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Putting Paul in His (Historical) Place: A Response to James Crossley, Margaret Mitchell, and Matthew Novenson

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I would like to thank my colleagues for their close, critical, and courteous reading of my book; and I thank *JJMJS* for this opportunity to respond to their comments and observations. Having no reason to do otherwise, I will adhere to alphabetical order, thus first addressing points raised by James Crossley,¹ then by Margy Mitchell, and last by Matt Novenson.

James Crossley

James Crossley kindly offers to christen the idea “that Paul did not think Israel should give up the Law and that the question of the Law is aimed rather at gentiles” as “Gagerism-Fredriksenism.” Honored as I am by this attribution, I feel compelled to point out that this interpretive position goes back at least a century, to Albert Schweitzer.² It was foundational for the mid-century contributions of Munck, Dahl, and Stendahl; and it was strongly foregrounded in the important work of Lloyd Gaston and of John Gager in the 1980s and by Stanley Stowers in the 1990s.³ (In different ways, of course, this interpretation of

¹ Because of the appearance in Galatians, which is under discussion here, of another James (“the Lord’s brother”), I will refer to my colleague James Crossley by his last name, to avoid confusion.

² E.g., *Paul and His Interpreters* (London: A. & C. Black, 1912), 237; *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul* (orig. pub. 1931; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 186–7.

³ Johannes Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1954), translated by Frank Clarke as *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1959); Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1977); Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199–215; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press,

Law in and for Paul also shapes some of the works of Origen and of Augustine, a topic to which I will later return.) So, while I must decline the attribution, I thank James for putting me in such good company.

With this view as a point of principle — Israel keeps the Law; the *question* of Law relates solely to gentiles within this messianic movement — what sense can be made of the Antioch incident (Galatians 2)? Crossley and I are agreed: circumcision of these Christ-following gentiles was not at issue. But then, what was? I break down the options according to “the menu, the venue, the seating.”⁴ Problems with seating, Mark Nanos has argued, violations of *triclinia* protocols, offended the community’s visitors from Jerusalem.⁵ Problems of venue, I have argued, would perhaps arise if the assembly were meeting in the house of a woman “married to an unbeliever” (cf. 1 Cor 7:12–16): the place would normally hold images of other gods, a contingency that may have put off the Jerusalem-based “men from James.”⁶

What about the menu? Were members of Antioch’s *ekklēsia*, Jews and gentiles both, eating abominations and crawling things? Or meat sacrificed to idols? This hypothesis presupposes that the entire community (Jews as well, that is) had dropped the biblical food laws. As an explanation, this is much favored by those commentators who presuppose a basic incompatibility between “the gospel” and “the Law.” James and his men — unlike those Jews in Antioch’s *ekklēsia* — were in thrall to *kashrut*; the liberal eating customs in Antioch shocked them.

If we construe Paul as acting and speaking from *within* Judaism, however, the likelihood of this diminishes too. Paul’s letter “emphasizes commensality, not the food itself. Nothing indicates that the community ate

1987); John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁴ With apologies to Lin-Manuel Miranda.

⁵ Mark Nanos, “What Was at Stake in Peter’s ‘Eating with Gentiles’ at Antioch?” in *The Galatians Debate*, ed. M.D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 282–318. Nanos expands his argument in “Reading the Antioch Incident (Gal 2:11–21) as a Subversive Banquet Narrative,” *JSPL* 7 (2017): 26–52. I am unpersuaded that Jerusalemite Jews would be so sensitively tuned in to Graeco-Roman upper-class dining protocols.

⁶ Fredriksen, *Pagans’ Apostle*, 96–99. For a vivid evocation of the religious images present in a Graeco-Roman household, see Caroline Johnson Hodge, “‘Married to an Unbeliever’: Households, Hierarchies and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 7:12–16,” *HTR* 103 (2010): 1–25, at 5–9.

anything other than food acceptable for Jews, which seems reasonable, since most non-Jewish adherents to the Jesus movement probably were recruited from⁷ the god-fearers, that penumbra of interested pagans so often involved voluntarily in diaspora synagogue life. That is to say, gentiles-in-Christ already “Judaized” — adopted Jewish food ways (at least at community meals) — not because they had fallen into the grips of right-wingers from Jerusalem, but because they had been recruited as pagans who were already Judaizing thanks to their prior involvement in the wider community of Antioch’s synagogue.

I note, also, that most ancient Mediterranean meals, this group’s or any others, usually adhered to — well, to the Mediterranean diet: bread, fish, eggs, olives, oil, cheeses, vegetables. Meat, whether offered to idols or not, was both rare and expensive. And since gentile members of the *ekklēsia*, in order to join the *ekklēsia*, had first to renounce their native gods, the likelihood of their serving idol-meat accordingly diminishes. In short: when Peter and “the rest of the Jews” (Gal 2:13) eventually withdrew from these meals, the menu was unlikely to have been the problem.

Crossley on this point disagrees, citing the importance of food for Jewish identity, a position emphasized in other Jewish texts that postulate situations of “mixed eating”: Daniel 1:3–17; Judith 12:17–19; Tobit 1:11; Aristaeas 181. He is absolutely right, but in these stories, the literary social mix is (idealized) Jews-plus-*active* pagans. In Paul’s letter, which reports a real-life social situation, the mix is (historical) Jews-plus-*ex-pagan*-pagans, the social *novum* of “eschatological gentiles” produced by the Christ-movement.⁸ The likelihood of non-permitted foods being served, I think, again, accordingly diminishes.

⁷ M. Zetterholm, “The Antioch Incident Revisited,” *JSPL* 6.2 (2016): 249–59, here at 254. Zetterholm goes on to argue that the problem in Antioch concerned “moral impurity” of non-Jewish members of the *ekklēsia*, an association with “gentile sinners” too close for the comfort of James’ men, 256–58. Gentile “sinfulness” however — as Zetterholm also points out — was tied in Jewish perspective to the nations’ worship of idols (p. 256). Non-Jewish members of Christ-following assemblies, however, would have entered by already having renounced their native gods. They would have been, in this regard, *ex*-sinners. Thus I cannot see how any putative gentile moral impurity could have been the problem.

