only has one, τὰ ἔθνη. And the two English words have different connotations, the first connoting ethnicity (the person in question is not a Jew), the second connoting religion (the person in question is neither a Christian nor a Jew). In Paul's lifetime, however, with the exception of ex-pagan προσήλυτοι, pagans were Gentiles and Gentiles were pagans. The distinction between ethnicity and religion created by our two English words, in brief, leads to anachronism when describing the first several centuries of the spread of Christianity. For this reason, I use 'pagan' in the present essay where common usage would expect 'gentile', in order to emphasize the bond of cult and ethnicity.

24 Ἐπιστρέφω comes into Latin as *converto* (thus, at 1 Thess 1.9 *conversi estis*), and the Latin comes into English as 'conversion', completely obscuring the very important distinction

spared two kinds of divine wrath: that of their own gods, infuriated by the lack of cult; and that of the god of Israel, which ‘is coming’ (v. 10; cf. Gal 4.8–9).

Note: both in the older Jewish apocalyptic traditions and in their newer Christian refraction, the nations join *with* Israel, but they do not *join* Israel. To phrase this point in Christian theological vocabulary, you do not need to be Jewish to be saved. At the End, the human population of God’s kingdom reflects quotidian demography: Israel and the nations together worship Israel’s god.<sup>25</sup>

Paul also invokes the very Roman idea of adoption to express this distinct-but-together relationship of Israel and his Christian pagans. Roman adoption was both a legal and a religious act. Entering a new family entailed taking on obligations to new ancestors and new gods: adoption was superintended by a *pontifex*.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, adoption in Roman culture is much like ‘conversion’ was in Judaism: both represent the legal creation of kinship bonds and an adjusted pantheon. Paul, however, does not think that Christian pagans should convert to Judaism, and so he deploys this image carefully. Israel, adopted already as God’s son, descends from ‘the fathers’—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—according to the flesh; to them God has made many promises (ἐπαγγελία, Rom 9.4; cf. 15.8 ἐπαγγελία τῶν πατέρων). Pagans-in-Christ are also from Abraham’s lineage, since Abraham was the father of many nations (Gen 17.4; Rom 4.17); but they descend from Abraham *alone*, not also from Isaac and Jacob.<sup>27</sup>

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between ‘turning’ and ‘converting’ in this context. Thus Acts 15.3 rsv speaks (wrongly) of the ‘conversion of the Gentiles’ for ἐπιστροφὴν τῶν ἔθνῶν, while translating ἐπιστρέφουσιν at 15.19 (properly) as ‘Gentiles who are *turning* to God’. The argument in Acts 15 is precisely that Gentiles do not and should not need to ‘convert’ to be part of the movement, as ‘certain individuals’ urge by insisting on circumcision (15.1): the only thing to convert to at mid-first century is Judaism, since a separate ‘Christianity’ does not yet exist. See Fredriksen, ‘Mandatory Retirement’, 232–5.

25 The final pattern [of eschatological inclusion] focuses not on Gentile attitudes and activity in the present but on the possibility that a substantial number of Gentiles would turn to worship God in the eschatological future. This expectation, deeply rooted in Israel’s scriptures, did not exist in isolation but was always one aspect of a larger eschatological scenario centered on Israel itself... Israel’s self-understanding required that the final establishment of God’s glory should be universal and that the nations as well should be included in God’s purposes’, Donaldson, *Judaism and Gentiles*, 509. See too C. Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University 2007) 138, on how Paul’s logic in Rom 9–11 required that he keep these two groups, Jews and Gentiles, ‘separate but linked’.

26 On the role of the pontifex in Roman adoption, M. Beard, ‘Priesthood in the Roman Republic’, *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. M. Beard and J. North; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1990) 38. Marriage, for ancient women, also represents the legal creation of kinship and, at the same time, the crossing of a religious boundary: as Plutarch notes, ‘It is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only those gods that her husband esteems’, *Moralia* 140D.

27 But cf. Hodge, *If Sons*, 94 and passim, who reads Rom 9.7, descent through Isaac, as referring to Gentiles-in-Christ.

