PAULINE DOGMATICS

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The Triumph of God's Love

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To Rachel

. . . I would walk five hundred miles
And I would walk five hundred more
Just to be the man who walks a thousand miles
To fall down at your door.

"I'm Gonna Be,"
The Proclaimers
Sunshine on Leith (1988)

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Beyond Colonialism

The Teaching of Contempt

For most of its history the church has viewed Jews with contempt. It has denigrated, ostracized, and periodically violently persecuted them. It has consistently taught the most appalling racial stereotypes about Jews, without which a horror such as the Holocaust would have been impossible. Hitler's racial anti-Semitism flourished in European soil that had been poisoned for millennia by Christian anti-Judaism. Moreover, readings of Paul are deeply intertwined with these abuses. Hence few questions are more important when interpreting Paul than getting his views about Jews right. Now more than ever we ought to be sensitive to the implications of how we read him for Jews and for Judaism.

Sadly, the recognition of this critical interpretative imperative is a minority tradition within the guild of Pauline interpreters, and even when it is recognized, scholars have not always known how to proceed. The most promising debate of these issues in recent times, sparked by the publication in 1977 of E. P. Sanders's epochal *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,[1] involved limited positions and ran quickly into a cul-de-sac. Exchanges continue between the "old" and the "new" perspectives on Paul, but the moniker "new" is now rather misleading, since most of the perspective's original advocates are currently drawing their pensions. Arguably, nothing new has been said on this front since the 1980s. Even more sadly, some scholars use the sterility of this debate to block the exploration of further, more creative exchanges, and scholarly retrenchments appear by the year.

There are reasons for all this deadlock and misdirection, however, and it has been one of the main agendas of this book to put the positions in place

1. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

that will allow us to clearly illuminate both the basic problem and its resolution. The initial key to unlocking this situation is the recognition that the destruction is being wrought *largely by a foundationalist account of the Christian difference from Judaism*.

Foundationalism explains the damage that many Christian readings of Paul do to Jews, along with the inadequacy of most Christian responses to the Jewish questions—because they do not recognize this underlying causality and fail to purge their positions of foundationalism. It follows, however, that as we free Paul's interpretation from foundationalism—on the assumption that he did not support this view and that to hold this position leads to a significant misreading of some of his texts—we open up the possibility of a vastly more constructive account. Paul's most important insights into the nature of Judaism in the Christian era are ultimately astonishingly inclusive and constructive. He explains difference not in terms of *displacement* but in terms of *diversification*. But before we can grasp Paul's positive contributions, we must free him from his negative readings; the ground must be cleared of its foundationalist debris.

Beyond Foundationalism

I have been identifying and avoiding foundationalism through the entirety of this book, and the treatment of Jews by Christians has been one of the most important reasons for doing so. I have constantly distinguished between a theology grounded in God's revelation and a theology (which is really unworthy of that name) grounded in some other foundation for the truth—some other set of overarching truth criteria—that we have built for ourselves, hence the name "foundationalism." A revealed theology grounds the truth appropriately in the truth, namely, the God revealed in Jesus, and hence *by* the truth. A foundationalist theology of our own making, mirroring the way we are made of Flesh, will falter, obscure, and ultimately kill. Of particular note to us now is that it will poison our description of Jews and of Judaism.[2]

The damage is done by the way that Christian foundationalism works forward. When this intrinsic methodological tendency is combined with the diversity of the early community, which embraced pagan converts acting eth-

2. It is important to recall here that rejecting foundationalism is important first and foremost as a matter of basic loyalty to God. It is then important, second, for ethical reasons.

ically but in many respects very differently from messianic Jews, the poison of *supersessionism* is concocted. A reverse derogation of Judaism must take place.

If the account of Christianity supplied, often by way of a reading of Paul, proceeds forward, then by definition Christianity grows out of something that preceded it, and in Paul (as well as in the rest of the Apostolic Writings) this is Judaism. Christianity emerged historically from Judaism. This relation is undeniable. It is as if we are dealing with two boxes again, Box A and Box B, and a great historical progress between them. But here we need to see clearly that Box A is Jewish and Box B is Christianity. However, if Christianity is not like Judaism in key particulars, for example, abandoning full Torah-observance, then its reasons for doing so—for being different from Judaism—need, in a foundationalist analysis, *to be found in the state that precedes it*, which is Jewish. The reason for Box B and all its differences must lie in Box A, and, in a forward-moving analysis, the reason can only be that Box A is inferior to Box B in some way and needs to be improved on. The truth of Christianity thereby grows directly out of the inadequacies of Judaism, inadequacies that are intrinsic and self-evident to the occupants of Box A, as well as to any later analysts.[3] Christianity is a later, superior version of whatever Judaism was originally, growing out of the obviously inferior state of Judaism, and so supersessionism must result. In short, Christian identity, when it is constructed within an overarching foundationalist schema and is also understood, as it must be, as something different from traditional Judaism, *invariably constructs Jewish identity in deficient terms both intrinsically and self-evidently*—a more sinister othering schema is hard to imagine. But this is also a principal reason why those operating within this schema find it so hard to address anti-Judaism effectively.

This perspective will be deeply entrenched for any occupants of Box B who think that the basic relationship between A and B is constructed in these terms. If the people occupying Box B, who are Christians and who are thinking forward in this way (i.e., from A to B), *don't* attribute fundamental inadequacies to Box A, then there is no good reason for Christianity to exist in Box B! Box B is unnecessary (or, God forbid, inferior or even some sort of mistake). Everyone should still be Jewish. Box A should be fine in and of itself. Hence, even though the consequences of living in Box B, on the

3. This progression can be softened from Judaism-bad/Christianity-good to Judaism-good/Christianity-better, and this is a step forward. But it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to justify coherently in relation to Paul, *and* it is still supersessionist. Judaism should still be erased.

backs of those laboring in Box A, are appalling, they are appalling for other people. But if the appalling consequences are recognized and addressed, Christianity *itself* is called into question. Box B risks being undermined, and unfortunately Christians, like most people, will generally sacrifice someone else's identity if by doing so they can preserve their own. As a result of this, Christians thinking in this way, foundationally, are caught in a nasty conundrum. To hold on to their account of Christianity, they must continue to denigrate the Jews, while to reverse this judgment is to invalidate Christianity. At bottom, Christians who think in this way are trapped in a classic othering schema, but the damage is being compounded by its combination with a foundationalist methodology that locks in the negative identity of the other in the basis of its own.

Fortunately, this conundrum is ultimately unnecessary because it arises from a fundamentally false account of Christian truth that can happily be abandoned, and once this insight has been grasped, Paul's texts can be interpreted from a very different point of view. But a hard road still lies ahead of us. Anti-Jewish foundationalism exists in multiple forms, and all of them need to be identified and avoided if the demon of anti-Judaism is to be exorcised from the interpretation of Paul. There are in fact three variations of anti-Jewish foundationalism within the interpretation of Paul that need to be confronted: (1) soteriological, (2) historicizing, and (3) salvation-historical. Each of these schemas unleashes virulent anti-Judaism and so ought to be identified and purged from Paul's description—if it is possible, but I think that it is.

In my experience, soteriological foundationalism is the variant that does the most damage. This is the place—which is to say, the set of texts—where foundationalism is introduced into Paul's interpretation in an especially intractable form. So it will be particularly important to address it carefully. It will be described and repudiated in the rest of this chapter. Historicizing foundationalism and salvation-historical foundationalism are addressed in the chapter that follows.

The Usual Reading of Galatians 2:15–16

The misguided reading of Paul in terms of soteriological foundationalism that unleashes an especially nasty form of anti-Judaism can be identified quickly by looking at how Gal 2:15–16 is often read. Here is how the New International Version understands Paul's underlying Greek:

> We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles
> know that a person is not justified by the works of the law,
> but by faith in Jesus Christ.
> So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus
> that we may be justified by faith in[4] Christ
> and not by the works of the law,
> because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Most scholars read Paul here as having a discussion with Jews and Judaism about getting saved, and this view has some truth to it. But they tend to assume further that the text discusses salvation in terms of how someone gets from Box A to Box B, and this assumption, as we have just noted, has momentous and very damaging consequences. Those occupying Box A are assumed to be unsaved and in a sense presaved, and in this text its occupants are clearly Jewish. People start their journey to salvation from this place, which is characterized by something called justification "by the works of the law." Law obviously means the laws of Moses found in the first five books of the Bible, which contained the key instructions to guide Jewish lives. So Box A, the unsaved condition, looks very much like a Jewish condition. However, unsaved Jews are clearly not supposed to stay there. The smart thing to do is to transfer from Box A to Box B, the Christian box, and thereby to get "justified" and to inherit eternal life. Box B is where salvation is found. But the overarching argument—the construction of how these two boxes relate to one another, in a sequence that runs from A to B—is clearly working forward. A foundationalist account of salvation is therefore being supplied, unfolding from a definition of a plight facing Jews before coming to Christ, to its solution through the Christian gospel, when that eventually arrives. The reasons for transferring to Box B to get saved therefore lie within Box A, and so Paul is held to be setting up Box A to place pressure on its occupants to commit to Jesus and thereby to jump across to Box B. (It is this feature of the reading that seems to make it useful for evangelism.) In fact, Jews are set up in Box A for this jump with the theological equivalent of a pressure cooker—a pressure cooker that technically boils us all until we are ready to embrace the gospel.

The pressure is generated as people first try to be righteous by observing the demands of the law for themselves or, in the usual translation, to be "justified." Paul uses this word instead of the word "saved" because he is supposedly

4. Significantly, the NIV adds here in a footnote "Or *but through the faithfulness of . . . justified on the basis of the faithfulness of*" thereby attributing the faith to Jesus.

envisioning a crucial future moment when everyone stands before God's throne on the day of judgment. God pronounces a verdict then over all of us, whether righteous and so saved, at which point we can, like the rest of the sheep, enter into the delights of heaven, or unrighteous, sinful, and guilty, at which moment we head off with the goats to hell. To be "justified" at this moment is to be "judged just" or "judged righteous" by God.[5] (Technically, it is to be judged innocent of all wrongdoing.) To fail to be justified is to be condemned to annihilation or worse.

But Paul argues (supposedly) that no one from Box A will be pronounced innocent, and so saved, on that day by being a perfectly righteous person for the simple reason that we aren't. Everyone sins for some of the time, however trivially, including Jews. Everyone gets parking tickets and exceeds the speed limit, and Jews all do the Jewish equivalent, perhaps lapsing into occasional moments of covetousness like the benighted sinner of Rom 7 (vv. 7–25). So we will all show up on the day of judgment and God will say, quite truly, "This is not a fully righteous person," therefore "You will not inherit eternal life." This judgment seems like very bad news, and on one level it is. We are heading for hell.

But we do learn something important if we go through this analysis before we get to the day of judgment, which is to say, while we are still in Box A. We realize that we are sinful right now and in desperate need of help from God. The flames of hell are flickering in our future. So when help from God arrives, we should grab it. This is the offer of the gospel, which we grasp on to by believing in its good news, assuming preachers or missionaries have visited to tell us about it. This vastly easier act gets us into Box B. If we believe in Jesus, then we are saved, although Paul continues to use the word "justified."

But, someone might ask, what happened to the stern God judging everyone for their deeds on the last day and pronouncing them guilty and punishing them? People haven't either suddenly become perfect or been appropriately punished, right?

5. "Just" and "righteous" mean the same thing. But "just" comes into English originally from the Latin *iustus*, by way of French, and "righteous" comes into English from Germanic languages and the root *recht*. Unfortunately, although the German "righteous" is probably a slightly better translation than the Latin/French "just," the German verb corresponding to the noun "righteous" has been lost. So when we need to translate Paul's Greek "just/right" words with a verb, thereby holding on to his use of these cognate words in Greek, we have to go to the Latin/French "justify," which can be a little archaic and/or mystifying.

This is where Jesus comes in.

His death on the cross (which isn't mentioned in Gal 2:15–16 but comes into view, at least in some sense, in v. 20) is a payment for the punishment of everyone, at least potentially. His death "satisfies" God's just anger with sin, which demands some sort of equivalent recompense.[6] This event consequently balances out the scales of justice, or in a slightly different picture, it pays for the debt that has been accumulated when sinners have injured others. So Jesus's death, understood in these terms, is very important. He steps into the place of punishment and bears that burden for us, vicariously (this being an act of divine generosity rather than justice). But we have to grasp on to this solution that God is offering us or it isn't applied to us, and we do so by believing in it. We are saved by faith. We should place our entire hope in Jesus and trust that he will pay off the punishment accumulating in store for us. In addition, his perfect life will be "credited" to us so that when we stand before God on the day of judgment God will pronounce a verdict over us as if we are Jesus, and not as we actually are ourselves. It will be as if we are clothed with Jesus, and so we will receive the verdict "You are indeed perfectly righteous; enter into your owner's joy in heaven."

Now we would be stupid not to believe, since if we don't grab onto Jesus's work, we will end up going to hell. It is in our own interests to believe. But failing to do so would be a moral and not merely a rational failure. We would be resisting the lessons of Box A about our sinfulness. On some level, we would be denying that we were sinful, which is obviously a very bad idea. Moreover, we might be still trying to make it on our own in spite of our sinfulness, and such pride and self-deception should be judged as well, and not affirmed.

This whole sequence of learning about our own sinfulness by striving to obey the law, getting appropriately anxious and fearful, then hearing the good news that Jesus has paid for our sins on our behalf should end up with us enthusiastically and gratefully grasping the offer of salvation by faith. Consequently, the entire process is the gospel according to many scholars who read Paul in this fashion, with the preaching of the gospel necessarily prefaced by the proclamation of the law. The basic underlying sequence, then, is "law first, then gospel," and clearly this progression works forward and can only work forward. It is our experience of the law that drives us to the gospel.

6. A process that many modern societies can pursue for themselves as the state inflicts pain on perpetrators in amounts (supposedly) equal to the pain that perpetrators have inflicted on others.

Read in these terms, Gal 2:15–16 looks like a compact summary of Paul's preaching about salvation. The two motifs in the text of works of law and faith denote the two boxes or states that encompass everyone. The motifs or boxes are arranged in a sequence, one after the other, and together they tell the story of salvation, here termed justification. And this story clearly needs both of them to work *and in this exact order*. The first box is the foundation for the story. The story starts here, with the non-Christian, and if this box is taken away or its terms are significantly altered, the whole story falls apart. Salvation loses its rationale. There would be no reason to become a Christian and no explanation of how to do so or of what exactly God accomplishes in Jesus to make salvation happen. In addition, however, and as we have already seen, this box is Jewish. So Jews must represent the generic non-Christian. (Paul supposedly addresses in Rom 2 the obvious question that non-Jews do not necessarily possess the law of Moses and so can't be held accountable for their wrongdoing. Romans 2, following on from implications stated in chapter 1, suggests that everyone naturally possesses an internal moral law by which they too can be judged.[7])

But this schema also neatly explains why Box B is ethically so different from Box A, recalling that the law seems to have been left behind and that Christians act rather differently from Jews in many respects. Works of law, which is to say, acting like a Jew, must stop once a person realizes how futile life in Box A is and has made a decision for Jesus. We must not continue to rely on works of law once we have been justified by faith, while any such reliance would suggest that we have slipped back into Box A and are trying to be justified by ourselves again through our own efforts—the quintessential sin of Box A. So Judaism must be left behind by this story of salvation. It is the story of the failure that sets up the success that is Christianity.

It is easy to see at this moment why Christian scholars reading Paul's argument in Gal 2:15–16 in this way think that they are on the right track. When Paul wrote this letter originally, people were trying to persuade Paul's Christian converts in Galatia to act like orthopractic Jews, if not simply to convert to Judaism (see 1:7; 3:1; 5:7–12). Pressure was being placed on the men,

7. See Rom 2:12–16, 26–29—although this argument only goes some way toward resolving this problem. To have two very different but equally valid laws in play at any one time is problematic. It is also awkward affirming universal self-evident culpability, but limiting the offer of salvation to particular visits by missionaries or preachers. Everyone experiences the former and will be judged and condemned; not everyone experiences the latter, and will have the chance to be saved.

in particular, to get circumcised, which was a key Jewish practice (see 5:2–3; 6:13, 15). If Paul is saying what these scholars think he is saying in Galatians, then he is reminding his converts in texts like 2:15–16 of the very basic reasons why they left all this stuff behind, although there is a slightly counterintuitive side to this story.

