1 *The Christian Problem of Paul and Judaism*

One often hears it said that the apostle Paul's discourse about the Jewish law – "Paul and the law" or "Paul and Judaism," in industry-standard shorthand – is one of those classically intractable problems, like the problem of evil in philosophical theology or cold fusion in nuclear physics. In fact, however, it is very simple. Simple, but not easy, because the solution, although it is historically clear and compelling (as I shall argue in this book), has proved existentially intolerable to many of Paul's readers. This is a shame, since it has effectively rendered unthinkable to us moderns what is, for its part, a very interesting, important idea, namely: that the world itself came to an end in the first century of the Roman Empire.

According to one Jewish writer from this period, when God sends his son the messiah in the fullness of time, the messiah's job is: to die, so that all his people can participate in his death, and then to effect the resurrection of the dead and the new creation. The Jewish writer I mean is the anonymous author of the apocalypse 4 Ezra (7:28–32),[1] although every word of that summary is also true of his near-contemporary Paul. Both 4 Ezra and Paul think that the messiah must come and die to put an end to the present age and bring about the new creation. Unlike 4 Ezra, however, Paul thinks that the messiah has just now – within his, Paul's, own lifetime – come and died. Hence, Paul reasons, the end of the age has come, and the new creation is here. This idea is not just implied but expressly stated all over Paul's

[1] "My son the messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice 400 years. And after these years my son the messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings, so that no one shall be left. And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it." (4 Ezra 7:28–32; Latin version trans. Metzger in Charlesworth, *OTP*)

letters. The ends of the ages have come (1 Cor 10:11). The form of the cosmos is passing away (1 Cor 7:31). Christ himself was the last man (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ, 1 Cor 15:45), the last mere mortal. His resurrection during the reign of Tiberius triggered the resurrection of all the righteous, so that from the 30s CE onward all God's people will enjoy the life everlasting promised to the patriarchs. Everything Paul says about the Jewish law follows from this premise.

So I shall argue in this book. To get there, we shall have to look closely at Paul's letters (and a number of other ancient Jewish texts) on the themes of Jewishness, gentileness, and time – or, in other words, ethnicity and eschatology. In relation to the long, fraught history of research, my goal is to explain why Paul's thought, which in its main lines is so conventionally Jewish (one God, his temple in Jerusalem, the promise to father Abraham, the giving of the Torah to Moses, the coming messiah, etc.), has also struck so many readers as so radical, so Christian, even so anti-Jewish. The answer lies in Paul's particular understanding of time, which is also quite conventionally Jewish (the present age, the end of the age, the day of the lord, etc.), except that Paul perceives the end of the age as present, not future.[2] If understood in a sufficiently vague way, this claim is perhaps relatively uncontroversial. But in the precise way that I mean it, it is quite different from any interpretation of Paul currently on offer. Hence this book.

Ethnicity and Eschatology

In the refrain of his 1889 poem "The Ballad of East and West,"[3] Rudyard Kipling, literary lion of the late British Empire, wrote what would become one of his best-known lines:

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,

[2] We now have several recent, thoughtful reconsiderations of Paul's understanding of time, in particular Jamie Davies, "Why Paul Doesn't Mention the Age to Come," *SJT* 74 (2021): 199–208; and, differently, L. Ann Jervis, *Paul and Time: Life in the Temporality of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2024). My quarrel with both of these otherwise excellent treatments is their evasion of the *skandalon* of imminent eschatology in Paul's letters.

[3] First published in the *Pioneer* (2 December 1889), then anthologized in Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen, 1892).

Which is followed immediately by a lesser known but equally significant line:

Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat.

Commenting on this poem, Kingsley Amis once wrote that Kipling was indeed a racist, but less of a racist than any other English writer of his age.[4] I am not competent to judge Amis's defense of Kipling.[5] But I do find "The Ballad of East and West" a helpful starting point for considering the racial attitudes not of Kipling, but of the apostle Paul.

Or, perhaps better, "ethnic attitudes." "Racial" is arguably not quite right for an ancient such as Paul, suggesting, as I think it does nowadays, both a sheen of scientism and a preoccupation with skin color that are part of our modern inheritance.[6] But "ethnic" (from Greek *ethnos*, a word Paul uses some forty-five times in his small

[4] Kingsley Amis, *Rudyard Kipling and His World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), 53–54: "Kipling was a racialist, or racist. The White Man's Burden is indeed a burden, an arduous duty, not the inheritance of a natural privilege, and the white men must carry it not because they are white but because they are qualified... Most of the ignorant castigation of Kipling as a racialist in the full aggressive sense comes from a single famous line of verse quoted out of context: *Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,* which is followed by the qualification: *Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;* which in turn leads to the antithesis: *But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the Earth!* This, however, is not a complete antithesis. What about more than two men, or not-so-strong men, or men just standing about instead of face to face? The twain shall meet only under exceptional conditions. Yet meet they shall. Ifs and buts are bound to clog any treatment of this matter. All that is clear is that Kipling understood and honoured men of other races more deeply than any other English writer, as a reading of *Kim* will suggest."

[5] Though Edward Said, Harish Trivedi, and Bart Moore-Gilbert are. See Edward W. Said, "Introduction," in Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Penguin, 1987), 7–46; Harish Trivedi, "Reading Kipling in India," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Howard J. Booth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 187–199; Bart Moore-Gilbert, "Kipling and Postcolonial Literature," in *Cambridge Companion to Kipling*, 155–168.

[6] A modern inheritance detailed by Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). Admittedly, a case can be made for (suitably disciplined) talk of "race" and "racism" in antiquity, as in Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). But I prefer to follow Buell's subtitle in speaking instead of "*ethnic* reasoning."

corpus of letters) is just right.[7] Following recent, creative theoretical work by Denise Kimber Buell, Caroline Johnson Hodge, Cavan Concannon, Adi Ophir, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, among others, I am interested in the way Paul thinks ethnicity – in particular Jewishness and gentileness – in light of his belief in the imminent end of the world as he knows it.[8]

I use the term "Jewishness" advisedly here. Part of the argument of this book is that Paul does not isolate and reify "Judaism" as a thing outside himself on which he could render judgment. (Hence the fatal flaw in the many studies of what interpreters have called "Paul's critique of Judaism.") Judaism is the air Paul breathes, so to speak, the water he swims in. He does not stand in a subject-object relation to it.[9] Most later Christians *did* and *do* stand in a subject-object relation to Judaism; hence their mistaken reading of the apostle as if he did too. But if we think, instead, of "Jewishness" in the sense Shaye Cohen sketches in his *Beginnings of Jewishness*, then we can get better historical purchase on a number of difficult texts in Paul's letters. Cohen summarizes:

> The Jews (Judaeans) of antiquity constituted an *ethnos*, an ethnic group. They were a named group, attached to a specific territory, whose members shared a sense of common origins, claimed a common and distinctive history and destiny, possessed one or more distinctive characteristics, and felt a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity. . . The most distinctive of the distinctive characteristics of the Jews was the manner in which they worshiped their God, what we today would call their religion. . . [But] for ancient Greeks and

[7] Ethnicity is no less complicated a concept than race – see in particular Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Rogers Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015) – but for my particular purposes it is less prone to mislead.