⁸ Streams of Jewish restoration theology anticipated the turning of the *ethnē* to Israel’s god at the end of the age. This apocalyptic hope and apocalyptic trope is realized socially — and unprecedentedly — in the gospel’s movement into the mixed populations of Jews and Judaizing pagans in urban synagogues: *Pagans’ Apostle*, 73–93.

Crossley also points to Acts 10–11:8 (Peter and Cornelius) and to Romans 14:1–6 as speaking of and to “the issue of legally permitted foods” as emerging within this messianic movement *ab origine*. This I question. The passage in Acts 10, an early 2nd-century composition, is *not* primarily about food: it is (awkwardly) about the incorporation of non-Jews into the Jesus-movement. (Peter does not “arise and eat” Cornelius: he baptizes him.⁹) All of the believers in view in Romans 14, I think, are gentiles:¹⁰ some are more fastidious than others when it comes to eating. *Jewish* identity does not seem to me an issue here: community coherence is.

Finally, we do have to wonder how many diaspora *Jews* restricted themselves to legally permissible foods — or, indeed, how variously they interpreted that category. Jewish town councilors, citizens, ephebes, soldiers, athletes, and actors would all have been present at pagan liturgical events: the ancient city was a religious institution. Different Jews would have enacted their Jewishness differently. (Some even invoked pagan gods to witness synagogue manumissions.)¹¹ Perhaps in Antioch this interpretive latitude offended James’s men, precisely because they were not diaspora Jews, thus unaccustomed to living with pagan neighbors both human and divine. And Daniel, Judith, Tobit, and Aristeas are identity-confirming fictions, idealizing adherence to high grid-high group constructions of Jewishness. Real-life diaspora Jews were doubtless more variable (or even off-grid).¹²

I really liked Crossley’s idea of the ever-more-fading Xerox-of-a-Xerox-of-a-Xerox: the increasing “gentilization” of spreading *ekklēsia*-networks. Logically, we must surmise that something like this happened. We have only one

⁹ See Matthew Thiessen’s illuminating reading of this scene, *Contesting Conversion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124–41.

¹⁰ In this I follow the orientation first formulated by Runar Thorsteinsson, *Paul’s Interlocutor in Romans 2* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2003). See too the essays assembled in *The So-Called Jew and Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, eds. Raphael Rodriguez and Matthew Thiessen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

¹¹ “*To the Most High God, Almighty, blessed*, in the reign of king Mithridates, the friend of [?] and the friend of the fatherland, in the year 338 [41 CE], in the month of Deios, Pothos son of Strabo, dedicated to the house of prayer . . . his slave Chrysa, on condition that she be unharmed and unmolested by any of his heirs under *Zeus, Gaia, and Helios*.” This inscription is discussed in L.I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 113–123.

¹² Further on Jews within the Graeco-Roman city, *Pagans’ Apostle*, 32–49; and on pagans within Jewish institutions, 49–60.

hundred years to get from 30 CE, when “Christians” were Jews, to 130, when Valentinus and his community — and Marcion’s in the 140s, and Justin’s in the 150s — were strongly and clearly gentile. And in that changed later context, as Crossley rightly notes, Paul’s letters were infused with new meanings and strong misreadings — a potential, as Crossley again rightly notes, that, given Paul’s highly-charged rhetoric, was there from the start.

Margaret M. Mitchell

This issue of Paul’s mutagenic interpretability brings us to Margy Mitchell’s comments, especially to her productive distinction between the “historical Paul” (HP) and the “historical-epistolary Paul” of the seven undisputed letters (HEP). Like Crossley, Mitchell holds Paul himself (HP) as implicated in later misunderstandings of HEP, given the “sometimes hardly penetrable logic of Paul’s arguments in their rhetorical unfolding and situation-specificity.” On this point, we would all do well to invoke John Marshall’s impeccable observation:

Paul’s rhetorical strategy in Romans seems to have been a failure in the sense that his later readers give no evidence of grasping the complex interplay of voices with which Paul constructs his argument. It’s as if Paul delights in leading his readers at high speed toward a logical precipice, stepping aside and interjecting *μὴ γένοιτο* with the expectation that they will not sail over the precipice but merely experience a pedagogically productive whiplash. In practice, it seems that they usually sailed over the precipice.¹³

To this point — the difficulties of Paul’s rhetoric — Mitchell appends another, “hermeneutical fact . . . *Paul’s letters never did and still do not have a single, unequivocal meaning*” (p. 62, italics in original). This is unquestionably true for hearers (and later, for readers) of Paul, as Mitchell herself has eloquently argued.¹⁴ But was this true for HP as well? I assume that Paul himself indeed intended *particular* meanings — “single, unequivocal” meanings — when he dictated what would become HEP. His anger at being misheard or misunderstood indexes *this* fact. It was in pursuit of *his* meaning that I did the historical, contextual work that I did.

How much can Acts help with this critical reconstruction of Paul’s historical and social context — and, thus, with the reconstruction of HP himself?

¹³ John Marshall, “Misunderstanding the New Paul,” *JECS* 20 (2012): 1–29, at p. 6.

¹⁴ *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

In considering this very problem, I began by invoking Munck's rule of thumb: Acts can be relied upon where not contradicted by Paul.¹⁵ But I was more cautious: Acts, I think, can be used a) where *corroborated by Paul*; and, b) where *corroborated by what we can know from other sources, especially inscriptions*.¹⁶ What survives this cautious triage is the presence of god-fearers — pagans voluntarily associated, in ad hoc ways, with diaspora synagogues. Hence the subtitle of my book.

Mitchell demurs, citing the space between PACTS (the "Paul" of Acts) and HEP. Luke's Paul goes to Jews, and picks up gentiles along the way, whereas HEP is from the womb an apostle to the *ethnê* (Gal 1:15-16). What about HP? He must have frequented synagogues, because he received synagogue disciplinary lashing (at least) five times (2 Cor 11:24). He felt himself hounded by other Jews ("in danger from my own people," v. 26). He became "as a Jew" in order to "win" some (1 Cor 9:19-13). Paul's *vocatio*, as he saw it mid-century, was, surely, to turn pagans to Israel's god; but clearly along the way, he interacted intensively with other diaspora Jews also, and tried to convince them as well that "the ends of the ages have come" (cf. 1 Cor 10:11).

