

KARL OLAV SANDNES

Paul Perceived

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament
412*

Mohr Siebeck

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Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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412



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Paul Perceived

An Interactionist Perspective on
Paul and the Law

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

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1 Introduction

1.1 *Voices of Others Matter!*

Pauline scholars are accustomed to distinguishing sharply between authentic and disputed letters, between Paul's own texts and those of a Pauline tradition, and not to say those in which he figures in texts composed by others (the Acts of the Apostles). The assumption is, of course, that only Paul matters when his theology is to be portrayed. The present study proceeds from the conviction that views, ideas, identity, and theology are a mixed bag of internal as well as external influences. Hence, voices of *others* are likely to mirror Paul's theology, since they contributed to its fashioning, albeit exaggerations and misunderstandings may be at work as well. Nonetheless, scholarship on Paul's theology cannot limit itself to the "real" Paul – the epistolary Paul anyway – since that would cut us loose from his earliest interpreters.

Present-day scholars are trafficking in the business of commenting on Paul's theology. This business is old, probably as old as the apostle's own letters. For in Paul's letters, embedded sayings are found (i.e., voices critical of him, or voices developing his thoughts further, or voices Paul wants to refute). His letters are *dialogical* in nature.¹ An example may be 1 Cor 15:12 (cf. 2 Tim 2:18): "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say (λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες) there is no resurrection of the dead?" Within Paul's text, a citation is embedded here, or at least, the essentials of a view held by *some* Corinthian converts form the subtext of what Paul says.² From this, we gather that dialogues concerning Paul's theology developed more or less *simultaneously* with its coming into being.

Among the writings included in the New Testament, instances are found where Paul is commented upon, even by the mentioning of his name. Well-known is 2 Pet 3:14–16; addressing Christian churches universally, he speaks of Paul as one who, at times, is known to be hard to understand.³ In some other

¹ We are reminded of the textbook written by Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (London: SCM, 1975), which has appeared in several later editions.

² See Douglas A. Campbell, *Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 540–41 for voices of others in Paul's letters, labelled "multiple textual voices and hidden transcripts."

³ See Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum: Das Bild des Apostels und die*

writings, Paul may be targeted without being mentioned. A possible example is Jude 4, in which the issue is the perverting of grace (χάρις) into licentiousness.⁴ Even more important is Jas 2:20–26, which is dense with terms that bring to mind Paul’s teachings on justification by faith and Abraham in Galatians and Romans.⁵ The two last instances revolve around law and issues pertaining to that. There are also texts which by present-day scholarship have been seen to engage Paul, such as the Gospel of Matthew (see below). Although these texts are not the focus of this investigation, they nevertheless prove the existence of a “Pauline debate” regarding issues on our agenda.

The present study investigates how Paul was regarded by others who commented upon his preaching and teaching, with particular reference to the law and issues pertaining to it. How Paul was perceived by others is, therefore, the lead to be followed in this study. I claim that present-day Pauline scholarship has not paid sufficient attention to this perspective. My sources are, therefore, embedded voices within Paul’s letters, and in addition, the Acts of the Apostles. By “issues pertaining to the law,” I mean topics such as works, faith, justification, circumcision, law, and Israel. With these issues, we are in the midst of the volcano in present-day Pauline scholarship, which are associated with the emergence of the so-called “New Perspective” and the “Radical New Perspective,” or better, “Paul within Judaism” (for these categories, see below). The discussion of these interrelated issues is simply immense. However, looking at them from their asides (i.e., from the perspective of how Paul was *perceived*) may shed some new light on long-standing discussions on Paul and the Torah.

Two citations will help situate this study in its relevance for Pauline studies. According to Michael Wolter, inquiries into Paul’s identity and his relationship with Judaism must distinguish between Paul’s perception of himself on the one hand, and

the perception of others from the side of his non-Christian Jewish contemporaries on the other hand. Furthermore, one can also inquire about an *outside perspective*: How did non-Jewish and non-Christians people perceive Paul? What identity was ascribed to him from their side?⁶

Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion (BHT 58; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 91–97; Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco: TX: Word Books, 1983), 326–35; Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus* (THKNT 15/II; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 354–63.

⁴ Similar allegations against Paul appear in texts to be treated later in the present study.

⁵ See Dale C. Allison Jr., “Jas 2:14–26: Polemic against Paul, Apology for James,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt and Joseph Verheyden (NTOA 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 123–49; for an extensive discussion see his *James: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 425–508.

⁶ Michael Wolter, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Waco, TX.: Baylor University Press, 2015), 428. The italics are Wolter’s.

This insight is important for working out the path to be taken in the present study. John M. G. Barclay has formulated this very succinctly:

In relation to Paul and the question of his “apostasy,” it is a mistake to pay too much heed to what he claims about himself. Discussions of this topic frequently revolve around Paul’s assertions of his Jewishness, citing such passages as 2 Cor. 11.22 or Rom. 11.1 where Paul proudly proclaims his Jewish identity. Every Jew in the Graeco-Roman world had in fact a triple identity: what he thought himself to be, what other Jews thought him to be and what non-Jews thought him to be. It is not difficult to decide which form of identity was socially determinative among Diaspora Jews. What counted here in terms of social and historical outcome was not what Paul himself thought, but how other Jews regarded him. Paul may have thought of himself as a loyal Jew and he may have been regarded as such by non-Jews, but if the Jewish communities in the places where he worked considered him an apostate, their verdict was what was decisive in social terms.⁷

Barclay goes on to say that it makes no sense to ask if Paul was an apostate, as though to suggest “that Paul can be measured on some absolute and objective scale.”⁸ This issue and related ones can only be answered with reference to *who* makes the judgment and in what context. The citations given above point to the importance of an outside perspective, claiming that this is needed in order to come to terms with Paul’s theology. How things are *perceived* is by no means irrelevant for understanding a phenomenon.⁹ The question as to whether Paul was a founder of a new religion, an apostate,¹⁰ or an apostle within Judaism by necessity implies how his theology and message were *responded* to, and also that the responses shaped how his theology ended up. Hence, the voices to be scrutinized here are not only responsive; they also *contributed* to the making of Paul’s theology. In other words, the views held about him, his message, and the groups loyal to him are equally important for how Paul came to be understood and how Christianity – certainly an anachronistic label – gradually came into being. A complexity of reasons, among which Paul *and* respondents are important, is thus assumed here. Patrick Gray has put this in a provocative way, claiming that if anyone is responsible for the founding of Christianity, “perhaps it should be those Jews who, quite reasonably, determined that the teaching of Paul and other ‘Christian’ writers threatened to stretch Judaism to the breaking

⁷ John M. G. Barclay, “Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostasy,” *JSNT* 60 (1995): 113.

⁸ Barclay, “Paul among Diaspora Jews,” 112. Stephen Westerholm, *Law and Ethics in Early Judaism and the New Testament* (WUNT 383; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 14 asks “... when we ask whether Paul remained within Judaism, after whose view of Paul *and* Judaism are we inquiring: his own, that of his contemporary, non Christ-believing Jews, or that of modern scholars?”

⁹ One is reminded of the title “*To See Ourselves as Others See Us*”: *Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Fredericks (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 223.

point and thus warranted ostracism.”¹¹ A responsive perspective is in line with how so-called interactionists within the field of sociology think of deviance. People’s reactions are crucial for understanding how a phenomenon comes into being and how it is labelled.¹² The outside perspective of the present study is primarily how other Christ-followers and fellow Jews came to see Paul’s view on the Torah and related issues.

1.2 An Interactionist Perspective: “Multiple Identities,” “Others,” and Rumors

Our topic on the law and pertaining issues is due to the role occupied by law in ancient Jewish sources, which is intimately associated with questions of identity.¹³ Hence, social theory and the role played by “others” have a bearing upon our investigation. Building on Henri Tajfel and his work on social identity and self-categorization, social theorists emphasize the importance of *relations* for the development of identity.¹⁴ This also puts the views of others up front in Pauline studies. The driving force in defining “who Paul was” is intimately involved with his theology on the Mosaic Law as well as the practices following from that. How identity and law are intertwined has been sufficiently demonstrated by the works of “New Perspective” scholars (see chap. 1.3) with their emphasis on how law and ethnicity are entangled. The complexity of this process of identity includes more than delving into what Paul says on this issue, since social identity develops in *relation* to others, be they friends or foes. Identity does not exist as something independent and fixed but is a product of socialization; that is, it is dependent on persons and circumstances with which one *interacts* in various ways. Identity issues are, therefore, always complex and dialogical in nature. Hence, we speak about “multiple identities,” depending on the perspective. Aaron Kuecher says that ethnic identities are not always salient, as “all humans possess multiple social identities.”¹⁵ He makes reference to *Flacc.*

¹¹ Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 132.

¹² See, for example, Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg, *Deviance: An Interactionist Perspective* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2008).

¹³ Thus also Anders Runesson, “Entering a Synagogue with Paul: First-Century Torah Observance,” in *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, ed. Susan J. Wendel and David M. Miller (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 11–26.

¹⁴ See Philip F. Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 13–39 and Andrew D. Clarke and J. Brian Tucker, “Social History and Social Theory in the Study of Social Identity,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 41–58.

¹⁵ Aaron Kuecher, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social*

45–46, where Philo speaks of the identity of Diaspora Jews, consisting of a nexus of Jerusalem and the Diaspora homeland. As for Paul, 1 Cor 7:17–24¹⁶ and his epistle to Philemon¹⁷ work likewise. These passages disclose the existence of multiple identities at work simultaneously; an in-Christ identity is intertwined with cultural, social, and ethnic identities.

According to Aaron Kuecher, “while nested identities can create a complex nexus of identity, an individual’s most basic social identity is his or her *terminal identity*. This social identity orients other lower-level identities and can be conceived as the answer to the question, ‘Who are my people?’”¹⁸ Kuecher’s distinction here between higher- and lower-level identities brings to mind William S. Campbell’s distinction between primary and secondary identities in Pauline studies (see later).¹⁹ Furthermore, conflict is an important aspect of any process of identity formation.²⁰ Hence, in the words of Richard Jenkins, “at the boundary we discover what we are in what we are not.”²¹ Thus, the “others” – be they fellow Christ-believers or fellow Jews – become an intrinsic part of how Paul’s identity, and along with that, his theology on the law were shaped.

It may be helpful to view the present study’s interest in the “others” from an interactionist perspective, which has become so important in the field of sociology and which has proved helpful in understanding a phenomenon such as deviance.²² This study does not depend upon a penetrating theory, but picks up on some common insights established by such theories. Meaning is a product of interacting with people; it is perspectival and societal. This is the obvious link to my interest in “others” in the Pauline tradition. Reactions and responsive actions are decisive for understanding a phenomenon. Hence, interpretation

Identity in the New Testament, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 72.

¹⁶ See pp. 47–50 in this study.

¹⁷ See J. Brian Tucker, “Paul’s Particular Problem—The Continuation of Existing Identities in Philemon,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. B. Tucker and C. A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 401–24.

¹⁸ Kuecher, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” 73.

¹⁹ William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (T&T Clark Biblical Studies; New York: T&T Clark 2008), 156–58.

²⁰ Kuecher, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” 72–75; see also Bengt Holmberg, “Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 14–15; see also Mikael Tellbe, “Identity and Prayer,” in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 15–17.

²¹ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 79.

²² John M. G. Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy: Some Applications of Deviance Theory to First-Century Judaism and Christianity,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 115–18. This perspective draws on a theoretical framework laid down by, for example, George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1934). The so-called “Definitive Edition” of his now classic work appeared in 2015.

and perspective become crucial. Several levels of explanations are necessary to explain identity and behavior. For this reason, it is not sufficient to delve into “how Paul saw it.” Interactions have a shaping effect. With regard to the present study, this means that Paul’s theology is shaped by “others,” who also depend on what they claim to know or have heard about him and his teachings. This sheds light on the dialogical nature of Paul’s epistles.

Engaging embedded dicta in Paul’s epistles, we become involved in an informal level of information circulating among converts, adversaries, and synagogues. This means that categories such as rumor and gossip are relevant for understanding what we are aiming at. In her study on the Pastoral Epistles, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow has worked out how rumor and gossip are related.²³ Both refer to “evaluative talk.” Rumor is the most appropriate term in the present study, although the two are not to be separated. Rumors convey and disseminate informal pieces of information. They are mostly anonymous and are circulated without any control. There is a certain hybridity to them, as they consist of twisted or interpreted facts. Rumors often come with a troubling effect upon those whom they are about. Hence, they are weapons in a protest aimed at preserving an established order. The destabilizing potential of rumors may be illustrated with Tacitus’s narrative about the fire in Rome during the reign of Nero (*Ann.* 15.44.3–4). Due to sinister rumors, the Emperor had to take action and decided to blame the Christians who lived in the city.

Jean-Noël Kapferer has investigated the idea of rumors, calling them “the oldest media in the world.”²⁴ According to Kapferer, rumors are an important source of knowledge, particularly since they are “anti-establishment.”²⁵ In the texts under scrutiny in this study, “anti-establishment” is not easily defined. The rumors present in Paul’s letters owe more to established opinions²⁶ than the reverse, but Paul *makes* them in his presentation and refutation “anti-establishment.” With reference to Jean-Noël Kapferer, Claire Clivaz says that “[i]n Paul’s letters the theme of rumors and its effects occur several times.”²⁷ She notices

²³ Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (BZNW 164; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), see 48, 53, 71–73, 89, 112–14, 206–207 in particular. Kartzow considers words of the Greek root *φλῶμα* as most important, although she does not restrict herself to this. Words of this root do not appear in the letters addressed in the present study. Kartzow’s emphasis on gendered speech makes this a natural focus. Gender is not an issue in the present study.

²⁴ This renders the title of his book, *Rumeurs: Le Plus Vieux Media du Monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

²⁵ Kapferer, *Rumeurs*, 22, 25.

²⁶ See chapter 5 in this study.

²⁷ Claire Clivaz, “Rumour: A Category for Articulating Self-Portraits and Reception of Paul: For They Say, ‘His Letters are Weighty ... But His Speech is Contemptible’ (2 Corinthians 10.10),” in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul’s Claim upon Israel’s Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters*, ed. David P. Moessner et al. (LNTS 452; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 272–74.

three examples: Gal 1:23; 2 Cor 10:9–10, and other texts in which the rumors of 2 Cor 10 are found, revolving around the issue of boldness and weakness that accompanied his ministry. Clivaz rightly points out that the rumors preceded Paul’s interacting with them in his letters. This is the area that the present study embarks upon, with the Torah as the governing theme.

According to Howard S. Becker, deviance is a consequence of others applying rules and sanctions to an offender. In other words, reaction is everything, not the act itself. References are not made to any given norms, but to reaction.²⁸ Becker’s point is helpful in this study as it theoretically highlights the importance of others. However, his point that deviance is only a matter of labelling, without involving given norms, needs some qualification in a Jewish discourse revolving around the Torah, which by its very nature gives regulations to be obeyed. Albeit, the continuous need for interpreting this norm forms part of the discourse.

In this light, the views of others become highly relevant in a study pertaining to Paul and the Torah. Who Paul was is also a product of how he was perceived. Hence, four perspectives on Paul are relevant in his portrayal:

- Paul himself (the so-called “real” Paul; in practice, the epistolary Paul)
- Fellow Christ-believers, be they Jews or Gentiles
- Fellow Jews
- Greeks or Romans

Within the framework of this study, the second and third will be emphasized. In a study focusing on the Torah, the perspectives of Greeks and Romans for natural reasons have less significance, although Acts 18:12–17 about Gallio’s judgment will come into play.²⁹

Thus, the present study delves into the responses that Paul and his theology received. I am not organizing these voices into a harmonious choir; they do not make up distinct groups of people, as they are separated in both time and space. There will be no attempt to organize the sources group-wise, as though we knew what sources belonged historically together. What is at stake is primarily to establish early perceptions of Paul and the Torah, and to see if some currents do appear. The question that will resonate throughout is this: Are issues high on the agenda of present-day Pauline scholarship recognizable when Paul is seen through the eyes of his earliest respondents?

The aim of the present study is thus to look into the epicenter of Pauline scholarship. To put it very simply, how did Paul appear to others, be they fellow Jews or other Christ-believers? Clearly, these voices, whether explicit or not, are

²⁸ Howards S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 9.

²⁹ See pp. 194–98 in the present study.

not sources of Paul's theology as such. They may well be exaggerations, polemically developed statements, or simply misunderstandings or caricatures. For sure, they are *fragmentary* vis-à-vis Paul's theology in general. Nonetheless, they are relevant, since rarely, nothing comes from nothing. They may, in an indirect way, serve to illuminate aspects of Paul's theology, simply because they indicate how aspects of his theology were perceived. From this follows that the perspectives of "others," even if partial, might serve a critical end toward present-day Pauline scholarship.

This study belongs within reception criticism of Paul's theology. Traces of how Paul was perceived are found in the Pauline tradition as it emerges in the so-called Deuteropauline epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, Ignatius, Acts of Paul, and Irenaeus, to mention just a few. This study proceeds from the fact that the reception of Paul has its beginnings during his own time, witnessed in the dialogical nature of many passages in his letters and in actions taken against him by contemporaries. In other words, the focus is on a reception that is *simultaneous* to Paul (found in his letters) or chronologically not too distant from him (found in the Acts of the Apostles). Hence, reception here is not identical with the Pauline legacy, as the term is often used.³⁰ The "original" is not untouched by the responses received, and it is itself a result of its reception. Implied is that reception in this study is a simultaneous phenomenon. In fact, there is no Paul from whom this reception can be removed, because the reception partly made him become the epistolary Paul. As for the Acts of the Apostles, this is naturally different. What is then the present-day context of scholarship that lends significance to such a study? What is the backdrop against which it is apposite to undertake this investigation? The answer to that question is the recent developments of Pauline studies on the law and pertaining issues. To that we now turn.

1.3 From Founder of Christianity to Apostolic Judaism: Pauline Scholarship – A Sketch

According to Adolf von Harnack, Paul "delivered the Christian religion from Judaism."³¹ He was the true founder of Christianity, a new religion separated from Judaism, which, at best, was a forerunner preparing the way for Christianity. Numerous assumptions on hotly debated issues in the Pauline letters are at

³⁰ See, for example, Jens Schröter, "Kirche im Anschluss an Paulus: Aspekte der Paulusrezeption in der Apostelgeschichte und in den Pastoralbriefen," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 77–104, who uses the term "Erbe des Paulus" throughout. Daniel Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters* (WUNT 310; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1–21, defines reception history as "Paul after Paul"; it is *subsequent* to the *original*. My perspective on "reception" in this study differs from such definitions.

³¹ Quoted from the excerpts of *The Founder of Christianity* (ET 1901), collected in *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1972), 302–308.

work in this conclusion. Most importantly, Paul's critique of the law forms the nexus between Paul and von Harnack's view on how Christianity separated from Judaism. Precisely, this topic is the gist of many controversies in present-day Pauline studies.

As we now proceed to providing a sketch of Pauline scholarship on the Torah and relevant issues, it may be helpful to keep in mind that two sets of questions are involved. The first set of questions revolves around issues related to what has been labelled "the parting of the ways"; that is, how "synagogue" and "church" eventually went their separate ways. Here belong questions such as: Was Paul a Jew or a Christian? Was there anything wrong with Judaism to Paul? How is the "deficit" in Judaism, if there at all, to be defined? The second set of questions revolves around contingency versus universalism in Paul's theology. The questions here are whether Paul's theology is equally applicable to Jews and Gentiles, and how his theology is eventually perpetuated. The two sets of questions are certainly intertwined in such a way that the first often provides the rationale for the second.

Although these questions are formulated with present-day debates in mind, kindred questions were at the center of Paul's correspondence with his churches during his own time. Internal differences between the letters (e.g., Galatians and Romans) suggest that Paul was in the process of finding his own way.³² According to Daniel Marguerat, the apostle's theology is marked by dialogue and evolution.³³ Both aspects have a bearing on the present investigation, as they both bring out the *dynamic* of Paul's theology, to which also belongs response, reception, critique, and rumors. The dialogical nature of the letters is part of this dynamic process. In current Pauline scholarship, the issues involved in the present investigation have, particularly since the publication of E.P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977),³⁴ become the epicenter of Pauline studies. The literature on the topics involved is simply immense. The present section is aimed only at mapping the landscape, providing a backdrop against which to evaluate the relevance of early perceptions of Paul for present-day scholarship, and also pointing out what I have in mind when talking about present-day Pauline scholarship.

Behind the scenes of current debates on Pauline theology is the way the Lutheran tradition in particular interpreted and made use of Paul, and how this pattern of thoughts has been perpetuated in scholarship until the present. Francis Watson depicts modern scholarship in Pauline studies as a critical dialogue

³² Udo Schnelle, "Gibt es eine Entwicklung in der Rechtfertigungslehre vom Galater- zum Römerbrief?" in *Paulus – Werk und Wirkung: In Honor of Andreas Lindemann*, ed. Paul-Gerhard Klumbies and David S. du Toit (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 289–309.

³³ Marguerat, *Paul*, 1, 200.

³⁴ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

with the Lutheran reading of Paul.³⁵ Magnus Zetterholm says that the debate on Paul and the law has been theologically driven, aimed at “finding a Paul who makes sense for the present-day church.”³⁶ This reformation-driven research has often been dubbed the “Old Perspective.” Paul’s alleged critique of the law and “works of law” were accommodated within the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, and added rationale for this gap. Judaism was perceived as a religion of “works-righteousness,” requiring law observance to find salvation. The anti-legalistic Paul was equally the anti-Jewish Paul. Paul’s law-free theology, manifested in the Christian Gospel, contrasted with Judaism. The antithetical style and the sharpness of Paul’s gospel, especially as it finds its expression in Galatians, became means whereby a theological wedge was driven between Judaism and Christianity.³⁷

As pointed out by John M. G. Barclay, Paul’s theology of grace, apart from the law, was liberating good news to the individual conscience. In the Lutheran tradition and among scholars sympathetic to this reading of Paul, this paved the way for *universalizing* Paul’s gospel: How can a sinner find a gracious God? Thus, Paul’s gospel was not only universalized but also de-contextualized.³⁸ Paul’s biography supported this interpretation. His Damascus experience was a “conversion,” and in his mission, he established groups of “Christians” who saw themselves as independent of the synagogue.

From E. P. Sanders’s insights in his monumental book from 1977, namely that Judaism was not a religion of work-righteousness, evolved new directions in Pauline studies. James D. G. Dunn launched in 1983 what has been dubbed the “New Perspective,”³⁹ arguing that Sanders failed to take “the opportunity his

³⁵ Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 27–56.

³⁶ Magnus Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism: The State of the Question,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 46. In his *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), Zetterholm traces the developments in Pauline scholarship. Issues relevant to the present study are given much attention.

³⁷ John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 339–41.

³⁸ As for this Lutheran tradition at work in Pauline scholarship, see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 22–41, 88–97; John M. G. Barclay, “The Text of Galatians and the Theology of Luther,” in *Reformation Readings of Paul: Explorations in History and Exegesis*, ed. Michael Allen and Jonathan A. Linebaugh (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 49–69. See also Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

³⁹ James D. G. Dunn’s Mansion Memorial Lecture, “The New Perspective on Paul,” from 1982 was published in 1983; it is now easily accessible in his *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 89–110. This collection has altogether 22 papers presenting Dunn’s version of the “New Perspective.” See also his *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1996), 335–59. For a good presentation of the “New Perspective,” see Kent L. Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

own mouldbreaking work offered.⁴⁰ What was wrong with Judaism and the law to Paul, according to Sanders, is that they did “not provide for God’s ultimate purpose, that of saving the entire world through faith in Christ.”⁴¹ This is epitomized in what has become a well-known dictum: “In short, *this is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity.*”⁴² Dunn argues that Sanders portrays Paul as jumping from one system to another, thus maintaining an antithesis between faith in Christ and Paul’s Jewish heritage. Paul’s critique of the law is much more precise and limited, claims Dunn and other advocates of the so-called “New Perspective.” Much of Paul’s critique of Judaism melts away, if it is taken into account that he addresses the ethnic boundaries that were kept in force through the “works of law,” understood as national or ethnic identity markers of boundaries, such as circumcision, dietary rules, and the Sabbath. Paul’s theology revolved around precisely or mainly these aspects of the Mosaic Law.

A key passage has been identified as the first instance in which Paul applies justification language and addresses the issue of law, namely Gal 2:16: “... justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” Here, Paul sums up the issues of contentions involved in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10) and Antioch (2:11–14), namely circumcision and dietary rules, respectively. These functioned as badges of the covenant people, keeping Israel distinct from the nations. Paul’s gospel was aimed at erasing such ethnic boundaries: “What Paul denies is that God’s justification depends on ‘covenantal nomism,’ that God’s grace extends only to those who wear the badge of the covenant.”⁴³ Faith in Christ renders these badges superfluous, according to James D. G. Dunn. Paul is not anti-legalistic; he is anti-ethnocentric. In the words of John M. G. Barclay, James D. G. Dunn “locates the focus of Paul’s theology not in existential issues of conscience, trust, and motivation but in social attitudes towards ethnicity, community, and boundaries.”⁴⁴

Lately, yet another approach addresses Paul and the law with issues pertaining to it in a way that has been dubbed a “Radical New Perspective”⁴⁵ or “Paul within Judaism.”⁴⁶ This recent development was anticipated by, for example, Lloyd Gaston who made the decisive point that the addressees of Paul’s epistles

⁴⁰ Dunn, “The New Perspective,” 93.

⁴¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 47.

⁴² Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552. Italics in the original.

⁴³ Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” 101.

⁴⁴ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 344.

⁴⁵ This is the term used by, for example, Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 215–16.

⁴⁶ So labelled in the volume edited by Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015). Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 169 says that “Paul within Judaism” is the best name, and I agree, as this name indicates what really is at stake here.

were non-Jews. The problems Paul addresses and the solutions he comes up with are, therefore, relevant solely for *these* addressees.⁴⁷ By implication, this renders Paul's gospel almost irrelevant for his fellow Jews. Furthermore, these scholars argue that even within the "New Perspective," the legacy of "something is wrong with Judaism" remains, albeit now reduced to ethnocentrism. The uneasiness that a number of scholars felt toward what they saw as remaining sentiments of an anti-Jewish legacy, even within the "New Perspective," were expressed in Pamela Eisenbaum's *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*.

Eisenbaum sets out to overturn the picture of Paul as the "first true Christian,"⁴⁸ whereby he is seen as a convert, turning from Judaism to Christianity. In other words, her position flies in the face of von Harnack and the legacy within which his interpretation belongs (see above). Paul was a Jew, and he remained so after Damascus. The traditional presentation of Paul has been deeply influenced by the grand narrative concerning the origin and development of the Christian Church, and hence, according to Eisenbaum, flawed if judged by what the apostle wrote himself: "In sum, the portrait of Paul as the quintessential convert is established early on, but the image is not rooted in Paul's letters but in other sources."⁴⁹

Two assumptions figure prominently in Eisenbaum's Pauline interpretation. In the first place, she says that the picture of Paul as the convert owes more to the Acts of the Apostles than to Paul himself. His Damascus experience, as we know from his own letters, cannot be given the role it usually occupies in reconstructions of Paul's theology. This experience was indeed "life-changing,"⁵⁰ and implied a giving up on the past.⁵¹ Yet, this has been emphasized at the expense of this event as a call or vocation. She aligns herself with her teacher Krister Stendahl's well-known mechanism for understanding the nature of this event, namely that it was equivalent to a call.⁵² Galatians 1:13–14 is seen as "merely a foil for contrasting the ways in which Paul acquired knowledge: he learned the Torah and ancestral traditions through human teachers, but Paul's knowledge of Christ came through a revelation from God, not from human teachers."⁵³ In

⁴⁷ Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987). See also William Campbell, "Paul, Antisemitism, and Early Christian Identity," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccacini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 326.

⁴⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 2.

⁴⁹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 43.

⁵⁰ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 142.

⁵¹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 134.

⁵² Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM, 1977), 7–23; thus also John G. Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity? The Jewish Lives of the Apostle Paul* (American Lectures on the History of Religions. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 38.

⁵³ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 141.

other words, the contrast between Gal 1:13–14 and 1:15–16a is identical with the contrast urged between human and divine origin in the preceding verses (Gal 1:10–12), not between Judaism and Christianity. The persecution mentioned in Gal 1:13–14 means that Paul turned from “having a complacent attitude toward the Romans to preaching a message of defiance.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, his vision primarily implied a new understanding of the *time* in which he lived. The time was now ripe to reach out to the Gentiles, in accordance with biblical apocalyptic hopes of the ingathering of the nations (e.g., Isa 2:2–3; Micah 4:1–5). The shift, therefore, concerns *time* rather than theology. He “now experienced time as hurtling toward a final cataclysm.”⁵⁵ In short, “Paul did not undergo a conversion from Judaism to Christianity.”

Furthermore, Paul’s letters were addressed to *specific* churches. He never envisioned his audience as representing the church as one body of believers. Eisenbaum makes much of this *particularism* of Paul’s letters:

Most important for modern readers to note is that Paul wrote to specific communities of believers, people with whom he usually had an intimate relationship. Even within his own time, the audience Paul addressed was not the church universal, but specific churches.⁵⁶

In other words, Paul’s primary audience was *Gentile* Jesus-believers, a fact which is essential for grasping his conceptual thinking. According to Eisenbaum, this fundamental feature determines all that he wrote, and this fact puts limitations on any attempt at construing a universal theology from Paul’s letters. The distinction between Jews and Gentiles, or between particularism and universalism, is absolutely fundamental for unravelling Paul’s thinking. This implies that his critique of the Torah concerns Gentiles only.⁵⁷ Accordingly, when Paul in Galatians emphasizes that his addressees should not be circumcised, this applies solely to Gentiles: “Therefore Paul’s interaction with Gentiles should not be seen as the radical step it is typically perceived to be.”⁵⁸ From this

⁵⁴ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 146.

⁵⁵ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 200. Thus also Paula Fredriksen, “How Later Contexts Affect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect is the Mother of Anachronism,” in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write their Histories*, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Joshua J. Schwartz (CRIT 13; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 37–39. This conviction of Paul is often limited to his understanding of *time*, thus neglecting the role that the coming of *Christ* has for his understanding of time (see later on this).

⁵⁶ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 61 cf. 170, 216–17.

⁵⁷ See also Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 45–51, who gives a helpful insight into how this view emerged among Jewish Pauline scholars. In my Scandinavian context, Magnus Zetterholm (Lund) holds views very similar to those presented here; see his *Lagen som evangelium? Den nya synet på Paulus och judendomen* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006), especially 140–54.

⁵⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 115.

it follows for Eisenbaum that “Jesus saves, but he only saves the Gentiles.”⁵⁹ She is thus an advocate of a so-called “two-way theology.”⁶⁰

John G. Gager’s recent book, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, reasons likewise: “Just as he [i.e. Paul] no longer thinks of salvation for Gentiles within the Mosaic covenant, so he does not imagine salvation for Jews through their acceptance of Jesus.”⁶¹ Gager argues that Paul’s statements about the law and circumcision are “disputes entirely within the Jesus-movement, not with Jews outside. Galatians is a letter not against *Judaism* but rather against other apostles *within the Jesus-movement itself*.”⁶² Paul’s negative statements about the law and circumcision have nothing to do with Jews outside the Jesus-movement. Gager’s point here is characteristic of some advocates of “Paul within Judaism,” as he envisages a complete separation between the Jesus-movement and Judaism. I find this surprising from a scholar whose point and aim is to argue that Paul is *within* Judaism. The only movement that Paul is really within is, according to Gager, the Jesus-movement. Unintentionally, Gager’s argument draws a wedge between Paul and Judaism, contrary to what he states and opts for.

Also Matthew Thiessen’s recent book, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*,⁶³ follows in the wake of Pamela Eisenbaum, Mark Nanos, and Magnus Zetterholm. He says that there are two hermeneutical keys for reading Paul’s letters adequately, and particularly regarding the law and issues pertaining to it. Both keys substantiate the “Paul within Judaism” perspective. The first key is the explicit claims of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7–8; Rom 11:13;⁶⁴ 15:16–18), suggesting a Gentile readership and intended addressees. Thiessen thus perpetuates the view introduced by Lloyd Gaston (see above). Second, there is the remark or slogan in 1 Cor 7:19 (cf. Gal 5:6; 6:15) that “circumcision is nothing, and

⁵⁹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 242. Similarly Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 165: “The Law was a curse *for gentiles*. The Law only revealed sin *for gentiles*. The Law was a service of death *for gentiles*. But for Israel the Law, God-given, was a defining privilege.” However, on p. 234 n. 64, Fredriksen says that Christ as the Messiah “could never be of null import for Israel.” She thus carefully distances herself from a position voiced clearly by Lloyd Gaston, John G. Gager, and Pamela Eisenbaum. This observation of Fredriksen is of outmost importance.

⁶⁰ A present-day rethinking of Paul’s theology should, according to Pamela Eisenbaum, lead to religious pluralism. She hopes that her book will foster appreciation of Paul’s theological pluralism; see her *Paul*, 4 and 255. This is not necessarily so with all advocates of “Paul within Judaism”; see, for example, Thiessen, *Paul*, 235. Thiessen does not explain *why* he differs from Eisenbaum here.

⁶¹ Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 28.

⁶² Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 26. Italics by Gager himself. For an engagement with Gager, see Joshua W. Jipp, “Is the Apostle Paul the Father of Christian Anti-Judaism? Engaging John Gager’s *Who Made Early Christianity?*” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 39 (2017): 83–92.

⁶³ Thiessen, *Paul*, 8–11.

⁶⁴ Romans 11:13 is in my mind a text often approached narrowly by scholars from “Paul within Judaism”; I will return to this later; see pp. 27–29 in this study.

uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything.” With reference to E.P. Sanders, Thiessen points out that this is “one of the most amazing sentences Paul ever wrote.”⁶⁵ The reason is that Paul seems to urge a distinction between the commandments and circumcision, as though circumcision was not among what he considered an important means of keeping the commandments: “To any person who viewed the Pentateuch as the oracles of God (cf. Rom 3:2), how could it make sense to distinguish between circumcision and the commandments of God?”⁶⁶ Along with many other scholars, Thiessen solves this conundrum by making reference to Paul who frequently speaks of circumcision and uncircumcision as epithets for Jews and Gentiles. With that interpretation, the first part of the sentence only says that being a Jew or Gentile is indifferent – the ritual of circumcision as such is not in view,⁶⁷ keeping the commandments is still what matters. Thus, Paul assumes the abiding relevance of law observance and circumcision.

Indeed, it is a long way from the legacy of Paul shaped by the Lutheran Reformation, as adopted by Adolf von Harnack, to the view that Paul’s gospel is applicable and relevant for Gentiles only, and that the law was a problem solely to them. Paula Fredriksen has formulated both the shift of paradigms and the challenge of present-day Pauline scholarship accordingly:

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. A daunting task of re-imagining lies before us. The letters must all be translated. The work books must all be recast. The commentaries must all be redone.⁶⁸

The present study calls for sensitivity to voices embedded in Paul’s letters. What happens if we take into account Paul’s early expositors when the tasks called for by Fredriksen are undertaken?⁶⁹ In the search for the real Paul, untainted by later interpretations, the necessary sensitivity to such sources has not been given due attention. Thus, the purpose of this study is to remedy this need to account for the complexities involved. Speaking about complexities, it is also pertinent to point out that neither of the scholarly perspectives mentioned here are uniform in the sense of being “schools.” They rather form networks of scholars sharing some fundamental assumptions and arguments.

⁶⁵ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 183.

⁶⁶ Thiessen, *Paul*, 8.

⁶⁷ Thus also Mark D. Nanos, “The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul’s Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus’s Advisors to King Izates,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 132; see pp. 47–49 and 144 in this study.

⁶⁸ Fredriksen, “Later Contexts,” 51. Fredriksen, *Paul* represents her attempt at reformulating this field of study.

⁶⁹ In my view, Fredriksen’s citation is indeed an exaggeration.

1.4 Approach

There are basically three ways of pursuing an investigation into the topics related to Paul and the law. The first and most important is obviously to delve into Paul's own letters, and to address this as a question of how to interpret relevant Pauline passages. Naturally, this is precisely what Pauline scholars must do. For sure, there is no lack of such studies. However, these efforts have not brought consensus, but they have certainly stimulated fresh research on Paul and his theology in its historical context. This approach can be combined with a second way, namely a view into contemporary Judaism or Judaisms – the diversity in itself becomes an argument for accommodating “Paul within Judaism” (see below). Much vitality in Pauline scholarship is due to insights into the diversity of contemporary Judaism. The third option is to address the issue from the perspective of those who viewed, evaluated, and criticized Paul from “aside.” Albeit, this includes people with whom Paul was intimately associated, be they Christ-followers of Jewish background or not. The “aside” here simply refers to how others, whoever they are, perceived Paul's theology on the law and issues pertaining to that. They do not constitute a single group that can be lumped together. They are separated by geography and time, and perhaps also by theology; nonetheless, these sources provide an opportunity for another angle. Obviously, this other Paul, or better, other Pauls (plural), cannot independently guide how Paul's letters and theology are to be interpreted. According to John G. Gager, “there were many Pauls.”⁷⁰ I work with one of them, although I do not think that the Paul of this study was always presented by the same people; in principle, there may even have been a plurality of Pauls in how he was perceived by others. Sensitivity to the debates Paul stirred is called for. They represent views to be accounted for when Paul's theology is portrayed. How did Paul's theology on the Torah appear to them? Voices that are “othered” in Paul's letters may be uncovered in four different categories of texts:

- Texts referring to “some” (τινες). In these instances, Paul makes reference to certain people without naming them. His use of “some” may be neutral with no other meaning attached (e.g., 1 Cor 6:11; 8:7; 10:7–10; Rom 11:17). In other instances, “some” refers to shadowy characters whom Paul considers opponents to his mission and gospel (Gal 1:7; 2:12; 1 Cor 4:18; 15:12, 34; 2 Cor 3:1; Phil 1:15 [possibly]).⁷¹

⁷⁰ Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 15.

⁷¹ According to Andrie du Toit, “Vilification as a Pragmatic Device in Early Christian Epistolography,” in Andrie du Toit, *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and David S. du Toit (BZNBW 151; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 48–49, τινες has a strong negative force; it is a “*deliberate blurring* of the faces of opponents in order to portray them as negative, shadowy figures.” It is not always obvious if Paul here refers to opponents whom he is vilifying, or to backsliders. See also

- Passages in which Paul makes use of the diatribe-style; that is, where he engages an interlocutor be it real or imagined (see pp. 97–99 in this study);
- In some places, notably in First Corinthians, Paul cites maxims or slogans probably coined by fellow believers, often in order to pinpoint Paul’s purported view or to question him. In some modern Bible translations, as in NRSV for example, such slogans are indicated with quotation marks.⁷² These slogans are less important to the present investigation as they do not directly address our topic. Nonetheless, they are important as they draw our attention to Paul’s practice of embedding in his epistles words of others, and then to engage them.
- Mirror-reading Paul when he engages opponents polemically, Galatians being the most prominent example (see below and pp. 64–70 in this study). This implies that Paul’s interactions with opinions about himself also come into play. He engages the viewpoints of others.

When Paul interacts with opponents or with rumors of various kinds about himself and his purported message, it differs from citations where New Testament authors cite, summarize, or interpret biblical passages or texts, or when Origen interacts with the viewpoints of Celsus or Heracleon. Paul interacts with much less identifiable opponents, who are not the same all the time, and even when he cites them, *he* is in control of what they say. This is so since there is no *text* Paul can refer to, like Origen did; more probable, it is about commonly held opinions being voiced or circulated. It is, therefore, not possible to distinguish sharply between quotations, summaries, or interpretative paraphrases. There is even the possibility that what Paul renders are assertions made on the basis of his own perceptions of what he hears people saying about him.⁷³ By

2 Thess 3:11; 1 Tim 1:6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim 2:17–18. The last passage is the only instance where “some” are identified by name. As for the role of these letters in this study, see below.

⁷² See, for example, 1 Cor 6:13; 8:1, 4, 8. Which slogans they really are, and where they start and end, is, of course, open to discussion. For a recent discussion, see Andrew David Naselli, “Is Every Sin outside the Body except Immoral Sex? Weighing Whether 1 Corinthians 6:18b is Paul’s Statement or a Corinthian Slogan,” *JBL* 136 (2017): 969–87.

⁷³ Carl Johan Berglund, “Evaluating Quotations in Ancient Greek Literature: The Case of Heracleon’s *hypomnēmata*,” in *Shadowy Characters and Fragmentary Evidence*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Tobias Nicklas, and Elisabeth Hernitscheck (WUNT 388; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 201–31, has drawn attention to quotation practices in ancient literature. He points out that *verba dicendi* (verbs of speaking) – like what we have in Rom 3:8 – are often used to introduce quotations. However, where quotations end are often not marked, and generally, there is no consistency in how to mark quotations. Moreover, ancient authors felt free to adapt citations according to their needs. Berglund points out that especially in polemical contexts, citations could be re-used in ways that departed from the “original.” Here it is necessary to remind ourselves that Paul’s letters are not literary pieces of work, but correspondences with persons involved or affected by the situations addressed. This sets some limits on his creativity. Furthermore, we need to remind ourselves that the present study does not look into how Paul quotes pieces from ancient literary works, but how he draws upon rumors, shadowy and anonymous figures appearing in his letters. This means that my use of “shadowy figures” differs

analogy, we may refer to present-day research on the historical Jesus, where many scholars have given up on identifying so-called *ipsissima verba*, realizing that dicta of Jesus are now shaped and merged into a new context. What is crucial is to mind when Paul engages or interacts with views pertaining to himself and his teachings. Furthermore, this means that it is not always easy to know when Paul ceases to interact. The dialogical nature of his epistles proves the necessity of the present study, but also represents a challenge since shadowy figures or opinions are everywhere. Accordingly, there is a constant movement from passages where Paul presents himself as discussing dicta characteristic of views held on his theology to passages where he is involved in an interchange on contested issues pertaining to the law. A constant challenge, with an arguable outcome I suppose, is to identify dicta or passages associated with others, and to distinguish them from Paul.

How do we proceed then in order to uncover dicta of others embedded in Paul's letters? Such dicta are not clearly marked in the text, unless *τινές* or the like appears. In some instances, what might be called a recitative *ὄτι*, introducing what appears as a citation, may be found. Furthermore, we proceed in accordance with the principles on mirror-reading worked out by John M. G. Barclay.⁷⁴ Importance is attached to inconsistencies in Paul's arguments and line of thinking, to which also belongs the rebuttal stance he takes toward expressed opinions. In this regard, some of the so-called slogans of 1 Corinthians 6 offer helpful illustrations. If we, for the sake of argument, accept that vv. 12a, c; 13a, b are slogans of others, they are all rebutted and denied by Paul (vv. 12b, d; 13c–14).⁷⁵ Not all criteria are in play in every single passage; nonetheless, isolated criteria are not sufficient; we need to see some of them working *together*. We label such texts embedded dicta, ranging from actual citations to reports or circulating rumors.

The obvious challenge is that all relevant texts are now swept up in Paul's rhetoric. An interactionist perspective is helpful as it serves to lighten the burden with regard to the distinctions between others and Paul; it is precisely the interactions between the two that fuel this study. The interactionist perspective thus reminds us that it is not possible, nor desirable, to separate the two entirely. The present study does not aim for quotation marks to be added to the supposed dicta present.

from the shadowy characters investigated in the volume in which Berglund's study is found. These kinds of elusive and anonymous voices I am concerned with are not the focus in that volume, albeit some shared interest is found in Korinna Zamfir, "Elusive Opponents in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Shadowy Characters and Fragmentary Evidence*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Tobias Nicklas, and Elisabeth Hernitschek (WUNT 388; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 27–48.

⁷⁴ See pp. 64–70 in this study.

⁷⁵ See Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (SNTSMS 120; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 191–97; Naselli, "Sin," 982.

The idea behind this project is not to contribute to Paul's theology directly, but to throw into the present-day debate some critical questions from the "perceived" perspective, or the way others see it (i.e., to call for sensitivity to the dialogical nature of his letters). As for Romans, how did some come to think that Paul had abandoned Israel if Paul addressed Gentiles only, as claimed by some Pauline scholars? Is this due to a misunderstanding, a deliberate misconception, or does it in some way represent an interpretation of Paul? Such questions will accompany the study throughout. However, how and why the opinions to be presented came into being is not the focus here; it suffices to *describe* them adequately. The very existence of early Pauline interpretations is in themselves worth working out, and they may possibly reflect on present-day constructions of Paul's theology. That is what this study is about. Hence, this study is an attempt to look at current developments in Pauline research in a way that asks the following question: How do recent developments in Pauline scholarship appear when seen through the lens of how Paul was perceived from early on? I want to enrich Pauline studies with a focus on this particular aspect, which was both *simultaneous* to Paul as well as the first real *perception* of him.

The legacy of Paul in general, as well as voices critical to Paul on grounds other than the Torah, are not the focus.⁷⁶ The target is limited and specified to matters pertaining to the law. There is, of course, the matter of limitations and what texts to choose as relevant for this investigation. It makes sense to distinguish between five layers of Pauline legacy within the New Testament, be they grateful or vexing: 1) the undisputed letters of Paul; 2) letters ascribed to Paul, which are contested in present-day scholarship; 3) dicta of others embedded in Paul's texts; 4) the Acts of the Apostles; and 5) non-Pauline writings such as James, Hebrews, the Gospel of Matthew. All five categories are, in principle, possible sources to gain knowledge about Paul and how he was remembered.

How will this study proceed with regard to this? Is it possible that Matthew's gospel⁷⁷ and Hebrews⁷⁸ represent various strands of opposition and tradition

⁷⁶ For example, Corinthian slogans are not fixed on the law, albeit some of them may be indirectly relevant (see later); see, for example, Jerome Murphy O'Connor, "Corinthian Slogans in 1 Cor. 6:12–20," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 390–96.

⁷⁷ David C. Sim advocates the view that Matthew's Gospel represents a hidden polemic against Paul; see, for example, "Matthew's Anti-Paulinism: A Neglected Feature of Matthean Studies," *HTS* 58 (2002): 767–83; see also Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 188–91, and Gerd Theissen, "Kritik an Paulus im Matthäusevangelium? Von der Kunst verdeckter Polemik im Urchristentum," in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte und Kontexte*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaienchi (BZNW 170; Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 465–90. If these scholars are right, Matthew's Gospel confirms that Paul's view on the Torah was a hotly debated issue, as, for example, Matt 5:19 refers to. Scholars holding this position unanimously refer to this text. From this perspective, Paul appears to be a key figure in the parting of the ways. The incorporation of both the Gospel and Paul's letters in the canon served to hide this division. Advocates of this view, in effect, hold a position which by

vis-à-vis Paul? As for the epistle of James, this is even more likely; ch. 2 of that letter may well target Paul in particular (see above). Nonetheless, these texts are relevant as a critical Pauline legacy only by way of interpretation, which at times are too speculative. I, therefore, leave out texts from the fifth group of possible critical voices. The fact that the present study is not focused on Paul, but on perceptions of Paul, makes the disputed letters highly relevant; also because they (possibly) antedate the bulk of the available testimony from the second century. In principle, they are, therefore, voices from others on Paul's theology as such, equal to dicta embedded in the authentic letters, albeit more grateful to Paul than the former. However, in spite of the fact that there are some passages where issues pertaining to the law occur, there is no real engagement with such issues.⁷⁹ Hence, these texts do not bring much to our investigation. As for the Acts of the Apostles – most likely composed toward the end of first century – several passages apply directly to issues discussed in this study, and is therefore entitled to a chapter of its own (chapter 7).

In the so-called authentic letters, emphasis will be on embedded statements, with Rom 3:8 (“And why not say [as some people slander us by saying that we say], ‘Let us do evil so that good may come.’ Their condemnation is deserved!”) being the outstanding example. Such statements are noted by Paul's claim to cite “some.” Most likely, there are embedded dicta beyond those treated in this study, simply because Paul does not draw attention to them and mark them as such. Paul will come into play in so far as he interacts with the embedded statements possibly to identify them. Alongside embedded dicta are *actions* taken against Paul for reasons of the Torah in some way or other (2 Cor 11:24). From

implication distances Paul from the Jewish context in which the author of Matthew was at home. Matthew takes a stand which is equivalent to Paul's opponents, particularly in Galatians; see, for example, Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 431–32. For reluctance similar to mine, see Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum*, 149–58; Ernst Dassmann, *Der Stachel im Fleisch: Paulus in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Irenäus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979), 98–108.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the recently presented dissertation by Martin Wessbrandt, *Transformed Readings: Negotiations of Cult in Paul, Hebrews and First Clement* (Doctoral Thesis, Lund University 2017), arguing that Hebrews in some respects are a reception of Pauline epistles.

⁷⁹ 1 Tim 1:8 (οἶδαμεν ὅτι καλὸς ὁ νόμος) echoes Rom 7:16b (σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός), but it is to be seen as a literary reception (“literarische Ergänzung”) of Romans rather than a debate on issues related to the law; see Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, “Jedoch, ich fand Erbarmen ...’ (1 Tim 1,13): Bekehrung und Indienstnahme des Paulus in den Pastoralbriefen,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, and Joseph Verheyden (NTOA 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 68–69 in particular; Michael Theobald, “Israel- und Jerusalem-Vergessenheit im Corpus Pastorale? Zur Rezeption des Römerbriefes im Titus- sowie im 1. und 2. Timotheusbrief,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, and Joseph Verheyden (NTOA 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 349–53 in particular. Tit 3:9 shows knowledge about discussions (ζητήσεις) regarding the law, which is in line with Jewish practices; for this use of the Greek noun, see p. 197 in this study.

this follows that polemical passages in which Paul is involved in an argument become relevant.

Since identity is a nested complex of perspectives, how others viewed Paul as well as how he came to view himself and his theology cannot be entirely separated. This is so since the perspectives of others, be they Jews and/or Christ-followers, are to be extracted from texts written by Paul, often with a view to how his rendering may serve *his* purpose and argument. This fundamental observation raises a problem that needs to be addressed along the way. Furthermore, this observation also brings Paul into the picture, as he interacts with views of others. Although an independent Paul-perspective is out of scope here, the apostle does come into play when there is reason to believe that he is engaged in debates with others about his own theology.

The way Paul renders the views of his opponents in his rhetorical fight with adversaries in the Galatian situation, works more or less identical to embedded statements, albeit Paul's polemical rhetoric may have both shaped and obscured them. This invites a carefully controlled mirror-reading, aimed at uncovering from Paul's rhetoric his opponents' claims. According to John M.G. Barclay, Galatians "provides an excellent case" for this procedure. Paul is involved in polemic and extensive arguments against his opponents over issues pertaining to the Torah.⁸⁰ For sure, there are other texts in which opponents may lurk in the background, and where the contested issues revolve around the law, 2 Corinthians 3 being the most obvious example.⁸¹ However, the text is not a dialogue in the way Galatians is. Hence, it is difficult to tease out what opponents there held against Paul. It is worth noticing though that also in this passage, where the law of Moses is addressed most directly, a shadowy group of "some" appears in 2 Cor 3:2 (cf. 2:17; 5:12), thus leaving the impression that Paul does not develop his theology in a vacuum. Be that as it may, these considerations leave us with the texts chosen for this investigation of the perception of Paul's views on the Torah.

Paul's own letters leave no doubt that he was a contested figure already during his life-time and ministry. He was, as Patrick Gray has labelled him, "a polarizing figure."⁸² Controversy was the very fabric of Paul's theology, especially

⁸⁰ John M.G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 73–93.

⁸¹ According to Thomas Blanton IV, "Spirit and Covenant Renewal: A Theologoumenon of Paul's Opponents in 2 Corinthians," *JBL* 123 (2010): 129–51, Paul's rivals in this epistle called upon Jeremiah 31 on the new covenant and demanded perfect obedience to Torah. Paul's discussion on the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3–4 takes its cue from the rivals. Paul B. Duff, *Moses in Corinth: The Apologetic Context of 2 Corinthians 3* (NovTSup 159; Leiden: Brill, 2015) 64–65, argues that Paul in this chapter draws on internal Corinthian suspicion, and that τινες in 3:1 may point to any individual in the ancient world arriving in a city with letters of recommendation.

⁸² Gray, *Paul*, 15. Gray summarizes nicely the phenomenon of antipaulinism, in its diverse nature, witnessed to in Paul's own letters on pp. 14–20.

those aspects which applied to the law. Not only his gospel, but also his personality, mission, and theology proved to be “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23). For this study, the first part of this dictum is, of course, especially worth noticing. Paul’s gospel was accompanied by critique, also from fellow Jews, from its very beginning.⁸³ Why he was considered “a stumbling block” for Jews and some Jewish Christ-followers is the topic of this investigation. In itself this is worth investigating. I do this also because “there is much to be learned from listening to Paul’s critics.”⁸⁴ Since some of these critics were his first interpreters, they serve, if not to make the picture of Paul more complete, at least to call Pauline scholarship to account for the complexity, which aside-voices do represent.

I state this *pace* for example, Richard I. Pervo’s work which proceeds from the assumption that “the portraits of Paul that emerge in early (and subsequent) Christianity do not arise from any concern to preserve history for the benefit of subsequent investigators; they seek to address the problems of those churches in their own times.”⁸⁵ If this is right, voices of others have no relevance vis-à-vis Paul’s own theology. Pervo makes a false dichotomy between remembrance and construction. I find this strange in view of the fact that Pervo himself draws analogies between the historical Jesus and Paul throughout. Both were “made” by subsequent followers or opponents; hence, the title of his book, *The Making of Paul*. In the case of Jesus, most scholars would find it appropriate to speak about Jesus being simultaneously constructed *and* remembered. It suffices here to bring to mind James D. G. Dunn’s book, *Jesus Remembered*.⁸⁶ Memory and construction accompany each other.⁸⁷

⁸³ The contest of Paul has been addressed in several studies; in addition to Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum* and Dassmann, *Stachel*, I mention also Gerd Lüdemann, *Paulus der Heidenapostel II: Antipaulinismus in der frühen Christenheit* (FRLANT 130; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Simon Légasse, *L’antipaulinisme sectaire au temps des Pères de l’Eglise* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 47; Paris: Gabalda, 2000) and Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). These studies have mostly addressed this as a wide-ranging, multifarious phenomenon. The present study concentrates on one aspect, namely that which pertains to Paul and the law. This approach overlaps with parts of these studies, but the narrowing of the perspective makes this an in-depth study in dialogue with the most recent trends in Pauline scholarship.

⁸⁴ Gray, *Paul*, 210.

⁸⁵ Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, xiii.

⁸⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

⁸⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008) points out that Paul’s letters as we now have them have been shaped to enhance a more universal role. Due to the developments in Pauline scholarship, a gap has been created between historical reconstructions and the “canonical Paul.” According to Childs, “[t]his canonical image is not a fictional caricature, but a historical vehicle of the Christian gospel (*geschichtlich*) and was seen and preserved by a community of faith, the impact from which continued to shape their lives long after Paul’s death. This fusion of the historical Paul and the canonical Paul is most clearly reflected in the Acts of

The aim is not to contribute to who Paul *really* was, but more modestly, to see how *others* saw him in regard to the Torah and related questions. These voices are important if we ask what and who Paul *became*. The voices of others hardly represent one united front of unanimous opposition, albeit some recurrent aspects are likely to appear. Such aspects deserve more attention since they possibly hint at commonly noticed problems inherent in Paul's theology. At this point, we need to return briefly to the concept of "multiple identities" worked out above. The idea was that several identities were at work simultaneously. Paul's converts in Corinth were at the same time both circumcised Jews and Christ-followers; likewise, slaves submitted to their masters and were simultaneously Christ-followers (1 Cor 7:17–24). Philo portrayed Diaspora Jews as having a dual identity, grounded in both Jerusalem and the Diaspora homeland (*Flacc.* 45–46). To account for similar complexities is equally important and relevant when asking who Paul was. However, when some aspects involved are contested by others, it is no longer a matter of adding just another perspective. Contest, conflict, and interaction become part of the complexities, and may therefore shed light on why and what aspects of Paul's theology came to be *contested*. Hence, the complexity also involves questions related to crossing accepted boundaries of Jewish traditions. Therefore, the material to be uncovered in this study has an indirect bearing on Pauline studies. In the views of others, there is the intention to grasp what Paul's theology is about and what consequences it brings, albeit misunderstandings and exaggerations are not to be excluded. Nevertheless, there is in these voices a searching for Paul's true meaning; this is not to say that they represent Paul in its entirety – by no means – but they form a *test* against which Pauline interpretations ought to be confronted. The question remains as to whether present-day Pauline scholarship has really accommodated the implications of these voices in how Paul has come to be portrayed.

1.5 The Torah and Jewish Identity

Although the present study takes the Torah as its focus, there can be no doubt that it is inextricably tied to the issue of Paul's Jewish identity. Is this identity to be thought of in terms of ethnicity or religion, or rather ancestral practices?

the Apostles. Much like the search for the historical Jesus, the historical Paul and the canonical Paul have been intertwined inextricably together" (p. 256). White, *Remembering Paul*, has also made this point. He brings his study to an end by saying that "[t]here is more certainty in the whole than in its parts." White's insight definitely calls for attention to aside versions of Paul's gospel, as the present study aims at. White's study is on the Pauline legacy in the second century. Furthermore, the most important difference between the two bodies of literature, which is that of Jesus and Paul, respectively, is that the traditions about Jesus were preserved in the belief that he was raised from the death. This shaped the tradition considerably. While Jesus is not recorded to have written anything, Paul differs markedly in that regard.

Birth is certainly important and a non-negotiable aspect of Jewish identity.⁸⁸ The fact that the ancients had no category for “religion” should not distract us from observing that practices, customs, rites, temple, and traditions emerging from revered texts imply a concept which, in effect, is religious. Daniel R. Schwartz argues for a “religiously oriented Judaism” found especially in the Diaspora for which “Jew” is the appropriate term.⁸⁹ When, for example, 2 Macc 8:1 speaks of those who remained in “Judaism” (μεμενηκότας ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ) and characterizes them through reference to prayers and temple, it is difficult not to call this description inclusive of “religious” aspects. Similarly, 2 Macc 6:6 says that people “could not neither keep the Sabbath nor observe (διαφυλάττειν) their ancestral feasts nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews” (Ἰουδαῖον ὁμολογεῖν εἶναι). NETS here reads “Judeans” while I here follow NRSV, since the primary aspect here is practices, not territory.⁹⁰

Likewise, when Paul is involved with issues pertaining to the Torah, both ethnic and religious aspects are involved. In the words of John M. G. Barclay, “Jewish identity in the Diaspora was not merely a matter of ancestry nor simply a question of cultural practice but was based on a combination of these two interlocking factors.”⁹¹ Despite all apparent diversity, the implication is that there was “a central core of beliefs and practices that the great majority of first century Jews, who followed no particular party, held in common.”⁹² This is in line with E. P. Sanders’s “common Judaism,” which he sets in opposition to “a lot of Judaisms.”⁹³ For Sanders, “common” means essential in that it refers to certain practices and beliefs that held Jewish communities together and which revolved around the law and the temple. Albeit, these issues were constantly negotiated,

⁸⁸ Regarding Paul as a Jew by birth, see Westerholm, *Law*, 8.

⁸⁹ Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 91–112.

⁹⁰ See Markus Öhler, “Judäer oder Juden: Die Debatte Ethnos vs. Religion im Blick auf das 2. Makkabäerbuch,” in *Die Makkabäer*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie et al. (WUNT 382; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 177–81. This article gives a survey of relevant positions. Öhler argues that it is possible to speak about a “Jüdische Religion,” albeit diverse, “aber immerhin mit einigen grundlegenden Eigenheiten ...” (p. 177).

⁹¹ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 402–403; thus also Dieter Sänger, “Ἰουδαῖσμός – ἰουδαΐζειν – ἰουδαϊκῶς” *ZNW* 108 (2017): 150–85.

⁹² Paul R. Trebilco, “Jewish Backgrounds” in *Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (NTTS 25; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 359; see also Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 26–27. Peter Oakes, *Galatians* (Paideia; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 53–54 renders Ἰουδαῖσμός “a way of life characterized by practices that Jews generally saw as being proper.”

⁹³ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66CE* (London: SCM, 1992). For a discussion of Sanders’s “common Judaism,” see *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism*, eds. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008). For the quotation, see E. P. Sanders, *Comparing Judaism and Christianity: Common Judaism, Paul, and the Inner and the Outer in Ancient Religion*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 43, cf. pp. 125–38.

thus paving the way for the diversity of these commonalities. Furthermore, “common” also means “ordinary,” which is non-elite or non-sectarian; it refers to the beliefs and practices of everyday Jews. This is not to plead for a uniform Judaism; unity implies self-definitions in plural. The fact that ethnicity or birth formed a starting point for Jewish identity paved the way for ideological plurality and diversity to develop and thrive.

The fact that commonalities in matters of how to conduct one’s life as a Jew⁹⁴ generated unifying features implies that passing out of Judaism was an option after all. This is amply demonstrated by John M. G. Barclay, who takes his examples from 3 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, Josephus, and 4 Maccabees.⁹⁵ For some contemporary fellow Jews, Paul was *considered* an example of an apostate (see later in this study). Barclay has also demonstrated the importance of a “perspectival” approach to apostasy.⁹⁶ In accordance with sociological theory of deviance, he points out that apostasy is a social product: “Moreover, what makes an act socially significant as deviant is not so much that it is *performed*, as that it is *reacted to* as deviant.”⁹⁷ Thus, the social reaction is decisive in bringing about apostasy. The present study’s emphasis on “other voices” fits nicely into this interactionist perspective. Response and reaction by others is integral and relevant for an adequate understanding of what Paul became.

In spite of the “perspectival” approach, apostasy was not negotiated anew in each instance. Barclay’s examples do reveal some commonalities. The context is often one of assimilation of various kinds, leading to the dilution of the faith and the abandonment of a Jewish way of life, idolatry, food laws, circumcision, Sabbath, criticism of inherited interpretations of Scriptures, or social distance toward fellow Jews imposed by the person labelled an apostate.

The focus, therefore, is not historically on *who* the critics were, albeit this question at times appears, but *what* Paul’s critics held against him on issues pertaining to the law. Before embarking on this task, it is necessary and justified to outline my own position vis-à-vis recent developments in Pauline research, especially as they pertain to the question of the Torah and related issues; in other words, to present my own views vis-à-vis the sketch of Pauline scholarship provided above. This view is worked out on the basis of texts that will *not* come into play in the present study. This is the issue of the next chapter.

⁹⁴ As for the debate whether Ἰουδαῖος is to be rendered “Jew” or “Judean,” I lean on the arguments put forward by Anders Runesson, “Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 64–70. I stick to “Jew,” particularly so since Paul’s mission mainly is involved with the Diaspora.

⁹⁵ John M. G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 145–51.

⁹⁶ Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 123–39; see also pp. 165–68, 176 in the present study.

⁹⁷ Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 125.

2 It Takes Two to Have an Interaction: Sketching Paul for Reasons of Transparency

This investigation distinguishes between Paul and the voices of others, with the focus on the latter. Paul will, therefore, have a say primarily as he responds to or engages in views by others. There is no independent or isolated effort in presenting Paul here. Clearly, my own voice is also heard throughout this work. For the benefit of the reader I, therefore, state some basic assumptions. My view here is worked out on the basis of passages that are *not* the focus of the investigation itself. Although this chapter does not contribute directly to the following chapters, transparency into the assessments that accompany the work on very contentious issues throughout is desirable. Thus, the following will outline my understanding of some recent developments in Pauline studies as they pertain to the issues under discussion in this book. Hence, in this chapter, the “others” are not the focus as elsewhere throughout this investigation. Now *Paul* is the focus.

2.1 Addressees and Horizons or Implications of Paul’s Theology Are Not Identical

We have seen that the question of the intended addressees of Paul’s epistles has been given far-reaching implications by advocates of “Paul within Judaism.” The scope and relevance of Paul’s theology is limited according to whom his epistles address. I question the claim that Paul’s theology is restricted in its relevance to Gentiles, albeit Paul conceived of himself as an “apostle to the Gentiles.” My point is that the horizon of Paul’s theology surpasses that of his intended addressees. By “horizon” I mean implications that he draws in his letters, which are predominantly addressed to Gentiles. Romans 11:13–15, a passage where Paul clearly assumes that addressees and implications are *not* identical, is worth pondering. Paul says that his apostleship to the Gentiles serves a role vis-à-vis his own people (called here: “his own body”; *μου τὴν σάρκα*). Thus, the overall aim of his Gentile mission is the ultimate redemption of his fellow Jews. This paradox must be accounted for.

Advocates of “Paul within Judaism” often treat Rom 11:13 as an independent or isolated witness, making reference to it without taking into account the con-

text in which it is embedded. Paula Fredriksen focuses only on the addressees involved: “Now I am speaking to you Gentiles” (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν).¹ She thus ignores what Paul is aiming at here, namely that his Gentile mission has a purpose vis-à-vis his fellow Jews. Romans 11:13 represents the very beginning of a rationale continued in the following verses (vv. 14–15). It goes beyond the limitations set for this study to embark on a discussion of what this entails. For now it suffices to point out that the rationale within which v. 13 is embedded – the textbook example that Paul’s letters were relevant for Gentiles only, or at least, predominantly – is neglected. Verse 14 picks up on the scriptural quotation in Rom 10:19 (Deut 32:21), and is also echoed in Rom 11:11 (παραζηλοῦν; “make jealous”). Hence, Paul’s Gentile mission is written into a divine plan, which is aimed at the salvation of all Israel: “save some of them” (σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν; v. 15; cf. 11:5–6, 26). This brings to mind 1 Cor 9:20 (“in order to win Jews”; ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω); notice how “win” in 9:22 is replaced by τινὰς σώσω found also in Rom 11:15. I consider this an important obstacle for the view propagated by advocates of “Paul within Judaism.” Paula Fredriksen, together with others, overlooks this, and considers v. 13 to convey isolated information on Paul, “apostle of Gentiles.” Since Fredriksen and other advocates of “Paul within Judaism” find their construction of the relevance for Paul’s theology for Gentiles only, as explicitly indicated here, some comments on the content of Paul’s dictum are called for.

According to Rom 1:7, Paul wrote to “all (πᾶσιν) God’s beloved in Rome.” Hence, when Paul in Rom 4:1 and 9:10 speaks about Abraham and Isaac as “our” fathers, he most likely includes real Jews among his addressees. I do not question that Romans 9–11 is written with Gentiles as the primary intended audience, but I question that this marks the end of Paul’s horizon here. The implications of Rom 11:13 are thereby *not* exhausted. Romans 11:11–12, 17–24 and 25 imply that Paul has in mind how *Gentiles* depend on Jews and their traditions. Surely that favors Gentiles as the intended addressees, but it is important to notice that Paul says this against the backdrop of a *relationship* between these Gentiles and the Jews within the Roman churches. His concern about Gentile Christ-believers’ hubris vis-à-vis Jews demonstrates that Gentiles are the primary addressees here, but also that it is precisely the salvation of fellow Jews

¹ Fredriksen, *Paul*, 117, 123, 155, 156, 159. Thus also Runar M. Thorsteinsson, Matthew Thiessen, and Rafael Rodríguez, “Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans: The Problem of Identification,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 16, 20, 37; Rafael Rodríguez, “Romans 5–8 in Light of Paul’s Dialogue with a Gentile Who Calls Himself a Jew,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 102; Joshua W. Jipp, “What are the Implications of the Ethnic Identity of Paul’s Interlocutor? Continuing the Conversation,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 186. Not one of these references points out the rationale within which Rom 11:13 is embedded.

through his Gentile mission, or the relationship between the two, which is at the heart of his concern here.² William S. Campbell, a scholar sympathetic to “Paul with Judaism,” is aware of how Rom 11:13 is embedded in an argument about “winning” the Jews and formulates this in a way worth quoting:

Despite his favored title, “apostle to the gentiles,” Paul himself did not envision his apostolic calling as serving a function *only* in relation to the gentiles, as if he had concluded they were to form a separate entity completely divorced from Jews and Judaism. Rather, he believed and hoped that a successful mission to gentiles would have a salvific influence on Jews, so that, together, they would then achieve the goal of the divine purpose to join in harmonious worship of the God of Israel. (Rom 15:7–13)³

Later in the same paper, Campbell seems to adhere to the idea that Paul's letters are addressed to Gentiles, although he says that Paul's thought “indeed is universal in scope, but universal via the particularity of Israel.”⁴ Campbell has in a fruitful way pointed to the need of coming to terms with the *universal* scope, which is not identical to the addressees of Paul's letters. What I have said here coincides with how Paul in Rom 11:25–27 defines the mystery of salvation for his people.

The idea that Christ saves, but only Gentiles (e.g. Eisenbaum), fails to account for how Gentiles and Jews are mutually dependent and intertwined in Paul's argument in Romans 9–11. Likewise, Rom 15:8–13 speaks of Christ as the servant of both the circumcised and the nations, and accordingly, portrays salvation in terms of togetherness between the two: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with (μετά) his people.” Paul's emotional intercession and his deep concern for Israel (Rom 9:1–3; 10:1–2) becomes, in my opinion, theatrical in Eisenbaum's Paul.⁵ Certainly, Paul's epistles are addressed predominantly to Gentiles, but not exclusively so. The evidence of the greetings in Romans 16, a part of the original letter, militates against this view. Paul here greets several Jews, who clearly were also Christ-followers, by their name.⁶ Michael F. Bird rightly points out that we know of no Gentile mission separated from a Jewish mission. These missions

² Thus also Lionel J. Windsor, *Paul and the Vocation of Israel: How Paul's Jewish Identity Informs His Apostolic Ministry, With Special Reference to Romans* (BZNW 205; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 240–43.

³ Campbell, “Paul, Antisemitism,” 316.

⁴ Campbell, “Paul, Antisemitism,” 326–27; quotation p. 327.

