




ARTICLE

Emissary to Jews in the Diaspora and to Some Non-Jews, Champion of Jewish Monotheism and Circumspect of Diaspora Judaism: Paul of Tarsus in the Book of Acts

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Abstract

In Christian tradition, Paul is the apostle to the nations. However, his portrayal in the Book of Acts is more nuanced. For a longer period, Paul's ministry is limited to Jews. Only from Acts 13 onwards does Paul slowly emerge as ministering to non-Jews. Yet even then, Paul remains foremost an emissary to diaspora Judaism. In its apology for Paul and his disputed way of including non-Jews into the people of God, Acts emphasises that Paul did so without diminishing the priority of Israel, as a staunch proponent of Jewish monotheism and in a way that took full account of the precarious situation of diaspora Judaism.

Keywords: Paul; Acts of the Apostles; early Judaism; early Christian mission; non-Jews; Jewish-Gentile relations; Jewish monotheism

1. Introduction

At the beginning of his study *'When You Were Gentiles': Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence*¹, Cavan W. Concannon quotes Adolf von Harnack's summary of early Christian alleged attitudes towards Judaism, 'in which a Christianity that wipes away sex, age, social position, and nationality is contrasted with the peculiar national religion of Judaism'²:

[In Christianity] the barriers of sex, age, position, and nationality vanish entirely for Christians, as Christians. ... Since Christianity is the only true religion and is not a national religion, but belongs to all mankind and pertains to our inmost life, it follows that it can have no special alliance with the Jewish people, or with their peculiar cult. The Jewish people of today, at least, stand in no favoured relationship with the God whom Jesus revealed ... [and the revelation prior to Christ to Israel] had as its end the calling of a 'new nation' and the spreading of the revelation of God through his Son.³

¹ Cavan W. Concannon, *'When You Were Gentiles': Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (Synkrisis: Comparative Approaches to Early Christianity in Greco-Roman Culture; New Haven and London: Yale University, 2014).

² 'When', 1.

³ A. von Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma* (Boston: Beacon, 1957) 42.

Concannon observes that when placed alongside each other (as is the case in von Harnack's simplistic claim), 'the two sentiments show how the rhetoric of a universal, non-ethnic Christianity is created by labelling Israel and the Jews in particular, ethnic, and peculiar. For Christianity to present itself as the universal religion of humankind, Judaism must be constructed as its particular *Other*'.⁴ In his conclusion, Concannon observes that 'the history of early Christian studies has been marked by a haunted racial history wherein Christianity was constructed as a non-ethnic, universal, world religion by constructing Judaism as its peculiar, nationalistic, ethnic Other. Paul, in particular, has been made to sit at the crux of this racial history, marking the transition from the particular of Judaism to the universal of Christianity'.⁵

This is not the place to analyse this instance of 'othering' further and to criticise one of the complex and highly problematic developments in our discipline. In this article, we argue that – next to everything *else* that is misleading in this confrontation – this is surely *not* the portrait of Paul that is painted in the Book of Acts. In Acts, Paul marks far less the 'transition from the particular of Judaism to the universal of Christianity' than often assumed. The opposite is the case: Paul, clearly characterised as a devout, loyal and veritable Jew all the way through Acts, marks the *continuity* between what was to become Judaism and Christianity. The portrayal in Acts underscores that Paul as the harbinger of universalism in Jesus, Israel's Christ, is not in contrast to Paul, the loyal Jew and champion of Judaism. Our quest for this predominant aspect of the portrayal of Paul in Acts is part of the larger quest to rediscover and emphasise Paul *the Jew* (his identity, world-view and theology)⁶, which, for him, was no contrast to Paul *the Christ-follower*. This quest, closely related to the new perspective, and more recently to new perspectives, has provided fresh trajectories.

In what follows, we focus on the *literary presentation* of Paul's behaviour and ministry in Acts. We cannot engage here with the larger issue – and highly nuanced discussion – of how this presentation relates to history – as far as we can ascertain it with the sources at our disposal.⁷

The portrayal of Paul in Acts as a champion of Judaism contains three aspects: Paul is presented primarily as a witness to his fellow Jews (II), as a proponent of Jewish monotheism in his ministry to non-Jews (III) and as respectful, circumspect and concerned for his fellow Jews (IV).

2. Witness to Jews and – With Delay and Only to Some Extent – to Non-Jews

While introduced early on into the narrative (Acts 7.58), Paul's ministry following his conversion/calling to *be the chosen instrument to carry the name of Jesus before the non-Jews and kings and the children of Israel* in Acts 9.15 is limited – in the Lukan presentation – for a longer period to Jews in Judea and in the Jewish diaspora. Only from Acts 13.7–12 onwards, *after* Peter's programmatic encounter with Cornelius (10.1–11.18) and the establishment of the church in Antioch by Hellenistic Jewish Christ-followers and its contacts with Jerusalem (11.19–30), does Paul emerge, almost by chance, as ministering to *non-Jews*.

⁴ 'When', 1–2.

⁵ 'When', 171.

⁶ See M. F. Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); G. Boccaccini, C. A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2016); B. Pitre, M. P. Barber, J. A. Kincaid, *Paul, a New Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019).

⁷ For a comprehensive summary of the issues, see C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary Vol. I Introduction and 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012) 90–220.

However, even then, Paul remains during the three Lukan mission phases primarily an emissary to diaspora Judaism.

In the account of his conversion/calling in Acts 9, not Paul himself but Ananias gets to hear in a vision what is to become Paul's mission: 'he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the non-Jews and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name' (9.16–17). Possibly Ananias shared this prediction with Paul, but we are not told so.⁸

Only Paul's own first detailed account of his conversion/calling in Acts 22 indicates his direct commission to the nations in the briefest of terms ('I will send you far away to the non-Jews', 22.21; ἐξαποστελω σε – referred to as an activity still in the *future*, not to be pursued immediately). This commission is not located on the road to Damascus or in Damascus itself (outside of Judea) but on the premises of the temple in Jerusalem, the holiest place in Judaism, and as close as any ordinary Israelite will come to the presence of God. Only there does Paul hear directly of his *future* calling to be Christ's emissary among non-Jews.⁹

Apparently, this commissioning took place at a later point, presumably during the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 9.26–30 ('When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple', 22.17) which came to an end because of the opponents' intentions (9.29). The divine analysis of the situation and prediction ('they will not accept your testimony about me', 22.18) combined with the calling to *future* ministry among non-Jews apparently made Paul agree to the decision of the believers in Jerusalem to send him off to Tarsus.

