A Pauline Approach to the Theology of Religions

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Abstract

The letters of Paul in the New Testament offer a number of insights which are relevant to the Theology of Religions, a branch of Christian Theology concerned with articulating a view of other religions and their adherents. This thesis seeks to offer a constructive approach to Paul's theology in relation to contemporary Theology of Religions and argue for an exclusivist view, positing that faith in Christ is uniquely the mode of salvation and that there is no basis in Paul's theology for confidence in other religions as mediatory of salvation or divine revelation. Paul broadly aligns with what is known as the exclusivist view in the Theology of Religions, seeing faith in Christ as necessary for salvation. Paul views both Jew and Gentile non-Christians as standing under divine judgement and oppressed by sin. Gentile religion is viewed as an idolatrous response to natural revelation, and can be demonic in character. It is unable to offer true knowledge of God or to effect salvation. Salvation is achievable only by divine action to rescue, which Paul believes only occurs through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul's theology divides humanity into two groups using his Adam-Christ dichotomy, with Christians seen as united to Christ and all others being associated with Adam. Conversion is a transfer from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ, which implies an ontological transformation at the deepest levels of the human person.

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πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.

(1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Abbreviations

BDAG	*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (1999 Bauer, Danker, Arndt, & Gingrich)
BDB	*A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1907 Brown, Driver, & Briggs)
BDF	*A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (1961 Blass, Debrunner, & Funk)
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*
ESV	Holy Bible, English Standard Version
FC	Fathers of the Church series, Catholic University of America Press
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOTSup	Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSPL	*Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters*
JTI	*Journal for Theological Interpretation*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell, Scott & Jones)
Louw-Nida	*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Louw & Nida)
NAC	New American Commentary
NET	Holy Bible, New English Translation
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	Holy Bible, New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NRSV	Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version
OTP	James Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
Str-B	*Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* ([Strack], Billerbeck)
WA	*Martin Luthers Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe.
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	*Wissenschafltliche Untersuchungent zum Neuen Testament*

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The Theology of Religions in Recent Christian Theology

The "Theology of Religions" is, broadly speaking, a field of Christian theology which attempts to understand the non-Christian "religions"[1] and/or to articulate a Christian approach to adherents of these. Alan Race has defined it as "the attempt, on the part of Christian theologians, to account theologically for the diversity of the world's religious quest and commitment."[2] The emphasis here is on the theological nature of the work; the phenomenon of religious diversity—both globally and within most contemporary communities—might be approached through quite a number of academic disciplines and sub-disciplines, and the "Theology of Religions" represents an attempt to do so through Christian theology. To a large extent, the approach taken towards defining the goal of theological work in this area is a function of some scholars' wider theological commitments, and involves many different strands of Christian theology—including theology proper, soteriology, Christology, revelation, ethics, eschatology, and theological anthropology. It is thus differentiable from non-theological and non-Christian responses to the phenomena of religious diversity, although other theological traditions may in fact develop their own "theologies of

[1] "Religion" is itself a contested term; see p.11ff. below. Cf. Peter Byrne, "Religion and the Religions," in *The World's Religions* (ed. S. Sutherland; London: Routledge, 1988), 3-5 Victoria S. Harrison, *Religion and Modern Thought* (London: SCM, 2007), 15-20. It seems to me that the notion of "religion" as a genus, of which Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and so on are species (but atheism, secularism, Marxism or humanism are not) will bear little serious scrutiny, yet is no less persistent and widespread as a result. Tillich makes this point as early as 1958, in Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of faith* (New York, NY: Harper, 1958), 58. See also n.3 below.

[2] Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 3.

religion" in line with that tradition's own theological commitments and concerns. Even the allegedly-neutral, quasi-sociological approach of "Religious Studies" tends to have, at least covertly, its own strong theological commitments when dealing with the phenomena of religious diversity; as Timothy Fitzgerald claims, "Religious Studies" as a discipline has tended to "pigeonhole" other religions into the categories provided by Christianity,[3] as well as disguising rather than truly setting aside prior theological commitment. There is, Fitzgerald argues, "no coherent non-theological theoretical basis for the study of religion as an academic discipline"[4] and much of what purportedly neutral academics do when they analyse religious phenomena is, in essence, theology.[5] Recognising this, not only the validity, but also the desirability of confessional and specifically theological attempts to understand and articulate Christian responses to religious diversity—that is, the Theology of Religions—becomes evident. Arguably this attempt to understand the nature and purpose of non-Christian religious traditions vis-à-vis Christianity has been a persistent, if latent, theme in Christian theology since the first century, as I hope to demonstrate in the Pauline writings. Certainly for many Christians in history it has been a

[3] Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 4. John Milbank, "The End of Dialogue", in D'Costa, Gavin (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 174-191, argues similarly that "construals of religion as a genus … embody covert Christianizations" (p. 176). This is, perhaps, given practical effect most starkly in Frykenberg's claim that the influence of Christian missionaries and Western scholars of religion during the period of British Imperial rule in India resulted in the "construction" of Hinduism as a single "religion", whereby (some) of the theological categories of Christianity, and the Enlightenment philosophical tradition, were eventually adopted into the theologies of the native religion(s) of the sub-continent; Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Constructions of Hinduism at the Nexus of History and Religion," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (1993): 523-550. Cf. also Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 72ff.

[4] Fitzgerald, *Ideology of Religious Studies,* 1.

[5] Ibid., 7.

practical as well as theoretical issue; and a certain understanding of non-Christian religions is implicit in the practice of Christian mission.

Both proponents of "innovative" views (pluralism, deep pluralism, parallelism…) and those of more conservative or "traditional" (used here in the sense of alignment with the wider "Great Tradition" rather than with respect to a particular denominational tradition) views tend to present the story of the development of the field of the Theology of Religions in precisely such terms: that is, it is generally understood that the overwhelming majority of Christians and Christian theologians up to, and for much of, the twentieth century, took a view which would now be called "exclusivist".[6] Other religions would be understood as wholly or significantly erroneous in their teaching; as worshipping "false gods"; and as unable to provide salvation. In the second half of the twentieth century, a wider reappraisal of the relation of Christian theology to other religions began to take place, with the development of different, more "open" perspectives within Christian theology. This, like all generalizations, tells a partial truth at best. Judaism, in particular, would

[6] Paul Knitter concedes the historical dominance of such views in seeing both what he calls "Conservative Evangelicalism" and "Mainline Protestantism" as proposing, both historically and at his time of writing (1985), albeit with different emphases and details, a scheme where Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, and mission to practitioners of other religions is imperative; Roman Catholic theology, too, is seen by Knitter as implicitly "exclusivist" prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) *No Other Name?*, Paul F. Knitter, *No other name? : a critical survey of Christian attitudes toward the world religions* (American Society of Missiology series no 7; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 1-2, 75-77, 97, 101-107, 120-122. Gavin D'Costa agrees broadly that an "exclusivist" perspective has a greater weight of historical tradition behind it: Gavin D'Costa, "Theology of Religions," in *The Modern Theologians* (ed. D. F. Ford, with Rachel Muers; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 626-644. Paul Hedges demurs, claiming that this is a "wildly overstated" case and points to the existence of universalist and allegedly inclusivist positions held by some early church writers (Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions* (London: SCM, 2010), 23). Universalism has historically been a minority position, and is not the same thing as inclusivism or pluralism; further it is tendentious whether or not Augustine and other writers named by Hedges were, in fact, inclusivists. Daniel Strange lists Augustine among historic exclusivists: Daniel Strange, "Exclusivisms," in *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths* (eds A. Race and P. Hedges; London: SCM, 2008), 40.

have often been thought of slightly differently to other religious traditions. The existence of various versions of a belief in universal salvation through the history of the Church, though admittedly a minority opinion, is also missed by too generalized a story about Christian views of other religions, as is the way in which the attempt to delimit the extent of salvation with respect to human persons (that is, the answer to the question, Who are saved?) is often a function of a wider soteriological debate.[7] And the development of the Enlightenment's concept of religion as a genus of which Christianity was a species, other religions sharing to various extents in the same "essence", seen in the work of Ludwig Feuerbach, Rudolf Otto, Friedrich Schleiermacher,[8] and others, represents (at least in principle) a significant departure from pre-Enlightenment theology. The assumption that all or most Christians prior to the twentieth century held one view of other religions ignores a considerable diversity of theological interpretations of religious diversity.[9] Nevertheless, it does appear that diversity has increased in the second half of the twentieth century both in terms of the development of genuinely innovative approaches, and in the more widespread appeal of those approaches.

[7] For example, the longstanding difference in Protestant theology between Calvinist and Arminian understandings of the nature of divine and human action in salvation, as expressed in the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610 and the Calvinist reply in the Canons of Dort (1619), led to differing understandings of election, and thus, the extent of salvation.

[8] Schleiermacher's position seems to have been that something good and Theistic called "religion" was found in many faiths, though in none did it appear untainted by error. It bears noting that Schleiermacher managed to affirm liberal Protestantism as the purest form of religion, in essentially a Theistic form, with other religions sharing a similar essence, while excoriating Roman Catholicism (in part) because of its exclusive claims to truth in the final chapter of *On Religion* (1799).

[9] Cf. Owen C. Thomas, *Attitudes Towards Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations* (London: SCM, 1969), 19-28.

In the decades following the Second World War, several factors stimulated a renewed interest for Christian theology in the questions surrounding religious pluralism.[10] In the West, mass immigration from largely non-Christian parts of the world meant that the phenomenon of religious pluralism became a more obvious fact of everyday life. At the same time, television and electronic media have enabled many Christians who live in Christian-majority areas of the world to appreciate, if only in a partial and restricted manner, the religious diversity of the world. Economic globalization and other long-term socio-political forces have added to an increasing consciousness of religious diversity as a phenomenon, as well as of living in a "global village" (some social commentators suggest the first video of the world from the moon in 1969—an event witnessed by much of the world's population and a majority of Westerners—provides a watershed moment for this consciousness).[11] Religious diversity is a phenomenon encountered by many Western Christians in their daily lives in a way—or so it is often claimed—that it has not been before. As John Habgood, the former Anglican Archbishop of York, puts it:

> "Other faiths used to belong to other lands. At home rival religious claims could safely be ignored. Or, if not ignored, patronized. The superiority of one's own faith was so evident that the alternatives could somehow be brought within its purview without posing any real theological or social threat. Today things are different. Different faiths are practised cheek by jowl in most parts of the world."[12]

Although the argument might be raised that Christian theology had previously had to encounter a great diversity of non-Christian religious traditions in the experience of Christian

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[10] Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 18-19, sees this period as a definable inflection point for both Protestant and Catholic theology.

[11] See Leonardo Boff, *Global Civilization: Challenges to Society and Christianity* (trans. A. Guilherme; London: Equinox, 2005), 21-29.

[12] John Habgood, in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Many Mansions: Interfaith and Religious Tolerance* (London: Bellew, 1992), vii.

explorers, merchants, missionaries and colonists (and, indeed, had developed considerable theological resources with which to parse this diversity),[13] the recent experience of increased religious diversity in the West is mentioned by some recent scholars as an impetus for theological reflection on other religions. The late pluralist scholar, John Hick mentions explicitly his experience in ministry in an area of Birmingham with a significant Sikh, Hindu and Muslim population as a significant formative influence upon his pluralist theology.[14] Paul Knitter argues that, in the development of globalization he perceives towards world citizenship, there is a concomitant responsibility to develop a "unitative pluralism" in which one's own religious tradition is seen as part of a global, pluralistic truth aiming at theological agreement, though not necessarily conformity.[15] Terry Blum notes that, despite people's general preferences for associating with people who are like them, the plurality of religions in modern Western societies make personal interactions across religious divides more likely.[16]

However, an increasingly religiously diverse environment in the West, occasioned by mass immigration and globalization, is hardly a sufficient explanatory factor for significant theological

[13] Against the popular misconception that the discovery in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of many millions of inhabitants of the Americas who had never encountered the Christian gospel occasioned a crisis of faith for European Christianity, Michael T. Ryan has demonstrated that this discovery was unproblematic for orthodox Christian belief, in "Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 4 (1981). Native inhabitants of the Americas were readily accommodated in the theological category of the "pagan". See also on attitudes to the native Americans, Wallace W. Marshall, *Puritanism and Natural Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 42-47, 67-68, 97; Marshall cites variety of Puritan and other Protestant authors who depict the native Americans in the category of "pagan".

[14] John Hick, *God Has Many Names: Britain's New Religious Pluralism* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 17-18.

[15] Knitter, *No Other Name?,* 9-13.

[16] Terry C. Blum, "Structural Constraints on Interpersonal Relations: A Test of Blau's Macrosociological Theory," *The American Journal of Sociology* 91 (1985): 511-512.

change. Greater familiarity with persons who practice another religion may raise the emotional stakes when considering the implications of a Theology of Religions, but does not change the essential issues involved. Arguments in favour of pluralism which rest on the simple assertion of the fact of greater religious diversity in contemporary Western societies are a theological version of Allport's influential "Contact Theory", which seeks to assert that prejudice against the "other" is founded upon isolation from and ignorance of the "other". "Contact Theory" asserts that greater contact between people from diverse groups, so long as it occurs on an equal socio-economic level, reduces isolation and ignorance and thus makes people more welcoming and tolerant of the "other" as their prejudices are dispelled.[17] However, Allport's "Contact Theory" does not seem to have been vindicated by events in the six decades which followed, with one recent large study by Robert Putnam concluding that increased social contact and increased diversity do not tend to engender positive attitudes towards the "other", but rather reduce social trust.[18] Putnam notes that religion has become less important in the United States as a line of social division, giving as an example the fact that Americans have become less denominationally-endogamous when selecting partners.[19] This, however, does not translate into the necessity of a more pluralist theological stance. As Christian Smith has argued in a study of American evangelicalism, exclusivism can persist even in a religiously plural environment because the mere fact of plurality does not mean individuals are forced into a pluralist theology. On the whole, Smith argues, individuals do not construct their theological views with reference to everyone they meet, but in relation to the

[17] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

[18] Robert D. Putnam, "*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century - the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 137-74.

[19] Ibid., 160.

norms of their own "reference group".[20] It is not as if earlier Christian theologians were unaware of the existence of other religions—Thomas Aquinas wrote about Islam[21] and Martin Luther produced a preface for the 1543 Latin translation of the Qur'an[22]—and the world of the New Testament itself was one with an immense plurality of religious practices and beliefs. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen acknowledges that the problem of religious pluralism is in this sense not new, citing John Bunyan's worries about faith given that Jews, Muslims, and others had equal certainty in their religious convictions. Kärkkäinen suggests that globalization and migration to the West are therefore more likely to have given a "new urgency" to the need for Christian theology to respond to the existence of other religions, rather than creating a hitherto unknown problem.[23] This is a more tenable claim, but does not seem sufficient to explain the development of some radically new perspectives in Christian theology. Habgood's claim that "today things are different" might be taken as suggesting that it is the mere scale of contemporary religious diversity in the West which has led to the (alleged) increasing plausibility of pluralism and other novel approaches. Not only is this problematic in being a particularly Western-centric perspective, it also seems to imply Christians forming religious minorities could not have thought their own faith superior. A consideration of the attitudes of sectarian movements, or historic Protestant–Catholic debate, not to mention the pre-Constantinian church, shows this to be a false assumption. Belief in the

[20] Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and thriving* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 106.

[21] *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.2.3.

[22] WA 53:569-572. Luther's concern in doing so was to educate Christians about the nature of Islam, in order to prevent them from converting to it. His views on Islam are ably summarized in Robert O. Smith, "Luther, the Turks, and Islam," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34, no. 5 (2007): 351-64.

[23] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 17-18.

superiority (whatever that is taken to mean in detail) of one's own religious tradition is not the preserve of the culturally dominant. Indeed, as Harold Netland claims, not only does recognizing the fact and extent of religious plurality ("religious diversity") not entail commitment to theological or philosophical pluralism, it does not even provide particularly good evidence for it.[24] Appeals to the fact of religious diversity may have an emotional force, but do not in themselves provide grounds for Pluralist approaches. It seems more likely that globalization is not the only factor at work. Postwar theological changes, and the development of some novel options in the Theology of Religions, have been driven not only by sociological change (the increasing religious diversity of the West and the phenomenon of globalization) but also philosophical concerns. The recent history of the Theology of Religions must therefore be seen within the broader story of the post-war period, changing ecclesial and political cultures, and the impact upon theology of postmodernity and (more recently) postcolonial theory.

Post-war theology had to deal with the significant and urgent questions posed for Christian theology by the Holocaust.[25] This remains a hotly-debated area of Christian theology today, and can in some cases become enmeshed with the Israel-Palestine conflict and the question of "Christian Zionism". Criticisms and defences of various Christian understandings of the relationship between Israel and the Church—whether covenantal, dispensationalist, supersessionist, "replacement", or other—have been a significant feature of post-war theology.

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[24] Harold A. Netland, "Religious Pluralism as Explanation for Religious Diversity," in *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview: Analysis, Assessment and Development* (eds D. Werther and M. D. Linville; London: Continuum, 2012), 25-49.

[25] The Hebrew term "Shoah" (calamity) is often used as it avoids the theological suggestions of sacrifice some hear in the term "Holocaust". I use "Holocaust" here as the generally-accepted term in English-language historiography for the Nazi genocide against Jews (and some other groups and individuals) and do not thereby wish to imply a specific theological interpretation of the events thus referred to.

These have frequently revolved around the interpretation of Paul's relationship to Judaism, and so will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

In the post-Holocaust environment, a significant change in the stance of the Roman Catholic Church was reached at the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). Karl Rahner and Hans Küng were significant participants in the conciliar proceedings and worked to articulate an "inclusivist" approach. Vatican II is generally, though not universally, understood as promoting an inclusivist approach, and moves away from the previous Roman Catholic position of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.[26] The most significant document in this regard is *Lumen Gentium*, which claims in paragraph 16 that the Jews remain included in the salvific plan of God, but also mentions the Islamic faith as co-worshippers of the same God (although the text remains ambiguous concerning their potential salvation).[27] In the preceding paragraph (15) the document has worked to articulate a theology of how non-Catholic Christians may be saved, and, while refusing to term Protestant denominations as proper "churches", it refers to them as salvific "ecclesial communities". It may be that the manner in which the theologians at Vatican II opted to affirm the salvation of Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Christians, without thereby conceding that they represent entirely valid "churches" in the Roman Catholic sense, also led inexorably towards openness towards other world religions.[28]

[26] Cf. Peter De May, "Recent Views of *Lumen Gentium*, Fifty Years After Vatican II," *Horizons* 39, no. 2 (2012): 252-281.

[27] Hans Küng interprets *Lumen Gentium* 16 as teaching that Muslims may be saved through the pious practicing of Islam: Hans Küng, *Christianity and World Religions: paths of dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 252-281.

[28] Cf. Küng, *Christianity and World Religions,* 440-441.

The Terminology of "Religions"

As suggested above (footnotes 1 and 3), what is meant by "religions" is not as straightforward as it might appear. Contemporary non-technical usage would suggest that "religions" are things like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism—what Brian Wilson terms the "lexical" definition of the term, derived by social consensus through a process of pointing out various members of the class, as opposed to consciously constructed definitions.[29] However, even with a loose and lexical definition, there are some hidden theological and sociological assumptions at play in such categorization. Part of the problem is that contemporary usages of religion rely on "covert Christianizations", to use John Milbank's phrase.[30] There is a growing body of scholarship pointing to the ways in which "religion" as a category in modern scholarly and everyday use is a product of the Western intellectual tradition, developed using Christianity as the paradigm "religion".[31] Wilfred Cantwell Smith argues that the category is so Western and reliant upon Christian categories, that comparable terminology simply has not been developed in non-Western cultures prior to Western influence (Smith, a scholar of Islam, notes that some partially analogous distinctions have arisen in Islamic thought but that this occurred in substantive cultural contact with Christianity and European thought), and subsequent sociological research has tended to vindicate this assessment.[32]

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[29] Brian C. Wilson, "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion," in *What Is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations* (eds B.C. Wilson and T.A. Idinopulos; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 143.

[30] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue", 176-177.

[31] E.g. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A new approach to the religious traditions of mankind* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1963), 18-19; Fitzgerald, *Ideology of Religious Studies*, 4; Wilson, "From the Lexical to the Polythetic," 141-162; William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 3-6, 70-75; Paul J. Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 6.

[32] Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, 82.

Regarding the study of Paul, it becomes important to recognise that the modern category of "religion" is an alien concept to the first-century Mediterranean world.[33] There may be a linguistic affinity with the Latin *religio*, but (as discussed in greater length in chapter 6) this phenomenon within Greco-Roman life is by no means coextensive with what is meant by "religion" today. *Religio* includes things which we might think of today as familial duty, social expectations, and civic obligations, in addition to worship of the gods.[34] Frazer's definition of Roman and Greek religion as "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life" is really already too narrow and conditioned by Christian theological expectations, set up to draw a comparison with the idea of atonement by Christ.[35]

Religio does not seem to have been a key term for early Christians to describe their own faith and practices; for example, it is used only thirteen times in Jerome's Vulgate,[36] and rarely in patristic literature. If used the term tends to correspond to worship, and Augustine demonstrates that a usage closer to the Roman obligation, worship, or piety, is generally what is meant by *religio* when he comments:

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[33] Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 40-43; G. K. Beale, "Other Religions in New Testament Theology," in *Biblical Faith and Other Religions: An Evangelical Assessment* (ed. D. W. Baker; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004), 79-80.

[34] Mary Beard, et al., *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 1.xii; R.M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and their Gods in the Age of Augustine* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1969), 10-17.

[35] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 58-59.

[36] It translates חֻקָּה in Exodus 12:26, 43, and *religione perpetua* translates חֻקָּה עוֹלָם in Exodus 29:9 and Leviticus 7:36; 16:31; σεμνός in 2 Maccabees 6:11; and θρησκεία in Acts 26:5; Colossians 2:18; James 1:26, 27. *Religio* also appears in Jerome's translation of Numbers 19:2; Esther 8:17, 9:27 with no corresponding words in the Masoretic Text.

> "The word "religion" [*religio*] would seem, to be sure, to signify more particularly the "cult" offered to God, rather than "cult" in general; and that is why our translators have used it to render the Greek word [θρησκεία]. However, in Latin usage (and by that I do not mean in the speech of the illiterate, but even in the language of the highly educated) "religion" is something which is displayed in human relationships, in the family (in the narrower and the wider sense) and between friends; and so the use of the word does not avoid ambiguity when the worship of God is in question. We have no right to affirm with confidence that "religion" is confined to the worship of God, since it seems that this word has been detached from its normal meaning, in which it refers to an attitude of respect in relations between a man and his neighbour."[37]

As Cavanaugh demonstrates, the use of "religion" to mean a body of beliefs and/or practitioners of worship is not found before the fifteenth century. Cavanaugh identifies this as occurring first in the work of Nicholas of Cusa in the sense of some common essence underlying Catholic, Greek, Jewish, and Muslim worship, and Marsilino Ficino in the sense of an internalized, universal tendency to worship God in humanity.[38] The Protestant Reformation and the so-called "Wars of Religion" are, according to Cavanaugh, the period in which Western Europeans began first to think of discrete "religions", in part as a distinction which facilitated the resolution of conflict between different groups by reconfiguring the relationship between church and state.[39] In the Enlightenment period it is then frequently used not only to talk about Protestantism and Catholicism as "religions" but also non-Christian traditions such as Islam, Hinduism, and other terms. In the twentieth century the term "world religions" becomes used as a construction to

[37] Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans* (trans. H. Bettenson; London: Penguin, 1984) X.1, 373.

[38] Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, 70-72.

[39] Ibid, 72-74. See also Cavanaugh, ""A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House": The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," *Modern Theology* 11, no. 4 (1995): 397-420.

distinguish those religions determined (not always on the basis of number of adherents) to bear especial significance in the contemporary world.[40]

The spread of the terminology does seem to indicate that it serves a useful linguistic function and describes something which is part of the human experience, even if we recognise the implausibility (and dangers) of an essentialist view of "religion".[41] Instead it is a modern and socially-constructed category which facilitates discussion of the phenomena thereby labelled, in a way which distinguishes them from nation, state, and politics in a manner heavily conditioned by the European experience of late medievalism and the Reformation, and Western intellectual history. The terminology of "religion" is difficult to avoid entirely, and there is not an inherent illegitimacy to using second-order categories and derived terminology when discussing a phenomenon when such terminology proves useful and where the discussion takes due note of the limitations and provenance of such language. Particularly in this chapter and in discussing the implications of Paul's theology for a contemporary theology of religions, I will use the terms "religions" in a modern sense, without wishing to imply an essentialist definition, but acknowledging Wittgenstein's sense of a label for these phenomena based on a "family resemblance" in a similar way to the construction of the label of "game" for the various phenomena of football, rugby, darts and chess.[42]

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[40] Mazusawa, *The Invention of World Religions,* 8, 72-75; Küng, *Christianity and World Religions*, xii-xiii.

[41] Russell T. McCutcheon suggests that there is something of a feedback loop where the use of the term "religion" as a genus in academic and public discourse creates and then reinforces its encoded presupposition as a social reality, meaning that Westerners begin to think of their own beliefs as a species of a category called "religion", *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 55-56.

[42] Cf. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 5; Wilson, "From the Lexical to the Polythetic," 158.

Allowing that Wittgenstein's concept of categorising phenomena as religions based on a "family resemblance" serves as a functional account of the category "religion" as widely understood, we must note that it is Christianity which has served as the starting point for identification of these resemblances. A reading of John Hick's attempt to define and explain religion in *An Interpretation of Religion* illustrates this;[43] Hick is honest about the difficulty applying definitions of religion to the world of phenomena, acknowledging that it is difficult to articulate a definition which includes Theravada Buddhism but excludes Marxism. In fact, Hick allows that Marxism operates in many ways like a religion, and might constitute a "distant cousin" to Christianity and/or Judaism.[44] This does provide a methodological difficulty, as recognised by Wilson, who notes that the inability to define "religion" causes some students to question the validity of "religious studies" as a discrete field of study.[45] This methodological difficulty applies to a secular approach to the subject matter, however; since the definition of "religion" is shaped, perhaps irreducibly, by theological presuppositions. Self-consciously theological approaches can overcome some of this difficulty by using a theological definition of religion; for example, by justifying the use of a particular normative "religion" as the paradigmatic starting point for Wittgenstein's "family resemblances" or Durkheim's functionalist account of religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things… which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[46] The difficulty in articulating a definition of religion acceptable outside of one's own theological tradition ought not to deter the

[43] Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 4-5.

[44] Ibid., 22, 32-33.

[45] Wilson, "From the Lexical to the Polythetic," 141-142.

[46] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1965), 62. In this case, Christianity is the normative paradigm, as is apparent from the term "Church".

use of a definition, detailed or otherwise, which makes sense within one's own tradition, so long as one remains conscious that this is what is taking place. Thus, within this study, the terminology of "religions" will be used in the Wittgensteinian sense, as appropriate, although some important considerations arise from a reading of Paul, and the issue will be revisited in chapter 8.

The Terminology of "Theology of Religions"

The term "Theology of Religions" is a post-war one. It is first used in a sense approximating Race's definition above by Hendrik Kraemer, in his 1956 work *Religion and the Christian Faith.* Kraemer argues that the allegedly-scientific study of religion, and the nineteenth-century History of Religions movement, is limited through its failure to recognise that any philosophical definition of an "Essence of religion"[47] is neither universal nor neutral, and relies heavily on covert theological assumptions. As we have seen, the idea of an "essence" of religion, reliant upon the Aristotelian distinction between essence and accident, has antecedents in medieval European thought.[48] In the academic study of religion, we can find an appeal to a universal essence in the work of D.F. Strauss, and influentially in Ludwig Feuerbach's 1841 work *The Essence of Christianity*.[49] Feuerbach understood religion as the projection of subjective human qualities into objectivity with the effect that religion really becomes an underpinning for morality and God an abstraction of the human being.[50] This finds theological expression in the "History of Religions" movement and its assumption that the various historical and world religions are species of the

[47] Hendrik Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 30-32, 141.

[48] Harrison, *Religion and Modern Thought*, 15; Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, 70-75.

[49] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (trans. G. Eliot; New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

[50] Ibid., 29-31.

same thing at different stages of development – as argued by Alfred North Whitehead.[51] The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* of the 1890s displayed a similar approach to the Bible with the claim that there is a natural and inevitable development from polytheism or tribal deism, through henotheism, to ethical monotheism in the Old Testament. Despite Kraemer's early criticism of this idea as "monistic" relativism,[52] the idea that the various religions are species of the same genus persists in much recent work in the Theology of Religions.

Kraemer suggests that Christians ought to engage instead in a "Theology of Religions"; that is, an attempt to articulate a theological understanding of other belief-systems from a Christian point of view.[53] Here he argues that Christianity is not the same as other religions, and that it is intellectually dishonest to make it appear so. From a Christian perspective, all other religions are limited and idolatrous in that, however theistic their description of their god or gods may be, they are not the Triune God of Christian belief.[54] Kraemer is building on an earlier work from 1938, which coincided with the World Missionary Conference held at Madras Christian College,[55] and notes that he has felt his position move in response to the influence of Barth and Brunner's theology to a "far more dialectic" view of religion and the gospel.[56] His "Theology of Religions" therefore is not in the least relativist or pluralist. Other early usages of the terminology differ slightly in aim: Heinz Schlette in his 1966 work *Die Religionen als Thema der Theologie*, published in English in 1968 as *Towards a Theology of Religions,* argues that Christianity (and specifically the

[51] Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (Cambridge: CUP, 1927).

[52] Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith,* 77.

[53] Ibid., 144.

[54] Ibid., 361.

[55] Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938).

[56] Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith*, 9.

Roman Catholic tradition) is true, but that nonetheless adherents of other religions may be saved through obedience to their own beliefs. "It is possible to describe the way of non-Christian religions as the ordinary, and the way of the Church as the extraordinary, way of salvation".[57] The terminology of "Theology of Religions" is also developed, apparently independently, in the early work of Raymond Panikkar. Panikkar, a Sri Lankan theologian who practised devotion to both Christ and Krishna, urges the development of a "theology of religion" as a theological approach distinct from the phenomenology of religion, and sees this as the necessary groundwork for a unified "theology of religions" which would encompass the varieties of religious belief and experience in the world.[58] There is thus some difference in understanding the nature of the project of a Christian Theology of Religions; is it, as Kraemer suggests, to articulate theologically an understanding of the nature and purposes of other religions from a Christian point of view; or is it (so Panikkar) to create a new theological framework to account for all religions, including Christianity? The former view has generally been more prevalent in recent work, and it should be noted that the latter view is actually incompatible with approaches such as those of Kraemer and Schlette which see Christianity as fundamentally true.

Contemporary work in the field of Theology of Religions, as a self-conscious and self-reflective "field" within Christian theology, is more recent, and has developed most significantly in the last thirty or so years, with the development of a number of (self-consciously) innovative perspectives,

[57] Heinz Robert Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (trans. W. J. O'Hara; London: Burns & Oates, 1968), 81. Schlette quotes Kraemer's work at several points, and it seems that the term "Theology of Religions" has thus originated with Kraemer.

[58] Raymond Panikkar, "The Category of Growth in Comparative Religion: A Critical Self-Examination," *Harvard Theological Review* 66, no. 1 (1973): 113-40, 132. Panikkar refers in this article to his use of the terminology in articles written for a Bombay weekly publication, *The Examiner*, from 1965 onwards.

as well as more recent restatements or reformulations of perspectives found in earlier Christian theology. Although Theology of Religions arises as a project a few decades before the 1980's, and, as Paul Hedges points out, draws in some way upon discussions begun in earnest in the nineteenth century,[59] in some ways it is helpful to use Alan Race's *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, published in 1983, as a starting point for discussing the contemporary Theology of Religions. In this book, Race analyses existing work in the field and develops a three-fold typology to categorise different theological strategies. Race terms these three categories "Exclusivism", "Inclusivism", and "Pluralism". Examples of what type of approach these represent can be seen respectively in Kraemer, Schlette, and Panikkar's perspectives cited above. There is some variety within these broad categories, but Race's paradigm has not only served to categorise the diversity of twentieth-century theology on this matter up to 1983, but essentially set the agenda for contemporary discussion in the Theology of Religions in the past thirty years.[60]

The Three-fold Paradigm

The discussion of the paradigm which follows maintains the essence of Race's three-fold portrayal. As such, it takes an approach which is focussed to a significant extent on soteriological concerns (who is saved?). Thus, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism are respectively

[59] Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue,* 11 n.4. Gavin D'Costa adopts this classification in Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: OUP, 1986), *passim*. Race's paradigm is also used in the 1994 edition of Alister E. McGrath's textbook *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); however McGrath notes several shortcomings in the current edition: *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th edition, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 443.

[60] It is used in much subsequent work, including the report by the Church of England Doctrine Commission, "The Mystery of Salvation," (ed. C. House; London: The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, 1995), 9-10; Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices,* 8-25; and (with some modification) Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 6-8.

representing views where the extent of salvation excludes those who do not follow Christianity; includes (some/all) others *despite* their other faith; or, includes (some/all) others *through* their other faith. Given the significance of the soteriological question for Christian theology at both the theoretical and practical level, this focus is understandable. However, as developments since have highlighted, even among those happy to work with Race's paradigm, the issue cannot be reduced to soteriology. Dan Strange demonstrates that the questions posed by the Theology of Religions intersect not only with the extent and recipients of salvation, but also with many other strands of Christian doctrine, leading to a matrix of responses to pertinent theological questions: whether or not salvation is *solus Christus*; whether conscious faith in Christ is necessary; whether there is an opportunity to respond to the gospel *post mortem*; whether few or many or all will be saved.[61]

Exclusivism, according to Race's paradigm, is the view that Christianity is true, and that other religions are deficient and/or mistaken where they make affirmations incompatible with the gospel. Exclusivist perspectives affirm that salvation is found only in Christ, and (usually) that one must encounter the gospel and respond positively to it, either in this life, or, (in some perspectives) through a post-mortem encounter with Christ.[62] One must believe the gospel to be saved. This can entail the claim that, outside the church, there is no salvation; expressed by Cyprian in the maxim "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus"*. The exclusivist attitude to non-Christians is usually a missional and conversionist one, emphasising the Church's vocation to proclaim the gospel and hoping for the conversion of non-Christians.

[61]Daniel Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevanglized: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 36, 304-331 See also D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 7.

[62] E.g. in Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1982), 7.

Few scholars identify explicitly as "exclusivist", since it may be considered a pejorative term. The terminology can imply separatism or a lack of interest in non-Christians.[63] Some commentators, such as Douglas Pratt, seek to associate such a stance with violence or the propensity for violence.[64] Such an association cannot be said to follow from the logic of exclusivism itself, for the exercise of coercion or violence along inter-religious lines do not require an exclusivist ecclesiology or soteriology, and the scholars typically cited as paradigmatic examples of exclusivism do not counsel violence. Hedges, who also associates Milbank's exclusivism with a potential for violence concedes this point, acknowledging that the position "certainly is not the endorsing of violence" but nevertheless claims that "intimidation and violence do not need to be physical to be real"[65] and that "views which exclude religious Others" are "unhelpful", "aggressive", and even "dangerous"[66]. Yet the elision of opposition of an idea into violent conflict with its proponents, or the conflation of "rhetorical violence" into physical violence falsely implies that substantive theological disagreement leads inevitably to warfare. Exclusivism is possible across a range of Christian theological traditions, and so it is also unhelpful

[63] This can be seen in Chung, where inclusivism and pluralism are ruled out as options, the uniqueness and finality of Christ and the need for faith in Christ are affirmed, yet the label "exclusivism" is not adopted, since it implies for Chung a "separatist" attitude towards the world. Sung Wook Chung, "Other Religions," in Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology (ed. G. R. McDermott; Oxford: OUP, 2010), 355-370.

[64] Douglas Pratt, "Terrorism and Religious Fundamentalism: Prospects for a Predictive Paradigm," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 11, no. 1 (2006): 1-15. Pratt seeks to connect Christian exclusivists and 'fundamentalism' with Islamic jihadists through the characterisation of fundamentalism as oppositional to other groups and reliant upon martial imagery in its self-understanding (pp. 2-3).

[65] Paul Hedges, "The Rhetoric and Reception of John Milbank's Radical Orthodoxy", *Open Theology* 1 (2014): 24-44, 35.

[66] Ibid, 41.

to associate it with "Fundamentalism."[67] Karl Barth is sometimes used as an example of an exclusivist, due to his radical rejection of human religion (including Christianity, insofar as it constituted a 'religion'!) and insistence upon valid knowledge of God arising only through special revelation, centred upon Jesus Christ. However, Barth hoped for some form of universal salvation, and so is problematic as a straightforward example of an "exclusivist" perspective.[68] Some recent significant work broadly within the exclusivist perspective includes that of Harold Netland,[69] Carl Braaten,[70] and Dan Strange.[71]

Inclusivism, in Race's paradigm, encompasses a range of views which affirm the uniqueness of Christ and that salvation is *solus Christus*, but that explicit faith in Christ is not always necessary for salvation. The fullness of the divine revelation is found in Christ, but inclusivists may differ on

[67] 'Fundamentalism' in Christian theology properly refers to the conservative Protestant movement originating in the United States in the early 20th century, associated with the publication between 1910 and 1915 of "The Fundamentals", on which see George F. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism 1870–1925* (Oxford: OUP, 1982), 118-123. Its contemporary usage seems more pejorative than descriptive, but, whatever is meant by it, 'fundamentalism' neither entails exclusivism, nor is exclusivism found only among 'fundamentalists'.

[68] Cf. Henri Blocher, "Karl Barth's Anthropology," in *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Differences* (ed. S. W. Chung; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 128-35

[69] E.g. Harold A. Netland, "Exclusivism, Tolerance, and Truth," *Missiology* 15, no. 2 (1987): 77-95; Netland, *Dissonant Voices.* Netland accepts the terminology of Race's paradigm when he argues in favour of "exclusivism", and offers a defence of this view and of Christian evangelism against charges of intolerance (Ibid., 278-280).

[70] Carl E. Braaten, *No Other Name! Christianity Among the World's Religions* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), Braaten proposes that, while salvation is exclusively found in Christ, other religions form a part of divine providence as preparation for the gospel, and are in fact fulfilled by Christianity (Ibid., 80). He goes further than a doctrine of general revelation to suggest that God actively reveals himself in other religions, though this revelation is preparatory for a future encounter with the Christian gospel rather than salvific in itself.

[71] Strange's PhD dissertation (University of Bristol, 1999) is published in a modified form as *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevanglised: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002). Here, and in his most recent book, he argues that Christianity is the "subversive fulfilment" of the world religions: *For Their Rock Is Not as Our Rock: An Evangelical Theology of Religions* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2014), 335-336.

whether partial revelation occurs through other religious traditions. Appearances of Christ, for example, in visions, in cultural contexts which are not 'Christian', are not generally what is meant by the possibility of revelation through other religious traditions, since such phenomena are acknowledged by at least some exclusivists as compatible with exclusivism.[72] As with exclusivism, other religions are held to be in error where they make affirmations incompatible with the gospel. However, those who practice other religions may be saved despite these errors, under certain circumstances. There is a wide amount of diversity within the inclusivist perspective as to what those circumstances might be.

An example of the inclusivist approach is found in C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, originally given as a series of BBC radio broadcasts between 1942 and 1944:

> "There are people in other religions who are being led by God's secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it."[73]

[72] Cf. David Greenlee, "Living Out an "In Christ" Identity: Research and Reflections Related to Muslims Who Have Come to Faith in Jesus Christ," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 30, no. 1 (2013): 5-12.

[73] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Bles, 1952), 176. One might think also of the episode in his *Narnia* books where Emeth is told by Aslan that his pious devotion to Tash is accepted as service to Him: *The Last Battle* (London: Harper, 1956), chapter 15. See also Elissa McCormack, "Inclusivism in the Fiction of C.S. Lewis: The Case of Emeth," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 11, no. 4 (2008): 57-73. Possible antecedents might be seen in the discussions reported at the Church of England's Malvern Conference of 1941, which proposed "reconciliation" between different religions in service of a "one world" agenda, and linked religious exclusivism with nationalism and violence. Cf. Ian Jones, "Faith in the Public Square in 1941 and 1991: Two Malvern Conferences Reviewed," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 37, no. 3 (2016): 247-258.

Another example is Karl Rahner's well-known concept of the "anonymous Christian" who serves Christ, and is saved by Christ, without knowing it.[74] Rahner raises the question of how those in the Old Testament were saved, if salvation is through Christ alone, and suggests that conscious faith in Christ is therefore not necessary in every instance. In some inclusivist scholarship this opportunity is limited to the unevangelized (however that is defined), with explicit rejection of the gospel disqualifying the non-Christian from salvation; while others allow for varying degrees of rejection of the gospel (perhaps due to false teaching regarding Christianity) in those members of other religions who are thought to receive salvation in Christ.

Inclusivist perspectives are possible across a broad range of theological traditions: inclusivism has been proposed by the Roman Catholic Rahner, the Anglican theologian and scholar of Islam, Kenneth Cragg,[75] and evangelical theologians Clark H. Pinnock[76] and John Sanders.[77] Lesslie Newbigin might be categorised as inclusivist insofar as his position holds that salvation is possible for non-Christians, though the term "Christian" is used in a more cultural and manner than it is by exclusivist theologians.[78] Inclusivism is also (usually) held to be the position reached by the

[74] See e.g. Rahner, Karl, "Anonymous Christians", Transl. K.H. Kruger, in *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 6 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd: 1966), 391-397; "Anonymous and Explicit Faith", Transl. David Morland, in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 16 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 52-59.

[75] Kenneth Cragg, *The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference* (London: SPCK, 1986), 2-4.

[76] Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 14-15, 77, 83.

[77] John Sanders, *No Other Name? An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 66-67.

[78] Newbigin's position seems to have some affinities with inclusivism in being open to salvation *extra ecclesiam* in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 182-183; however, this is articulated within a framework which affirms the revelatory uniqueness of Christ and the necessity of an individual responding to Christ for salvation; cf. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ* (London: SCM, 1969), 9-15, 22.

Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council.[79] One of the concilar documents, *Lumen Gentium*, makes the following affirmation about the unevangelized:

> "Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who, through no fault of their own, do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience."[80]

The more recent encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium*, reiterates this approach:

> "Non-Christians, by God's gracious initiative, when they are faithful to their own consciences, can live "justified by the grace of God", and thus be "associated to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ"[81]

Pinnock's slightly different inclusivist approach was, and remains, controversial in Evangelical theology. Pinnock raises the issue of general revelation, which he notes is generally considered a viable source of truth about God in Evangelical theology (though with significant qualifications, particularly in the Reformed tradition) and suggests that salvific knowledge of God may be available through other religions.[82] Pinnock makes considerable use of scriptural texts in his argument, claiming that the salvific possibility of general revelation outside the proclamation of the gospel is taught in the New Testament.[83] Pinnock also argues that we must define our 'control

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[79] See Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside The Church?* (New York: Paulist, 1992), 146.

[80] "Lumen Gentium" in *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church* (Vatican: Roman Catholic Church, 1964), 16.

[81] "Evangelii Gaudium" (Vatican: Roman Catholic Church, 2013), §254. <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/>, accessed 13/12/2015.

[82] Clark H. Pinnock, "The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions," in *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World: Theology from an Evangelical Point of View* (eds M. A. Noll and D. F. Wells; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 157.

[83] Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 234-236.

beliefs', which affect our interpretation of scripture and our theological outlook, arguing for a control belief which prioritises "the unbounded generosity of God revealed in Jesus Christ" and a "hermeneutic of optimism".[84] Pinnock argues that some (indeed, many) non-Christians may be saved by Christ through their response to general revelation, and even to truths (such as the mercy of God) mediated through other religious traditions which are themselves in error.

Pluralism, by contrast, is the belief that many (or, less commonly, all) religions may be valid. There are differences between pluralists, including as to whether these religions are valid paths towards the same God or reality, or towards different religious ends. Some pluralists hold that it is possible to "grade" religions, for example according to a supposedly objective ethical standard,[85] while others reject classification of one religion as 'better' than another. Pluralists therefore understand Christianity as one religion among others, Christ as one revelation or divine mediator among others, and mission in terms of dialogue and mutual learning.

Pluralists (in general) would wish to affirm that many religions can be valid, while acknowledging that there are genuine differences between the religions.[86] These differences may be engaged in the hope of resolving them, however. Pluralists claim that there is a common reality or essence to religions which enables mutual learning and understanding; that is, on some level,

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[84] Ibid., 25, 100-101.

[85] E.g. John Hick, "On Grading Religions," *Religious Studies* 17, no. 4 (1981): 451-67; Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (eds. J. Hick and P. Knitter; London: SCM Press, 1988), 178-218. Knitter suggests that "by applying the criteria of liberative praxis, by asking, for example, how a particular Hindu belief or Christian ritual or Buddhist practice promotes human welfare and leads to the removal of poverty and to the promotion of liberation, we might be able to arrive at communal judgments concerning what is true or false, or what is preferable, among different religious claims or practices" (210).

[86] Alan Race, *Interfaith encounter: the twin tracks of theology and dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 29-30.

adherents of different religions are all talking about the same "thing". There may also be a focus on the ethical as criteria to evaluate religions and as a starting point for inter-religious dialogue, as opposed to theological issues.[87]

Significant pluralist scholars include Paul Knitter, Alan Race, and John Hick. Raymond (anglicised convention; frequently spelled Raimon or Raimundo elsewhere) Panikkar also moved from inclusivism to pluralism around 1973.[88] Hick's work is of note in his calling for a "Copernican revolution" in theology.[89] Just as Copernicus reoriented astronomy from a geocentric to a heliocentric model, so pluralism challenges theology to reorient itself away from a "Christocentric" model. A "Christocentric" theology cannot, Hick argues, move beyond the historical particularity of Jesus Christ, and will implicitly rule out religions which do not affirm Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God. Depending on the precise formulation of Christ's uniqueness, "Christocentric" theology may entail exclusivism, or at least a very restricted inclusivism.[90] Indeed, Hick charges that Christianity has erred in making a metaphorical "son of God" a metaphysical one, and thus becoming intractably "Christocentric" in its mode of theology.[91] In its place, Hick first suggested a "Theocentric" model, which focused on God rather than Jesus Christ (itself a problematic claim for traditional Christian Trinitarian understandings of theology proper), but, realizing that this still ruled out atheistic religions (such as Theravada Buddhism), Hick modified

[87] Although the division between "theological" and "ethical" can be problematic in practice.

[88] So D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions*, 12-14.

[89] First in John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 120-132.

[90] John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977), 165-180.

[91] John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions: The Rainbow of Faiths* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 8.

his view towards "Reality-centic" theology, focused on "the Real" rather than on "God".[92] Hick's thought here relies upon the Kantian distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal, with "the Real" corresponding to the noumenal divine reality, which might be called "God" in Christianity, as separate from the phenomenal "God", "gods" or other transcendent reality actually encountered by religious adherents in their ritual and practice.

It is important to stress that many pluralist scholars explicitly reject relativism; rather than claiming that all religious truth is relative, they in fact make a strong truth claim that Christianity is not the only true or valid religion.[93] In fact, pluralists generally wish to critique strongly any theological claim which wishes to present itself as the only, superior, or final truth. Nevertheless, a thoroughgoing philosophical relativist engaging in the Theology of Religions would likely be characterised as a pluralist under Race's typology.[94] As with exclusivism and inclusivism, pluralism is not tied to a particular theological tradition, although it is more significantly distinct from these perspectives, and is generally acknowledged by its proponents to be a "novel" approach within Christian theology.[95]

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[92] John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 248. This is also found in the original edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 233ff., where Hick describes a divine noumenal reality independent from religious descriptions of it, which he termed "the Eternal One".

[93] See e.g. Knitter, *No other name?*, 223-229; Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 180 .

[94] Race suggests that he knows of "no serious [Christian] pluralist theologian" advocating this, although it bears some affinity with Swami Vivekananda's "Hindu philosophical ethos"; *Interfaith Encounter*, 29.

[95] Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Transformation by Integration: how inter-faith encounter changes Christianity* (London: SCM, 2009), 85-110 As seen above with Hick, it is common for pluralism to be presented as a "revolutionary" view, or as significant a change for Christian theology as the Reformation (cf. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions", 179-183).

Theology of Religions in the Past Thirty Years

The most notable feature of the recent Theology of Religions is thus the development and popularisation of the pluralist view, and other novel approaches. To some extent, much of the significant critique has occurred in the discussion of pluralism, between pluralist and non-pluralist views, though there has also been some significant debate between exclusivist and inclusivist perspectives. There has also been criticism of Race's three-fold paradigm on a number of grounds.

A number of significant works proposing pluralist approaches to religious diversity and the Theology of Religions appeared in or just before the early 1980's. Alan Race's *Christians and Religious Pluralism* has been mentioned above as establishing a three-fold typology, but also advocated the pluralist approach. Indeed, Race has suggested that one of the goals of his particular typology is to encourage a direction of travel towards pluralism.

In addition to *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977) which proposed a pluralistic revolution in theology, Hick also published in 1982 *God Has Many Names*, proposing an approach to theology which sought to move beyond the particularities of various religions toward a unitative theology focused on the divine reality which lay behind them. Hick therefore expressed a pluralist attitude which claimed a single, unitary reality behind many religions, and expressed the attitude that humanity must work together to express the universal ethic towards which these religious traditions point, and upon which many of them agree. Hick placed this claim within his autobiographical journey to pluralism, having previously been involved with the evangelical InterVarsity Fellowship (now the Universities and Colleges Christian Unions, the Great Britain member organisation of the International Federation of Evangelical Students) and an ordained

Presbyterian minister. Hick recounts his later reaction against what he saw as an intolerant attitude in evangelicalism towards those who "questioned religious orthodoxy"; "a certain narrowness" which he has left behind for the "larger vision" of his pluralist theology, suggesting that "rational or moral considerations" make the (exclusivist) conservative perspective untenable.[96] Indeed, his experience in an increasingly multi-racial, multi-religious Birmingham (a city with, as a result of post-war migration, significant Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities, as well as a longer-established Jewish community) convinced him that Christianity could not be exclusively true.[97] Part of this is linked with a political aspiration to create a tolerant, non-racist, non-discriminatory society, with Hick claiming that liberal theological attitudes were generally correlated with progressive politics.[98]

Panikkar's move to pluralism is also significant, as one of the pioneers of the idea of a Theology of Religions. Panikkar, an ordained Roman Catholic priest, became a practitioner of multiple religious belonging, considering himself a Hindu and a Buddhist as well as a Christian.[99] In the second edition of his *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, published in 1981, Panikkar had ceased to regard Christ as "the end and plenitude of every religion" but, rather, as a cipher for the

[96] Hick, *God Has Many Names*, 15-16. Hick seems to regard this as simply self-evident: "[In] the light of our accumulated knowledge of the other great world faiths, this conclusion [*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*] has become unacceptable to all except a minority of dogmatic diehards." (27); the exclusivist view is simply dismissed as an attitude "formed in a period of substantial ignorance of the wider religious life of mankind" (29).