Because of the Spirit, however, these pagans too are now sons, heirs to the 'promise' to Abraham; like Israel, they too can now call God 'Abba. Father' (Gen 12.3; Rom 8.15; also Gal 4.6, where the spirit of Jesus effects the adoption).<sup>28</sup>

But this new kinship is *not* tantamount to 'conversion', because these Gentiles are adopted not into Israel's family, but into God's. God, not Abraham, is their 'Abba', made such not κατὰ σάρκα but κατὰ πνεῦμα. Put differently: redeemed Israel and the pagans-in-Christ together share the same heavenly father κατὰ πνεῦμα, but κατὰ σάρκα they remain distinct.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.

Paul's pagans received the divine spirit through baptism, specifically baptism into Jesus' death. The spirit also 'sanctified' these pagans. These ideas correlate to others: ideas about sacrifice, about purity and about holiness. To understand them, we have to look to their source: the rules of Leviticus, and the operation of the Temple.

All purity rules in antiquity, pagan and Jewish, describe ritual protocols which enabled the worshiper to approach and to interact with divinity.<sup>30</sup> The zone of this interaction was often around altars, and thus often had to do with sacrifices. Specifically biblical tradition governed the approach to divinity by two binary distinctions. One was the distinction between pure/impure or clean/unclean (טמא/טהור in Hebrew; καθαρός/ἀκάθαρτος in Greek). The other was the distinction between holy/profane or separated/common (קדש/שדך in Hebrew, ἅγιος/κοινός in Greek).<sup>31</sup>

28 When Paul speaks of 'the promise' in the singular, he refers to God's promise to Abraham about the redemption of the Gentiles (e.g. Gen 12.3). But, as Stanley Stowers notes, 'for Israel, there were many promises, not one. Because Romans is about gentiles, the promises peculiar to Jews bear only a mention [i.e. at 9.4 and at 15.8]... In 15.8, Paul speaks of the fathers (plural), who include Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and many others who are not fathers of the gentiles in the same way as Abraham. Only Abraham received the promise that in his seed the gentiles would be blessed. This promise does not lessen the significance of the other fathers for the Jews (9.5)', *A Rereading of Romans*, 133.

29 'Peter' in Acts 15.8–9 rsv makes this same point. 'God, who knows the human heart, testified to them [the Gentiles] by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us'. Κατὰ πνεῦμα, these Gentiles with their hearts cleansed stand together with the apostolic community, whose hearts have likewise been cleansed; κατὰ σάρκα, they remain distinct, and thus the apostolic assembly rejects the motion to require the circumcision (thus, conversion) of gentile members.

30 On pagan concepts of purity/impurity, see now R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (New York: Oxford University 1993).

31 'Pure' (καθαρός) and 'holy' (ἅγιος) are two distinct concepts, but the Greek κοινός, 'common' begins to function as a synonym for ἀκάθαρτος in some Hellenistic Jewish texts.

The pure/impure distinction refers first of all to levitical or ritual impurity, a highly contagious condition arising from certain natural bodily processes, or from contact with or even proximity to certain polluting substances or objects. Such a state was virtually unavoidable, all but universal and, finally, temporary. It implied no moral condition: the impure person was not *eo ipso* a sinful person. The remedy for this sort of impurity is purification.<sup>32</sup>

Another type of impurity resulted from certain sexual and/or cultic sins.<sup>33</sup> To distinguish it from the first kind, scholars have designated this sort of defilement as ‘moral’ or ‘figurative’ or ‘metaphorical’ or ‘spiritual’ impurity.<sup>34</sup> It did not regulate access to the Temple. It did articulate moral status. Such defilement was *not* contagious, it was volitional, and it was avoidable.<sup>35</sup> The sinner defiled not only him or herself, but also the sanctuary and the land (Lev 18.25; 20.3). The remedy for the impurity of sin is cessation of the sinful activity, repentance and a special day of purgation with its own special sacrifices, Yom Kippur (Lev 16).

A second set of biblical categories, holy/profane or separated/common (קדש/חל; Lev 10.10), also governed proximity to the sanctuary. Something ‘holy’ could be rendered ‘common’ or ‘profane’ (*pro-* before, outside; *fanes* altar). Iron tools cutting the stone of the altar, for example, would render the altar unfit (Exod 20.22). And the ordinary could be made holy, meaning ‘separated out’ from the common and dedicated to God. When choosing a perfect animal for sacrifice, for example, the worshiper would pronounce the offering קדש, thus קרבן (cf. Mark 7.11). Similarly, a Jewish groom pronounces his wife קדש לי, ‘sanctified to me’, set apart from all others for himself.<sup>36</sup>

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Thus, e.g., 1 Macc 1.62, where people refuse to eat ‘unclean’ food; Mark 7.2, 5; Acts 10.14–15; Rom 14.14. I thank my colleague Daniel Schwartz for bringing the example from 1 Macc to my attention.