For whatever theological or literary-narratological reasons, Luke emphasizes "the Jew first and also the Greek." (Mitchell, positing Romans as one of Luke's sources, ventures one reconstruction of Luke's strategy on p. 68. Given all the places where Paul actually contradicts Acts, I'm less confident than she is that Luke had access to Paul's letters.¹⁷) Paul's primary focus, mid-century, was pagans. Whether this was the result of a principled readjustment because he first failed among Jews, as Schweitzer conjectured,¹⁸ or whether this had always been the case, I have no way of knowing. For HEP, it does not matter. And my argument for Paul's own continuing Law-observance is based on HEP, not on PACTS.

Mitchell closes her response with four excellent questions, three to me and then the final one to both John Gager and to me. I will respond to these *staccato*, because I want to return to the complex *wirkungsgeschichtliche* issue

¹⁵ *Pagans' Apostle*, 207 n. 1, citing Munck, *Salvation*, 202.

¹⁶ Especially valuable for orienting oneself in this investigation is I. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

¹⁷ *Pagans' Apostle*, 61-62.

¹⁸ "Was it his failure among Jews and success among the Gentiles what made him the Gentiles' apostle?" *Mysticism of Paul*, 181.

about Origen (who lived 187–254) and Augustine (354–430) that she raises just before. So, first, to pp. 76–77:

1. “Death and resurrection are the heart of Paul’s evangelion,” says Mitchell. I disagree: this phrasing, and framing, domesticates and de-eschatologizes Paul’s gospel. At its heart, rather, are Christ’s death/resurrection//Parousia/general resurrection.¹⁹ Decoupling the first two items from the second two, when Paul saw the first as immediately entailing the second (e.g., 1 Cor 15:12–20), indeed accommodates the way that history worked out: Christ in fact did not return in Paul’s lifetime. *But Paul did not know that this would be the case.* In this way, he was “innocent of the future” — in the way, that is, that we are all “innocent,” that is, unknowing, of the future.
2. Second part of this first question: Mitchell insists that Christ’s death for Paul has “its own significance.” She then notes that I characterize Paul’s language of “sacrifice,” where he speaks of Christ’s death, as “confused and confusing.” I do not think, as she does, that HP “was ‘possessed’ by the death of Christ” (p. 76). But I do think that Paul had a LOT of explaining to do, to himself not least, because the eschatological Davidic messiah was not supposed to die before his triumph. Paul seems to fall back on the language of sacrifice (though this too has been challenged),²⁰ and Jewish protocols of sacrifice are themselves elaborate and difficult to construe (as evinced by the two rabbinic corpora that argue about them!). When Paul focuses on Christ’s death, it is to assert (not to argue, or to demonstrate) that it occurred in a way that obliges Christ’s messianic status: by divine plan, *kata graphas*. *That* is the key element of Paul’s good news, not Christ’s death per se.

¹⁹ Realizing the degree to which this is the case enabled me to see how distorting the authorized translations of Romans 1:4 are: Jesus is not declared “son of God in power. . . by his resurrection from the dead,” as the RSV and NRSV have it; he is — or is to be — declared son of God in power “by *the* resurrection *of* the dead” (*ez anastasis nekrôn*), that is, at [and only at] his second coming, when the dead will be raised; *Pagans’ Apostle*, 141–45 and notes.

²⁰ By Aaron Glaim, “Sin and Sin Sacrifices in the Pauline Epistles,” Paper presented at the 2013 SBL, Baltimore, MD.

3. “Conversion” of a non-Jew into a Jew, for males, meant circumcision. Paul’s ex-pagans, quite precisely, do *not* “convert,” though they do “turn” (*-strephô*) — as indeed, they do in Isaiah — at the End-time. To break down Paul’s eschatological demography more precisely: Israel is always ethnic Israel. Pagans are the nations who do not know God, and thus the objects of his coming wrath (e.g., 1 Thess 1:10; though cf. Rom 11:25, when their *pleroma* is saved). The *kainê ktisis*, “new creation,” are those ex-pagan pagans, the “eschatological gentiles” who, through the gift of Christ, do know God.²¹ The identity of Israel, for Paul, is constant throughout.
4. Rhetorical binaries decorate ancient argument, and pulse it along. Once they become rigid polarities, a weird kind of ontologizing sets in. Thus, for example, Käsemann’s reading of Romans 2 as about “the Jew in all of us.” That is what I meant by “the veils of later ecclesiastical tradition” — and, alas, of later academic tradition as well.
5. Wide-open diaspora synagogues. Mitchell worries that some people on the ground may have been more concerned to maintain fences, forms of “us” and “them.” Possibly. Given how humans are, almost certainly. (The Therapeutae and the DSS community offer two ready examples.) But (all) the institutions of the Graeco-Roman city — of which the diaspora synagogue was one — were wide open. As late as the late Roman empire, gentiles are still showing up in Antioch’s synagogues (to Chrysostom’s chagrin), and Gamaliel still enjoys the baths in Akko (*Avodah Zara* 3, 4). Long after Constantine, the Sardis synagogue, incorporated into the heart of the city (attached to the gymnasium!) featured a public fountain in its forecourt; the Jewish community in Aphrodisias, famously, as late as the 4th/5th century, publicly listed benefactors (including town council members) according to their degrees of Jewish affiliation: regular

²¹ Thus I read Paul’s discounting of circumcision in Gal 6:15 as *circumcision for gentiles*, the topic of the entire letter; the “new creation” of 2 Cor 5:17 — addressed to an entirely gentile assembly (or assemblies) — speaks to this new eschatological human category as well.

members, *proselytoi*, and (pagan? Christian?) *theosebeis*. On the evidence, no fences made good neighbors.²²

So much for my staccato responses. On to the patristic meat of the matter: Origen's and Augustine's constructions of a fully law-observant, Jewish Paul.²³

Both theologians were master rhetoricians. This means that both were trained in how to deploy the most powerful arguments possible for making their own particular interpretation of a text as persuasive as possible. To the question at hand — their respective descriptions of a Law-observant Paul — both said astonishingly positive things about Paul's Law-observance (and about that of Jesus, and about that of the other original apostles) *when it suited their purpose*. Elsewhere and otherwise, neither has the slightest difficulty in sounding the dark themes of standard, toxic patristic rhetoric *contra Iudaeos*.