[97] Ibid., 16-18.

[98] Ibid., 20.

[99] William Grimes, "Raimon Panikkar, Catholic Theologian, Is Dead at 91," *The New York Times*, September 6 2010, A20.

salvific nexus between God and the world, not necessarily associated with the historical Jesus of Nazareth.[100]

Paul Knitter, an American Roman Catholic theologian, has also been a significant pluralist scholar. His 1985 work, *No Other Name?*, represents an attempt to convince Christians that pluralism is compatible with Christian belief, and draws on Rahner's inclusivism, while seeking to move past it towards pluralism.[101] Knitter develops a four-fold typology of Christian attitudes towards other religions, comprising what he terms the "Conservative Evangelical", "Mainline Protestant", "Catholic", and "Theocentric" models. Bizarrely, Karl Barth is provided as the example of the Conservative Evangelical model,[102] which corresponds with Race's "exclusivist" category. The Mainline Protestant model is claimed to be the view that other religions may reveal God and contain truth, but are inadequate and do not mediate salvation. They may be seen as preparatory for the Gospel.[103] With the (Roman) Catholic model, an interpretation of Vatican II is offered which, while acknowledging it reached generally inclusivist conclusions, suggests that it has opened the door for further development. The Theocentric model is essentially the pluralist model: Knitter endorses Hick's theocentrism and attempts to vindicate this against claims that this is incompatible with Christian commitments to a high Christology and the "uniqueness" of Jesus. Knitter appeals to an 'evolutionary' view of Christian theology, in which theological

[100] Knitter, *No Other Name?,* 155-156; D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 12.

[101] Knitter, *No Other Name?,* 200-201.

[102] Ibid., 80.

[103] One problem with Knitter's denominational descriptors, and possibly the reason why he later adopted other terminology, is that the broad denominations in question have changed over time: pluralism is now quite common across the North American churches which might be termed "Mainline"; inclusivism among "Evangelicals"; and the Roman Catholic position prior to Vatican II was unquestionably exclusivist.

understanding grows progressively nearer to truth, and suggests that a new understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus is desirable.[104]

Knitter also engaged with some of the relevant New Testament material, although he tends to recognise that the traditional understandings and interpretations of texts do not support pluralism. As a result, Knitter frequently appeals to the fact of diversity of interpretation of biblical texts as evidence that the texts *could* support pluralism. A detailed exegetical argument for pluralism is, however, absent from Knitter's book; instead he seeks to minimize the theological significance of the New Testament for Christian theology in this area. For example, he appeals to the lack of unanimity among New Testament scholars as to the nature of Jesus' "uniqueness" and the uncertainty as to whether the New Testament represents a 'high Christology' (at the time of writing, which perhaps might be less the case now in serious New Testament scholarship) in order to provide his self-confessed "non-normative" approach to Christology with equal plausibility.[105] Knitter also seeks to prevent the Pauline letters from having too much input to the Theology of Religions by suggesting that there is too much disagreement between Pauline scholars for these texts to be used.[106] This can lead to attempts to sidestep challenges to pluralism on the grounds of New Testament exegesis, such as some of Netland or Kärkkäinen's arguments. This approach to the New Testament can (unfortunately) be typical of much pluralist engagement with the biblical texts.

[104] Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 172-173.
[105] Ibid., 173-177.
[106] Ibid., 92-94.

Knitter and Hick then co-edited in 1986 a volume entitled *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, with twelve contributors generally in favour of the pluralist approach.[107] Inclusivism was criticized as, although it was more "open" to other religions, it still relied on a Christocentric approach to theology and emphasised "Christian uniqueness". The history of Christianity was claimed to undermine or make untenable claims of absolute truth in religion, since (Hick claimed) the assumption by Christians that their religion alone was true led to oppression and war. Hick invoked the worst aspects of European colonialism and anti-semitism, and North American attitudes towards the indigenous and black populations as clear examples of the "destructive effects of the assumption of Christian superiority".[108] Along with other contributors, the stress was on the alleged oppressive potential of a belief in Christian uniqueness—that is, exclusivist and inclusivist interpretations of the Theology of Religions. Consistent with this stress on the social and political effects of theological beliefs, Knitter and others suggested that the ethical impact of religion should be the criteria by which they are evaluated.[109] Liberation Theology could contribute towards a theology of pluralism by suggesting that the preferential option for the poor provided common ground between the religions which was neither theologically objectivist, nor foreign to most religious traditions. At the same time religions could be assessed (or "graded"[110]) according to their promotion of justice or human flourishing. Christian theology needed to

[107] Paul Knitter and John Hick (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM, 1986; repr. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987). A diversity of theological approaches is represented in the contributions to this work, although they are generally oriented towards articulating a Christian pluralism.

[108] John Hick, "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity", in Knitter and Hick (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 16-36, 18-20.

[109] Paul Knitter, "Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions", in Knitter and Hick (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 182-202.

[110] A point made initially by John Hick, "On Grading Religions" *Religious Studies* 17, no. 4 (1981): 451-467.

"cross[…] a theological Rubicon"[111] to a pluralistic understanding; a phrase which acknowledges the greater gulf between pluralism and other views than between inclusivism and exclusivism, as well as the significant theological reworking a pluralist approach requires.

Criticism of Pluralism

Some significant criticisms of pluralism were offered following these publications. As a reply to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, fourteen contributors published critical responses in a 1990 book edited by Gavin D'Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. Although varied in approach, three main criticisms of pluralism emerged. The first, expressed by Rowan Williams, Christoph Schwöbel, and D'Costa himself, concerned the Trinity. Williams gently critiqued Panikkar's claim that the Trinity was the "ultimate foundation for pluralism"[112] although he did commend Trinitarian approaches to pluralism as preferable to non-Trinitarian ones which could easily lead to relativism or syncretism, an implicit criticism of Hick's Theocentrism.[113] D'Costa's contribution represented an argument in favour of inclusivism; suggesting that Trinitarian theology led necessarily to Christocentric view of salvation and religious truth, and that "Christocentric Trinitarianism is all-important if Christianity is to retain its only valid role: serving God and neighbor in proclaiming and living the Good News".[114] If Trinitarianism is a non-negotiable part of Christian theology, then Unitarian versions of

[111] Knitter, "Preface" in Knitter and Hick (eds), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, viii.

[112] Rowan Williams, "Trinity and Pluralism", in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 3-15, 3.

[113] Ibid., 13-14. Indeed, Hick does propose a technically Unitarian understanding of God in "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity", 32-33.

[114] D'Costa, "Christ, the Trinity, and Religious Plurality", in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 16-29, 27.

pluralism—such as Hick's Theocentrism (or Real-centrism)—cannot properly be termed *Christian* pluralism.

A second set of objections regard the potential of pluralism to flatten religious differences. Although Race, Hick, Panikkar, and Knitter were adamant that they did not mean to imply all religions or all beliefs were the same, pluralism could be construed in a way that flattened or minimized religious difference. Some pluralist contributions to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* are criticised for this, particularly in Joseph A. DiNoia's contribution to *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered.* DiNoia notes the considerable diversity of religious beliefs and practices, and also that many religions, and not only Christianity, have made particularistic claims (that is, have claimed implicitly or explicitly to be the only, or most, true religion). In essence, pluralists ask (most) religious practitioners to modify their religious beliefs to accommodate pluralism, rather than actually succeeding in encompassing all faiths.[115] DiNoia expands upon this in his 1992 book *The Diversity of Religions*, noting further that different religions actually envisaged different "religious ends". Christianity envisages an end of "salvation" and resurrection with Christ; Buddhism may envisage *nirvana* as an appropriate religious end. The "end" (perhaps τέλος) of a religion is not extrinsic to the religion itself; but rather, each religion understands its own end in a way which is unachievable except through that religion itself.[116] Pluralism is unable to give a satisfactory accounting for the divergence in religions in terms of beliefs, practices, and even

[115] J.A. DiNoia, "Pluralist Theology of Religions", in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 119-134.

[116] J.A. DiNoia, *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 6-7. This is why, DiNoia argues, it is nonsensical for someone who is not a Christian to take offence at the traditional Christian teaching that they are going to hell—if they are not a Christian then they have no reason to believe this Christian claim is true, or even intelligible: DiNoia, "Jesus and the World Religions," *First Things* no. 54 (June 1995), 24ff.

"ends", and results in a flattening of these differences. Christian "ends" were projected by pluralists onto other religions in a way that did not respect those religions' own integrity or authenticity.

The third, related, criticism to emerge, on essentially philosophical grounds, revolved around whether or not pluralism is a coherent position. A number of contributors to *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* raise this point. John Milbank argues that the forms of pluralism represented by Hick and Knitter rely on an unsustainable idea of religion as a genus. Schwöbel contends that this "allows [other religions'] distinctive particularity only a penultimate and preliminary status".[117] Furthermore, according to Milbank, pluralism ends up subverting its own intent of avoiding the "imperialism" of Christocentric theology, since it ends up being covertly imperialist in its ambitions.[118] In essence, pluralism represents the claiming of absolute truth for a certain set of (liberal, Western) values. Newbigin recognizes this, too, arguing that "[pluralism] is itself one possible position among other possible ones" and so pluralists end up constructing just another, more-or-less syncretistic, variety of religion.[119] Kenneth Surin contends that pluralism, reliant upon liberalism, suffers the same imperialistic flaws as liberalism in trying to construct a grand narrative of the religions:

> "Traditional liberal intellectuals pride themselves on acknowledging heterogeneity and plurality, but this acknowledgement is always fatally compromised by a deployment of

[117] Christoph Schwöbel, "Particularity, Universality, and the Religions", in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered,* 30-47, 33.

[118] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue", 174-77.

[119] Lesslie Newbigin, "Religion for the Marketplace", in D'Costa (ed.) *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 135-148, 137.

homogeneous logic—a logic which irons out the heterogeneous precisely by subsuming it under the categories of comprehensive and totalizing global and world theologies".[120]

This criticism of pluralism as incoherent has been expanded upon by D'Costa, who argued in 1996 that pluralism cannot really exist.[121] Since pluralists make a series of "specific and exclusive truth claims" (regarding the nature of reality and/or God, including the claim that more than one religion can be true) with "exclusive criteria for truth", they represent a form of exclusivism.[122] Philosophical pluralists cannot logically sustain the position that there are conflicting and different views of truth, while at the same time making strong truth claims regarding salvation and the nature of reality reliant upon a cognitive view of religious language.

Beyond Pluralism

Pluralist responses to these criticisms have shaped the development of the Theology of Religions in divergent directions. Some scholars have mounted a defence of pluralism against these criticisms; while others have developed alternative approaches.

Gavin D'Costa argues at length in *Christianity and World Religions* that the development of modern Western political culture, and its globalization in the twentieth century, has made pluralism appear a viable theological option.[123] This involves both a longer-term development of political liberalism and secular modernity, which D'Costa traces to the sixteenth century,[124] and a

[120] Kenneth Surin, "A "Politics of Speech": Religious Pluralism in the Age of the McDonald's Hamburger", in D'Costa (ed.), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, 192-212, 210.

[121] D'Costa, "The Impossibility of A Pluralist View of Religions", *Religious Studies* 32, no. 2 (1996): 223-232.

[122] Ibid., 228. See also D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 26-30.

[123] D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 55-102.

[124] Ibid., 57.

more recent component of postmodernity's twist on the liberal tradition. "Modernity", as a secular phenomenon, tells a particular story about religion, defining it as "an increasingly immanent sentiment, a matter of private choice, [...] consequently de-socialized".[125] Thus, religious truth claims are excluded from the public square and allegedly neutral 'secular' ones developed instead to underpin a secular nation state. The more recent component D'Costa identifies is the development of "procedural liberalism" (as opposed to "ideological secularism", which more aggressively attempts to stifle public discussion of religion) to arbitrate increasingly plural societies, resulting in the exclusion from public life of religious perspectives which do not adapt themselves to secularism: only "certain types of liberal modernizing religions" may participate in public discourse.[126] The effect of this is that the religious believer operates with two discourses – their own religious tradition, tightly circumscribed as private, and a secular tradition within which to negotiate their religion's place in society. In this sense they become, as Molly Worthen has described American Evangelicals, "the estranged children of Pietism and the Enlightenment".[127] That is, by accepting both the relegation of religion to the private sphere, and the procedural norms of secular public discourse, pluralism appears a more viable option. The paradigm of individuals relating to each other via a specific, allegedly-neutral secular discourse bears

[125] Ibid., 102. Kärkkäinen makes a similar observation, arguing that the Enlightenment led to the calling into question of Christianity's exclusive claims to religious truth: *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 19-20.

[126] D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 112-115. Perhaps the pre-eminent example of this assumption in practice is the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, the implications of which for the teaching of religion in tax-supported educational institutions are drawn out succinctly in Gary Comstock, "Why Christians Should Not Be Allowed to Teach Religion at State Universities," *Quarterly Review* 6, no. 3 (1986): 37-53. Comstock shows that, in theory, only "Liberals" may legally teach theology or religion in this setting, not because they have more or better knowledge, but because "their ideology has been sanctioned by the Supreme Court" (46).

[127] Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 7.

remarkable similarity to the unitative pluralist paradigm of particular religions as species which relate to each other via a larger genus of religious truth (e.g. Hick's 'Real'). This is why all of the contributors to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* operate with the assumption that religion "is a genuine category"; that is, a genus of which individual religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism…) are species.[128] D'Costa suggests that this view of religion is problematic, and offers an alternative reading of modernity wherein the secular state has not so much provided a neutral, level playing field for different religions and their adherents, but supplanted Christianity (in the West) as a source of moral and religious authority. Secular liberalism, whether in its European or American forms, thus functions almost as an alternative religion, according to D'Costa. This must be taken into account when considering the development of Christian views of other religions, and the way in which pluralism now seems a plausible option in a way it historically was not. D'Costa argues elsewhere that pluralism ought to be viewed as a sub-type of inclusivism, specifically "post-Christian inclusivism",[129] since it involves such substantial modification to Christian belief, finding not only the Trinity but almost every cataphatic statement in the various creeds objectionable, that it constitutes a different system altogether, and one which argues that if those who disagree attain salvation it would be despite their faulty, non-pluralist, beliefs:

> "The answer [pluralism proposes] to religious disagreement is to accept the pluralist solution and then the disagreement would dissolve. This is akin to asking everyone to

[128] So Milbank, "The End of Dialogue", 174-91.

[129] Gavin D'Costa, "Changing the Typology? Why Pluralism Should be Renamed Post-Christian Inclusivism," in Harris, Hedges and Hettiarachchi, *Twenty-First Century Theologies of Religion: Retrospection and Future Prospects* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 128-141.

convert to Christianity and then the problems of different religious truth claims would dissolve."[130]

D'Costa's argument here is considerably more subtle than Hedges allows in summarizing it as increased "liberalism in society" causing "increased religious tolerance" (Hedges here means the development of non-exclusivist positions);[131] rather it is the (largely unrecognized) development of a secular meta-discourse for arbitrating religious diversity to which D'Costa points. This is bound up with a particular idea of "religion" which we can see at work in the development of modernity. D'Costa's argument here bears much affinity with other postliberal theological approaches, including Radical Orthodoxy, in offering a critique of some or all aspects of Enlightenment thought as it pertains to theology. It differs from some postmodern postliberal approaches as, although strictly speaking D'Costa refrains from adopting a Foucaultian genealogical approach to problems of contemporary thought, in that although he narrates these developments and makes claims about conceptual dependencies, he does not claim to do so from a neutral position, but from a confessional Roman Catholic perspective. Not all postliberal approaches are endorsed by D'Costa; and he critiques postmodernist approaches such as "ethical deconstructionism" as smuggling in assumptions which end up being rather problematic for Christian theology.[132]

A defence of pluralism against the charge of inconsistency, as made by D'Costa, is attempted by Hick.[133] Hick argues that using exclusive truth criteria does not make one an exclusivist, since inclusivists also (presumably) wish to use some exclusive truth criteria and cognitive religious

[130] Ibid., 139.

[131] Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions*, 12.

[132] D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 44-48.

[133] John Hick, "The Possibility of Religious Pluralism: A Reply to Gavin D'Costa", *Religious Studies* 33, no. 1 (1997): 161-166.

language. However, he suggests that what he is doing is different to either exclusivist or inclusivist approaches. Such approaches claim to know theological truth; whereas Hick suggests his approach (which might be termed Transcendental Agnosticism) is grounded in the fact that he does not know the exact nature of the Real, but offers a hypothesis that such a thing exists behind the great religious traditions of the world as an explanation of their diversity and similarities.[134] Hick concedes that his pluralism does ask religious believers to modify those aspects of their theology which do not cohere with pluralism, but suggests that this is unavoidable in theological discourse.[135] However, it is not clear from Hick's argument here what stops us from considering pluralism (granting its own conceptualisation of religion as a genus) as an additional religion, rather than as a meta-level theological explanation encompassing all religions.[136]

Hick's self-confessedly postmodern approach does, it seems, remain vulnerable to postmodernity's critique of meta-narrative. This suspicion of meta-narrative, found particularly in Jean-François Lyotard's critical writings, is a defining feature of postmodernity. A meta-narrative in theology is a theory which attempts to explain what is going on *behind* a given narrative or discourse, and thus to explain it on a more abstract level. It is suspect precisely because it is more epistemically privileged than the discourses it seeks to explain.[137] Pluralism must constitute a

[134] Ibid., 163.

[135] Ibid., 165. An example of this modification is found in an anecdote related by Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), xii, where she recounts an interfaith service at a synagogue where "key pieces of the liturgy were rewritten so that congregants could sing about "all the people of the world" rather than just about "the people Israel.""

[136] I would suggest that, if J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1923), 1-16, were justified in viewing Liberal Protestantism as so distinct from Evangelical Protestantism as to constitute another religion, this is *a fortiori* true of Christian Pluralism.

[137] That is, it presents itself from a position of claiming greater/truer knowledge. This point is made, not precisely in these theoretical terms, by D.A. Carson in *The Intolerance of Tolerance*

theological meta-narrative *par excellence*, for it purports to tell the truth about diverse religious traditions at a level beyond their own self-description, from a more informed viewpoint.[138]

This is recognized by some postliberal theologians in their critique of pluralism. One response has been the development of "particularism". This term can be ambiguous, since it is employed by some authors as a non-pejorative synonym for what Race termed exclusivism. In other contexts it is the soteriological opposite of universalism (i.e. the salvation of some vs. the salvation of all). In our context here, "particularism" describes approaches to the Theology of Religions which attempt to do justice to the doctrinal, historical, and social particularities of each religion.[139] George Lindbeck makes this criticism of pluralism in his 1984 work *The Nature of Doctrine.*[140] Lindbeck applies a cultural-linguistic approach to religious difference and suggests that, although the ontological truth claims made by the various religions might be seen as relativized by postmodernity, they do not thereby lose their alterity. Classical pluralism is therefore an

(Nottingham: IVP, 2012), in a critique of Lessing's parable of the three rings as an epistemically privileged discourse. Lessing's parable attempts to give parity to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, by a meta-level claim concerning what God has purportedly done in permitting the development of three religions claiming to be true accounts of Himself. This ends up making a grander claim (!) to knowledge of the divine will than these three religious traditions make themselves.

[138] In this paragraph I am drawing upon Merold Westphal's insight into theological narrative and metanarrative in the introduction to his *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Towards a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), xii-xviii. Westphal suggests that Lyotard's suspicion of meta-narrative is justified, but that Christianity is properly a narrative, rather than a meta-narrative (xiii). Westphal is positive towards Kantian idealism, but develops its application to theology in a way unlike John Hick's approach, responding to the provisionality of human understanding of God with a reliance upon revelation rather than the accepting of mutually conflicting traditions (89-105).

[139] Paul Hedges, "Particularities", in Race and Hedges (eds), *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, 112-135.

[140] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1984), 68-69.

inadequate approach to religious diversity, as it flattens or ignores the differences between religions.

In many cases the idea of the religions sharing a common essence is rejected, for each has a distinct nature and internal logic, as expressed in DiNoia's argument concerning religious "ends", above. To compare religions is, as John Milbank remarks, less like comparing apples and oranges and more like comparing "apples and vacuum cleaners".[141] The key term for particularists is the "incommensurability" of religions. Particularists have critiqued some versions of inclusivism as well as pluralism, especially the claim that other religions are covertly centred upon Christianity or their pious adherents receive salvation in the Christian sense.

Parallelism and Deep Pluralism

A version of particularism that is especially novel is that proposed by S. Mark Heim, who criticises the assumption that "salvation" is univocal. Heim's position builds upon DiNoia's critique of religious ends, and suggests that each religion in fact succeeds (or can succeed) in achieving its own religious end. Heim first offered this critique of pluralism and posited a reality where different religious ends could be achievable in 1985, which he termed "parallel pluralism".[142] An expansion and elaboration of this was published in 1995 as *Salvations.* The plural in the title is significant, as Heim envisages a plurality of religions leading not to a unitary (Christian) salvation, but to a plurality of "salvations".[143] Different religions are not so much different paths up the same mountain, but rather paths to the tops of entirely different mountains. This does at least raise the

[141] Milbank, "The End of Dialogue", 176.

[142] S. Mark Heim, *Is Christ the Only Way? Christian Faith in a Pluralistic World* (Valley Forge, CA: Judson Press, 1985), 111-114.

[143] S. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 4-5.

question of how such a reality comes about, whether through the human will or through a divine power which respects the religious wishes and expectations of the adherents of various religions.[144] We should also note that, although DiNoia suggests that other religions have a distinct purpose in the providence of God, he is not a parallelist in the same way as Heim, as he does not envisage different "salvations" for the adherents of these religions actually taking place, but only notes that they are expected.[145]

This idea can be found implicitly in some earlier work, for example in George Rupp's argument (made in 1973) that an "uncritical relativism" of religions is deeply unsatisfactory, involving not only an "artificial homogenization of each tradition" whereby intrareligious differences are flattened or ignored, but also an abandonment of the necessity of "mutual appraisal" in inter-religious dialogue. Really, Rupp says, a "more accurate aphorism" for one minded towards a relativist approach would be "each of the various religious traditions includes different approaches leading to different goals."[146]

A further development of pluralism might be termed "Deep Pluralism", expressed by John B. Cobb Jr. and David Ray Griffin. This, drawing upon Alfred North Whitehead's Process Theology, posits that reality itself is plural; that is, there are many realities and many ultimates. Cobb

[144] One might also ask what happens post-mortem to the materialist who believes that death is the end of his or her existence, or a Christian who dies doubting their salvation and fearing eternal torment.

[145] J.A. DiNoia, *The Diversity of Religions*, 90-91. Paul Hedges, "Particularities", 119-120, and Derek Cooper, *Christianity & World Religions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 54, are therefore incorrect to categorise DiNoia as a parallel pluralist.

[146] George Rupp, "Religious Pluralism in the Context of an Emerging World Culture," *Harvard Theological Review* 66, no. 2 (1973): 217.

suggests this approach as perhaps the only consistent way pluralists can avoid relativism.[147] *Deep Religious Pluralism,* a 2005 collection of essays edited by Griffin explores this.[148] As Cobb shows in his contribution to this work, "deep pluralism" is dependent upon Alfred North Whitehead's understanding of God and reality, and so entails significant philosophical commitment.[149] It might be possible, therefore, to analyse deep pluralism itself as an exclusivist truth claim, though one of a different order to traditional Christianity. Kenneth Rose offers a similar approach in the recent *Pluralism: The Future of Religion*, while acknowledging that this will require religions to change some of their traditional teaching. He envisages the gradual decline of those who refuse to do so, dismissing them as "fundamentalist".[150] Deep pluralism is, however, an attempt to avoid the imperialist potential of Hick and Knitter's pluralism and recognise the validity of some of the particularist critique of (classic) pluralism.

Exclusivism

Some defences of exclusivism have also been offered. Harold Netland in 1991 published *Dissonant Voices*, which argued that the exclusivist position was the most tenable on philosophical and theological grounds.[151] Netland contends that exclusivism is more epistemologically consistent than pluralism or other positions, does better justice to the distinctiveness of different religious traditions, and is more consistent with the biblical material and the theology of the New

[147] John B. Cobb Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology,* 2nd edition (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 178-181.

[148] David R. Griffin (ed.), *Deep Religious Pluralism* (Louisville, Ky..: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

[149] Cobb, "Some Whiteheadian Assumptions about Religion and Pluralism" in Griffin (ed.), *Deep Religious Pluralism*, 243-261.

[150] Kenneth Rose, *Pluralism: The Future of Religion* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30.

[151] Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

Testament. He presents a picture of humanity as under the power of sin, and questions whether religious traditions without Christ as mediator would be able to overcome the epistemological and moral effects of sin.[152] Netland concludes that "where the claims of Scripture are incompatible with those of other faiths, the latter are to be rejected as false."[153]

Another proponent of exclusivism, Don Carson, sees postmodernism, and in particular the work of linguistic theorists Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida, as the comparatively recent source for contemporary pluralism in his 1996 work *The Gagging of God*. Carson wishes to distinguish between three types of pluralism: 'Empirical pluralism', 'cherished pluralism', and 'philosophical pluralism'.[154] By 'Empirical pluralism', Carson means simply the fact of human diversity, whether religious, cultural, or any other difference; perhaps describable by "plurality". 'Cherished pluralism' is a more Western-specific cultural and political phenomenon of a cherishing and championing of diversity; the attitude that "empirical pluralism is not only a raw datum, it is a good thing."[155] While this second phenomenon may lend an emotional support to the pluralist perspective, Carson really wishes to engage "philosophical pluralism" as a postmodern phenomenon. Pluralism, according to Carson, relies upon the relativism and radical subjectivism of postmodern thought, pioneered by Derrida and other literary theorists. Carson emphasizes the recentness of this development: the radical hermeneutics he discusses are "only a few decades old".[156] Although modernism and, in particular, Kant's philosophy, were prerequisite for the

[152] Ibid., 310-313.

[153] Ibid., 134.

[154] Carson, D. A., *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 13-22.

[155] Ibid., 18. The term "cherished" pluralism comes from Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society,* 1.

[156] Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 22.

development of postmodernity (so Carson),[157] it is recent radical subjectivity, relativism, and scepticism towards "metanarrative", which makes pluralism possible and plausible. Furthermore, Carson understands the development and influence of philosophical pluralism to constitute a "qualitatively new" threat to traditional Christian theology:

> "Many generations have recognized how difficult it is for finite and sinful mortals to come to close agreement as to the objective truth of this or that subject, but this is the first generation to believe that there is no objective truth out there, or that if there is, there is no access to it."[158]

Carson is surely correct in seeing the significant difference in philosophical and theological assumptions between pluralist and non-pluralist approaches. Approaches described by Race's three-fold taxonomy of the Theology of Religions as "inclusivist" or "exclusivist" bear much closer affinity than either group do to the "pluralist" positions. Inclusivists agree with exclusivists about the uniqueness of Christ, and (usually) about salvation through Christ alone and the objective truth of the Christian message. Pluralists do, by and large, take the "philosophically pluralist" approach Carson depicts, as evidenced by Hick's move away from "Christo-centrism", via "Theo-centrism", and ultimately to a theology centred upon "the Real",[159] or by Panikkar's relativization of Christ from the "end and plenitude of every religion" to "the link between the finite and infinite … not presupposing its identification with Jesus of Nazareth".[160] The comparative recentness of

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[157] Ibid., 64-67.

[158] Ibid., 54.

[159] Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion,* 2nd edition, (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2004), 248.

[160] D'Costa has highlighted these differences between the 1964 and 1981 editions of Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hindiusm*, cited in D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 14.

pluralist approaches to religious difference in Christian theology bears emphasis, over and above the influence of the Enlightenment.

More recently, Carson has nuanced his assessment of pluralism as a thoroughly postmodern perspective. Although "Postmodernism is implicitly religiously pluralistic", strongly pluralist claims can become inconsistent and epistemologically "arrogant".[161] In *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, he claims that pluralist perspectives are epistemologically arrogant in that they claim themselves to be telling the absolute truth, with a concomitant "intolerance" towards non-pluralist (and, particularly, exclusivist) perspectives.[162]

Although Carson does not mention this explicitly, his analysis permits us to draw out the threat to pluralism from postmodernism itself, in that pluralism (at least following Hick or Knitter's approaches) is itself a metanarrative. In fact, it is an enormously privileged metanarrative in that it claims to tell the truth about what is "really" going on behind the phenomenon of religious diversity: the Buddhist and the Christian both unknowingly worship the same God (or Reality) and can or will receive salvation.

Daniel Strange's 1999 Bristol PhD dissertation on Inclusivism in Evangelical Theology, and his publication of it in 2002 as *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised* also represent a significant contribution to articulating an exclusivist approach which takes account of religious diversity. Strange, however, is noteworthy in that he describes other religions as having a providential non-salvific purpose, and suggests that there are elements which can form part of a

[161] Carson, D. A., "The Dangers and Delights of Postmodernism," *Modern Reformation* 12, no. 4 (2003): 11-17.

[162] Carson, D. A., *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Nottingham: IVP, 2012), 96.

preparation for the gospel, though in surprising ways. This he terms, in a phrase borrowed from Kraemer, "subversive fulfilment".[163] His most recent work deals with this concept in more depth.[164] Strange argues, drawing from biblical texts and Protestant systematic theology, that other religious traditions form part of God's purpose for the world, although they are not themselves salvific. In addition to world-historical purposes (a possibility modelled, *inter alia*, on the view of foreign nations as unwitting agents of God's justice in the Hebrew prophetic material relating to the exile) non-Christian religious traditions can also form the basis for a "subversive" fulfilment by the Christian gospel. This is more complex than the claim that these traditions articulate needs and desires to which the gospel provides more satisfactory answers; rather, the desires themselves and their implicit assumptions about the world are frequently subverted by the proclamation of the gospel.[165]

Beyond the Three-fold Paradigm

Although Race's paradigm of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism is intended to express a direction of travel towards pluralism as the desired end, some have found that it in fact promotes inclusivism as it positions it on a "spectrum" as a moderate view between the supposed extremes of exclusivism and pluralism.[166] In addition, some views are hard to categorise helpfully on it.[167]

[163] Daniel Strange, *For Their Rock Is Not As Our Rock*, 34.

[164] Ibid., 285-288.

[165] Ibid., 239.

[166] J. Abraham Vélez de Cea, "Comparative Theology of Religions and the Virtue of Interreligious Openness", Paper presented at the University of Winchester, 10 September 2013.

[167] What, for example, are we to make of the claim that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all worship the same God in acceptable, though different ways—e.g. Miroslav Volf in his introduction to Volf (ed.) *Do We Worship The Same God?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), vii-x; or Tony Blair's "Three Faiths Foundation"—since it rejects the Christocentricity of Inclusivism, yet excludes other religions in a way, at first glance, incompatible with pluralism.

The addition of "Particularism" as a fourth category is sometimes suggested,[168] although one might also want to add Deep Pluralism, Parallelism and others as distinct positions. An alternative typology is suggested by Jacques Dupuis of "Ecclesiocentrism", "Christocentrism", and "Theocentrism".[169] These represent the focal point of different theologies of religion, and the locus of theological truth. Ecclesiocentric views limit salvation and true knowledge of God to the church (however defined; although Dupuis has the Roman Catholic Church in mind here, it is also possible for another denomination to hold that salvation is limited to their own denomination; or for an ecumenically generous definition of the "church" to be given in this position). Christocentric views emphasise the uniqueness and finality of Christ, and stress Christ as the sole mediator of salvation, but might express varying degrees of hopefulness regarding non-Christians being saved through Christ. Theocentrism, stressing relationship to 'God' (often construed in as generic a manner as possible) as the common focal point, is is in many respects analogous to Hick's call for a pluralist "Copernican Revolution".[170] Indeed, when Kärkkäinen adopts Dupuis' typology, he suggests the addition of a fourth category of "Realitycentrism" for Hick's later position.[171] This typology is perhaps more neutral than Race's. However it leaves "Christocentrism" as a fairly large category, within which we may wish for some subdivision.

One useful sub-typology which represents views which assume a Christian salvation (i.e. not the deep pluralist or parallelist approaches) is presented by Christopher W. Morgan.[172] He presents

[168] Paul Hedges, "A Reflection on Typologies" in Race and Hedges (eds), *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, 17-33.

[169] Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 184.

[170] Ibid., 189-192.

[171] Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, 25.

[172] Christopher W. Morgan, "Inclusivisms and Exclusivisms", in Morgan and Peterson (eds) *Faith Comes By Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 17-39. Morgan's

an image of concentric circles depicting the "means of salvation"; respectively Church, Gospel, Special Revelation, General Revelation, World Religions. He suggests that the first three are forms of exclusivism and the final two forms of inclusivism. Pluralism and universalism offer different answers, and so are outside the final circle. This typology does at first glance assume that the World Religions do not correspond in any way to Special Revelation, and so this is a question which bears further investigation. However, it is quite useful in categorising work from Reformed, Evangelical, Anglican, and other traditional Protestant perspectives where the categories make sense.

Finally, perhaps the most thorough descriptive tool for exclusivisms and inclusivisms is the matrix described by Daniel Strange in his *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised*. Strange proposes a set of six theological binaries, which he labels as propositions 1–12. These regard the divine salvific will (particular/universal); divine salvific provision (particular/universal); salvific hope (*Heilspessimismus*/*Heilsoptimismus*); salvific accessibility (particular/universal); salvific means (Christ epistemologically necessary/not epistemologically necessary for salvation); and, salvific eschatological opportunity (response to the gospel required in this life/post-mortem opportunity).[173] Although classically, exclusivism tends to be associated with the former, and inclusivism with the latter, this gives a greater ability to describe nuanced positions, and demonstrates the different systematic considerations involved.

typology can accommodate deep pluralisms or salvations as an outer category, but the logic of his typology means this is not particularly descriptive.

[173] Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised*, 305.

Situating the Debate in Relation to the Modern University

The debate surrounding the Theology of Religions has not developed in an intellectual vacuum; and elements of the debate are best understood when situated in the context of developments in the modern university. As C. John Sommerville points out,[174] easily the majority of Western universities and colleges founded prior to the 20th century were established along Christian foundations, of one denomination or another. Yet a process of secularization beginning in the late 19th century and continuing through the 20th led to a redefinition of knowledge which prioritized the empirical knowledge most clearly associated with the sciences. This reflects a rejection to a greater or lesser extent of confessional identity in favour of secular criteria of truth which are ostensibly equally accessible to all. That this conception remains influential, if not dominant, might be illustrated anecdotally from the prioritization of funding and resources for the so-called STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medicine) subjects in UK Higher Education today. A university organized around empirical knowledge finds difficulties understanding the place of the humanities within itself, and in particular religion.[175] Secularization may attempt to get rid of religion and theological studies from the university, or to assimilate it to empirical modes of thought by its subsumation into social science, or cultural studies. Alternatively, it may change the mode in which theological study is pursued in a manner which privileges, if it does not outright demand, a pluralist approach.[176] If religious belief is engaged with

[174] C. John Somerville, *The Decline of the Secular University* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 11-17.

[175] Ibid., 27-29. See also Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 293-298.

[176] Somerville, *The Decline of the Secular University*, 67. Some writers consider this a very recent phenomenon, but it appears to be a feature of approved public discourse throughout the post-war period, according to John Murray Cuddihy, *No Offense: Civil Religion and Protestant Taste* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1978), who argues that the USA has developed a "Civil Religion" which has displaced religions imported from Europe from the public discourse. The toleration of Protestants,

to the level of evaluation, and not only understanding, the problem of which criteria to use to evaluate religious beliefs and claims inevitably arises. Without a confessional paradigm, competing religious claims must be adjucated in a secular framework which, in a Western context, is likely to be materialistically reductionist and prioritise phenomenology of religion and/or pragmatic, politically-defined criteria for 'grading' religious belief.[177]

This approach has been accompanied by the development of multiculturalism as a governing ideology in the secular university, alongside other political developments. Here, I refer to politics in a broad sense, in the sense of assumptions which are not necessarily partisan and which are common at least to Anglophone Western countries if not more widely. Multiculturalism, accompanied by Critical Theory's identity politics with its focus on race, gender, class (and, more recently, sexuality), has led in general to a turn towards the subject in much academic discourse, Somerville argues, and this leads to parallel problems understanding religion outside the discourse of power; oppressed and oppressor. The application of these ideologies to the Theology of Religion almost demands a subject-focussed and relativist approach; the key questions of theology, soteriology, eschatology and claims to religious truth simply cannot be adjudicated since there is no empirical data and few (if any) shared assumptions which might be acceptable to all possible participants in the debate. Functionally, criticism of religion requires a set of normative values by

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Catholics, and Jews, accompanied by the Vatican II statement on Judaism, led to a situation where exclusivism was seem as unseemly on grounds of taste. It was not appropriate to seek to convert others or to insist upon the exclusivity of salvation through one denomination. Cuddihy sees this at work even in the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr who is said to have placed the traditional theologian into a defensive posture by making the outsider's perception of Christian theology normative and thus placing under question any theology deemed apologetically embarrassing (41-43).

[177] There are parallels here to William James' pragmatic criteria for judging religions: "Judge them by their fruits", in idem., *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, 1908), 21-22.

which to grade, and the criteria which might be obtainable from secular presuppositions are merely procedural. A mistaken essentialism, which sees one's religion as an unalterable part of one's being akin to race (race and religion being an equivalency now put into UK law in provisions such as the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act and the 2010 Equality Act) has meant that strong criticism of religion, particularly from the viewpoint of another religion, can be viewed as increasingly unseemly, if not illegitimately oppressive.[178] Arguing the Christian inclusivist, or, worse, the exclusivist position in the secular university often feels uncomfortable precisely because it is conceptually at odds with an institution which has become *de facto* secular, enamoured of Critical Theory, and which views critique of religion as verbal violence aimed at oppressing the adherents of the religion being criticised. This author would, however, seek to contest the assumption that the exclusivist (and inclusivist) perspectives are especially problematic or entail a reduction in the dignity afforded to non-Christians, as will be argued below.

Peter Berger, in a prescient article originally published in 1996 in *The National Interest*, argues that antipathy to religious beliefs and practices which are at odds with liberal secularism is especially prevalent in academia, and by extension the Western-educated cultural elites who "control the institutions that provide the "official" definitions of reality, notably the educational system, the media of mass communication, and the higher reaches of the legal system."[179] Berger does not develop a theory of why this is so, but notes that, at least in this respect, the university is unusual from a global perspective. He describes his "aha!" moment of realisation that

[178] Somerville, *The Decline of the Secular University,* 47-48, 63.

[179] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview", in idem. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1-18, 10.

fundamentalism and other anti-secular religious beliefs were not a fringe phenomenon outside of this elite, and that, in his words, "[the] difficult-to-understand phenomenon is not Iranian mullahs but American university professors."[180] To the extent that exclusivism (and some forms of inclusivism) represents a view considered at odds with liberal secularism, it is thus unsurprising to find it more prevalent among non-elites than in the university.[181]

Another, related, political pressure derives from the practical *fact* of religious diversity in Western societies, and associated issues felt as problematic by government and funding bodies. The difficulties in adjudicating a multi-religious society require some governing ideology, which in the absence of Christianity as a state ideology frequently becomes a procedural pluralism, even if this is not overtly acknowledged. In the UK and elsewhere these practical governance concerns often fall broadly within the area described by the label 'community cohesion' and 'religious extremism'.[182] For public policy, pluralism may seem to offer an 'easy win' on these issues by ostensibly reducing the potential for religion to offend adherents of alternative traditions (although, as noted above, pluralism has the potential to be considered more offensive by exclusivist or inclusivist adherents when it puts itself in a position of telling them from an epistemologically-privileged outsider's perspective what is *really* going on inside their religion) and by critiquing the sociological separatism thought to accompany theological exclusivism.

[180] Ibid., 2.

[181] Cf. Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 108.

[182] A criticism of some secondary-level religious education made in a recent report on UK RE provision involves a confusion concerning its aims and potential instrumentalisation of the study of religion in service of 'community cohesion'-related goals. Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead, "A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools", (Lancaster: Westminster Faith Debates, 2015), 30-31.

These observations are not intended to be wholly, or even largely, explanatory of the rise in pluralism and other novel approaches to the Theology of Religions, but to highlight the academic and political environment in which the debate has taken place.

Conclusion

The Theology of Religions debate is of inherent interest for Christian Theology, with implications not only for soteriology and missiology, but across a range of theological loci. In addition, it forms a point of debate with secular liberalism which might be considered the dominant contemporary ideology of the Western world. The discussion has been through at least two discernible phases of, initially, challenge to traditional understandings from pluralist perspectives and critique of pluralism, followed by a reply to that critique from classical and modified pluralism(s) and a period of further critique. Some features of post-modernity combine to make pluralism an especially attractive option, and conversely to make exclusivism more challenging to articulate in the contemporary academic climate. Nevertheless, recent defences of varieties of exclusivism have also been mounted, most notably by Evangelicals such as Netland, Carson, and Strange, as well as Roman Catholics such as D'Costa. One significant challenge for pluralism and some iterations of inclusivism is the challenge of defining religion, and the problems implicitly essentialist definitions of religion face on the conceptual level. Another significant challenge for pluralism is that articulations of pluralism tend to relativize specific theological traditions and cataphatic statements, and to struggle to integrate the phenomena of different "religions" when these are given "thick description". In the case of Christianity, it seems that the "thicker" the theological articulation, the harder it becomes to sustain some of these approaches which rely, overtly or otherwise, on theological minimalism. Turning to the New Testament and, specifically in this study, to some of the specific claims made by Paul, may

therefore provide a challenge to pluralist and some inclusivist approaches. Paul also provides some resources for a constructive biblical-theological approach to many the issues raised by religious diversity, and it is the purpose of this thesis to articulate some of the themes in Paul which can contribute to a Christian understanding of the Theology of Religions.

Paul and the Theology of Religions

Although some systematic theologians working in the Theology of Religions have felt that Paul has little or nothing to contribute,[1] Paul is in fact almost impossible to ignore in developing a Christian approach to the Theology of Religions. This is because the issues raised by a Theology of Religions intersect with numerous strands of Christian belief, almost all of which are touched upon in the letters of Paul and which would, hypothetically, have assumed very different forms had Paul never become a Christian. These include several significant issues. Strange demonstrates that the questions posed by the Theology of Religions intersect not only with the extent and recipients of salvation, but also with many other strands of Christian doctrine, leading to a matrix of responses to pertinent theological questions: whether or not salvation is *solus Christus*; whether conscious faith in Christ is necessary; whether there is an opportunity to respond to the gospel *post mortem*; whether few or many or all will be saved. To these we might add the issue of revelation, since a full evaluation of other religions from a Christian theological perspective would want to assess whether the religion is revelatory of truth about God and the world, as well as whether it is salvific. If the idea of Christianity as a revealed religion is accepted, and the indispensability of that revelation forms a foundation for Christian theology, it is

[1] For example, Kenneth Rose, *Pluralism: The Future of Religion* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 119.

naturally a question of great significance whether God has spoken in other religions as well. Treatments of these issues in systematic theologies typically make extensive reference to Paul and his letters.

Interactions between New Testament scholarship and systematic theological concerns on this issue are, as I shall argue, desirable and mutually beneficial. While different Christian traditions have developed different ways of relating scripture to Christian theology, and theologians since Johann P. Gabler's famous lecture of 1787 have grown used to distinguishing between "Biblical Studies" and "Dogmatic Theology",[2] few would want to rule out interaction between the two sub–disciplines entirely. There are some contemporary approaches to Paul which seek to be completely secular,[3] although many scholars who take these approaches caution against any idea that this makes them more neutral. Rather, as Magnus Zetterholm states regarding his own theologically-uncommitted approach to Paul, "I do not mean to suggest that this state of affair[s] guarantees scholarly objectivity or freedom from influencing biases—only that my biases are of a different kind."[4] This is commendably honest when

[2] John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, "J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality," *SJT* 33 (1980), 133.

[3] Marcus Bockmuehl relates attending a conference Barcelona in 2004 which included a Presidential address arguing that theological approaches to the New Testament were illegitimate and ought to be "erased" from the discipline of Biblical Studies. Marcus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament study* (Studies in Theological Interpretation 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 76.

[4] Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), x.

compared with the confident tone of earlier, modernist critical scholars, who considered the conclusions reached by a biblical studies carefully walled off from theology and the church to be a kind of scholarly gold standard; "the assured results of modern scholarship" in a phrase which seems well-known but variously attributed.[5] Some contemporary approaches to New Testament study which deliberately sideline theological issues do so consciously to avoid particularism or with the aim of enabling pluralist theologies by putting reader-response approaches in the foreground of interpretation.[6] One question which could be posed to scholarship of Paul which does not seek to relate Paul to theological concerns is for whom such scholarship is done, if not for a relatively small audience of likeminded scholars?[7] A purely historical study of Paul as an early Christian writer, preacher, and missionary would not justify a world of where

[5] Cf. John H. Hayes, *New Testament: A History of Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 15. The confidence implied by this approach could be critiqued on several levels; see for example, Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 116-118, 159, who considers the term to represent an analogously naïve confidence to that of "pre-critical" missionaries.

[6] According to Robert Morgan, "New Testament," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (eds J. W. Rogerson and J. M. Lieu; Oxford: OUP, 2006). This kind of approach would represent the opposite to the one adopted in this study, constituting a pluralist approach to Paul rather than a Pauline approach to the Theology of Religions.

[7] Or, as Bockmuehl puts it, "what is the methodological connection of the academic study of these texts with the contemporary world in general and especially with the nearly two billion people who today consciously inhabit its symbolic world? In that respect, a vital but unanswered question is whether scholars of the New Testament relate to their subject matter most appropriately in descriptive and antiquarian terms like professors of Egyptology or in a more practical mode like professors of music or medicine." Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word,* 32.

hundreds of books and journal articles are published each year concerning Paul. On purely historical grounds we might expect more attention given to Josephus or Philo, of whose writings much more has survived. Paul is given special attention among first-century figures because of his significance for Christian theology. This is true not only as a historical point about the origins of biblical studies in Western universities, but in our contemporary world where the majority of interaction with Paul's writings and the major audience for commentaries on Paul's letters is in the church. Approaches which refuse to interact with theology are of very limited value to the church, and, more to the point, end up refusing to engage with Paul in the mode of thought for which he is most notable. Brevard Childs' approach to tearing down the "iron curtain"[8] between biblical scholarship and theology feels refreshing in comparison; whereby scripture and Christian theology are distinguished (the signal achievement, Childs feels, of the Reformation)[9] but not ultimately separated. Thus, according to Childs, the ultimate goal of the study of the Old and New Testaments is to contribute constructively to a 'Biblical Theology'. 'Biblical Theology' is something of an umbrella term, encompassing a range of approaches including the identification and articulation variously of 'central themes', single points of unity, and overarching metanarratives, as well as Childs' canonical

[8] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1992), xvi.

[9] Ibid., 3-4.

approach.[10] More recently, the value and propriety of "theological interpretation of scripture" has been affirmed as a way of overcoming this (modern) split between biblical studies and systematic theology in a somewhat different manner than 'Biblical Theology'.[11] John Barclay has suggested that, although contemporary study of Paul might not wish to adopt many of Rudolf Bultmann's specific conclusions, he is nonetheless commendable for an approach to Paul which seeks to move beyond "mere repetition" of Paul "in order to render this text theologically fruitful, and communicable as good news, in our contemporary context."[12] Furthermore, theological interpretation of Paul benefits when it can draw upon concepts and terminology not found in Paul, so long as the theological interpreter is clear that this is what is being done. Scripture read in such a context provides a rich source for Christian theology, and the approach will include historical evaluation, reception history, but focus primarily on the positive theological contribution of the biblical texts. This is an approach which I will take in this study, in seeking to relate relevant elements of Paul's thought to issues raised by the Theology of Religions, and seeking to then propose some conclusions and an overall outline of a Theology of Religions which follows Paul.

There have been some questions raised as to the appropriate terminology for discussing Christ-believers in the mid-first century, with some scholars

[10] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (2012), 445-459.

[11] Daniel J. Trier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008), 103-126.

[12] John M. G. Barclay, "Interpretation, Not Repetition: Reflections on Bultmann as a Theological Reader of Paul," *JTI* 9, no. 2 (2015), 201, 204.

avoiding the use of the term "Christian" for reasons of alleged anachronism, or because of the theological baggage associated with a term that can have historical or normative connotations.[13] The argument that the term is anachronistic recognises that the term "Christian" originated in the first-century, but suggests that it remained a term used by outsiders to describe followers of Christ, rather than a self-description until the second century.[14] An alternative etic designation can be used, such as "Christ-believer,"[15] or discussion could be restricted to emic self-designations within the Pauline corpus, for example, ἀδελφός. Others, such as Dunn, are happy to use it as a meaningful category for describing Paul's own thought, which, if not quite part of Paul's vocabulary, describes the same concept as someone who is "of Christ" or "in Christ."[16] The term could well be an etic one in the sense that it is not unreasonable to think it could be part of Paul's vocabulary (though it is not attested in his surviving letters), since Χριστιανός occurs in some other NT texts (indeed, in Acts 11:26 Luke suggests that Paul was in Antioch when the believers first began to be called "Christians," and in 26:28 it

[13] For example, John Barclay suggests that (in Galatians) "Paul has no counter-category, 'Christian'" against 'Jewish' identity (in *Paul and the Gift,* 421) and reserves the term "Christian" for discussion of the secondary literature and theological interpretation of Paul.