Slightly less likely, the vision occurred during the so-called famine-relief visit of Acts 11.27–30 (in this case, Paul would have skipped his first visit to the city as a Christ-believer in this defence speech). At the end of this visit, Barnabas and Paul leave and return to Antioch due to their responsibilities there, not due to opposition to Paul. Soon after their return to Antioch from this visit (12.25), Barnabas and Paul are commissioned for the first missionary phase (13.1–3).

Acts 9.30 and the account of Paul's visionary experience in Jerusalem in Acts 22.17–21 paint the portrait of a reluctant missionary to the non-Jews who, if he had had a say in the matter, would have rather shared his new insights with his fellow Jews in Jerusalem than be sent off far away to non-Jews. Paul insists that the Jews of Jerusalem know about his past, in particular about his rejection of Jesus and his followers. It is not entirely clear how this functions in Paul's argumentation: does Paul think that the people of Jerusalem still accept him as a religious authority and would therefore listen to him? Would his biography make people particularly curious and willing to listen? Does Paul insist that in view of his past as a persecutor, he is all the more obliged to take a risk and proclaim the Gospel to the people who know him and his activities – now that he has changed sides?

However, the risen Lord does not consider Paul's preference to stay in Jerusalem and witness there as the people of Jerusalem will not accept Paul's testimony (Acts 22.18). Therefore, he commands Paul, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me'. After Paul's insistence to minister to Jews and in Jerusalem/Judea (see the objections raised by OT prophets to their calling and commissioning), he is commissioned by Jesus on the very temple premises, 'Go, for

⁸ This also applies to Paul's summary of Ananias' words to him in his statement of account in Acts 22.13–16; there is likewise no direct mention of a mission to non-Jews. Paul is to be a witness for the Righteous One, that is, the Messiah. There is no specification as to *whom* Paul is to present such witness.

⁹ On the road to Damascus, Paul learns that Jesus was and is indeed Israel's Messiah; in the temple vision, he learns that this Messiah commissions Paul to extend the salvation he brought beyond the confines of the people of Israel.

I will send you far away to the non-Jews' (22.21). Paul is commanded to leave and to go (and perhaps also *allowed* to go). Thus, when the Lukan Paul ministers primarily not in the Jewish core territory but among Jews in the diaspora and to non-Jews, it was not due to Paul's own reluctance or fear but to the fact that the Jews of Jerusalem would not accept his witness and – for that reason – that he was sent elsewhere by Jesus himself. Paul's account in Acts 22 reads as an explanation, if not an excuse, for not having stayed and ministered in Jerusalem/Judea.

Following his conversion/calling, the freshly commissioned missionary to the non-Jews and the children of Israel (Acts 9.15) ministers in Damascus to Jews: 'For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God"' (9.20). Paul kept confounding the Jews by proving that Jesus was the Christ (presumably with reference to the Scriptures of Israel, 9.22). This ministry only came to an end when his Jewish opponents plotted to kill Paul (9.23), and his followers sent him off (9.25; they take the initiative and see to it that he really leaves the city – even though the means are unusual).

Back in Jerusalem, Paul moves among the Christian community and preaches boldly in the name of Jesus. 'And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists' (Acts 9.29; Jews with a diaspora background like Paul himself – perhaps a first pointer to the group within Judaism to which Paul feels a particular responsibility). Paul continues with the people to whom Stephen had ministered (6.8–11), and where Stephen encountered fierce resistance.

Paul's ministry in Jerusalem is a further fulfilment of the announcement of Jesus and of Scripture that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, *beginning in Jerusalem*' (Luke 24.47).¹⁰ When some Hellenists seek to kill Paul, he has to leave and is made to leave (Acts 9.28–30). This fierce resistance causes the Christ-believers of Jerusalem to send Paul off. They are determined that there will be no further martyr like Stephen; they take Paul to Caesarea and ensure that he ends up on a ship to Tarsus. Otherwise, he would have fearlessly continued his ministry in Jerusalem, as the apostles and Stephen had done previously (Acts 4–7).¹¹

After Paul's being sent off, Acts passes over a longer period in the biography of Paul in silence. There are only a few hints of Paul's activities during these years. The letter mentioned in Acts 15.6–29 is addressed to the non-Jews in Antioch, *Syria and Cilicia* (15.23). Next to Antioch, one might rather have expected the regions visited during the first missionary phase (13.4–14.26) to be included. While Antioch is in Syria, and churches might have been founded in its vicinity by members of the Antiochene church, up to this point, there is no reference to churches being founded in *Cilicia* ... other than the fact that Tarsus lies in Cilicia. This could be an indication that Paul was active during this period between Jerusalem and Antioch and founded communities of Christ-believers in Syria and Cilicia.¹²

That the decree of the Council is also addressed (and was delivered) to these communities indicates that the issues discussed in Jerusalem are also of relevance to them and that some of the communities which Paul probably founded during these years included significant numbers of Christ-believers with a non-Jewish background. They may have faced the same controversies as noted both in Antioch and Jerusalem. Possibly, the

¹⁰ In Acts 26.20, Paul describes this phase as follows: 'but declared first to those [Jews] in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles ...'.

¹¹ Acts indicates that after the initial conflicts regarding the apostles and Stephen in Acts 4–7, the Christ-followers in Jerusalem were careful in navigating their relationship with their fellow Jews in Jerusalem (see 12.1–19). While Paul's visits to Jerusalem in Acts 11.27–12.25; 15.4–29 and 18.22 (?) are not presented as problematic, his arrival in Acts 21.15 required a strategy of de-escalation even *within* the Christian community.

