

Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity

edited by

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and Charles Stang

Mohr Siebeck

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Origen and Augustine on Paul and the Law

PAULA FREDRIKSEN

For scholars whether ancient or modern, the question “Paul and the Law” entails a host of other considerations. How did Paul relate to the original Jerusalem community and, thus, to traditions stemming from Jesus of Nazareth? How had Jesus in his turn related to Jewish law, and how had his attitudes and practices affected Paul’s? How did Paul’s diaspora setting contour his message, and/or alter what he had inherited? When he says ‘Law,’ does he always mean the same thing by it? And, finally – the primary question that will occupy us here – did Paul practice what he preached? In other words, did Paul himself live according to the so-called ‘Law-free’ gospel that he (putatively) urged on gentile *ekklēsiai*?¹

Our historical Paul depends in part upon how we read the rhetorical Paul. Paul often presented his ideas through pulsing pairs of binary opposites: spirit/flesh, gospel/law, grace/sin, life/death, circumcision/foreskin, Jew/gentile, Jew/Greek, freedom/slavery. To what degree do we map these verbal syzygies onto each other? And what happens as the contrasting pairs come to seem like opposing poles? In the history of interpretation, as we know, very often the negative terms were clustered together (sin, death, flesh, slavery) and opposed the positive terms, identified with Paul’s own message (grace, life, spirit, freedom). Where do we place – or claim that Paul placed – “Law,” “works of the Law,” and “circumcision” within this polarized rhetoric? Does “Law” correspond to or map onto these negative terms? Those who have read Paul this way have made a strong case for the apostle’s own post-Damascus “lawlessness.”²

In the second century, these questions were further compounded by fundamental problems of theology. Who was Paul’s god? How did he relate to the one high god of Graeco-Roman *paideia*? To the god who gave the Torah? How, in turn, did this high god relate to the material cosmos, especially as described in the opening chapters of Genesis (LXX)? The wildly various answers given to these problems of divine identity led to the splintering of the Christian movement post-100 into a family of warring sects, comprised almost exclusively of

¹ Full disclosure: I think that neither Paul’s gospel nor his personal behavior was “Law-free.” see Paula Fredriksen, “Why Should a ‘Law-free’ Mission Mean a ‘Law-free’ Apostle?” *JBL* 134.3 (2015): 637–650.

² For a recent statement of this sort of reading, arguing that the Christian Paul rejected the Law, see John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

ex-pagan gentiles. As these groups contested with each other over what constituted sacred (thus revelatory) texts, and over how to read these texts, they derided gentile Christian rivals by reactivating derogatory terms from the older, intra-Jewish polemics that were available in Paul's letters, in various gospels, and most especially in the LXX. In this way and for these reasons, the intra-Christian exchange of anti-Jewish insults, polemics *contra Iudaeos*, became one of the drive-wheels of patristic theology.³ *Contra Iudaeos* rhetoric in turn conjured a charged interpretive atmosphere around the question of Paul and the Law.

Origen (185–254) and Augustine (354–430), two towering geniuses of the ancient church, wrestled with all of these issues of historical reconstruction, interpretive coherence, and the Christian derogation of Judaism (most especially of Jewish practice) when they each worked out their own readings of Galatians, of Acts (which foregrounds a Law-observant Paul), and of the Pauline corpus more generally. They shared a common scriptural canon, Old Testament and New; and they each self-identified with Roman orthodoxy, the “universal” church of the *catholica*. Finally, despite the century-plus that stands between them, they were similarly situated polemically: Origen wrote especially against the competing views of Paul's mission and message offered by Marcion's church; Augustine, against those of his former Latin Manichaean community, a dualist Christian sect much influenced by Marcion. For these reasons, their respective solutions to the puzzle of Paul's own Jewish practice have several elements in common. Yet, finally, they contrast significantly with each other.

Before we embark on this comparison of each man's Paul, however, we need to have a general sense of what both had inherited from the second century. Neither Origen nor Augustine painted on a blank canvas; rather, each filled in their respective portraits of Paul against a background of the theologies, polemical postures, and traditions of reading laid on by the formative controversies of the earlier period. An initial glimpse at the second century, then, before we look to the third and the fourth.

³ Two overviews of these intra-Christian developments: Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 41–102 and 367–75; D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2013), 87–134. This insight – namely, that rhetoric *contra Iudaeos* served immediate needs internal to forming gentile Christian identities – traces back to D. P. Efroymson's fundamental essay, “The Patristic Connection,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. A. T. Davis (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 98–117. Dated but still very valuable is Marcel Simon's great study, *Verus Israël: Études sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'empire romain* (Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1948; E. T. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

The Second-Century Framework

For ancient Christian authors, historical issues (the relation of Jesus, and of the Jerusalem community, to Paul), hermeneutical issues (which texts were revelatory of Christianity, and how should these texts be read?), and theological issues (the identity of God and his relationship to various sacred texts, and to the Jews) all bore on the question of Paul and the Law. But by the second century, what had most dramatically and decisively shifted between Paul's day and theirs – and thus what especially affected their answers – was God's ethnicity. For Paul, God the father of Christ was the highest god, the universal deity, "the god of the Gentiles also" (Rom 3:29); but he was emphatically the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the god of Jewish scripture and of Jewish history. The Jewishness of God is, indeed, the pivot upon which Paul's vision of impending final redemption turns (e.g., Rom 9–11, esp. 11:25–35; 15:4–12).⁴

In the second century, however, within the context of developing gentile Christianities, God the Father is himself no longer "Jewish." He is conceived rather as the high god of Graeco-Roman paideia: perfect, changeless, radically stable, incorporeal, ungenerated (that is, contingent upon no other and, thus, uniquely self-generated), utterly transcendent; the source of everything else but not its maker (since creation as such implied action, thus change).⁵ The constraints of paideia had the effect of removing the One a long step from the Law: to have authored and communicated the Law would have involved the high god too intimately in time and change. What then, or who, was the source of the Law?

Second-century theologians concurred with each other that the high god was the father of Christ, who himself was therefore (and by definition) another, lower divinity. What then was Christ's relationship to and with the Law? According to the Valentinian Ptolemy, the question was complicated. The Law itself, he explained, had been established by yet a third deity, "a god who is just and who

⁴ On this issue of divine ethnicity and Paul's construal of it, see my study, "How Jewish is God? Divine Ethnicity in Paul's Theology" *JBL* 137 (2018): 193–212.

⁵ Thus, the Valentinian Ptolemy observed, "The nature of the ungenerated Father of All is incorruption and self-existent, simple, and homogeneous light" (*Ep. ad Floram*, apud Epiphanius, *Pan.* 33.7.7); similarly Justin, "That which always maintains the same nature, and in the same manner, and is the cause of all other things – that indeed is God," (*Dial.* 3); God is unbegotten and without passion (1 *Apol* 25.2), without form (9.1), unchanging (13.4) without a name (10.1).