32 Biblical legislation clusters at Lev 11–15 and Num 19. E. P. Sanders provides a useful table of biblical impurities together with their means of purification and the zone of affected activity, in *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990) 151.

33 Sexual, e.g., Lev 18.1–30; 20.10–21; ritual (idolatry, cultic infanticide, magic), Lev 20.1–5; Deut 7.25 and 12.29–31 (idolatry).

34 See especially A. Büchler, ‘The Levitical Impurity of the Gentile in Palestine before the Year 70’, *JQR* 17 (1926) 1–81. For the ways that ‘impurity of sin’ comes to relate specifically to pagans or paganism, J. Klawans, ‘Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism’, *AJS Review* 20/2 (1995) 285–312; C. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

35 Some late Second Temple Jewish communities, such as those represented by Jubilees and by the Dead Sea Scrolls, do treat moral impurity as contagious: see Klawans, ‘Notions’, 293–8 and the literature cited in nn. 40–60.

36 On the long history of this phrase, which goes back well into the period of the late Second Temple, see M. Kister, ‘“According to the Law of Moses and the Jews”: The History of a

The purity legislation of Torah was binding only on Jews. How does it help us to understand Jewish views of Gentiles in the Roman period? Ritual impurity seems an irrelevant category. Israel, not the nations, is the focus of this purity legislation, both in the Bible and in later rabbinic opinion.<sup>37</sup> Moral impurity presents a more complex problem. Again, the biblical legislation is directed specifically to Israel, but the warnings refer to ‘the nations’ having committed similar sins. ‘Do not defile yourself with any of these things [incest, adultery, ritual infanticide, homosexual intercourse] for *by all these things the nations that I cast out before you defiled themselves, and the land became defiled...and the land vomited them out*’ (Lev 18.24). The natives of Canaan, God seems to be saying here, had defiled themselves and the Land with this behavior. The same behaviors, imputed to pagans, routinely show up in the vice lists of Hellenistic Jewish writings, among which, emphatically, are Paul’s letters.<sup>38</sup> Pagans, in this view, would be not intrinsically impure, but functionally impure, made such by their enduring attachment to idols (not to mention their habitual indulgence in the various forms of *πορνεία* that invariably accompany idolatry in Jewish anti-pagan rhetoric, e.g., Rom 1.18–32).

But moral defilement, even that contracted through the worship of idols, is not contagious, and the lay-out of Herod’s temple underscores this fact: Jews were able to walk through the Court of the Nations on their way to their own areas without fear of defilement. (The pagan presence in the synagogue would be even less problematic, since synagogues were not sites of sacrifice, thus not regulated by purity concerns.) However, ‘though not inherently impure, Gentiles are inherently profane’<sup>39</sup>—that is, common, not separated out, when compared with Israel, the ‘holy’ nation set apart from the other nations by God for himself. Even a (theoretical) pagan who had not defiled himself with idols would still be *κοινός*, thus not suitable to be brought close to the altar of Israel’s god.

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Religious and Legal Formula’ (Hebrew), *Atara l’Haim: Studies in the Talmud and Medieval Rabbinic Literature in honor of Professor Haim Zalman Dimitrovky* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2000) 202–8. For early rabbinic comments on the biblical protocols for sanctifying an offering in Lev 1.2, see *Sifra, parasha B*, 4.

37 Sanders, *Judaism*, 156; Klawans, ‘Notions’, 302–9 on Tannaitic literature.

38 ‘The use of purity language for correct behavior and impurity terms for transgression, highly visible in Paul, is what leads so many NT scholars to confuse the entire issue’, E. P. Sanders, personal correspondence, 6/29/09. For Paul’s lists of Gentile vices, see, e.g., Rom 1.18–31; cf. Gal 5.19–21, there as ‘works of the flesh’; 1 Cor 6.9–11 (personal, not abstract nouns: ‘idolators, adulterers, sexual perverts...and such were some of you’); cf. 1 Thess 4.4–6. For a discussion of such vice lists in Hellenistic Jewish literature, E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 49; on Paul’s lists, see the chart in Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 662–3.

