

Introduction

Jews, Former Gentiles, Israelites

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Messiah Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

And thus all Israel will be saved.

Romans 11:26

Paul's thought contains one overarching difficulty, and he himself was aware of it: how does God's recent revelation in Christ relate to his former revelations to Israel?

E. P. Sanders¹

A little over a century ago, Albert Schweitzer suggested that providing an explanation for how a small Jewish sect proclaiming a rabbi from the backwater town of Nazareth to be the messiah of Israel so quickly transitioned to a movement primarily involving non-Jews was “the great and still undischarged task which confronts those engaged in the historical study of primitive Christianity.”² “The primary task,” Schweitzer says, “is to define the position of Paul,”³ the Jewish teacher who declared himself “apostle of nations/gentiles”⁴ and insisted on the inclusion of

¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* (2001), 52.

² Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* (1912), v. Further: “The system of the Apostle to the Gentiles stands over against the teaching of Jesus as something of an entirely different character, and does not create the impression of having arisen out of it. But how is such a new creation of Christian ideas – and that within a bare two or three decades after the death of Jesus – at all conceivable? . . . This want of connection must have some explanation” (vii).

³ Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, x.

⁴ Rom 11:13; cf. Gal 2:8–9; Rom 15:16, 18. See E. P. Sanders, “Patterns of Religion in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism” (1973).

non-Jews as equal members in the communities of Jesus-followers. Despite significant advances over the past century, the position of Paul has remained difficult to define and has been the subject of significant scholarly reappraisal in recent decades. Paul's distinctive insistence on the inclusion of uncircumcised "gentiles" (that is, non-Jews) as full members of communities devoted to following Jesus as the messiah of Israel served as a key pivot point in the transition from a small Jewish sect to the primarily gentile movement a generation later.⁵ But the rationale for that inclusion – and how it fits with God's plan for Israel as Paul understands it – has continued to engender considerable inquiry and debate.⁶

That is not to say that no progress has been made, as much that could be taken for granted in Schweitzer's day has been weighed and found wanting. For example, even a generation ago, most scholarly work could presume a traditional (mostly Protestant) view in which Paul understood Jesus to have abolished the Torah, resulting in the universal "law-free" message of "justification by faith" as opposed to Jewish "legalism" or "works-righteousness" – that is, the idea that one must observe the Torah to achieve God's favor through one's righteous works, a task Paul allegedly found onerous and impossible before his "conversion" to "Christianity." In this model, the inclusion of gentiles in the new Christian community is therefore a natural outgrowth of Paul's realization that salvation could not be achieved through obedience to the Torah – which Christ abolished – but is instead freely available to anyone who believes in Christ without regard for works. Consequently, non-Jews now have the same access to salvation as Jews, whose "legalism" or "works-righteousness" provides the foil for Paul's universal message. In this model, Paul's new "Christian religion" has superseded "Judaism,"⁷

⁵ See the excursus at the end of this chapter for discussion of the difficulties involved in the translation of the terms "Jews" and "gentiles."

⁶ For summaries and assessments of some of the recent trends in this area, see Matthew Novenson, "Whither the Paul within Judaism *Schule*?" (2018); Magnus Zetterholm, "Paul within Judaism" (2015); N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (2015); Wright, "Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship" (2012); John M. G. Barclay, "Paul, Judaism, and the Jewish People" (2011); Christopher Zoccali, *Whom God Has Called* (2010); Christine Gerber, "Blicke auf Paulus" (2010); Gunther Wenz, "Old Perspectives on Paul" (2010); Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul* (2009); Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, "Jewish Interpretation of Paul in the Last Thirty Years" (2008). For an older but still relevant summary of these issues, see Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles* (1997), esp. 3–27.

⁷ "Judaism" is another problematic term, in part because of centuries of baggage in which it has served to describe the (alleged) religious or cultural characteristics of Jews over and against Christianity. But the term is also difficult because it is an abstract category

and the church has become the “true Israel,”⁸ effectively replacing the disobedient Jews who have refused the gospel.