⁵ Similarly Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, “Eine neuere Paulusperspektive?” in *Biographie und Persönlichkeiten des Paulus*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer (WUNT 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 56–62.

⁶ Reidar Hvalvik, “Jewish Believers and Jewish Influence in the Roman Church until the Early Second Century,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 190–93, says that “the portion of Jewish believers in Romans 16 would be close to 30 percent” (p. 193); see also Reidar Hvalvik, “Named Jewish Believers Connected with the Pauline Mission,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 154–78.

were interlocked in which boundaries were eventually crossed. An example is Paul teaching in the synagogues, as frequently witnessed in Acts, and Peter appearing in Corinth (1 Cor 9:5). Such pieces of information do not follow the instructions laid down in Gal 2:8, and as such, point to a constant cross-over in the Pauline mission.⁷

These pieces of information are not to be ignored. The audience to whom Paul's epistles were addressed were mixed, albeit predominantly Gentile. Runar M. Thorsteinsson argues that Rom 16:3–15 is irrelevant for the question of Paul's intended audience.⁸ The second-person type greeting (*ἀπάσασθε*) implies that Paul wanted greetings to be delivered by the addressees to these people. Thus, those greeted are *not* part of the addressees conceived by Paul. I find Thorsteinsson's view unconvincing. The ancient letters mentioned by Thorsteinsson as examples of second-person type greetings⁹ differ from Romans, as they are all addressed to individuals who are then asked to convey greetings to others. Thorsteinsson's reading of Romans 16 substantiates what I consider a paradox, namely that in the interest of enhancing the Jewishness of Paul and his theology, the actual Jews are about to disappear.¹⁰

Thorsteinsson's view on Rom 16 has been supported by Antti Mustakallio, who points out that this chapter is commonly seen as witness to the mixed character of the Roman church(es), consisting of Gentile and Jewish Christians.¹¹ However, he claims that the end greetings found in Rom 16 indicate otherwise. He argues that the second-person greetings (*ἀπάσασθε*) found in vv. 3–16 are indirect salutations. This means that the addressees are asked to convey greetings to them as a "second audience." Hence, they are *not* among the immediate readership of the letter.¹² In other words, Romans is not sent to them, and they are, therefore, not integral to grasp how the church(es) were composed. From this, Mustakallio draws this conclusion: "Hence, it seems that at first the letter was not read to the whole congregation, but to a much smaller group of people, which is asked to send Paul's greetings to 'all the brothers' and take care of the reading of the letter."¹³ Romans 16 also includes a first-person greeting from Tertius, the letter writer (v. 22), and third-person greetings (vv. 16, 21 and 23).

⁷ Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 102–103.

⁸ Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Paul's Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography* (ConBNT 40; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), 98–100.

⁹ Thorsteinsson, *Paul's Interlocutor*, 140–44.

¹⁰ This brings to mind the citation of John G. Gager (see p. 14 above) where the Jesus movement at the end of the day comes out as a phenomenon isolated from Judaism.

¹¹ Antti Mustakallio, "The Very First Audiences of Paul's Letters: The Implications of End Greetings," in *The Nordic Paul: Finnish Approaches to Pauline Theology*, ed. Lars Aejmelaeus and Antti Mustakallio (LNTS 374; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 227–37.

¹² Mustakallio, "Audiences," 230.

¹³ Mustakallio, "Audiences," 232.

Mustakallio is right in pointing out that this raises some questions with regard to how the letter was received and passed on. However, he takes this as an opportunity to exclude the recipients of these greetings from the Roman church(es), and assumes on the basis of second-person greetings, a historical situation about which we know very little. The second-person type of greeting is insufficient to substantiate the historical setting he depicts regarding the reception of the letter.

In the citation given above, I notice that Mustakallio uses the word “send,” which is prone to creating a distance between the addressees and those greeted. This serves his purpose, namely to argue that the second-person greetings are invalid with regard to the composition of the Roman church(es), but this is *imported* into the text, not given by it. Furthermore, in Rom 16:16, Paul says that they should greet (ἀσπάσασθε) one another (ἀλλήλους) with a holy kiss (cf. 1 Thess 5:26). If second-person greetings imply distance here, how do we then come to terms with “each other,” not to say the kiss? This being said, Mustakallio has called for further consideration on how the letters were received in the churches, but this question takes us beyond second-person greetings.¹⁴ However, at the end of his article, Mustakallio makes a statement that comes as a surprise and is unwarranted in his argument. He says that the “second-person type of greetings do not reveal the composition of the second audience, the larger group of believers.”¹⁵ Thus, Mustakallio dismisses those greeted in the second person not only from the intended audience of Romans, but also from the fellowship of those who made up the church(es) more generally. This dictum is hard to understand. Applied to the Jews appearing in these greetings, Mustakallio, in effect, excludes them from both the first and the second audience of the letter.

Mustakallio's interpretation raises several historical questions, such as where is the second audience to be found, and what is its relationship to the intended audience? I suggest that a text-pragmatic approach is worth considering here. In a situation where Paul addresses Christ-believers in Rome, a fellowship who knows him from hearsay only and where rumors critical to him circulated, Paul has a need to build bridges. The relevant greetings introduce names with which the Roman addressees are familiar, and who are also acquainted with Paul. Due to his fragile role and position, Paul seeks to establish connections through these greetings.

The question of the addressees of Paul's letters forms a significant assumption for advocates of “Paul within Judaism.”¹⁶ In the book *Paul within Judaism*,

¹⁴ The recent book by Brian J. Wright, *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window into Early Christian Reading Practices* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017) emphasizes how widespread the practice of communal reading is. This may be relevant when the historical reconstruction of primary and secondary audiences assumed by Mustakallio is reviewed.

¹⁵ Mustakallio, “Audiences,” 237. In footnoting this dictum, he makes reference to Thorsteinsson among some others.

¹⁶ Magnus Zetterholm, “Jews, Christians, and Gentiles: Rethinking the Categorization

which in many ways epitomizes that perspective, this assumption is never really substantiated. A more substantial argument is given in Matthew Thiessen's *Paul and the Gentile Problem*.¹⁷ Most Pauline scholars would agree that Paul's intended readers are for the most part Gentiles, but they are not necessarily ready to draw the implications made by advocates of "Paul within Judaism." Furthermore, the fact that Paul's letters are *not* exclusively written to Gentiles – this is also consented by Thiessen¹⁸ – is worth observing. The audience to whom Paul's epistles were addressed were mixed, albeit predominantly toward Gentiles. It seems to me that the reservations implied in "predominantly" have hardly affected the way many advocates of "Paul within Judaism" perceive of Paul's theology, since that observation, in fact, calls for renewed thinking with regard to the implications of Paul's theology for Jews as well.

As noted by William S. Campbell above, there is a universal scope in Paul's letters. This comes clearly into view in Rom 1:18–3:20 where God is the Creator of all humankind (e.g., 3:6). This gives a universal – if not a cosmic dimension or horizon – to what he writes there. Humankind's captivity to the demonic power of Sin¹⁹ paves the way for how Paul in Romans depicts salvation as a cosmic event. God's action in Christ concerns the world, Jews as well as Gentiles. Romans 1:18–3:20 is picked up on in Rom 5:12–13, which talks about sin coming into the world (εἰς τὸν κόσμον), thus suggesting how these passages interact in the rhetoric of the letter.²⁰ In Rom 1:18–3:20, the universality of human sinful-

within the Early Jesus Movement," in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: In Honour of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker (LNTS 428; New York, London: T&T Clark, 2010), 249–50; Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization," 134–35; Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Question of Identity: Gentiles as Gentiles—but also Not—in Pauline Communities," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 153, 156; Neil Elliott, "The Question of Politics: Paul as a Diaspora Jew under Roman Rule," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2015), 234.

¹⁷ See the preceding chapter in the present investigation.

¹⁸ Thiessen, *Paul*, 10–11 says "predominantly" to Gentiles and "rarely" to Jews, thus indicating some reservation. Similarly with Magnus Zetterholm, "The Non-Jewish Interlocutor in Romans 2:17 and the Salvation of the Nations: Contextualizing Romans 1:18–32," in *The So-Called Jew in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodrigues and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 40: "... his main interest was the gentile nations, not the Jewish people, and that he consequently addressed predominantly non-Jews."

¹⁹ Beverly R. Gaventa, "The Revelation of Human Captivity: An Exegesis of Romans 1, 18–32," in *God's Power for Salvation: Romans 5–11*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Monographische Reihe von Benedictina: Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 23; Leiven: Peeters, 2013), 44–46. Martinus de Boer, "Apocalyptic as God's Eschatological Activity in Paul's Theology," in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 53–59.

²⁰ This was pointed out by Nils Alstrup Dahl, "A Synopsis of Romans 5:1–11 and 8:1–39," in *Studies in Paul: Theology for Early Christian Mission*, ed. Nils A. Dahl (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1977), 88–90.

ness brings together Jews and Gentiles, clearly stated in “no human being” (πᾶσα σὰρξ; v. 20 cf. Gal 2:16).²¹ In the words of Michael F. Bird, “Jews need the gospel because they are part of the world enthralled to evil powers; Israel too is Adam.”²² This universal perspective permeates this section of Romans, as is evident from 2:1, 9–11: humankind as such is accountable in God’s judgment. The reference to “... you call yourself a Jew” (Rom 2:17) picks up on 2:1, in which Paul raises the question if some people, *in casu* the Jews, are exempt from the charge that all humans are sinners.²³

In Romans 5, Paul speaks about Adam and the cosmos, a chapter that coincides with Rom 8:18–39, which is certainly cosmic in its scope.²⁴ The cosmic and universal dimensions unite Paul’s presentation of sinful humanity in Rom 1:18–3:20 and his hope and vision for the future in Romans 8. The universal and cosmological horizon of Paul’s theology, particularly in Romans, develops from the oneness of God, stated explicitly in Rom 3:29–30, and echoing the creed of *Shema* (Deut 6:4). It is worth noticing that the universality of sin, also according to Gal 3:19–22, brings to Paul’s mind the oneness of God (v. 20). The issue of Paul’s intended addressees should sidetrack neither of these dimensions nor Paul’s monotheism.²⁵

²¹ At the SBL meeting in Boston 2017, Runar M. Thorsteinsson presented a reading of Rom 3:20, claiming that οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ, meaning “no human being will be justified in his sight by deeds prescribed by the law” as exclusive vis-à-vis Jews; that is, Paul’s emphasis on justification by faith applies to Gentiles only. This militates against the context in which this echo from Ps 142:2 LXX is found. The grammatical structure with οὐ/οὐκ/μή is found in Mark 13:20/Matt 24:22, and 1 Cor 1:29 in an *inclusive* sense. 1 Cor 15:39 has οὐ πᾶσα σὰρξ in an exclusive sense, like Thorsteinsson assumes in Rom 3:20 as well, but it is worth noticing that οὐ is attached to the noun immediately here, not to a verb as in the other instances given above. What we have in Rom 3:20 is a Semitic style, witnessed to in, for example, Gen 9:11 LXX; see also BDR §302.1.

²² Bird, *Anomalous Jews*, 43–44.

²³ As for Romans 2 in particular, see Jens Schröter, “Juden und Heiden in Römer 2: Röm 2,1–29 innerhalb der Argumentation von 1,18–3,20,” in *God’s Power for Salvation: Romans 5, 1–11*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Monographische Reihe von Benedictina: Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 23; Leuven, Peeters, 2017), 62–63, 65–66. Schröter says that Paul here describes “eine anthropologische Realität” (p. 68), stated *pace* Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor* and Thiessen, *Paul*, 43–71, who argues that “you who call yourself a Jew” is a Gentile claiming Jewishness. Likewise, Gaventa, “Revelation,” 48–50, 58–59 reads Rom 1:18–32 as being about humanity, a perspective culminating in the universal and cosmic Rom 5:12–21. More on Rom 2:17 on pp. 99–104 in this study.

²⁴ See Udo Schnelle, “Die kosmische Auseinandersetzung zwischen Christus und der Sünde nach dem Römerbrief,” in *Paulus und Petrus: Geschichte, Theologie, Rezeption*. In Honor of F. W. Horn, ed. Heike Omerzu and Eckart D. Schmidt (ABG 48; Leipzig: EVA, 2016), 79–100; see also his “Die Gegenwart des Heils im Lichte seiner Zukunft: Röm 5,1–11 als Grundsatz und Transferpassage,” in *God’s Power for Salvation: Romans 5, 1–11*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Monographische Reihe von Benedictina: Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 23; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 188–93.

²⁵ Karl Olav Sandnes, “Justification and Abraham: Exegesis of Romans 4” in *God’s Power for Salvation: Romans 5, 1–11*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Monographische Reihe von Bene-

This brings us to the apocalyptic Paul. His letters are carried by the conviction that in Christ a new era has dawned (Gal 4:4; 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17–19; Rom 1:17); the promised time is about to be consummated by his coming to the world.²⁶ The apocalyptic horizon of Paul's theology is apparent in his first extant letter, where his readers appear unprepared that they might die before the coming of the Lord (1 Thess 4:13–18). His instruction on marriage and family (1 Corinthians 7; see especially vv. 26, 29) is carried by a similar expectation of the world approaching its end. For sure, this does not make Paul less Jewish; on the contrary. However, it makes him eruptive, creative, and radical in a way that has to be accounted for. Although I endorse Pamela Eisenbaum's emphasis that the turning point in Paul's life revolved around what *time* it was, I find that she overlooks the role of *Christ* in this turning of the tides.²⁷ Paul's new understanding of time was intimately connected with the Christ-event and its dimensions for the whole world. A reformation individual, "how does the individual find a gracious God?" does not come to terms with the apocalyptic Paul. Neither does a theology which says that Paul's theology is limited to the intended addressees of his letters. Paul, the apocalyptic, is by implication both universal and cosmic beyond the reformation perspective, but also hardly accommodated within a reading limiting the scope of his theology to its intended addressees.

So, one of the characteristics of "Paul within Judaism" is the role assigned to the "chronometrical element"²⁸ or the pilgrimage of the Gentiles to Jerusalem, a conviction firmly rooted in Jewish traditions, and which certainly plays a role for understanding Paul's theology (see above). Paul's coming to understand what time it was marked the turning point in his life, and this was, according to Mark D. Nanos, the only thing that separated him from contemporary Jews. Previous to this turn (i.e., his Damascus Road experience), Paul may well have "held that non-Jews should be circumcised and even been actively engaged in circumcising them previously" (implied in Gal 5:11).²⁹ In view of his new understanding of time, this was no longer appropriate. From this, Nanos deduces that it was only the circumcision of Christ-following non-Jews that Paul opposed as

dictina: Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 23; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 147, 170–71, 176–77, argues that Abraham's fatherhood for *all* who believe, be they Jews or Gentiles in Romans 4, is made with reference to God of *Shema* and God of Creation. This theocentric perspective of Paul's dicta on justification by faith is crucial. See also Christopher R. Bruno, "God is One: The Function of *Eis ho Theos* as a Ground for Gentile Inclusion in Paul's Letters (LNTS 497; London: T&T Clark, 2013).

²⁶ See, for example, J. Christian Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982); J.P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses? An Evaluation of the "Apocalyptic Paul" in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature* (LNTS 562; London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

²⁷ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 196–200.

²⁸ Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization," 109, 122, 126.

²⁹ Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization," 149.

a rejection of Christ. Nanos's argument is not transparent here; nonetheless, Gal 1:23 implies that Christ-followers in Jerusalem and Judea were also targets of Paul's persecution.³⁰ Persecuting fellow Jews was motivated in the zeal for the law.³¹

Finally, regardless of the many debated questions involved in the interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23, it is hard to get away from v. 20 (“to Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews”), implying that Paul's mission involved him with Jews as well.³² According to Matthew Thiessen, Paul was *occasionally* involved with Jews; that is, “he had to explain message and actions to some of his Jewish contemporaries.” Hence, Paul's mission was not entirely unrelated to Jews. By introducing the language of “explaining,” Thiessen here bends Paul's dictum to be about Paul defending his gospel, rather than about preaching and mission.³³

To observe that Paul's intended readers were predominantly Gentiles is in itself not suggestive of the far-reaching implications that some advocates of “Paul within Judaism” often draw. I think it is necessary to distinguish between the question of addressees and the horizons or implications involved; some of these implications come to the surface in the texts themselves. Although Gentiles are the intended addressees, albeit not exclusively so, this does not necessarily imply that Jews are out of the *horizon* of Paul's point, or that they are not affected by what he writes. The horizon of Paul's apostolate is not identical to the intended readers of his epistles. The universal horizon in Paul's way of talking about faith in Christ finds expression in, for example, Gal 3:28 (cf. 1 Cor 12:13): neither Jew nor Greek. This well-known dictum is nullified in all possible ways if Paul made it, and simultaneously, silently so to speak, added a note, namely that the Jews are not within the scope anyway. Based on this passage and its immediate context, the question is if the baptismal practice assumed here includes Jews as well. Along with Ole Jakob Filtvedt, I find it awkward if the claim “neither Jew nor Greek” and the emphatic use of “all” here is exclusive to Jews after all.³⁴ The asymmetry, or the prerogative of the Jews stated in Paul's “for Jews first” as found in Romans, and probably implied in Gal 2:15 as well, is not in focus in Galatians 3.

³⁰ See pp. 57–62 in this study.

³¹ I notice that there is no entry on Gal 1:23 in the index of *Paul within Judaism*, ed. M. D. Nanos and M. Zetterholm.

³² For this passage, see Reidar Hvalvik, “Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to the Book of Acts,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 128–31; Karl Olav Sandnes, “A Missionary Strategy in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23,” in *Paul as a Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner (LNTS 420; New York, 2011), 128–41.

³³ Thiessen, *Paul*, 178–79. Likewise, Fredriksen, *Paul*, 165.

³⁴ Ole Jakob Filtvedt, “A ‘Non-Ethnic’ People?” *Bib* 97 (2016): 109–12.

2.2 *Paul's Theology Is Not Identical to Its Occasion*

It follows from the preceding discussion that Paul's theology on the law is not identical to the situation which occasioned it. His letters, and the theology which comes out of them, arose in situations of contingencies. The relationship between Jews and Gentiles occupied a key role, particularly so in Galatians and Romans, where issues relevant for our study abound. Although I consider the Damascus event (see below) important here, it is a fact that issues pertaining to the law were occasioned by Paul preaching and practicing admission for Gentiles into Christ-believing groups. James D. G. Dunn has rightly drawn the attention to Gal 2:16 as a point of departure in this regard. Badges of ethnic identity hold a prominent place here (see above). Dunn notes himself – a remark often overlooked – that he has never claimed “the ‘works of law’ denote only circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath: A careful reading of my ‘New Perspective’ should have made it clear that as in Galatians 2, these were particular focal or crisis points for (and demonstration of) a generally nomistic attitude.”³⁵ This paves the way for the conclusion that Paul's theology on the law is not identical to the occasion that elicited it; in the words of Stephen Westerholm, “it is the point rather than the historical occasion of the formulation that is crucial.”³⁶

What is the point then? Westerholm believes that Paul's view on the law is not sufficiently accounted for by the ethnocentrism of the “New Perspective,” but depends upon the apostle's anthropological pessimism: the inability of the law to cope with human sin. The most salutary emphasis of the “New Perspective,” according to Westerholm, is the insistence that Judaism was not legalistic: “Jews did not think they ‘earned’ their salvation; they acknowledged God's goodness in granting Israel his covenant and strove to respond to that goodness by fulfilling its requirements.”³⁷ However, the operative principle of the law for Paul was the demand to *do* what it required. This brings us closer to the general nomistic attitude mentioned by Dunn (see above). It is not to be overlooked that Paul in Gal 1:4 and 3:22 makes sin the backdrop for understanding the role of Jesus. Thus, these passages form a bridge to Romans where this is much more in focus (1:18–3:20; 4:7–8). “Being under sin” (ὕπὸ ἁμαρτίαν) summarizes Paul's view on humankind in both Gal 3:22 and Rom 3:9; furthermore, in both texts, this view is said to be based on the Scriptures.³⁸ The sinfulness of all humankind is beyond the law's capacity to cope with it.³⁹

³⁵ Dunn, *Theology*, 358 n. 97.

³⁶ Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 445.

³⁷ Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 443. See also his “Righteousness, Cosmic and Microcosmic,” in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly R. Gaventa (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 21–38; *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

³⁸ Sandnes, “Justification and Abraham,” 147–80.

³⁹ Cf. Timo Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach* (South Florida Stud-

In his recent study, *Paul and the Gift*, John M. G. Barclay argues that divine grace in Christ is incongruous, given without regard to ethnicity, status, cultural prestige, sinfulness, ignorance, etc. Paul stands among Jews in his discussion of divine grace, but “[t]he way Paul radicalizes the incongruity of grace, and the distinctive way he connects that grace to the Christ-event and practices it in his Gentile mission, relativizes the authority of the Torah in a fashion unparalleled among his Jewish peers.”⁴⁰ Such a divine gift of grace reconstituted Paul’s life from being a persecutor to becoming an apostle (Gal 1:15).⁴¹ The situation of humankind, as voiced in the Scriptures, ties in with this incongruous and unconditioned grace. From this follows that Paul’s theology on the Torah involves more than a critique of ethnocentrism, and also that its relevance, as Paul sees it, extends that of his intended addressees as well as the situations occasioning his letters.

2.3 *Damascus: Between Biography and Theology*

There is a tendency in recent Pauline scholarship to minimize Paul’s problem with the law. This tendency does not adequately account for the formative influence that the Damascus event is likely to have had on Paul’s views of the Torah. A wide range of scholars have made the Damascus event the origin of Paul’s theology, among whom Seyoon Kim⁴² and Christian Dietzfelbinger⁴³ stand out. I find myself in basic agreement with them, although I find their views at times exaggerated. Under the heading “Damascus,” I will now highlight some aspects which have an important bearing on the current debates on Paul and the law, and which often are not given sufficient attention.

Regarding the Damascus event, we must start with the changes that were *immediate*, preceding anything that could be called theological reflection or triggering Paul’s reconsideration. From the immediate changes, we turn to what kind of reflections grew most naturally out of the changes that Paul immediately took upon himself. Paul’s remarks on his Damascus event are, of course, not untouched by the theology that he later developed. This makes it highly important to consider the immediate changes that this event brought about, although

ies in the History of Judaism 115; Atlanta, GA; Scholars Press, 1995), who considers the separation between church and synagogue to be due to Paul’s “exclusive” Christology and “the pessimistic anthropology” (p.209).

⁴⁰ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 566.

⁴¹ Karl Olav Sandnes, “Prophet-Like Apostle: a Note on the ‘Radical New Perspective’ in Pauline Studies,” *Bib* 96 (2015): 554–56.

⁴² Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981). First published Tübingen 1981 in WUNT 2.4.

⁴³ Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Die Berufung des Paulus als Ursprung seiner Theologie* (WMANT 58; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1985).

they are reported in epistles marked precisely by the theology that he subsequently developed. According to Beverly R. Gaventa, Paul tells his story in Galatians 1–2 in a way which demonstrates that his *theology* is the real cause of his “conversion,” and not the other way around. His theology is then not a product of Damascus; Damascus is shaped by his theology.⁴⁴ Surely, the paradigmatic role of the Damascus event (see below) must imply similarities between paradigm and application, and there is every reason to believe that the influence goes back and forth here.⁴⁵

As for the fact that Paul’s language in Galatians colors the Damascus event, we must ask how Paul’s biography can really underpin his gospel, if it was shaped to the extent that it was hardly recognizable by the addressees. From a rhetorical point of view, pieces of information that are beyond what the addressees may recognize hardly work as arguments – particularly so when the argument claims to be based on shared “facts.” Thus, Gaventa weakens Paul’s argument considerably. Paul argues with reference to the familiarity of his converts with his Damascus event (“you have heard”), and builds his argument from there.⁴⁶ This is in accordance with Gal 3:1–5 where Paul urges his converts to draw a lesson from what they have experienced. Paul frames these experiences in the language of faith *versus* law; this is *his* language and *his* categories, not necessarily theirs. However, he assumes that they are able to consider his argument by being reminded of their own experiences. Paul’s rhetoric is very much an attempt to bring to their mind past experiences and to reflect thereupon. The way that he takes advantage of their experiences in his theology is possible precisely because the two are distinct, but still combined and bridged in his argument. It is only by keeping in mind Paul’s biography and the way it was shaped that his testimony can really work paradigmatically. For Galatians 1–2 to work paradigmatically, it requires that Paul is involved *qua persona*; it implies that his life in some way performs or portrays his message. As epitomized particularly in the Damascus event, Paul enacted the gospel through his own life.⁴⁷ Accord-

⁴⁴ Beverly R. Gaventa, “Galatians 1–2: Autobiography as Paradigm,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 312–13.

⁴⁵ See pp. 44–47 and 57–62 on Gal 1:23

⁴⁶ This is stated *pace* Matthias Konradt, “Bekehrung – Berufung – Lebenswende: Perspektive aus das Damaskusgeschehen in der neueren Paulusforschung,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, and Joseph Verheyden (NTOA 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 112, who with reference to the rhetorical situation, says: “Sie bieten keinen verlässlichen Anhalt, um von Paulus’ Interpretation des Geschehens auf das von ihm Erlebte zu schliessen.” This is not how Paul and his Galatian converts conceived of it. The rhetoric of Galatians proceeds from an assumed knowledge, shared by both, about this event. For sure, this is not to invite naïve attempts at reconstructing history, but it is to take seriously the rhetoric applied by Paul. A similar point is made by Terence L. Donaldson, “Zealot and Convert: The Origin of Paul’s Christ-Torah Antithesis,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 664. See also pp. 161–64 in the present study.

⁴⁷ Susan Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Gala-*

ing to Andrie du Toit, “grace became almost a name-tag by which one could recognise a Pauline reference to his Damascus-experience.”⁴⁸

The autobiographical passages in Paul’s epistles are abbreviated into what we may call coded texts; this applies especially to Galatians 1. The passage is shaped according to literary models (prophetic vocations); furthermore, it is a reminder to the addressees. By necessity, this makes it coded for later readers, and the event is recounted as an argument and shaped accordingly. Extracting biography from such texts is not without its challenges, and this also affects how biography impacted Paul’s theology. It requires a certain amount of imaginative but careful reading, when we abstract sub-textual dimensions from his argument. However, we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater here.

2.4 Immediate Damascus: Commission and Abandoning Persecutions

How the Damascus event impinged upon Paul’s theology is a mixed bag of immediacy and process, inclusive of studying the Scriptures and his Gentile mission. I do not claim that Paul received his theology on the law in a flash, although it was *triggered* by what happened outside Damascus.⁴⁹ It is necessary to distinguish between Paul’s full-fledged theology and the way that the Damascus event *initiated* what came to be Paul’s theology. Christian Dietzfelbinger argues that “Das neue Urteil des Paulus über die Torah gründet dagegen in der Erfahrung von Damaskus und in der durch sie ausgelösten Reflexion.”⁵⁰ Dietzfelbinger addresses the initial immediate consequences of this event, defining them consistently in *cognitive* terms: “Überlegungen,” “Denkkonse-

tians (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 66–88, has pointed out that Paul’s prophetic consciousness makes the medium inseparable from the message. Paul’s life is intertwined in his theology, similar to what we see with Jeremiah and other prophets; see also John Anthony Dunne, *Persecution and Participation in Galatians* (WUNT 2.454; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 129–51.

⁴⁸ Andrie du Toit, “Encountering Grace: Towards Understanding the Essence of Paul’s Damascus Experience,” in Andrie du Toit, *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and David S. du Toit (BZNW 151; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 61.

⁴⁹ I find that, for example, C. Marvin Pate, *The Reverse of the Curse: Paul, Wisdom and the Law* (WUNT 2.114; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 223, overstates the case when he says that at the Damascus Christophany, Paul “came to perceive that, at the cross, God was ‘hidden under the opposite:’ curses gave way to blessings; death was replaced by life; the works of the law became obsolete in the light of faith in Christ, God’s supreme revelation.” This is a one-sided cognitive definition of what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus; it is also scarcely immediate. For an updated presentation of the Damascus event in Pauline research, see Konradt, “Bekehrung.”

⁵⁰ Dietzfelbinger, *Berufung*, 105.

quenzen,” “theologische Position oder Urteile.”⁵¹ Dietzfelbinger confines himself to the effects that this event had on Paul’s theology and thinking, and adopts this rationalistic perspective throughout. The biographical aspects are turned into changes in *thoughts*. This view does not come to terms with the *immediacy* of this event. The more the consequences of Damascus are conceived in cognitive terms, the more one is also inclined to speak in terms of a process, of something that gradually came into being. While there is no reason to think that Paul’s change of practice (i.e. of giving up on his persecutions) implied a full-fledged theology of the law, there is every reason to believe that Paul’s immediate change of behavior provoked further reflections.

In the first place, the Damascus event conveyed a prophetic-like commission to preach to the Gentiles.⁵² According to Galatians 1, our primary source for this event, the immediate change is his awareness of having been commissioned. It took Paul years to find out *how* this was to be carried out (Gal 1:17–20). It was thus the commission itself that was immediate, not its execution.⁵³ Paul’s awareness of this commission must have engendered serious reflection about how it could possibly be carried out within the received strictures of the Torah. The very fact that Galatians 1 implies distance in time between the awareness of the commission and it being carried out is suggestive in that regard. Paul hardly came to believe that God accepted the Gentiles without being aware of the problem of the law, which was inextricably bound up with this issue. Terence L. Donaldson says, “... a perceived call to a Gentile mission could not have been Paul’s starting point. There must have been a first stage in which a Christ-centered mission to the Gentiles made sense before there could be a second-stage perception that he himself was called to play a central role in such a situation.”⁵⁴ He holds this against Seyoon Kim’s somewhat exaggerated position. Donaldson assumes that theology or sense precedes a perceived call in a way which I find unlikely. The unexpectedness with which the revelation outside Damascus appeared to him suggests that “sense” was hardly immediate, but needed to be worked out in the aftermath of the event. In other words, it is scarcely possible that issues pertaining to the law were not part of this process.

Second, in terms of the immediate effects of Damascus on Paul’s behavior or practice, is his *cessation* of persecution, which is of the outmost importance. It is impossible to imagine that Paul continued in any way to persecute his former

⁵¹ Dietzfelbinger, *Berufung*, 99, 100–101.

⁵² For example, Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle’s Self-Understanding* (WUNT 2.43; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 56–66.

⁵³ According to Acts, Paul launched himself immediately on his commission while still within the precincts of Damascus (Acts 9:20; 26:20). This episode paved the way for Alan F. Segal to label Acts 9:18–22 a “quick conversion” that also included baptism, which is different from the “slow or gradual conversion” visible in Paul’s own letters; Segal, *Paul*, 80, 84.

⁵⁴ Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997) 250, cf. pp. 259–60.

enemies, if only a little. To my knowledge, no scholar has ever claimed that he did so. Pamela Eisenbaum says that it is the “issue of persecution that is most in need of explanation if we are to debunk the notion that Paul underwent a conversion.”⁵⁵ What became of his persecutions is certainly a key issue. With regard to the immediate effects of the Damascus event on Paul’s life and theology, one observation stands out: Paul immediately ceased persecuting Christ-followers. What that entails for his theology on the law demands further reflection.

The fact that Paul’s persecution was motivated by his devotion to law, and even more, how his own Damascus event is portrayed in accordance with his “doctrine” on justification by faith, pave the way for insights pertaining to the issue of Paul and the law. His zeal for the law and his persecution appears “in einem Atemzug,” as Bernd Kollmann puts it,⁵⁶ in both Gal 1:13–14 and Phil 3:6. Paul ceased to do precisely what the law had motivated him to do. The fact that he left behind his persecutions is an immediate sign of the first step in a process of some duration. In the words of Mark A. Seifrid: “His very ceasing to persecute them therefore indicates that his view of the Law changed in some manner by his coming to faith in Christ.”⁵⁷ The Damascus event is turned into an argument that mirrors the opposition between law and faith in Galatians. No doubt, the Galatian situation heightened the awareness of issues pertaining to the law, but I find it unlikely that Paul, the Pharisee, embarked on a mission to the Gentiles with no real understanding that the issue of law was involved.⁵⁸ In saying this, I question the claim that the silence of 1 Thessalonians regarding the law inevitably indicates that the Galatian crisis *alone* caused this to be on Paul’s agenda.⁵⁹

2.5 Damascus: A Tandem Disturbed or the Torah and Christ

The following argues that the autobiographical passages give access to a *dilemma* that must have appeared immediately to Paul, leading him then to further reflection. This dilemma proceeds from a contrast between the Torah and Christ that comes through in some of the relevant passages, particularly in Galatians 1 and Philippians 3 (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). It is significant to note that Paul emphasizes how his zeal for the law had made him an enemy of God’s appointed Messiah.⁶⁰ This must have been shocking, since the Messiah and the law had been

⁵⁵ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 143.

⁵⁶ Bernd Kollmann, “Die Berufung und Bekehrung zum Heidenmissionar,” in *Paulus Handbuch*, ed. Friedrich W. Horn (Tübingen 2013) 80–91, especially p. 85.

⁵⁷ Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin & Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (NovTSup 68; Leiden; Brill, 1992), 139.

⁵⁸ Thus also Marguerat, *Paul*, 204–208.

⁵⁹ Pace, for example, E.P. Sanders, *The Apostle Paul’s Life, Letters and Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 192–93 who follows the classical view of William Wrede.

⁶⁰ Donaldson, “Zealot” emphasizes the importance of zeal for coming to terms with

imagined as standing in a harmonious relationship.⁶¹ Paul's dilemma may be formulated in this way: How is it possible that my devotion to the Torah turned me into an enemy of Israel's promised Messiah?

Reading Psalm 2 as part of the united Book of Psalms⁶² renders the Torah and the Messiah a tandem. The Messiah is portrayed as fulfilling observance of the Torah *par excellence*. Like a tree yielding rich fruits, Psalm 1 portrays those who trust in the law ("his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he will meditate day and night"; v. 2). Psalm 1 blesses (μακάριος) the man who puts his trust in the law. This blessing also marks the close of Psalm 2: μακάριοι πάντες οἱ πεποιθότες ἐπ' αὐτῷ (v. 12d). The Messiah thus becomes an instrument for the παιδεία provided by the law (Ps 2:10–12a), guiding people toward its righteousness (Ps 1:1, 6a+b; 2:12b). Reading Psalms 1 and 2 thus accords with the conception of the Nathan promise in 1 Chron. 28:6–10: the Messiah is resolute in keeping God's commandments and ordinances. According to 1 Chron. 28:11, like Moses (Exod 25:9, 40), David is given a model of the sanctuary and is portrayed as a "second Moses."⁶³ Likewise in the Book of Ezekiel, David is portrayed as the lone shepherd of the people (vv. 23–24, echoing Ps 2:9's ποιμαίνειν), through whom the people will find renewal. This renewal is constituted by the law (Ezek 37:24: "And my slave David, shall be ruler in their midst, and they shall all have one shepherd, for they shall walk by my ordinances and keep my judgments and perform them"; cf. 34:23; 36:27).⁶⁴ This tandem consisting of the Messiah and law is thus clearly attested in different parts of the Hebrew Bible.

Paul's persecutions of Christ-followers, but also for the Christ–Torah antithesis in his theology. The way I work this out here differs from his presentation. I find it particularly interesting though that Donaldson (pp. 672–74) stresses "the community emphases in the zeal tradition." Although zeal is directed inwards, as it is applied "in Jewish interparty strife," its concern for the Torah implies a concern for the preservation of the *community*. This is also emphasized by Torrey Seland, *Establishment Violence in Philo and Luke: A Study of Non-Conformity to the Torah and Jewish Vigilante Reactions* (Biblical Interpretation Series 15; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 302. From this follows that the importance Paul assigns to his zeal in persecuting the church is involved with rival group-formation as well, or rather, that a liminal or threshold situation is involved. This also holds true when Paul later faces persecutions; see pp. 170–73 in this study.

⁶¹ Matthew V. Novenson, "The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question," *JBL* 128 (2009): 357–73, argues that Jewish convictions on the Messiah were universal in scope; the Messiah was to rule the pagan nations. Novenson argues that "Paul believed that God had enlisted him to recruit pagan subjects for this Jewish king" (p. 372). Novenson gives examples from relevant sources, with Rom 15:12's citation of Isa 11:10 as a lens here. If Paul's emphasis on the Gentiles finds some analogies in these sources, the way Paul in some texts comes to contrast law and Christ is still not accounted for.

⁶² See Erich Zenger, "Psalmenforschung nach Hermann Gunkel und Sigmund Mowinckel," in *Congress Volume Oslo 2000*; VTSup 80; Leiden: Brill 2000), 399–435, especially pp. 416–30.

⁶³ Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29* (AB; London: Doubleday, 2004), 930–31.

⁶⁴ See also Ps 88 (89):30–33 concerning the Messiah and the Torah.

Psalms of Solomon, especially 17 and 18, are relevant with regard to how Paul's contemporaries conceived of the Messiah and the Torah. According to *Pss. Sol.* 17:40–42, the Messiah will “shepherd” (ποιμαίνων) the Lord's flock “to discipline it” (παιδεῦσαι), thus echoing Psalm 2.⁶⁵ Likewise, *Pss. Sol.* 18:7 says that the people will be “under the rod of discipline of the Lord Messiah” (ὑπὸ ῥάβδον παιδείας χριστοῦ κυρίου; cf. Ps 2:9). Discipline in the *Psalms of Solomon* is intimately associated with the law (7:9; 10:1–4; 14:1–4; 16:10–13).⁶⁶ *Pss. Sol.* 14 evokes the metaphor of Psalm 1, namely that those who observe the law faithfully are like a tree firmly rooted.⁶⁷ Furthermore, v. 3 in this psalm echoes Lev 18:5: “You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live” (ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς). Preston M. Sprinkle has demonstrated how this Old Testament text is understood in the *Psalms of Solomon* as life conditioned by *doing* the law.⁶⁸ Although the Messiah is not linked explicitly to the law in this literature, he being intimately associated with wisdom, righteousness, and discipline, nonetheless, turns the Messiah and the law into a tandem.⁶⁹ Jostein Ådna has investigated the portrait of the Messiah in the *Targum of Isaiah* to Isaiah 53 and found that the Messiah is the “Teacher of the Law”. Ådna considers this a continuation of a picture with wide currency in other *Targumim*, in rabbinic literature and in pre-Christian Jewish texts like *Pss. Sol.* 17.⁷⁰

Paul reflecting upon the Damascus event was disruptive to this tandem, as it drew a wedge between the law and the Messiah (Christ). The two were not supposed to work against each other, but this was precisely the option that the Damascus experience conveyed to Paul, even though his experience demanded further reflection. John M. G. Barclay points out the antithetical rhetoric of Galatians; that is, human *versus* divine, slavery *versus* freedom, law *versus* Christ, flesh *versus* Spirit, “works of law” *versus* faith: “The Christ-event has recalibrated all systems of worth, creating communities that operate in ways significantly at odds with both Jewish and non-Jewish traditions of value”.⁷¹ Paul's remarks on the Damascus event are deeply embedded in these contrasts that form the backbone of his theological rationale in Galatians. Paul's allegiance to

⁶⁵ OTP 2:665–70.

⁶⁶ Mikael Winninge, *Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul's Letters* (ConBNT 26; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell 1995), 87–89, 119–20.

⁶⁷ It is worth noting that Trypho, Justin's Jewish dialogue partner, reasons likewise; a conflict between law and the Messiah is simply not conceivable (*Dial.* 46.1; 89.2; 90.1).

⁶⁸ Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul* (WUNT 2.241; Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 87–100.

⁶⁹ Thus also Pate, *Reverse of the Curse*, 37–42.

⁷⁰ Jostein Ådna, “The Servant of Isaiah 53 as Triumphant and Interceding Messiah: The Reception of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 in the Targum of Isaiah with Special Attention to the Concept of the Messiah,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 207–209.

⁷¹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 337–39; quotation on 350.

the law has now been superseded by his allegiance to Christ (Gal 2:14–21). The contrast of the law *versus* the Messiah takes the Damascus event as a point of departure, thus suggesting that the event is closely tied up with these polarities.

Looking back at this incident, Paul says that he persecuted the “church of God” (1:13). What comes to the surface in this theocentric perspective is a *dilemma*: how did Paul come to persecute the church of God of the fathers, precisely because he was devoted to the law of Moses? This dilemma may be rephrased in the following way: how is it possible that his dedication to the divinely given law turned him into an opponent of God’s appointed Messiah? Here lies a potential explanation of why Paul’s theology on the law developed as it did. Mark A. Seifrid puts it like this: “... why in the case of Paul, unlike in that of numerous other Jewish Christians of his day, faith in Christ was antithetical to a salvific value for *Torah* observance.”⁷² Paul negotiated the relationship between the Torah and Christ, a relationship traditionally seen as a harmonious tandem in which the Messiah embodied the ideal of faithful Torah observance. A decentering of the law is at play in Paul’s theology, due to his Christocentrism and also his anthropology (see above).

The argument proposed here cannot explain Paul’s attitude to the Torah *in toto*, since there is no rejection of the law as such in Paul’s epistles. Particularly in Romans, Paul sees a need to enhance the positive role of the law (2:27–29; 3:31; 7:12; 8:3), which is alluded to more provisionally in Galatians (5:6, 14; 6:15). Nonetheless, Paul’s theology, especially in Galatians and Romans, demonstrates an ongoing need to negotiate the role of the law, subordinating it to Christ. Accordingly, the law is both past and temporary; it is subordinated but still necessary like a *paidagōgos* (Gal 3:24),⁷³ and it is also, in fact, fulfilled by other means than by simply observing it. This variegated picture is a window into Paul’s ongoing workshop on the law. In Paul’s claim that the law is fulfilled through actions of love (Gal 5:6; 6:15; Rom 3:31; 13:8),⁷⁴ he adjusts and shapes his theology in accordance with the harmony that had long been supposed between the law and the Messiah, but which he questioned. This will be elaborated on later.

2.6 Damascus: A Paradigm

Scholars have long noted that Paul in Gal 1:6 portrays his Gentile converts in a way that echoes his own Damascus revelation, thus implying that his experience works paradigmatically: it reveals something about the addressees as well.

⁷² Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 146.

⁷³ For the role of this figure in ancient educational texts, see Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity* (LNTS 400; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 127–29, 259–63.

⁷⁴ Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 434–37.

This is clearly implied in the way 1:6 and 1:15 are juxtaposed: τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι [Χριστοῦ]// καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ. The call given to Paul as an act of grace does not set him apart from the Galatians; on the contrary, this particular event in his life shares a fundamental similarity with the addressees' embracing of Paul's gospel. Paul's biography thus works both paradigmatically and theologically in this epistle.⁷⁵ Galatians 1:6–9 makes it abundantly clear that grace is not merely a piece of Paul's experience; it is the very core of the content of his gospel (Gal 2:20–21).⁷⁶ In Gal 2:15–21, Paul expounds on the Antioch incident, where the issue was Gentile adoption of Jewish dietary rules. At first glance, this passage supports Pamela Eisenbaum's view that Paul is addressing only Gentiles here.

However, the exposition that follows this incident adopts a wider view. I noted above that Paul moves between “we” (clearly a reference to himself and other Jews) and all of humanity (πᾶσα σὰρξ). In vv. 17–18, he moves freely between “we” and “I,” thus making the point that he still considers himself a Jew. Eisenbaum does not come to terms with how Paul also brings his theological reflection to bear upon his Jewish identity.⁷⁷ In Gal 2:16, καὶ ἡμεῖς is to be taken seriously and emphatically; Paul starts from a generic ἄνθρωπος and proceeds to state that “also we” belong in the πᾶσα σὰρξ, which sums up his logic. “We” is not to be isolated from “we ourselves are Jews by birth” (ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι; v. 15). In Paul's biography, the story of grace and faith is played out in a way that is relevant to Jews and Gentiles alike.⁷⁸

Galatians 2:19–21 urges a contrast between the law and Christ. According to John M. G. Barclay, Paul's statement about his break with the law is “absolutely breathtaking.”⁷⁹ It is notable that the passage has a number of similarities to the Damascus event described in chapter 1:

- The biographical shape of the two passages;
- The contrast between the law and Christ echoes 1:13–14, representing law *versus* 1:15–16a, representing Christ;
- Christ is called “God's Son,” which picks up on 1:16a;
- The phrase ἐν ἐμοί in both passages describes Paul's relationship to Christ brought upon him by God;⁸⁰

⁷⁵ This has been argued persuasively by Gaventa, “Galatians 1 and 2.” See also Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 356–62.

⁷⁶ See also Sandnes, “Prophet-Like Apostle,” 554–56.

⁷⁷ See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 372, who highlights that Jewish identity is “not obliterated, albeit relativized in its normative significance ...”

⁷⁸ John M. G. Barclay, “Paul's Story: Theology as Testimony,” in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Bruce W. Longenecker (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 136–38.

⁷⁹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 385–86.

⁸⁰ Scholars often take ἐν ἐμοί in Gal 1:15 and 2:20 to mean different things, the first being equivalent to a simple dative (μοι; “for me/to me”), and the second as more about some kind

- Verse 20 (οὐκέτι *versus* νῦν) echoes 1:23, which summarizes the Damascus event in categories of past *versus* present; and
- Both passages involve God’s love (1:15 εὐδόκησεν; 2:20 τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με) in terms of grace (χάρις).

Accordingly, Gal 2:19–21 establishes the Damascus event⁸¹ as highly relevant for Paul’s critique of the law in this epistle. Furthermore, this text echoes Gal 1:4 (τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν), which introduces Christ’s death for “our sins” as the perspective that sheds light on the entire letter. Seeking justification through Torah practices is to nullify this death of Jesus (Gal 2:21). Taken in its immediate literary context, this applies to Jews and Gentiles alike, demonstrating that for Paul the Damascus event had a direct bearing upon the contrast he urged between the law and Christ. In Gal 5:4–5, Paul makes the same contrast, which once again is a matter of χάρις to Paul, as it deconstructs and reconceptualizes all previous allegiances, be they about circumcision or not.

In Gal 2:19, “I” – notice the inclusive use of this presented above – is death to the law, and does not live for himself any longer, but for God, in such a way that Christ lives in him. This results from Christ’s self-giving death and love. It is a matter of God’s grace. The priority of divine action here echoes the revelation given to Paul and the message he preaches according to Galatians 1–2. These chapters are shaped fundamentally by the antithesis between what God does and what humans do; this antithesis is the backbone of the truth of Paul’s gospel.⁸² “I” has thus not been obliterated, but reconstituted in such a way that the law is redundant and that Christ now lives through and in “I.”

The transformation experienced by “I” is hardly accounted for by Dunn, who says that Paul came to understand that some *specific* parts of the law were to be criticized. Eisenbaum’s claim that Paul came to understand that the eschatological *time* had arrived is also not sufficient here. Both fail to account for the fact that the Damascus event, and Paul reflecting upon it, transformed him *beyond* the reception of new insight or instruction. The Damascus event and

of union or the presence of the resurrected Christ in the believer; see, for example, J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB; New York, New York: Doubleday, 1998), 158, 258. Paul’s use of ἐν is slippery and invites interpretations that are not fixed to only one meaning. This is illuminated by 1 Cor 15:8, in which Paul starts from ὄφθῃ κἀμοί, a simple dative, to speak about God’s grace (εἰς ἐμέ), which then becomes God’s grace (σὺν ἐμοί). Furthermore, Phil 3:9–10, proceeding from the Damascus event, speaks of this in terms of union and fellowship. From this I gather that ἐν ἐμοί in Gal 1:16 is more than a simple dative, and hence, no obstacle for considering Gal 2:19–21 as related to the Damascus event; see also Dunne, *Persecution*, 144–51.

⁸¹ Gaventa, “Galatians 1–2,” 317–18 sees this passage as a transition from the autobiographical chs. 1–2 and the discussion emerging in chs. 3–4; hence, the text looks backwards to Gal 1:11–17, which is the immediate context of the Damascus event. Kim, *Origin*, 16; Dietzfelbinger, *Berufung*, 97–100 and du Toit, “Encountering Grace,” 68–73; Marguerat, *Paul*, 173–75, also considers this a passage drawing on the Damascus event, but their arguments are not specific on this point.

⁸² I am indebted here to Sprinkle, *Law*, 153–64.

Paul's statements on the law and his justification are all embedded in the fundamental antithesis of the divine and human in Galatians. This is the heuristic grasp that Paul takes on his theology in this epistle, rather than a perspective applicable solely to Gentiles, as Eisenbaum claims. This perspective is certainly triggered by the Damascus event, but in Galatians, we see that Paul is reflecting on it. However, his reflection is only provisional, since in Romans, Paul further clarifies what this implies, probably due to critique raised against him.⁸³

The fact that Paul uses himself and the Damascus event as a paradigm involves his life and fate in ways for which the expected *time* for the pilgrimage of the nations can hardly account. Paul's use of himself as *exemplum* in Galatians fits poorly into the view that what happened to him was the reception of new insight only, even if it was insight of a special nature. Paul explicitly presents himself as an example: "... become as I am, for I also have become as you are" (Gal 4:12). This passage brings to mind how Paul urged his readers to imitate him,⁸⁴ but it is not an ordinary injunction to *imitate* an ethical pattern, to literally act as Paul does. Paul's life and theirs intersect in a way that makes God's powerful grace in Christ visible.⁸⁵

2.7 What about 1 Cor 7:19?

We noticed above that this passage provided a key for grasping Paul according to "Paul within Judaism," which is particularly emphasized by Matthew Thiessen. He formulates the riddle of this dictum from the perspective of Jewish readers. According to Thiessen, the strategy of the whole passage is that God's requirements vary according to position and status. Hence, ἐντολαὶ θεοῦ become "the commandments that God requires of each group of people,"⁸⁶ differing for Jews and Gentiles, respectively.⁸⁷ For sure, diversity is important in 1 Cor 7:17–24, but this diversity finds some *unifying* cores, among which "keeping the commandments of God" is especially important. In Thiessen's interpretation, the plural ἐντολαὶ θεοῦ pave the way for diversity; that is, the commandments *differ* for the two groups correspondingly. I find this assumed rather than really argued for. How does Thiessen know that "the commandments of God" speak about norms that are distinctive for Jews and for Gentiles, respectively?

Two questions call for some explanation: Does 1 Cor 7:19 in any way relativize circumcision? This is important since Thiessen argues that circumcision here simply refers to Jews contrasted with Gentiles. The rite of circumcision as

⁸³ See chapters 3 and 4 in the present study.

⁸⁴ Eastman, *Paul's Mother Tongue*, 25–29.

⁸⁵ Eastman, *Paul's Mother Tongue*, 30–43.

⁸⁶ Thiessen, *Paul*, 9.

⁸⁷ Thiessen, *Paul*, 11.

such is not in view. If that is answered in the affirmative, how then do we come to terms with the fact that “keeping the commandments of God” is still important? According to Thiessen, it is not possible to distinguish between “keeping the commandments” and circumcision; in effect, they are synonymous.⁸⁸ We will address these questions in turn. I fully agree with William S. Campbell that in the passage of 1 Cor 7:17–24, Paul “thinks in terms of differentiated groups with differing identities in terms of Jews and gentiles, rather than in a church where there is neither Jew nor gentile.”⁸⁹ Thus, particularity and ethnicity are certainly important here. Does this also mean, however, that circumcision as a rite is not at all involved in the relativization (not obliteration) taking place here? To read Paul’s dictum as though circumcision is irrelevant is to me questionable. Verse 19 follows upon v. 18 in which the ritual is very much in focus. This is seen by the fact that the verb περιτέμνειν is used, and also the very specific verb ἐπισπᾶσθαι, which refers to surgery aimed at redoing the circumcision.⁹⁰ That this is out of scope in v. 19 is unlikely. Furthermore, Gal 5:6, which is akin to 1 Cor 7:19, is found enclosed within a setting speaking about the *ritual* of circumcision (v. 2 and v. 12). Paul would hardly conceive of his *relativization* of circumcision as equivalent to some kind of criticism of Judaism, but this was not as obvious as Paul had foreseen. This is precisely where the voices of the present study will come into play and add important nuances. I concur with James D. G. Dunn who says that “the central issue in these passages is obviously circumcision,” and that this passage picks up on deeper and larger conflicts in which the issue of circumcision was at the center.⁹¹

As for the second question involved, I start with an observation concerning the structure of the dictum (v. 19) where οὐδὲν ἐστὶν is followed by ἀλλά. This fundamental structure is found in the kindred dictum of Gal 5:6 (“For in Christ Jesus neither (οὔτε) circumcision nor (οὔτε) uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing (ἀλλά) that counts is faith working through love”), and of 6:15 (“For neither (οὔτε) circumcision nor (οὔτε) uncircumcision is anything; but

⁸⁸ In Justin’s *Dial.* 10.3, Trypho holds against the Christians that they neglect feasts, Sabbaths, and circumcision; in sum, he criticizes them for disregarding God’s commandments. This passage is supportive of Thiessen’s point.

⁸⁹ William S. Campbell, “Gentile Identity and Transformation in Christ According to Paul,” in *The Making of Christianity: Conflicts, Contacts, and Constructions*. In Honor of Bengt Holmberg, ed. Magnus Zetterholm and Samuel Byrskog (ConBNT 47; Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 49; see also Karl Olav Sandnes, “Paul and the Jews: Negotiating Unity in Christ,” in *Justification According to Paul: Exegetical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Ondrej Prostrednik (Comenius University Bratislava, 2012), 261–63, 268. A distinction between primary and secondary identity is an implicit conclusion also of Windsor’s study on Paul’s Jewish identity, *Paul*; see, for example, pp. 248–54.

⁹⁰ For references to this medical practice, see BDAG s.v. entry 3.

⁹¹ James D. G. Dunn, “Neither Circumcision nor uncircumcision, but ...” in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 307.

(ἀλλὰ) a new creation is everything”). This structure conveys that the part introduced by ἀλλὰ serves to emphasize what *unites*, although particularities may still abide. In Thiessen’s interpretation, the ἀλλὰ part further *enhances* the diversities involved.

But what does Paul see as uniting the particularities among his Corinthian addressees? In other words, what does he mean by “commandments of God”? The answer should account for the fact that Paul here envisages a *uniting* element, something Jews and Gentiles have in common, something both of them may do. This interpretation is the opposite of what Thiessen claims. Relevant here is the well-attested idea in contemporary Jewish sources, namely that Jewish laws that also applied to Gentiles were minimal: “... keeping at least some commandments of Judaism.”⁹² This phenomenon has been worked out by Peter J. Tomson⁹³ and Markus Bockmuehl,⁹⁴ and is most likely the phenomenon which lies at the heart of the apostolic decree mentioned in Acts 15. Thiessen is completely right in claiming the importance of this passage to understand Paul’s relationship to his own Judaism. That is obvious from the importance Paul attaches to this, saying that he teaches like this in all his congregations (v. 17b). Likewise, in Gal 6:16, he labels a kindred dictum κωνόν, which indicates some kind of rule or standard.⁹⁵ However, I maintain that the importance assigned to this dictum must be defined in a way that differs from Thiessen. In 1 Cor 7:19, Paul does make a distinction between circumcision and the “commandments of God,” even as surprising as that may be.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Rom 4:11 attests that Paul negotiates circumcision

⁹² Campbell, *Paul*, 93.

⁹³ “Paul’s Jewish Background in View of His Law-Teaching in 1 Corinthians 7,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law: The Third Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 251–70.

⁹⁴ “The Noachide Commandments’ and New Testament Ethics: With Special Reference to Acts 15 and Pauline Halakha,” *RB* 102 (1995): 71–101; see also his *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakha and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 145–73; as for 1 Cor 7:19, see p. 171 in particular. This phenomenon is well presented by Thiessen, *Paul*, 21 under the heading “ethical monotheism.”

⁹⁵ BDAG s.v.

⁹⁶ Philip la Grange du Toit, “Paul’s Reference to the ‘Keeping of the Commandments of God’ in 1 Corinthians 7:19,” *Neotestamentica* 40 (2015): 21–45, argues that this verse is a passing reference to a teaching Paul gave the Corinthians on circumcision and the Torah, and that such teaching can be inferred from Gal 5:1–6 and Rom 2:12–29. Thus, the first part of v. 19 refers to the irrelevance of circumcision, while the second part refers to “the requirement of keeping the whole Torah when one reverts back to the practice of circumcision” (p. 41). Paul thus says that believers should not in any way be bothered about circumcision, and if they are, they are obliged to do the whole Torah. I find that du Toit here does not come to terms with the basic structure of Paul’s argument, indicated in οὐδὲν ἐστὶν followed by ἀλλὰ. Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 31; Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2013), 38–39, 128–33, argues that Paul in 1 Cor 7:19 urges a replacement of the Torah by his own instruction given in the letter. 1 Corinthians 14:37 is an indication that “the Lord’s commandment(s)” (plural in some MSS) may refer to his instruction. This is an interpretation worth considering, but I think Paul is

generally. There, Paul considers circumcision a supplement, and hence, secondary to faith in Abraham's biography. He labels circumcision a "seal" (σφραγίς), implying that this rite affirmed the validity of what was already present through faith.⁹⁷ In other words, it was subsequent, and thus, also subordinate, implying that Paul is able to urge distinctions not commonly drawn.

2.8 *The Naming Game*

Names, labels, and categories of identity are treacherous, as they tend to carry with them assumptions that are either retrospective or associated with the issues under debate. With regard to the topics under discussion, this is rightly pointed out by Anders Runesson and Magnus Zetterholm.⁹⁸ They argue that avoiding terms such as "Christians," "Christianity," and "Church" presents the possibility "to understand Paul as practicing and proclaiming a minority form of Judaism that existed in the first century."⁹⁹ I have sympathy with the attempt to find "a more neutral terminology."¹⁰⁰ How difficult this is becomes apparent when Zetterholm suggests that one such term is "Jesus movement," which I find appropriate, and then adds the following comment, "... which we should think of as one of many manifestations of first century Judaism."¹⁰¹ Here, the suggested term becomes equally treacherous; one major issue under discussion here is with the term itself, which is precisely what Zetterholm and Runesson in a praiseworthy way want to avoid.

The present study attempts to adjust their insights on terminology, but we cannot overlook that there is an ongoing process of identity formation vis-à-vis Judaism, and that Paul's theology was probably more polarizing than advocates of "Paul within Judaism" admitted. This is precisely what this study argues. I notice that Runesson speaks of a "minority form of Judaism," thus implying that some kind of negotiation is at work here. This may also be put in the words of Michael Wolter: "The conviction that belonging to Christ institutes a new identity that dominates over all other identities determined the position already advocated by Paul at the apostolic conference and in the Antiochene incident."¹⁰²

demanding very much of his audience if "keeping the commandments of God" has no reference at all to the law.

⁹⁷ See Sandnes, "Justification," 164, 167–68.

⁹⁸ Anders Runesson, "The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 53–77; Zetterholm, "Jews," 242–54.

⁹⁹ Runesson, "Terminology," 77.

¹⁰⁰ Zetterholm, "Jews," 253.

¹⁰¹ Zetterholm, "Jews," 253–54.

¹⁰² Wolter, *Paul*, 430.

I would add that this applies to Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul's letters convey, in my opinion, a relativization, not of his Jewish identity as such, but with regard to the *importance* he attached to it.¹⁰³ Paul did not cease to be a Jew, nor did he abandon that identity, but the importance he attached to it was now *subordinate* to his in-Christ identity. I find William S. Campbell's distinction between primary and secondary identities helpful in this regard. Several sub-identities were at work for Paul, but all of them were subordinate to being "in Christ." However, "[r]ather than regarding these as each comprising distinct identities, such components could be described as sub-identities in a nested hierarchy of identity of which being in Christ is the primary."¹⁰⁴ Such a distinction accepts and maintains the diversity of peoples.¹⁰⁵ However, for Paul, the particularity of his Jewishness was more important than often assumed, as Romans 9–11 especially brings to mind. "Paul within Judaism" thus provides a helpful reminder, but in his urging of equality in Christ, Paul implies redefining *all* identities, including his being a Jew.

Jörg Frey is correct when he says that "even though Paul relentlessly worked for the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians, it may well be the case that he actually contributed more to the later split between the increasingly Gentile church and Jewish Christianity."¹⁰⁶ Bengt Holmberg describes a drawn-out process in which Christian identity came into being. He speaks of "a loosening of moorings" in which Christ-believers, be they Jews or Gentiles, "belonged inside Israel while staying outside Judaism."¹⁰⁷ It seems Paul's Damascus experience and his Gentile mission brought into being a theology that contributed to a process gradually moving toward a parting of the ways, although that was not at all his intention. The power inherent in his argument is not irrelevant for this process. For obvious reasons, advocates of "Paul within Judaism" focus attention on the continuity between Paul and his Jewish heritage. From that follows that there is equally a tendency to downplay or even ignore passages where Paul

¹⁰³ See Jörg Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World: Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripenrog (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 71; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 310–15, 321.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, *Paul*, 157; cf. pp. 4–6 in this study on "multiple identities." Sanders, *Judaism and Christianity*, 278–79, discusses what term is appropriate for the groups surrounding Paul's mission: "It is easy to call these people *Christians*, and I see no reason to avoid the use of the term when discussing Paul's converts." Supportive evidence is that Paul throughout designates his group by phrases including "Christ," such as "in Christ," "the body of Christ," etc. This insight, in fact, comes to expression also in designations such as "Christ-followers" or "Christ-believers." Thus, the all-encompassing role of Christ is crucial anyway.

¹⁰⁵ See David J. Rudolph, "Paul's 'Rule in All the Churches' (1 Cor 7:17–24) and Torah-Defined Ecclesiological Variegation," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 5 (2010): 1–24.

¹⁰⁶ Frey, "Paul's Jewish Identity," 321; similarly Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 7, 46, 65–66.

¹⁰⁷ Bengt Holmberg, "Early Christian Identity—Some Conclusions," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 176.

clearly states a change in values and priorities, also in matters pertaining to his Jewish heritage (e.g., Phil 3:8; 1 Cor 1:18–25). There must be some reason why Paul found it appropriate to describe his gospel as a stumbling block to Jews (1 Cor 1:23). The sum of the evidence is a *complexity* not acknowledged among some advocates of “Paul within Judaism.” Furthermore, the issue of the parting of the ways involves more than theology; group formation and life within these groups (prayers, rituals, including baptism and sacred meals, and morals) are not to be ignored.¹⁰⁸ To label Paul’s theology, his mission, and the results thereof a variant of Judaism is certainly capturing important aspects, but this does not come to terms with the complexity of the issues involved. This is not to imply that Paul considered himself “a former Jew,”¹⁰⁹ and certainly not an adherent of another religion. However, his emphasis on the Christ-event had a de-stabilizing power vis-à-vis the Torah, which together with other factors contributed to the parting of the ways.

Much ink has been spilt in order to categorize Paul adequately; who was he really, and how is he most precisely to be described vis-à-vis issues of the Torah? Here are some suggestions found in recent literature: apostate, a former Jew, a marginal Jew, a radical Jew, a transformed Jew, a faithful Jew, an apostolic Jew, an anomalous Jew, or a Jew of his own.¹¹⁰ Considerable overlap is involved here, but also a growing scale of difference. What these do have in common, however, is that they all attempt to capture a *complex* picture. There seems to be a consensus, albeit with much variance, when it comes to the evaluation that there was something *unruly* about Paul in his relationship to the law. The complexities involved here are a reminder that Paul’s identity is not easily fixed or catego-

¹⁰⁸ According to Daniel Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my Border Lines),” *JQR* 99 (2009): 28 “... there is no non-theological or non-anachronistic way at all to distinguish Christianity from Judaism until institutions are in place that make and enforce this distinction... .” To Boyarin, such institutions developed in the fourth century C.E. This is to me a neglect of the role that rituals and Sunday gatherings played in this process, and these are in place rather early. Some of these phenomena amounted to institutions, if this term is defined functionally. Larry Hurtado, “The Place of Jesus in Earliest Christian Prayer and Its Import for Early Christian Identity,” in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 35–56 has pointed to the role of prayers in the name of Jesus. The volume in which his contribution is found includes several papers relevant for how practices of prayer impacted on the question of identity formation. Paul’s Jewish identity may be addressed by means of his *convictions* which he shared or negotiated with his fellow Jews, or by means of the *group affiliation*, which marked his life after the Damascus event, or by means of *rites* in which he was involved, as pointed out here. That some complexities may come out of this is to be expected.

¹⁰⁹ This is a reference to Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (LNTS 410; London: T & T Clark, 2009).

¹¹⁰ The last is my rendering of Mark Nanos’s label “Paul’s Judaism”; see his “Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul’s Judaism,” in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 117–60.

rized. The main question to be addressed in the chapters that follow is this: Who was Paul vis-à-vis the law and pertinent issues in the eyes of others? This is done in an attempt to critically review, from this particular and narrow angle, how present-day scholarship presents Paul. It is now the turn of others – whoever they were – to have their say.

3 Paul's First Interpreters: Judean Christ Believers and Galatian Adversaries

The eldest extant testimony about Paul from others is found in his Epistle to the Galatians. They are of two kinds; the first is Paul rendering a rumor about himself circulating among Judean Christ-followers (Gal 1:23). There is no reason to limit the phenomenon to this passage, as Paul elsewhere refutes opinions voiced by “some” (see below). The identification of a second group of embedded dicta is based on questions inserted and Paul’s emphatic denial of them. They are linked with Paul’s divergence with opponents in Galatia. I will argue that Gal 2:17b (“is Christ then a servant of sin?”) is one such dictum, albeit shaped by Paul’s argument. It is worth considering that also Gal 3:21 (“Is the law then opposed to the promises of God?”) touches upon an embedded dictum by those Paul turns against in this epistle. Furthermore, Gal 5:11 on Paul and circumcision may also reflect dicta uttered or rumors spread by opponents. This selection of passages is hardly exhaustive; due to their nature of being embedded in Paul’s text, it is hard to know. Nonetheless, these are *identifiable*, and they shed light on the dialogue Paul embarks upon in this epistle.

As pointed out in the introduction of this investigation, embedded dicta are likely to appear more indirectly as well, integrated in Paul’s responses. In other words, Paul also interacts with opinions regarding himself and his Torah theology elsewhere. Paul’s confrontation with opponents is a context where this is likely to happen. This chapter will, therefore, constantly move between what opponents might have said and Paul’s interactions with them. Paul’s interactions come into play only in so far as they are *responsive*.¹ I am not delving into Paul’s overall way to address the issues involved. How to label the opponents – anonymous but very much present figures in Galatians – is a matter of dispute. They may be called “troublemakers,” “agitators,” “intruders,” “new missionaries,” or “new preachers.”² I choose terms which are aligned with Paul’s way of introducing them in his letters, knowing well that this is not how they would conceive of themselves (see below). This makes a preference for opponents or adversaries.

¹ Reading Paul’s letters has often been compared with listening in to a phone call, where only one part of the dialogue can be heard. However, if we listen carefully, we will, in spite of some uncertainties, grasp some of the issues under debate.

² See Martinus C. De Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (The New Testament Library; Louisville, KE: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 51.

3.1 *Between Rhetoric and History*

As we now approach the first embedded dictum in Paul's letters – and a pretty obvious one at that – namely Gal 1:23, it is pertinent to highlight some observations that put such dicta in his letters into context. We have pointed out that Paul is in control when he makes reference to such sayings. As we now find them, they are integrated into *his* rhetoric, and they are a means for *his* purpose. Extracting from Paul's rhetorical shaping, what others stated about himself and his preaching, be they positive or negative, is a constant challenge of this study. In emphasizing Paul's rhetorical take, some scholars tend to neglect the historical aspects involved in his rhetoric.³ If the relevant texts are seen primarily as foils against which Paul argues, the "others," whoever they are, becomes blurry and fictitious. The phenomenon of embedded dicta is an extension of the role given to examples and imitation in Paul's letters. Paul's correspondences are not only involved with developing ideas or concepts, but are related to experienced, shared knowledge and patterns with which his audience are familiar, be they good or bad. Also belonging to this phenomenon is the fact that Paul constantly reminds his readers of past experiences and shared stories, although in their present form, they are shaped by Paul's intentions in the given text.

The first chapter of 1 Thessalonians is a good example of how stories worthy of imitation and stories demonstrating the reception of the gospel were integrated into the missionary preaching itself:

And you became imitators (μιμηταί) of us and the Lord ... you became an example to all believers (τύπον πάντων τοῖς πιστεύουσιν) in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known ... For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols... ." (1 Thess 1:6–10 cf. 4:10)

Instructively, this passage conveys that the reception of the gospel was vital to the preaching of the gospel, and entered the proclamation of the gospel itself. This reception generated stories in which the reception itself was commemorated. Preaching the gospel was not only about passing on ideas and concepts; it was accompanied by such testimonies and stories. Furthermore, this practice grew out of the role assigned to examples in ancient rhetoric.⁴ Stories about the

³ We touched upon this on pp.37–39; see also pp.161–64.

⁴ See, for example, Benjamin Fiore, "Paul, Exemplification, and Imitation" in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 228–57. The role of examples in providing patterns, either to adapt to or to avoid, is well-known in ancient ethical material; see Walter Ubelacker, "Paraenesis or Paraclesis: Hebrews as a Test Case," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (BZNW 125; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 337–40 and Clarence E. Glad, "The Rhetoric of Moral Exhortation in Clement's Pedagogue," in *Early Christian*

reception of the gospel thus served a paradigmatic purpose. Likewise, Paul's "you have heard" in Gal 1:13 makes reference to this practice: the story of Paul's life served as an example of "grace" (cf. Rom 11:1–6).⁵ With regard to his collection of money to Jerusalem, Paul uses the same practice (2 Cor 8:1–7).