39 Klawans, ‘Notions’, 292, cf. 298.



Paul's letters are shot through with the language of sanctuary, sacrifice, purity and holiness. Alas, much of it is confusing. His efforts to describe Christ as a sort of sacrifice defy clarity. Paul's reference to Christ as a paschal lamb in 1 Cor 5.7 is less Christological than hortatory: in this passage, he urges his pagans to cleanse themselves of the leaven of pride in view of the fact that the (metaphorical) holiday of Passover is already underway. The paschal image, in other words, refers to Jewish time-keeping, not to a sacrificial death on the part of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5.21 and Rom 8.3, Christ as  $\eta\kappa\sigma\tau\iota/\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$  or as  $\pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ , also seem confusing, especially if scholars have rightly understood the Temple's own dynamics of purity: sin sacrifices cleanse the sancta, not the sinner.<sup>40</sup> The  $\acute{\iota}\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  of Rom 3.25, finally, is a sacrifice of expiation; but again, the image is extremely confusing (and, I think, confused). In Leviticus, the sacrifice is brought by penitent humans; in Romans, it is God who brings Jesus. The closest analogy to a sacrifice in Paul's time that would bear away the sinner's sin would be the scapegoat of Yom Kippur. But Paul nowhere uses this image and, besides—a nod to the eucharistic traditions—you do not eat scapegoats.<sup>41</sup>

By comparison, Paul's language of  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$  with respect to his pagans-in-Christ, and his representations of his own work as priestly service, are surprisingly clear, as is his reference to the rituals of Jerusalem's temple that serve as his template. His Thessalonian pagans, for example, having turned from their idols to the living and true god, have attained  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ : the RSV translates 'sanctification', but we should equally understand 'separation' or 'dedication'. These Christian pagans, through their cleaned up ritual and sexual behavior, are separated from or distinguished from the other pagans, the ones who do not know God (1 Thess 4.4–5). Those who *do* know God have been called 'not to impurity'—the moral consequence of idolatry and porneia—but 'in holiness' (v. 7). Elsewhere, Paul simply refers to these ex-pagan pagans as 'holy ones' ( $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\iota$ , RSV 'saints' Rom 1.7; 1 Cor 1.2). They have been made holy—or separated, or dedicated to God—by God, through the spirit, in Christ (1 Cor 1.2).

We should hear Paul's language of purity, separation and sanctification in terms of the biblically based binary pairs  $\tau\alpha\mu\alpha/\eta\sigma\epsilon$  and  $\eta\lambda/\psi\kappa$  that govern access to the sanctuary in Jerusalem. Thanks to God's spirit (or to Jesus' spirit), these

40 Thus J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday 1991), 254–8. J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University, 2000) 3–20 offers a succinct review of various scholarly perspectives.

41 Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 212–23 labors to transform the intrinsic messiness of Paul's sacrificial references into coherence, but a confused account of Jewish blood offerings, and of Paul's metaphorical usages of them, nonetheless emerges. See, e.g., his attribution of an atoning function to the corban Pesach, p. 217; his imputation of 'sinlessness' to the sacrificial animal, *loc. cit.* and again p. 221, while conjuring the Yom Kippur offering as well. As J. Klawans notes, the sacrificial animal is neither sinful nor sinless, neither 'innocent or guilty. The animal is food', *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple* (New York: Oxford University, 2006) 44.

pagans have been separated out from their fellows, adopted into God's family, cleansed to participate in the eucharistic sacrifice of Christ—1 Corinthians 10 elaborates this whole set of ideas.<sup>42</sup> When speaking of God's spirit, Paul likens his pagans to the Jerusalem temple: 'Don't you know that you are God's temple, for God's spirit dwells in you?... For God's temple is ἄγιος, as you are' (1 Cor 3.16). 'Your body is a temple of the holy spirit' (6.19). 'We are the temple of the living god' (2 Cor 6.16).

NT scholars will sometimes point to these verses by way of arguing that, for Paul, Jerusalem's temple has been superseded by this new, spiritual 'temple' of the Christian community. I argue the opposite: Paul praises the new community by likening it to something that he values supremely. If he valued the temple less, he would not use it as his touchstone.<sup>43</sup> This is not an either/or situation: for Paul, God's spirit dwells *both* in Jerusalem's temple *and* in the 'new temple' of the believer and of the community (Rom 9.4; cf. Matt 23.21).