Two excellent introductions to ancient philosophical theology: John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 BC to AD 200* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) and R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972). E. R. Dodds' graceful classic, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: WW Norton, 1965), narrates the afterlives of Plato's cosmogony, the *Timeaus*, in various Roman Christian and pagan theologies and practices. More recently, with much relevant bibliography, Frederick E. Brent, "Plutarch's Middle-Platonic God," in *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch*, ed. R. Hirsh-Luipold (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 27–49; and Jan Opsomer, "Demiurges in Early Imperial Platonism," *ibid.*, 51–99.

hates evil” (*Pan.* 33.4,6), neither the perfect god nor the Devil, but rather the maker of this material cosmos, the *demiurgos* (7,4; this lower deity is himself of course contingent upon the high god, 7,6). And the Law was composite: some legislation was from the demiurge, some from Moses, some from the Jewish elders (4,1–2). Further, the demiurge’s laws are themselves composite: some are good but imperfect, requiring fulfillment (5,1); others base and unjust (like the *lex talionis*, Lev 24:20; *Pan.* 33.5,4), and still others purely exemplary and symbolic (5,1–2 and 8). Christ came to fulfill only the demiurge’s good laws (5,1; cf. Mt 5:17); the bad laws he came to destroy (5,1 and 7). The symbolic laws, finally, Christ came to decode for his followers, who now understand “circumcision,” for example, to refer to a spiritual and moral state, not a physical one (5,11; so similarly the true meaning of Sabbath rest, fasting, and Passover, 5,12–15, specifically referencing 1 Corinthians 5:7). When Paul pronounced the law holy and the commandments just and good (Rom 7:12), he clearly had only the “good” laws in view (6,6). Equally obviously, the Christian, understanding the true meaning of the symbolic laws, had little reason to enact them literally: their spiritual and ethical fulfillment was her goal (5,11–15).

For Justin as for Ptolemy, the high god and father of Christ was radically transcendent and changeless, the prime deity of Middle Platonism. The god who appeared in the narratives of the LXX therefore, thus the god who gave the Law, for Justin as for Ptolemy cannot have been the high god. (The Jews’ philosophically naive insistence otherwise – that is, that it was indeed the high god who spoke to Moses – irritates Justin no end, 1 *Apol* 63.1–15; cf *Dial.* 60; 127.) No: the source of the Law, the busy narrative character of the LXX, was a *heteros theos*, “another god” (*Dial.* 56). But unlike Ptolemy, Justin holds that this law-giving agent was not some middle deity somewhere on the spectrum between the high god and Satan. Rather, he was none other than the pre-existent Christ, before his incarnation (56–62; cf. 38; cf. 1 *Apol* 63.1,14).

Jewish law in its entirety thus had a much wider range of application for Justin than it did for Ptolemy. Since Christ was the source of the Law, the Law itself (not just some small portion) is a code for Christ; accordingly, the Jewish scriptures themselves become the texts of the (that is, of Justin’s) church (*Dial.* 29), which in turn represents the true Israel (123). All of the laws must be understood spiritually, in their allegorical sense, whether as symbols or as prophecies of Christ. This deeper understanding had evidently escaped the vast majority of fleshly Israel. It is on this account that many of the laws, “laws that were not good,” were mandated (Ezek 20:25; *Dial.* 21). Their purpose was pedagogical and punitive. Why?

The answer was of a piece with Justin’s ethnic reformatting of his scriptural patrimony. Just as its high god is “re-ethnicized” to be non-Jewish (indeed, to be non-ethnic), and just as its messiah is “re-ethnicized” to be the timeless champion of Justin’s gentile church, so also the premier sin of scriptural tradition, the worship of idols (especially worship through blood sacrifices) is ethnically

reformatted too. In Justin's reading, idolatry becomes *the* hallmark sin not of *ta ethnē*, the gentile nations, but of Israel according to the flesh. The Jews' abiding blindness and spiritual obduracy were displayed from their beginning as a nation, when they made and worshiped the Golden Calf (*Dial.* 19–23). The whole reason that the god of the LXX – that is, the pre-existent Christ – gave the laws about sacrifices and Sabbaths and foods and circumcision was to distract carnal Israel from their own fleshy, demon-driven behaviors (19–22). This legislation ended in and with the incarnate Christ (43), when its true, spiritual meanings were finally and definitively revealed.

In the writings that we have from him, Justin never directly addresses issues arising from the Pauline materials. We can only infer from his critique of fleshly Jewish practices that his Paul would not have been traditionally Law-observant. The case for the non-Law-observant Paul, however, was made much more strongly by Paul's premier second-century interpreter, Marcion.⁶ Marcion took the contrasting pairs of Pauline rhetoric – law and gospel, flesh and spirit, Jew and gentile – as pointing to two different moral and cosmic domains. The high god, the father of Christ, had been revealed for the first time *by* Christ: Jewish scriptures had no direct revelatory function, whether as embedded Christian allegory or as historical background, to the gospel. Jewish scriptures, rather, belonged to the Jews, whose creator god, justice-obsessed, harsh, bellicose, and much given to animal sacrifices, was the (lower) deity described in their holy books.⁷ The previously unknown high god, a god of light and love, was revealed uniquely through and by Christ. Those places in his letters where Paul seemed to speak positively of Jewish law, Marcion accordingly argued, were Judaizing interpolations placed in the manuscripts by Paul's enemies. For, as Galatians, "the primary epistle against Judaism" clearly taught (Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.2), and as Paul clearly knew, the law had nothing to do with the gospel. Textually instantiating these theological points of principle, Marcion proceeded to champion a new scriptural canon for the Christian: a collection of ten Pauline letters together with a gospel (possibly some version of Luke).⁸

⁶ In the year between my framing of the current essay (2015) and my finishing it (2016), Judith Lieu has produced a definitive study, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). She notes there the difficulty of reconstructing Marcion's teaching from the hostile witness of Mediterranean heresiological writers (15–142), and thus analyzes her material in two cycles, heresiological (Part 1) and synthetic (Part 2).

⁷ Marcion's particular contribution to these second-century theological debates, Lieu notes, "is in his radical separation and degrading of the Creator," *Marcion*, 434; for her full discussion, 323–66, summarized 434–36. See also Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63–7, on Marcion's reading of the LXX.

⁸ On Marcion's "canon," see Lieu, *Marcion*, 183–233 (Marcion's gospel), 234–69 (on his Pauline collection), 398–432 (on his scriptural hermeneutics).