Likewise, Paul's epistle to the Romans attests to this practice: Sentences like "... your faith is proclaimed throughout the world" (Rom 1:8) and "Your obedience is known to all" (Rom 16:19) show that information about churches and individuals were passed on, thus providing examples for instruction, and also fostering a trans-local identity.⁶ In a way highly relevant to the present investigation, Christoph W. Stenschke argues that Rom 3:8, a text to which we will turn in the next chapter, is to be seen against this backdrop as an example of referring to "other Christians."⁷ That observation implies that also examples about what to avoid or to stay away from are part of this practice. This is certainly in accordance with ancient rhetoric as well.⁸ Not only reception and welcome, but also lurking challenges and dangers, come into play. This provides a context in which references to "other Christ-followers" and also questionable opinions, charges, and rumors make sense in Paul's epistles. From this follows that embedded dicta – albeit it will remain debatable which ones there are – are most likely more than foils serving Paul's own rhetoric. In other words, Paul's rhetoric depends on these dicta bringing pieces of information that refer to a perceived reality *shared* by both the author and the addressee. With this in mind, we turn to rumors from Judea.

3.2 First Embedded Dictum: Gal 1:23 on Paul's Turnabout

Paul presents this as a dictum of the Judean or Jerusalem church: "... they only heard (ἀκούοντες ἦσαν) it said (ὅτι): 'The one who formerly (ποτε) was persecuting us (ἡμᾶς) is now (νῦν) proclaiming the faith he once (ποτε) tried to destroy'." Formally, ὅτι here is recitative and serves as a quotation mark, thus introducing a citation.⁹ Accordingly, Hans-Dieter Betz says that Paul here quotes verbatim

Paraenesis in Context, ed. J. Starr and T. Engberg-Pedersen (BZNW 125; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 436–37.

⁵ Sandnes, "Prophet-Like Apostle," 554–56; see also pp. 162–64 in this study.

⁶ See Michael B. Thompson, "The Holy Internet: Communication between Churches in the First Christian Generation," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 49–70.

⁷ Christoph W. Stenschke, "Your Obedience is Known to All? (Rom 16:19): Paul's References to Other Christians and Their Function in Paul's Letters," *NovT* 57 (2015): 251–74.

⁸ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 39–50.

⁹ BDR § 470.

what they said about him.¹⁰ The Greek ὅτι introduces this as a direct quotation, very much in line with texts like Rom 3:8 (φασίν) or 1 Cor 15:12 (λέγουσιν). However, what claims to be a citation, and formally speaking is so, is indebted to Paul's rhetoric and language. Their testimony is phrased and shaped by Paul's theological outlook in Galatians; it is simply absorbed into his theological argument.¹¹ Therefore, Betz's claim that this is a verbatim report is probably too much of an assumption. In this merging of citation and Paul's shaping, those who formerly were targets of Paul's persecution find the appropriate way to address what happened to him, and how it affected their lives.

Jack T. Sanders has found many followers when he points out that the narration in these chapters is "disinterested in historical fact as it is understood in the modern world."¹² Asking questions of history and facts are, therefore, misplaced. No doubt, the text is embedded in an argument for Paul's ministry and gospel, but Sanders throws out the baby with the bathwater here. For rhetoric to work properly, the argument can hardly be based on pure fiction.¹³ In order to be persuasive, Paul's rhetoric assumes some familiarity on the part of the audience with the "facts" being drawn upon. We have just pointed out that reports, information, and rumors were circulated, transmitting news about the progress of the gospel, fellow Christ-followers, the people and opinions to look out for, etc. The Pauline letters and tradition amply demonstrate this exchange of news, and it is often rendered with the verb ἀκούειν in both the active and passive forms. We may take 1 Cor 5:1 as an example: "It is actually reported (ἀκούεται) that there is sexual immorality among you ..."¹⁴ Likewise, in Gal 1:23, ἀκούειν takes us to the informal level of information exchange in the early church. To dismiss Gal 1:23 cuts us loose from this casual aspect of life among the Christ-followers.

A key issue here is who "we" refers to. Is it about the Judean Christ-followers themselves, or is it a rumor that reached them about Christ-followers elsewhere? The line of thought is definitely in favor of the latter. Judean Christ-believers heard rumors about fellow disciples, most naturally in Syria and Cilicia. However, the style is in keeping with the first-person plural "we," remarkably citation-like. Clearly v. 24 is not part of this report, but forms a comment: "And they glorified God because of me." Inferred is that Christ-followers in Judea rejoiced about this report, thus demonstrating how their lives were intertwined

¹⁰ Hans-Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermenia; Fortress Press 1979), 81; similarly Ernst Bammel, "Galater 1:23," *ZNW* 59 (1968): 112, who says that this passage is "eine verschüttete Quelle aus der Urgemeinde, eines der ganz wenigen Zeugnisse, in denen das ältesten Christentum von sich selbst spricht."

¹¹ Thus also, for example, De Boer, *Galatians*, 102.

¹² Jack T. Sanders, "Paul's 'Autobiographical' Statements in Galatians 1–2," *JBL* 85 (1966): 335–43 (p. 343).

¹³ See pp. 37–39 above.

¹⁴ See also 1 Cor 11:18; Gal 1:13; Phil 1:27, 30; 2:26; 4:9; Phlm 5; Col 1:4, 9; 2 Thess 3:11.

with fellow believers elsewhere. They are knitted together, and in Judea, they rejoice as though they were themselves victims.

The passage overlaps with Gal 1:13 in such a way that it becomes relevant for a study revolving around the Mosaic Law. While Gal 1:13 is *Paul's* testimony about his persecutions, Gal 1:23 is presented as the views of his *victims*, and the two run very much in parallel. In the testimony of the victims, "church" has been replaced by "faith" (πίστις). This term, around which so much revolves in this epistle, has its first appearance here. In other words, "church" and "faith" are equally mentioned as targets of Paul's persecutions, as both are objects of the verb πορθεῖν, and implicitly also of διώκειν. Paul thus sees the church that he formerly persecuted and the one he has now joined as the same.¹⁵ Also implied is that the persecutions of Paul are presented as directed against the very message of his Epistle to the Galatians, namely faith *versus* law. That conclusion is an inference from the way Gal 1:23 is shaped by 1:13. The persecutions thus take on a role far beyond that of rendering a biographical note; it is deeply embedded in the theological rationale of the letter. The testimony of the victims is caught up in the logic of Galatians about faith *versus* law. This observation is further strengthened by the fact that there is a parallelism between Gal 1:23 and 1:16 as well. While Paul in Gal 1:16 is given a commission to preach (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) God's Son to the nations, the rumors say that he now preaches (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) "the faith."¹⁶ Hence, Gal 1:23 through the parallelisms evoked there, conveys that Paul's gospel presented in this epistle provided the structure according to which this rumor is presented. Galatians 1:23 thus has a dual appearance here; on the one hand, it is presented as a citation, in which even a "we" with a primary text-external reference is there, and on the other hand, deeply fixed in Paul's rhetoric.

What Change?

What may be gleaned from this text for our quest on how others saw Paul? The text formulates how little they knew about Paul beforehand; what they knew was hearsay. The introductory word μόνον (only) indicates their limited familiarity with Paul. Their limited knowledge of Paul may question to what extent they themselves were victims of Paul's persecutions. Anyway, it is worth observing that the Jerusalem church utters a fellowship or solidarity with other

¹⁵ Pointed out also by D. Françoise Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians: A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter* (WUNT 2.190; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 68.

¹⁶ De Boer, *Galatians*, 103 says that "faith" here does not refer to the act of believing, "but to what is believed." Bammel, "Galater 1:23," 108 makes πίστις (cf. Gal 6:10) here synonymous to, for example, ὁδός, which in Acts is a label on the Christians (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14); Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 114.

Christ-followers whose voices we hear in Gal 1:23. They are not untouched by the persecutions launched by Paul.

The rumors had come to their attention. Paul's use of *conjugatio periphrastica* (ἀκούοντες ἦσαν) points to a *continuous* hearing; this is not a rumor heard once, but something they kept hearing. Hence, the rumor rendered is more than an impulsive reaction. The rumor stated basically one fact: a foe has become a friend. A transition from persecution to ceasing thereof has taken place.¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo makes reference to the report of Damascus Christ-followers who react similarly to Paul's turnaround (Acts 9:20–21).¹⁸ That is also the only other occurrence in the New Testament for πορθεῖν. Although Gal 1:23 is embedded in layers of Pauline interpretation, the experience that a former threat has been turned into a companion is clearly voiced here. This makes the “former and now” contrast crucial in this testimony. How is this contrast to be interpreted?

The “former and now” contrast, which provides the logical structure of the testimony, is often found in discourses on conversion, analogous to “from darkness to light” and “from death to life.”¹⁹ Most present-day expositors agree that this does not refer to a conversion from Judaism to Christianity, a rather obvious conclusion for both historical as well as theological reasons. However, this also marks the end of agreement on this issue. In my opinion, the discussion on what label to use here²⁰ diverts the attention from some crucial observations.

The text is witness to a change that brought a radical shift from the past to the present in Paul's life. This change, whatever label is put on it, affected the lives of Christ-followers even in Judea. From being targets and victims, they become companions of Paul, albeit their knowledge of him is limited. Paul altered his practice; he ceased persecuting them as well. This change is presented not as a change in religion, but as a re-orientation with regard to the Torah. Notice that the tradition of the ancestors are mentioned explicitly in Gal 1:14, in line with the theology of Galatians more generally. The radical shift in Paul's life was certainly noticed among Judean Christ-followers, although the theology in

¹⁷ See pp.39–41 in the present study on the immediate effects of the Damascus event.

¹⁸ Moo, *Galatians*, 114.

¹⁹ Beverly R. Gaventa, *Conversion, From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (OBT; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 130–45; Joel B. Green, *Conversion in Luke-Acts: Divine Action, Human Cognition, and the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 100–105; Reinhard Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit: Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* (SUNT5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 82–87.

²⁰ For the Damascus event as a “conversion,” see the balanced presentation by Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought*, 100–102, and James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning From Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 356. Segal, *Paul*, 33 considers Paul “a convert from one form of Judaism to another); Gaventa, *Conversion*, 37–40, labels the radical change “a transformation.” Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 142, “life-changing.” Konradt, “Bekehrung” prefers “Lebenswende,” 114–17. For a helpful discussion on “conversion” with regard to Paul, see Campbell, *Deliverance*, 123–66.

which Paul summarizes their observations probably owes more to him than to them. It is worth noticing, as de Boer does, that “Paul attributes to the law-observant members of the churches of Judea the notion that faith (thus not the law!) is definitive for Christian identity even for those who are Jews by birth” (cf. 2:15–16; 3:28).²¹

As we noticed in chapter 3, Pamela Eisenbaum finds the issue of persecution crucial for debunking the notion that Paul underwent a conversion. She argues that Paul's persecution was caused by his aim to avoid the ire of Rome: “Thus, Paul turned from persecutor to persecutee because he turned from having a complacent attitude toward the Romans to preaching a message of defiance.”²² Furthermore, Eisenbaum says that Paul's becoming a missionary to Gentiles was caused by a utopian vision of their pilgrimage to Jerusalem in accordance with ancient Jewish apocalypticism (Isa 45:22–23).²³ While the latter explanation for the change that occurred in Paul's life tends to be more positive toward Gentiles, her political explanation works differently. How the two may be reconciled is not clear. As for her political explanation, I find three obstacles worth mentioning. First, the picture Galatians renders of persecutions is that it was due to matters pertaining to *Jewish* sources.²⁴ Second, if Paul's persecution was inspired by the example of Phineas, as I find most likely,²⁵ this militates against a complacent Paul vis-à-vis the Romans before Damascus. Third, Paul's admonition to submit to the Roman authorities (Romans 13), and that he was remembered for such an attitude (Titus 3), undermines Eisenbaum's view that Paul turned from complacent to rebellious vis-à-vis the Roman authorities. These critical comments apply to Paula Fredriksen as well, who says that the single word “zealous” is a “very slander hair of a putative allusion” to Phineas.²⁶ I think Fredriksen is belittling this allusion. The coming together of violence, law, ζηλωτής, and cognates is suggestive of the Phineas tradition. Furthermore, the fact that this Greek term appears in a similar context in Phil 3:6 (cf. Acts 22:3) further strengthens this impression.

Paul's life revolved around the issue of the Torah and faith, albeit the victims whose voices we approach in Gal 1:23 would hardly formulate it precisely like this. An indication that Paul's perspective and theirs did not differ entirely, though, is the fact that both Gal 1:13 and 1:23 refer to something “heard” about his previous life. Paul draws upon rumors that were *recognizable* to his audi-

²¹ De Boer, *Galatians*, 103.

²² Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 146.

²³ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 148–49; 189–200.

²⁴ Thus also Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 336.

²⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 341–46. For Phineas, see also Benjamin J. Lappenga, *Paul's Language of Σῆλος: Monosemy and the Rhetoric of Identity and Practice* (BibInt 137; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 90–106; 167–78.

²⁶ Fredriksen, *Paul*, 217.

ence. The rumor conveyed that Paul's Damascus event had corollaries for his view on the Torah, manifested in his ceasing to persecute his previous targets. This was a fact that did not need the clothing of Paul's theology to be noticed.

What are the findings from this dictum with regard to present-day Pauline scholarship then? Advocates of "Paul within Judaism" argue that what Paul says in Galatians regarding the law has no relevance for Jews, as it applies to its primary addressees, the Gentiles only. This embedded dictum about Paul challenges that conclusion. The Judean disciples considered themselves weaved into Paul's wider mission, inclusive of his mission to Gentiles as implied – at least by Paul himself – in Gal 1:16b (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Those cited here considered Paul's attitude to the Torah to have changed in such a way that the Torah no longer made him a persecutor. Paul had given up on a practice that hitherto was integral to his law obedience (Gal 1:14), thus runs the report. The change in Paul's life summed up in Gal 1:23 in words voiced by his victims is by Paul himself formulated as his giving up on Ἰουδαϊσμός (1:13); that is, on practices defining what that entails. The juxtaposition of Gal 1:13 and 1:23 justifies speaking about leaving "the past" (παρε) behind, and that this brought a change in terms of practice (ἀναστροφή). From Gal 2:14 and its immediate context, we glean that this is about practicing a Jewish way of life (ἰουδαϊκῶς; i.e., dietary rules). Dieter Sängler calls this "ethnisch orientierte Lebensweisen."²⁷ In other words, what is at stake here are matters of lifestyle essential for a Jew. Regardless of how we define this, no doubt the Torah is involved. The change that the victims experience is, therefore, a result of Paul's altered attitude to the Torah. Paul no longer found the Torah supportive of his practice of persecuting Christ-followers. Paul's turnaround affected *Judean Jews*, and they rejoiced in solidarity with other Christ-believers, most probably other Jewish Christ-believers. They did not conceive of themselves as exempt from Paul's persecutions. Paul's life and mission influenced Judean Jews as well. So goes the message from this dictum as it appears now in Paul's letter.

3.3. *The Galatian Situation: Opponents*

Paul's ministry to the Galatians met with *opposition*. This opposition parades early interpretations of Paul's attitude to the law. No source other than Paul targeting them is available; we are to glean information from this biased source.²⁸

²⁷ Sängler, "Ἰουδαϊσμός," 175–76. Thus also Gerbern S. Oegema, "1 and 2 Maccabees in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," in *Die Makkabäer*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie et al. (WUNT 382; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 347–48, who makes reference especially to passages in the Maccabean tradition.

²⁸ Andrie Du Toit, "Vilification as a Pragmatic Device in Early Christian Epistolography," *Bib* 75 (1994): 403–12.

This is a task necessary to undertake in this study, albeit by no means an easy one. The focus of our interest is *not* the opponents as such, but *how* they viewed Paul's theology on issues pertaining to the law, albeit the two issues to some extent are interlaced. The antithetic style of the letter, connected to the explicit appearance of "some" (τινες), suggests that Paul engages *people* who hold opinions on his gospel. His view on the Torah is at the center of this debate. We will start by pointing out the presence of "some" in the Galatian conflict, and see how their presence has left their mark on Paul's epistle:

- 1:7 "... some who are confusing you and want to pervert (τινές εισιν οι ταρασσοντες) the gospel of Christ"
 3:1 "Who has bewitched you?"
 4:17 "They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them"
 5:7 "You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?"
 5:10 "But whoever it is that is confusing (ὁ ταρασσων) you will pay the penalty."
 5:12 "I wish those who unsettle (οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες) you would castrate themselves."
 6:12 "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel (ἀναγκάζουσιν) you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ."
 6:13 "Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised, so that they may boast about your flesh."

Two additional texts are indirectly relevant. Opponents are not mentioned, but the vocabulary mirrors the abovementioned texts in significant ways, thus demonstrating how the issue of opponents has penetrated the theology of Galatians:

- 2:3–4 "But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled (ἠναγκάσθη) to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. But because of false believers (ψευδαδέλφους) secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom (κατασκοπήσαι) we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us ..."
 2:14 "... how can you compel (ἀναγκάζεις) the Gentiles to live like Jews (ιουδαίξειν)?"

The bias in these pieces of information is pretty obvious. Paul portrays the opponents as antagonists to both himself and his gospel. The conflict revolves around law and circumcision,²⁹ and Paul conceptualizes this as truth *versus* fal-

²⁹ "Urging or forcing circumcision" is clearly an issue. Dunne, *Persecution*, 56–62, 152 takes this to refer to aggressive behavior amounting to persecution; it was a matter of threat or

sity (Gal 2:5, 14; 5:7; 6:16³⁰). They are false brethren (Gal 2:4). Paul's argument also brings to mind biblical patterns of false prophecy,³¹ which was already a well-established label for false doctrine and teaching.³² The antithetical style and the tone of the letter fill in this picture. These observations are suggestive of *extra-textual* influences, and make it necessary to derive information about Paul's rivals based on the assumption that their position can somehow be mined from the positions Paul espoused. When Paul issues a warning against "another gospel," he assumes his readers are familiar with influences amounting to this label, or they are at least recognizable once Paul points them out. The label is certainly Paul's, but his readers are able to identify what he had in mind. Since no source other than Paul's own critique directed against them is available, it is a matter of gleaning information from this polemical source. How is this done?

Mirror-Reading the Opponents

We are faced with a double challenge; that is, to tease out from Paul's text *what* opponents found wrong in Paul's Torah theology, and then to glean from Paul's text *why* they found his view problematic. The two tasks are intertwined, as the opponents' views form a substructure in what Paul writes here. Although Paul is in control and constructs his opponents and also what they held against him, the references to "some" (Gal 1:7 cf. 4:17)³³ make visible the appearance of opposing voices at work among his converts. References like ὁ ταρασσῶν (Gal 5:10), οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες (Gal 5:12), ὅσοι θέλουσιν (Gal 6:12), and οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι (Gal 6:13) work very much like *τινες*. To be able to meet the challenges, we rely partly on mirror-reading: "we must use the text which answers the opponents as a mirror in which we can see reflected the people and the arguments under attack."³⁴

George Lyons called for the need of criteria to know how to apply mirror-reading. He argued that mirror-reading is a symptom of the dominance given to historical questions in the exegesis of Galatians to the detriment of Paul's

hostility. I think the reference to ἀναγκάζειν here is to be interpreted not primarily in psychological and violent terms, but against the backdrop of how the law was interpreted according to the Scriptures and tradition; that is, as we see it being used in texts treated in chapter 5.1 in this study. This is not to exclude any coercive power, but Dunne ends up more psychological than historical in his presentation.

³⁰ Κανὼν is intimately connected to the idea of truth and standard; see BDAG s.v.

³¹ Sandnes, *Paul*, 70–73; Roy E. Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2* (WUNT 2.102; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 83–90, 242–51. Eastman, *Mother Tongue*, 63–81 makes biblical prophets the key for her reading of Paul in Galatians.

³² Jannes Reiling, "The Use of ψευδοπροφήτης in the Septuagint, Philo and Josephus," *NovT* 13 (1971): 147–56.

³³ The singular *τις* may be more rhetorical Gal 3:1; 5:7, but is, nonetheless, to be associated with the situation created by opponents.

³⁴ Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 73–74.

rhetoric. According to Lyons, Paul is himself “the rhetorical opponent” in this letter, albeit “some rhetorical denials might also respond to actual charges.”³⁵ I think Paul’s rhetoric depends on his readers’ familiarity with the presence of other missionaries among them,³⁶ albeit Paul’s way of seeing them is his and not theirs. Staying away from mirror-reading in the interpretation of Galatians is hardly an option – even George Lyons holds it possible that some charges are at work³⁷ – since the presence of extra-textual influence is assumed in the epistle. It is a matter of how to mirror-read and what information to glean from doing it. John M. G. Barclay has introduced seven criteria which are helpful in mirror-reading Galatians.³⁸ When operating together, they provide the basis for a feasible way to proceed. His criteria are as follows:

- 1) *Type of utterance*: Each type of utterance is open to a range of mirror-images, as various responses in principle are possible. It is, therefore, important that the criteria work together.
- 2) *Tone*: Emphasis and urgency indicate importance over a central issue, as a casual mentioning indicates that this is not the essence of the debate.
- 3) *Frequency*: Repeated appearance of a theme is indicative of importance over casual mentioning.
- 4) *Clarity*: Only statements with clarity can be mirror-read. Ambiguous statements or Paul’s polemical distortion of his opponents poses a problem.
- 5) *Unfamiliarity*: The presence of unfamiliar motifs in the letter is a possible reflection of a particular feature that Paul is responding to.
- 6) *Consistency*: The results of the previous criteria must be tested: do they amount to a consistent picture of Paul’s opponents? A single object being targeted is to be preferred. If mirror-reading leads to the conclusion that Paul is faced with more than one type or argument, this is possibly indicative of too creative a reading.
- 7) *Historical plausibility*: Extra-textual evidence provides a contemporary context for the findings. The aim is to make the opponents conceivable as objects of Paul’s attack. In the present study, a chapter of its own is devoted to this; relevant Jewish texts will then be drawn upon.

Mirror-reading is not a procedure to be applied generally; it is the presence of “some” within the polemical setting, which is suggestive of this procedure. Taken together, the texts mentioned above convey the picture that the “troublemakers” arrived among Paul’s converts *after* he had left. Texts such as Gal 1:7; 3:1–3;

³⁵ George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Towards a New Understanding* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 96–105, 111–12, 170–71.

³⁶ For a similar critique of Lyons’s position, see Philip F. Esler, *Galatians* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1998), 61–68.

³⁷ Lyons, *Autobiography*, 111.

³⁸ Barclay, “Mirror-Reading,” 84–85.

4:9–11, 15–16; 5:1, 7 all speak about a shift or a change that occurred subsequently to Paul's ministry among them. This chronology mattered to Paul as is clear from his argument in Gal 3:1–5, 17, since subsequence to him was indicative of subordination. The sequence of events here also paves the way for the possibility that the troublemakers claimed to correct and/or complete what Paul left behind unfinished (see below).³⁹ Paul's teaching on the law and related issues were to them incomplete and unsatisfactory. There was a need to fill in the gaps, and they provided this service. In the words of John M. G. Barclay: "What is most significant for our purposes is that they saw no reason why the Christ-event should reduce or relativize the authority of the Torah."⁴⁰ As our presentation of Gal 3:21 will demonstrate (see below), the relationship between promise and law is, therefore, a crucial matter.

The appearance in Galatia *after* Paul left is important because this fact makes them the first expositors of Paul's theology on the issue of the law. Paul's polemic rhetoric is hardly a source from which to glean information about their motives, which may well have been more irenic, albeit insistent, than the polemic aimed at refuting them.⁴¹ In spite of attempts to render an irenic situation (see on Gal 5:11 below), we notice the strong-mindedness of the opponents, as circumcision and ἰουδαίειν were matters of no indifference to them (see below). Furthermore, this means that the way Paul portrays his adversaries in Galatians revolves around issues at stake also in the embedded dicta identified in this epistle. There is a convergence between the way Paul portrays the opponents and the embedded dicta we are about to address.

Reading Galatians from the perspective of Gal 1:6–9, where "some" are introduced, brings these criteria into play. Taken by itself, the passage is open to various mirror-readings (criterion 1). The emphasis and urgency of the passage, unprecedented in the Pauline epistles⁴² (criterion 2), directs us to a central issue, which Paul engages with throughout this epistle (criterion 3). "Some" have caused a shift both in attitude and in praxis among Paul's converts. The list given above of the appearance of opponents in the letter, demonstrates that they are almost ubiquitous in Paul's argument, which revolves around issues pertaining to the law (criterion 6).⁴³ Although the opponents are clothed in Paul's polemical

³⁹ Thus also Peder Borgen, "Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases Men," in *Paul and Paulinism. Essays in Honour of Charles K. Barrett*, ed. Morna D. Hooker and Stephen G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982), 39–41, argues that the opponents most likely presented themselves as bringing to an end the task which Paul left unfinished behind; see also pp. 83–89 below.

⁴⁰ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 335.

⁴¹ Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 75–76. I state this *pace* De Boer, *Galatians*, 51, 55, who argues that the aim of the opponents was to substitute Paul's gospel and that they urged the Galatians to abandon Paul's gospel. This is to enter the issue of motives, which is beyond what mirror-reading may do.

⁴² This is the only letter of Paul's where no introductory thanksgiving is found.

⁴³ According to Mark Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Con-*

rhetoric, the relevant passages leave no doubt about their main concern (criterion 4):⁴⁴ the validity of circumcision and the Torah for Paul's converts.

The presentation of the troublemakers throughout the epistle is entangled with Paul's own mission to "the nations" (Gal 1:16; 2:7–8; 3:7–8, 14). The conflict reached its climax with the issue of circumcision, whether it was *necessary* or not for pagan converts. This question also permeates the entire letter (criterion 3), and is often mentioned remarkably intensively, with 5:12 as the outstanding example (criterion 2). Furthermore, the issue of circumcision is intimately bound up with advocating the observance of the Torah. Paul's concern about "works of the law" (Gal 3:1–10) and his emphasis on the temporary validity of the law (Gal 3:6–4:11) (criteria 2 and 3) are clear evidence of his opponents' aim: "Taking the argument of the letter as a whole, there is sufficient evidence that the Galatians were informed of (and responded warmly to) the requirements of Torah-observance as the hallmark of the people of God."⁴⁵

Intertwined in this discussion is scriptural interpretation. Frequent references to Scriptures in chs. 3–4 are indicative of this aspect of contention (criterion 3). The Abraham narratives from Genesis occupy a special role here (Gal 3:6–29;

text (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 203–16, Paul's opponents or "influencers" were not Christ-believers, but local non-believing Jews. Their concern was that accepting Paul's message implied that participation in Roman imperial cult was brought to an end for those who embraced Paul's teaching, without their being fully transferred to the Jewish communities. The "influencers" required circumcision to remove the liminal situation of Paul's converts. Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter* (WUNT 2.237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) argues that "the crisis was spawned in part because of their former religious adherence to the public worship of the emperor" (p. 149). Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010) argues that Paul's dispute with the opponents revolved around the issue of persecution by Romans. Paul's main concern is with the imperial gospel and its relationship to the Jewish Messianism he preached. The other missionaries in Galatia advocate circumcision and Torah observance, encouraging the converts to live in a way accepted by civic authorities, not so for genuinely Jewish reasons, but to avoid persecutions by the Romans. Paul is, therefore, not engaged in a struggle concerning the Torah as such, but with Jewish law as seen by the Romans; that is, the "works of the law," which so much revolves around in Galatians is really about imperial law, laws of Caesar, and euergetism to comply with imperial demands. "The other gospel" referred to in the introduction of the letter is thus really about the imperial cult. Although this approach has insightfully brought much historical material to the discussion, its immediate relevance for the interpretation of Galatians is, in my view, not at all obvious. It is hard to get away from the role of the Torah as a genuinely Jewish discourse in this epistle, and imperial order is never really mentioned. Galatians 3:15–22 about law, which came four hundred years after Abraham, gives the direction for what is at stake in the Galatian debate: it is about the Torah. Likewise, Gal 1:13–15, about the Torah's role in Paul's life prior to the Damascus event, is embedded in the argument of the letter as being paradigmatic. This means that it shows the way to the proper context for the Galatian discourse; for a critique, see also Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 336, 348–49.

⁴⁴ Gal 2:4 and 6:12–13 ascribe motives to Paul's opponents; hence, his verdict is hardly helpful.

⁴⁵ Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 87.

4:21–31). Paul's opponents probably substantiated their complementary gospel with reference to the *continuum* of the Abraham story of Genesis: Abraham's faith (Genesis 15) was not a sole piece of evidence; on the contrary, his faith was followed by his circumcision (Genesis 17), and which manifested itself in his obedience or faithfulness (Genesis 22). The *sum* of these texts enabled them to portray Abraham over Paul's emphatic and sole reference to Gen 15:6 as *prior* and, therefore, also *superior* to the rest of the Abraham narrative. In the light of contemporary discourses on how to read the Abraham biography,⁴⁶ this is a fairly likely conclusion, and I argue that Gal 3:21 is at home in that discourse.

Throughout, Paul shapes his interaction with the opponents according to an alleged contrast between truth and falsity (see above; criteria 2, 3, and 6). As for criterion 5 on unfamiliarity, we are reminded of First Thessalonians, Paul's first extant letter. As pointed out by William Wrede long ago, the Torah and pertaining issues do not occur in that letter, his first extant letter. It is in Galatians that these topics emerge for the first time. Although Wrede made too much out of that,⁴⁷ his observation certainly pinpoints the importance of opponents for understanding how Paul's theology on the Torah developed.⁴⁸ Wrede's point affirms my argument that voices of others were formative vis-à-vis the development of Paul's theology.⁴⁹ As for criterion 7, historical plausibility, we will return to that in a separate chapter below (see chapter 5).

In Gal 1:7, Paul says that they “want to pervert the gospel of Christ” (μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). The verb means to “change” or to “alter.” When applied to doctrine or philosophy, it takes on the meaning to “distort.”⁵⁰ Accordingly, some Bible translations render Gal 1:7 as “perverting” the gospel (KJV; NRSV). According to Aristotle, justice (τὸ δίκαιον) cannot be altered (οὐκ ἔστι μεταστρέψαι), neither due to fraud nor to compulsion (οὐτ' ἀπάτη οὐτ' ἀνάγκη), since justice is based on Nature. In this way, justice differs from a contract which is subject to negotiations (*Rhet.* 1376b25). The logic of that passage is not unlike Paul's emphasis on divinely given “truth” in Galatians. Likewise, Sir 11:31 says that the evil-doer turns good into evil (τὰ γὰρ ἀγαθὰ εἰς κακὰ μεταστρέφων),⁵¹ thus attaching blame even to worthy actions. A kind of turning things upside down is at play here. What Paul holds against the intruders is to

⁴⁶ John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1988), 53; Sandnes, “Justification,” 149–54 on how well-established such a continuous reading of this biography was in relevant Jewish texts. As for Paul's emphasis on the chronology or sequence in this biography, see pp. 163–68; see also pp. 148–54 in the present study.

⁴⁷ See pp. 42, 157 in this study.

⁴⁸ Alongside the Damascus event, Scripture, and Gentile mission, the opponents were a driving force in the shaping of that theme in Paul's theology.

⁴⁹ See pp. 1–6 in this study.

⁵⁰ BDAG s.v.; LSJ s.v.

⁵¹ This is not unlike what “some” held against Paul according to Rom 3:8; see pp. 104–110 in this study.

be understood against this backdrop. They distort and pervert. As for themselves, the opponents would hardly describe Paul's gospel as a distortion. I am inclined to think that they preferred to describe it in terms of a preliminary or first teaching, a basic and first lesson in need of the appendage of circumcision and law observance, just like circumcision subsequently followed upon Abraham's faith, according to his biblical biography (see below).

That Paul in Galatians defends himself against charges from opponents has been taken more or less for granted in scholarship since John Chrysostom did the earliest extant commentary on this epistle; albeit, this view has been contested by some. Recently, Justin K. Hardin has questioned mirror-reading as helpful for coming to terms with the Galatian situation.⁵² He suggests that the epistle is to be read without a mirror being imposed upon the text. Paul, according to Hardin, is not responding to criticism. Read without a mirror, Galatians is probably even without charges against him. The letter is not defensive; it is rather a letter where Paul contrasts himself to the opponents, thus becoming "a foil to the agitators in an effort to persuade his dear children not to fall prey any longer to the judaizing message of the agitators."⁵³ In short, the method assumed in the present study is considered distortive and flawed.

Hardin's article is a reminder of the dangers inherent in this method, and since mirror-reading can be applied in multiple ways, it serves as a warning against intricate reconstructions of the Galatians situation. Nonetheless, I am not persuaded by Hardin's argument, due both to how the epistle presents itself, and also due to weaknesses in his arguments. As for the first, I think the appearance of "some" among Paul's converts propagating a false gospel, sets an atmosphere whereby Hardin's portrayal of Paul as merely a contrastive pattern or foil does not come to terms with. The tone that follows from Gal 1:6–9 is not accounted for by Hardin, although I admit that how to grasp "tone" in an ancient written text is not a given. Furthermore, Hardin makes a questionable distinction between message and person, between status (apostleship) and gospel. Although my reading in this study is focused on the latter, I think the two are not so easily separated. Hardin makes reference to Philip Esler's pertinent comment: "the highly competitive nature of this culture means that it is most unlikely that people would have been causing trouble in Galatia by arguing against Paul's message, without expressing hostility to the man himself."⁵⁴ Hardin considers this a "fair point," but dismisses it in the end. Paul's personality,⁵⁵ weaving himself into the very argument of the letter

⁵² Justin K. Hardin, "Galatians 1–2 Without a Mirror: Reflections on Paul's Conflict with the Agitators," *TynBul* 65 (2014): 275–303.

⁵³ Hardin, "Galatians 1–2," 302.

⁵⁴ Esler, *Galatians*, 74.

⁵⁵ In an intriguing article, albeit its claims are hard to verify, Terrance Callan, "Competition and Boasting: Toward a Psychological Portrait of Paul," *ST* 40 (1986): 137–56, describes Paul's personality as of a competitive nature, self-reliant, and a fear of failure. He "relied on

(Gal 4:12–20; 5:7–12; 6:11, 14, 17), as well as his *prophetic* self-understanding, are suggestive of keeping gospel and status together; the two are not easily separated.⁵⁶ Both aspects are prone to foster conflict, charges, and responses.

3.4 Second Embedded Dictum: “Christ a Servant of Sin?” (Galatians 2:17)

As we now proceed to identify embedded dicta, we build upon the insights presented above. We seek dicta or Paul mirroring such dicta (i.e., passages that stand out in Paul’s text) as being somehow strange or unfamiliar, since they ran against his argument. This is often reflected in Paul emphatically denying or rebutting them. The passages have, especially when formed as questions, an implicit claim: the views Paul holds vis-à-vis the Torah end up in absurdity. Such is the case in Gal 2:17b where Paul poses a rhetorical question: “... is Christ then a servant of sin?” Paul emphatically denies it, μὴ γένοιτο, “certainly not!” This comes out of a discussion revolving around issues of the Torah in this chapter.

The interrogative particle ἄρα expects a negative reply. The question in v. 17b comes as a result of v. 17a, which sums up vv. 15–16: justification in Christ has turned Paul and Peter into sinners along with the Gentiles.⁵⁷ The structure of this verse brings to mind Paul’s diatribe style, particularly in Romans.⁵⁸ We consider it likely that Paul here works with an embedded dictum entailing a charge against his theology of the law. Peter Oakes says that this is “a potentially problematic corollary” of what the apostle stated in Gal 2:15, namely that Peter and Paul by birth are Jews and not Gentile sinners. When Paul goes on to argue that Peter in Antioch lived in a Gentile manner, rather than Jewish, the question of 2:17b follows naturally. Implied is that it is possible to account for this verse without reference to opponents or embedded dicta claiming to represent them.⁵⁹ However, the fact that Paul chooses to mention a potential corol-

himself, compared himself with others and competed with them” (p. 150). This may naturally find support in modern psychological theories on the exceptionality of founder personalities.

⁵⁶ This is one of the conclusions reached in my dissertation. Paul’s consciousness of having been entrusted the gospel formed the way he conceived of his apostleship. Paul becomes the gospel, so to speak; Sandnes, *Paul*, 243. See also how the medium and the message are woven together in prophetic traditions; pp. 162–64 in this study. Hardin, “Galatians 1–2,” 284–86, illustrates Paul’s relationship to the Galatians with an exasperated parent or mother talking to her contumacious teenager. A dismayed mother does not necessarily mean that her status as a mother is questioned, the argument goes. This simple illustration, albeit helpful to some extent, demonstrates that Hardin does reason with the integrated relationship between apostle and gospel in mind.

⁵⁷ De Boer, *Galatians*, 156–57.

⁵⁸ See pp. 97–102 in this study.

⁵⁹ Oakes, *Galatians*, 91; see also Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 373; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 384.

lary, if that be the case, is in itself indicative of its *relevance* for the addressees. It was at least an objection which in some way was at hand.

The passage in which this verse is found is dense, convoluted, and brings a plethora of questions and challenges. It is certainly one of the most difficult passages in this epistle. According to Matthias Konradt, Paul here refutes a consequence that may be drawn from his teaching, very much analogous to what happens in Rom 3:8 and 6:1.⁶⁰ Konradt considers Gal 2:17b kind of a preamble to the passage in Gal 5:13–6:10.⁶¹ Formally speaking, it appears to be part of Paul’s response to Peter, but it is difficult to know when that rebuke comes to an end, and when Paul starts his considerations aimed at his addressees, the Galatians. I am not sure if that distinction really matters here, since Paul’s rebuke of Peter is integral to an argument which mirrors the Galatian crisis and his response to it. In order to come to terms with this dictum, we cannot leave Paul’s response out of the picture; hence, to some extent, we must delve into the Pauline context in which it is found.

According to Debbie Hunn, the view that Paul in Gal 2:17b addresses a charge from opponents is faulty and to be dismissed.⁶² A key point in her critique is the issue of *when* the sins of v. 17 were committed. The point of departure is that Paul must have “genuine sins” in mind here. Hunn argues that advocates of v. 17 reflecting a charge depend on an understanding whereby the sins referred to are “post-conversional, because Jews kept the law before they turned to Christ.”⁶³ This fails to convince Hunn, since Gal 2:17 refers to pre-conversion sins: “Scholars often argue that *post*-conversion sins of v. 17 motivated Paul’s opponents to charge Christ as a minister of sin. Since Paul speaks of pre-conversion sins, however, the connection they observe between the sins and Paul’s question is broken.”⁶⁴ I find Hunn’s argument on this issue bewildering. By introducing the idea of “committing sins,” Hunn, in effect, turns the singular genitive ἁμαρτίας into a plural, and reduces it to a matter of *mistakes*. Admittedly, παραβήτης of v. 18 (“transgressor”) may be taken to point in that direction. The passage as a whole though, from v. 15 on, is thereby *not* accounted for. Paul is more cosmological and apocalyptic in the way he conceives of sin. The idea of “being found as sinners” in Gal 2:17 draws on the preceding v. 16 and anticipates

⁶⁰ See pp. 110–15 in this study.

⁶¹ Matthias Konradt, “Die Christonomie der Freiheit: Zu Paulus’ Entfaltung seines ethischen Ansatzes in Gal 5,13–6,10,” *Early Christianity* 1 (2010): 77–78; similarly Martyn, *Galatians*, 254–55; Moo, *Galatians*, 165; Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 78–80, 109–11; Betz, *Galatians*, 119–20, calls it a slogan of opponents; De Boer, *Galatians*, 156–57; Tolmie, *Galatians*, 92.

⁶² Debbie Hunn, “Christ versus the Law: Issues in Galatians 2:17–18,” *CBQ* 72 (2010): 537–55.

⁶³ Hunn, “Christ,” 539.

⁶⁴ Hunn, “Christ,” 542.

3:22, where the singular (ὅπὸ ἁμαρτίαν) is used as well. This leaves the categories of pre- or post-conversion sins hanging in the air. Furthermore, in v. 15, the starting point here, ἁμαρτωλοί, carries strong ethnical implications. Although more profound theological aspects are added in the proceeding verses (see below), this ethnic aspect is not to be overlooked: “this verse [i.e., Gal 2:17] highlights the theological process of the marking out of boundaries.”⁶⁵ I think Gal 2:17b is practically a citation of opponents. Admittedly, this is debatable, but the arguments adduced by Hunn are not fit to alter that view.

In Gal 2:10–14, Paul brings to the mind of his audience what happened in Antioch between Peter and himself. The rendering of the instance ends with a question, which seems like Paul citing himself on that occasion: “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile ...” It is uncertain whether v. 15 is to be seen as his response to Peter or as his reflection on what happened, with the Galatians as the intended addressees.⁶⁶ It seems that v. 15 marks a transition from the occasion itself to Paul commenting on it, although the two may be intertwined throughout v. 17. Therefore, the first-person plural in v. 18 marks the end.

Paul states that he and Peter (“we”) by birth are Jews and not Gentile sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί). What matters to Paul is to give this incident a bearing upon his addressees.⁶⁷ Hence, the rendering of the incident serves a purpose in Galatia and, therefore, develops into a theological reflection or comment. Thus, it hardly makes sense to imagine that Gal 2:17b is what Cephas said in Antioch.⁶⁸ That would neglect the rhetorical nature of what Paul writes here.

Verse 17 consists of three parts: first, a statement of facts (a), and then a question which is an inference about (a);⁶⁹ (b) Does Christ minister to sin or impart sin?⁷⁰ Finally, there is an emphatic denial directed at this question. The relationship between v. 15 and v. 17 is important, since ἁμαρτωλοί appears in both pas-

⁶⁵ Longenecker, *Triumph*, 109.

⁶⁶ I agree with Martinus De Boer, “Paul’s Use and Interpretation of a Justification Tradition in Galatians 2.15–21,” *JSNT* 28 (2005): 192, that the account of the incident in Antioch turns into a rebuttal of the new preachers in Galatia. However, I part ways when he says that the relevant verses, which once may have been directed at Peter, “are now primarily directed to the new preachers in Galatia.” The adversaries are not independent addressees of this epistle. Paul’s converts who find themselves in a situation marked by the presence of opponents of Paul are the primary addressees. With Sängler, “Ιουδαϊσμός,” 183–84, we may speak about the adversaries as “Nebenadressaten.”

⁶⁷ Thus also Brian Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic ‘I’: Personal Example as Literary Strategy* (JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 155–56. However, in saying that the confrontation with Peter is carried on through v. 17, Dodd emphasizes Peter more than I do.

⁶⁸ Pace Helmut Feld, “Christus Diener der Sünde: Zum Ausgang des Streites zwischen Petrus und Paulus,” *ThQ* 153 (1973): 119–31.

⁶⁹ With Hans-Joachim Eckstein, *Verheissung und Gesetz: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Galater 2,15–4,7* (WUNT 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 34–35, I take ἄρα to introduce a question based on the stated fact; see also Tolmie, *Galatians*, 91–92.

⁷⁰ Hunn, “Christ,” 542 for this use of διάκονος.

sages. How the two relate is a key matter. The implication of this term takes its starting point in a traditional distinction between Jews and Gentiles (v. 15).⁷¹

However, the proceeding verses imply that this distinction is altered in light of the justification “in Christ,” and also in light of *πάντα σάρξ* (all human beings) being in need of precisely *that* justification. Verse 16 anticipates the pervasive power of sin mentioned in 3:22, which makes justification by faith necessary for *all*, be they Jews or Gentiles. According to Bruce W. Longenecker Paul, here “sarcastically ridicules the traditional distinction between Jews and ‘gentile sinner.’”⁷² I am not confident that “sarcasm” really grasps what this is about. Rather, it seems that Paul “negotiates” what being a “sinner” is about, and takes an issue of dispute in the Antioch incident as his starting point. It is worth noticing that v. 17b picks up not only on v. 15, but also on v. 16 about the justification in Christ. This adds a dimension to “sinners” that is not immediate from v. 15, where Paul distinguishes between Jews and Gentile sinners. The fact that v. 15 spoke about Peter and Paul as “sinners” in opposition to Gentiles, and that now in v. 17 this applies to them as justified in Christ, indicates that a theological dimension surpassing ethnicity has come into play.

According to J. Louis Martyn, a double charge is visible here: “The Teachers are saying that, by linking rectification solely to Christ apart from observance of the Law, Paul has not only become a sinner indistinguishable from a Gentile. He has also in effect turned Christ into one who condones and even facilitates sin, rather than combating it.”⁷³ Thus the ethnic distinction assumed in v. 15 is altered through the justification in Christ of sinners *generally*. Verse 17a (*εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ*) depends primarily on v. 16, which anticipates 3:22 (*τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν*). I take *ἡ γραφή* here as referring to the Scriptures generally,⁷⁴ thus running very much in parallel with scriptural quotations in Rom 3:9–20.

Within this argument is found Gal 2:17b, which is coined to convey how absurd Paul’s gospel is.⁷⁵ Christ promoting sin is an idea suggestive of charges

⁷¹ For examples, see Moo, *Galatians*, 156.

⁷² Longenecker, *Triumph*, 109. Thus also Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 155, 370–72.

⁷³ Martyn, *Galatians*, 255.

⁷⁴ De Boer, *Galatians*, 234, says that it is a synonym for God, to be understood in line with Rom 11:32. “For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.” In Gal 3:22 as well as in Rom 11:32, Paul uses the verb *συγκλείειν*. I state this *pace* Debbie Hunn, “Does the Law Condemn the World? Law, Sin, and Faith in Galatians 3,22–23,” *ZNW* 106 (2015): 245–61, who argues that *ἡ γραφή* here refers to Deut 27:26 as it is quoted in Gal 3:10. She is right that it is Paul’s practice to use *γραφή* in the singular to indicate a particular passage of Scripture. However, when this occurs, the passage referred to always follows from the *immediate* context. That is not the case in Galatians 3; the “distance” between v. 10 and v. 22 is too long to warrant her conclusion. With Sprinkle, *Law*, 146, I take *τὰ πάντα* to indicate “enslavement of ‘all things,’” not only persons, under the power of Sin, in line with how Paul in Romans 8 addresses the cosmological consequences of sin.

⁷⁵ Betz, *Galatians*, 120, mentions Philo’s *Spec.* 2.10–13 as an illustration of the absurdity

being involved, be it a citation or paraphrase. Paul and his opponents were probably of one mind in considering Christ and sin as incompatible. However, the adversaries argued that Paul, in practice, turned Christ into an ally of sin. The texts in Paul's letters that speak likewise are *accusations* of antinomism.⁷⁶ It seems therefore likely that Paul in Gal 2:17b either cites⁷⁷ or has in mind critique voiced against him and his view on the Torah.

What observations have we made favoring that Gal 2:17b is an embedded dictum? The numbers given in parentheses indicates the criteria worked out by John M. G. Barclay (see above). We have noticed that Gal 2:17b forms a question picking up on the argument, but running contrary to Paul, uncovering a preposterous gospel (5). The absurdity is also suggestive of tone or urgency (2). Paul denies it vigorously. Furthermore, we are about to see that Paul's rebuttal is picked up in an extensive reasoning in chs. 5–6 (3); in other words, it is not a casual mentioning. The question corresponds to other passages in Paul, some of which are accusations of antinomism (see later), and finally, has plausibility in extra-textual evidence (7).⁷⁸

When he now brings this to the mind of his Galatian audience, he assumes their familiarity with such sentiments. The implicit allegation assumes Paul's Christocentrism, but considers this prone to foster an antinomian attitude. In this dense and ironic question we, therefore, see a wedge between Christ and the Torah. The preachers Paul opposed in Galatia found that he urged an unnecessary contrast between the two. The result is that Christ becomes a minister to sin. Galatians 2:17b likely was at home among critics of Paul's theology, especially regarding his view on the Torah. Paul writes against the backdrop that he faced charges that his teaching fostered sinfulness by blackening the antidote against sin, namely the law.

What may be gleaned from our presentation with regard to present-day Pauline scholarship? The context in which this dictum is found serves to bring out the *universality* implied in Paul's theology. Galatians 2:17 connects with the preceding verses, thus indicating that the distinction between Jews and Gentiles is negotiated, or rather loses relevance, when it comes to the issue of *sin*. This can be deduced not from Gal 2:17 alone (i.e., from the embedded dictum itself), but from the context in which it is found. Verse 17b, an embedded dictum, ech-

involved. Here Philo speaks about calling upon God as witness for an oath about falsehood. This amounts to taking God as a cloak for wrongdoings: "I am ashamed to appear a sinner, be Thou my accomplice; take the charge of my villainy upon Thyself instead of me." Such words or thoughts are impious in the extreme, says Philo.

⁷⁶ See pp. 110–15 in this study.

⁷⁷ De Boer, "Paul's Use," 195–97, argues that "[yet] we know" (εἰδότες [δέ]) in v. 16a introduces a quotation, in whole or in part. Paul and the new preachers agreed on the referential meaning of the key terms found here, but they parted ways on the relationship between them. I don't find the arguments persuasive to include v. 16a as an embedded dictum.

⁷⁸ See pp. 129–54 in this study.

oes an implied allegation, and follows upon the statement that “we ourselves are found to be sinners.”⁷⁹ Thus, Galatians 2:17 is a reminder that Paul’s occupation with the Torah is not only about ethnicity. This is not without relevance to a dialogue with the “New Perspective.” Furthermore, the way Paul responds to the critical question brings into play his conviction that all human beings are enslaved to the power of sin. In the context in which Paul has embedded this dictum, where “we” must include Peter and himself, the idea of two separate theologies, one for Jews and one for Gentile believers, indeed becomes questionable. Thus, one of the fundamentals among advocates of “Paul within Judaism” is contested here. This means that Gal 2:17 has implications for both the “New Perspective” and “Paul within Judaism.”

Paul substantiates in Gal 2:18 his rebuttal of the charge implied in v. 17b. He cannot be seen as a transgressor (παραβάτης) of the law since that is no longer the basis for his justification, as also v. 19 makes evident. The law is no basis for his justification, since that basis is now “in Christ,” and Paul is, in fact, dead to the law. He cannot, therefore, be considered to operate within the realm of the Torah in this regard. Accordingly, he is also no transgressor of it. Worth noticing in particular here is his dismissal of the accusations implied in καταλύειν, meaning to dismantle, destroy, or dissolve.⁸⁰ According to Hans-Dieter Betz, this verb is “a catchword for accusations against Paul.”⁸¹ Josephus uses this verb in the sense of setting aside the customs or the laws (*B.J.* 4.348; *Ant.* 15.281; 16.35–36 cf. 20.81). In *Somn.* 2.123, Philo provides a text which is a good illustration. He mentions a political ruler in Egypt who “disturbed our ancestral laws (τὰ πάτρια καταλύειν),” did away with the Sabbath, and νόμον καταλύειν. Philo saw this as an attempt to make Alexandrian Jews backslide (παραβάσις), an attempt which eventually failed. This text brings us close, even in its wording, to accusations Paul seems to defend himself against. Worth noticing is that “identity markers,” to use a term often associated with the “New Perspective,” are involved in these passages, but as *pars pro toto*; that is, the law is conceived here in wider terms, and identity markers such as the Sabbath are included. Against this backdrop, Gal 2:18 substantiates that Paul defends himself against allegations of having invalidated the Torah.

⁷⁹ Paul speaks of “we” in a way inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles, albeit the letter is addressed to Gentiles; see Karl Olav Sandnes, “Was Paul a Christian?: Some Thoughts on a Radical New Perspective,” in *Among Jews, Gentiles, and Christians in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In Honour of Oskar Skarsaune*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and John Kaufman (Trondheim: Tapir, 2011), 165–68.

⁸⁰ BDAG s.v.

⁸¹ Betz, *Galatians*, 121, with reference to Rom 3:31; Acts 21:24–26; 22:3; 24:14; 25:8. However, in none of these instances does this verb occur, albeit synonymous verbs do. More on target is F. Büchsel, “λύω,” *TDNT* 4:336, who makes reference to Matt 5:19; John 5:18; 7:23; 10:35. These passages sufficiently demonstrate that καταλύειν may be used in the sense of invalidating the Torah; see also p. 145 in the present study.

Counter-Exhortation

We noticed above that Mathias Konradt suggested that Gal 2:17b with its reference to slogans of opponents serves as a preamble to Gal 5:13–6:10. The criticism hidden in that particular verse, and Paul's emphatic denial that Christ facilitates sin, called for further elaboration on Paul's part. This is provided in Gal 5:13–6:10. John M. G. Barclay's study, *Obedying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, marked a watershed in the understanding of this part of the Galatians. He established this part as integral to the argument of the letter, and demonstrated that it grew out of the Galatian situation, to which also belonged the proposals of the agitators about how the Galatians could "fix the boundaries of acceptable belief and behaviour."⁸² Likewise, Rodrigo J. Morales has suggested that Gal 2:15–21, with its emphasis on death and life, is a leitmotif throughout the letter, reaching its climax in the reaping of eternal life through the Spirit in 5:13–6:10.⁸³ It is worth noticing that the importance which Morales attaches to Gal 2:15–21 vis-à-vis this part in the letter, serves to link 2:17b to the exhortations found there, albeit that point is not made explicit by him.

Now our aim is not these exhortations as such, but the fact that they somehow are exacerbated by adversaries, and that Paul here responds, making them a relevant source for the present study. Hence, the passage may take us a little further toward grasping what *they* found wrong with Paul's attitude to the Torah. We, therefore, ask if it is possible to reach some firm conclusion regarding why the opponents set out to correct or fill in the gaps. This takes us to a most important observation, namely that the law (νόμος), which in chs. 2–3 is an oppressive power, reappears in Gal 5:13–6:10, albeit in altered terms. This indicates that the Galatian crisis lurks in the background throughout the letter, and that the contentious issues pertaining to the law come to rest here. Clearly, the primary importance of this section of Galatians is to give guidance and direction. Nevertheless, what Paul provides here is a "counterexhortation."⁸⁴ John M. G. Barclay puts it like this: "... *this passage is best understood as having been framed specifically for the current crisis in the Galatian churches.*"⁸⁵

⁸² Barclay, *Truth*, 68–72, 178–82. Whether the agitators created division among the Galatians, or if they just benefitted from a situation already there, is not so important here. Dunne, *Persecution*, 53–56, argues that the vice list in Gal 5:19–21 is tailored by Paul to target his opponents. By calling the vices "works of the flesh," Paul brings to mind their emphasis on circumcision, and their destroying and conflict-increasing attitude is mirrored in a way that unites the list with the situation that prompted Galatians. Dunne's suggestion is intriguing, but possibly somewhat exaggerated.

⁸³ Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians* (WUNT 2.282; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 6, 133, 171. Also for Morales, the agitators' proposals are at work in Gal 5:13–6:10.

⁸⁴ Thus De Boer, *Galatians*, 330.

⁸⁵ Barclay, *Truth*, 217. The italics are Barclay's own; similarly Longenecker, *Triumph*, 74–80; Moo, *Galatians*, 340.

Imposing circumcision is identical to imposing the law, as Paul himself states categorically in Gal 5:3–4. In that passage, circumcision and law observation are contrasted with Christ and χάρις (grace or gift). We noticed that in Gal 2:3–4, the issue of being circumcised was intimately associated with the “freedom” proclaimed by Paul, a concern which Paul continues in chs. 5–6. Relevant here is the emphatic way Paul addresses this contrast already in Gal 5:1–6. He seems to target the adversaries directly by contrasting “freedom” and their demand for circumcision. This contrast in v. 6 turned into an adiphoron: “For in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (πίστις δι’ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη) – a text that finds its parallel 1 Cor 7:19.⁸⁶ Paul picks up on Gal 5:1 in 5:13, which introduces this section, urging his addressees not to use “freedom” as an opportunity for the flesh (εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί). These two passages from ch. 5 encapsulate Paul’s concern in the passage in question.

First, Paul utters concern about the possible consequences of his teaching, a concern revolving around *morality*. This is seen in the way this section of the epistle picks up on terminology at home in ancient moral discourses.⁸⁷ Paul’s use of ἐπιθυμία and cognates (Gal 5:15, 17, 24), ἐγκράτεια (5:23), lists of virtues and vices, and his emphasis on “doing good”⁸⁸ (6:9–10) are all at home in moral discourses of antiquity. Furthermore, three times in this passage Paul says that his presentation is in accordance with νόμος (Gal 5:14, 23; 6:2). Matthias Konradt formulates this nicely: “Die Frucht des Geistes stimmt materialiter mit der Forderung der Tora überein.”⁸⁹ Paul’s teaching raised issues pertaining not only to ethnicity and identity, but to morality as well, particularly the issue of curbing bodily desires. Flesh is the malevolent power that needs to be overcome (Gal 5:16, 19–21).

Second, the law finds its fulfillment in love: “For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14 where Lev 19:18 is cited). Paul changes the terminology from “observance” to that of “fulfilling,” thus indicating a new relationship to the Torah.⁹⁰ By mentioning love first in the list of the fruits of the Spirit, Paul further emphasizes the key role assigned to mutual love in the life of the believers. Third, the power in

⁸⁶ See pp. 47–49 in this study.

⁸⁷ For this ancient discourse, see Sandnes, *Belly*; David Winston, “Philo of Alexandria on the Rational and Irrational Emotions,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 204–207; David C. Aune, “Passions in the Pauline Epistles. The Current State of Research,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 228–33.

⁸⁸ Longenecker, *Triumph*, 81, says that Paul’s emphasis on “doing good” is in dialogue with those who insisted on “works of the law,” which Paul has seriously questioned in Galatians. For “doing good” as Torah-centered terminology, see pp. 108–110 on Rom 3:8.

⁸⁹ Konradt, “Christonomie,” 73.

⁹⁰ De Boer, *Galatians*, 345; Morales, *Spirit*, 143–45; Westerholm, *Law*, 294.

which flesh is overcome is the Spirit (Gal 5:16–17, 22–24; 6:1). Paul portrays the role of the Spirit in terms (περιπατεῖν) taken from the frequent ethical use of the Hebrew verb *halak* in the Old Testament and other Jewish texts.⁹¹ These are indications that Paul here comes to terms with charges that he neglects the guiding role of the law.⁹² He includes the law by defining it Christologically, “the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2), a phrase that epitomizes what the fulfillment of the law through the Spirit is really about. I take this phrase to refer to a Christ-like way of living, manifested in altruism, as the immediate context suggests through its synonymous “carrying the burdens of others” and its antonymous “those who think they are something.”⁹³ Finally, Paul in 6:10 sums up his instructions in “doing good (ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθόν),” phraseology which is intimately connected with living according to the law.⁹⁴ From all this follows that the *purpose* of the law is maintained, preventing freedom from the law from turning into an opportunity for the flesh.

Paul's negative view on “the works of the law” in Galatians was probably seen by his adversaries as pertaining to the law in general, as Paul actually comes very close to saying so himself (Gal 3:12; 5:3). This marks a difference from the ethnic understanding of “works of law” introduced by James D. G. Dunn and advocates of the “New Perspective,” and which opened up new venues for the interpretation of Galatians in particular. Nonetheless, the way issues of morality come into play here indicates that the adversaries saw that more than “national identity markers” were at stake.

John M. G. Barclay says that Gal 5:14 (the fulfilment of the law) and 6:2 (the law of Christ) are the “most unexpected development of Paul's thought in Paul's letter, the obvious reason being that Christ and Torah which elsewhere in this epistle are contrasted, here are conjoined.”⁹⁵ This is either running against the rest of the letter and, hence, to be dismissed as self-contradictory, or it is “a necessary nuance” Paul wants to add. This unexpected turn is also due to his need to address the crisis emerging from Gal 1:6–9 and elsewhere in the letter. The proposed ethics are there to meet charges that his critique of the law paved the way for moral permissiveness. While his adversaries called upon the law and

⁹¹ De Boer, *Galatians*, 351. It means to conduct one's life; for example, 1 Thess 4:1, 12; Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13. Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT 3.1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 19–24, 36–47; see also p. 109 in this study.

⁹² See chapter 5 of the present study.

⁹³ For a discussion of this phrase, see David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 222–31; in short, this is about seeking the benefits of others. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 71–72, has pointed out that Christ's love is seen precisely in his self-giving (Gal 1:4; 2:20). This is essential for understanding both for the “law of Christ” in Galatians as well as for what it means to live a Christ-like life.

⁹⁴ This is the phraseology which is in play in Rom 3:8; see pp. 108–110 in this study.

⁹⁵ Barclay, *Truth*, 126; see also pp. 41–44 in this study.

issues pertaining to it, Paul in Galatians 5–6 makes reference to what it means to “walk” in accordance with faith and Spirit. Simply put, Paul’s adversaries maintained that his critique of the Torah rendered an incomplete picture, at best, for its purpose, namely to fight desires.⁹⁶ J. Louis Martyn gives voice to what he imagines the opponents said to Paul’s converts. This goes very much in line with what I think *they* held against *Paul* as well:

In fact, the fights and contentions in your communities show that you have not really been converted, that Paul did not give you the divinely ordained antidote to the Impulsive Desire of the Flesh, the guidance of God’s holy law ... Paul has allowed you to remain a group of sailors on the treacherous high seas in nothing more than a small and poorly equipped boat. He gave you no provisions for the trip, no map, no rudder, and no anchor. But that is exactly the mission to which God has called us. Through our work, the good news of God’s Law is invading the world of Gentile sin.⁹⁷

The issue of sin, which forms the background of Gal 5:13–6:10, has already been introduced in the epistle in 1:4: “who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age.” Galatians 3:21–22 picks up on this by saying that “all things” are “imprisoned under the power of sin”; this is in accordance with Scripture. Scripture was important in the Galatian crisis (see Abraham above), and Paul now claims it as a witness to his theology. This reading of Gal 3:22 is consistent with Romans 1:18–3:20 and also 11:32. The backdrop for Paul’s theology on the law is the issue of its ability to deal with the problem of sin – whose malevolent power has affected all.

The contentious issue between Paul and his opponents was precisely to what extent the Torah and circumcision were a means to deal with sins. This is probably what they held against Paul: he ignored the Torah as a means to overcome sin. This also explains why they found Paul’s Torah theology a problem. This throws doubt on the interpretation that Paul in Galatians envisages the Torah only in relation to his *Gentile* readers. A universal perspective with regard to the Torah comes into view here, albeit not developed in Galatians. However, looking into Gal 2:17b and Paul’s interaction with this dictum paves the way for what William S. Campbell has labelled primary and secondary identities, where the latter applies to Paul’s Jewishness.⁹⁸ Distinctions between Jews and Gentiles are subordinated to the pervasive power of sin, which is overcome not by the Torah but by “walking” in the Spirit. Thus, Gal 5:13–6:10 is Paul’s indirect response to allegations targeting his theology on the law.

⁹⁶ As demonstrated by Barclay, *Truth*, 12–13, many scholars have thought likewise.

⁹⁷ J. Louis Martyn, “A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 361.

⁹⁸ See pp. 5, 48, 51 in this study.

3.5 *Third Dictum: The Law Opposed to the Promises of God?* (Gal 3:21)

While Gal 2:17b echoes a slogan-like objection aimed at demonstrating absurdity or nonsense on Paul's part, Gal 3:21 takes us to the theological or rather scriptural dispute involved. The objection represents a culmination of the role of Scripture in the preceding verse. Paul raises the question: "Is the law then opposed to the promises [of God]?" The words given in square brackets are missing in two of the best text-witnesses, P⁴⁶ and Vaticanus. The genitive τοῦ θεοῦ, found in, for example, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, brings out the conflict which is at the heart of the matter here: Does God contradict himself? The brackets in the Nestle-Aland 28th edition render the situation precisely. In spite of text-critical doubt, for the issue involved, there is no reservation that the full text brings us closer to what is at stake: Is Paul presenting a contradictory God?

Paul answers the question in the negative: Certainly not! (μὴ γένοιτο). In other words, the style bears resemblance to that of Gal 2:17. Both passages revolve around how the law is situated within Paul's preaching. It is possible that this case is merely a diatribe or reflects an opinion that might be raised against Paul's teaching, so that "Paul feels that something he has said could be interpreted to mean that the Law opposed or compromised or altered the promises."⁹⁹ In putting it like this, Ben Witherington III sees the potential for critical questions. However, the dialogical and polemical nature of Galatians suggests that Paul is not only reasoning with himself here; in any case, his reasoning takes this form because his converts were exposed to the kind of thinking voiced in Gal 3:21a. I find it likely that somehow a charge is mirrored here.¹⁰⁰

The dictum addresses the issue of the Torah directly, and follows upon the discussion on the role of Abraham. We noticed above that the Abraham narrative was a field of contention between Paul and his adversaries in Galatia, and that the continuum of his biography was held against Paul's emphatic and isolated use of Gen 15:6 within this biography. This alerts us to consider v. 21, if not necessarily a citation, at least as Paul responding to inferences drawn regarding his teaching on the Torah. Paul is, due to his use of the Abraham biography, driven to argue that the law was added later (Gal 3:17) and, hence, subordinated. In the verses preceding v. 21, this becomes a discussion on if and how the law is to be understood in relation to the promises given to Abraham. Paul takes Gen 12:1 as his point of departure, thus emphasizing "promise," as Gal 3:8

⁹⁹ Thus Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 259.

¹⁰⁰ Scholars who take this as a charge are, for example, F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Pater Noster, 1982), 180; Betz, *Galatians*, 174; De Boer, *Galatians*, 233; Longenecker, *Triumph*, 28–29; Westerholm, *Law*, 16–17.

and its development in 3:14 make evident. Verses 15–18 argue that the promises to Abraham about blessings for the nations and about offspring (σπέρμα) are *independent* of the law, and hence, cannot in any way be annulled by it. Structurally, the argument follows Paul's line of logic about the relationship between faith and circumcision in the Abraham biography, or between Genesis 15 and 17.¹⁰¹ The same kind of argument is applied in Gal 3:1–5 as well: faith came *first*; hence, it is also independent of the law, and it is superior. Galatians 3:14 picks up on this by speaking about “the promise of Spirit” received by faith. That encapsulates what Gal 3:1–5 is really about. The question of how the law and promises relate reaches its conclusion in Gal 3:29, where Christ, as the true offspring of Abraham, brings the blessing to the nations, promised in Genesis 12.

The objection of v. 21 is, therefore, natural: Is the law really opposed to the promises? The issue of a *continuum* is really about God being contradictory or not. The protest hidden in this objection takes the discussion one step further, initiated by Paul himself, who was, of course, not ignorant of how Scripture might be turned against his argument. The objection is analogous to the question found in Rom 7:7: “Is the law sin?” (ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία:). Galatians 3:21 is less clear than Gal 2:17 on whether it is a citation or Paul's own inference. In the latter case, we noticed a shift in the way “sin” was construed within that context, from ethnicity to anthropology. No similar tension is found in the present text. If it is Paul's inference, he made it because he was confident that this question would arise anyway. Hence, it is hardly of primary importance if Paul here voices what others have said about his theology, or if he only imagines this objection. Under any circumstance, its relevance for the addressees is pivotal here. It is in any case a view from the aside, relevant for his Galatian addressees. This may be illustrated by referring to Hans-Joachim Eckstein who says that v. 21 is not about “einen *gegnerischen* Einwand, der sich auf die vorausgehende Erörterung bezieht, sondern um eine rhetorische Frage des Apostels Selbst.”¹⁰² He then goes on to say that Paul's rhetorical question “auf den gegnerischen Standpunkt anspielt.” The ambivalence is apparent here.

Hans-Dieter Betz argues that Paul, against the allegations from his critics, denies that he separates Abraham from Moses.¹⁰³ According to James D. G. Dunn, Paul here argues that “the role of the law is consistent with that of the promise.”¹⁰⁴ Martinus De Boer has rightly opposed this view, saying that Paul's primary concern throughout chapter 3 is to keep Abraham's promises *unaffected* by the law. Hence, the question of v. 21 is not whether Abraham and Moses may form a tandem, but rather “[d]oes the addition of the law through the inter-

¹⁰¹ Similarly in Romans 4; see Sandnes, “Justification,” 163–68.

¹⁰² Eckstein, *Verheissung*, 206.

¹⁰³ Betz, *Galatians*, 173.

¹⁰⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Testament Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 192.

vention of angels then constitute an invalidation of God's promises to Abraham.¹⁰⁵ Paul claims that the law does not in any way put the promises aside. The adversaries, however, claimed that Paul distances God from the Torah.¹⁰⁶ This is precisely how Paul himself formulates it in v. 17: "My point is this: the law, which came four hundred years later, does not annul (ἀκυροῖ) a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify (εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι) the promise." I think the view held by Betz and Dunn owes more to Romans than to Galatians. Romans 3:31 is hardly relevant here.¹⁰⁷ Verse 21b substantiates this, since no attempt to unite the law and justification is made; instead, it is emphasized that they have *different* purposes: law does not give life.¹⁰⁸

We noticed that the dictum of Gal 3:21, through its references to "the promises of God," picks up on the Abraham discussion introduced in v. 6. References to "promises" abound; see vv. 14, 16, 17, 18 (twice), 19. It is worth noticing that Paul's response in v. 21b picks up on another aspect, which is also tied up with the contention over Scripture in which Paul found himself. The tandem of the law and life brings to mind Lev 18:5 (cited in Gal 3:12) and Hab 2:4 with ζῆσεται (cited in v. 11).¹⁰⁹ In other words, the dictum summarizes not only a critical question regarding Paul's use of the Abraham biography, but also raises questions pertaining to the law and life, naturally derived from Lev 18:5. That biblical text can be seen as encapsulating the Torah, summarizing what the Torah brings.¹¹⁰ The conditional style of 3:21b (εἰ) plus the affirmative ὄντως give the impression that Paul reasons from within an argument. Martinus C. De Boer calls it "a contrary-to fact conditional sentence."¹¹¹ This means that the conditional sentence affiliated with Lev 18:5 (εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζῶσθαι) probably renders the viewpoint of the preachers in Galatia.¹¹² The continuum of Abraham's story has been held against Paul, and so has Lev 18:5. Paul denies the validity of that biblical passage (Gal 3:12 cf. 3:18 and 5:3), which speaks about τὸ νόμον ποιῆσαι (i.e. *doing* the law). Key terminology is supplied by Lev 18:5, and favors the view that Paul is involved in a dispute where this was

¹⁰⁵ De Boer, *Galatians*, 232.