Though this reading has by no means disappeared, it can no longer be taken for granted because of many faults found in its foundation – most notably in the alleged opposition between “Jewish legalism” and Paul’s message of “grace” and “justification by faith.” First, as Krister Stendahl famously pointed out in “Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” the apostle gives no indication of having had a guilty conscience or of having had any difficulty keeping the Torah – a view Stendahl identifies as having derived from Augustine rather than Paul. Instead, Paul had a “rather ‘robust’ conscience,”⁹ declaring that he had been “blameless with respect to righteousness which is in the Torah” (Phil 3:6) and continuing to emphasize the importance of obedience throughout his letters, warning his hearers that all will reap what they have sown (Gal 6:7–8) and will be judged based on works (2:6–11). It is therefore unlikely that Paul arrived at the doctrine of justification by faith in opposition to obedience to Torah and then concluded that gentiles could be included on that basis.

Then, even more significantly, E. P. Sanders’ landmark *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) demonstrated that Jewish belief and practice in Paul’s day did not resemble the traditional legalistic image presumed by Pauline interpreters, making “works-righteousness” an implausible foil for Paul’s gospel.¹⁰ This more robust understanding of the Judaism of

describing the customs, culture, and boundaries of a particular social group (or set of groups) and because the characteristics of “Judaism” are variegated and encompass both what would typically be called “ethnic” and “religious” categories today. Where that term appears in this study, it refers to customs, practices, and theological perspectives common among those identified as *Ioudaioi* in the Second Temple period. On the difficulties inherent in the term “Judaism,” see Michael L. Satlow, “Defining Judaism” (2006); Satlow, “A History of the Jews or Judaism?” (2005); Seth Schwartz, “How Many Judaisms Were There?” (2011); and the discussion in the excursus at the end of this chapter.

⁸ See Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (1986), 65–97; Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race?* (2005), 94–115.

⁹ Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West” (1963), 200; a revised English version of Stendahl, “Paulus och Samvetet” (1960).

¹⁰ Sanders was not the first to challenge the image of Judaism as a legalistic theology of merit but rather built on the work of earlier scholars such as C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul* (1914); George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism” (1921); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1955); Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (1961); and others. Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (1974), 244–48, also anticipates Sanders’ more extended treatment in many respects. But whereas their protests had gone largely unheeded, Sanders synthesized a tour de force that could no longer be ignored, resulting

Paul's day led to a "New Perspective" on Paul's gospel.¹¹ Nevertheless, most proponents of the New Perspective have still operated from the assumption that Paul must have found *something* wrong with Judaism, following Sanders in understanding Paul and Judaism as representing two distinct "patterns of religion."¹² With "Jewish legalism" no longer an obvious foil, many have since relocated Paul's objection to Judaism from the supposed *rationale* for the inclusion of gentiles to the *fact* of the inclusion of gentiles itself. That is, Paul rejected Jewish insistence on ethnic identity as a necessary component of membership among God's people in favor of a racially inclusive Christianity exemplified in his declaration that "in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal 3:28).¹³ Essentially, rather than rejecting legalism, Paul's gospel is based on a rejection of racism, and the core of his gospel was, in N. T. Wright's words, "grace, not race."¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn explains:

For the Judaism which focused its identity most fully in the Torah, and which found itself unable to separate ethnic identity from religious identity, Paul and the Gentile mission involved an irreparable breach.¹⁵

At its historic heart Christianity is a protest . . . against any and every attempt to mark off some of God's people as more holy than others, as exclusive channels of divine grace.¹⁶

This model does have the advantage of not setting Paul against the imaginary and anachronistic bogeyman of legalism, but it lacks one strength of the traditional reading: a plausible explanation for Paul's objection to ethnocentrism. Instead, this approach simply presumes that

in a paradigm shift. See also Daniel R. Langton, "The Myth of the 'Traditional View of Paul'" (2005).

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn is usually credited with popularizing the term "New Perspective on Paul" in his 1982 Manson Memorial Lecture, published as "The New Perspective on Paul" (1983), though it would be more accurate to call it a new perspective on Judaism for Pauline studies. See the summary in Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism* (2015), 42–46.