Mitchell gives two samples of Origen's negative rhetoric on pp. 72–73. I could add to these (and shortly will. I could also — but won't — give very many examples of Augustine's making nasty anti-Jewish remarks²⁴). So her observation that Origen's view of a(n actively) Jewish Paul cannot be said to “quite hold across his extant oeuvre” (p. 72 top) is absolutely correct, and equally true of Augustine. Their rhetoric *adversus Iudaeos* does *not* distinguish them, alas, from that of any other church father. It is their rhetoric *pro Iudaeos* that does. And their respective constructions of an “historical Paul” provide premier examples of this.

²² For a walk-through of this late Roman material, P. Fredriksen and O. Irshai, “Christian Anti-Judaism: Polemics and Policies,” *Cambridge History of Judaism* 4 (2006): 977–1,034.

²³ This section of my response draws from a forthcoming article, “Origen and Augustine on Paul and the Law,” *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, eds. D. Lincicum, C.M. Stang, and R. Sheridan (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

²⁴ See P. Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 304–14; eadem, “Jews, Judaism, and St. Stephen in Augustine's *City of God*,” in *KAMPF ODER DIALOG? Begegnung von Kulturen im Horizont von Augustins De civitate Dei*, ed. Christof Müller (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2015), 293–306, at 296–97. For a more detailed catalogue of Augustine's lush anti-Jewish hate speech — uttered, unsurprisingly, in the context of the Donatist controversy (Jews are bad, but Donatists are worse) — see Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 260–306 (“Ravens Feeding on Death”).

Origen's Law-observant Paul features especially in his commentary on Romans (written in Caesarea, shortly before 244) and in the *contra Celsum* (c. 246). In both works, he positions himself against Marcion. He therefore defends the positive theological status of material creation, and argues for the continuity of identity between the high god and the god of Israel; for the status of the LXX as Christian revelation; and for the goodness of the Law. And Origen takes account of those parts of NT scriptures where Jesus or the other apostles or Paul are depicted as Law-observant (e.g., c. *Cel.* II.6). Origen maintains that Jesus came in order to do away with the Jewish *interpretation* of Jewish law (I.29; II.4; VII.8), to thereby reveal the Law's true — that is, spiritual — meaning (V.60). Yet scripture portrays both Jesus and his first-generation Jewish followers as Law-observant. So at what point did Jesus teach *against* not Jewish law, but the Jewish practice of the Law? And why did Peter, evidently, not get the memo (pointing to Acts 10, and to Galatians 2; c. *Cel.* I.1)?

Origen solves this puzzle by invoking John 16:12–13, where Jesus says to his disciples that he still had “many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

The question in this passage is, what were the many things that Jesus had to say to his disciples, which at that time they were not able to bear? This is my view. Perhaps because the apostles were Jews and had been brought up in the literal interpretation of the Mosaic law, he had to tell them what was the true law, and of what heavenly things the Jewish worship was only a pattern and a shadow. . . . But he saw that it is very difficult to eradicate from a soul doctrines with which he was almost born and brought up . . . He perceived that it is hard to prove that they are ‘dung’ and ‘loss’ (Phil 3:8). . . . *He therefore put it off until a more suitable time after his passion and resurrection.* . . . By ‘many things’ [Jesus] means the method of explanation and exegesis of the Law according to the spiritual sense, and somehow the disciples could not bear them, because they had been born and brought up among the Jews.

c. *Celsum* II.2 (my emphasis)

The timing of Jesus's instruction resolves the tension between the evangelists' depiction of Jesus's own Law observance and the message of freedom from the Law that defines the kerygmatic gospel. And it also accounts for the long period, post-resurrection, during which the disciples continued to maintain their traditional observance. Peter's vision at Joppa revealed that Peter still adhered “to Jewish customs about clean and unclean things” (c. *Cel.* II.1;

Acts 10:9–15). At that point and thereafter, the Spirit of truth “taught him the many things [about spiritual exegesis] which he could not bear to hear when Jesus was still with him according to the flesh” (II.2). *In short: the spiritual exegesis of the Law came in phases, post-Resurrection.* This phased instruction allows for the disciples’ continuing Law observance, even after the crucifixion.

But what about the situation in Antioch, when Peter and Barnabas and the other Jewish believers withdrew from believing gentiles, fearing the men from James (Gal 2:12)? And what about Paul’s allowing circumcision, and acting as a Jew among Jews so that he could win Jews (1 Cor 9:20)?

Here a certain pastoral pragmatism governs both Origen’s remarks, and the motives of the apostles as he reconstructs them. “It was appropriate that those sent to the circumcision should not abandon Jewish customs” (*c. Cel.* II.1), in order to encourage and enable their kinsmen to join the new community. And Paul himself became a Jew to the Jews, so that he might gain Jews (*c. Cel.* II.1; 1 Cor 9:20).²⁵ It was for the same reason — to gain Jews for the church — that Paul also even offered sacrifices (II.1; Acts 21:26). “In the beginning phase of our faith,” Origen notes in his commentary, Paul permitted Jewish Christians to circumcise their sons, an option that he did not extend to gentile believers (*Commentary on Romans* 2:13, 3 [SC 532: II.9.6]). The true meaning of circumcision is spiritual, its true ritual expression baptism (*Rom.* 2:11, 9 [SC 532: II.8.7]). Paul certainly knew this, as he himself taught it (*Rom.* 2:11, 4–13, 23 [SC 532: II.8.2–9.29]). But fleshly circumcision as practiced by Jews was an indigenous mark of their own nation, deeply ingrained as custom. Paul understood that Jews would not come into the church *unless* they could circumcise their sons: a blanket interdiction, in other words, would have impeded the spread of the gospel (*Rom.* 2:13, 3 [SC 532: II.9.7]). The apostles thus continued to observe Jewish tradition for eminently practical, even laudable, reasons.