[8] Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Cavan W. Concannon, *When You Were Gentiles: Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Goy: Israel's Multiple Others and the Birth of the Gentile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Also very helpful here are the essays in *Ethnicity, Race, Religion: Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts and in Modern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Katherine M. Hockey and David G. Horrell (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

[9] On this essential point, see in particular Matthew Thiessen, *A Jewish Paul: The Messiah's Herald to the Gentiles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2023).

contemporary social scientists, "religion" is only one of many items that make a culture or a group distinctive. Perhaps, then, we should translate *Ioudaismos* not "Judaism" but "Jewishness."[10]

I actually do not think that the Greek word Ἰουδαϊσμός (*Ioudaismos*) itself means either "Judaism" or "Jewishness"; so I argue in Chapter 2. But Cohen's larger point that we should think of ancient Jews as sharing a sense of Jewishness (including ancestry, homeland, god, cult, etc.), as Romans did Romanness or Gauls Gaulishness, is well made in its own right and helpful for thinking the case of Paul.

Many, many books have been written on the subject of Paul and *Judaism*, but as I argue below, most of these books are predicated on a category mistake, or several category mistakes, in fact. [11] Recent research, better attuned to Paul's own ethnic reasoning, has tended to focus on gentiles and gentileness in the letters[12] – and rightly so, since Paul styles himself apostle to the gentiles and addresses his letters to gentiles. This recent research is all for the good, but it effectively leaves Jewishness in Paul unexplored (often, one suspects, in a spirit of polite avoidance).[13] A few studies have wanted to correct the recent

[10] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 7–8.

[11] To footnote them all would be overkill. But see, e.g., Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1900); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Gerd Lüdemann, *Paulus und das Judentum* (Munich: Kaiser, 1983); Timo Laato, *Paul and Judaism: An Anthropological Approach* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Preston M. Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

[12] E.g., Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). On the ancient Jewish concept of gentileness (e.g., *giyut goyim*, "the gentileness of gentiles," in *Sifre Numbers* 158 on Num 31:23), see Vered Noam, "The Gentileness of Gentiles: Two Approaches to the Impurity of Non-Jews," in *Halakhah in Light of Epigraphy*, ed. Albert I. Baumgarten et al., JAJSup 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 27–41.

[13] E.g., John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 147: "Whatever Paul understood by Peter's gospel to the circumcised (Gal 2.7), Paul preached his own gospel to the uncircumcised. . . [Regarding the former,] we do not know." Gager is quite right about Paul's gentile audience, but we *can*,

preoccupation with gentiles in Paul by pleading for the more theologically useful category of the *human*.[14] There is something to this impulse, but in my view, it too hastily skips over Paul's demonstrable concern with Jewishness and gentileness, which were theologically significant to him in a way they simply have not been to (gentile) Christian thinkers from the second century to the present. So we need an account of Jewishness in Paul. Not of "Paul and the Jews," since, unlike most Christian thinkers through the centuries, Paul did not perceive "the Jews" as a problem, or even as an entity outside himself.[15] And not of "Paul and Judaism," since, unlike most Christian thinkers through the centuries, Paul did not perceive "Judaism" as a rival religion, or even as a discrete thing. I am not aware of any account quite like what I am describing, so I have tried to give one in this book.

Thus far ethnicity; now to comment briefly on eschatology. My claim is that what interpreters have mistakenly called "Paul's critique of Judaism" is actually just a feature of Paul's imminent eschatology, which is to say, his very particular understanding of time. There has, of course, been more than ample research on Paul's eschatology, much of which I find very helpful and discuss, *passim*, in the chapters that follow.[16] But a common (which is not to say ubiquitous)

I think, say more about what Paul understood by "the gospel for the circumcision" if we are willing to consider the question.

[14] See especially Jonathan A. Linebaugh, "Announcing the Human: Rethinking the Relationship between Wisdom of Solomon 13–15 and Romans 1:18–2:11," *NTS* 37 (2011): 214–237; Jonathan A. Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul's Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and, differently, Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

[15] Cf. the classic cases explored by Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); and Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[16] E.g., Richard Kabisch, *Die Eschatologie des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1893); Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1930); John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); L. Joseph Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology*, JSNTSup 19 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987); Joseph Plevnik, "Paul's Eschatology," *TJT* 6 (1990): 86–99; Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15*, NovTSup 84 (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Yon-Gyong Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians*, WUNT 2/183 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,

problem in this research is a tendency – characteristic of what Stanley Stowers calls "academic Christian theological modernism"[17] – to assume that Paul stands in the same relation to eschatology that his modern (mostly Christian) interpreters do, as if both Paul and, say, Geerhardus Vos were reflecting theologically on the same far-off subject matter. In fact, I argue in this book, that is emphatically not the case. The end of all things lay in the immediate future for Paul in a way it simply has not done for most people down through the ages, and certainly not for the modern, bourgeois guild of professional Bible critics (of which the present writer, alas, is a member).

A number of interpreters before me – Albert Schweitzer, late-career Krister Stendahl, Dale Allison, and Paula Fredriksen, among others – have argued along these lines, but they have often been dismissed with criticisms that are not really to the point. For instance: It is true that, because Paul does not expressly set a date for the coming of the kingdom,[18] his expectation is not, strictly speaking, falsified. But neither is it vindicated.[19] Paul's "very soon" is not as specific or as vulnerable as "in the year x," but it is far, far more specific and vulnerable than "God only knows" (cf. Mark 13:32). It is this "very soon," not the red herring of a set date, that needs accounting for. Or again, it is true that the so-called delay of the parousia (*Parusieverzögerung*) does not arise as a problem in the letters of Paul as it does in 2 Peter or Porphyry. But by no means does it follow that questions of imminent eschatology are therefore irrelevant to the

2004); David Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, NTOA 71 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009); Sydney Tooth, *The Eschatologies of 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming); Daniel Oudshoorn, *Pauline Eschatology: The Apocalyptic Rupture of Eternal Imperialism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020); T. J. Lang, "Cosmology and Eschatology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, ed. Matthew V. Novenson and R. Barry Matlock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[17] Stanley K. Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 105–150 at 106–107.

[18] In contrast, e.g., to the *Epistula Apostolorum*'s bold gamble on 150 years.

[19] This is my quarrel with Brad East, "Enter Paul," *Los Angeles Review of Books* (23 June 2019): "The logical distinction here is between the claim that Jesus *may* return *at any time* and the claim that Jesus *will* return within a specific, known time frame. [Paula] Fredriksen infers the latter position from Paul's letters (and, possibly, from other New Testament texts). I believe she is mistaken. Paul's language of 'soon,' 'at hand,' 'nearer now than when we first believed,' and so on, while patient of such a reading, admits of an alternative."

case of Paul.[20] Quite the contrary, in fact. Paul's letters are our only extant sources from the first generation of the Jesus movement, from that brief window before the delay of the kingdom became a fact of life for all Christians ever after. For purposes of history, we should want to understand how things looked to Paul and his contemporaries, not rush to elide their perspective on time with their successors' – let alone our own – perspectives. But popular rubrics like "inaugurated eschatology" (à la Vos, Oscar Cullmann, G. E. Ladd, N. T. Wright, and many others) do precisely this; they make it quick and easy for moderns to imagine Paul's perspective on time as identical with their own. One might argue that this makes for good theology – although whether it does so is debatable – but it certainly makes for bad history.[21] The goal of this book, therefore, is to undo this elision, to show how Paul thought ethnicity and eschatology differently from how his successors' have thought them.