¹² Luke passes over Paul's ministry in Arabia and in Syria and Cilicia, which we know about from Gal 1.21.

same people who came down from Jerusalem and agitated in Antioch (Acts 15.1) had also been active in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia in the communities which Paul had founded earlier on. However, all these activities are passed over in silence. In Acts, the ministry among non-Jews does not start with Paul.

Paul reappears on the stage in Acts 11.25 when Barnabas sets out to search for him in Tarsus and to bring him to Antioch to assist him there.¹³ Luke's focus for Paul's ministry in Antioch is *inner-Christian*: 'For a whole year they met with *the church* and taught a great many people'.¹⁴ While Paul's teaching was probably not limited to Christ-believers, in the presentation of Acts with regard to Antioch and to teaching elsewhere, teaching occurs primarily with reference to *believers*.¹⁵ There is no indication in the text that Paul was evangelising among non-Jews in Antioch.

In this context, Luke reports the journey of Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 11.27–30). Both men are sent as representatives of the church in Antioch. Although this would have involved certain risks for Paul, he is portrayed as loyal to Jerusalem (using each opportunity he can get to return to the city) and willing to support the Jewish believers there.¹⁶

After delivering the famine-relief funds, Barnabas and Paul return to Antioch (Acts 12.25) and resume their place among the *prophets* and teachers in the Antiochene community (13.1). After some time, they are commissioned by the Holy Spirit and the church to the work for which the Spirit has called them (13.1–3). At the beginning of this first missionary phase, the ministry is restricted to Jews: being portrayed as *true prophets*, 'they proclaimed *the word of God* in the synagogues of the Jews' (13.5). Apparently, this is what happens as the missionaries traverse the island as far as Paphos (13.6). There the missionaries encounter 'a certain magician, a Jewish *false prophet* named Bar-Jesus' in the service of the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus, 'a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear *the word of the Lord*' (13.7). Whether and to what extent this word was actually preached to him on that occasion is not clear (the note that Sergius Paulus is 'astonished at the teaching of the Lord' later on, 13.12, implies a certain amount of information). The focus of the narrative is not on the conversion of this high-status non-Jew (and probably people in his entourage) but on the controversy, on the challenge and riposte between the true prophets and the imposter. Paul is affirmed as the true prophet by the only punitive miracle which he performs in Acts.

Other than this general designation ('the word of God' ... 'the teaching of the Lord', Acts 13.7, 12), the specific content of this word is not presented – even if this is the first proclamation of the Lukan Paul to a non-Jew. The stage surely would have been ready and grand enough for such a presentation! The readers are left to assume that Paul would deliver his own version of what Peter preached to the non-Jews gathered in the house of Cornelius in Caesarea (10.36–43).

¹³ Barnabas perhaps brought Paul to Antioch because he had some experience in reaching out to non-Jews and in founding communities in this context. Barnabas probably knew of Paul's calling to carry Christ's name before the non-Jews (9.15). Yet Acts does not give this or any other motivation for Barnabas' move. The readers would recall Acts 9.27 when Barnabas succeeded in including Paul in the community in Jerusalem. Does Barnabas repeat this inclusion of Paul when he can do so without risking harm to Paul or to the Christian community in Antioch?

¹⁴ Other Jewish believers from Jerusalem reached out to non-Jews (Acts 11.20) and brought them into the community. The new name given to the believers, 'Christians', suggests that a group of Jewish and non-Jewish believers had come into being for whom the common designation 'Jews' was not or no longer adequate.

¹⁵ See the survey in C. W. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith* (WUNT II.108; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 335–44.

¹⁶ The gifts of the church in Antioch, which included non-Jews, is reminiscent of some OT prophecies which foresaw that non-Jewish peoples would bring their gifts to Zion.

From that point onwards in the narrative, Paul appears as the leading figure ('Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos', Acts 13.13) and spokesman.¹⁷ No events are reported for Perga in Pamphylia (13.13).

In the programmatic and detailed account of the events in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13.14–52), Paul addresses the 'men of Israel and you who fear God' (13.16, the beginning of the sermon is a summary of Israel's history from the election of the patriarchs to the coming of Jesus, 13.17–25). The reactions to Paul's proclamation are likewise telling. There is interest in the Christian proclamation both among Jews and non-Jews (13.42). '... many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God' (13.43).¹⁸ Jewish opposition arises when almost the whole city gathers the next Sabbath 'to hear the word of the Lord' (13.44). Rather than being delighted that so many people are eager to hear *the word of the Lord*, 'when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with zeal/jealousy'¹⁹ and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul – that is, the word of the Lord – reviling Paul'.

In reaction, Paul and Barnabas 'spoke out boldly, saying: "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the non-Jews'" (Acts 13.46). The reason for the necessity of this way of proceeding is the salvation-historical priority of Israel and its privilege of being addressed first. Thus, Paul's strategy of reaching out to Jews first does not derive from practical considerations and experiences, such as that non-Jews who are prepared for monotheism, the Jewish Scriptures and Jewish expectations of a messianic figure through their contact with diaspora Judaism are easier to convert, although Judaism appears as the *preparatio evangelica per se* in Acts, to play on Eusebius' title.

This move to the non-Jews is motivated and justified through reference to one of the Isaianic servant songs (Isa 49) which the missionaries boldly claim as commission for themselves to the non-Jews: 'For so the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the non-Jews, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth"' (Acts 13.46–7). Paul's ministry to non-Jews is defended and justified with reference to the Scriptures of Israel. Acts 13.49 notes in summary fashion that 'the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region'. Presumably, it was accepted by some who heard it, including non-Jews.

Paul's turning to non-Jews is motivated by the rejection of the word of God by some Jews. In this scene, Paul appears as a *prophet* who pronounces the *word of the Lord* (Acts 13.44, 49) or the *word of God* (13.46). He uses the words of Habakkuk 1.5 to warn his Jewish audience: 'Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: "Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your

¹⁷ See C. Stenschke, 'When the second man takes the lead: reflections on Joseph Barnabas and Paul of Tarsus and their relationship in the New Testament', *Koers* 75 (2010) 503–25.