[14] E.g. Friedrich Blass, "ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΟΙ: ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΙ," *Hermes* 30, no. 3 (1895), 465-70. The dating of 1 Peter is one issue involved here, as well as the issue of whether 1 Peter 4:16 represents a self-designation; cf. David Horrell, "The Label Χριστιάνος: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity," *JBL* 126 (2007): 361-381.

[15] E.g. Michael Bird, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 10-11 and *passim*.

[16] Dunn*, Theology of Paul the Apostle,* 399, 423.

occurs in Agrippa's question to Paul).[17] Hurtado provides examples of similar group-designation terms in Koine, influenced by the Latin noun endings *-ianus/-iani,* and suggests that "Christian" was on obvious and intuitively-understood label for a follower of Christ or a member of a 'Christ-party' and that this would have been possible "well before … 64 AD."[18] Thus "Christian" could plausibly be a self-designation in the time of Paul, and would almost certainly be intuitively understandable to him, making the etic/emic question moot as regards the propriety of describing Paul's theology with this or an alternative term. I will use the nominal and adjectival forms of "Christian" when discussing Paul's theology, since it is helpful terminology, and does not in my judgement represent a distortative imposition on the text.

Why engage with Paul on the issue? Quite apart from the normative status accorded to his writings by large numbers of Christians both historically and now, Paul's theology has been nothing short of formative for the wider Christian theological project and influential upon the Western philosophical tradition. It is hard to disagree with N.T. Wright's appraisal of Paul's significance as an ancient thinker as being comparable to that of Plato or Seneca, in terms of his intellectual stature and influence upon the history of thought.[19] Although frequently dichotomous and provocative, Paul is a deep, complex, and nuanced

[17] Cf. Paul Trebilco, *Self-designations and group identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 272.

[18] Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 92-94.

[19] N. T. Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005), x. Cf. Wright's discussion of Paul in relation to his "philsophical contemporaries" in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1354-1356, 1371.

thinker, working to articulate his theology in a religiously diverse and politically complex environment. While a simple exercise in proof-texting is to be avoided, a critical but respectful study of Paul brings us into contact with profound theological insights, and holds the possibility of an encounter with "truth" about God and the world.[20] Furthermore, an exegesis of Paul which does not seek to discern his theological contribution is essentially abandoning the hope of finding an argumentative coherence to his thought, and will quickly become either a truncated, bare historical account, or a rapidly fragmenting eisegesis of agenda-driven "readings". As such, an exegetically responsible and careful study and analysis of Paul's theology is not only desirable in itself, but also has much to contribute to the Theology of Religions.

Objections have been raised against reliance upon Pauline thought by significant voices in the Theology of Religions debate: Paul Knitter, for example, protests that there is too much disagreement between Pauline scholars on what Paul meant to make much use of him, and that a focus on Paul can "drown out" other voices in the New Testament witness.[21] This concern is misplaced. The recognition that Paul—as Apostle to the Gentiles—is one of the New Testament authors with the most to contribute to the debate is not an invalidation of the other authors; it is the canon and not merely the letters of Paul that has been

[20] Richard H. Bell, "Reading Romans with Arthur Schopenhauer: Some First Steps toward a Theology of Mind," *JSPL* 1, no. 1 (2011), 41; citing Christof Landmesser, *Wahrheit als Grundbegriff neutestamentlicher Wissenschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 192-194, see also 393; cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (4vols.; vol. 1; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 41.

[21] Knitter, *No other name?,* 92-95.

normative for Christian theology. Knitter points to Paul's rejection of justification by "good works" and the fact that these works are seen as "intrinsic to the experience of salvation" in James and the Synoptics,[22] hoping that we will infer that we may take or leave Paul. Yet the perspective offered by James and the gospel writers on "good works" is never that they are a substitute for faith in the God of Israel, and specifically in Jesus Christ. Similarly, the diversity of interpretations of Paul in New Testament scholarship is not a priori grounds for the conclusion that study of Paul may not contribute to a Theology of Religions. As much—if not greater—scholarly diversity may be found in the interpretation and application of Karl Barth, or Vatican II, to the Theology of Religions, without anybody suggesting these sources thereby be ruled out.

Another objection, posed by Alan Race is that the Bible (and hence Paul) knows nothing of contemporary religions.[23] This objection is meant not so much in the sense that Paul did not conceive of the modern category of "religions" (though this is true), but more specifically that Paul did not encounter (for reasons of chronology) Islam, Sikhism, and other religions developed since the first century, and neither does he show awareness of Hindu or Buddhist thought. The cults of the Corinthian "pagans" (τὰ ἔθνη) spoken of by Paul may no longer exist; nor the imperial cult of Rome. Yet Paul's theological response to the Gentiles and (what we would term) their religions relies remarkably little on their specific details—anything which might be thought to present an

[22] Ibid, 94.

[23] Alan Race, *Making Sense of Religious Pluralism* (London: SPCK, 2013), 10.

"incommensurability" with contemporary world faiths—and is drawn mainly from his Christian gospel and the context and theological resources of his Jewish background. As will be argued at greater length in chapter 8, his thought lends support to a critique which can apply to contemporary religions. It does not, therefore, seem *prima facie* implausible that Paul's theology can inform a contemporary theology of religions where Christianity's main interlocutors, at least on a crude numerical basis, would be Islam, Hinduism, and other 'major world faiths', which might be treated in an analogous manner to his attitude to Gentile religion. Paul's discussion of Judaism would bear relevance to a Christian attitude to Judaism, and potentially also to other beliefs. The most likely candidate for being considered analogous to Judaism might be Islam,[24] although this depends to some extent on the grounds upon which one would make the case for a *Sonderweg* or continuing separate covenant with Judaism. If, for example, ethnic descent is intrinsic to membership in Israel, or adherence to specifics of *halakha,* then the parallels which might be drawn with Islam are harder to make. Some caution is to be advised, as the occasional nature of Paul's writings and the fact that he never addressed the issue in his surviving letters in the level of detail as Christian theology has done mean that some conclusions must be drawn inferentially and others will be tentative where the evidence is not definitive. However, the situation is not quite as underdetermined by the text as G.K. Beale

[24] An argument made, among others, in Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2001).

suggests,[25] particularly considering Paul's greater engagement with Gentile belief and practices when compared with the gospels and the "catholic letters", his extended discussion of the situation of Jewish non-Christians, and the cohesiveness of Paul's thinking on issues such as revelation and salvation, which allow relatively specific inferences to be drawn.

Critical scholarship has at one time or another declared almost all of Paul's letters to be pseudepigraphal. The older consensus among critical scholars tended to be that there were seven or eight authentic Pauline letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon (and possible Colossians).[26] More recently there has been a move in the consensus towards seeing Ephesians as authentic.[27] In addition there have been defences of the authenticity of the remaining letters mounted in recent decades.[28] This discussion ultimately does not affect the development of a *Pauline* theology of religion, since the theology of the disputed letters is generally consonant with that of the undisputed letters, at least insofar as the use of terminology for non-Christians, the themes of sin, Adam, and union with Christ, and the attitude to idolatry are concerned. Nevertheless, in this study I have found that the salient points of Paul's theological perspective as it touches the issues of other religions

[25] Beale, "Other Religions", 90-91, 102.

[26] W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 162-184.

[27] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002). As argued also in my MA dissertation, "Images of Israel and the Church in the Letter to the Ephesians" (Nottingham, 2011).

[28] Cf. D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 306.

and the questions raised by the Theology of Religions can be demonstrated from the undisputed letters, and so I will proceed on this basis, with texts from Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastorals brought in as support for points derived from Paul's other letters. Luke's record of Paul's preaching in Acts will be treated in a similar way and brought in as supporting evidence. The sermons in Acts 14:15—17 and 17:22—31 are of some significance for discussing Paul's view of revelation and will be examined in chapter 7 alongside evidence from the letters.

The New Perspective on Paul

The 'New Perspective on Paul' has had a major impact upon Pauline studies in the past few decades, with approaches to Paul diverging greatly among scholars who broadly adopt the 'New Perspective' and those who are critical of it, whether or not the 'Lutheran' reading of Paul is retained. One key (and polarizing) issue is that of Paul's attitude towards Judaism. The 'Lutheran' perspective on Paul takes a fairly radical break between Paul and Judaism as axiomatic, whereas the 'New Perpsective' tends to seek to interpret Paul without assuming a major break with Judaism, and sees Paul as remaining within the boundaries of Second-Temple sectarian Judaism. At stake is what Paul means in his critique of the (Jewish) law and statements about justification in texts like Galatians 2:16:[29]

> "…yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so

[29] Cf. also Romans 3:20—21, 28; Galatians 2:21; 3:2, 5, 10—11.

that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law." (NRSV)

The 'Lutheran' or 'traditional' perspective on Paul owes a great deal to the Protestant reformation, and contemporary proponents of this perspective generally seek to defend an interpretation of Paul which sees him as a proponent of justification on the basis of faith alone, and as critiquing Judaism as a religion of righteousness based on works. "Works of the law" are thus seen as opposed to "faith in Christ" as means by which one might seek to be justified, with Paul teaching that the latter is the only effective way of being justified. This perspective when articulated today does not necessarily involve a defence of Luther's own interpretations in detail, or those of other historic proponents of the traditional approach (for example, Bultmann). The "traditional" view, particularly in German scholarship, is not solely indebted to Luther, and the so-called Tübingen School view on Paul is dependent not only on Lutheranism but also upon the work of nineteenth-century German scholars such as F.C. Baur.[30] Baur in turn drew heavily upon Hegel's dialectic of history in his interpretation of Paul, seeing Judaism and Christianity as antithetical and necessarily opposed. Furthermore, Baur saw Paul as the proponent of a law-free, universalist Christianity in opposition to Peter's alleged Judaizing gospel, and finally Johannine Christianity as a synthesis of the two. Such a perspective makes itself open to criticism both because it is unduly dependent upon a particular

[30] Scott. J. Hafemann, "Paul and his Interpreters since F.C. Baur," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (ed. R. P. Martin; Nottingham: IVP, 1993), 666-667.

philosophical Idealism, and because the articulations of it by the Tübingen School were anti-Semitic, seeing Judaism as a historically inferior faith.[31] A rather different articulation of a traditional perspective can be found in some Anglophone scholarship, for example the work of C.E.B. Cranfield.[32] Contemporary 'Lutheran' readings of Paul do not generally seek to make the specific polemic parallels Luther drew between himself and Paul, or between the late-medieval Roman Catholic church and Pharisaism. Within these approaches some variation is possible regarding Paul's stance towards the propriety of observance of the Torah for Christians. However, the traditional Reformation theological distinctives of "imputed righteousness" and "justification by faith alone" are generally defensible from Paul from this perspective and not from the 'New Perspective'.

Some significant demurrals from this perspective include E.P. Sanders, who argues that Judaism, at least in Palestine, in the period from the second century BC to the second century AD, was characterised by what he terms "covenantal nomism", whereby "one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression."[33] Obedience to Torah is therefore not a way of earning one's

[31] See Zetterholm, 37-40.

[32] C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Volume I* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975).

[33] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: a comparison of patterns of religion* (London: S.C.M., 1977), 75.

righteousness, of "getting in", but of maintaining one's good standing as a member of the covenant community, of "staying in".[34] Sanders claims that in the Judaism of the period he has studied, and in "all the literature surveyed, obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace as such."[35] The claim that Paul saw the law as impossible to fulfil has also been questioned, given that this is a perspective not generally found elsewhere. As Das puts it, ""Pauline interpreters have searched so diligently for alternative explanations of Gal. 3.10 because Jewish literature from Paul's day rarely exhibited any pessimism about the possibility of satisfactorily obeying God's Law."[36] Thus scholars of Paul who had assumed that Paul criticised Judaism because it was legalistic had to re-evaluate their understanding of Paul given a significantly different understanding of his opponents.[37] This builds upon the claim made by Krister Stendahl that Luther read his own "introspective conscience" into Paul's life and letters and thus interpreted Paul as finding Christ as a solution to his troubled conscience. On the contrary, Stendahl claims, the Pharisaic Paul would have been untroubled by his own sins since the Torah provided sacrifices as a means of atonement for them.[38] For Sanders, Paul's criticism of law-observance within Judaism is not that Judaism is legalistic or

[34] Ibid, 180.

[35] Ibid., 420.

[36] A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Library of Pauline Studies; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 42.

[37] Douglas J. Moo, "Paul and the Law in the last ten years," *SJT* 40 (1987): 293; Nijay Gupta, "Thirty-Five Years on Paul", *JSPL* 4, no. 1 (2014): 81-86.

[38] Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *The Harvard Theological Review* 56, no. 3 (1963): 119-215.

grace-less, but that the law leads to boasting and to the exclusion of the Gentiles. Justification by faith is good news because it leaves no room for boasting, and because it is not based on a Torah observance which excluded Gentiles from sharing in the covenant. Boasting is a problem because it undermines Paul's Christological soteriology, and the exclusion of the Gentiles is a problem in the light of Paul's conviction that the gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jews.[39] Notably Sanders himself understood Paul's theology to imply a soteriological exclusivism while being universal in its scope and appeal—that is, the gospel is appropriate for Jews and Gentiles, but that one must have faith in Christ to be justified before God. The problem, therefore, with Judaism "is that it is "not Christianity" and that it fails to recognize who Jesus is.[40]

Stendahl, in contrast, understood Paul rather differently, arguing that the proclamation of justification by faith is not the *summa* of Paul's theology but rather a strategy to gain acceptance of Gentile converts without them having to obey the whole Torah. It is a way of asserting their right to also claim the blessings of God's promises to Israel.[41] Gentiles do not have to keep the Torah but Jews do,[42] and Paul's argument in Romans 9—11 represents his desire for "a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity in which the missionary urge to convert Israel is held in check."[43] Stendahl considered it

[39] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 489-490.

[40] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552.

[41] Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 2-9.

[42] Ibid, 130.

[43] Ibid, 4.

inappropriate for Christians to seek the conversion of Jews to Christianity, considering Judaism to be an equally valid means of salvation (for Jews), and this admission of two possible routes to salvation was later expanded by Stendahl into the claim that other religions (in addition to Christianity) could be valid means of salvation for Gentiles.[44] This approximates the pluralist position in the threefold Theology of Religions typology.

There are a number of different constructive proposals made by scholars who adopt the 'New Perspective', such that it might be more accurate to speak of 'New Perspectives' on Paul and his relation to Judaism. I take the core unifying issue of the 'New Perspective' to be the view that Paul's criticism of Judaism had to do with its supposed ethnocentrism or racial exclusivity rather than legalism or a critique of gaining righteousness by "works of the law", however these are defined. The significant question is why Paul rejected "the works of the law". Sanders' proposal that they are rejected because of boasting, and because they exclude the Gentiles, is not universally shared.[45] There are also some positions which would see Paul as not rejecting "works of the law" at all, but seeking to modify them so as to preserve "equal rights in Christ" and as

[44] Krister Stendahl, "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism," in *Meanings: The Bible as Document and Guide* (ed. K. Stendahl; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984); Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 4. Cf. Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 20-24.

[45] Cf. Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters," 670-677. Cf. Aaron O'Kelley, *Did the Reformers Misread Paul? A Historical-Theological Critique of the New Perspective* (Studies in Christian History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014), 22-26.

teaching that Christians were still obligated to obey certain commandments (for Gentiles, the Noachide commandments rather than the Torah).[46] Pamela Eisenbaum has recently argued that Paul taught two ways of salvation, with Jesus as providing salvation through faith for the Gentiles, while the Torah is the means of salvation for Jews.[47] In addition Heikki Räisänen has put forward the view that Paul is simply inconsistent on the Law and its relation to justification and its role the life of the Christian believer.[48]

One significant issue for the question of a Pauline Theology of Religion, if the idea of "covenantal nomism" is accepted as part of Paul's thought, is that salvation is to be thought of in communal terms, and so it is important to discuss where the boundaries of the covenant community lie and how one might enter the community from outside those boundaries. J.D.G. Dunn accepts Sanders' "covenantal nomism" thesis regarding Judaism and suggests that Paul himself retains some of this concept in his theology. Although Paul took many of his beliefs about God for granted from his Jewish background, the shape of these beliefs become modified through the lens of Christ.[49] Dunn identifies "works of the Law" in Galatians as especially signifying law-observance as a marker of identity: circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath being the major examples of

[46] Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum; vol. 1; Assen, NL: Van Gorcum, 1990), 269.

[47] Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original History of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009).

[48] Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT II 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 264.

[49] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle* 29.

these. Paul is not critiquing the moral law at this point, but rather aspects of law-observance which are intended to function as a "boundary-marker" between Jews and non-Jews.[50] Thus it is not obedience to the law as such which Paul is against, but the use of it to exclude Gentiles. Paul teaches justification by faith in Jesus Christ as a corrective to "justification by works of the law" which emphasise a "nationalistic or racial" aspect to the covenant which either excluded Gentiles entirely or put them in a second-class position.[51] There is thus still a critique of Judaism in Paul and an implicit discontinuity due to a change wrought by Christ. Dunn argues that the Christian Paul did continue to consider himself a Jew on the level of ethnic affiliation, but that he was probably no longer law-observant (on the basis of 1 Corinthians 9:19—23) and that he considered his identity as a Jew to be erased on another level by his incorporation into Christ.[52] While this view allows for a great deal of continuity with Judaism, Dunn interprets Paul in a way which would make second-temple Judaism inferior on the grounds that its approach to "works of the Law" renders it unduly exclusive of Gentiles.

This perspective—that Paul finds Judaism wanting because it is nationalistic or ethnocentric—is also adopted to a large extent by N.T. Wright. Wright argues that Paul disputed the idea of "national righteousness" and the

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[50] James D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 186.

[51] Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 195.

[52] James D.G. Dunn, "The Jew Paul and His Meaning for Israel," in *A Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (ed. T. Linafelt; New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 201-215.

primacy of ethnic identity as constituting membership in the people of God. The problem with Torah is when "law functions not as a legalist's ladder but as a charter of national privilege" and Paul's gospel is superior in that it it universally accessible, with Wright claiming that "[faith], unlike the Torah, is available to all."[53] The major problem Paul finds with his Pharisaic background is then not that it has a legalistic view of justification, nor that it cannot solve the predicament of human sin, but rather that it is ethnically exclusive. To this point we might well ask whether this is a fair picture of the Pharisees, who were not only open in principle to Gentiles converting to Judaism, but seem rather to have encouraged it (cf. Matthew 23:15).[54] Although there is little evidence of *organised* missionary activity by Pharisees, or direct documentary evidence of significant efforts at proselytism (for example, propaganda or first-hand accounts of conversion), there are some reports of Gentile opposition to Jewish proselytism where the Pharisees are likely involved, and some indirect evidence regarding the growth of the Jewish population in Hellenistic and Roman cities which strongly suggest significant numbers of conversions to Judaism by Gentiles.[55] Torah is, contra Wright, available to all, if they are willing to accept its demands. Pharisaism was not ethnically exclusive in the strictest sense, and

[53] N. T. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 65.

[54] David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews : Jewish contours of Pauline flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23* (WUNT II 304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 202-203.

[55] So Louis H. Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (JSJSup 107; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 151-152. Cf. Brian McGing, "Population and Proselytism: How many Jews were there in the Ancient World?," in *Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. J. Bartlett; London: Routledge, 2002).

although conversion by an adult male would have involved the significant hurdle of circumcision (the modern-day practice varies somewhat as to whether *brit milah* is required of adult male converts to Judaism) it seems likely that a significant number of Gentiles did convert to Judaism in the first century AD. Conversion to Judaism was possible and so Paul's objections to Judaism cannot be solely to do with its ethnocentrism. If we were to reduce our reading of Paul's critique of Judaism down to the shifting of boundary-markers, we would be in the position of arguing that Paul objects to putting the burden of circumcision, food laws, Sabbath, and certain other identity badges upon Gentile converts, while expecting them to adopt Jewish standards of sexual morality, opposition to idolatry and concomitant exclusive devotion to the true God, and to commit themselves socially to the Christian community in an analogous manner to a convert joining the Pharisees.[56] Sanders notes that the Pharisees were quite similar to Pauline churches in that they maintained a strong theological identity and relatively strict practice without isolating themselves from society as a whole.[57] It does not seem to me that Paul can be read as differing from the Pharisees only over which particular boundary markers were appropriate ones to expect Gentiles to conform to, and which were unnecessary impediments. It fails to capture the way in which the acceptance or rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, lies at the heart of Paul's differences with Judaism. Paul

[56] I am grateful to my fellow PhD student Tim Murray for helpful discussions on this point.

[57] E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1983), 236-242.

charges Israel with "unbelief" in Romans 11:23, not ethnic chauvinism, and this means essentially unbelief in Jesus as the Christ.[58] In the light of the vast claims Paul makes about Christ transforming believers, quibbles about boundary markers seem secondary or tertiary to this issue. I am unconvinced by the arguments that the primary problem with "works of the law" for Paul was ethnocentrism which prevented non-Jews from entering the covenant community, since Pharisaic Judaism showed openness to Gentiles converting,[59] which means the "works of the law" were not an inherent barrier to conversion, and also because Paul also wishes his converts from Gentile backgrounds to adopt a strict sexual ethic (for example) which is essentially the same as Jewish sexual ethics and would present considerable difficulties for some pagans to accept.[60]

Wright and Dunn do both recognise the significance of Paul's Christology and that it forms a major point of difference between Judaism and Pauline

[58] Cf. Romans 9:30—10:21; Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An inquiry into Paul's theology of Israel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 267. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 596: "The unbelief here is nothing less than unbelief in Christ since there is so doubt that the "faith" by which the Gentiles stand (v.20) and the "unbelief" by which the Jews were cut off related to trust in Christ or lack of the same."

[59] Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer* (WUNT II 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 435-442; Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 88.

[60] Cf. Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture & Religion 7; trans. R. Frechet; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 187-192. Pauline sexual ethics continues to be considered a stumbling-block to conversion by some today: Ruth Gledhill, "Scandal and schism leave Christians praying for a 'new Reformation'," *The Times*, 2 April 2010.

Christianity.[61] Wright sees Paul as essentially "rethinking" elements of Israel's faith and scriptures so that his theology is a "freshly reworked" and "freshly imagined" expression of this faith centred around Jesus, producing a "Messiah-shaped monotheism."[62] Here I agree that Paul's acceptance of Jesus as the Christ makes the significant difference to his theology, and that this affects every element of his thought. This is precisely because Paul's differences with Judaism stem from the fact that they do not accept Jesus as the Messiah.

Whether the 'New Perspective' approach is accepted is not necessarily determinative of whether an exclusivist, inclusivist or pluralist reading of Paul will be adopted, but it does significantly affect the terms in which this might be expressed. Boundary markers and group identity are a significant issue for Paul, which will be addressed in the following chapter, but are not the problem he identifies with Judaism in the way that Dunn and Wright argue. However the increased attention given to them does serve to highlight that salvation in Paul, though it has an individual dimension, is not *individualistic*, and that the communal aspect of being a Christian is important for Paul. The traditional, 'Lutheran' reading can minimize this aspect of Paul's theology, although we might want to note that the major theological figures of the Reformation, for example Luther and Calvin, do both show a considerable appreciation of the corporate dimensions of Christianity. Rather, it is the nineteenth-century

[61] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 380-381; Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," 166; N. T. Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2013), 695-696.

[62] Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God*, 687.

interpretation of Paul in the tradition of Weber, Billerbeck, Bousset, Kittel, and others which downplays the ideas of covenant and community, in favour of an apocalypticism which seeks to make salvation an individualized and personal event. Sanders is right to criticise these scholars as distorting both Judaism and Paul's gospel,[63] but mistaken in his assumption that these represent the only, or even the normative, expression of Protestantism.[64] As Bird argues, bifurcating the covenantal and apocalyptic in Paul distorts his message, which combines these ideas:

> "The covenantal horizon means that we cannot lose sight of the question of who are God's people and how are they marked out as they await their final vindication. Similarly the apocalyptic horizon demands that the coming act of salvation spells out liberation from sin, death, and evil as well as the rectification of sinners and transgressors. The question that confronts us is: who are the people of God and in what economy shall they be vindicated?"[65]

Paul and Judaism

Of more immediate concern to this present study is Paul's attitude to Judaism and non-Christian Jews. The question of Paul's relation to Judaism is of particular importance with regards to the question of boundaries of salvation, and the possibility that there may be, in Paul's thought, a *Sonderweg*—as it is customarily termed—for Israel to attain salvation outside of faith in Christ. The

[63] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism,* 234-235.
[64] Cf. O' Kelley, *Did the Reformers Misread Paul?,* 17.
[65] Bird, *Saving Righteousness of God,* 32.

argument can be made that a possibility of salvation via a *Sonderweg* can open avenues for considering other religious traditions to be their own analogous paths to salvation. This idea is utilised by Stendahl and others in their cases for pluralism.[66] We might describe this proposal as a "multiple *Sonderweg*" or "pluralistic *Sonderweg*" which extends the concept of a special status for (non-Christian) Israel to a special status for other religious groups. Such a proposal typically must assume that Israel is "religiously" defined rather than ethnically-defined, which allows for an analogy between Judaism and Islam, or between Judaism and Buddhism. These analogous systems can then be considered to form their own special means of salvation, perhaps even to be considered as having their own covenant with God.

However, this pluralistic *Sonderweg* reading is in significant tension with an alternative pluralist reading of Paul. A universalist strand of thought, particularly pronounced in liberal Protestant theology, sees Paul as arguing against the ethnic distinctiveness and boundary-drawing elements of Judaism, which are interpreted as paradigmatically exclusivist. Rather, Paul undermines these categories and preaches a "non-exclusive"[67] gospel which, in its ethnic openness to Gentiles, also suggests openness to the religious beliefs of other cultures. Relationship with God is possible for any individual, and is unrelated

[66] Stendahl, "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism", 233-244.

[67] Race, *Making Sense of Religious Pluralism*, 52. Cf. Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Sexism and God-Language", 156, who argues that Paul considers "class, ethnicity, and gender" as "divisions overcome by redemption in Christ" and reads this in a maximally-deconstructive sense to see Paul as fundamentally universalistic.

to group-membership. As Caroline Johnson Hodge demonstrates, this reading is common in twentieth-century Protestant theology and has antecedents in the early church, but is reliant upon reading Paul as opposing the granting of any theological relevance to ethnic and kinship-concepts.[68] The undertone of the universalistic reading is that Paul is intensely opposed to "exclusivist" Judaism and that "pluralist" Pauline Christianity is a significant advancement upon this. The universalistic pluralist is therefore committed to a reading of Paul which is essentially that of F.C. Baur,[69] and perhaps even hyper-Lutheran and anti-Jewish. A pluralistic reading of Paul which is reliant upon a universalising ethic is inherently at odds with the respect for religious diversity held in the pluralist *Sonderweg* proposal, but may do more justice to the overcoming of Jew-Gentile barriers which forms a key part of Paul's theology. The form of argument can be scaled-back into forms of inclusivism which suggest that it is in Christ that the work of salvation is accomplished for those in other religions, but again this is fundamentally a different logic to the pluralist *Sonderweg* position which holds that there are fundamentally separate means of salvation, including—in the

[68] Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 3-4. Hodge fundamentally disagrees with this position and argues that Paul conceived of the church as a (non-biological) *ethnos* rather than transcending this category, appealing to Paul's inclusion of the Gentiles within the story of Abraham and his language of adoption and sonship: "being in-Christ is not ethnically neutral; rather, it falls under the umbrella of Jewishness." (ibid., 150)

[69] Baur depicts Paul as a universalist using Hellenistic thought as a means of overcoming the parochial and ethnically-exclusive Jewish thought, a caricature which arguably forms the source for much of the "New Perspective" criticism of Lutheranism. F.C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, 1:47.

case of "unbelieving Israel" in the Letter to the Romans—salvation for those who are outside of Christ. Both readings of Paul are mutually incompatible, which is something that appears to receive insufficient recognition in pluralist appeals to Paul, despite the implications of the universalist readings receiving substantial criticism from Boyarin and others.[70]

The question of contemporary Christian relations to Judaism looms large over a lot of post-war scholarship whether or not this is explicitly stated, and hence the discussion of Paul's attitude to Judaism is difficult to disentangle from contemporary arguments concerning the propriety of (Gentile) Christian missions to Jews. Wright suggests that the traditional view of Paul meant that "Judaism had been regarded by most Pauline expositors as the great exemplar of the wrong sort of religion … [it] represented human self-effort, legalism, prejudice and pride" and that consequently it needed to be abandoned, being seen by many as complicit in the anti-Semitic attitudes which contributed to the Holocaust.[71] The representation of Pharisaic (and/or Second-Temple Judaism as a whole) as legalistic is thus seen as an illegitimate theological move in that it leads to anti-Judaism. Anti-Judaism is defined by Nirenberg and others as a theological position which has potential to become anti-Semitism when it becomes racial or political animus.[72] This might be combined with a

[70] Boyarin*, A Radical Jew*, 40–42. See also below.

[71] N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul really said: was Paul of Tarsus the real founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 16. Cf. Dunn, "The Jew Paul and His Meaning for Israel," 201.

[72] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York, NY: Norton, 2013), 1-2.

genealogical approach to the history of thought which seeks to extend this reading of Paul, via Luther and Protestant theology, to the European anti-semitism which led to the Holocaust.[73] Logically speaking, this is a slippery-slope fallacy. Furthermore, the idea that Judaism is legalistic is not the only possible reading of Paul which might be considered a critique of Judaism susceptible to an anti-semitic usage. Wright and Dunn's criticism of Torah on the grounds that it was ethnocentric, and that Paul's theology is to be commended for overcoming the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews might be considered anti-Jewish or anti-semitic by some. If it is a damaging stereotype to suggest Second-Temple Judaism was legalistic, is it not just as damaging a stereotype to allege it was racist or ethnically chauvinistic? Along different lines, Daniel Boyarin, who in many respects understands Paul along similar lines to Dunn and Wright, argues that Paul's "radical … neither Jew nor Greek" Christian universalism is destructive to Jewish identity and represents a flattening of human diversity by seeking to eradicate cultural particularities.[74] Additionally the question of Israel as a nation is fraught with potential for accusations of anti-Semitism. Wright himself argues for a reading of the New Testament which might be described as supersessionistic, even if Wright disavows the label, in that he sees the church as "the continuation of Israel in a new situation" which

[73] Robert Paul Seesengood, *Paul: A Brief History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 190-195.

[74] Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 1, 22.

is to "fulfil Israel's vocation on behalf of the world",[75] and describes elsewhere the Temple as "replaced" by Christ.[76] On the basis of Romans 2:25—29 Wright argues that there is a need for the kind of unity in the new covenant community which precludes distinction between Jew and Gentile, which is precisely the kind of attitude objected to by a Jewish scholar like Boyarin. Thus Wright would be open to a charge of having developed an anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish theology from the perspective of a Jew who finds this idea objectionable. Indeed, it is possible that only an approach like Eisenbaum's, which sees two covenants for Jews and Christians respectively, would escape this potential accusation. However, accusations of theological anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism in the interpretation of Paul represent weaponized language, and would seek to place an exegetical claim outside the bounds of legitimate discourse without due examination. And the claim that any kind of interpretation of Paul or the New Testament which expresses supersessionism or which launches a strong critique of Judaism can no longer be held because of the Holocaust seems ill-judged as well. As Luke Timothy Johnson suggests, we must be cautious about such claims, which see one aspect of history or one experience as unique, since "one cannot declare one's own or anyone else's experience unique, for the rules of

[75] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 457-458.

[76] Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God*, 358. Elsewhere, Wright argues that Jesus Christ *is* the true Israel to the extent that the death of Jesus can be identified with the death of Israel Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," 67-68.

historiography do not allow that sort of declaration."[77] Johnson suggests that the events of the Nazi period in Germany were not seen as invalidating traditional readings of Paul by scholars who began work prior to the end of the Second World War, but that this idea comes from a succeeding generation of scholars: "Despite the *novum* of the Holocaust, however, no Christian theologian of major stature who began work before 1945 ... fundamentally altered his theological position because of that experience."[78] While a respectful approach to these issues is desirable, it seems methodologically impossible and anachronistic to suggest that a twentieth-century tragedy, no matter how grave an enormity it constitutes, is determinative of how Paul is to be read. If this were so, a hermeneutical veto would effectively be given to whoever claims the authoritative theological interpretation of history. Why stop at ruling out certain readings of justification in Paul, when the claim is made by others that the Holocaust makes it impossible to pursue a responsible theodicy,[79] or even that it makes us impossible for us to believe in a personal God entirely?[80]

It is an unsatisfactory approach to Paul to determine ahead of time what his attitude towards Judaism and non-Christian Jews must be, and then to interpret the texts around this assumption. A brief look at some significant texts on Paul's

[77] Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Bible After the Holocaust: A Response to Emil Fackenheim," in *Contested Issues in Christian Origins: Collected Essays* (NovTSup 147; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 631.

[78] Ibid., 626.

[79] Terrence W. Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1991), 208-14.

[80] Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 70-71.

relationship to and evaluation of Judaism will be helpful. Three such texts are found in 2 Corinthians 3:4—4:6, Romans 9—11, and 1 Thessalonians 2:14—16. Galatians 2 could also be a relevant text, where Paul is almost certainly expressing an evaluation of Judaism along with the criticism of false Christian teaching.[81] However, this is difficult to disentangle and in the end depends upon a view of Paul's relationship to Judaism drawn from his other writings, and so will not be looked at here. Galatians appears to have been written to a predominantly Gentile church (cf. Galatians 4:8) and so Paul may not feel it necessary to distinguish clearly between non-Christian Jews and Jewish Christian opponents who differ from him on observance of the Torah. Some additional passages which could also be considered are Philippians 3:2—11, along with (debatably) Ephesians 2:11—21 and Colossians 2:16—17.

2 Corinthians 3:4—4:6

In 2 Corinthians, Paul develops an extended contrast between the "old" and "new" covenant of the Law and the Spirit (3:6, 14). He then goes on to discuss the situation of those who are "unbelievers" (ἄπιστος, 4:4) and to whom the gospel remains "something veiled" (κεκαλυμμένον, 4:3), which makes this a highly significant text concerning Paul's attitude towards non-Christian Jews and Judaism.

[81] Cf. Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 116-118.

Paul introduces the contrast between the old and new "covenant" (διαθήκη) in 3:6. Here, διαθήκη is used as the Greek equivalent to בְּרִית, as can be seen by its use in the allusions to Jeremiah 31:31, Ezekiel 36:26, and Exodus 34:29—35 in the passage.[82] This reflects the choice of translation by the Septuagint authors, where διαθήκη translates בְּרִית in nearly every occurrence.[83] The referent is not to the texts of what we term the Old and New Testaments (which would constitute an anachronism) but rather to two different modes of God relating to a covenant people, or two "divine economies"[84] in Childs' phrasing. The contrast here is not between Law and Gospel as a basis of justification but between the ministry (διακονία) of the two covenants.[85] The contrast between old and new covenants in 3:7—18 forms what Richard Hays has called an "allusive homily based on biblical incidents"[86] and provides an instructive insight into how Paul conceived of Israel before Christ relating to God as constituting a different covenant to the one he now considered himself to be counted within.

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[82] E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 153. Cf. David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (NAC 29; Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1999), 162-164.

[83] The exceptions are 1 Kings 11:11 and Deuteronomy 9:15.

[84] Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 131.

[85] Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Anchor Bible; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 49. Contra Otfried Höfius, "Gesetz und Evangelium nach 2. Korinther 3," in *Paulusstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 75. The Law-Gospel contrast which occurs in Galatians and Romans is certainly driven by the same theological convictions, but the contrast here is between the two covenants and their respective ministries, with the aim of demonstrating the superiority of the new covenant.

[86] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1989), 132.

Paul draws a number of contrasts between the ministry of the two covenants:

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
Ministry of the letter (3:6)	Ministry of the Spirit (3:6)[87]
Ministry of death (3:7)	Ministry of the Spirit (3:8)
Ministry of condemnation (3:9)	Ministry of righteousness (3:9)
Temporary (3:11)	Permanent (3:11)

Paul alludes to the account in Exodus 24:29—35 of Moses returning from Mount Sinai with the replacement stone tablets upon which the commandments were inscribed. There, Moses' face and skin shines following his meeting with God, and consequently the people of Israel are afraid to come near him.[88] After Moses has spoken the words of the covenant to the people, he then puts a veil over his face. Paul then develops an argument about the nature of the old covenant, adding in the claim (which is not in the Exodus text) that the covenant given through Moses has a glory which was "now set aside" (NRSV) or "being brought to an end" (ESV) in 3:7. Here Paul uses a present passive participle form of καταργέω, a verb used more frequently by Paul than any other NT writer (of the 29 occurences within the NT, 27 are in the Pauline corpus). The

[87] Regarding the "Spirit" in this passage we might also note Paul's own epexegetical identification of "the Lord" and "the Spirit" in this passage (3:17, 18).

[88] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 283.

term here means something which is "diminishing", "passing away" or being brought to an end so that it is set aside or no longer in existence.[89] In 3:11, 14, 15 Paul is bolder and shifts the referent from the "glory" to the covenant itself, which is described as temporary.[90]

The claim that the Mosaic covenant has now been brought to an end is significant for Paul. If we are to take this claim seriously then Paul's implication is that non-Christian Judaism hold to an obsolete covenant. Elsewhere the implication is made that the "old covenant simply cannot be continued as it has been broken"[91] but Paul's statement here seems to suggest that the Mosaic covenant was intended as an interim covenant from its very establishment, by alleging that the glory with which it was given was a "diminishing" glory.

Francis Watson argues that Paul here is not imposing a Christian doctrine of the temporary nature of the Mosaic covenant onto the Exodus text, but is rather making an exegetical argument to resolve the tensions of the text within the context of the Pentateuch. One could argue that the Mosaic covenant was temporary rather than final and eternal only at the cost of making the covenant with Abraham secondary and of ignoring some of the tensions within the book

[89] BDAG, "καταργέω", 525-526.

[90] It is possible that in 3:14 the referent is not the old covenant (ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη) but the veil (κάλυμμα), although in 3:15 the verb περιαιρέω is used for the removal of the veil rather than καταργέω. Cf. Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (New Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 94.

[91] Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1969), 71.

of Exodus. In addition, the canonical context which includes "new covenant" texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel makes it possible to read the Mosaic covenant as parenthetical within salvation-history.[92] If this is the case then we can postulate that Paul would have undergone a similar development of thought himself at or shortly after his conversion as given in his argument here in 2 Corinthians.[93]

However, it is also possible that Paul has come to the conclusion based on the Exodus 34 passage itself, given how much he makes of the idea of "glory" being associated with Moses' shining face. In 3:10 Paul talks about "the thing having been glorified" (τὸ δεδοξασμένον - a perfect passive participle form of δοξάζω) or "that which once had glory" (ESV) which now does not have glory (οὐ δεδόξασται). In Exodus 34:35 the LXX describes Moses' face as having been filled with glory (δεδόξασται), and so there is good reason, as Guthrie argues in his commentary, to suppose that Paul's thought draws the inference from the temporary nature of Moses' radiant skin and face to the covenant it was associated with also being temporary.[94] Barnett makes a similar argument, with Romans 10:4 adduced as evidence of Paul's view that the Law, and thus the Mosaic covenant, had a τέλος that had been reached in Christ.[95] Some, however, would contest Paul's claim that the glory of Moses' face dimmed or went away.

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[92] Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 183-190.

[93] See also Höfius' claim that the style of argument used here by Paul would be at home among targumic interpretative methods, Höfius, 88.

[94] George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), ad. loc.

[95] Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 183n22.

Höfius cites some targumic traditions which claim that Moses' face remained radiant for the rest of his life.[96] However a reading of Exodus where it is understood that the effect upon Moses' face was temporary seems perfectly reasonable; as Murray Harris notes, the text in Exodus might imply such because it seems as if the glory needs to be "recharged" periodically through meeting with God in the Tabernacle.[97] The veil over Moses' face in public could be intended to conceal from the people of Israel the fading of the glory following each meeting with God rather than to protect them from seeing it; a reading which may make more sense since the people see the shining face of Moses in Exodus 34:32, 35a. Thrall suggests that Paul finds fault with Moses for "[concealing] the ultimate redundancy of the old covenant: the fact that by God's design its purpose was to perform only an interim function until its supersession by the Christ-event",[98] and it is indeed possible that there is an implicit criticism of Moses here if we posit that one purpose of the veiling was to conceal the diminishing glory of Moses' face. Alternatively, it could be that Paul could say that the glory was impermanent in view of the death of Moses, when contrasted with the ongoing glory of the risen Christ.

Given Paul's view that the glory of the old covenant has faded, and the covenant itself has been made inoperative or obsolete by the new covenant, it seems as if his view of a non-Christian Judaism which placed a high value on the

[96] Höfius, "Gesetz und Evangelium," 99-102.

[97] Harris, *Second Epistle*, 285.

[98] Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC; 2 vols.; vol. 1; Cambridge: T&T Clark, 1994), 1.258.

observance of the law of Moses would also be that such a religion was now obsolete. The question then arises as to whether Paul views adherence to the old covenant as holding any value for Jews. Thrall suggests that the present participle τὸ καταργούμενον suggests a continuous sense of the abolition of the Mosaic covenant, such that she suggests it remains in the present age as a valid, albeit superseded, covenant for Jews until the conversion to Christianity of all Jews.[99] If this is the case then Jews who observe the old covenant would presumably still be granted salvation by God.[100] However this is to make too much of the present tense in the participle as connoting a continuous aspect: as Wallace notes, "when a participle is *substantival,* its aspectual force is more susceptible to reduction in force."[101] Although the use of the present here is what would be needed for Thrall's theory to be correct, it will not bear the weight of this argument alone. Harris is right to question this interpretation because Paul is more likely to "have regarded the Mosaic covenant as terminated in effect when the new covenant was inaugurated by Christ's death" and because on Thrall's view the Mosaic covenant is—in effect—never actually abolished in this world.[102] Consequently the more persuasive reading of 2 Corinthians 3 is

[99] Ibid., 1.252-253.

[100] This view differs from Eisenbaums' in that the two covenants are not suggested to be equally valid, but rather that until the process of abolition of the old covenant is complete it retains a form of validity and efficacy. Cf. C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1973), 118.

[101] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 615.

[102] Harris, *Second Epistle,* 290-291. So also Barnett, *2 Corinthians*, 188-189, Guthrie, *2 Corinthians,* ad. loc.

that the Mosaic covenant (which includes the Law) is now obsolete since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which has begun the new covenant. Therefore, those who profess to follow the old covenant are no longer seeking God through the appropriate covenant and will be unable to obtain what they seek. This impression is supported by Paul's depiction of non-Christian Jews in this passage as having "hardened minds" (3:14) and a "veil over their hearts" (3:15) which prevents them from understanding Moses. Such language is reminiscent of the description of Israel in Isaiah 6:10 or Jeremiah 5:21,[103] and Paul's description in Romans 11:7 of the remnant of Israel as "hardened" and represents a negative evaluation regarding salvific status and knowledge of God.

This is reinforced by Paul's statement that if a Jew were to turn to the Lord (3:16) the veil is removed. Paul clearly thinks it necessary for non-Christian Jews to "turn to the Lord" and enter the new covenant. The term "turn" (ἐπιστρέφω) is used extensively in Acts to refer to conversion (Acts 3:19; 9:35, 40; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19, 35; 16:18; 26:18, 20, 27) and also once elsewhere by Paul to refer to the conversion of the Christians in Thessalonica from a pagan background (1 Thessalonians 1:9). It is specifically an unbelieving (i.e. non-Christian) Jew here who Paul wishes to turn to the Lord,[104] although Harris is correct to point out

[103] Although the LXX uses παχύνω in Isaiah 6:10 rather than πωρόω as in this passage, the citation of Isaiah 6:10 in John 12:40 uses πωρόω. The verb σκληρύνω which is also translated "harden" in many English versions is used of Pharoah and the Israelites in the LXX but by Paul only in his allusion to Pharaoh in Romans 9:18.

[104] Cf. Thrall, *2 Corinthians,* 1.261, 270; Barrett, *2 Corinthians,* 110.

that a Gentile would also join the new covenant the same way.[105] As Höfius points out, it is of great significance that Paul urges them to "turn to the Lord".[106] "Lord" (κύριος) here has been understood to refer either to Christ[107] or to Yahweh.[108] In either case Paul presents a negative evaluation of non-Christian Judaism: if the referent is to Jesus Christ then what is being critiqued is the rejection of Jesus as Messiah; if to Yahweh then the stark implication is that non-Christian Jews are not in a right relationship with the very God they profess to worship.

Finally in this passage the non-Christian Jews who do not turn to the Lord are described as "perishing" or "being destroyed" (4:3) and as having their minds blinded by "the god of this age" (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου; 4:4). The "god of this age" refers not to God the Father, but to Satan.[109] Paul views Jews who do not believe as in an intensely negative situation, being blinded by Satan to the truth so that they do not believe the gospel. Their situation is analogous to that of a Gentile unbeliever, and the conclusion we would draw from this is that Jews need an individual conversion "to the Lord" to enter the new covenant.[110]

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[105] Harris, *Second Epistle,* 308.

[106] Höfius, "Gesetz und Evangelium," 119.

[107] Barnett, *2 Corinthians,* 199; Höfius, "Gesetz und Evangelium," 119.

[108] E.g. Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 211; Harris, *Second Epistle,* 308.

[109] The construction ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου is unique, but the use of the term θεός is by no means strictly reserved by Paul for Yahweh (cf 1 Cor 8:5; Gal 4:8) and its qualification as "of this age" is a limitation which makes no sense to apply to Yahweh.

[110] Thrall, *2 Corinthians,* 1.273.

Romans 9—11

Paul's most extensive discussion of Israel with respect to the gospel is found in Romans 9—11. The passage is extremely dense and consequently it is impossible to make a thorough exegesis of the whole passage within the confines of this study. My remarks will be confined to issues which pertain to Paul's views regarding non-Christian Jews, along with the question of how to interpret Paul's claim that "all Israel" will be saved in 11:26. This latter claim could form the basis for approaches to the question of salvific exclusivism which see a separate option for Jews, however this group is delineated, or the idea of an eschatological opportunity to respond to the gospel, which although it would fit under the "exclusivism" category in the Theology of Religions, does differ from the perspective that those who do not respond positively to the gospel prior to death cannot be saved.[111] Furthermore this passage has been used in the construction of views which see other religions as potentially mediators of salvation.[112] One example is Jacques Dupuis, who sees this passage as affirming the validity of a separate divine covenant with the Jews, and posits that God may in fact have made many covenants with different peoples in history, of which Christianity is only one.[113]

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[111] So Robert H. Gundry, "The Hopelessness of the Unevangelized," *Themelios* 36, no. 1 (2011).

[112] Walter Kasper, "The Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: A Crucial Endeavour of the Catholic Church". Boston College, 6 November, 2002), ; George A. Lindbeck, "Christians Between Arabs and Jews," *Worldview* 22, no. 9 (1979).

[113] Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 233.

In Romans 1—8 Paul has presented a theology which raises the issue of the role of ethnic Israel in the present and the future. Paul has specified that salvation is "for the Jew first" in 1:16 (repeated in 2:9, 10) and yet that both Jew and Gentile are guilty before God and are justified by faith (3:22, 28—29).[114] Paul holds to a justification of the ungodly (4:5) and this leads him to doxology in 8:28—39. The emotional tone of the letter then shifts sharply into "grief" (λύπη) and "anguish" (ὀδύνη) in 9:2 as Paul contemplates the implications of this theology for his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (9:3, ESV), the "Israelites" (9:4), a reference to ethnic Jews.[115] The anguish is because these people are "cut off" from Christ, in that they do not all believe Jesus to have been the Messiah, nor do they obey the gospel. This unbelief is despite a number of privileges Paul outlines which belong to the people of Israel: the "adoption", "glory", "covenants", the law" and the "promises", along with being related biologically (κατὰ σάρκα) to the "fathers" (presumably Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and to the Messiah.[116] This raises a question about whether God's word had failed (9:6a).[117]

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[114] David L. Bartlett, *Romans* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 3.

[115] Schreiner, *Romans,* 480-481.

[116] Richard H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9—11* (WUNT 63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 178.

[117] Johannes Munck, *Christ & Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (trans. I. Nixon; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1967), 21-29 suggests that the privileges belong solely to Israel in the pre-Christian era and are socio-political rather than salvific. However, the broader context and rhetorical structure of the passage seem rather aimed at explaining why Israel currently do not believe, and establishing a hope that they will believe in the future (cf. Anthony J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: the purpose, genre, and audience of Paul's letter* (SNTSMS 81; Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 152-154).

Paul's argument is that God's word has not failed, and he introduces the concept that "not all who are from Israel are Israel" ("οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ" 9:6b). This is the idea that the biological descendants of Israel (Jacob) are not and never have been "true Israel" automatically but that rather there has always been a "remnant" of those who are the true recipients of God's promise and salvation. Abraham is used as an illustration here, with the blessings of the covenant with Abraham belonging to Isaac's descendants rather than to Ishmael's. A further example of this is given with Jacob and Esau in this passage. Thus Paul establishes a difference between what we might term "ethnic Israel" who are the biological descendants of Jacob, and "true Israel" which is a subset of the former, composed of faithful Jews who are the elect of God. This idea can be found in Isaiah 1:9 and 10:22—23 (cited in Romans 9:27—29) and is a well-established idea in first-century AD Judaism.[118] Thus there is a broader and a narrower definition of Israel in this passage. Paul views this narrower group of "true Israel" in his generation as identifiable with Jewish Christians, and develops a metaphor of an olive tree to explain the inclusion of Gentile Christians within this "true Israel".[119]

In Romans 10:1 Paul suggests concerning unbelieving Israel that they are not saved, since he has a burning desire that they might be saved. 10:4 highlights that Christ is the τέλος of the Law and so we must infer that in order to be saved

[118] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 574.