For our purposes, what matters most about Marcion's arguments is the counter-argument that they drew from Tertullian.⁹ Amplifying Justin's earlier critique of Judaism in *Dialogue with Trypho*, and (through clenched teeth) occasionally agreeing with Marcion ("We too [*quoque*] claim that the primary epistle against Judaism is that addressed to the Galatians, for we receive with open arms that abolition of the ancient law," *Marc.* 5.2), Tertullian turned his defense of his church's double canon and single divine hierarchy into a massive indictment of traditional Jewish practice and, thus, of the Jews.¹⁰ Those "troublesome scrupulosity" about cult, for example, that had made Israel's god seem like a bad god to Marcion, had actually been given by a good god, Tertullian explained, and for a good purpose (deflection from idol-worship), though to a bad people (fleshly Israel, *Marc.* 2.18,3; 4.31,3–7). Marcion was wrong: Reading the Jewish scriptures in a fleshly way – reading, indeed, said Tertullian, like the Jews (3.7,1) – Marcion had missed the condemnation of Jews and of Judaism that stood in the Jewish scriptures themselves (e.g., 5.2,1). No need to posit two different deities, then, a "Jewish" one and a "Christian" one: God the Father was the same deity proclaimed in both revelations.

The positive significance of the Old Law for the true church, Tertullian repeated, lay in its secret and figurative meanings (3.19,2; 22.1). Jesus and the first generation of the church correctly understood these scriptures, and so repudiated fleshly Jewish practices (e.g., 4.12,1, on Jesus' teaching against the Jewish observance of the Sabbath). The apostles turned aside from "Judaism itself" (*ipso Iudaismo*, 3.22,3). And the apostle Paul certainly understood that the gospel abolished the Law (5.2,1).

By the turn of the third century, then, shaped by the energetic diversity (and correspondingly energetic arguing) of gentile Christianities, the positions of the proto-orthodox – that stream in which Origen and Augustine will stand – had clearly emerged. Jewish scriptures were really Christian scriptures, once read with the higher, spiritual understanding of allegory; the texts of the New Testament completed the witness of the Old. The Jewish fleshly misreading of the Old Testament Jewish texts was literally embodied in fleshly Jewish practice – actual circumcision, resting one day out of seven, avoiding certain foods and keeping certain holidays. Both this style of reading and this tradition of practice had been repudiated by Jesus and by his disciples after him. And the apostle who had issued the clearest clarion of the gospel's freedom, who had insisted upon it and who had himself lived it was, of course, Paul.

⁹ For Lieu's analysis of Tertullian, *Marcion*, 50–85.

¹⁰ On this rhetorical/theological move, see Efrøymssen, "Patristic Connection," 100–6.

Origen's Paul

In any discussion of Paul and the Law, certain New Testament passages will jump to the fore: Galatians 2:11–14, Paul's argument in Antioch when he accused Peter of hypocrisy; 1 Corinthians 9:20 (Paul's becoming "to the Jews as a Jew"), the apostle's *modus operandi* when dealing with his own people (was he not then a hypocrite himself?); Romans, both on the status of the Law (ch. 7) and on the status of Paul's *syngeneis*, ethnic Israel (9:4; 11:26); Acts 21:26, with its presentation of a Law-observant Paul who sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. As thoughtful pagan critics such as Celsus and Porphyry came to know these texts better, Paul's account of his fight with Peter in particular caused special embarrassment: their rift implied a crack in the very foundations of the movement.¹¹

Jerome in his own commentary on Galatians had credited Origen with finding a solution to the problem of the apostolic face-off depicted in Galatians 2.¹² How could Peter, who by this point must have known that Law-observance was nugatory, have capitulated to the men from James? How could there be such fundamental disagreement among the founders? How could Paul – the younger man and the newer apostle – have dared to reprimand Peter in public?¹³ It was not a true fight, Jerome claims Origen claimed: rather, like two attorneys, each apostle usefully pretended to fight (*utilis simulatio*, a "useful deception") for the edification of their audience. Peter knew full well that Law-observance was of no positive value, especially for the Christian. He pretended to go along with James' men in order to give Paul the opportunity to publicly declaim the right position. In writing up his account of this episode, Paul continued this pedagogical deception, describing Peter as erring and, thus, as rightly subject to Paul's rebuke.

In Origen's extant works no such interpretation of Galatians 2 appears. So much has been lost of his corpus that this fact in itself does not tell against Jerome's attribution. As we will shortly see, however, such a reconstruction of apostolic *utilis simulatio* does stand in some tension with what Origen seems to say, specifically on the topic of Peter's orientation toward the Law and Paul's observance of it, in his *Contra Celsum* and in his commentary on Romans.

¹¹ In his commentary on Galatians (*praef.* I), Jerome reports that Porphyry's strategy, in focusing on this episode, was "to brand [Peter] with error and [Paul] with impudence, and to bring against us as a body the charge of erroneous notions and of false doctrine, on the grounds that the leaders of the churches differed among each other."

¹² *Ep.* 75.3,4 Jerome to Augustine (in the Augustinian numbering). Jerome there mentions having drawn on Origen's five books of commentary on Galatians, and on book ten of Origen's *Stromateis*. Jerome also claimed Chrysostom as another allied authority, but Chrysostom's interpretation of Galatians was more complicated: see Margaret M. Mitchell, "Peter's 'Hypocrisy' and Paul's: Two 'Hypocrites' at the Foundation of Earliest Christianity?" *NTS* 58 (2012): 213–34.

¹³ This was not only a question of disrespect; Paul's behavior also flies in the face of Jesus' instruction that rebukes are to be tendered quietly: "If your brother sins against you, go and correct him privately," Matt 18:15.

Origen composed these two works in Caesarea within a few years of each other, the commentary sometime shortly before 244, the work against Celsus around 246. In both, he positioned himself clearly against Marcion: the god who made the laws and who gave them to Moses, he asserts against the earlier theologian, is the creator of the world (*Cels.* 1.18: by “creator” Origen seems to mean the preincarnate Christ, whom he describes as the founder of Judaism as well as of Christianity: *Cels.* 3.14; cf. *Comm. Rom.* 2.13,10 [2.9,12]).¹⁴ Unlike Justin, however, who, using similar arguments, had urged that the LXX’s god had always been understood by Septuagintal heroes such as David or Isaiah to be the Christ, Origen insisted on the ‘Jewish identity’ of the high god as well. “The supreme god is called ‘the god of the Hebrews’ even by people alien to our faith,” he notes approvingly (*Cels.* 5.50).¹⁵ The first position (that is, that Christ gave the Law and was thus the founder of Judaism) and the second (that Christ’s father the high god is also the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 4.33) together combine to support Origen’s positive estimate of the Law more generally. Put differently: the more positive the Law’s source, and the more positively both Christ and God are associated with historical Israel, the more scope for viewing Jewish law positively. This in turn opens up more room to imagine the apostles as actually Law-observant – an argument that Origen will make.