Paul Within or Without Judaism

I make my argument in the context of the recently minted and currently flourishing "Paul within Judaism" movement. Just as to write a book on Paul in the 1980s or 1990s was to reckon with E. P. Sanders's bombshell *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and the various "new perspective" proposals then current, so to write a book on Paul now is to reckon with a cluster of strong readings now emerging from Israel,

[20] This is my quarrel with N. T. Wright, "Hope Deferred? Against the Dogma of Delay," *EC* 9 (2018): 37–82. Modern scholarship has fixated on the delay of the parousia in particular, entranced, I suspect, by the fascinating 2 Pet 3:4 (see James Carleton Paget, "Some Observations on the Problem of the Delay of the Parousia in the Historiography of Its Discussion," *EC* 9 [2018]: 9–36). But imminent eschatology is a much bigger issue. Hence the absence of *Parusieverzögerung* anxiety, in particular, in the letters of Paul is another red herring, not a counterargument.

[21] Thus rightly Dale C. Allison Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 31–164; Paula Fredriksen, "*Al Tirah* ('Fear Not!'): Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology, from Schweitzer to Allison, and After," in *"To Recover What Has Been Lost": Essays on Eschatology, Intertextuality, and Reception History in Honor of Dale C. Allison Jr.*, ed. Tucker S. Ferda et al., NovTSup 183 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 15–38. The problem with the notion of "inaugurated eschatology" is that it is almost infinitely extensible through time. Of course, that is the very feature that makes it so theological useful! But it also makes it virtually impossible to think the peculiar case of a person (like, say, Paul) from the generation of Jesus himself.

Scandinavia, and North America, from the pens of revisionist interpreters such as Pamela Eisenbaum, Paula Fredriksen, Mark Nanos, Matthew Thiessen, and Magnus Zetterholm.[22] The present book makes its argument in the context of that movement, but it does not toe any party line. It is not a tract either for or against the Paul within Judaism *Schule*. It is just my own interpretation, which, I hope, does not make it "idiosyncratic" in the sense that one uses that word with scorn. On this issue, at least, I think it is best not to think in terms of party lines or *Schulen*, but just of so many interpretations of the relevant texts.[23] The more idiosyncrasy, the better. Not "the new perspective," but James Dunn's reading, or N. T. Wright's reading, or what have you. Not "the Paul within Judaism view," but Pamela Eisenbaum's reading, or Matthew Thiessen's reading, or what have you. We will of course recognize some family resemblances between certain scholars' readings, but boiling down these family resemblances into a single, easily labelled view is sloppy and confusion-making.

Here is an example: My 2012 book *Christ among the Messiahs*,[24] in which I argued, contrary to a longstanding critical orthodoxy, that the apostle Paul thinks of Jesus as the messiah, met with a mixed reception among Paul-within-Judaism interpreters. For some of them, my sketch of Paul as a Jewish messianist comparable to the Qumran covenanters or the Bar Kokhba partisans was a success, a marquee demonstration of the apostle's situatedness within Judaism. For others, however, my argument raised the troubling possibility that Paul imagined Jesus, as

[22] The best record of this cluster of strong readings is Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), the proceedings of the eponymous SBL research group. Earlier intimations include the essays collected in *BibInt* 13.3 (2005) and the history of research in Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009). My own biopsy on the movement is Matthew V. Novenson, "Whither the Paul within Judaism *Schule*?" *JJMJS* 5 (2018): 79–88.

[23] With Steve Mason, "Paul without Judaism," in *Paul and Matthew among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honour of Terence L. Donaldson*, ed. Ronald Charles, LNTS 628 (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 11: "Inquiry is [history's] only requirement – *not* accuracy in relation to pre-conceived images. If we knew the past in advance, after all, we would not need to investigate it. Whatever prestige history has comes from its relentlessly truth-seeking, ever-questioning nature. If we give that up and descend into camps, we forsake history's aegis."

[24] Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

messiah, somehow effecting redemption for Israel, a bridge too far for those interpreters committed to a so-called *Sonderweg* or two-covenant view.[25] How to interpret this mixed reception? Is my interpretation of "Christ" in Paul a Paul-within-Judaism interpretation, or is it not? I like to think yes, but the fact that other people in a position to answer this question thought no just goes to illustrate the conceptual problem.

As is often the case in discussions like this, the nub of the matter lies in the implied contrast term. Fifty or a hundred years ago, to talk about "Paul within Judaism" would have been to imply a contrast with *Hellenism*, as, for instance, in Albert Schweitzer's classic *Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, whose second chapter is entitled "Hellenistic or Judaic?": "When any attempt is made to explain the Pauline doctrine [of Christ-mysticism] as Hellenistic, it finds itself confronted with the greatest difficulties."[26] Or, a generation later, in W. D. Davies's *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*: "We shall not seek to deny all Hellenistic influence upon him; we shall merely attempt to prove that Paul belonged to the main stream of first-century Judaism, and that elements in his thought, which are often labelled as Hellenistic, might well be derived from Judaism."[27] Schweitzer and Davies framed their arguments in this way because, for much of the twentieth century, interpretation of the letters of Paul was locked in a strange, zero-sum debate over the relative degree of influence on the apostle of these two supposed cultural streams. Nowadays, happily, we seem mostly to have gotten over this strange habit of thought,[28] and we argue about other things.

[25] E.g., Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987); Gager, *Reinventing Paul*.

[26] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (New York: Seabury, 1968 [1931]), 26.

[27] Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 1.

[28] Thanks in large part to Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols., trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), although even Hengel remains beholden in some respects to the dichotomy he tries to undo. A more thoroughgoing criticism is Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), especially Engberg-Pedersen's introduction (1–16) and Dale Martin's essay "Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question" (29–62). I say "we seem mostly to have gotten over" the Judaism/Hellenism dichotomy, but for discussion of its lingering effects in one important subfield see the essays in

In the twenty-first century, to talk about "Paul within Judaism" is to imply a contrast not with Hellenism but with *Christianity*. This is clearest of all in the title of Pamela Eisenbaum's important 2009 book *Paul Was Not a Christian*,[29] but it is also a leitmotif in numerous works of the Paul-within-Judaism *Schule*. Paula Fredriksen, for instance, characterizes her *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* as a counterpart to certain "works arguing that Paul is a Christian theologian who repudiates Judaism."[30] Fredriksen's rhetoric here is by no means tilting at windmills. The view to which she is reacting is evident not just in the unconscious habit whereby exegetes refer to Paul and his auditors as "Christians" but also in major efforts such as N. T. Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*: "My proposal is that Paul actually invents something we may call 'Christian theology.'"[31] Whereas Wright, here representing the majority, views Paul in continuity with a tradition that came after him ("the inventor of Christian theology"), Paul-within-Judaism interpreters have wanted to view the apostle strictly with reference to categories available to him. And "Christian," which word is earliest attested around the turn of the second century, was not such a category.[32] For my part, I have no problem with calling Paul a Christian in a redescriptive sense for certain heuristic purposes, as Daniel Ullucci, for instance, has done quite fruitfully.[33] For the purposes of this study, however, such usage would confuse rather than clarify, because one main effect of reading Paul as Christian is to elide

Matthew V. Novenson, ed., *Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, NovTSup 180 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[29] Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2009).

[30] Fredriksen, *Pagans' Apostle*, 230n43.

[31] N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (London: SPCK, 2013), 1: xvi.