[119] Moo, *Romans*, 572-576.

the non-Christian Jewish people need to accept Jesus as Christ and believe in the gospel. Paul emphasises this idea that what is lacking is belief throughout chapter 10 (e.g. 10:9, 10, 13) and states clearly in 10:16 that not all Israel has obeyed the gospel. This idea of obedience to the gospel is an important one in Romans, with the "obedience of faith" (ὑπακοή πίστεως) forming an *inclusio* for the entire letter (1:5; 16:26) and appears to be coextensive with salvation. Paul sees his particular ministry as bringing about ὑπακοή among the Gentiles (15:18) but desires it too for his fellow Jews. From this we would quite naturally reach the conclusion that "Israel apart from Christ lies outside the sphere of salvation"[120] and that Judaism post-Christ is not salvific.

In chapter 11 Paul seems to qualify this position without endorsing Israel's unbelief as a valid religion or alternative covenant in itself. He puts forward an idea of unbelieving Israel as temporarily hardened but not as cast off altogether (11:1).[121] In 11:7—10 Paul suggests that although the elect (remnant) had obtained salvation, the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ) were hardened and blinded. The fact that non-Christian Israel did not accept the gospel was clear, but Paul makes a claim of theological insight and says that a divine hardening (as opposed to a self-hardening)[122] is involved. As Cranfield puts it, "[while] Israel's unbelief was something plain for all to see and not needing to be revealed, the fact that a

[120] Das, *Paul and the Jews,* 71.

[121] Cf. O. Palmer Robertson, "Is There a Distinctive Future for Ethnic Israel in Romans 11?," in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology* (eds S. Gundry and K. Kantzer; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 213.

[122] Cranfield, *Romans,* 2.549.

divine hardening was involved was … something which could not be known by unaided human reason."[123] It must therefore be among the "mysteries" which Paul received by revelation. However, in what follows in 11:11—32, Paul seems to suggest that there is a future hope for Israel, and that, being "provoked to jealousy" (11:11, 14) there will be a future acceptance of them, and that "all Israel will be saved".[124] This is, again, a prophetic insight into the future which does not seem to be knowable apart from the revelation of the "mystery" given to Paul in 11:25.

The question then arises, what is the extent of "all Israel" in 11:26? Is it, as some have claimed by an appeal to Galatians 6:10, the church?[125] Cranfield suggests that there are four basic options: (i) all the elect, both Jew and Gentile, that is, that "all Israel" means the church, as Calvin and Augustine argued; (ii) all the elect of the nation of Israel; (iii) the whole nation of Israel, including every individual member; and (iv) the nation as a whole but not necessarily each and every member.[126] Cranfield rejects (i) and (ii) as being anticlimactic and within the argument of Romans 11 this does seem persuasive. However, view (i) does seem to make sense in view of the mention of the "fullness of the Gentiles" in 11:25, the preceding verse, if we are to understand the οὕτως of 11:26 to have the salvation of the elect among the Gentiles as its referent. This would also make sense within the context of the olive tree metaphor, where the Gentiles'

[123] Ibid., 2.575.
[124] Cf. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, 156-167; Schreiner, *Romans,* 591.
[125] E.g. Augustine and Calvin, cited in Schreiner, *Romans,* 614.
[126] Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.575-576.

inclusion is made possible by cutting off some of the natural branches. However the logic of the appeal to the concept of resurrection in 11:15 seems to imply a transcendence of what would be possible with an actual olive tree (Paul in fact develops a metaphor which is the opposite of what an olive grower would do anyway)[127] If Paul is being consistent throughout the passage in the use of his terminology, then the reference to "all Israel" in 11:26 is to what we have termed "ethnic Israel."[128] Dunn summarizes this as the "consensus" view.[129] Whichever view is adopted, the significant question for our study is whether this is viewed as each and every Israelite, how this salvation is viewed in relation to Christ (i.e. whether it is salvation by Christ or outside of Christ), and whether it necessitates us to postulate a post-mortem opportunity to gain salvation which might, in theory, be extended to other religions.

"All Israel" might be understood to imply each and every (ethnic) Israelite without exception, as Cranfield reports Aquinas as holding.[130] Bell holds this interpretation, stating that Paul thinks God will save "the whole nation, including every single member".[131] This requires, in Bell's judgement, an

[127] William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), 327.

[128] So Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy,* 139; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.576; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (Anchor Bible; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 624; Schreiner, *Romans,* 615. Contra N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (London: A & C Black, 1993), 248-251.

[129] James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 691.

[130] Cranfield, *Romans,* 2.575 cites Aquinas as interpreting Israel in Romans 11:26 'non particulariter sicut modo, sed universaliter omnes'. Sanday and Headlam agree, *Romans*, 335.

[131] Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God,* 261.

opportunity for salvation at the second coming of Christ, at which point every Israelite from every age will believe.[132] This view would however be problematic to reconcile with Paul's statements about the hardening of part (ἀπὸ μέρους) of Israel in 11:25 which seems to be irreversible.[133] The hardening and mercy depicted in 9:21—23 seems to be an either/or proposition and the idea that some vessels are destined for wrath must be understood with a sense of finality, and thus an analogy for the final divine condemnation of Jews who do not believe. It would also be hard to reconcile a view of each and every ethnic Jew being saved in the end with Paul's statements that faith in Christ is necessary for salvation (10:9—13) for both Jews and Gentiles. What grieves Paul is that the unbelieving Jews have not believed in Christ (9:31—10:8) and are separated from them (9:3). The level of anguish Paul describes, such that he might wish he himself to be accursed by God if it would lead to the belief of his compatriots, would go beyond melodrama into an unbelievable exaggeration if Paul believed that their ultimate salvation were not at stake.

I suggest that the sense of "all" here is that of "the nation as a whole but not necessarily each and every member."[134] The term πᾶς is dependent upon context to define its range of reference and in the NT can carry the sense of a high

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[132] Ibid., 265. Bell recognises the difficulties in harmonizing this interpretation with 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 2 Corinthians and other texts in the Pauline corpus but suggests a process of *Sachkritik* to resolve this in favour of the "mature" position of Romans 11:26 (313-315).

[133] Fitzmyer, *Romans,* 623; Schreiner, *Romans,* 618; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 6; 3 vols.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978-1982), 2.256.

[134] Cranfield, *Romans*, 2.576.

degree of completeness without the implication of each and every individual member being included.[135] Some parallel uses of πᾶς with Israel in the Septuagint occur in 1 Kingdoms 7:2 where "all the house of Israel" (πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ) lament; in 3 Kingdoms 8:65 where "all Israel" (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ) hold a feast with Solomon (cf. also 11:16); and 1 Esdras 1:19 where "all Israel" (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ) is used with the qualification that it refers to those who dwelled in Jerusalem. The likely referent is then to a significant enough number of Jews as to constitute the nation as a whole, but not each and every Jew who has ever lived (the precise definition of which would be almost insurmountably possible to define even were the now-prevalent matrilineal definition of Jewishness accepted without too many questions being asked about the preference for patrilineal genealogies in Second-Temple Judaism).

This view accounts for the statement in Romans 9 that the promises of salvation apply to "true" Israel, that is, to the believing remnant, and the insistence in 10:9—13 that faith in Christ is necessary for salvation. Paul in Romans 11 is making a statement about the future, where "all Israel" in the sense of the Jewish people as a whole will come to believe in Christ and thus be saved in the same manner as the Jewish and Gentile Christians—that is, by faith in Christ. These statements are not contradictory, as Räisänen alleges,[136] but rather are to be distinguished in salvation history. At the time of Romans being written, as now, and until the "fullness" of the Gentiles come to obedience, Israel

[135] BDAG, "πᾶς", 782-784.
[136] Räisänen, *Paul and the Law,* 192-196.

as a whole remains hardened. During this period there is, however, a remnant who believe (Jewish Christians) and are consequently united to Christ and saved. At some point, the hardening will cease, according to Paul, and then Israel as a whole will believe in Christ. This will occur after the full number of elect Gentiles have come to faith.[137] Thus we could further specify "all Israel" as being those Jews who are alive at that time (along with any succeeding generations, should this period of renewed mercy upon Israel extend that far). As Augustine notes, it would be inappropriate to use Romans 11:26 as a proof for universal salvation, for Paul

> "did not mean by these words that God would not condemn anybody. What he meant is made clear by the context. Paul was speaking about those Jews who would one day believe".[138]

This interpretation emphatically denies the continuing validity of a parallel covenant with the Jews, as Das notes at length.[139] Thus Dupuis' use of this passage to support his pluralistic theology relies on a misconstrual of the passage, and one which would make it contradict 2 Corinthians 3 at that. Paul's view of an eschatological salvation for "all Israel" is one on the same terms as the Jews and Gentiles who currently believe, and entails that they will accept Jesus

[137] So Cranfield, *Romans,* 2.577; Fitzmyer, *Romans,* 609-610; Guerra, *Romans,* 154-156; Schreiner, *Romans,* 621; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. S. J. Hafemann; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 172.

[138] Augustine, *City of God,* XXI.24.

[139] Das, *Paul and the Jews,* 96-106.

Christ and believe the (Christian) gospel, and is thus more aligned with the exclusivist perspective in this text.

A post-mortem opportunity to respond to Christ?

In what has been discussed it has been assumed that this opportunity for salvation is for those who are alive in the period after the full number of Gentiles have been converted. An alternative suggestion is that the text allows for a post-mortem encounter with Christ.[140] The biblical text most often appealed to in defence of this is 1 Peter 3:18—20, along with 1 Peter 4:6 in the context of the first reference, although these texts are far from clear. Gabriel Fackre argues in addition to 1 Peter, there are some Pauline texts which could support the idea of a post-mortem opportunity to respond to the gospel. Fackre suggests that 1 Corinthians 15:19 be read as "if in this life alone human beings have hope, then we are miserable indeed"[141] and that Paul is therefore extending the hope of salvation into the future beyond death. Thus Fackre understands God to persevere in offering salvation even to those who are in hell. On such an understanding it would be possible to read "all Israel" as including some or all Jews who have died without faith in Christ.[142] However, the text in 1 Corinthians 15:19 is in the first person plural, rather than the person plural as Fackre suggests, and so more naturally refers to Christians in the context (Paul and his

[140] Cf. W. Gary Phillips, "Evangelicals and Pluralism: Current Options," *Evangelical Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (1992): 235.

[141] Gabriel Fackre, "Divine Perseverence," in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (ed. J. Sanders; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 96.

[142] Ibid., 97.

addressees). Furthermore, 1 Cor 15:16—18 have to do with the idea of resurrection from the dead, and so 15:19 is most naturally taken as referring to the hope Christians have connected with the resurrection of the dead, as almost all interpreters of the passage acknowledge. Hence the idea of a post-mortem opportunity to respond to the gospel seems to find no explicit support in Paul.

Nevertheless, D'Costa suggests this may be the best way to reconcile his claim that "some non-Christians can be saved even if they die as non-Christians" with "the necessity of confessing faith in the triune God to enjoy the fullness of salvation".[143] This possibility is not ruled out by Paul, though I agree with Millard Erickson's observation that this would be a view "based upon interpretations of Scriptures and philosophical and other assumptions, which, by admission of the proponents of this view, are in many cases at best possibilities, and scant in number."[144] If there were such an opportunity, I suggest it would in fact come under the exclusivist view in the threefold Theology of Religions paradigm, being predicated upon a response of conscious faith when being presented with the gospel. Despite this I am unconvinced that the evidence points to Paul teaching such a doctrine, and certainly it is not a necessary corollary of Romans 11:25—26, where the coming to faith of Israel is eschatological (in the sense of

[143] Gavin D'Costa, et al., *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM, 2011), 152.

[144] Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 175.

towards the end of this present age and close to the *Parousia*) but an occurrence within history in this world rather than after death.

1 Thessalonians 2:14—16

A final passage of great significance for Paul's view of Judaism and non-Christian Jews is in 1 Thessalonians 2:14—16. Some have argued that the passage in its entirety may be inauthentic; others that the final clause of 2:16 may be an interpolation.[145] The latter view appears more likely, since this clause could easily be imagined as a marginal note made after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD subsequently incorporated into the text by later copyists. In 2:14 Paul makes reference to the persecution of the Thessalonian Christians by their Gentile "compatriots" (οἱ ἰδίοι συμφυλέται) as the Jewish Christians in Judea had from the "Jews" (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι). Here the translation "Judeans" might be more appropriate, but it is clear that non-Christians are meant, and inescapable that non-Christian Jews are signified by this term here.[146] Paul uses the same term in 2 Corinthians 11:24 to refer to those at whose hands he received a whipping on three separate occasions. The language used to describe them is quite harsh. This group are said to have killed "the Lord Jesus and the prophets", persecuted or driven "us" (perhaps Paul and his group) out, and further that they "displease

[145] Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 91 considers the view that the entire passage is a later interpolation to be "without a historical leg to stand on" and a view that "could only have appeared at a time in history when one (rightly) fears anything that may be taken as anti-Semitic".

[146] D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians* (NAC 33; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 90.

God" and "oppose all mankind" by hindering the proclamation of the gospel (2:15—16).[147] That this hindering of the gospel prevents Gentiles from hearing a message that they need to hear in order to be saved (the implication of ἵνα σωθῶσιν in 2:16) is one reason for Paul's indignation here. Best suggests that Paul does not distinguish here between Judaism as a religion or "as a race"[148] yet it is clear that Paul is here discussing those who actively oppose Christianity to the extent of persecuting the church, by his comparison to the Thessalonian pagans who were troubling the church in ThessaloniCA[149] Paul himself had experienced direct persecution from "the Jews" for his preaching (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:24).

The charge of having killed Jesus and the prophets might involve either the OT prophets, or the martyrdom of Stephen and James. Strictly speaking, Jesus was executed by the Roman authorities, and the gospels suggest that the Jewish authorities did not have the power to condemn someone to death themselves. One issue is whether or not there ought to be a comma between 2:14 and 15. Such a comma has been termed "anti-Semitic" in that it could be construed as alleging that all Jews share the responsibility for the death of Jesus and the prophets and that the description of them as opponents of all humanity apply

[147] James Everett Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 106.

[148] Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1972), 114.

[149] Fee, *Thessalonians*, 99.

indiscriminately.[150] This is not what Paul is teaching, and so the comma would be better omitted from English bibles here.

There is, however, an implicit criticism of Judaism per se in this passage on a theological level, insofar as the rejection of the gospel constitutes something displeasing to God. Jeffrey Lamp suggests that Paul is making an impassioned but reasonable condemnation of non-Christian Judaism for having rejected the Messiah. If one accepts Paul's fundamental premise that Jesus is the Messiah, then the rejection of him by non-Christian Jews would merit criticism and presumably constitute an offense to God in the rejection of his saving work done in Christ.[151]

The final clause in verse 16 could potentially be an interpolation, reflecting a later copyist's interpretation of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Some textual variation in this passage includes the addition of the "of God" to qualify the "wrath" in some manuscript traditions.[152] Against this theory is the lack of manuscript evidence of a text of 1 Thessalonians which omits this clause, although this is not an insuperable objection if the addition were early enough in the manuscript tradition. It is generally not good practice to allege interpolations in the absence of textual critical evidence, but the difficulties in understanding this passage otherwise make interpolation an attractive option.

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[150] Cf. Frank D. Gilliard, "The Problem of the Anti-Semitic Comma between 1 Thessalonians 2:14 and 15," *NTS* 35 (1989).

[151] Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Is Paul Anti-Semitic? Testament of Levi 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13—16," *CBQ* 65, no. 3 (2003): 408-427.

[152] Cf. Fee, *Thessalonians,* 102.

However, if it is original, then the question arises of whether the judgement expressed of condemnation on the Jews is final, and what kind of condemnation it might be. The εἰς τέλος could be translated "finally" or "completely" which seems to imply a finality or an irreversible aspect to the "wrath". This seems to be incompatible with Paul's use of "wrath" elsewhere to designate God's eschatological judgement against sin. As Marcus Bockmuehl suggests, "Paul's own writings elsewhere make it unlikely that he would hold all ethnic Jews accountable for the death of Jesus, or even to condemn them irredeemably in favour of Gentiles."[153] Hence "wrath" would have to be taken to refer to something else. It is possible that Paul refers here to the "hardening" of Israel discussed above in Romans 9, but that would seem to be an odd transition. Bruce suggests that the expulsion of the Jews from Rome could be in view,[154] although the text does seem to have Judea rather than Rome in mind. Another possibility, argued tentatively by Bockmuehl, is that Paul perceives (perhaps through an apocalyptically-minded view of history) the fortunes of Judea as a nation to be headed irreversibly downhill after the events of 48-49 AD including recurrent famine, the death of Agrippa, the execution of several insurrectionists, and a Roman political climate turning against Judea.[155] This is a creative suggestion and has a great deal to commend it, but cannot be demonstrated

[153] Marcus Bockmuehl, "1 Thessalonians 2:14—16 and the Church in Jeruslalem," *Tyndale Bulletin* 52, no. 1 (2001): 11.

[154] F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 49.

[155] Bockmuehl, "1 Thessalonians 2:14—16 and the Church in Jeruslalem," 26-27.

conclusively. Currently it is not clear to what the final clause of 2:16 refers, and it may now not be knowable, although we ought to presume that if it is original it required no further clarification to the Thessalonians. Unfortunately the lack of clarity to later interpreters has led to confusion and, sometimes, to unfair characterizations of Paul's attitude to Judaism.[156]

In addition, we should note that in this passage Paul refers to "the Jews" as a different group, despite being an ethnic Jew himself. What is the basis of this differentiation? Within the text it seems to be that they have "killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets", "persecuted us", "displease God" and are at enmity with humanity by hindering the spread of the gospel. Clearly Paul considers these "Jews" a different group, although in view of what is said elsewhere, as well as the specific nature of the description here, Paul does not consider the differentiation to be on an ethnic level. He remains an ethnic Jew and many ethnic Jews are Christians. Together these features hint at a distinction in Paul's thought based on faith rather than ethnicity, and specifically, their acceptance or rejection of Christ. Faith in Christ forms a religious boundary for Paul that divides him and Jewish Christians from Jewish non-Christians. We might push the implications of this a little further and note that by the time Paul wrote to

[156] "When [Paul's] letters came to be read by Gentiles who little understood Judaism, the misinterpretation of Paul became almost inevitable. Disputes between Paul and his kinsmen … no longer appeared as attempts at the reinterpretation of a shared tradition but as forages in hostility… What was a disruption among Jews came to be spelt out as the denigration and rejection of Judaism and the people of Israel as a totality." W. D. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," *NTS* (1977): 22.

the Thessalonians in the late 40's AD only a fraction of the five or six million Jews alive[157] could have heard the apostolic preaching, and yet are considered to be in the non-Christian Jew category by Paul without having personally had the opportunity to accept or reject Jesus as the Christ.

What can be said confidently concerning this passage is that Paul's evaluation of Jews who opposed Jesus and who sought to hinder the proclamation of the gospel is intensely negative. Paul's criticism is primarily on the grounds that they persecuted him and others in the church, and thus were engaging in behaviour which was neither in the interests of humanity (who needed to hear the gospel) nor pleasing to God. In contrast with other writers of antiquity, Paul does not criticise Judaism for exclusivism or monotheism, since both of these are attributes Judaism shares with Christianity.

Evangelising Jews

Paul sees himself as the "apostle to the Gentiles" but in view of what he has said concerning non-Christian Jews, he certainly thinks that it is appropriate for Christians to evangelise to non-Christian Jews. Paul views the Christian gospel as applicable for Jews and Gentiles; indeed, he describes it as "for the Jew first" in Romans 1:16. In Romans 10:9 he emphasises that belief in Christ is necessary

[157] Estimates from McGing, "Population and Proselytism," 88-106, and A. T. Kraabel, "The Disappearance of the 'God-Fearers'," *Numen* 28, no. 2 (1981): 120-122. Naomi E. Pasachoff and Robert J. Littman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People* (New York: Bowman & Littlefield, 2005), 67 suggests as many as 7 million but notes that ancient population figures can be imprecise, although they suggest that a proportion of around 10% of the Roman Empire population is likely to be correct.

for salvation for Jews, and in 2 Corinthians 3:16 he suggests that they need to "turn to the Lord". This view stands against the claim made by some Christians that it is not necessary to evangelise Jews, or even that such evangelism is inherently illegitimate.[158] This does seem to be the position of the Roman Catholic Church, if *Evangelii Gaudium* is to be understood as disavowing mission to Jews: "their covenant with God has never been revoked … we cannot consider Judaism a foreign religion; nor do we include the Jews among those called to turn from idols and serve the true God".[159] Paul does not seem to share this reticence to evangelize his fellow Jews, and openly hoped for their conversion to Christ.[160]

It is not necessary, nor possible within the confines of this study to define any more precisely the relationship of Israel and the Church in Paul. Markus Barth delineates some of the potential approaches as including a "substitution theory" whereby Israel is replaced by the Church, a "remnant theory" where a (partial) continuity remains between the two via those Jews who believe in Christ, a "split people" theory where Jews and Christians are envisaged as remaining separate within the one people of God, and his own position whereby Christians are seen to have become part of the people of God, that is, Israel.[161]

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[158] Cf. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 391.

[159] "Evangelii Gaudium", §247 <http://www.vatican.va/evangelii-gaudium/en/>, accessed 13/12/2015. The wording seems to reflect closely that of Kasper.

[160] Luke records Paul as preaching to Jews on multiple occasions in Acts.

[161] Markus Barth, *The People of God* (JSNTSup 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 1-25.

Whether on a strict supersessionist view of Israel's rejection, a Calvinist 'Covenant Theology' perspective,[162] or on Wright's view that Jew and Gentile are combined into a reworked people of Israel (the church) Paul remains insistent that a Jewish person must accept Jesus as Messiah and become united to Christ in order to be a member of the new covenant community and to receive salvation. If a view is adopted which sees a separate eschatological salvation for ethnic Jews, whatever the precise scope of "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 might be, then one is not committed to a thoroughgoing gospel exclusivism that sees conscious faith in Christ in this life as necessary for salvation. If the idea of a post-mortem encounter with Christ is adopted as a potential solution to a perceived problem with this teaching, this should not be interpreted as detracting from Paul's conviction that faith in Christ was necessary for salvation, which could not be accomplished by works alone.

One religion or two?

A consistent theme of the passages we have studied is the distinction Paul draws between Christians and non-Christian Jews, with the acceptance or rejection of Christ as the boundary. Faith in Christ is put forward as necessary for Jew and non-Jew alike, and Paul sometimes speaks about non-Christian Jews in a way that suggests he views them as outside the covenant, as opposed to the believing remnant. However there is a great deal of continuity as well; Paul develops a metaphor of Israel as an olive tree, into which the Christian Gentiles

[162] E.g. as in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, §7.

are now grafted. This comports with the imagery of Ephesians 2:11—22 where Gentiles are brought from a situation of being separated from Israel into fellow-citizenship, and from two peoples (Jew and Gentile) Christ makes one people by destroying hostility and abolishing (!) the law. Paul views the spiritual heritage of Israel as essential and indispensable even to Gentile Christians, and although he does not seek to put them under the Mosaic law, he sees them as coming into possession of the fulfilment of the covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David by their union with Christ.[163]

Although Paul's language concerning Jews with whom he differs on the issue of faith in Christ is strong by modern standards, it stands in line with both the OT prophetic critique of Israel and the ministry of Jesus (e.g. the parable of the vineyard in Mark 12:1—12 // Matthew 21:33—45 // Luke 20:9—18). Paul was able to launch a strong critique of non-Christian Judaism, and of elements of the Judaism of his day, while still identifying with historic Judaism as he understood it. Paul identifies with the OT scriptures and considers them revelatory and authoritative. His assumptions about God are fundamentally Jewish in nature.[164] He sees the new covenant which he proclaims as that which has been promised by Jeremiah and others, and as the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. Even Paul's critique of the Mosaic covenant is one from within the terms of reference

[163] G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 53.
[164] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 43-46.

of Israel, as he describes it as something temporary and "passing away" rather than as something alien and irrelevant. As Davies points out,

> "in accepting the Jew, Jesus, as the Messiah, Paul did not think in terms of moving into a new religion but of having found the final expression and intent of the Jewish tradition into which he himself had been born. For him the Gospel was according to the Scriptures: it was not an alien importation into Judaism, but the true development of it, its highest point, although in his judgement on the centrality which some Jews had given to a particular interpretation of the law it showed a radicalism which amounted to a new creation." [165]

There is an ethnic and a religious sense of "Judaism" or "Israel". In terms of religion we might distinguish between a "Judaism" with which Paul identifies, constituting the tradition of the prophets, the covenants, and a history of relationship with God, and a "Judaism" with which Paul makes a break – characterised above all by a rejection of Jesus as the Christ and by unbelief in the gospel. Although Paul hints at an eschatological coming to faith of "all Israel", we must note that Judaism of this second kind, which does not have faith in Christ, is not viewed as salvific for Paul and is characterized by him as a spiritual "blindness".

Trajectory Hermeneutics

A different approach to Paul which could be used to support pluralism is the style of argumentation which might be termed "trajectory hermeneutics". To some extent all systematic theology needs to draw out possible conclusions from lines of thought in order to apply Paul's extemporaneous letters to

[165] W. D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (London: SPCK, 1984), 136.

theological questions, and thus will wish to reconstruct a trajectory. However it is important to ensure that a trajectory is plausible and does not do violence to Paul's own thought. One example of this approach is sometimes referred to as a "redemptive-movement" hermeneutic,[166] which tends to identify the core biblical message as one of liberation for the oppressed, and to then suggest that Christian theology has the task of following this trajectory on further. In Evangelical interpretation of the Bible this approach is often associated with William Webb, and with R.T. France's arguments for gender egalitarianism. This hermeneutic is of course not limited to Evangelicals.[167] France suggests, for example, that the gospels do not teach this view of gender and yet "contain the seeds from which [egalitarianism] was bound to grow".[168] One other classic example given of a trajectory is the abolition of slavery, which the NT seems to allow for (e.g. Paul returns Onesimus to Philemon)[169] while the vast majority of Christian theologians would commend the abolition of slavery.[170]

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[166] William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 30.

[167] Cf. the assumed underlying trajectory hermeneutic of Katharine Jefferts Schori, "Sermon delivered at All Saints Church, Steenrijk, Curaçao," (2013).

[168] Richard T. France, *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test Case for Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 78.

[169] Although 1 Timothy 1:10 possibly condemns "enslavers" if that is the correct understanding of ἀνδραποδισταῖς.

[170] Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*, 33. We might protest Webb's insistence that this is possible only on the basis of some form of trajectory hermeneutic, noting the differences between Roman slavery and the slave trade abolished by the British in the Eighteenth century, and the form of slavery practised in the antebellum United States, and noting too that many Christian abolitionists based their arguments not upon trajectory hermeneutics, but on the biblical prohibition on man-stealing (e.g. Theodore Weld, *American Slavery As It Is* (New York, NY: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839)).

Webb suggests that this method of interpretation follows an X ⇒ Y ⇒ Z pattern, where X represents the cultural background of the world of the NT writers, Y represents the text and its challenge or critique of the background, and Z represents an "ultimate ethic" which is the position Christian theology ought to arrive at.[171]

One might easily imagine an adoption of a "redemptive-movement"-style trajectory hermeneutic which argues from Paul's mission to the Gentiles that there is an ultimate ethic of religious pluralism. Such an approach would critique Second-Temple Judaism as religiously chauvinist and exclusivist, set against Paul who expands the covenant to include Gentiles, and suggest that this could be developed in a progressive direction to a theology which includes non-Christians within the sphere of salvation.

Benjamin Reaoch has recently put forward a comprehensive case against this particular type of liberation-oriented trajectory hermeneutics, based on his doctoral dissertation. Reaoch makes two major points. First, that the case for a NT "redemptive-movement" hermeneutic rests almost entirely upon the slavery issue, and that if it can be demonstrated that the NT texts which seemingly condone slavery do not conflict with an ethical position which would see abolition as desirable, then the force of the argument is nullified: "if the New Testament simply regulates slavery and points toward its abolition, then the

[171] Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*, 31-32.

perceived need for the redemptive-movement hermeneutic evaporates."[172] Second, that there is a fundamental disanalogy between the slavery issue and the complementarian-egalitarian issue.[173] Reaoch argues persuasively that Webb and others have distorted the extent to which the NT is already critical of slavery in the course of making redemptive-hermeneutical arguments, and that Paul in particular seems to counsel an attitude where freedom from slavery is something to be attained if possible, and that Christian owners of slaves ought to treat them in such a way as to ameliorate almost all the negative aspects of their condition. As Wright argues, Paul's letter to Philemon heavily implies that he is not favourable towards slavery as an institution, and would be glad to see it end.[174] Reaoch's point about a disanalogy between slavery, and the role of women in families and in the church, would seem to pose a challenge to any other trajectory hermeneutical move to demonstrate why it is analogous to the alleged redemptive-movement trajectory on slavery found in the NT. The trajectory in Webb's system is "redemptive" which Webb uses as an antonym for "regressive". This does seem to suggest that "redemptive" is intended as "progressive" along with the political connotations that term implies in the contemporary Western world. The question then arises of whether a progressive political outlook is in practice open to correction or critique from the Scriptures

[172] Benjamin Reaoch, *Women, Slaves, and the Gender Debate: A Complementarian-Response to the Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2012), 46.

[173] Reaoch, *Women, Slaves, and the Gender Debate*, 87.

[174] Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God*, 16-21.

when a redemptive-movement trajectory hermeneutic is employed.[175] What makes a liberation-oriented trajectory hermeneutics different, in practice, from a *Sachkritik* approach?[176] And on what basis is a proposed trajectory open to critique? Would not a Muslim apologist be within their rights to identify the supposed progression from Judaism, to Christianity, to Islam as a valid trajectory from the cultural background to the NT, towards an ultimate idealized ethic? As history demonstrates, claims made about its direction which receive little or no explicit support from the texts themselves ought to be treated with a certain amount of scepticism, and what may seem to be on the right side of history can quickly become obsolete.

If the basic legitimacy of a trajectory hermeneutic (whether liberation-oriented or otherwise) is accepted, it is still necessary to do significant exegetical work to identify the trajectory correctly, and to ensure that the use of data is plausible in the wider context. The problem is akin to a mathematic one of drawing a curve through a limited number of points on a plane. There are infinitely many curves which can pass through three points, and even if we are certain that the type of curve is a parabola and not any other type of curve, there are usually two possible solutions for four points. I would argue that in practice use of trajectory hermeneutics with respect to the Theology of Religions in Paul

[175] Anthony Thiselton raises an analogous concern about the role of Marxism in Liberation hermeneutics, Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 260-264.

[176] Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 158.

tend always to be predicated on a trajectory of greater and greater inclusion. Thus they are similar to the universalising perspective on Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism discussed earlier in this chapter, and open to critique on similar grounds.

Conclusion

Paul is a significant theological voice in the New Testament and has a great deal to contribute to a Theology of Religions. Recent developments in the study of Paul point to a need to understand his relationship to Judaism clearly, but the adoption of the "Lutheran" approach or the "New Perspective", or a different approach to Paul, is not in itself determinative of how Paul will be understood in relation to the issues which make up the Theology of Religions. The possible appeal to Paul as a universalistic pluralist (or certain species of inclusivism) would require a commitment to the subset of "Lutheran" readings, adopted by Baur and others, who see Pauline thought as a rejection of Jewish parochialism and ethnocentrism. Conversely, the establishment of a *Sonderweg* for Israel in Paul's thought would—at the least—significantly qualify a view of him as exclusivist, but there are numerous problems involved in drawing this out to a pluralist conclusion, not least that there is no warrant for viewing this *Sonderweg* as anything other than unique for Israel. And if there is no support for a *Sonderweg*, as suggested by Paul's statements which suggest a negative salvific evaluation of Judaism, then the case for pluralism based upon this concept evaporates. Overall Paul does seem to cohere with an exclusivist perspective, and however his statements regarding the salvation of Israel are to

be understood, Paul clearly thinks it desirable that Jewish non-Christians turn to Christ, and by implication it is legitimate and proper for Christians to seek to evangelise Jews.[177] The development of a redemptive-movement or trajectory hermeneutic for pluralism from Paul is conceivable, but faces significant theoretical challenges, to the extent that such an argument would be indistinguishable from a rejection of Paul's own stated position. In any case, close attention should be given to how Paul depicts non-Christians and their religions, in particular Gentile religion, which seems a better analogy than Judaism for many contemporary non-Christian religions.

[177] Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God*, 403: "The widespread belief that Jews (and those of other religions) do not need the gospel is, I believe, a major heresy in the Church today"

Paul's depiction of non-Christians: Terminology

The terminology used by Paul to depict non-Christians sheds a great deal of light on his attitude towards non-Christians, and non-Christian religion. Paul's use of terminology is frequently distinct from that in common Greek usage, often reflecting more the use of terminology in the Jewish tradition exemplified by the Septuagint and other Second Temple Jewish literature. However, Paul can also show a differentiation even with this tradition, particularly when the use of a term reflects a theological understanding of boundaries.

'Outsiders' and in/out imagery

Paul uses 'outsider' language to refer to non-Christians in several circumstances. In 1 Thessalonians 4:10b—12, Paul uses the term ἐξω in the context of arguing for a certain social quietism or conservativism.[1] Paul's addressees are urged to seek a quiet life engaged in productive work so that they may conduct themselves with propriety (περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως) before "outsiders" (τοὺς ἔξω). "Outsiders" here must refer to non-Christians, since Paul is addressing Christian "brothers" (ἀδελφοί) throughout (see 4:1). Indeed, as Frame points out, it is a term used to refer to non-Christians regardless of race, and parallels similar use by Jews to talk of non-Jews.[2] Furthermore the

[1] Best, *Thessalonians,* 173-74; Fee, *Thessalonians*, 161-62.

[2] Frame, *Thessalonians*, 163.

impression is of outsiders as potential critics or antagonists of Christians, who maintain a watchful eye over the public conduct of Christians.[3] To speak of non-Christians as "outsiders" (ἔξω) does establish a conceptual boundary between an in-group and an out-group; though the existence of an out-group and an in-out boundary is functionally already established (implicitly) by Paul's defining of the church as an in-group.[4] Charles Wanamaker argues that the terminology

> "derives from the fact that Paul had erected a group boundary for his converts and wished to preserve it in order to maintain their sense of identity and separation from the pagan society of which they had formerly been a part."[5]

Identity is certainly an important factor here, yet "separation from … pagan society" requires clarification: Paul does not here urge physical or social separation from non-Christians,[6] and his argument assumes that Christians participate in society at some level, since their lives are observed by "outsiders". Rather, the construction of the church itself as an 'in-group' with a specific

[3] So C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 164.

[4] Or, rather, following Wright, as Paul's re-defining of the "people of God": Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God*, 776ff.

[5] Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 164.

[6] Although in 1 Corinthians 5:9–13 Paul argues for such distancing from professed Christians who apostatize or persistently undermine Christian ethical teaching.

identity logically leads to the construal of those not included in the 'in-group' as 'outsiders'.[7]

The usage of ἔξω in Colossians 4:5 is very similar to that in 1 Thessalonians 4:12. Christians are urged to bear in mind "outsiders" in the way they conduct themselves. The sense of περιπατέω as conduct or a way of life is again used in connection with outsiders. Christians here are urged to conduct themselves in a way of life which is distinctive from those who are not Christians — and specifically in Colossians in a way which rejects certain behaviours or modes of conduct which were part of their pre-Christian lives, and which one might say characterised Gentile non-Christians. As Dunn argues, the use of περιπατέω in the letter suggests a concern with more Jewish ethical norms, particularly around the issues of idolatry and sexual morality; the use of the aorist περιεπατήσατε in 3:7, to refer to their previous ethical conduct in a negative way suggests a change of behaviour: "the conversion of the Colossian Christians was also a conversion from a way of life to one more characteristically Jewish in its ethical norms".[8] The sense of one's conduct being observed by 'outsiders' found in 1 Thessalonians 4:12 is retained in Colossians, though perhaps elaborated by the instruction to be "making the best use of the time" (τὸν καιρὸν

[7] "Groups exist by virtue of there being outgroups. For a collection of people to be a group there must, logically, be other people who are not in the group", Matthew A. Hogg, "Social Categorization, Depersonalization, and Group Behavior," in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (eds M. A. Hogg and R. S. Tindale; Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 56.

[8] James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: a commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 217.

ἐξαγοραζόμενοι),[9] in which case the desire is, at least potentially, for the conduct and speech (4:6) of Christians to lead to the conversion of the outsider.[10] The 'outsider' may not be permanently on the 'outside' but may be persuaded to cross the in-out boundary via conversion to Christ.

The terminology is used also in the Corinthian correspondence. In 1 Corinthians 5:12—13 Paul employs an explicit distinction between "outsider" (ἔξω) and "insider" (ἔσω); Paul disavows responsibility for judging the behaviour of those who are outside (the church), for it is those who are inside whom the church is expected to judge. This language is employed in the context of rebuking the Corinthian church for tolerating sexual immorality (πορνεία — 5:1, 9b) and establishing that the church ought to enforce discipline against Christians who behave in certain egregiously immoral ways (5:11). By contrast, Paul suggests that, while πορνεία for non-Christians is characteristic of those who "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (6:9), the implication of his claim in 6:11 "and this is how some of you once were" (καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε) is that such behaviour prior to Christian conversion, if repented of, is not an occasion for disqualification or exclusion from the church.[11] Paul makes it clear that his demand for church discipline for one who persists in πορνεία applies to the

[9] So G. K. Beale, "Colossians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 868

[10] Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 267-68.

[11] Victor P. Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 52-83. On πορνεία, see Louw-Nida, 88.271, which identifies the term as referring to "sexual immorality of any kind".

'insider' as opposed to the 'outsider', thus demonstrating a conscious appeal to a clear boundary between Christians and non-Christians.

Another term used by Paul which should, I suggest, be viewed similarly is ἰδιώτης, which occurs in 1 Corinthians 14:16, 23, 24 alongside ἄπιστος (see below). The context is discussion of the use of 'tongues' and 'prophecy' in the meetings of the church in Corinth, and Paul's concern that this "be done decently and in order" (12:40). One concern Paul has about the Corinthian's exuberance in the use of 'tongues' is that this may render the service unintelligible to the ἰδιώτης who is then unable to hear or participate. The sense of ἰδιώτης here is probably "uninitiated", and likely refers to non-Christians rather than to catechumens or new Christians.[12] Paul's use here of the phrase is not derogatory towards the uninitiated, but in fact assumes the presence of non-Christians at the church's worship and urges moderation for the sake of the unbeliever. The idea that a religious service ought to be conducted in such a way as to maximise its intelligibility for non-initiates contrasts with the ecstatic rituals of some Gentile

[12] So LSJ, "ἰδιώτης"; James Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 221. Many patristic commentators take "ἰδιώτης" to refer to Christian laypeople (see e.g Ambrosiaster, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians," translated by G. Bray (*Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*: 186); Homily 35, John Chrysostom, "Homilies on 1 Corinthians," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol XII*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 211) but it seems more likely that Paul here talks about outsiders (so NRSV, ESV, al.) in the sense of non-Christians, as suggested by his use of ἄπιστος in 14:22, 24.

religion,[13] but also illustrates Paul's concern for the non-Christian to understand (and, hopefully, to accept) the Christian faith.

'Sinners' and associated terms

There are a number of related terms used by Paul to refer to groups which focus on the moral status of non-Christians. Given the significance of sin (ἁμαρτία) as a cosmic power for Paul,[14] and his message of salvation by Jesus Christ from the power of sin, it is unsurprising that Paul uses the derived noun 'sinner' (ἁμαρτωλός) the plural/group noun 'sinners' (ἁμαρτωλοί) in contexts referring to non-Christians. 'Sinners' is used as a group designation in Galatians 2:15, 17 and in Romans 3:7; 5:8, 19. However, the manner in which Paul uses the term so differs in some significant respects from Second-Temple Jewish literature, as a consequence of his theology of justification.

At first glance, Paul seems to be using 'sinners' as "a regular label for 'our outsiders'"[15] in Galatians 2:15, where he contrasts those who are "Jews by nature" or, rather, "born Jews" (φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι) with "Gentile sinners" (ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί). 'Sinners' here might seem to be an example of a derogatory qualification of, or more likely, additional description of 'Gentiles' as opposed to

[13] Matthew R. Malcolm, *The World of 1 Corinthians: An Annotated Visual and Literary Source-Commentary* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2012), 129. Cf. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law,* 122, where ἰδιώτης is interpreted as catechumen and ἄπιστος as non-Christian, with the suggestion that there were assigned places in church worship for each, in light of similar practices in certain Greek cults.

[14] See footnote 25 in this chapter.

[15] Paul Trebilco, "Creativity at the boundary" (paper presented at SNTS General Meeting. Perth, Western Australia, July 23-26, 2013).

'Jews'. It is certainly true that 'sinner' and 'sinners' can be used in precisely this sense in other New Testament and Early Christian literature; the question of the scribes in Mark 2:16 ("Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?") carries a potentially derogatory sense, as well as connoting those who are 'not us'. Sinner can carry a sense of 'law-breaker' or violator of the Torah in Second-Temple Judaism.[16] The terminology 'sinners' (ἁμαρτωλοί) is frequently found juxtaposed with the 'righteous' (δίκαιος) in the Septuagint's rendering of the Psalms (e.g. Pss 10:2—3; 36:14—16; 140:4—5 LXX), as well as in material such as the Psalms of Solomon (e.g Ps.Sol. 13:10; 17:6) and so may well represent a prevalent usage among Second-Temple Jews (and early Christians), referring variously to either the egregiously wicked breaker of the Torah, or simply to the Gentiles *in toto*.[17] It is clear that the issue is not simply that Gentiles are ritually impure or unclean (categories frequently misunderstood as connoting moral guilt) according to the halakhic precepts, for, as Christine Hayes argues, concern for ritual purity or ceremonial cleanness in this time is almost always in connection with the Temple, and almost always concerns Jews or those in the process of conversion to Judaism.[18] Rather, the motive for Jews calling Gentiles 'sinners' is likely polemic, and associated with Gentile behaviour which the Jewish law viewed as offensive and immoral. According to Ronald Fung, "what

[16] According to Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 115.

[17] As in e.g. 1 Maccabees 2:62.

[18] Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile impurities and Jewish identities: intermarriage and conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 47ff.

made the Gentiles sinners in the estimation of the Jews was not only that they did not observe the law, but also that they did not even possess it…",[19] which lends credence to the idea that 'Gentile sinners' could have been an ethnic slur used by Jews against non-Jews, and potentially present in the background of the incident involving Peter "and the other Jews" mentioned in Galatians 2:11—21.

However, in Galatians 2:15 Paul is undoubtedly employing irony in his use of 'Gentile sinners'; he even may be directly using Peter's words, by which Peter justified his refusal to eat with Gentile Christians. Paul rebukes Peter, and repudiates the view that Jewish Christians should maintain distance from Gentiles in the Church (specifically the refusal to eat together) on the grounds that one is made righteous by other means than "from works of the law" (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) — namely via Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ): "through faith in Christ" (NRSV) or "through the faithfulness of Christ".[20] Paul has just highlighted the hypocrisy of Peter in refraining from eating with non-Jews in Antioch, and those in the Galatian church going along with the teachers who wish for Gentile converts to be circumcised in 2:14, alleging that Peter, though born a Jew, does not (any longer, presumably) live as an observant Jew and so has no right to demand that the 'Gentile sinners' do so, any more than the circumcision group have to enjoin ritual circumcision upon Gentile converts. In view of this, it is

[19] R. Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 113.

[20] The "*pistis* Christou debate" certainly has some bearing on the precise manner in which Paul thinks of Gentiles being justified, but either of the understandings of the phrase are compatible with my suggestion here about Paul's use of "sinners".

unlikely that Paul would use a label such as 'Gentile sinners' as a derogatory term for Gentiles or an ethnic slur on face value. Rather, the division of 'we Jews' versus 'those Gentile sinners' is undermined by Paul's theology, whereby the gospel leads to the justification of both Jew and Gentile apart from works of the law.[21]

Paul turns the terminology of 'sinner' upon the Christian, too, in this passage (2:17). Paul engages the argument that his theology of justification encourages sin, or, more specifically, does he make Christ into an "abettor of sin"[22] or "servant of sin" (NRSV)? Paul's scandalized and negative response to this suggestion (μὴ γένοιτο) usually signifies Paul's rejection of "a conclusion which may be speciously but falsely deduced from his own previous statements",[23] which would suggest that Paul grants the premises that, first, seeking justification in Christ entails abandoning the law as a means of gaining righteousness, and, second, to abandon the law thusly is to become a sinner (2:17), while rejecting the illogical conclusion that this makes Christ complicit in sin.[24] Alternatively, the argument in 2:17 could be that Paul does not see abandoning the law as becoming a sinner — although this would need to be integrated with his charge that both Jew and Gentile *are* in fact sinners in

[21] James D.G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1993), 132.

[22] Fung, *Galatians*, 119.

[23] Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 126.

[24] Favoured by Fung, *Galatians*, 119-20. and Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1900), 119.

Romans (e.g. in 3:19—23; 5:14—21). I suggest that Paul is suggesting that seeking to gain justification in Christ entails the abandonment of the law and thus, making oneself open to the charge of being a sinner, at least from the standpoint of Torah-observance.[25] If this is correct then the implication is that conversion to Christ does entail being a 'sinner', or at least being put on the same level as 'Gentile sinners' in the sense that one is now a "violator of the law" (so Burton),[26] and involves the Jew and Gentile who seek justification in Christ being placed on the same "plane".[27] Acceptance of Paul's gospel means being found to be a 'sinner' as well as receiving justification 'in Christ'. As Tom Schreiner puts it, the implication here is that Paul and other Christians from Jewish backgrounds here "recognized that they were no better than Gentiles. The only way to be righteous is through faith in Christ."[28]

Paul's use of 'sinners' and the 'sin' word group in Romans 1:18—3:20 bears comment here. Paul's rhetorical aim in this passage is heavily geared towards the conclusion that all alike (i.e. both Jew and Gentile) are 'sinners' in the sense

[25] Though it would be wrong to infer that Paul's doctrine of sin is reducible to "transgression of the law", as Krister Stendahl does, since Paul in Galatians 2:15–21 is not concerned with defining sin but rather with exposing the hypocrisy of Jewish separatism within the church by an appeal to the gospel. See Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Paul does, in fact, have a much more expansive view of "sin" such that it transpires that all are under the power of sin in some sense irrespective of the law: see Richard H. Bell, *No one seeks for God : an exegetical and theological study of Romans 1.18-3.20* (WUNT, 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 212-214; Beverley R. Gaventa, "The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Towards a Widescreen Edition," *Interpretation* 58 (2004): 229-240.

[26] Burton, *Galatians*, 124-25.

[27] Lightfoot, *Galatians,* 129. So also Dunn, *Galatians*, 133.

[28] Schreiner, *Galatians*, 168.

of being held hostage by sin, envisaged as a reified power, and thus of receiving condemnation rather than justification from the law.[29] This conclusion is stated explicitly in 3:9 where both Jews and Greeks (i.e. non-Jews) are said to be "under the power of sin", and the 'power' language returns in 5—8 as a description of sin's hold over human beings. Indeed, in 3:7, Paul has implicated himself also, by acknowledging that he, too, is "condemned as a sinner" (ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι). All of humanity ("all without exception"[30]) are 'sinners' and this carries an enormous anthropological significance for Paul, as we have seen. The term 'sinners' is not abandoned by Paul, for it is an accurate, pithy, and theologically significant description of the (present) human condition; but neither does Paul endorse its use as a slur against outsiders.

The significance of this for Paul's attitude towards non-Christians is that they, too, are viewed as 'sinners' — for all are made sinners by humanity's coming under the power of sin (the intended sense of ἁμαρτωλοί in Romans 5:19).[31] Yet this is a term that ought not to lead to their being dehumanized or being seen as "dispensible or even disposable"[32] by Paul's theology for two reasons: that Christians, too, are sinners and recognise themselves to be such; and that, for Paul, one's status as a sinner makes one eligible for the justification

[29] Gaventa, "The Cosmic Power of Sin," 232. Cranfield, *Romans,* 1:190-91.

[30] Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 213.

[31] Cranfield, *Romans,* 1:290.

[32] Brigitte Kahl, "Galatians," in *The New Testament: Fortress Commentary on the Bible* (eds M. Aymer, et al.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 513.

and salvation promised by the gospel he preaches, rather than being a disqualification or grounds for social separation.

Briefly, I suggest that this is also the case in the deployment of related terms by Paul in Romans: the objects of God's justification are described as "ungodly" (ἀσεβής , 4:5· 5:6), "weak" (ἀσθενής , 5:6), and God's "enemies" (ἐχθροί, 5:10). These terms all describe the former state of those who are now Christians, in the abstract, so we should be cautious in assuming these are terms by which Paul would refer to individual persons. Nevertheless, the logic of Romans 5—8 (and other 'once you were…' passages — for example Colossians 1:21ff.; 3:7 and Ephesians 2:2ff.;. 5:8ff.) runs in this direction: non-Christians are thought by Paul to be in a tragic predicament, held captive under the power of sin and thus 'sinners'. Yet this predicament can be overcome: in fact Paul's use of the term (according to Paul Trebilco) only emphasises "that this state has been overcome by Christ's death" and that both Jew and Gentile may receive the benefits of this.[33] Paul acknowledges that non-Christians are 'sinners' but this does not entail for him separation from 'sinners', but rather motivates his desire to present Christ as the solution for these sinners' plight, by preaching the gospel.

"Those without the Law"

As I have suggested above, Paul's description of Gentiles as 'sinners' is not based upon breaking the commandments of the Torah, or of being ritually

[33] Paul Trebilco, *Self-designations and group identity in the New Testament,* 73·

impure or ceremonially unclean according to halakhic precepts, but on an ontological claim about the present human condition. Paul recognises that Gentiles are without the law. This is seen in the term ἄνομος, which Paul uses to describe both those who live apart from the Torah (i.e. the Gentiles he seeks to "win to Christ") in 1 Corinthians 9:21 and also his behaviour among them: "[I became] for those without the law as one without the law" (τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος). This is opposed to those (i.e. Jews) who are "under the law" (ὑπὸ νόμον, 9:20). Paul's willingness to describe his own behaviour as ἄνομος (though he clarifies this to state that he himself is submitting to Christ's law - ἔννομος Χριστοῦ) would suggest that it does not mean "lawless" in the sense of an utterly immoral person or one in rebellion against God, but rather, one who is not bound by the law. By this term Paul implies no particular criticism, but rather "indicates empathy for those outside Mosaic tradition".[34]

In addition, Paul refers to Gentiles as "apart from the law" with the adverb ἀνόμως in Romans 2:12, while discussing God's judgement on the manner of life or "works" of those who do not have the Jewish law. The section 2:6—11 is sometimes interpreted as a suggestion of justification by works for 'righteous Gentiles', which would mean that Paul were either speaking hypothetically (i.e. a perfectly righteous person without Christ could attain justification, but nobody is in fact sufficiently righteous),[35] or trapped in a contradiction between

[34] BDAG, "ἄνομος". Cf. also Louw-Nida, 11.42, where ἄνομος is interpreted as a term for non-Jew without any implicit moral critique.