¹⁰⁶ Martyn, *Galatians*, 366–67.

¹⁰⁷ Pace, Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 56.

¹⁰⁸ Sprinkle, *Law*, 138–152, argues that Hab 2:4, cited in Gal 3:11 (ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζῆσεται), directed Paul's reading here, thus forming a contrast to Lev 18:5.

¹⁰⁹ Even Hab 2:4 may have been a proof-text for opponents, as they understood πίστις to mean "faithfulness," which approaches "obedience"; see Tomson, *Paul*, 66–68; *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 255–56; 261–63.

¹¹⁰ Peter V. Legarth, *Moseloven: Det magtesløse ord fra Gud* (Fredericia: Kolon, 2016), 23–123, gives a survey of this text in ancient Judaism, concluding that it summarizes the role of the Torah.

¹¹¹ De Boer, *Galatians*, 233.

¹¹² Thus also Martyn, *Galatians*, 237; De Boer, *Galatians*, 233.

a proof text thrown against him.¹¹³ The continuum of Abraham's biography easily formed a tandem with Lev 18:5: life and the law are a joint venture.

Have we justified that Gal 3:21a is an embedded dictum or mirrors Paul's opponents? The case is weaker than in Gal 2:17b; nonetheless, there are some observations weighing in on this conclusion. A question picks up on the argument, and turns Scripture against Paul. The conditional style of Paul's immediate response (3:21b) is suggestive in this regard. The implications of the question, namely that God in His law brings to naught promises given to Abraham, are vehemently denied by Paul. In other words, the question represents a motif that differs markedly from Paul's position (5). Chapter 3 of Galatians rather lengthily addresses issues raised by the question (3). Finally, Gal 3:21a revolves around the law in a way not unlike Gal 2:17b, especially the issue of "life" forms a bridge between them. None of these observations are by themselves conclusive, but together they are suggestive.

What is at stake then in Paul facing opposition which draws on the *continuum* of the Abraham story and Lev 18:5? Galatians 3:21 is relevant in the present study, whether it is a dictum of opponents or an inference Paul makes, because he reasons against the backdrop that these questions were likely to arise and have a damaging effect on his converts. Together with the embedded dictum in Gal 2:17b, it substantiates that the critique of Paul's theology on the law revolved around the issue of sin and its pervasive power. Although this is not found in the dictum of Gal 3:21 itself, the proceeding v. 22 makes this evident. Paul's discussion on the law cannot be isolated from his perception of the power of sin. Furthermore, Gal 3:21 attests that the Galatian crisis to some extent may be characterized as "scripture against scripture."¹¹⁴ Paul's adversaries found that his instruction on the law was at best incomplete (see below). They urged that according to Paul, God made contradictory statements, since Paul, in fact, denied what to them was the concise summary of the law (Lev 18:5). To them, Paul related selectively to the law, not taking the whole into account, and thereby left God inconsistent. God had given a law that was in opposition to the promise God had given to Abraham. To Paul this was essential; to his antagonists this was disastrous.

3.6 Fourth Dictum: Paul Preaching Circumcision (Gal 5:11)

Within a context deeply rooted in the polemics of Galatians, the following statement is found: "But my friends, why am I (ἐγώ) still (ἔτι) being persecuted if (εἰ) I am still (ἔτι) preaching circumcision? In that case (ἄρα) the offense

¹¹³ Legarth, *Moseloven*, 200–206, argues that Paul's "works of the law" is an abbreviation that refers to Lev 18:5. That being the case, an ethnic understanding of this phrase is too narrow.

¹¹⁴ Thus also Sprinkle, *Law*, 206–207.

(σκάνδαλον) of the cross has been removed.” This is how NRSV renders the passage in which the conditional sentence introduced with εἰ has been rearranged so the clause in NRSV is closed by it. The adverb ἔτι of this conditional sentence is missing in some codices, such as D first hand, F, G, 0278, in three minuscules, in some translations, and in patristic evidence (Ambrosiaster). This is probably due to the fact that it appears redundant since the same adverb is repeated in the rhetorical question introduced with τί. It is worth noticing that this alternative reading implies that the conditional sentence becomes a claim about what Paul is allegedly doing *in the present*, thus indicating that to these textual witnesses, the conditional clause was a statement on how Paul was viewed by some. Very much in line with this, John Chrysostom, the first extant commentary on Galatians, assumes that Paul in Gal 5:11 responds to accusations (*Hom. Gal.* 61.663 [PG])¹¹⁵

Jonas Holmstrand has made a good case that τί ἔτι should not be rendered “why still” as most translations do. The two words represent a fixed or established expression to be translated as “what further reason is there that I am being persecuted?” This is a rhetorical question emphasizing that Paul is faced with persecutions since he does not insist on circumcision for Gentiles.¹¹⁶ Holmstrand makes reference to Rom 3:7 (cf. 9:19) where τί ἔτι likewise enforces a question. According to Holmstrand, Gal 5:11 is “an intellectual experiment”¹¹⁷ with no reference to a real situation. Paul is exploring “what would be the result if he were to preach circumcision.” While to Holmstrand Gal 5:11 renders a potentiality, I think it refers to a real situation, which in some way involves the polemical situation of Galatians. This is not to deny that the argument is convoluted, and assumptions beyond our knowledge are obviously at play here. According to Hans-Dieter Betz, “[w]hat the Apostle has precisely in mind will in all likelihood always be hidden from our knowledge.”¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, some observations pertaining to the present investigation may be drawn from it.

The polemic context revolves around the issue of circumcision. James D. G. Dunn paraphrases the sarcasm involved succinctly: “... since they are so concerned with cutting of foreskins, they should go the whole way and cut off the whole organ!”¹¹⁹ Paul also utters judgment on them (v. 10b), very much in analogy with Rom 3:8 (see later). The emphatic ἐγώ, which introduces the sentence, forms a strong contrast: Paul and the opponents hold markedly different opinions when it comes to the question of circumcising Gentiles. This is, however,

¹¹⁵ See Justin K. Hardin, “‘If I Still Proclaim Circumcision’ Galatians 5,11a): Paul, the Law, and Gentle Circumcision,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 3 (2013): 153.

¹¹⁶ Jonas Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul: An Analysis of 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Galatians* (ConBNT 28; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1997), 182–86.

¹¹⁷ Holmstrand, *Markers*, 185.

¹¹⁸ Betz, *Galatians*, 268.

¹¹⁹ Dunn, *Galatians*, 282.

precisely what this dictum denies; hence, it also accurately points to the unfamiliarity (criterion no. 5) of Gal 5:11.

The structure of Gal 5:11 is the following: a conditional sentence (εἰ) rendering what appears to be a dictum, followed by a double refutation. The first refutation is given in a rhetorical question which makes a claim, namely that Paul is persecuted because of his view on circumcision. Paul still being persecuted proves that he does *not* preach circumcision. Implied is that what Paul labels persecutions evolved from issues about circumcision. Clearly, circumcision was an issue vis-à-vis synagogue discipline. This is also assumed in Gal 6:12: "... try to compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted (μὴ διώκωνται) for the cross of Christ." The fact that the verb διώκειν is used here as well as in Gal 1:13 about Paul's persecution of the church, indicates that issues pertaining to circumcision caused disciplinary actions of some kind.¹²⁰

I surmise that what we hear in this question is Paul's denial of allegations or rather claims made by adversaries; in other words, what is mirrored here is probably the voice of opponents. Justin K. Hardin has demonstrated how firmly embedded in the polemics of Galatians this passage really is. Galatians 5:7–12 picks up on Gal 1–2 in such a way that Paul has superimposed the events described there onto the situation in ch. 5.¹²¹ For example, the occurrence of *ταράσσειν* (Gal 5:10) picks up on Gal 1:7 (see above).¹²² The emphatic "I" and the sarcasm of v. 12, recalling Phil 3:2, set a tone indicative of urgency on Paul's part (criterion no. 2). The unfamiliarity of the proposed claim in Gal 5:11 also indicates that opponents are lurking in the background here. J. Louis Martyn has pointed this out by adding in his translation "as some say I do."¹²³ The second way Paul refutes the implied assertion is introduced by pointing out theological implications, introduced with ἄρα.¹²⁴ The ἄρα sentence renders Paul's own view, and urges a contrast between Christ's crucifixion and circumcision, which brings to mind my discussion in chapter 2.5 on how the Torah and the Messiah tandem is disturbed by Paul's Damascus experience. The contrast Paul urges

¹²⁰ See also pp. 130–44, 164–69 on 2 Cor 11:24 in this study.

¹²¹ Hardin, "Circumcision," 160–61. Hardin, however, is rather hesitant about a mirror-reading of Gal 5:11, which finds a dictum of the agitators there. Nevertheless, the whole setting is to him at home in the Galatian crisis.

¹²² Thus also Dunn, *Galatians*, 278; Moo, *Galatians*, 336; Oakes, *Galatians*, 164–65; Jerry L. Sumney, "Servants of Satan," "False Brothers" and Other Opponents of Paul (JSNTSup 188; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 145–46.

¹²³ Martyn, *Galatians*, 467; see also pp. 475–77; similarly De Boer, *Galatians*, 322. This is also the case in *New Living Translation*. Ernst Baasland, "Persecution: A Neglected Feature in the Letter to the Galatians," *ST* 38 (1984): 135–50, makes the point that an issue in the Galatian conflict was how to interpret Paul's present sufferings, be it curse or imitation of Christ (Gal 4:13–18; 6:12, 14; cf. 4:29). This is a reason why persecutions occupy an important role in this epistle; thus also Kjell Arne Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians: Paul Confronts Another Gospel* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 205.

¹²⁴ BDAG s.v. 2a.

here brings together a concern throughout the letter, initiated in Gal 2:19–21, and which is also stated in 5:2: “Listen! I, Paul (Ἰδὲ ἐγὼ Παῦλος), am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.” This contrast between circumcision and Christ also emerges as Paul brings his epistle to an end in Gal 6:17 where he mentions “the marks of Jesus (τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) branded on my body.” This is probably a deliberate contrast to the physical mark of circumcision,¹²⁵ thus underlining as the letter closes that the true identity marker of Christ-believers is the fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, not circumcision. In this perspective, the contest between Paul and his adversaries is about circumcision as an identity marker. From that perspective, circumcision was not indifferent to Paul, though the ritual as such was relativized (Gal 6:15).¹²⁶

The verb καταργεῖν, used in the ἄρα sentence, echoes Gal 5:4 (cf. 3:17) about the incompatibility of Christ and circumcision. Paul brings to our mind 1 Cor 1:23 about Christ's crucifixion as a σκάνδαλον to the Jews.¹²⁷ Paul's emphatic denial of the assertion echoed here, implies that this resonates with the demands for circumcision stated elsewhere in Galatians (see below), albeit it is stated here in a more irenic style. This is worth noticing since it is conveyed that, at the end of the day, Paul also teaches circumcision. What may we glean from this assertion with regard to our topic then? Does the assertion make sense as an accusation?

Much hinges on how to make sense of ἔτι; that is, why does Paul bring up a *past* practice of his here? Since this implies a “once” here, scholars have discussed at what time Paul did this.¹²⁸ A pre-Damascus reference hardly makes sense, primarily “because such work would have no rhetorical value for the present situation.”¹²⁹ This leaves the question of why mention it to the Galatians addressees hanging in the air. In other words, the assertion is aimed at substantiating what has a direct bearing on the Galatian situation at the present time. Douglas A. Campbell says that this, therefore, implies that Paul “at some previous point in his life as an apostle to the pagans” preached circumcision.¹³⁰ There

¹²⁵ See Dunne, *Persecution*, 100–10.

¹²⁶ Nina E. Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol* (WUNT 2.295; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 79, rightly says that the sign of circumcision mattered more to Paul than the ritual itself.

¹²⁷ Dunn, *Theology*, 197, also considers Gal 5:11 as helpful in order to understand 1 Cor 1:23; thus also Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 538.

¹²⁸ Dunn, *Galatians*, 278–80, gives a helpful survey of options.

¹²⁹ Thus Campbell, *Deliverance*, 157. This is stated *pace* Martyn, *Galatians*, 476–77, who argues that ἔτι does not have a temporal meaning here; instead it means “in addition to” (cf. BDAG s.v. 2b). This implies that Paul from time to time added the demand to be circumcised. Andreas Blaschke, *Beschneidung: Zeugnisse der Bibel und verwandter Texte* (TANZ 28; Tübingen: Francke, 1998), 388, takes this to refer to Paul's “vorchristliche Vergangenheit.” Likewise Richard Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990), 233.

¹³⁰ Douglas A. Campbell has argued this in length in his “Galatians 5.11: Evidence of an

is no evidence in Paul's letters that he did so after Damascus; on the contrary, much speaks against this, particularly in Galatians (1:8; 2:3, 9; 5:2–3).¹³¹ Concluding thus far, I have ruled out a pre-Damascus reference since this hardly fits the needs of his Galatians audience. I have also embraced the critique of the view that Gal 5:11a refers to an earlier phase in Paul's apostolic ministry. That view I consider tantamount to saying that Paul after Damascus occasionally persecuted Christ-followers.¹³² What remains then is to take ἔτι as a reference to what Paul is still involved in. This is best accounted for as either sarcasm, or more likely with regard to Gal 5:11a, a *strategically* motivated assertion aimed at targeting inconsistencies in Paul.

What is implied in the assertion is the claim that Paul, if taken seriously, is or will become an advocate of circumcising Gentile converts. It is a somewhat shrewd attempt to draw implications from his teaching and his references to the Scriptures (see below). Before elaborating on this, we need to consider the phrase “preaching circumcision” (περιτομὴν κηρύσσειν). The Greek verb κηρύσσειν followed by the accusative here implies some kind of public announcement or proclamation. The public perspective is very much part of the terminology.¹³³ If Paul really renders opponents more or less verbatim, Philo offers a possible analogy, as he uses κηρύσσειν for Moses as legislator (*Mos.* 2.167 and *Spec.* 2.104). In other words, the commandments given by Moses may form a backdrop here. Against that backdrop, “preaching circumcision” makes sense as a claim that Paul teaches in accordance with Moses. However, since the phrase echoes in a contrastive way Gal 2:2 (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρύσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), it is possible that this is Paul's language, rendering their view ironically.

I think it is difficult to make sense of the assertion without considering that Paul is involved in sarcastic rhetoric, as v. 12 clearly indicates. First Corinthians 7:17–19 and the book of Acts 16:3 give a more complex picture than Galatians, thus suggesting that Paul did not always appear so antithetical toward circum-

Early Law-Observant Mission by Paul?” *NTS* 57 (2011): 325–47; thus also Segal, *Paul*, 332 n. 1 who, in light of his concept of Paul's conversion as a gradual or slow process, considers this option. Paul *gradually* turned away from this practice. Likewise Thiessen, *Paul*, 37–38. There is much to recommend in the concept of a “slow conversion,” but to me, that refers primarily to Paul bit by bit coming to terms with all implications of this event in his life. The *immediate* shift with regard to persecution indicates that Paul hardly continued to teach law observance for pagans; see pp. 39–41 in this study. Hardin, “Circumcision,” 148–59, has given a relevant and apt critique of Campbell's arguments. Campbell's arguments hardly amount to more than pointing out a possibility about which no affirmative evidence is produced. In short, Campbell's view implies that Paul himself has practiced what in Galatians has become anathema.

¹³¹ See pp. 39–41 in the present study.

¹³² See pp. 40–41 in this study.

¹³³ Philo uses this verb when a winner of a contest is announced (*Agr.* 112; *Praem.* 52; *Congr.* 159). Josephus likewise uses the term for the activity of heralds or prophets (*B.J.* 1.295; 1.524–525; 6.285).

cision, as rendered in Galatians.¹³⁴ The fact that Paul seems to have dealt with circumcision not in general, but with a view to whom he addresses, as we are reminded by “Paul within Judaism,” is worth noticing here. This might have paved the way for the assertion like Gal 5:11a. Paul’s inconsistencies laid out in, for example, Gal 2:17b and 3:21a will eventually be brought to an end, due to his claim to teach in accordance with the Scriptures. He will then end up also circumcising Gentiles.

For reasons of strategy, opponents may have referred to Paul preaching spiritual circumcision (Rom 2:28–29; Phil 3:2–3). They might have claimed that this, by implication, leads to its physical implementation; that is, they reasoned along the lines of Philo’s argument in *Migr.* 89–94, namely that physical circumcision naturally followed the ethical circumcision;¹³⁵ or they reasoned in accordance with Eleazar of the Adiabene story.¹³⁶ This might have been an attempt to form a bridge between Paul’s preaching and theirs, claiming perhaps that Paul in his instruction to the Galatians never made it to this point; that is, he did not reach the point of addressing the implications of Genesis 17 concerning Abraham being circumcised.¹³⁷ Be that as it may, “[t]he question in any case implies that Paul is ‘being persecuted’ for rejecting circumcision as obligatory for Gentile believers in Jesus.”¹³⁸ That is what comes out of the embedded assertion.

As we have seen previously in this study, Paula Eisenbaum, Paula Fredriksen, and Mark Nanos, to mention a few, called upon the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to explain Paul’s Gentile mission. However, in that tradition, circumcision is not an issue. Clearly, for Paul’s opponents, who were also involved in the Gentile mission, this biblical vision is hardly a backdrop capable of offering a satisfactory explanation, since, in fact, that biblical model might have served Paul’s view rather than theirs. The fact that so much of the debate revolves around circumcision, leaves the pilgrimage model somewhat short in explaining what is going on here.

In light of the criteria for mirror-reading worked out by John M. G. Barclay, it can easily be seen that Gal 5:11 fits in with criteria no. 2 (tone) and 5 (unfamiliarity). We will later see that also no. 7 (historical plausibility) is relevant here.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ With reference to such passages, it is not unlikely that Paul was seen by some as a figure of inconsistency, an opportunist; see Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul’s Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT 2.23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 306–17; see also De Boer, *Galatians*, 323.

¹³⁵ See especially Borgen, “Paul Preaches Circumcision,” 38–41. For the idea that the opponents wanted to fulfil what Paul had begun, see Morland, *The Rhetoric of Curse*, 102 with references to scholars holding this position.

¹³⁶ See pp. 133–37 in this study.

¹³⁷ For a discussion on Genesis 15 and 17 in Paul’s dealing with Abraham, see Sandnes, “Justification.”

¹³⁸ De Boer, *Galatians*, 323.

¹³⁹ See pp. 130–44 in the present study.

Although I have asserted that the embedded dicta to be uncovered in this study do not necessarily make up one uniform opposition against Paul, it is natural to see the embedded dicta in Galatians as being somehow coherent. In that light, it becomes difficult to unite Gal 2:17b, in which Christ becomes a servant of sin, and 3:21 about the promises as contradictory to the law, with Paul being said to preach circumcision. Barclay's criterion no. 6 on consistency issues a warning against constructing a diversity of basic arguments that Paul is encountering within Galatians.

My presentation may seem to end up precisely with such a dual picture. I think, however, that the two may be reconciled as forming *content* and *strategy*, respectively. The dictum of Gal 5:11 is a shrewd attempt to portray Paul's gospel as some kind of preparation or basic lesson in need of being completed or supplemented. This can be put in terms of the discourse on Abraham's biography which is at play in this letter. Paul's instruction is then presented as having *not yet* incorporated Genesis 17 in his interpretation of Gen 15:6.¹⁴⁰ After all, Paul did refer to the Scriptures. His adversaries may have said, for reasons of strategy, that the power and unity of Abraham's biography eventually will lead him to join together what he so far has separated. This brings consistency to assertions that at present appear diverse. The assertion made in Gal 5:11a is, therefore, in line with a complete Abraham biography, joining harmoniously together faith and the law or circumcision. Paul's reference to him as a point of departure, will, due to the incumbent concord of his biography, bring Paul to the next step. This means that Gal 2:17 is closer to *what* the opponents said about Paul, while Gal 5:11a is closer to their *strategy*. John Anthony Dunne considers the view that figures Paul wrestling with opponents is difficult if they considered themselves to "complete Paul's ministry by filling in the gaps that he missed, such as circumcision."¹⁴¹ For sure, Paul does regard them as opponents, and he sharpens this throughout his letter. However, I see no necessary contradiction between being opponents and attempts to blur distinctions. For reasons of strategy, this is exactly what we would expect in a situation where the favor of former allies (read: Paul's converts) of a missionary (Paul) is sought.

¹⁴⁰ Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 50, says that while Paul's adversaries claimed that he omitted crucial parts of the Torah obligation, Paul on his part alleged that they did not speak about the obligation to obey the whole law (Gal 5:3; 6:13). Clearly, wholeness and sum are important issues here.

¹⁴¹ Dunne, *Persecution*, 50; thus also Sumney, "Servants of Satan," 146. Nanos, *Irony*, 122–24, argues with reference to Gal 5:11 that there were no real opponents in Galatia, only people who claimed to complete what Paul had already begun. It was Paul's rhetoric that turned them into agitators. I beg to differ here, for two main reasons. In the first place, Paul's rhetoric would come as a total surprise if his addressees were unaware of any conflict. Second, Paul's repeated mentioning that the agitators forced circumcision upon Gentile Christ-believers resonates with the uncompromising attitude demonstrated on pp. 130–44 in this study.

3.7 Summary

Galatians is Paul's first extant letter in which the law really becomes a subject. Paul engages opponents, and although our knowledge about them is limited, it is evident that what turned them into adversaries were issues pertaining to the law. We recognized the indebtedness to Paul's rhetoric and theology for all pieces of evidence relevant here. Nonetheless, we identified some likely embedded dicta representing them. However, the first saying was not from the opponents, but from Judean Christ-followers. Paul cited them regarding his turnaround. Their testimony was that Paul once persecuted and ceased doing so. Taking Gal 1:23 in tandem with 1:13 makes this a change with ramifications for the Torah. Not only was Paul himself affected by this change. His victims were equally affected. Christ-followers in Judea rejoiced together with fellow believers elsewhere. In other words, Paul's reorientation with regard to the law applied to Judean Christ-believers as well.

We identified three embedded dicta from opponents or inferences drawn with a view to their position, namely Gal 2:17; 3:21, and 5:11. The first case poses the question whether Paul is about to turn Christ into a minister for sin, facilitating sin, so to speak (v. 17b). In short, Paul's teaching is absurd. As it appears in Paul's text, this question is derived from the insight in the preceding verses (vv. 15–17a) that *all* human beings are sinners. In other words, the opponents whose voices we hear in Gal 2:17b considered Paul's theology on the law to be deeply involved with the issue of sin. The critical implication of this dictum served as a prelude to Gal 5:13–6:10, where Paul emphasizes that a Spirit-led life fulfills the purpose of the law. What Gal 2:17b denied emphatically is elaborated on in that passage in terms characteristic of ancient moral discourse.

The second case found in Gal 3:21 is entangled both in Paul's Torah theology and in his use of the Abraham biography. The wedge he draws between "promise" and law paved the way for the inference that the law was opposed to the promises. Paul's use of the Abraham figure as well as Lev 18:5 demonstrated in the eyes of Paul's opponents that he turned against both the continuum of the Abraham narrative and the summary of the law given in Lev 18:5 (life-giving). Paul's Torah theology rendered *God* contradictory and kept it away from people who were in need of it.

Many scholars make the point that what Paul opposes in Galatia is that *Gentiles* are to be circumcised. This is also precisely what the opponents demanded. Naturally, this gives a limited scope to Paul's theology on the law. However, the question to be pursued is *why* so? The answer given to this is often about ethnicity and the law. In various ways, issues of identity and ethnicity have dominated the discussion on the law in Galatians. Most famously, advocates of the "New Perspective" have emphasized that Paul's opposition to the law was limited to identity-forming aspects, such as circumcision and the observance of

clean and unclean.¹⁴² Philip F. Esler gives special attention to this social function of Paul's argument. Paul's discussion on the law is neither forensic nor ethical, but an attempt to form a new distinct identity. The obvious ethical part of the letter (see above) is primarily suggesting "normative behavior of a sort appropriate to the new dispensation."¹⁴³ Accordingly, the demand for circumcision is about social identity, to make the Gentile Christ-followers truly members of the covenant people.

Caroline Johnson Hodge criticizes those who view Paul's "Christianity" as transcending ethnicity and representing a neutral, inclusive identity.¹⁴⁴ With regard to the law, Jews are never expected to alter their relationship with the Torah; Christ only replaces the Torah with the Gentiles. Hence, Gentiles and Jews are ethnically separated, and not a single unified group of Christ-followers without ethnic affiliation. Hodge is a spokeswoman for "Paul within Judaism." When Paul's opponents are seen from the perspective of ethnicity, notwithstanding how this term is shaped, the tendency is to say that they hold against Paul that he did not make his converts full members of the covenant people. Judged from the perspectives of the embedded dicta in Galatians, a somewhat different picture emerges. It seems that the opponents considered Paul's theology problematic in regard to the role of the law as an antidote to sin, possibly subsequent to faith in Christ, but nonetheless, very much needed to stand against the power of sin.

As for Gal 5:11, this is really a conundrum in Paul's text. My interpretation has tried to fit it into the larger picture by helping to make a distinction between content and strategy, whereas the latter applies to this text. I admit that this is not without its problems, since it can be seen to smooth the uncompromising picture given elsewhere in Galatians. It seems, however, that most solutions come with some problems regarding the statement that Paul still preaches circumcision. If "still" is given meaning vis-à-vis those who were supposed to have the letter read to them, I consider the interpretation given here to be most likely: Paul's opponents have, for reasons of strategy, argued that Paul by the end of the day will come to realize that the Abraham biography he calls upon does include circumcision. For the present study, it is worth noticing how the circumcision issue is bound up with conflict and what Paul labels persecutions. This possibly links up with reactions Paul faced from synagogues on several occasions (2 Cor 11:24).¹⁴⁵ Paul's response urges a dichotomy between circumcision and Christ's crucifixion (cf. Gal 3:1–4; 5:2), thus bringing the issue of identity into play also.

¹⁴² For example, James D. G. Dunn, "Paul, Grace and ERGA NOMOU," in *Ancient Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, and Joseph Verheyden (NTOA 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 263–75.

¹⁴³ Esler, *Galatians*, 222; see also pp. 72–73.

¹⁴⁴ Caroline J. Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4, 146. For a critique of Hodge, see Sechrest, *Jew*, 217–24.

¹⁴⁵ See chapter 6 in this study.

4 Roman Debates: The Absurdity of Paul's Gospel

4.1 Entering Romans through Romans 3:8

Paul's letter to the Romans is indeed dialogical in nature, and much of the Roman debate evolves from the dialogical passages. These fictional and rhetorical dialogues are aimed at forwarding Paul's argument only, or they envisage viewpoints Paul counters or corrects, because they are held by people among the addressees. Likely, there is a mixed bag of both. One particular text has attracted attention as Paul here cites an opinion about his teaching, namely Rom 3:8: "... some (τινές) people slander us by saying that we say: 'Let us do evil so that good may come'." This is a pointed and revealing aside of outmost significance to the present study. William S. Campbell has labelled Rom 3:1–8 with its questions and answers as "the structural centre" of Romans, arguing that the entire letter develops from here.¹ More recently, Douglas A. Campbell has made a similar observation: "Since 3:8 links a set of programmatic questions from elsewhere in Romans specifically with the charges of certain malevolent opponents, an explanation is thereby potentially generated for many of the other programmatic questions in Romans as well."² There is much here to commend, since these verses raise issues which Paul returns to more fully later in the epistle. An indication is seen already in Rom 3:2, which leaves the impression that Paul starts listing (πρωτον) arguments, from which he is diverted. Hence, a response is postponed and awaited. Whether or not the two Campbells are right, it nonetheless follows that Rom 3:8 is embedded in issues beyond historical "opponents" in Romans, as it triggers discussions which will evolve later in the epistle.³

¹ William S. Campbell, "Romans III as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter," in *The Romans Debate. Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 257–60.

² Campbell, *Deliverance*, 500–501.

³ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 458, is hesitant to give Rom 3:8 a dominant role in explaining Romans. I think Rom 3:8 is more important for understanding the letter than often assumed; thus also Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Purpose of Romans," in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 239. Stuhlmacher considers Rom 3:8 and 16:17–18 a tandem; on this, see later in this chapter. I do not subscribe to Stuhlmacher's view that Rom 3:8 belongs within an organized anti-Pauline mission, consisting of Jewish Christian contra-missionaries, who followed him "like satellites"; see also his "Paul's Understanding of the Law in the Letter to the Romans," *SEÅ* 50 (1985): 87–104.

4.2 The Structure and Line of Thought in Romans 3:1–8

As for the structure or train of thought in Rom 3:1–8, 3:1 (ἡ ὠφέλεια) connects with 2:25 (ὠφελεῖ), indicating that there is a continuous discourse here. The question in Rom 3:1 about the advantage of the Jews comes naturally against the backdrop of Rom 2:25–29.⁴ In Rom 3:2, Paul embarks on answering this question, but remains for now by one fact: God's words⁵ have been entrusted to them. The structure of the following verses is given by three conditional sentences as questions:

- v. 3 εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσῃ;
 v. 5 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην συνίστησιν, τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν;
 v. 7 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ψεύσματι ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, τί ἔτι κἀγὼ ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι;

Each question finds a response, in v. 4, v. 6, and v. 8, respectively. Both v. 4 and v. 6 are negations (μὴ γένοιτο).⁶ Verse 8 works likewise; it is Paul's refutation of v. 7. Verse 7 continues the line of thought from the preceding, as it picks up on ψεύστης (liar; v. 4), but also develops this in a somewhat other direction by introducing ἁμαρτωλός (sinner) and a rhetorical "I": "Eigentlich dürfte ich nicht mehr als Sünder verurteilt werden."⁷

This passage starts off with the question of the Jews. It is likely that v. 3 is formulated with that issue in mind: the unfaithfulness of the Jews does not nullify the faithfulness of God! Some argue that this is the perspective throughout the passage (see below). I think a shift is gradually taking place from v. 4 on. Paul returns to the overall purpose of Rom 1:18–3:20: God is the righteous judge, and all are accountable to Him. God's judgment comes into play in v. 4, taken from Ps 50 LXX (κρίνεσθαί σε). This is also suggested by the fact that such terms occur in vv. 5–6 and 8 (κρίνειν, κρίμα) in Romans 3 as well. Verse 6 hits what Paul aims at in this passage as a whole, namely to emphasize *God's judgment*. Fur-

⁴ The logic of Rom 2:25–29 follows in the footsteps of Old Testament traditions urging Israel to repent with references to a figurative sense of circumcision; for example, see Exod 6:30; Jer 4:4; 6:10; 9:26; Deut 10:16; 30:6. With reference to 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6 and 6:15, Rosner, *Paul*, 35–36 says, rightly in my mind, that there is a marked difference between a "deeper significance" of circumcision as witnessed to in the Old Testament passages mentioned here and the "no significance" uttered by Paul.

⁵ See later in this chapter.

⁶ Predrag Dragutinović, "The Advantage of Having the Scriptures: An Exegesis of Romans 3,1–20," in *God's Power for Salvation: Romans 5,1–11*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Monographische Reihe von Benedictina: Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 23; Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 104–108, considers μὴ γένοιτο in vv. 4 and 6 as something uttered by the interlocutor, not by Paul. This is not convincing.

⁷ Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer (Teilband 1: Röm 1–8; EKK VI/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2014)*, 222, paraphrases v. 7 in this way.

thermore, this is linked up with Rom 1:18; 2:1–6, 12, 16 where God’s judgment is in focus.⁸ Also worth noticing is that the emphasis in Rom 3:4–7 on ἀλήθεια, ἀδικία, and ψεῦσμα overlaps with terminology appearing in 1:18, 24, and 2:2, thus indicating the line of thought into which also 3:1–8 gradually moves.

Marcus A. Mininger recently presented a new reading of Rom 3:1–8.⁹ He argues – and rightly so – that the question in v. 3 follows upon the role of Israel in 2:28–29. God’s trustworthiness toward Israel does not depend upon the faithlessness of the Jews. Paul substantiates this with reference to Ps 50 LXX (Rom 3:4). Thus, Paul roots the advantage of the Jews in repentance, since the citation is taken from David’s well-known prayer of repentance. Therefore, David’s repentance parades what Rom 2:28–29 is really about: not a visible mark of superiority, but a pointer to the heart-circumcision of repentance. Hence, the advantage of the Jews is that they have access to τὰ λόγια, such as this biblical psalm which is really about justification of the sinner.¹⁰ From this follows that v. 5 is a comment on Paul’s version of Jewish identity, that is, an identity based on justification by the sinner, just like David. This reading is attractive, but falls short of explaining how Paul conceives of the *advantage* of the Jews. The asymmetry between Jews and Gentiles, so fundamental in Paul’s theology in Romans growing out of his use of ὠφέλεια here, is not accounted for by reference to justification by faith, which primarily expresses that Jews and Gentiles are on equal footing. Mininger’s exegesis is a maximalist reading of the citation from the psalm, as he takes into account the entire psalm, and assumes that the whole passage of Rom 3:1–8 is informed by it.

The listing of opposites from v. 3 on paves the way for v. 8, which is presented as a dictum on Paul’s gospel. Together with v. 7, it forms one basic objection, which is aimed at demonstrating how absurd Paul’s gospel appeared. The second καθὼς-sentence of v. 8 does not add anything to the logic and is, in fact, unnecessary; hence, it is often set in parentheses in translations (see below). It refers to people who allegedly claim to know the implications of Paul’s view.¹¹ Inserted into v. 8 is the ὅτι sentence, introducing a citation followed by ἴνα, which also belongs to the citation (v. 8b), giving the motivation for the claim

⁸ Jochen Flebbe, *Solus Deus: Untersuchungen zur Rede von Gott im Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (BZNW 158; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 25–54, argues how deeply embedded Rom 3:1–8 is into the line of thought of the preceding chapter, a major link being the frequent appearances of words from the root κριν. Rom 3:1–8 picks up on the theme of chapter 2: “das unparteiische Gericht Gottes” (p. 26). Also Schröter, “Juden und Heiden,” 84–88, emphasizes the perspective of judgment in Romans 2.

⁹ Marcus A. Mininger, *Uncovering the Theme of Revelation in Romans 1:16–3:20* (WUNT 2.445; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 282–93.

¹⁰ Surprisingly, Mininger does not mention Rom 4:6–7 where David is introduced as a man of forgiveness.

¹¹ For a thorough discussion of the structure in vv. 7–8, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans, Vol 1: Romans I–VIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 185–87.

made in the first part of the citation. The citation is surrounded first by a claim that things are *not* like “some” wrongly attribute to Paul’s gospel (v. 8a) and a final statement of judgment (v. 8c). The opposites in this passage are crucial, as all of them might serve to undermine the idea that God is judge.

In the questions involved here, Paul slides from the trustworthiness of God to the question of whether sin is preferable (see below). That Rom 3:8 is entangled in the logic running from 3:3 on can be illustrated in the contrastive logic implied:

v. 3: Does Israel’s faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

v. 5: Does injustice confirm the justice of God?

v. 7: Does falsehood enhance God’s truthfulness to his glory?

v. 8: Does good come from evil?

All of these verses are similarly structured, robbing God of His right to judge. Verse 7 in particular paves the way for v. 8 about how ludicrous Paul’s gospel is by pointing out mindless consequences. Fundamental to all of them is what v. 8 formulates most succinctly: evil or sin become servants enhancing what is good; or vice versa, what is good depends on human evil. Such a view robs God of his right to judge, since no basis on which to make a judgment remains. The fact that v. 8 brings to an end the conditional sentences of vv. 3, 5, and 7 strongly suggests that Paul envisages opposing voices to be at play not only in v. 8, but probably throughout Rom 3:1–8.¹²

Marcus A. Mininger says that “Paul is *not* concerned here merely with the spectre of ‘libertinism’ or ‘antinomianism,’ that seems to set believers free from sin, since he set them free from the law.”¹³ The topic of Paul’s concern is not moral laxity but whether human sin may positively serve as an instrument to bring about God’s glory. Mininger here urges an artificial contrast. Verse 8 is formulated with a view to practical consequences; it is not a purely theological matter. Chapter 5.2 in this study unfolds how the law is intertwined in moral issues, being an antidote against sin. In light of the material unfolded there, Mininger’s distinction between sin and law seems erroneous.

The issues involved in chs. 6–8 about sin and in chs. 9–11 about Israel and God are to some extent anticipated in 3:1–8.¹⁴ These topics are introduced as part of a dialogue, and they raise issues with the potential to undermine Paul’s gospel among his addressees in Rome. Thus, Rom 3:8 paves the way for key is-

¹² Thus also Flebbe, *Solus Deus*, 52–54.

¹³ Mininger, *Revelation*, 284. This is a citation taken from the German exegete Adolf Schlatter and is indebted to a Lutheran legacy. Furthermore, Rom 6:18, 22, speaking about liberation from sin, contradicts this quotation.

¹⁴ Thus also, for example, Gerd Theissen, “Gesetz und Ich: Beobachtungen zur persönlichen Dimension des Römerbriefes,” in *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und in Neuen Testament*. Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75. Geburtstag, ed. Dieter Sänger and Matthias Konradt (NTOA 57; Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 289.

sues to be discussed in the Epistle to the Romans. Does Paul battle in the wind here, with himself so to speak, or does he engage views to which his addressees may be exposed in such a way that Paul is troubled? This takes us to the question and answer style of this passage.

4.3 *Diatribes: Between Rhetoric and Objections*

Chapter 3 of Romans is held in a dialogue or diatribe style, as noticed by its many questions to which Paul then responds. Paul introduces his epistle by stating emphatically: “For I am not ashamed (ἐπαισχύνομαι) of the gospel” (Rom 1:16a). This might be a hint that he is aware of objections or that his gospel was prone to be ridiculed. His gospel is confronted with shaming arguments, among which the sarcasm of Rom 3:8 fits nicely. At this introductory stage in the correspondence, any specificity with regard to objections is not possible. Paul does not address people he knows in this letter. In this way, Romans differs markedly from Galatians. He has by now already faced objections elsewhere (Galatians), and he is concerned that his Roman audience is susceptible to charges against him and his theology. The diatribe style is *not* pure imagination. Behind any imagined interlocutor lurk opinions, misperceptions, or rumors concerning Paul and his relationship with his addressees. However, this view does not necessarily find general affirmation in scholarship on Paul’s use of the diatribe style.

The importance of the diatribe style for the interpretation of Romans has been long since noticed.¹⁵ Characteristic of this style is that some of the questions serve Paul’s purpose for writing, helping him push his argument forward; some are due to interlocutors, be they fictive or not. Diatribe is a rhetorical style surely found in the New Testament, and particularly, albeit not exclusively, in Romans. Stanley K. Stowers’s contributions have proved helpful and influential to understand this phenomenon.¹⁶ Stowers emphasizes the rhetorical and hypothetical nature of the style. The setting is the “classroom instruction”; hence, its aim is protreptic or pedagogical, not polemical. The interlocutor is a student

¹⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *Der Stil der paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe* (FRLANT 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1920) and Stanley K. Stowers, *The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (SBLDS 57; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Thomas Schmeller, *Paulus und die “Diatribe”*: Eine vergleichende Stilinterpretation (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen Neue Folge 19; Münster: Aschendorff, 1987); Changwon Song, *Reading Romans as a Diatribe* (Studies in Biblical Literature 59; New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

¹⁶ See also Stanley K. Stowers, “Paul’s Dialogue with a Fellow Jew in Romans 3:1–9,” *CBQ* 46 (1984): 707–22. Similarly, Song, *Romans*, argues on the basis of the diatribe style that Romans should not be read as a real letter, but as a diatribe that was distributed in Paul’s schoolroom and later appropriated as a letter. This teaching was not directed to a specific group of people, viz., the Christians in Rome, but rather intrinsically universalized.

under instruction, not various people or viewpoints Paul sets out to refute. Hence, the dialogue is a matter of instructional procedure, *not* other people. This widespread view has a direct bearing on the interpretation of Rom 3:8, since it implies that this verse gives no access to how Paul was perceived by “some,” only to his methods of instruction. Nevertheless, Stowers remarks, in his study on the diatribe style, that sometimes in the writings of both Epictetus and Dion of Prusa, “real objections from the audience seem to occur.”¹⁷ This insight, which balances in a very important way how Stowers’s work is often rehearsed, comes through also with regard to Paul: “objections ... do not simply grow out of the internal logic of the argumentation, but also reflect the teacher’s experience of objections and false thinking or behavior which is typical of his audience.”¹⁸ Stowers’s sensitivity here is often ignored by scholars calling upon his studies on diatribe.

In his recent commentary on Romans, Michael Wolter argues that the dialogue with Jews carried through in Rom 1:18–3:20 is, in fact, not a dialogue at all: “Sein Gesprächspartner ist dabei niemand anderer als er, der Jude Paulus selbst.”¹⁹ It is Paul’s soliloquy. What is at work here then is not objections and responses, but internal mind-making theology. With no references to external voices, Paul is in the process of clarifying his theology to *himself*. He carefully avoids identifying who “some” are; most likely he cannot. Nevertheless, as for v. 8, Wolter says that here begins “eine Auseinandersetzung mit text-externen Gegnern.” That insight is hardly accounted for in the way Wolter understands the diatribe in Romans 3. Wolter’s admittance is very similar to that made by Stowers. It is worth noticing that Rom 3:8 challenges a reading of the diatribe as purely fictional, and that at the end of the day, this is acknowledged, even by some of the most prominent advocates of pure diatribe in Romans.

In my view, Wolter does not come to terms with the fact that Paul decides to address this in a letter to the *Romans*. This fact should be accounted for in how the diatribe is to be interpreted. For some reason, Paul considered *this* relevant for *these* addressees. He must have thought that *they* needed to hear this, probably because he considered them exposed to just that kind of objection. The fact that Rom 3:8b mentions that the judgment on these blasphemers is just is in itself important since that militates against a purely rhetorical and fictive reading of the passage. If the diatribe was Paul primarily making a dialogue with himself, or mainly his classroom technique, why then utter a judgment here? The relative pronoun ὃν refers not to thoughts or ideas, but utters judgment on *people* hold-

¹⁷ Stowers, *Diatribe*, 128. His reservations toward a one-sided hypothetical reading of the diatribe are worth noticing.

¹⁸ Stowers, *Diatribe*, 177.

¹⁹ Wolter, *Römer*, 238; see also pp. 210, 221–22. Thus also David R. Hall, “Romans 3.1–8 Reconsidered,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 183–97, claiming that the origin of the debate is found not in debates with Jewish objectors, but is an internal “debate within his own conscience” (p. 184).

ing and transmitting such ideas. In this regard, the indicative present tense $\phi\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\nu$ is worth noticing in Rom 3:8. The diatribe style, most prominently present in ch. 2, does not have any occurrence of this verb. The only instance within this part of Romans is 3:8. That this calls for some attention becomes apparent when compared to Romans 9–11, where diatribe passages appear as well. Here we find the verb $\phi\eta\mu\acute{\iota}$ being used, but in all instances in the future sense (Rom 9:14, 19, 30; 11:19), thus indicating something to be *expected*. Since this is not the case in Rom 3:8, we would do well to reckon that Paul here engages views that *already* existed among his Roman audience.²⁰

In his study on the diatribe style, Thomas Schmeller argues that whether the dialogical style is purely fictive, a means to serve the argument only, or if it implies references external to the text, such as objections, is to be proved from case to case.²¹ Indeed, there are obvious similarities between the conventions of diatribe as the rhetorical means of classroom instruction and Paul's letter to the Romans. However, as pointed out by Thomas H. Tobin, readers would have recognized within these similarities that Paul used these conventions for his own purposes.²² With regard to Rom 3:1–20, there is probably a merging of rhetoric and opponents, most clearly in 3:8. In 1 Cor 15:34–35, there is an example where Paul moves freely between a rhetorical $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ (v. 35) and $\tau\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\varsigma$ (v. 34), clearly among some of his Corinthian converts. Likewise, in 2 Cor 11:20–22, $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ is rhetorical but not purely so. It implies a reference to a situation Paul addresses, as chapter 6 of this study argues. Romans 3:8 likely falls into this dual practice. We have to ask *why* the Romans need to hear this, and also why Paul dwells so long on issues pertaining to the law in this part of his letter. Paul obviously had the conviction that it would serve his Roman audience to be exposed to this. His addressees were susceptible to accommodating counterarguments to his gospel. With the Galatian correspondence in mind, it hardly comes as a surprise that stories about Paul were accompanied by rumors and objections, and that they had reached Roman Christ-followers as well.

The So-Called Jew in the Diatribe

The diatribe makes a turn in Rom 2:17 (“But if you call yourself a Jew...”), and this turn also sets the stage for 3:1–8. Furthermore, Rom 2:17 is often presented as a building-block for the claim of “Paul within Judaism,” that Paul is engaged with Gentiles and not Jews. We need, therefore, to clarify this relationship. This brings us to the hotly debated question of who Paul has in mind in 2:17. According to Stanley K. Stowers, “one’s reading of Rom 2:17–29 decisively sets the di-

²⁰ Thus also Schnelle, “Gegenwart,” 183–84.

²¹ Schmeller, *Paulus und die “Diatribes”*, for example, 436.

²² Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul’s Rhetoric in its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 88–98, 118–23.

rection for reading chapters 3–8.²³ Paul directly addresses someone *calling* himself a Jew (σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ). In his *A Rereading of Romans*, Stowers argues that Romans 2 gives no polemic against Jews. Paul does not speak about Jews in general or generically (i.e., he does not speak on the Jews as such).²⁴ Through so-called speech-in character, Paul has in mind a particular imaginary Jewish teacher: “Paul has created an interlocutor who is a fellow Jew and with whom he will conduct a diatribal dialogue.”²⁵

Two observations are worth considering here. First, Paul refrains from identifying his interlocutor precisely. By leaving it like that, Paul makes this a matter not of fighting opponents, but of inviting his readers to contemplate some key matters pertaining to his teaching. Second, Paul construes the interlocutor not only as a Jew, but as someone involved in a “Christian” discourse as well; hence, he is a learned Jewish Christian. As Douglas A. Campbell has pointed out, he is engaging with Paul’s converts, and he is contradicted by Paul’s instruction.²⁶ Taken together, these two observations imply that the interlocutor, albeit rhetorical in nature, comes out of Paul’s experiences. However, “some” is not purely rhetorical. This becomes, in my view, evident in the role of the first-person plural in 3:8; the slandering is about “us,” and also by the fact that Paul utters a judgment on “some.”

At the center of this dialogue is the claimed coherence between hearing and saying versus doing and practicing (Rom 2:1–2, 6, 13, 21–22), leaving the interlocutor without an excuse. As the following will make clear, I think Stowers is right in claiming a Jewish identity of the interlocutor here, but I do not think the diatribe is purely fictional. I find it worth noticing that Stowers, especially with regard to Rom 3:8, concedes: “Paul admits that he has actually met such objections as he dismissively anticipated that argument” (3:8).²⁷ Such an admission is, in fact, tantamount to saying that the diatribe is *not* purely fictional.

In his ground-breaking study, Runar M. Thorsteinsson questioned the Jewish identity of Paul’s interlocutor.²⁸ His book has elicited studies that have paved the way for “Paul within Judaism,” since a consequence is that Romans 2 utters no critique of Jews at all.²⁹ Matthew Thiessen emphasizes that this is a

²³ Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 159.

²⁴ Stowers, *Romans*, 143–58.

²⁵ Stowers, *Romans*, 147–48; similarly Campbell, *Deliverance*, 559–61. However, Campbell considers Rom 1:18–3:20 in its entirety to be speech-in character. I find his view exaggerated, and hard to substantiate by textual indications; see also Grant Macaskill, “Review Article: The Deliverance of God,” *JSNT* 34 (2011): 158–59.

²⁶ Campbell, *Deliverance*, 560.

²⁷ Stowers, *Romans*, 173.

²⁸ Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor*, 159–234.

²⁹ The volume, *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodriguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), with its many contributions, stands on the shoulders of Thorsteinsson.

text about Gentiles who *call* themselves Jews.³⁰ Hence, Romans 2 is a “Gentile locutor’s claim to Jewishness.”³¹ In other words, what Paul has in mind here is a Judaizing Gentile, a proselyte perhaps, who takes the name of being a Jew, and who assumes the signs of the Mosaic covenant. Paul does not say anything negative about Jews here. The problems addressed are all about *Gentiles*.

In spite of the efforts made here by Thiessen and others, this fails to convince.³² This is so for several reasons. In the first place, Thiessen implies that Paul in Romans 2 in no way redefines “Jew”; verses 28–29 are about Judaizing Gentiles. In my view, Rom 11:1–7 argues from a distinction *within* Israel,³³ made visible in Paul’s distinction between the “rest” (λεῖμμα) opposed to οἱ λοιποὶ (“the others”). Hence, Paul is in Romans familiar with negotiating “Jew” or “Israel.” Hence, Rom 2:28–29 is not an isolated passage on Jews in Romans.

Second, Rom 2:17 is caught up in an argument which drives toward *universality*.³⁴ Crucial for Thiessen’s argument is that Rom 2:17 follows from 1:18–32, which resonates how *pagans* are often portrayed in relevant Jewish texts, such as Wis 13–14.³⁵ Following in the wake of this observation is the assumption that the context leading up to Rom 2:17 has Gentiles, and not Jews, in mind. However, the rhetoric and scope of this part of Romans questions Thiessen’s argument, namely that since the “sources” Paul draws on here are exclusive to Gen-

³⁰ Windsor, *Paul*, 147–63, argues that the social setting of this text is the Jewish synagogue, and that ἐπονομάζειν is not used in the middle voice here, as suggested by, for example, Thorsteinsson, but in the passive voice, meaning “you are publically acknowledged as entitled to the name Jew” (p. 148). Hence, Paul has in mind a Law-teacher – imaginary most likely – who represents the synagogue *par excellence*.

³¹ Thiessen, *Paul*, 59, and Matthew Thiessen, “Paul’s Argument against Gentile Circumcision in Romans 2:17–29,” *NovT* 56 (2014): 373–91; thus also Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 107–109; Fredriksen, *Paul*, 156–57, and Rafael Rodríguez, *If You Call Yourself a Jew: Reappraising Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 47–61. Rodríguez distinguishes sharply between a claim to be a Jew and being one, and this distinction works throughout this part of Romans. Rodríguez asks if “a gentile who commits himself to Torah-observance might ‘call’ himself a Jew” (pp. 51–52). Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.9.19–21 provides for him a relevant passage: “This passage does, however, raise the possibility that earning and exhibiting the epithet ‘Jew’ was an issue for gentile converts to Judaism” (p. 52). The main problem with this Epictetus passage, in my view, is not that ἐπονομάζεσθαι fails to appear, but that Rodríguez does not get the context right. Epictetus emphasizes that words and actions must be united (so also in *Diss.* 2.19.21–26). It is not a matter of a gentile calling (καλεῖται) himself a Jew while he is not; it is a matter of living in correspondence with what one claims for one self; λόγος and ἔργον must coincide (21). Hence, a key term in Epictetus’s passage is ὑποκρίνειν, with connotations of hypocrisy; see LSJ s.v. Hence, the Epictetus passage is not the match claimed by Rodríguez.

³² Thus also Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, “Götzendiener, Tempelräuber und Betrüger: Polemik gegen Heiden, Juden und Judenchristen im Römerbrief,” in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte und Kontexte*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaienchi (BZNW 170; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 217–23.

³³ Notice that Rom 9:24 has ἰουδαῖος.

³⁴ See also pp. 32–33, 94, 102 in this study.

³⁵ Thiessen, *Paul*, 47–52.

tiles, so *must* Paul's text likewise be occupied with Gentiles. The whole passage in Rom 1:18–3:20 is aimed at a choking rhetorical effect, that all, be they Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. Due to the universal perspective of this section in Romans, views resonating in texts about pagans come into wider use. The *universal* scope and horizon is clearly suggested in the scriptural citations and also in the final “no human being” (πᾶσα σάρξ). The universal scope thus suggests that Jews are in view also (see below). Paul does not only adopt from other “sources” here; he also adapts to his purpose and rhetoric.

Third, “instructed in the law” (κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου) fits a Jew better by birth than a Gentile claiming to be Jewish. Reference to such instruction brings to mind, for example, 4 Macc 18:9–19 about how a Jewish father instructs his children in the Torah and the Prophets.³⁶ It is, of course, worth noticing that the interlocutor is also said to be the instructor of children (διδάσκαλον νηπίων), which also fits well the Jewish context of receiving and giving instruction in the law. Finally, the way Rom 2:24 distinguishes between ὑμεῖς and “Gentiles” favors a traditional reading of Rom 2:17. This distinction is blurred if ὑμεῖς also refers to Gentiles, even if they are Gentiles calling themselves Jews. Calling oneself a Jew is, therefore, equivalent to trusting in the law according to this text, and the interlocutor is a Jew, not a Gentile calling himself so.³⁷

Furthermore, Rom 3:9 is a challenge to the view that Paul in chs. 2–3 envisions a so-called Jew only, with the implication that the unfolded judgement perspective does not apply to Jews. Briefly put, if the interlocutor is a Gentile, what happens then to 3:9 when Paul says that “we have already charged (προητιασάμεθα) that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin”? How can Paul say this if the Jews have not been in view yet? The fact that this is the first time “sin” occurs in Romans does not really matter, since this only encapsulates what has been in play since 1:18 on. The Greek verb προατιτᾶσθαι is used only once in the New Testament. Fundamental is that reference is made to some *preceding* act. In other words, the activity involved has been anticipated already.

According to Runar M. Thorsteinsson, reference in Rom 3:9 is made not to any previous part in Romans itself, as scholars usually consider, but to what follows, namely the catena of passages from Scripture (vv. 10–18): “Now if Paul's extensive discussion prior to 3:9 has already demonstrated that all are under sin, why would he need such a lengthy list of scriptural quotations to prove exactly

³⁶ For the instruction of Jewish children, see also *C. Ap.* 1.60; 2.173–178, 204; *Legat.* 115; *Praem.* 162. Instruction in the law of Moses from childhood on is at the center of these passages. The view that Rom 2:17 is a Gentile interlocutor who calls himself a Jew, assumes – if it is not only rhetoric – a certain level of instruction for proselytes. Precise information about this is not easily found. On Jewish privileges listed here, see Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology in Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 200–15.

³⁷ See Schröter, “Juden und Heiden,” 84–88.

that point? In fact, it is first with these citations that the charge of ‘universal sinfulness’ is explicitly announced.” Thus, the charge of universal sinfulness is announced for the first time through these quotations in Romans 3.³⁸ Thorsteinsson takes the verb here to be similar to Rom 1:2 (προεπιγγείλατο) and 15:4 (προεγράφη), in which reference is made to Scripture: Scripture has referred previously to Paul’s doing it. What Paul does is simply to subscribe to or to affirm what Scripture has *already* stated. This is an interesting suggestion, albeit questionable on some points. In Rom 1:2, προ- is justified by the prophetic perspective spelled out there, thus directing the reading to Old Testament passages. As for the second case, προεγράφη is most likely a stylistic variation of ἐγράφη; hence, the two verbs are used synonymously there. The textual witnesses found in the Nestle-Aland 28th edition make this clear, as there obviously is some confusion regarding which verb to use. Hence, the two references Thorsteinsson relies on hardly work the way he surmises. As for the relevance of textual witnesses, it is worth noticing that Codex Alexandrinus to Rom 3:9 adds πρῶτον, clearly to assimilate the text to Rom 1:16 and 2:9–10, thus rooting Paul’s statement within previous passages of Romans. Furthermore, the role of “*we*” in the verb of 3:9 (προητιασάμεθα) implies, if Thorsteinsson is right here, that Paul includes himself among the Scriptures. He does not only subscribe to what Scripture says, but he writes himself into that reference. Paul’s use of the first-person plural, most likely a reference to himself, throws serious doubts on taking this as a way of introducing Scripture. Hence, I abide by the view that Rom 3:9 makes reference to something stated already *within* this very letter.

Joshua D. Garroway has made another suggestion regarding Rom 3:9 and the issue of who the interlocutor is. He argues that Paul’s use of προ- followed by a verb of communication neither refers to something related previously in the letter nor to the Jewish Scriptures: “but rather to something he said on a *previous occasion*.”³⁹ Garroway takes his examples from the Corinthian, Thessalonian, and Galatian correspondences. Likewise, in Rom 3:9, Paul “is referring not to a charge he has leveled previously in the epistle, but to a charge he has leveled previously in some other context.” Paul here brings to the minds of his addressees a reference like Gal 3:22: “Scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin.” Garroway, like Thorsteinsson, sees the sinfulness of Jews introduced for the first time in Romans through the scriptural quotations, but according to Garroway, Paul brings to mind previous teaching on this issue.

³⁸ Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor*, 235–36; quotation p.235. Thus also Matthew V. Novenson, “The Self-Styled Jew of Romans 2 and the Actual Jews of Romans 9–11,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 151–52.

³⁹ Joshua D. Garroway, “Paul’s Gentile Interlocutor in Romans 3:1–20,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 96–97.

I find Garroway's solution even more questionable than the one presented by Thorsteinsson. If Paul in Rom 3:9 makes a reference to his previous teaching among the Galatians, this leaves the mention of "Jews and Gentiles" without any reference,⁴⁰ since this phrase is found in Romans alone, and in no other letter of Paul. Furthermore, Garroway assumes that Paul's Roman audience is familiar with his Epistle to the Galatians or previously given instruction. In principle, that is possible, but we do not know. Garroway's argument surmises that the Roman audience had access to Paul's instruction given outside the letter sent to them. Finally, the references made to Paul's correspondence with his converts in Corinth, Thessalonica, and Galatians make sense only since Paul did minister among them for some time. This is *not* the case with Romans; here, Paul introduces himself and his teaching to a church who knows about him primarily from hearsay. All this takes us to the conclusion that Rom 3:9 substantiates a traditional reading of Rom 2:17 as referring to *Jews*.

4.4 The Absurdity of Paul's Gospel: The Dictum of Romans 3:8

Paul's theology on the Torah developed dialogically, a fact which, in principle, should make other voices on the matter discernable in his letters. The preceding chapter has shown how opposition fostered Paul's view on the Torah in Galatians. When Paul's theology is presented by others, it is, of course, out of his hands. This is not to deny that when their dicta find their way into Paul's letters, *he* is in control, thus paving the way for exaggerations and bias. Nonetheless, objections and questions that were raised, cultivated problems or challenges inherent to Paul's thinking. This is, of course, the reason that they found their way into the epistles, as he needed to unmask them. One such example that has a direct bearing on our investigation is Rom 3:8: "And why not say (as some people [τινες] slander [βλασφημούμεθα] us by saying that we say), 'Let us do evil (ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά) so that good (τὰ ἀγαθὰ) may come?' Their condemnation is deserved!" The parentheses rendered by NRSV here are worth noticing. Together with 2 Cor 10:10, this is the only instance in which Paul claims to quote opponents; even in Galatians no such claim is made, albeit we have argued that allusions of the same kind are present. Paul allows adversaries to have a say within his own epistles. "Some say" (φασίν τινες) is a hint of explicit opposition. It remains an open question though if this opposition is present through adversaries in Rome. Paul is vague; it is a congregation to which he is, for the most part, not personally known. The presence of adversaries is not necessary to provide a backdrop for the kind of questions involved in Rom 3:8. The vagueness of Paul is in itself not a sign that no opposition existed; however, as for Rome, "opposition" is known proba-

⁴⁰ Gal 3:28 is no real parallel here.

bly not through a group of adversaries that may be identified, but through a set of critical questions or reports circulating. There are many other instances where Paul accommodates voices of others, but they are not introduced as *their dicta*, as it happens here. This implies that the content voiced in the dictum has found a hearing among the Romans; at least this is Paul's concern.⁴¹ The dictum represents a very early, concise, and malevolent exposition of Paul's view on the law, epitomized in a condensed sarcastic dictum. To its exposition we now turn.

Romans 3:8 in its Romans Context

Fundamental to the structure of this verse is the double *καθώς*, the first referring to Paul's evaluation of the accusations, and the other to *what* "some" critics say about him. Paul judges their criticism blasphemous. The interlocutor is identified as the anonymous *τινες* (some), who blasphemously claim that Paul says that believers should do evil in order that good might come. In other words, evil becomes a means to bring about good things.

We have seen that v. 8 is kind of a response to the question raised in v. 7. Samuel Byrskog takes this as a point of departure, meaning that "the Jewish people should do evil in order to produce what is good. The accusation is not targeting Paul's gospel, but the view that people within the covenant may transgress the law, confident that God then even more will demonstrate his goodness."⁴² "We" in Rom 3:8 is, according to Byrskog, a reference to fellow Jews with whom Paul identifies here. Thus, Rom 3:8 brings to an end the discussion which was initiated in 3:1 about the prerogatives of the Jews: their unbelief is no excuse against God's judgment. Certainly, there is a "we" in v. 5 as well, but regardless of whom "we" in v. 8 refers to, the backdrop here is Paul's teaching. I find it likely that "we" found also in the verb (*ποιήσωμεν*) anticipates the plural in Rom 6:1 and 15 (see below). In other words, Paul is anticipating his ethical instruction given there. This means that Rom 3:8 is to be interpreted in light of the larger context about the sinfulness of human beings.⁴³ The "I" of v. 7 is to be interpreted in that light, referring to sinful humanity. Verse 8 follows immediately upon v. 7, which Wolter paraphrases in this way: "Eigentlich dürfte ich nicht mehr als Sünder verurteilt werden."⁴⁴ The rationale for this is then given in the maxim formulated in v. 8: It is precisely by doing evil that good will come. If men contribute to God's glory by committing falsehoods, does it then make

⁴¹ This is downplayed by A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 48, when he says that there are no actual opponents in Rome.

⁴² Samuel Byrskog, *Romarbrevet 1–8* (Kommentar til Nya Testamentet 6a; Stockholm: EFS, 2006), 80, 84–85; my translation from p. 85: "Anklagelsen er inte riktad mot Paulus evangelium utan mot uppfattningen att någon inom det judiska förbundets ramar kan utföra lagövertredelser i övertygelsen att Gud då i ännu högre grad visar sin godhet."

⁴³ See pp. 32–33, 94, 102 in this study.

⁴⁴ Wolter, *Römer*, 222.

sense to speak of human beings as “sinners” accountable to God’s judgment?⁴⁵ Samuel Byrskog’s reading is consistent and intra-textually oriented. However, Paul’s reference to “some” is indicative of an *extra-textual* world, outside of the text or “behind” the text, so to speak. As I argued above regarding structure, I think the line of thought in Rom 3:1–8 develops from the question of the Jews into more general questions.

Furthermore, Paul’s logic in Rom 3:1–8 is not as straightforward as scholars could wish.⁴⁶ Two observations are prone to suggest that Paul’s argument is somewhat fluid here. The first observation is, of course, the numbering of his arguments initiated in 3:2, which is not continued until – most likely so – 9:4 (more on this later).⁴⁷ Furthermore, Rom 3:4 has a transitory role in picking up on the sinfulness of humanity developed in the preceding chapters, and by anticipating 3:9–20, revolving around citations of psalms to substantiate scripturally Paul’s anthropology. In this light, it is not surprising to find that Rom 3:8 develops the train of thought from 3:1 in accordance with the larger section, 1:18–3:20. Finally, even if Rom 3:8 is to be limited as suggested by Byrskog, this question still remains: from where does the opinion that sin is rewarding come? To answer that without any reference to Paul’s gospel, or misrepresentations of it, is in my mind unlikely.

Blasphemous

The first καθώς sentence summarizes how Paul judges the accusations against him: he and those involved with his gospel – hence, “we” – face charges amounting to “blasphemy.” This label gives *his* perspective on this dictum, be it a statement by opponents or rumors that had spread and are susceptible to affect the addressees. According to *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (BDAG), in relation to human beings, βλασφημία and the cognate verb is to be rendered slander, revile, or defame. In relation to transcendent entities or associated entities, however, it takes on the notion of speaking impiously or disrespectfully. In other words, the criticism involved is judged ideologically. Paul’s use of the verb combines these two aspects; it is in relation to fellow humans, but the following will argue that there is an ideological component to this criticism, as Paul sees it. To Philo, blasphemy comprises first of all God’s name and supremacy, but it is also inclusive of His laws (*Mos.* 2.205–221). Ac-

⁴⁵ Thus also Wolter, *Römer*, 220–21.

⁴⁶ Heikki Räisänen, “Zum Verständnis von Röm 3,1–8,” in *The Torah and Christ: Essays in German and English on the Problem of the Law in Early Christianity*, ed. Heikki Räisänen and Anne Marit Enroth (PFES 45; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1986), 185, says that Paul loses track of his argument. Jewett, *Romans*, 250, also points to the flexibility in Paul’s logic here.

⁴⁷ Thus also Flebbe, *Solus Deus*, 28.

according to *Decal.* 63–65, honoring God in a true way is the essence of the first commandment of the law, which is the opposite of blasphemy and ἀσέβεια. Hence, blasphemy amounts to ἀσέβεια for Philo (*Conf.* 154).⁴⁸

Likewise, Josephus associates blasphemy with attacks on Moses (*Ant.* 3.307; *C. Ap.* 2.179) and the laws of the fathers (*C. Ap.* 2.143).⁴⁹ In his presentation of the Essenes, Josephus equals blasphemy against God and against Moses (*Bell.* 2.145, 152). In the latter text, Josephus speaks of the Essenes in ways very similar to how 2 Maccabees 6–7 and 4 Maccabees speak about the martyrs who refused to blaspheme Moses by yielding to the demand to eat forbidden food.⁵⁰ Read against this backdrop, Paul considers the critique voiced against him as *ideologically* driven, having the law and pertaining issues as its most likely background. The references called upon here align Paul's view on his anonymous critics with the use of βλασφημία and cognates in Acts 6:11: “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God” (cf. Mark 14:63–64 parr). Seen against this backdrop, Paul conveys that there is a theological dimension at play in the criticism directed at him and his mission, and he, therefore, does not only “speak in a human way” (Rom 3:5). His uttering judgment strengthens the impression of the dimensions involved here. Although “blasphemy” is Paul's label on the allegations he faced, it likely follows from his label that the contested issue evolved from the law of Moses.

The Dictum

The second καθώς introduces a dictum of “some,” most likely critics who claim to know the implications of what Paul and his co-workers say. This τινες is to be understood alongside 1 Cor 15:12; 2 Cor 3:1; Gal 1:7, and several other passages⁵¹ as taking us beyond a rhetorical and fictitious “some,” although they now serve a rhetorical purpose in *Paul's* text. However, the specificity can only be defined in terms of *what* is being said, not *who* they were. The ὅτι recitativum⁵² introduces a citation, namely what Paul allegedly says according to τινες. So, what did they claim Paul said, or what did they see as implications of his gospel? The subjunctive ποιήσωμεν puts matters of *conduct* up front in the accusations. The hortatory or deliberative subjunctive portrays Paul or “we” encouraging evil to be done; matters of lifestyle are in focus. Allegedly, Paul said that doing τὰ κακά brings τὰ ἀγαθά; doing evil brings forth good.

⁴⁸ See also pp. 165–68 in this study.

⁴⁹ Herman W. Beyer, “βλασφημία,” *TDNT* 1:621–22.

⁵⁰ In 1 Cor 10:30, Paul says that he is denounced (βλασφημοῦμαι) for his partaking with thankfulness in meals with Gentiles. It is, of course, worth noticing that the setting for this is a broad discussion on food matters (1 Corinthians 8–10).

⁵¹ Cf. 1 Tim 1:6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:10, 21.

⁵² BDR §471.1.

For sure, exaggeration, mockery, or pejorative rhetoric is at work here; it is their hostile presentation or it is Paul who thus scornfully renders their opinion on his gospel. Anyway, Paul presents this as what *they* say. He exhibits how outrageous he finds their criticism, hidden in this citation. Hence, the question in Rom 3:8 is introduced with μή, which requires a negative answer.⁵³ A possible analogy to the phraseology here may be Rom 10:15 where Paul cites Isa 52:7, with a possible echo of Nah 2:1 as well: εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθά, so that “good” encapsulates what the gospel is about. Nonetheless, nowhere does Paul say anything like this. John M. G. Barclay’s criterion on unfamiliarity (5) as one possible guide toward mirror-reading and the presence of “others” is worth remembering here.⁵⁴ This suggests that we are close to what others claimed regarding Paul’s gospel. Dieter Zeller sees here a caricature that pretends to be a Pauline maxim.⁵⁵ If that is the case, we see that Paul’s gospel is at the heart of this. Certainly, Paul’s gospel of grace is involved here (see below), but the intended interplay between bad and good in Rom 3:8 makes a specific link to perceptions of Paul’s theology on the Torah.

There is an intended irony here, since the law is usually seen to convey good things, and to be an obstacle to what is evil. The dictum clearly makes a play of these matters. Although the precise terminology “good” versus “evil” does not occur in Psalm 1, it nevertheless conveys a picture that having one’s delight in the law brings good to the righteous who are opposed to the ungodly. The revelation of God’s law is summed up in Deut 30:15 in this way: “See I have given before you today life and death, good and evil”; Ἰδοὺ δέδωκα πρὸ προσώπου σου σήμερον τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τὸν θάνατον, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν.⁵⁶ In this text, we see that the phraseology of the dictum is found within a context talking about the life-giving blessing of the law (cf. Lev 18:5). Per Jarle Bekken has demonstrated that Deut 30:15 and Lev 18:5 form a unity consisting of τὸ ἀγαθόν, life and the law (e.g. Philo *Virt.* 183–184; *Praem.* 79–84), and this is precisely what Paul questions. Hence, he juxtaposes these two passages in Romans 10.⁵⁷ This brings to mind observations we made regarding the conflict in Galatians.⁵⁸ Paul finds himself in a discussion on the law and “good,” and Rom 3:8 provides a window into that.