The Galatians were not Jews originally but pagans (Gal 4:8). So Paul's point seems to be that to adopt Judaism is in effect to return to paganism and to abandon salvation by faith because Jews are the quintessential non-Christians. There is no fundamental difference between Jews and pagans, except that Jews present the basic salvific issues especially clearly. So any pagans who have become Christians and then decided to convert to Judaism have in effect gone back to Box A. This movement might look different on the ground—it might look like another forward step in piety, which is what seems to be confusing the Galatians—but underneath all the superficial religious flim-flam, it's a drastic step backward, from justification to its abandonment, and hence (ostensibly) Paul's passion as he writes to them. "Don't become a Jew; it's the same thing as losing your faith and returning to paganism!"

The law-faith sequence comes up again briefly in Philippians, principally in chapter 3, because the same problem seems to have recurred in relation to those converts, and it comes up extensively in Romans. According to many scholars, Romans provides an account of Paul's gospel in full, with him leading with the two boxes of works of law and faith in chapters 1–4 and then building everything in the rest of the letter on top of this. Moreover, this sequence arguably fits Paul's life as the book of Acts recounts it as well. Paul has a dramatic conversion, as the model prescribes, turning from legalistic law-observance to a life of freedom and salvation by faith alone. Acts describes this event three times (although, the careful reader will note, not in these exact terms; a former life of tortured legalism is never mentioned, nor is a specific decision of faith that alone justifies).[8] The story goes on to recount how Paul's converts no longer obey the law and how Paul defends his position determinedly against other misguided Jewish leaders in the early church like James, rather as Paul's later disciple, Martin Luther, stood up to the misguided legalism of Catholicism. (There are again some further details that don't fit this overarching narrative particularly well, especially the moments we have already noted when Paul, journeying through Jewish spaces, adopts Jewish practices, but these small data points are easily overlooked or explained away.) We know from this entire

8. See Acts 9:1–9; 22:3–11; 26:12–18.

story, in short, why Christianity is not Judaism—and, I am tempted to add, why Protestantism is not like Catholicism.

Most of us will have heard this account of Paul's gospel at some point, and many of us know it like the backs of our hands. Some congregations talk of little else. But less well-known is the fact that we are touching here on one of the most poisonous roots of the teaching of contempt.

This account of Paul's gospel builds, as we have just seen, on a foundation that is a description of Jews attempting to be justified by works of law, a foundation that is entirely negative. Jews are basically supposed to realize that Judaism sucks, and self-evidently so! It is supposed to collapse because it is, in and of itself, unworkable. No one can get saved by doing works of law perfectly, which is to say that Judaism saves no one. And so those Jews who grasp this "truth" become Christians saved by faith alone and leave Judaism behind. It is the moral and rational thing to become a Christian, then, and the immoral and irrational thing to remain Jewish. As a result, the heart of Jewish identity is the realization that Jewish identity is inadequate and should be abandoned! It is a negative identity—an identity that rejects itself, and if it does not do so, it should be condemned.

It should be clear by this point in our analysis, then, that this particular soteriological reading of Gal 2:15–16, along with any related passages in Paul, must release a particularly virulent form of anti-Judaism into Paul's theological description. Jews *must* be defined in this negative way on an ongoing basis because this is what grounds Christianity.

Fortunately, further critical scrutiny suggests that the reading from which this definitional hostility springs is questionable. It is very good news that in the growing thicket of difficulties that we see here, it is ultimately our assumptions that are the problem, and not Paul's account of salvation.

Authentic Judaism

There is a spread of more technical problems that we could talk about—principally objections that this understanding of Paul's overarching argument and its accompanying model of salvation do not enjoy an especially tight fit with the text that supposedly outlines it in the most detail, Rom 1:16–4:25, although the other texts where he is supposedly arguing in this way all have their problems of fit too.[9] But these are highly technical discussions about the precise nuances

9. Someone might object that vast numbers of readers of Paul have not spotted

of Paul's Greek, so any interested readers will need to check out my more detailed treatments elsewhere if they want this information.[10] I will concentrate here on just one of the big problems: the baffling and sinister implications of the reading for Jews and for Judaism. That is, at this moment, we will turn the damaging implications of this reading back on its own head. The reading's virulent account of Jews turns out to be one of its greatest weaknesses.

As we have already seen, the generic occupants of Box A and the unsaved condition are Jews, and they are Jews characterized above all, according to this reading, by the attempt to gain salvation by doing works of law. It is as if salvation is a brownie point system. Each good deed earns points, and when Jews show up before God on judgment day, they expect the verdict "Well done, my good and faithful servant; you have earned enough brownie points to get into heaven; enter into your master's joy." This approach is often called legalism, and its advocates legalists (although we will recharacterize things more accurately in a moment). And there is a very basic problem here: *Jews in Paul's day were just not like this*.

This observation has been made many times,[11] but E. P. Sanders made an especially compelling case in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Doubtless some Jews were legalists (here softening Sanders's overly programmatic claim), much as some Christians are legalistic when they are not supposed to be. But many if not most Jews were not (and are not) legalists, just as many Christians are not legalists either. Would we want all Christians to be categorized as legalists when just a minority are? Probably not. And the same applies to Jews. Even if some are legalists, why characterize the majority in this way? Moreover, even

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these mistakes before or have worried about them, so aren't these problems exaggerated? But there are two good reasons for thinking there *are* problems: (1) Christians were unlikely to pick up major problems in relation to Jews until very recently—essentially after World War II and the *Shoah*; and (2) people occupying a paradigm—and a reading undergirding an account of a gospel is a paradigm—don't like to ask critical questions of their own position, precisely because it is so important. This sort of blindness is very common. This is why Max Planck famously quipped that the progress of science can be measured by its funerals. For those who want more details concerning this resistance, see the justly famous analysis by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

10. My suspicions are introduced in *Quest*, developed in detail in *Deliverance*, and then summarized and defended in *Beyond*. The key biographical issues are addressed in *Framing*. A summary and overview that blends together the biographical and the theological issues can be found in *Journey*, chs 10–11, 127–50.

11. By the great rabbinic scholar George Foot Moore, and then later by Sanders's teacher, W. D. Davies and by my Doctorvater, Richard N. Longenecker.

if some were legalists, they were not necessarily *unreasonable* legalists, in the manner that this argument requires in order to continue. Neither God nor they necessarily demanded absolute perfection.

When we read what Jews themselves wrote in Paul's day about God, as Sanders did, we find a very dedicated group of teachers who followed the instructions of Moses scrupulously because God had given these teachings to them to guide their lives. When God gives instructions, handing them down personally to one of your great leaders in an extraordinary event on a mountaintop, you take very careful consideration of what they say. So, just as many Christians are dedicated to studying and obeying the Bible today, Jews were (and are) dedicated to studying and to obeying the Torah. Most Christians don't obey the Bible because by obeying it they hope to accumulate brownie points and thereby to get to heaven. They obey it because it contains critical instructions for living life. It is Scripture. It lies at the heart of pious living and obedience—of ethics. Christians know that they can't do everything instructed by the Bible. But we still read it and study it and try to do what it says (suitably interpreted). Just so, most Jews obey the Torah for ethical reasons, not for self-interested reasons of salvation. Torah is a gift from God that shapes the Jewish way of life. Putting things a little more technically here, we could say that a careful analysis of the Jewish sources reveals a critical inaccuracy in this reading; the dogmatic location of Torah for most Jews is within ethics, not within soteriology.

Complementing this insight is the belated realization that Jews are saved by election, which is to say, by God. God chose the Jews' ancestors a long time ago and promised to save both them and their descendants. He called the Jewish people into existence by summoning and blessing Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah and Rachel. The resulting people, whom we know now as the Jews, are consequently his chosen people. God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives, which includes saving them. What sort of God would dump a people he called into being, having stayed in relationship with them through all sorts of ups and downs? It would be like deserting a beloved marriage partner on his or her deathbed!

But someone might say, What about sin? Doesn't sin break apart this cozy arrangement and separate the Jews from God?

By no means. Like any good parent, God knows his people sin and has made a lot of arrangements to deal with it. Moreover, like any good parent again, God does not cut off his people—his children—because they step out of line. His relationship with them is not dependent on a mere contract. He is Israel's *parent*, and so he stays committed to the Jews *in spite of* and *through*

any wrongdoing. And Jews in Paul's day could be equally mature. They were often quite realistic about their transgressions.

They knew they sinned, but as anyone reading the Torah knows, God had made careful arrangements to deal with all this sin, and Jews were deeply dedicated to continuing those arrangements. They supported and in some cases ran a highly expensive and complex temple system that, among other things, atoned for sins. It did this every day and local Jews defended its purity to the death. Even if they lived thousands of miles away, Jews would send large sums of money for its upkeep annually and would travel and visit it in pilgrimage as often as they could. That is, most of the Torah is taken up with instructions for building and running the tabernacle, instructions that were taken to apply in turn to the temple in Jerusalem. And the temple, among other things, atoned for sins (see esp. Lev 16–17). So everyone Jewish knew that sin existed and that it was a problem that had to be dealt with, but they faithfully continued one of God's solutions to this problem located in the temple.

But Jews relied on the many other ways the Bible speaks of attaining forgiveness as well, a forgiveness grounded in the deeply generous and forgiving character of God. God cared about those who were kind to others, perhaps by giving alms self-sacrificially to the poor and burying the dead. Those who had shown kindness would be shown kindness—for example, Tobit. And like David after his awful sin committed with Bathsheba, Jews knew that honest confession and deep repentance could elicit God's forgiveness. Furthermore, God simply cared about the descendants of the patriarchs and matriarchs whom he loved so much. The sons and daughters of Jacob, renamed Israel, would not be judged harshly but would be blessed and nurtured because of God's deep commitment to their original parents. So the exquisitely penitent Prayer of Manasseh says,

> You, Lord,
> according to your gentle grace,
> promised forgiveness to those who are sorry for their sins.
> In your great mercy,
> you allowed sinners to turn from their sins and find salvation.
> Therefore, Lord,
> God of those who do what is right,
> you didn't offer Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
> who didn't sin against you,
> a chance to change their hearts and lives.
> But you offer me,

the sinner,
the chance to change my heart and life,
because my sins outnumbered the grains of sand by the sea. (7–9 CEB)

So when scholars read Paul's claim "You are [not] justified by works of Law" in places like Gal 2:16 and suggest that this reflects a definitive account of Judaism in Paul's day in legalistic terms, they are misguided. "Jews think that they can be justified by works of Torah; they work away and expect God to pronounce them righteous on the day of judgment, in which they will fail because God will condemn them for not being perfect," they opine. But most Jews in Paul's days would have said "What?!" (and they still do). This just isn't an accurate or fair description of Judaism.[12]

The reading of Paul's argument in texts like Gal 2:15–16 in soteriological terms—as the definitive story of Christian salvation—is now in deep trouble. The challenging Jewish arrangement in Box A is the foundation for his whole position. It sets the entire account of salvation in motion by placing pressure on its occupants to learn that they are sinful and thereby need to move on to become Christians, *and it just seems untrue*. It is in fact an absurd and rather nasty generalization that cannot stand up to close scrutiny. Jews were not legalists, or at least many of them weren't. However, without this claim holding good, in its entirety, for all Jews and then everyone else besides, Paul's account of Christian salvation in terms of faith alone has no rationale. We are supposed to get saved by faith alone, which is nice and easy,[13] *because* we fail so badly at

12. Some Jews might have added, "Of course we aren't justified by doing works of Torah. We are justified by our loving and gracious God, as the Scriptures say quite clearly. He saves us in the very same way that he called us into existence in the first place, through our father Abraham, and then through Moses and the exodus, by giving life to us, and ultimately by resurrecting us, as a gift. We are his chosen people, and he chose us before we chose him! However, he has also gifted us with these precious instructions about how to live our lives before him in a way that pleases him, and we are deeply dedicated to doing that as best we can. He is our God after all and has given us these instructions because he cares about us. In fact, I would never use the translation 'law' for them but would speak only of 'Torah,' meaning, as the underlying Hebrew suggests, our sacred teachings and instructions. I do expect to give an account of myself to God on the day of judgment. But I expect God to treat me like his child and to save me in and of himself, since this is what he has always intended and always said that he will do."

13. Ostensibly! Our earlier discussion of belief-voluntarism in ch. 13 suggests that choosing to believe things that we don't believe and also that we may have no access to

attempted justification through works, as Jews do. Faith is manageable for us, we learn. And we want to get saved *because* God is going to punish us harshly if we don't grasp onto Jesus by faith. But the first stage in this argument now seems to be false. Jews aren't like this, and neither is God. God doesn't expect us to observe the law perfectly, as any reasonable Jew will tell us. So there is now no reason to progress out of the first box into the second. In fact, there is no need to enter into Box A in the first place. Its account of Judaism is too extreme and unreasonable.

But if this reading is so badly mistaken in its most basic claims, our suspicions should be gathering that Paul didn't actually argue in this manner. Would he be this unfair about his fellow Jews? He says on one occasion that he loves them enough to sacrifice himself for them (Rom 9:1–3). And would he be this rhetorically ineffective, beginning his account of the gospel with a description that anyone with half a Jewish brain could evade? Would he be this stupid?

These are admittedly not knock-down arguments. People can say all sorts of terrible things when they are placed under enough pressure, and some people say horrible things all the time. Perhaps Paul was under pressure. Or perhaps he was just a horrible person. But I don't think so. Some important evidence suggests that this account of Paul's argument in Gal 2:15–16 and similar passages is just plain wrong. It is time to lower the boom on this particular reading of Paul, along with its vicious anti-Judaism.

Paul's Signature Issue

As we already know well by this stage in our book's discussion, Paul's teaching was ethically challenging for any pagans who converted to the Jesus movement, but he did not ask them to convert fully to Jewish ways. The men did not have to be circumcised, and the communities did not have to observe the Jewish calendar, to eat Jewish food, and so on. This teaching caused a lot of controversy. It was shockingly innovative and felt very lax to Jewish conservatives in the Jesus movement, and this controversy confirms that Paul was doing something rather new and different. The traditionalists were offended. However, Paul defended his position successfully at the big Jerusalem meeting

verifying, is anything but easy. How do we find out whether Jesus's death has actually paid for the sins of humanity? Where do we go to verify this assertion, especially if we are just not sure whether it is true? How do we simply choose to believe these things if we don't think that they are true?

that was dedicated to discussing it (Gal 2:1–10), and the early church, at least for a time, evidenced a commendable commitment to diversity. It pursued a Jewish mission under the leadership of Peter, which was conducted in standard Jewish terms, and a pagan mission conducted in terms of Paul's more flexible, relational ethic, which allowed various aspects of local pagan identity to be maintained within the new Christian communities that formed (see esp. Gal 2:8–9). And the reading we are currently discussing of texts like Gal 2:15–16 in terms of justification not by works of law but by faith alone *cannot explain either this situation or its rationale.*

The argument cannot account for this spread of different ethical approaches within the church, and *it cannot actually explain why Paul's converts sat so lightly to the demands of the Jewish Torah*. It cannot explain, that is, the signature feature of Paul's mission, because when we read the argument about justification very carefully, we notice that the Torah is *not* abolished in relation to Christian behavior. It is abolished only salvifically, or as the texts say, in terms of justification. Christians are not justified and saved by observing the law. Fair enough (although who ever really thought they were, apart from a few foolish Jewish proto-Pelagians?!). But Christians *should still be living in terms of the law's instructions* (which is what reasonable Jews did). Its *ethical* relevance is *undisturbed!*

Now the advocates of this reading tend not to notice this implication. It is considered one of justification's greatest strengths that it can explain why Paul's converts largely left the law behind, even if one of the prices paid for this explanation is that Judaism is left behind as well. People in Box A will not be saved by observing the demands of the Torah largely because they can't observe them perfectly, so they are saved by believing alone. So clearly they have left a lifestyle of attempted works of law behind. We will grant these claims for the sake of argument, even though they are false. We just need to observe now, however, that this contention does not prove that the demands *themselves* are wrong, which is a fairly blatant non sequitur.