[35] E.g. John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (trans. R. MacKenzie; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), 56-57;

this view and that expressed in 3:9—20.[36] Alternatively, the passage may be describing a positive divine eschatological verdict upon the "good works" of those who have been justified in Christ, contrasted with the condemnation of those who are not.[37] Paul may have his charge of sinfulness against the self-righteous and complacent Jewish person he describes in 2:1,3 more in mind than a 'righteous Gentile' here, which may explain some of the interpretative difficulty when the passage is approached with the question of whether or not one who does not have the law may be saved by works. As Cranfield argues, the main point following this in 2:12—16 "is that knowledge of the law does not in itself constitute any defence against the judgment of God."[38] This being the case, the unspoken assumption regarding Gentiles who are "apart from the Law" must be that they, too, would stand condemned by their works. Yet Paul also credits Gentiles with some positive measure of moral responsibility, given that "the works of the law are written in their hearts" (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, 2:13), suggesting the availability of at least a basic set of moral norms (whether innate or inculturated),[39] and "conscience" (συνείδησις) to

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Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1-8* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 140-41; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Did Paul Believe in Justification by Works? Another look at Romans 2," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 3 (1993).

[36] So Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 124-29.

[37] E.g. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8,* 152-53; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 297.

[38] Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 153.

[39] Peter Leithart makes the suggestion that the moral norms of non-Christians can have greater or lesser consensus with Christian moral norms corresponding with greater or lesser historical and cultural influence of Christianity (and, particularly in the ancient world, the Hebrew tradition) resulting in a "non-saving knowledge of God and his will derived from both special and general revelation." Leithart states that "Pagans hold to certain

provide internal judgement over their keeping of these norms.[40] Thus Paul does not mean to imply by his use of ἄνομος that non-Christians are incapable of significant adherence to moral norms (though they fall short of being 'righteous', as do Jews), nor that they are 'lawless' *sui generis*.

"**Idolaters**"

"Idolaters" is a characteristic term in the Septuagint and other Hellenistic Jewish literature for describing the practitioners of other religions, and in particular those who serve other gods. John Barclay suggests that the depiction of non-Jews as idolaters was a natural consequence of the way that abstention from "idolatry" (participation in pagan cults) was a key distinguishing feature of Jewish identity in the Diaspora, and not tolerated in Judea either.[41] This is supported by Josephus' claim in *Contra Apionem* II, responding to a misinformed critique of Jewish belief, that the Jews are distinguishable by not having gods in common with other nations. The aversion to idolatry,

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moral principles that are compatible with Christian morality not only because they are inescapably confronted with God's revelation in creation, but also because they have been directly or indirectly exposed to … special revelation" via cultural contact or historical influence. Peter J. Leithart, "Did Plato read Moses? Middle grace and moral consensus," *Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper* 23 (1995): 4-5.

[40] Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 159-60; Schreiner, *Romans*, 123. This is perhaps a more accurate description of Paul's use of "conscience" here than BDAG's suggestion ("συνείδησις") that it refers to "the inward faculty of distinguishing right and wrong", since conscience among the person without the (Mosaic) law functions to police adherence to the internal moral norms, as opposed to discovering them.

[41] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 429-439. Cf. Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly: Josephus on Images and Idolatry", in Stephen C. Barton (ed.) *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism, and Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 73-87.

exemplified in the second commandment, means that the idolater can immediately be construed as outside the bounds of permissible religion, and so "idolater" came to be used as an outsider term in ancient Judaism and early Christianity.

In Joseph and Asenath 8:9, 11:5—6, Aseneth is identified as an idolater, and comes to view her idolatry as a source of divine disapproval. It is the repudiating of idolatry in 11:11 and identifying Yahweh as her only hope of salvation that forms the core of her conversion. This is likely an exemplary act of conversion which demonstrates the author's perspective on the incompatibility of idolatry and Judaism.[42] Philo expresses strong aversion to idolatry (Decalogue 65-86) and also criticises Jews who participate in such as having given in to "polytheistic creeds" (πολυθέοι δόξα) which lead to atheism (Rewards and Punishments, 162).[43] The association of polytheism with atheism suggests that Philo conceives of worshipping the gods represented by the idols as something which is close to worshipping no god, with both of these in opposition to worshipping the true God.

At Qumran the term can be used in a sectarian sense, to describe Jews who are thought by the community not to worship in the correct manner (CD 20.8-13; 1QS 2.11-18). The Thganksgiving Scroll also contains a reference to idolatry as

[42] Randall Chesnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 172, lists several ancient Jewish texts which consider the repudiation of idolatry as "tantamount to the full embracing of Judaism."

[43] Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments,* LCL 341:414-415.

being characteristic of compromise with pagans and the temptation to become syncretists (1QH[a] 7:13-19).

Paul uses "idolatry" in a vice list in Galatians 5:20 in a similar manner to other New Testament authors, as a characteristic of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21). Examples of this use occur in 1 Peter 4:3, and in Revelation 21:8, 22:15. Some extrabiblical parallels can be seen in Sib. Or. 3:35-45 and 2 Clement 17:1 where idolatry also occurs in lists of vices. Paul does not tend to make as much use of the "kingdom" language as other New Testament writers, which leads Betz to suggest that this is "in tension" with Paul's theology.[44] The concern may be with the suggestion that engaging in these behaviours results in exclusion from receiving salvation, and that this sits uneasily with Betz's reading of Paul as presenting salvation as an unconditional gift. However, the passage does seem to have affinity with 1 Corinthians 6:9—10 and Ephesians 5:5, where certain sins or vices are listed as characteristic of those who will not inherit salvation, including idolatry.[45]

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[44] Betz, *Galatians*, 285. I would question the assumption that this is "un-Pauline" vocabulary. Paul uses "kingdom" on a number of occasions (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:10, 6:9, 10, 15:24, 50; 1 Thess 2:12; and in the disputed letters Eph 5:5; Col 1:13, 4:11; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1, 18) demonstrating that it is a concept with which he is familiar and expects to be understood by his audience. That he includes it in the letter to a church which he has not visited, in Romans 14:17, suggests also that it would be a widely-known concept in early Christianity.

[45] The wider theological issue concerning Betz is discussed in Robert N. Wilkin et. al., *Four Views on The Role of Works at the Final Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), with several possible solutions offered. Dunn's essay "If Paul could believe both in justification by faith and judgment according to works, why should that be a problem for us?" (119-141) is of particular note. Cf.

Paul uses the term 'idolater' (εἰδωλολάτρης) to describe non-Christians in a vice list in 1 Corinthians 5:10. This use is worth some examination, since in the following verses it is also applied to a "so-called brother" (ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος) in 5:11. This would seem to be an example of "idolatry" being mentioned as a possibility for a Christian, rather than an externally-directed critique of idolatry. The use of ὀνομαζόμενος does seem to represent a qualification on Paul's part, or possibly a pulling-back from endorsing such a "brother" as a true brother. As Garland notes, this letter to the Corinthians goes on to discuss each sin in the vice list in detail, with idolatry especially considered in 8—10.[46] Chapter 6 in this study will deal in more detail with the issue of idolatry, and the evaluation of Gentile religion as idolatrous. We should note also that Paul considers the act of engaging in idolatry by a professing Christian to be serious enough to justify disfellowshipping: the position Paul advocates is not to associate (συναναμίγνυμι) with such a person; terminology used also in 2 Thessalonians 3:14 to express an excommunicative idea.

"**Gentiles**"

The term 'Gentile' (ἔθνος; ἐθνικός)[47] or 'the Gentiles' (τὰ ἔθνη — literally, 'the nations') occurs frequently in the Septuagint and the New Testament as terminology describing an 'outsider' group or groups. The first point to note is

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also Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 720.

[46] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 189. Cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 223.

[47] ἐθνικός is not used in Paul; it occurs only in Matthew (3x) and 3 John (1x) in the New Testament.

that in New Testament contexts, 'Gentile' in the sense of 'non-Jew' is a label applied from a (Jewish) perspective, and not a self-designation or a term which would naturally be applied by contemporaneous non-Jews to themselves. In wider classical usage, ἔθνος can refer in a neutral manner to a people group,[48] but in the Septuagint and New Testament predominantly carries the sense of 'foreigner', frequently 'non-Jew'.[49] Also in non-Jewish literature of the period it can connote 'foreigner' in a negative sense, with Aristotle using the term with perhaps the sense of 'barbarians' to describe non-Hellenes, and Appian referring thusly to people groups from outside Italy.[50] The term is not necessarily pejorative, but to call oneself a 'foreigner' or a 'Gentile' makes little sense apart from situations where one is a traveller, migrant, or a minority resident among a different national or ethnic group. Thus it is unlikely that a non-Christian would choose to describe themselves as belonging to the τὰ ἔθνη group in an unqualified sense—rather, it would presumably be other ethnic and national groups, perhaps including Jews and Christians (initially thought of by some as a Jewish sect),[51] whom they might think of as 'foreign'. Self-description would

[48] "A number of people living together, company, body [...] tribe or nation" in LSJ, "ἔθνος". Philo occasionally refers to "the people of the Jews" (τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος) when writing for a non-Jewish audience (e.g. *Decalogue*, 96) but usually simply to "the Jews" (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι).

[49] BDAG, "ἔθνος", cf. "βάρβαρος".

[50] Paul Trebilco, "Creativity at the Boundary: Features of the linguistic and conceptual construction of outsiders in the Pauline Corpus," *New Testament Studies* 60, no. 2 (2014): 195.

[51] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1987), 160-61.

usually use the singular ἔθνος and be as part of a particular tribe or nation: 'we are from this-or-that nation' rather than 'we are foreigners'.[52]

In the Septuagint, ἔθνος and its cognate forms occur frequently, translating the Hebrew *goy* (גּוֹי) approximately 451 times and *'am* (עַם) 122 times.[53] In some contexts it seems to be a synonymous translational alternative with λαός ('people' or 'nation'). Frequently ἔθνος refers to the people of Israel as a 'people' or 'nation'. In the plural, τὰ ἔθνη, more often refers to other nations or peoples, or to all the nations (the people of Israel and all the other peoples of the earth). The contexts of usage here can be relatively neutral and descriptive of other groups ("appoint for us a King … like all the other nations"; 1 Kingdoms 8:5 LXX), or even positive towards non-Jewish people groups (for example "let the nations rejoice"; Psalm 66:5 LXX). It can carry some potentially negative senses — the peoples as adversaries of the people of Israel or Judah (e.g. Deuteronomy 28:49; Zechariah 12:3 LXX), as unclean or especially sinful (e.g. Deuteronomy 18:19 LXX). In 1—4 Maccabees, τὰ ἔθνη almost always carries the sense of 'the non-Jewish peoples' (4 Maccabees 4:7 being a likely exception, where it refers to the largely Jewish populace). The use in Exodus 23:22a LXX demonstrates how ἔθνος can be used to denote both the people of Israel, and, in the plural, "the nations" in general:

[52] Denise K Buell, "Race and Universalism in Early Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 432–441. Cf. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 48.

[53] Figures derived from search conducted using Logos 6 software.

ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ ποιήσῃς πάντα, ὅσα ἂν ἐντείλωμαί σοι, καὶ φυλάξητε τὴν διαθήκην μου, ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς περιούσιος ἀπὸ πάντων **τῶν ἐθνῶν**· ἐμὴ γάρ ἐστιν πᾶσα ἡ γῆ, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἔσεσθέ μοι βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα καὶ **ἔθνος ἅγιον** [...]	"If you listen and hear my voice and do all of the things I command you, and keep my covenant, you shall be my special people from among all **the nations**. For all the earth is mine, but you yourselves shall be my royal priesthood and **holy nation** [...]"

This passage represents a difference from the Masoretic Text of the passage, which contains no corresponding language to the "keep the covenant" clause, and takes a more adversarial view towards the nations. The sense of the LXX text above is not (other than, perhaps, "royal priesthood") an unprecedented theology, however, given that similar formulations occur several times in the Pentateuch in the MT (e.g. Exodus 19:5). James M. Scott has argued that the Septuagint's use of ἔθνος suggests a derivation of the sense of 'foreigner' from the idea of 'nations', of which Israel is "one among many."[54] Scott appeals to the idea of a "Table of Nations" in the Jewish tradition (e.g. in Genesis 10; 1 Chronicles 1:1—2:2; Ezekiel 27, 38—39; Daniel 11; Isaiah 66:18—20) as demonstrating a conception of humanity as divided into ethno-linguistic people groups,

[54] James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish background of Paul's mission to the nations, with special reference to the destination of Galatians* (WUNT 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 59.

sometimes enumerated as 70 or 72 groups, each with their allotted territory, of which Israel is perhaps the pre-eminent and 'chosen' nation, but a nation nonetheless.[55] Israel is thus a nation which originates, according to this idea, from Noah and his sons, just as all other nations do. The sense of τὰ ἔθνη as 'the other nations' is derived from Israel being 'a nation', and this then leads to the idea of τὰ ἔθνη as 'foreigners'.[56] There is a subtlety to the usage of ἔθνος in the Septuagint, relating both sociologically to whether groups of 'insiders' or 'outsiders' are in view (someone 'from the nations' is a 'foreigner' but someone 'from our/my nation' isn't) and theologically to the concept (expressed for

[55] Also in *Jubilees*, the 1QM 'War Scroll', Josephus and Philo: ibid., 5-56. The claim that 'nation' and 'nationalism' are anachronistic categories in the pre-modern period seems to be predicated on overdetermined definitions of 'nation' which assume that which they set out to prove – namely that 'nationalism' arose in early modern Europe in response to secularism and the subordination of church to state. Broader conceptions of nation and nationalism correctly identify it as a working construct in medieval and ancient society, where it defines a people group who conceive of themselves as a nation, with a defined or delimited territory or homeland, political sovereignty or aspirations to political sovereignty, and defined customs or law, whether or not kinship and linguistic considerations are also involved, as found in, e.g. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6-10. Anderson notes that civic nationalism and the modern system of nation states retaining a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within their territory relies on social construction and is largely "imagined" by elites, but this does not justify the assertion that every concept of 'nation' is simply socially-constructed as Eric Hobsbawn suggests; rather the ethno-linguistc nation can be identified as the core of most nation-states prior to the development of civic nationalism, as demonstrated in Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 12-14; idem., *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 11-18. For the concept in biblical Israel, see J. C. de Vos, *Heiliges Land und Nähe Gottes: Wandlungen alttestamentlicher Landvorstellungen in frühjüdischen und neutestamentlichen Schriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 139–158.

[56] Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 58-59.

example in the text above from Exodus) of God having a special, chosen people from among the peoples.

This subtlety, and particularly the concept of a 'chosen' people, is important to bear in mind when considering Paul's use of ἔθνος and τὰ ἔθνη. Paul seems to use the language in both a racial or ethnic sense, where 'Gentiles' are those who are not Jewish by birth, and in the sense of a 'chosen' people group (which, for Paul, actually means the church) which is not dependent upon biological kinship, whereby the 'Gentiles' or 'foreigners' are essentially those who are not part of this special group. As noted by Caroline Johnson Hodge, and others, this non-biological inclusion in the people group of God is not one which evacuates the notion of ἔθνη of all significance or nullifies it in a universalising manner. Rather, Paul articulates a non-biological heritage for the Gentiles which counts them as sons of Abraham by faith. Hodge explains her concern with the language of Pauline interpreters who see in Paul an "erasure" of the concept of people, ethnicity, and kinship:

> "Using different interpretive frameworks, liberationist scholars have offered readings that highlight the potential social implications of an "erasure" of social distinctions. To the extent that social differences are used to authorize discrimination, their removal can be viewed as liberative. Though I sympathize with efforts to identify moments of resistance to domination in our ancient texts and social contexts, I am not convinced that Paul's text represents a transcendence of difference.

> Furthermore, to the extent that this liberating transcendence is read as "Christian," these readings can unintentionally erase Judaism, reinscribing a supersessionist Paul and Christianity. Finally, all of these readings depend on the myth that Paul's "in-Christness" (many call it Christianity) is somehow not embodied."[57]

This gets to the heart of problems with reading Paul as an opponent of religious boundaries and a model for 'openness'. It is too simplistic to conclude the discussion with the discovery that Paul sees no ethnic disqualification for Gentiles; attention should be paid to the manner in which Paul sees a potential source of disqualification for Gentile Christians being removed by adoption into the family of God, and by inclusion "in Christ". Paul does not abolish entirely the concept of there being a people of God with "the Gentiles" outside, but posits a fictive kinship achieved in Christ for those who are outside to be brought inside. Being in Christ, for Hodge, is "not ethnically neutral" but (for a Gentile) means they have taken on a new ethnic identity "rooted in Jewishness."[58] It may be of some significance that Paul does not use ἀλλόφυλος at any point; whereas it is Josephus' favoured term for non-Jews.[59] Neither does he use the related term ἀλλογενής,[60] which Josephus also employs occasionally. The terms ἀλλόφυλος and ἀλλογενής seems to be more specifically ethnic (in Jewish usage, to refer to

[57] Hodge, *If Heirs Then Sons*, 126.

[58] Ibid., 130.

[59] Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 99 n. 295. Over 280 occurrences in the Septuagint.

[60] 46 occurences in the Septuagint. Used in the New Testament only in Luke 17:18 of the 'grateful Samaritan' in a potentially derogatory sense.

someone who is not ethnically Jewish) and so can apply to non-Jews living among the people of Israel (e.g. in Josephus and Philo,[61] and the use in reference to the Canaanites in Zephaniah 2:5 LXX or the non-Jewish inhabitants of Galilee in 1 Maccabees 5:15) as well as to those from other lands (e.g. Judith 6:1, and the extensive use in Judges 15—16 LXX and 1—4 Kingdoms *passim* to refer to the Philistines) whereas ἔθνος perhaps carries more of a sense of those who are foreign nationals, belonging to a different nation. This distinction makes sense of the usage in Second-Temple texts; for example *T. Levi* 9:10 where Isaac tells Levi to marry a wife who is neither ethnically non-Jewish nor from a foreign nation (ἀπὸ γένους ἀλλοφύλων ἢ ἐθνῶν). Although we should not place excessive stress on Paul not using ἀλλόφυλος, since his preserved writings provide only a small sample size, it may suggest that he thinks of those who are not Jews in a more complex manner than as simply not sharing his ethnicity. Scott, in his interpretation of Romans 9—11, suggests that Paul's preference for the term ἔθνος over ἀλλόφυλος reflects his desire to spread the gospel, which "applied equally to Israel and the other nations of the world," beyond his own people, in order that all the nations may believe, which will bring about the salvation and restoration of Israel.[62] This is at least plausible, especially in view of Paul's description of himself as an "apostle to the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13) and the fact that passages in the Septuagint (e.g. Isaiah 51:4—5, 55:5—7, 65—66 LXX), which promise a salvation for the nations through Israel, use ἔθνος as opposed to

[61] Scott, *Paul and the Nations,* 87-96, 99-108.

[62] Ibid., 125, 34.

ἀλλόφυλος. As Johannes Munck has shown, Paul's belief that his ministry had a role to play in the salvation of the Gentiles, and one which would then lead to salvation for "a great number" of Jews, is both possible and coherent in his historical and theological context.[63] This indeed seems to be Paul's self-stated goal in the letter to the Romans, where his desire to bring about the "obedience of faith among all the Gentiles" (ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) forms an *inclusio* at the start and end of the letter (1:5, 16:26).[64] If so, then Paul's use of ἔθνος needs to be considered in light of his stated aim of seeking their conversion to Christ.

The usage of ἔθνος in the national sense can be seen in instances where Paul juxtaposes 'Gentiles' with 'Jews' as opposite groups, or a division of humanity into Jew and non-Jew. We have seen this usage above in Galatians 2:14,15 where 'Gentile' functions as 'non-Jew'. This occurs also in Romans 3:29 where God is said to be the God of the Gentiles, and not of the Jews only, and in Romans 9—11

[63] Munck, 120-24. See also Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God,* 103-05; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: the unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 656-65.

[64] The *inclusio* is present if 16:25–27 are original, as argued by Schreiner, *Romans,* 816-17. and N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology* (eds D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 63. If this section is a later addition then the idea of mission to the Gentiles is still given a prominent role in the letter, making the doxology a fitting summary of the letter, as Fitzmyer notes: Fitzmyer, *Romans,* 753. The text is present in all manuscripts save a few later Western examples (F^p, G^p, 629), but transposed or repeated in some significant early witnesses; for a full discussion of the text-critical evidence see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1994), 470-73; Schlatter, *Romans*, 278; Hurtado, "The Doxology at the End of Romans," in E.J. Epp and Gordon Fee (eds) *New Testament Textual Criticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 185-199 .

'the Gentiles' are frequently used as an opposite to 'Israel'. Indeed, Paul describes himself as ethnically an "Israelite" (ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης), contrasted with Gentiles in Romans 11:1 (see also Philippians 3:5). In 2 Corinthians 11:26, "Gentiles" is used in the sense of 'foreigners' and contrasted with "my own people" (γένος). This ethnic or racial usage of 'Gentiles' is also at work in Paul's frequently-stated desire to preach the gospel "to the Gentiles" (e.g. Romans 15:16, 18; Galatians 1:16, 2:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:16). Although Paul does occasionally use other national or ethnic designations, notably 'Greek' (Ἕλλην) in opposition with 'barbarian' (βάρβαρος) in Romans 1:14 and Galatians 3:28, or 'Greek' as opposed to 'Jew' in 1 Corinthians 1:22, 'Gentile' seems to be his preferred catch-all term for 'foreigners' from the Jewish perspective and is the most frequently used term.[65]

The other sense of 'Gentiles' in Paul can be seen in the surprising passages where he addresses those converts to Christianity who are not ethnic Jews as being 'no longer Gentiles'.[66] Perhaps the clearest example of this is given in 1 Corinthians 12:2 where Paul writes, "You know that when you were Gentiles (ἔθνη ἦτε) you were led astray, being misled by speechless idols."[67] This is

[65] Of 54 occurrences of the lemma ἔθνος in the Pauline corpus (Romans–Titus), at least 40 instances carry the sense of 'non-Jew' or 'non-Jewish'. The term is used in Romans (29x), 1 Corinthians (3x), 2 Corinthians (1x), Galatians (10x), Ephesians (5x), Colossians (1x), 1 Thessalonians (2x), 1 Timothy (2x) and 2 Timothy (1x).

[66] Cf. Hodge, *If Heirs Then Sons*, 126.

[67] The emphasis on the idea that idols do not speak is a common one in the Hebrew tradition and in Second-Temple Jewish literature (e.g. Psalm 115:4-5 MT; Isaiah 44:9; Jeremiah 10:5; Habakkuk 2:18; 3 Macc 4:16, though the LXX uses κωφός rather than ἄφωνος here).

contrasted with the present state of Paul's addressees, who are by and large in Corinth ethnically non-Jewish, yet the implication is that, in some sense, they are not 'Gentiles' any longer. This happens through their incorporation into Christ. For Paul, Christians irrespective of ethnicity are not 'Gentiles' in the sense of 'strangers' or 'foreigners' to God's covenant and promises; for they have been included in the same body.

The significance of this idea is the development of a Christocentric definition of the people of God: who is 'in' or 'out' is not dependent upon ethnicity, heritage or nationality, but on relationship to Christ. It is important here to note that Paul does not abandon the idea of there being a 'people of God' with an 'in-group' and an 'out-group', but has drawn the boundaries in a different manner than would be done in other strands of Second Temple Judaism.

The usage of τὰ ἔθνη in 1 Corinthians 5:1 also seems oriented towards this usage: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality (πορνεία) among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among the Gentiles (οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν)." Paul here draws on a trope, common in Second-Temple Judaism, that the Gentiles were egregiously immoral when it came to sexual matters. As William Loader suggests, Jewish literature of this period often mentioned πορνεία in the context of polemic depictions of "the evils of Gentile culture."[68]

[68] William Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Attitudes towards sexuality in Apocalypses, Testaments, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). Cf. Pieter W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of*

Here, dealing with an apparent case of incest, Paul criticises the Christians in Corinth for tolerating this ongoing case of sexual immorality, when (apparently) even their non-Christian neighbours would disapprove. This implies a level of distanciation from "the Gentiles", and could not be said by Paul unless he viewed the Christians as in some sense not (or no longer) to be reckoned among τὰ ἔθνη.

This prompts the translation of τὰ ἔθνη as "pagans" (NRSV, ESV, and others) or "heathens" (RSV) in 1 Corinthians 5:1 and 12:2. The use of the term τὰ ἔθνη to refer to non-Christians is also found in Ephesians (2:11—14; 4:17), as well as (notably) in 1 Peter, suggesting that this concept of Christians no longer being 'Gentiles' was not limited to Paul's ministry, but held some wider acceptance in the first-century church.[69] This idea then becomes developed in some patristic thought as early as Tertullian into the claim that Christians constitute a "*genus tertium*" (i.e. neither Jews nor Gentiles).[70] The *genus tertium* idea recognises the

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Pseudo-Phocylides: With Introduction and Commentary (Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 110-12, 225-52., also Leviticus 18:20–27 LXX; Deuteronomy 12:1–4; 28:64 LXX; *Jubilees* 1:8–9; 2:4–8; 22:10–24.

[69] Possibly Silvanus could be suggested as a 'common link' between Paul and 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:12; 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). On the use of τὰ ἔθνη in 1 Peter see Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1996), 127. Cf. Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: a canonical and synthetic approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 569-70. Cf. also 3 John 7.

[70] Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 1.8. This claim not to be Jews reflects perhaps a Gentile Christian perspective formed by Roman persecution of the Christians as something separate from Judaism, and increasing mutual differentiation between the church and non-Christian Jews in the second century. Garroway has argued that Paul would in fact have regarded his converts as Jews, or, in his terminology "Gentile-Jews", and thus both (ethnically) Gentile and naturalized

significance of Paul's theology regarding the uniqueness of Christians and their belief, but it has a very different emphasis to Paul's narrative of the Gentiles being no longer Gentiles in the sense of no longer being excluded from the people of God. Paul, as Hodge notes, describes not so much a transcending of a bounded people of God, but the inclusion of the Gentiles into a reconfigured Israel.[71]

There are at least two significant implications for a Theology of Religions following Paul of this dual usage of τὰ ἔθνη: First, that ethnic, national or political status is in no way a disqualification for Paul regarding salvation, for the boundaries of the 'people of God' are drawn Christologically. Second, that Paul views Christians from a non-Jewish background as in some sense no longer Gentiles (even if 'Gentile' remains for him an acceptable descriptor of their ethnicity) but to be reckoned among the people of God (in this sense, they have become Jewish, although Paul also reconfigures the meaning of Judaism). Paul's converts needed to understand they had been incorporated into the story and people of Israel, in Christ. The place they occupy in the story is that of the "foreigners" who have been brought in.[72] As Hays comments:

> "When [Paul] indicates that the Corinthian believers are no longer Gentiles, Paul is unmistakeably suggesting that they have turned away

citizens of Israel: Joshua D. Garroway, *Paul's Christians as Gentile-Jews: neither Jew nor Gentile, but both* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1.

[71] Hodge, *If Heirs Then Sons,* 124-126. See previous chapter.

[72] Scott, *Paul and the Nations,* 202.

> from idols to serve the living God of Israel … and thereby become grafted into Israel."[73]

Thus, Paul conceives of his Gentile converts as having been brought into a particular community and a covenant, from which they were once excluded. Their being brought in is something which happens 'in Christ' and is by no means universal nor automatic for all Gentiles, since Paul clearly only considers some of the Gentiles (i.e. Christians) to be "no longer Gentiles".

'Unbelievers'

The most theologically significant term used by Paul to describe non-Christians is probably "unbeliever" (ἄπιστος). This term is used by Paul extensively in the Corinthian correspondence, eleven times in 1 Corinthians and three times in 2 Corinthians.[74] Paul uses the terminology of ἄπιστος in contexts which oppose or contrast it with in-group terminology: for example contrasting οἱ ἄπιστοι (repeatedly) with οἱ πιστεύοντες 'believers' in 1 Corinthians 14:22ff. and with οἱ ἀδελφοί 'brothers'[75] in 1 Corinthians 6:6 (possibly also 7:12). The ἄπιστοι are those therefore who are not 'believers' or reckoned as among the 'brothers'. This clearly suggests that this term refers to non-Christians as those who do not

[73] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2011), 209.

[74] 1 Corinthians 6:6; 7:12, 13, 14 (twice), 15; 10:27; 14:22 (twice), 23, 24; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 6:14, 15. The term ἄπιστος is also used in the Pastorals to designate non-Christians: 1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 1:15.

[75] ἀδελφοί is grammatically masculine and so I have translated 'brothers' rather than 'brothers and sisters' (so NRSV) to avoid implying ἀδελφοί καὶ ἀδελφές (cf. James 2:15 ἐὰν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ…); ἀδελφοί frequently refers to both male and female Christians in the New Testament – see BDAG "ἀδελφός".

have πίστις ('faith') in Christ. As Trebilco shows, the theological significance of Paul's using this term is that:

> "The boundary is constructed around πίστις, so those who are out are defined as ἄπιστοι, a term that is comprehensive and includes all outsiders."[76]

Thus the in-out boundary Paul operates with for the church is marked by faith in Christ, rather than by anything else. This does seem to be a use of the term ἄπιστος which Paul has developed, or one at least which was not commonly used in Second-Temple Jewish literature, where the label of οἱ ἄπιστοι would be more frequently be applied in the sense of the 'doubters' or 'faithless' within Israel or of the quality of being 'unfaithful' (e.g. Proverbs 17:6; 28:5; Isaiah 17:10 LXX). However, it becomes a frequent term for non-Christian in Greek language patristic literature (e.g. 2 Clement 17:5; Justin Martyr, *Apology* 19, 33; *Dialogue with Trypho*, 91:3; Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 5:2). Trebilco makes a plausible case that Paul himself has developed the Christian use of the term ἄπιστος to refer to a non-Christian, and since it does not occur in 1 Thessalonians, an earlier letter, where there are several opportunities for Paul to use the term (e.g. 2:14, 16; 3:12; 4:5, 12; 5:6, 15), we can even suggest that Paul coined his usage of ἄπιστος some time between his composing 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians (likely within the range 50—54 AD).[77] The term ἄπιστος could have seemed a logical term, constructed using the alpha privative, to describe

[76] Trebilco, "Creativity at the Boundary," 187.
[77] Ibid., 189.

those who did not have the πίστις which Paul found so important, and which occurs (particularly in participle forms of the related verb πιστεύω) in some labels Paul applies to Christians (e.g. Romans 3:22; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:19 has τοὺς πιστεύοντας "those who believe"; Romans 1:16; 4:5; 10:4 has πιστεύοντι "[one] who believes"). If it is not the case that Paul has developed this terminology, then we would have to suggest that the terminology arose from another source in the early church and was adopted by Paul as coherent with his theology. In either case the theological implication is clear: Paul views the in-out boundary of the church as defined by faith; that is, by whether or not one believes in Christ.

The use of ἄπιστος in 1 and 2 Corinthians to refer to non-Christians is not necessarily overtly negative. As with ἰδιώτης, the use in 1 Corinthians 14:22ff. suggests that non-Christians were present (whether every time, or occasionally enough for Paul to make the assumption that they might be present) in the meetings of the church, and Paul urges the moderation of the use of charismatic gifts so as not to render the services unintelligible to outsiders or unbelievers. So even though the church is a bounded group, with unbelievers being on the outside, they are welcome to be physically present at the meetings of the church, and, what is more, Paul clearly accords them significant dignity and status in asking the Christians in Corinth to moderate their worship for the sake of the unbeliever. In 1 Corinthians 10:28 Paul again assumes social interaction between Christians and οἱ ἄπιστοι by dealing with the question of what one can eat at a dinner one has been invited to by an unbeliever. This is permissible,

according to Paul, and one may eat whatever is served, except in the case where the unbeliever tells you that the food is εἰδωλόθυτον (i.e. food ritually sacrificed in pagan rituals) in which case Paul suggests abstaining "for the sake of [their] conscience", presumably so as not to undermine the credibility of the Christian message in the eyes of the unbelieving host.[78] Again the reasoning accords significant moral status to the unbeliever — certain things are to be done or not done for the sake of the unbeliever's conscience. Paul's use of ἄπιστος in 1 Corinthians 7 is concerned with the issue of marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian. Although Paul counsels against entering into such a marriage (7:39; and also in 2 Corinthians 6:14—15) in a manner would be very much in accord with Jewish scruples against intermarriage,[79] he also suggests that a Christian who is already married to an unbeliever ought to remain so, if possible (7:12—15). Thus significant and intimate relationships between Christians and unbelievers are assumed by Paul to be a normal part of life for the church in Corinth, and not something to be abandoned. Soteriological exclusivism for Paul did not entail social exclusion or separatism.

[78] Moffatt, *First Epistle*, 144; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: a commentary on the Greek text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 784-93.

[79] *Joseph and Aseneth* is a prime example of this, where the 'loophole' of saying Aseneth converted to Judaism is used to explain Joseph marrying the daughter of an Egyptian priest (see Genesis 41:45, 50). In deploying this explanation, the prohibition or warning against marrying pagans is in fact reinforced. Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality,* 490-92.

Conclusions

I argue that ἄπιστος, 'unbeliever', is the most important of the labels used by Paul for understanding his attitude towards non-Christians, since it demonstrates his innovative manner of conceiving of the boundaries of the community of God's people. It demonstrates, more than any other term, the significance of faith as marker of group identity for Paul. Whether one is 'in' or 'out' depends on whether or not one has faith in Christ. The boundary is defined in a Christocentric manner. Whether or not Paul himself coined this use of 'unbeliever', it coheres well with his theology and is the term which sums up his thought concerning non-Christians.

The use of 'Gentiles' by Paul is also highly significant, demonstrating his conviction that something has changed for his converts to Christ from a non-Jewish background. There is a real 'exclusion' of those outside the covenants and community of the people of God in the tradition of the Hebrew scriptures and in Second-Temple writing, which Paul also does not wish to deny. Yet he envisages a redrawing of the boundaries around Christ, and a way for those who are foreigners to become naturalized through faith in Christ. Both exclusion and acceptance are part of this story, for Paul, and we need to view these themes in light of his convictional world and, again, Christocentrically.

It is also worth noting that Paul combines a theological exclusivism and strong 'in-out' language and concepts with a care for the outsider and the ascribing to them of significant moral worth. Claims that theological

exclusivism must lead to separatism or chauvinism do not seem to be the case with Pauline theology. Paul's attitude towards non-Christians is, nevertheless, strongly mission-oriented; Paul's desire is for non-Christians to become Christians. His wish is that they, too, may be incorporated into the people of God. Thus, while Paul shows a willingness to redraw the boundary of the people of God as faith in Christ, rather than as ethnically bounded, he does not abolish the boundary, nor suggest that it could be further redrawn in a manner which does not centre on Christ. Those on the outside of Paul's schema are to be brought in through the preaching of the gospel to them, in order that they might believe (stated perhaps most clearly by Paul in Romans 10:9—17).

Paul on Union with Christ

"Union with Christ" is a feature of Paul's theology that is often neglected, but which pervades his thought. It forms a category without which Paul's theology is incomplete, particularly when one wishes to examine the question of what difference Paul thinks becoming a Christian makes. The "comparative neglect"[80] of this issue in some areas of Pauline scholarship is hard to understand. It is by no means a marginal or peripheral teaching; as Anthony Hoekema has put it, "Once you have your eyes opened to this concept of union with Christ, you will find it almost everywhere in the New Testament".[81] "Union with Christ" as specific terminology is often associated with Reformed theology, although not exclusively, and the word "union" helpfully encapsulates a key feature of Pauline theology. It may be known by other terms – some older writers preferring "communion"; Ed Sanders and James Dunn use the term "participation in Christ"[82], in slightly different ways, while others speak in an untranslated manner of Paul's *en Christo* (ἐν Χριστῷ) language. Constantine Campbell in a recent study has suggested that what we find in Paul is a "meta-theme", which covers a range of ideas expressed in English with the terminology "union, participation, identification, [and] incorporation."[83] I find this a helpful

[80] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 397.

[81] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 64.

[82] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 390ff; Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 522

[83] Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 29-30.

clarification, particularly as Campbell then clarifies that he does not view these as disparate themes in Paul, nor even together as a separable doctrine, but rather as an underlying idea which forms part of Paul's theology as a whole. Indeed, as will be argued here, union with Christ, or the status of being "in Christ" is inalienable from Pauline theology. The increased attention given to this theme in recent Pauline scholarship is therefore a welcome development.

As this Pauline focus suggests, it is largely Paul's language, unique in the New Testament (although the concept certainly isn't – see John 15:4, 5, 7 and 1 John 4:13), of Christian believers being "in Christ" (ἐν Χριστῷ) or "with Christ", which informs discussion of "union" or "participation" in Christ in New Testament Theology. Paul's discussion of baptism in Romans 6 and elsewhere is also germane, as is his repeated claim that Christians have "died with Christ". A quick review of the "proof-texts" of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms confirms that it is Paul's language which provides the biblical data for historic Reformed theology's discussion of union with Christ, with the citation of texts from the Pauline corpus to support this doctrine.[84] It is, however, a slippery concept: in the aforementioned Reformed documents, and in some other

[84] *Westminster Longer Catechism* §66: "The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God's grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling" cites texts from Ephesians and 1 Corinthians as proofs. *Westminster Confession of Faith* §26.1 "All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory" cites texts from Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians and 2 Timothy, as well as from John and 1 John, as proofs.

Reformed theology, union with Christ is sometimes elided into the categories of election or justification, and wheeled out as an explanation for baptism, without much reflection. There is potential for a recovery and a clearer restatement of this doctrine in Paul and in Christian theology which wishes to follow Paul closely. Primarily this enables a more precise understanding of what it is to be a Christian, but also can contribute to the related discussion of what it means to be a human being who is not a Christian. A concept of "union with Christ" underlies much of Paul's theology and provides a certain amount of cohesion. The concept also has some important corollaries for a Theology of Religions following Paul.

Union with Christ in Pauline Scholarship

Paul's modern interpreters have understood his concept of union with Christ in a number of different ways, and consequently come to different conclusions regarding the significance of this concept as a theme for Pauline theology.[85] An early proponent of the view that this is a significant theme in Paul's theology is Albert Schweitzer.[86] Schweitzer read Paul in such a way as to make even the doctrine of justification by faith (which he did not dispute) "secondary" to the doctrine of "union with Christ". Borrowing a metaphor from the world of artillery, or, less violently, astronomy, he described justification by faith as a "subsidiary crater" within the "main crater" of Paul's theology of

[85] Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 20ff.

[86] See James Carleton Paget, "Schweitzer and Paul," *JSNT* 33, no. 3 (2011).

mystical union with Christ.[87] As Schweitzer's terminology here suggests, he views Paul's theology as "mystical"—that is, a form of mysticism. Perhaps it is the influence of Schweitzer's classification of this idea as "mystical" that leads to Bultmann's comparative neglect of the doctrine. Although working with the literary categories of the 1920's, Schweitzer developed this language in a broad enough sense that he did not try and shoehorn Paul's thought into too specific a category, instead comparing it to other religious traditions deemed to be forms of "mysticism". However, he sought to drive a wedge between Johannine thought, which he interpreted as teaching a deificatory mysticism, and Pauline thought, read as teaching a communion of the soul with God, a "fellowship with the divine being".[88] This is unfortunate, as in many ways Johannine and Pauline theology are very cohesive,[89] and certainly some interpreters of Paul have read passages such as 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Romans 8:17—30 as teaching some element of deification in the language of conformation to Christ.[90] Furthermore, Schweitzer's insistence that union with Christ meant, or rather, would mean in the age to come, a certain loss of individual personality,[91] is not widely held today. Nevertheless, Schweitzer may be helpful in showing how fundamental

[87] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: A & C Black, 1931), 225.

[88] Ibid., 16.

[89] Bertil E. Gärtner, "The Pauline and Johannine Idea of 'to Know God' against the Hellenistic Background," *New Testament Studies* 14, no. 02 (1968) shows that both authors use γινώσκω in a similar sense when discussing human knowledge of God.

[90] Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 152, 191.

[91] Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle,* 125.

union with Christ is to Paul's thought. It is not my intention to discuss the relative importance of the elements of Paul's theology here, nor the logical priority of each element, but there is clearly some significance to Paul's use of union or participation language.

Schweitzer does not offer much by the way of solution if we wish to ask, how exactly Christians are united with, or participating in Christ. The language of "being in Christ", being "buried with" Christ (συνθάπτω; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) or having "died with Christ" (Romans 6:8; 2 Corinthians 5:4; 2 Timothy 2:11 cf. "crucified with Christ" in Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20) is obviously not flatly empirical. Schweitzer's description of this as "mystical" really means non-empirical, but neither does it correspond to other "mystical" concepts with which Schweitzer compares it. Sanders runs into the same problem half a century later:

> "We seem to lack a category of 'reality'—real participation in Christ, real possession of the Spirit—which lies between naïve cosmological speculation and belief in magical transference on one hand and a revised self-understanding on the other. I must confess that I do not have a new category of perception to propose here. That does not mean, however, that Paul did not have one."[92]

Like Schweitzer, Sanders tends to view participation in Christ as a fundamental element of Paul's theology, and he alleges that overly-forensic accounts of justification in Paul have missed this element. Whether or not one agrees with Sanders' opposing of "Lutheran" accounts of justification by faith

[92] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism,* 522-3.

alone with Pauline participation language, or sees them as ultimately compatible, it is clear that he recognises the significance of Paul's "with" and "in Christ" language. Sanders also recognises that we need something different to many of the usual New Testament scholarship categories to establish more loosely what Paul's union and participation language actually means. Not being one to shrink from interpreting Paul in a way that challenges or revises self-understanding, but hopefully avoiding naïve cosmological speculation, I want to suggest a number of features of Paul's language here that can help establish some boundaries for discussion.

Dunn establishes the concept of "Union with Christ" in connection with his "Adam Christology". Christ is the head, or source, of glorified humanity in the same way as Adam is the head of sinful humanity. Christ obeys where Adam failed, and the fruit of his obedience is shared with all who belong to, that is, participate in him. Dunn sees union with Christ as paralleling in some sense humanity's solidarity in Adam. Although Adam is mentioned by Paul by name only in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Dunn argues that the contrast between Adam and Christ as the two representatives of humanity underlies and pervades Paul's theology. Though Jesus' role goes much further than simply "second Adam", and "union with Christ" seems to be a multivalent concept, or at least one which spans a wide semantic field. Dunn speaks of:

> "The portrayal of a Jesus Messiah who functions severally as another Adam, firstborn from the dead and an elder brother of the family of the resurrected, as divine wisdom and life-giving spirit, but also as co-regent

> with God and coming Lord. Now we also have a Christ who is conceived as a 'location' into which the convert is 'inserted' and within which believers find themselves, or as a personal presence within believers; as God's saving action with which believers can be identified… as a body of which believers are members."[93]

All of this presents something of an interpretative puzzle when we look at Paul's theology.

Paul's ἐν Χριστῷ language

Some older treatments of Paul's ἐν Χριστῷ language have treated it as a technical term. This is the case in Schweitzer, and treating a phenomenon of Paul's language as a *terminus technicus* is always a popular option when we don't know what to do with it. This can lead to formulaic treatments of Paul's ἐν Χριστῷ language, if not ignoring it altogether, or to what James Barr calls an "illegitimate totality transfer"; that is, the exegetical mistake of freighting a word or phrase with every shade of meaning it carries in every context, either within the biblical canon or (less frequently) in all Greek literature.[94] As has been increasingly recognised, this approach needs to be avoided.

Deissmann is representative of an early approach which recognised a metaphysical and mystical dimension to the terminology, explaining the concept in Paul as an "experience" which takes place "in the soul of the convert."[95] Deissmann presents the idea of union with Christ as essentially

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[93] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle,* 409.

[94] Cf. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: OUP, 1961), 218.

[95] G. Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (ET; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), 161.

subjective, although his suggestion that there is a normative form of this experience (which he distinguishes from the "intoxicated" experience of the Corinthians) means that it is neither universal nor a product of human desire alone.[96] Other interpreters are even more explicit in noting an objectivity to the concept of union with Christ in Paul's theology, with Schweitzer emphasising that the status of being in Christ depends upon divine empowerment and, specifically, the power of the resurrection.[97] W.D. Davies likewise stresses that the experiential side of being "in Christ" is a consequence and not a cause of belief in Christ.[98]

Hengel notes that the term is an extremely important one for Paul and demonstrates its connection to his account of the nature of the church as well as his view of justification.[99] More recent Pauline interpreters have sought to establish what ἐν Χριστῷ means in a specific Pauline context, seeking meaning at the sentence- and paragraph-level. Grammatically, it has been recognised that the ἐν Χριστῷ language can have a number of senses.[100] In some cases, it has a locative sense. That is, "this person" or "these people" are in Christ; a shorthand for saying they are Christians (e.g. Romans 16:7). At other points it carries an instrumental sense, "in Christ" possibly serving as shorthand for

[96] Ibid., 153.

[97] Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 74.

[98] Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 88.

[99] Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 65-77.

[100] Mark A. Seifrid, "In Christ," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (eds G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 433-436. Cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 189-191.

"through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:19); at other points having a modal sense, stressing the manner in which an action occurs (e.g. Romans 9:1: "I speak the truth in Christ"). To borrow Constantine Campbell's phraseology, ἐν Χριστῷ is an idiomatic expression and not a formulaic one, which refers to a broader concept rather than a fixed tightly-defined idea in every use.[101] As Mark Seifrid has pointed out, Paul's use of the phraseology of being in Christ or with Christ moves beyond strictly defined modal or instrumental senses, and can encompass multiple of these senses by metaphorical extension.[102] Paul's extension of this language leads to his use of "in Christ" to describe a sphere of existence, which is generally opposed, as in Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15, to the sphere of Adam. In fact, the closest parallel to the "in Christ" language in any biblical literature is Paul's "in Adam" language, and the dichotomy he draws between Christ and Adam suggests he views these as two mutually exclusive spheres of existence. I suggest, then, that Paul's ἐν Χριστῷ language carries at least minimally the sense of belonging to the sphere of Christ and the gospel; sharing in the benefits that this entails regarding righteousness, salvation and knowledge of God; and undergoing some level of consequent personal transformation). Paul's σὺν Χριστῷ (with Christ) language often carries the same sense. Some examples will help to demonstrate this:

[101] Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ,* 26.
[102] Seifrid, "In Christ," 433.

First of all, Paul speaks of being "in Christ" as deriving from divine action:

And because of him you are **in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30)	ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε **ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ**, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις

This verse is syntactically difficult to translate into English, with the emphasis of ἐξ αὐτοῦ being perhaps the same as that in Romans 11:36, according to Schrage.[103] The basic sense is thus "from him," although in this context that suggests causation, and so I have opted for "because of him."[104] Here the status of being "in Christ" is explicitly connected with divine action; one does not make oneself "in Christ" but rather one is caused to be "in Christ" by Christ. The following "from God" reinforces this, and connects the blessings of righteousness, sanctification, and redemption with the gift which enables the believer to be "in Christ." As Thiselton notes, these qualities "both characterize Christ and are imparted by Christ,"[105] which shows the connection between union with Christ and participation in or possession of these benefits.

A major concern of Paul in 1 Corinthians is to assert the unity of the church against the possibility of internecine rivalry.[106] Thiselton identifies the concern

[103] Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 1:213.

[104] Cf. Thiselton's "It is as a gift from him that you are in Christ Jesus", in *First Epistle*, 188.

[105] Ibid., 191.

[106] Fee, *First Epistle*, 4-5; Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 1:30-36; Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language*

to address the issue of discord as not simply ecclesiological, but as bound up with the gospel. Hence Paul addresses the issue of discord by "a reproclamation of grace and the cross of Christ."[107] Hence one aspect of the "in Christ" language is to provide a theological rationale for the unity of Christian believers, who are together counted as being in Christ (see the discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:13 below), but there is also an individual aspect to being "in Christ" which, in some way, connects the Christian believer with the righteousness of Christ. Two further passages in Paul also connect the status of righteousness of the believer in Christ with their union with Christ:

On our behalf he [God] caused him to be sin who knew no sin, so that **in him** we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)	τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ **ἐν αὐτῷ**.

This passage is much discussed, with a great deal of debate around the idea that God caused Christ to "be sin," and around the interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.[108] For our purposes we can bracket these issues and concentrate

and Composition of 1 Corinthians (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 20ff.

[107] Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 34.

[108] See e.g. Harris, *Second Epistle*, 455; George Elton Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Revised ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 487. J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 159ff.

on the assertion that, whether the benefit Paul describes is becoming righteous before God or sharing in God's own righteousness, it is one which accrues "in him." The ἵνα clause is undoubtedly referring to the present experience or status of the Corinthian believers and not only to an eschatological state, as, although the aorist subjunctive γενώμεθα is used rather than the present (which would more strongly imply a process aspect), there is no reason to connect the righteousness with anything yet to be given to the believers in this passage,[109] and Paul elsewhere treats this righteousness as a present property of believers (Romans 6:18; 8:10; 10:10; Philippians 3:19). In addition we should note the use of the perfect when describing the new creation in 5:17 (ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά). The status of being "in Christ" is thus a present reality for the believers, and depends upon divine action. It is neither automatic nor universal. Furthermore it is the union with Christ which mediates the benefits of Christ to the believer. This suggests an inexchangeability to union with Christ, which can not be considered to be present through other religious mediators. As Thrall notes, "to be "in Christ" is to be united with his personal being."[110] 2 Corinthians 5:19 has a close connection with this thought in the immediate context, with the assertion that God's reconciling action occurs "in Christ" reinforcing the idea that this status depends upon union with Christ.[111]

[109] Harris, *Second Epistle*, 454.
[110] Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 1.444.
[111] Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 317.