The second half of Romans, I think, particularly works against an either/or view of God's in-dwelling spirit. The sanctity, dignity and probity of the Temple cult provides the inclusio that shapes the second half of the letter, from 9.4 to 15.16–27, where Paul likens his own mission to the Temple service. The RSV's famously bloodless translation of Paul's Greek terms masks Paul's Temple imagery in 9.4, where δόξα/כבוד speaks precisely of God's glorious presence in Jerusalem's sanctuary, and λατρεία/עבודה refers to the cult of offerings enacted there. Chapters 9 through 15 move from Jerusalem to Jerusalem, where Paul anticipates performing his own priestly work, 'sacrificing' God's good news,

42 On Paul's analogy of eucharist to sacrifice in this passage, Klawans notes how Paul draws a contrast 'between proper worship on the one hand and idolatry on the other. This contrast—which is drawn elsewhere (1 Cor 8.4–6, 13; 2 Cor 6.16)—is instructive, and it allows us to juxtapose the picture of early Christian worship in a Pauline, Diaspora community with Acts' picture of the apostles' [temple] worship in Jerusalem. In Acts 2, we are presented with a picture of early Christians performing both Eucharistic and sacrificial rituals. In 1 Cor 10, we are presented with a different picture: that of Gentile Christians in Corinth who do not have the option of performing sacrificial rites and Eucharistic rites. Jewish sacrificial devotion outside of Jerusalem is out of the question. Other local forms of sacrifice are equally out of the question, because they are idolatrous. And what is Paul's message? That early [Gentile] Christians must choose one or the other: it's either idolatry or the worship of God, either sacrifice or eucharist... [But] Paul himself did not articulate a broadly antisacrificial perspective. In his view, the Jewish cult is proper and effective, though it refers primarily to the people of Israel (cf. Rom 9.4). *The sacrificing that he does reject...is idolatry*. But to a Gentile in the Diaspora, rejecting all sacrifice but the Jerusalem cult is little different from rejecting all sacrifice whatsoever. The origin of the idea that the eucharist is a replacement for sacrifice is likely to be found in this kind of social reality, among those who—unlike the disciples in Jerusalem—actually had to choose between two distinct options: eucharist *or* sacrifice', *Purity*, 221 (emphasis original).

43 So similarly F. W. Horn, 'Paulus und der Herodianische Tempel', *NTS* 53 (2007) 184–203, esp. 191 and (with reference to supposed traditions emanating from Stephen and the Hellenists), p. 196.

presenting ‘the offering of [his] pagans’, now acceptable because they have been set apart/made holy by the holy spirit.<sup>44</sup> His pagans, through Christ, have moved from wrong ritual—the worship of idols—to right ritual, the worship of the true god. They are thus fit for intimate contact with the divine.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4.

What conclusions can we draw from this very quick survey of Paul’s mission and message?

1. First, we should not be tricked by the pagan complaints about Jewish ἀμιξία (separateness) or μισόξενος βίος (‘foreigner-hating lifestyle’). Learned Graeco-Roman ethnic stereotyping routinely leveled such accusations of anti-social behavior at foreigners.<sup>46</sup> The specifically anti-Jewish material looms large in the extant evidence because the later church incorporated and amplified those traditions so much; and often, NT scholars repeat these accusations of clannishness and separateness to explain tensions between Christian and non-Christian Jews (with Paul serving on both sides of the fence). But as the rich and variegated literary remains of Hellenistic Jewish culture and as the plenitude of inscriptions attest, Jews vigorously participated in majority culture socially, politically and intellectually: in many ways, *except for their general refusal to participate in public pagan cult*, Jews were *not* all that separate.<sup>47</sup> A high degree of social integration coexisted with religious—better, ethnic—distinctiveness.

2. We often read that, through the gospel, Paul came to see the wrong-headedness of Israel’s ‘covenant distinctiveness’. Christian Gentiles and Christian Jews, in this view, together comprise a ‘new Israel’, where no such distinctions obtain. (Gal 3.28 is often pressed into service here.) This *vetus Israel/verus Israel* contrast is not native to Paul’s thinking.<sup>48</sup> Paul, further, continuously

44 εἰς τὸ εἶναι με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱεουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἔθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (Romans 15.16). On Paul’s vocabulary here see further Horn, ‘Paulus und der Tempel’, 200–201.