When the Torah says, "Do not covet," it is true that no one can fully observe this commandment. We won't be saved by fulfilling this demand perfectly if that is the way we get saved. But just because we won't be saved this way, it does not follow that we don't have to worry about covetousness any more. The ethical challenge named here remains. It is still the right thing not to covet, as the Torah says. Just because we can't do it perfectly doesn't mean it no longer applies. We should continue to work on our covetousness as hard as we can, meaning, we should try to resist it. In like manner, I am not a perfect father. But I'm not going to stop trying to be a good father, even though

I know I'm not perfect. It's still the right thing to try to do. And so, pursuing the line of inference further, everything in the Jewish Scriptures should still theoretically be the right thing for Christians to do as well: circumcising male children on the eighth day, resting on the Sabbath, avoiding impure forms of meat, refraining from adultery and false witness, and so on.

Hence we can imagine the Galatians objecting to Paul as follows if he was arguing as the justification advocates say he was: "Paul, we know we get saved through faith alone—and, again, we're very grateful that you came and told us this. It feels great to be saved. But we're wanting to move on in a serious way now with right living. We are disciples of Jesus and we're seeking guidance for this life from the Scriptures, which he knew intimately and quoted himself quite a lot. Moreover, they are, as you yourself say, the words of God preserved and written down to instruct us, so they are very precious texts. And they say quite clearly that we must be circumcised if we are males, and we should all be obeying the purity instructions and following the Jewish calendar. The Sabbath is, after all, one of the Ten Commandments. We don't see any reason why we shouldn't be doing any of this, as these visitors from Jerusalem have helpfully pointed out to us. We understand fully that we won't be saved by this. But we're not worried about salvation any more. We're worried about how to be good people and how to please the God of the Bible."

This objection is entirely fair and, more to the point, quite valid. Paul doesn't have a leg to stand on. His argument—if he is arguing as the justification advocates say he is—does not give the Galatians any good reasons for not doing what he seems to be saying in his entire letter to them that they should not do, that is, get circumcised and convert to Judaism (on ethical grounds of course)!

Hence, the construal of Gal 2:15–16 (along with any analogous texts) in terms of a journey to salvation—to justification—tells us nothing about relaxing the Jewish demands that should be placed on a convert (let us say, a woman) once she has committed to Christ. Her sins are forgiven. (Yay.) She is saved by faith alone. (Phew.) But she now has to try to live like a good person, because this is what God wants. (Yikes.) And there is absolutely no reason within this schema why she would not try to observe all the things that are written in the Bible, including in its first five books, known to many as the law. What else would she do? It was handed down to God's people in a fiery cloud, by God in person, to answer precisely these questions. Who is going to stop observing the Ten Commandments after they have been saved? Heck, some American politicians want vast versions of them engraved on hillsides.

In short, once we grasp this conundrum, we clearly have a major problem with what actually happened in Paul's mission. Everyone who converts, according to this reading, should still look like a Jew, not because they get saved in this way, but because this is the right way to live. *And this is clearly not what happened.* Paul's converts became Christians, not Jews—and he defended this position to the death. So this is a massive explanatory failure on the part of this reading. It doesn't explain the one key thing about Paul that we need explained, especially in Galatia—why Paul's converts from paganism are not living like Jews. So this reading just cannot be right. In view of this problem then, I think we can safely say that this was not Paul's argument in Gal 2:15–16 to begin with.

But can we save Paul's argument in these terms with some qualifications? Can we get his signature ethical freedom out of the traditional justification sequence in some clever way?[14] In fact, there is no solution to this dilemma, and neither can there be by the very nature of the case. The demands of the law, to which God holds us accountable, must remain in place as the fundamental structure of Box A.[15] Without them, the entire progression makes no sense. The story of the individual's salvation never gets started, a story generated by our culpability to future retributive judgment for not fulfilling the demands of the law. If the correctness and validity of these demands is negotiated away, then the entire model collapses. Its foundation is broken apart, which clearly cannot happen. And yet, if this is the right way to read Paul's argument in his justification texts, forward, and with reference to salvation, Christians should

14. There is a "free-rider" argument that I sometimes entertain, but it is immediately implausible. "Leave the law behind salvifically *and* ethically and live however you like, doing whatever you want, however sinful, assured that you will be saved through faith alone." This rejoinder's condemnation is deserved.

Others appeal to something in Paul called "sanctification," a model that does explain his ethical flexibility. But this move reduces justification to redundancy. Sanctification explains everything important in Paul that needs to be explained, as Schweitzer and Sanders have both famously observed. Moreover, attention to the fundamental differences between covenantal and contractual schemas suggests that justification and sanctification are fundamentally different accounts of both God and the gospel. So endorsing this sequence introduces contradictions into Paul's thinking at its most basic level. He is then deeply confused—the thesis of Räisänen.

15. In my experience, advocates of justification love the law and are ardent supports of "law-enforcement" and of "law-and-order" agendas in politics. Lutheran theology acknowledges this issue in part by speaking of *tertium usus legis*, the "third use of the law."

all still be Jews. Christianity, as a different ethical form from Judaism, should not exist. It remains a more likely conclusion that this reading is badly wrong.[16]

However, a few more pieces need to be set in place before soteriological foundationalism and its virulent anti-Judaism are removed from Paul's description. We need to supply a convincing alternative reading of the texts in question that solves our anti-Jewish conundrum. We need to be sure, that is, that Paul was not actually saying any of this. Fortunately, all the pieces are already assembled that will allow us to do this, and this book has been gathering them, carefully and deliberately, up to this moment, largely to make this alternative and non-foundationalist construal possible. These texts remain important, but they counsel us about different issues from salvation; they speak, rather, about the issue of missionary colonialism.

The Enemies

The basic problem, as we know well by now, is caused by foundationalism, which is to say, by reading forward Paul's argument in texts such as Gal 2:15–16. The text contains two "boxes," which we have been referring to from time to time as Box A and Box B. A foundationalist reader supposes that Box A is the foundation for Christian salvation in Box B. But let us suppose for a moment that Paul is not thinking like a foundationalist and thereby arguing forward. Another reading of these two important boxes might then be possible. Galatians 2:15–16 is, after all, simply an opposition—a straight-out antithesis. There are a Box A and a Box B in the text to be sure, but nothing says that they have to be connected together into some sort of overarching story of salvation, and it is this connection that does the damage. Nothing in the text actually says that Paul is arguing *from* A *to* B. Can we read this text, then, as a simple opposition between two states, one wrong and one right, which would solve a lot of our problems? Absolutely!

Earlier on in Galatians, in chapter 1, Paul details the reason why he wrote this letter. Verses 6–8 read:

16. A more sophisticated rejoinder could be made here—that Rom 2 reduces the Jewish Torah to a simpler "natural" law, and that this is the basis of Paul's pagan ethic. Sometimes we hear this position operating in terms of a distinction between the ceremonial and the moral law. But this move effectively erases Jewish history, as well as Jewish identity, and Paul overtly, and most obviously later in Romans (in chs. 9–11), affirms these things unequivocally.

I am astonished
that you are so quickly deserting
the one [i.e., me!] who called you to live in the grace of Christ
and are turning to a different gospel—
which is really no gospel at all.
Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion
and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.
But even if we or an angel from heaven
should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you,
let them be under God's curse!

We learn here that certain figures have arrived in Galatia who are subverting Paul's gospel, displacing his teaching with another proclamation, that is, a "gospel," that he regards as unworthy of the name. Recognizing Paul's engagements with this group of counter-missionaries is a key move as we try to purge these passages of their anti-Judaism. We need to realize that he is debating in Galatians specifically with the agenda of these countermissionaries and nothing more.

We have already seen how Paul had to negotiate his shockingly radical new missionary approach with the other Jewish leaders of the early church. This process culminated in a gathering in Jerusalem over the winter of 49–50 CE, during which an important deal was made. Peter would lead a mission to the Judeans, which would proceed in conventional Jewish terms; Paul would lead a mission to the pagan nations, which would continue in a more diverse way, and he would also send a great deal of money to Jerusalem to assist their ministry to the poor. But not everyone accepted the Jerusalem deal. As is common in deep conflicts, a small, militant faction did not accept the decision of the majority at the meeting and set out to undermine it. We will call them "the enemies," since this is what Paul calls them once in an uncharitable moment.[17]

In 51 CE the enemies began to travel through Paul's communities, insisting that his converts from paganism adopt Judaism fully. The men had to be circumcised and to join the local synagogue.[18] Everyone had to start

17. Phil 3:18: "I have said to you many times and now say to you in tears that many walk [and ask you to imitate them] who are enemies of the cross of Christ."

18. They probably had a more technical reason for insisting on circumcision. Like the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo, they thought that circumcision of the foreskin of the penis literally cut "the evil impulse" off from people as well. This was the impulse living within that prompted people to sin. (It is a male-oriented argument.) So without

reading Torah assiduously (which is not a bad thing if it is done for the right reasons, but here it isn't), eating the right food, avoiding contaminated wine and idols, avoiding sexual immorality (which they were already supposed to be doing although, again, it needs to be for the right reasons), and following the Jewish calendar, lighting the Sabbath lights, resting on Saturdays, and observing the Jewish feasts. Reading between the lines, the enemies thought that only circumcision and complete commitment to the Torah would generate right behavior. If people did all this and lived righteous lives, they would show up before God's throne on the day of judgment and be pronounced righteous, which was pretty important. Only the righteous entered the kingdom of heaven.

This identification of the enemies and their agenda is highly significant. We can see now that they perfectly exemplify a *colonial* mentality. Moreover, they illustrate how colonialism frequently operates in a sinister alliance with foundationalism. Critical lessons lie for us here, then, as we parse their destructive "gospel," which Paul references in "Box A" (while critical errors lie in wait for us here if we fail to understand that Paul is opposing this position, not describing the first phase in his story of salvation).

A Colonial Gospel

Paul's enemies actually take us deeper into a key problem in relation to Pauline navigation that we began to address in previous chapters. There we saw that Paul's own advice concerning the construction of gender imposed an unwarranted form on his pagan converts—entirely understandably in certain respects, but in a way that should not be followed today. He justified the imposition of this structure with a particular account of creation, which was ultimately a mistake. His infralapsarian assumptions concerning creation needed to be reformulated in supralapsarian terms, at which point any warrant for his heteronormative construction evaporates (and we have since learned that terrible prices are ultimately paid if we resist this act of *Sachkritik* vis-à-vis creation). This was presumably a largely unwitting instance of colonialism, however; the introduction of this structure from Paul's parent context was not sufficiently thought through, we might say. He was impressively flexible and

circumcision, people had no way of resisting sinful behavior. They would spiral inevitably into deeper and deeper sins at the behest of the evil impulse and would be judged unrighteous on the day of judgment and sentenced to death and/or hell.

relational in many other respects, so generally he provides us with a missionary strategy that is anything but colonial.

The enemies, however, are much more aggressive colonizers. They want Paul's converts to embrace Judaism in toto! There will be no careful adoption of local pagan forms but a comprehensive introduction of Jewish structures alongside the introduction of an appropriate relationality. Pagan culture, except where it fortuitously overlaps with Judaism, must be erased, and Paul's Christian converts will become messianic Jews. And most significantly, in support of this agenda, the enemies seem to have done something that Christians through the ages have done as well.

They took the practices that they cared about ethically *and built them into salvation*. Becoming a Jew and doing all the deeds prescribed by Torah are how you get saved, they claimed. "Do them or go to hell!—but do them well and you go to heaven!" We know well by now that this move conditionalizes salvation and shifts it into a contractual form. Moreover, by refusing to renegotiate any of these claims christologically, the enemies necessarily endorse foundationalism as well. These cherished practices and claims are now the truth about the nature of God and God's will for humanity, overriding any additional insights that might come from Christ. So presumably their foundationalism was something of a Mosaic- and Torah-centric foundationalism—the sort of aggressive pro-Jewish agenda we see in a text like the Wisdom of Solomon (and hence not necessarily representative of the views of many other Jews in Paul's day, who wrote and read very different books). It probably contained what we could call messianic elements as well. The enemies seem to have believed that Jesus was the Messiah, resurrected on the third day, and that his death, with its shed blood, had atoning value, although to just what extent is hard to say. But this embrace of Jesus and his significance was far too limited. He might have been confessed as Lord, but he was not operating as Lord over the enemies' understandings of the truth and ethics!

In short, we learn from the gospel of Paul's enemies, then, that colonizers are foundationalists and foundationalists are colonizers, although it is historically somewhat ironic to see this playing out first in relation to a view of Judaism. But we should quickly recall that Judaism was the dominant, powerful partner when the church first got going; the converting pagans were a marginal and dubious minority. We learn from the enemies, that is, that colonizers reify parts of their culture as God-given—as a foundation—which makes them nonnegotiable forms that must be imposed on any converts.[19]

19. The causality might have run the other way, with prejudices about cherished

Christological scrutiny is thereby also blocked, which means that any structures endorsed fundamentally—here Jewish—along with any inappropriate relationality embedded in those (perhaps the legitimacy of violence in their defense) will not be subject to the overarching challenge of a loving triune relationality either. Moreover, any differences from these nonnegotiable forms are to be condemned. Such differences are sinful and wrong. So the colonial project operative here has a certain impermeability built into it, along with a characteristic self-righteousness. Everyone must look the same. Disaster!

Fortunately for us, Paul was having none of it. He opposed these enemies of the cross, as he termed them, in person when he could, but he couldn't be everywhere at once. So he sent volleys of letters to his communities when he thought that the enemies were either there or were about to arrive, and three of these are preserved in the Apostolic Writings—in historical order: Galatians, Philippians, and Romans. And it follows that a certain sort of messianic Jewish foundationalism is present in Paul's texts when he talks about the gospel of his enemies in these letters, although, of course, as he remarks caustically in Gal 1:7, it doesn't deserve the title of gospel at all.

The phrase "You will be justified by doing works as instructed by the law" is a summary of the gospel of the enemies, and it captures their conditionality nicely, beneath which we can detect a Jewish colonialism as well. "If you do works as taught by the divinely revealed lawbook, then you will be saved on the day of judgment. You will be pronounced righteous by God because you are! You will receive a verdict of 'righteous' in that court because a court is what decides these sorts of things. And you should get going as fast and as hard as you can now, beginning [addressing males] with circumcision, and following that up with a comprehensive abandonment of your disgusting pagan ways and a comprehensive adoption of our Jewish customs."

Of course, Paul adds in the fairly crucial little word "not" here. He has absolutely no confidence that this system will work. You will "not" be saved or justified by doing all the deeds prescribed by the Torah. You are too sinful, for starters. So it is a "gospel" that is just plain wrong, all the way through and all the way down. It doesn't know God, it doesn't understand what Jesus has revealed about God and what God has done for us through Jesus, and it doesn't even understand Judaism properly. This is what is going on in Box A in Gal 2:15–16, as well as in any related texts.[20]

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structures and forms—traditions—leading to the unwitting unleashing of a foundationalist theology; but the results are the same.

20. The realization that Paul is engaging with another "gospel" in much of Gala-

Box A does not address Judaism directly at all. It describes a particular group of messianic Jews who have a debased view of God and of salvation—a messianic Jewish colonialism intertwined with foundationalism. And understood as such, we have broken the all-important progression between Box A and Box B. Paul is not describing a soteriological progression here at all. Box A is not a description of the unsaved state where we all begin our journey to the gospel from. Paul is contrasting two versions of the gospel, one of which—a messianic Jewish colonizing foundationalism—is wrong (and horribly so). The other version, Paul's, emphasizing resurrection through Jesus, is right, although this last claim leads to an important part of the situation that we still need to address. How should we now read Box B?