¹⁸ The phenomenon of a divided Jewish response in Luke-Acts has been emphasised by J. Jervell, 'The Divided People of God: The Restoration of Israel and the Salvation for the Gentiles', *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Jervell; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 41–74. The division among Jews through the apostolic preaching applies to the apostles in Jerusalem and to the mission of Paul. In every place, Jews (and their sympathisers, proselytes and God-fearers) come to faith, before other people are reached, most prominently in Ephesus.

¹⁹ See E. J. Schnabel, 'Jewish Opposition to Christians in Asia Minor in the First Century', *Jesus, Paul and the Early Church: Missionary Realities in Historical Contexts* (ed. E. J. Schnabel; WUNT 406; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018) 289–332 for the discussion of whether ζήλος refers to the moral attitude of jealousy or to religious zeal; see also C. Stenschke, 'Interreligious Encounters in the Book of Acts', *Interreligious Relations: Biblical Perspectives* (H. Hagelia and M. Zehnder eds.; T & T Clark Biblical Studies; London, Oxford, New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017) 135–79.

days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you” (13.40–1). The work God was and is doing is the coming of Israel’s Christ and its consequences, including the proclamation of Christ’s name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24.47). The local Jews (and non-Jews) are informed about all this by the missionaries (Acts 13.32–3; see also v. 38–9) but do not believe.

Curiously, at the very next stop and on all further stops during this phase and the following phases, Paul and his fellow missionaries again start with the local Jewish synagogues – despite the resistance which they meet and continue to encounter in this context.

A scene similar to that in Pisidian Antioch is repeated in the Corinth account (Israel first, then turning to the Gentiles; Acts 18.5–6) and in the Rome account (28.23–8; the first group of people that Paul invites to his place of lodging are the leading Jews of Rome). In both cases, Paul keeps continuing his ministry among diaspora Jews even after his programmatic actions and statements (13.46; 28.25–8): ‘And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly ...’ (19.8), ‘and welcomed *all* who came to him ...’, 28.30). Throughout his ministry outside of Judea, Paul respects the priority of Israel and addresses Jews first.

The events in Pisidian Antioch set the pattern for much that is to follow in the narrative. Paul appears as the missionary to diaspora Jews. Paul’s places of ministry are – with few exceptions – the Jewish synagogues in the diaspora. With the exception of Lystra (where the missionaries leave in order to avoid conflict with Jews; however, in vain as the account indicates), Paul and his companions always start their mission endeavour in the local Jewish synagogue or a gathering of Jews elsewhere as in Philippi ... and continue as long as it is possible. The Jews are the first to hear.

Acts tells in summary fashion of the success of Paul’s mission to non-Jews and their conversion (Acts 13.48; 14.4, 20; 17.4, 12), of individual non-Jews such as Sergius Paulus (13.12), the jailor of Philippi and his household (16.34), Dionysius and Damaris and others with them in Athens (17.34; the non-Jews mentioned by name have in common that they have a higher social status).

Acts also gives an indirect indication of the spread of the message and its impact (‘And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region’, Acts 13.49; however, it is not specified who the addressees were), such as when there is a noticeable decrease in the production and trade of idolatrous devotional objects (19.23–7). In this context, it is a non-Jew who, probably with some exaggeration for rhetorical impact, attests to Paul’s success: ‘in almost all of Asia this Paul had persuaded and turned away a great many people [from the worship of Artemis], saying that gods made with hands are not gods’ (19.26).

In the early narrative devoted to the Lukan Paul, he is portrayed as a reluctant missionary to non-Jews. He has a ‘late start’ as a missionary to non-Jews. Paul only begins to proclaim to non-Jews when the mission to non-Jews had been initiated by others and was well on its way: The mission to non-Jews starts with *Philip* in Samaria and on the desert road (Acts 8.4–39), not with Paul. *Peter* is sent to Caesarea to meet Cornelius, to proclaim the Gospel to him and those present with him, to recognise the genuineness of his conversion and reception of the Holy Spirit and to eventually baptise him (10.1–48), not Paul. *Dispersed Hellenistic Christ-believers from Jerusalem* start with the systematic proclamation of the Gospel to non-Jews and found the church in Antioch, made up of Jews and non-Jews (11.19–21), not Paul. They are the pioneers of what became the pattern for Paul’s ministry (‘... who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus’, 11.20). Their ministry turns the Jewish ‘way of the Lord’ into – from a sociology of religions perspective – an ethnically mixed movement made up of Jews and non-Jews.

Even later on, Paul's ministry to non-Jews remains closely tied to diaspora Judaism. The non-Jews whom Paul predominantly addresses appear in the context of Jewish synagogues. While there are exceptions (Lystra, Athens) and some indirect indications of Paul's success among non-Jews, a detailed description of Paul's mission to non-Jews and of his success among them is *not* the focus of Acts. In his mission, Paul respects and pursues the priority of Israel. He is portrayed primarily as the emissary to diaspora Judaism; non-Jews appear more as the 'by-catch' rather than as Paul's ultimate aim.

3. Paul as Champion of Jewish Monotheism

Paul's regular encounters with Jews in the diaspora indicate his concern for his fellow diaspora Jews. Paul meets them in the local synagogues and uses every opportunity to speak to them. The statement in Acts 9.20 on the first occasion of such ministry is programmatic: 'And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God"'. This sets the pattern. These encounters in synagogues also serve to characterise Paul as *a devout Jew*: surely, while travelling he would attend the local synagogue or prayer meeting (16.13) and join the local services. This is where one would expect to find a devout Jew on a Sabbath day ... and surely, this is where one finds Paul: the man also reaching out to non-Jews is fully devout and loyal to his Jewish heritage. This is not the behaviour of a defector.

With few exceptions, such as Lystra and Athens (even in Athens Paul combines his missionary efforts on the ἀγορά with the usual ministry in the synagogue: 'So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there', Acts 17.17), Paul encounters and addresses non-Jews (God-fearers and proselytes) among the Jewish audiences *in* synagogues. In each case, Jews and non-Jews come to faith.