¹² The phrase comes from the subtitle of Sanders, *PPJ*. Elsewhere, Sanders (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [1983], 207–8) concludes that "Paul's break [with Judaism] is clearly perceptible."

¹³ E.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law* (1990), 194–203, 215–41; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (1993), 240, 243, 247; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant* (2015), 278–80; Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (1994).

¹⁴ Wright, *Climax*, 238.

¹⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism* (1991), 230.

¹⁶ Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 258–59.

Paul's encounter with Jesus must have caused him to realize that openness and inclusiveness are *prima facie* superior to exclusivity and particularity, an unlikely conclusion for a Jew living in the first-century Roman Empire.

It is also hardly mere coincidence that a group of Western scholars from the late twentieth century discovered that Paul's gospel was really about inclusiveness and opposition to racism. "Inclusiveness" is, after all, arguably the highest virtue in postmodern Western culture. The New Perspective has therefore exchanged an antithesis more at home in the sixteenth century (merit/grace) for one better suited to the twenty-first century (racism/inclusiveness).¹⁷ By interpreting Paul's message as the gospel of inclusiveness,¹⁸ Paul's interpreters have once again looked down the deep well of history and seen their own faces reflected back at them.¹⁹ Moreover, by trading "legalism" for "ethnocentrism," much New Perspective scholarship ironically and unfortunately represents a retreat to the anti-Jewish tendencies of pre-Schweitzer Pauline scholarship, effectively portraying Paul as the enlightened apostle of modern liberalism, embracing inclusive and progressive ideals over and against a regressive Jewish particularism.²⁰

¹⁷ David I. Starling, *Not My People: Gentiles as Exiles in Pauline Hermeneutics* (2011), 214.

¹⁸ See, for example, the discussion in Jacob Neusner, "Was Rabbinic Judaism Really 'Ethnic'?" (1995), 283.

¹⁹ This image is often associated with Schweitzer but in fact derives from George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Cross-roads* (1909), 49.

²⁰ "Most scholarship takes as its starting point the position that Israel in the Judaism of that time is ethnic, but the Gospel, universal. Christianity improved on Judaism by bringing to all the peoples of the world what had originally been kept for one people alone . . . The contrast between the ethnic Judaism and the universalist Christianity derives from the presentation of Israel by the apostle Paul" (Jacob Neusner, "The Premise of Paul's Ethnic Israel" [1995], 2). See also Mark D. Nanos, "Introduction" (2015), 6–7; Kathy Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged* (2004), 123–60. On the anti-Jewish perspectives of the pre-Schweitzer era, see Barclay, "Paul, Judaism, and the Jewish People," 190; for an example, see Ferdinand Christian Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (1878), 1.47. Such an image of a progressive Paul at odds with regressive, racist Judaism is obviously coherent with the anti-Semitic zeitgeist leading up to the Holocaust, as the Jews were maligned for their unwillingness to leave behind their Jewish particularities and fully assimilate into their wider national societies, as was expected upon their emancipation. See Steven Beller, *Antisemitism* (2007), 32–33; David Jan Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (1987), 3–40; Jonathan M. Hess, "Jewish Emancipation and the Politics of Race" (2006); Hess, *Germans, Jews, and the Claims of Modernity* (2002); David Lee Brodbeck, *Defining Deuschtum* (2014), 43–52. For a closer look at how modern concerns have imposed on the interpretation of Rom 9–11, see Klaus Haacker, "Das Thema von Römer 9–11 als Problem der Auslegungsgeschichte" (2010).

That Paul's gospel amounts to a rejection of particularism is also difficult to square with the troublesome fact that Paul himself established groups set apart by and to the God of Israel.²¹ Inasmuch as Paul's own groups had clear boundaries and expectations of insiders in distinction from outsiders, Paul does not reject particularity in principle. The dispute between Paul and his opponents does not pit "particularism" versus "inclusion" nor does it call into question whether there should be a particularist, exclusive people of God at all. Instead, the debate concerns the proper location of the boundaries for the exclusive community of God's people; and although many have assumed Paul found something wrong with Judaism leading to his conversion to Christianity, Paul presents his transition as a *revelation* and a *call* from Israel's God in continuity with the theological framework he had previously embraced.²² Paul never presents himself as having departed from Israel or as having created something entirely new, instead declaring, "I too am an Israelite!" (Rom 11:1) and continuing to treat the Torah and Israelite prophets as authoritative scripture.²³