Faith

People reading these texts as a foundationalist story of salvation might point to Paul's repeated use of faith language in relation to Box B and go on to suggest that this clearly links the two boxes together in a single progression and story. The faith in question is the faith of the individual (here picture a man)—his decision for Jesus, by which he has been saved—and it follows that the texts *must* be speaking of his journey from unbelief to belief, and of salvation more broadly. If there is a moment when he believes, then there is a part of his journey before he believed. And presumably he had to be given reasons in that part of the journey to believe, which points toward Box A and Box B being linked together and telling the story of an individual's journey from unbelief and possible damnation to belief and salvation. It is clearly the story of one person's journey to faith. It focuses on him and his crucial moment of decision. The emphasis, we might say, is anthropocentric throughout.

tians, Phil 3, and Romans opens up a very different view of Paul's argument in his key anti-Jewish and foundationalist text: Rom 1:18–3:20. From this viewpoint, it becomes apparent that this is not a foundationalist account of the gospel at all, but a masterful Socratic subversion of the opening preaching gambit of the enemies, which seems to have been based on the account of pagans supplied by Wisdom. Reading Paul's argument in this Socratic fashion eliminates several nagging exegetical and argumentative problems that the usual, foundationalist reading cannot deal with, and so seems more plausible. Read in this way, any foundationalism is also eliminated. Paul identifies and exploits this commitment within his enemies' gospel. This Socratic reading is briefly described in *Quest*, argued in detail primarily in *Deliverance*, and then debated, clarified, and defended in *Beyond.*

But this possible objection was anticipated and dealt with some time ago. In chapter 13 we discussed the virtue of faith, including a careful description of the way it involves, but is not reducible to, believing.[21] We spent some time there exploring how Paul grounds our faith in Jesus's faith. We saw then that Paul loves to use the terminology of Hab 2:4, although assisted by texts like Gen 15:6 and Isa 28:16, to link the faith of his converts to the foundational faith of Jesus himself, arguing that the presence of this faith within us is a guarantee that God is at work within us by his Spirit and that we are on track for glory. We are part of the difficult part of Jesus's life now, when he journeyed faithfully and obediently to the cross, but precisely because of this action, we know that we are on track to enjoy the resurrection and ascension that came after this for him. It is consequently an argument intended to assure us, not to tell us how to become Christians in the first place. We believe in fact only because we have become Christians already; our believing is a part of the character of Jesus that we now dimly reflect. And this argument for assurance fits the situation like a hand in a glove.

Box B texts now speak of the importance of participation in Jesus as the basis of our discipleship and our growth in the key virtues. Moreover, they gesture toward the way in which these virtues and our relationship with Jesus himself are rooted in a future age, accessible through his resurrection, which is now breaking into our tawdry present but which we are nevertheless one day certain to enjoy. The risen and living Jesus is the source of our faith—and of our love, our giving, our obeying, our believing, our peacemaking, our joy—and hence of our future life in glory together with him. Furthermore, we have been set free, released from the need to repay the debt generated by sin *now* (which is death) and so "justified," right where we are. So we do not have to wait nervously and uncertainly for a verdict on the day of judgment. God is for us because God is in us, now. And the threats of the enemies can be ignored, and on all counts.

Understanding Paul's argument in this way, there is no need to connect Box A and Box B together on the basis of Box B's repeated references to faith. In fact, they really belong more firmly apart, as distinctly contrasting accounts of salvation. The enemies, thinking foundationally, want Christians to earn their way to heaven, basically by becoming Jews. If all goes well, they will be granted entry into the blessings of the age to come after the day of judgment. So resurrection is all about us and how we earn it, and an aggressive messianic

21. Our faith, derived from Jesus's faith, involves obeying and being faithful, trust, and believing, as well as believing and trusting in relation to the future, hence hope.

colonizing project will meanwhile unfold on the ground. But Paul is investing heavily in God's plan for resurrection, which involved the sending of his Son, who died bearing our humanity and was resurrected carrying a new humanity for us into heaven. If we are connected to him, through the Spirit, we will be resurrected. And our faith is evidence that we are part of him now and that the completion of our journey is guaranteed.

Paul's repeated use of revelation elsewhere in Galatians now reinforces the sense in which there is no human journey to salvation from an unsaved to a saved state that is oriented primarily by human considerations—that is to say, a journey that we control and think through for ourselves. God brings us to the realization of his Son and of his truth and importance by revealing these things to us, as they were first revealed to Paul. So a key text from Galatians noted earlier bears repeating here:

> But when God,
> who set me apart from my mother's womb
> and called me by his grace,
> was pleased *to reveal* his Son to me
> so that I might preach him among the pagans,
> my immediate response was not to consult any human being. (1:15–16)

Paul repeatedly emphasizes in Galatians, as well as in other letters, that God breaks into our lives, interrupting them, whether dramatically, as he broke into Paul's, or gently, quietly, and gradually into ours, perhaps mediated by other Christians or messianic Jews. It doesn't matter. The key point is that underlying whatever process took place God was in charge revealing himself. We know that Jesus is the Lord because the Lord has revealed it to us. So we are certainly involved in this event and are summoned to respond to the resulting relationship. God loves us and respects us as people, treating us with more dignity than we deserve. But the initiative and the effectiveness within this whole process lie with God. We don't work our way out of Box A into Box B. (We could say that we are located in some sort of Box A, which takes its distinctive contours from our specific situation—so every Box A is different!—and that God locates us in Box B, which we are duly invited to respond to.)

Drawing all these insights together—the presence of the enemies at Galatia peddling their foundationalist gospel, Paul's emphasis on the faith of Jesus, and our inclusion within him by way of God's revelation and divine intervention—I would translate Gal 2:15–16 as follows, and our problems with soteriological anti-Judaism are solved.

> We who were born Judeans and not pagan sinners,
> who know that a person is not released [from the debt of sin]
> through works instructed by Torah only
> but through the faith of Jesus Christ as well,
> even we believed concerning Christ Jesus
> that we are released through the faith of Christ
> *and not* through works instructed by Torah,
> [and understood further] that [as Scripture says]
> "all flesh will not be released through works as instructed by Torah."

This is no longer a foundationalist text or a story of salvation in two stages. And it no longer boxes Jews and Judaism irrevocably and negatively into Box A, to supersede them as individuals journey across to the Christian state in Box B. It is a compare-and-contrast exercise. It juxtaposes a gospel that is not really a gospel at all but a colonizing program, one that views resurrection as something that people might be able to earn in the future, with the real gospel of God effected through Jesus, which views resurrection as a gift given through Christ and the Spirit now.[22]

With these realizations we also learn more deeply why people can be so offended by Paul and can resist the diversifications flowing from his flexible missional engagements. We see here the humbling *reflexive* dimension in the navigations he pioneered that can challenge members of their parent communities—transformational mode 4. Paul's enemies have recurred through much of church history, probably for much the same reason that they occurred in the first place. Taking reflexivity on board is difficult.

Missional Reflexivity

A Pauline navigation, as we have seen repeatedly in what precedes this point, should enter any new context in an incarnational mode, freely adopting the healthy relationality operative there already, along with any structures or forms that are not overtly offensive in relational terms. It is a noncolonial venture and a diversification inevitably results—a flourishing of God's community into

22. Stating things a little more technically, the argument runs: "We were in state A, and after B was added, received C; *therefore* C results from B *and not* from A, and C does *not* result from A in isolation." Note, arguably this argument also subtly suggests that Jews should be messianic, something we will probe more in the next chapter.

new, different expressions. Much still needs to be navigated locally, whether the introduction of a translated pedagogy or the reform or even abandonment of any sinful practices and structures. A transformation still needs to take place, and it can be quite dramatic. But much in the original context can be left in place as well, or at least remains recognizable after its relational modification. So a legitimate diversification in the church as a whole slowly takes place. And it is important to recall now, with the example of Paul's enemies fresh in our minds, that one feature of this situation is a *reflexive* impact on the group and the parent culture that sent out the missionaries in the first place. In Paul's day, however, this parent culture was of course Judaism.

When what we can call the parent culture's forms and structures are not imposed in toto on the evangelized people, something of a downgrade in their significance is experienced. When pagan converts become Christians and not Jews, the structures and forms of Judaism—the cherished customs and practices underwritten by the teachings of Moses—are necessarily revealed to be important but not mandatory, which is to say that they matter to Jews precisely as their historical and traditioned forms but do not have to matter to other people in the same way. I have taken pains to point out that they are neither trivial nor erasable. Jews are embodied, like everyone else, and the structures and forms that they act through count; they are the vehicles of their relationality and key components of their identity. They matter. God cares about them. But they matter *only to this degree*, which can be a humbling realization. Previously some Jews might have thought that their customs were rather more important than this. They might have thought that Jewish practices were *the* practices, superior to all others, and, if possible, necessarily to be adopted by all others. They should be universalized.

But Paul's mission revealed that such conclusions would be in fact to overvalue Jewish practices. They were important. They were no less, but they were also no more than this, and this implication was clearly rather galling to his messianic enemies. Indeed, they rejected this position and inserted their cultural affections into the basis of their theological program, producing a certain sort of early colonizing foundationalism. And presumably other nonmessianic Jews felt the same way if 1 Thess 2:14–16 is any indication. Indeed, we can assume that this was a common reaction to a Pauline navigation because it still is.

It is irritating to be told that our particularities are merely important, and important largely to us and so not that special, and certainly not superior to all others. *But it is imperative that we hear this correction.* We must grow up in Christ and, if necessary, become adults at this moment. *If we resist this lesson,*

we resist Paul's constructive account of differences in terms of diversification and return to an account of difference in terms of superiority and inferiority, to a colonial mentality, and to attendant practices of inappropriate negation and erasure. It is vital, then, to accept the implication of Paul's diversifying missionary work, namely, that our own structures and forms, which we might be very fond of, are merely important. Furthermore, we do not need to feel insecure about this reassessment.

Forms do not need to be mandatory to guarantee their importance, and to push for this further legitimation can be profoundly counterproductive. It is to enter a less secure space because, on the one hand, it is to unleash foundationalism, which inevitably collapses. On the other, the claim that our own structures are fundamentally superior issues a challenge to other forms as well, unleashing a never-ending struggle in zero-sum terms for survival. To make this claim is automatically to insist on some form of erasure. Valued as merely important to us, however, within our current embodied communal expression, our structures and traditions are unassailably important, and we do not need to undervalue or to override any others. Our practices are part of the way we are responding together, where we are, as we are, uniquely, to God. What could be more important than this?[23]

The preceding discussion has been a little technical at times, but it had to be. So many people go so badly astray at this moment in these distinctive texts that we had to grasp clearly just how this happens and how we can avoid it. I hope this is all quite clear by now. A great deal is at stake. Paul's interpretation will be shipwrecked if we read these texts in their usual fashion, an approach that has very little to commend it and much that should be said against it. In particular, we have learned that a vicious anti-Judaism will be written by this into the very foundation of Paul's gospel. And his gospel will in turn be cast in irreducibly foundationalist terms—terms that were actually being promul-

23. I actually know of no other account besides Paul's that can plausibly affirm differences, without merely ratifying differences per se (which would be to overlook sin), within an overarching arrangement that gives differences due weight but affirms them in a noncompetitive way—an account of difference within a process of ecclesial diversification. Every other account I am familiar with loses its way at some point. To its credit, classical political liberalism is at least aware of the importance of differences and tries to accommodate them in relation to an affirmation of the things that need to be held in common to facilitate a diverse life together, but it generates various distortions, partly because of its legal mentality, along with its predilection for abstractions and its ultimate reification of the nation-state.

gated by his deadly opponents! Few misreadings in the history of Pauline interpretation have been more ironic or more momentously destructive than this. It is time to rid ourselves of it, root and branch.

Theses

- For most of its history the church has described Jews negatively and hostilely and has frequently treated them poorly and even horrifically and has abetted the same by other actors.
- Without this prior history of contempt, the Holocaust would have been impossible.
- It is therefore especially important in a post-Holocaust era to be sensitive to the implications of any reading of Paul for Jews and for Judaism.
- The presence of any foundationalism within a description of Paul's thinking will generate anti-Jewish implications automatically. Recognizing the nature of foundationalism, along with its sinister role in generating anti-Judaism and supersessionism, is critical.
- The analysis in foundationalism works forward (A → B). The state preceding Christianity (B) is Jewish (A). Christianity (B) emerged from A as something different and later. It emerged, therefore, out of the *deficiencies* of state A (Judaism). Christianity (B) was the solution to the problems perceived self-evidently in Judaism (A). Its differences are superiorities to the self-evident problems in A. The rationale for later Christian difference from Judaism consequently lies in the inferiority of the previous state, which is Judaism (A– → B+). That rationale must be evident in state A, so it can lead to state B. So Judaism must be self-evidently insufficient, inadequate, and even immoral, incoherent, and irrational. A correct understanding of Judaism should entail the abandonment of Judaism for Christianity.
- This basic anti-Jewish dynamic operates in Paul's interpretation in three ways: in terms of (1) soteriological, (2) historicizing, and (3) salvation-historical, foundationalism.
- Soteriological foundationalism is the most important influence. It contributes significantly to a trenchant, definitional anti-Judaism in Paul, and the texts it relies on are the key texts for reading him in foundationalist terms. Foundationalism and anti-Judaism coincide exactly in these texts.
- A foundationalist and anti-Jewish account of Paul's gospel occurs when his antithetical "justification" texts are understood to be accounts of the

individual's journey to salvation, where justification is not by works of law but by faith. A woman (let us say) first learns from the attempt to do works of law (Box A) that she is under God's punitive judgment. Suitably anxious, she then grasps the offer made by the gospel of salvation by faith alone, thereby entering Box B. The punishment we justly deserve for our debt of sin is paid for by Jesus on our behalf. Box A is Jewish; Box B is Christian.

- Clearly in this schema, Jews are generically representative of unbelievers.
- This state in Box A is supposed to be abandoned because of its inherent inadequacy and because of anxiety about future judgment. This evaluation should prompt eager acceptance of the offer of salvation made by the gospel in terms of faith alone.
- The inadequacy of Judaism is self-evident. Those who resist these conclusions are irrational and/or immoral.
- This model seems to fit historically with the situation in Galatia. It purportedly explains why Paul's converts from paganism there should not convert to Judaism. That would be to return to Box A and to deny the validity of salvation by faith alone, which achieved entry to salvation in Box B.
- This reading can be challenged.
- This is a deeply inaccurate portrait of Jews and of Judaism in Paul's day, as E. P. Sanders and others have argued. Some Jews were covenantal, not contractual; others were reasonable, as against unreasonable legalists. (The model needs unreasonable legalism to work.) Jews had multiple biblical and theological solutions to transgression and sin, especially the temple, but also almsgiving, suffering, and repentance. The Bible also speaks of a forgiving God, especially in view of his commitment to Israel's founding ancestors.
- Paul is therefore being unfair, stereotypical, and reductionist, about Jews, if he is arguing in this way in his texts addressing Box A. He is also being argumentatively ineffective.
- Alternatively, this is not what Paul was arguing.
- We can confirm that this was not what Paul was arguing because this reading cannot explain Paul's flexible Christian ethic, which was his "signature issue." (Salvation, or justification by faith, actually requires the law to stay entirely in place ethically. That the law is to be abandoned ethically after it has been abandoned soteriologically is a non sequitur. Moreover, to suggest that it should be abandoned would be fatal to the entire construction,

which depends on its validity as it operates in Box A placing pressure on its occupants to move on to Box B. But Paul's converts did not observe the law as disciples, as they should have, if this was what he was arguing. This fact suggests that this particular construal of his argument is false.)