In his few encounters with non-Jews *outside* of this Jewish context, Paul appears primarily *not* as the emissary of Jesus as Israel's universal Messiah but as an exemplary campaigner for Judaism, its monotheism and manner of worshipping God. Some aspects of the ministry of Paul are presented in a way that devout Jews cannot (or should not!) but approve of it. Rather than being critical of Paul or rejecting him as a renegade, they should see him as *an able proponent of Judaism*, in itself a variegated movement in the Second Temple period – despite

- his version of early Jewish eschatology, including his identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (which was forced on him on the road to Damascus as he was zealously endeavouring to preserve the law, the temple and the identity of Israel); and
- his way of including non-Jews into the people of God, which – in any case – was not even introduced by him, but well established before Paul addresses the first non-Jew in Paphos (when commissioned by the Holy Spirit and church in Antioch with its strong links to Jerusalem!).

Surprisingly, in these encounters with non-Jews outside of Jewish diaspora contexts, the particularly *Christian* aspects of Paul's ministry and proclamation appear either in a marginal role or not at all:

- Paul must have initially preached a message that included the ministry of Jesus in Lystra (Acts 14.9). After all, at some point, Paul could see that the lame man had faith to be healed. This would suggest that he mentioned the miracles of Jesus (see 2.22), and the fact that Jesus is still, or again, alive (this would imply reference

to the death and resurrection of Jesus) and is continuing to intervene and act.²⁰ In Paul's actions and the speech which Luke places centre-stage, Paul is presented as a staunch and able proponent of Israel's God and His proper veneration (14.14–18): Paul and Barnabas, immediately and as emphatically as possible under the given circumstances, reject the misled worship that is offered to them as they are mistaken to be pagan deities (14.14). They do all in their power to prevent the crowds from offering sacrifice to them (14.18; they tear their garments and rush into the crowd so as to render their being worshipped impossible). In Paul's ensuing brief speech, he attacks idolatry and proclaims the living God 'who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them'. Paul does so in language steeped in the Old Testament (14.15–17).

- Although Paul is portrayed as preaching about Jesus and the resurrection in Athens (Acts 17.18), the brief summary of the content of his reasoning in 17.17 is only presented to explain the reaction of some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who take Paul to be a 'preacher of foreign divinities'. His following speech before the city's Areopagus Council provides as able a presentation and defence of Jewish monotheism as one can get under these circumstances. While Paul also refers to some non-Jewish poets, his speech is steeped in the language and theology of the Old Testament and early Judaism, as Bertil Gärtner has shown.²¹ Only at the very end of the speech does Paul return to his initial proclamation on the Athenian ἀγορὰ and clarify the misunderstanding of his message by the philosophers: he was not preaching foreign divinities (like other pagan divinities worshipped by the Athenians and under consideration here) but the human Jesus and his resurrection ('by a man whom he has appointed [see Dan 7.13]; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead', Acts 17.31; not unheard of in the OT and an integral part of OT and early Jewish eschatology).²² With the exception of Paul's very last words (however, Luke indicates that belief in the resurrection is a disputed matter among Jews, 23.8), Jews can and should approve of Paul's polemic and apology of Jewish monotheism and the proper worship of God.

In his essay 'Introducing Foreign Deities: The Documentary Evidence',²³ Eckhard J. Schnabel studies the background to the account in Acts 17.18, where in response to his proclamation on the Athenian marketplace, the Lukan Paul is said to be introducing foreign deities (ξένα δαιμόνια). This is the occasion of him being led to the Areopagus Council to present his case. Schnabel argues that while Greek and Roman cities did not prescribe which deities their inhabitants were to worship, the introduction of new deities was dependent on official authorisation. This can be discerned in a number of literary sources²⁴ and in documentary evidence.²⁵ 'The documentary evidence demonstrates that magistrates and the *demos* of Athens, and other Greek cities, did in fact discuss, investigate, and decide whether a new cult can be allowed to be added to the pantheon of

²⁰ Curiously, Luke never tells his audience precisely what Paul preached to non-Jews when it was not a case of correcting severe misunderstandings of his actions (healing a lame man like in Lystra) or his proclamation (misunderstood as an endeavour of introducing foreign divinities like in Athens).

²¹ *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (ASNU 21; Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup; Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1955).

²² See R. A. Muller, 'Resurrection', *ISBE* IV (1988) 145–50, at 145–7.

²³ In Schnabel, *Jesus*, 85–120. Paul does not plead for new cult images, altars and temples but for faith in and worship of the one God.

²⁴ Pp. 85–87.

²⁵ Pp. 88–115.

deities worshipped in the city'.²⁶ When read against this backdrop, the account of Acts indicates that 'The permission of the Council included, at least in some cases, detailed stipulations concerning sacrifices, processions, and financial matters relating to the cult, which would make matters difficult for the new community of worshippers of Jesus Messiah. Thus Paul argued before the Areopagus Council that he was not introducing new gods (Acts 17.22–31)'.²⁷

What Paul has ably demonstrated before a non-Jewish audience in Athens (he is not introducing new divinities, but propagating the God of Israel and does so in traditional Jewish language) also applies to his readers: they should know and be assured that during his ministry to Jews and non-Jews, Paul did not compromise Jewish monotheism (by introducing new gods) and his adherence to it, but staunchly and ably defended it. Paul's inclusion of non-Jews in the people of God does *not* mean that he would tolerate any form of idolatry. Any claims to the contrary are false.

In the synagogue of Ephesus, Paul speaks boldly, reasons and seeks to persuade his audience about the kingdom of God (Acts 19.8; elsewhere, Paul is said to be proclaiming Jesus, 'saying, "He is the Son of God"', 9.20).²⁸ A reference to Jesus appears in this context only on the lips of some Jewish itinerant exorcists (19.13) who (mis)use the name of Jesus as a magic formula 'I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims' (19.13) and in the response of an evil spirit to the seven sons of Sceva: 'Jesus I know, and Paul I recognise, but who are you?' (19.15). The founding of a Christian community is mentioned only vaguely: 'Paul withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the lecture Hall of Tyrannus' (19.9).

In this way, 'all the residents of Asia heard *the word of the Lord*, both Jews and Greeks' (Acts 19.10; the Jews being mentioned first), be it through Paul himself, his co-workers (remarkably absent during the third phase) or his converts. This is one of the few hints in Acts (cf. the summary statement in 13.48) of the success of Paul's mission among non-Jews. Greeks heard Paul's proclamation, and as the following episode indicates, many apparently accepted it and rejected their idolatrous practices. They no longer worship Artemis and acquire the silver shrines produced by Demetrius and his colleagues. This triggers the riot at Ephesus (19.23–41).