⁵³ BDR §427.2

⁵⁴ See pp.64–66 in this study.

⁵⁵ Dieter Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer* (RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1985), 79; see also Segal, *Paul*, 144–45.

⁵⁶ Sprinkle, *Law*, 185–90, argues that Paul in Rom 7:7–8:11 is involved in a discussion on the law and Lev 18:5, centered around “life” and what is good; see pp. 68, 77–78, 109–110, 115, 117, 144–48 in this study.

⁵⁷ Per Jarle Bekken, *The Word is Near You: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul's Letter to the Romans in a Jewish Context* (BZNTW 144; Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2007), 10–12, 153–54.

⁵⁸ See pp.62–64 in this study.

According to Neh 9:13 (LXX 2 Esdra 19:13), God at Sinai gave to Israel “straightforward judgments and laws of truth and ordinances and good commandments” (καὶ ἐντολάς ἀγαθάς). It is echoed in much relevant literature that God in the law presented Israel with τὰ ἀγαθὰ and τὰ κακά:

Come, O children; hear me; the fear of the Lord will teach you. What person is he who wants life, coveting to see good days? Stop your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit (παῦσον τὴν γλῶσσαν σου ἀπὸ κακοῦ). Turn away from evil, and to good (ἔκκλινον ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ ποίησον ἀγαθόν); seek peace and pursue it. (Ps 33 LXX [=Ps 34]:12–15)⁵⁹

The imperative (ποιήσον) in v. 15 is like an echo of Rom 3:8, but in the Pauline passage, it is turned upside down. Such a link finds affirmation in Ps 36 LXX [=Ps 37]:27, which also has ἔκκλινον ἀπὸ κακοῦ καὶ ποίησον ἀγαθόν. In fact, Paul also accommodates his way of talking about law in Romans to this tradition (Rom 2:10; 7:10, 12–13, 16, 18, 19, 21; 12:1): the law brings good and is, therefore, good. The density of terms associated with the law and “good versus evil” in Romans 7 is remarkable, and links up with Rom 3:8. Joshua W. Jipp points out that, outside Romans, Paul never refers to the law as “good” or “beautiful,” thus strengthening the impression that Paul here engages views ironically attributed to him, turned upside down though.⁶⁰

In Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 10.3–4, Trypho holds against Justin and his Christian friends that they have separated themselves from the customs of the law, “expecting to obtain some good thing from God, while you do not obey His commandments” (ἐλπίζετε τεύξεσθαι ἀγαθοῦ τινοῦ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, μὴ ποιοῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐντολάς; ANF 1:199). This passage provides a context against which to hear Rom 3:8, namely how can good things come when the law is neglected? The context for ποιεῖν in the *Dialogue* – in 10.4, φυλάσσοντες τὸν νόμον – is clearly a debate on the Torah. It is also worth observing that Rom 3:8 has a logic which brings to mind Isa 5:18–20, with words of divine judgment against those who turn wrong into right: “Ah, those who call evil good and good evil (οὐαὶ οἱ λεγοντες τὸ πονηρὸν καλὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν πονηρὸν) who make darkness light and light darkness, who make bitter sweet and sweet bitter” (v. 20). This passage enters the polemic between Justin and his dialogue partner Trypho (*Dial.* 17.2 and 133.4); in both passages, there is a dispute over the Torah. A suggestion may be that the critique mirrored in Rom 3:8 is influenced by the language of Isaiah 5. Chapter 5 in the book of Isaiah is a collection of divine judgment oracles, and

⁵⁹ See also Prov 20:10; Eccl 12:14; Sir 17:7, 12; *Decal.* 8, 176; *Legat.* 7; see Walter Grundmann, “ἀγαθός,” *TDNT* 1:14; Karin Finsterbusch, *Die Thora als Lebensweisung für Heidenchristen: Studien zur Bedeutung der Thora für die paulinische Ethik* (SUNT 20; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 135–39.

⁶⁰ Joshua W. Jipp, “Educating the Divided Soul in Paul and Plato: Reading Romans 7:7–25 and Plato's *Republic*,” in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Pauline Studies 15; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 238–39.

there are several occurrences of law-related phraseology, which make a polemical use of this passage possible. Isaiah 5:2 speaks about Israel being protected by a fence (φραγμός), traditional language for the law (cf. *Let. Aris.* 139, 142; Ephes 2:14); v. 24 speaks about “those who did not want the law,” and ἀνομία occurs in vv. 7 and 18. Hence, there is the potential in this psalm to develop a critique about attitudes to the law in terms of turning evil into good.

According to William S. Campbell, the view that Rom 3:8 represents “a Jewish parody of Paul’s gospel, is a mistaken opinion ... those who slanderously reported Paul in Rom 3:8 may be Gentile Christians who mistakenly attributed their own antinomianism to Paul’s gospel of grace.”⁶¹ Undoubtedly, antinomianism was not exclusively a phenomenon related to the Torah, as demonstrated in Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians (e.g. 1 Cor 6:13),⁶² but the immediate context in Romans 3, and even more so, the way Rom 3:8 is shaped in accordance with other texts talking about the Torah, indicates that Campbell is mistaken here. Most important is to notice that the slanderous opinion Paul targets is formulated in a way resonating with implications of the law of Moses, as its commandments were commonly viewed as a means against evil and promoting good.⁶³ In this case, however, this is turned into a parody. This has a bearing on the content of the accusation. Paul’s teaching on the law is faced with attempts to elicit consequences, thus leaving an impression of absurdity and nonsense. The true nature of Paul’s gospel is claimed to be laid bare in this dictum. What emerges is that Paul’s teaching on grace and sin were utterly irresponsible. In the words of Douglas A. Campbell, the Teacher (see chapter 4.2 above) involved here considers Paul as having “left the pagans ethically defenseless (and so the apostle’s teaching is deeply irresponsible).”⁶⁴ His converts are left without the illumination of the law, and also the pruning of the heart afforded by the Torah.

4.5 Paul Responds

Nils A. Dahl pointed out that chs. 6–8 in Romans, with their emphasis on sin, law, and spirit, contain Paul’s attempt at refuting accusations, while chs. 9–11 pick up on the question of Israel, thus giving to Rom 3:8 a key role in the epistle.⁶⁵ The issue raised by 3:8 in particular is framed differently in Rom 6:1 (“Should we continue [ἐπιμένωμεν] in sin in order that grace may abound

⁶¹ William S. Campbell, *Paul’s Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans* (Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 69; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 33; see also pp. 30, 32, 54.

⁶² Sandnes, *Belly*, 181–216.

⁶³ We will come across this also elsewhere in this study; see pp. 144–48.

⁶⁴ Campbell, *Deliverance*, 570 cf. p. 577.

⁶⁵ Nils A. Dahl, “Two Notes on Romans 5,” *ST 6* (1951): 41–42.

[πλεονάση]?)” and v. 15 (“Should we sin [ἀμαρτήσωμεν] because we are not under law but under grace?”). This antinomian point of view is commonly stated by scholars but needs to be accounted for, and the relationship to Rom 3:8 to be considered. These rhetorical questions in ch. 6 follow upon the absurd logic found in Rom 3:8, namely that evil or sin is conducive to what is good or grace; or that the latter is served by doing evil.

Paul’s own version illustrating what might have given rise to this malevolent misunderstanding is found in Rom 5:20b (“... where sin increased [ἐπλεόνασεν], grace abounded [ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν] all the more ...”; cf. Rom 4:15 “For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation”). The noun ἀμαρτωλός (Rom 3:7) forms a bridge to Romans 6 where the question of 3:8 vibrates. In both Rom 6:1 and 15, the language of 3:8 is replaced by “sin” and “grace” (χάρις).⁶⁶ The subjunctive ἐπιμένωμεν (Rom 6:1) brings to mind ποιήσωμεν in 3:8. The verb πλεονάζειν occurring here, which means “to increase or to bring forth in abundance,” continues the logic of 3:5–8, namely that good is served by evil; grace is *enhanced* or increased by continuing to commit sins. While Rom 3:7 has περισσεύειν, Rom 6:1 has πλεονάζειν; though, the verbs are often synonymous.⁶⁷ Likewise, Rom 6:15 is also introduced by a subjunctive, “should we sin (ἀμαρτήσωμεν) because we are not under law but under grace?” This question takes its point of departure in an alleged “encouragement” to sin, and thus echoes not only 6:1 (ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ), but also 3:8.⁶⁸ The question in Rom 6:15 explicitly attributes this sarcastic “boost” to sin to Paul’s teaching on law and grace. Thus, 6:15 brings out what is implied in Rom 5:20 and 6:1, but which is not stated in 3:8. Worth noticing is, of course, that Paul in Rom 5:20 speaks of “multiplying trespasses” (πλεονάση τὸ παράπτωμα) in a way that is not far from the idea behind Rom 3:8, but which is now attributed to the Torah. Together these texts render an impression of what kind of allegations Paul is up against, and Rom 5:20 is indeed a verdict that may have provoked dicta such as 3:8, 6:1, and ἀμαρτήσωμεν in 6:15. That the law increased sin is a

⁶⁶ Charles H. Cosgrove, “What If Some Have Not Believed? The Occasion and Thrust of Romans 3:1–8,” *ZNW* 78 (1987): 93, questions the link between Rom 3:8 and Romans 6. He says that Rom 3:8 is not about χάρις, but τὰ ἀγαθὰ, “which in context appear to involve not an advantage for sinners but their condemnation (3:4–7).” I find that Cosgrove underestimates that Rom 3:8 echoes a *perceived* Paul, while in 6:1, Paul shapes his response in his own terminology.

⁶⁷ See BDAG s.v.

⁶⁸ Thus also Klaus Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (THKNT 6; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 84; Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 114–15. This is stated *pace* scholars who argue that while Rom 3:8 refers to Jews or Christ-believing Jews and their legalistic view, Rom 6:1 and 15 refer to libertinists; for example, Halvor Moxnes, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul’s Understanding of God in Romans* (NovTSup 53; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 58–59. This is an example where Paul ends up being confronted with different kinds of objections, which is precisely what the criterion on consistency regarding mirror-reading, sets out to avoid.

statement that militates against the common way of conceiving about the law as an antidote for sin, and is, therefore, to be considered a ludicrous presentation.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the way grace and the tandem of sin and law are contrasted in Romans 6 is supportive of the view that Paul here picks up on 3:7–8. Douglas J. Moo argues that Paul does not really answer the objection of 3:8; hence, ch. 6 makes no reference to the objections voiced there: “We must suppose, then, that Paul intends the very absurdity of the objection to imply its dismissal.”⁷⁰ Moo’s argument would by implication mean that Paul did not need to mention the objection at all, since it would fail to convince his audience anyway, due to its absurdity. The fact that Paul *did* choose to mention it remains a puzzle in Moo’s assumption.

Matters of lifestyle are at the center of Rom 3:8 as well as in ch. 6, as seen in Paul’s use of *περιπατεῖν* (Rom 6:4). Karen Finsterbusch points out that this verb refers to lifestyle associated with the law.⁷¹ When Paul makes use of this terminology, he accommodates his own discussion into a discourse which is at home in halakic discussions. This turns Romans 6 into a response to the accusations echoed in Rom 3:8 – not unlike how we saw Gal 5:13–6:10 worked.⁷² Worth noticing here is, of course, that law at this point in Romans enters the scene: sin and law are now contrasted with grace and Spirit. Romans 7:7 (“Is the law sin?”) is to be heard against the background worked out here,⁷³ analogous to Gal 2:17b: “... is Christ then a servant for sin (Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος)?”⁷⁴ According to Rom 7:7–13, there is a continuous tandem of sin and law (see also 6:14–15; 7:5). Paul frames his discussion in terms taken from the Decalogue: οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις (Rom 7:7 cf. 13:9). As pointed out by Robert Jewett, ἐπιθυμία and cognates here echoes not only the Decalogue, but also the key term for the chief passion according to Greek moral philosophy. Thus, the discussion on the law here is framed by the wider moral issue of how to curb and control the passions.⁷⁵ That this discussion picks up on Rom 3:8 is visible in 7:13 where the law is described as bringing τὸ ἀγαθόν; thus mirroring 3:8. Paul’s major concern in Romans 7 is the role of the law.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ See pp. 144–48 in this study.

⁷⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans: 1996), 195.

⁷¹ Finsterbusch, *Thora*, 113–20; see also Rosner, *Paul*, 85–88 and p. 78 in this study.

⁷² See pp. 76–79 in this study.

⁷³ Thus also Campbell, “Romans III,” 259–60.

⁷⁴ See pp. 70–75 in this study.

⁷⁵ Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 447–48; Wolter, *Römer*, 430–31. Samuel Byrskog, “Adam and Medea—and Eve: Revisiting Romans 7,7–25,” in *Paul’s Greco-Roman Context*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (BETL 277; Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 284–85, says that Paul is here not concerned about the object of the desire, but desire itself: “The desire itself is the central point of his discussion of the Law.”

⁷⁶ This is pointed out by Jipp, “Educating the Divided Soul,” 232–37; see also above in chapter 4.3.1.

Twice in Rom 7:7–13 (v. 8 and v. 11), Paul says ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα (ἡ ἁμαρτία), an idiom meaning “to take advantage or opportunity” (i.e., sin takes advantage).⁷⁷ The negative usage here brings to mind Gal 5:13 where Paul himself voices the view that the freedom (ἐλευθερία) he has proclaimed has the potential to pave the way for the flesh (σάρξ). In Galatians 5, this idiom is closely attached to the idea of mastering the desires. Hence, ἐπιθυμία is mentioned twice in Gal 5:16–17 and sums up this passage in Gal 5:24. Furthermore, Gal 5:22 mentions ἐγκράτεια, a key term when it comes to the question of mastering the desires.⁷⁸ The role of ἐπιθυμία in both Galatians 5 and Romans 7 makes it natural to give the first passage a bearing on Romans 7. In both cases, Paul is engaged in an apology for the law. Joshua W. Jipp says that “the primary function of Romans 7 is not to provide an apology for the Law, but rather to counter Jewish-Christian opponents who advocate the Jewish Law as a means of curbing the passions of the body.”⁷⁹ Jipp here urges a contrast which is unnecessary. If Paul in Romans 7 depicts the Mosaic Law as being “hijacked through sin,”⁸⁰ this is tantamount to saying that the law is not to be blamed. Hence, the law is excused. While law was often seen as the means whereby passions were mastered,⁸¹ Paul does not see it in that way. Seen against the backdrop of Sirach (e.g., 2:6; 24:22) – where obedience to the law will never be put to shame, since the law serves as an *obstacle* to sin⁸² – Paul’s portrayal of the law is radically shocking in his saying that the law does *not* keep us from sin; on the contrary, it *incites* desire.

Petra von Gemünden has demonstrated how ἐπιθυμία and νόμος are related in Fourth Maccabees and in Romans, respectively.⁸³ While “Affektkontrolle,” mastery of the desires, was the role assigned to the law in the Fourth Maccabees, this was not so to Paul: “Bei Paulus dagegen dient der νόμος in Röm 7 nicht zur Affektkontrolle, sondern gehört zu den Faktoren, die sie scheitern lassen.”⁸⁴ To Paul, sin was too powerful for the law to cope with. The only means whereby sin was coped with was “in Christ” and the renewal of the Spirit (Rom 8:1–4 cf. 12:1–2).⁸⁵ Paul’s response to accusations for having invalidated the law as a

⁷⁷ Jewett, *Romans*, 449–450; De Boer, *Galatians*, 335.

⁷⁸ LSJ s.v.; Sandnes, *Belly*, 43–46, 48, 116, 121–22, 128–29, 199–210.

⁷⁹ Jipp, “Educating the Divided Soul,” 232–33.

⁸⁰ Jipp, “Educating the Divided Soul,” 235 cf. p. 236.

⁸¹ See Sandnes, *Belly*, 108–32, on bringing the belly under control, and Sandnes, *Homer*, 68–78, on Philo’s view on *paideia* and its ultimate purpose in bringing the unruly desires under control.

⁸² For more on this, see pp. 144–48 in this study.

⁸³ Petra von Gemünden, “Der Affekt der ἐπιθυμία und der νόμος: Affektkontrolle und soziale Identitätsbildung im 4. Makkabäerbuch mit einem Ausblick auf den Römerbrief,” in *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im Neuen Testament. Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Dieter Sänger and Matthias Konradt (NTOA 57; Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 55–74.

⁸⁴ Von Gemünden, “Affekt,” 73–74; quotation p. 73.

⁸⁵ See pp. 76–79 in the present study.

means to curb the desires culminates in that passage. That Paul's treatise is conceived as a response, comes through in the fact that *περιπατεῖν* occurs again, and now in connection with τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ νόμου, a phrase which is a simple re-writing for the commandments of the law (cf. Rom 1:32; 2:26). In a context like Rom 8:1–4, δικάϊωμα is simply an emblem for the law.⁸⁶

Gerd Theissen has pointed out that Romans 6–8 appear like an apology or self-defense against the accusation voiced in Rom 3:8,⁸⁷ and rightly so in my opinion. The intensity⁸⁸ and the breadth⁸⁹ of Paul's argument demonstrates how deeply affected he must have been by the critique mentioned in Rom 3:8. While Theissen emphasizes that Paul was personally affected,⁹⁰ I am more inclined to focus on Paul's concern for the damaging effect that such accusations might have for his addressees' receptiveness of his gospel. What is held against Paul is that his gospel, inclusive of his view on the law, turns Christ into someone paving the way for sin.

According to Arland J. Hultgren: "[t]he charge of antinomianism is inescapable."⁹¹ Remarkably often, Paul insists that he is not an antinomian: Gal 5:13; 1 Cor 6:12; 10:23. Dale C. Allison, Jr., rightly says that "whatever Paul believed or taught, some perceived him – for reasons we ought to understand – as teaching a dangerous lawlessness."⁹² Particularly in Rom 3:8, paving the way also for the argument in chs. 6–8, we have seen that Paul's gospel was seen as prone to nurture moral permissiveness. According to Wolter, it was first of all "der paulinische Umgang mit der Tora und seine Gnadentheologie"⁹³ that earned him this rumor. Paul's view on the Torah perfected "the misalliance between χάρις and the condition of its recipients"⁹⁴ in a way that "some" found provocative. Karen Finsterbusch has demonstrated how deeply Paul's ethical instructions are embedded in motifs taken from the Torah in, for example, Rom 8:1–8: "Damit wird auch wahrscheinlich, dass Paulus seine ethische Ausführungen als Auslegungen von Weisungen der Thora verstanden wissen wollte."⁹⁵ Outside the horizon of her study is that dialogical and critical perspectives are involved, but her observations make perfect sense as Paul's attempts to respond to allegations for paving the way for immorality.

⁸⁶ See Philo *Her.* 8 where Gen 36:3–5 is cited; *Congr.* 163 where Exod 25:23–25 is cited and *Somm.* 2. 175 where Deut 30:9–10 is cited; see also Finsterbusch, *Thora*, 173–77.

⁸⁷ Theissen, "Gesetz und Ich," 290–91, 293–98.

⁸⁸ Brings to mind John M. G. Barclay's criterion nr. 2 (tone); see p. 65.

⁸⁹ Brings to mind John M. G. Barclay's criterion nr. 3 (frequency); see p. 65.

⁹⁰ Theissen, "Gesetz und Ich," 293, "... wie tief er ihn getroffen hat."

⁹¹ Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 139; thus also Jewett, *Romans*, 251.

⁹² Allison, "Jas 2:14–26," 140.

⁹³ Wolter, *Römer*, 222; similarly Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 472–73.

⁹⁴ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 496.

⁹⁵ Finsterbusch, *Thora*, 186. She includes Gal 5:16–6:10 in this description.

A final observation rarely made is how key terms from Rom 3:8 (“good versus evil/bad”) reappear in the paraenesis of this letter (Romans 12–15); see 12:9, 17; 13:3–4; 14:16 in particular. Most prolifically, this is stated in Rom 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (μη νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλὰ νικά ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν). This is found in a setting where love (ἀγάπη) prevails (12:9; 13:8, 10; 14:15)⁹⁶ as representing fulfillment of the law. Worth noticing is that this dictum of Paul echoes his praise to love in 1 Cor 13:5: ἡ ἀγάπη ... οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν. All this comes together in Rom 13:10: “... love is the fulfilling of the law” (πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη; cf. Gal 5:14). It is, of course, difficult to know if Paul here really picks up on the allegations mirrored in Rom 3:8, but that makes perfect sense; how these passages connect is, nevertheless, worth noticing. Thus, the paraenesis given here might serve as partially defensive against rumors or allegations for leaving the Torah void, very much analogous to Gal 5:10–6:13.⁹⁷

4.6 Romans 16:17–20: Who Paves the Way for Moral Permissiveness?

According to, for example, Peter Stuhlmacher this passage toward the end of the letter picks up on Rom 3:8 (see above). By implication, Rom 16:17–20 is then Paul’s considerations on the accusations levelled against his gospel according to Rom 3:8. With regard to Rom 16:17, Stuhlmacher says: “The one who incites scandals in Rome is thus to be identified with those who ‘slander’ the apostle’s preaching of the gospel as a message of cheap grace” (3:8).⁹⁸ The following will discuss this and also consider to what extent these verses are relevant in a study focusing on how Paul was understood by contemporaries. Eventually, these deliberations include the interpolation, are these verses really integral to the letter?⁹⁹

⁹⁶ To this comes that the way Paul in Rom 15:1–7 portrays the altruistic Christ, echoing passages like 1 Cor 8:1, 11–13; 10:33–11:1; Phil 2:1–4, which is about putting into practice 1 Cor 13:5 about love ἡ ἀγάπη ... οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς; see Horrell, *Solidarity*, 222–31 who, rightly in my view, considers this as equivalent to “the law of Christ.”

⁹⁷ See Stefan Schreiber, “Law and Life in Romans 13.8–10,” in *The Torah in the Ethics of Paul*, ed. Martin Meiser (LNTS 473; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 70–99.

⁹⁸ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 253; see also p. 9, and his “Paul’s Understanding of the Law,” 90; similarly Moo, *Romans*, 928–29.

⁹⁹ A number of scholars argue that these verses are an interpolation; for example, Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 446–47, 455–56; Michael Theobald, *Der Römerbrief* (EdF 294; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 19–20; Leander Keck, *Romans* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 27–28, 377–78; most extensively argued by Jewett, *Romans*, 985–96.

Finding a Context

Scholars who favor the authenticity of this passage tend to think that the admonitions proceed from the disruptions referred to in Rom 14:1–15:13; that is, the contentious issue of food which created tension between the “strong” and the “weak” in the Roman churches.¹⁰⁰ It follows from this that “belly devotion” (Rom 16:17) is a euphemism for dietary laws, or in other words, the demand for submitting to food laws. This view is to be questioned for some important reasons. First, if Paul here targets the “weak” from chs. 14–15 in such a harsh tone, he is, in fact, “undercutting all that he tried to do in that section.”¹⁰¹ Additionally, he could hardly target the “strong” in this way either, since he reckons himself among them (Rom 15:1). This observation is sufficient for leaving this option aside.

To this comes the rhetoric of “belly devotion,” which is thrown against some opponents here. In my study, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles*, I addressed this topos in detail, contextualizing it in traditional discourse on mastering the desires in contemporary moral philosophy.¹⁰² As a piece of pejorative rhetoric, “belly devotion” is primarily a shaming argument with no reference to content at all; it is simply a caricature.¹⁰³ Although there is much to be commended in that, some nuances need to be added. The belly topos also has a reference to the self-lover or self-pleaser, a metaphorical extension of its intimate relationship with greed.¹⁰⁴ As for food laws and belly devotion, my study argues that Jewish dietary rules were a means to bring the unruly belly – the organ of the pleasures so to speak – under control. In Philo this becomes evident: “In Philo’s view ..., Paul is likely to be seen as paving the way for belly-worship since he has done away with the means (Sabbath, food laws, circumcision) of fighting the pleasures deriving from the stomach.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, Philo echoes sentiments running very much in tandem with the accusations levelled against Paul, according to Rom 3:8. In that light, it is hard to imagine Paul throwing the rhetoric of belly devotion back against people who advocated the law and its practices, claiming that *they* paved the way for a lack of self-control. Can we imagine that Paul simply returns the ball to them?

¹⁰⁰ Karl P. Donfried, “A Short Note on Romans 16,” in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Version*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 51–52; Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans; A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 1081–82; Horn, “Götzendienner,” 224–29. For further references to scholars holding this view, see Sandnes, *Belly*, 7–11.

¹⁰¹ Thus Hultgren, *Romans*, 592.

¹⁰² Sandnes, *Belly*, 24–131, 265–74. As for Rom 16:17–20, see pp. 165–80 in particular.

¹⁰³ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (WBC 38B; Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 903, seems to think along that line.

¹⁰⁴ Sandnes, *Belly*, 65–71, 149–53, 265–69; thus also Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 803.

¹⁰⁵ Sandnes, *Belly*, 108–35; quotation p. 132. This is concordant with how the present study portrays opposition against Paul’s view on the law.

It is here worth considering briefly 3 Macc 7:10–11 about Jews who transgress the commandments “for their belly’s sake” (γαστρὸς ἕνεκεν);¹⁰⁶ such people are not trustworthy in politics either: “they will never be well disposed to the king’s business either.” Those who break divine laws are likely to do the same with human laws as well. Narratively, this text comments on 3 Macc 2:25–3:10 where the Jews find themselves squeezed between martyrdom and apostasy. A key issue is the food laws. Narratively, nothing suggests that those who transgressed these laws did so out of gluttony. This topos, however, blames the transgressors of dietary laws for seeking their own ends in situations of need. This extension of gratifying the belly to refer to selfishness is well attested (see above).¹⁰⁷ In other words, belly devotion may apply to people bent on observing the law, but in terms of such *extension* of the idiom. Hence, Rom 16:17–20, if seen in the light of the contention addressed in Romans 14–15, makes sense only in that regard. The atmosphere or tone of Rom 16:17–20 brings to mind the Galatian crisis or Phil 3:18–19 about “enemies,” but this is out of touch with what Paul portrays in the preceding chapters of Romans. This also means that the authenticity of the passage has to be settled without exclusive references to chs. 14–15 in Romans.

What about Rom 3:8 then? Clearly, there are links suggesting a bridge between these passages.¹⁰⁸ The reference to “some” (τινες) in 3:8 has an analogy in οἱ τοιοῦτοι; both passages envisage views that are represented by people who oppose Paul. In Rom 3:8, Paul utters condemnation (ὄν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν); this finds an analogy in the harsh tone of 16:20 about Satan’s retribution which will come upon the opponents. The contrast between τὰ ἀγαθὰ and τὰ κακά in 3:8 has a possible analogy in 16:19: “I want you to be wise in what is good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) and guileless in what is evil” (τὸ κακόν).

Furthermore, if Rom 3:8 is connected to Romans 6, as suggested above, it is worth mentioning that Rom 6:17 speaks of διδασχὴ passed on by Paul in terms which equal Rom 16:17. The density of δουλεύειν and cognates in Romans 6 also finds a parallel in 16:18 (δουλεύουσιν τῇ ἑαυτῶν κοιλίᾳ). This suggests that Rom 3:8 and 16:17–20 are connected, a conclusion supportive of the authenticity of Rom 16:17–20. However, some caution is called for here.¹⁰⁹

Out of Context – But Still in Romans

In spite of these observations linking the two passages, it is important to notice that while the judgment in Rom 16:17 is motivated by doctrinal matters, κρίμα

¹⁰⁶ See Sandnes, *Belly*, 99–100.

¹⁰⁷ Hence, I think “gratifying the belly” has a reference beyond food laws; this is stated *pace* Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 139–40.

¹⁰⁸ See Sandnes, *Belly*, 173.

¹⁰⁹ In Sandnes, *Belly*, 165, I favored authenticity on the basis of the relationship between Rom 3:8 and 16:17–20.

in 3:8 primarily targets the sarcastic and absurd presentation given of Paul's gospel. Furthermore, if belly devotion applies to Rom 3:8, it can only be shaming or blaming rhetoric. It hardly makes sense to think that Paul thought the opinion voiced in 3:8 represented belly devotees in the sense of being indulgent in matters of conduct. This is precisely what *they* held against Paul: "Since Paul's text gives no hint of adversaries who were bent on gluttony or indulgence, the figurative meaning of the belly topos is worth considering ... belly service was associated with selfishness and self-gain; an attitude of neglecting the fellowship for the sake of pleasing oneself."¹¹⁰

Is it likely that Paul is turning the accusation of paving the way for indulgence against those who were responsible for the indictment of Rom 3:8? In the first place, Paul's primary concern in Rom 3:8 seems not to target opponents, but that his addressees are susceptible to a certain way of thinking. Thus, his primary concern is to fight the view that his law theology paved the way for indulgence; this has been addressed in chs. 6–8 where substantial arguments come into play. Why does he now toward the end of the letter end up blackmailing certain people? The warning comes too late.¹¹¹ It comes unprepared and is more or less out of context.

Douglas A. Campbell finds that interpolation theories are to be abandoned,¹¹² although he acknowledges that the passage "has no apparent function in its present locale. In view of this suddenness, incomprehensibility, and aggression, the text is excised. But closer examination suggests that this is a fragile set of contentions." The main reason for Campbell to reach a conclusion that set aside these observations of strangeness is his reading of Romans as a continuous dialogue with the so-called Teacher, more or less throughout the epistle. Within a dialogue with this Teacher, Campbell finds a role for Rom 16:17–20 within Romans. In spite of much sympathy with Campbell's reading, I find his case exaggerated (see below). For me, the suddenness with which Rom 16:17–20 appears within this epistle remains a puzzle. There is no text-critical evidence to suggest interpolation, but we need to remind ourselves that there was a practice of expanding on Paul's letters, and vv. 25–27 in the same chapter are an obvious example, as the textual transmission makes evident.

In his now classical article on Romans, "Paul's Last Will and Testament," Günther Bornkamm made the point that some MSS of Romans demonstrate that "originally Romans was not composed in its present form in one piece,

¹¹⁰ Sandnes, *Belly*, 173.

¹¹¹ Gordon P. Wiles, *Paul's Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of Paul* (SNTSMS 24; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 93–95, points out that Paul elsewhere closes his letters with sharp warnings, such as in Gal 6:11–13; 1 Cor 16:22. I do not find this as persuasive as Wiles claims, since both Galatians and First Corinthians were written to people with whom Paul has a personal relationship.

¹¹² Campbell, *Deliverance*, 513–14.

destined for the church in Rome.”¹¹³ “In Rome” (Rom 1:7) is missing in the majuscule G, and this finding is affirmed in Patristic evidence noted in the margin of Greek manuscript 1739 as well. Likewise, the closing doxology in Rom 16:25–27 witnesses uncertainty about some parts of ch. 16. Against that backdrop, Bornkamm raises doubt about 16:17–20 as well, and considers it written to another community (Ephesus). Be this as it may, Bornkamm has in a fruitful way drawn attention to the fact that the transmission of Pauline letters involved a process within which they were universalized. Brevard S. Childs stands on the shoulders of Bornkamm when he says that “... Romans has been heard in a particular way in the subsequent development of the Pauline corpus.”¹¹⁴

William O. Walker, Jr. defines interpolation as “foreign material inserted deliberately and directly into the text of a document.”¹¹⁵ Hence, it can be removed without disrupting the logical flow of the text. In my view, Walker’s definition simplifies the matter. The very fact that scholars differ so markedly in their conclusions – not only in this case, but in most similar cases – calls for some caution here. Interpolations are by their very nature dual; that is, they are in some way interrupting the context, and simultaneously, they often pick up on the very context. Hence, arguments can be used both ways, either supportive of authenticity or vice versa. The thing is that precisely the presence of both kinds of arguments may be an indication of its dubious character.¹¹⁶ When Walker speaks of a “deliberate” action involved in interpolations, this paves the way for a more ambiguous definition than provided by him. In fact, when he takes 1 Cor 14:34–35 as his prime example, he proves my point¹¹⁷ that there are features linking this passage to the immediate context: “In short, it may simply have been the common themes of ‘speech’, ‘silence’, and ‘submission’, together with the setting of public worship ‘in the churches’, that led to the insertion of 14:34–35 precisely at its present location in 1 Corinthians.”¹¹⁸ In other words, the duality of 1 Cor 14:34–35 vis-à-vis the literary context in which it is found makes up the very problem here. From all this it follows that, although Rom 16:17–20 is probably a later insertion, it still takes *Romans* as its point of

¹¹³ Günther Bornkamm, “The Letter to the Romans as Paul’s Last Will and Testament,” in *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Version*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 21–22.

¹¹⁴ Childs, *Reading Paul*, 67; see also the contributions found in *The Pauline Canon*, ed. S.E. Porter (Pauline Studies 1; Leiden: Brill 2004).

¹¹⁵ William O. Walker, Jr., “Interpolations in the Pauline Letter,” in *The Pauline Canon*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Pauline Studies 1; Leiden: Brill 2004), 195–96.

¹¹⁶ Dealing with matters of interpolation is in some way similar to dealing with pseudepigraphy and the method of *mimesis* applied in such studies; see pp. 19–20 in this study.

¹¹⁷ Whether or not 1 Cor 14:34–35 is a secondary addition is not an issue to me here. I use it here for the sake of argument. My point is simply that Walker, taking that passage as an example of an interpolation, substantiates my point: interpolations often come with a twin face.

¹¹⁸ Walker Jr., “Interpolations,” 234.

departure. The links between Rom 3:8 and 16:17–20 are, therefore, in themselves hardly sufficient to prove authenticity.

How does Rom 16:17–20 apply to the present investigation then? If this is an interpolation, it is the text not of Paul but of a Pauline tradition. According to Christopher Bryan, Paul in this passage “writes a final *subscriptio* in his own hand.”¹¹⁹ Bryan makes the point that the belly rhetoric is general rhetoric of blame, and that the “only content to be derived from the expression is the author’s disapproval.” It is simply a term for apostasy. The problem with Bryan’s view is not that, but his claim for authenticity and his interpretation of the belly rhetoric as only a means of blaming opponents do not go well together. Why should Paul in the *subscriptio*, the part of the letter where he most directly engages his addressees, mention in such polemical tones a situation grounded not in Romans, but in the church universal, as claimed explicitly by Bryan? The Roman problem is “merely one example” of situations that he met universally, according to Bryan. Is it likely that Paul is so harsh toward a church to which he is personally unknown, and where these hard words are not really directed at them? Bryan’s solution carries, in my view, a tension.

If I am right here, Rom 16:17–20 becomes a text on Paul by others, but Paul is made the mouthpiece of how some others conceived of Pauline opposition, and particularly as it emerges in Rom 3:8. In other words, this is benevolent “others” uttering their judgement on “some” in 3:8. The gist of the critique voiced in Rom 3:8 was, in fact, that Paul paved the way for belly devotion. Paul’s view on the law was perceived as characteristic of an apostle of licentiousness, and this picture is remedied in Romans 16 by having Paul throwing exactly that accusation against opponents more generally. Therefore, Rom 16:17–20 is of little relevance with regard to the situations which caused Romans. It applies rather to the reception history of Romans. However, the only text in Romans which is a possible point of departure for the interpolation is Rom 3:8. Hence, Rom 16:17–20 may be seen to substantiate our exegesis of Rom 3:8, albeit the passage is primarily a witness to polemic rhetoric. In light of Rom 16:17–20, 3:8 speaks about heretics, and heretics are prone to become licentious, very much like the transgressors of food laws in 3 Maccabees (see above) become betrayers in politics; in short, people are not to be trusted. Such people seek only what benefits themselves.

Those who carried around the rumors rendered in Rom 3:8 were hardly belly worshippers in a traditional sense, but according to the polemics of Rom 16:17–20, in ridiculing Paul’s gospel, they paved the way for their destruction. They were liable to fall into their own trap and become gratifiers of themselves. This scornful rhetoric is a strong expression of disapproval. Romans 16:17–20 then throws back on the opposition voiced in Rom 3:8 that they serve only their own

¹¹⁹ Christopher Bryan, *A Preface to Romans: Notes on the Epistle in Its Literary and Cultural Setting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 230–32 (quotation p. 231).

end. When this is thrown back at them, charges of being belly devotees takes on another form; it becomes a way of blackening opponents with little interest in portraying opinions held or practices performed.

Since I consider Rom 16:17–20 and Rom 3:8 a tandem, albeit not made by Paul himself, this has repercussions for how I view the voices of “others” in these passages. The echo which we hear in Rom 3:8 assumes some kind of *Jewish* opposition, and this goes for Rom 16:17–20 as well. The appearance of a traditional topos (belly) in ancient moral philosophy does not change that. Mark D. Nanos has argued that the latter passage, which he considers authentic, is about “*gentilizing* Christians,” who sought to instruct the audience not to continue to practice the Jewish rules of behavior, which they had embraced when they first believed.¹²⁰ Paul attacks the eating behavior of “the strong,” which represents a temptation to Jewish believers to apostasy (i.e. to abandon their dietary rules). Nanos’s interpretation relies on two assumptions about which I am hesitant, namely that the belly actually has to do with physical eating, and that Paul expresses himself harshly toward the “strong” with whom he expresses sympathy elsewhere. In other words, Romans 14–15 provides the context for understanding Rom 16:17–20. As the preceding has shown, I am rather hesitant about these suppositions.

4.7 Romans 9–11: God’s Promises and Paul’s Gospel

In Rom 3:1, Paul picks up on 2:25–29 by raising a possible objection: “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?” The way Paul here juxtaposes “Jew” and “circumcision” makes it evident that he has ethnic Jews in mind.¹²¹ Some observations pave the way for viewing Rom 3:1–3 anticipating chs. 9–11.¹²² Obviously, the two parts of this letter address the same topic, namely what bearing Paul’s gospel has on the privileges of the Jews, and hence, also on God’s faithfulness toward his promises. This is formulated most concisely in 11:1: “... has God rejected his people?” In addition to this come some more specific observations.

¹²⁰ Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 14, 201, 292–93.

¹²¹ Thus also Thiessen, *Paul*, 56.

¹²² Thus also Jewett, *Romans*, 557–58; Longenecker, *Romans*, 339, 341; Hultgren, *Romans*, 134; Wolter, *Römer*, 212. Christoph Stenschke, “Römer 9–11 als Teil des Römerbriefs,” in *Between Gospel and Election*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner (WUNT 257; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 206–207; Thiessen, “Gesetz und Ich,” 298–300. Thiessen also emphasizes the personal tone and use of Paul’s autobiography in these chapters. Moo, *Romans*, 548–49, calls these chapters “the defense of the gospel.” This brings out the dynamic and dialogical nature of these chapters.

First, the listing started in Rom 3:2 (πρῶτον) with the privileges of being a Jew left there, while 9:4 gives a list of advantages, thus bringing this to completion. Second, the question in Rom 3:1–8 renders God unpredictable and, hence, not to be trusted. God's πίστις (i. e., his faithfulness) was at the center of the argument in Rom 3:3. Four times in Rom 3:2–3, πίστις and cognates appear. The issue of God's faithfulness toward Israel and the promises easily develops from Paul's mission to the nations. Does Paul preach a gospel that renders God unfaithful to Israel and the promises given to them? Provisionally, Paul simply marks his position: God is true (ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής; Rom 3:4). This is contrasted with human beings as liars (ψεῦσταις); thus, it is conveyed that "true" here means to be trustworthy.

Second, the thoughts in Rom 3:1–8 move from Israel's privileges to God Himself, since the promises are His. God's trustworthiness is the backdrop against which to read ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ ("entrusted with the oracles of God"). The plural noun used here may simply refer to divine words in the sense of Scriptures.¹²³ However, the context suggests an emphasis on *promises*. The dialogue between Paul and his critics revolves around God's trustworthiness vis-à-vis His promises to Israel. This issue can hardly be addressed with reference to Scripture in general, since that leaves the contentious issue undefined. Only a more *specific* meaning of τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ makes sense in this dialogue. This finds affirmation in Rom 9:4 where αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι ("promises") occurs (cf. Rom 4:13–14, 20; 15:8). The touchy issue is whether Paul's gospel renders God's promises void; the appearance of βέβαιος and cognates (Rom 4:16; 15:8), with strong affinities to what is reliable and abiding,¹²⁴ is indicative of the core of the issue.

Third, Rom 9:6 likewise formulates the nature of the issue in terms of God's *trustworthiness*: "It is not as though the word of God had failed" (ἐκπέτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ). Klaus Berger has demonstrated that when πίπτειν is linked with ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ or similar phrases, it is about promises given by God, which makes perfect sense here. Passages like Josh 23:14; Ruth 3:18; Luke 16:17 (cf. 1 Cor 13:8) show that this expression is about ceasing to be valid or coming to an end.¹²⁵ The Greek verb means to become "inadequate" or irrelevant.¹²⁶ In light of Paul's use of this verb in Gal 5:4 (τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσατε), where it is synonymous with καταργεῖν, the term refers to the nullifying of God's promises (cf. Gal 3:17). The question found in Rom 9:14 echoes Romans 3, v. 5 in particular: "What are we then to say? Is there injustice (ἀδικία) on God's part? By no means!"

¹²³ Thus J. W. Doeve, "Some Notes with Reference to ΤΑ ΛΟΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ in Romans III 2," in *Studia Paulina. In Honorem Johannis De Zwaan* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn N.V., 1953), 111–23.

¹²⁴ BDAG s.v.; LSJ s.v. Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek, s.v.

¹²⁵ Klaus Berger, "Abraham in den paulinischen Hauptbriefen," *MThZ* 17 (1966): 79–80.

¹²⁶ See BDAG s.v.

Finally, the way Paul introduces the issue of Israel (Rom 9:1–2) strengthens the impression that he embarks upon a *troubling* question, not only for reasons of his own, but since he has been confronted with this issue from fellow Jews, be they Christ-believers or not. This implies that a wider context of critical questions is assumed.¹²⁷ On a general basis, Paul's teaching on the law made him vulnerable to criticism, claiming that he was a traitor to his own people. Romans 9–11 responds to a challenge that bothered Paul deeply. Douglas A. Campbell has given a more specific reading, claiming that Romans 9–11 is part of an ongoing debate with the Teacher from chs. 2–3. Hence, this part of the epistle is made up of defensive arguments put forward by Paul to rebut criticism from the Teacher.¹²⁸ Campbell takes Rom 9:30–31 as following up on the diatribe style in Rom 3:1–8 and, hence, puts a question mark after v. 31.¹²⁹ Verses 30–32 then bring two related critical questions by the interlocutor, the Teacher. Campbell structures Rom 9:30–32 in the following way:

- V. 30a Teacher: “What are we then to say?
 b *Pagans* not pursuing righteous activity have received a righteous act [from God]?!
 c Paul: The righteous act [of God] ‘through faithfulness.’
 V. 31 Teacher: But *Israel*, pursuing a Torah of righteous activity toward that Torah, *have* not?!
 V. 32 Paul: Why? Because they did not strive for it ‘through faithfulness’ but ‘through works.’ They have stumbled over the stumbling stone ...”¹³⁰

Campbell's view would work well within the present study. Nonetheless, I am not convinced by his reading. I think that the introductory question in 9:30a (τί οὖν ἐποῦμεν) aims at an attentive listening; it does not introduce a diatribe section with questions and answers. I also find it difficult to accommodate Paul's first answer within this structure. It goes more like an assertion than a response. The question of 9:30a, therefore, introduces *Paul's* affirmative statements, rather than objections posed to him.¹³¹ A question may be a hidden transcript here, but then a question to which Paul gives an affirmative answer.¹³² In short, both voices seem to be on the same side of the debate; there is simply no real antagonism in that particular passage. In our approach, we have emphasized John M. G. Barclay's criterion of unfamiliarity; that is, Paul responds to an idea for-

¹²⁷ See pp. 95–96, 106 in this study (Flebbe). Longenecker, *Romans*, 814, says that this is an assertion that Paul had heard throughout his ministry from Jews, Christ-believers or not, who found Paul's gospel denigrating to the Jewish people, and hence, also to God's faithfulness.

¹²⁸ Campbell, *Deliverance*, 771–74, 788–89.

¹²⁹ Nestle-Aland 28th edition does not have a question mark here.

¹³⁰ Campbell, *Deliverance*, 789.

¹³¹ Thus also Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 580; Jewett, *Romans*, 608; Longenecker, *Romans*, 838.

¹³² Thus also Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 580.

eign to his line of thought. Campbell's presentation of Romans 9 fails, in my mind, to meet this criterion.

This part of Romans is relevant for a study on how Paul's view on the Torah and pertaining issues were viewed by others, albeit 9:30–31 is not construed as Paul addressing an interlocutor. Paul solemnly declares to tell the truth about his concern for his fellow Jews: ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι. Thus, in this particular case, Paul exempts from the insight he formulated in Rom 3:4 (“everyone is a liar”). A similar claim is found in 2 Cor 11:10, a context where Paul presents his apology vis-à-vis critics. He states emphatically that he speaks the truth. It is worth noticing that such claims are found in texts where Paul speaks against criticism (2 Cor 11:31 and Gal 1:20; in both occurs οὐ ψεύδομαι), countering defamatory accounts. Characteristic of these passages is also that Paul calls upon God or Christ as witnesses to his claim. Such is also the case in Rom 9:1 where Christ is mentioned and also that Paul's consciousness finds affirmation ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. With Richard Longenecker, I take the unique emphasis on Paul's trustworthiness here to imply that, due to his Gentile mission, he has been confronted with questions of what corollaries these have for the Jews, and accordingly, also *God's* faithfulness to His promises to them.¹³³ The accent Paul puts on his credibility corresponds to the criterion of tone, which is about emphasis and urgency as indicative of some kind of opposition.

The result of these deliberations is that Paul was faced with critical questions regarding Israel and God, raised by his mission addressing predominantly Gentiles. Thus, the links between Rom 3:1–3 and chs. 9–11 seem sufficient to establish a dialogical perspective as most relevant here. Although Rom 3:8 is alone in clearly voicing charges, it seems that the wider context is part and parcel of a dialogue, extending beyond that chapter, and which has participants *beyond* Paul's own mind. This applies to Romans 9–11 as well.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has considered Rom 3:8 a “window” into Romans debates. In this verse revolving around Paul and the Torah, Paul targets if not opponents in the Galatian sense, at least criticism to which his addressees are exposed. The gist of this criticism is that Paul's gospel is absurd, seen from what it entails about the law. His mentioning of “some” indicates the presence of people who identify with this critique and spread it around. This has important ramifications for how to understand the diatribe in Rom 3:1–8, namely that critical voices are up front in this entire passage. By implication, a dialogical character is thereby added to theological issues in Romans. Baptism and sin (ch. 6), law and sin (ch. 7),

¹³³ Longenecker, *Romans*, 782.

and renewal of the mind (ch. 8) – together these topics make up Paul’s reflection on the accusations levelled against him according to Rom 3:8. The issue of Israel and God’s faithfulness – intertwined as they are – in chs. 9–11 picks up on questions raised in the diatribe of ch. 3 as well. In addressing these issues, we are, of course, deeply involved with Paul’s theology from his *own* perspective. However, since these passages mirror accusations, Paul’s own considerations are relevant. We have read Romans as a polyphonic text; that is, “wir hören in ihm mehrere Stimmen.”¹³⁴ In doing so, we agree with Joachim Jeremias who stated the following with special reference to Romans 3: “Der Gedankengang des Römerbriefes dürfte sich erst voll erschliessen, wenn man betrachtet, in wie starkem Masse er Gesprächscharakter trägt.”¹³⁵

So what may we deduce from this regarding how Paul’s view on the Torah was perceived? The accusations mirrored in Rom 3:8, revolving around “doing good or evil,” imply that the law is addressed more widely than assumed by the “New Perspective’s” emphasis on ethnicity. Ethnocentrism is not a primary matter here. It is, of course, possible, not to say likely, that the critique also includes circumcision since this ritual, according to its moral interpretation, was a means whereby the desires were brought under control (see the next chapter). However, it is in the capacity of its relevance to *morality* – not ethnicity – that also circumcision comes into play here. This ties in the issue of circumcision in Rom 3:1–2 with the issue of Rom 3:8, thus also suggesting that chs. 9–11, which bring 3:1–2 to completion, is attached to the critical nature of the diatribe in Romans 3.

Judged from the evidence of how Paul was perceived according to this text, the impression is that the “New Perspective” has narrowed Paul concerning the law unduly. This is, at least, how some of Paul’s contemporary critics would come to see it. According to Simon J. Gathercole, ethnocentrism has been emphasized far too much in the exegesis of New Testament scholars.¹³⁶ He says that “justification by faith is the solution to the problem of the weakness of the flesh.”¹³⁷ This resonates with what we have seen from the perspectives of Paul’s critics in Rome.

The critics proceeded from the conviction that Paul’s gospel was about sin and grace in such a way that the law was rendered ineffective. In fact, his teaching laid the foundation for sin to abound. Paul was seen to challenge, not to say undermine, the role of the law as a means to bring under control desires, or

¹³⁴ Theissen, “Gesetz und Ich,” 294.

¹³⁵ Joachim Jeremias, “Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen,” in *Studia Paulina: In Honorem Johannis De Zwaan* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn N.V., 1953), 149. Wolter, *Römer*, 41–56, discusses the Roman situation in detail; regrettably, the dialogical nature of the letter is ignored.

¹³⁶ See Gathercole, *Boasting?*, 261–66.

¹³⁷ Gathercole, *Boasting*, 266.

simply, the flesh. Stephen Westerholm puts this in a provocative way: "In its day, then, the distinctive (and, for some, damnable) feature of Paul's gospel was held to be that it promoted sin by discounting the law and moral efforts devoted to its fulfillment. This suggests that Paul was too 'Lutheran' for his contemporaries' liking."¹³⁸ Anachronistic, for sure, but this aptly brings out how Paul was perceived according to Rom 3:8, and also Paul's interaction with these accusations. Among some in Rome, this was the perception, and furthermore, Paul was concerned that this view would find a hearing among his audience there. The rumors voiced in Rom 3:8 had a potential for destabilizing Paul's mission, and they were not without a point of departure in Paul's own theology. Paul's view on the law, sin, and grace were high on the agenda of those who passed on the critique voiced in Rom 3:8. Paul's grace-bound gospel threatens to undercut the moral order established on the Mosaic Law.¹³⁹

As for Romans 9–11, Paul appears deeply and personally troubled by the issue of Israel and God's trustworthiness vis-à-vis the promises. To some, these issues proved a test case for how his gospel was to be evaluated. Although "some" in Rom 3:8 are loosely tied up with the Israel issue, this matter is, nonetheless, raised in a context where critical voices reverberate. Furthermore, we have pointed out how chs. 9–11 pick up on 3:1–8.¹⁴⁰ These observations are important as they suggest that the intensity of Paul's argument is not only personally motivated, but includes a dialogue with critical voices as well. The passage in Romans 9–11 is, therefore, meant to also serve as a response to critical questions regarding the role of Israel. The issue of Israel, to which Paul devotes so much space, and which aroused so many emotions in him, is a matter emerging as a problem from within Paul's theology as well. His theology, as presented in Galatians, is sufficient to explain why Israel's advantage calls for further consideration. Some critics took notice of this, and they drew attention to this, thereby exposing his gospel as paving the way for absurd theology: How can God be trusted if Israel's fate is on equal terms with the Gentiles? This is tantamount to raising the question of God's trustworthiness. If Paul through his critics in Galatia rendered God contradictory, Romans implies that some were concerned about God's trustworthiness.

Romans 9–11 represents an Achilles heel for "Paul within Judaism," especially with regard to the claim that Paul's theology is limited to the intended addressees of his letters. Paul's theology then applies exclusively to the addressees

¹³⁸ Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 373.

¹³⁹ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 471–74.

¹⁴⁰ Novenson, "Self-Styled Jew," 160–62, has in an instructive way demonstrated how the self-styled Jew in Romans 2 differs from the description of Jews in Romans 9–11. The differences are striking. Novenson takes this to mean that the interlocutors in Romans 2 and 3 are not actual Jews: Paul would simply not address Jews in this way. There is a need to take into account the different rhetorical situation reflected in these chapters. In Romans 2, Paul's rhetoric aims at a choking effect in preparing his readers for the need of Christ for all.

of the letters. This can be illustrated with a citation by Magnus Zetterholm: “Accordingly, Romans is predominantly about the condition of *the nations*.”¹⁴¹ This hardly accounts for Romans 9–11. If Paul’s theology did *not* apply to the Jews, why is Paul then troubled by the issue addressed in Romans 9–11? The need for these chapters comes as a result of Paul’s theology as an “apostle to the Gentiles.” However, if that implied that his theology was irrelevant for issues pertaining to the Jews, why then bother with a problem about his fellow Jews? It is a paradox that these chapters, in which Paul as a Jew expresses his deepest loyalty to his own people, do not fit in with a narrow understanding of Paul as “the apostle to the Gentiles.” If I am right that the question of Rom 3:1 about any advantage for the Jews has a foundation in criticism, somewhat analogous to “some” raising critical questions in 3:8, it is taken for granted that Paul’s mission and theology were involved with Jews as well, and could, therefore, also be questioned on that basis. We are reminded of Jacob Jervell’s well-known thesis that Romans is a “letter to Jerusalem.” Although written to the Romans, Paul is “absorbed by what he is going to say in Jerusalem.”¹⁴² Jervell probably overstated his case, but his observations are relevant here: Romans cannot be adequately read without taking into account his fellow Jews.

¹⁴¹ Magnus Zetterholm, “The Non-Jewish Interlocutor in Romans 2:17 and the Salvation of the Nations: Contextualizing Romans 1:18–32,” in *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 55; see also p. 40. According to Krister Stendahl, who in many ways paved the way for “Paul within Judaism,” Romans 9–11 is “the climax of Romans ... In this letter, Paul’s focus really is the relation between Jew and Gentiles, not the notion of justification or predestination and certainly not other proper yet abstract theological topics.” For this citation, see his *Paul*, 4.

¹⁴² Jacob Jervell, “The Letter to Jerusalem,” in *The Romans Debate Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 53–64 (quotation p. 60).

5 A Contemporary Context?

In this chapter, we ask if our findings in Galatians and Romans make sense against the backdrop of how the Torah, circumcision, and Abraham were seen by contemporaries. We simply ask if what we have found is conceivable within the relevant historical context. These are topics that stand out when Paul's letters are read dialogically, and when we are attentive to the voices of others. Making sense of these interpretations owing to "others" is what matters now. In other words, we turn to John M. G. Barclay's seventh criterion (historical plausibility) for practicing "mirror-reading."¹ This external evidence is important as it yields plausibility to our findings; it also helps grasp *why* voices pertaining to these issues were voiced against Paul, and also of what kind of nature they were.

We need to remind ourselves that Paul's interactions with fellow Jews on issues pertaining to the law are limited to the opinions and the people *he* faced. Paul was never faced with Judaism as such, or with Jewish views on the Torah in full; nor was he exposed to Judaism as construed by present-day scholars in all its diversity. In other words, the miscellaneous nature of contemporary Judaism is certainly relevant in providing a historical context for the question as to whether Paul is within Judaism or not. What is at stake here, however, is that when Paul is met with other interpretations, some particular issues matter. We seek corroborating evidence that the views challenging him were, if not necessarily representative of Judaism in general, still firmly rooted there. We are reminded of our comments on "common Judaism" made in a previous chapter.² From this fundamental observation follows that this chapter is not addressing circumcision, the Torah, and Abraham in general terms, but focuses primarily on those aspects that were at play in the embedded dicta and Paul's interactions with them. In practice, this means that we will focus on the following aspects: the necessity of circumcision, the law as an antidote against sinful life, and the continuum of Abraham's biography. These are the issues which our approach has uncovered as challenges presented to Paul's theology on the law.

¹ See pp. 64–65 in this study.

² See pp. 23–25 in this study.

5.1 The Necessity of Circumcision

The picture given by our presentation, particularly in Galatians, is that some Christ-believers saw the practice of circumcision as a *necessity*, also for Gentiles. This was a contentious issue between Paul and his opponents regarding Gentiles who embraced the Christian faith. In addition, circumcision embodied the obedience and observance commanded by the Torah, also for Gentiles entertaining fellowship with Jews. Furthermore, the law was instrumental in overcoming sin and desire, and was conceived of as the true guidance to good life. We will see below that circumcision as an act of excision or cutting away was prone to symbolize in a particular way the elimination of pleasures and sin. Gentile Christ-followers who were not circumcised were, therefore, left without the true guide for living in accordance with God's will. This means that some pieces of insight conveyed in chapter 5.1 anticipate 5.2 on the law as an antidote against sinful life. If circumcision was considered *necessary*, the question is then *why* was it so? This shows how chapters 5.1 and 5.2 are interrelated. These are the main elements for which we now seek contemporary parallels.

The Epistle to the Galatians leaves no doubt that the most contentious issue between Paul and his adversaries, the issue which encapsulated their disagreement, was circumcision. This comes through clearly in Paul's emphatic denial of the ritual for Gentile converts and in the opponents' claim to its necessity. This debate is not without parallels in contemporary Jewish sources, and we now delve into that in order to find out *why* circumcision was considered a necessity. This will probably provide a clearer picture as to how Paul appeared to his contemporaries. By saying that his adversaries "compelled" circumcision also for Gentile Christ-believers,³ Paul's posits them within the context of Jewish proselytism vis-à-vis Gentiles.

According to Esth 8:17 LXX, many Gentiles were circumcised out of fear for the Jews; they thus *ιουδαίζον* themselves. The ethnic perspective comes clearly to expression here. Likewise, Josephus tells of Metilius, the commander of a Roman garrison, who was taken captive with some of his men. He saved his life by pleading and *ιουδαίσειν* (cf. Gal 2:14); he was circumcised (*Bell.* 2.454).⁴ The "ethnic" aspect of this ritual is clearly stated in Jdt 14:10: "Achior came to believe utterly in God (*ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ*) and had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised, and he has been added to the house of Israel" (*περιετέμετο τὴν σάρκα τῆς ἀκροβυστίας αὐτοῦ καὶ προσετέθη εἰς τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραηλ*; NETS).⁵ Also among

³ See pp. 62–64 in this study.

⁴ See also Peder Borgen, "Militant and Peaceful Proselytism and Christian Mission," in *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism*, ed. Peder Borgen (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 45–69.

⁵ Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 129, speaks in this instance of a threefold pattern – faith, circumcision, and "*Zugehörigkeit zum 'Haus Israel'*." See also Oegema, "1 and 2 Maccabees," 350.

pagan writers, male Jews were noted for having circumcision as an ethnical mark.⁶ It is commonplace in Pauline scholarship that Paul opposed Gentile converts being subjected to this ethnical ritual. It is the merit of the “New Perspective” to have made this evident, and to have pondered upon how this works within Paul’s theology. However, as the present chapter is about to unfold, contemporary sources suggest that more than ethnicity is involved in this ritual, and that this has a direct bearing upon how Paul came to be seen by some critics.

Gentiles Residing Among Jews

Paul’s Galatian opponents were not alone in demanding circumcision. Likewise, Josephus tells about two nobilities from Trachonitis who took their refuge among the Jews (πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταφυγόντας; *Vita* 113). This aroused a dispute whether circumcision was to be required of them. The Jews – thus says Josephus – compelled (ἀναγκαζόντων) them to be circumcised as a condition for living among them (εἶναι παρ’ αὐτοῖς).⁷ This echoes Leviticus 17–18 on demands imposed upon foreigners οἱ προσκείμενοι ἐν ὑμῖν – a phrase stated repeatedly in ch. 17. This is how the Septuagint renders MT’s “in the midst of Israel.”⁸ Circumcision is not mentioned among the regulations for Gentiles residing among Jews, but this was obviously practiced in some circles. It is, of course, worth noticing here that while Leviticus 17–18 speak about Gentiles residing in Israel, the Septuagint introduces the notion of “proselyte” (see, e.g., 17:3, 8, 12–13, 15), which is prone to direct practice in this regard.

That the laws for strangers were practiced in this way is attested by *Ant.* 13.257–258. Hyrcanus permitted the Idumeans to “remain in the country”

Oegema argues that Paul came out of a milieu holding this ideal regarding circumcision, and that so did his Galatian opponents; pp. 352–53: The inspiration “will have been both the Maccabees and their zeal for God’s Torah.” As for the relationship between circumcision and “die Aufnahme ins Judentum,” see Gerbern S. Oegema, *Poetische Schriften* (JSHRZ 6; Lieferung 1,4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 59–60.

⁶ See, for example, Petronius, *Satyricon* 102.14; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.8–9; cf. Juvenal *Sat.* 14.96–106; Suetonius, *Dom.* 12; Origen, *Cels.* 5.43. *Ant.* 1.191–193 comments on Genesis 17 and circumcision. Josephus says that the reason for this demand was to keep the people (γένος) from mixing with others; hence, there is clearly an ethnic aspect to it. Romans regarded circumcision as something which distinguished Jews from other people; see Molly Whitaker, *Jews & Gentiles: Graeco-Roman Views* (Cambridge Commentaries of the Jewish & Christian World 200 BC to AD 200 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 80–85. For an extensive presentation of circumcision within the ancient world, see Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 323–60. This ritual was often treated with disdain; see Barclay, *Truth*, 46–47.

⁷ Thus also in *Vita* 149 where the issue is whether Gentiles who take refuge among the Jews must follow the customs of the people.

⁸ Richard Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting 4; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 459–61, for how these Old Testament passages come into play in Acts 15.

(μένειν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ) if they were circumcised and observed the laws of the Jews. They submitted to circumcision and adjusted their life in accordance with that of Jews, and “they have continued to be Jews” (258). In these passages, we observe a movement from “remaining in the country” as refugees to Gentile adoption of Jewish customs and traditions, inclusive of circumcision, and thus becoming Jews (εἶναι Ἰουδαίους). A movement toward demanding circumcision is witnessed in *Ant.* 13.318–319 (cf. 397⁹); this is put in a very concise way: “... compelled (ἀναγκάσας) the inhabitants, if they wished to remain in the country (μένειν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ) to be circumcised and to live in accordance with the laws of the Jews” (περιτέμεσθαι καὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίων νόμους ζῆν). In these texts, circumcision epitomizes the law and embodies its demands, and can, therefore, not be ignored.¹⁰

In *Vita* 113 mentioned above, Josephus opposes compelling those who take refuge among the Jews to be circumcised. He turned against any use of force or constraint to impose circumcision on people living among them for such reasons. Thus, Josephus attests to a discussion among fellow Jews on this issue. His report on the Trachonitis is revealing as to the fact that important issues concerning circumcision and Gentiles were negotiated. His point of view does, of course, not make him less Jewish; his use of the first-person plural (“having fled to us”; πρὸς ἡμᾶς) make that abundantly clear. Furthermore, his view does not imply that he generally had a lax attitude toward circumcision and Gentiles who wanted to live like Jews.¹¹

We have seen that the Old Testament regulations for Gentiles living among Israel easily developed into demands of complying with the law, inclusive of circumcision. Particularly, proselytes were expected to do this. This ethnic aspect is precisely where Paul differed. Gentiles embracing faith in Christ were *not* supposed to perform this ritual. In other words, Paul’s mission was not equal to proselytism and finds a partial analogy in Josephus’s opinion regarding

⁹ This passage speaks about “the national customs of the Jews; τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθη.”

¹⁰ On “forcing circumcision,” see also Michael F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 59–61. Bird argues that this issue is not only part of “mission,” but about the holiness of the country. This can be illustrated by 1 Macc 2:46–47 where it says that Mattathias with friends went around the country, circumcising all uncircumcised boys within the borders of Israel (ἐν ὅριος Ἰσραηλ). NETS renders “circumcised *by force* all the uncircumcised boys.” The Greek text simply says περιτέμον, although the context is suggestive of coerciveness, particularly since v. 47 say that “children of insolence” (υἱοὺς τῆς ὑπερηφανίας) were persecuted (ἐδίωξαν); cf. 1 Macc 1:48–49 where this policy of the king is seen from his perspective. The noun used here stands in the Maccabean literature for the arrogance associated with idolatry and disobedience (e.g., 1 Macc 1:21, 24; 2 Macc 7:36; 3 Macc 2:5, 17). For natural reasons, this particular argument loses some of its weight in a Diaspora setting. Taking this material as a point of departure, it is possible that Paul’s opposition was influenced by this ideal, extending it beyond the confines of Israel.

¹¹ So also Steven Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, Translation and Commentary 9; ed. Steven Mason (Flavius Josephus; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 75.

Gentile refugees. However, Josephus's view that refugees were exempted from circumcision does not account for the opposition Paul faced from Galatian opponents. They prove the existence of fellow Jews unwilling to compromise with what they saw as regulations deriving from Leviticus 17–18.

The Adiabene Case

In *Ant.* 20.34–48, Josephus narrates how the royal family of Adiabene came to favor Judaism. After his mother embraced Judaism, Izates, the king, wanted himself to become a genuine Jew through circumcision. This aroused debate within the royal family and among their Jewish sponsors. The Jewish merchant Ananias said that the king could worship God *without* being circumcised; devotedness counted more than the physical act itself. In fact, this replaced the ritual and rendered it superfluous. Ananias deemed the king's situation to be one of necessity (ἀνάγκη), and feared for how his subjects would react if their king was circumcised. This was to Ananias a legitimate reason for not performing the rite. The king would by being circumcised become a devotee of customs deemed foreign by his people.¹² According to Nina E. Livesey, “in this narrative, circumcision is a decisive mark of commitment to Judaism.”¹³ In other words, the ethnical aspect pointed out above is at play.

However, Ananias's position met with criticism from another Jew, Eleazar from Galilee. He urged the king to carry out the rite physically in order to be “assuredly Jewish” (βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος; 38): “For you ought (δεῖ) not merely to read the law, but also even more, to do (ποιεῖν) what is commanded in it” (44).¹⁴ This quotation draws on the topos of consistency between word and deed, and emphasizes the divine necessity¹⁵ of performing the rite, thus making consistency manifest. Observing the law is not only an inward matter, and therefore, it is not adequately expressed in a spiritual way. Eventually, Izates undertook the rite. According to Eleazar, there could be no closet Jews. Any reverence for Judaism that lacked outward observances was to him a lack of consistency between words and actions, amounting to impiety. The king followed his advice and secretly performed the rite, and then informed the court and Ananias about this. They were troubled by hearing that the king had been circumcised.

To Josephus, the king made the right decision and is, therefore, an example of true piety. Hence, God will also protect him and his family from danger. This

¹² Thus rightly Fredriksen, *Paul*, 67. For a similar situation regarding circumcision and a king, see *Ant.* 20.137–140.

¹³ Livesey, *Circumcision*, 36.

¹⁴ This correspondence between words and actions is also the logical substructure of Paul's critique in Romans 2; see pp. 100–101, 150, 152–53, 156 in this study.

¹⁵ For the meaning of δεῖ as referring to God's will as made known in Scripture, see Charles H. Cosgrove, “The Divine *Dei* in Luke-Acts: Investigation into the Lukan Understanding of God's Providence,” *NovT* 26 (1984): 168–90.

position comes clearly through in *Ant.* 20.48 where it says that Ananias and the court had no reason for fear. God always opens the way for those who are obedient. In saying this, Josephus makes it clear that his position equals that of Eleazar. God demonstrated (ἐπίδεικνύς) “that those who fix their eyes on Him and trust in Him alone do not lose the reward of piety” (εὐσεβείας; 48). This is the lesson that Josephus draws from this incident.

Josephus’s presentation makes this story an issue about true piety. Ananias argues that piety (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν) without circumcision is possible (41), whereas Eleazar considers that tantamount to impiety (ἄσεβεια; 45). Furthermore, Josephus summarizes this story by saying that God prevented (θεὸς ὁ κωλύσων) the fears of Izates’s mother and his subjects (48). This looks back at his mother’s attempt to prevent (κωλύειν) her son from performing the rite (39–40). God thus acts in a way which is opposed to the mother here. Josephus is not indifferent in this matter. His sympathy lies with the view held by Eleazar. Terence L. Donaldson rightly points out that Josephus appears proud that prominent Gentiles like Izates willingly run the risk of embracing Jewish traditions. As for Ananias, Donaldson says that what he expected of Izates was “a level of observance that would be appropriate for a Gentile but that would fall considerably short of what was required for a Jew.”¹⁶ This raises the question whether the incident provides relevant analogies for coming to terms with the Galatian conflict.

According to Anders Runesson, this narrative demonstrates that Paul’s ideas about the law and circumcision were fully at home in an internal Jewish discourse, since “Josephus seems to accept both Ananias’ and Eleazar’s positions on this matter.”¹⁷ The disagreement between the two Jewish teachers is, therefore, one of a spectrum. The complexity of contemporary Judaism implies that defining Jewish identity was a constant subject of debate, and this narrative is thus illuminous. This contemporary debate evolved around issues such as halachic regulations, dietary rules, fasting, Sabbath, and circumcision.¹⁸ For obvious reasons, this is most relevant to the question of how Paul is to be situated vis-à-vis Judaism. According to Andreas Blaschke, this story distinguishes between two ways of salvation, one for a God-fearing Gentile with no circumcision, a view propagated by Ananias, and one for proselytes requiring circumcision, propagated by Eleazar. The two represent “zwei unterschiedlichen jüdischen Möglichkeiten”; in other words, Ananias exemplifies “wie ein Jude in ntl. Zeit argumentieren konnte (bzw. wie sich der hellenistisch gebildete Phar-

¹⁶ Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles. Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 336–38.

¹⁷ Runesson, “Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I,” 81; thus also Donaldson, *Judaism*, 337; Nanos, “Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul’s Judaism,” 132–34.

¹⁸ See Shaye D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Judaism: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 25–68.

isäer Josephus eine solche Argumentation dachte).¹⁹ The fact that Josephus sympathizes with Eleazar should not distract from the fact that Ananias represents another, but still valid, model of thinking about Gentiles among Jews. In that regard, Runesson is right.