45 The Temple instantiates such intimacy. Horn, commenting on Paul’s conceptual breakthrough in Romans—Paul’s using priestly language to describe his mission and Temple imagery to describe pagan Christians—rightly observes, ‘Damit ist der Tempel wohl noch jüdischer boundary marker gegenüber den Heiden, er wächst aber doch zugleich in der Rolle eines identity marker für Juden, Judenchristen und Heidenchristen’, ‘Paulus und der Tempel’, 203; cf. also 201 n. 65.

46 Isaac, *Invention of Racism*, 324–500 provides a superb overview of ancient ethnic stereotyping; on Jews in particular, pp. 440–91. He notes that ‘Christian activity is responsible for the preservation of a good deal of ancient source material on Jews that is not available for other ethnic groups in antiquity’, p. 441.

47 See esp. Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2001).

48 Against this traditional (mis)interpretation of Paul as envisioning two Israels, one ethnic and fleshly, the other spiritual and saved, see Hodge, *If Sons*, 102.

draws distinctions between Israel and the nations ('the Jew first and also the Greek').<sup>49</sup> The divinely granted promises, privileges and prerogatives of Israel, 'the gifts and the call of God', abide forever (Rom 11.29). This distinction between Israel and the nations, and these convictions about God's constancy, shape the most programmatic discussion that we have from Paul, namely his letter to the Romans. Like other apocalyptically minded Jews of his era, Paul too held that the Kingdom's demography would reflect then what the world holds now: Jews and Gentiles, Israel and the nations.<sup>50</sup>

The 'saved Israel' of Rom 11.26 came to refer exclusively to Christians only in the second century, once later theologians, re-reading the Septuagint and relinquishing Paul's vision of a fast-approaching eschatological resolution, referred the promises of Israel to their own churches.<sup>51</sup> But for Paul, the hardening of Israel, which enables the mission to the Gentiles, is providential and temporary (Rom 11.25–26), while for Augustine, for example, it is punitive and permanent. The bishop accordingly must re-define 'Israel': 'all Israel' that is saved must become *Christian* Israel, the 'Israel' of the church (e.g. *ep.* 149.2, 19). But for Paul, 'Israel' always means his 'kinsmen according to the flesh—they are Israel' (Rom 9.4). The distinction of the covenant, and of the promises to the forefathers, remain. Romans ends with the Gentiles rejoicing 'with God's people' (Rom 15.10).

3. The Temple remains absolutely central, driving all of Paul's messy metaphors for Jesus' death as a sacrifice. No less importantly, it also supplies the chief terms by which Paul conceptualizes the incorporation of his pagans-in-Christ into Israel's redemption. The language of 'sanctification' means that these pagans have been separated out and, through the spirit, dedicated to God. (That also means that there is nothing intrinsically problematic for Paul about distinctiveness or separateness: that is how election works.) Paul's temple imagery; his way of speaking about offerings; his distinguishing between types of Gentiles as either  $\psi\kappa$  or  $\eta$ , ἄγιος or κοινός; his condemnation of pagan cult; his insistence on their worshiping Israel's god alone<sup>52</sup>—in and through all these ways, Paul demands that his pagans Judaize.

49 Hodge considers this motif in detail, *If Sons*, 137–53.

50 For a similar conclusion based on different arguments, see M. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

51 Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 41–78 traces this turn in second-century Christian rhetoric and theology with particular reference to Justin and to Tertullian. M. Simon, *Verus Israel* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986; orig. pub. 1948), though now dated, remains essential.