- An alternative construal of Paul's justification texts can be offered that avoids their anti-Jewish construal and these problems.
- This approach is more sensitive to his historical circumstances.
- Paul is engaging with "another gospel" in these texts—the teaching of people he calls his "enemies" (see Gal 1:6–7; Phil 3:18).
- They were messianic Jews hostile to Paul, with a fundamentally colonial attitude toward his pagan converts. They expected pagans to convert comprehensively to Judaism.
- This agenda was combined with a foundationalist emphasis on Jewish customs and practices as detailed by the books of the law.
- This led to a conditional and contractual account of salvation.
- "Justification by works of law" was their gospel, as well as their method of achieving resurrection.
- "Justification by works of law" does not therefore refer to Judaism in general or to a generic state prior to Christianity where a journey to salvation should begin in self-evident terms. Box A is simply a false messianic Jewish gospel. It is untrue.
- The enemies traveled through Paul's communities in 51 CE trying to subvert his teaching.
- Paul wrote Galatians, Phil 3:2–4:3, and Romans to oppose them—a more plausible account of their composition in historical terms than the alternative.
- Paul opposes the essentially colonial approach of his enemies to salvation by emphasizing Jesus's faithfulness to the point of death, followed by his resurrection and ascension. He uses scriptural language to warrant this emphasis, especially Hab 2:4. Those who believe are evidencing their connection to Jesus and are thereby guaranteed resurrection ("life," in Hab 2:4). This is God's chosen method of providing resurrection to sinful people. It is effective now to a significant degree. There is no need to wait until the day of judgment to learn whether we are saved. The presence of the faith of Jesus in Paul's argument has been discussed earlier, in chapter 13, when loving as faithfulness was analyzed. Participation in Jesus is central to Paul's ethics, as we learned earlier in part 2 as a whole.
- The "gospel" of the enemies is a useful lesson. It demonstrates how re-

sistance to a Pauline navigation into, and affirmation of, differences, can arise out of an overcommitment to the traditions, customs, and practices of a parent body.

- A Pauline navigation that sits lightly on structures and forms necessarily reveals many of the structures and forms in a missionaries' parent body to be merely important, not mandatory or universalizable. In this way colonization is resisted. But the price paid for this approach is the designation of Jewish structures and forms as merely important. This teaching offended some Jews both inside and outside the early church.
- But this Pauline account of difference, in terms we might say of mere importance, allows a constructive account of difference, and a secure one. Differences are explained in terms of missional and ecclesial diversification. They matter ultimately as particular expressions of communities before God.
- If differences are reified more strongly, they combine with foundationalism. This linkage creates vulnerability, not security, because that foundationalism will collapse under closer scrutiny. Moreover, it will engender a competitive account of difference, leading necessarily to attempted negations and erasures. So an attempt to increase the importance of certain structures and forms by elevating them is misguided and counterproductive.
- The reading of Paul's justification texts in terms of soteriological foundationalism needs to be repented of, not the least because it generates a virulent anti-Judaism.

Key Scriptural References

The construal of Gal 2:15–16 is central to the discussion of anti-Judaism in Paul, especially as it can be representative of more or less constructive readings of a family of similar passages in Paul, texts frequently understood in some sense to be about "justification." See Gal 2:15–3:29; 5:5–6; Rom 1:18–5:1; 9:30–10:17; and Phil 3:2–11; also Eph 2:8–10. Ultimately, the key text is Rom 1:18–3:20. Vestiges of righteousness terminology can also be found in 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11; and 2 Cor 5:21.

Paul speaks of "enemies of the cross" in Phil 3:18.

Galatians 1:15–16 recounts his call/conversion/commission, emphasizing that it took place through revelation (see also 1:12; and 3:23).

Key Reading

An important set of essays stating the issues, their solution in these terms, and their attempted defense against critics, are gathered together neatly by Tilling in *Beyond*. (I wrote four essays and respond to the rest.) Chapter 6 should prove especially helpful: "Connecting the Dots: One Problem, One Text, and the Way Ahead." Several helpful introductory essays can also be found in chs. 7–11 of my *Quest*: 132–261. *Journey* blends together the biographical and the theological issues in chs. 10–11, 127–50.

Further Reading

The contentions of this chapter build directly on the affirmation of revelation and critique of foundationalism found in chs. 1 and 2, which rested ultimately on Barth, especially *CD* I/1, a position restated and nuanced in I/2, although it is also ably articulated by the Torrances. They also build on the critique of conditional and contractual accounts of God's relationship with humanity found earlier in several places, especially chs. 3 and 18 (leaning there on J. B. Torrance and ultimately John Macmurray); on the interpretation of some of Paul's believing language with reference to Jesus, argued in chapter 13 (see the literature referenced there, especially by Richard Hays); and on the diversity of the early church, comprising both messianic Jewish and formerly pagan, now Christian, members, argued especially in chs. 20–21.

Barth's account of Israel and of Judaism is contentious and has been sharply criticized. He wrote an astonishingly far-sighted account of Israel in *CD* II/2, which circulated, in an awful irony, in 1943. It does have its harsh side, however. An overtly post-Holocaust account of Barth on Israel probably needs to soften his views still further.

The diversity of Jews in Paul's day is nicely captured by (among others) Barclay and Cohen (in the Diaspora), and Neusner (principally in Judea, and extending beyond the first century).

Important forerunners to Sanders's challenge were W. D. Davies, his teacher, and G. F. Moore, who in 1921 wrote an astonishingly prescient essay addressing anti-Judaism in Paul and his New Testament interpreters. Richard N. Longenecker is an early Evangelical champion of this view as well. Few have pressed the resulting contradictions harder than Heikki Räisänen.

The basic way to avoid the anti-Jewish trap when reading Paul is indicated by Martyn's magisterial scholarship. He emphasizes revelation and its uncondi-

tionality, the importance of Paul's opponents to the interpretation of Galatians and related texts, and the centrality of the faith of Jesus to Paul's arguments. We also link hands here with the great founder of the modern biblical analysis of Paul, F. C. Baur, who discerned that the Paul of the letters, as against the Paul of Acts, had a real fight on his hands with a more orthopractic, Jewish wing of the church.

In addition to the shorter, more introductory treatments noted above, I provide a more detailed account of the situation and its solution in *Deliverance* and provide details of the biographical issues and solutions in *Framing*.

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CHAPTER 28

Beyond Supersessionism

Interpreting Judaism in Paul

The previous chapter charted how easy it is to make a critical mistake when reading some of Paul's arguments in Galatians, Philippians, and Romans, taking them to be his account of salvation in two steps, from works to faith, and hence from Judaism to Christianity. It changes things considerably when we grasp that Paul wrote these letters to deal with the enemies. Salvation was at stake in this engagement, not to mention resurrection, but the texts are *not* speaking about an individual's journey from an unstable Jewish state to a superior Christian existence. Paul was opposing a misguided messianic Jewish gospel that had lapsed into foundationalism and colonialism, countering it with his gospel, which centered on participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The recognition that this is the argument that was going on—an opposition of two different gospels, one wrong and one right—removes the virulent anti-Jewishness generated when Paul's justification arguments are misunderstood. All the textual data in Paul that ostensibly describe Judaism legalistically in terms of attempted justification through works of law as the basis of Christianity—the terms of Box A—can now be sidelined. This characterization summarizes a misguided messianic Jewish gospel and is just plain wrong. So we can now jettison Rom 1:18–3:9a, and any other texts that sound like it, for the purposes of describing Paul's view of Judaism, although there aren't that many of them. (Gal 2:15–16 is a nice summary of this group of passages.) This material looks Jewish, and in a certain sense it is, but it is not Paul's account of Judaism.[1] It is a distorted and inadequate account of

1. We can still use it to describe Judaism in Paul's day "phenomenologically," in terms of what various Jews at the time thought about God and salvation, although

salvation by contemporary competitors that he rejected, and we would be wise to follow him here.

Unfortunately, however, the anti-Jewish demon in Paul is not slain by this single stroke of the sword, although it is quite a stroke. If soteriological foundationalism and its anti-Jewish implications can be eliminated by reading texts like Gal 2:15–16 and Rom 1:18–3:20 more accurately in their original historical settings, it can still rear its dreadful head in two other ways: methodological and salvation-historical.

Historicism

The second form in which we encounter foundationalism and its characteristic forward thinking—which is what really does the damage to the Christian interpretation of Judaism—is *historicism*.

Historicism is not history or sheer historical analysis. Far from it. It is an underlying set of presuppositions, themselves closed off to historical analysis, holding that observable history and its causalities are all that exist. It is the assumption that reality is entirely immanent. These premises about the nature of history cannot be established by history. We do not observe or reconstruct them from the available evidence. They are really a prior metaphysics in the light of which certain types of derivative "historical" interpretation are then undertaken. Nevertheless, they are held by many modern secular scholars, and even by theistic scholars who accept the secular parameters of analysis within the modern university. Moreover, there is some truth in this viewpoint. God's incarnation, in particular, reveals that our embodied world is significant, and action within it is valid and meaningful. To a degree, history does proceed forward in this way. Much causality is immanent. However, this is a half-truth and, as such, dangerous. Divine action *on* our world, as well as *within* it and *through* it, is also rather important!

If we reify the importance of our own actions and those actions we can observe around us into an exhaustive account of reality, then history must proceed forward, and we will do history by histori*cizing*, which is to say, by assuming that history is a closed causal process. Everything happens because of something that happened before it. Reality moves in one direction. The

here messianic Jews. The speeches by the angel Uriel in 4 Ezra and, to a degree, the program underlying 4 Maccabees, along with part of Wisdom, are points of contact with contemporary Jewish texts.

present arises directly out of the past, making the study of a phenomenon's origins the key to much of its later development. Moreover, biological analogies will beckon.

The assumption of historical immanence has often been combined with an equally strong commitment to historical progress. A great impetus to this entire way of thinking was given by Darwin's theory of evolution, which burst onto the intellectual scene in 1859 with the publication of his *Origin of Species*. This theory combined in interesting ways with the rise of the modern capitalist and democratic nation-state in Europe. The astonishing success of capitalist economies—their massive increases in productivity and population as they industrialized from the late 1700s onward—and the emergence of complex and very powerful bureaucratic states led to a widespread and deeply rooted belief among the Western intellectuals funded and teaching in their universities that history is progressive. Immanent reality was also, then, we might say, fundamentally optimistic; it had a high opinion of itself.[2] History moves and evolves and develops upward, frequently culminating, a little predictably, in the culture and politics of the philosopher writing the large book about history and politics that people are reading at the time. So one of the greatest exponents of this viewpoint, Georg W. F. Hegel, argued from 1812 to 1831 that history was God on a great quest for conscious self-discovery, spiraling upward from lower to higher stages, until history and God culminated in nineteenth-century Prussia, with a little help from Napoleon.

This myth of progress is far from dead. It lives on where I currently reside, in the United States, many of whose residents are deeply convinced of its own developmental superiority to every other nation on earth—of its "manifest destiny"—and are equally deeply convinced that things have to move forward and upward, to progress. A nice marker of this historical optimism is provided by the campaign slogans of recent successful presidential campaigns. Reagan campaigned in 1980 with the slogan, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" (The answer was No, making it an effective slogan because it should have been Yes.) Clinton campaigned in 1992 with "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow" (which also used a jaunty theme song of the same title by pop band Fleetwood Mac). Obama campaigned in 2008 with the mantras "Change we can believe in," "Hope," "Yes we can!", and "Forward"—a plethora of upward-moving tropes. Trump's campaign slogan in 2016, "Make America great again" clearly also implied that things should move upward and onward.

2. This is Barth's jocund opening observation about the Enlightenment in *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*.

But this worldview, when it is secularized, will, as we saw in the very first chapter of this book, cut us off from a great deal that Paul says about actors such as God, and it will lead us to supply a reductionist account of his thought, and probably to question his sanity as well. And even if Paul's analysts do not overtly embrace these drastically narrowed parameters, when they proceed in this way tacitly, analyzing events in history like the emergence of Christianity from Judaism in terms that are accessible only within history, then historicism will dominate and a methodological foundationalism will be unleashed. And this in turn will release a second form of supersessionism.

If history works forward, immanently, and also evolves upward, the emergence of Christianity from Judaism must again be rooted in some prior deficiency within Judaism, and we will thereby return to all the problems of soteriological supersessionism, although these will play in a new key, so to speak, in grand historical mode. The new form that is Christianity emerges out of Judaism, although it is different from Judaism in many respects; consequently, it improves on Judaism, progresses beyond it, and must displace it. Jews who resist this movement resist progress, and maybe even resist "freedom" and "modernity" as well. Hegel's terminology for this shift was a movement from "the particular" to "the universal." God in history needed to move from the narrow details of existence to the great universal abstractions of modernity and the nation-state. So the cramped details of Judaism needed to be discarded and left behind for the massive and greatly purified reach of Christianity.

This claim turns out to be almost complete nonsense once it is pressed. All historical peoples are irreducibly and permanently caught up in details and particulars. So Christianity is entirely particular. It is not an abstraction, Hegel's hopes notwithstanding. It is not just a great idea, universally applicable like Kant's categorical imperative. Christians are real people caught up in all the messy details of specific lives—eating, working, reproducing, and so on. Moreover, Judaism is as committed to universalism, in the healthy sense, as Christianity is. As soon as the affirmation is made that God is the Lord, a significant universal claim is in play (although this is not abstract). So Hegel's distinction doesn't make much sense. But it still recurs within our scholarship, staggering through our analyses like a zombie, in part because the great father of modern critical Pauline studies, F. C. Baur, was a devout Hegelian.[3]

Moreover, a tacit cultural alliance is often present here with anti-Judaism. Many cultured Europeans were embarrassed by Christianity's Jewish roots and

3. It was noted earlier that F. C. Baur had some insightful things to say about Paul—but not everything he said was insightful.

so were happy to grasp on to a theory that allowed Judaism to be abandoned as a primitive and early form to be discarded for the higher evolution that was Christianity. The bizarre tumult of the eastern European synagogue could be left behind for the elegant liturgical, architectural, and musical refinements of the German church. So this theory often mapped the social locations of the viewpoint's advocates nicely.

In short, if the changes that history itself delivers from within are in any sense a step forward, which is to say, a moment of progress—and both evolution and much modern Western cultural thought would say "Yes, they are"—then Christianity must supersede Judaism as *Homo sapiens* succeeded the dinosaur and capitalism succeeded feudalism. This worldview and its progressive outworkings resonated nicely, moreover, with widespread anti-Jewishness in Europe. And at the heart of this progress was Paul (and this even if some of the categories he used to express the point were quaintly superstitious). He was the great apostle of progress, who pioneered, enacted, and justified the emergence of Christianity, the highest form of religion, and the abandonment of its Jewish precursor as a primitive form that must now be firmly repudiated, along with all its inadequacies.

What should be done about this derogation and ultimate erasure of the Jews?!

The problem here is again initially methodological. So the only way to prevent the emergence of this demonic supersessionist variant within the analysis of Paul is by insisting that history is an open process, not a closed one. This approach still allows us to undertake sober historical analysis, but it will not be pursued in historicizing terms, which would in any case, if I am right, be reductionist. God is involved in history, and so good historical analysis needs to take this factor into account, and I have tried to do so throughout this book. Moreover, as election indicates, God's plan for history is the real key to the ultimate direction of history, however complicated and opaque its detailed outworking might be (Rom 8:28), and we grasp this truth only after it has grasped us, through revelation. So history does not *itself* contain an internal upward momentum—far from it. It stands always on the edge of chaos and evil, being held against complete disintegration by a good God acting on it faithfully "from above." The truth about history holds history in the palm of its hand. If we let go of these insights we inevitably fall back into a closed historical process, and then it is very difficult to resist building anti-Jewishness into the heart of Christianity. Moreover, any Christian commitments on the part of this type of analyst will, somewhat ironically, make supersessionism nigh on unavoidable.