[32] On this point, see especially Anders Runesson, "The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussion on Paul," in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, 53–78.

[33] Daniel C. Ullucci, *The Christian Rejection of Animal Sacrifice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 177: "I define [*Christian*] as a subset of religion. Religion (and religious positions) posits the existence of superhuman agents. I define *Christian positions* as those positing that Jesus was/is a superhuman agent. Thus, Paul clearly displays Christian positions, regardless of what he would call himself."

the very phenomenon that we are here concerned to examine: his thoroughgoing eschatology.[34]

A main contribution of the present book is to give attention to some key Pauline texts that have gone largely neglected in recent Paul-within-Judaism research. The movement has been around long enough now that critics have begun to suggest that neglect of certain texts is significant, possibly intentional, and in any case incriminating. For instance, James Dunn, reviewing Nanos and Zetterholm's *Paul within Judaism*, complains as follows:

> One of the most curious features of the volume is that two key Pauline texts, key for the whole discussion, are never really discussed. One is Gal. 2:16, which was the focus of the original "New Perspective" essay [i.e., Dunn's 1983 "The New Perspective on Paul"]... Still more surprising from my perspective is that Paul's use of the key phrase "in/within Judaism," which occurs only in Gal. 1:13–14 (twice) is never really discussed... It is very disappointing, then, that a collection of essays entitled "Paul within Judaism" never really discusses what presumably should be regarded as the key text.[35]

To Gal 2:16 ("a person is not put right from works of the law except through trust of Jesus Christ") and Gal 1:13 ("you heard of my former occupation in *Ioudaismos*"), we may add at least Gal 2:19 ("through the law I died to the law"), 2 Cor 3:6 ("we are attendants of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit"), and Rom 10:4 ("Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness for everyone who trusts") to the list of texts brandished by recent critics of the Paul-within-Judaism hypothesis.[36] It is fair to ask for a discussion of these texts but wrong to assume that they could not admit of new, alternative interpretations. In this book, I will offer a number of such interpretations. I do so in the rather pollyannish belief that, although it is impossible to convince everyone, it is nevertheless possible and desirable to argue one's case to the widest range of colleagues in the field. If taking this approach

[34] To borrow William Montgomery's memorable English gloss for Albert Schweitzer's *konsequente Eschatologie*.

[35] James D. G. Dunn, review of Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*, in *JTS* 66 (2015): 782–784.

[36] E.g., Joshua D. Garroway, "Paul: Within Judaism, Without Law," in *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David Lincicum et al., WUNT 420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 49–66; Mason, "Paul without Judaism."

means that no particular school is likely to rally around the account I offer here, well, I can live with that.

Comparing Things

The predominant way, by far, that interpreters have tried to think of Paul and Judaism has been to *compare* the former with the latter.[37] But the glaring flaw at the heart of this entire tradition is the assumption that one can profitably compare a single person (Paul) with an entire ethno-religion (Judaism)[38] – where, to skew the comparison even further, the person in question is himself a member of that ethno-religion. It is not that such a comparison is *impossible*; we can, of course, compare anything we like – apples with oranges, Paul with Judaism, Shakespeare with bioluminescence, etc. – because comparison is a mental operation performed by a thinking subject. Things do not compare themselves; thinkers compare things.[39] But comparisons can be more or less profitable, more or less interesting, more or less instructive depending on the choice of comparanda and the particular questions posed about them.[40] And it is here that the myriad scholarly comparisons of Paul and Judaism betray their conceptual deficiency. Every such study *has* to conclude with a claim about how, exactly, Paul differs from Judaism; the form of the conclusion is required by the set-up. But any claim of this form, no matter how well-researched or perceptive, is predicated on a gross generalization about (whatever

[37] This trend is documented and diagnosed by Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Comparing Paul and Judaism: Rethinking Our Methods," *BTB* 10 (1980): 37–44. And now see also William S. Campbell, "Reading Paul in Relation to Judaism: Comparison or Contrast?" in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck et al., BRLJ 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 120–150.

[38] "Ethno-religion" is Shaye Cohen's term in his *Beginnings of Jewishness*. On the question of the aptness of the term, cf. David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and the discussion of both Cohen and Goodblatt by Martha Himmelfarb, "Judaism in Antiquity: Ethno-Religion or National Identity," *JQR* 99 (2009): 65–73.

[39] Jonathan Z. Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19–35.

[40] See Jeffrey Stout, "What Is the Meaning of a Text?" *New Literary History* 14 (1982): 1–12; and for application of this rule to comparative projects, Oliver Freiberger, *Considering Comparison: A Method for Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

the writer in question includes under the heading) "Judaism." Comparisons of this type cannot do otherwise than find Paul to be unique or anomalous; they are purpose-built to find that. In fact, the supposed uniqueness or anomaly is not a discovery but a presupposition, not a conclusion but an unacknowledged premise. As Brent Nongbri has aptly put it:

> If we go looking for differences between the writings of Paul on the one hand and all other Jewish writings on the other, we shall surely find them. . . If one were to carry out a similar exercise by isolating another Jewish document and comparing it with all other Jewish literature from the Second Temple period, it would not be surprising to find that the isolated Jewish document had "unique" elements. Would we then conclude on this basis that the document was not Jewish? Unlikely. Yet, such a conclusion is exactly what one finds when Paul is compared with "Judaism" in this way.[41]

Regarding Nongbri's counterfactual "If one were to carry out a similar exercise by isolating another Jewish document and comparing it with all other Jewish literature. . .," in bibliographical fact this is almost never done. (It has occasionally been done with Jesus, but this is the exception that proves the rule. What is more, because Jesus left no writings, his is a quite different case, more like Socrates than Paul in this respect.) None of the great studies of Ben Sira, Salome Alexandra, Philo, Josephus, Babatha, or Rabbi Judah the Patriarch – let alone the many anonymous and pseudonymous Jewish texts from antiquity – is framed as a comparison of the lone figure on the one hand with all of ancient Judaism on the other. Because, in most cases, we recognize intuitively that that is an ill-formed kind of comparison, like comparing Jane Austen with all of English literature, or Gerald Ford with all of America. We can think those comparisons, but there is little to be gained by doing so. Much more profitable to compare Jane Austen with Walter Scott, or Louisa May Alcott, or Zadie Smith; or to compare Gerald Ford with Spiro Agnew, or Abraham Lincoln, or Phyllis Schlafly. In this connection, one recent, salutary trend has been a vogue of studies comparing Paul with just one other ancient figure on a topic of common interest. Examples include Bruce Longenecker's study of Paul and 4 Ezra on covenant, John Barclay's study of Paul and Philo on circumcision, Jonathan Linebaugh's study of Wisdom of

[41] Brent Nongbri, "The Concept of Religion and the Study of the Apostle Paul," *JJMJS* 2 (2015): 1–26 at 17 and n60.

Solomon and Paul on grace, George Carras's study of Paul and Josephus on diaspora, Niko Huttunen's study of Paul and Epictetus on law, and Alexander Muir's study of Paul and Seneca on consolation.[42] One might reasonably complain that, at a disciplinary level, the enormous volume of attention devoted to Paul in contrast to other ancient figures is itself a corrupting influence on historical understanding.[43] But at least the form of these recent comparative studies is a great improvement.