Some idiosyncrasies in the phrasing of this passage have prompted suggestions that it represents a pre-Pauline tradition, which may suggest that this idea was a commonplace of early Christian theology. Thrall examines the question of whether 5:18—21 represent a pre-Pauline tradition and concludes that the evidence for this is lacking and the hypothesis "should probably be rejected."[112] If this is then a concept developed by Paul, it does seem to be integral to the gospel he proclaimed, and thus an understanding which he would presumably consider universally valid for Christian theology.

Philippians also contains a similar passage connecting the status of enjoying righteousness with being "in him", that is, united with Christ.

…in order that I may gain Christ and be found **in him**, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ (or, the faithfulness of Christ), the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Philippians 3:8b–9)	…ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὑρεθῶ **ἐν αὐτῷ**, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει

[112] Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 1.445-449.

In this section of the letter,[113] Paul contrasts his previous way of life and beliefs with those he now holds as a follower of Jesus Christ. The contrast is extremely favourable for his new status, by which his old way of life is considered to be worthless (3:8).[114] He explains that his goal is to know Christ fully (3:10). In the context of this, he emphasises his ambition to be "found in him" rather than not. This seems evocative of the idea of belonging to Christ and owing one's allegiance to him. Again, the possession of righteousness is connected with union or being "in Christ", with the assertion that this righteousness is not of his own, but connected with Christ (3:9). Whether διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ is employing a subjective or objective genitive, the connection of righteousness with Christ as the source, mediated through union with him remains.

Paul also speaks in Romans in similar terms of righteousness being "in Christ":

...in order that I may gain Christ and be found **in him**, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ (or, the faithfulness of Christ), the	...ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὑρεθῶ **ἐν αὐτῷ**, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει

[113] Philippians 3 is sometimes thought to be a separate letter which has become combined with one or two others. See B.D. Rahtjen, "The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians," *NTS* 6, no. 1 (1959), 167-173.

[114] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 390-391.

righteousness from God that depends

on faith. (Romans 3:24)

This spatial language suggests that "in Christ" can sometimes signify the realm of salvation for Paul;[115] an aspect of which is explored in greater detail in the following chapter with reference to the Adam-Christ dichotomy.

There are also uses of participatory "in Christ" language with reference to the death and resurrection of Christ. As has been noted, the believer is considered to have partaken in the death of Christ, and so consequently to have become "dead" to the law and its condemnatory power and claims against them.[116]

I have been crucified **with Christ**. **Χριστῷ** συνεσταύρωμαι.

(Galatians 2:19c)

[115] J. Cornelius de Vos helpfully points out that Paul relies on spatial imagery not only to determine an "in" and "out" of the people of God or the realm of salvation, but also a concentric imagery, with Christ and God towards the centre and death and sin outside: idem., "Paul and the Parting of the Arguments in Galatians." Paper presented at SBL/EABS Joint Meeting. Berlin, Germany, August 7-11, 2017. Cf. Philip Whitehead, "There's Another Country: The Conceptual Geography of the Letter to the Ephesians," *The Other Journal* 24 (2014), where I argue that the conceptualisation of space in the letter to the Ephesians demonstrates a Christocentric focus without a Temple, where God dwells with and in the centre of his people, the church, in Christ <https://theotherjournal.com/2014/08/25/theres-another-country-the-conceptual-geography-of-the-letter-to-the-ephesians/>.

[116] F.F. Bruce, *Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 142.

Here Paul is discussing the freedom from the law obtained in Christ, which means the Christian has "died to the law through the law" (2:19a) and that Christ now lives "in me" (2:20). Elsewhere it is common for Paul to say the Spirit lives within Christians, but he also envisages an indwelling of Christ in the believer. The spatial imagery here could appear confused if these are equivocal, but it is likely that they refer to complementary ways of understanding the idea and consequences of being united with Christ.[117] Schreiner interprets this idea through the discussion in Romans with an appeal to Paul's Adam-Christ dichotomy.[118] This represents a move towards a synthetic understanding of union in Paul, but the language of Galatians here and Romans does seem parallel:

Now if we have died **with Christ**, we believe that we will also live with him. (Romans 6:8)	εἰ δὲ ἀπεθάνομεν **σὺν Χριστῷ**, πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ

Cranfield suggests that the death here is that which symbolically takes place in baptism (on which see the discussion of 6:3—4 below) and that this betokens submission to Christ as Lord and an experiential death of selfish

[117] Carson tries to avoid this difficulty through arguing for a representative understanding of "Christ lives in me" in 2:20, with the effect that Christ dies and lives (i.e. rises) in the place of the believer: *Love in Hard Places* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 166. In my view the passage is asserting a stronger identification of the believer with the death of Christ, though the precise nature of the death which one dies to sin with Christ remains obscure in Galatians.

[118] Schreiner, *Galatians*, 171-172.

ambition.[119] Such a reading is possible, but the wider context of the passage seems to suggest that union with Christ is in view in the idea of dying and rising with him. 6:4—5 suggest that the believers have "become united with him in the likeness of his death" (NET) which guarantees or stands as a sign of the resurrection. The phrase τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ in 5a is unusual.[120] The term ὁμοιώματι does seem to be synonymous with εἰκών in some Greek philosophical literature,[121] and is also used in the Septuagint to refer to images and statues of idols. The sense is likely that of something which is a likeness but not an identification, or else Paul could simply have τῷ θανατῷ αὐτῷ, repeating the idea of 6:3. The term is suggestive therefore of a participation in the death of Christ which is not merely symbolic, but neither an identical repetition.[122] This suggests that the believer also experiences a "death" rather than just gaining the benefits of association with the work of Christ. The death of Christ therefore is not viewed as automatically mediating salvation to the whole of humanity, but requires a union with him through faith and conversion (here, baptism) in order for its benefit to be mediated to the believer. Hence dying with Christ, which requires conversion, is the token of newness of life and resurrection, which are paralleled in Paul. 6:11 repeats this idea, with a shift to the imperative mood

[119] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:311-312.
[120] Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 436; Dunn, *Romans 1—8*, 318.
[121] Schreiner, *Romans*, 313.
[122] Ibid., 313-4; Moo, *Romans*, 386.

indicating the moral behaviour expected for Christians as a result of their salvation and union with Christ.[123]

The idea is also present in the Pastoral Epistles:

The saying is trustworthy, for: If **we have died with him**, we will also live with him;	πιστὸς ὁ λόγος· εἰ γὰρ **συναπεθάνομεν**, καὶ συζήσομεν

(2 Timothy 2:11)

From this we can see that there is a sense of identification with Christ in this language; of being "found in Christ" or identified with him. But the language goes further and implies a genuine participation in Christ; in his suffering and death, and in his resurrection. For Paul, union with Christ means that believers really were present in some sense at the cross. This would seem to be the meaning of Galatians 2:19 where Paul claims that "through the law I died to the law". As Bell puts it, "the most likely meaning [of Galatians 2:19] is that Paul, by dying with Christ … has died to the law through the law in the sense that Christ stood under the curse of the law. Paul participated in this death under the judgement of the law."[124] I suggest that this claim should be treated with seriousness and not peremptorily dismissed as mere imagery of forensic justification by faith. Rather, it suggests we adopt a view of the human being

[123] This is a common mode of argument in Paul, described aptly by Käsemann as a "become what you are" exhortation (*Romans,* 173).

[124] Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God,* 43.

that encompasses a nonmaterial and unconscious aspect (here I use aspect rather than part, to avoid the pitfalls of partitative anthropologies relying on dichotomies or trichotomies) that can be said to have been present in Christ's death and resurrection.

Rather than "mystical" in Schweitzer's sense, we ought to see the language as "mythical". This emphasis on being "in Christ" and "united" to him is not merely a shorthand form of what we would use the adjective 'Christian' to describe, but deliberate mythological language employed by Paul to express what he considered to be a deep ontological difference in the human being who is the recipient of God's salvation via Paul's gospel. "Myth" here does not mean "untrue" or "fictitious" as it might do in colloquial usage, but rather a usage of symbols and non-literal language to express truth. As Bell points out, this is not simply simile or metaphor, since the choice of mythic symbol is not arbitrary and fungible. Rather, mythic symbols are "inexchangeable" because "myth has the ability to address the fundamental problems of our existence and change our being at its deepest level."[125] In 2 Corinthians 5:17, this difference is expressed in terms of a "new creation": εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις. I suggest further that Paul's bodily metaphors (and the marriage metaphor in Ephesians 5:22—32) belong to this same concept of union with Christ. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27 and Romans 12:4—5 concerning the church as the body of Christ relies on an idea of corporeity with Christ. What is interesting is that the

[125] Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us From Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 64.

metaphor used really relies on a the joint and several union of individual believers with Christ; in other words, the catholicity and corporeity of the church is a function of the believer's union with Christ. The union Paul describes is first and foremost a personal union; that is, between Christ and the believer. The church does not mediate this union; rather it is formed by this unity of believers in their union with Christ. This can be demonstrated by the way in which, as we have seen, Paul describes a direct union with Christ for Christian believers, and the way in which Christ, or God, and never the church, is invariably said to be the source of this union.

Occasionally Paul does talk about Christ being in, or among Christians (e.g. Galatians 2:19; Romans 8:10); though this does not seem to run counter to the sense we have established of a particular sphere of existence; rather it shows an element of reciprocality or mutuality to the sense of union with Christ. The implications of Paul's union language here lead me to suggest, minimally five features of union with Christ:

1. The union language implies an ontological connection with Jesus Christ, particularly his death and resurrection, without thereby teaching a loss of personality or a merging of persons. Thus, as Gathercole points out, for a Christian, the answer to the question in the song "Were you there when they crucified our Lord?" is in one sense (being mythically present

with Christ such as one identifies with his death) "yes", and in another sense (physical presence, and suffering the wrath of God) "no".[126]

2. The union is a *personal* union: that is, between individual Christian believers and Christ.
3. Personal union forms the basis for the church's corporeity and catholicity as the body of Christ.
4. Participation in Christ is what allows the Christian believer to share in the righteousness of Christ. This, I suggest, is the answer to N.T. Wright's now infamous protestation against the idea of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers that "[r]ighteousness is not an object, a substance or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom"[127] Indeed; it is the Christian believer, and not an abstract "righteousness" which is transferred into the realm of being "in Christ", and thus shares in Christ's righteousness.
5. This union comes about at conversion, or the initiation into the church which is spoken of in terms of baptism, (Paul can speak of Andronicus and Junia as "in Christ" before him in Romans 16:7) and as such differentiates the Christian from the non-Christian.

[126] Simon Gathercole, *Defending Substitution: An Essay on Atonement in Paul* (Acacia Studies in Bible and Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 13-14.

[127] Wright, *What Saint Paul really said*, 98.

Baptism and Union with Christ

Another issue which ought to be considered in connection with the theme of union is the rite of baptism. The church communities to which Paul wrote practiced baptism as an initiatory rite. Paul himself notes that he baptised at least some of the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14—17); and the discussion of baptism as a commonplace Christian rite in Romans suggests that it was a widespread practice in the church by the time of the late 50's AD. Baptism is to be considered an initiatory rite in the New Testament, and has its antecedents in the *mikvoth* undertaken by converts to Judaism in the Second-Temple period.[128] Although the precise symbolism of baptism in the New Testament remains a point of discussion, it seems clear that it was an initiatory ritual which was practised by Christians from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, at least in some communities.[129]

Some scholars argue that Paul downplays the significance of water baptism (often termed "physical baptism") with a concentration on a "spiritual" or metaphorical baptism, which can be identified with union with Christ. Constantine Campbell argues this on the basis of Romans 6:3—4, and suggests that Paul is downplaying baptism in 1 Corinthians 1:14—17.[130] The first passage will be examined below, and I disagree with his construal of the passage in 1

[128] Dunn, *Romans 1—8*, 308-311; Richard N. Longenecker, *Romans*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 612-613; T.F. Torrance, "The Origins of Baptism", *SJT* 11 (1958) 158-171.

[129] R.E.O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), 362. Cf. Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 91.

[130] Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 336-7.

Corinthians. Paul minimizes the significance of the one who performs the baptism, but not the act itself, which seems to be assumed elsewhere in the letter to be a ritual undergone by all Christians (12:13).[131] Indeed, it may be possible that Paul in actuality baptised a large number of the Corinthian Christians and his claim not to remember is a rhetorical device to drive home his point that the agent who performs baptism is unimportant.

Dunn also expresses some scepticism that water baptism is important for Paul, preferring instead to identify references to baptism as metaphorical of a process he terms "conversion-initiation."[132] This is partially motivated by a concern that the references Paul gives to baptism tend to emphasise union with Christ and the status of coming into the possession of the benefits of being a Christian, which one presumes happens at conversion, whereas baptism can occur some time after conversion. White suggests that there is some evidence, though it is not conclusive, that first-century baptism was usually administered after a period of catechesis, during which it was possible that the catechumen might die, and that this explains the reference to the "baptism for the dead" in 1 Corinthians 15:29.[133] Against this view stands the references to baptism in the Book of Acts which are presented as more or less immediately after conversion.[134] It is possible that there were a variety of practices in the first-

[131] Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 998; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 289.

[132] Dunn, *Romans 1—8*, 311-312; idem., "'Baptized' as Metaphor," in Porter and Cross (eds), *Baptism, the New Testament, and the Church* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 294-310.

[133] White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, 358-361.

[134] Acts 2:41; 8:12—16, 34—36; 9:18; 10:47—48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5.

century, as there are today. Dunn's view emphasises the initiatory aspect of baptism, and that the Christian is united with Christ irrespective of water baptism, though I think that the concern about the status of the Christian who has not yet received water baptism is not part of Paul's argument, since he seems to assume that all Christians would undergo water baptism, and indeed administered it to converts himself on more than one occasion. Three important texts for the connection of baptism with union with Christ are Romans 6:3—4, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Galatians 3:27.

Romans 6:3—4

Or are you unaware that **as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death**? We have been buried with him, therefore, **through baptism into death**, so that, just as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life.	ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι **ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν**; συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ **διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον**, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρός, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν.

Paul here connects baptism with participation in the death of Jesus. The context is significant; Paul has established in Romans 1–3 the universal sinfulness and condemnation of humanity apart from Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, and explained the salvation through faith available in Christ. This is by faith, after the pattern of Abraham, according to 3:21—4:25. In 5, Paul discusses the relationship of Christ and Adam, as discussed below, and the role of the law.

Sin, hypostasised as an oppressive power, is something from which there is now freedom for the person united with Christ, since, as reiterated in an elaborate metaphor involving marriage in 7:1—6, the Christian has "died to sin" (6:2). Paul then suggests here that baptism (at least) symbolises this, through union with Christ.

Commentators differ as to whether water baptism is in view here; Dunn notably suggests that "conversion-initiation" is what is meant, since it applies to all Christians.[135] Others suggest that the symbolism of dying with Christ strongly hints at water baptism,[136] or that in the wider context of Pauline usage of the term, "baptise" almost always signifies water baptism, with the baptism of the Israelites in the Red Sea in 1 Corinthians 10:10 being the sole exception.[137] Longenecker suggests that 6:3 in context is likely talking about water baptism but is not concerned primarily with the rite so much as the overall process of becoming a Christian. He terms this "Christian baptism" and urges against dividing the elements involved in conversion too finely here.[138] This seems wise – the argument Paul gives is that the believers have died with Christ and are now freed from the power of sin through resurrection with Christ; this has a

[135] Dunn, *Romans 1—8*, 311; idem., *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 145ff.

[136] Moo, *Romans,* 355. George Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 129.

[137] Schreiner, *Romans*, 306; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:601. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 203; I. Howard Marshall, "The Meaning of the Verb 'Baptize'," in Stanley Porter and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies,* JSNTSup 234 (New York, NY: Sheffield, 2002), 9.

[138] Longenecker, *Romans*, 612.

clear connection with the idea of union with Christ as mediating salvation, and suggests that baptism operates as at least symbolic of this.[139] It is not necessary to press Paul into assenting to an *ex opera operato* view of baptism in order to make sense of this passage,[140] so long as we recognise that Paul uses baptism here "as shorthand for the conversion experience as a whole."[141]

The connection of baptism with dying and rising with Christ is participatory in nature. Schnackenburg comments that the imagery suggests that,

> "[the] baptized man is drawn into the once-for-all event of salvation accomplished in the cross and resurrection of Christ, and with Christ he goes through death and the grave to resurrection."[142]

One question which illustrates this is to ask when the "death to sin" took place. Two broad possibilities present themselves: at the moment of Jesus' death on Golgotha, or at a point in the experience of the believer, which could be the moment of conversion (or baptism). The former view has some attractions and would cohere in many respects with a strong view of union with Christ which establishes a trans-empirical component of the human being as being present with Christ on the cross (see the following chapter for discussion of this idea in Paul). In this text, however, I believe that it is more likely that the "when" is a moment in the experience of the believer who has come to faith in Christ. This

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[139] Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 140.

[140] E.g. Erik Peterson, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1997), 177-179.

[141] Moo, *Romans,* 355.

[142] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul* (Transl. George Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 111.

is supported by the suggestion in the passage that the transfer has been consciously experienced.[143] If we take this broadly (as in Dunn)[144] as referring to a conception of the beginning of faith, the gift of the Spirit, water baptism, and union with Christ as constituting a process of "conversion-initiation" then the argument for a distinction between the status of the Christian and non-Christian on the basis of union with Christ is strengthened.

1 Corinthians 12:13

And by one Spirit we all were baptised into one body, whether Jew or Greek, whether slave or free, and we all were caused to imbibe one Spirit.	καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἓν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

A grammatical question for the translation of this text is whether ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι is to be understood as a locative or instrumental dative. In the former case, Paul is suggesting that the Spirit and the body are both things or realms into which the Corinthians have been baptised. In the latter, the Spirit is the means or agency through which they have been baptised into the body. The latter reading is more likely in my judgement, given the use elsewhere of ἐν with the dative to convey agency, and the difficulties in paralleling the Spirit and the body.[145] The baptism into one body is significant in Paul, and is likely a technical

[143] Moo, *Romans*, 358. See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 306-308.

[144] Dunn, *Baptism,* 145.

[145] So also Thislelton, *First Epistle*, 997; Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 288. The "in the Spirit" view is sometimes favoured by Pentecostal readings which seek to establish a second baptism of Spirit from this text. Such readings run "against

term for initiation into the church, as Conzelmann suggests: "incorporation into it takes place through baptism."[146]

Here we have a focus on unity in the church, made possible through the Spirit's action, and which implies a unity and common status among Christians. The focus in the context of the letter which has been concerned throughout with unity is not to explain the process by which this happens but to assert the unity of the church through the receipt of a common status by a common baptism.[147] The rhetorical function is important, but, as Thiselton notes, an appreciation of the rhetoric does not abnegate the presence of a Christological dimension to baptism in this passage.[148] The unity and the reversal of status which is asserted elsewhere in the chapter to have taken place is located *in Christ*, and here *in one body*. One could press this too far and assert an ontological identity between the body and the church, but this is not necessary to understand the passage. Rather, it is the metaphor of a body of which individual Christians are members (μέλη) which occupies 12:12—31. The church is identifiable with Christ as it is united with him. What can be predicated of the body of the whole is also true of each member, and so the implication is that individual Christians also have been united with Christ in baptism. Again, the

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the grain" of the text (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 998) and the presence of πάντες could present insuperable difficulties for a Pentecostal theology which suggests that the second baptism is not enjoyed by all. The Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee agrees that this is not what this text means and that a single conversion experience is intended (*First Epistle*, 605).

[146] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 212.

[147] Fee, *First Epistle*, 603.

[148] Thisleton, *First Epistle*, 996. Cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 444-446.

baptism here ought to be understood as signifying the entire process of conversion and not the rite alone, although the water baptism rite is probably part of what is intended here.[149]

Galatians 3:27

For as many as have been baptised into Christ	ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε,
have been clothed with Christ;	Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε·

In Galatians 3, after discussing the relationship of the gospel to law, and the place of faith in salvation, Paul describes the status of Christians in 3:21—4:7 as sons and heirs of the covenant.[150] The rite of baptism is one which includes all Christians, as indicated by the context in 3:26 which asserts that all the addressees are sons of God through faith. As Betz says, "included are all Christians because they were all baptized."[151] The clothing with Christ is then a consequence which follows from one's status of being a Christian and results in an equality before God of Christians in 3:28.

This equality is sometimes taken as a warrant for the negation of interreligious differences, and the assertion of an idea of the unity or brotherhood of all mankind in Paul.[152] The problems of this have been discussed

[149] Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 288-289; Schnackenburg, *Baptism,* 83; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 167-170.

[150] Cf. Schreiner, *Galatians*, 253; Burton, *Galatians,* 200.

[151] Betz, *Galatians*, 186.

[152] E.g. in Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 57.

above in chapter 2 and 3, and are well covered by Hodge.[153] In context this passage is not affirming a radical negation of all empirical values, as Burton notes:

> "That he is speaking of these distinctions from the point of view of religion is evident from his inclusion of the ineradicable distinction of sex. This passage has nothing to do directly with the merging of nationalities or the abolition of slavery."[154]

Rather Paul is concerned with establishing that *in Christ* the different groups mentioned have equal access to salvation and communion with God. The theme is union with Christ and all that is signified thereby. Baptism must therefore be read in these passages as signifying the gateway to the newness of life in Christ. Despite Betz's Lutheran sensibilities being offended by Schlier and others who seek to interpret the passage as signifying a "mystical" baptism and importing what he considers to be inappropriate "Roman Catholic sacramentalism," Betz recognises that there is an implication here of a Christological significance to baptism too.[155] It is not the rite itself which accomplishes this, but the spirit, and the coming into union which is meant by the process of conversion, initiation, and baptism, as described thusly by Bruce:

> "Repentance and faith, with baptism in water and reception of the Spirit, followed by first communion, constituted one complex experience of Christian initiation."[156]

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[153] Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons Then Heirs,* 3-4, 126, 150.
[154] Burton, *Galatians*, 206.
[155] Betz, *Galatians*, 187.
[156] F.F. Bruce, *Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 186.

Water-baptism and conversion may be conceptually distinguished, however, but the implication of Paul's thought is that they are associated together as part of the normative process of becoming a Christian, whether from a Jewish or Gentile background. As Schreiner suggests, both water-baptism and reception of the Spirit are thought of as normative components of having become a Christian, which we might term "conversion."[157] Baptism can function as synecdoche for the entire process of "conversion-initiation" and so it is not necessary to insist that the texts in which Paul suggests baptism is a necessary experience undergone by all Christians rely on an *ex opere operato* view of baptism; rather they serve to remind the Christians of a visible sacramental experience which serves as a token for the whole process of conversion.[158]

Implications for Paul's view of the non-Christian

This suggests that Paul's concept of union with Christ forms a strong differentiation between Christians and non-Christians in his view. Union with Christ is in at least two ways an idea that sets up an exclusive or particularistic attitude to non-Christians. Paul asserts the distinctiveness and exclusivity of God's saving action in Christ through the concept of union with Christ; salvation is not only the action of the living God and no other, but it happens in personal union with Christ.[159] But Paul also speaks of union with Christ in ways which

[157] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Baptism in the Epistles," in Thomas Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (eds), *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2006), 67-97.

[158] See Anthony R. Cross, "Spirit- and Water-Baptism in 1 Corinthians 12.13," in Porter and Cross (eds) *Dimensions of Baptism*, 120-148.

[159] Cf. Seifrid, "In Christ," 436.

imply an ontological reality to this union: Christians are at some level, in some aspect of the human person, distinct from non-Christians. If conversion, as Dunn suggests, means a transfer of the human being from the sphere of Adam to the realm of Christ, then there are some significant implications for Paul's understanding of non-Christians. Being a Christian entails an ontological reality of union with Christ, and is thus not reducible to confessing the right beliefs, belonging to the correct social community, or doing the right actions. Union with and participation in Christ, beyond the exchange of beliefs, doctrines and behaviours, is the difference that becoming a Christian makes, according to Paul. This union happens with conversion, and so conversion involves an ontological change at some level of the human being. Conversion is construed as a process involving repentance, faith, and the initiation into the church through baptism. Although one must theoretically acknowledge an instant point of transfer, this is not necessarily obvious experientially, and so the moment of baptism would provide this in the life of the church as a means of acknowledging someone's status as a Christian. If this is so, we must say that Paul views the Christian as ontologically different to the pre-Christian or the non-Christian. The change is effected by the action of God in transferring the human being from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ; it cannot be effected by the human subject themselves, who finds themselves in a predicament they cannot solve. He or she is now united to and participating in Christ, rather than in Adam. A transfer of being and status has taken place, as well as a transfer of religious affiliation. This certainly accounts for Paul's

dichotomous language elsewhere concerning Christians and non-Christians, and would support some of the claims made by so–called "exclusivist" theologians regarding other religions.

In Paul's thought, Christians are, almost by definition, united with, and participating in, Christ. If, as I have argued, we understand this to be making a claim about a sphere of human existence, we must say that Paul implies non-Christians are outside that sphere. Hence, non-Christians do not participate in Christ, have not died with Christ or risen with Christ, do not partake in the divine nature, do not share in Christ's righteousness. The state of being a Christian can be recognised, if provisionally, by the administering of baptism by the church, which involves an explicit confession of Christian faith, whether verbal or otherwise. Obviously this raises some pertinent questions regarding the salvation of those who practise other religions, or those who have not heard the gospel. Wider theological considerations regarding election, eschatology, human responsibility and justice must be brought into play to answer these questions in Christian theology; yet I believe Paul's concept of union with Christ has much to contribute to this discussion, at least, if we wish to regard the teaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles as in any way normative for Christian theology.

Paul and the Adam—Christ Dichotomy

Union with Christ, as we have seen, is an essential aspect of Paul's thought concerning the identity of the Christian. The corresponding category for those who are not Christians in Paul's though is Adam. Adam is the determinative figure for Paul's theology of the human person, and the theological category in which he places those human beings who are not "in Christ". This feature of Paul's anthropology is at once both *universal*, in that it is a way of talking about all humanity and every individual human, and *dichotomous* when placed against Christ as two categories or realms, into one–and only one–of which everyone falls. The anthropological challenge to the Theology of Religions can be approached via the question, What difference does being a Christian make? Indeed, for Paul, whose own conversion experience bears directly upon his thought and writing,[1] the question is perhaps better phrased as, What difference does becoming a Christian make? What is involved in the transfer from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ? Is it an exchange of one set of beliefs, doctrines, sentiments and behaviours for another? Is it a transfer of allegiance from one group to another? Or might it be an altogether deeper matter, one

[1] Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 330-332.

dealing with the very nature of the human being? An analysis of Paul's argument in Romans, and in particular his Adam/Christ language, suggests the latter.

Adam in Romans

As J.D.G. Dunn has said, the importance of Adam for Paul's theology is often understated, although "Adam is a key figure in Paul's attempt to express his understanding both of Christ and of man."[2] Adam is mentioned by name in Paul's argument in Romans 5, though his significance extends well beyond that in the letter. One of Paul's key concerns in Romans is to address Jewish/Gentile issues within the church,[3] and Adam is employed as a figure with whom both groups have equal solidarity.[4] In common with Luke in his genealogy of Jesus, and the writer of Jude, Paul undoubtedly took Adam to be a historical figure and the first human being temporally, though his employment of Adam in his theology does not dwell or depend on this. Rather, he employs Adam as a representative figure; even a "mythic" one in the sense of a figure in whom we participate.[5] Here, "mythic" is not to be understood as "not true", but to indicate both the trans-empirical manner in which the figure of Adam is deployed by Paul, and the way in which it betokens a claim about the human being at the

[2] James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1980), 101.

[3] Moo, *Romans*, 290.

[4] That the category of "Adam" includes Jews in Paul's thought is clear from the appearance of Moses in Romans 5:12–21. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 284 argues Paul is at pains to demonstrate that "Jews have not escaped the entail of Adam's disobedience by virtue of the law".

[5] Bell, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 27, 251.

very deepest level through narrative. As Hans Frei has pointed out with the opening chapters of Genesis, what we have with Adam is an ascriptive—rather than a descriptive—narrative which really means what it says, but on its own terms.[6] For Paul, the significance of Adam is not genetic or "scientific", but rather in the mysterious way humanity is represented in him and bound, with him, to the power of sin.

It is frequently noted that Paul speaks most often not of ἁμαρτίαι ("sins") plural, but of ἁμαρτία ("sin") as characterizing the human condition.[7] Sin is conceived as an ontological state, as something which

> "affects not only the sinner's actions and behaviour, but reaches into his being and attacks the centre of his person. In the [sinner's] break with God, an irrevocable offence against the very terms of his existence takes place, to live by and for God … sin is thus determinative for the human being's whole existence; and the sinner is "ungodly" not only in his evil deeds, rather, he is in a state of being comprehensively far from God and hostile towards God. It is of this state of being a sinner–and not merely of a simple misdemeanour or a failure which can be solved by the person themselves–that Paul speaks."[8]

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[6] Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: a study in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1974), 42-43, 124-126.

[7] However, "sins" do occur in the plural in Galatians 1:4, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 17; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 5:22, 24; 2 Timothy 3:6, excluding instances where Paul is quoting the OT. One ought not to push the distinctively Pauline idea of sin as an enslaving power so far as to deny that he also considers discrete acts of moral wrongdoing to be "sins". Gathercole demonstrates this and helpfully points out instances of this with other terminology, such as "transgression" (Gathercole, *Where is Boasting?,* 49).

[8] Höfius, ""Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen" als Thema biblischer Theologie," 123 (my translation).

This state characterizes both Jew and Gentile, as Paul demonstrates in Romans 1:18—3:20, since all alike are under the power of sin (3:9). This "cosmic" perspective on sin relates directly to Paul's use of Adam in Romans.[9]

The idea of Adam as a representative of all humanity is one found in the Jewish tradition.[10] Ecclesiastes 7:29 (Hebrew) and Hosea 6:7 make reference to Adam as the first or paradigmatic sinner.[11] The representative motif is developed and elaborated in literature from the Second Temple period and after: for example, the pseudepigraphal author of 4 Ezra (7:118, transl. Charlesworth, 1983) laments: "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants."

Here the author is reflecting on the enormity of sin in the context of the destruction of the Second Temple, and comes to similar conclusions to Paul regarding the sin of Adam as having radical consequences for humanity after

[9] Gaventa, "The Cosmic Power of Sin," 229.

[10] Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 629.

[11] While Barr is quite correct that the Genesis account of Adam as found in the Hebrew Bible is not, on its own, so starkly pessimistic as Paul, and that the radicalisation of sin and representative or participative nature of Adam is found more in Hellenistic Jewish texts (James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (London: SCM, 1992),), this Hellenistic "anthropological pessimism" is clearly a thought world in which Paul operates (Stephen Westerholm, "Paul's Anthropological 'Pessimism' in its Jewish Context," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (eds J. M. G. Barclay and S. Gathercole; London: T&T Clark, 2006)) and, though his interpreting the Hebrew Bible in the light of the Christ event, understands Adam as associated with sin, death, and human incapacity. In other words, Paul clearly believes in a "Fall" even if one might not reach this conclusion from the Hebrew Bible alone.

him.[12] Stephen Westerholm has demonstrated similar radicalisation of the Genesis Adam material to explain a "pessimistic" anthropology in (some) sectarian Judaism of Paul's time.[13] Anthony Thiselton also demonstrates that this representative view of Adam is found in some Hellenistic Wisdom texts and Philo.[14] One can point to the "re-writing" of the Adam and Eve material in *Jubilees* as reflecting a belief in Adam as the primordial sinner and origin of sin (though in the Noah testament in *Jubilees* this is seen as radicalised and spread to all humanity via the Watchers story).[15] Paul's employment of Adam in his argument in Romans is as a counterpoint to Christ, as also in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45—49,[16] and is thus more elaborate than those known to us from surviving Second Temple texts.[17] Paul invests Adam with a deeper significance as the

[12] Nevertheless, there seems to have been some diversity in the way Adam is interpreted, with the author of 2 Baruch putting forwards the somewhat incompatible idea that "each of us has been the Adam of his own soul" (54:19, transl. Charlesworth, 1983; cf. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism,* 53).

[13] Westerholm, *Divine and Human Agency*, 71ff, 93

[14] Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: a commentary on the Greek text*, 1282.

[15] Cf. Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology, and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 34, 57-58.

[16] James D.G. Dunn, "1 Corinthians 15.45 - Last Adam, Life-giving Spirit," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of C.F.D Moule* (eds B. Lindars and S. Smalley; Cambridge: CUP, 1973), 127ff; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1281-1283

[17] N. T. Wright argues that there is an established motif of Israel's vocation to be the "true Adam" in Second Temple literature (Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 262–268), which Paul then presumably applies to Christ as the "true Israel". Whether or not the development of Paul's Christology moved from Adam to Christ directly, or Adam via Israel to Christ, it seems to be the former language he employs most often in his references to Adam.

(negative) counterpoint to Christ.[18] Adam and Christ form one of Paul's antitheses: each associated respectively with death, sin, and judgement, and life, freedom, and salvation.[19]

Romans 1:18–23

The idea of Adam playing a role in Paul's description of human wickedness in Romans 1 is perhaps the most debateable of the Adam allusions in Romans. Morna D. Hooker, among others, has argued there is a "remarkable parallelism" between the language in 1:18—23, and Genesis 1.[20] Dunn also sees an "obviously deliberate echo of the Adam narratives" here,[21] whereby the frustration of the "thinking" (διαλογισμός) and "darkening" of the heart (καρδία) in 1:21 is

[18] Fitzmyer, who is loath to admit allusion to Adam outside of Romans 5:12—21, thinks Paul invented the doctrine of incorporation into Adam, arguing it "seems to appear for the first time" in 1 Corinthians 15 (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 272). While Paul clearly assigns a deeper–as I shall argue, ontological–significance to Adam than other Second Temple writers, this is clearly building upon an understanding of Genesis he gained from his Jewish background.

[19] Otfried Höfius, "Der Mensch im Schatten Adams. Romer 7,7-25a," in *Paulusstudien I I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 65-66

[20] Morna D. Hooker, "Adam in Romans I," *NTS* 6 (1960): 297; idem., *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 77-78; Niels Hyldahl, "A Reminiscence of the Old Testament at Romans i.23," *NTS* 2 (1956): 285-288. Fitzmyer counters that Genesis 1 and 2—3 are separate narratives (though presumably not for pre-Wellhausen Paul) and that alleged echoes of Adam in Romans 1:18—23 are "non-existent" (Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 274). However, the use of γινώσκω in Romans 1:19ff. may be a verbal allusion to the Septuagint of Genesis 3; additionally, allusion and echo is not limited to verbal parallel, but can also encompass semantic domain and concept (cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 20-31, 199n.75). Dunn suggests it is "the description of human aspiration for greater knowledge and a position of high regard which actually results in a decline into disadvantage and a position of low regard" which is modelled on and alludes to Adam (Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 60).

[21] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 53; Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 84.

understood to parallel the curse of Adam in Genesis.[22] The knowledge of God in Romans 1:18 is thus one that is available to Adam's "pristine mind" and one in which humanity participates in some manner.[23] However, this participation is also a participation in the frustration of Adam's mind due to sin, with the result that humanity now is at an epistemically disadvantaged position when it comes to knowledge of God.[24]

However, not all the details of Romans 1 parallel Adam. In verses 24ff. the Gentiles seem to be in view. For example, Paul's reference to homosexuality and idol-worship is unrelated to the story of Adam (although Wedderburn examines the suggestion idolatry is associated with Adam's fall in Second Temple Jewish thought, he concludes this is unlikely),[25] but very similar to the denouncement of Gentile behaviour found in Wisdom 11—15; if Adam's transgression and condition are in mind in this passage, it is likely mixed with humanity's

[22] The use of these terms seems to indicate the totality of the human being, but dwelling particularly on the corruption of the intellectual aspect of the human person by sin; the "noetic" effect of sin in obscuring true knowledge of God–so Cranfield: "Paul uses καρδία to denote a man's inward, hidden self as a thinking, willing and feeling subject" (Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:118). This ambiguity to human knowledge (Stephen K. Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship: A New Model," *Christian Scholars' Review* 28 (1999); see also Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor 2:6–16," *WTJ* 57, no. 103-124 (1995) on 1 Corinthians 2:6—16) should discourage the appeal to Romans 1:18 as a proof-text for "natural theology" or the *a priori* validity of non-Christian religious traditions.

[23] Hooker, "Adam in Romans I," 300.

[24] Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 110; see also Richard Alan Young, "The Knowledge of God in Romans 1:18-23: Exegetical and Theological Reflections," *JETS* 43, no. 4 (2000).

[25] A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Studia Biblica 1978* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1980), 313-319.

condition in general: a case of Paul using the concept and semantic range of Genesis' Adam story without precise verbal allusion. The fact that there is this mixing and compounding of the fall of Adam and the fallenness of humanity in Paul's language here supports the hypothesis that Paul views humanity in solidarity with Adam.[26]

Certainly, Paul's indictment of the Gentiles in this passage is universal, and encompasses not only their acts of idolatry, and immorality, but asserts that these derive from a corruption of the mind and heart; that is, an ontological "fallenness" to the whole human being under the power of sin, which he links explicitly to Adam in 5:12.

Romans 5:12–21

In Romans 5, Adam is explicitly described by Paul as a τύπος ('type') of Christ (5:14); though this comparison is not a strict equivalence, and in fact Adam serves largely as a negative image.[27] My understanding of the progression of Paul's argument here is as follows: Sin, envisaged as a cosmic power, entered the world through Adam's transgression, and death as a consequence of that, with the result that all of humanity following Adam exist under the power of sin and death: to borrow a phrase from Otfried Höfius' study of Romans 7, "in the shadow of Adam".[28] Sin exists before the Law and the establishment of Israel, and is thus a feature of all human existence. Adam is a type of Christ, but the

[26] Cf. Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 24-25; Wedderburn, 418.
[27] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:273; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 296-298.
[28] Höfius, "Der Mensch im Schatten Adams," 104ff.

negative image of him: their achievements contrast, for Adam's transgression is not like the χάρισμα ("gift", or "grace") offered by Christ. The result of the one is death and condemnation; that of the other is grace, righteousness, and the covering of many transgressions.[29]

The precise understanding of how Adam's transgression causes sin and death to spread to all is controversial, and has been debated since the time of the early church.[30] Pelagius insisted people sin by following Adam's example; however, Paul's use of Adam here would scarcely seem to allow that view: why parallel Adam with Christ in this way if there is no especial significance to Adam? Rather, there seems to be a way by which, in Paul's thought, Adam's transgression has an effect on all human beings. Cranfield suggests, and may well be right, that what is inherited from Adam is not shared guilt in his discrete transgression, but a sinful nature or disposition, so that all in Adam are under the power and influence of sin, and inevitably commit transgressions themselves.[31] Thus, it is an ontological condition that is inherited from Adam. I would, however, say that the language and imagery here is that of *participation* in Adam, just as much as the clearly participatory language used to describe

[29] Peter J. Leithart, "Adam, Moses, And Jesus: A Reading Of Romans 5:12-14," *Calvin Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (2008).

[30] A helpful summary of patristic views on this is presented in R.A. Greer, "Sinned We All in Adam's Fall?," in *The Social World of the First Christians: essays in honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (eds L. M. White and O. L. Yarbrough; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 382-94. The exegetical issues involved are covered comprehensively in S. L. Johnson, Jr., "Romans 5:12–An Exercise in Exegesis and Theology," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (eds R. N. Longenecker and R. C. Tenney; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), 298-316.

[31] Cranfield, *Romans* 1:274-281; Höfius, "Der Mensch im Schatten Adams," 82.

Christ in Romans 6. In some sense human beings are seen to participate in Adam's transgression and its associated consequences, in the same way as Paul considers Christians to participate in Christ's death: they "have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20, cf. Romans 6:8).

Romans 7:7–13

Adam also seems to play a role in Paul's argument in Romans 7. There are well-rehearsed debates over the identity of the "I" (ἐγώ) in 7:7—25, which I cannot cover in detail here.[32] Given Paul's language in the preceding chapter concerning the Christian being "freed from sin and alive to God" (6:22) and of slavery to sin being a thing of the past (6:17, 20 uses ἦτε, the imperfect of εἰμί, connoting a continual state of slavery to sin in the past)[33] and the state of freedom described in Romans 8 strongly suggests that Paul cannot be describing either his present experience, or the Christian experience in general in 7:7–25.[34] In verses 7—13, however, Adam is a strong candidate for the "I". The description

[32] On the history of interpretation, see Wilckens, 2.101-117, and Mark Reasoner, *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 67-84.

[33] cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 548.

[34] Though the view that Romans 7:7—25 cannot refer to the Christian is sometimes accused of representing an "over-realized eschatology" (Barrett, *Romans*, 137-144) and thus an unreasonably optimistic view of the Christian experience (Cranfield, *Romans* 1:342, 1:347), it must be noted both that Romans 8:10–13, 18–23, 34–36 describes a Christian existence involving suffering and death, awaiting eschatological vindication, and thus giving a full expression of Paul's "now-and-not-yet" schema; and that Paul's language in *both* chapters 7 and 8 seems to be describing theological and ontological realities for the human being in union with Adam or Christ respectively, and not necessarily conscious experience. Even if Paul is primarily describing his pre-Christian experience in 7:7ff. we have to reckon with the lack of troubled conscience he seemed to have felt as a Pharisee (cf. Philippians 3:6).

of the "I" in 7:7—13 as being once "alive" χωρὶς νόμου ("apart from," or "without the law") has more affinity with Adam than with any other individual.[35] Paul may be alluding deliberately to the Genesis 3 narrative of Adam's transgression: There was once a time when Adam was without sin, and, having been deceived (ἐξαπατάω),[36] sinned, and "died". For Paul, as we have seen in Romans 5, this is the origin of sin and death in the world, and so, strictly speaking, 7:9 can only refer to Adam. As Ernst Käsemann says of the "I" of 7:7—13, "[there] is nothing in our passage which does not fit Adam, and everything fits Adam alone".[37]

In 7:14ff. more than Adam–most likely the personified general state of the human being under sin–may be in view, but Adam certainly fits the description of one who was once alive and without the law, but who, through the provocation of the commandment became enslaved to sin, death and the law. It is hard to make sense of the passage if *only* the Adam of Genesis 2—3 is meant

[35] Schreiner, *Romans*, 361 objects that Adam cannot be meant here as Paul describes a commandment of the Decalogue, which Adam could not have encountered (also Moo, *Romans*, 412). However, Paul may use νόμος here not to mean "Law" in the specific sense of the Decalogue or Mitzvot, but in a more general sense of God's commandment–specifically the Paradise commandment which Adam in fact breaks. Höfius argues persuasively for this (Höfius, "Der Mensch im Schatten Adams," 129, 133-35).

[36] On balance this is likely to be a direct verbal allusion to Genesis 3:13. The Septuagint of Genesis 3:13 has ἀπατάω, from which ἐξαπατάω is derived. The verb ἐξαπατάω is rare in the New Testament, occurring only in the Pauline corpus, and explicitly refers to the Genesis 3 narrative in 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:13 (where ἀπατάω is used of Adam and the more intense ἐξαπατάω of Eve!).

[37] Ernst Käsemann, *A Commentary on Romans* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 196; cf. Preston Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine Agency and Human Salvation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 103; Wilckens, *Römer,* 2.79.

throughout, however, especially given Paul's use of "I" to describe Adam, who he has referred to in the third-person a few paragraphs ago. The depiction of a historical or literary character in the first-person, known as *prosopoiia*, is a standard feature of Graeco-Roman rhetoric,[38] and could be employed here to stress the identification of Adam with the "I" Paul writes of here, as Ben Witherington has suggested.[39] I suggest that Paul is using the "I" to refer to the experience of humanity in general under sin, who are jointly and severally incorporated into Adam. He is thus describing an ontological state of those who are not united to Christ, rather than an historically contingent condition of first-century "pagans". Sin is, in this passage and for Paul, an enslaving power, and the implications for a theological anthropology of the human being under its power are extensive. Paul's argument in the preceding two chapters has entailed that the human being is either associated with Adam or Christ. To borrow the phrasing of 1 Corinthians 15, the human being is either "in Adam" (ἐν Ἀδὰμ) or "in Christ" (ἐν Χριστῷ).

This requires more precision, however. If statements such as "I was once alive apart from the law" strictly speaking apply to Adam alone, how then can the "I" represent humanity in Adam? The difficulty can be resolved if the

[38] In which Paul was undoubtedly trained, as demonstrated by Stanley Kent Stowers, *A rereading of Romans: justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1994).

[39] Ben Witherington, III, ""But I Would Rather Persuade"...: The Necessity of Understanding Rhetoric for Understanding the Text and Context of the New Testament" (paper presented at Society of Biblical Literature. Chicago, IL, 16 November, 2012).

passage is read in the light of Paul's use of participative language in his Adam-Christ typology. This is recognised in what is often called "Federal headship" in Reformed theology—the idea that Adam's fall involved a participation of the entire human race, with Adam as their representative head—although I argue Paul goes beyond it in asserting an ontological and anthropological reality to the notion of participation in Adam. Here, perhaps the "I" is to be understood as Adamic humanity, with the implication that the participation of the human being in Adam is not only legal, but has some ontological basis; just as union with Christ for the Christian is no "legal fiction" but involves a genuine participation (cf. Romans 6:5—11) so too is the non–Christian united to Adam in sin and death. Thus, it is objectively possible for this "I" to say "I died" in Adam's transgression (7:10). The condition which follows, for all human beings in Adam, is one characterized by bondage to sin and incapacity to know or relate properly to God. Furthermore, this is how Paul thinks of all non-Christians, and so the relevant consideration for him is not the ethics taught by a particular tradition, but a mission-oriented concern that God effects the conversion of non-Christians, transferring them from the realm of Adam to Christ.

Some Theological Implications

This participative, "mythic" use of Adam in Paul's theology to describe human beings has a number of implications for a Theology of Religions following Paul. If we accept Paul's ideas of union with Adam or Christ, we must see these statements as making a far stronger claim than being merely shorthand labels for religious affiliation. It is my contention that Adam provides

the central theological category into which non-Christians fall in Paul's thought. There is much here that is mysterious and needs integration into a holistic view of Paul's theology. However we ought not to minimize the significance of Paul's dichotomy here by viewing it as simply metaphor rather than a claim about the human person at the ontological level. To say someone is "in Adam", or "in Christ" is a claim with a greater ontological significance than we might attach to calling them "non-Christian" or "Christian" in everyday language. Paul really does view the actions and fate of Adam as having direct consequences on the very nature of human beings far removed from him in space and time, in the same way that he views Christians as having really been present in Christ's death and resurrection. An aspect of the human being is therefore deeply bound up with either Adam or Christ. This aspect is clearly a non-material and non- or sub-conscious facet of the human being; what Christian theology has traditionally termed the *soul.* Furthermore, Paul sees this as a genuine dichotomy of belonging to Adam or, and only or, Christ; there is no third option here. His scheme may be summarized fairly as:

> "Two great figures stand at the entrances to two worlds: Adam stands at the gate of the old world, Jesus at the gate of the new. Adam's first sin inaugurated the old age and brought sin, death, and condemnation. Now in Jesus a new day of righteousness, life and justification has come (Romans 5:12—21). If we are "in Adam," we are part of the old age and under its sway. But if we are "in Christ," we are part of the age to come and can already experience God's life-giving power."[40] (

[40] Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 189.

Paul speaks, too, of conversion meaning a transfer of the human being from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ. *This* is, beyond the exchange of beliefs, doctrines and behaviours, the difference that becoming a Christian makes, according to Paul. Conversion involves an ontological change at some level of the human being, and if this is so, we must say that Paul views the Christian as ontologically different to the pre-Christian or the non-Christian. The change is effected by the action of God in transferring the human being from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ; it cannot be effected by the human subject themselves, who finds themselves in a predicament they cannot solve.[41] He or she is now united to and participating in Christ, rather than in Adam. A transfer of being and status has taken place, as well as a transfer of religious affiliation. Furthermore, there is a definitiveness to the identity of those united to Christ, in that Paul thinks there is an objectiveness to being in Christ beyond one's subjective choice of affiliation or non-affiliation, although we must note that whether a given person claiming to be a Christian is united to Christ would be knowable definitively only to God. This certainly accounts for Paul's dichotomous language elsewhere concerning Christians and non-Christians, and would support some of the claims made by so-called "exclusivist" theologians.[42]

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[41] This last phrase is borrowed from Judith Butler, *Giving an account of oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 103, who uses it in a different context to describe the human condition.

[42] The focus on conversion, however, would add support to a strongly "missionary" approach which does not write off non-Christians, but seeks their conversion to Christ. Chung, "Other Religions," 356-357 urges what he calls a

As Seifrid points out, Paul's use of Adam in Romans also "clarifies Abraham's place."[43] That is, Paul demonstrates that non–Christian Jew and Gentile alike belong to the realm of Adam, and that the real inheritors of Abraham's blessing are those–both Jew and Gentile–whom God has united with Christ.[44] Both Christ and Adam take priority over Abraham (and Moses) here; with the corollary for Christians engaged in inter–faith dialogue that it is perhaps not useful to develop a category of the "Abrahamic religions" over against e.g. Buddhism or Hinduism. It would also suggest an important qualification of exclusivist approaches which rely solely upon the observation of differences in beliefs between Christians and non-Christians. These kind of "worldview" approaches, which identify Christianity as one "worldview" or "set of presuppositions" and then seek to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity

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"missional perspective" and objects to "exclusivism" when it is "separatist", though he affirms the uniqueness and finality of Christ and refuses to endorse even evangelical "inclusivism" (370-371). This is an example of one of the major faults of the threefold typology, in that few who affirm core "exclusivist" beliefs wish to describe themselves as "exclusivist" as the terminology implies a certain separatism or lack of interest in inter-religious dialogue.