Fortunately, an open, elective view of history—which is really just to say an eschatological view of history—is undergirded by deeply Pauline claims. Almost everything he wrote makes sense only on the assumption that God exists and acts definitively through Jesus, and that our gathering in him into the triune communion is the destiny of the cosmos. This is as important and as real as it gets. It is a difficult stance to maintain within the modern academy. But if we are followers of Jesus in the terms that Paul describes, then we have no choice. We simply hold this to be true, and it is true because it has been revealed to us, so we can no more deny this reality than deny that the sun rises. Moreover, the heart of our ethic calls us to maintain these convictions with as much courage as we need to resist their erosion, if necessary to the point of death!

But at least this stance, which is to say, the faintly ridiculous claim that God is in charge of history, now has the added bonus that we do not need to engage in a historicizing reduction of Judaism to a primitive historical antecedent to the development of Christianity. Christianity did not evolve from and transcend its historical antecedent, the Jewish people, in the way that higher species like primates evolved from lower forms like fish. Humankind has to be gathered into the ultimate purpose of God, which is communion. The development of Christianity was clearly part of God's great plan. It need not follow, however, that the Judaism that preceded it was in any way inferior to it or needed to be abandoned. God's plan was for the church to *diversify* outward from Judaism as all things are gathered back into communion, which is a rather different thing.

With this set of important realizations in place, along with their critical counter to methodological supersessionism, we must turn to consider the third principal way in which anti-Jewishness can slip into Pauline interpretation, by way of salvation history, although as we do so we will need to address the problem that various important scholars of Paul don't want him to have a salvation history at all. This dimension within his thinking can be rejected, and attempts to introduce it have been hotly disputed. We see here, in fact, that the elimination of supersessionism from any salvation-historical dimension in Paul is caught up with foundationalism in an especially complex way.

Sacred-Nation Theology

Much history as it is described by the Jewish Scriptures revolves around a divinely constituted people who colonize a divinely gifted area of land, driving

out, enslaving, or assimilating the original inhabitants, and then developing political institutions that are divinely ratified in turn. Monarchies ensue with taxation, armies, and capital cities complete with palaces and a temple, which is all the outworking of God's great plan within history. Hence, the vehicle within which all God's purposes are concentrated is, at bottom, *a sacred nation*. And it is privileged over its ethnic neighbors, divinely entitled to its territory, and justified in appropriating and defending itself with lethal and even genocidal force.

When we take a step back from this construct, it is a truly frightening thing. A group of people is entitled by God to occupy a particular area of land, resisting all ethnic assimilation or inclusion, and blessed, if necessary, in its bloody acquisition and defense. I suspect that people need no encouragement to form such essentially tribal allegiances. When they do so in these theological terms, however, they are removed from all moral restraints as they further the perceived interests of their people, and the results have been quite horrifying as they have played out in subsequent history.

Just this ideology, for example, informed the appropriation of the upland territory now organized as the Transvaal and Orange Free State in South Africa by Dutch settlers in the early 1800s—the Voortrekkers. (They also colonized Natal.) December 16 is still commemorated annually as the day a covenant was formed between God and the Dutch settlers, when a vastly outnumbered force of settlers defeated a huge Zulu *impi* (army) at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. On December 9 the settlers had prayed,

> If the Lord might give us victory, we hereby deem to found a house as a memorial of his Great Name at a place where it shall please him, and that they also implore the help and assistance of God in accomplishing this Vow and that they write down this Day of Victory in a book and disclose this event to our very last posterities in order that this will forever be celebrated in the honor of God.[4]

On December 16 the Zulu attacked, hoping to drive the migrating Voortrekkers from their land. About three thousand Zulu warriors were killed assaulting the Voortrekker laager of wagons, which was defended by muskets

4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Blood_River. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voortrekkers; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaal_Colony; and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_of_Natal.

and two small cannons, and only three defenders were wounded. (In other words, it was a massacre.) The battle was a turning point, and colonization of the new territories followed—territories that were then defended against later British absorption and, still later, organized on racial lines. (It is only fair to note that the original Dutch invasion was not completely one-sided in moral terms. The Zulu king Dingane had invited an initially peaceful party of settler leaders to his kraal, ostensibly for a celebratory beer-drinking feast after making a treaty with them, only to have them massacred.)

Further examples of horrific violence perpetrated in the name of a sacred nation are easy to find. The breakup of Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001 witnessed ghastly incidents of ethnic cleansing. Many Serbian atrocities were justified by the conviction on the part of the Serb perpetrators that Serbia was a sacred nation, with particular holy sites and territory, surrounded by ethnic and religious others who needed to be expelled or exterminated—a group including Catholic Croats, Slovenes, and Albanians and Muslim Bosnians and Albanians. (The intellectual center for this ideology was the University of Belgrade.) The same basic stance can be detected in militant Zionism. It recurs again centrally to much of the trouble that has unfolded in Northern Ireland, in both Catholic and Protestant militant groups. But the most notable example of this way of thinking is of course German National Socialism, the cradle within which some of the most important Pauline scholars of a previous generation were raised and formed. Hence when these scholars and their pupils see the phrase "salvation history," they think immediately of a sacred nation and its appalling legitimization of the Nazi reign of terror, and so they quite understandably just say No.

Complicating this situation is the fact that this sinister legacy tends not to be noticed by many other Christian scholars who are situated in liberal and democratic cultures. It is unthinkable in this context that naked tribal dynamics would be fanned into flame by what is initially just a hermeneutical program—a reading strategy—that builds from the Jewish Scriptures continuously through to the Apostolic texts. But this is merely fortuitous. Such a program contains no automatic political safeguards. A careless account of the history of Israel can endorse a sacred nation clearly and continually, and have a powerful resonance with later political projects in just the same terms, however unintentionally. The aggressive and genocidal political implications latent within this particular approach to salvation history need to be faced and dealt with directly—*but not by refusing to undertake salvation history at all*. This is a mistake, and a big one, for reasons that now need to be fully appreciated.

Salvation-Historical Foundationalism

If God is a faithful and ultimately also an all-powerful God—bearing in mind the critical insights into the nature and operation of God's power revealed by the crucified Jesus[5]—then his original plan for the cosmos needs to work out within the cosmos. And this plan began in earnest within human history with the creation of his people, a people that Paul descends from directly, whom he refers to as Jews or Judeans.[6] God's involvement with us did not begin with Jesus. It began long before this central moment. To deny this involvement was Marcion's great error. Moreover, Paul is no Gnostic. He believes in a fully embodied life and so believes in a fully embodied history within which God is involved using, as usual, people to convey his purposes. It follows that there are (so to speak) concrete antecedents to the new communities that formed around Jesus, namely, the Jews. And any responsible account of Paul—and simply any responsible theology, period—*must* contain a story about these Jewish antecedents. So we must include a salvation-historical dimension in our account of Paul—and he certainly did.

However, many traps lurk here as we do so, including of course the great trap that underlies almost all others, foundationalism. If the response offered to the rejection of salvation history by scholars traumatized by the horrors of the Nazi regime is a knee-jerk affirmation of salvation history undertaken in foundationalist terms by well-intentioned anti-Marcionites, then the cure is as bad as the disease, and the debate will be driven, moreover, into an intractable impasse.

It is very easy, that is, for Tertullianism to rear its ugly head again within any account of salvation history. We should recall that Tertullianism—which is not, to reiterate, a complete description of Tertullian himself—is prompted principally by canonical and historical anxieties involving Jews and creation, anxieties first raised by Marcion. Marcion argued that the God of the Jews, the Jewish Scriptures, and the Jewish people could have nothing to do with the God of Jesus, the Christian Scriptures (which he defined narrowly, around Paul), and the Christian church. He denied any need, then, for salvation history, as well as denying any need for an account of creation.

5. See especially 1 Cor 1:18–31.

6. The Greek *Ioudaioi* can denote either of these referents, suggesting either what a modern person would call an ethnic group or someone from a particular place, in this case, Judea. There is a concrete connection between these two notions, but they are not the same thing.

Tertullian, along with many others, realized that this was a disaster on multiple levels. God's integrity is called into question; the scriptural basis that the church rests on is compromised, and ethics is ultimately placed in jeopardy by the flight of the church from the gritty, embodied realities of creation and history. However, if the response to these anxieties is the assertion up front of the truth and significance of God, of creation, of the history of the Jews, and of the Jewish Scriptures, without due attention being paid to the careful derivation of these truths from the primary truth that is Jesus, then the result is an endorsement of foundationalism in salvation-historical guise. And at this moment the baby has gone out with the bathwater. This posture—the telling of the story of salvation history like a quest—will ultimately and somewhat ironically erode all the key claims about God and reality that Tertullianists ultimately hold dear, because as foundationalist claims they will not stand up to further scrutiny. Moreover, this well-intentioned but badly founded strategy will pay the further price of supersessionism, which is our principal concern here. It may even, in addition, unleash the radioactive salvation-historical form of sacred-nation theology.

The key truths about God, creation, and history, including Jewish history, might be affirmed up front, as was just said, in advance of the coming of Jesus and his definitive revelation, as the foundation for all further Christian thinking. This assertion of the basal role of ancient Israel is supposed to safeguard its importance (although it will ultimately do anything but). The overarching schema works forward, from Israel and its history to Christianity and its somewhat different history. Hence, given that the thrust of the schema is forward, the differences that Christianity embodies will, once again, as in the soteriological schema, have to arise out of the prior deficiencies of Israel. In a schema that works forward, a later state that is different entails an explanation in terms of the deficiencies of the first state from which it arises, and supersessionism must result.

It is actually quite difficult to build a broad, salvation-historical story that accounts coherently for this fundamental shift at all. So one of the most important contemporary representatives of this view, N. T. Wright, although preferring the broader, salvation-historical canvas, retreats to good old-fashioned soteriological categories to make this case; the deficiencies of trying to be justified by works of law are writ large across Israel's history, to be succeeded by a new dispensation based on faith. As a result, true Jews in the new era of Jesus, arising out of the great story of Israel that precedes him, look suspiciously like Protestants who have learned that law-observance demonstrates only the presence of sin and of a deep problem with a God who judges, although they have

also now been disobedient to their divine calling to evangelize the nations.[7] Other advocates of the New Perspective try to offer a alternative, nuanced version of this progression, but the price they pay for this modification is a collapse into frequent argumentative incoherence and exegetical implausibility. A somewhat different, promise-fulfillment schema is sometimes affirmed by scholars like Krister Stendahl and Oscar Cullmann, which seems initially to be rather more kind-hearted. Judaism here is not in and of itself necessarily intrinsically negative; it is the bearer of the promises in its precious Scriptures, which Jesus will come and fulfill. However, this schema struggles to explain the radical divergences between Christianity and Judaism, and when it does so, burying the explanation of that coming divergence in the promises, a harsh side again emerges within the explanation, not to mention, within God. Soteriological supersessionism tends to emerge again, although with a new sting in its tail.

It follows from this particular rationale that the coming of Jesus should have been anticipated by Jews. After all, they possessed the Scriptures that sketch out their current promissory state and the hope of a perfected future, which is realized in their coming Messiah. So when Jesus arrived, fulfilling all their promises, Jews should have embraced him—and when they did not, they therefore failed to understand their own history and their own Scriptures. As a result of this failure, Christians, who did accept Jesus, now understand Jewish history, Jewish hope, the Jewish Scriptures, and their all-important promises better than the Jews do. Hence Christians effectively colonize all these dimensions of Jewish life, and judge nonmessianic Jews with customary harshness to be deficient, resistant, and foolish. So we are not really much further ahead when we promulgate this promise-fulfillment schema (and we still often struggle to explain coherently why Christianity is so different from Judaism).[8]

In short, we can see that whatever particular rationale we choose to run, a harsh form of Jewish accountability is again necessarily generated by any broad

7. I call this position "panoramic Lutheranism"; see my essay-length review "Panoramic Lutheranism and Apocalyptic Ambivalence: An Appreciative Critique of N. T. Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*," *SJT* 69 (2016): 453–73.

8. The claim that God intended this change all along, and built it into the promises, has challenges of basic scriptural plausibility, because the Jewish Scriptures emphasize the Torah so strongly; it raises insurmountable questions about God's integrity. These match the problems raised if God intends a two-stage creational schema, a preliminary inferior form being succeeded by a later superior version.

account of salvation history that works forward, from Judaism to Christianity. Christianity inevitably goes on to displace Judaism, moving beyond its prior deficiencies. And the Torah will be left behind somehow, for some reason, so Jewish forms and structures will ultimately be erased. It seems, then, that any forward-moving account of salvation history is inevitably supersessionist (i.e., where it is not either unorthodox or completely incoherent). Tertullianism is a Jewish poison pill, then, which is not a little ironic when it arises from anxieties that Marcion dangerously cut the Jews off from the gospel. But why reaffirm them in such a way that they are negated, judged, and erased?[9]

Moreover, all the dangers of foundationalism have been unleashed again, which we know well by now, except that in this instance they link hands with sacred-nation theology!

One of the great problems generated by foundationalism that we have noted repeatedly is its inability to criticize its own favored cultural and political commitments. When these are built into the foundation of the system being advocated, they are removed from Trinitarian and christological challenge. And one of the reasons for this constant attention is to prepare us for this very moment, where we see that a foundationalist salvation history either offers absolutely no defense against sacred-nation theology or it *is* sacred-nation theology! Sacred-nation theology is really nothing more than a peculiarly self-righteous and ultimately vicious form of foundationalism, whose virulence is repeatedly attested to by history. And with this realization we can probably grasp why so much contemporary debate is caught in a bitter and intractable impasse.

Paul *must* have a salvation history or his interpretation risks collapsing into Marcionism. The critics of overly disjunctive approaches to Paul are right to point to this necessity. But when salvation history is introduced by such critics, a comprehensive supersessionism *and* a sacred-nation theology are unleashed! And it is entirely correct for this construct to be firmly rejected as well. Moreover, these positions seem to be a straightforward either/or; it is one or the other—*although both these alternatives are fatal*. What is to be done?

The way ahead lies—as usual—with the recognition that the damage is being done in all these constructs, whether in terms of supersessionism or sacred-nation theology, by foundationalism, and with the complementary

9. What this dynamic exposes, sadly, is a Christian concern that is actually canonical, worried about the sundering apart of the two testaments of the Bible, and a lack of much concern for the Jews themselves.

realization that the problems unleashed can be dealt with as we learn to tell Paul's salvation-historical story in the right way, backward. Never has it been more important than here to hold all these methodological insights together.

Salvation History as Memoir

We can articulate a salvation history in Paul, as we must, and in fact kill all our supersessionist birds with one stone, including any sacred-nation theology, if we cleave to our original insight about storytelling, articulated first in chapter 3, and tell this story retrospectively, or backward, like a memoir. This approach will prevent the unleashing of foundationalism. It will free us from the foundationalist need to describe Judaism as innately and self-evidently deficient, evolving into the higher, and very different, state of Christianity. In other words, it will free us from supersessionism. And it will allow us to criticize and to reformulate, if not simply to expunge, any sacred-nation theology from our account, resisting the suggestion that this political form needs to be carried on. Only a loving relationality needs to be carried on, as God's goal for the cosmos, and all other social and political arrangements are to be subjected to the lordship of the one who was crucified before he was resurrected and enthroned. Hence it is to our great good fortune that this is exactly what Paul does, once we notice it (although the following will necessarily be a very brief sketch).

Paul narrates the pre-messianic history of Israel as a smoothly continuous and coherent story, *now that the figure to which everything has slowly been building has been revealed*.

> Theirs [Israel's] is the adoption to sonship;
> theirs the divine glory,
> the testaments,
> the receiving of the sacred teachings,
> the temple worship [in the presence of God],
> and the promises.
> Theirs are the patriarchs,
> *and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah,*
> *who is God over all, forever praised!*
> Amen.[10] (Rom 9:4–5)

10. The syntax is, strictly speaking, capable of being read in different ways from

> The Holy Scriptures [made promises]
> regarding his [God's] Son,
> who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,
> and who through the Spirit of holiness
> was appointed the Son of God in power
> by his resurrection from the dead:
> Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 1:2–4)

So,

> The Son of God, Jesus Christ,
> who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—
> was not "Yes" and "No,"
> but in him it has always been "Yes."
> For no matter how many promises God has made,
> they are "Yes" in Christ.
> And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us
> to the glory of God. (2 Cor 1:19–20)

In the light of Jesus's climactic arrival, death, resurrection, and ascension to lordship on high, Paul looks backward and now sees faithfulness and resurrection inscribed into Israel from its very beginnings and attested to by the Jewish Scriptures. Israel began when it was called into being through the household of Abraham. Abraham, known as Abram at the time, was promised seed and land by God:

> I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;
> I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
> I will bless those who bless you,
> and whoever curses you I will curse;
> and all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you. (Gen 12:2–3)

God reiterated these promises in a subsequent chapter:

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this translation. But this construal is, given the available evidence, most likely. See Robert Jewett, with Roy D. Kotansky, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 566–69; and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 779–95.