The one comparison of Paul and Judaism that towers over all others is E. P. Sanders's 1977 *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*.[44] Sanders is so brilliant an exegete that, when he gets down to the work of reading primary texts, he manages to be right much, even most of the time. But in the architecture of the project, Sanders goes astray in precisely the way detailed above. To give him due credit, he does not attempt to compare Paul with *all of Judaism*, but with all of Palestinian Judaism ca. 200 BCE to 200 CE (including the Mishnah, Tosefta, tannaitic midrashim, all the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, Psalms of Solomon, and 4 Ezra), which is still more than enough to yield an absurd asymmetry.[45] Another problem is Sanders's notion of a "pattern of religion," which turns out to mean roughly "soteriology,"[46] of which he finds one Pauline

[42] Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11*, JSNTSup 57 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); John M. G. Barclay, "Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Rom 2:25–9 in Social and Cultural Context," *NTS* 44 (1998): 536–556; Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness*; George P. Carras, *Two Diaspora Jews: Josephus and Paul – A Historical, Social, and Theological Comparison of Hellenistic Jewry* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Niko Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law: A Comparison*, LNTS 405 (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Alexander Muir, "Paul and Seneca on Consolation" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2022).

[43] A point well made by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 161–174.

[44] On the influence of the book, see the retrospective essays by Anders Runesson, Matthew Thiessen, Neil Elliott, Adele Reinhartz, and Gregory Tatum in *JJMJS* 5 (2018).

[45] As Jacob Neusner rightly points out, if Paul is allowed a pattern of religion all his own, then the Ben Sira should be allowed his own, 1 Enoch its own, the Mishnah its own, and so on ("Comparing Judaisms," *HR* 18 [1978]: 117–191).

[46] See Nils A. Dahl, review of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, in *RSR* 4 (1978): 155: "'Pattern of religion' for Sanders means much the same as 'soteriology,' but the latter term has connotations which he wants to avoid. . .

type (viz. participationist eschatology) and a different, pan-Jewish type (viz. covenantal nomism).

Sanders sets up his comparison as follows: "What is clearly desirable, then, is to compare an entire religion, parts and all, with an entire religion, parts and all; to use the analogy of a building, to compare two buildings, not leaving out of accounts their individual bricks. The problem is how to discover two wholes, both of which are considered and defined on their own merits and in their own terms, to be compared with each other."[47] Writing at the time, Jonathan Z. Smith subjected this plan to stern but warranted criticism:

> Allowing, for the moment, the language of "entire" and "wholes" to stand unquestioned, and setting aside the difficulty, indeed the impossibility, of comparing two different objects, each "considered" and "defined in their own terms" – a statement which he cannot mean literally, but which he gives no indication as to how he would modify – Sanders compounds confusion by further defining the notion of pattern… I am baffled by what "entire religion, parts and all" could possibly mean for Sanders. I find no methodological hints on how such entities are to be discovered, let alone compared.[48]

Notwithstanding the enormous and almost entirely positive influence of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* on the field of Pauline studies,[49] Smith is quite right about the conceptual problems. If not even Sanders's *magnum opus* could successfully compare Paul with Judaism, how much more is this true of the many lesser attempts at that ill-advised project.

A more recent trend in this research area speaks not of "Paul and Judaism" but rather of "Paul the Jew." Instances of this trend begin by granting (!) that Paul was a Jew but then add a descriptor qualifying what kind of Jew he was: "Paul, an [x] Jew." There is some precedent for this rubric in older scholarship. Kaufmann Kohler classed Paul as an archetypal *self-hating* Jew, one who had internalized Greco-Roman anti-Judaism and thus wrote with contempt for his own ancestral

> The concentration on (soteriological) patterns makes it possible for Sanders to compare the religion of one individual, Paul, with centuries of Palestinian Judaism. The approach leaves room for variations but, on the whole, is ahistorical."

[47] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 16.

[48] Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," 33–34.

[49] On which see Matthew Thiessen, "Conjuring Paul and Judaism Forty Years after *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*," *JJMJS* 5 (2018): 7–20.

traditions.[50] Markus Barth, in a provocation to his mainline Protestant interlocutors, classed Paul as a *good* Jew: "His was the life of a good Jew: a struggle for the rights of the neighbor."[51] But studies of the form "Paul, an [x] Jew" have only really come in vogue since the 1990s. Daniel Boyarin classes Paul as a *radical* Jew: "I read Paul as a Jewish cultural critic, and I ask what it was in Jewish culture that led him to produce a discourse of radical reform of that culture... My fundamental idea... is that what motivated Paul ultimately was a profound concern for the one-ness of humanity."[52] Calvin Roetzel classes Paul as a Jew *on the margins*, a member of his tribe but not of its orthodox, orthoprax center.[53] Going further than Roetzel, Love Sechrest classes Paul as a *former* Jew, one who has dissociated from his Jewish identity in order to associate with the *tertium genus*, the third race, of the Christ-believers.[54] Contrariwise, Mark Nanos classes Paul as a *Torah-observant* Jew, one who keeps the commandments that pertain to him and teaches gentiles-in-Christ to keep the (far fewer) commandments that pertain to them.[55] Similarly but less specifically, Gabriele Boccaccini classes Paul as a *Second-Temple* Jew, full stop. "Paul should be regarded as nothing other than a Second Temple Jew. What else should he have been? Paul was born a Jew, of Jewish parents, was circumcised, and nothing in his work supports (or even suggests) the idea that he became (or regarded himself as) an apostate."[56] But Boccaccini's "nothing other than" is overstatement; he himself also regards Paul as a Pharisee and an apostle, among other categories. Most recently, Brant Pitre, Michael Barber, and John

[50] Kaufmann Kohler, "Saul of Tarsus," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906), 11:79–87, on which see further Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57–96.

[51] Markus Barth, "St. Paul – A Good Jew," *HBT* 1 (1979): 7–45, here 37.

[52] Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 52.

[53] Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul, a Jew on the Margins* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

[54] Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race*, LNTS 410 (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

[55] Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 1–60, subtitled "Paul as a Torah-observant Jew."

[56] Gabriele Boccaccini, "The Three Paths to Salvation of Paul the Jew," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 2.

Kincaid have classed Paul as a *new covenant* Jew: "We follow Paul's lead and refer to him as a 'minister of a new covenant' (2 Cor 3:6) – that is, as a *new covenant Jew*... [This label can] account for elements of both continuity ('covenant') and discontinuity ('new') with Judaism in Paul's theology."[57] Other critics have tried to explain Paul by classing him as a proselyte Jew, a Hellenistic Jew, a Palestinian Jew, a Pharisaic Jew, an apocalyptic Jew, an eschatological Jew, and other categories beside.

Perhaps the most interesting and most influential of these proposals is John Barclay's mid-1990s classification of Paul as an *anomalous diaspora* Jew.[58] Barclay rightly questions why his predecessors (e.g., W. D. Davies, E. P. Sanders, Alan Segal) had compared Paul with *Palestinian* Jewish sources if Paul's social context was so obviously the diaspora. He writes, "Paul can properly be regarded as a Diaspora Jew and compared with other Jews living in this social environment... By observing him in this, his primary social context, we can plot his social and cultural location amongst other Diaspora Jews. As we shall see, his position there is distinctly anomalous."[59] There are two key moves here. Historiographically, Barclay situates Paul among other Greek-speaking diaspora Jewish writers, yielding real heuristic gains. But analytically, then, he argues that Paul is an anomaly relative to all of them. The first of these moves is a great advance on older scholarship, but the second, as Ronald Charles has pointed out, actually reproduces the conclusions of that older scholarship.[60] Barclay

[57] Brant Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John Kincaid, *Paul, a New Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 62.