Like Justin, however, and indeed like every ancient theologian known to us with the possible exception of Marcion,¹⁶ Origen too holds that the deeper or truer or fundamental meaning of the Law is available only through spiritual or typological readings of it. “The laws were written with the very intention that they should be allegorized” (4.49). The Jewish enactment of these laws, “fleshly” or “literal,” actually had deeper import: their rites symbolized profound mysteries (4.23; these ceremonies were *typoi* for more profound truths, 2.2). Still, Origen insists, Jewish literal-mindedness does not take away from the Jews’ religious accomplishment both in the past and even currently. On the Sabbath, it was

¹⁴ There are two major chapter and section numbers of Origen’s commentary on Romans. *Sources Chrétiennes* uses the numbering system of the standard critical edition, *Der Römerbrief-Kommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins*, ed. C. P. Hammond Bammel, 3 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1990–98). While Thomas P. Scheck’s English translation (2 vols., FC 103–104 [Washington: CUA Press, 2001–2002]) relies on this same text, he uses the chapter and section numbering system of Migne. In order to allow the reader to quickly locate both the English and a critical edition, this article provides both citations – the ET first, the Latin second.

¹⁵ This god’s magical efficacy also seems for Origen to bespeak his supremacy over lower gods, that is, daemons: 3.22; 4.33; 5.45.

¹⁶ Tertullian accused Marcion of not reading scripture “spiritually” (= allegorically) – thus, of reading it like “the Jews” (*Marc.* 3.6–7): “Let the heretic now give up borrowing poison from the Jew!” (3.8,1). How much of this is clever rhetorical invective, how much an actual description (as Harnack took it to be) is less than clear. Lieu opines that “it is evident that Marcion did read ‘symbolically’ in some sense; however, he does not seem to have applied this technique systematically to the scriptural narratives of God’s behavior,” *Marcion*, 365. See too her Index, s. v. “allegory,” 496.

possible to see the entire nation 'studying philosophy' (that is, the Law, 4.32); and even to this (that is, to Origen's) day, "the [pagan] philosophers in spite of their impressive teachings fall down to demons, while even the lowest Jew looks only to the supreme god" (5.43).

The Law's double layers of meaning, superficial vs. profound (2.4 superficial being a 'Jewish' reading), or literal vs. spiritual (7.18, the mistake pagans make in interpreting the Law; cf. 2.2, the mistake of the Jews) in turn describes the field of Jesus' mission and message. Jesus, himself the Law's author, came to do away not with the Law per se, but rather with the Jewish interpretation of the Law: "Jesus did away with *the customs of the Jews* while reverencing their prophets" (1.29, my emphasis). He thereby revealed their true meaning (5.60). Now, however, the "doctrines of the Jews," meaning their behavioral observances, "are myths and trash" (2.5). Thus "it does not follow, since [Christ] was a Jew, that every believer, whether from the gentiles or from the Jews, must keep the laws literally," Origen teaches (2.4), especially since believers now understand the Law's mystical meanings (5.60). The truth having been made known, such 'literal' behaviors should be left behind, though Jews and even some Christian Jews continue in them (2.1 and 3; 5.61).

Still, as Celsus observes, the gospels describe a law-observant Jesus: "Jesus kept all Jewish customs and even took part in their sacrifices" (2.6). At what point, then, did Jesus teach against Jewish practice? And why did Peter evidently miss the lesson? "Peter seems to have kept the customs of the Jews for a long time," notes Origen, pointing to Acts 10. "He had not yet learned from Jesus to ascend from the letter of the Law to its spiritual interpretation" (2.1. He then refers as well to Peter's behavior in Gal 2:12). 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. (*Cels.* 2.2, my emphasis)

The timing of Jesus' instruction resolves the tension between the evangelists' depiction of his 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 tra-

ditional observance. Peter's vision at Joppa revealed that Peter still adhered "to Jewish customs about clean and unclean things" (*Cels.* 2.1; 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" (*Cels.* 2.2). In short: The spiritual exegesis of the Law came in phases, post-resurrection. This phased instruction allows for the disciples' continuing Law observance.

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" (*Cels.* 2.1), 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 (*Cels.* 2.1; 1 Cor 9:20). It was for the same reason – to gain Jews for the church – that Paul also even offered sacrifices (*Cels.* 2.1; 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 (*Comm. Rom.* 2.13,3 [2.9,4]). The true meaning of circumcision is spiritual, its true ritual expression baptism (2.11,9 [2.8,1]). Paul certainly knew this, as he himself taught it (2.11,4–13,23 [2.8,3–9,28]). 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 (2.13,3 [2.9,4]). No *utilis simulatio* here: the apostles 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" (2.13,27 [2.9,32]). Between this cultural contempt, and a 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 (2.13,27–29 [2.9,32–34]): Origen suggests that Satan demanded "blood as our price," 2.13,29 [2.9,34]). Now that baptism has been revealed as the true circumcision of the inner man, [Christian] gentiles 'become' Jews by receiving 'circumcision' with a mystical meaning (2.14,4 [2.10,2]). In this sense, Christian gentiles are 'law-observant' too.

To sum up: 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 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).¹⁷ And this legal latitude seems to have been restricted to “the beginning phase of our faith” (2.13,3 [2.9,4]), that is, to the first apostolic generation of the church.

What then of that larger group, Israel according to the flesh, that still observes and guards fleshly Jewish practice up to Origen’s own day? While dismissing current Jewish practices and doctrines, Origen in both writings ends on a high note: acceding to Paul’s statement in Romans 11:26, Origen too affirms that “all Israel” – meaning ethnic Israel, not just ‘spiritual Israel’ – “will be saved” (*Cels.* 6.80; *Comm. Rom.* 8.12,3–8 [8.11,2–8], with reference to 1 Tim 2:4, “God wants all men to be saved”). When? Once the “fullness of the gentiles” comes into the church (*Cels.* 6.80; cf. *Comm. Rom.* 8.2,2 [8.2,1], in “the last days”). We will defer consideration of the scope of Origen’s vision of final redemption, however, until after we consider Augustine on the Law, on Paul’s attitude toward the Law, and on Paul’s personal observance of the Law.

Augustine’s Paul

For more than ten years, the formative period of his young adulthood, Augustine had been a member of, and an active advocate for, the Manichaeen church. This dualist Christian sect, originally Persian, had drawn much from the theological legacy of Marcion, with his derogation of Jewish law based on his close reading – and de-Judaizing purgations – of Paul’s letters.¹⁸ Augustine would have been intimately familiar with this de-Judaized, anti-legal Paul. In the first flush of intellectual *brio* following his conversion to Roman Christianity in Milan,

¹⁷ Note: in neither of these writings does Origen discuss the reason for Paul’s reprimanding Peter, or the offending element of Peter’s activity that led Paul to accuse him of “hypocrisy.”