This suggests that Paul's intensive teaching in Ephesus includes criticism of pagan beliefs and practices and a charge to 'turn away from these vain things to the living God' (Acts 14.15; this is also the picture which emerges from 1 Thess 1.9–10).

Indirect support for Paul as the champion of Jewish monotheism comes from Demetrius of Ephesus and the entire episode. Paul's non-Jewish opponent *par excellence* in Acts acknowledges that Paul's prolonged ministry has led to the demise of the worship of Artemis: 'not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods' (Acts 19.26). While the Athenians are mistaken in their summary and evaluation of Paul's message ('Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"', 17.18), Demetrius summarises Paul's polemic in Old Testament parlance: 'gods made with human hands (οἱ διὰ χειρῶν γινόμενοι) cannot be gods.

All Jews who detest pagan deities and their veneration should be delighted to hear of this success of Paul and see him as a truly Jewish apologist and campaigner of Israel's God and worship.²⁹

²⁶ P. 88.

²⁷ 'Introducing', 115–16, italics CS.

²⁸ This forms part of Luke's apologetic strategy. Paul attaches himself to the Jewish synagogues and ministers there as long as he can do so. Only once serious resistance arises does he continue his ministry in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Paul does not start there right away, as one might expect the *doctor gentium* to do.

²⁹ While Paul is characterised in this way, the Jewish king Herod Agrippa I accepts the idolatrous acclamations of non-Jewish crowds in Caesarea: 'The voice of a god, and not of a man' (Acts 12.22). In response, an angel of the

In view of all this, it is all the more surprising that Paul's Jewish opponents distance themselves from Paul and his proclamation:

- They instigate the non-Jewish crowd of Lystra *after* Paul has behaved in an exemplary manner (not accepting the honour and worship due to God alone), denouncing idolatry and proclaiming the one creator God (Acts 14.15–17).
- In Ephesus, during the riot organised by the non-Jewish Demetrius, the local Jewish opponents seek to distance themselves from Paul and his ministry. They want to protest their innocence with regard to upsetting the religious balance. They put forward Alexander (it becomes clear later on that he is Jewish himself). He motions with his hand, the typical Hellenistic gesture for an orator, and wants to make a defence to the crowd. *'But when they recognised that he was a Jew, for about two hours they cried out with one voice, "Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians"'* (Acts 19.33–34). Ironically, Alexander's likely attempt at distancing the city's Jewish community from Paul and his proclamation is what focuses the *rioting crowds* (19.29, 32) and what leads to the two-hour long acclamation *'Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians'* (19.35) – an abomination to Jewish ears.

This state of affairs is even acknowledged by Paul's opponents in Philippi. Although they use this as a pretext to cover up their real concerns (*'But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone ...'*, Acts 16.19), Paul's opponents charge him and Silas as follows: *'These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs [that is, particularly Jewish customs] that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice'* (16.20–21).

In this way it becomes clear on whose side Jews concerned for their ancestral religion should be.

4. Paul's Respect, Circumspection and Concern for his Fellow Jews

Paul's ministry among Jews and non-Jews is characterised by respect and concern for the well-being of diaspora Jews. While Luke tells of conflicts between Paul and Jews who reject his preaching and mode of integrating non-Jews into the people of God, Paul is not one to escalate conflict. Rather, he does all in his power to de-escalate conflict. When there is resistance, Paul withdraws (or accepts it when others urge him to do so). The following portrayal of the first missionary phase suffices:

- Rather than escalating the situation in Damascus further, Paul lets his followers take him by night and lower him in a basket through an opening in the city wall (Acts 9.25).
- Paul lets the Christ-believers of Jerusalem bring him down to Caesarea and usher him off to Tarsus (Acts 9.30).
- When Paul is being driven out of the district of Pisidian Antioch by his opponents, he shakes off the dust from his feet against them and moves on to Iconium (Acts 13.50–1) – despite the fact that he had a considerable following among Jews and non-Jews in the city. He does not seek to use his followers to turn the tide against his opponents.

Lord strikes the king down, 'because he did not give glory to God'. In contrast, Paul receives a generous measure of divine approval and affirmation throughout Acts. Paul immediately rejects idolatrous veneration directed at him (14.14–18).

- When there is division in Iconium and resistance by non-Jews and Jews, Paul flees to Lystra and Derbe and continues his ministry there (Acts 14.5–6).
- After surviving a stoning in Lystra, Paul re-enters the city but does not cause trouble (Acts 14.20).
- When at the end of the first missionary phase Paul retraces his steps and visits the newly-founded communities to encourage and install community structures, his activities seem limited to these communities; no further conflicts are noted (Acts 14.21–3).

Paul never takes over the local synagogue and expels his opponents. He does not contend for ‘space’ as one of the contested domains according to current theorising on religious conflict³⁰, but cedes the building to them and continues his ministry elsewhere (as in Corinth where Paul continues in the house of Titius Justus, a worshipper of God whose house was next door to the synagogue³¹) or leaves altogether. Only once in Acts does Paul use his miraculous powers for punitive purposes and uses them in this context: a Jewish magician on Cyprus who seeks to turn non-Jews away from the faith will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time (Acts 13.10–11; a fairly moderate punishment in comparison to the divine punishment in 12.23).

Paul conducts his mission to Jews and non-Jews in a way that does not endanger or harm diaspora Judaism. He does all he can to avoid public conflict which might draw unwanted attention and lead to negative consequences for the Jewish communities in their potentially precarious legal state.³² While his Jewish opponents are portrayed as readily and cunningly drawing on the local elites and, in some cases, questionable non-Jewish support (in doing so, they probably use questionable means³³) against Paul, their fellow Jew, Paul never instigates against his fellow Jews or stirs up non-Jews against them. While Paul is presented as a Roman citizen in Acts, a friend of powerful office bearers such as the *Asiarchs* in Ephesus and as an able public orator, it is difficult to assess whether and to what extent Paul as a ‘new arrival’ in town, had he wanted to do so, would have been able to intervene against the established, perhaps well-connected Jewish local elites.