[58] John M. G. Barclay, "Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?" *JSNT* 18 (1996): 89–119; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 381–396; and now also John M. G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016). The "anomalous Jew" rubric has been adopted by, e.g., F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches* (London: Routledge, 1998), 250–266; Carl R. Holladay, "Paul and His Predecessors in the Diaspora: Some Reflections on Ethnic Identity in the Fragmentary Hellenistic Jewish Authors," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald et al., NovTSup 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 429–460; and most recently and programmatically Michael F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

[59] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 381.

[60] Ronald Charles, *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 87–124, especially 104–107.

explicates the Pauline anomaly thusly: "In his conceptuality Paul is most at home among the particularistic and least accommodated segments of the Diaspora; yet in his utilization of these concepts, and in his social practice, he shatters the ethnic mould in which that ideology was formed… By an extraordinary transference of ideology, Paul deracinates the most culturally conservative forms of Judaism in the Diaspora and uses them in the service of his largely Gentile communities."[61] Barclay is too careful a thinker to call Paul *unique*, but nevertheless, in the respect that Barclay cares about, Paul stands on one side of a dividing line, all other diaspora Jews on the other. Only Paul "shatters the ethnic mould" and "deracinates" the tradition via an "extraordinary transference of ideology." One wonders whether, as Charles suggests, this kind of anomaly is just uniqueness by another name.[62]

Some of the "Paul, an [x] Jew" proposals are simply false. I am virtually certain, contra Hyam Maccoby, that Paul was not a Greek who turned proselyte in order to marry a Jewish woman.[63] I am not certain but relatively confident, contra Michael Satlow, that Paul was not a born and raised Jerusalemite Jew.[64] Many "Paul, an [x] Jew"

[61] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 393.

[62] Charles, *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora*, 104: "*Anomalous* is, admittedly, not synonymous with *unique*, and Barclay may have carefully chosen this term to sidestep some of the issues that Jonathan Z. Smith raises with regard to the positions holding up Christianity as sui generis. But Barclay's position as it relates to Paul in the Diaspora is very close to a position of placing Paul in a unique place." Barclay neither cites Smith nor comments on the problem of uniqueness anywhere in the book, so I think it unlikely that he is responding to Smith, even implicitly. But Barclay has now engaged with Smith in his "'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us, To see oursels as others see us!': Method and Purpose in Comparing the New Testament," in *The New Testament in Comparison: Validity, Method, and Purpose in Comparing Traditions*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and B. G. White (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 9–22. Further on Barclay's Paul the anomalous Jew, see Thiessen, "Conjuring Paul and Judaism."

[63] Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1986), on which see John Gager's review in *JQR* 79 (1988): 248–250.

[64] Michael L. Satlow, *How the Bible Became Holy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 210–223; Michael L. Satlow, "Paul, a Jew from Jerusalem," *Bible and Interpretation* (September 2014); Michael L. Satlow, "Paul's Scriptures," in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Honor of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael Satlow (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2018), 257–274. I consider and respond to Satlow's proposal in my "*Ioudaios*, Pharisee, Zealot," in *Paul, Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022) 24–45.

proposals, however, are technically accurate, depending what point is being made; but the crucial question is what we actually gain from them. It is true – and most critics would agree that it is true – that Paul was a Second-Temple, diaspora, Pharisaic, apocalyptic, nonconformist (etc., etc.) Jew. But the fact that most critics would agree to this litany is proof that the application of the labels tells us relatively little, because they can mask huge differences of interpretation. Regarding Pitre, Barber, and Kincaid's "new covenant Jew" proposal, I have argued elsewherethat it is *both* a welcome hedge against the imposition of ill-suited categories *and* a barrier to taxonomy, because neither ancient nor modern writers ever use "new covenant" to denominate a certain subset of ancient Jews. [65] To identify Paul as a Hellenistic Jew is to say that he is like, for example, Philo of Alexandria in some relevant respect.[66] Likewise, to identify Paul as an apocalyptic Jew is to say that he is like, for example, the Qumran covenanters in some relevant respect.[67] But what does it mean to identify Paul as a new covenant Jew? Who are the other members of that set? Indeed, are there any? Paul only uses the label "attendants of a new covenant" of himself (and perhaps also Timothy, 2 Cor 1:1), not of the other apostles or other Christ-believers, let alone any other Jews outside the Christ sect. So perhaps to identify Paul as a new covenant Jew is simply to say that he is a Paulinist. But that is a tautology, or very close to one. Simply to label is not yet to understand. Thus my goal in this book is not, for instance, to prove that Paul was an eschatological Jew, as if proving that could tell us very much. I do think that Paul was an eschatological Jew, and a Second-Temple Jew, and a diaspora Jew, and a great many other things – all suitably defined and qualified, of course. But I do not think that just to apply any of those labels is yet to understand him. My goal in this book is to explore how Paul (who was of course an x, y, and z Jew) thinks ethnicity and eschatology. That is a different and, I think, much more productive project.

[65] Matthew V. Novenson, review of Brant Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John A. Kincaid, *Paul: A New Covenant Jew*, in *SJT* 74 (2021): 93–94.

[66] As explored, e.g., in the essays in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

[67] As explored, e.g., in the essays in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature*, ed. Jean-Sebastien Rey, STDJ 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

Speaking of Paul

For the purposes of this study, I mostly use "Paul" as a shorthand for the author of the seven (almost) undisputedly authentic letters: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1–2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon. Of course, this shorthand masks numerous problems. Not even these seven letters are really undisputed; even today, a few interpreters would defend only F. C. Baur's list of four, or Bruno Bauer's list of zero, or other permutations besides.[68] With the majority, however, I think that we can attribute these seven letters to Paul, or better: to Paul and his colleagues. As Laura Nasrallah has rightly emphasized, all but one (viz. Romans) of the seven letters are expressly co-authored:[69] Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in 1 Thessalonians (1:1); Paul and Sosthenes in 1 Corinthians (1:1); Paul and Timothy in 2 Corinthians (1:1), Philippians (1:1), and Philemon (1); Paul and "all the brothers" in Galatians (1:1–2). And even Romans comes from the hand of Tertius the scribe (Rom 16:22), not Paul the author.[70] What is more, not only are the letters products of Paul's network; the letters *as we have them* are products of the third-, fourth-, and fifth-century tradents of our best manuscripts. We are necessarily ignorant, for the most part, about the text of the letters for the roughly two centuries between their composition and the earliest extant witnesses.[71] At least one of the letters – 2 Corinthians – was very probably not written in the form we

[68] On the moving target of an ostensibly undisputed canon of authentically Pauline letters, see Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Patrick Hart, *A Prolegomenon to the Study of Paul*, MTSRSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Benjamin Petroelje, *The Pauline Book and the Dilemma of Ephesians*, LNTS 665 (London: T&T Clark, 2022).

[69] Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1–4.

[70] On Tertius, and the possibility that he was enslaved to Paul or to another Christ-believer in Corinth or Cenchreae, see Candida R. Moss, "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and the Production of Early Christian Literature," *JTS* 74 (2023): 20–56.