¹⁸ On the similarities and differences between Marcion’s and Mani’s views on New Testament scriptures, especially the Pauline letters, see M. Tardieu, “Principes de l’exégèse manichéenne du Nouveau Testament,” *Les règles de l’interprétation*, ed. M. Tardieu (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1987), 123–146, esp. 142–44, on Paul. As Tardieu explores – and as Augustine’s magnum opus, *contra Faustum*, makes clear – Western Latin Manichees were exceedingly familiar with orthodox’s double canon, well armed with honed critiques of both Old and New Testament texts.

Augustine had viewed Paul's message as fundamentally compatible with that of [pagan] Neoplatonism.¹⁹ But Augustine's Paul underwent a rapid – and thorough – re-“scripturalization” once Augustine was back in North Africa (387), inducted into Hippo's clergy (391), elevated to the position of sole bishop (396), and forced to confront his former co-religionists publicly, especially on the issue of how to read Paul's letters. His pastoral, political, and polemical contexts directly affected Augustine's reconstruction of the ‘historical’ Paul.

These contexts were themselves compounded by circumstance. Augustine's works that specifically attempt to retrieve Paul from the Manichees²⁰ span from 392 (his debate with his former Manichaean colleague Fortunatus) to 399/400 (his massive refutation of Latin Manichaeism, the *c. Faustum*), efforts called forth by energetic missionary activities on the part of his former co-religionists. Against the sectarians' position, Augustine urged that Paul be seen as a spokesman for the freedom of the will and the goodness of the Law, hence his special concentration on Romans and on Galatians at this time.²¹ Concurrently, and separately, another project of interpretation engaged him: how the Bible could be read not only in a spiritual way, but also in a way that respected its “historical” or “literal” (*ad litteram* or *secundum historicam proprietatis*) or “specific” (*proprie*) meanings no less than its deeper, figural, Christian ones (*doctr.*

¹⁹ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) reviews this period of Augustine's life in chapters 9 and 10, “The Platonists,” and “Philosophy;” see esp. his comments on Paul and philosophy, 113. For a very different perspective on these same years (384 to 388), Jason BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, vol. 1: *Conversion and Apostasy, 373–388 CE* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 165–302. Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 122–32, traces Augustine's shifting intellectual horizon line during the years in Milan; for a more detailed analysis, Fredriksen, “Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and the Pelagians,” *RA* 23 (1988): 87–114.

²⁰ For an analysis of the ways that North African Manichaeism based itself on Paul's letters, F. Decret, “Utilisation des épîtres de Paul chez les Manichéens de l'Afrique,” in *Le epistole paoline nei Manichei, i Donatisti e il primo Agostino*. (Roma: Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 1989), 29–83.

²¹ His public debate with Fortunatus – when the Manichee ran circles around Augustine in quoting obliging sentences from Paul's letters – put Augustine on notice: the high tone of his philosophical learning, acquired in Milan, was not going to impress the locals back in Africa, who orientation toward biblical texts was *much* less sophisticated. Simply by quoting NT texts so much more often than did Augustine, Fortunatus put his opponent in an awkward situation. On the centrality of Paul to this debate, see W. H. C. Frend, “The Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition in North Africa,” *JEH* 4 (1953): 13–27, at p. 21; further on the debate, Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 142–54; Jason BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, vol. 2: *Making a “Catholic” Self, 388–401 CE* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 122–63.

Augustine's Pauline commentaries cluster in 394/95: *expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistolae ad Romanos*; *expositio ad Galatas*; *epistolae ad Romanos inchoate exposition*. In the period immediately following, he turns repeatedly to Romans in smaller essays, qq. 66–68 of *de diversis 83 quaestionibus* and finally, capping this period, he writes his response to Simplicianus of Milan (*ad Simplicianum*, 396; question 2 focuses on Romans 9, and the choice of Jacob over Esau), and begins – and, perhaps, completes – the *Confessions* (397).

Chr. 3.10,15–23,33).²² And, finally, Augustine became engaged in a long-running and rancorous argument with Jerome over the ethics of deceit, thus over the correct construal of the apostles' behavior, and Paul's account of it, as given in Galatians 2. What emerged from the intersection of all of these efforts, as we shall see, was Augustine's insistence on a Paul who *always* lived according the Jewish law, and who did so out of a principled piety.

Paul's Jewish practice, interestingly, was rehabilitated well before that of Jesus. Both in *epistulae ad Galatas expositio* (394/5) and in *de doctrina Christiana* (397), Augustine had presented a Jesus whose mission had defied the Law. Augustine writes:

Jesus Christ did not follow certain observances to the letter. [Augustine then refers to Mt 12:1–8 and parr, Jesus' disciples picking grain on the Sabbath.] And so by not observing those things [viz.: the Law's commands] in a carnal way, Jesus incurred the hatred of carnal people and indeed received the punishment laid down for those not observing them, but he did so in order to set those who believed in him free from the fear of such punishment. (*Exp. Gal.* 22.1–2)

The people who resolutely held fast to these signs [by interpreting them as halachic practices] were unable ... to tolerate the Lord, who disregarded them ... [and they refused to believe in him] since he refused to follow these practices in the way that they were observed by the Jews. (*de doct. Chr.* 3.6,23)

Jesus had publicly enacted his disdain for the Jewish understanding of the Law, says Augustine, not in order to somehow communicate the Law's mystical or spiritual meanings, but in order to free his Jewish hearers from their fear of *not* enacting the Law. The Law was indeed meant to be 'fulfilled,' by which Augustine seems to mean "enacted," but genuine fulfillment is possible only through love, never through fear. And the Law in and of itself, Augustine emphasizes, is good. "The Law is not to blame [for carnal understandings of it]. For the law is spiritual [Rom 7:14] and does not force anyone to understand it carnally" (*Exp. Gal.* 7.3–4). Thus both apostles, Paul and Peter, had continued to live according to their native customs, understanding their symbolic or Christological meanings, but abiding in them not out of fear, but out of love – a love oriented in part around pastoral concerns to reach out to other Jews.²³

²² Augustine's interest in a "historical"/*ad litteram* reading of scripture balances against his (no less great) commitment to typological and allegorical ("spiritual") interpretation. In the 390s, he was searching for a way to meaningfully construe a biblical passage within its own timeframe (that is, within the timeframe of the given episode, incident or story set in the past). The Bible, for Augustine, could not be only a repository of infinite symbols and mystical meanings: it also had to relate things that "actually happened" (*facta narratur*, as he will say in 399, *Faust.* 12.7). This hermeneutical principle will inform his position as he jousts with Jerome over how to understand Pater and Paul's argument in Galatians 2. See further Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 190–96 (*de doctrina christiana*), and 240–48 (there against Faustus, in defense of Jewish blood offerings in the days of the temple).