However, the Adiabene case conveys that circumcision of Gentile proselytes was an issue of debate, but it does not bear witness to the existence of two *equally* valid ways of living for Gentiles embracing Jewish piety – one with circumcision and another without. Hence, I question whether Ananias is a real analogy to Paul. If he was, one has to ask why the opponents in Galatians – at least how Paul portrays them – objected so forcefully. At least among them, Paul’s practice found opposition. If Ananias’s view was common and firmly established within Judaism, why did Paul attract opposition in Galatia on precisely this point? With Nina E. Livesey, I find that this narrative does discriminate between the views in question:

In sum, according to the Adiabene narrative, circumcision is a decisive mark of commitment to Judaism. Izates’ act of circumcision required courage and the encouragement of the Jewish teacher Eleazar. Once he made the commitment to become circumcised, God intervened to protect him, his family, and his nation. While scholars have referred to this narrative in support of the variety of expressions of Judaism in the first century, remarking that Izates was a Jew without circumcision, the contours of the narrative dictate otherwise. The point of the story is that Izates made the “correct” decision by becoming circumcised.²⁰

Livesey comments on the view that this narrative conveys two different paths to salvation: “Taken within the context of the entire narrative, however, it seems that the reader/hearer is meant to understand this counsel (i.e., Ananias’ advice not to be circumcised; my addition) as a convenient excuse. Ananias is trying to protect himself from potential harm. Ananias is portrayed as a weak character in the narrative, with God and Izates being the strong ones.”²¹ I find Josephus’s comment on Ananias in this regard telling: “For he said that he was afraid that if the matter became universally known, he would be punished, in all likelihood as personally responsible because he had instructed the king in unseemly practices” (*Ant.* 20.41). Ananias’s view is not equally valid to Josephus; he is a man seeking to save his neck.²²

However, the fact that Josephus holds Eleazar as representing ideal piety does not imply that he conceives of Ananias as an outsider, but he did not value the two views equally valid. Seen against the backdrop of how Josephus renders the story, Paul’s opponents found Paul’s view unsettling. It is worth noticing that, in spite of the fact that circumcision was a matter of dispute, it was very often

¹⁹ Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 236–40.

²⁰ Livesey, *Circumcision*, 84; see also Bird, *Crossing*, 29–33.

²¹ Livesey, *Circumcision*, 38.

²² See also John Nolland, “Uncircumcised Proselytes?” *JSJ* 12 (1981): 192–94.

associated with constraint, as something being *forced* upon Gentiles. The very fact that the Galatian “troublemakers” are depicted likewise is indicative of no relaxed attitude to this question, thus making Eleazar an appropriate figure with whom to compare Pauline opposition in Galatians.

This is the place to engage Mark D. Nanos’s interpretation of Josephus’s Izates story and its bearing upon Pauline exegesis.²³ Nanos proceeds from the view that this story forms an analogy to Paul, as it is about whether or not non-Jews are to be circumcised. Nanos agrees that Josephus is upholding the ideal represented by Eleazar, but that “he still depicts both Jewish teachers articulating what actions would best express faith(fulness) for Izates.”²⁴ Nanos notices that the issue was whether to perform τὸ ἔργον, the rite of circumcision commanded by the law. This makes the scene very much equivalent to Paul’s “works of the law,” which according to Nanos, refers to circumcision solely, not to other badges of ethnic identity.²⁵

According to Nanos, Ananias and Eleazar, in spite of their disagreement regarding the importance of the rite itself, were united in proceeding from a common question: what represents faith(fulness) for Izates? It is, therefore, a matter of how circumcision and πίστις belong together, thus making a comparison with Paul look very natural. They share the value of πίστις. Judged from how Josephus perceives this incident, I find Nanos’s view untenable for two reasons. First, Ananias’s logic, based upon a case of emergency (ἀνάγκη), is circumstantial and expedient; that is, it is a decision based on a situational evaluation of how the king, his family, and his rule may be affected. Although Nanos also mentions this, his argument of faithfulness as the main issue prevails. In my view, this is beyond the evidence. It is Ananias’s concern and fear for both himself and the king that dictate his advice. Second, Nanos’s main argument is taken from *Ant.* 20.48, which is Josephus’s summing up of this incident: “God thus demonstrated²⁶ that those who fix their eyes on Him and trust in Him alone (μόνῳ πιστευκόσιν) do not lose the reward of their piety.” Nanos extends this to apply to Ananias as well: “According to Ananias, however, Izates is justified

²³ Nanos, “Conceptualization,” 105–52.

²⁴ Nanos, “Conceptualization,” 119.

²⁵ This is stated *pace* James D. G. Dunn and advocates of the “New Perspective”; see Nanos, “Conceptualization,” 138–39. Nanos is right that in the Izates passage, τὸ ἔργον refers to circumcision. However, this cannot without further ado be transferred to Paul, since in Gal 2:11–14 dietary rules pave the way for Paul’s statement on “works of the law”; the plural is, of course, also worth noticing.

²⁶ The use of ἐπίδεικνύσθαι is worth observing here. The verb is often at home in contexts where persuasive arguments are offered, that is, to give proof; see BDAG and LSJ s.v. Josephus thus reads the story as God making a display of or exhibiting what true piety is. In *Ant.* 18.284, this verb is used in a context where God sending rain, is interpreted likewise, as a demonstrative act. With regard to Izates, God demonstrated his will in events that followed, namely that the king, in spite of attempts to conspire against him, remained a king throughout his life. When Josephus continues to unfold the events, this is most likely in his mind.

by his faithfulness (alone!) as a non-Jew, who is a ruler who seeks to worship the God of the Jews, which involves behaving faithfully according to Jewish customs, but doing so apart from becoming circumcised (i.e., a Jew)...²⁷ Thus, Ananias becomes the analogy of Paul's "by πίστις alone," but this is an inference which runs contrary to the text.

Nanos's interpretation of Ananias owes more to his attempt to find a correspondent to Paul, than what Josephus really says in this story. Josephus's comment is rather a backdrop against which Ananias's adaptable argument is to be *critically* evaluated. Taking on the rite of circumcision and, thus, "trusting in God alone" separates Izates from Ananias's *opportunistically* motivated argument. Certainly, Paul of Galatians differs strongly from Eleazar, but also from Ananias, since he appeals to *principle*, that is, to faith(fullness), and not to expedience. The principle appealed to is what Nanos labels the "chronometrical element" (i.e., the awaited time for the ingathering of Gentiles had arrived).²⁸ As I have worked out in chapter 2 above, I find that this is not sufficient to come to terms with Paul in Galatians.

More important in this particular context, however, is that advocates of "Paul within Judaism" reduce circumcision to a rite aimed merely at distinguishing Jews from Gentiles: "circumcision is what distinguishes a Jew from a Gentile."²⁹ Following in the wake of this perception is, of course, that Paul's issue with the law was limited. His point was simply that Gentiles did not need to adopt Jewish practices along with circumcision. In the Adiabene case, this ethnic aspect is certainly dominant. The following will, however, show that such an assessment of circumcision along with the law more generally does not come to terms with the involved issue of *morality*. This is important, since both Galatians and Romans convey that Paul's view on the law and circumcision were met with accusations precisely regarding morality. To see this more directly, we turn to Philo.

Philo and the Allegorists in Alexandria

The way both Galatians and Romans mirror the critique of Paul's theology of the law as revolving around moral permissiveness finds no real counterpart in the Josephus passages presented here. Turning to Philo, however, this aspect indeed enters the picture. In *Spec.* 1.1–11, Philo introduces circumcision, a ritual ridiculed among many people, as he puts it. He gives several reasons for this rite to be observed (1–7), to which he also adds his own considerations: "... I consider circumcision to be a symbol (σύμβολον) of two things most necessary

²⁷ Nanos, "Conceptualization," 129.

²⁸ Nanos, "Conceptualization," 109, 122, 126.

²⁹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 97.

(τοῖν ἀναγκαιοτάτοις) to our well-being. One is the excision of pleasures which bewitch the mind ...” (8).³⁰ The second thing most necessary, according to Philo, is that taking on this rite symbolizes the banishing of (οἷσις) pride, self-conceit, or arrogance (*Spec.* 1.10). Circumcision simply keeps man in his place (*Spec.* 1.265, 293). Thus, obedience is a key issue here. His own considerations are introduced as representing a tradition, probably a reference to the so-called unwritten law: “These are the explanations handed down to us from old-time studies of divinely gifted men who made deep research into the writings of Moses” (8).³¹ Peder Borgen puts this aptly: Philo does not “just refer to biblical texts, but to biblical and traditional laws as they were to be practiced in Jewish community life.”³² This is to be noted, since it implies that Philo’s exposition of biblical passages is aimed at serving his community in the day-to-day life in the Diaspora, and is in accordance with venerable traditions.

The role assigned to fighting the unruly pleasures in Philo’s exposition makes it natural that he immediately focuses on circumcision, the ritual which involves the organ of sexual intercourse, thus embodying pleasure and passion. Hence, God has ordained that the male organ be *excised*³³ of superfluous pleasure, thus conveying a message of self-control and moderation. In this way, circumcision becomes a ritual symbolizing the necessity of bringing under control the unruly passions.³⁴ The argument runs in tandem with his logic on food laws (*Spec.* 4.97–131). Moses has forbidden food from the finest and fattest meat: “The finest food is forbidden since it represents a special temptation for the pleasure of the taste.”³⁵ In other words, what generates pleasures receives special attention. The symbolic interpretation of Philo is derived from the notion of the “uncircumcised” heart (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; *Spec.* 1.304–305). Circumcision is as an act of excision particularly apt to depict the need for pruning, taking control of the unruly passions. Thus, through its being performed, the ritual is a symbol conveying a message, but is simultaneously also a primary means with

³⁰ Thus also QG 3.48; 3.52. Philo conceives of the Exodus, the departure from the land of Egypt, as leaving behind the land of desire and pleasure; see Sandnes, *Belly*, 112–13, and more in depth, Sarah J. K. Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo’s Representation of Egypt* (WUNT 208; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 81–127.

³¹ Philo states this also in *Migr.* 90 (see below). See Karl-Gustav Sandelin, “Philo as a Jew,” in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Torrey Seland (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 27, and Torrey Seland, “Why Study Philo? How?” in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Torrey Seland (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 177.

³² Peder Borgen, “Philo—An Interpreter of the Laws of Moses,” in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Torrey Seland (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 86.

³³ Philo makes a word play here: περιτομή–ἐκτομή.

³⁴ Philo’s interpretation of circumcision appears somewhat odd, due to his frequent emphasis that women in a special way embody passions and desires in need of control (*Gig.* 4–5; *Fug.* 188–89; *Sacr.* 102–103, 112; *Spec.* 1.201; *Leg.* 3.200; *Agr.* 108; *Congr.* 59–60).

³⁵ Sandnes, *Belly*, 128–29.

which to bring bodily temptations under control. In this way, circumcision precisely as a physical act portrays the Torah as an antidote against sin (see below). Philo's interpretation of circumcision is, therefore, ethical rather than spiritual.³⁶

According to Philo's *De Migratione Abrahami* 89–93, some Jews in Alexandria paid attention to this symbolic meaning of the rituals, such as the Sabbath and circumcision. As a result thereof, they neglected the literal or physical act itself. In other words, they challenged Philo's ethical interpretation according to which the physical performance of the rite itself was required. Philo is at pains to argue against them, because they are pushing the limits of his own allegorical interpretations. His method had the potential for generalizing, de-Judaizing, de-historizing, and universalizing laws given to Israel.³⁷ Some went down that path, and in the interpretation of "some" (τινες) in Alexandria, Philo faces undesirable consequences of his own allegory.³⁸ The situation is not without parallels to Paul and the dialogical situation in which his theology came into being, or in other words, the very topic of this study. Both faced τινες, who in various ways argued from within Philo's and Paul's own thinking, and they both took the opportunity to address this in their writings.

But this is simply too much allegory – even for Philo himself. To him, the regulations laid down by Moses, circumcision included, were a *means* whereby the appetites of the body were curbed (*Spec.* 4.95–104). Philo considered them symbols whose power rested upon the practice of the rituals themselves. In urging his opponents to study more intensively (*Migr.* 89), using the noun ζήτησις,³⁹ Philo conveys that this is a matter of understanding Scripture correctly. The word σύμβολον appears three times in the actual passage in the *Migration of Abraham*, thus indicating that this is a key word here. Obviously, those to whom Philo makes reference took it to refer primarily to the spiritual meaning, while for Philo, σύμβολον implied a message to *practice* the ritual. Observing the rite (ποιεῖν; *Migr.* 91) was to Philo a matter of necessity (ἔδει; *Migr.* 89; cf. *Ant.* 20.44 above), thus bringing to mind that when Paul's opponents in Galatia demanded circumcision, this was not primarily a matter of violent behavior,⁴⁰ but of Scripture and traditions evoked from there.

The interpretation offered by the allegorists is to Philo a disembodied soul. Since the body is the home of the soul, the literal meaning of the laws must be fulfilled; soul and body are not to be separated. The soul (symbolic meaning)

³⁶ For a presentation of the advantages of circumcision, more broadly speaking, such as health, etc., in Philo, see Livesey, *Circumcision*, 46–58.

³⁷ For example, *Leg.* 3.236; *Det.* 167; *Post.* 7; *Plant.* 113. Livesey, *Circumcision*, 72, points out that Philo is concerned about *group participation* in his emphasis on circumcision. Compared to this, the position of the allegorists appears individualistic.

³⁸ Similarly, Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 65: "his argument is directed against facets of his own philosophical stance."

³⁹ See pp. 197 in this study.

⁴⁰ *Pace* Dunne, *Persecution*; see pp. 63–64 in this study.

finds its true home in the very performance of the rite. In this way, the symbolic meaning will also be appreciated. In short, the allegorical implications of the commandments cannot set aside the need to comply physically with what they say. Twice Philo makes reference to the opinion held by the majority (οἱ πολλοί) among the Jews (*Migr.* 90, 93). Acting contrary to this majority view will incur criticism from the Jewish fellowship, he says:

If we keep and observe (φύλαττομένων)⁴¹ these [i.e. the rituals], we shall gain a clearer conception of those things of which these are the symbols (σύμβολα); and besides that we shall not incur the censure of the many (ἀπὸ τῶν πολλῶν) and the charges they are sure to bring against us. (*Migr.* 93)

Here, it comes clearly through how “symbol” for Philo is a tandem, consisting of the ritual and its meaning, or in other words, the mutuality between the act and its interpretation. Furthermore, Philo clearly considers this a matter which will trigger criticism and charges from a *majority* among the Jews. John M. G. Barclay points out that Philo here expresses his deep loyalty to tradition and the Jewish community.⁴² Philo hardly imagines Judaism so diverse that Paul of Galatians can easily be accommodated within it.

According to Pamela Eisenbaum, “Philo elsewhere seems to speak of proselytes as if they were not physically but only spiritually circumcised.”⁴³ The reasoning aims at accommodating Paul firmly within Judaism. Reference is made to *QE* 2.2, which is a comment on Exod 22:21 about sojourners: “the sojourner is one who circumcises not his uncircumcision but his desires and sensual pleasures and the other passions of the soul. For in Egypt the Hebrew nation was not circumcised.” Although Eisenbaum here assumes a rather clear tension in Philo’s thinking, she might find support in two passages. The first is in *On the Virtues* (175–186) where Philo addresses the topic of repentance, including Gentiles joining Israel, without mentioning circumcision explicitly.⁴⁴ However, it is worth noticing that when Philo depicts the Gentiles turning to Jewish piety as leaving behind pleasure and “gratifying the belly” (*Virt.* 182–183), this corresponds exactly to his presentation of circumcision as the excision of pleasure in, for example, *Spec.* 1.1–11 (see above).

Second, in *Spec.* 2.42–48, Philo speaks about the few righteous Gentiles who live according to Nature, and thereby master “the belly and the organs of generation.” Implied is the fundamental coherence between Nature and a lawful

⁴¹ The verb φύλασσειν here refers to observing the law, as in *Spec.* 2.250 and many other places; see the Philo Index s.v., but it has also kept the nuance of guarding the law itself. The law is not only to *be* observed or to be guarded; it is itself guarding those observing it; see also later in this chapter.

⁴² Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 65–67.

⁴³ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 111.

⁴⁴ Walter T. Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria on Virtues: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 3; Leiden: Boston, 2011), 362.

life, which is universally applicable.⁴⁵ It is worth noticing that the point of departure for Philo in this passage is the biblical commandment of “daily offerings.” Hence, every day is, in fact, a festival. This is worth noticing since Philo views the festivals as a means of curbing the desires. In other words, the passage is concomitant with how Philo elsewhere reasons about Jewish customs as a means of controlling desires.⁴⁶ In practice, righteous Gentiles conform to the meaning of the Jewish festive life, including circumcision.

What then to make of the fact that circumcision is left unmentioned in the two passages, thus seemingly paving the way for Eisenbaum’s conclusion? According to Shaye J. D. Cohen, it is not to be expected for every passage to mention all elements involved in becoming a Jew; that is, the practice of Jewish laws, exclusive devotion to God of the Jews, and integration into the Jewish community:

It is striking that Philo does not explicitly associate the process of conversion with the observance of the special laws, notable circumcision; we may presume that Philo would have required the proselyte, upon acquiring membership in the Israelite polity, to observe all the laws observed by the Israelites, including circumcision, but the initial process of conversion does not seem to include circumcision.⁴⁷

A reminder that *QE* 2.2 is not to be read in a “doctrinal” way is Philo’s mentioning of the Jews not being circumcised while in Egypt. Regardless of what he has in mind here, this piece of information cannot be taken in isolation, implying that circumcision of Jews is not important. The passage in *QG* 52 is indicative that Philo, in spite of his conservative attitude regarding observance of the instruction in the law, practiced some level of flexibility. Here, he addresses the situation that people, like infants, have not been circumcised in due time. They are not to be blamed for this, he says. In the words of Andreas Blaschke, to Philo: “[d]ie physische Bedeutung ist zwar nicht das Wesentliche am Beschneidungsgebot, aber sie ist nichtsdestotrotz unabdingbar!”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ On Philo and the Natural law, see David Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory,” in *Principat*, ed. Wolfgang Haase (ANRW II.21.1; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 381–88; Trent A. Rogers, “Philo’s Universalization of Sinai in *De Decalogo* 32–49,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 24 (2012): 85–105. Jutta Leonhardt Balzer, “Jewish Worship and Universal Identity in Philo of Alexandria,” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripenrog (AGJU 71; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 29–53, argues how Philo combines the view that “the Pentateuchal instructions about the details of Jewish worship must be observed in literal sense” (p. 52) with a universal perspective. For an extensive argument that *QE* 2.2 is not a Philonic opposition against circumcision for proselytes, see also Nolland, “Uncircumcised Proselytes?” 174–79.

⁴⁶ Sandnes, *Belly*, 108–32.

⁴⁷ Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 156–58; quotation on p. 157. Thus also Sandelin, “Philo,” 28. Ellen Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo’s Thought: Israel, Jews, and Proselytes* (Brown Judaic Studies 290; Atlanta, GE: Scholars Press, 1996), 200, also finds it difficult to see if *QE* 2.2 is really meant to address whether proselytes are required to be circumcised.

⁴⁸ Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 212.

The *Letter of Aristeas* provides a rationale that is very similar to what we have found in Philo, albeit this writing does not address circumcision in particular. At the center of interest are matters of food, another ethnic aspect of the Torah which is interpreted with regard to *morality*.⁴⁹ The point of departure is the question of why distinctions between different kinds of food and the difference between clean and unclean animals are to be upheld if God, after all, created all equally (*Let. Aris.* 128–129).⁵⁰ The exposition given by Eleazar of this writing runs parallel to Philo’s reasoning. Note first that the exposition about a “deeper meaning” of the law is introduced by emphasizing the *necessity* of observing it literally: “The good life, he said, consisted in observing the law” (§ 127).⁵¹ Everything pertaining to Jewish conduct needs to be set out symbolically, or as allegories (τροπολογία).⁵² Hence, the laws are signs (σημεῖον) pointing toward general moral issues (*Let. Aris.* 150). Eleazar brings his exposition to a close by saying that the “solemnity and characteristic outlook of the Law” (τὴν σεμνότητα καὶ φυσικὴν διάνοιαν τοῦ νόμου)⁵³ has now been laid out (§ 171). Two observations are important for our purpose. The true meaning of the law resonates with a universal and rational mind, namely that the mind needs to be *trained* to master evil and desire (see more below). This is articulated most directly in *Let. Aris.* 161:

I have already demonstrated to you the extraordinary nature of the sound reason behind our distinctive characteristic of memory when we expounded the cloven hoof and chewing the cud. It is no chance accident that it has been ordained as part of our very soul; but it is bound up with truth and the expression of the right reason (πρὸς δ’ ἀλήθειαν καὶ σημειώσιν ὀρθοῦ λόγου).

Furthermore, this training takes place when the instructions of the law are *observed*. Eleazar makes this abundantly clear in speaking about practices, made visible in the terminology χρῆσις and cognates (§ 143), thus assuming that the regulations are manifested in performance. However, the literal observance has a deeper sense (λόγος βαθύς; § 142–143), which is for the “amendment of life for the sake of righteousness” (§ 144). This discussion on the Torah in the *Letter of Aristeas* in § 222–285 is put into the context of Greek moral discourse, by having

⁴⁹ See Benjamin G. Wright III, *The Letter of Aristeas: “Aristeas to Philocrates” or “On the Translation of the Law of the Jews”* (CEJL; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 246–313, on the part called “Eleazar’s *Apologia* for the Law” on § 128–171.

⁵⁰ This brings to mind Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 10:26 (quoting Ps 23:1 LXX) and similarly in Romans 4: God being the father of all reaches back to Shema and Creation; see Sandnes, “Justification,” 147, 171, 175–78.

⁵¹ OTP 2.21; for Greek text, André Pelletier, *Lettre d’Aristée a Philocrate* (SC 89; Paris: Cerf, 1962).

⁵² According to *LSJ*, this means an allegorical exposition.

⁵³ Pelletier, *Lettre d’Aristée*, 183 renders this: “la sainteté et la pensée essentielle de cette Loi.”

the king ask for the “highest form of sovereignty” (§221).⁵⁴ The following makes it abundantly clear that this ideal is reserved for the person who masters his desires, which is the only way to attain true virtue.

The texts presented in this paragraph aimed at coming to terms with how Paul’s theology on the law, manifested in his denying the necessity of Gentile converts being circumcised, places him within an ongoing debate on such issues within Judaism. The texts presented witness to the fact that the issue of circumcision was negotiated among Jews in the Diaspora. This discourse came to the fore in Josephus’s concern not to force conversion and circumcision upon Gentile refugees, in the Adiabene case and in the radical allegorists of Alexandria. Paul belongs within this discourse, but he is not easily accommodated within the examples given of this discourse. The texts give, in spite of some diverse practices, a rather unanimous picture of a *dominant* position which fits the Galatian opponents, but hardly Paul.

The frequent appearance of the “necessity” of circumcision is revealing, a fact resonating in Galatians and in Acts as well (see later). If Paul is to be seen as having turned from one variety of Judaism to another, he has indeed embraced an alternative denied by most Jews.⁵⁵ This can be illustrated with reference to the book of Jubilees ch. 15, which is a comment on Genesis 17, a crucial text for Paul’s opponents (see below). The law of circumcision is here a fundamental requirement, which applies also to foreigners living with Abraham in his house (*Jub.* 15:12, 24). Circumcision is the exclusive sign for males’ belonging to the covenant; it is really the identity marker *par excellence*. Hence, it amounts to denying the covenant (*Jub.* 15:14, 26, 33–34) not to circumcise all male children living in the house.

In the words of John M. G. Barclay, Paul is “effecting a fundamental shift in Jewish discourse.”⁵⁶ At two important points, this material and the Epistle to the Galatians converge; namely, that circumcision had a role, making it natural that it became such a contentious issue. It is worth noticing that in this epistle, Paul speaks about persecution-like experiences – whatever they might have been – which followed in the wake of this disagreement (Gal 4:29; 5:11).⁵⁷ This is indicative of the high profile that the question of circumcised Gentiles joining the fellowship of Israel had among Jews, certainly among his opponents. Furthermore, the material on circumcision presented here, and also the findings in the next part of this chapter, put the discussion on the law and ethics in Galatians into perspective. The issue of circumcision and curbing desires were really

⁵⁴ Greek: τὴν ἐστὶν ἀρχὴν κρατίστη. On the idea of “supreme good” in contemporary philosophy, see Sandnes, *Belly*, 61–74, 209.

⁵⁵ Barclay, “Paul Among Diaspora Jews,” *JSNT* 60 (1995): 118–19 in particular.

⁵⁶ J.M.G. Barclay, “Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Romans 2.25–29 in Social and Cultural Context,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 555 in particular.

⁵⁷ See pp. 157–58 in this study.

a tandem, especially as attested in Philo. This is precisely where the hearts of Paul's adversaries were beating. The material presented here takes us to the essence of what both Galatian opponents and Roman rumors held against Paul. His position on the law vis-à-vis Gentiles paved the way for moral licentiousness. Paul's theology on the law and issues pertaining to that were prone to foster moral laxity. It is against charges of such nature that Galatians 5–6 make sense within the Galatian situation, and Romans 6–8 followed in the wake of this.

A final note here applies to the much-discussed paradigm of 1 Cor 7:19 within the views of "Paul within Judaism." We noticed above that Paul in 1 Cor 7:19 made a distinction between circumcision and "observing the commandments of God."⁵⁸ Such a distinction has been questioned by Matthew Thiessen⁵⁹ and also by Mark D. Nanos.⁶⁰ Since "observing the commandments of God" by necessity involves circumcision, Paul cannot have stated anything that devalued circumcision, at least not for Jews. Thus is the reasoning of these scholars, the backdrop against which advocates of "Paul within Judaism" interpret 1 Cor 7:19 and who find support in the material presented here, as circumcision embodies obedience to the law. In my view, however, these scholars underestimate the rhetoric involved in 1 Corinthians 7. This has been pointed out already; for now, I want to make the point that they also get involved in an argumentative dichotomy. On one hand, since circumcision epitomizes law observance, Paul cannot have stated what most scholars have found him to really have done in 1 Cor 7:19, namely urge a difference between circumcision and observing the law.⁶¹ On the other hand, these scholars often turn to Ananias and the Alexandrian allegorists, who questioned precisely this tandem, to explain why Paul's view on circumcision in Galatians is firmly rooted in an ongoing Jewish discourse. This is a dichotomy which calls for some more thinking.

5.2 *The Law as an Antidote against Sinful Life*

Several times during this study, we have come across that the allegations Paul faced regarding his view on the law were also rooted in a discourse on moral philosophy in the ancient world, and in Hellenistic Judaism in particular. To that we now turn. A major issue in ancient moral philosophy was the matter of self-control, embodied in the classical virtue of restraint or self-control

⁵⁸ See pp. 47–50 in this study.

⁵⁹ See p. 47 in this study.

⁶⁰ Nanos, "Conceptualization," 132–35.

⁶¹ I find Blaschke, *Beschneidung*, 397–99, helpful as he points out that the distinction between circumcision and "God's commandments" is paradoxical or absurd to contemporary Jews; nonetheless, this is precisely what Paul urges.

(ἐγκράτεια) as opposed to pleasures and licentiousness. Paul writing in a Greco-Roman setting was deeply embedded in this philosophical context as was his contemporary Philo.⁶² Fourth Maccabees is an example of how deeply this philosophical context had penetrated Jewish discourses on the Torah.⁶³ This is a story of the martyrs who embraced death for the sake of the law. This narrative is framed and shaped philosophically as an illustration of the theory presented in the prologue (4 Macc 1:13–3:18): reason is sovereign over the emotions. That reason is the superior virtue is demonstrated in the way observance of the *law* brings self-control and courage to the martyrs.⁶⁴

In *Mem.* 1.5.1–6, Xenophon says that ἐγκράτεια is “a fair and noble possession” (καλὸν τε κἀγαθόν). Self-control is, therefore, the foundation for all virtuous life: “For who without this can learn any good (τι ἀγαθόν), or practice it worthily?” (5). A man who is a slave to his pleasures (ἡδοναί) “should entreat the gods to give him good masters: thus, and only thus may he find salvation” (σωθείη) (5). The good master guiding to the good life is in a Jewish setting primarily appropriated by the Torah itself, as articulated clearly by Eleazar in 4 Maccabees:

I do not so pity my old age as to subvert the ancestral law (τὸν πάτριον καταλύσαι νόμον) by my own act. I will not play false to you, O Law that trained me (παιδευτὰ νόμε), nor will I renounce you, beloved self-control (φίλη ἐγκράτεια). I will not put you to shame, philosophical reason, nor will I deny you, honored priesthood and knowledge of our law code (νομοθεσίας ἐπιστήμη)... . you shall not defile the honorable mouth of my old age nor the maturity of a law-observant life. (4 Macc 5:33–37)⁶⁵

What is at stake in this text is piety (ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐσεβείας; v. 38) strongly embedded in law observance. According to Philo, Moses – a euphemism for the law here – is the god-given gift to the earth, due to his ruling power of bodily pleasures. All desires coming from the body are subjected to him; that is, to his law (*Sacr.* 9). According to *Migr.* 67, this view on Moses and the law finds substantiation in Lev 8:21 (“wash out the belly”), which is an allegory for cleansing away desire. Philo considers this role comparable to that of a surgeon, who eradicates evil by the help of a knife, thus bringing to mind the excision of the circumcision ritual (see above). Moses is the true physician of the mind or soul (*Deus* 67).⁶⁶ In other words, the law is the surgeon keeping the soul healthy. It is in line

⁶² See, for example, Sandnes, *Belly* for this discourse.

⁶³ Notice also that Josephus in *Bell.* 2.120 portrays the Essenes accordingly.

⁶⁴ David C. Aune, “Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity,” in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Wendy E. Helleman (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 125–57; see also Karl Olav Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses on Jesus’ Prayer at Gethsemane: Courageous, Committed, Cowardly?* (NovTSup 166; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 45–51.

⁶⁵ As for this use of καταλύειν, see pp. 75 in this study.

⁶⁶ See Aune, “Mastery,” 128–34. This is in accordance with how philosophers are often depicted as physicians, providing the necessary cure for healing the soul. This became com-

with this that Philo in his introduction to the Decalogue says that “for the good life they needed laws and ordinances which would bring improvement to their souls” (βελτιοῦσθαι; *Decal.* 17). Hence, the laws are βιωφελείς; that is, they are beneficial for life (*Decal.* 50), and are to be considered “saving commandments” (τὰ σωτήρια κελεύειν; *Decal.* 177). This is not a soteriological statement; it is about the law being conducive of a good life, beneficial as it keeps the observer away from evil.

It is worthwhile returning for a moment to the *Letter of Aristeas* (see above in this chapter). Towards the end of this writing, the discussion of “the highest good” is brought to an end. The true answer is the following: “The virtuous disposition, on the other hand, restrains (κωλύει) those who are attracted to the rule of pleasure (ἡδονοκρασίαν), and commands (κελεύει) them to respect self-control (ἐγκράτειαν) and justice more highly” (*Let. Aris.* 278). The context leaves no doubt that this is a dictum on the role of the law; this is made explicit in §279 when it says that it is the laws that improve (ἀνακτῶνται)⁶⁷ the lives of men. Worth noticing are the verbs; “to restrain” in particular, which attributes to the law the role of a guardian vis-à-vis a sinful life.⁶⁸

This way of looking at the role of the law is rooted in the commonplace that the law of Moses fostered a good life in opposition to evil.⁶⁹ From this developed the idea that the law was also a guardian protecting its observers from committing evil. This comes clearly through in Prov 2:6–8, 11–12 about the wisdom conveyed by God, embodied in His “commandment,” (v.1), which here is a so-called *pars pro toto* (i.e., indicative of the law as such). Verbs signifying protection abound in these verses:

- will shield (ὑπερασπιεῖ) their journey
- guard (φυλάξαι) the ways of righteous deeds
- protect (διαφυλάξει) the way of the ones who revere him
- good counsel will guard (φυλάξει) you
- holy insight will protect (τηρήσει) you
- it can rescue (ρύσῃ) you from an evil way

In 2 *Bar.* 48:22, the protective role of the law vis-à-vis its observers is found within a thanksgiving: “In you we have put our trust, because, behold, your Law is with us, and we know that we do not fall as long as we keep your stat-

monplace in ancient moral philosophy. Dio Chrysostom’s *Discourse on Virtue*, *Or.* 8.5–8, may serve as an example. As a good physician, the philosopher approached the Isthmian games, offering his services to those in need. His treatment offered relief from folly, wickedness, intemperance, ignorance, cowardice, pleasure-loving, irascibility, etc.; in short, it healed the foolish soul; see Abraham J. Malherbe, “‘Gentle as a Nurse.’ The Cynic Background to 1 Thess 2,” *NovT* 12 (1979): 203–17.

⁶⁷ This verb is about recovering, repairing, or putting things right; see LSJ s.v.

⁶⁸ See Wright III, *Aristeas*, 369–70, 413–15.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Sir 4:12; 14:26–27; 19:20; 45:5, Bar 4:1; Gal 3:21.

utes” (cf. 44:7). This role of the law finds substantiation in Rom 2:17–24 where Paul imagines a Jew who considers the law the solution to the problem of sin. In instructing Gentiles to keep the Decalogue, this interlocutor attests to this common view on the Torah among Jews. The fact that Paul uses a Jew as a rhetorical figure here assumes familiarity with the view expressed by the figure. Whether the interlocutor is a rhetorical Jew, as I claim, or a Gentile calling himself a Jew⁷⁰ is not really of any importance here. In any case, the passage voices a stereotypical understanding of the law as a means of guidance to a life of self-control vis-à-vis sins and desires. Fourth Maccabees puts this in a rhetorical question: “What wonder, then, if the desires of the soul for union with beauty are deprived of their force?” (ἀκροῦνται; 4 Macc 2:1). This rhetorical question condenses the last part of the preceding chapter about the temperate mind’s ability to control the impulses of the body. In other words, this is precisely what the law works among its adherents. This point is then immediately substantiated with reference to Joseph facing temptation in Genesis 39. His way to overcome the sexual temptation manifests the role of the law vis-à-vis pleasures and passions.⁷¹

Paul’s theology of the law was seen to foster immorality since it left his converts alone with regard to mastering their desires. They lived bereft of the primary means of mastering their cravings. Hence, licentiousness is due to follow in the wake of Paul’s mission. According to David C. Aune, “[i]t is not unlikely that the opponents of Paul in both Romans and Galatians were pious Jews who sought to impose upon newly converted Gentiles the idea that the Law can help them achieve mastery of the passions.”⁷² This corroborates with what our investigation has found. Stanley K. Stowers has pursued this view in depth in his *A Rereading of Romans*.⁷³ The backdrop for this is what he labels “Judaism as a school for Self-mastery.” In his words, particularly according to Philo and 4 Maccabees, “the law is a uniquely effective means of obtaining and maintaining self-mastery, or, to be more precise, of obtaining the degree of self-mastery possible in virtue of a person’s social level and gender.”⁷⁴ The strongest argument, according to Stowers, that Paul was engaged in a discourse on law and self-mastery is the fact that it provides an explanation for the ethical material in the letters. This is concomitant with our observations regarding the last part of Galatians: Paul’s instructions were aimed at allegations against his view on the Torah (i.e., charges for making a breeding ground for pleasures and desires to

⁷⁰ See pp. 99–104 in this study. Stowers has rightly pointed out that this passage is not a caricature of a Jew, but a rhetorical figure making sense of the view that self-mastery is obtained in knowledge of the law. Stowers still considers this figure a Jew; see *Romans*, 143–53.

⁷¹ This biblical story plays an important role in Philo’s discourse on mastering the desires; see Sandnes, *Belly*, 121–23.

⁷² Aune, “Mastery,” 141; thus also Jipp, “Educating,” 253–57.

⁷³ Stowers, *Romans*, 58–74.

⁷⁴ Stowers, *Romans*, 60.

thrive). However, Stowers implies that “Paul believes the law prohibits desire but does not seem to view it as a means to self-mastery, at least for Gentiles.”⁷⁵ As stated earlier in this study,⁷⁶ I find that restricting Paul’s view on the Torah to apply to Gentile does not come to terms with the universal perspective in Rom 1:18–3:20, which also forms the backdrop for Rom 7:7–25 where Paul presents the law as being hijacked by the power of sin.⁷⁷

According to both Galatian opponents and Roman rumors, Paul left his converts without proper moral guidance and protection against moral permissiveness. The way he approached the law vis-à-vis his Gentile converts questioned the law as the primary means in this regard. The material presented in this chapter fills in a gap, as critical voices embedded in Paul’s epistles make sense against the backdrop of the material presented here.

5.3 The Continuum of Abraham’s Biography

We have seen that in his Torah theology, Paul was accused of implying that the Abraham narrative was reduced to a single defining moment, that of Gen 15:6 (faith or trust). Paul combined this defining moment with Genesis 12 and the blessing of the nations. However, he made himself vulnerable by keeping these texts apart from other shares of the Abraham biography, urging that the *sequence* of the chapters was indicative of importance and independence, thereby drawing a wedge between Abraham of faith and Abraham of circumcision (Genesis 17) and obedience (Genesis 22). Thus, Paul engages with and likely also stirs up a debate on Abraham, the most prominent of the Jewish forefathers, “die wichtigste Identifikationsgestalt,” as Matthias Köchert has put it.⁷⁸ Abraham’s highly esteemed position developed around the question of the nature of his “faith,” as witnessed in the Torah. When Paul starts negotiating this, he participates in a “contest” over Abraham and the texts about the nature of his faith. In the words of James D. G. Dunn, “Abraham was at this time regularly presented as a type or model for the devout Jew.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Stowers, *Romans*, 60; see also pp. 69, 132. Although not spelled out, Stowers here prepares the ground for “Paul within Judaism.”

⁷⁶ See pp. 101–102 in this study.

⁷⁷ Jipp, “Educating” and von Gemünden, “Affekt” show how Paul’s presentation of the law here is framed within ancient discussions on mastering the pleasures.

⁷⁸ Matthias Köchert, “Abrahams Glaube in Röm 4 und im vorpaulinischen Judentum,” in *Der Römerbrief als Vermächtnis an die Kirche: Rezeptionsgeschichten aus zwei Jahrtausenden*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener, 2012), 15.

⁷⁹ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 200; see Benjamin Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith in Romans 4: Paul’s Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6* (WUNT 2.224; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 152–215. This paragraph is a slightly altered version of my “Justification,” 149–54.

In the so-called *Laus Patrum* (Praise of the Fathers), in which the noble acts of the Fathers are summarized and condensed, Sir 44:19–21 is devoted to Abraham. This passage forms an amalgamation of Abraham texts, with the emphasis on Genesis 17 and 22. Genesis 15:6 is implied, albeit not cited, and interpreted in a rather traditional way: “and in a trial he was found faithful” (ἐν πειρασμῷ εὐρέθη πιστός).⁸⁰ This is mentioned in tandem with a clear reference to circumcision (Genesis 17). Worth noticing is that the reference to circumcision precedes mentioning his being πιστός. The continuum includes not only Gen 15:6 and circumcision, but Genesis 22 as well: “He kept the law of the Most High.” This summarizes Abraham’s obedience in preparing his son to be sacrificed. Thus, Sirach joins a choir in which Gen 15:6 and Genesis 22 are seen as forming a tandem, or more accurately, where the first text comments on the second. Hence, Abraham becomes a prime example of what being “faithful” is really about: “... the conduct of the pedagogical model Abraham can be subsumed under the umbrella of ‘obedience’.”⁸¹

Chapters 17–18 of the *Book of Jubilees* relate how Mastema tests Abraham by demanding Isaac’s sacrifice (Genesis 22). The introductory scene brings to mind the heavenly dialogue between God and Satan in Job 1 (*Jub.* 17:16). Mastema insinuates that if Isaac, Abraham’s beloved son, is taken from him, God will find out whether or not he is “faithful”; this term appears thrice in the introductory scene (vv. 15–17). This continues in v. 18, where the term is repeated three times. God knew that Abraham was faithful. The story is told in detail in chapter 18 and rounded off in this way:

Because you have done this thing and you have not denied your firstborn son, whom you love, to me that I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of heaven and like the sand of the seashore and your seed will inherit the cities of their enemies. And all of the nations of the earth will bless themselves by your seed because you obeyed my word. And I have made known to all that you are faithful to me in everything which I say to you. Go in peace. (*Jub.* 18:15–16; OTP 2.91; cf. 19:8–9 and 23:10)⁸²

The continuum is not explicit here, since Gen 15:6 is unmentioned; nonetheless, the passage clearly demonstrates the key role occupied by Genesis 22. A juxta-

⁸⁰ Similarly, Neh 9:7–8 (2 Ezra 19 LXX) implies Gen 15:6 when it says that Abraham was found to be faithful (v. 8: εὐρες τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ πιστὴν ἐνώπιόν σου).

⁸¹ Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 175.

⁸² See also Josephus, *Ant.* 1.223–225; *Jdt* 8:24–27. That Abraham’s faith is explained with reference to his sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22) is also witnessed to within the Christ-believing movement; see Heb 11:17 and Jas 2:20–24. The latter passage takes Abraham’s “works,” not his circumcision, to be what is related in Genesis 22. This passage may be taken to represent a polemic against Paul’s interpretation; see Martin Hengel, “Der Jakobusbrief als antipaulinische Polemik,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament. Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 248–78; see p. 2 in the present study.

position of these texts is made explicit in 1 Macc 2:52, which bears many resemblances to *Laus Patrum*.⁸³ On his deathbed, Matthias bids his sons farewell, urging them to be “zealous” for the law (v. 50). He tells them to remember “the deeds” (τὰ ἔργα) of the ancestors, with Abraham mentioned first: “Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was accounted to him as righteousness?” (ἐν πειρασμῶ εὐρέθη πιστός, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην). This rhetorical question states a fact. Abraham was reckoned righteous due to his obedience in sacrificing Isaac, which is the most notable of his “deeds.” This much-discussed term in contemporary Pauline theology does not here refer to circumcision or boundary markers between Jews and Gentiles, but to Abraham’s obedience or fidelity.

Philo offers extensive testimony to an interpretation of the Abraham biography where all the parts are coming together, forming a *continuum* of events that Paul emphatically keeps apart. In *Deus* 4, Gen 15:6 is seen as commenting on the testing of Genesis 22, whereby Abraham appeared as “the perfect.” In *Somn.* 1.194–195, Philo considers God’s testing of Abraham (Genesis 22) proof of his piety (εὐσεβεία),⁸⁴ which is synonymous to πίστις, thus suggesting that Gen 15:6 is most likely a subtext here. Philo raises in *Her.* 90–95 the question of whether Abraham’s faith – reference is again made to Gen 15:6 – was a reason for praise (ἔπαινος). In diatribe style, he asks if not even “the most unjust and impious” pay heed when God makes promises: what then is so remarkable about Abraham’s faith? Against this view, Philo states that Abraham is not to be robbed of his ἐγκώμια (his praise), since his faith was the most perfect of *virtues*. Trusting in God is no easy matter, because men are disposed to putting their trust in riches, repute, office, friends, health, and strength instead of trusting in God. This contrast implies that πίστις here is equivalent to being faithful; it takes on the meaning of trust, which is the perfect virtue and worthy of praise.

Philo’s allegorical biography *On Abraham* is worth noticing here. The beginning as well as the closing of this treatise are marked by references pointing to Abraham as embodying what a continuous reading of his biography conveys, namely obedience to the law. Philo says that he postpones his examination of particular laws, and introduces first “men who have the laws endowed with life and reason ... so that one might properly say that the enacted laws are nothing else than memorials of life of the ancients (ὑπομνήματα⁸⁵ εἶναι βίου τῶν παλαιῶν), preserving to a later generation their actual words and deeds” (*Abr.* 3–5). The treatise is summarized in the same vein: “Such was the life of the first, the

⁸³ Schliesser, *Abraham’s Faith*, 200–203.

⁸⁴ In the phrase δοὺς ἀπόπειραν εὐσεβείας, the first noun, particularly in the context of testing, takes on the meaning of trial or proof; see LSJ s.v.

⁸⁵ This term brings to mind the biographical genre; see, for example, Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.3.1; see Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 124–84.

founder of the nation, one who obeyed the law, some will say, but rather, as our discourse has shown, himself a law and an unwritten statute” (νόμος αὐτὸς ὢν καὶ θεομὸς ἄγραφος; *Abr.* 276). This conclusion of the treatise is introduced (275) with a saying by Moses, κεφαλῆ, rendered “crowning saying” (Colson; LCL)⁸⁶ regarding Abraham: “that this man did the divine law and the divine commands” – which is, in fact, a quotation from Gen 26:5 wherein Genesis *sums up* the Abraham biography. No doubt, Philo intends to shorten the biography and does so with reference to this text. This harks back to *Abr.* 262 where Philo starts explaining what Gen 15:6 is about (see below), demonstrated in the fact that 275 picks up on what firm πίστις really is.⁸⁷ His introduction (*Decal.* 1) reiterates the point that Abraham was himself an unwritten law, thus showing how firmly rooted his Abraham biography is in the Torah. To cut it short, Abraham epitomizes law obedience. Such is the frame within which Philo accommodates him.

In order to grasp the importance of the sequence in Paul's argument, it is worth noting as a backdrop that Philo in *Migr.* 127–130 comments on Gen 12:4: “So Abraham went (ἐπορεύθη)...” In accordance with Philo's allegorical method, this means that Abraham *walked* on the path of virtue, which Philo connects with Gen 26:5: “Abraham did all my law” (πάντα τὸν νόμον μου). This marks Abraham throughout his biblical biography then as a man of law obedience. The use of Gen 26:5 here indicates that it is a matter of giving an adequate *summary* of the ancestor's life. Philo's reading of Gen 12:4 is, of course, facilitated by his allegory and his idea of the Natural law, but even more by the fact that the ethical commandments of the law were called *halakha*, which simply means “walking or journeying.”⁸⁸ This enables Philo to bridge the law and Genesis 12 in a way that Paul does not; Abraham's biography was, indeed, one continuous story revolving around the Torah. Genesis 12 initiates this story as well as providing a summary of its essence. With Philo's interpretation, any emphasis on subsequence in Abraham's biography is ruled out, thus illustrating the core of the discussion behind the argument in Galatians as well as in Romans 4.

From *Abr.* 255 on, Philo praises Abraham for his ἐγκώμια (his praise or merits). The first example he gives is how Abraham, representing the prototypical sage, wrestled like an athlete with sorrow (λύπη)⁸⁹ when his wife passed away. Abraham is portrayed as a man mastering his passions, able to fight his desires by means of his virtues. Since his virtues are more or less identical with his law

⁸⁶ According to Montanari, Dictionary, s.v. it may be rendered “main part,” “completion,” or “conclusion.”

⁸⁷ Thus also Martina Böhm, *Rezeption und Funktion der Vätererzählungen bei Philo von Alexandria: Zum Zusammenhang von Kontext, Hermeneutik und Exegese im frühen Judentum* (BZNW 128; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 151–63.

⁸⁸ See pp. 78–79, 112, 114 in this study.

⁸⁹ As for λύπη as a classical vice, see Sandnes, *Gethsemane*, 17–39.

observance, this passage is also relevant in pointing out that the law is an antidote against the power of sin (see earlier in this chapter). Chief among his virtues is a faith worthy of praise (ἔπαινος) and witnessed to in the dictum “he trusted in God” (ἐπίστευσε τῷ θεῷ; *Abr.* 262): “Now that is a little thing if measured in words, but a very great thing if made good by action” (ἔργω; *Abr.* 262). What Philo has in mind is not made explicit, but *Abr.* 167–190 shows that it includes Genesis 22. This action⁹⁰ is praised for being a voluntary good deed (*Abr.* 186) precisely because Abraham did not seek any praise (ἔπαινος) or wish to boast of it (*Abr.* 188–190). Philo’s text now develops into a meditation on Gen 15:6. The relationship between Gen 15:6 and ch. 22 is seen as the relationship between words and actions, and since *consistency* between them is the ideal, Philo is once again able to substantiate how these parts of Abraham’s biography are united in forming a continuous story. According to *Abr.* 268–270, faith in God (ἡ πρὸς θεὸν πίστις) is the highest good, “the queen of virtues.” The patriarch put his trust not in precarious things such as health, wealth, fame, noble birth, etc., but in God and God alone.

Philo’s portrayal of Abraham is shot through with terminology at home in educational discourse, as a kind of “walking the path toward the supreme good.” The peak of this route is the law of Moses.⁹¹ In much the same vein, *Praem.* 28–30, 43–46 speak of Abraham as climbing the ladder to a peak marked by a “vision of God”; he becomes a “God-seer.” This is the perfection at which Philo hints when he often calls Abraham “the perfect.” Hence, faith is the most intimate relationship, visualized in “seeing God,”⁹² but actually achieved through education and training (49).⁹³

A dual meaning of πίστις, faithfulness and trust, also comes into play in *Leg.* 3.228, where Gen 15:6 means trusting in God, rather than in all the precarious things in which human beings tend to put their trust. To make his point, Philo then cites Num 12:7 where πιστός clearly means “faithful.” Thus, the two aspects of πίστις clearly form a tandem, although “faithful” dominates. What we see at work here is an exposition in which Gen 15:6 on trust and faithfulness together with Genesis 22, and indeed the Abraham story generally, form a continuous account in which all the parts together contribute *equally* to portray Abraham’s faith.

⁹⁰ In this passage, Philo uses πρῶξις and ἔργον interchangeably to denote Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice, his firm belief that “to God all things are possible” (*Abr.* 175).

⁹¹ See Sandnes, *Homer*, 33–36, 68–78, and Karl Olav Sandnes, “Markus – en allegorisk biografi?” *DTT* 69 (2006): 277–85. Schliesser does not account sufficiently for this aspect; see *Abraham’s Faith*, 203–11.

⁹² This is how Philo explains the meaning of IS-RA-EL, repeatedly stated in his writings; for example, *Deus* 143–144; *Ebr.* 82–83; *Migr.* 39, 201. In *Virt.* 211–216, Abraham is said to be the first who believed in God, which is a reference to Gen 15:6. Believing in God is interpreted in terms of “seeing God.”

⁹³ See also Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 231–33.

Paul's summoning Gentiles to become children of Abraham calls for some words on the paradigmatic role Abraham had for Gentiles turning to Judaism.⁹⁴ Philo describes the proselyte as a pilgrim travelling from his native country to settle in a better land, thus bringing to mind Abraham who moved from his own country to a new one (*Abr.* 62–64; *Migr.* 2; *Congr.* 77–79). Abraham is:

the standard nobility for all proselytes, who, abandoning, the ignobility of strange laws and monstrous customs which assigned divine honours to stocks and stones and soulless things in general, have come to settle in a better land, in a commonwealth full of true life and vitality, with truth as its director and president. (*Virt.* 219 cf. *Spec.* 1:51)

On the basis of Gen 12:1, Abraham is used as a paradigm for the proselytes' conversion. Philo is indebted to a tradition where Abraham is the principal paradigm for proselytism (*Jub.* 11:16–17; *Apoc. Ab.* 8; Justin, *Dial.* 119:5–6).⁹⁵ This implies that the very setting of Paul's ministry (Gentile mission) paved the way for a discussion on the role of Abraham, and following in its wake, for what this entailed with regard to law observance. Paul's position in isolating Gen 15:6 appears rather clearly to be a minority position; therefore, it is no wonder that his use of Abraham became a point to be targeted. Again, it seems likely that what was held against him was his making this passage into a single defining moment, in which Torah observance was left out. Paul does *not* provide a continuous reading of the biography.⁹⁶

To Paul, Gen 15:6 is a single defining moment, but this was not at all obvious in his context. Abraham's faith voiced in Gen 15:6 is generally seen as inclusive of his *whole* life, but especially in reference to the act of obedience he demonstrated in the test of his faith. There is a broadly witnessed tradition that Gen 15:6 encapsulates what Abraham demonstrated in action in Genesis 22 when tested. This was his "deed" par excellence, the act that paraded him as faithful and perfect. The two chapters taken together form a harmonious unity between words and actions, leaving a consistent picture of Abraham. Since his trust marks the end of a progressively defined relationship nurtured by education and study of the law, it is for Philo itself an achievement that carries God's favor. In Galatians (and in Romans 4), Paul negotiates the way Abraham was commonly seen on the basis of the biblical evidence by separating or keeping apart what had traditionally become a continuum of the texts that depict Abraham's faith.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ See Klaus Berger, "Abraham," *TRE* 1: 372–82; Klaus Berger, "Jüdisch-hellenistische Missionsliteratur und apokryphe Apostelakten," *Kairos* 17 (1975): 232–48; Karl Olav Sandnes, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross-Cultural Comparisons* (Studies in Intercultural History of Christianity 91; Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 41–46.

⁹⁵ Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria: On Virtues*, 258, 360, 385, 405–407.

⁹⁶ He does include Gen 17 in Rom 4:11. To Paul, circumcision was not only introduced to Abraham after his being declared righteous, but it was also added as a seal (σφραγίς) of a status already received; see Sandnes, "Justification," 163–66.

⁹⁷ Beate Ego, "Abraham als Urbild der Treue Israels," in *Bund und Torah: Zur theologischen Begriffsgeschichte in alttestamentlicher, frühjüdischer und urchristlicher Tradition*, ed.

Compared to the findings here, Paul's version of Abraham's story appeared incomplete and inconsistent.

It is by no means my intention to say that all the material unfolded in the present chapter can be transported into the "others" as they emerge from Galatians and Romans; far from it! However, this material is sufficient to demonstrate a way of reasoning well attested in different sources, thus providing a wider context within which those opinions on Paul and the law make sense and become plausible within their historical context.

Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger (WUNT 92; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 26, says that Paul's exposition of the Abraham biography "mit ihrer Betonung des Glaubens des Patriarchen diametralt entgegensteht." Although this conclusion needs some qualification, Ego's observation is helpful in identifying why Paul's Abraham theology was questioned; see also Köchert, *Abrahams Glaube*, pp. 27–47.

6 What's in a Punishment? The Lashes of 2 Corinthians 11:24

Paul says in 2 Cor 11:24 that synagogues punished him five times, inflicting upon him the thirty-nine lashes; in the Greek text, “forty less one.” Something with Paul was found to be offensive to synagogues, and they acted upon this impression. These incidents were not isolated events, if we are to believe what Paul says. The fact that this happened on *multiple* occasions, and most likely in *different* synagogues, adds significance to this piece of information. Most other relevant passages in this investigation refer to dicta, utterances about Paul, or Paul interacting with them. Second Corinthians 11 speaks about *actions*; that is, performances of critique.¹ What we have in this passage are acted or performed perceptions on Paul, his gospel, or his ministry. To what extent law is involved depends on why lashes were inflicted on Paul (see below). What implications may be deduced from this information? The way this is embedded in a larger context where Paul mentions opponents among his Corinthian converts makes it necessary to address 2 Cor 11:24 in its literary setting, and also to distinguish between the position taken by Paul's opponents, by the synagogues inflicting the lashes upon him, and finally, Paul's own position. Paul makes reference to the lashes as part of his fighting his opponents. The epistle is, of course, not a communication with the synagogues, but with his converts, and indirectly, with his opponents, since Paul is concerned that they have a say about him among the Corinthians.

6.1 Context – In Paul's Ministry and the Corinthian Correspondence

That Paul received the punishment five times of “forty strokes save one” at the hands of “the Jews” – as he puts it – is found within the 2 Corinthians 10–12. Within these chapters, Paul targets opponents and even cites them:

10:2 “... to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards” (ἐπί τινας τοὺς λογιζομένους ἡμᾶς ὡς κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας).

¹ Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 55, sees a correspondence between 2 Cor 11:24 and accusations of antinomianism, as found in, for example, Rom 3:8.

10:10 “For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible’ (ὄτι αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησὶν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενής καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος).

Although these two citations have no direct relevance for the specific topic of the present study, they do demonstrate Paul’s habit of recounting what *others* (τινες) held against him, and to expose them to his addressees. This habit was part of his strategy to fight opposition. The practice forms a backdrop for the procedure of this study. Here, he ironically calls the opponents “superapostles” (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11); they are, in fact, false apostles preaching a false gospel (2 Cor 11:4). These chapters convey very little about *what* these apostles said about Paul, law, and pertaining issues. From Paul’s text – of course, the only available source – we gather that the issue was one of authority and legitimacy. Paul presents them as people who undermine and question his legitimacy as an apostle. They convey to his converts that his preaching is done in accordance with human motives, that there is no consistency between his words and acts, nor between his presence and absence, and he had no letter of recommendation to show. In short, his authority is self-made.² Paul on his side presents his apostolic credentials, thus substantiating that the issue is one of legitimacy. Paul cuts this short in stating that what matters is his ἐξουσία (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10).

Turning to Paul’s ministry more widely, his life prior to his Damascus event (Gal 1:13–14) attests that the presence of Christ-followers stirred a debate in Judea. They represented something unsettling, arousing Paul’s anger and due reaction. His reaction cannot necessarily be generalized. His anger and due action, witnessed to in both his letters and in Acts, are witness to how *his* Judaism perceived of these Christ-followers. Gerd Theissen is, in principle, right when he says that Paul’s “Aussagen über das Judentum sind Aussagen über *sein* Judentum.”³ However, the fact that Paul received the lashes more than once – given that this information is reliable – leaves Theissen’s dictum as probably too narrow. The piece of information rendered in 2 Cor 11:24 assumes a core which caused similar reactions at several places. The present chapter argues that Paul the persecutor guides us to a history more complex and unsettling than assumed by advocates of “Paul within Judaism.”

When Paul later worked as an apostle in the Diaspora, *he* faced persecutions. In 2 Cor 11:26, he lists a number of dangers he faced, among which is also included being endangered by his own people (κινδύνους ἐκ γένους). Worth noticing in the immediate context is 2 Cor 11:32–33. Paul here adds a piece of a sup-

² For a detailed presentation of what issues were disputed, see Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (LNTS 325; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 102–104.

³ Gerd Theissen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen: Eine Theorie des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 2001), 289 (his italics).

plemental narrative to the catalogue of hardships in the preceding. He escaped attempts by Aretas, the Nabatean ethnarch, to seize him (πιάσαι με) while in Damascus, being let down the city wall in a basket. To many scholars, this piece of evidence is “so out of place in Paul’s arguments.”⁴ What prompted Paul to mention this is probably that he now (v. 30) shows his weaknesses. Among these, his escape appears rather cowardly.⁵ These verses raise questions of historical background and chronology that go beyond what is relevant for the present study.⁶ The incident referred to is most likely about Paul’s later visit to Damascus (Gal 1:17), after his mission in Arabia (Nabatea?). The reason for his being targeted by the king is not stated. A later reflection of this incident is found in Acts 9:23–25, where it takes place in chronological proximity to his Damascus experience: “after some time had passed” (ὡς δὲ ἐπληροῦντο ἡμέραι ἰκαναί; v. 23). Furthermore, the attempt to have him killed is there attributed to the Jews. That version of the events is relevant for the present investigation; this is not equally clear with regard to 2 Cor 11:32–33.

What we do see, however, is that Paul’s mission caused disturbances more or less immediately; it seems likely that this happened *prior* to the Galatian crisis (see above). According to the version found in Acts, this means that Paul’s theology and practice did not turn controversial only after that crisis.⁷ Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer have pointed out that there were many Jews in Nabatea, and also that the relationship between Aretas and Herod Antipas was tense, due to the fact that Herod divorced the daughter of Aretas, which eventually led to war (*Ant.* 18.106). In such a situation, a Jewish missionary like Paul might not necessary have found much favor with the king, and probably some Jews collaborated with him in an attempt to do away with a troublesome person. Notwithstanding, *conflict* accompanied Paul’s mission throughout, and there is a need to account for this.

That Paul suffered by the hand of fellow Jews is implied in Gal 5:11 (cf. 4:29);⁸ 6:12–13 as well. In Rom 15:30–32, he urges his addressees to pray that he will be “rescued from the unbelievers in Judea.” Paul was obviously concerned about the outcome of his impending visit to Jerusalem. First Thessalonians 2:14–16

⁴ Thus, for example, Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 533.

⁵ Thus also Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 821; Thomas Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther (2 Kor 7,5–13,13)* (EKK VIII/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Theologie/Patmos, 2015), 267.

⁶ Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM, 1997), 106–26.

⁷ In pointing this out, I address the long-standing tradition, reaching back to William Wrede, that Paul’s theology on law and justification by faith derived from his struggle with opponents during that crisis; see also pp. 41, 68 in this study.

⁸ See pp. 83–89 in this study.

mentions persecutions inflicted upon himself and fellow Christ-believers in Judea and Macedonia, indicating that his preaching to the Gentiles (κολούοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλήσαι) in particular provoked hostilities. Hindrances in this regard were made to prevent him from doing so.⁹ Worth noticing is that Paul's mission to the Gentiles is pinpointed. This mission generated issues pertaining to the law, such as circumcision, food laws, and morals. In other words, law issues were probably implied by Paul already in the situation hinted at in 1 Thessalonians 2.

These texts form a helpful background for approaching the statement found in 2 Cor 11:24: "Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one." Paul here is more specific than he was in the preceding v. 23 where hardships are listed more generally. It is, however, very likely that Paul would include the lashes mentioned in v. 24 among the floggings (ἐν πληγαῖς) received according to v. 23 (cf. 2 Cor 6:5). This finds substantiation in Josephus who twice uses this noun as a reference to the synagogue punishment of the forty lashes less one (*Ant.* 4.238; *Bell.* 6.303).¹⁰ In other words, the lashes of v. 24 are most likely in view also in the preceding verse. Worth noticing is then the adverb ὑπερβαλλόντως of v. 23: The flogging took place on countless occasions. It is the style of such listings to exaggerate and lump things together; in any case, Paul clearly conveys that this happened on *numerous* occasions. We gather from this that Paul was a polarizing figure throughout his ministry; there is hardly any reason to doubt the basic information given in this particular passage.

"Foolish Talk"

Scholars are usually interested in how the mentioning of the lashes fits into Paul's "foolish talk" as he himself labels it (vv. 1, 16–19, 21; 12:6, 11). My primary task is to ask what information may be gleaned from this with regard to how *others* conceived of his ministry. It seems that what we have here is a telling example of how opinions called forth judicial actions and punishments. Why did synagogues take action against Paul on several occasions? However, focusing on these questions cannot excuse us from considering the rhetoric in which this comment is embedded, and particularly so since this rhetoric has paved the way for a conclusion that undermines the relevance of this comment for the present investigation: "Like other ancient autobiographical texts Paul's autobiographical passages do not necessarily provide historically reliable insights into his ac-

⁹ The authenticity of this passage has been disputed; see the discussion in Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 164–65, 172–79 and Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 89–103. With these scholars I think the text is Pauline.

¹⁰ We notice later in the present chapter that Jesus, son of Ananias, also suffered from πληγαί (see below).

tual life experience.”¹¹ Is that really so? Before we turn to that question, we will look into the rhetoric in which the relevant v. 24 is found.

In 2 Corinthians 10–13, Paul responds to problems in Corinth regarding his apostleship and his authority among them. He is faced with anonymous (τινες) opponents (10:2, 10, 12; 11:12–15, 18). They preach “another Christ” and “another Gospel”; hence, the Corinthians have been misled to receive “another Spirit” (11:4). These charges, theological in their nature,¹² bring to mind the rhetoric of, for example, Gal 1:6–9. However, his adversaries’ teachings and practices are never specified. Paul does not launch against them theological arguments as does his Epistle to the Galatians. Attention is concentrated on issues of legitimacy and authority. These adversaries have approached Paul’s Corinthian converts in such a way that his authority has been undermined and his leadership qualities questioned. Paul is now involved in a *competition* over what it takes to be an apostle to the Corinthian converts. He is clearly somewhat uncomfortable with the way he finds himself forced to do this; hence, he repeatedly says that his “boasting” is “foolish talk.”

Exegetes talk about chs. 11–12 as the “foolish talk” (*Narrenrede*). Although this is introduced already in 2 Cor 11:1, this label is often applied from 11:16 on. By saying that he speaks as a “fool,” Paul allows himself to boast. A contest between Paul and his adversaries comes clearly through in 2 Cor 11:18: “since many boast according to human standards, I will also boast”; the double *καγὼ* in 11:22, not to say *ὑπὲρ ἐγὼ* in 11:23, convey this. In other words, the list of hardships is introduced as a means in this competition. Paul claims not only to be their equal, but also their *superior*. The main difference between him and the opponents, according to the list of tribulations in 2 Cor 11:23–33, is that Paul has encountered “more numerous and more difficult circumstances.”¹³ Paul’s biting irony in calling them “superapostles” (11:5; 12:11) is particularly telling. In fact, they are “false apostles” (*ψευδαπόστολοι*) who have taken on the shape of apostles of Christ (11:13–15).

This puts Paul receiving the thirty-nine lashes in a context which differs from that of most similar texts found in the Graeco-Roman world.¹⁴ The issue here is not primarily that of enduring hardships, nor of being untouched by tribulations. Paul claims his sufferings as arguments in a contest of what it takes to be

¹¹ Catherine Hezser, “Paul’s ‘Fool Speech’ (2 Cor 11:6–32) in the Context of Ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman Culture,” in *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of Late Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al. (CRINT 14; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 225.

¹² This is pointed out also by Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of Election: Paul’s Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel* (WUNT 2.202; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 82–83.

¹³ Scott B. Andrews, “Too Weak not to Lead: The Form and Function of 2 Cor 11.23b–33,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 274.

¹⁴ See Andrews, “Too Weak,” 264–69, with references both to relevant texts and literature.

a true apostle. Following in the wake of Hans Windisch,¹⁵ scholars often consider 2 Corinthians 11–12 a parody or satire, wherein Paul praises himself for things not commonly boasted about. Instead of praising achievements, Paul instead lists his humiliations. Implied is that Paul's literary models are heroic lists of achievements, as found in, for example, Augustus's *Res Gestae*,¹⁶ which he now turns upside down.¹⁷

Whether or not Paul here works with a fixed genre and intended an inversion of traditional values is not important to this study. What matters is the *fact* that Paul as a missionary brought the Corinthians the gospel, by which they now live. Furthermore, this brought upon him numerous kinds of suffering. Hence, they can put their trust in *him*.¹⁸ This is voiced already in 2 Cor 11:2: "I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." The passage 2 Cor 11:7–11 puts Paul's boasting into perspective: He humbled himself (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν; cf. Phil 2:7–8) to preach God's gospel to them free of charge. Thus, the power of the gospel or of Christ becomes visible in his weakness (2 Cor 12:9–10, 14–15). Paul has been commissioned to "build" (2 Cor 12:19; 13:10). In his mission to preach the gospel, he overcame several kinds of hardship, among which 2 Cor 11:24 is to be counted. This gives to Paul's boasting a christological backdrop.

Sigurd Grindheim argues that since 2 Cor 11:22 belongs within the Fool's Speech, "the reference to his Jewish background must be read as satire."¹⁹ Paul makes a parody of it: "This qualification indicates that this is not a claim Paul is content merely to match, but a claim he wishes to dismiss altogether."²⁰ Grindheim applies this citation directly to v. 22 and to Paul's Jewish identity, and he mentions it alongside Phil 3:4–8. As for v. 24, Grindheim says that Paul in v. 23 shifts the criteria for being a servant of Christ from strength to weakness. Hence, v. 24 is not a parody. In effect, Grindheim distances Paul from his Jewish identity, voiced in v. 22. I find it questionable that v. 22 is satirical. Nothing indicates that v. 22 serves another purpose than the rest of the catalogue of hardships.²¹ Paul compares himself with opponents throughout, as indicated by

¹⁵ Hans Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924), 344–50.

¹⁶ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, ed. F. W. Shipley (LCL 152; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner "Apologie" 2 Korinther 10–13* (BHT 45; Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 1972), 78–89; Fredrick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (SNTSMS 131; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 186–90.

¹⁸ See James A. Kelhoffer, "Suffering as Defense of Paul's Authority in Galatians and 2 Corinthians 11," *SEÁ* 74 (2009): 103–26. Kelhoffer argues that Paul's appeal to his persecutions in Galatians (4:19–20; 5:11; 6:17) works likewise.

¹⁹ Grindheim, *Cruz*, 94.

²⁰ Grindheim, *Cruz*, 90–91.

²¹ For a similar critique, see Thomas Schmeller, "Zwei Narrenrede? 2 Kor 11,21b–33 und

v. 21b: “But whatever anyone dares to boast – I am speaking as a fool – I also dare to boast of that.” As part of this comparison or competition, the catalogue lists hardships as “achievements.” Paul coped with the thirty-nine lashes, which he received five times, and still remained a servant of Christ for the benefit of his Corinthians converts.

From vv. 29b–30 on, these achievements become “weaknesses.” As for v. 24 in particular, the information given there runs contrary to Grindheim’s view that Paul in v. 22 dismisses his Jewishness, since v. 24 assumes that background and makes sense only within such a context (see below). As for Grindheim’s use of Phil 3:4–8, this passage differs from 2 Cor 11:22 at one significant point, namely by its distinction between physical and spiritual circumcision (Phil 3:3). Since this is not in view in 2 Cor 11:22, Paul’s relationship to his physical descent is valued differently in the two texts. With regard to the topic of the present investigation, it is worth noticing though that Phil 3:3 witnesses circumcision as being a matter of dispute between Paul and fellow Jews.