[71] Thus rightly Brent Nongbri, "To See Paul as Paul Saw Himself," *Syndicate* (2 June 2020): "Even if we grant (as all of us effectively do) that the textual critics have been basically successful at obtaining the earliest recoverable text of Paul's letters, it bears recalling that this is essentially the text of Paul's letters as it existed in the fourth century… We have no good way of knowing what the text of Paul's letters looked like in the second century, never mind the middle of the first century."

now have it but is a composite of two or more shorter communications. And while we have good reason to trust that our critical text of Paul is mostly free of later interpolations,[72] the case of the doxology at Rom 16:25–27 should keep us on our toes.[73] All of which is to say that even the so-called undisputed letters cannot transport us directly to the apostle himself.

That being the case, one might be tempted to abandon the authentic/pseudonymous distinction altogether and simply let "Paul" mean the whole late ancient *corpus Paulinum*, including at least 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1–2 Timothy, and Titus. Luke Timothy Johnson, to cite one eminent example, has recently proposed something along these lines.[74] And for reception-historical and theological purposes, such an approach has much to commend it. But it has significant liabilities, too. Most importantly, there is no such thing as *the* late ancient *corpus Paulinum*; rather, there are several of them, at least.[75] Do we include Hebrews, which counted as "Paul" in the Greek East but not the Latin West, and in modern Bibles sits awkwardly between the Pauline letters and the Catholic letters? Or 3 Corinthians, accepted among the Syrian and Armenian churches but not elsewhere? Or the Pastoral Epistles, absent from the early ten-letter corpus of church letters attested in P46? It is *not* a simple choice between a seven-letter critical corpus and a thirteen-letter ecclesiastical corpus. What we actually have are some twenty-odd ancient letters attributed to Paul, preserved in several partly overlapping ancient editions (a ten-letter corpus, a thirteen-letter corpus, a fourteen-letter corpus, and so on), *none* of which includes *all* of those twenty-plus extant letters. So there is just no getting around the obstinate historical questions about the relative proximity of each of these texts to the apostle, even if we must abandon the naïve hope of access to the mind of the man himself. In this study, therefore, I appeal to the seven letters, minus some textually dubious passages, as first-order evidence for Paul (in the

[72] Contra William O. Walker, *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, JSNTSup 213 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

[73] Harry Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, SD 42 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977).

[74] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Constructing Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), volume 1 of his tellingly titled *The Canonical Paul*.

[75] See Harry Y. Gamble, "The Formation of the Pauline Corpus," in *Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, 338–354.

sense stipulated above), while in the footnotes I also comment selectively on relevant passages from 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1–2 Timothy, and Titus, as well as Hebrews, 3 Corinthians, Laodiceans, Paul and Seneca, Apocalypse of Paul, Prayer of Paul, Acts of the Apostles, Acts of Paul, and more. These are sources of a different order, much less proximate to the apostle, but they are sources nonetheless, part of the "Pauline archive" with which we have to work.[76]

Even setting aside the problem of the sources, which is not easily set aside, there is an equally thorny problem with the word "author" in my breezy "shorthand for the author of the seven authentic letters." Margaret Mitchell helpfully distinguishes between what she calls *the historical Paul* – "the actual flesh-and-blood human person in his finite and complicated life, as best as we can reconstruct him" – and *the historical-epistolary Paul* – "the mini-corpus of the seven scholarly *homologoumena*, which has itself had many lives since."[77] We would, of course, be delighted to have straightforward access to the historical Paul (and likewise the historical Socrates, the historical Cleopatra, and so on), but in fact we only know him by way of the historical-epistolary Paul, which is not the same thing, because, as Mitchell puts it, "no person is equivalent to or reducible to a selective body of his or her rhetorically forceful and occasional writings."[78] The two are related, because there is good reason to think that at least the seven letters do come, via whatever slings and arrows of composition and transmission, from the historical figure himself. But not even an (ostensibly) undisputed passage in an (ostensibly) undisputed letter is a transparent deliverance of the mind of Paul. As Mitchell rightly notes, our author "was strategic and canny, often deliberate and acting aforethought, but also inclined to antithetical reasoning, combativeness, and hyperbole, often followed by or associated with, forms of

[76] "Pauline archive" is the preferred term of Hart, *Prolegomenon*; and Cavan W. Concannon, *Profaning Paul* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021). See also Gregory Fewster, "Archiving Paul: Manuscripts, Religion, and the Editorial Shaping of Ancient Letter Collections," *Archivaria* 81 (2016): 101–128.

[77] Margaret M. Mitchell, "Paul and Judaism now, Quo vadimus?" *JJMJS* 5 (2018): 61–62. For further application of this distinction, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Emergence of Christian Textuality: Early Christian Literary Culture in Context*, WUNT 393 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

[78] Mitchell, "Paul and Judaism," 62.

conciliation, whether tonal pauses, shifts from categorical to temporal arguments, and types of diction."[79] As will become clear in the argument below, I am more optimistic than Mitchell is about the possibility of synthesizing at least some of Paul's main ideas. She is absolutely right that "Paul's letters never did and still do not have a single, unequivocal meaning."[80] In fact, I would go further still and do without talk of meaning(s), whether singular or plural, altogether.[81] I do not claim to pronounce on *the* meaning of the letters, only to offer one reading that I think makes good historical-contextual sense.[82]

The Past and Its Uses

I come to interpret Paul, not to praise him. I have no interest in perpetuating the Great Man approach to the letters, a hermeneutical stance that assumes that Paul is the upright party in all his disputes, the hero of the story of which he is part. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura Nasrallah have perceptively identified and criticized this commonplace in their excellent essay "Beyond the Heroic Paul." Over against such a hermeneutical stance, Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah urge, "There is much to gain from reading the letters of Paul – in their writing, reception, and afterlives – as sites of debate, contestation, and resistance rather than as articulations of one individual's vision and heroic community-building efforts."[83] That is, we can read Paul's letters in order to understand not just his ideas and goals, but also the (different, sometimes contrary) ideas and goals of Cephas, Apollos, Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche, the Corinthian women prophets, and others. Following Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, I try in what

[79] Mitchell, "Paul and Judaism," 63.
[80] Mitchell, "Paul and Judaism," 62. She develops this point in detail in her *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[81] Following Stout, "What Is the Meaning of a Text?"
[82] That is, I do precisely what Mitchell elsewhere describes as follows: "Pauline interpretation is fundamentally an artistic exercise in conjuring up and depicting a dead man from his ghostly images in the ancient text, as projected on a background composed from a selection of existing sources. All these portraits are based upon a new configuration of the surviving evidence, set into a particular, chosen framework" (Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 428).
[83] Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul."

follows "to turn away from the question of whether the ancient Paul was a hero or a villain and instead to imagine him and his interpreters as fully engaged in the messier political subjectivities of the diverse communities to which he wrote."[84] Now, inasmuch as the present study does focus on Paul's own ideas and goals, rather than those of Apollos or Phoebe, it runs the risk of appearing to be another drop in the sea of "heroic Paul" readings. But I consider that a risk worth taking, for I think that we have not yet understood Paul on ethnicity and eschatology precisely because we have cast him as a hero. Only by allowing ourselves to imagine Paul *otherwise* than as heroic or villainous, perhaps even as tragic, can we think our way to the end of this particular problem.