Paul's own arguments are also strikingly ethnocentric, starting with his claim of Jewish priority in the gospel: the gospel is "first to the Jew and then to the Greek" (e.g., Rom 1:16). And contrary to Sanders' conclusion that Paul "denies two pillars common to all forms of Judaism: the election of Israel and faithfulness to the Mosaic law,"²⁴ Paul vigorously defends Israel's special status, concluding three full chapters defending God's fidelity to Israel (Rom 9–11) with the declaration "thus all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26). This ethnocentric dictum closely parallels the declaration of the Mishnah that "All Israel has a part in the world to come" (m. Sanh. 10:1) and would hardly be surprising from any other Jewish thinker of the period. But it would be an exceedingly strange sentiment coming from someone who denies the election of Israel.

Some modern interpreters have found Paul's declaration of Israel's salvation so foreign to Paul's thought as to suggest – despite the lack of any textual evidence – that it must be a later interpolation,²⁵ while others

²¹ See Nanos, "Introduction," 7–8; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs* (2007), 79–91.

²² See Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (1976), 7–23.

²³ See Anders Runesson, "The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul" (2015) and Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?" (2010), 129–31.

²⁴ Sanders, *PLJP*, 207–8.

²⁵ E.g., Christoph Plag, *Israels Wege zum Heil* (1969), 41. See also John C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (1975), 177.

have concluded that Paul here shows a “startling lack of logical consistency,”²⁶ backtracking on his prior claims about the equality of all before God.²⁷ Still others have suggested that Paul, aware his arguments could be taken too far, suddenly makes a defense for the very thing against which he has been arguing in order to prevent such abuse,²⁸ with Romans 9–11 and its conclusion (as Sanders declares) “a desperate expedient” to resolve “a problem of conflicting convictions.”²⁹

Recognizing this problem with the typical New Perspective approach, some scholars have proposed that rather than comparing “Paul and Judaism,” it is better to think of “Paul within Judaism.”³⁰ In this approach, Paul is understood as never having departed from Judaism at all. Instead, rather than Judaism serving as a “background” or a foil for the creation of something entirely new, Paul is understood as remaining part of a larger Jewish discourse, retaining his commitment to Israel’s special election and the divine authority of the Torah, and continuing to practice Judaism as he understood it. Some taking this approach have suggested that Paul’s gospel is ultimately focused on fixing the “gentile problem” – that is, the idolatrous and immoral nature shared by gentiles (but not Jews) that keeps gentiles from knowing God.³¹ In this framework, both Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus must keep God’s commands, but these commands differ for the two groups – Jews are “obligated to keep the whole Torah” (Gal 5:3), while gentiles are obligated to a smaller set of divine commands.³² Paul therefore argues against

²⁶ Terence L. Donaldson, “Riches for the Gentiles” (1993), 88.

²⁷ E.g., Heikki Räisänen, “Paul, God, and Israel” (1988), 182, 192–96; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (1987), xxiii; Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (1969), 126–27; W. D. Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel” (1977), 33; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles* (2007), 334. William Campbell (“Divergent Images of Paul and His Mission” [2000], 189) argues that Paul should not be held to modern standards of consistency and logic. Nevertheless, although it is possible that Paul’s arguments are contingent to the point of being contradictory or incoherent, this conclusion should only be a last resort.

²⁸ E.g., David Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel* (1995), 210.

²⁹ Sanders, *PLJP*, 198.

³⁰ See the recent collection of essays in Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul Within Judaism*. On this group as “the Radicals,” see Pamela Eisenbaum, “Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism” (2005), 232–33. Cf. Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul*, 127–63, under the subheading “Beyond the New Perspective.” See also Nanos, “Why Not Paul’s Judaism?”; William S. Campbell, “Perceptions of Compatibility between Christianity and Judaism in Pauline Interpretation” (2005); Bird and Sprinkle, “Jewish Interpretation of Paul”; Ehrensperger, *That We May Be Mutually Encouraged*, 177–202.