For the same practical and pastoral reason, says Origen, Paul actually proscribed circumcision for gentile believers: requiring circumcision of gentiles would also have impeded the spread of the gospel. This was in part because gentiles (and especially gentile heretics, like Marcion, who repudiate the Old Testament) regard circumcision with derision as a “mutilation of shameful places” (*Rom.* 2:13, 27 [SC 532: II.9.32]). Between this cultural contempt, and a

²⁵ See Mitchell pp. 68–69 for more of Origen’s remarks on this verse in 1 Corinthians. I thank Wally Cirafesi for inputting above the references to Origen’s *Commentary on Romans* from *Sources Chrétiennes*.

real fear of pain, gentiles would have been hindered in their way to God (loc. cit.). The “shameful deformity” as practiced by Jews before the advent of Christ, however, was itself a useful prefiguration of the future redemption: both required the shedding of blood (*Rom.* 2:13, 27–29 [SC 532: II.9.31–35]; Origen suggests that Satan demanded “blood as our price,” 2:13, 29 [SC 532: II.9.34]). Now that baptism has been revealed as the true circumcision of the inner man, however, [Christian] gentiles “become” Jews by receiving “circumcision” with a mystical meaning (*Rom.* 2:14, 4 [SC 532: II.10.2–3]). In this sense, Christian gentiles are “law-observant” too.

For Origen, the true value and meaning of Jewish practices *always* rested at the allegorical or mystical or spiritual level; and the laws that seemed to mandate literal (“fleshly”) practices had actually always been meant to be interpreted *kata pneuma*, according to their mystical — that is, their gentile Christian — meanings. With the coming of Christ — not his advent *kata sarka*, but his advent post-resurrection *kata pneuma* — these true meanings of the Law were slowly revealed. For pragmatic pastoral reasons, however, both circles of disciples, those around James and those around Paul, those who went to the circumcision and those who went to the gentiles, permitted Jewish Christians to continue their fleshly observance of the Law, as occasionally Paul did himself (though for strategic reasons, not principled ones). And this legal latitude seems to have been restricted to “the beginning phase of our faith” (*Rom.* 2:13, 3 [SC 532: II.9.6]), that is, to the first apostolic generation of the church.

Augustine’s affirmation of Paul’s Jewish practice is much more robust.²⁶ It is informed by his emphasis on reading the Bible *ad litteram*, “historically,” *quam littera sonat* and *secundum historicam proprietatis* (*contra Faustum* 12.7; *Retractationes* 1(18)17). His Jesus is Law-observant even post-mortem: Jesus is careful to die before the onset of the Sabbath, and he does not retrieve his fleshly body until long after the Sabbath has passed (*c. Faust.* 16.29). Jesus’s revolutionary instruction in the Law was not about its mystical meanings, but about its affective *sine qua non*: to be fulfilled, the Law must be loved, not feared (e.g., *Propositiones ex epistula ad Romanos* 75, 1–4, and frequently). And whereas for Origen, contemporary Jewish practices are “myths and trash” (*c. Cel.* II.5), for Augustine, they are *revera multum mirabile* (*c. Faust.* 12.13). To Origen, Jewish practice literally embodied the defective Jewish reading of scripture; to Augustine, it enacted historically the Bible’s great message of the redemption of the flesh. The entire first Jewish generation of the church, he

²⁶ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 240–331.

insisted, lived according to the Law for as long as the temple stood, and for a principled and kerygmatic purpose: to teach gentiles that the source of Jewish practices was God; but the source of pagan practices, demons. The gentiles' not living according to Jewish practices, therefore, had nothing to do with their reasons for disavowing their native ones (c. *Faust.* 19.16; 32.12; cf. *ep.* 82.2, 9–15, arguing with Jerome about Galatians 2).

In light of their contrasting valuations of Jewish law — Origen's measured; Augustine's astoundingly original and resoundingly positive — the conclusions reached by these two master theologians about the meaning of Romans 11:26, "all Israel will be saved," are somewhat surprising. For Augustine, as for Christian theologians of his period (and thereafter) more generally, Paul meant only the "Israel" of the [Christian] elect, chosen from among Jews and gentiles both (e.g., *ep.* 149.2, 19, to Paulinus of Nola). But for Origen — radically, in the patristic context — Paul meant all ethnic Israel. All Jewish Israel, Origen affirmed, will be saved.

Mitchell, p. 68 n. 34, voices some skepticism about Origen's radical inclusiveness on this question, seeing only "a hint" in this direction in the new homilies on Psalms. By contrast, John Gager, following Jeremy Cohen, sees Origen's commodiousness as a direct function of his Paulinism.²⁷ Cohen and Gager, however, on this point are wrong. Paul does *not* frame Origen's interpretation. It is Origen's views on God and on the cosmos that do. To understand how Origen comes to assert the salvation of "all Israel," we have to look to a much earlier work of his, the first systematic theology in Christian culture: Origen's shattered masterpiece, the *Peri Archôn* (*On First Principles*, written c. 225).

In this work, Origen set out his views on God, creation, time, and revelation. Unlike Augustine, who sees each soul as created as a *tradux peccati*, conceived in (and in a sense, by) Original Sin, Origen held that all souls eternally pre-existed with God. God loves every soul equally — his fairness is the index of his justice — and God wants all souls to be saved.²⁸

²⁷ John Gager, *Who Invented Christianity? The Jewish Lives of the Apostle Paul* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 7–9, with reference to J. Cohen, "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation: Romans 11:25–29 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis," *HTR* 98 (2005): 247–81.

²⁸ For a walk-through of Origen's metaphysics in *PA*, and the ways that he envisages a divine comedy (in sharp contrast to Augustine), when every soul is redeemed, see P. Fredriksen, *SIN. The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 99–134.

When every soul but that of Jesus slipped away from God in the time before time, God summoned out of nothing another order of creation, the world of time and of matter, to serve as a school for souls (*PA.* II.i, 1–4). Placed by divine providence in exactly the right learning situation, each soul — those of demons, stars, and planets as well as of humans — will eventually realize the error of its previous ways, repent, and (re)turn in love to God. Each soul and every soul, because God loves his whole creation and wants all to be saved. Each soul and every soul, because God’s love cannot be frustrated. Thus *even Satan will repent and so be saved* (I. vi, 5–9; III. v, 5–6). Origen’s god throws no one away. When all have finally returned, taught Origen, matter will sink back into the nothingness from which it was called, and souls will abide in eternal beatitude with God, just as they had been before the start of their long sojourn in matter and in time.

Pace Gager and Cohen, then: if, for Origen, everyone is saved, if the sun and the moon and the stars are saved, if demons and even Satan are saved, then it is no surprise that all ethnic Israel will be saved as well.