52 Gods too are ethnic in antiquity, and Israel's god is no exception. The scope of his activities may be universal, and he interacts with whichever humans he will (see e.g., Amos 9.7 for Philistines, and Arameans; so too Rom 3.29); but he is no non-historical, universal high god such as we see in much later middle- and late Platonism (e.g. in Sallustius's Περὶ Θεῶν καὶ κόσμου). Paul's god, 'the god of the Gentiles also' (Rom 3.29), remains emphatically the god of the patriarchs, the promises, the prophets and the scriptures: in brief, the god of

4. Finally, we should see clearly what Paul is asking of his pagans, and what (so far as we know) absolutely all of the apostles in the early years of this messianic movement were demanding of their gentile followers: No λατρεία to native gods.<sup>53</sup> This was not an ethical demand so much as a *ritual* demand. More than this—as Paul surely knew—it was specifically a *Judaizing* demand.<sup>54</sup> The Jesus movement, out of apocalyptic conviction, required its Gentiles to enact precisely that behavior that majority culture (and Jews as well) associated universally and exclusively with Jews: to foreswear public sacrifice. Born Jews had been the occasional object of pagan resentment because of this behavior; proselytes that much more so. But when fellow pagans also began to disrespect the gods, this went too far, and the gods' people struck back. It is from this population—the deviant pagans of the Jesus movement—that the martyrs would come.<sup>55</sup>

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Jewish history (Rom 15.8). In pronouncing God's oneness at Rom 3.29, Paul invokes the *Sh'ma* as he recaps his mission. Precisely in and through its ineradicable Jewishness, Paul's gospel brings the good news of universal redemption.

- 53 The book of Acts, written c. 100 CE, offers a vivid and realistic description of early responses to this socially disruptive message. Itinerant apostles were actively repudiated by synagogues, run out of town by irate gentile citizens, and occasionally punished by cautious Roman authorities attempting to keep the peace. In the thirties and forties CE, this unprecedented and disruptive policy of separating pagans-in-Christ from their native cults gives the measure of the apocalyptic mind-set, and indeed of the time-frame, of the earliest apostles. Christ would return soon; all would be finally resolved. While, notoriously, Acts conforms to and confirms neither the chronology implicit in Paul's letters, nor indeed Paul's own view of his mission as exclusively to Gentiles, both Paul and Acts cohere in their presentation of this early urban response. Thus, Paul lists his woes, variously inflicted by Jews, by pagans, and specifically by Romans, in 2 Cor 4.8–9; 6.4–5; 11.24–26. Cf. Acts 13.50; 14.2, 4–6, 19; 16.20–24 (in v. 21, pagans complain to magistrates about Paul and Silas: 'They are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to adopt or observe'); 17.5–9; 18.12–17 before Gallio in Corinth; 19.23–41 the tumult in Ephesus.
- 54 Paul had condemned Cephas for trying to force pagans in Antioch to Judaize (ἰουδαῖζειν, Gal 2.14), in that context meaning to assume ancestral Jewish food practices (2.12). Worshiping the god of Israel and him alone, however, while a uniquely Jewish behavior in the quotidian, was for Paul the eschatological destiny of all humanity (e.g. Rom 11.25–35): on this point, speaking to his pagans, his eschatological perspective overtakes their quotidian circumstances. Besides, using the term would have only contributed to confusion: it normally referred either to proselytism (full 'conversion') or to god-fearing (adding the Jewish god to a pagan pantheon), both of which Paul not only does not endorse, but actually condemns (conversion to Judaism, Galatians, passim; god-fearing, e.g., 1 Cor 5.11). In brief, common usage prohibited his employing the term positively in the context of his mission.
- 55 On pagans-in-Christ foreswearing traditional sacrifices, see also M. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 257–71. On the persecution of pagan Christians not because they were Christian but because they were deviant pagans, thus sure to anger the gods, T. Barnes, 'Legislation against the Christians', *JRS* 58 (1968) 32–50; F. Millar, 'The Imperial Cult and the Persecutions', *Le culte des souverains*

This insistence that none other than the god of Israel be worshiped ultimately came from the first table of the Law. It was defining; it was non-negotiable; it was uniquely Jewish. For all of the reasons reviewed above, then, but most especially for this one, the last way we should describe Paul's gospel to the Gentiles is to say that it was 'Law-free'.

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*dans l'empire Romain* (Entretiens Hardt vol. XIX; Vandoeuvres: Geneva, 1973) 145–75; Lane Fox, *Pagans*, 419–34. Dressing pagan Christians in the arena as characters from classical mythology both amused the crowd and, perhaps, assuaged insulted gods, K. Coleman, 'Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments', *JRS* 80 (1990) 44–73. On the links between the synagogues' 'persecution' of Christian Jews and majority culture's persecution of Christian pagans see also M. Goodman, 'The Persecution of Paul by Diaspora Jews', *The Beginnings of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2005) 376–87; also Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 79–98.