> Look up at the heavens and count the stars—
> if indeed you can count them. . . .
> So shall your offspring be. (Gen 15:5)

These promises had translated by Paul's day into entry by Abraham and his seed into the life of the age to come through resurrection, and the inheritance of that perfect world forever (so most clearly Rom 4:13). But there was a technical problem. Abraham had no direct heir with Sarah, his wife. Nevertheless, at an extraordinarily advanced age, having soldiered on in faith for sixteen years or so after receiving the last iteration of the promises, God miraculously gifted the couple with Isaac, an heir through whom Abraham's seed would descend and the promises be fulfilled. Paul describes both Abraham's old loins and Sarah's barren womb as "dead," so the conception and birth of Isaac was literally an event of life from the dead, or a resurrection.

> He [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—
> the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.
> Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed
> and so became the father of many nations,
> just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."
> Without weakening in his faith,
> he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—
> since he was about a hundred years old—
> and that Sarah's womb was also dead.
> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God,
> but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,
> being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Rom 4:17–21)

We need now to note carefully just what account of past Judaism Paul has created. The story has God placed centrally as the key actor, as is appropriate. God calls Judaism into being through its original ancestors, then promises future life to them. They will have land and posterity and will ultimately inherit the world to come. In this fashion they are "elected," or chosen. So God initiates this relationship and gifts Israel with existence and purpose. Abraham responds faithfully to this relationship after his call, trusting God. God then begins to fulfill his original promise almost immediately through an act of resurrection in Isaac that opens up new life, which foreshadows the main event,

which will come much later, at the end of the age. The generation of Israel is also effected, the people who will inherit this new world, although God is again at work explicitly in this genealogy, calling and creating. So in just the same way as he called Abraham, God calls Isaac and then Jacob, the younger son of Isaac, over Esau, gifting them with seed and inheritance.

In view of these origins in the patriarchs and matriarchs, it now seems like the most natural thing in the world that Jesus has come—God in person—and opened the doorway into the promised new life through his resurrection. Another faithful figure has arrived who has endured suffering obediently and then been gifted with resurrection, although this time life has been given in the age to come and not merely anticipated. The promises have been fulfilled! The original intimations of resurrection and inheritance promised to Israel at its inception have flowered into full bloom. Death has been defeated!

Paul is even able to ingeniously slip his mission to the pagans into this overarching narrative arc. God did not just *promise* Abraham seed, which is to say descendants, and land, meaning in its later, expanded sense, the age to come. He promised *to bless* Abraham as the father *of many nations*—the pagan nations. Abraham was told repeatedly, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Consequently, Paul's mission to the pagan nations is just the outworking of this original blessing. The pagans gain entry into the life of the age to come through Abraham's most important descendant, Jesus, although the way they live now, without fully adopting Jewish customs, is unexpected. But this inclusion by God of the pagans into his original chosen people who will be gifted life in the age to come is in continuity with these foreshadowings in Abraham's very name and with sundry other Scriptures.[11]

Paul then adds in Rom 9 that God is obviously free to include whomsoever he wants into his people as long as he doesn't turn his back on his original people—and he doesn't—which is an argument anticipated by Rom 4:11–12.

> [Abraham] is the father of all who believe but have not been
> circumcised,
> in order that deliverance might be credited to them.
> And he is then also the father of the circumcised,
> *and* of those who not only are circumcised
> but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith
> that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

11. Romans 9:24–26, citing Hos 2:23 and 1:10; and Rom 15:9–12, citing 2 Sam 22:50/Ps 18:49; Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; and Isa 11:10 (LXX).

This is a controversial retelling of Jewish origins and subsequent history. Although Paul knows the Mosaic stories well and appeals to them from time to time as he needs to,[12] he has defined Israel in terms of its origins using the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs. This marginalizes the story of the exodus and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai more than many other Jews in his day would have been happy with. Those great events become an interlude. They are far from constitutive. Moreover, the gift of the Torah is, as we have seen, a double-edged sword. It is not just a treasured repository of God's instructions about right living, although it is this. It is an opportunity at the same moment for the evil powers working on human nature and the sinful lusts present within, to seduce and to deceive Jews into sinning—a position informed by other aspects of Jewish tradition, principally by the tragic story of Adam and Eve, but underlined by the universal human experience of death. New information in the Torah about right living is also new information about wrong living, and wrong living takes people onto the pathway to death; this is the "payment" that we must all make for the accumulating debt that is our sin (Rom 6:23). So Paul's history of Israel reduces the gift of the Torah—which remains a good gift—to an interlude between the patriarchal origins of Israel, with all their anticipations of resurrection, and their later fulfillment in Jesus's arrival, death, and resurrection. The Torah cannot resolve the conundrum of mortality and death. Indeed, it exacerbates this situation.

At bottom, then, past Israel is depicted by Paul as having a *telos*, or goal, the overarching goal that is the resurrected Messiah (Rom 10:4).[13] With the arrival of that goal, Paul sees the previous history of Israel as building toward it. This is a plausible narration only for those who believe in the goal, but he, along with all the other Jewish followers of Jesus, did. God has come to Israel in person, and as a result of this definitive insight, revealed to him on the road to Damascus, Paul tells the story of Israel backward, like a memoir. The significance of Israel becomes apparent in retrospect. Moreover, by telling the story of the Jews prior to Jesus in this way, Paul has avoided some very nasty traps. In particular, there is now no need to erase Judaism, including many of its precious forms and structures, when Jesus comes and Christianity emerges shortly after. It is possible to tell a story of subsequent diversification instead, and one that by this point we know well. Which is also to observe that in order

12. See Rom 5:19; 9:16–18; 1 Cor 10:1–13; 2 Cor 3:7–18; Gal 3:15–25.

13. There is no need to press this motif in the direction of termination. It is possible on lexicographical grounds, but nothing in the context necessitates this understanding—setting aside presuppositional pressures from soteriological foundationalism!

to exorcise the demon of supersessionism from Pauline interpretation completely, we must press on to consider what Paul does with Jews in the present and in the future, and not merely in the past.

Beyond Supersessionism

Jews in Paul's day were divided—and still are—between those who confessed Jesus's lordship and those who didn't, and how Paul treats both these groups is significant.

The former were in the minority, so he uses the biblical motif of a remnant to describe them in Rom 9 and 11, and this is another positive sign. Remnants were small groups of things left behind, often after a devastating experience, from which new life could later flourish. The prophet Isaiah speaks of a tree that has been cut down, with only a stump left.[14] Fresh growth and another tree will eventually spring from it, evoking the way a small group of Jews returned to Jerusalem after their seventy-year exile in Babylon and flourished again. So messianic Jews like Paul exist, even if there aren't very many of them, and their presence suggests that a great future flourishing could take place. Moreover, it is important to recall that messianic Jews within the present remnant are still Jews.

They are not Christians. Paul expects them to live like Jews. We can detect moments when messianic Jews are called to Paul's mission among the pagans and so live to a degree like pagans.[15] But otherwise we see that messianic Jews in the early church, and even Paul when he moves through Jewish spaces, lived in full obedience to the Torah's instructions. In Acts Paul takes a Nazirite vow twice during two trips to Jerusalem. He shaves his head, avoids corpse impurity, avoids alcohol, then shaves his head of its unkempt hair again and makes an offering of it when he arrives in the temple in Jerusalem. This behavior is pretty Jewish. He circumcises Timothy, who was technically a Jew, being born of a Jewish mother, but who had not been circumcised. Paul observes the Passover in Philippi. He debates from the Jewish Scriptures in synagogues on the Sabbath. And such is his commitment to his own people he himself

14. See Isa 6:13b: "And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land" (NIV; the original text quoting from the MT, not the LXX).

15. See Col 4:11, where Paul says he is comforted by the assistance in the pagan mission of fellow-Jews Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus/Justus. Their lifestyle during this missionary work is best summarized by 1 Cor 9:19–23, especially v. 21.

tells us that on five occasions he endured the frightful community discipline of thirty-nine lashes from them.[16]

Similarly, we get no sense at any time from Paul that he expects the missionaries to the Jews in the early church, led by Peter, to abandon the Torah or to teach the same to their Jewish converts. They are not to universalize that lifestyle into the Christian mission when pagans convert. Pagans can stay where they are, with some adjustments. But Jews are to stay where they are when they were called, with only messianic adjustments, which means living as good Torah-observant Jews.

Christians now exist, as we have taken some pains to emphasize, as a valid missional and ethical diversification from Judaism. Christianity exists, that is, because God pushed his Jewish community, especially by means of the Spirit, out into non-Jewish, pagan groups and networks to gather them up into the great plan at the heart of the cosmos. However, as this missional inclusion took place—this great outreach—at the behest especially of those people chosen as apostles and set apart for missionary work, it became apparent that they could live, to a degree, on their own terms. These converts were ethical, but they were not ethnically Jewish.

The rationale for this liberty, to reiterate a claim made repeatedly up to this point, was essentially eschatological, although this realization had to be coupled with several others. In drawing people into the age to come, God was drawing them into the play of divine communion, whose dynamics are primarily relational. This communion is the original plan for creation (although Paul does not press this insight to its fullest extent), and is the basis for the entire process that follows. That everyone is one in Christ is fundamental. But it follows from this that where we are located now is structured by interim forms that are impermanent—things like ethnicity, class, and gender, not to mention death and time. These are helpful and embodied structures—or at least they are related to embodiment—but they are also imperfect, fallible, and impermanent. So God presses into these forms, gently inserting the relational dynamics of the coming age through Jesus and the Spirit into the details and patterns of life that we currently occupy, without either affirming them universally or overthrowing and abolishing them.

The result is a diversifying ethic, with missionaries like Paul being called to navigate the differences that emerged within the church. Some pagan practices could be affirmed, some had to be practiced better, while others had to be reformed or abandoned, the result being a particular form of Christianity. And

16. See Acts 13:14–43; 16:3; 18:18, 22; 20:6; 21:24, 26; and 2 Cor 11:24.

it follows that neither Judaism nor Christianity needed to be displaced. The ongoing existence of Judaism does not entail the erasure of Christianity, and the ongoing existence of Christianity—which rapidly becomes different forms of Christianity—does not erase Judaism. In fact, Judaism remains historically prior. The root of the tree is Jewish. Jesus was Jewish. The original Scriptures were Jewish, and the new Scriptures are mainly Jewish as well. The patriarchs and matriarchs were Jewish. So Judaism comes first. But it does not overwhelm Christianity, even as Christianity must not later overwhelm Judaism.

Hence a narrative of appropriate diversification is another important part of the solution to our overarching problem of supersessionism (although it arises out of a shared Trinitarian reality). We explain the Christian difference coherently without negating Judaism by doing so, which is a very important realization for additional reasons. A Christianity that can avoid erasing Judaism can also avoid erasing non-Christian cultures inappropriately when it comes into contact with them through mission. It clearly has an account of itself in place that can recognize a healthy diversity. A Christianity that erases Judaism, however, most likely contains an internal colonial program and so will also erase any non-Christian cultures it encounters. To be insensitive to Judaism is automatically to be insensitive to other non-Christians as well, because such insensitivity is driven by foundationalism, and foundationalism imposes aspects of its originating culture uncritically on its converts (the third horseman). Hence if Judaism dies, like the canary in the coal-mine dying as a gas leak begins, thereby warning any coal-miners that death is on its way, other cultures will be threatened with erasure and death as a Christian church that is insensitive to Jews, now made immensely powerful by its reach and wealth, spreads to eagerly grasp those who are not yet made in its image.

In short, any trace of supersessionism is a profoundly bad sign. Supersessionism is the death of Judaism, which is clearly an awful thing in and of itself. But it is also the death of the canary, which means that it is the death of all the local cultures sucked up into the maw of a foundationalist church as it spreads its stultifying influence. So it is vital to purge it from our readings of Paul—if that is possible, of course, but I hope that it is clear by now that it is. Having said this, however, we must nevertheless insert a quick caveat.

Critiquing Judaism

We must recognize that Paul does not endorse Judaism in toto, and in every form. We noted earlier the horrific dangers of sacred-nation theology. If some

Jews understand themselves as a sacred nation, formed in this way, occupying this structure, is this thinking left alone? Does Paul's gospel leave *this* construction undisturbed?

Here the critical evaluative distinction between structure and relationality that is followed during appropriate mission work takes on a more searching aspect, if necessary in its reflexive mode. As we well know by now, Paul does not ask us to treat forms and structures uncritically. They are not just endorsed happily and automatically as diverse but neutral cultural expressions. They might be neutral, but they might not be. Structures must be treated sensitively, with due respect. But they are subject to divine pressure and subsequent evaluation. Jesus is Lord over any structures and forms, which means including over the forms operating in the parent culture of the missionary-apostles themselves, which in Paul's day, was Judaism. And the loving relationality that Jesus reveals must reform even those Jewish forms that do not channel it effectively, or eliminate those that stand directly in the way of it.

In this light we can see that Paul criticizes his fellow Jews, even as he affirms their importance and states that he loves them deeply. He is not afraid to suggest that they are making some very serious mistakes—rejecting Jesus, the incarnation of their God, being one of them, something he holds them fully responsible for (Rom 10:5–21). On one occasion he also angrily notes how Judeans resist the proclamation of salvation to pagans (1 Thess 2:13–16), thereby eliciting an appropriate parental chastisement. (Moments of admonition, reform, and condemnation will all be appropriate here.) It follows, then, that any sacred-nation theology, even within Judaism, will fall under judgment as well and be radically reformed or eliminated.

With these clarifications made, we must tie off the final remaining supersessionist vulnerability within Paul's thinking.

The Future

One last final anxiety about supersessionism might still remain—concerning the future of the Jews who continue to resist Jesus. Does God ultimately throw them under the bus? If this is the case, we risk introducing a conditionality into God's relationship with Israel at the last and cast doubt on the strength and reach of his love, suggesting limits to our love for Jews as well. Are there any Jews who are ultimately beyond the reach of God, which might suggest in turn that the church does not need to care about them either?

But we have already seen that Paul argues extensively for the eventual inclusion of "all Israel" in the cosmos's final salvation, a phrase that at least includes all of ethnic Israel alongside believing pagans, although I suspect that Rom 11:26 simply means all of ethnic Israel.[17] And this is just as it should be. There are no ultimate constraints on the final execution of God's great plan, and no limits on his love. So Israel will eventually be gathered back to the God revealed in Jesus in its completeness, just as humankind will be. The love of God will finally win, and win, most significantly, over his own recalcitrant people. Having said this, however, perhaps we can add, at the last, one final flourish in terms of *Sachkritik*.

We discussed the nature of time earlier on, in chapter 6, because the introduction of a more accurate viewpoint unavailable to Paul allowed us to resolve one of the great tensions in his thinking as he presents our resurrection in Jesus. Do the spirits of those who have died in Jesus go to be with him immediately after death, in an intermediate state, where they await the receipt of a body later on the last day? Or is the person annihilated for a time and then resurrected completely, soul and body, when Jesus returns? Both of these options are deeply problematic. The first implies a fundamental dualism within human nature, undermining the significance of bodiliness, and the second implies that our relationship with God, established through Jesus, is breakable, making death a power temporarily but still scandalously greater than God.