[43] Seifrid, "Romans," 692

[44] For Paul this does not erase the history of God's dealings with Israel (Romans 9:4—5; 15:4, 8). Paul seems to be working with the idea, found also in the Hebrew Bible, of the holy "remnant" (λεῖμμα) within (ethnic) Israel (11:5, 7b) whom he would presumably see as in some way united with Christ, whereas unbelieving/apostate Israel is not (Schreiner shows that Paul's anguish in 9:1—5 can only be explained by his understanding that "many of his [Jewish] contemporaries are unsaved", *Romans,* 485; cf. Käsemann, *Romans,* 301). Paul never states this explicitly, but his identification of Jesus with the God of Israel in his use of the *shema* formula in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and as having being present with Moses in 1 Corinthians 10:4 leads me to believe his solution to the question of how faithful Israelites who lived before Jesus were saved would be Christological.

over the others,[45] fail to capture Paul's fundamental claim that the dichotomy has an objective, ontological aspect to it. One is in the realm of Adam, or Christ, in an objective sense and not solely within one's own interior thought life. Furthermore we might ask whether in fact there are many Christian worldviews, perhaps as many as there are Christians, since so many presuppositions vary by culture and theological tradition. Is an analysis of differences in belief the most appropriate approach to use when discussing the *sui generis* difference between being a Christian and not? Beliefs are part of it, sure, but Christian creeds tend to underdetermine cultural presuppositions. As acknowledged by Sire and other proponents of worldview approaches, worldviews are fuzzy round the edges,[46] unlike the sharp distinction on the ontological level of being in Christ or in Adam.

Paul's theological anthropology here poses a strong challenge to the Theology of Religions debate—if he is correctly understood as claiming that becoming a Christian involves an ontological change in the human being; that Christians and non-Christians are distinct at some level[47]—then a Pauline Theology of Religion must give due account of this, and will pose challenging questions for the wider debate. Paul alleges differences between Christians and

[45] E.g. James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 19.

[46] Cf. Mark Pickett, "Review Article: 'For Their Rock is Not as Our Rock' " *Foundations* 67 (2014).

[47] I do not think Paul claims that this is precisely knowable from any epistemological position other than God's; that is, it is not possible for us to say with certainty whether a specific person is genuinely united with Christ.

non-Christians at a deep level of the human person. Furthermore, if being in Adam entails a corruption of the intellect, (true) knowledge of God may in fact be inaccessible outside of the gospel, and so claims about God and reality bound to a non-Christian religion cannot be uncritically affirmed by Christian theologians.

Paul's theological anthropology suggests the concept of "union with Christ" is at least as significant as the subject's faith in Christ, which undermines the approaches which are solely focused on the subject's belief. If being 'in Christ' means more than beliefs, behaviours, and affiliation, is it separable from these, or are these necessary manifestations of a transfer from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ? I would tentatively suggest Paul's theology implies the latter. In any case, the ontological predicament human beings are said to be in without Christ, exemplified by the category of Adam, suggests that phenomenological approaches to the Theology of Religions are not capable of giving a full account of religious identity and conversion, and nothing short of a theological approach is sufficient for articulating a Christian understanding of those who belong to other faith traditions. Paul views those who are not "in Christ" as "in Adam", and we must presume from the reference to Moses in 5:14 along with his statements about non-Christian Jews examined earlier that this includes both Jew and Gentile who do not believe in Christ. Furthermore, Paul's contrast between Christian and non-Christian with his Adam—Christ dichotomy is of a nature which would seem to rule out many pluralist and inclusivist approaches.

Is an idol anything? A study in 1 Corinthians 8—10

Paul's most extensive direct treatment of the religion(s) and religious practices of the Gentiles is found in 1 Corinthians 8—10, responding to concerns from the Corinthian church regarding idols and the eating of "food sacrificed to idols" (εἰδωλόθυτον).[1] In contrast to Paul's discussion surrounding food and the social practices around eating in Galatians 2:11—13 where the issue likely revolves around Jewish dietary laws,[2] the issue in 1 Corinthians 8—10 involves the religious practices of pagan religious culture. Idols, the cults associated with them, and the ritual practices surrounding them, were an everyday issue for Paul's converts in Corinth, and so it is no surprise that they come up in the (no longer extant) letter they wrote to Paul, to which he responds here (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9—11). The Christians in Corinth were almost certainly from a predominantly Gentile pagan background, given Paul's repeated references to their former way of life as characterized by idolatry (6:10ff., 8:7, 12:2) and an approach to sexual ethics which

[1] τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον means literally "the things sacrified to idols", but as the context in 1 Corinthians makes clear, it refers specifically to food, and likely, meat which has been ritually offered to idols. Cf BDAG, "εἰδωλόθυτος", 280. The terminology is inherently that of an outsider (Jewish or Christian); a pagan would term such food τὸ ἱερόθυτον ("the things devoted to a divinity" [BDAG, "ἱερόθυτος", 470]), as in Paul's voicing of a hypothetical pagan's statement in 1 Cor 10:28.

[2] See James D.G. Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11–18)," *JSNT* 18 (1983).

seems uncharacteristic of diaspora Judaism.[3] Theological concerns regarding idols were not merely theoretical, but affected diet, commerce, and social interaction. Paul's nuanced argument in 1 Corinthians regarding idols and associated Greek and Roman religious practices does not contradict the assertion that "an idol is nothing", yet urges Christians to flee from these idols, for the sake of the "weaker brother" and because idolatry involves participation with demons. These issues, and the precise nature of Paul's association of idols and the demonic, provide particularly important material for an understanding of a Pauline approach to non-Christian religions.

The issues the Corinthians present to Paul around food sacrificed to idols involve both eating food—likely to be meat—which has been purchased in the market and which has its origin in sacrificial ritual, and participation in feasts or ritual meals held in pagan temples. Some features of the city and its culture in Paul's day, particularly as pertaining to religious observance, are relevant to our consideration of the details of his argument in the letter.

Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10

In 1 Corinthians 8—10 Paul deals with a number of questions raised by the Corinthians surrounding idols and related practices.[4] The phrase Περὶ δὲ in 8:1 ("Now concerning…"), as in 7:1, introduces a reply to a question asked by the

[3] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 4 n. 12.

[4] Wolfgang Schrage, *Der Erste Brief an die Korinther* (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar; 4 vols.; Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1991-2001), 2:212-215; W. L. Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (SBL Dissertation Series 68; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 20.

church in Corinth. The issue at hand is εἰδωλόθυτον and associated practices. I suggest that Paul's argument is structured along the following lines:

8:1—3	The application of knowledge is to be shaped by love.
8:4—6	There is only one God, and so an idol has no real existence.
8:7—13	The exercise of a Christian's liberty of conscience is to be moderated for the sake of other believers.
9:1—27	Paul provides examples of this from his own conduct.
10:1—5	Israel in the time of Moses worshipped the one true God, but was led astray into idolatrous practices.
10:6—13	The church in Corinth ought to learn from this history not to mimic this indulgence of idolatrous practices.
10:14—17	Instead they are to flee from idolatry and participate instead in Christ.
10:18—22	The reason for this is that idolatry is the service of demons.
10:23—11:1	Paul deals with some specific implications, including meat bought in the marketplace and dinner invitations.

This passage might be considered to contain a lengthy digression from the issue of idolatry and idol-meat, with the issue left at 8:13 and picked up again at 10:12 (or 10:6), but the material in 9:1—10:11 forms an appeal to two examples—Paul's ministry, and the history of Israel—which are part of Paul's argument

against idolatry. The rhetorical coherence of the passage as it stands and the use of common motifs mitigate against the view of some that these digressions form part of a separate letter.[5] Rather 8:1—11:1 forms a unit within the letter responding to questions about idolatry and idol-food. It is generally recognised that Paul quotes and responds to some statements from the Corinthians (often viewed as 'slogans') in 8:1, 4; 10:23, as also in 6:12.[6] Assuming that the phrases, introduced by οἴδαμεν ὅτι... (we know that...)—πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν ("we all have knowledge") in 8:1, and οὐδὲν εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμοῳ ("there is no idol in the world"; ESV: "an idol has no real existence") and οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ("there is no God but one") in 8:4—are quotations of the Corinthians' letter to Paul, it seems as if the issue posed by the Corinthians is that of whether or not there is any real harm in continuing to participate in aspects of pagan religion, since the gods represented by the idols were not, in fact, real. Thus the "strong"[7] Corinthian position would be along the lines: if there is, in reality, only one God, then knowing that fact, what reason would a Christian have to avoid eating food offered to idols, or participating in pagan religious practices?

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[5] See Barrett, *First Epistle,* 219; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 446-7.

[6] Barrett, *First Epistle*, 144; Moffatt, *First Epistle,* 69, 104; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 461, 617-621.

[7] Paul contrasts "strong" (ἰσχυρός) and "weak" (ἀσθενής) in 1:27 and 4:10 (cf. 1:25) and, while he does not use the term "strong" in chapter 8, it seems reasonable to assume the perspective opposed to the "weak" position can be termed that of the "strong". The use of the comparative form of ἰσχυρός in 10:22 supports this inference. Cf. Alex T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* (JSNTSup 176; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 16.

Paul strongly discourages such action, giving several reasons. His argument in 8:1—3 is that the "knowledge" of some in Corinth which forms part of their rationale for the permissibility of eating in temples or otherwise engaging in pagan religious practices needs to be applied in a manner characterised by love (ἀγάπη). It is important to note that Paul uses the term "knowledge" because the Corinthians have written to him using this term; and he may be using it with a degree of irony.[8] As we shall see, he does not endorse the conclusions of those who claim to possess "knowledge". He argues that it "puffs up" (φυσιόω)—probably 'makes one proud'—a term which he has already used in criticism of the Corinthians' partisanship in 4:6 and their flaunting of their tolerance of sexual immorality in 5:2. In 8:4—6, Paul responds to the Corinthians' premise that "an idol is nothing" and there is only one God. Paul agrees that there is only one God, and makes a significant claim by identifying Jesus with this God,[9] but does not think that "an idol is nothing" is the final word on the matter. Rather, he makes the statement that there *are* many gods and many lords (εἰσὶν θεοὶ

[8] On irony in Paul, see Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1988), 87; Glenn Holland, "Paul's Use of Irony as a Rhetorical Technique," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture* (eds S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; vol. 146 of *JSNTSup*; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

[9] Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 39: "He is identifying Jesus as the 'Lord' whom the *Shema'* affirms to be one. Thus, in Paul's quite unprecedented reformulation of the *Shema'*, the unique identity of the one God consists of the one God, the Father, and the one Lord, his Messiah"; Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: an exegetical-theological study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 90-91.

πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί).[10] Here Paul is likely talking on the level of "the social phenomenon" by which these were called gods by (some) human beings, but by making reference to these gods being "either in heaven or on earth" (εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς) Paul makes it clear that he does not regard the gods as non-existent.[11] The fact that they are only "so-called gods" (λεγόμενοι θεοὶ) is a dismissal by Paul of the idea that the "gods" are to be considered divine in the same sense as the true God, who is the creator (8:6) and not a contingent, created being.[12] The existence or otherwise of the "gods" is an important issue and one which will be discussed below. Either way, Paul does insist that the social phenomenon that the pagans do actually believe in the gods cannot be ignored in the discussion simply because of the assertion of monotheism. In addition, the Corinthians are told they ought to consider the exclusive nature of devotion to Jesus (8:6).

[10] I do not agree with Richard Liong-Seng Phua, *Idolatry and Authority: A Study of 1 Corinthians 8.1—11.1 in the Light of the Jewish Diaspora* (LNTS 299; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 145 that Paul endorses the view of the "strong" on this point, nor with Moffatt's dismissal of the idea that the idols had any existence as "semi-superstitious" (*First Epistle,* 110) which constitutes a value judgement that assumes the conclusion it hopes to demonstrate. See Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 142-3, who sees Paul's argument as implicitly relying not on the denial of the existence of pagan gods, but on opposing them while denying their power, and Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 633, who does not go so far as Conzelmann but sees the problems with a reading which has Paul simply endorse the "idol is nothing" view.

[11] So Mo Rody, "The Relationship Between Powers of Evil and Idols in 1Corinthians 8:4—5 and 10:18—22 in the context of the Pauline Corpus and Early Judaism" (University of Aberdeen, 2008) 229; Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 2:236-245.

[12] See below on the existence of the "gods".

In 8: 7—13 Paul argues that the "right" (ἐξουσία)[13] that the 'strong' (implicitly, though this term is not used) think they possess to eat idol-food ought not to be exercised. It is possible Paul concedes such a "right" may exist in theory, but, as I shall argue below, I take Paul to be building a case against eating idol-food entirely. If this is the case, then he uses it with a certain irony. In chapter 9 Paul uses his own example of renunciation of that to which he is entitled as an apostle to demonstrate the principle.[14]

In 10:1—13 Paul develops an analogy based upon the people of Israel at the time of the exodus. As Fee notes, Paul "emphasizes … the Corinthians' continuity with what God had done in the past" by referring to Israel with the term "our fathers" (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν).[15] The implication of this and other allusions and citations to the Old Testament in the Corinthian correspondence, is that, despite being a predominantly Gentile-background church, the Corinthians have a reasonable degree of familiarity with the story of Israel, and identify themselves as in some manner now included in that story as Christians. The use

[13] The ESV and NIV opt for "right" here, whereas the NRSV has "liberty." Thiselton renders it "right to choose" and regards the phrase as among the Corinthian "catchphrases" and so places it within quotation marks (*First Epistle*, 649). It seems plausible that ἐξουσία would form part of the Corinthians' letter to Paul given their use of the slogan Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, cited in 6:12 and 10:23.

[14] The fact that Paul would be entitled to that which he has foregone could count against the view I take of the Corinthians' supposed "right" to eat idol-food, but I do not think this is something which Paul intends. The rhetorical move of 9:1—7 is not concerned with finding a parallel contentious issue in Paul's praxis, but rather to show that, even if we were to concede a certain "right" of the Corinthian "strong", the principle of love would mean that they ought to forego this putative right.

[15] Gordon D. Fee, *First Epistle,* 444

of the people of Israel as a warning example is thus particularly apposite, for just as Israel had experienced divine grace and redemption (10:1 is certainly an allusion to the Red Sea crossing),[16] so too the Corinthians have experienced God's grace and redemption from slavery to sin (10:1—4; cf. 5:7—8). The fall into idolatry (probably the reference is to the golden calf, given the allusion in 10:7—8 to Exodus 32:6, although Paul may also in mind Numbers 11) took place despite this redemption, with severe consequences, and Paul warns the Corinthians that they, too, ought to flee from idolatry (10:14) which presents a spiritual danger to them. They are to participate in Christ, through the participation in the meal of bread and wine, rather than in feasts in honour of idols.

Paul warns the Corinthians that the idols are not harmless, but ultimately represent demonic powers in 10:18—22. This claim is extremely significant for a Pauline theology of religion, and draws upon the position expressed in Deuteronomy 32 which alleges the "other" gods are not truly gods, but rather demonic beings. In 10:23—11:1 Paul deals with the issues of eating in a meal at a pagan's home, and of eating meat of uncertain origin found in the marketplace. Here Paul's argument is more casuistic and nuanced, and he seems to offer a less forceful position than his condemnation of eating in idol temples or associated dining rooms.

[16] Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 724; Fee, *Thessalonians*, 445; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 450.

The passage as a whole forms a coherent response to the question or issue posed by the Corinthians about eating idol-food, and, more broadly idolatry and participation in the cultic activity of pagan religion. Paul seems to take the position that Christians ought not to participate in anything which would be idolatrous, and for him, this includes eating in a cultic setting, or indeed eating something one has been informed has been ritually offered to a pagan god (10:28). Paul's rationale includes the exclusive nature of devotion to Christ, the need to avoid ambiguity which could damage other Christians' faith, and also the charge that the pagan religions serve demonic powers, with whom Christians are forbidden to associate.

Eating in temple dining-rooms

Paul's converts in Roman Corinth lived indeed in a world of "many gods, and many lords" (8:5). The religious thought-world dominant in Corinth, while highly pluriform, involved the major gods thought to dwell upon Mount Olympus, as well as a whole retinue of minor and local gods as well as spirits, nymphs, and *daimones*.[17] Corinth, a significant port city occupying the strategic isthmus between the Aegean and Ionian seas, had been re-established as a Roman colony city in 44 BC, having previously been left abandoned following its destruction in the Achaean War (circa 146 BC). No doubt as a consequence of its

[17] Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 6-7. In the New Testament, the term δαιμονίον is used in a negative sense, associated with evil, whereas the usage in pagan literature is more neutral, with good and evil *daimones*.

geographically strategic location, the city in Paul's day was a place of extensive trade and commerce, and was correspondingly one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the Mediterranean.[18] Greek, Roman, and Egyptian temples and religious sites were present, as well as a Jewish community of some size.[19] Strabo's *Geography*, completed sometime between 7 BC and 23 AD, a generation before Paul writes, depicts Corinth as a wealthy city notable for its temple prostitution:

> τό τε τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερὸν οὕτω πλούσιον ὑπῆρξεν, ὥστε πλείους ἢ χιλίας ἱεροδούλους ἐκέκτητο ἑταίρας, ἃς ἀνετίθεσαν τῇ θεῷ καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες.
>
> "And the temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it owned more than a thousand temple-slaves, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess."[20]

N.T. Wright is correct in his observation that archaeological studies of Corinth throw up few surprises:

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[18] Thiselton, *First Epistle,* 6-12

[19] James R. Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome I: 228 B.C. – 267 A.D.," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt II.7.1* (eds W. Haase and H. Temporini; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 504. Cf. Acts 18:4ff.

[20] Strabo, *Geography, Volume IV: Books 8-9.* (Loeb Classical Library 196; trans. H. L. Jones; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 191VIII, 6:20. It is sometimes claimed that Corinth was so notorious as a site for prostitution that a verb Κορινθιάζομαι ('to Corinthianize') was coined, meaning to consort with prostitutes (LSJ "Κορινθιάζομαι"). However the only extant occurrence is in a fragment attributed to the fifth-century BC poet Aristophanes, and so not of direct relevance to the Roman city with which Paul was familiar (fr.370 LCL 502:286-287).

> "Studies of Corinth have abounded recently, and for our purposes amount to the obvious and major conclusion: Corinth was a thoroughly pagan city, typical of many in the ancient world."[21]

Corinth's religious world would not have been particularly different to that in other predominantly pagan cities in the Roman Empire, characterised by pluriformity of worship and a variety of practice and belief, but within a common overarching framework or set of presuppositions.[22] Roman religion was "multicultural … as far back as we can trace it",[23] and able to assimilate many gods (perhaps the implication of the "unknown god" inscription mentioned in Acts 17:23) within its view of the cosmos. The very fact that it could do so in a way which seemed coherent to its practitioners, while also having some implicit boundaries (Jewish and Christian monotheism, for example, seem not to have been assimilable within the Roman pantheon)[24] demonstrates that despite its pluriformity, it did form a common system of belief, which we might call paganism.[25] The cults and beliefs were mutually assimilable to the extent that it

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[21] N. T. Wright, "One God, One Lord, One People: Incarnational Christology for a Church in a Pagan Environment " *Ex Auditu* 7 (1991): 45.

[22] Jörg Rüpke, "Roman Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (ed. H. I. Flower; Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 179-181.

[23] Susanne William Rasmussen, "Roman Religion," in *The Handbook of Religions in Ancient Europe* (eds L. B. Christensen, et al.; Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 192.

[24] Rasmussen, "Roman Religion", 201, 204; Ogilvie, *The Romans and their Gods,* 3.

[25] D. E. Aune, "Religion, Greco-Roman," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (eds C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 917. Beard, et al., *Religions of Rome*, 1.x-xii discuss the propriety of the term 'paganism' given the implicit value-judgement it now carries, and opt for its use, given that there is no alternative "unloaded" term.

became possible to integrate these philosophically as manifestations of the same divine power, it being "possible to interpret the popular pantheon with all its gods and demons in a philosophical manner" as different δυνάμεις of one God.[26] This paganism is what we find evident in Corinth. In addition to the prominent temples and shrines on Acrocorinth—the mountain overlooking the city—the city of Corinth itself was host to a variety of temples, with clear archaeological evidence of dining-rooms attached to some of these, at least in the Greek period.[27] Based on some of this archaeological evidence, Peter Gooch (1993:5-13) argues persuasively that meals eaten in many of these temple dining-rooms were cultic in nature, particularly those centred upon Demeter and Kore (Persephone).[28] In the case of Demeter, a goddess associated with agricultural fertility and harvest, he asks rhetorically, "How could one eat in Demeter's sanctuary and not remember, or be reminded by word or symbol or ritual act, that the fruit of the fertile ground was her gift?"[29] This could explain somewhat Paul's stance against eating in these temples in 1 Corinthians 10 as presumably participiation in such meals would involve endorsement of the cultic rituals involved. Gooch, however, suggests that there was an ambiguity about some

[26] DDD, 512.

[27] See site illustrations in Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 187-188.

[28] Κόρη (attic) / Κόρα (doric) and her mother Demeter were particularly honoured in Corinth due to the tradition that agriculture in the Peloponnese arose as a consequence of the spread of her cult from Attica; so Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.3.6 (LCL 89:153).

[29] Peter D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: I Corinthians 8–10 in its context* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 5; Waterloo, ON: Laurier University Press, 1993), 13

other dining-rooms which could have led to disputes between the "strong" and the "weak" as to whether a Christian eating in them was participating in a cultic meal. He offers as evidence for this the dining arrangements at the Temple of Asclepius—the Asklepion—where he suggests that the dining rooms of what is termed in modern archaeology as the Lerna fountain. Such ambiguity might explain why some in the Corinthian church felt able to eat in such meals, even assuming that they held a basic assumption that outright idolatry was no longer permissible for them as Christians. We might speculate concerning the lines of reasoning Christians who did participate in these meals might employ to justify their behaviour: Perhaps the Corinthians might view the dining-rooms as not really part of the temple, and so if invited there, one may as well eat. Or alternatively the Corinthian believers might reason that eating these meals is a long-established practice of their people, and of their own social experience, and that nothing they learned from Paul or from the gospel forbids them to continue it as a culturally familiar and socially useful practice. As Ogilvie points out, Greco-Roman religion was more about praxis than cosmology, which was the purview of philosophy and could be debated without occasioning overt hostility.[30] Participation in religious praxis, whatever one believed about the gods, was more socially policed, however, since occasioning the wrath or displeasure of a god, and failing to propitiate him or her, could have negative consequences for the whole community.[31] Expectations or invitations to attend

[30] Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods,* 2-3.

[31] Ibid., 110-114.

cultic or civic meals may have been socially costly to turn down, involving as they did not only religious festivals, but also the celebrations of human life events—births, deaths, and marriages—of close friends, family and associates.[32] Admittedly this speculation cannot be proven conclusively, and really depends upon a reconstruction of the contents of the letter to which Paul is replying. This reconstruction would be dependent upon a number of interpretative variables, not least the question of whether statements like "we are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do" (8:8) and "all things are lawful" (10:23) are Paul's face-value statements, Corinthian slogans or quotations endorsed by Paul, statements quoted without endorsement, or slogans critiqued by Paul,[33] and whether the meal invitation in 10:27 is to take place at a private dwelling or a temple (or temple dining-room).

Jerome Murphy O'Connor, however, cautions that we cannot be certain whether the dining rooms mentioned most prominently in the archaeological literature—those at the site identified by Gooch as the Lerna fountain—were in use at the time of Paul, since, although the temple of Asclepius was rebuilt in 44 BC, the colonnade around the fountain was not, and so the status of the dining rooms abutting the piazza containing the fountain in Paul's day remains unclear

[32] MacMullen, *Paganism*, 35-37.

[33] The majority of recent commentators take the view that Paul is quoting and responding to the Corinthians in at least 8:1 and 8:4, which is also the position implicit in major modern translations. The punctuation in the NRSV and NIV (2011) suggest these are quotations from the Corinthians' own letter to Paul. The notes from the NET Bible for 8:1 state that "Paul cites certain slogans the Corinthians apparently used to justify their behaviour" in 8:1; 4, and 6:12—13; 7:1; 10:23.

to archaeologists.[34] It is possible that they were in use, or if not, that similar arrangements were employed elsewhere in Corinth, reflecting established cultural practices.

Finally, John Fotopoulos has argued more recently that Gooch is reliant upon a misidentification of the site of the Lerna fountain, and that the real dining-rooms would not be in a semi-public or public area as Gooch suggests. There would additionally be no ambiguity about eating in them: to do so would be unmistakeably to associate with the temple.[35]

The conjecture of Gooch that eating in temple-associated dining rooms is both a widespread popular practise in Corinth in the time of Paul, and potentially ambiguous regarding participation in idol-worship,[36] allows the possibility that eating in these dining-rooms was something Christians in Corinth could plausibly claim was not participation in idolatry. However, the archaeological evidence to support the idea that the dining-rooms were public or semi-public appears equivocal, and in what follows it will become clear that the exegetical evidence of 1 Corinthians itself does not require this supposition, and in any case it is not necessary to establish the *bona fides* of the position some in Corinth may have had in favour of participation in these meals, since

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[34] Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth,* 189. Matthew Malcolm expresses more certainty that they were not in use in the Roman period (*The World of 1 Corinthians, 87*).

[35] John Fotopoulos, "The Misidentification of the Lerna Fountain at Corinth: Implications for interpretations of the Corinthian idol-food issue," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Grecon-Roman Context: studies in honor of David E. Aune* (ed. J. Fotopoulos; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 37-50.

[36] Gooch, *Dangerous Food,* 15-16.

Paul strongly condemns the practice. Paul provides three reasons why the Corinthians are not to indulge in cultic meals or any pagan cultic activity: first, the potential for such behaviour to make one a πρόσκομμα (NRSV and ESV: "stumbling block") to other Christians (8:7—13); second, the incompatibility of involvement in pagan ritual with Christian identity (10:16—17); and third, that the cultic activity of pagans is a participation with demons (10:19—22).

Paul's first argument, that such behaviour makes one a πρόσκομμα to other Christians, revolves around the potential for the "weak" Christian (cf. 8:11) to have their conscience wounded (the phrase here, τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν, is a strong term even when applied figuratively, and has the sense "to assault someone's conscience")[37] by the actions of the Christian whose exercise of "knowledge" leads them to eat food offered to idols. Such action makes them into a "stumbling block" for others. The word πρόσκομμα is used, apart from a very loose citation of (or allusion to) Isaiah 8:14 in 1 Peter 2:8,[38] only here and in the letter to the Romans in the New Testament. It does seem to be characteristically a Pauline phrase in the New Testament.[39] However, Paul seems to think it is a concept which is familiar to his audience, and so, given

[37] BDAG, "τύπτω", 1020.

[38] Cf. Norbert Brox, "Zur pseudepigraphischen Rahmung des ersten Petrusbriefes," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 19 (1975).

[39] The related noun, προσκοπή, occurs only at 2 Corinthians 6:3 in the NT, and the adjective, ἀπρόσκοπος ("not causing to stumble"), occurs only in the letters of Paul (1 Corinthians 10:32 and Phillipians 1:10) and in Luke's account of Paul's words in Acts 24:16. However the verb προσκόπτω is more widely used, occurring in Matthew 4:6; 7:27; Luke 4:11; John 11:9,10; Romans 9:32; 14:21 and 1 Peter 2:8.

that he uses it in Romans when writing to a church he has not yet visited, it seems reasonable to assume that Paul doesn't depart widely from the established use of πρόσκομμα attested in the Septuagint. There it occurs eleven times,[40] and frequently has the sense of a metaphorical pitfall or cause of stumbling, which proves to be hazardous to someone's moral conduct or religious life. It is notable that in Exodus 23:33 it is an idol which is said to be a potential πρόσκομμα, and in Jeremiah 3:3 the metaphorical adultery which syncretism, and the following of ποιμένας πολλοὺς ("many shepherds", that is, multiple religious guides—see Jeremiah 2:8; 3:15) is a πρόσκομμα for the people of Israel.[41] The term certainly occupies the same semantic domain as σκάνδαλον,[42] and the terms seem parallel in the rendering of Isaiah 8:14 in Romans 9:32 (as in 1 Peter 2:8; and in Aquila and Symmachus' editions of Isaiah). What is meant in 1 Corinthians 8:9 is that the exercise of someone's "right" to eat could present an occasion for another believer's conscience to be damaged and for them to be encouraged to commit idolatry. The conduct of this second Christian is thus damaged by the example of the first. We might term this the "weaker brother" argument.[43] The "weaker brother" argument seems to have

[40] Exodus 23:33; 34:12; Isaiah 8:14; 29:21; Jeremiah 3:3; Sirach 17:25; 31:19; 34:7, 30; 39:24; Judith 8:22. προσκόπτω occurs 17 times, with a similar range of uses.

[41] See Georg Walser, *Jeremiah: A Commentary based on Ieremias in Codex Vaticanus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 216-220.

[42] Louw-Nida, 1:308.

[43] 8:11 identifies the weak person as an ἀδελφός; a term used in Paul's letters for fellow-Christians of either gender. I use the term "weaker brother" as opposed to "weaker sibling" as the latter appears an awkward phrase, with more potential for unintended connotations.

been a significant feature in the development of the church in the first-century, and is similarly deployed by Paul in Romans 14 in relation to eating (although the issue in Rome may have been slightly different, perhaps involving controversy between Jewish– and Gentile–background Christians, as the appeal for unity between these two groups in Romans 15:7 may indicate).[44] This argument concedes that a given action may be approved of by some Christians, yet engaging in the action is something requiring further reflection as it may offend—those Christians who consider engaging in that action to be sinful or a breach of fellowship, or cause them to stumble. The non-individualistic logic of this argument demonstrates the inadequacy of individualist or rights-based accounts of the propriety, or otherwise, of issues in Christian practice, and points towards the necessity for an ecclesial approach to the issue. There are long-running exegetical debates as to the identity of the "weak" (and, thus, the "strong") in Corinth. I hold that identifications of the "weak" as Jewish Christians

[44] So e.g. Käsemann, *Romans*, 364-369. Robert Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," *CBQ* 35, no. 2 (1973) argues that Romans 14:1—15:13 represents a "generalized rewriting" of Paul's argument concerning the "weak" and the "strong" in 1 Corinthians, while Mark Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak: Romans 14.1—15.13 in context* (SNTSMS 103; Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 3-5, 287-300, argues that the situation in Romans, like that in Corinth, reflects a different dividing line than Jewish-Christian tension and that the concerns of the "weak" are a mixture of pagan and Jewish rationales for avoiding meat, which would make the argument in Romans of some relevance for our understanding of Paul's argument here. Given that the argument in Romans shows no sign of being connected with the issue of idol-food and that Paul declares the food in question "clean" (καθαρός) in Romans 14:20, along with the different circumstances in composition (Paul is writing Romans to a community he has never visited) I find the passage in 1 Corinthians sufficiently dissimilar that Romans 14 is not a source of interpretative assistance.

are implausible. This position may seem attractive if it is supposed that the passage relating to eating (and other "quarrels over opinions"—διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν) in Romans 14:1—12, and further that the divisions between parties in Romans 14 reflect a Jew-Gentile divide.[45] However, as argued above (fn. 43) the passage in Romans is sufficiently different from this passage that they are not mutually interpretative.[46] Neither are the "weak" here non-Christians (Nanos argues that the "weak" in Rome are non-Christian Jews[47] but there, as here, the use of the term "brothers" (ἀδελφοί) to designate the "weak" strongly suggests that they are Christians), but Christians whose "conscience" (συνείδησις) is weak. Conzelmann seems to be right in cautioning that the "weak" are not a self-designated group or party; that is, they are not one of the factions alluded to in 1:11—13.[48] Something which may also be missed in interpretation is the presence of irony in Paul's use of these labels. By not understanding this we can be misled into thinking Paul counts himself among the "strong" and grudgingly makes concessions for the "weak". One might think that Paul in reality agrees with the

[45] E.g. Robert Mounce, *Romans* (NAC; Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1995), 251-2.

[46] See Reasoner, *The Strong and the Weak*, 288. John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean diaspora,* 326, argues that Paul demonstrates Romans a "particularly assimilationist" approach to Jewish and Gentile Christians and argues that Jewish Christians experienced pressure to put aside some of their particularities in the name of commensality with Gentile Christians. Barclay argues that Paul defends the right of Jewish Christians to observe food restrictions and Sabbath, but urged them not to "impede fellowship" with Gentile Christians.

[47] Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 85.

[48] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 147.

"enlightened strong" against the "superstitious weak".[49] Rather, we ought to recognise that the "strong" are those who self-designate as strong because of their "knowledge", critiqued elsewhere throughout this letter, and who consider themselves "spiritual" and possessing more advanced understanding that others (c.f. 1 Cor. 1:25, 27—31; 3:18—20; 4:10). They are the ones who perhaps feel the greatest latitude of liberty in the Corinthian church, and who are here most likely to participate in the eating of idol-food (and perhaps also in ritual meals). They are also likely the ones who have developed the strong-weak terminology as a polemical category against those who do have a problem with eating idol-food. Paul, with a heavy dose of irony, deploys their category of the "weak" as opposed to those who have "knowledge" (without necessarily endorsing this division) in a way which should make those who consider themselves strong stop and take notice. Paul's rhetoric in 1 Corinthians does not serve to denigrate the "weaker brother" but rather to protect their interests: in 1 Cor 1:25, 27 Paul describes an inversion of status in the gospel whereby the weak things put to shame the strong;[50] in 12:22 he develops a bodily metaphor whereby the "weak" members are seen to be essential to the church; and Paul even seems to align himself with the "weak" in 4:10 and 9:22.[51] One might say that the "weak" and the

[49] As, for example, in Moffatt, *First Epistle*, 109-114.

[50] Cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 185; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus: The Problem of Continuity," in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays* (ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn; *JSNTSup* 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 103.

[51] Jae Won Lee, *Paul and the Politics of Difference: A Contextual Study of the Jewish-Gentile Difference in Galatians and Romans* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 3, makes the same argument that Paul shows solidarity with the "weak", though I dispute his claim that this is incompatible with an exclusivist

"knowledgeable" or "strong" reflect value judgements as to the maturity or status of different groups (though not formal factions) within the church to Paul's interlocutors, but for Paul the issue is of conscience and his argument could be put in terms where the respective believers possess "sensitive" and "insensitive" consciences.

Those who considered it their "right" to eat idol-food and participate in potentially idolatrous or idol-compromised situations if they wish to—for whatever reason—are told by Paul that they ought to consider—in addition to the dangers of "participation with demons"—the effect their actions have upon others in the church. Paul claims that such insensitive individualization of Christian ethics can even destroy others in the church. The reasons include the potential to "defile" the conscience of the "weak" if they are encouraged to eat idol-meat by the example of others (8:7). This defilement seems to happen because the weak, through formerly being part of the world of paganism "eat it as idol-food" or "as if idol food" (ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν). This demonstrates that it is not the food itself, in the purely material sense, to which Paul objects, but the religious and cultic connotations attached to it. The food itself is simply food, but the fact that one can eat it ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον demonstrates that the context and liturgical significance are the issues which pose danger to the "weak". That danger is that one might be "encouraged" (8:11) to engage in the

perspective. On the contrary, Paul's concern for the "weak" in this passage is predicated upon a desire that they not be tempted towards syncretistic practice or abandoning exclusive devotion to Christ.

idolatrous aspects of εἰδωλόθυτον consumption. In fact, eating idol-food was undermining the very thing the "strong" thought it asserted: the Christian's exclusive devotion to Christ as Lord. Paul agrees with them that Christ is Lord: for Christians there is one God and so an idol is not a god; an idol in itself is "nothing". But actions do matter, in particular those invested with liturgical significance, and the action of deliberately eating idol-food undermines exclusive devotion to Christ. If it is consumed "as idol-food" this would be a serious matter, "ruining" (8:11) one's conscience.

Meat brought in the market

The issue in 10:23—11:1 is that of food sold in the marketplace or served in a non-cultic setting, which may have been sacrificed to idols, and is a slightly different issue. Paul refers to the purchase of meat ἐν μακέλλῳ (10:25), that is, in a marketplace (μάκελλον), and likely specifically a meat-market.[52] There is some epigraphic evidence relating to the *macellum* in Corinth, including the Latin inscription noted by Cadbury[53], which suggests the market in Roman Corinth was built as a gift to the city by a rich benefactor. Gill suggests that the market sold both meat and fish,[54] of which it is likely the meat would pose more theological problems for Jews or Christians. Winter suggests that, given the

[52] BDAG, "μακελλον", 611. This term is cognate with the Latin *macellum*, but not, as was once thought, a loanword from Latin to Greek.

[53] Henry Joel Cadbury, "The Macellum of Corinth," *JBL* 53 (1934): 134-141.

[54] Ibid., 391.

presence of a significant Jewish community with a synagogue (epigraphic evidence of which postdates the time of Paul but which according to Acts 18:4, 17 was extant prior to Paul's arrival) and legal rights, it is likely that kosher food, including meat, would have been available to Jews in Corinth, and was also available for sale to Christians.[55] It is possible that at some point between Paul's leaving Corinth and the Corinthians writing to Paul, prompting the response of 1 Corinthians, kosher food was no longer available in the *macellum* as a result of anti-Jewish restrictions,[56] or related to the possible famine which may be alluded to in 7:26.[57] Kosher meat, and fish, would have provided uncontroversial sources of protein for the Corinthian Christians, and in particular salted fish, which was less perishable and traded at Corinth, would have provided a relatively economic form of dietary protein.[58] It is possible that the availability and price of suitable, non-sacrificial meat may have fluctuated with market conditions. It is difficult, therefore, to be entirely sure about whether or not Paul's Christian converts had ready and reliable access to meat which was not potentially linked to pagan sacrifice. Conzelmann suggests it is misleading to

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[55] Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 295, 297.

[56] Ibid, 297-8.

[57] Tacitus records 51 AD as a famine: *Annals,* 12.43 (LCL 312: 336-337). See also Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 227. However see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 126, for the view that the crisis is apocalyptic/eschatological.

[58] Ephraim Lytle, "Marine Fisheries and the Ancient Greek Economy" (Duke University, 2006) 181-182. Although sacred fish were not unknown in some ancient religions (MacMullen, *Paganism,* 35), this does not seem to have been a feature of religious life in Roman Corinth.

say that all, or almost all, meat sold in the *macellum* would be sacrificial meat, and that other meat would likely have been available.[59] The temptation for Christians in Corinth may then well have been that sacrificial meat was cheaper or easier to obtain, rather than being the only option for one who wished to eat a diet containing meat. Indeed, if it were a straight choice between idol-meat and vegetarianism, the letter might be expected to give some indication of this.

In terms of the question of being invited to dine with an unbeliever (10:27f.) the guidance Paul gives is not to ask about the precise origin of the food. If one is informed by another guest or by the host that the food served has been offered to an idol then one should refuse to eat it.[60] The use of the terminology ἱερόθυτόν demonstrates that it is a non-Christian, pagan host who is in view here. Perhaps this may be a concern primarily of the social elite, who would be expected to be invited to banquets, and who might wish to avoid the potential embarrassment for their hosts should they refuse to eat the food they are offered. Paul does not forbid Corinthian Christians from attending meals or eating with pagans (he may well encourage it; cf. 5:10) but does not allow the consumption of idol-food when it is known to be such. Significantly, Paul includes in the explanation for this the effect upon the conscience of the unbelieving host (10:28—29); which is probably best understood as a concern that the pagan host or informant about the nature of the food being served not

[59] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 176. Cf. Cadbury, "The Macellum of Corinth", 141.

[60] Fee, *First Epistle*, 484.

be misled into believing that Christians endorse syncretism or the worship of idols.[61] The danger of eating the food would be that the pagan informant or host would *not* be given the impression that Christian devotion to Christ is to the exclusion of all pagan deities and cults, and may indeed become tempted into thinking Christ could be assimilated into the pagan view of the world as an additional god among the pagan pantheon.

Is eating food offered to idols an *adiaphoron*?

Much nineteenth- and twentieth- century scholarship on 1 Corinthians 8—10 has assumed that Paul is making the argument that the eating of idol-food is among the *adiaphora*; that is, it is a matter of individual Christian liberty.[62] This is based upon an understanding of the second half of 8:8 as Paul's real position, and the assumption that Paul would think it permissible to eat in the temple if no Christian witnesses were there.[63] Paul, so it is understood, then

[61] Fee, *Thessalonians*, 485, is correct to observe that it is not another Christian's conscience which is meant here.

[62] Cf. Moffatt, *First Epistle*, 114. The term *adiaphora,* a latinization of the Greek term ἀδιάφορα (not used by Paul), is often used in the study of Paul with reference to issues on which he allows liberty under conscience (see for example, Betz, *Galatians*, 94-95; David M. Hay, "Paul's Indifference to Authority," *JBL*, no. 88 (1969): 44; Mounce, *Romans*, 55) and originates in Stoic thought (Tuomas Rasimus, et al., *Stoicism in early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 34). It became a key theological category for early Protestantism in relation to liturgical practices "which are neither forbidden nor commanded in God's word" (David M. Whitford, *T&T Clark companion to Reformation theology* (T&T Clark companions; London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 335), but in modern Protestant theology is also used in relation to ethical issues (D. A. Carson, "On Disputable Matters," *Themelios* 40, no. 3 (2015): 383) which accounts for its popularity as a category in Protestant exegesis of Paul.

[63] Moffatt, *First Epistle,* 111, sees Paul as "enlightened" for taking this position.

tempers this as a concession to those whose theology is "weak" and don't understand that Christians are in principle at liberty to eat idol-food. This is often, in the context of 'Lutheran' readings of Paul, seen as a paradigmatic example of Paul rejecting law: as Barrett describes it, this reading of Paul sees him showing via a permissive attitude to idol-meat the extent of his "radical liberation from his Jewish past".[64]

The Reformed tradition, too, while loathe to see Paul as an anti-law radical, has felt the pull of arguments which see Paul as fundamentally indifferent to the propriety of eating idol-food, save for concern for others' conscience. John Calvin, for example, argues that the need to avoid idol-food is not a matter of divine law, but a case where Paul applies "the eternal law of charity" to the situation whereby the consciences of the superstitious and 'weak' were troubled by others using their liberty offensively. He goes on to draw close parallels between the Judaizers who troubled Paul and the so-called tyrants of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, and uses the issue as a paradigmatic example for approaching the issue of how to deal pastorally with superstitions among the ill-taught.[65] A common expression of this idea is that Paul reasons that, since an idol has no real existence, idol-food is ethically neutral and so a Christian can eat it if he or she wishes to do so. It is thus only a problem for those whose faith is "weak" who may lapse into paganism – the "strong" may do

[64] Barrett, "Things sacrificed," 50.

[65] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. H. Beveridge; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 792-793 (IV.10.21-22).

as they wish, only taking care that they do not encourage the "weak" to sin.[66] This view relies on the identification of the "strong" as corresponding to the "mature" (τέλειος) in 2:6, where the "strong" exercises a greater deal of liberty, having more knowledge and/or being more mature. On this understanding, Paul's sympathies would lie with the "strong" but he urges them to moderate their freedom so as not to offend the "weak". However some more recent studies suggest that Paul does actually wish to discourage the practice of eating idol-food among both the "strong" and the "weak". That is, Paul sees eating idol-food as something which he wants the Christians in Corinth to avoid entirely. This is not a novel view, for as Alex Cheung has pointed out, this is in fact how the passage was understood in Greek patristic interpretation, and happily coincides with the practice of the early church.[67]

To take briefly three recent studies of this passage as it relates to the eating of idol-food (all originally doctoral theses), we can see some common threads emerging. First, Peter J. Tomson's 1990 PhD dissertation, published as "Paul and the Jewish Law" suggests that Paul's argument here bears many of the features of *halakha* – in essence, Paul is parsing circumstances to determine if some meat counts as idol-meat. If it does count then he wishes his audience not to partake of it. This bears some comparison to Rabbinic Judaism of the time of the Babylonian Talmud, whereby Jews were permitted to eat meat bought in the pagan meat market provided the animal was slaughtered by a Jew, the meat had

[66] Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 610-612.
[67] Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth*, 16-19.

not been used in a pagan ritual, and the seller was able to give assurances that he only sold to Jews. In such cases the meat was deemed halakhically acceptable; in other cases it was idol-food and thus forbidden.[68] Paul's requirements are less stringent, but amount to a comparable approach: Christians can eat whatever is sold in the market, so long as they do not know that the meat has been used in a pagan ritual, and can eat whatever their unbelieving acquaintances serve them, given similar assurances. In other cases the food counts as idol-food, which they may not eat.[69] Second, Alex Cheung's 1999 study "Idol Food in Corinth" argues strongly for the interpretation that Paul wishes his audience to flee from idols and idol-food. Cheung argues that eating in temple dining-halls would be perceived as idolatrous by Paul and most other Christians, but also that eating idol-food while cognizant of its origins is, for Paul, a sinful act rather than an *adiaphoron*.[70] Third, Matthew Malcolm's "Paul and the Rhetoric of Reversal", a socio-rhetorical study of 1 Corinthians, based on his PhD at Nottingham, argues that Paul permits eating meat which may be idol-food in origin, in certain circumstances, but condemns the eating of it in pagan temples. Malcolm demonstrates also that this is the approach taken by Chrysostom in interpreting the passage.[71]

[68] Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 171.

[69] Ibid., 189-191.

[70] Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth*, 108, 157.

[71] Matthew R. Malcolm, *Paul and the rhetoric of reversal in 1 Corinthians: the impact of Paul's Gospel on his macro-rhetoric* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), 125-128.

Eating in temples is, as we have seen, a practice which is symbolically a compromise of Christian rejection of idolatry. Whether or not participation in feasts in dining-rooms were plausibly a 'neutral' activity from the perspective of those "strong" and "knowledgeable" Christians in Corinth who asked Paul about the issue, Paul discourages the practice in strong terms, as seen above.

Räisänen claims that to treat something as a genuine *adipahoron* "amount[s]… to a rejection of the Law"[72] and here I would not disagree that Paul does not consider his Gentile converts imperil their salvation by eating εἰδωλόθυτον, or even that to eat such is inherently impermissible. Paul does consider Christians to be freed from the demands of the Law of Moses, and that freedom includes the possibility of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Indeed, on the logic of 10:26 a Christian is free to eat *anything*.[73] However his attitude here in 1 Corinthians does not seem to regard the issue as completely indifferent, as can be seen from the increasing recognition among biblical scholars and interpreters of Paul that he permits eating such as a concession, urges those who would eat to moderate their freedom out of love for others, and strongly suggests that he is trying to discourage the practice altogether.

To sum up, it is almost certainly the case that the consumption of idol-food is not an *adiaphoron* for Paul but something he wishes to discourage. This is also the general view of Patristic writers on this passage, and so not a new theory per se but a retrieval and rediscovery of an ancient interpretation. Paul

[72] Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 77.
[73] Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 785-786.

wishes to discourage both eating in a pagan temple or cultic meal, and the eating of idol-food (when it is known to be such) in more private settings.

How consistent is Paul here with other early Christians?

It seems that other New Testament authors condemned outright the eating of meat which had been sacrificed to idols. Acts 15:20 suggests that the eating of food sacrificed to idols (εἰδωλόθυτον) formed part of the Jerusalem council's guidance to non-Jewish Christians, along with the injunctions against eating blood and sexual immorality. Revelation 2:20 also attests to the condemnation of eating idol-food. The writer of the Didache, in a tradition likely independent of Paul's letter to the Corinthians,[74] also enjoins Christians not to eat such things:

> περὶ δὲ τῆς βρώσεως, ὃ δύνασαι βάστασον· ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ εἰδωλοθύτου λίαν πρόσεχε· λατρεία γάρ ἐστι θεῶν νεκρῶν. (Did. 6:3)
>
> "But regarding eating, tolerate what you are able to, but scrupulously abstain from food sacrificed to idols: for it is the worship of dead gods."

Taking the understanding of 1 Corinthians 8—10 suggested above, the position of the Didache is not as far removed from Paul's as we might suppose if we take the view that Paul endorses the "strong" position that eating idol-meat is permissible. The reference to "the worship of dead gods" (λατρεία … θεῶν

[74] There is some debate about the Didache's relation to Paul; my view is that the Didache is not literarily dependent upon Paul in view of its attitude to law in 6:1-2 and lack of identifiable allusion to any Pauline epistles. Indeed, it is an open question whether it is literarily dependent upon any New Testament documents.

νεκρῶν) brings to mind Paul's assertion that offering sacrifices to idols serves demons.[75]

Pliny the Elder's celebrated letter to Trajan concerning Christians, written from Bithinya in 112 AD, complains that scarcely anyone had been prepared to buy meat from temple sacrifices, yet that persecution of Christians had led to a revival in this trade.[76] One can infer that Christians in Roman Asia were not buying idol-meat, at least, not in large quantities, fifty years after Paul's visit to Corinth. Avoiding idol-food thus seems to have been the instruction of other early Christian leaders, even if not the actual practice of Christians in places like Corinth.

It was also the practice of contemporary Jewish communities in Gentile cities, and consistent with the example of Daniel 1 and Esth. 14:17 (LXX). We might further note the account of the Maccabean martyrs given in 4 Macc 5:1—3 where the text commends the choice of death rather than eating pork and meat sacrificed to idols (εἰδωλόθυτος) as evidence of the vehement rejection of idol-food consumption within late-Second-Temple Judaism.[77]

The question therefore arises of whether Paul portrays a different, or even a contradictory approach in relation to idol-food in 1 Corinthians 8—10.[78]

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[75] David Flusser, "Paul's Jewish-Christian Opponents in the Didache," in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 210.

[76] Pliny, *Letters* 10.96.10 (LCL 59: 290-291)

[77] Cf. Cheung, *Idol Food*, 46-48; Matthew Malcolm, *World of 1 Corinthians*, 85.

[78] Some commentators have suggested that Paul is himself inconsistent between the attitudes of chapters 8 and 10 and suggest on the basis of this, and other alleged inconsistencies, that the text of 1 Corinthians is a composite of

Paul's relationship to the Jerusalem decree is of relevance here, and has been variously interpreted.[79] Some interpreters of Paul suggest that his instruction to the Corinthian church here undermines the Jerusalem decree in indifference towards the issue of eating idol-meat,[80] or by the omission of a prohibition on eating the meat of strangled animals (not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:25).[81] Perhaps, one might argue, Paul is deliberately contradicting the Jerusalem decree, if he considers it to place an unacceptable burden upon the freedom of Gentile Christians in Corinth. Or, if he is in fact contradicting it here, he could be doing so unwittingly. Thiselton does raise the issue of whether or not the decree of the council would have been widely published at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians,[82] but given that the likely date of the council is 49/50 AD, and that

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several letters. However, as Fee points out, the lack of agreement among partition theorists as to where and between how many sources the letter ought to be divided up suggests that the "various reconstructions are not as viable as their proponents would lead us to believe" (*1 Corinthians*, 15) and as Mitchell demonstrates there is sufficient thematic and rhetorical unity to the letter to defend the compositional integrity of 1 Corinthians as the text now stands (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 298.).