One last question, from Mitchell’s rich and thoughtful response to our books on Paul, though one she addresses not to me, but to John Gager. She asks him, p. 74:

(Why) does being a modern Jew make Taubes or Wyschogrod somehow a typical Jewish reader who sees what Christian readers do not or cannot? Does being a modern member of *any* religious tradition make one a more natural or congenial or better reader of ancient materials? And isn’t the problem with many “Christian” readings of Paul — that they assume this?

And she continues, loc. cit. n. 36, “If 20th-century Christians may import anachronisms in their readings of Paul, might not also 20th-century Jews?”

To Mitchell’s first two questions to John Gager, I must answer a resounding “No;” to her last two questions, a resounding “Yes.” There is no natural land bridge, formed by temperament and tradition, into the distant past. In fact, the false familiarity conjured by such claims is a serious impediment to historical thinking.

Having taught ancient Christianity — thus, Hellenistic Judaism — since 2004 at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, I can categorically deny that modern Jewishness translates into *any* innate historical understanding of ancient Jewishness. For our classes, my students read ancient pagan ethnographers on Jewish *amixia* and *asebeia* (meaning refusal to worship the right gods). Thinking

with the idea of abiding and eternal Jewish separateness, and with the rabbinic boundary lines established and patrolled in *Avodah Zara*, my students just assume that these ancient ethnographers describe historical fact.

But they do not. The anti-social tropes of classical ethnographies are stereotypical. They are leveled against many ancient ethnic groups.²⁹ But my students, until our historical work gets underway, cannot know this. They are thus initially astonished by all the abounding inscriptional evidence attesting to diaspora Jews' comfortable embeddedness in their ancient cities, to their good relations with their pagan neighbors (human and divine), to their multi-leveled integration into pagan society. My students' 21st-century Jewishness, in other words, does not *eo ipso* enable them to understand patterns of ancient Mediterranean Jewishness.

Further: given the murderous horror inflicted by mid-twentieth century European Christians on European Jews, a figure as identified with Christianity as is Paul can initially seem radically Other to my students: hostile, a little threatening, intrinsically and essentially anti-Jewish. Again, my students' being Jewish does not enable them to recognize Paul's own (but ancient) Jewishness. Indeed, as the important books by Alan Segal *z"l* (*Paul the Convert*) and by Danny Boyarin (*A Radical Jew*) attest, you don't have to be Protestant to reconstruct a Protestant (universalist, post-ethnic) Paul. You just have to think from within that paradigm.

"The past is gone," said Augustine, "and the truth of what is past lies in our own judgment, not in the past event itself" (c. *Faust*. 26.5). The past is a place that lives only in our imaginations. We conjure it by a disciplined appeal to our ancient evidence. But if for a minute any ancient figure — no matter how foundational to later tradition — seems immediately comfortable and familiar to us, then we are almost certainly misreading our evidence and misconstruing him or her. The past is a foreign country. It *should* seem strange — and so should the people who live there.

Matthew Novenson

This last point brings me to my third respondent, Matthew Novenson. Novenson credits me with giving Paul "a full and sympathetic reading, but one that situates him squarely in his ancient (read: strange, foreign) theological context. She makes Paul weird again." I can think of no higher accolade. Thank you, Matt.

²⁹ See the magisterial study by Benjamin Isaac, *The Origins of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

It took a long time for me to see Paul's weirdness. I have been reading his letters, all year every year, since the mid-1970s. But it wasn't until fairly recently that I saw what was in them all along: other gods. For Paul as for his gentile assemblies, pagan gods are real. They have social agency. Their anger has real effects. "Indeed, there are many gods and many lords," Paul says to his Corinthian assembly forthrightly (1 Cor 8:5). These cosmic *daimonia* and *archontes* have crucified the son of Paul's god (1 Cor 2:8; 10:24). They account for the frustrations that Paul experienced in his own mission (2 Cor 4:4). And at Christ's Parousia, these cosmic powers will play a crucial role: they provide the opposition that Jesus *qua* eschatological, triumphant Davidic messiah will overwhelm when he returns (1 Cor 15:24–27; cf. Phil 2:10). Absent these entities, the Parousia loses its messianic force and focus.³⁰

Why did I not see what was right in front of me? Because I knew something that Paul evidently did not know, namely, that ancient Jews were "monotheists."³¹ They thought that their god was the only god. This was *the* premier Jewish theological idea, after all. It set Jews apart from everyone else. Indeed, it defined them. Or so, for a long time, I thought. Actually, I did not "think" about this at all: I just knew it. And it cohered perfectly with what I had been taught.

My unselfconscious convictions about Jewish "monotheism" made all the other gods that populate both Jewish writings and later Christian ones harder to see. It was not until they finally asserted themselves in my imagination that I was able to make sense of a lot else in Paul's letters, especially the harassment of early Christ-following Jews by other Jews (such as, initially, Paul), by angered pagan populations, and by the occasional Roman magistrate (2 Cor 11:25–26). Failure to take seriously that ancient people took ancient gods seriously meant that I had missed a lot of what was roiling Paul's mission, and what would continue to bedevil gentile Christian populations on through to the imperial efforts of Decius, Valerius, and Diocletian.³²

Gentiles *qua* pagans were born into their obligations to their gods (as, indeed, were Jews to theirs). Abandoning cult — a non-negotiable proviso for gentiles joining the *ekklēsia* — angered these gods, and (rightly) made their

³⁰ *Pagans' Apostle*, 87–90.

³¹ E.g., to my now-embarrassment, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 70.

³² On fear of the gods' anger as the root reason for anti-Christian persecutions, Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 88–96; *Pagans' Apostle*, 74–93.

humans nervous. Nobody in antiquity wanted an angry god on his case. Paul and his assemblies had an apocalyptically induced insouciance in this regard. They could comfortably and confidently defy these gods, because their messiah was about to return to defeat or to rehabilitate them. More than humanity would worship the god of Israel once his messiah establishes the Kingdom: these gods would, too (cf. Ps 97:7).³³ Weird. But not in a mid-first-century Mediterranean context.