²³ Thus, addressing the issue of Paul's circumcising Timothy, whose mother was Jewish,

If both Peter and Paul were Law-observant, for what reason did Paul reprimand Peter in Antioch? In the background of Augustine's reconstruction, first framed in his Galatians commentary of 394/5, stands his distaste for the solution to this question that he had read in Jerome's. In Jerome's account of the apostles' *simulatio*, Peter's withdrawal from gentile believers, prompted by the visit of men from James, had led these gentiles to assume that they, too, were required to follow Jewish law (something that Peter knew not to be the case). Paul had then 'lied' when he performed his reprimand of Peter (since the two had arranged for this by agreement and in advance), and Paul lied yet again when he knowingly reported this incident in a false way, as if it had been a real confrontation, in Galatians 2. Augustine, acutely aware of the Manichees' theory of interpolations in Paul's letters (namely, that any passages seeming to speak positively about the Law or more generally about Jewish scriptures were inserted later by Paul's Judaizing opponents), could not tolerate the erosion of scriptural authority that he felt Jerome's reconstruction entailed. Writing to Jerome as he worked on his own commentary, Augustine warned:

I think that it is extremely dangerous to entertain the idea that the sacred books contain any lie anywhere; that is, the idea that the men who composed and wrote the Scriptures may have lied in their own books. . . . If we allow into that supreme authority even a single 'useful lie,' nothing will remain of those books because, whenever anyone finds something in them difficult to do or to believe, he will appeal to this same idea and attribute the passage to the plan or purpose of a lying author. (*Ep.* 28.3,3)

Augustine's letter never reached Jerome. *Ep.* 28 wandered. However, in the interval between this letter and *Ep.* 40, his next effort to engage Jerome on these issues, Augustine had become more committed to reading biblical texts *quam littera sonat*, "according to just what the words say" or "historically." These two concerns combined to make his second letter in defense of the Law and of Paul's Law-observance even more sharply worded (*Ep.* 40, c. 397). Pointing to 1 Cor 9:20 ("I have become to the Jews like a Jew in order that I may gain some"), Augustine insisted against Jerome that the apostle did not mean that he acted "as if," living by Jewish custom as some sort of ploy (*simulatio fallaciae*) to entice fellow Jews to the gospel. Paul "was, after all, a Jew; but having become Christian, he had not abandoned the *sacramenta* of the Jews, which that people had suitably and rightly received in that period when they were necessary. Therefore, he undertook their observance when he was an apostle of Christ" (*Ep.* 40.4,4). And he did so sincerely. The Law was not a problem, and keeping it was not a problem: the only problem was thinking wrongly *about* the Law, namely, that it

when the latter was already Christian (Acts 16:1–30), Augustine insists that Paul "did to avoid scandalizing his own people. He did not act hypocritically (*simulans*) in any way, but rather he acted out of that indifference with which he says, 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing'" (1 Cor 7:19; *Exp. Gal.* 41.6).

was necessary for salvation (the position taken by the men from James; loc. cit.; cf. *Exp. Gal.* 41.7).

Paul's personal Law observance demonstrated to other Jews drawn to the gospel that there was nothing dangerous or wrong in keeping their beloved inherited traditions: hope for salvation should not be placed in them, however, for that salvation signified by these *sacramenta* had been revealed already through Christ. The Law, in brief, was no longer *necessary* for salvation (though before Christ, as in the days of the Maccabees, it had been, *Ep.* 40.4,6). For that reason, Paul forbore from imposing these observances on gentile believers, whose unfamiliarity with them "would hold them back from faith" (40.4,4).

Therefore, concluded Augustine, the reason for Paul's rebuke to Peter had *nothing* to do with the latter's own Law-observance per se (40.4,5). Rather, Paul spoke out against Peter's acting as if keeping these customs were necessary for *gentile believers*, "forcing the gentiles to live like Jews" (Gal 2:14; so also *Exp. Gal.* 15.1–8). But gentiles were never obligated to Jewish law. Further, Augustine continued: When Paul spoke of looking at aspects of his former life as "loss and rubbish" (Phil 3:8), he certainly did not mean by this statement that he disdained the ceremonies of the Law, but only the errors and vices (like his persecution of the *ekklesia*) that his own, formerly unenlightened Law-observance had led him into (*Ep.* 40.4,6). But his sincerity in respecting Jewish custom could not be questioned, Augustine urged; otherwise

If [Paul] observed those sacraments because he pretended that he was a Jew in order to gain some Jews, why did he not also sacrifice with the gentiles, since he became like someone without the Law for those who were without the Law so that he might gain some, too? Rather, he observed the [Jewish] sacraments like someone who was a Jew by birth, and he said all this not in order that he might deceitfully pretend that he was what he was not, but because he thought that he should mercifully help [other Jews] in this way ... out of compassionate love. (*Ep.* 40.4,6)

Alas, *Ep.* 40 to Jerome also wandered. Meanwhile, in late 398, a powerful local initiative against North African catholics emerged in the newly-published and circulating *Capitula*, a writing by the Manichaean *electus* and bishop, Faustus. A brilliant work of apology and invective, the *Capitula* was designed to serve Manichaean missionaries in their disputes with catholic Christians (*Faust.* 1.2), primarily through a critique of both Old and New Testament texts. Manichees had their own scriptures, five books of Mani's teachings and visions. For them, the New Testament served more or less as apocrypha; and its writings, they said – and here Manichees took a page from Marcion – had long ago been compromised by Judaizing interpolations (e. g., 33.3). The Old Testament was much, much worse: its god, its heroes, its prophets, and its laws were literally beyond redemption (e. g., 22.4–5). In short, (Jewish) law could have nothing to do with (true, Christian – that is, Manichaean) revelation; true Christianity could only be that church wholly untainted by carnal Judaism.

To make his case, Faustus ingeniously combined two originally quite different traditions *contra Iudaeos*. The first was that of the dualist-Marcionite stream, with its critique of the morally unsavory Jewish god, of the unelevating Jewish texts, and of the gospel and the Pauline epistles corrupted by Judaizers. These positions would have been well known to Augustine, given his own decade-long allegiance to the sect. But together with this invective Faustus combined the *contra Iudaeos* polemics originally conceived to counter Marcion: the arguments of Justin, of Tertullian, and of catholic tradition more broadly. These had refuted Marcion's position by turning his critique of Jewish texts and of the Jewish god into a critique of the Jews themselves. Thus, the Jewish god was not morally obtuse: the Jews were. The Jewish laws were not carnal: the Jews were. And their carnality was exhibited nowhere more clearly than in the fleshliness of Jewish practice – interpreting “circumcision” as if the commandment were about body parts, not sexual modesty; interpreting Sabbath as if it meant literally a day of rest; interpreting laws about animal sacrifices as if God wanted blood, and laws about food ways as if God cared about food, and so on.