A modern view of time, realized since the seminal work of Einstein, resolves this conundrum. The conundrum is caused by treating time as a fixed constant that even God is subject to. Once we grasp that time is a field that shifts and bends relative to space, a field that God is positioned outside of and is lord "over," we can see that resurrection denotes *a different time*, just as it denotes a different space and a different body. After death the person experiences a complete resurrection immediately, so to speak, in God's time, and this realization solves our problem. There is no dualism and no waiting period.

This demythologization of Paul's view of time, essentially updating it to a more modern account, was warranted because it was theologically responsible and constructive (and Paul himself was already taking explicit steps in this direction). But with this introduction, we are also warranted to introduce it here in relation to salvation history, which tends to operate in terms of a con-

17. Paul can speak of an eschatological Israel inclusive of Jews and Christians (so in all probability one of the instances of "Israel" in 9:6), but the immediate context of 11:26, and the actual thrust of the argument, suggest this meaning here. Note that he is referring to a group that is not currently saved but that he is asserting will be; not to a future group already included and glorified.

stant time line as well. What happens if we introduce Einstein's more accurate understanding of time as a field that engages relationally with other fields to structure our current existence specifically to salvation history and Israel? I think two helpful insights result that reinforce our movement beyond any sense of Jewish supersessionism in Paul's thinking to full Jewish inclusion.

We need to begin by thinking about time as a field that is laid out before God in the way that space is. It is as if the combination together of space and time—the "space-time manifold"—is a great beach ball of existence floating in the presence of God, space-time being the surface of the ball. *We* experience this as the past, present, and future, but from the point of view of God, there is no past, present, and future. All of space-time is "present" to God all of the time. And we can perhaps see now that the entry of the Son *into* space-time as Jesus must ripple through *all* of space-time, and hence, in a rather counter-intuitive way, into the past as well as into the future. We don't need to get into all the technical details here. But the takeaway is quite simple. Jesus comes to a certain point on the surface of the beach ball that is space-time, and when he touches it, the entire surface of the beach ball changes. It follows, however, that Jesus was present to Israel, in our past. He is present to all of space-time. Both the past and the future are not inaccessible to God, who is the Lord of time, whether he is presiding over it from "outside" or entering it—as the scientists would say—mapped by a specific set of space-time coordinates.

It is extraordinary to think about the possibility that on some level Paul knew this. He wrote a much-maligned comment to the Corinthians that we have already briefly discussed, picking up an episode from the ancient Hebrews' wilderness wanderings that turns out to be impeccably precise in Einsteinian terms (well, almost):

> For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters,
> that our ancestors were all under the cloud
> and that they all passed through the sea.
> They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
> They all ate the same spiritual food
> and drank the same spiritual drink;
> for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them,
> and that rock was Christ! (1 Cor 10:1–4)

At the very least, we have a direct warrant here from Paul for reading the history of the Jews prior to Jesus's arrival in resolutely christological terms. Jesus might not have been known then in his incarnate form, but he was there, all

the time, *and this presence infuses that history with a powerful validity*. God loved Israel and loves Israel. It is clearly an arrangement that he is particularly fond of and a people he cares for deeply. We should therefore banish forever from our minds the thought that it might need to change drastically. It just needs Jesus acknowledged in its center, and he is there in any case, even if he is unacknowledged, as he is the center of every life and structure, acknowledged or not. He follows Israel, perhaps unseen, through its past, present, and future, as the rock followed Israel through the wilderness. Hence it can and should continue much as it is—although we are entitled to read the Jewish Scriptures rooted in that history in an overtly christological way, as Paul does here.[18]

A second insight flowing from this deeper account of space-time resumes our earlier discussion of the future of disobedient Israel and the eventual triumph of God in chapter 18. There we briefly noted that God's victory over suffering, sin, and death, which we have just affirmed includes his triumphant gathering of his people up in all their fullness, reaches into all of time. There is no state existing at the end of a time line that gets resurrected and perfected by itself. Space, time, and existence are all rolled up together, around a ball, and space-time *itself* is resurrected, including all its suffering, *which means that all of Israel in the past will be resurrected too. History itself* is resurrected, from which it follows that *salvation* history is resurrected. What an amazing prospect to contemplate!

Jesus is present to all of Israel's history, from its inception to its last steps (phenomenologically speaking), and Jesus will resurrect all of Israel's history. Every tear will be wiped from every Jewish eye—and many have been shed. As Paul prayed in Eph 3:14–19, and as we have had frequent cause to note before now,

> I bend my knees to the Father . . .
> so that he might give to you from his glorious riches
> the capacity to be grasped by the Spirit in your inner person;
> and that Christ might dwell through a right understanding in your hearts,
> so that you might be rooted and founded in love;
> and that you—together with all the saints—
> might be able to grasp and to know
> the knowledge that surpasses knowing, namely,
> what the width and length and height and depth of the love of Christ is.

18. Stephen Chapman's commentary on 1 Samuel is an excellent example of this approach.

The love of God grasps time. It is present to it, and eventually reaches into it, takes it up, and heals it. And folded into this love is his original people, the Jews, to whom he has always been present, and to whom he will always reach out, eventually to perfectly restore them through all of their history, including their sufferings.

Summation

In sum, supersessionism can be avoided in Paul's thought when we describe his salvation-historical dimension, but only if:

1. we first take a nonfoundationalist, nonhistoricizing approach to salvation history, reading Israel's past retrospectively, like a memoir (having already jettisoned the passages that describe Judaism as an attempt to be justified by doing works of law);
2. if we realize that in the present pagans are included within God's explicit community as a diversification, so Judaism is not displaced (the rationale for this being eschatological, supralapsarian, and relational); and
3. if future Israel is included within God's good and final purposes in toto and saved.

We can't drop the ball at any one of these moments. But Paul didn't, so why should we? Furthermore, a reintroduction of Einstein's view of time, as a field in relation to the other dimensions structuring our current existence, presses these inclusive insights to their christological limit—a limit that has no limits. The Jews were called into being as the overt bearers of Plan A within history, and that has never changed. They remain at the center of God's plan, and God's plan is definitively realized through their greatest representative and climactic moment, Jesus. And it is now clear, moreover, that Jesus was always present to them, and that he will gather them from every corner of space *and time* at the last, in his resurrection. There is nothing unknown or mysterious about God's plan, then. It is a wondrous thing well worth praising and celebrating.

> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
> How unsearchable his judgments,
> and his paths beyond tracing out!
> "Who has known the mind of the Lord?
> Or who has been his counselor?"

"Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?"
For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Rom 11:33–36)

Theses

- Supersessionism can be present in Pauline description, first, by way of his justification passages when they are read soteriologically and in terms of foundationalism. However, reading these passages more circumstantially, with reference to his enemies, removes the characterization "justification through works of law" from Jewish description—the subject of ch. 27.
- The second way that supersessionism is present in Pauline description is by way of historicism, a philosophy of history that holds history to be a closed causal process that works forward through time from antecedents and causes to results.
- This view of history is often coupled with a belief that history progresses "upward," from lower to higher forms. This view is encouraged both by evolutionary thinking, and by the rise of modern liberal, democratic, and industrialized states.
- The application of this view to salvation history leads to the view that Christianity emerges from Judaism as a higher form from a lower precursor.
- This view neatly mapped the social location of much European anti-Jewishness.
- The founder of modern Pauline studies, F. C. Baur, a Hegelian, consequently argued, in a widely influential view, that Judaism was a particular religion from which Christianity evolved as a higher, more universal religion, even though this distinction collapses into incoherence on closer examination.
- The antidote to historicism's necessary supersessionism is an open view of history, hence an eschatological account. All "history" teeters on the brink of chaos and annihilation, ordered and saved only by the action of a good God and his gifts.
- The third way that supersessionism is present in Pauline description is by way of salvation history, although the dangers here are especially acute.
- Some scholars reject the suggestion that Paul has a salvation history at all, fearing any endorsement by him of "sacred-nation theology."

- Sacred-nation thinking has done untold damage in human history, for example, legitimizing the origins of apartheid in South Africa, ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, persistent terrorism in Northern Ireland, militant Zionist expropriation of Palestinian land, and, most important, the German National Socialist project.
- So visceral rejections of the very notion of salvation history are understandable.
- However, we always have to supply an account—a story—of the history of God's dealings with humankind prior to the coming of Jesus, and this history revolves around Israel and the Jews, hence the rubric "salvation history." This is unavoidable or the theological consequences are crippling—the original great error of Marcion.
- But the response to the rejection of salvation history should not be an anxious endorsement of salvation history in a foundational location. Unfortunately, such foundationalism is not uncommon in relation to salvation history when scholars, pressed by Marcionite anxieties, reproduce the error of Tertullianism. By affirming God, creation, and here Israel, up front, foundationalism is endorsed (so the claims responding to these anxieties will ultimately collapse in any case), and supersessionism is now inevitable, and in a harsh form.
- The soteriological progression from works to faith can be redeployed here, with supersessionist results.
- The New Perspective is not a plausible alternative explanation, being argumentatively incoherent and exegetically unsupported.
- Insofar as prior Judaism is preparatory and promissory, any rejection of Jesus by Jews entails, in addition to the standard criticisms, that they do not understand their own Scriptures, promises, or history. In all these locations, Christians will still displace Judaism.
- The solution to all these challenges and problems is the construction of salvation history retrospectively, or backward, in the form of a memoir (as outlined in ch. 3). This approach will avoid foundationalism in a salvation historical form—salvation historical Tertullianism—along with its innate supersessionism in general, and any unleashing of sacred-nation theology in particular (because this last will be subject to christological critique).
- In fact, Paul does give an account of Israel that looks backward, seeing everything as building toward Jesus, from the patriarchs onward. It is the story of promised life and resurrection fulfilled in Jesus. But the pagan mission is also anticipated in the blessing to Abraham, "the father of many nations." This retrospective account reduces Moses and the giving of the

Torah to an interlude, one with mixed potential. Informed by the deception of Adam and Eve by the commandment, the Torah can give life but also kill, a fact attested by the universality of death.

- This (brief) account of salvation history avoids foundationalism and any necessary displacement of Judaism with the arrival of Jesus and the church.
- The continued avoidance of supersessionism can be reinforced by realizing that Paul never expected Judaism to be erased.
- He himself lived like a Jew on occasion and never expected the mission to Jews to abandon Jewish practices.
- He argues that a small group of messianic Jews functioning like a remnant indicate God's commitment to the rest of his original people and his intention to bring a future flourishing to them.
- He justified the differences evident within the church between Christian communities and messianic Jews on eschatological and relational grounds. Forms and structures are relationally transformed but not necessarily abolished. So Jews and different types of Christian community can all legitimately flourish alongside one another. The Jewish community is at the center, as the community to which God came in the incarnation, the original community from which all the others spring. The basic narrative emerging from Paul is, in short, not supersession, but legitimate diversification.
- Jews also function in relation to Christianity as "the canary in the coalmine." If they are erased, then a Christian colonialism is being endorsed that will erase non-Christians as well; if they are not erased, then an account of Christianity is being supplied that will be sensitive to non-Christians during any encounters with them. In other words, the death of the canary, which is to say, the erasure of Judaism, reveals the presence of Christian foundationalism.
- This understanding does not remove Jews from all theological challenge, however. All structure and forms, including Jewish forms and structures, are subject to pressure from the Trinity's loving relationality and should be reformed or even abandoned, if necessary—the reflexive mode in any navigation.
- Hence, Jewish endorsement of militant sacred-nation theology should be abandoned.
- A final vulnerability arguably remains, however: will any Jews remain unsaved in the end, thereby casting doubt on God's relationship with his people, and inviting a concomitant insensitivity from Christians?

- Paul is convinced that God will eventually gather all Jews into salvation and resurrection, so God's love will win, and his covenant with Jews will be unbroken.
- The introduction of a demythologized account of time reinforces this realization.
- When time is understood as a field, not a line, operating relative to space, and as a structure to which God is not subject, then we can grasp that the Son is present to all of time and hence to all of history, including to what we call the past, as Paul intimates in 1 Cor 10:4. The pre-messianic history of Israel is consequently fraught with christological significance and is a fully legitimate form.
- Furthermore, all of time and hence all of Israel, past, present, and future, will ultimately be resurrected, and its sufferings addressed and healed, a remarkable hope that Paul praises extravagantly in Rom 11:33–36.

Key Scriptural References

Paul's most important accounts of the origins of Israel in the patriarchs appear in Rom 4, especially vv. 16b–23 (not forgetting v. 1); Rom 9:6–26 (shading here into an account of pagan inclusion); and Gal 3:4–4:7 (again, including comment toward the end of this section on pagan inclusion).

The key statement of Jesus as the *telos* of Israel is Rom 9:4–5; and of the Torah, in 10:4.

The remnant is introduced in Rom 9:27–29 and is developed in chapter 11.

The future inclusion of "all Israel" is affirmed in 11:26–27.

Jesus's presence with past Israel is affirmed in 1 Cor 10:1–4.

Convincing arguments can be made that, in their mention of "Israel," Rom 11:26 and Gal 6:16 are referring to the concrete historical community of Jews. This is not to deny that Paul views what we might call eschatological Israel, the community of the age to come, in terms inclusive of Jews and Christians; see here Eph 2:11–22 and probably also Rom 9:6, supported by vv. 25–26 and more indirectly by Rom 4:1, 9–11; 1 Cor 10:1; and Gal 4:21–31.

Key Reading

Most of the key issues detailed here in relation to Paul are laid out programmatically in chapter 7 of *Quest*, "Paul's Gospel, Judaism, and the Law," 132–45.

An alternative account of much the same position is Richard B. Hays, "The Conversion of the Imagination." Few have captured the broader issues and their solution better than Mark Kinzer, a "postmissionary" messianic Jew.

Further Reading

Barth constantly affirms and articulates salvation history, which is explicitly oriented by Jesus and constructed retrospectively. He uses the category "covenant" a great deal in these discussions. Its clearest presentation is probably at the beginning of *CD* III/1. He discusses and clearly refutes presuppositional philosophies of history in III/3, when discussing providence.

The appropriate conception of history over against historicism is discussed by Kerr, Adams, and Rae, as noted in chapter 1.

Famous attacks on the very possibility of salvation history in Paul have been made by Käsemann and echoed by his later English-speaking disciples Martyn, and Cousar, in a hyperallergic—although entirely understandable—reaction against German National Socialism and its resonances with sacred-nation theology. Käsemann was initially concerned with the overly sunny salvation history of Stendahl, but Cullmann's famous account of history and time is arguably also susceptible to his concerns as well. But the possibility of salvation history should not be rejected. To fail to supply one is to slip into Marcionism. Instead, a correct account of salvation history ought to be supplied—an explicitly retrospective account, which will eliminate the constructs that concern Käsemann and his pupils.

Wright has a strong salvation-historical agenda but fails to distinguish clearly between a prospective and a retrospective viewpoint. So he deploys soteriological supersessionism at the crucial moment to explain Christian differences from Judaism. Israel then becomes something of a cipher for a reading of the Jewish Scriptures and not for the Jewish community—and a hermeneutical program is then evident in his work as against an actual concrete concern for Jews. See my article "Panoramic Lutheranism and Apocalyptic Ambivalence."

The New Perspective is unhelpful. The reasons for this judgment are laid out in my article "The ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ from Durham" and in *Deliverance*.

The links between erasure or supersession in relation to Israel and the Jews and later Christian colonial distortions are articulated eloquently by Jennings, as we have already seen. He was anticipated by Boyarin's concerns about Jewish erasure. Soulen has written a deeply sensitive analysis of the key underlying issues, as has, more recently, W. S. Campbell.

Goldman's work probes the relationship between Christianity and Judaism insightfully. He also offers a powerful Jewish critique of Zionism, tracing its distorting influence through intellectual work.

The demythologization of time used here was, as was said earlier, pioneered by T. F. Torrance, especially in his *Space, Time, and Incarnation* (further details in ch. 6).

Longenecker is helpful on Rom 9:5, as is Jewett.

Eastman is very insightful on Gal 6:16.

Wagner should be consulted on Rom 11:26.

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