Putting Paul in his place, not only culturally and socially (alongside these pagans *and* their gods) but also biblically (especially within the grand theme of Israel and the Nations) also brought him into sharper focus, especially on the meaning of Romans 11:25–26. For this I have to thank Jim Scott for his meticulous study, *Paul and the Nations*.³⁴ Scott shows in that book how the idea of Israel (and of Israel's god) works in tandem with the idea of the nations who do not know God, but who will know God at the End. Scott's book made Paul's phrasing in Romans 11:25–26 concretely meaningful. "The fullness of the nations and all Israel" are not pleasant abstractions. "All the nations" refers quite specifically to Genesis 10, the Table of Nations, those various ethnic groups, the *goyim* or *ethnē*, produced by the progeny of Noah's three sons. Their "full number" — in Paul's phrasing, their *plērōma* — is 70 nations. And "all Israel" indicates all 12 tribes, itself an eschatological idea. When, in Romans 11, Paul speaks of final salvation and of inclusion in God's kingdom, he speaks of all humanity: the 12 tribes plus the 70 nations.

By the time that he dictates the last letter that we have from him, in other words, Paul's vision of eschatological redemption has grown as commodious as Deutero-Isaiah's (e.g., Isa 66:18–20).³⁵ Augustine, reading Paul closely, but with the idea of predestination firmly in his own head, got Paul wrong. Origen, though for reasons that trace back as much to his understanding of Platonic metaphysics as to his understanding of Romans, on this point got Paul right.

Novenson on p. 80 notes, correctly, that the so-called "Paul within Judaism" *Schule* is a doctrinal mess. Important differences within it abound. Significant ones, as Novenson says, distinguish my views on particular issues

³³ *Pagans' Apostle*, 131–45.

³⁴ James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations. The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians*. (WUNT, 84. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

³⁵ *Pagans' Apostle*, 159–66.

from those of John Gager. Gager's Paul is no longer Law-observant; mine continues to be. (Why *wouldn't* he be?³⁶) Gager's Paul thinks that Christ has redemptive relevance only for gentiles; my Paul sees Jesus quite precisely as the eschatological Davidic messiah, thus and therefore the *christos* of Israel as well. And so on. Do we then represent "a school" or "a perspective"? Or something more like a "network"? A movement, maybe? Whatever.

The interpretive point of principle that binds us all together is the recognition that no one in Paul's generation would have looked at his *euangelion* as anything other than a particular — perhaps peculiar — inflection of late Second Temple Judaism. Thus our commitment, no matter what our various conclusions, to construing Paul's letters *within* and *with* those criteria of meaning specific to late Second Temple Jewishness. "Christianity" as an idea and as an entity is born only long after Paul's lifetime. To echo Pam Eisenbaum's felicitous title, Paul was not a Christian.³⁷

Why and how and when, then, is "Christianity" born? Here too Novenson sees my two-pronged argument clearly, and also my great debt to Schweitzer. The second prong of my argument is God's Jewish identity crisis, which begins in the early second century. As Novenson puts it, "next-generation gentile thinkers such as Valentinus, Marcion, and . . . Justin Martyr all get Paul wrong in the same way: they identify the (middle Platonic) transcendent high god as someone other than the god of Abraham" (p. 78). In the course of the late first/early second century, through these theologians, God the father of the messiah becomes de-ethnicized. For Paul, that god, "the god of the Jews," while he was "the god of the nations also" (though not all the nations yet realized this fact; Rom 3:29) was also and irreducibly "Jewish." Once cut free of his ethnic moorings in these later gentile theologies, this high god floats wide of the deity represented in the LXX. And he becomes the father of a non-Jewish — indeed, of an anti-Jewish — messiah. At that point, "Christianity" exists — or, rather, multiple Christianities exist. And they exist as movements that are both other than and, in a sense, over-against "Judaism."³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., 165f.

³⁷ Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was Not a Christian* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

³⁸ *Pagans' Apostle*, 167–74. See too Fredriksen, "How Jewish is God? Divine Ethnicity in Paul's Theology," JBL 137.1 (2018): 191–210, on the normal ethnicity of all (non-philosophic forms of) divinities in antiquity. This second-century shift to a non- or to an anti-Jewish theology is not universal. Arguably, those contemporary movements

Why and how does this happen? Novenson, quoting Schweitzer, pellucidly formulates the first prong of my argument: “The fact that even the second [Christian] generation does not know what to make of his [Paul’s] teaching suggests the conjecture that he built his system upon a conviction which ruled only in the first generation. But what was it that disappeared out of the first Christian generation? What but the expectation of the immediate dawn of the messianic kingdom of Jesus?”³⁹ The continuing delay of the End was already confounding the movement mid-century, complicating the various (and competing) outreach efforts to sympathetic pagans and spurring the creation of circumcising Christ-missions, as we see especially in Galatians.⁴⁰

This delay inspires Paul’s creative rationalization in Romans 9 to 11: God was waiting for the full number of gentile nations to join the movement before the redeemer would appear from Zion. And, finally, it was only once Christ came *back*, raising the dead and subjecting all powers, celestial and terrestrial, to himself, that more than just the remnant of Israel “currently chosen by grace” would realize what time it was on God’s clock (Rom 11.5). At that point, Christ would be declared “son of God in power” to the cosmos by the eschatological resurrection of the dead (Rom 1:4; cf. Phil 2:10, which also relies not on Christ’s own resurrection, but on his triumphant return).⁴¹ Only *then* would Christ’s status as eschatological scion of David’s house be made public, “declared.” And all Israel would come into the Kingdom (Rom 11:26).

The earlier appearances of Jesus raised, for his first followers (Paul included), thus neither revealed nor confirmed his status as divine “son,” that is, as “messiah.” Rather, these visions confirmed the prime prophecy of Jesus of

represented by texts such as the Didache and the Didascalia Apostolorum continue into the second century and later as particular inflections of Judaism.

³⁹ Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*, 39, quoted by Novenson, p. 78. The author of the gospel of Mark, a second-generation figure, did continue his apocalyptic convictions, spurred on by the destruction of the temple in 70, which he took to be a sign of the coming victorious Son of Man, Mk 13 passim. And prophecies of the impending end have consistently appeared in every Christian generation, up to our own day. But, manifestly, the failure of the End to arrive in Paul’s generation meant that his letters had to support meanings different from those he intended. We see these changes already in the deuterio-Paulines: *Pagans’ Apostle*, 169. On the serial adjustments that the continuing delay of the End required of the first generation of Jesus’s followers, see also my study, *When Christians Were Jews. The First Generation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 94–108.

⁴¹ Ibid., 131–45.