By holding onto these carnal Jewish books – by which he meant the gospels (written by *nescio quibus ... semi-iudaeis*, “obscure half-Jews,” *Faust.* 33.3) and Paul's corrupted letters, as well as to the Old Testament – catholics, Faustus argued, condemned themselves by being too much like the Jews, caught up in fleshly beliefs and practices of their own. And by *not* performing the Laws in the Jewish manner while insisting that the Jews' books were really theirs, he continued, catholics further revealed themselves as hypocrites. “I reject circumcision as disgusting,” wrote Faustus, “and so do you ... I reject sacrifice as idolatry; so do you. ... Both of us regard Passover and Sukkot as useless and needless ... Both of us despise and deride the various laws against mixing types of cloth, or species of animals ... You cannot blame me for rejecting the Old Testament, because you reject it as much as I do. ... You deceitfully praise with your lips what you hate in your heart. I'm just not deceitful, that's all,” (6.1). “Your Christianity, just like mine, is based on the belief that Christ came to destroy the law and the prophets. You prove this by what you do, though you deny it by what you say” (18.1). “You sip so daintily from the Old Testament that your lips are scarcely wet!” (32.7). By these accusations Faustus suavely insinuated that catholics and Manichees did, after all, unite in common cause: both churches were joined by their principled and mutual contempt for the teachings and the practices of Judaism.

Faustus' deft appropriation of catholic traditions *contra Iudaeos*, combined with his own concern to divine a way to read the Bible *ad litteram*, “historically,” spurred Augustine to astonishing originality. In the thirty-three books of his *contra Faustum*, Augustine mounted a fervent defense of the catholic double canon of scripture and of “fleshly” catholic doctrines – creation, incarnation, bodily resurrection – by mounting, as well, a defense of Jews and of Judaism. He did so by reclaiming, or rehabilitating, the idea of “flesh:” far from always and every-

where signaling moral turpitude and spiritual deficiency, Augustine now urged that “flesh,” its creation and its ultimate redemption, gave the measure of true Christianity. This rehabilitation of “flesh” in turn led him to recast his “historical Jesus,” who emerges as more scrupulously Law-abiding than were the Pharisees he tangled with (16.4, 29–30, 32). Christ rigorously kept God’s commandments not only in life but even in death, taking care to lay down his fleshly body before the Sabbath began, and to raise it only on Sunday, long after the Sabbath had passed (16.29). And the Jews of the first generation of the church – the apostles and Paul emphatically included – also continued to keep the Law according to Jewish custom, for as long as the Temple stood (19.16).

And it was pastorally important that these Jewish apostles be seen to live the Law, Augustine explained, not only to recruit fellow Jews, but *more* importantly, so that they could enlighten converting pagans. These gentiles, turning to Christ, had been instructed both that they had to abandon their old gods and that they were not to assume Jewish practices. But keeping the Law was not at all like worshipping idols, and the reasons for not worshipping idols had nothing in common with the reasons why these gentiles need not live like Jews. The source of Jewish practice was God; the source of pagan practice, demons. Indeed, Augustine insisted, the first gentile generation of the church even went so far as to Judaize, voluntarily assuming some Jewish dietary restrictions in order to accommodate the sensitivities of Jewish Christians (32.12; cf. Acts 15:29).

Finally, Augustine even defended current Jewish practice. “It is a miracle to be greatly respected (*revera multum mirabile*),” he continued, “that while all the nations subjected to Rome went over to the rituals of Roman worship, ... the Jewish nation under foreign monarchs whether pagan or Christian has never lost the sign of their law, by which they are distinguished from all other nations and peoples” (12.13). Some divine initiative must continue to preserve and to protect Jewish practice (12.13) – in fact, Augustine concluded, any monarch whether pagan or Christian who tries to impede Jews from living according to their traditions will meet with divine vengeance seven-fold. By so continuously enacting and preserving the antiquity and integrity of their own tradition while refusing to turn to Christ, Augustine concluded, the Jews, under God’s protection, performed as well a vital act of witnessing to the integrity and antiquity of (orthodox) Christian tradition, since their *not* receiving Christ was itself predicted in the church’s Old Testament. Thus the Jews qua Jews “testify to the truth [that is, the Christian interpretation of Jewish texts] by their not understanding it” (16.21).²⁴

It was in the course of his energetic rethinking of the merits of continuous Jewish practice that Augustine received, finally, Jerome’s response to his interpretation of Galatians 2 (*Ep.* 75, c. 403). Jerome had exploded. Invoking again the authority of Origen (75.3,4), Jerome proceeded to warn Augustine, darkly, against

²⁴ Summarizing Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 235–89.

Judaizing – the endpoint, he insinuated, of Augustine’s position. The apostles, and especially Peter and Paul, only *pretended* when they observed the Law, for various situational reasons: but they certainly knew that such observances were nugatory (75.3,9 and 10). “It is on account of fear of the Jews that Peter and Paul both equally pretended to observe the commandments of the Law” (75.3,11). “How well you succeed in defending Paul! He did not ‘pretend’ to hold the Jews’ error: he actually did hold it! ... What an original sense of mercy the Apostle demonstrates! When he wanted to turn Jews into Christians, he made himself into a Jew ... How pathetic, how deplorable are those [like Augustine] who, on account of their own belligerence and their love for the abolished Law, make the apostle of Christ into a Jew!” (75.4,17).

It is in his *Ep.* 82 (c. 405), his reply to Jerome’s hectoring, that Augustine gives his longest and fullest discussion and description of Paul the Law-observant apostle to the gentiles. Warning Jerome again of the dangers of imputing a “useful lie” to Paul and Peter,²⁵ Augustine proceeds to assert vigorously that Paul always and everywhere denied that gentiles should observe the Law like the Jews; but that he himself, as a Jew who was a Christian, always and everywhere observed the Law. “At that time, the [Christian] Jews were not to be kept from those rites as if they were wicked; and the [Christian] gentiles were not to be forced to those rites as if they were necessary” (82.2,9). The Law, God-given, was to be observed during “the time of the presence of the Lord in the flesh, and during the apostolic generation” (82.2,15).

Or, asked Augustine, was Jerome saying that Paul and all the other Law-observant apostles were right to keep the Law, but only if they did so as a pretense? If so, he continued, then Jerome was introducing a new heresy, worse even than that of the Ebionites or the Nazareans,²⁶ “since it arises not from error, but from a desire to deceive” (82.2,16). (Besides, he continued, a person motivated to take on Jewish practices chiefly by a love of deceit would have to be crazy: *insanire*.) Turning finally to Paul’s confrontation with Peter as described in Galatians 2, Augustine repeated firmly the interpretation that he had given against Jerome almost ten years earlier, in his commentary: Paul rebuked Peter not for keeping Jewish customs, but for trying to impose them on gentiles (*Ep.* 82.2,22; cf. *Exp. Gal.* 2.11,15). Both apostles were Law-observant, Augustine concludes; and Scripture abounded with examples where Paul in particular respected Jewish rites.