Cavan Concannon has argued still further along the lines sketched by Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah. In a bracing manifesto entitled "Paul Is Dead. Long Live Paulinism!" Concannon pleads, "We have to kill Paul... I am calling for an overthrowing of Paul as the representative of the Platonic One in favor of the creation of a vibrant, polyvalent Pauline archive... In other words, and to paraphrase Marx, let's stop interpreting Paul and start creating Paulinisms that can change the world."[85] Concannon is understandably weary of the modern project of historicizing the apostle and rightly suspicious of the many claims of Pauline warrant for various theological and ethical visions. He proposes, therefore, that we abandon the quest for the historical Paul and mine the whole, vast Pauline tradition ("authentic," pseudo-, deutero-, trito-, apocryphal, and otherwise) for anything we find ethically useful. "Let's not start with the presumption that the Pauline archive will provide us with answers once we have revealed the real Paul; rather, we should allow our work to ask if anything from the Pauline archive (or any early Christian text for that matter) might yet become weaponizable in the struggle for a more just future."[86] My reading of Paul in the present book is more old-fashioned than what Concannon proposes in one respect and more radical in another. It is more old-fashioned in that I do not abandon the (hermeneutically chastened) quest for a historical Paul. I think that there is still much to be gained from Spinoza's (and Albert Schweitzer's, and Paula

[84] Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul," 173.
[85] Cavan W. Concannon, "Paul Is Dead. Long Live Paulinism!" *AJR*, (1 November 2016).
[86] Concannon, "Paul Is Dead."

Fredriksen's) historicizing project.[87] But my reading is more radical in that, while I am a comrade in Concannon's "struggle for a more just future," I am even more willing than he is to leave Paul (and Paulinism) out of that struggle. After all, it is our struggle, not Paul's. Christians will of course have good reason to invoke Paul as an authority and a resource. But others will not, and I see no reason why students of religion in antiquity, in their capacity as such, should do. Like Concannon, but even more so, I am happy to let Paul be *useless* for our modern projects, and I think that by doing so we stand to understand him better. In contrast to the dominant approach to Paul, which Stanley Stowers rightly diagnoses as "academic Christian theological modernism,"[88] the historical reading offered in this book reckons with the fact that Paul is irremediably different from us in certain fundamental respects.[89]

With those methodological parameters in place, the argument of this book unfolds as follows. Chapter 2 considers the only passage in any of the books comprising the New Testament that contains the word Ἰουδαϊσμός, *Ioudaismos*, often transliterated "Judaism": Gal 1:13–14. I show that that word does not actually mean (what we mean by) "Judaism" and explain how exactly Paul positions himself in relation to it. Chapter 3 examines that Pauline bugbear "justification from

[87] I cite Spinoza here because Concannon cites him disapprovingly, Schweitzer because Concannon cites him approvingly, and Fredriksen (whom Concannon does not cite) because she is, in my view, the most incisive current theorist of history, theology, and ethics in the study of Paul, e.g., in her "*Al Tirah!*" and "Historical Integrity, Interpretive Freedom: The Philosopher's Paul and the Problem of Anachronism," in *St. Paul among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 61–73.

[88] Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 106–107: "The dominant approach to Paul and the Corinthian letters I characterize as academic Christian theological modernism. . . The tradition is thoroughly grounded in the situation developing from the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, but took form as part of the crystallization of European modernity in the nineteenth century and the institutionalization of confessional faculties in the universities. . . [It assumes that] with regard to science and cosmology, the ancients and the early Christians are other in a rather absolute sense, but with regard to religion, morals, sociality, and subjectivity, the early Christians are the same as us. They are the same people in different clothes, with a different 'science.'" Mason, "Paul without Judaism" gives a similar diagnosis of and warning to modern studies of Paul.

[89] I develop this programmatic claim further in my *Paul, Then and Now*, in particular chapter 1 "Our Apostles, Ourselves," in dialogue with Concannon, *Profaning Paul*.

works of the law" and asks who in antiquity actually argued *for* such a thing. Chapter 4 mines the letters for evidence regarding the ethnicity(s) of Paul's opponents. I show that the centuries-old and still-popular image of Paul versus "Jewish Christianity" is not tenable. Chapter 5 starts from the traditional picture of Paul as an anti-legalist and proceeds to show a mass of evidence for (what anywhere else we would call) legalism in Paul's own letters. Chapter 6, similarly, starts from the traditional picture of Paul as an anti-ethnocentrist and proceeds to show a mass of evidence for (what anywhere else we would call) ethnic chauvinism in Paul's own letters. Chapter 7 considers all those passages where interpreters have thought that Paul redefines Israel to mean Christ-believers, demonstrating that he never does so. Chapter 8 explores why Paul sometimes says that Christ effects righteousness for *gentiles*, other times for *all people*, giving a summary account of what Paul thinks Christ does for gentiles and Jews, respectively. The concluding Chapter 9 explains the logic of Paul's controversial claim that Christ is the end of the law, proving its relation to ancient Jewish and Christian speculation about the physics of immortality.

Conclusion

Let us return, briefly and finally, to Rudyard Kipling. I suggested above *that*, but did not explain *how*, the opening lines of Kipling's "Ballad of East and West" help to illustrate Paul's way of thinking Jewishness and time.

> *Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,*
> *Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat.*

Some ancients did, like Kipling, perceive the peoples of the world in terms of east and west, ἀνατολή and δύσις, *oriens* and *occidens*. "The eastern group are more masculine, vigorous of soul, and frank in all things… Those to the west are more feminine, softer of soul, and secretive" (Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 2.2.9 LCL). "Many shall come from east and west and recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11). And so on. Paul does not classify peoples in this way, but he does presuppose another binary just as fundamental: Jews and gentiles, or, in the singular, Jew and Greek. Although in actual social practice, Jews and gentiles did meet all the

time and everywhere in the ancient Mediterranean world,[90] Paul, like some other Jewish thinkers of his day, thought of the two as deeply, even ontologically different – *Jews are Jews, and gentiles gentiles* – in a way not bridgeable otherwise than by the re-creation of the universe itself.

But – and here Kipling's second line comes in – Paul also believed in the re-creation of the universe itself, not in the distant future as an article of faith, but in his immediate present as an empirical fact. Whereas Kipling, like most Christians down through the centuries[91] (and, *mutatis mutandis*, most Jews, too), imagines God's great judgment seat as a feature of the dim and distant future, Paul perceives it as a reckoning about to happen right now. The end of the ages has come. East and west, Jew and Greek, finally meet in the presence of the one God who is over all. In fact, not coincidentally, Kipling's phrase "God's great Judgment Seat" is itself a Paulinism: "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Rom 14:10); "We must all be revealed in front of the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10). In the dawning new creation, Jews are perfected in righteousness and made to live forever, like the angels, in fulfilment of God's long-ago promises to the patriarchs; meanwhile, gentiles are transformed from their natural state of debauchery into the same pneumatic existence promised to the Jews. Because of this peculiar combination of ethnicity and eschatology, the religion of Paul is neither what we normally think of as Judaism, nor what we normally think of as Christianity. And that fact is the cause of most of the confusion in the long history of Paul-and-Judaism debates. That is to put the thesis of this book. Now it only remains to prove it.

[90] See Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Paula Fredriksen, "What 'Parting of the Ways?' Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City," in Adam H. Becker and Anette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 35–64.

[91] Kipling's own religion is a famous puzzle. In a 1908 letter to Lady Edward Cecil, he identifies himself as "a God-fearing Christian atheist."