³¹ See especially Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (2016).

³² Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 11.

gentile circumcision because the Torah does not command gentiles to be circumcised but only the descendants of Abraham, specifically those within Israel, the heir of Abraham's covenant.³³ Similarly, Paul's other arguments about the inefficacy of "works of Torah" apply only to non-Jews, while Jews remain responsible to keep the Torah of Moses in the same way they had been before Jesus' death and resurrection.

The "Paul within Judaism" perspective has much to commend it, and this book will similarly argue that Paul never abandoned the theological, eschatological, and ethnic framework he held before he came to identify Jesus as Israel's messiah. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Paul declares that "both Jews and Greeks are all under sin" (Rom 3:9), that "all who are from works of Torah are under a curse" (Gal 3:10), that Moses administered "the ministry of death" (2 Cor 3:7), that "messiah is the end/goal [*telos*] of Torah" (Rom 10:5), and that God has broken off "natural branches" from his people due to infidelity (11:19–23). These statements and many others like them are difficult to square with the idea that Paul understands his gospel and ministry as applying only to pagans while Jews are to continue as before.

WHO ARE PAUL'S (FORMER) GENTILES?

Whether considering Paul as operating within Judaism or otherwise, a persuasive explanation for how Paul understands the status of uncircumcised Jesus-followers has remained especially elusive. On the one hand, Paul continues to distinguish between these uncircumcised individuals and Jews (e.g., Rom 11:13; Gal 2:14) and vigorously argues that gentiles should not undergo circumcision or attempt to become Jews (e.g., Gal 5:1–6). On the other hand, Paul's gospel requires that these persons abandon their own gods and traditional norms and practices, pledging loyalty to Israel's messiah and worshipping only the God of Israel – commitments and practices otherwise associated with Jewish ethnicity. Even more significantly, Paul also regularly applies Israelite language and

³³ Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian* (2009), 62–63. Others arguing along these lines (with some variation) include Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (1987); John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (2000); Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (1994); Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*; Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Paul's Interlocutor in Romans 2* (2003); Rafael Rodríguez, *If You Call Yourself a Jew* (2014); Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*; Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*; and Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (2017).

ethnic markers – even prophecies specifically about Israel – to these uncircumcised individuals (e.g., Rom 2:14–15; 9:26) and goes so far as to call them *former* gentiles (1 Cor 12:2), include them among the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29), and refer to them as descendants of biblical Israel (1 Cor 10:1).³⁴ These persons are therefore not Jews, but they are not exactly gentiles anymore,³⁵ and if they are descendants of biblical Israel, they cannot be “ex-pagan pagans,” either.³⁶

It should be noted that the idea that gentiles did not need to undergo circumcision or become Jews in order to worship the God of Israel or attain eschatological salvation was by no means unusual in early Judaism.³⁷ After all, there was a court of the nations at the temple to allow gentiles to worship YHWH, and the Prophets predicted that after Israel's restoration the nations would stream to Jerusalem and serve Israel's God. Consequently, the debate over whether gentiles should or must be circumcised only makes sense if it concerns gentiles becoming members of the covenant. Paul's opponents are advocating circumcision for adult gentiles as a means of incorporation in Israel's covenant, marking status transition from “gentile” to “Israelite.”³⁸ Paul could have

³⁴ On Paul's portrayal of gentiles in quasi-Israelite terms, see Starling, *Not My People*; Cavan W. Concannon, “*When You Were Gentiles*” (2014). That Paul includes former gentiles as descendants of biblical Israel in 1 Cor 10:1 is a significant problem for the idea that he sees them as incorporated into Abraham but not Israel.

³⁵ As observed by Joshua D. Garroway, “The Circumcision of Christ: Romans 15.7–13” (2012), 7–8.