²⁵ “The Manichees claim, when they cannot twist the lucid teachings of the holy scriptures to some other meaning, that very many passages in these same scriptures must be false And yet even they do not attribute this falsity to the apostles who wrote them [as Jerome’s reading did], but rather to persons unknown who later corrupted the manuscripts. ... Does not your holy wisdom understand how great an opportunity would lie open to their malice were we to say that the apostles’ letters had been falsified not by others, but by themselves?” *Ep.* 82.2,6.

²⁶ These were two sects of Law-observant Jewish-Christians. It is unclear to me whether these terms – certainly by the fifth century – represent actual groups, or whether they are heresiological constructs used to define deviance from orthodoxy.

Conclusion

Christ's purpose in coming, according to Origen, was precisely to separate "the ceremonies of Jewish law" from the Bible (see above, p. 75). Jewish practice literally embodied defective Jewish readings of scripture: superficial, literal, fleshly. Christ, however, taught the spiritual meanings of the Law for the most part only after his resurrection. The apostles, and Paul himself, nonetheless (though perhaps only occasionally) honored these observances, though for an eminently practical reason: they wanted to draw Jews into the movement, and knew that a demand to their kinsmen to abandon the Law would work against the mission to Israel. At the end of the day, however (looking at Romans 11:26), Origen asserted, all Israel – meaning all Jewish Israel – would be included in final redemption.

Christ's purpose in coming, according to Augustine, was to educate his followers to love the Law rather than to fear it, or to fear those who policed compliance with it: Law can be truly fulfilled only through love. But traditional Jewish practice was itself appropriate, and Christ himself, as well as the apostles and Paul, sincerely preserved their rites and traditions for the length of first generation of the church. Their piety addressed a practical pastoral goal: to educate gentile converts that the Law itself was good, though no longer necessary for salvation; and that Jewish practices had nothing in common with pagan ones, which had to be at all times and places repudiated. At the end of the day, however (looking at Romans 11:26), Augustine asserted, all 'Israel' – meaning not ethnic Israel, but that eschatological body of Jews and gentiles within the church of the saints who were predestined to salvation – would be included in final redemption.²⁷

Of the two theologians, it was Augustine who conceived the more robust and resoundingly positive endorsement of Jewish observance, thus of a Paul who was 'lawful' rather than (as Marcion, Tertullian, Jerome, and Faustus all urged) 'lawless.' His position was all of a piece with his larger projects: to read scripture *ad litteram*, and as *facta narratur* (*Faust.* 12.7), "historically;" to insist on the flesh as the locus and focus of Christian redemption; to insist on history itself as the primary arena of God's creative and redemptive acts. We see this more clearly

²⁷ After Adam's sin, wrote Augustine, "the whole of mankind is a condemned lump, for he who committed the first sin was punished, and along with him all the stock which had its roots in him. The result is that there is no escape for anyone from this justly deserved punishment, except by merciful and undeserved grace. Humanity is divided between those in whom the power of merciful grace is demonstrated, and those in whom is shown the might of just retribution. Neither of these could be displayed in respect of all mankind, for if all had remained condemned ... then God's merciful grace would not have been seen ... and if all had been transferred from darkness to light, then the truth of God's vengeance would not have been made evident. Many more are condemned by vengeance than are released by mercy;" *Civ.* 21.12. On Rom 11:26 specifically ("all Israel will be saved"), and the way that Augustine limits "all Israel" to the saints, Jews and Gentiles both, see *Ep.* 149.2,19, to Paulinus of Nola; discussed in Fredriksen, *Augustine*, 325–28.

by framing his earlier writings, which discuss Paul explicitly, with his two latter masterpieces, *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* and *The City of God*.

In those two huge works, Augustine set out his ideas of the soul's relation to the body (both had been created together, and would be together forever in eternity), of the souls' relation to time (souls were born as bodies were born, serially and through time), and of time's relation to eternity (time began with creation, and would end only in and as the eschaton, swallowed up in the eternity of redemption – and of damnation). And it is within those two works that Augustine frames his theology of predestination. Little wonder that only a small portion of Israel according to the flesh will be saved: only a small portion of catholics will be saved (and no Christians outside of the true – that is, the catholic – church will be saved). How much of humanity will be saved? Only that much that will show forth God's mercy. How much will be damned? Enough to showcase God's justice. It is a bleak vision, and a sad one.²⁸

Origen's remarks on Paul, on Jewish observance, and on the redemption of all Israel in turn have to be framed by a prior and broader work of his, his shattered masterpiece *On First Principles*, the first systematic theology in Christian history (c. 225). There Origen set out his views on God, creation, time, and revelation. Unlike Augustine, Origen held that all souls eternally preexisted with God. God loves every soul equally – his fairness is the index of his justice – and God wants all souls to be saved.

When all souls 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 (*Princ.* 2.1, 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. *Even Satan will repent and so be saved* (1.6, 5–9; 3.5, 5–6). When that happens, 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. In eternity, gender, social class and ethnicity are sloughed off: the soul is beyond and above such distinctions (cf. Gal 3:28). If everyone is saved, if even Satan is saved, then it is no surprise that all ethnic Israel is saved as well.²⁹ Origen's is a commodious vision, and a profoundly optimistic one.

²⁸ For a review and a comparison of Augustine's and Origen's respective ideas about final redemption, Paula Fredriksen, *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 97–134.

²⁹ The scope of Origen's vision, which exempts no soul from salvation, makes his endorsement of ethnic Israel's redemption a little less extraordinary, a point missed evidently by Jeremy Cohen, "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation: Romans 11:25–29 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis," *HTR* 98 (2005): 247–81.

What is the lesson for us from our quick tour of the patristic Paul, as we quest for the Paul of history? What emerges from these ancient quests for the historical Paul is the way that the theology of the individual thinker, in intense relation to other rival theologies, had a determinative effect on many of their results. Would either Origen or Augustine have asserted their respective “lawful Pauls” were they *not* contesting Marcionite (or Marcion-influenced) “lawless” constructions? How much of the legacy of *contra Iudaeos* rhetoric influenced, for good and for ill, their respective readings?

Despite these extra-historical considerations and priorities, though, both men presented an apostle who in many ways conforms to what some 20th- and 21st-century New Testament scholars now argue, namely, that Paul himself always continued to live as a Jew.³⁰ The positions of these two ancient theologians are of course neither critically nor historically validating. But still – how bad a thing can it be, to have both Origen and Augustine (in some sense!) on one’s side?

³⁰ See the essays assembled in Mark Nanos and Magus Zetterholm, eds. *Paul within Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); also Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). The argument was already made by Albert Schweitzer in 1931: “[Paul] himself – we must not allow his protestations that he had become a Greek to the Greeks to introduce any confusion on this point – continued to live as a Jew,” *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1953), 196.