6.2 *Between Reality and Fiction*

In an article on Paul’s autobiographies, Lukas Bormann addresses 2 Cor 11:24, saying that there must always be “Vorbehalte gegen die Nützung von Autobiographien als historischen Quellen. Die Wahrheit der Autobiographie ist immer nur eine Wahrheit für ihren Autor.”²² Bormann further argues that in some of the autobiographies of Paul there are “Hinweise auf die graduelle Fiktionalität des autobiographischen Erzählens.”²³ This implies that there is a *mix* of reality and fiction involved here. Bormann rightly points out that Paul himself conveyed to his addressees his experiences and hardships as reality and not fiction. Nonetheless, Bormann’s presentation tips the balance in favor of fiction, thus leaving Paul receiving the forty strokes minus one more or less a piece of invalid information. Bormann is followed by Catherine Hezser in this judgment. According to her, the “very lack of explicitness ... may caution us against taking him too literally.”²⁴ That Paul repeatedly says that he is practicing “foolish talk” is hardly a reference to fictionality as such. The “foolish talk” refers to his boasting, not to say bragging, of his own “achievements” (2 Cor 11:17). That these “achievements” manifest themselves in weakness enhances this talk as be-

Phil 3,2–11 im Vergleich” in *Der Philipperbrief des Paulus in der hellenistisch-römischen Welt*, ed. Jörg Frey and Benjamin Schliesser (WUNT 353; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 189–205.

²² Lukas Bormann, “Autobiographische Fiktionalität bei Paulus,” in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer (WUNT 187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 113.

²³ Bormann, “Fiktionalität,” 117.

²⁴ Hezser, “Fool Speech,” 236; see also 225–26, 234–36.

ing “foolish” (2 Cor 11:30; 12:9–10; 13:9). Paul subverts notions of honor, dignity, and power. His real strength lies in his weakness for the benefit of his converts. Naturally, the competition involved is prone to foster exaggerations. Biographical details are hardly untouched by the rhetorical setting, but the prophetic traditions at work (see above) are a reminder not to turn Paul’s passage too easily into fiction.

Message and Medium: Prophetic Prototype?

Catherine Hezser says that Paul’s suffering “reflects a kind of moral superiority,” which has its closest analogy in “the prophetic prototype,” epitomized in the suffering servant in particular: “When Paul presents himself as a suffering servant, he must have had these biblical associations in mind.”²⁵ Some scholars portray Paul as identifying himself with the servants of God in Isaiah 56–66 at length.²⁶ Against some of these attempts, I find it necessary to distinguish between Paul identifying himself with a certain prophetic figure as kind of a typological fulfillment on the one hand, and his use of prophetic patterns more widely when he fights for the legitimacy of his apostleship on the other hand. In my view, the latter applies here.

The following observations substantiate this. First, Paul finds himself in a situation where the legitimacy and authority of his ministry and message are questioned. He probably coins the term “false apostle” as analogous to the Septuagint’s “false prophet” (ψευδοπροφήτης), as a category for people who deceive and teach falsely.²⁷ This is precisely the situation which triggered his use of prophetic traditions in Galatians 1.²⁸ The situation in 2 Corinthians 10–13 is prone to call upon biblical prophetic traditions. He charges his adversaries for preaching “another Christ,” “another Gospel,” and “another Spirit” (see above), which all bring to mind traditions on false prophecy as depicted in Deuteronomy 13 in particular: “... the question of false prophecy was involved in the discussion of his apostolate and gospel.”²⁹ Second, in 2 Cor 12:1–10 – found within his “foolish talk” – evinces “a particular connection with the prophetic

²⁵ Hezser, “Paul’s ‘Fool Speech,’” 233–34.

²⁶ Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah’s Servants: Paul’s Theological Reading of Isaiah 40–66 in 2 Corinthians 5:14–6:10* (LNTS 330; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 112–31. Somewhat similar but more balanced is Jeffrey W. Aernie, *Is Paul also Among the Prophets? An Examination of the Relationship between Paul and the Old Testament Tradition in 2 Corinthians* (LNTS 467; London: T&T Clark, 2012).

²⁷ Reiling, “ψευδοπροφήτης.”

²⁸ Sandnes, *Paul*, 48–70.

²⁹ Sandnes, *Paul*, 70–73; quotation p. 73. In his detailed study, Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2*, 71–101, argues that Paul draws heavily on Deuteronomy 13 and apostasy, but that this owes more to his own understanding of his opponents than his enemies accusing him for being a false prophet.

tradition of the Old Testament.”³⁰ Finally, the way the message and the medium, the gospel and the apostle, merge in 2 Cor 10–13 hardly finds a better analogy than in prophetic traditions.³¹ In fact, present-day readers have become so familiar with Paul the *apostle*, that we tend to forget that ἀπόστολος means “messenger” or “emissary,” for which the closest analogy are the prophets. When Paul argues that his message is inseparably connected with himself as its medium, he leans on such traditions.³² These observations have some repercussions on the question of reality versus fiction in the list of hardships (see below), since too much fiction is disturbing to Paul’s argument. The prophetic analogy is a reminder that the sufferings included are not primarily fiction, since that would write them off as having any relevance for establishing the credentials of a prophet. Catherine Hezser seems not to realize that the prophetic prototype paves the way for a blending of the medium and the message, which affects the communication: if the message is to be believed, it cannot differ fundamentally from what the addressees know about the messenger.

There is no way to ascertain all questions related to the when, how, and who was involved in all the hardships mentioned. There is in Paul’s letters a context for some of them (see above), and the Acts of the Apostles also provides a context for some of the instances mentioned, while others are mentioned in this passage only. Probably, Paul exaggerates in a heated contest that he cannot afford to lose. Fictionality is, therefore, part of this, but primarily as exaggerations. If the list of hardships is intended as an *argument*, which, indeed, it is, it is by no means enough that it represents only “truth for its author,” as claimed by Bormann. That is tantamount to reject that autobiographical details are given a role to play vis-à-vis the addressees. It is simply to dismiss the rhetorical situation that aims at *communication*, not soliloquy. As an intended argument, the list of hardships requires that the addressees or readers find and recognize it as true also for them, at least in its basic information.³³

It is not by accident that the most well-known piece of an autobiography of Paul (Gal 1:13–16a) is introduced with a reference to what the addressees already know: “you have heard” (Gal 1:13). Paul’s reference to their *shared* knowledge, old information, obviously applies also to the Damascus event hinted at in Gal 1:15–16a. It is hardly possible to imagine that his Galatian converts heard about Paul’s persecutions with no connection to the dramatic change that had occurred in his life. Unfortunately, when Bormann mentions the formula “you have heard” as a possible reference to reality, he does not include Gal 1:13 in his list of references.³⁴ Galatians chapter 1 is relevant in this context. Pieces of au-

³⁰ Aernie, *Paul*, 233–243; quotation p. 243.

³¹ This is also pointed out by Ehrensperger, *Paul*, 83–86, 91–97, 104, 106.

³² See Eastman, *Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 66–88.

³³ For similar arguments, see pp. 37–39 in this study.

³⁴ Bormann, “Fiktionalität,” 118.

tobiographical information serve as an argument there as well, in bringing shared knowledge to bear on the issue of Paul's legitimacy.³⁵ We noticed that the autobiography in Galatians was embedded in the theology developed.³⁶ A similar duality is probably at work in 2 Corinthians 11 as well. The mix of reality and rhetoric does not, therefore, suggest that 2 Cor 11:24 be put aside as we seek information on how Paul's theology was perceived by others, in this case, the synagogues inflicting the lashes upon him.

6.3 *The Punishment and What It Speaks*

Crucial to our investigation are, of course, the questions pertaining to this punishment: who had the authority to inflict the thirty-nine lashes? What were the reasons for receiving them? Do we have sources relevant from Paul's time? The point of departure for the practice of this punishment is the regulations mentioned in Deut 25:2–3. This text assumes that forty lashes is a maximum, and that the number of lashes is to be meted out in accordance with the accusation. Clearly, Paul received the maximum to be meted out of this punishment. Since Deut 25:2–3 sets an upper limit at forty, it is likely that a tradition to reduce this punishment with one strike developed from the principle to “build a fence around the law,” thus safeguarding that the letter of the law was not broken.³⁷ There are no sources from Paul's time conveying how this biblical punishment was implemented. However, Josephus mentions it (*Ant.* 4.238,³⁸ 248; 13.294), and, most likely, also Philo (*Spec.* 2.27–28). The latter text distinguishes between penalties proceeding from God and men, respectively. The first applies to perjury or ignoring God, but no specific punishment is mentioned, but the wrongdoer remains forever in hopeless uncleanness. Penalties given by men are either death or the lash (πληγαί). The lash is less serious than the death punishment, but the wrongdoer is scourged *in public*. Philo here uses both δημοσίᾳ and ἐν κοινῷ; the latter probably mirrors a synagogue setting as can be gleaned from his detailed presentation of fellowship in a synagogue (*Prob.* 80–87); see espe-

³⁵ Sandnes, *Paul*, 66–68.

³⁶ Sandnes, “Prophet-Like Apostle,” 554–56; see also pp. 37–39, 66–67 in the present study.

³⁷ On the punishment, see Sven Gallas, “‘Fünfmal vierzig weniger einen ...’ Die an Paulus vollzogenen Synagogastrafen nach 2 Kor 11,24,” *ZNW* 81 (1990): 178–91; see also David Bolton, “Paul and the Whip: A Sign of Inclusion or Exclusion?” in *Theologizing in the Corinthian Conflict: Studies in the Exegesis and Theology of 2 Corinthians*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al. (Biblical Tools and Studies 16; Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 367–69.

³⁸ Louis H. Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1–4: Translation and Commentary* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary Vol. 3; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 420, points out that the universally applied penalty in Deuteronomy 25 by Josephus is applied to greed or hubris in particular. It is appropriate that “being enslaved to greed” is punished in a way fitting to slaves.

cially 85–87 where this adjective is found frequently. Although Philo distinguishes between the death punishment and flogging, he says that “a flogging is as severe a penalty as death.”

Most detailed, however, are the regulations laid down in Mishnah, *m. Mak.* 3.1–10. Sven Gallas concludes that at Paul’s time this punishment was conducted by synagogue authorities “in einer ähnlichen Form.”³⁹ According to Josephus, this is a most ignominious penalty to receive for a “free man,” since it exposes him as a slave. Josephus’s concept of this as proper treatment of slaves, finds interesting parallels in Paul’s text in the “foolish talk” of boasting about weakness and shame. Paul’s subversive rhetoric resonates with what Josephus writes here. However, Josephus does not offer much help when it comes to grasp *why* the thirty-nine lashes were practiced. However, he takes the punishment in Deut 22:18 to be the lashes prescribed in Deuteronomy 25, and says that they are inflicted on those who act contrary to marriage laws, which might be worth noticing here since mixed marriages bring into the context the issue of how Gentiles and Jews relate. Scholars have suggested various reasons for Paul being punished. A crucified Messiah may have been found offensive, or Paul’s laxity toward the law in not requiring Gentiles to be circumcised⁴⁰ might have been seen as amounting to principled apostasy. Such reasons are often mentioned. The following will now delve into this. As we do that, we have to distinguish between what the punishment as such speaks, and what Paul’s *mentioning* of these incidents speaks. In this study, the first question is most important. We will start there: what kind of offences caused the lashes?

Apostasy?

It is hardly possible to infer from the punishment itself precisely what the accusers held against Paul, since the punishment target is rather wide. Nonetheless, Mishnah provides some help. Sven Gallas has drawn attention to *m. Mak.* 3.2 in particular, where numerous issues of cleanliness, among which food laws stand out, are mentioned.⁴¹ This brings into the picture practical and cultic issues intimately connected with Paul’s Gentile mission.⁴² In other words, law issues are

³⁹ Gallas, “Fünfmal,” 191.

⁴⁰ Fredriksen, “Later Contexts,” 41 says that “we cannot infer anything about the Jewish apostle’s level of Jewish observance on the basis of the *ekklesia*’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 age, which is where the first generation of the movement thought they stood.” Fredriksen is right in pointing out that these two things are not necessarily the same. It seems, however, that those who inflicted the floggings on Paul, were less concerned about this distinction.

⁴¹ Gallas, “Fünfmal,” 184.

⁴² Hvalvik, “Paul as a Jewish Believer,” 132, points this out as essential for interpreting why Paul suffered this punishment.

most likely the backdrop of 2 Cor 11:24. As suggested by many expositors, Paul's refusal to circumcise the Greeks, and still to consider them entitled to full rights of "citizenship" together with the people of God, is a likely backdrop here. Combined with this, the messiahship of Jesus, Christ crucified, as found in, for example, 1 Cor 1:23 ("we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews") may also have caused the punishment.⁴³ Murray J. Harris also makes reference to *m. Mak.* 3.2 and mentions "disregard of food laws by eating unclean food and encouraging other Jews to do so."⁴⁴ However, Harris goes on to say that an even more probable reason is a charge of blasphemy, understood as "defiant sin." He calls upon Num 15:30–31 where it says that those committing "defiant sins" will be expelled from the people (ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ... ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτῆς). This brings us close to apostasy.⁴⁵ In my opinion, this is misleading as to how the thirty-nine lashes worked, and what they aimed at. If they aimed at *maintaining* Jewish laws and customs, they cannot simultaneously be caused by apostasy (see below). What the punishment aimed at preventing is not identical with its cause. When Harris summarizes that 2 Cor 11:24 "affords further evidence of Paul's Jewishness,"⁴⁶ I concur, but find that contradictory to his use of Num 15:30. If apostasy is really involved, this can hardly at the same time be taken as straightforward evidence of his Jewishness.

Urging this distinction finds support in the fact that *m. Mak.* in 3.15 differentiates between being scourged and extirpation; in fact, the strokes provided relief from extirpation, or "being cut off ..." (Lev 18:5; Num 15:30–31): "All they that are liable to Extirpation, if they have been scourged are no longer liable to Extirpation, for it is written, *And thy brother seem vile unto thee* (Deut 25:3) – when he is scourged then he is thy brother."⁴⁷ Accordingly, Paul W. Barnett says that Paul was deemed to have committed transgressions that warranted

⁴³ Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians Volume II* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 737; Bolton, "Paul and the Whip," 377.

⁴⁴ Harris, *Corinthians*, 802. David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (WUNT 2.304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 204, says that the "best guess is that it was for the serious offense of blasphemy when he proclaimed his faith in Christ, his altered understanding of Judaism with the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God."

⁴⁵ Samuel Krauss, *Synagogale Altertümer* (Berlin, Wien: Benjamin Harz, 1922), 186, mentions later Christian sources, including Epiphanius *Haer.* 30.11, where it says that Jews who embraced Christianity were submitted to the lashes. These sources are too late to rely on, and furthermore, they mix up *the reason* for the penalty with what it aimed at preventing. I state this *pace*, for example, James C. Miller, "Paul and his Ethnicity: Reframing the Categories," in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner (LNTS 420; New York, London: T&T Clark, 2011), 50, who says that the lashes, seen from the perspective of those administering them, characterize him as an apostate, while not for Paul himself.

⁴⁶ Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 802.

⁴⁷ Quoted according to *The Mishna Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*, ed. H. Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

“being cut off from among his people,” but that the scourging absolved him.⁴⁸ This distinction paves the way for another tractate in Mishnah, *Keritot* on Extirpation. The distinction attested to in the fact that there are two tractates is hardly applicable to Paul’s time. Nevertheless, the overlaps between the two with regard to the offences committed indicate that drawing such distinctions has been an issue already. Hence, *m. Mak.* 3.15 warrants that the lashes of which Paul speaks hardly amounted to apostasy as such.

The question of apostasy has been addressed by John M. G. Barclay. I render a quotation which carefully balances the distinction I have urged:

The synagogue beatings suggest that Paul tried to maintain his contact with the Diaspora communities, but was convicted on several occasions for serious breaches of the law. One may presume that, if he maintained his stance on these controversial matters as a point of principle, he may even have been considered an apostate who abandoned the Jewish customs.⁴⁹

Barclay here balances between what might have caused the punishment and what his *continued* breaches of the law would then bring about. This distinction implies that apostasy as such cannot have caused the thirty-nine lashes. As long as there is a reason for punishment, there is simultaneously an aim or hope in preventing apostasy to become manifest. Hence, if Paul was judged to be an apostate, he would hardly suffer punishments from synagogue authorities. The thirty-nine lashes are, thus, an indication that he is *not yet* deemed an apostate, but a troublesome person worthy of punishments that, hopefully, will bring an end to the path he is following, a path that eventually many fellow Jews would consider apostasy, and a path from which other Jews should be kept away.

Apostasy, Jews leaving behind their ancestral religious practices, was an option, as demonstrated in the wake of the Maccabean crisis,⁵⁰ but in my view, the lashes represent something different. According to Matthias Konradt, “Die ‘Verfolgung,’ mit der sich Paulus im Kontext von Synagogen konfrontiert sah (2 Kor 11, 24, 26, s. auch Gal 5,11; 6,12) weist deutlich auf die Einschätzung des Paulus auf jüdischer Seite hin.”⁵¹ Konradt labels this “Einschätzung” “Apostat,” and says that Paul presented issues fundamental to Jewish identity as obsolete

⁴⁸ Paul W. Barnett, “Was Paul’s Grace-Based Gospel True to Jesus?,” in *Paul as a Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner (LNTS 420; New York, London: T&T Clark, 2011), 101–101.

⁴⁹ John M. G. Barclay, “Who Was Considered an Apostate in the Jewish Diaspora?,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 90.

⁵⁰ See pp. 188–89 in this study.

⁵¹ Matthias Konradt, “‘Mein Wandel einst im *Ioudaismos*’ (Gal 1,13): Paulus als Jude und das Bild des Judentums bei Apostel Paulus,” in *Fremdbilder – Selbstbilder: Imaginationen des Judentums von der Antike bis in die Neuzeit*, ed. René Block et al. (Basel: Wien, 2010), 47–48. Thus also Segal, *Paul*, 223, who makes reference to the Maccabean tradition and brings Gal 5:11 into this perspective.

(“obsolete”) and not valid (“hinfällig”), such as circumcision and dietary rules. In my opinion, this presentation, is, from a Pauline perspective, hardly accurate. We should rather speak of Paul *relativizing* the law than leaving it obsolete. Konradt makes no distinction here between what is obviously a topic in the decisions leading to undertake such punishments (what they wanted to prevent), and the reason which caused the punishment itself.

Sociology of Punishments

David Bolton has presented “a sociological study of Paul’s synagogal beatings” (2 Cor 11.24).⁵² His interest lies with the sociological implications of the lashes. He argues that the punishment is proof that the Jesus movement, *in casu* Paul, belonged firmly within Judaism:⁵³ “So long as you wanted to stay as a member of the Jewish community, you had no choice but to submit to it. But if for any reason you wished to leave it, it would have no further purchase on you.”⁵⁴ This is stated *pace* scholars who hold that Paul mimed Torah observance for strategic reasons only, thus keeping access for the gospel to the synagogues (1 Cor 9:19–23).⁵⁵ Supposedly, Paul underwent this punishment as part of his mission strategy to win his fellow Jews by being a Jew to Jews. I agree with Bolton that this interpretation hardly provides a satisfactory explanation. My main reason for doubting this is that 2 Cor 11:24 would rather endanger than promote Paul’s mission among Diaspora Jews.

However, I find it confusing when Bolton also says that Jesus believers were seen as “apostate Judeans,” who through this punishment were pressurized to return “to both confessional and halakhic norms.”⁵⁶ This is confusing with regard to apostasy (see above). I also find that this runs against what he says, namely that the punishment has no purchase on those who have left the community. This tends toward contradictory statements. I do agree, however, that more is at stake here than issues of halakha. Halakhic issues were at the heart of scribal discussions, but such disputes did not normally amount to measures of punishment.

⁵² Bolton, “Paul and the Whip,” 363.

⁵³ Bolton, “Paul and the Whip,” 377.

⁵⁴ Bolton, “Paul and the Whip,” 369.

⁵⁵ For example, A. E. Harvey, “Forty Strokes Save One: Social Aspects of Judaizing and Apostasy,” in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study*, ed. A. E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1985), 82–83; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 803, and Hvalvik, “Paul as a Jewish Believer—According to the Book of Acts,” 132. See also Philipp Vielhauer and the Acts of the Apostles, p. 181 in this study.

⁵⁶ Bolton, “Paul and the Whip,” 370. According to Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 736–38, Paul suffered these hardships because his gospel involved “a break with Judaism,” due to his radical attitude to the Mosaic Law, particularly in relation to his gentile mission where he did not require circumcision. There is, however, a tension in Thrall’s presentation as she also says that Paul regarded himself as within Judaism, and therefore, willingly suffered at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

The main problem with David Bolton's investigation is that it is not really sociological. If such a perspective is taken seriously, it has the potential to destabilize the conclusion that punishment is identical with inclusion. Although this is true, it is still saying too little. E. P. Sanders has in his understanding of 2 Cor 11:24 coined this in a well-known dictum: "*Punishment implies inclusion*" (his italics).⁵⁷ Certainly, the point of departure should be that punishment by nature is an *insider* phenomenon, since it presupposes a commonality of authority, rules, and space, but punishment conveys simultaneously some kind of *ambivalence* toward the person being punished. Pieter Spierenburg says that its aim is always to civilize; in other words, social control and boundaries are involved.⁵⁸ According to the fellowship responsible for the judicial action, the punished find themselves in a situation deemed *problematic* vis-à-vis this fellowship. According to Esther Cohen, the punished find themselves in a state of *liminality*, similar to the situation which Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner have applied to explain the role of rites of passages. Whether temporary or permanent, the liminal status imposed upon offenders was a means of demarcating the boundaries between the normative community and those who offended against it. Like any other mechanism of social control, legal processes could and did impose coercive liminality.⁵⁹

A relevant example is the chastisement of Jesus, son of Ananias (Josephus, *Bell.* 6.300–309). He was "tortured with many strokes" (πολλαῖς αἰκίζονται πληγαῖς; 302) as a *warning*.⁶⁰ In spite of this warning, he *continued* his message of judgment and performed bad omens (prophetic symbolic actions) against Jerusalem and the temple. Hence, the man was handed over to the Roman governor, a procedure which conveys that the punishment was seen as a warning before further steps were taken, thus confirming the liminality involved. This sociological perspective leaves a more complex picture. From the perspective of the synagogues responsible for the punishment, Paul's status was that of an insider, but for the time being, his position was deemed *liminal*. From Paul's own perspective, he maintained his liminal status through the fact that he received this punishment more than once; it seems to have been a recurrent phenomenon in his career. In John M. G. Barclay's words, Paul was thus "continually endangered."⁶¹

⁵⁷ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 192.

⁵⁸ Pieter Spierenburg, *Violence & Punishment: Civilizing the Body Through Time* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013).

⁵⁹ Esther Cohen, *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France* (Brill Studies in Intellectual History 36; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 79–81; quotation on p. 80.

⁶⁰ See Bent Noack, *Jesus Ananiassøn og Jesus fra Nasaret. En drøftelse af Josefus, Bellum Judaicum VI 5,3 (Tekst & Tolkning 6; København: Gad, 1975), 44–54. Noack refers to Jesus's dicta against the temple and his symbolic actions as a driving motivation for the punishment. Josephus distinguishes between this punishment by Jewish leaders and the scourging ordered by the Roman governor (303).*

⁶¹ Barclay, "Deviance and Apostasy," 122.

Persecutions and Persecuted

Paula Fredriksen addressed the issue of the synagogues' disciplinary actions taken against Paul already in 1986.⁶² She argued then that what accounted for Paul's persecutions of the Jewish group of believers in Damascus was their proclamation of a crucified (i.e., dead) messiah: "The *skandalon* of the cross is in declaring *any* dead leader as messiah, because to function as messiah, the leader (as Akiba realized) could not be dead."⁶³ Fredriksen emphasizes that this did not affect the attitude toward the Torah, since there is no Jewish tradition whereby the Torah and messiah militate against each other.⁶⁴ In her 1986 article, Fredriksen makes a suggestion, which then was left undeveloped, namely that the synagogue actions of Paul while a persecutor and later those against himself, were caused by concern to continue a peaceful co-existence with the imperial government.⁶⁵

Fredriksen has recently picked up on this suggestion and developed it.⁶⁶ Important in her presentation is that Paul persecuting ἐκκλησία (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:8–9), in fact, juxtaposes the synagogue disciplinary statement that he received himself later. In other words, in both cases, flogging is implied, and by having the two mirror each other, we enhance the possibility of reaching an adequate understanding of the reasons behind it. Paul the persecutor sheds light on why he was later persecuted. The reason for Paul administering the synagogue discipline as well as for his receiving it was that the Jewish community was put at risk by a message that alienated pagans from their ancestral obligation, which was to pay homage to the local gods. His own receiving of the thirty-nine lashes resulted from Paul requiring new followers of Jesus from a pagan background to denounce the Roman gods and to stop worshipping them. This led to the synagogues disciplining Paul, because they were concerned that Paul's self-identification as a Jew would lead to attacks on the Jewish communities. The synagogues could be seen as cradles for disloyalty.

⁶² Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *JTS* 36 (1986): 3–34.

⁶³ Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine," 13.

⁶⁴ Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine," 10. For the Torah and the Messiah tandem in Paul's theology, see pp. 41–44 in the present study. Larry Hurtado, "Paul's Messianic Christology," in *Paul the Jew: Reading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccacini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 107–31, argues that Paul's variant-form of devotional messianism is distinctive in its Jewish setting. According to Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 70, Paul's messianism was "not simply some new religious Jewish party, such as the Pharisees seem to have been. It was something more radical. The early Jesus movement was, to use modern terminology, more 'sectarian,' making an exclusivist claim to which all others should give assent."

⁶⁵ Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine," 13–14.

⁶⁶ Paula Fredriksen, "Later Contexts," 42–47.

In other words, the security of the synagogues was jeopardized by what pagans considered deviant Gentiles. To safeguard themselves, Jews therefore repudiated any action that might be seen as deviation by the pagans, and which might be traced to the synagogues. Thus, synagogue authorities considered the message of Christ-believers as potentially destabilizing to social order. Such situations caused the Jews to become targets of local anxieties and resentments: “alienating the pagan majority put the synagogue at risk.”⁶⁷ Fredriksen’s view finds support in the Acts of the Apostles (17:1–9; 19:21–41; take notice of v. 33–34 in particular).⁶⁸ However, in none of these instances is flogging by the synagogue mentioned. The instances most relevant in the Acts of the Apostles are Paul’s persecutions (Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–2). Worth noticing is that Fredriksen speaks of “local” anxieties, while the initiative to calm the situation in Damascus, according to Acts, comes from Jerusalem. Furthermore, Paul is even given authority to bring the troublemakers from Damascus to Jerusalem. This is hardly a local situation; more is at stake here. The narrow and local perspective finds no corroboration in these passages. For sure, the Acts of the Apostles envisions conflicts between Paul and Jewish communities caused by a concern for the latter to co-exist with local imperial powers, but this is never connected to disciplinary actions nor to Paul’s persecution of Christ-believers.

If we take Paul’s persecution as a point of departure for understanding the lashes he received, the role of his zeal and the Phineas-tradition come into play (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6 cf. Acts 22:3). Torrey Seland makes a strong case that what is implied in Paul’s zealotism is a zeal for God or the Torah, and that it came into play in “cases of gross Torah transgressions.”⁶⁹ Seland argues that Gal 1:14 is a reference to ancestral customs. In Philo’s writings, “customs” often equals the law in such a close way that the distinction between the law and customs collapses. This is corroborated with passages in Philo as well as in Josephus,⁷⁰ where the customs refer to what distinguishes Jews from other people.⁷¹ Hence, the issue at stake in Gal 1:14 is what Paul perceived as attacks on the Torah, in one way or other. In the words of Terence L. Donaldson, “[p]ersecution arises not

⁶⁷ Fredriksen, “Later Contexts,” 46.

⁶⁸ Fredriksen, “Later Contexts,” 47, makes reference to Acts 19.

⁶⁹ Torrey Seland, “Saul of Tarsus and Early Zealotism: Reading Gal 1,13–14 in Light of Philo’s Writings,” *Bib* 83 (2002): 450. In discussion with James D.G. Dunn and the “New Perspective,” Dane C. Ortlund, *Zeal Without Knowledge: The Concept of Zeal in Romans 10, Galatians 1, and Philippians 3* (LNTS 472; New York: T&T Clark, 2012) argues that “Jewish zeal normally refers most fundamentally to the moral substance of zeal, not the ethnic form in which it is exercised” (p. 166). In other words, the immediate focus is *obedience* to God or the Torah.

⁷⁰ *Spec.* 2.253 (ζηλωταὶ νόμον, φύλακες τῶν πατριῶν ἀκριβέστατοι); *Ant.* 12.271 (εἴ τις ζηλωτῆς ἐστὶν τῶν πατριῶν ἐθῶν καὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ θρησκείας). The reference of Mattathias’s dictum in Josephus speaks of “the native form of worship” (270) in a way inclusive of both law and customs. Both passages are remarkably similar to Gal 1:14 in their wording.

⁷¹ Seland, “Saul of Tarsus,” 464–65.

because a group holds ideas at variance with the norm, but because it does so in ways that threaten social cohesion.”⁷² That comment accounts for the historical sources and also makes a pertinent sociological observation. Paula Fredriksen has rightly pointed out that Paul as persecutor and persecuted mirror each other, but that is also precisely the Achilles heel of her argument. Galatians 1:14 with its emphasis on Paul’s zeal hardly coincides with her interpretation of 2 Cor 11:24. This does not mean that 2 Cor 11:24 is taken as a case of apostasy; in this I agree with Fredriksen. However, we must account for the seriousness involved in this.⁷³ It makes sense that Fredriksen, due to her position, holds zeal and Phineas to be overstated in much Pauline scholarship,⁷⁴ and here our ways part.

Fredriksen’s point of departure, namely that Paul persecuting the Christ-believers and his being persecuted for having joined them, brings another problem as well. We noticed earlier that Paul recounted his persecutions in terms of *διώκειν* and *πορθεῖν* (Gal 1:13). The two verbs are closely connected since they have, in fact, the same grammatical object, *ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ* and the pronoun *αὐτή*, which refers to “the church of God.” Paul’s use of *πορθεῖν* is particularly worth noticing here. This verb occurs also in the testimony of the victims of Paul’s persecutions (Gal 1:23),⁷⁵ with one important alteration though; namely, that “the church of God” has been replaced by “faith” as the object Paul targeted in his persecutions. I pointed out in chapter 3, that this implies that Paul’s persecutions are presented as directed against the very message of his Epistle to the Galatians, as faith *versus* law. Persecution thus takes on a role *beyond* a biographical note; it is deeply embedded in the theological rationale of Galatians. In other words, Paul targeted not only persons or institutions, but a way of thinking, a system of thoughts as well.

The verb *πορθεῖν* is at home in discourses on wars or military actions where complete destruction of the enemy is the intended goal.⁷⁶ This is seen, for example, in its frequent appearance in the *Jewish War* of Josephus.⁷⁷ Josephus also uses this term frequently in his *Antiquities* when he describes the wars waged against Israel throughout history. Very often the object of this verb is a piece of land, a village, a country, houses, or Jerusalem, inclusive of its people.⁷⁸ Philo

⁷² Donaldson, “Zealot,” 671.

⁷³ See my comments on “apostasy,” pp. 165–68, 186–92 in this study.

⁷⁴ See p. 61 in this study.

⁷⁵ See pp. 57–62 in this study. It is worth noticing that in Acts 9:21 (“Is not this the man who made havoc [*πορθήσας*] in Jerusalem among those who invoked his name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?”) this verb occurs in a citation of people in Damascus who observed the shift in Paul’s attitude; in other words, quite similar to Gal 1:23.

⁷⁶ LSJ s.v.

⁷⁷ Karl Heinz Rengstorff, *A Complete Concordance of Flavius Josephus I–IV* (Leiden: Brill, 1973–83), s.v.

⁷⁸ Flaccus’s actions against the Jews (*πορθεῖν Ἰουδαίου*) in Alexandria are compared to that of sacking a city in *Flacc.* 54.

summarizes in *Conf.* 46–47 the nature of war, and among the many terms used to depict what war is like, is also found *πορθεῖν*, the destructive power which brings down nations and countries, cities or villages, including families and individuals.⁷⁹

The occurrence of *πορθεῖν* in Galatians hardly substantiates Fredriksen's view that the primary concern in the lashes was *self*-protection. The military connotations of the term give the impression that it was more than a defensive action. Furthermore, the object ("Church of God" and "faith") of this "war-like" activity seems ideologically driven. If this applies to Paul as persecutor, it applies equally – as Fredriksen rightly emphasizes – to the lashes Paul received at the hands of synagogues. Fredriksen is, therefore, right in making Paul's persecutions crucial for understanding why he himself came to be persecuted later, but she is mistaken when she claims that this was caused by the synagogues' concern to maintain peaceful relations with Roman authorities. This is not what the lashes "speak."

A Persistent Troublemaker

The forty lashes save one were inflicted upon Paul by Jews, so he says. In the preceding v. 22, Paul claims his identity: "I am a Hebrew. I am an Israelite. I am a descendent of Abraham." No irony is attached! Verse 24 indicates some kind of distancing Paul from this claim and from those responsible for the punishment, at least when seen from *their* perspective. This distancing, as Paul sees it, does not apply to his identity as a Jew, but indicates that he considers the punishment inflicted on him as not being in accordance with the hopes of Israel (v. 22), to which he committed himself. The implicit tension here echoes a distinction between Paul's ethnic and "religious" identity, and that the two were not always identical.⁸⁰ The latter is more in flux than the first; at least, that is how the synagogues in question saw it.

As pointed out by many expositors, 2 Cor 11:24 attests that Paul "remained in contact with the synagogues even during his mission to the Gentiles, and that they, conversely, regarded him as one of their own, one who was subject to the punitive measures available to the Jewish community."⁸¹ In other words, Paul's Jewishness was not an issue. If Jewishness as such was an issue, this piece of

⁷⁹ In *Plant.* 159 and *Prob.* 38, Philo exploits the military reference metaphorically and speaks about "invading and destroying the mind."

⁸⁰ See pp. 23–25 in this study.

⁸¹ Harris, *Corinthians*, 802–803; Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, Apollos, 2014), 428. Similarly, Schmeller, *Korinther*, 256. This was noticed already by Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ Vol. 2* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1901), 262, saying with reference to this particular passage that Jews "administered justice among the members of their community."

information would certainly have aggravated Paul's case. His suffering at the hands of synagogue authorities on several occasions hardly serves to substantiate his Jewishness. Thus, the mentioning of the punishment assumes Jewishness, and the aim of the punishment itself was to maintain that. However, this is also precisely where the punishment conveys a double message. The punishment speaks loudly about Paul as a Jew, but a troublesome Jew at that. Hence, he is punished, and the lashes inflicted upon him also served the purpose of issuing a warning to others. We can hardly ignore that Paul counted the punishment among persecutions inflicted upon him. Love L. Secrest rightly points out that it is misleading when it is said that Paul "submitted" to the authority of the synagogues; the idea of his "submission" must be balanced by the fact that he describes the lashes as something he "received" (ἔλαβον).⁸² Though, it is still unlikely that those administering the punishment saw themselves as punishing an "outsider."

Paul says that he received this punishment five times. From this we get the impression of some persistence in Paul here, something he was not ready to abandon at any cost. It is not likely that these incidents occurred in the same synagogue. Different synagogues scattered in the Diaspora held similar views on Paul.⁸³ He came to be seen regularly and at different places as a liminal phenomenon, as a problem, someone disturbing commonly accepted views and practices. In other words, these five incidents should not be seen as incidents. Together they attest that Paul was seen as a persistent troublemaker.⁸⁴ This means that, although we do not know the precise reasons for these acts of punishment, it is unlikely that they "arose from false charges and were designed to deter his ongoing presence in a particular town or city."⁸⁵ Turning this into merely local and accidental punishments is neglecting the impact of the information passed on in this passage.

⁸² Secrest, *A Former Jew*, 161–62.

⁸³ Robert E. Osborne, "St. Paul's Silent Years," *JBL* 84 (1965): 60, 65, suggests that since Luke leaves out the information given in 2 Cor 11:24, "we may with some assurance place these things in his silent period" (A.D. 37–48). Thus also Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians Second Edition* (WBC 40; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 565. In other words, the piece of information fits into his early time as a Christ-follower, a time about which we know next to nothing. Martin gives no additional reason for this suggestion. There are too many questions regarding history, which makes Osborne's point of departure fit for anything else than purely a suggestion. There are sufficient indications in Paul's letters that he suffered also at the hands of fellow Jews; see pp. 157–58 above.

⁸⁴ As pointed out by Grindheim, *Crux*, 97–98, the thirty-nine lashes in Paul's rhetoric represent Jewish authorities, while the beating with the rod refer to Roman authorities. Stoning was considered a most contemptuous punishment. Hence, Paul here portrays himself having suffered rejection by Jewish as well as Roman authorities.

⁸⁵ *Pace* Barnett, *Corinthians*, 542. In view of the fact that this punishment was a threat to life (thus Schmeller, *Korinther*, 256), it amounts to more than attempts to deter a local situation.

6.4 *What Do the Lashes Speak When Mentioned?*

What is the role of the lashes within Paul's communication with converts and opponents at work among them? The fact that Paul's mentioning of the hardships appears in a context invoking comparison and competition with rival missionaries, implies that he does not only convey a general view that power manifests itself through weakness. This pattern of thought must in some way have a bearing on the contested issue of legitimacy of Paul's apostleship, in short, vis-à-vis his Corinthian converts.

Apparently, claims by opponents to their Jewish roots made Paul do the same (2 Cor 11:22). Thus, the claim to Jewishness is a common ground between them. With regard to Jewish identity, Paul competes with outstanding credentials. However, Jewishness is hardly as such a contested issue in his list of hardships. Paul's claim to be a Hebrew, an Israelite, and a descendant of Abraham (1 Cor 11:23) – very much like his claims in Phil 3 – is probably part of the authorization dispute, not an indication that his Jewishness was questioned. If that was the case, Paul would certainly have played into their hands by including among his credentials that he on multiple occasions had been punished by synagogue authorities (2 Cor 11:24).

Having five times received the thirty-nine lashes in synagogues is hardly something Paul would have brought up if someone held against him that he was negligent of Jewish customs and the law. Paul assumes Jewish identity in making reference to the punishment, but is that really his purpose? I doubt that. The question is why Paul, in a controversy with opponents who claim Jewishness, mentions the lashes he has received at the hands of Jewish authorities. This piece of information rather serves the purpose of making evident Paul's burdensome life as an apostle for others, thus bringing to mind the paradigm of Christ. He proves his authenticity as an apostle by including references to his tribulations. The weaknesses of which he boasts in 2 Corinthians 11 make up the very foundation for his converts' becoming Christ-followers and for their remaining so. Verse 28 about Paul's daily pressure and anxiety for all his churches gives this perspective on the tribulations, among which the lashes are also included. His converts can rely on him since he has carried these burdens to bring them the gospel.

6.5 *Summary*

The piece of information given in 2 Cor 11:24 about the actions taken against Paul by the synagogues is embedded in Paul's rhetoric. Paul may have exaggerated the number of incidents, but these possible exaggerations should not distract from grasping the basic reality here: Paul was publically (i.e., in synagogues)

exposed as a troublemaker. Furthermore, the catalogue of hardships speaks a truth which is *not* reserved for the author. This information must have met with basic familiarity among his addressees. More than once, and in different places, Paul suffered the punishment of forty lashes less one. In other words, they were not incidental, but marked Paul as a person who regularly was found to be stretching the limits of what was acceptable within synagogues. Paul's contemporary Judaism should not be portrayed so flexible and pluralistic that such an act of punishment becomes meaningless. If the piece of information about five occurrences in various places is taken seriously, we have something that amounts to a deviant career. Paul is not a co-religionist in good standing, according to the information rendered here. This text must be read against the backdrop of the many passages in Paul's letters conveying that Paul was a *polarizing* figure. This fact brought upon him numerous occasions of different sorts of punishments and from different people (1 Thess 2:14; Gal 5:11; 6:17; 1 Cor 1:23; 4:3–5; 16:9; 2 Cor 4:4–8; 6:4–5; 12:10), albeit we do not surmise that all these instances involved Jewish authorities; however, some did, and this applies particularly to the thirty-nine strokes. According to these passages, Paul was a “stumbling block to the Jews,” (1 Cor 1:23), and he lived a strenuous life, due also to the difficulties he faced from fellow Jews.⁸⁶ The Corinthians to whom Paul now addresses himself owe their life as Christ-believers to the fact that Paul held out his sufferings. This is the reason that he mentions the lashes to them.

Hence, this punishment speaks, and it speaks loudly, on the topic of the present investigation. First of all, it speaks of Paul as a Jew, as firmly belonging within the power and jurisdiction of synagogues. These actions were punishment for unwanted behavior or opinions, most likely related to the law. Within this perspective, the punishments were also attempts at maintaining Paul within the fold. He was *not* considered an apostate, but the punishments were aimed at preventing just that from happening. The information conveyed in this passage is important, as on one hand, it brings to mind that it is necessary to distinguish between how Paul saw himself and enacted his identity, and on the other, how this was considered by *others*. The two are not necessarily the same. Acts performed publically, and in different places, are clear expressions that Paul was labelled liminal.

Finally, the punishments were also issuing a warning against similar views and attitudes. Second Corinthians 11:24 often serves as a proof text for the basic view of “Paul within Judaism.”⁸⁷ Though, we cannot ignore the fact that differ-

⁸⁶ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Paul and Faithfulness of God: Parts I and II* (London: SPCK, 2013), 541, rightly points out that such passages are manifestations of what “scandal of the cross” entails.

⁸⁷ Elliott, “The Question of Politics,” 232; Thiessen, *Paul*, 56. According to Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 18–19, Paul suffered (2 Cor 11:24) “a biblical punishment (Deut 25:3) reserved for Jews who violated basic values and practices of the community.” He has

ent synagogues considered Paul an erring member, and acted upon that by punishing him, thus also making Paul an example to other Jews of unwanted behavior. In short, the piece of evidence of 2 Cor 11:24 substantiates as well as de-stabilizes the way Paul is portrayed by some promoters of “Paul within Judaism.” Hence, it does not suffice to say about the punishment, as Thomas Schmeller does in his recent commentary: “Immerhin belegen sie die bleibend enge Verbundenheit des Paulus mit der Synagoge.”⁸⁸ The complexity involved in Paul being *punished* on several occasions is thereby *not* accounted for. That the punishment reveals that Paul was seen as a Jew is simply to state the obvious. It is necessary to come to terms with what is in a punishment, also from a sociological perspective. In other words, 2 Cor 11:24 is not sufficiently accounted for by only saying that Paul here proves to be Jewish.

Furthermore, the evidence of this text also implies that Paul’s mission, from the perspective of those who inflicted the punishment, was not seen as limited to Gentiles. The nature of the punishment was to target *Jews*, who in one way or other were jeopardizing Jewish customs. In other words, although 2 Cor 11:24 goes a long way to support “Paul within Judaism,” it also questions the view where Paul’s mission involves him with Gentiles only. Insisting that 2 Cor 11:24 substantiates Paul’s Jewishness and, simultaneously, his mission exclusively for Gentiles, is faulty. For those inflicting these lashes upon Paul, the latter was not irrelevant to the former. At least, Paul’s Gentile mission called forth *Jewish* actions against him.

become “a Jewish heretic.” “Heretic” equals “apostate,” and I have my reservations about that category (see above). How Gager’s view on this point can be reconciled with his view that Paul’s ministry did not affect Jews outside the Jesus movement (see p. 14 in the present study) is not clear to me.

⁸⁸ Schmeller, *Korintherbrief*, 256.

7 Paul and the Law in the Book of Acts: An Ambiguous Picture

So far in our investigation, we have pursued how *others* viewed Paul. The distinction between Paul and embedded dicta of anonymous others and also actions taken against Paul by others (2 Cor 11:24) have guided us. With the Acts of the Apostles, the terrain changes. As it is not written by Paul, Acts *as such* presents Paul from the viewpoints of others. It is important at the very outset to be aware that Acts conveys more than an authorial perspective on Paul. It does make sense to see who says what about Paul in Acts, but nonetheless, *all* passages about Paul and the Torah are, in principle, equally important to the present study, as all of them convey perceptions *about* him. The material relevant for this investigation grows in Acts, and we need to apply some other distinctions; that is, between narrative pieces of information, attested in general opposition and in Paul's practices, between the implied author and figures within the story, between Jewish and Roman authorities, and between Jerusalem and the Diaspora.

Paul's preaching finds in the Jews its fiercest opponents.¹ This opposition has a rationale in ideology: Paul threatens the fundamental pillars of Jewish identity, among which the law holds pride of place. At other times, the Jewish opposition is portrayed as collaborating with local authorities, thus giving the impression that the dispute is not only about theology, but also about the concern for Jewish ethnic privileges and for stability *vis-à-vis* political authorities.² At times, Jewish authorities, as those present in Rome, express no hesitance in listening to Paul; he is among his own for sure. Sometimes, Roman authorities voice their opinion on Paul in ways that matter to this investigation. Throughout all these diversities, we need to remind ourselves that Luke has orchestrated it all. While the other chapters in this study have addressed Paul in the eyes of his contemporaries (i.e., a reception story simultaneous to him), we now turn to *later* receptions. Although the date of composition is debatable,³ along with

¹ See Joseph B. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1992), 142–45.

² See Moyer V. Hubbard, "Urban Uprisings in the Roman World: The Social Setting of the Mobbing of Sosthenes," *NTS* 51 (2005): 416–28.

³ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; MN: Fortress, 2009), 5, who places it in the second century.

most scholars, I hold Acts to have been written toward the end of the first century;⁴ a relatively early witness to how Paul was labelled.

Paul and the law as well as issues pertaining to the law have impacted largely on questions of authorship and the authenticity of this literature. How can the compliant Paul, as portrayed in, for example, Acts 16:3 where he circumcises his co-worker Timothy, be reconciled with the resolute figure of Galatians (Gal 5:2, 12; 6:12–13)? A true companion of this debate on “Paulinism” and Paul’s Jewishness in Acts is his attitude to the Torah. In his classical article “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,”⁵ Philipp Vielhauer made the point that Paul’s attitude to “the ancient religion of the Jews” implied not only a historical distance from Paul, but also a distinctive theological viewpoint which was *not* Pauline. In other words, Paul’s Jewishness in Acts sets him apart from the epistolary Paul. Vielhauer summarizes the questionable Jewishness of Paul in Acts in eight points, all pertaining to law obedience:

- Missionary method, in which the synagogue plays an important role
- Submitting himself to Jerusalem authorities
- Paul circumcises Timothy (16:3)
- Spreading the apostolic decree (16:4)
- Assuming a vow (18:8)
- Visiting Jerusalem to participate in Jewish festivals (18:21; 20:16; 24:17)
- Participating in a Nazirite vow with other members of the Jerusalem Church, after the advice of James
- Stressing that he is a Pharisee, nurturing only the “hope” of Israel⁶

The Epistle to the Galatians is to Vielhauer the standard or measure for defining the characteristics of “Pauline.” The eight points stand “in direct contradiction to the theology of Paul, but it fits Luke’s view that the law retains its full validity for Jewish Christians and that Paul acknowledged this in a conciliatory concession to the Jews.”⁷ That said, Vielhauer, in fact, anticipates the view that

⁴ See, for example, Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Cambridge, UK: Paternoster & Eerdmans, 1997), 60–63; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary. Introduction and 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 383–401.

⁵ Philipp Vielhauer, “On the ‘Paulinism’ of Acts,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (London: SPCK, 1966), 33–50; originally published in German in *Evangelische Theologie und Kirche* 10 (1950–51): 1–15. The impact of Vielhauer’s article on scholarly debate is seen in the fact that it is reprinted as an overture to a collection of articles in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul’s Claim upon Israel’s Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters*, ed. David P. Moessner et al. (LNTS 452; New York, T&T Clark, 2012), 3–17. For a critical view on the “Paulinism” of Acts, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; Doubleday: The Anchor Bible, 1998), 145–47.

⁶ Vielhauer, “Paulinism,” 38.

⁷ Vielhauer, “Paulinism,” 41.

Luke's perspective corroborates with "Paul within Judaism," albeit Vielhauer strongly differs in taking this as a *deviation* from the epistolary Paul.⁸

Jacob Jervell challenged what in the wake of Vielhauer became a dominant view, particularly among German scholars. To Jervell, Acts is witness to the importance of "Jewish Christianity" for understanding Paul's ministry and theology.⁹ Jervell takes as his point of departure that Paul in Galatians – the standard of Paulinism – was engaged in *polemics*. He asks how Paul was and reasoned when he was *not* engaged in fighting adversaries. Only the non-polemical Paul accounts for his complex personality: "The Lukan portrait of Paul is today by leading exegetes characterized as inauthentic and a distortion, but it is in my opinion part of the unknown Paul from the Pauline letters. We can trace the portrait of Paul in Acts back to the marginal notes in the Pauline letters."¹⁰ Hence, the Lukan Paul resembles Paul as he speaks in Romans 9–11, and also in 1 Cor 7:18. The unknown Paul is the Jewish Paul, and this is also, according to Jervell, the historical Paul. What is there in the shadows of Paul's letters is placed in the sun by Luke.

In his recent study, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, Matthew Thiessen stands on the shoulders of Jervell and portrays Paul thusly: "Paul had no problem with the Jewish law itself."¹¹ This conclusive dictum seeks justification in the early reception-history found in Acts.¹² Although Thiessen states that Luke's reliability is to be disputed with regard to historical information, "the Paul of Acts ought to be considered a reliable interpretive guide to the letters of Paul for anyone who considers both Acts and Paul's letters to be scripture."¹³ What Thiessen here refers to is the shape of the New Testament canon. By having Acts preceding Paul's epistles, Acts functions as a hermeneutical key, the lens through which Paul is to be understood. The interpretative guide to Paul is, therefore, how Luke portrays him. My presentation of Paul and the law in Acts aims to see

⁸ With reference to 2 Cor 11:24, Vielhauer, "Paulinism," 38–39, says that "as a Christian he [Paul] acknowledged the synagogue's jurisdiction over himself." However, to Vielhauer, this is so for *strategic* reasons, since the synagogue offered opportunities for him as a missionary. Thus, 2 Cor 11:24 is swept up in 1 Cor 9:19–23, and has little to offer regarding Paul's Jewish identity. The synagogues to Vielhauer are nothing but "mission areas." It is worth noticing how similar Vielhauer and John G. Gager end up in their evaluation of Paul and the synagogue; see citation p. 214 in this study. Vielhauer urges a distinction between Judaism and Christianity within which Paul is rightly understood as belonging to the latter, while Gager emphasizes strongly that Paul is *within* Judaism, but when it comes to the pieces of information that Paul attended synagogues, they both define this in terms of mission strategy only.

⁹ Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984); see also his *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) and his *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Jervell, *Unknown Paul*, 63.

¹¹ Thiessen, *Paul*, 161; see also Thiessen, *Conversion*, 112.

¹² Thiessen, *Paul*, 164–69.

¹³ Thiessen, *Paul*, 168.

that *differing* pictures of Paul are at work in this literature, although Luke throughout conveys *his* way of looking at it. The question of authorship is not in view here. With reference to tradition, I label the author Luke, with no intention of subscribing to any particular theory on provenance.

7.1 *Reading Acts Backwards*

Luke's concern about providing a buffer to protect Paul against accusations reaches a climax in the way his Pauline story comes to an end in Acts 28:17–22. In this section, Paul comes out absolved vis-à-vis accusations occurring in the larger narrative. The passage summarizes the allegations levelled against him by Jews in chs. 21–26. Paul takes a stand against these accusations (vv. 17b–20), epitomized in the dictum “I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors ...” (Acts 28:17). Furthermore, the place attributed to this scene within the larger narrative is important. Found at the closing of the story, significance is to be attributed to it. Further legitimacy to this clearance of Paul comes from the fact that he engages in a friendly dialogue with leaders of Roman synagogues (v. 17). No authoritative message from Judea¹⁴ about Paul as a problem has been conveyed to them. The well-known role of Jerusalem and Judea in Luke's writings makes this piece of information worth noticing. They also have not heard anything evil about Paul. Judged from what the narrative itself conveys about accusations raised against Paul, this irenic reaction at the end of the narrative turns out rather idyllic. Luke portrays these Jews in an analogy with those of the synagogue in Beroea (Acts 17:11); they are truth seekers who consider Paul a Jew with whom they can search for truth together. It is no accident that the majority of MSS make an addition to v. 29, describing the scene as scriptural discussion (συζητεῖν/ζητήσις; see below). This is fundamentally an *insider* perspective: Paul is a Jew, ethnically and ideologically. The shadow of contest and separation is not entirely removed though (v. 22). The leaders are familiar with Paul being contradicted everywhere (πανταχοῦ ἀντιλέγεται), and his message causes division also among themselves (vv. 24–25). The last word to the Jews is taken from the prophets (Isa 6:9–10), and it is about their failure to understand. Nonetheless, Luke portrays this as a division within Judaism.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cf. Acts 9:2, 14 about such directives.

¹⁵ Loveday Alexander, “Reading Luke–Acts From Back to Front,” in *The Unity of Luke–Acts*, ed. Joseph Verheyden (BETL 142; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 419, says that ch. 28 is primarily about community conflict, and describes the scene depicted in this chapter as “the disturbing encounter with the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome, with its harsh and menace ending, which dominates the final chapter of Acts.” This presentation of ch. 28 does not sufficiently address the more friendly aspects, as I see it.

Reading Paul and the Torah in Acts against the backdrop of this ending leaves him as a law-abiding Jew. This is conveyed in the role given to the synagogues in his mission strategy.¹⁶ Paul assumes a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:8b; 21:21–26); he participates in Jewish festivals (Acts 20:6, 16; 27:9; 18:21 Western text). All these pieces of information are tied up with his journeying, thus paving the way for the conclusion made by Isaac W. Oliver, namely that Paul’s itinerary seemed to be planned so that he did not interfere with the day of the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals.¹⁷ He has no objections against Jewish believers practicing circumcision, as demonstrated by Acts 16:1–3. Although I find it likely that Paul did circumcise Timothy,¹⁸ historical reliability is not a primary matter here. What matters is that in Luke’s narrative, this incident serves as an argument “against accusations stating to the contrary that he opposed Jews who upheld the Torah”¹⁹ (see below). This is important as it indicates that Luke’s portrayal is entangled in a *debate* on Paul’s relationship with the Torah.

Torrey Seland has pointed out that Luke’s reason for “whitewashing his hero”²⁰ is relevant also for understanding the purpose of Acts more generally. This question takes us beyond the limits of this study. What can be affirmed though is one fact and a question following in its wake. The fact is that Paul’s Jewishness or his loyalty to the Torah and the Jewish heritage is at the center of chs. 21–28. From this follows a question: What happens when Luke brings the contested issue of Paul and the Torah to the attention of his readers? Luke would hardly have introduced his readers to a tradition throwing shadows on his and their hero, if no such rumors existed. Luke is certainly not inventing this. Hence, a tradition with the potential to blacken the hero was already around. Luke is in no position to deny that some Jewish Christ-believers were troubled by what they kept hearing about Paul and his gospel. Thus, even among friendly Roman Jews, the story ends with a concern about Paul and Paul’s warning to them. *Ambiguity* seems to be an appropriate word here.

7.2 Paul Accused and Defended

Luke’s ambition to prove that Paul was not a violator of the law naturally includes attempts at acquitting him of allegations to the contrary. Luke’s ambition and the allegations are thus intertwined. Luke’s portrayal of Paul is given against

¹⁶ For example, Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1–2, 10; 18:4–6, 19; 19:8–9. According to Isaac W. Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 222, Paul is “a Jew thoroughly comfortable with the synagogue habitat.”

¹⁷ Oliver, *Torah Praxis*, 194–237.

¹⁸ See, for example, Sandnes, “A Missionary Strategy?,” 137–40.

¹⁹ Oliver, *Torah Praxis*, 433.

²⁰ Seland, *Violence*, 199.

a backdrop of a *contested* picture at hand to his readers. The Book of Acts is replete with passages in which Paul is accused in various ways; hence, he also appears in judicial settings. The accusations concern the Torah and halakha, temple, social unrest, whether Jesus was the Messiah, and resurrection. The following will concentrate on issues that Luke finds pertaining to νόμος, albeit in various ways. Daniel Marguerat draws attention to the fact that law vocabulary in this literature is concentrated primarily in the figure of Paul. Luke's portrait of Paul revolves around issues of law, whereas it is quite absent in the picture of the apostles. This paves the way for an important inference: "This distribution of Law vocabulary already affords us a first-clue: Luke is aware that the relationship to the Law played an important role in Paul's activities."²¹ Furthermore, the polemical context and the accusations against Paul represent evidence that "the author of Acts has preserved the memory of a crisis involving Paul and the Law, even if the exact terms of this crisis do not appear again explicitly in his work."²²

Chapters 21–26, in particular, portray Paul as loyal to the law against allegations to the contrary. The presence of the term ἀπολογία and cognates in these chapters (Acts 22:1; 24:10; 25:8, 16; 26:1, 2, 24) are indicative of a main concern. Accordingly, Reidar Hvalvik says that "it is clear that Luke wanted to paint Paul as a pious Jew, especially in the defense speeches."²³ In his discussion on the speeches in Acts, a genre to which the defense speeches obviously belong, Colin Hemer says that "[t]he real issue is whether they are Lukan summaries or Lukan creations."²⁴ These alternatives can be addressed, as does Hemer, as part of the issue of the authenticity and reliability of Acts: "There remain good reasons for taking them as abstracts of real addressees rather than fabrication."²⁵ Such a conclusion has a bearing upon the present project, as it implies that the defense provided by Paul in the relevant speeches, more or less, are his *own* words, which would then leave them irrelevant for the present study. They are not words about Paul by others, *in casu* Luke. However, Hemer also concedes that the speeches are not "verbatim reports," rather "perhaps a *précis* of distinctive highlights."²⁶ Luke's hand in these speeches is to me a given, albeit historical remains should not be ruled out.²⁷ This observation justifies that even when

²¹ Marguerat, *Paul*, 50.

²² Marguerat, *Paul*, 51.

²³ Hvalvik, "Paul as a Jewish Believer, 152. Thus also Tyson, *Images*, 158–68; Witherington III, *Acts*, 432; Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 152: "Paul's Jewish credentials are superior to those of any other believer in Acts."

²⁴ Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 418; for his discussion, see pp. 418–27.

²⁵ Hemer, *Acts*, 427.

²⁶ Hemer, *Acts*, 418.

²⁷ Vitor-Hugo Schell, *Die Areopagrede des Paulus und die Reden bei Josephus* (WUNT 2.419; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 61–65.

Paul defends himself in these speeches, this is to be perceived as *Luke's* perspective. In principle, this means that we have an interactionist perspective present.

In Jerusalem (Acts 21:17–36)

A key incident is the passage on Paul's final visit to Jerusalem. Multiple perspectives on Paul's attitudes to the Torah come into play here. Different groups of people hold opposing sentiments on this issue, thus demonstrating that the issue is contentious and indeed complex. Jerusalem Christ-followers render a rumor critical of Paul circulating among some Jewish Christ-believers in the city. These believers are pointed out explicitly among other Christ-believers. Paul's friends approach the rumors, and develop a strategy aimed at disproving them. This involves an act of demonstration, putting on display, so to speak, Paul's loyalty to the temple and the Torah. The aim is to prove Paul's loyalty to the law (στοιχεῖς καὶ αὐτὸς φυλάσσων τὸν νόμον; Acts 21:24), a strategy worked out by no other than James. The strategy fails, as Paul by Asian Jews present in the temple, is mistaken (Acts 21:29) to have violated it by bringing Gentiles into a restricted area. The Roman authorities intervene, and Paul is arrested. The crowd shouts: "Away with him!" This passage parades the complexities involved in how Paul is portrayed in Acts. Multiple views on Paul are reflected, those of his friends, Asian Jews, Romans, the crowd, Jerusalem-based Jews (more indirectly), and of course, Luke who composed the scene.

The Jewish Christ-followers were called "zealous for the law." They are concerned about what they have been *told* (κατηχήθησαν; v. 21 cf. v. 24) about Paul's mission and teaching. More than rumors are implied here; well-founded information has been passed on to them.²⁸ The verb used here corresponds to the accusations Paul's mission faces; he is involved in "teaching" (διδάσκεις). What is passed on are allegations that Paul teaches a dubious "doctrine." The accusations rendered in v. 21 have two main points. Paul teaches apostasy (ἀποστασίαν διδάσκεις) from Moses. Furthermore, he teaches that all *Jews* living among pagans should not circumcise their sons or follow Jewish customs. The two are intertwined in a way that makes the second the rationale for the main allegation. Matthew Thiessen rightly points out that the allegations depend on reports "that Paul teaches *Jews* who live among the gentiles that they should abandon Jewish customs."²⁹ However, since no other source indicates that Paul wanted Gentile believers to be circumcised and to obey Jewish customs, such allegations represent a *misunderstanding* of the real Paul. For Jewish believers noth-

²⁸ BDAG s.v. Seland, *Violence*, 263; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 524 says: "Es geht um systematische Informationswirksamkeit." This probably goes beyond the evidence, but the term used here has a claim toward passing on knowledge as a kind of instruction.

²⁹ Thiessen, *Conversion*, 119.

ing has changed with regard to the Torah after Christ.³⁰ Thiessen thus explains a possible obstacle for his use of the Acts of the Apostles as substantiating evidence for “Paul within Judaism.”

I do not necessarily question that interpretation, but the question to be asked is the following: If Paul himself thought like this, and if “Luke believes that Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church, not to mention the zealous leaders in Judea, agree that all Jewish believers, in both Judea and the diaspora, ought to continue to observe the law, including the rite of infant circumcision,”³¹ how did such allegations come into being, and why did Luke bother to transmit them? The charges, albeit labelled false, represent a critical tradition arising out of what was seen as a non-negotiable aspect³² in Paul’s theology on the Torah; hence, in some ways also relevant to Jews. Luke took pains to demonstrate that the conclusion drawn by the charges was false. Nonetheless, he passes on the view that Paul’s “doctrine” concerning the Torah did not follow the logic of “Paul within Judaism.” If such accusations at Luke’s time were non-existent and did not apply, why pass them on, and why correct them? Why make them up?

Apostasy?

Delving into the key term ἀποστασία gives an adequate perspective on the allegations. According to BDAG, ἀποστασία and cognates mean “defiance of established system or authority, rebellion, abandonment, breach of faith.” The term has political as well as religious connotations. In Josephus’s writings, this is the term for rebellion, directed mostly against the Romans (*B.J.* 2.39; 7.39, 164; *Ant.* 15.291; 18.302). It is the opposite of loyalty (πίστις) or obedience (Ῥωμαίοις ὑπήκουσεν; *Vita* 39). According to *Vita* 43, John, son of Levi, who observed that some of the citizens at Gischala “were highly elated by the revolt from Rome (ἀποστασίαν τὴν ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων), tried to restrain them and urged them to maintain their allegiance” (τὴν πίστιν ... διαφυλάττειν).

Philo attests to the political inference of this term when he has the Jews of Alexandria address the Roman official Flaccus’s proceedings against them (*Flacc.* 94):

When were we suspected of revolting (εἰς ἀπόστασιν)? When were we not thought to be peaceful (εἰρηνικοὶ) inclined to all? Were not our ways of living which we follow day by day blameless and conducive to good order and stability in the City (πρὸς εὐνομίαν πόλεως καὶ εὐστάθειαν)?”

³⁰ Hence, Thiessen, *Paul*, 165–66.

³¹ Thiessen, *Conversion*, 120.

³² In my view, this non-negotiable aspect likely has to do with Paul’s emphasis on Christ and the subordination of the Torah and customs that followed in the wake of this; see pp. 41–44 in this study.

The lifestyle of the Jews, as they follow their laws and traditions, are here seen as conducive to peace and stability in society. Hence, law observance and order form a tandem, which echoes the gist of accusations raised against Paul in some of the texts addressed here (see below): his teaching brings disorder and is threatening to stability and order.

However, in many texts, ἀποστασία and cognates take on a more direct religious reference, referring to a breakaway from inherited practices and traditions.³³ In Josh 22:22–27, we find a text which equals an incantation, saying that God will not rescue if apostasy (ἐν ἀποστασίᾳ) is committed. The context mentions people raising altars for idols, with the effect that they turn away from God (ἀποστήναι ἀπὸ κυρίου). What follows in the wake of this is that the next generation will have no share in the God of Israel (οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῖν μερίς κυρίου). In 2 Chr 29:19–22, ἀποστασία is used with reference to cult practices in the temple; it is here closely identified with bringing defilement (ἐμίανεν) to the holy place and its vessels.

When Josephus renders the story of the tower (Genesis 11), he draws on non-biblical traditions about Nebrodes, grandson of Ham, Noah's son (*Ant.* 1.111–117). Nebrodes incited the people to detach themselves from God (ἀποστήσειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοῦ φόβου τοῦ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ; 114). This story epitomizes disobedience to God (παρακούειν), which led to their neglecting that they owe their τὰ ἀγαθὰ to God's benevolence (111).³⁴ In a Greek fragment to the Jubilees,³⁵ it says that Nebrodes incited people to apostasy (παρορμῶντος αὐτοὺς εἰς ἀποστασίαν; cf. *Jub.* 10.18). The story of the vineyard of Naboth (1 Kings 21) is told in the Septuagint (3 Kings 20). Jezebel conspires against Naboth and sends two men to accuse him falsely, with the intention of having him stoned to death. These two men are called υἱοὶ παρανόμων (vv. 10 and 13); some MSS read ἄνδρες τῆς ἀποστασίας. We see here how apostasy gradually came to imply some kind of questioning of the law.

In *Isaiah's Martyrdom*, during the reign of king Manasseh, the king is portrayed as wicked, causing apostasy, being a servant of Beliar (*Mart. Isa.* 2.4). In the Greek fragments of this literature, it says: πολλοὺς ... ἀποστήσει ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν εἰδώλοις ("Many ... he will cause to abandon the living God, and they will worship idols").³⁶ What this means is then unfolded:³⁷ Manasseh did not follow in the steps of his father who observed God's commandments. Instead, he abandoned serving God (ἀφήκεν τὴν λατρείαν τοῦ

³³ See Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 144, for other references.

³⁴ This brings to mind the way the allegations mirrored in Rom 3:8 are shaped; see pp. 107–110 in the present study.

³⁵ *Fragmenta Pseudepigraphorum Quae Supersunt Graeca*, ed. Albert-Marie Denis (PVTG 3; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 88.

³⁶ *Fragmenta Pseudepigraphorum*, 107. My translation.

³⁷ *Fragmenta Pseudepigraphorum*, 108–109.

θεοῦ), made himself idols of gold and silver, and thus worshipped the Devil. He ἐξέκλινε πάντα τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείας καὶ προσκυνήσεως (“He turned all the house of his father away from serving and worshipping God”; 3.3). Manasseh drifted into apostasy (ἀποστασία) and lawlessness (ἀνομία).

Literature revolving around the Maccabees and the Hellenization of that time vividly portrays that apostasy was an option for Jews. The revolt takes its starting point in the king’s (i.e., Antiochus IV Euphrosyne) officers who were “enforcing apostasy (οἱ καταναγκάζοντες τὴν ἀποστασίαν), as they came to the town of Modein to make the people there offer sacrifice” (ἵνα θυσιάσωσιν; 1 Macc 2:15). Mattathias states that he himself, his sons, and brothers will never abandon (ἀποστήναι) the worship conducted by the fathers: “Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances” (ἴλεως ἡμῖν καταλιπεῖν νόμον καὶ δικαιώματα; 1 Macc 2:19–22). What is implied in the relevant noun here is to leave behind the practices ordained by the law. This is also the case in 1 Macc 1:15 when it says that some Jews in Jerusalem removed the marks of circumcision, or as the Greek text says, “made themselves uncircumcised” (ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀκροβυστίας), with the intention of making themselves fit for participating in competitions at the Greek gymnasium. To the author of that text, this is identical with abandoning (ἀπέστησαν) the holy covenant, joining the Gentiles (ἐξευγίσθησαν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), thus setting themselves to do evil (τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν).³⁸ This passage has the cognate verb in a setting which leaves no doubt that it is possible to leave behind living like a Jew and embracing a pagan lifestyle. Hence, being a Jew is not only a matter of ethnicity. For sure, political revolt is not the focus here. Furthermore, this is not primarily about ethnicity, but about *living* according to the customs. Instructive in this regard is 3 Macc 1:3 where it mentions a man by the name of Dositheus, “a Judean by race (τὸ γένος Ἰουδαῖος) who later changed his customs and became estranged from his ancestral beliefs” (μεταβαλὼν τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τῶν πατριῶν δογμάτων ἀπηλλοτριωμένος).³⁹ This use of μεταβάλλειν is found also in 4 Macc 6:18–19 and 15:14. Greek ἀπαλλοτριῶν refers to alienation and is often used with reference to Israel’s abandoning God, found in judgment passages (Jer 19:4 [Ἐγκατέλιπόν με καὶ ἀπηλλοτριώσαν τὸν τόπον τοῦτον]; Ezek 14:5 [κατὰ τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν τὰς ἀπηλλοτριωμένας ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ], 7 [ὃς ἂν ἀπαλλοτριωθῆ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ]). It is abundantly clear that this is about leaving God and the practices associated with that relationship. In Ephes 2:12, this verb describes pagans who are not members of the people of Israel (ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ), alienated from the life in God (Ephes 4:18 [ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ] cf. Col 1:21). The Maccabean tradition picks up on this language, and it is evoked in the Acts of the Apostles in some of the charges Paul faced.

³⁸ Again one is reminded of Rom 3:8; see pp. 107–110 above.

³⁹ Thus NETS; NRSV reads “a Jew by birth.”