A few examples of the opponents’ activities suffice to illustrate the point:

- The Jews of Pisidian Antioch incite the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city and stir up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drive them out of their district (Acts 13.50).
- Jews come from Antioch and Iconium to Lystra and persuade the crowds, stone Paul and drag him out of the city (Acts 14.19).
- The Jews of Thessalonica are jealous/zealous and take some wicked people from the rabble, form a mob, set the city in uproar and attack the house of Jason (Acts 17.5). Then, they drag Jason and some other Christ-believers before the city authorities and accuse them falsely (Acts 17.6–7).

³⁰ See W. Mayer, ‘Religious Conflict: Definitions, Problems and Theoretical Approaches’, *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam* (ed. W. Mayer and B. Neil; AKG 121; Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013) 1–19.

³¹ Acts 18.7. In Ephesus, Paul withdraws from the local synagogue and ends up teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19.9). In this way, all the residents of Asia hear the word of the Lord (19.10) which is not tied to a synagogue.

³² With a few exceptions, Paul’s mission does not rock the local balance of religion and power, as his Jewish opponents may have feared and intervened accordingly.

³³ See C. Stenschke, ‘“At the same time he hoped that money would be given to him by Paul” (Acts 24.26): Corruption, misuse of power and greed in the Book of Acts and their implications’, *South African Baptist Journal of Theology* 30 (2021) 225–41.

- The Jews from Thessalonica come to Berea, agitate there against the missionaries and stir up the crowds against them (Acts 17.13).
- The Corinthian Jews make a united attack on Paul and bring their fellow Jew before the tribunal of Roman governor Gallio (Acts 18.12–17). Not Paul's activities, but this attempt leads to Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, being beaten up by the crowds in front of the tribunal without any intervention from the governor.³⁴ *Not Paul's ministry, but the schemes of his opponents pose a threat to diaspora Judaism and its representatives.*
- In contrast to Alexander's intention, this attempt at dissociating the Jewish community from Paul and his proclamation (Acts 19.33–4) puts the Jews of Ephesus in a precarious position: they are now perceived to pose a threat to the trade of the silversmiths, to the temple (as another significant economic factor) and to the very goddess Artemis (19.27: 'And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship'). This 'backfiring' of Paul's mission on the Jewish community was caused not by Paul, but by his Jewish opponents.

On his return at the end of the third missionary phase, Paul faces massive suspicions against him among the Jewish Christ-believers in Jerusalem (Acts 21.20–1). They believe rumours that Paul would teach all the diaspora Jews to forsake Moses, 'telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs' (21.21). *Paul readily follows the demands of the local leaders* and publicly demonstrates his own allegiance to the law (21.23–4) 'but that you yourself also live in observance of the law' (21.24). The next day, Paul purifies himself along with the Jewish Christ-believers who had taken vows, enters the temple premises with them and pays for the offerings which they need to present. When the seven days are almost completed, Jews from Asia see Paul in the temple and stir up the crowds against him. Paul is presented as a regular visitor to the temple coming with religious intentions. Paul later on insists that he came to Jerusalem to bring alms for his people and to present offerings in the temple (24.17).³⁵ In view of the earlier presentation of Paul, these are not strategic moves but actions out of conviction.

Even when severely and falsely accused and facing fierce resistance, Paul *the prisoner* does all to avoid negative consequences for his Jewish opponents. In his defence, Paul describes the events in a matter-of-fact way and points out where the legal procedures are not being observed (e.g. the witnesses who should accuse him are not present, therefore the entire litigation is unfounded), but does not accuse his opponents or malign them.³⁶ While they use all the enabling conditions available to them against Paul, he refrains from doing so and retaliating despite the fierce resistance which he encounters.

According to Acts 28.17, Paul invites the Jewish leaders of Rome and informs them in advance of his case and the impending trial at the imperial court and the charges directed against him. He does so, on the one hand, clearly with his own advantage in view; he presents the matter as he sees it and as he wishes it to be understood in view of the coming trial. On the other hand, Paul might also wish to ensure that the Roman Jews do not side with his opponents in a rash and unconsidered way and thus take the risk of being

³⁴ See the discussion in C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary Vol. III 15:1-23:35* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014) 2775–6.

³⁵ The alms are presented as an act of private charity. Paul does not refer to paying the annual temple tax. Acts does not mention Paul's collection enterprise for the saints of Jerusalem, perhaps because this endeavour may have been considered illegal by some.

³⁶ See the survey in C. Stenschke, "'So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man'" (Acts 24.16): Saint Paul as Prisoner and Ethical Societies', *Journal of Dharmā: Dharmaram Journal of Philosophies and Religions* 45 (2020) 391–406.

charged themselves with supporting an unfounded case against a Roman citizen. Says Klaus Haacker:

Nach V. 17 ergriff Paulus sofort nach seiner Ankunft in Rom die Initiative, um die jüdischen Gemeinden in Rom über den gegen ihn laufenden Prozess zu informieren. Warum? Es war damit zu rechnen, dass Vertreter der Anklage (ohne die keine Verhandlung möglich war) aus Jerusalem anreisen würden. Im Falle eines Freispruchs für Paulus war mit einer drastischen Bestrafung der Ankläger zu rechnen. Darum lehnt Paulus vorsorglich jede Verantwortung für dieses Risiko ab.³⁷

This portrayal is confirmed by Paul's own declaration. Before the leading Jewish representatives in Rome, he affirms that he has 'done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers'. He 'had no charge to bring against his own people' (Acts 28.17, 19). Paul will not do so at the impending trial – the Jews of Rome need not fear any accusations from him.