³⁶ Pace Fredriksen, *The Pagans' Apostle*, 73–77. Although elsewhere emphasizing the ethnic nature of ancient Mediterranean deities and theology, Fredriksen argues that Paul is an exception, such that the “sharp dichotomy [between Israel and the nations] is resolved *theologically* but not *ethnically*” (116, emphasis original), despite the fact that Paul explicitly uses ethnic terminology to refer to his ex-pagan converts. For a critique of Fredriksen's concept of “ex-pagan pagans” theologically but not ethnically included in the people of God, see Denys N. McDonald, “Ex-Pagan Pagans? Paul, Philo, and Gentile Ethnic Reconfiguration” (2022) and the response of Fredriksen, “Paul, Pagans and Eschatological Ethnicities: A Response to Denys McDonald” (2022).

³⁷ See Nanos, “Why Not Paul's Judaism?,” 124–35; Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 99–115; Paula Fredriksen, “Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope” (1991); Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 60–74; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (1996), 438–39; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, “Lots of God-Fearers?” (1992); Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew” (1989), 20–26; John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (1983), 56–66; “Jews, Gentiles, and Synagogues in the Book of Acts” (1986).

³⁸ E.g., Jdt 14:10, which equates circumcision with being joined to Israel. On circumcision as the mechanism for full conversion, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (1999), 137–38, 156–58, 218–20; Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary”; Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 29–32. The frequency of conversions involving

responded by arguing that gentiles need not be incorporated into the covenant because they can and should be saved as gentiles outside Israel's covenant, but he does not. Nowhere does he suggest that these faithful gentiles are the fulfillment of the prophetic promises of the nations flocking to Jerusalem at the eschaton,³⁹ nor does he mention or cite the passages in which these promises occur.⁴⁰ He also nowhere argues that ethnic conversion is impossible, nor does he call attention to the timing of circumcisions or argue that circumcisions occurring after the eighth day are not efficacious for converting a gentile into a Jew.⁴¹ Quite the contrary, he argues that such circumcision of gentiles does in fact bring them under the Torah (Gal 5:2–4), effectively putting them in the same position as Jews absent the redemption granted by Jesus and administered by the spirit (Gal 3:10–13).

Rather than objecting that conversion and circumcision cannot make gentiles into Jews, Paul says that the problem with the circumcision gospel

circumcision in this period is unknown, and there is considerable debate regarding the alacrity with which Jews proselytized in antiquity. See Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (1996), 288–382; Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic period* (1968), 13–24; Scot McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles* (1991), 49–77; Martin D. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion* (1994), 60–90.

³⁹ As suggested by Sanders, *PLJP*, 171–206; Fredriksen, “Apocalyptic Hope”; among others. See the discussion in Chapter 7.

⁴⁰ Donaldson, “Riches for the Gentiles,” 92.

⁴¹ As suggested by Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 64–102. Thiessen (*Contesting Conversion* [2011], 67–86) argues that the book of Jubilees provides evidence that some Jews regarded any circumcision not performed on the eighth day as inadequate for Israelite membership, making it impossible for a gentile to become an Israelite via adult circumcision. But the primary texts on which Thiessen builds his argument do not have proselytes in view but only native-born Jews and Israelites. For example, when Jub 15:25 says, “there is no circumcision of the days, and no omission of one day out of the eight days,” the dispute is with other Jews who might, for example, object to circumcising on the Sabbath, resulting in circumcision on the wrong day. Jubilees does state that those circumcised after the eighth day are “meant for destruction” (15:26), but the condemnation is because “he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God,” which presumes an initial location within the covenant, casting doubt on whether such a condemnation could apply to a proselyte, especially since Jub 15:12–13 also commands the circumcision of adult slaves, who then appear to be included within the covenant (“my covenant will be in your flesh for an eternal ordinance” immediately follows this command). The application of Jubilees’ statements about eighth-day circumcision to proselytes is therefore questionable at best. See the similar critiques in Genevieve Dibley, “The Making and Unmaking of Jews in Second Century BCE Narratives” (2021), esp. 13–15, and Shaye Cohen’s review of *Contesting Conversion* in *CBQ* (2013). In any case, the circumcision debate must have concerned the question of whether (and/or how) gentiles may attain full Israelite status. For more on Jubilees (a Hebrew work retelling the stories of Gen 1–Exod 24 generally dated to the second century BCE), see James C. VanderKam, “Recent Scholarship on the Book of Jubilees” (2008).