According to the material presented here, ἀποστασία implies abandonment of God, tradition, true worship, and the law. It is associated with key figures and events in the story of Israel:

- Nebrodes and the backdrop of the Flood story in Genesis
- King Manasseh, the iconic disobedient king
- Jezebel, the queen who epitomized incitement to worship foreign gods; hence, she became in, for example, the Book of Revelation a stock figure for apostasy (Rev 2:20)
- King Antiochus IV and his politics, which caused the Maccabean uprising

The fact that Paul in Acts 21 is faced with allegations revolving around the Torah, the temple, and circumcision make these texts a relevant backdrop, as Paul was seen to lead Jews astray. According to Alan F. Segal, Paul in the Acts of the Apostles is also one who incites Jews to “give up their ancestral customs. The charge is appropriate to the message that Paul delivered.”⁴⁰ Allegations of apostasy are grounded in what is conceived as prompting *Jews* who live in the Diaspora to a lax attitude toward the customs, among which circumcision is given pride of place. Paul’s attitude to this rite among his pagan converts is here generalized and applied also to Jews, who thereby, with the abovementioned material as a backdrop, start adapting to their pagan environment to a degree that will eventually question their Jewish identity.

Some scholars (rightly) question if there is any account in the Book of Acts that supports such charges.⁴¹ The accuracy and reliability of these allegations are not of primary interest here. They do, however, convey sentiments about Paul relevant for a study on how he was *perceived*. The accusations bring to mind 1 Maccabees 1. In 1 Macc 1:11, Jews, called υἱοὶ παράνομοι,⁴² are mentioned and rendered “deserters of the law,” who persuaded (ἀνέπεισαν) many fellow Jews to separate themselves from their life and to form a covenant with the pagans among whom they live (διαθώμεθα διαθήκην μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν κύκλω ἡμῶν). What this entails is made clear in 1 Macc 1:15 (see above). This means leaving behind traditional Jewish practices, not circumcising their sons, and forgetting the law (ἐπιλαθέσθαι τοῦ νόμου) and altering its commandments (ἀλλάξαι πάντα τὰ δικαιώματα) (1:42, 48–52). This was seen as an act of forsaking (ἐγκαταλείπειν)⁴³ the law.

⁴⁰ Segal, *Paul*, 257.

⁴¹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 693; Witherington III, *Acts*, 648. Thiessen’s view is obviously along that line (see below).

⁴² Cf. Acts 18:13 above.

⁴³ This verb appears in 1 Macc 1:42 and 52; see also above. See also the accusations levelled against James, the brother of Christ, according to Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–201: παρανομισάντων (“having transgressed the law”).

That Paul allegedly taught (διδάσκων) against the people, the law, and the temple *everywhere* (πανταχῆ; Acts 21:28) is to be seen in the light of such traditions, which is also echoed in the accusations levelled against Stephen, eventually leading to his being stoned: “This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law ... change the customs that Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:13 cf. v. 11). Paul’s seductive teaching concerning the law, and his endangering the purity of both the temple and the people are seen as manifest, not contingent, and as questioning “the fundamentals of Judaism.”⁴⁴ Torrey Seland describes this as “a somewhat distorted Jewish understanding of Paul’s preaching and practice.” This may well be the case, but the question remains: why is it there in Luke’s narrative? Luke labels these accusations false, as he does with the case against Paul in Acts 21:29 and 25:7–8. According to the latter text, the accusations could not be proved, and Luke has Paul say that he never committed an offense against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple or the Emperor.

Torrey Seland has demonstrated that actions taken against non-conformers often were motivated by the example of Phineas.⁴⁵ Zeal in the Phineas tradition is by its very nature *inward-directed*; that is, it targets in-group Jewish crimes or offenses. Even in 2 Maccabees 6–7 and 4 Maccabees, where zeal for the law is at play in the antagonism against the pagan king and his men who forced Jews to violate the law, it is worth observing that this literature is aimed at the instruction of *insiders*; this is clearly stated in 2 Macc 6:12–17, 31 and in the closing chapter 18 of Fourth Maccabees, where the audience of the story is addressed. Hence, this in-group perspective must guide our perspective on Paul’s persecutions of Christ-believers, and also of the opposition he later faced according to Luke. However, zeal and punishment are indicative of boundaries that are threatened (see chapter 6 above); hence, issues of identity, group-cohesion, and preservation are in play. From this perspective, Paul in Acts finds himself in a threshold situation vis-à-vis the Jewish fellowship, due to his attitude to the Torah. Luke preserves and transmits a tradition aligning Paul’s attitude to the Torah with motifs at home, in how some Jews considered fellow Jews who adapted to the Hellenistic culture during the Maccabean period.⁴⁶ The Pisidian episode with the ominous reaction of the Jews present there (Acts 13:45) indicates that this situation was triggered by Paul’s Gentile mission.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Seland, *Violence*, 278–79.

⁴⁵ Seland, *Violence*, 103–81.

⁴⁶ Several observations evoke a Maccabean background of the charges involved. This applies to the content of the charges, including the role of the temple; judicial settings with foreign authorities involved are suggestive in this regard. Worth noticing is also Acts 12:21–23 about the death of Herod which echoes among other texts, also 2 Macc 9:9 about Antiochus IV. Epiphanes. We have also noticed that other incidents of grave sins are involved (see above), and we will later observe similarities to Balak’s sin as well. The charges thus mirror times of error and delusion in Israel’s history.

⁴⁷ Thus also Bart J. Koet, “Paul, a Light for the Gentiles: Paul as Interpreter of Scripture

In Caesarea (Acts 24:5–8)

In front of Felix, the Roman governor, Tertullus presents a case against Paul. After praising the governor for his peaceful rule, he turns against Paul:

We have, in fact, found this man a pestilent fellow (λοιμόν), an agitator (κινούντα στάσεις) among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (πρωτοστάτην τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἰρέσεως). He even tried to profane (βεβηλώσαι) the temple, and so we seized him. (Acts 24:5–6)

If Felix examines the prisoner, he will find the accusations warranted, says Tertullus. Furthermore, the Jews affirmed their veracity (v. 9). Paul is portrayed as a troublemaker, a person causing social unrest, destabilizing peace and harmony among the Jews, a fact which eventually also affects stability in the society at large (see below). Hence, this is a matter for the authorities. Paul is a λοιμός, a pestilence. The noun normally refers to diseases or plagues bringing destruction.⁴⁸ When a person is called so, he is labelled dangerous to the public, bringing a contagious disease, like animals.⁴⁹

A certain ambiguity is at play in the allegations; doctrinal and social perspectives are intertwined. This comes through in Luke's use of the noun στάσις. Barabbas caused στάσις and was taken captive by the Romans on those grounds (Luke 23:19, 25 cf. Mark 15:7). In Acts 19:40, the fear of being charged for causing στάσις convinced the people gathered in the theater of Ephesus to be dismissed. The essence of the critique is not about theology, but stability and order. However, accusations for threatening the social order may also include disputes over Scriptural interpretation, as is the case in Acts 15:2; 23:7, 10. This seems to be the situation in the present passage as well. Doctrinal matters caused not only division but also turmoil, which, from a Roman perspective, was a destabilizing force in society.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, this term occurs frequently in Josephus's *Bellum*, used either for a faction or the result of strife. He attributes the fall of Jerusalem to this kind of activity, which eventually led to sedition and discord.

in Galatians 1:13–16 and in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Paulinische Schriftrezeption: Grundlagen – Ausprägungen – Wirkungen – Wertungen*, ed. Florian Wilk and Markus Öhler; FRLANT 268; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 270.

⁴⁸ BDAG s.v.; LSJ s.v.; *Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, s.v. This brings to mind the accusation against Christians by Pliny the Younger in his *Ep.* 10.96.9: “It is not only the towns, but villages and rural districts too which are infected (*contagio pervagata est*) through contact with this wretched cult.” For *contagio*, see OLD s.v. For further references, see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 24:1–28:31* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 3373–74.

⁴⁹ For example, Philo, *Ebr.* 79.

⁵⁰ As we have seen, such observations formed the starting point for Paula Fredriksen's interpretation of Paul's persecutions as well as those afflicted on him; see pp.170–73 in this study. Although Fredriksen's view on 2 Cor 11:24 finds support in the Acts of the Apostles, her argument for locally conditioned actions against Paul runs aground by the wider perspective of the narrative. Paul's gospel is portrayed more universally. The accusations against Paul in Acts have a horizon beyond the local setting assumed by Fredriksen.

In Josephus's blaming the "bandits" for this, it becomes evident that στάσις is a force that undermines the fellowship.⁵¹ Philo substantiates this picture. In *Decal.* 152–153, it says that enmity and estrangement among kinsmen grows from στάσις, and may develop into war (cf. *Congr.* 176; *Legat.* 113). The subversive power is apparent.

Furthermore, the charges claim that Paul is a ringleader of the Nazarenes (πρωτοστάτης; v. 5), stirring Jews throughout the world. Once again, we notice that Paul's attitude to the Torah is considered a matter for *Jews*. Implied in this is that Paul is not only a local problem; his activities extend *beyond* native instability caused by him.⁵² The perspective is not only local and conditional. The horizon is empire-wide. Local instability following in the wake of Paul's ministry is seen as a consequence of ideology, manifesting itself *everywhere*. For sure, exaggeration is part and parcel of the rhetorical strategy here; nonetheless, it is evident that Paul is seen as much more than a home-grown troublemaker. This is substantiated through reference to Paul allegedly profaning the temple in Jerusalem, the very center of traditional pious life. The narrative manifestation of the accusation is found in Acts 21:27–30 (see above). Two minuscules (614 and 1505) have a longer version of Acts 24:6, reading at the end: "and we wanted to judge him in accordance with our law." This reading assumes that a political aspect was involved, but not sufficient to deal with Paul's matter; his case raised matters relevant to *Jewish* jurisdiction in the narrative world of the Acts of the Apostles. The allegations involved evolved from convictions based on the Torah, and should, according to the minuscules, be judged accordingly.⁵³ Albeit late, these minuscules aptly express what is conveyed in the narrative at large.

Group or Heresy?

The last part of the allegations to be considered is what is implied in labelling Paul a ringleader of a sect (αἵρεσις). The meaning of this noun is derived from the verb αἵρεῖν, "choose" or to "have an inclination or resolve";⁵⁴ hence, it came to denote a "doctrine" or "school," (i.e., the choice of a distinctive way of life or opinion). This is the way the term is used by Josephus when he says that he, at the age of sixteen, decided to:

⁵¹ See Mason, *Life of Josephus*, 28, 85, with reference to literature. This is also clear from the rhetorical strategy of Tertullus when he urges a contrast between Felix as peacekeeper and the allegations against Paul; see Ernst Baasland, "Tertullus og Paulus: Mesterskap i retorikk eller lukansk ironi i Apg 24?" in *Ad Acta: Studier til Apostlenes gjerninger og urkristendommens historie tilegnet professor Edvin Larsson på 70-årsdagen*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Hans Kvalbein (Oslo: Verbum, 1994), 27–51.

⁵² See Acts 21:28 (above) where it says that Paul's teaching extends "everywhere."

⁵³ Verse 7 and part of v. 8 are probably later additions, quite well attested though (see the text-critical apparatus), blaming Lysias for having taken Paul from "us."

⁵⁴ Heinrich Schlier, "αἵρεσις," *TDNT* 1:180–81.

gain personal experience of the several sects into which our nation is divided (τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν αἰρέσεων). These are ... the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. I thought that, after a thorough investigation, I should be in a position to select (αἰρήσεσθαι) the best ... Being now in my nineteenth year I began to govern my life by the rules of the Pharisees, a sect (πολιτεύεσθαι τῇ Φαρισαίων αἰρέσει) having points of resemblances to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school (*Vita* 10–12).

Here, the term is synonymous with a philosophical school. The prepositional phrase παρ' ἡμῖν (“among us” is a more precise translation) implies diversity *within* the larger fellowship of Jews.⁵⁵ The Book of Acts corresponds very much to this usage of the term, as it is applied to Sadducees, (Acts 5:17) and Pharisees (15:5; 26:5). In the last-mentioned passage, Paul says that he lives as a Pharisee, in accordance with “the strictest sect of our religion” (κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας). The genitive in this phrase works very much like παρ' ἡμῖν in Josephus (above). Likewise, the Christ-followers are called a sect thrice in Acts (24:5, 14; 28:22).

Worth noticing, however, is that in two of the instances mentioned here, αἵρεσις is seen as troubling and undermining, fostering diversity. According to BDAG, these instances imply that some kind of *deviation* is implied.⁵⁶ I think that what αἵρεσις amounts to is to be decided not on a lexical basis alone, but by the *context* in which it is used.⁵⁷ In Philo's writings, the term is about deliberate choice; however, it is often used in contexts which add nuances worth noticing, for example, about choosing between good and bad, or virtue and vice (e.g., *Virt.* 205).⁵⁸ In *Spec.* 2.228 and 4.108, Philo urges his readers to choose virtue and leave behind vices and the life of pleasures in a way that brings to mind the classical image of Heracles's choice between virtue and vice.⁵⁹ In such passages emerges what later became obvious, namely that αἵρεσις may be inclusive of deviancy. Philo addresses the issue of conversion in *Virt.* 175–186 (Περὶ μετανοίας). Gentiles embracing Israel's God and turning away from the past, inclusive of the delights of “the belly,” are described as having made a glorious choice (αἵρεσις) (185). This is made even more explicit in *Praem.* 15–17; conversion is about choosing the excellent, which includes despising life governed by

⁵⁵ On Josephus's use of this noun, see Mason, *Life of Josephus*, 15–16.

⁵⁶ This is, of course, why the term later came to denote heresy; see, for example, Justin, *Dial.* 35:3 who, leaning on Matt 7:15 and 24:15, makes this noun synonymous to σχίσματα; Origen, *Cels.* 5.54. I agree with Witherington III, *Acts*, 708, that the term here begins to take on the pejorative sense that dominated the reception of this term; similarly Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 734.

⁵⁷ 2 Pet 2:1 may be an example, but even here it is hardly the term itself which is decisive, but the context in which it is embedded.

⁵⁸ For more references, see *The Philo Index: A Complete Greek Word Index to the Writings of Philo of Alexandria*, ed. Peder Borgen et al. (Grand Rapids MI: Leiden: Eerdmans and Brill, 2000), s.v.

⁵⁹ See Sandnes, *Belly*, 44–45. For the motif, see Erwin Panofsky, *Heracles am Scheideweg und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neuen Kunst* (Berlin: Teubner, 1930).

desires.⁶⁰ In these instances, αἵρεσις has kept its basic meaning “choice,” but the very context in which the term appears paves the way for other nuances (i.e., the distinctiveness of the choice made amounts to some kind of separation and non-conformity with the past). Surely, not all possible lexical meanings of a given term can be transported into any text where it occurs, and in this case, the Book of Acts. Nonetheless, these lexical findings bring an awareness, which is confirmed by taking the context into account, namely that the allegations envisage a breakdown of what is considered conformity, even to a point beyond what is negotiable.

Paul responds to the charges brought against him (Acts 24:10–22). His defense focuses on two aspects. He has not stirred up the crowd, neither in synagogues nor in cities, and he is firmly rooted within the Jewish tradition: “But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect (κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν), I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets” (v. 14).⁶¹ Luke’s Paul thereby denies both the collective and the theological aspects of the allegations. He firmly places “the Way” within Judaism, acknowledging though that his accusers call this a “sect,” but that is a label imposed on the “Way” and himself by *others*. Deviance is not an issue, but conformity with Jewish traditions is! Such is the core of his defense.

Paul’s fidelity to his Jewish faith is underscored. Calling those who follow the “Way” “Christians” (Acts 11:26) is by no means indicative of “an autonomous group or space lying outside the Jewish realm”;⁶² it is merely an example of diversity. This is also most likely how Luke would consider it. The narrative context of a breakdown in relationships due to Paul’s attitude to the Torah is not envisaged here as it is in Acts 18 (see below). Nonetheless, Luke conveys clearly that Paul’s fidelity to the Jewish faith and tradition did not find agreement by all. Accusations revolving around the Torah and the temple have the potential to turn a group within into an aberrant one. The perspective or viewpoint are decisive for determining how Paul is perceived, and Luke’s narrative has preserved more than his own perspective.

In Corinth: Law, Order, and Torah (Acts 18:12–17)

The Jewish fellowship of Achaia presents Gallio, the Roman proconsul of the province, with accusations against Paul. Luke depicts the Jews as united (ὁμοθυμαδόν) when they bring Paul before the tribunal. This is a favorite term

⁶⁰ Sandnes, *Belly*, 130, on the role of conversion as the best means whereby passions are mastered.

⁶¹ According to Tyson, *Images*, 170 “[i]f we had only this statement we would conclude that there is no distinction between Judaism and Pauline Christianity ... the Lukan Paul seems intent at this point on stressing the identity of Christian and Jewish belief.”

⁶² Thus Oliver, *Torah Praxis*, 16–17.

for Luke regarding unity and concordance, be it among Christ-believers or their opponents.⁶³ Implied is that the Jews as a group – unanimously so to speak – stood up against Paul on this occasion. Luke summarizes the allegations presented to the proconsul: “This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law” (παρὰ τὸν νόμον ἀναπειθεὶ οὗτος τοὺς ἀνθρώπους σέβεσθαι τὸν θεόν; Acts 18:13).⁶⁴ This echoes the accusations which brought death upon Stephen (6:11–13), to which Paul gave his consent at an earlier stage in the narrative. Hence, Paul is not portrayed idiosyncratically here; he conforms to a *pattern* characteristic of those belonging to the so-called “Way,” and also to an attitude that brought harm and occasionally, as with Stephen, death upon its proponents. The verb ἀναπειθεῖν takes on the meaning of seduction here (cf. *Bell.* 7.438). What is at stake is the matter of how God is rightly to be worshipped (σέβεσθαι τὸν θεόν). We notice also the *universal* perspective of the allegations; it is about men (ἄνθρωποι) in general, Jews included.

The allegations take the Torah as the true standard of divine worship. Paul is seen as undermining that particular measure, and in its wake follows an altered worship. The backdrop is a traditional Jewish viewpoint regarding the law;⁶⁵ that is, the Torah defines what true worship is about, albeit what this entails in practice was a matter of perennial debates. True worship (εὐσέβεια) was identical to obedience to the law (*Let. Aris.* 127, 131–132). Honoring God (σέβειν) was synonymous with observing the law, says Moses according to Josephus (*Ant.* 4.318). Worship and observing the law is indeed a tandem in Josephus’s writings: “everywhere they induced their lovers to renounce the laws of their fathers and the God to whom they owe them, and to worship (σέβειν) the gods of the Midianites and Moabites. For thus will God be moved to indignation (ὀργισθήσεται) against them” (*Ant.* 4.130). This passage taken from Josephus’s account of the Balak incident is remarkably similar to the allegations Paul faced according to the Acts of the Apostles. True worship is to be νόμιμος (i. e., a person living in accordance to the law).⁶⁶ Obviously, this is what Paul is not in the eyes of his accusers. Against this backdrop, the accusations portray Paul as someone in the process of leaving behind proper worship, and who thereby also endangers the fellowship.

Narratively, Acts 18 gives some clues to what Paul’s accusers considered worship contrary to the law to be about. According to Acts 18:5–11, scriptural disagreement on the Messiah is involved (v. 5), albeit this alone by no means disqualifies Paul (see below). Furthermore, Paul faces mockery and eventually leaves the synagogue (v. 6). His parting from the synagogue is accompanied

⁶³ See Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 15:25; 7:57; 19:29.

⁶⁴ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 629–30, takes “people” to indicate that reference is made to Roman law.

⁶⁵ Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 461.

⁶⁶ See also *Ant.* 1.310; 3.91; 4.198; 12.253; 20.41, 48. This adjective means to be conformed to the law; BDAG s.v.

with a symbolic act – choking the dust from his clothes⁶⁷ – thus demonstrating cessation of fellowship.⁶⁸

A further sign of the altered worship Paul instigates is the incident where Crispus, the head of the local synagogue, came to believe (ἐπίστευσεν τῷ κυρίῳ; Acts 18:8). He embraced the claim at the center of the dispute, namely that Jesus was the Messiah, and together with other Christ-believers in Corinth, Crispus was *baptized* (v. 8). This is told in a way that brings to mind other passages where baptism, faith, household, and βαπτίζειν and cognates are found.⁶⁹ Worth noticing is that the ritual of baptism is closely associated with issues of identity. Taken together with the symbolic act performed by Paul as he left the synagogue, baptism here becomes a ritual of transition. Although not spelled out in full in this passage, it falls into a pattern of texts where “[d]ie Taufe ist demnach für Lukas derjenige Ritus, der die Zugehörigkeit zur christlichen Kirche begründet.”⁷⁰ Paul is involved in a ritual that paves the way for a breakaway group. Thus, his worship παρὰ τὸν νόμον is not merely a dispute over issues of the Torah, but it involves him in the formation of an alternative group as well.

Although the allegations presented to Gallio clearly make reference to the Mosaic Law, there is what F. F. Bruce called “a studied ambiguity” at work here, aimed at portraying Paul in a way offensive to a Roman official, and thus forcing him to take action (cf. Acts 16:21; 17:6–7).⁷¹ This has led some scholars to argue that νόμος here refers to Roman law, implying that Paul is accused of crimes against the imperial order.⁷² Gallio’s response, however, speaks about “your own law” (18:15), no doubt a reference to the Mosaic Law. As pointed out by C. Kavin Rowe, the ambiguity implied is that the two senses of νόμος are bound

⁶⁷ Neh 5:13; Matt 10:14; Acts 13:51; for this practice, see Henry J. Cadbury, “Dust and Garments,” in *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part 1 The Acts of the Apostles* Vol. 5, ed. Frederick J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (London: Macmillan, 1933), 269–77. In itself this act is no sign of a leaving behind Judaism.

⁶⁸ However, Paul’s attachment to the synagogue remains, manifested in the fact that he takes residence in a neighbouring house (v. 7). A similar ambiguity is seen in Acts 13:46 as well. Paul declares that his engagement with the synagogues has come to an end, but the narrative has Paul still attending synagogues; the decision is not at all final.

⁶⁹ This is further strengthened in Codex D and some minuscules where references to the name of Jesus are made as well.

⁷⁰ Jens Schröter, “Die Taufe in der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. David Hellholm et al. (BZNW 176/1; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 582.

⁷¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), 347. Thus also Dunn, *Beginning*, 701; Witherington III, *Acts*, 552; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary 15:1–23:35*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 2768. Pace Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 461, who overlooks the duality involved in law here.

⁷² Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HTKNT 5.2; Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 252; Richard Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 92.

together by the fact that Paul, by persuading people to worship God contrary to the Torah, brings Roman law also into conflict.⁷³ This ambiguity is what Gallio denies in his response (Acts 18:14–15). To him this is a dispute (ζητήματα) concerning words and names (περι λόγου καὶ ὀνομάτων) in the law of Moses. The noun ζήτημα or its cognate ζήτησις appears elsewhere in Acts (15:2; 23:29; 25:19–20; 26:3), and is particularly associated with internal Jewish disputes on how to interpret the Scriptures. The word-group ζητεῖν with cognates is, in many instances, associated with disputes over Scriptural interpretation. Philo says about the Therapeutae that their leader at their session “discusses (ζητεῖ) some question arising in the Holy Scriptures or solves (ἐπιλύεται) one that has been propounded by someone else” (*Contemp.* 75 cf. *Opif.* 77; *Leg All.* 2.103; *Spec.* 1.345).⁷⁴ Therefore, Gallio defines the dispute as a matter of scriptural interpretation only; that is, about matters of doctrine in general and names, probably about the Messiah, issues that find their rationale in the Torah and, hence, an *internal* matter. There is no sensitivity on the part of Gallio for what the narrative at large develops as the perspective of Paul’s accusers, namely a growing distance toward the law and the fellowship upholding it.

At the Corinthian incident, various perceptions of Paul and the Torah come into play: the Jews of the city, the proconsul, and Luke who stages the scene; Paul himself is remarkably silent. Clearly, the perspectives of those involved matter here. To Luke, the proconsul refutes the allegations presented by the Jews in two ways. First, the social and collective aspect involved is denied. Second, as for the Torah issue more specifically, this is deemed a domestic affair to be solved among themselves. A certain tension in Luke’s perspective comes into view here. Taken in their narrative context, the accusations in Corinth are part of a triad, namely worship contrary to the law, group separation and formation, and baptism. In such a context, the accusations take on a character much more ambiguous on the relationship between Paul and the synagogue than what is envisioned by Gallio. More is at stake than domestic Scriptural interpretation. Paul’s attitude to the law, conveyed through the accusations levelled against him, is here written into another story, namely how groups relatively distinctive from the synagogue came into existence.⁷⁵ The issue of Paul and the law of Moses is thus accommodated into that history. Although Luke throughout denies

⁷³ C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 57–62; see also my presentation of Philo’s *Flacc.* 94 below. Marguerat, *Paul*, 61–65, argues how the issue of the law to the *Romans* was an issue of customs, tradition and legitimacy. This is stated *pace* Pervo, *Acts*, 454, who says that the mentality of the accusers in bringing issues of the Jewish law to bear on Roman law is “childish and unworthy of credence.”

⁷⁴ Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) has drawn attention to what she labels “zetetic literature,” which is questions and answers in the service of interpreting the law; see pp. 169–86 in particular.

⁷⁵ Marguerat, *Paul in Acts*, 44–45.

that Paul is a violator of the Torah, in this case, he narratively approaches the issue in a way that resonates with the allegations. Thus, the critique against Paul's attitude to the law is not isolated from the group formation with which his mission was involved. This indicates that not every aspect of the allegations were entirely false to Luke.

7.3 *Law and Salvation in Acts*

We have seen that accusations against Paul concerning the law are rather grave within this story, but also that Luke insists that they are false. Hence, advocates of "Paul within Judaism" may consider Luke as substantiating evidence for their reading of the epistolary Paul. To some extent it certainly is. However, the *complexity* involved in how the Book of Acts portrays Paul is often overlooked when Acts serves the role of confirming a view grounded elsewhere. We noticed in the Corinthian scene in Acts 18 that the accusations against Paul were found within a context of group formation, manifested in the ritual of baptism (Acts 18:5–8). In other words, the accusations against Paul are found in a narrative context where an identity that separates the Christ-believers from Corinthian Jews emerges. Luke narratively conveys that the identity which Paul's mission and instruction left behind, did not find its full expression within the synagogue. Hence, a simple picture where Paul's mission is fully within Judaism is *not* confirmed.

Although "salvation" (σώζειν and cognates) is absent, the baptismal story of Acts 18 with its emphasis on πίστις (faith), links up with the topic of identity formation in Acts.⁷⁶ Parallels are found in Acts 2:21, 47; 7:25; 13:26, 47; 14:9 (ἔχει πίστιν σωθῆναι); 16:17, 31 (baptism: σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκός σου); 11:14 (baptism: σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ οἶκός σου). Together these examples demonstrate how closely connected faith, baptism, and salvation are in this work. This brings the baptism story of Acts 18 into contact with Luke's presentation of the Pentecost in Jerusalem, and the closing call in Peter's speech in particular (Acts 2:38–41). This is important, since it implies that the Corinthian scene narratively unfolds the bearings of what happened at Pentecost in Jerusalem. This is seen in the emphatic and inclusive use of καὶ at key points in Luke's story:

10:45: καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη
 11:1 καὶ τὰ ἔθνη
 11:18 καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν

⁷⁶ For the importance of this vocabulary in Luke's double-work, see, for example, Joel B. Green, "Salvation to the End of the Earth: God as the Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 83–106. A glimpse into a concordance will demonstrate how frequent this terminology is in Luke-Acts.

The full meaning of this καὶ is found in Acts 11:17: “If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us (ὡς καὶ ἡμῖν) when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, ...” This dictum is a comment on what happened in Acts 2, as the preceding verse makes clear by speaking about baptism in the Holy Spirit. These passages are found in the mouths of Jewish believers who thereby express that salvation is given to Jews as well as to Gentiles *in the same way*, namely through faith in Jesus Christ:

and in cleansing their hearts by faith (τῇ πίστει) he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will (πιστεύομεν σωθῆναι καθὼς ὁ τρόπος ἡμεῶν) (Acts 15:9–11).

Again, καὶ is clearly inclusive here. Faith and the yoke – a traditional term for the demands of the law⁷⁷ – are contrasted when it comes to the question of “being saved.” Seen against this backdrop, Acts voices a rather clear opinion against a gospel distinct for Jews and Gentiles, respectively, as claimed by, for example, Pamela Eisenbaum. While there is much to commend in saying that Luke’s view on Paul and the Torah equals that of “Paul within Judaism,” the question of a Pauline gospel for the Gentiles only finds no corroboration here. It is worth recalling what the heavenly voice said to Paul according to Acts 26:17–18; he is sent to *both* Israel and the nations. In other words, this particular view held by some advocates of “Paul within Judaism” not only lacks affirmation in the Acts of the Apostles; it is contradicted.

The statement from Acts 15 (cited above) is at home in a story where the issue of the law is hotly debated (γενομένης δὲ στάσεως καὶ ζητήσεως οὐκ ὀλίγης; v. 2): “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (οὐ δύνασθε σωθῆναι; Acts 15:1). Christ-followers among the Pharisees are here cited (λέγοντες ὅτι) by Luke, thus intended as an embedded dictum: “It is necessary (δεῖ) for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). The use of δεῖ here equals ἀναγκάζειν in texts presented elsewhere in this study.⁷⁸ Furthermore, this dictum shows how intimately circumcision and law observance were often seen; the first embodies law observation.⁷⁹ Respect for the law is symbolized in the act of circumcision. The gist of the disagreement according to Acts 15 is about the law and salvation for the Gentiles; this is made explicit in vv. 1 and 5. Peter’s response, however, is not only about Gentiles. In his answer, there is a “we” to be distinguished from the Gentiles; hence, both Jews and Gentiles find salvation (σωθῆναι; being saved) in the *same* manner.

⁷⁷ Ζυγός; BDAG s.v.

⁷⁸ See pp. 63, 130–44 in this study and Cosgrove, “The Divine *Dei*.”

⁷⁹ See pp. 130–44 in this study.

Paul propagates the view that faith alone is the means of salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike. Luke puts this in Paul's mouth in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, thus making it evident that Jews are included as well: "Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; by this Jesus everyone (πᾶς) who believes is set free from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38–39). In language that evokes Paul of the letters, Luke states the universal horizon of faith, and also the inability of the law of Moses in this regard.⁸⁰

Christo-centrism, which is the sole ground on which to find salvation, is also stated in Acts 15:10 (voiced by Peter in Jerusalem), and finds its truest expression in Acts 4:12: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (σωθῆναι).⁸¹ Against this backdrop, it is hardly possible to uphold the view that Luke believes the accusations against Paul about his being an aberrant Jew were entirely groundless. In Luke's theological world, they likely were so, although his efforts to prove them wrong indicates that he found himself faced with a challenge. Anyway, the critical audience portrayed in his story are not left without arguments on which their accusations find some grounds.

Matthew Thiessen makes reference to Acts 13:38–39, which implies the necessity of trusting in Christ, "and that such trust brings benefits that the Jewish law cannot provide."⁸² Thiessen comments: "But he does not conclude from this fact that Jewish observance of the law is incompatible with justification by faith. Luke's Paul, once again, fits with the radical new perspective's claim that Paul believed Jesus Christ-followers ought to continue in their law observance."⁸³ In my mind, Thiessen here speaks against what Acts 13:38–39 says about "justification." Thiessen is probably right with regard to lifestyle (see below), but as for "salvation," Acts 13 renders a different picture: the law of Moses is unable to offer the forgiveness of sins, which is fundamental to justification according to this text.

7.4 Summary

Paul is certainly an ethnic Jew in Acts; twice he announces his being so (Acts 21:39; 22:3). As for the "ideological" aspect, Paul's fidelity toward the Torah, the temple, and customs are frequently stated. This is in accordance with Luke's major view, vividly portrayed in Acts 28:20 where the chained Paul says that he

⁸⁰ This is pointed out also by Marguerat, *Paul*, 49, 51–52.

⁸¹ For this text, see Karl Olav Sandnes, "Beyond 'Love Language': A Critical Examination of Krister Stendahl's Exegesis of Acts 4:12," *ST* 52 (1998): 43–56.

⁸² Thiessen, *Paul*, 166.

⁸³ Thiessen, *Paul*, 166.

carries his chains “for the sake of the hope of Israel” (cf. 23:1; 24:14).⁸⁴ Acts 27:23 is, in this regard, highly important. Paul here speaks to the crew of the sinking ship: “For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship (οὗ εἶμι [ἐγὼ] ὃ καὶ λατρεύω), ...” It is, therefore, quite right when Matthew Thiessen says that “Acts is replete with statements that describe Paul as faithful to Jewish law and custom; statements to the contrary are consistently identified as false rumors.”⁸⁵ Hence, Thiessen’s study, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, comes to a close with references to the Acts of the Apostles, which is seen as “an early reception-historical clue to reading Paul.”⁸⁶ The Book of Acts serves as corroborating evidence for Thiessen’s reading of Paul, namely that “Paul had no problem with the Jewish law itself,”⁸⁷ and that Thiessen’s study of 1 Cor 7:19 – addressed elsewhere in the present study⁸⁸ – finds substantiation in Acts. Thiessen’s use of the evidence in Acts is not fundamentally questioned with regard to *Luke’s* perception of Paul.⁸⁹

However, Thiessen’s reading of Acts is directed by his aim to find what *Paul* taught and how he is rightly understood. His conclusion picks up on *normative* aspects of how Paul is portrayed in Acts; that is, how he *should* be understood. This is evident when Thiessen points out that “numerous characters within the narrative of Acts believe that Paul and early Christianity break from Jewish law.”⁹⁰ The significance of that observation is what catches my interest in the present study but goes unnoticed for Thiessen. Luke conveys in Acts *contrastive* pictures of Paul vis-à-vis the Torah. When he composed this text, such contrastive images were already around. There is simply an issue in the Acts of the Apostles, namely whether Paul’s proclamation of the gospel is still faithful to the law. From the perspective of the present study, it is not sufficient to notice that Luke *defends* Paul in this regard. The presence of the very issue is highly important and calls for sensitivity with regard to how Paul was perceived.

Joshua W. Jipp has recently assented to the evaluation given by Matthew Thiessen on Luke’s portrayal of Paul in the Book of Acts. Luke portrays Paul in a way concomitant with the view provided by “Paul within Judaism” scholars:

The four features of the Paul of Acts that I have noted seem to indicate that, for all of their obvious differences, that the Paul of Acts *and* the Paul of the epistles share some

⁸⁴ See Keener, *Acts* Vol. 4, 3743–44.

⁸⁵ Thiessen, *Paul*, 167. This citation is given in endorsement with Rudolph, *Jew*, 57. Thus Koet, “Paul,” 262–64.

⁸⁶ This is the heading given to his presentation, 164–67.

⁸⁷ Thiessen, *Paul*, 161; see also his *Conversion*, 140–41.

⁸⁸ See pp. 47–50 in this study.

⁸⁹ Wedderburn, “Eine neuere Paulusperspektive,” 55, also points out that Luke’s Paul in Acts recalls the New Perspective in Pauline scholarship, and turns this observation into a starting point for discussing how well the author knew Paul, thus bringing us back to Vielhauer’s problem.

⁹⁰ Thiessen, *Conversion*, 112.

common ground in their affirmation that Jews remain committed to Torah observance, in the articulation of the gentile problem, in the rejection of circumcision as a means of solving the gentile problem, and in defining Israel's hope around the Messiah's resurrection.⁹¹

There is much to commend in this citation, but neither Thiessen nor Jipp comes to terms with the fact that Luke conveys that Paul was a man who faced troubles for his view on the Torah. Taken as a whole, Acts is witness to a lively *dispute* on Paul and the Mosaic Law. The complexity with which Paul's attitude to the law was remembered comes out in full in the Acts of the Apostles. Naturally, Thiessen is aware of this when he says that "in Acts 21–28, Paul finds himself swept up into a controversy about his views on the Jewish law."⁹² The relevance of this piece of information is, however, sidetracked by the fact that the allegations are attributed to characters who are *not* "reliable":

Paul is a "reliable" character; indeed, he is the human protagonist of much of Acts. Thus Paul's statements serve as "an interpretative guide" throughout Luke's narrative: the many characters give voice to conflicting perspectives on numerous issues, but the reader can trust Paul's voice.⁹³

The question for Thiessen is with whom one ought to "side." For me, the question is rather why Luke has left this complex and conflicting perspective to his readers to be partly corrected? Luke conveys a double message⁹⁴ with regard to Paul and issues pertaining to the law. Paul's attitude to the law in Acts is fully dependent on whose perspective one takes, and there is more than Luke's own – a fact which needs to be underscored vis-à-vis Thiessen and his use of this book as one-sidedly supportive of "Paul within Judaism." If we follow Thiessen, in taking Acts as a reception-historical clue to Paul, the result is precisely ambiguity and complexity in his attitude to the law. In the words of Daniel Marguerat, the reception of Paul in the book of Acts is a "diversified phenomenon";⁹⁵ this applies particularly to how his attitude to the law is portrayed.

⁹¹ Joshua W. Jipp, "What are the Implications of the Ethnic Identity of Paul's Interlocutor? Continuing the Conversation," in *The So-Called Jew in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. Rafael Rodrigues and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 191–96; quotation on p. 196. The four features mentioned are that Paul is Torah observant, the Gentile problem is fundamentally one of non-Jewish identity, circumcision is not to be imposed on the Gentiles, and the hope of Israel is manifest in God raising Israel's Messiah from the dead.

⁹² Thiessen, *Paul*, 165.

⁹³ Thiessen, *Paul*, 168.

⁹⁴ The idea of a double message is taken from Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke–Acts* (Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), although she uses it on another issue.

⁹⁵ Marguerat, *Paul*, 46. Thus also Philip La G. du Toit, "Was Paul Fully Torah Observant According to Acts?" *HTS Theological Studies* 72 (2017); www.hts.org.za, accessed January 4, 2018.

We noticed above that Luke in Acts 18 writes a critique against Paul's practice regarding the Torah into another story, namely that of the emerging identity of a fellowship relatively independent of the synagogue. Furthermore, we noticed that Paul in Acts states very clearly that the law is not a means of salvation. On precisely this point, he clashed with other Christ-followers. Matthew Thiessen, therefore, renders a too simple picture when he says that Paul in Acts finds no problem with the law. Worth noticing in particular is that the "Paul within Judaism" view, in which Paul's teaching on the law applied to Gentiles only, finds resistance in the fact that Paul is accused of teaching *Jews* to abstain from circumcision. Such accusations are stated clearly and frequently here, which is never the case in Paul's letters. The fact that Luke considers such accusations false does not really matter from the perspective of the present study. The very presence of such traditions is worth pondering upon. Furthermore, the allegations take a universal perspective in Paul's theology as a point of departure; he teaches the same everywhere. Luke embraces this by saying that Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same manner. The complexity in the figure of Paul comes out of a concern on the part of Luke for establishing continuity with Jewish roots, but also emphasizes the founding role of Paul and his teaching for the nascent movement of Christ-followers. Paul and the law stand at the crossroads of these interests.⁹⁶

Luke's view on the Torah may be summarized in three points. In the first place, *salvation* is attainable in an equal manner for Jews and Gentiles. They are all saved in the same way. Second, as for *lifestyle*, some differences appear. Since the Torah is a law for the covenant people, the Jews remain law observers. This is not so with the Gentiles, although they are expected to comply with some requirements, those mentioned in the apostolic decree.⁹⁷ Third, Luke sets out to defend Paul against mistaken rumors regarding the Torah. It is the presence of this that attracts the interest of the present study. Paul was already a controversial figure in this regard when Luke embarked on his project.

Compared to the embedded voices we have investigated in his own letters, and also the synagogue punishments mentioned in 2 Cor 11:24, the allegations levelled against Paul in Acts are more critical in nature, probably also more stereotyped. Luke has preserved a memory of Paul as deviant vis-à-vis the law, even to such a level that some considered him an apostate. This is more than we found in his epistles.⁹⁸ Pauline scholarship does well not to turn a blind eye to this fact. We are then brought back to our discussion with Colin Hemer, wheth-

⁹⁶ Marguerat, *Paul*, 46–47, speaks of Paul as "an identifying figure," enabling Luke to present "the continuity link with Judaism and also the causes of the rupture and the universality of the new faith."

⁹⁷ See David M. Miller, "Reading Law as Prophecy: Torah Ethics in Acts," in *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, ed. Susan J. Wendel and David M. Miller (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 84–89.

⁹⁸ See Koet, "Paul," 274, who says that Luke presents the Paul of Acts even more unambiguously Jewish than he appears in his own letters.

er the defense speeches were really dicta of others about Paul. Colin Hemer urged that the authenticity of these speeches in effect throws doubt on that. These differences, vis-à-vis the epistolary Paul, suggest that we did right in considering these speeches, in principle, as *perceptions* of Paul rather than words by Paul.

8 Final Summary and Implications

This study has come to an end. What have we found, and what are the implications for present-day scholarly debates on Paul? The study entered the topic which has been called the volcano in present-day Pauline scholarship, namely Paul's attitude to the Torah. In its wake followed a number of issues revolving around his relationship with the Jewish faith and identity.

8.1 Sources and Approach

The most used approach – and for all good reasons, the primary one – is to investigate this topic on the basis of what the epistolary *Paul* has to say on these issues. The present study, however, proceeds differently. Theology and identity involve not only self-presentation and dicta uttered by the person in question; there is a need to take into account how things were perceived and reacted upon by *others*. Paul's letters are dialogical in nature and should be read accordingly. Voices of others are embedded and responded to, albeit these embedded dicta are rhetorically shaped by Paul. This poses a challenge, which studies such as the present one cannot escape. Another challenge accompanying the work throughout has been whether references to “some” include persons, mostly critics, or if it is simply a literary strategy by Paul to push his arguments forward. We have tipped the balance in the texts scrutinized here in favor of critical voices, albeit this in some instances is debatable. Nonetheless, the fact that Paul chooses to introduce questions of the sort at least implies that rumors were around, or that he anticipated that such critical issues may be evoked and have an impact upon converts. If only a rhetorical game, this is always done with a view to *relevance* for his audience. His addressees were susceptible to accommodating such critical points.

Such dicta found or mirrored in Paul's letters are worth considering in the light of an interactionist perspective, which takes others' labelling into account. This perspective brings a responsive dimension to bear on Paul's theology. Who Paul was finds relevant material in how others saw and labelled him as well. In the present study, due to the nature of the discourse as being about the Torah, the labelling of others is not without reference to the interpretation of a given norm, law, or Scripture. Furthermore, an interactionist perspective makes it

necessary to also to have an eye on Paul's responses. Thus, we hope to have proceeded according to the true dialogical nature of Paul's epistles.

Relationships, hence others, are crucial for how identity comes into being. Dialogue, conflict, and boundary situations are important factors in identity formation, resulting in what has been labelled "multiple identities." Michael F. Bird has put it like this: "Let us remember that ethnic identity is something that is privately enacted and publicly validated."¹ This goes hand in hand with how Paul's theology finds responses and criticism, and leads to punitive actions taken against him. "Multiple identities" implies dynamic, multiple, and complex perspectives on Paul's theology and who he was. In focusing on the role of "others" in Paul's letters, this is precisely what we have been aiming at. A ramification is that Paul is to be studied perspectivaly; that is, different ways of perceiving Paul may be at work simultaneously. Pauline scholarship needs to come to terms with the complexity coming out of such interactions.

What is at stake is, therefore, a *reception* of Paul's theology regarding law, but *not* a reception that followed after Paul had fixed his theology. In other words, this is not about reception as legacy. Much of the present study – except for the Acts of the Apostles – deals with material that is *simultaneous* to Paul, and which even *precedes* the composition of some of his letters. In other words, sensitivity to "others" and to rumors regarding Paul is helpful in order to understand how his theology developed, and also relevant for grasping how his theology on the issue of the Torah came to be understood. Paul's letters are responsive vis-à-vis opinions and rumors about himself and his instruction. This makes it useful, not to say necessary, to look at Paul's theology on the law and pertaining issues from the perspective of "others." How did they perceive of what Paul taught on these matters? What were their objections? What did they see at work in Paul's theology?

For sure, this raises a number of historical questions revolving around who the people behind the embedded dicta were. This study does not go down that path. Our focus is on *what* they said; in short, their perception on Paul and the Torah. There is no assumption here that the others in any way represent one group of people, or that their voices can be added up to form a single uniform group or movement, or a common front of opposition. After all, some of the dicta investigated may represent circulating rumors, informal evidence being passed on rather than statements of identifiable groups of people. However, some common traits in this material may be discerned.

The Acts of the Apostles is in its portrayal of Paul and the law *per se* a non-Pauline text on Paul; hence, its presentation of Paul complies with how embedded dicta work in the present study. A substantial chapter is, therefore, devoted to that particular source. In addition, the Acts of the Apostles has been

¹ Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 56.

taken to favor an understanding of Paul on the Torah, which is in accordance with “Paul within Judaism.” Since this takes us to the present-day context, it was natural to include that chapter. The passage in 2 Cor 11:24 about Paul being punished by synagogues represents actions taken against Paul, and is, therefore, in principle a perception of his theology or practice in a manifest way. It is an opinion performed publically.

Embedded dicta have been identified as standing out from the immediate context in various ways (e.g., by the appearance of “some”), and also by speaking against the line of thought in the passage. Furthermore, we have applied John M. G. Barclay’s criteria for mirror-reading. Throughout the investigation, we have teased out the relevant passages with the help of these criteria. Among Barclay’s criteria for how to mirror-read responsibly is also found criterion no. 6, consistency. This criterion implies that if mirror-reading leads to objections in different directions, there is the possibility that it has been practiced too creatively, and that too much speculation is at work. Against that backdrop, it is worth noticing that our findings in Galatians and Romans to a large degree cohere. In both letters, Paul’s law theology was targeted as irresponsible and absurd, in effect, paving the way for sin to abound. Such objections are conceivable through relevant contemporary material in which the law is seen as the primary means by which sin and desire are dealt with. Furthermore, one of the dicta uncovered in Galatians held against Paul that he presented God’s law as opposed to the promises; in other words, *God* appeared contradictory in what He says. In a slightly different but still kindred way, also in Romans, *God* is crucial. A key issue in Rom 3:1–8 and chs. 9–11 was whether God was trustworthy; again God’s relationship to the promises is up front. The fact that objections teased out are fairly consistent is an indication that our mirror-reading has been balanced.

Nonetheless, it is possible to dispute these criteria. I can imagine some kick-backs on this, but in any case, these will not do away with the need to take seriously what it means that Paul’s epistles are *dialogical*. It can hardly be denied that Paul *interacts* with perceptions on his own developing Torah theology, that these perceptions occasionally come into play in his letters, and in this regard, that sensitivity toward an interactionist perspective is called for. Furthermore, it is possible to question my application of the criteria. The dicta may represent misunderstandings of Paul, they may be his own soliloquy, or his dialogue with fictitious dialogue partners. In the last two cases, Paul is thought not only to have shaped the dicta, but also to have invented them. Behind the issue of “misunderstanding” lurks normativity, which is really unfit to address the issue in an interactionist perspective. Misunderstandings or exaggerations cannot be ruled out, but we need to ask *why* they arose then, and what part of Paul’s theology they took as a point of departure and developed into allegedly misunderstandings. As for soliloquy and a purely fictitious dialogue partner, we still need to ask why Paul chooses to involve his addressees in what are really his own

thoughts and considerations. The genre of letters, as a means of communication, suggests that he considered his audiences *susceptible* to precisely these thoughts; hence, also *relevant* for them. It is striking that even some of the sternest advocates of diatribe as a literary style concede that real antagonists cannot be ruled out; this particularly proved to be the case regarding Rom 3:8.

8.2 Findings – Snapshots

The Epistle to the Galatians attests the first extant response to Paul's theology on the Torah, a response which to a large extent also came to shape his theology. Paul engages other missionaries, and the epistle evolves dialogically and even polemically. We traced four embedded dicta, all shaped by Paul in the service of his rhetoric. He is in control of them. The first dictum identified was Gal 1:23, a Judean account on Paul's turnabout at Damascus. Victims of his persecutions are here given their say. Their account is molded by the message of the letter, that is, faith versus law. The change in Paul's life mirrors the contrast between faith and law, which also the Judean Christ-followers now adhere to. Judean Jews are cited as rendering rumors about Paul's persecutions elsewhere, and rejoicing in the change in his life as something affecting them as well. This dictum conveys indirectly that Paul's mission elsewhere had repercussions also for Jews in Judea. Galatians 1:23 does not state explicitly that Gentile believers are also in view, but the way the rumors are weaved into the rhetoric of Galatians makes this a likely assumption.

The second dictum (Gal 2:17) aimed at demonstrating how absurd Paul's teaching on the law was, as he rendered Christ a servant to sin, facilitating sin so to speak. Paul's theology faced charges of fostering sin, paving the way for a sinful life. The way Paul in Gal 5:13–6:10 portrays Christian life as Spirit-led, but in effect complying with the ethical ideals of the law, turns this passage into a counter-exhortation. To put it otherwise, the charge implicit in Gal 2:17 serves as a preamble to that part of the epistle.

The third dictum (Gal 3:21) addresses the issue of the Torah directly, against the backdrop of Paul's presentation of Abraham. What is at stake here is whether Gen 15:6 (faith) is to be interpreted as a single defining moment in Abraham's life, or in a continuum with the rest of the Abraham biography. Paul is seen as distancing God from the Torah, and probably also doing away with the way Lev 18:5 summarizes law observation: "doing the law." The implicit charge involves Paul with Scripture, but not to say that he is depicted as speaking *against* Scripture and God. Judging from the second and third dicta in Galatians, Paul's opponents considered him as not giving to the law its assigned role as an antidote against sin. He thus left the Galatians converts bereft of the important means of the law to fight the power of sin.

The last dictum identified in Galatians (Gal 5:11) is also the most difficult to make sense of. From this text, we deduced that the issue of circumcision was an issue vis-à-vis synagogue discipline. Paul faced what he labels “persecutions” because of his rejecting circumcision for Gentile Christ-believers. However, the dictum is possibly a shrewd attempt to portray Paul as more conformable than he appears in Galatians; in other words, a *strategic* statement of opponents, vis-à-vis the Galatian audience: eventually, Paul will come to realize that his use of the Abraham narrative includes circumcision and always will.

The key text in our investigation of Romans was 3:8, where Paul refers to the slandering of “some.” The interlocutor speaking in this context is presented in ways surpassing a purely rhetorical figure. Paul utters judgment on *people* diffusing charges against his teaching. The logic of Rom 3:8 follows in the wake of the rationality uncovered in the embedded dictum of Gal 2:17, aimed at exposing the silliness of Paul’s gospel. The allegation turns a stereotypical discourse on the law upside down as conducive of good and protective against evil. With Paul, so goes the claim, this is turned upside down: good is said to come from doing evil. Romans 5:20 may serve as an example for how Paul provoked such assertions. The charge implied in Rom 3:8 finds substantiation in Rom 6:1 and 15.

Chapters 6–8 in Romans provide Paul’s response to refute this, not unlike what we observed with regard to Gal 5:13–6:10. In Romans 6–8, a traditional discourse on the law that paves the way for a good life in protecting against evil, merges with a moral philosophical discourse on the mastery of desires. I argued that Rom 16:17–20 is probably an interpolation that, nonetheless, is to be interpreted in light of its role within Romans, and vis-à-vis 3:8 in particular. It is thus a text on Paul by others, where Paul is made the mouthpiece of how *they* saw Pauline opposition as it emerges in Rom 3:8. The passage is polemic rhetoric aimed at blackening Pauline opposition, holding against such people that they are liable to become gratifiers of their belly.

Romans 9–11 pick up on the diatribe in Rom 3:1–3 and demonstrate that Paul faced critical questions regarding Israel’s role within his theology. Although no direct charge can be identified as having given rise to Romans 9–11, Paul seems to wrestle with questions regarding God’s trustworthiness, promises, and Scripture – in ways bringing to mind Gal 3:21. This grappling is intertwined with critical questions following in the wake of his theology. Paul’s deep concern for his fellow Jews proves the point that Paul’s horizon is by no means limited to whom his letters are addressed, namely predominantly Gentiles.

In chapter 5, our findings in Galatians and Romans were made conceivable within relevant Jewish sources; in other words, the issue was a matter of historical plausibility of our findings. Our investigation had paved the way for three issues to be addressed in particular: the necessity of circumcision; the law as an antidote against the power of sin; and the Abraham biography. For obvious reasons, it is by no means justified to transfer all the material (totality transfer)

presented in that chapter into the “others” as we identified them in Galatians and Romans. However, this material is sufficient to demonstrate a way of reasoning well attested in different sources, thus providing a wider context within which opinions on Paul and the law make sense and become plausible. The chapter argued that the discourse on Paul’s theology alive already within his epistles, even before their composition, revolved around issues that were under negotiation in other sources as well, but also that the way Paul reasoned regarding these key issues hardly finds accommodation within recognized diversities.

Chapter 6 shifted attention from dicta to actions, that is, punitive actions taken against Paul (2 Cor 11:24), albeit Gal 5:11a may also be such a text. The rhetorical situation in Second Corinthians required that Paul passed on information that, in principle and in its basic form, was recognizable also to his addressees. He is *not* rendering only “truth for himself.” On several occasions, Paul received synagogue punishment. This speaks loudly on the topic of this investigation. Indeed, the punishment conveys that Paul is seen *within* the jurisdiction of the synagogues; he is treated as an insider. However, it also conveys that he is considered a troublemaker, and a consistent one at that. From a sociological perspective, Paul appears not as an apostate, but as a *liminal* figure in need of correction in the eyes of those who inflicted this punishment upon him. If we take 2 Cor 11:24 to convey reliable pieces of information, this means that *some* found Paul counterproductive to the Jewish fellowship, and furthermore, these were not primarily individuals but different *synagogues* located throughout the Roman Empire.

The Acts of the Apostles is a special case in this investigation. This literature has played a major role in Pauline scholarship, due to its way of presenting Paul as faithfully observing the practices of the law. Some scholars have taken this as an indication that Acts distorts Paul, while recent advocates of “Paul within Judaism” attest that “Paul had no problem with the Jewish law.”² Paul of Acts is thus seen as putting the Paul of “Paul within Judaism” into an affirming narrative. The aim of my presentation was to demonstrate that, although Luke conveys *his* way to look at Paul, contrastive pictures of Paul are at work throughout this writing. Accusations of apostasy and speaking against the law, also vis-à-vis the Jews, loom large here, although Luke sets out to correct this. This fact deserves attention as it conveys the existence of a rather complex picture of Paul vis-à-vis the law. Luke delivers that Paul was a man who faced troubles for his view on the Torah.

In a study where the early reception of Paul is in focus, this observation cannot be side-tracked by references to Luke’s *own* picture of Paul. That is a *normative* approach. Luke is up against a picture of Paul that he finds disturbing, but it is still there! Furthermore, Luke writes the critique against Paul into the

² Thiessen, *Paul*, 161.

story of how a group of Christ-believers in Corinth started gathering relatively independently of the synagogues, and in which baptism marked an identity not fully accommodated in synagogues. Luke portrays Paul both as loyal and observant vis-à-vis the Torah and as an apostate, all depending on *perspective*. In the Acts of the Apostles, it is Jews who voice accusations of apostasy against Paul. Furthermore, Paul's mission in the Acts of the Apostles is not addressed to Gentiles only; at least, this is how the accusations depict the situation. From that perspective, Paul made claims relevant for Jews as well (see below). The double message conveyed is that Paul is more loyal to the Torah than he appears in his letters, but it is also conveyed that some Jews considered Paul an apostate. Nowhere in Paul's letters is such a label affirmed. In short, Paul is both more loyal and more disobedient toward the law than in the letters. This is precisely the complex picture left by Luke's narrative. Reckoning this affirmative, vis-à-vis "Paul within Judaism," is based on a normative approach: how does Luke think Paul *should be* understood?

8.3 Recent Research on Paul and the Torah from an Interactionist Perspective

Although a view on present-day Pauline scholarship has been a companion throughout the chapters, it is time to sketch how the interactionist perspective taken in this study may impinge upon recent scholarship, with an emphasis on the "New Perspective" and "Paul within Judaism" with regard to Paul and the Torah.

The Power of Sin

From advocates of the "New Perspective," we have learned that Paul's critique of the law is primarily about ethnicity; in other words, the apostle targeted those aspects of the law that were decisive in marking Israel off from the Gentiles. If stated in such terms, this view is challenged by the dictum found in Gal 2:17 about Christ facilitating sin, which is echoed in Rom 3:8 as well. Even the dictum about the continuum in Abraham's biography is embedded in a context where the pervasive power of sin is voiced. Clearly, some of Paul's earliest dialogue partners regarding the Torah looked beyond issues of ethnicity. *Morality* and how to fight the power of sin were important perspectives in dicta found in both Galatians and Romans. The morality issue was at the center of the passages investigated there. This certainly does not leave ethnicity void or deem such issues irrelevant. They do appear in the way circumcision and Christ are contrasted in Gal 5:11. However, the ethnic emphasis must come to terms with the fact that this is not a primary issue for a reception that was simultaneous to

Paul, even preceding the composition of some of his letters. For this reception, the problem of ethnicity did not attract the primary attention. The problem of sin did, or to be more precise, how Paul's teaching was prone to foster sin due to its attitude to the law.

Decentering Torah

The controversy which fueled Galatians, and even Romans, were the terms on which Gentile converts could be accepted as fellow members of the family of Abraham, or to put it otherwise, how pagans could become Abraham's children without becoming Jews. In this sense, the *nations* are at the center of Paul's interest. Hence, his theology on the law is at the service of the Gentile mission, but it comes as a result of the role he assigns to *Christ*. Out of this theology grows a decentering of the law, or in the words of William S. Campbell, a primary and secondary identity, where the first is Christ-centered and the second is multi-layered, including, for example, the Torah and Jewish identity. In the present study, the decentering of the Torah came to express the way Paul is faced with allegations that he has not given his Gentile converts the necessary antidote against sin, namely the law. The good purpose of the law, to protect from sin, is withheld from Gentile converts. Paul's response, both in Galatians and Romans, is that the renewed life, guided by the Spirit, in fact, manifests the ideals of the law in the Christ-believers.

For Gentiles Only?

The paradigm in Pauline research known as "Paul within Judaism," proceeds from the assumption that Paul almost exclusively addresses himself to Gentiles, albeit some concede that "predominantly" to Gentiles is a more accurate way of putting it. At some relevant points, my investigation touches upon this issue and this assumption. Romans 3:8, so crucial to the present study, is caught up in that discussion, since a key issue is the identity of the interlocutor in the diatribe, and especially in Rom 2:17. The view that Paul here envisages Gentiles who *call* themselves Jews fails to convince. I notice that this minute question has far-reaching consequences; it has become almost a switch or a turning point in Pauline scholarship. In this study, I have noticed two perspectives to which Paul ascribes much importance, assumptions which advocates of "Paul within Judaism," in my view, tend to underestimate. The first is the universal, not to say cosmological, context in which Rom 2:17 and the diatribe is found, the sinfulness of humanity (Rom 1:18–3:20). Paul's claim that neither Jews nor Gentiles can be righteous before God through the law, but only through faith, comes as a result of his understanding of the pervasive power of sin. This is the context in which Rom 3:8 is embedded. The second issue has to do with the Jews in Paul's

theology, epitomized particularly in Romans 9–11. Paul’s emotions on behalf of his fellow Jews run high there. If the Jews were really outside the scope of his mission, this, indeed, becomes melodramatic. A narrow understanding of Paul as the “apostle to the Gentiles” is called into question against that backdrop. Paul even states that his Gentile mission serves a purpose, namely that of bringing salvation to his fellow Jews. A complete dichotomy between Gentiles and Jews in Paul’s mission and theology is, therefore, hard to imagine.

Furthermore, it is a paradox that advocates of “Paul within Judaism” end up minimizing, sometimes even deny, the existence of real or physical Jews in the Pauline mission. A disinterest in the actual Jews who do appear in Paul’s letters, such as in Romans 16, is apparent. This is so since the appearance of actual Jews disturbs one of the fundamental assumptions of “Paul within Judaism,” namely that Paul’s mission was for Gentiles exclusively, and that his theology was designed accordingly. We may quote as an example here Magnus Zetterholm, who aligns himself with Runar M. Thorsteinsson’s interpretation of Romans: “Accordingly, Romans is predominantly about the condition of *the nations*. This conclusion fits very well into the recent trend among scholars who embrace assumptions different from the traditional ones.”³ Caroline Johnsen Hodge, another scholar associated with “Paul within Judaism,” puts it differently: “An exploration of how Paul portrays Gentiles helps us see these letters not as founding documents of a new religion, but as efforts by a faithful Jew to play his part in the larger narrative of the redemption of Israel.”⁴ The way two distinguished advocates of “Paul within Judaism” here formulate themselves differently with regard to the ultimate purpose of Paul’s mission is a reminder that the role of Israel in Paul’s letters needs more reflection, but also that “Paul within Judaism” is no uniform *Schule*. It remains a crux though that reclaiming the Jewishness of Paul has come at the cost of actual Jews in his letters. The more consistently Paul is seen within Judaism, the more he is also without Jews⁵ – indeed, a paradox.

In the present study, we touched upon these issues several times; Rom 3:8 and 9–11 have been mentioned already. In addition to this comes Gal 1:23, where *Judean* Christ-followers formulate the change in Paul’s life in terms taken from the message of the Epistle to the Galatians, and thus voices, albeit in Paul’s own words, that Paul, themselves, and the Galatians are now *united* in the faith which Paul once persecuted. Furthermore, in the Acts of the Apostles, which by some has been claimed as a proof text for “Paul within Judaism,” Paul is accused of teaching *Jews* to abstain from Judaism. Such accusations are not found in the letters of Paul. The Jewish Paul of Acts is deeply involved with fellow Jews. His

³ Zetterholm, “Interlocutor,” 55. The emphasis is his.

⁴ Hodge, “Identity,” 173.

⁵ This formulation was suggested to me by Professor James Kelhoffer during a seminar in Uppsala, December 2017.

frequent preaching in the synagogues (Acts 13:5, 14, 46; 14:1; 17:1–2, 17; 18:4) makes this evident. Thus, it seems to me to be justified to say that Acts turns Paul’s “first to the Jews” found in, for example, Rom 1:16 into a narrative. According to John G. Gager, the reason for Paul’s regular visits to synagogues was that “he knew that he would find significant numbers of Gentiles there.”⁶ For sure, Acts attests that Paul met Gentiles sympathizing with Judaism in synagogues, but this observation hardly accounts for Paul’s *reason* to visit synagogues. Gager’s view is equivalent to saying that the synagogues primarily were places where Paul met with Gentiles, which hardly makes sense. Even in their own synagogues, the Jews are overlooked by a “Paul within Judaism” scholar. A passage such as Acts 13:46, which speaks about the “necessity” to speak to Jews first, conveys a very different picture, and it is this asymmetry that is narrativized in Acts.

8.4 A Polarizing Figure within Judaism

A full-scale dialogue with recent trends in Pauline studies on the question of law has in no way been conducted here. This would require engagement with a number of many much-disputed Pauline passages. Chapter 2 sketched some of the assumptions from which I would have carried out a more full-scale dialogue. The embedded dicta, including also rumors and actions taken against Paul, are focal points of the present study, but also set its limitations. Paul is definitely *more* than the present study has argued. In spite of internal variations, it seems justified to say that “Paul within Judaism” represents a generalized or absolutist position on Paul; that is, claims are made to portray Paul in ways that capture the epistolary Paul both in its *general* and its *real* and *true* nature. This is less so with the “New Perspective”; particularly in James D. G. Dunn’s version, a more diversified picture is at work. This is a reason why “Paul within Judaism” has attracted more attention in this study. No similar generalized claims are made in the present study. The sources available to this study give access to *fragments* or *aspects* only, but are *sufficient* to question any portrayal of Paul in which these aspects are alienated or fail to find accommodation.

Two important limitations follow from the selection of passages here. The first is the question whether Paul’s theology applies to Jews as well. As we have seen, some protagonists of “Paul within Judaism” question this. In the dicta chosen in the present study, this was not a pressing issue, although we touched upon it in Gal 1:23. However, we found that the Acts of the Apostles was affirmative regarding this question: Paul’s ministry and theology applied equally to Jews and Gentiles. I have argued that in Paul’s letters, his fellow Jews belong to the universal horizon implied, although this finds its expression in letters pri-

⁶ Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity*, 58–62; quotation on p. 61.

marily envisaging a Gentile audience. Romans 9–11 bring the Jews into the center of Paul’s interest. His Gentile mission is, in fact, a strategy aimed at the salvation of Israel, thus paving the way for an asymmetry between the two.

This brings the role of Christ into the discussion. Some advocates of “Paul within Judaism” argue that Paul’s mission to the Gentiles comes as a result of his understanding of the time; the time was now ripe to stage the in-coming of the Gentiles in accordance with ancient prophecies. There is much to recommend in this view, but the role of Christ within Paul’s understanding of *time* is often underestimated. The coming of the Messiah is precisely what makes the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4). Hence, Christ is essential for grasping why the time was considered to be ripe. Furthermore, if the coming of the Jewish Messiah is really what defines the time for Paul, it is hardly possible to imagine that Jews are unaffected by the coming of *their* Messiah.⁷ To cut it short, we are involved with theological issues with far-reaching consequences, but which, strictly speaking, are not sufficiently addressed in the passages relevant to this study.

Another limitation is that the material investigated here might end up portraying Paul primarily as a controversial figure vis-à-vis Judaism. There is no doubt that Paul was an ethnic Jew, and that this was brought to the knowledge of his converts in multiple ways. We also saw that synagogues treated him like a Jew, even when that implied inflicting punishment on him. His theology was also Jewish, in the sense that the God whom he preached was the God of Abraham. His pagan converts are “grafted into Israel” (Rom 11:17–24). Hence, their sonship has been given to them by adoption (Gal 4:1–7; Rom 8:15). In accordance with Jewish tradition, he urged his converts to leave behind idolatry and their many gods. His ethical instructions are deeply rooted in the Torah and the traditions following in its wake. The approach chosen in this study has implied a more critical attitude and stance, due to the nature of the sources chosen.

It is my conviction, though, that in spite of the limitations involved, this material has to be *accounted for* in wider or general studies on Paul and the Torah. This is the *critical* perspective coming out of this study. Paul’s theology is born out of dialogues, not to say controversies. Controversies are woven into the very fabric of his ministry and theology. In the words of Alan F. Segal, we “can be certain that wherever Paul’s mission took him, trouble and persecution followed; this is an essential background of his letter to the Romans.”⁸ Sensitivity as to *why* such controversies arose, and also about *what* issues these controversies revolved around, is called for.

⁷ As noted on p. 14, this is rightly pointed out by Paula Fredriksen. Novenson, “Jewish Messiahs,” argues that Paul’s Gentile mission is inspired by the idea that when the Messiah comes, he will rule the nations. The way Novenson brings together the eschatological time and the Messiah is crucial. How this affects Paul’s mission with regard to Jews still needs to be addressed though.

⁸ Segal, *Paul*, 257.

Are the tensions implied sufficiently accounted for by reference to how diverse Judaism was in Paul's time? The very nature of the synagogues was interpretations and disputes, thus paving the way for diversities and for coping with them. In spite of these diversities, were there any boundaries at work, and did Paul in any way step close to them or even beyond some of them? I have argued that Paul's theology on the law involved him in issues that were fundamental for his Jewishness, albeit in light of Judaism's diversities. From the perspective of this study, it is here germane to make reference to 2 Cor 11:24 about the synagogue punishments of Paul on several occasions and in different places. Even more important is to acknowledge the perspectival focus of this study. According to some synagogues, Paul was not easily accommodated within the recognized diversities. With reference to this passage in 2 Corinthians, Albert I. Baumgarten puts it like this:

Some Jews and/or Romans of the time, who presumably knew more than we ever will about what Paul preached and practiced, considered him deserving of punishment... . We should never make Paul such a "good" Second Temple Jew (even in Enochian terms) that we forget that Paul was perceived by others of that era as a "bad" Jew, in trouble with other Jews and/or Romans, and worthy of being punished.⁹

This quotation is very much in accordance with findings in the present study. However, Baumgarten goes on to say that Paul was far from unique. "In every sense, Paul was a Jew of his time."¹⁰ This apparent tension probably owes much to the complexity of Paul with regard to the law. Part of this complexity is a *destabilizing* force at work; at least this is how some fellow Jews found him. Michael F. Bird puts it like this: "So, as Jewish as Paul was, he said and did things that provoked ire, umbrage, and violence from his fellow Jews."¹¹ In addition, 2 Cor 11:24 attests that leaders of various synagogues considered Paul to be on the verge of breaking the fellowship to which he belonged. In other words, Paul's place within Judaism cannot avoid a *perspectival* approach (i.e., to some extent, this question depends on the topic and on whose perspective is taken).

One of the questions that this study wanted to address is if the claim made by, for example, "Paul within Judaism" can really stand when confronted with voices from "others" whose presence is attested to in Paul's letters. The material I have presented is in no way sufficient for an authentic presentation of Paul's theology. The breadth of Paul's theology on the law is not accounted for in the

⁹ Albert I. Baumgarten, "Paul in an Enochian Context: Response to Gabriele Boccaccini," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 25.

¹⁰ Baumgarten, "Paul," 26.

¹¹ Bird, *Jew*, 7; see also 55: "Paul's construal of his identity is paradoxically affirming of his Israelite ancestry but also relativizes his Jewishness to the point that many of his coreligionists would wonder whether, so to speak, he had given away the family store." This complexity aptly formulates what 2 Cor 11:24 conveys.

procedure chosen here. However, it is sufficient to form a test: interpretations unable to explain the complexity witnessed in the earliest reception of Paul call for reconsideration. Thus, although relatively limited, this material makes sense as a litmus test. Hence, how Paul appeared to others matters in Pauline studies.

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