Like any (religious) minority in a potentially hostile majority society, diaspora Judaism was keen to secure the support/protection of the local elites or individuals of high standing. Their influence would be much appreciated and needed in times of conflict. According to the portrayal of Acts, in some cases the Jews were successful in drawing on such support against Paul (13.50: 'But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city ...'). While Acts never mentions that Paul used such contacts against his opponents (see above), Acts notes that Paul was also able to recruit some non-Jews of high social standing with his 'version' of Judaism: Sergius Paulus, the Philippian jailor, Dionysius and Damaris, the Asiarchs and Publius. Paul's ministry does not pose a threat to the precarious situation of diaspora Judaism: in his approach and ministry not only did Paul not do anything to endanger the Jewish communities, but he also succeeded in winning additional patrons of high social standing.

Another aspect is worth mentioning in this context. In the very first episode (with the exception of the separation between Paul and Barnabas), which is told in some detail after the so-called Apostolic Council in Jerusalem with its affirmation that non-Jews need not become Jews in order to be saved (Acts 15.6–29), Paul circumcises Timothy, who had a Jewish mother but a non-Jewish father. As Paul wants Timothy to accompany him, he takes and circumcises him (16.1–2). Paul did so, 'because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was Greek' (16.3). As he sets out with the full approval of the Christ-believers of Jerusalem on the second missionary phase, Paul respects and even affirms Jewish sentiments and Jewish identity: sons born to Jewish mothers are considered Jews and should therefore be circumcised. And, apparently, Paul sees to it with his own hands! While Paul insists that *non-Jews* need not become Jews and be circumcised, his mission to Jews and non-Jews does not and will not diminish the Jewish people in the diaspora. Rather, the contrary is the case: Paul is the one concerned about preserving Jewish identity, not his opponents!

5. Conclusions

Rather than supporting the traditional portrait of Paul as the missionary to the non-Jews *par excellence* and as the champion of a nascent, non-Jewish but universal 'Christianity', these often-neglected aspects of Paul's portrayal in Acts paint a different picture:

³⁷ 'Der Prolog zum lukanischen Werk (Lk 1:1–4) – neu gelesen', paper presented (and made available) at the digital *Rhein-Main Exegesetreffen*, 29 May 2021, hosted by the *Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen*, in Frankfurt, Germany, p. 8.

- In his apology for Paul and his disputed way of including non-Jews into the people of God, the author of Acts emphasises that Paul did so without diminishing *the priority of Israel* (Acts 13.46: 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you'; see 'to the Jew first', Rom 1.16). Only after he ministered to Jews in Damascus, Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea (Acts 26.20), Antioch and on the island of Cyprus does Paul eventually proclaim the word of God to Sergius Paulus (13.7) and to other non-Jews elsewhere. Paul in no way betrayed Israel, but fully respected its place in the plans and purposes of God. Almost reluctantly, he started carrying Christ's name before non-Jews (9.15).
- Rather than betraying his ancestral faith in his disputed ministry, Paul acted as the veritable champion and representative of Judaism in his encounters with non-Jews. While Paul – following the precedents set by Philip, Peter and other Christ-believers associated with the church in Jerusalem – welcomed non-Jews as non-Jews and did not insist on their conversion to Judaism as proselytes, Paul in no way compromised with regard to polytheism and idolatry, but was a staunch proponent of Jewish monotheism wherever he went. A city teeming with idols provokes Paul to the core (Acts 17.16) and he is ready to 'engage' with it.
- Paul conducted his mission enterprise to Jews and eventually non-Jews in a way that took full account of the precarious situation of diaspora Judaism. Acting circumpectly and respectfully towards diaspora Judaism, Paul was very careful not to endanger his fellow Jews. He does all in his power to de-escalate conflict and is ready to back off rather than endanger his fellow Jews.

Only after the gathering and restoration of Israel has taken place in Jerusalem through the ministry of the apostles and has been taken to the Jewish diaspora by the apostles and the dispersed Hellenistic Jewish Christians of Jerusalem does Paul appear on the stage. His first missionary encounter with non-Jews is located in Cyprus during the first missionary phase. However, throughout his missionary career, the *doctor gentium*, as he came to be remembered and venerated, continued this mission to the Jewish diaspora. This is the predominant picture which Acts paints of Paul. His ministry among non-Jews, in particular apart from the context of diaspora Judaism, is marginal in comparison. While Luke reports in great detail how Paul carries the name of Jesus to the children of Israel (Acts 9.16) and to kings (25.13–26.32), he is remarkably taciturn when it comes to Paul's ministry to non-Jews, who are, after all, named first in Christ's 'job description': 'for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the non-Jews and kings and the children of Israel' (9.16).

With his portrayal of Paul and his ministry in the diaspora, Luke refutes the charges levelled against Paul in Acts 21.21 that he would 'teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs'. When Paul readily agrees to the suggestion of the Jerusalem leaders to publicly refute these charges with a demonstration of his own loyalty to ancestral laws and customs, Paul does so not out of opportunistic motivation (as some may have claimed) but in full consistency with his ministry and conduct as a loyal Jew for many years.

Looking at these pervasive clues in the portrayal of Paul in Acts, one realises that the traditional simplistic dichotomies between a 'particular' Judaism and a 'universalist' early Christianity must be further revised. One can only welcome that this process is well on its way in Pauline studies with the recent emphasis on the *Jewish* Paul and his abiding loyalty to the Judaism or Judaisms (plural) he knew. Luke paints a portrait of Paul which agrees in many aspects with the fresh appraisal of Paul's self-presentation in his own letters.

Unfortunately, Luke's emphasis on Paul's appreciation and respect for his Jewish identity and 'roots' (a problematic metaphor when understood as meaning that Paul had 'out-grown' these roots later on) and the Judaism he knew and its representatives were soon neglected and lost sight of in what became Christianity. This contributed to the way Paul has been viewed and interpreted for a long time as anti-Jewish both in the academy and in the church. That notion has only been exposed and seriously revised in the last few decades.

Luke's portrayal also contributes to our understanding of the so-called 'parting of the ways'. Acts notes clear distinctions between the Christ-followers and other representatives of early Judaism and insists that something new and different came into being (which led to a different designation, that is, 'Christians', the followers/partisans of Christ, the Christ-people). At the same time, Acts also tells the story of Paul and others, even his Jewish Christian opponents, who sought to integrate the Christ-event and Judaism or – in his perspective – the Judaism he knew and cherished and the Christ-event which became the overwhelming and determining factor in his biography and theology.

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