Nazareth: the Kingdom of God was indeed at hand. To establish that kingdom, however, and manifestly, Jesus would have to come back. This, Paul asserted, Jesus was about to do (e.g., 1 Thess 4:15–18; Phil 4:5; 1 Cor 7:29, 10:11, 15:51–52). His resurrection simply indicated, to a chosen inner circle, how close that glorious second coming was — “nearer to us now than when we first became convinced” (Rom 13:11).

The risen Christ, for this generation, was the first swallow of the impending eschatological spring. The men and women committed to his message, accordingly, were not founding a new movement. They were not “founding” anything. They were declaring the fulfillment of God’s ancient promises to Israel. In their own eyes, they were history’s last generation. It is only in history’s eyes that they became — belatedly — the first generation of the church.

Novenson points out that my emphasis on Paul’s thoroughgoing eschatology “generates inevitable conflict with readings” that I designate as “Christian-theological, inasmuch as the latter identify the *Sache* of Paul’s message with something other than the imminent kingdom of God” (p. 83). Yes and no. Theologians are free to generate whatever theologies they may, from within whatever church traditions they stand, based on Paul’s letters, or on whatever NT texts they so desire. But it is important to distinguish theological interpretation from historical reconstruction.

In other words, problems of intellectual integrity accrue when twenty-first-century theologians authorize their own work by claiming that their twenty-first century theologies express what *Paul*, c. 50 CE, himself would have thought. He could not have done so. He lived two millennia ago, in a culture far different from our own. For Paul, demons caused disease. The earth stood at the center of the universe. Gods and humans interacted intimately. Gods deprived of cult grew angry. And so on, and on.

Modern Christian theologies of course draw on ancient Christian sacred *texts*; but they should not appropriate the mindsets of ancient *persons* to do so. First-century Christ-followers were not 21st-century Christians. Modern criteria of meaning would be beyond their imagining — as are criteria of meaning, two thousand years hence, for us. Anachronistic appropriations of sacred figures put modern theologies on wobbly foundations. Theology can, and must, do better than this.

In first-century Jewish texts — Paul’s letters included — the Kingdom of God is not a metaphor for Heaven. It is not a coded way to talk about “the church.” In first-century Jewish texts, the Kingdom is an historical, empirical event: the defeat of pagan gods; the battle between good and evil — and good

wins; the resurrection of the dead; the advent of the triumphant messiah (for those groups who expected a messiah); the turning of the nations to Israel's god; the miraculous reassembling of Israel's 12 tribes; the establishment of universal peace. The day *after* the Kingdom of God arrived, in other words, would definitely look different than had the day before.

John the Baptizer, in the 20s of the first century, taught that these events were imminent. Jesus of Nazareth, in the late 20s/early 30s of the first century, taught that these events were imminent. And this is what Paul, in the middle decades of the first century, also taught was imminent. That's interesting. Because by the time that we have our earliest evidence for this messianic movement — that is to say, with Paul's letters, mid-first century — the Kingdom was already about twenty years late. Today, as you read this essay, the Kingdom is almost 2,000 years late.

Krister Stendahl — pastor, bishop, theologian, scholar — long ago forthrightly noted that this was the case. In *Final Account*, his last book on Romans, he observed, "If the [New Testament] text says 'now' in the year 56 of the Common Era, where does that leave you and me? It leaves us almost 2,000 years later. No kerygmatic gamesmanship can overcome that simple fact."⁴² Deal with this fact, Krister urges. Work with it. Do not ignore it, or pretend that it does not exist. But do not do bad history, which leads to dishonest theology. Acknowledge that "Now!" is what Paul, mid-first century, proclaimed.

I am not a theologian. I am an historian of theology. My concern in *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*, is with history. But I think that our opportunity to do good history, no less than good theology, is also compromised when we overlook what Stendahl called this "simple fact," the vivid eschatological commitments of the first generation. If we let go of this piece of the Jewish past, we let go of the one thing that explains Christianity's future.

Late Second Temple Jews, by the first century of the Common Era, had long worked out socially stable ways to accommodate pagan interest in the Jewish god. Pagan men could "convert" by receiving circumcision, thereby assuming Jewish ancestral practices.⁴³ And pagans *as* pagans could voluntarily

⁴² Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 23. Original publication, University Lutheran Church, Cambridge MA, 1993.

⁴³ Though, as the work of Christine Hayes and of Matthew Thiessen has pointed out, not all Jews (such as those represented in *Jubilees*) thought that "conversion" was an option.

“Judaize,” associating ad hoc with Jews both in synagogue communities and in the Jewish god’s temple precincts in Jerusalem.

It was only the Jesus-movement that demanded that *its* pagans completely cease worshiping their native gods, while nonetheless insisting also that they *not* become Jews.⁴⁴ These sympathizers were to become *ex-pagan* pagans, that is, “eschatological gentiles” committed to the exclusive worship of Israel’s god and to the imminent return of his anointed son. A socially destabilizing demand, as centuries of pagan anti-Christian persecutions evince; but a demand that makes sense only if framed by Jewish apocalyptic expectations. And this intense eschatological expectation alone accounts for a prior and no less foundational behavior: the early post-crucifixion Jewish movement’s ready inclusion of sympathetic ex-pagan pagans within their assemblies to begin with. After all, this swell of ex-pagan commitment validated their own convictions. At the End of Days, the nations were to destroy their idols and turn to worship the true god.⁴⁵

But things did not work out that way. Time continued to continue. And with it, the gospel message itself necessarily altered, adjusted, changed⁴⁶ — until, by the second century, as we have seen, we have a non-Jewish high god and an anti-Jewish messiah. But that was a long way from the first generation, Paul’s generation — that founding generation, which thought that it was the final generation.

To James Crossley, Margy Mitchell, and Matt Novenson: many, many thanks for interacting so energetically and so forthrightly with my book. And to John Gager: thank you, John, for being my teacher.

⁴⁴ Circumcising missions were a mid-century phenomenon, brought about by the stresses caused by the Kingdom’s delay, *Pagans’ Apostle*, 94–109.

⁴⁵ Tobit 14.5–6; for more primary sources, *Pagans’ Apostle*, 28–31.

⁴⁶ For this insight I am indebted, as James Crossley rightly notes, to “the classic argument associated with one John Gager in *Kingdom and Community* (1975),” p. 52.