[79] One could question the historicity of the decree entirely, and see the account in Acts 15 (and 21) as a pious fiction in the service of peace-making between Pauline and Jewish Christians. I do not think it plausible to do so, regardless of the dating of Acts, since even if Luke could expect nobody to challenge his account of a private meeting between persons who were now dead, he could hardly expect to be believed giving a false account of a public document intended for promulgation to the very same audience for whom he wrote.

[80] E.g. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 48.

[81] E.g. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 152. The textual variants of Acts 15:20 and 21:25 (in general, the Western MSS lack the prohibition on the meat of strangled animals) also bears some relation to this issue – see Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 506.

[82] Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 786. Thiselton cites Witherington, "Idle thoughts", 252-254 here as claiming 1 Corinthians was written prior to "any public policy

the decree is explicitly intended for promulgation to the Gentile churches, it seems unlikely that it would not have reached Corinth quickly.

Witherington, however, makes the argument that the Jerusalem decree is not about demanding Gentile Christians to observe Jewish food laws, but rather that, based on his demonstration that εἰδωλόθυτον and πορνεία are assumed from a Jewish perspective to be the most objectionable characteristic practices of Gentile religion, that the import of the decree is that Gentile Christians have an imperative to flee from idolatry.[83] A subsidiary purpose is that, although not a legal imperative, avoiding non-kosher meat enables easier fellowship between Jewish and Gentile-background believers. This interpretation allows a reading of 1 Corinthians 8—10 where Paul is being fully consistent with the Jerusalem decree; indeed, given that 10:7—8 mention eating (though not specifically εἰδωλόθυτον) and sexual immorality as destructive behaviours indulged in by the people of Israel in the wilderness, which the Corinthians must avoid, the link between inappropriate eating, sexual immorality, and idolatry seems also to be present in Paul's thinking in this passage. Thus he can call for the Corinthians to abandon these behaviours because they are particularly characteristic of Gentile religion.[84] There are

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agreement of the kind reflected in Acts", yet Witherington posits this in relation to Galatians, not 1 Corinthians, which Witherington sees as consistent with Acts 15.

[83] Witherington, "Idle thoughts", 252.

[84] Whether or not sexual immorality, particularly cultic prostitution, was a frequent or infrequent practice of the specific cults in Corinth does not particularly matter, since the argument is rather that Jews thought this was characteristic of Gentile religion. MacMullen details some Roman and Greek

certainly also intrinsic reasons for Paul to condemn sexual immorality, including his assumption throughout 1 Corinthians 7 of sexual fidelity within monogamous marriage, and his assertion of the need to honour God with one's body in 1 Corinthians 6:18—20. However he also seems to think of sexual immorality as linked in some circumstances with idolatry by their association in 10:7—8, and elsewhere (for instance, in Romans 1:22—28). Thus Paul's appeal that the Corinthian Christians "flee from idolatry" (10:14) contains the essence of the Jerusalem decree and summarises his reasoning concerning meals in temples, participation in pagan cultic activity, and any associated sexual activity. This view also makes sense in a possible scenario where the church in Corinth has received the Jerusalem decree and is seeking clarification on its implications.

Far from being a contradiction to the Jerusalem decree, I argue that Paul's attitude in this letter represents an application of the agreement made at the Jerusalem council, in particular an insistence that Gentile Christians ought not to continue to participate in the cultic activity which characterised Greek and Roman religion. Paul does forbid eating in cultic meals, and participation in the cult activity of pagan temples. Paul's argument about food bought in the marketplace is really a development of some of the practical implications of the

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cult associations which placed strictures on their worshippers' sexual regimen which would approximate Jewish moral and purity codes (MacMullen, *Paganism,* 12).

fact, recognised by some in Corinth, that the meat itself is not harmful, but rather the potential for actual or perceived participation in idolatry. Paul never calls the meat bought in the *macellum* εἰδωλόθυτον, and in the circumstance in which a Christian is about to eat but someone else tells them τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν ἐστιν ("this has been offered to idols")[85] On this understanding, I suggest that Paul's approach is in fact consistent with the prohibition on eating εἰδωλόθυτον in the Jerusalem decree and in Revelation 2:20, in that the prohibition is on participation in pagan cultic practices related to food, and not on the food itself.[86] This parallels Paul's argument related to idols in 8:1—13 where he affirms both that the physical idol itself is nothing, and in 10:20 that the gods to which pagans sacrifice are demons.

Idolatry and Demons

In 10:20 Paul makes a bold statement linking idols and demons. Paul's focus on the demonic is, perhaps, more troubling to modern ears. Paul's argument here is more readily understandable in the light of recent renewed appreciation of the significance of "participation" or "union" in Pauline theology. "Participation" is a key concept for Paul's account of salvation, the church, and

[85] The earliest and most reliable MSS have this reading, but many later ones read εἰδωλόθυτον. The reading ἱερόθυτόν is undoubtedly correct (Thiselton, p.786-787) and reflects the words a pagan would have used, in a hypothetical scenario constructed by Paul (Fee, 1Co, 484); the change in the later MSS may be due to the dying out of pagan religious practices (see the discussion of Pliny's Letter to Trajan above) and the consequent substitution of the now unfamiliar original term with the familiar pejorative term εἰδωλόθυτον.

[86] Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation* (New Covenant Comentary 18; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 37-40.

eschatology, and can be said to denote the way in which a Christian is connected with Christ and receives or enjoys Christ's benefits. In this connection Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians regarding demons express both a warning against spiritual danger from demonic agents, and a concern for exclusive commitment to Christ among his converts in their practice as well as in their hearts.

Paul's claim that "what they (i.e. the worshippers of an idol) sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons not God" has numerous parallels in Jewish literature, where the idol is linked to offering to demons rather than God.

ἀλλ' ὅτι ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ θύουσιν	1 Corinthians 10:20
παρώξυνάν με ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίοις, ἐν βδελύγμασιν αὐτῶν παρεπίκρανάν με· ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ, θεοῖς οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν·	Deuteronomy 32:16—17 LXX (repeated verbatim in Odes 2:16—17a)
παροξύνατε γὰρ τὸν ποιήσαντα ὑμᾶς θύσαντες δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ	Baruch 4:7

In these instances, 'God' is singular and contrasted with the plural 'demons'. The Deuteronomy passage (and Odes 2:16—17a which is identical) then goes on to refer to the recipients of sacrifice, initially identified as 'demons' as 'gods' (θεοί). Here the "other" gods are identified as the demons who receive the sacrifices offered in the worship of idols.

Furthermore, we move onto Paul's description of the dangerous aspect to idol-food and meals in the service of idols. Paul uses the example of Israel and the golden calf, quoting from Exodus 32:6 in 10:7. The quotation itself is notable in that it does not simply condemn the fashioning of the idol (the statue of a calf) itself, but the eating, drinking, and "playing" (παίζειν) which accompanied

this. Here it seems possible that παίζω is a euphemism for sexual immorality[87] (as in Isaiah 3:16 LXX and Hermas Sim 9.9.4) given that this is the concern of Paul's next comment in 10:8.[88] Idols may have no significance, as Paul concedes, but worship or participation in their cult and rituals does. The reason is that behind the idols is a demonic reality. Paul here affirms the view that those who serve idols are in fact serving demons.

> They sacrificed to demons, not God,
> to deities they had never known,
> to new ones recently arrived,
> whom your ancestors had not feared.
> (Deuteronomy 32:17, NRSV)[89]

The linking of demons and idols has an extensive pedigree in the Jewish tradition prior to Paul. This link seems to be, as Mody argues, not that the material idol itself is a demon, nor that a demon indwells the physical idol, but rather that demons "stand behind" the idols, "co-opt the sacrifices consciously intended for the idols" which are offered by pagans, and thus influence those who worship the idols.[90] The Greek term δαιμόνιον itself derives from δαίμων,

[87] BDAG, "παίζω", 750; though Louw-Nida 1.527 thinks "dancing" is meant here.

[88] εἰδωλολατρία and πορνεία can be found linked many Jewish texts (e.g. Wisdom 14:12; Test. R. 4:6) along with the idea of Gentiles as sexually dissolute and licentious (which is the background assumption of Paul's outrage in 5:1).

[89] Cf. Michael S Heiser, "Does Deuteronomy 32:17 Assume or Deny the Reality of Other Gods?," *Bible Translator* 59, no. 3 (2008), 137-145.

[90] Ro Mody, "The Relationship between Powers of Evil and Idols in 1 Corinthians 8:4–5 and 10:18–22 in the Context of the Pauline Corpus and Early Judaism" (University of Aberdeen, 2008) 36, 99.

which in classical Greek literature designates a range of spiritual divine or semi-divine beings, generally below the 'gods' but more powerful than humans.[91] Greek authors can use either term to refer to evil, good, or benign beings. Luke's account of the response of the Athenians to Paul reproduces the pagan usage (possibly via being a verbatim report) with the Athenians discussing whether Paul is "a preacher of foreign deities" (ξένων δαιμονιῶν καταγγελεύς, Acts 17:18). Its adoption by Jewish and Christian authors is, however, used to describe beings that are given a negative moral evaluation. In the Septuagint and the intertestamental literature, as in the New Testament,[92] its use is to designate evil spiritual beings.[93] It is clear that the normative position of the New Testament is for Christians to avoid association with demons, as in this passage (e.g. in 10:14) and so they ought not to be worshipped. Paul in 10:20 does, however, seem to suggest that the worship of the pagan gods is, in some sense, serving demons, and so although those involved in idolatry may not consider their gods to be demons, the claim is nonetheless made that the pagan "gods" are demons, or that demons "stand behind" them.[94]

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[91] LSJ, "δαίμων, ονος". There is a considerable range of usage. Some classical authors do use this term to refer to gods and goddesses; Hesiod uses it to refer to the spirits of those who lived during the Golden Age.

[92] With the exception of Acts 17:18, noted above as reported speech reproducing the pagan usage, and Philo, Vit. Moses. 1.276, which describes a Canaanite idol or stele in honour of an unspecified δαιμόνιον, which *may* imply a negative evaluation but could also be reproducing a neutral usage.

[93] Anders Petersen, "The Notion of Demon: Open Questions to a Diffuse Concept," in *Die Dämonen - Demons* (eds A. Lange, et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 23-28.

[94] Str-B, 4/1, 501.

The foreign gods in the Hebrew Bible are sometimes designated with the same vocabulary as the God of Israel and called אֱלֹהִים. The Septuagint translates this generally with θεοί.[95] There is no Hebrew term strictly equivalent to δαιμόνιον, and the occurrences of δαιμόνιον in the Septuagint which translate a word present in the Hebrew texts translate either אֱלִיל (Psalm 96:5 = 95:5 LXX) which may be used to designate an idol in this passage but seems particularly to emphasise worthlessness,[96] שֵׁד (Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37 = 105:37 LXX) which appears to be a loan-word from Assyrian religion,[97] or שָׂעִיר (Isaiah 13:21; 34:14), which is translated "goat-demon" in the NRSV and simply "goat" in the ESV; cf. "satyr" in the KJV. Two other occurences in the Hebrew Bible of שָׂעִיר (Leviticus 17:7 and 2 Chronicles 11:15) are translated using ματαίοι ('empty things') in their respective Septuagint translations.[98] Hans Duhm suggests that שֵׁד is used in Deuteronomy 32:17 and elsewhere as a polemic category encompassing all divinities apart from Yahweh, whether Egyptian, Canaanite, or otherwise.[99] It seems likely that שֵׁד and אֱלִיל refer specifically to foreign gods,[100] whereas the use of שָׂעִיר in the Isaiah passages is more ambiguous, occurring in

[95] BDAG, "θεός", 450-452.

[96] BDB, "אֱלִיל", 47.

[97] BDB, "שֵׁד", 993.

[98] This is perhaps a good example of the perspective which sees the 'other' gods as empty. Cf. BDAG, "μάταιος", 623.

[99] Hans Duhm, *Die bösen Geister im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1904), 49.

[100] Cf. Str-B, 4/1, 509.

a list of beings or creatures which occur in desolate places. It could mean nothing more than "goats" with the emphasis being on the depopulation of the land, leading to its haunting by wild animals.[101] Norman Snaith suggests that שָׂעִיר refers to "rain-gods" and these originate from Ugaritic religion.[102] The strongest reason for seeing שָׂעִיר as representing demons or any kind of spiritual being is the placement next to 'Lilith' (לִילִית), though Judit Blair has offered a convincing argument that nothing in the Hebrew Bible offers a warrant for seeing Lilith as the personal name of a god(dess) or demon and that the word likely refers to a nocturnal bird.[103] It is, we ought to note, the position of the Septuagint translators and not necessarily of the Hebrew text itself that these are identified as 'demons'. With this caveat noted, I believe it is almost certainly a viewpoint which Paul would endorse.

The question then arises of what exactly is meant by 'demon' in this perspective which identifies the foreign or "other" gods as demonic. There seems to be a negative evaluation of them rather than a neutral one; the term

[101] So Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah* (2. vols.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 1.272. The 'demonic' perspective however seems to be operative in the mind of the author of Revelation 18:2—3 where a closely parallel denunciation of and pronouncement of judgement against 'Babylon' leaves her depopulated and devastated, to become a haunt for demons *and* unclean animals.

[102] Norman Henry Snaith, "The Meaning of שׂעירים," *Vetus Testamentum* 25 (1975): 116. Duhm suggests these are "goat-form demons" to which altars were built and sacrifices offered by (some) Israelites in Lev. 17:7: Duhm, 47.

[103] Judit M. Blair, "De-Demonising the Old Testament: An Investigation of *Azazel*, *Lilith*, *Deber*, *Qeteb* and *Reshef* in the Hebrew Bible" (Edinburgh, 2008) iv, 102-103.

implies malevolence or opposition to God. One possible identification of them is with impersonal forces of evil; the "principalities and powers" view which would identify them with the forces referred to in Ephesians 1:21, 2:2, 6:12.[104] These cosmic powers (κοσμοκράτορες) are located "in the heavenly realms" and oppose God's purposes, according to Ephesians 6:12, where they are associated with the devil (διάβολος, 6:11). They are "spirit beings, who have parts of the cosmos under their control."[105] Walter Wink suggests that these are, although powerful and malevolent and "very, very real", not personal agents.[106] Wink suggests that Paul's language of "demons" is a personalisation of these impersonal forces, but that Paul does not hold an extensive and detailed demonology of individual demonic beings with personal agency, but rather has engaged in a "demythologizing" project whereby the elaborate demonologies of Second-Temple Judaism are flattened in his thought in favour of a cosmos where the powers which oppose God are abstract.[107] F.F. Bruce holds this position to the exclusion of other possibilities, arguing that "demons for Paul were probably not personal beings but impersonal forces which exerted a powerful influence over unregenerate man."[108]

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[104] So Thiselton, *First Epistle,* 774, who translates δαιμονίοις in 10:20 as "to demonic forces"; Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 13.

[105] BDAG, "κοσμοκράτωρ", 561.

[106] Wink, 5.

[107] Wink, 100-104.

[108] F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (New Century Bible Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1990), 96.

Another possible identification of the demons is as personal spiritual beings. One possibility is the Jewish tradition of the "angels of the nations", that is, an angelic being which is assigned to each nation (ἔθνος, in the sense of people group, rather than a geographical area). Michael Heiser suggests that this is what is implied in texts such as Deuteronomy 4:19—20 and 32:8—9 (which we might see as being of particular relevance to Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:20) where God gives the nations up to the governance of other beings.[109] The Hebrew Masoretic Text has the nations divided "according to the number of the sons of Israel" with for the final phrase reading יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי, but some Qumran fragments read בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים ("sons of God"). Notably the Septuagint has the phrase "angels of the Lord" (ἀγγελοὶ θεοῦ). This idea is linked to the idea that there are seventy nations, as detailed in the "Table of Nations" of Genesis 10 (cf. 1 Chronicles 1). Paul Scott demonstrates that this was a widespread idea in Judaism and likely one accepted by Paul.[110] Each nation has a heavenly ruler (ἄρχων; cf. Daniel 10:13 LXX) who, under the sovereignty of God, rules or looks over their respective people groups.[111] Calvin seems to interpret these angels as "obedient" and "virtuous" servants of God, and not among the "devils" or fallen

[109] Michael S. Heiser, "Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible " *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18, no. 1 (2008): 13.

[110] Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 216-218.

[111] Patrick D. Miller, "God's Other Stories: On the Margins of Deuteronomic Theology," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (ed. P. D. Miller; vol. 267 of *JSOTSup*; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 593-595.

angels.[112] However this perspective seems to ignore the judgement pronounced upon these angels in Psalm 82, and would prevent an identification of these angels with the objects of the nations' religions and cults, seeing them rather as administrative figures. Heiser argues that these angels are in fact to be identified with the "gods" (אֱלֹהִים) of the divine council, as seen for example in Psalm 82, and that they have "fallen" and oppose God to some extent.[113] These beings thus deceive the peoples for their own ends, which is at the same time affirmed to occur under the sovereignty of God. Martin Dibelius suggests that this belief in *Völkerengel* would be part of Paul's assumptions about the demons, although he argues that Paul implies that the spirit world is conquered and abolished by Christ, which allows ancient belief in demons to sit alongside modern scepticism very neatly.[114]

Elsewhere in the Septuagint the term δαιμόνιον is sometimes paralleled with 'evil spirit'—πνεῦμα πονηρόν (Tobit 6:8). Personhood and personal agency is implied in the description of the demons and the evil spirits. Expansions of these ideas can be found in the Pseudepigrapha, for example in the *Testament of Solomon* which is likely to have been composed around the first century AD, and which purports to be a warning from Solomon concerning "the powers of the demons" and detailing "their forms as well as the names of the angels by which

[112] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 93 (I.14.5).

[113] Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 113-115; cf. idem, "Does Deuteronomy 32:17 Assume or Deny the Reality of Other Gods?," 137.

[114] Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt in Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909), 189, 208.

they are thwarted."[115] The demons are elsewhere associated with the giants of Genesis 6:1—4.[116] The Pseudepigrapha contain some extensive formulations of this idea: Jubilees links them to fallen angels who fathered children with human women (Jubilees 7:21—22; see also T. Reuben 5, which seeks to provide an explanation for the biological origin of the 'giants' that overcomes the difficulty in explaining how an angel and a human can have a child, whereby the offspring have a human biological father who is possessed by the spirit of a fallen angel), most of whom are consigned to the underworld after the Flood, but some of whom are permitted by God to remain on the earth (Jubilees 10:8—9). 1 Enoch 14—16 presents a similar origin story for the demons whereby they are the spirits of the dead 'giants'.[117] 1 Enoch 15:9 identifies the "sons of God" of Genesis 6:2—4 (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים; οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ 'the angels of God' in the Alexandrian LXX text) who take human women as partners and father 'giants' as πνεύματα πονηρὰ, and the demons as the spirits of their dead offspring. It is sometimes claimed that this tradition is an inclusion of pagan mythology into the book of Genesis and thence to the Jewish tradition,[118] but this is not in itself an explanation of the claim. Parallels do indeed exist in other Ancient Near Eastern mythologies, but the 'giants' tradition is presented in Genesis as something which did indeed happen, the many questions posed by the claim of demons and humans having

[115] 15:14; OTP 1:976.

[116] Cf. DDD, 618-620.

[117] Cf. DDD, 893-895.

[118] E.g. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A commentary* (The Old Testament library; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961), 109-112; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (vol. 1; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 503.

offspring notwithstanding. Philo, for instance, is at pains to emphasise that the story is not a myth (in the sense of a fiction).[119] The demons are then the spirits of the dead 'giants', who are evil in origin and in nature. Demon-possession might therefore be a phenomenon of these spirits, who once had a physical body, seeking again to be embodied or to control a body. Josephus appears to hold a related view, identifying the demons as "the spirits of evil humans" (πονηρῶν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπῶν πνεύματα, Jewish War 3.559), a term which could designate, *inter alia*, the 'giants'.[120] 1 Enoch also seems to suggest, however, that the demons pre-existed this incident (19:1) and it is not entirely clear whether this refers to the demons who are identified as the spirits of the 'giants' or a different group of spiritual beings. The 'giants' story is alluded to by other New Testament authors, notably in Jude 6ff., 1 Peter 3:19, and 2 Peter 2:4. Some have suggested that this concept lies behind Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 11:10 that women be veiled or otherwise cover their head during worship "because of the angels,"[121] although it is far from certain that this is what is meant.[122] It is not

[119] Philo, *On the giants*, 58 (LCL 227:474-475): "Some may think that the Lawgiver is alluding to the myths (μεμυθευμένα) of the poets about the giants, but indeed myth-making is a thing most alien to him, and his mind is set on following in the steps of truth and nothing but truth"

[120] This is suggested by Josephus' use of "evil humans" to designate the 'giants' in Antiquities 1.72ff. See also Roland Deines, "Josephus, Salomo und die τέκη," in *Die Dämonen - Demons* (eds A. Lange, et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[121] For example, Lyder Brun, "'Um die Engel willen,' 1 Kor 11,10," *ZNW* 14 (1913); G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers* (Oxford: OUP, 1956), 273.

[122] Fee, *First Epistle*, 521, views this interpretation as "impossible" because it would imply a type of full-face veiling for which there is no evidence in the first century period. Cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 839-841.

possible to state for certain that Paul accepts this "giants" tradition, although its acceptance in broad form by the translators of the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, and other New Testament authors suggest that it was not an aberrant sectarian belief, but one which it is reasonable to posit Paul as holding.[123]

Dibelius' view that Paul would not have been interested in Jewish apocalyptic or the views of the Septuagint where it differs from the Hebrew text is no longer sustainable in the light of work done in the past century on Paul and Second-Temple Judaism.[124] His claim that Paul in 1 Corinthians aims to deny entirely the reality of the pagan gods, rather than identify them with demons, does still have some modern proponents however.[125] This seems to be contingent upon an interpretation of 1 Corinthians which sees Paul as essentially endorsing the position of the "strong" or the "knowledgeable" that there is only one God and an idol is nothing. As argued above, I do not think this is correct. The view of Dibelius, Wink, Bruce, and others, which sees Paul as a "demythologizer" when it comes to the unreality of demons is unpersuasive. As Richard Bell has shown, Paul has an intensely "mythic" imagination.[126] The interpretation of Paul where "demons" are only impersonal forces reflects a post-Enlightenment Western view, expressed by Bultmann famously as simply

[123] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 109, suggests there is a significance to the fact that "Paul never thought it of relevance to describe or define these powers in any detail" and that he may be holding a deliberate agnosticism on the details.

[124] Dibelius, *Geisterwelt,* 2-3.

[125] Dibelius, *Geisterwelt*, 68-69.

[126] Bell, *Deliver Us From Evil,* 2, 44-45.

"unglaubhaft" ('unbelievable') for modern ears in the age of the electric lightbulb.[127] This implausibility may be a difficulty of contemporary Western thought, rather than one shared by Christians in non-Western contexts, and even within Western culture may seem more plausible in some Christian traditions than in others.[128] Simon Stocks relates an anecdote of being told by a Christian minister from Goa, India, that a significant problem facing his converts was their temptation to participate in the veneration of idols, which the minister considered a "demonic influence". Stocks (himself British) remarks that this "describes a world which is quite strange to me, and yet one which I can readily relate to biblical texts."[129] It may, as Thiselton suggests, be a particularly strange way of thinking for Protestant scholars, whose Bibles do not contain the apocryphal books.[130] Cheung complains precisely that this is a totalizing move by Western scholars who are insufficiently self-critical about the heritage of the Enlightenment, and points out that such things are not unbelievable, but rather make a great deal of sense to Christians in China and

[127] Rudolf Bultmann, "Neues Testament und Mythologie," in *Kerygma und Mythos, Band I: Ein theologisches Gespräch* (ed. H.-W. Bartsch; Hamburg: Reich & Heidrich, 1948), 17.

[128] See Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (ed. P. L. Berger; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), who suggests that secularization is a feature predominantly of elite culture and Western education and that, globally speaking, "the difficult-to-understand phenomenon is not Iranian mullahs but American university professors" (4).

[129] Simon P. Stocks, *Popular Idols: A Biblical View on Gods, Desire, and Idolatry* (Grove Booklets B79; Cambridge: Grove Books, 2016), 3.

[130] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 109.

other non-Western situations.[131] Furthermore, we are not faced with an either-or between the two choices of personal demons and impersonal cosmic powers.[132] The cosmic powers may be made up of individual demonic agents, analogously to an army being composed of soldiers and having within it both the terminology of individualized ranks (e.g. captain, colonel, general) and terminology for impersonal units (e.g. company, regiment, division). Chris Forbes has argued that this is precisely what we find in Paul, with terminology covering a range of dimensions when it comes to angels and demons, from the pure abstractions of "height" and "depth" in Romans 8:38, through the personified abstractions of the "cosmic powers" and similar terms, the literary personifications of powers such as "sin" and "death" in Romans, and personal spiritual beings (the demons).[133] The numerous names and titles in the Bible and the intertestamental literature might therefore reflect attempts to fill out a detailed taxonomy of these beings, a task which will not be attempted here. Thus what Paul has in mind when he warns of the danger posed by demons who "stand behind" the idols is a varied realm of malevolent spiritual beings whose influence and purposes will be opposed to God.[134]

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[131] Cheung, "Idol Food," 304-305. See also Chris Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?," *JSNT* 23, no. 82 (2001): 61.

[132] Contra Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law,* 152-154.

[133] Chris Forbes, "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology? Principalities, Powers and the Elements of the World in their Hellenistic Context," *JSNT* 24, no. 85 (2002): 51-73.

[134] Mody, "Relationship," 289-296.

Paul does mean to identify the idols as connected with demons; that is, real and personal powers which, although existing under the sovereignty of God, are opposed to his purposes and seek to deceive people for their own ends. Paul does not believe that the demons "inhabit" the idols, but rather that the "co-opt" the worship offered to the idols for their own purposes. Although it is unusual for pagan religion of any type to identify the objects of their worship as "demons" in the sense of evil spirits,[135] we should note that this is an attempt at an objective description of pagan religion by Paul and not at all a sympathetic "insider" account from the perspective of a pagan. Corinth's pagans would have termed Asclepius, Sarapis, Isis and possibly others including Demeter and Kore "gods" (θεοί) rather than any other term.[136] The demons especially, and even the angels and other divine agents, were not worshipped in normative Judaism contemporary with Paul,[137] and Paul likewise forbids participation in such worship for Christians.[138] For Paul, who accepted and shared "the exclusiveness

[135] Cf. Bernie H. Reynolds, "What are Demons of Error?," *Revue de Qumran* 22, no. 4 (2006): 612-613, who argues that those in Ancient Israel who offered child sacrifice did so conscious that it was an attempt to appease a demon. Some contemporary practitioners of Satanism may also be self-conscious about honouring and worshipping demons.

[136] John Fotopoulos, *Food offered to idols in Roman Corinth: a social-rhetorical reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 212.

[137] See Blair, "De-Demonizing the Old Testament," 11; Paul A. Rainbow, "Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article," *NovT* 33, no. 1 (1991): 86.

[138] Incidentally, this tends to support the "early high Christology" hypothesis that worship of Jesus as fully divine originates with the first generation of Christians rather than being a later development, since Paul here forbids association with demons and elsewhere the "worship of angels" (Colossians 2:18, assuming Pauline authorship) yet ascribes worship and divine honour to Jesus (1 Corinthians 8:6). Cf. Bauckham, *God Crucified,* 28; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus*

of Israel's monotheism",[139] the only legitimate recipient of worship is Israel's God, and the Lord Jesus, whom Paul places in association with this God in 1 Corinthians 8:6. This is what N.T. Wright has called "Christological monotheism," which seems the most helpful term for describing Paul's doctrine of God.[140]

It is useful to add some qualification to the concept of "monotheism" for Paul. It is common to see Paul's strong affirmation of monotheism as a denial of the existence of other gods entirely. Paul is thus seen as presenting a worldview where there is the one true God, and the "gods" of other religions are simply fictitious.[141] In this understanding, Paul essentially agrees with the "strong" position of the "knowledgeable" and considers it "ignorance" and "non-rational" to consider the pagan gods to have any real existence or power.[142] This view certainly does justice to the critique of idolatry as empty or vain in the Old

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Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 48; Wright, *Paul and The Faithfulness of God*, 1:644-653.

[139] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 34.

[140] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 129. Hurtado's "binitarianism" can be misunderstood in the light of the "Two powers" controversy. Cf. Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A suggested strategy* (LNTS; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 78; Rainbow, "Jewish Monotheism," 90-91; Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977), 149. For an ambitious argument in favour of the propriety of describing Paul as "Trinitarian", see Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, relations, and the Pauline letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

[141] E.g. F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 229.

[142] So Richard A. Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1—6," *NTS* 27 (1981): 37.

Testament and in the Jewish tradition.[143] Paul certainly shares the view that the idol itself is not an animate being (e.g. 10:19). This denial of the power of the idol itself coheres with texts like 1 Thessalonians 1:9 where Paul describes conversion involving turning from idols "to serve the living and true God" (δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ), where the idols are implicitly held as lifeless in contrast, and Acts 19:26 where the craftsmen of Ephesus are reported as understanding Paul to teach that "gods" (θεοί) made by human hands, that is, the idols themselves, are not real gods. However, I do not think Paul does fully endorse the position of the "knowledgeable" in Corinth by following this through to the "flattening" conclusion that no spiritual being or power stands behind the idol. Schrage is correct to note that Paul concedes the existence of the "other" gods in 8:5 and critiques their power and divinity rather than their existence.[144] They are not, according to Schrage, projections or fictions.[145] Rather, in 10:20, Paul endorses the Jewish tradition that the gods of the nations are demons, or that demons "stand behind" the identities of the pagan gods.[146] They are not the real God, but are falsely called "gods" by their adherents, which is the real offense of idolatry, a

[143] Cf. Isaiah 44:14—17; Jeremiah 10:1—16; Hosea 13:1—3; Habakkuk 2:18—19. Hadas-Leber summarises this tradition as the belief that "idols are only inert matter" ("Jerusalem Against Rome," 306).

[144] Schrage, *Erste Brief,* 2.236-239. We might also note Paul's apparent designation of Satan by the term ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τουτοῦ in 2 Corinthians 4:4 to signal that Paul is not overly concerned about the application of the term θεός to demons and false gods, so long as it is clear that the normative approach for Christians is to hold that they are pretenders to the title of the "real" God. In Philipians 3:19 Paul can even use θεός to signal the metaphorical idolatry of those whose "god is their belly".

[145] Ibid., 2.240.

[146] Ibid., 2.244.

matter more severe than the image-making (though both are prohibited).[147] Paul wishes to proclaim the true God in contrast to these other pretenders, who exist, but who are in reality demons by nature and not God. If Rody's view that the demons "co-opt" the worship given to idols is true, then it becomes possible to see how Paul can affirm the essential emptiness and worthlessness of idols while also cautioning the Corinthians that the worship of idols involves a participation with demonic powers.

A final question then, is what place these religions which are co-opted by and serve demons have under the sovereignty of God. The essential issue is whether we are to understand the "other" gods as serving a redemptive and revelatory purpose, or a purpose which leads to hardening and judgement. Patrick Miller cautiously proposes the former view, in a study of the aforementioned texts in Deuteronomy 4 and 32, proposing that we view pagan religion as "God's other stories" and presents the other gods as part of God's sovereign rule; they are not for Israel to worship but "God's redemptive work on behalf of other nations."[148] Miller does not define what "redemptive" means here, nor does he provide any textual evidence for the claim that these "other stories" are redemptive in the sense that they might lead to salvation. Miller cautions against the use of this idea as a legitimation for pluralism, arguing that in the context of Deuteronomy, "the claim about the Lord having allotted the other

[147] Jose Faur, "The Biblical Idea of Idolatry," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 69, no. 1 (1978).

[148] Miller, "God's Other Stories," 593.

gods to the other nations and so placing their activity within the sovereign rule of the Lord is not put forth in behalf of a tolerance of other religions ... it is part of a critique of Israel's interest in and attachment to those other gods."[149] However this view might well cohere with either a Christian pluralist approach, which sees Christianity as the right way to God for Christians (and Christians ought not to be syncretists any more than the original addressees of Deuteronomy would be expected to adopt elements of other religions into their lives, since that is not the right way for them) and the "other stories" with their own angels (or demons) as tutelary gods under the sovereignty of God as providing possible other salvations or paths to the same salvation. Inclusivists might also appeal to this idea, although there would be significant theological hurdles to overcome to posit the demons as intermediate agents of salvation *solus Christus*.[150] However, instead of viewing these other gods and the religions which serve them as "God's other stories", it is possible to view them as "God's rivals".[151] The demons are in their very essence deceptive and malevolent beings, and do not bring those whose worship serves them to any kind of redemptive end.[152] If the demons are then opposed to God, what purpose might they be

[149] Ibid., 601.

[150] Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 3.604-605; As an example from Paul's thought, his rhetorical question in 2 Corinthians 6:15a seems to assume that Christ has no partnership with such powers.

[151] Gerald R. McDermott, *God's Rivals: Why has God allowed other religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007).

[152] Witherington, "Idle Thoughts," 250.

achieving in leading the nations astray? One answer posited by Edward Meadors is that the purpose served is to harden the heart of the idolater, intensifying their sin. As he notes, this divine action "appears on the surface to contradict the doctrine of God's love and the whole enterprise of Christian evangelism".[153] However, the idea that this hardening forms part of a possible divine punishment finds support from Paul (cf. Romans 9:17—18; 11:7b, 25b) and Meadors argues that it can be considered an intrinsic consequence of idolatry. When Meadors claims that heart hardening follows from idolatry, it is almost impossible to distinguish this from a claim that hardening follows from sin. In fact, Meadors reformulates the axiom in this way himself: "Sin caused hardening is evident throughout the OT."[154] Thus one divine purpose which may be achieved by God's permitting demons to deceive the nations through idolatry is the opposite of redemptive; it is to intensify sin for punitive ends. However, there may also be a way of seeing the divine purpose as leading indirectly towards redemptive ends for some alongside the punitive end for others. Strange's idea of "subversive fulfilment" whereby the gospel represents the "subversion, antithetical contradiction, confrontation, condemnation and crisis" of other religions but at the same time fulfils some of the existential hope and desire that this experience of crisis in the confrontation with the gospel

[153] Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 56.

[154] Ibid., 173.

provokes, can draw support from this idea.[155] The divine purpose which the rebellious and fallen demons unwittingly fulfil is both to intensify judgement upon the adherents of false religion, but also to create objective conditions whereby the gospel will appear as good news to the idolater.

[155] Daniel Strange, *For Their Rock is not as Our Rock: An evangelical theology of religions* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2014), 268.

Paul and the Knowledge of God

Aside from the evaluation of other religions according to ethical and salvific criteria, a comprehensive view from a Christian perspective of other religions should establish whether or not those religions might be mediators of revelation. Christianity has from the outset made claims to possess and be a response to special acts of divine revelation.[1] We have seen this claim in Paul; both in his attitude towards the revelation given to Israel and which constitutes "the scriptures" for him, and in his further claims to have been given special revelation, which he often refers to as a "mystery" (μυστήριον).[2] This term may sometimes refer to the interpretation of the OT, as is possibly the case in Romans 11:25, but elsewhere seems to be the revelation of something kept secret from "before the ages" as in Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 2:7 (cf. Ephesians 1:19; 3:3, 4, 9; Colossians 1:26—27). The implication is that Paul received this by revelation, as he states in Galatians 1:12 where Paul emphasises that he received the gospel by means of revelation (δι' ἀποκαλύψεως) and not from a human (παρὰ ἀνθρώπου). Similar claims to revelation can be found in Romans 16:25; 2 Corinthians 12:1, 7; and Ephesians 3:3. The point is not that Paul expects every Christian to have a

[1] Cf. James I. Packer, "Contemporary Views of Revelation," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (ed. C. F. H. Henry; London: Tyndale Press, 1959), 89-91.

[2] Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 304-305.

similar experience, but to emphasise that his teaching concerning the gospel is the product of divinely revealed truth.

This claim is really fundamental to Christian thought, since it enables the claims of theology to be taken seriously as objective description of facts about God, the self, and the world, which could not be arrived at without revelation. Attempts to construct theology, and in particular to make any statements about an invisible God, in the absence of revelation could fairly be critiqued as bare assertion or language games. If human beings are finite and limited creatures, then any knowledge of God that they might possess must come about through God's manifestation of himself through revelation.[3]

Special and General Revelation

It is helpful to distinguish between some different concepts of revelation. By "revelation", Christian theologians typically mean God's communication to human beings. Historically, most theologians have made a distinction between "general" revelation and "special" or "particular" revelation. General revelation is typically thought of as indirect, addressed to humanity in general and universally accessible. The supposed loci of general revelation vary from theologian to theologian, but typically include nature (that is, the physical world), history, and the human self, or an innate knowledge. Special revelation is thought of as direct communication occurring in specific instances, for

[3] Paul Helm, *The Divine Revelation: The Basic Issues* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 11.

example in God's supposed speaking to the prophets, his inspiration of the Scriptures, and in the person and life of Jesus Christ.

	General Revelation	Special / Particular Revelation
Recipients	Humanity in general	Specific people or groups
Scope	Universal	Particular
Communication	Indirect	Direct
Loci	**Nature** History Human self-awareness / innate knowledge	**Scripture** Prophecy Jesus Christ

In practice, discussion of revelation in Christian theology has tended to focus heavily on nature and scripture. In terms of other religions, the issues are different with both of these. One issue is whether or not special revelation has occurred in other religious traditions. A separate issue is the question of whether there is in fact a general revelation in nature, and if so, whether it is sufficient for someone who has not encountered special revelation to be saved.

An early and influential metaphor used to describe these two (supposed) forms of revelation and their relationship is that of "two books" – the Bible, itself

literally a book, and Nature, which is metaphorically seen as a book in communicating truth about God. The groundwork for this metaphor is present in the Old and New Testaments, where God's self-communication is frequently described as a "word"[4], or indeed "the Word". Added to the Judeo-Christian belief in God as Creator, it becomes possible to develop a metaphor of "nature as a book". The metaphor can be pressed a little further, as in terms of theological method it matters which book you read and in what order you read them.[5]

The first explicit use of the language of "two books" to describe nature and scripture occurs in Tertullian's work (c.207 AD), so this is one of the earliest and most persistent metaphors in Christian religious epistemology. Tertullian treats the "book of nature" as the marvels and beauty of the physical world, as well as its perceived ordering and regularity, as speaking universally about God. Indeed, for Tertullian, revelation from reading the book of nature precedes knowledge of God from Scripture or Christian preaching:

> "We state that first we know God through nature and after we recognise him in the doctrines." [6]

The idea is that theology may begin with reasoned reflection on the physical world and universally-accessible arguments, before proceeding on to Scripture and Christian teachings which act to confirm and expand the knowledge of God

[4] See for example, Psalm 119 or John 1:1—4; but the concept is extremely widespread in the Biblical texts and seems to be the dominant way of describing revelation.

[5] George L. Murphy, "Reading God's Two Books," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 58, no. 1 (2006).

[6] Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* I,18 [PL 2, 266]

we have through reason. Augustine is another proponent of this view, likening the nature to a book which the unlearned (*idiotes*) may read:

> "It is the divine page you must listen to; it is the book of the universe you must observe. The pages of Scripture can only be read by those who know how to read and write, while everyone, even the illiterate, can read the book of the universe."[7]

Thomas Aquinas made this position the foundation of his *Summa Theologica*, and his influence lies behind the statement of the First Vatican Council (1870) which formalises the classical view, that God may be known through either the Book of Nature or Scripture, and anathematises those who deny that God may be known truly through reason alone. On this view, Scripture and the church's teaching exist to flesh out this knowledge of God and reveal important but nonessential truths. This 'classical' view differs from what we could term the 'Enlightenment view' in that the 'classical' view still sees a significant role for the Book of Scripture in theology. By contrast, Enlightenment thinkers such as Ludwig Feuerbach and Friedrich Schleiermacher wished to avoid appeals to Scripture or Church teaching, and argued on the basis of nature and reason alone.[8] In the eighteenth century this approach can be seen in both

[7] *Narrations in Psalms*, 45, 7 [PL 36, 518]. Also 'Heaven and earth cry out to you: God made me' ("*Clamat ad te caelum et terra: Deus me fecit*.") *Sermones* 68,6 Mai 126 = PLS 2, 501-512.

[8] Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 57; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (ET, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1928).

Protestant liberalism, as well as Deism and Scepticism, which ultimately move beyond the bounds of what may be called Christian theology.[9]

In conscious repudiation of Protestant Liberalism, the twentieth-century Protestant theologian Karl Barth and others following him developed a view based on the rejection of a "book of nature" entirely. Barth noted that Aquinas' thought rested on the philosophical axiom of the "analogy of being"—that is, a relationship of similarity between God as creator and the world as his creation. Aquinas' position (and indeed the classical view of the "two books" metaphor) relies on being able to know what God is like by looking at His works (the creation and ordering of the physical world). Barth simply asserts that this doesn't work: we have no certainty that a work reflects the character of its author, and we cannot know about God from the creation. Barth asserts that the proper theological term for reasoning from nature to God is idolatry.

> "… but always, when man has tried to read the truth from sun, moon and stars, or from himself, the result has been an idol."[10]

Theologians who begin by reading the book of nature and then reading the book of Scripture fall into the trap of identifying God with what has been made and therefore misidentifying him. This view, which I term the Barthian view, rejects the "two books" metaphor in favour of an understanding of revelation

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[9] Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and Histoey* (trans. B. Cozens and J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1972), 110-111, 534-537. See also Barth's preface to Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*.

[10] Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (trans. G. Thomson; London: SCM, 1949), 52.

which only accepts special revelation as valid for Christian theology.[11] This leads to a style of theology which is strongly focused on the Bible as revelatory and the basis for Christian doctrine and does not seek to ground its assertions in universally-accessible observations or reasoning.

Fourthly, there is the view that accepts both the book of nature and the book of scripture as loci of God's revelation, and thus as valid sources for Christian theology, but reverses the order employed in the 'classical' view. This is often termed the Reformed view, because of its association with Protestant Reformed theology, and John Calvin in particular, but it has antecedents in medieval and renaissance thought. Hugh of St. Victor and Bonaventura are two examples of late Medieval theologians who embody this approach. God has revealed himself in nature, but the human intellect has been damaged by sin so that it cannot reliably perceive or interpret this revelation. Thus revelation is objectively present in nature, but subjectively inaccessible without additional revelation through Scripture. This idea is latently present in Martin Luther's thought, particularly his motif of a hidden God, a *deus absconditius*, but made explicit in the work of John Calvin, where it forms the basis for his *Institutes*.[12] Calvin allows that God could be known from creation, were it not for the corruption of the human mind by sin:

[11] Interestingly, this differs from most Protestant 'fundamentalism', which relies heavily on the classical view in arguments from design and arguments from creation.

[12] Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Ashgate Philosophy of Religion Series; Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 116-118.

> "But although the Lord represents both himself and his everlasting Kingdom in the mirror of his works with great clarity, such is our stupidity that we grow increasingly dull towards so manifest testimonies, as they flow away without profiting us."[13]

Thus, one must read the direct and explicit book of Scripture, before one may correctly perceive the indirect revelation of God in the book of nature. This leads to a style of theology which tends to value the Bible as the primary source and authority for Christian theology, but which seeks to gain from interaction with "the book of nature" through philosophy and the natural sciences.

I believe that this fourth view is the most supportable from what we find in Paul, and this has some implications for a Theology of Religions. The priority and indispensability of special revelation for salvation means that other religions and their adherents will be unable to attain salvation through reliance upon general revelation alone. This means that the issue of the extent of access to special revelation is important in evaluating the other religions. The Reformed claim that the human mind is corrupted by sin to the extent that it makes true knowledge of God impossible apart from supervenient divine grace is also significant, and finds some support from Paul. The implication of this for the evaluation of other religions is likely that they are inadequate and distorted in their representation of God and the world to the extent of being idolatrous.[14]

[13] Calvin, *Institutes*, 22-23 (I.5.11).

[14] As argued by Strange, *For Their Rock is not as Our Rock*, 235-236.

Romans 1:18—32

One text in Romans which seems to deal with the question of a "natural" knowledge of God through creation is found in Romans 1. Romans 1:19—20 is frequently given as a "proof-text" for the idea of an ability to know God from the evidence of creation. Paul states that humanity is "without excuse" (ἀναπολόγητος) since "what can be known about God is manifest among them" (τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς) and further that God has made this known to them (ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανέρωσεν). Paul states that although God's attributes are "invisible" (ἀόρατα) they are "knowable clearly" (νοούμενα καθορᾶται) through "the things which have been made" (τοῖς ποιήμασιν).

Despite this, many commentators see a need to qualify this idea in view of the context of the broader argument in 1:18—3:20 which seeks to establish that, in fact, "no one seeks for God" and all humanity stands condemned before him.[15]

This qualification has some justification, and it is clear from what follows that Paul does not intend to say that such knowledge of God is sufficient for salvation, nor that each and every human being knows these things about God. Paul goes on to describe this knowledge as essentially lost to (Gentile)[16]

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[15] Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 35-50; Käsemann, *Romans*, 41-42; Moo, *Romans*, 106-107; Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (trans. S. S. Schatzmann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 35; Wilckens, *Römerbrief,* 1.105-107.

[16] Schreiner, *Romans*, 85. Seifrid suggests here that both Jew and Gentile are dealt with because Paul does not introduce an ethnic distinction until 2:9 – see Mark A. Seifrid, "Natural Revelation and the Purpose of the Law in Romans," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49, no. 1 (1998): 117. However, we might note that what Paul says

humanity. In 1:21 the use of the aorist participle γνόντες rather than the present-tense γινώσκοντες suggests that this knowledge cannot be viewed as extending to the present, being sequentially prior to the failure to glorify and give thanks to God. Rather, Paul depicts a process of their thinking becoming futile (ἐματαιώθησαν) and having their hearts become "darkened" (ἐσκοτίσθη). This seems to be drawing from Psalm 93:11 LXX (94:11 Hebrew) where the thoughts (διαλογισμός) of humanity are said to be μάταιος in view of their apparent ignorance of God and defiance of his law.[17]

Paul then goes on to describe the idolatry of Gentile religion in "exchanging" (ἀλλάσσω) the glory of God for idols (εἰκόνες) in 1:23 and "exchanging" (μεταλλάσσω) truth about God for a lie in 1:25. This leads, according to Paul, to a further "exchange" in 1:26 of "natural" relations for homosexuality,[18] along with other egregious wrongdoing (1:29—31). This condemnation is remarkably similar to other Jewish polemics against the immorality of the Gentiles and their ignorance of God, as evidenced for example in Wisdom 11—16.[19] According to Paul in Romans 1, the present state of human beings is one of corruption and an

applies more naturally to Gentiles who do not possess access to special revelation via the OT or Israel's tradition.

[17] So Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 50.

[18] The idea of homosexuality being an inversion of the natural order can be found in other ancient literature. For example, Pseudo-Lucian, *Affairs of the Heart*, 19-20 [LCL 432:180-183] describes homosexuality as κατὰ φύσιν; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 751C [LCL 425:320-321] describes it as παρὰ φύσιν (Romans 1:26 has παρὰ φύσιν). This perhaps explains Paul's choice of it as an illustration of the immoral consequences of false belief.

[19] Bell, *No one seeks for God*, 51-52; Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:112; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 48.

ignorance of God, rather than knowledge of him, as evidenced by the idolatry and immorality of the Gentile world. As Murphy states,

> "What Paul says is that the natural world offers material from which God's eternal power and divine nature' could be known, but that people uniformly refuse to know God and instead construct idols. The problem, in other words, is bad natural theology."[20]

Romans 1:19—20 is thus misused when it is adduced as a proof-text for an actual natural theology in the sense of a knowledge of God which is, in fact, available to empirical human beings.[21] There has been a historical suppression of this knowledge by humanity in general so that what we, in fact, find is that the situation outside of special divine revelation is marked by idolatry and immorality.

The idea of a "noetic effect of sin" is relevant here and supportable from this passage. This idea holds that humanity's condition under the power of sin and in the realm of Adam includes an impairment of our reasoning and perception. Stephen Moroney, building on Emil Brunner's theology, has suggested that this impairment is most severe when it comes to "man's inward life" and that the "more closely a subject is related to man's inward life, the more natural human knowledge is "infected" by sin while the further away it is, the less will be its

[20] Murphy, "Reading God's Two Books," 65.

[21] Helm suggests that we should therefore *not* speak of a natural theology, for a universal knowledge of God is not present in humanity. Helm, *The Divine Revelation*, 25.

effect."[22] This includes theological reasoning,[23] which applies to Christian theology as well, but the effects are exacerbated in the realm outside of Christ where the sin-hardened mind will tend towards idolatry and error.[24]

The idea of a fallen mind is supported by the Paul's implicit and explicit references to Adam in Romans. The unspoken background to this passage is, as has been discussed in chapter 5, the story of Adam. It makes no sense to read this passage as referring to each and every human being empirically as having an inchoate knowledge of God they have consciously suppressed, any more than it makes sense to accuse every individual human being of homosexuality, or every vice listed in 1:29—31. Rather, Paul has in mind humanity as a whole (to which ἄνθρωποι can refer), with the exchange of knowledge for ignorance being related to the idea of the fall of Adam. If anyone can be said to have access to a natural knowledge of God, it would have been Adam, yet, sinning, he lost this for his descendants. Morna Hooker has presented an influential argument for this view,[25] which has more recently been supported by John Levison's observations of numerous parallels between the vocabulary and ideas in Romans 1 and the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*.[26] Paul here rather underlines the

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[22] Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of How Sin Affects Our Thinking* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 33.

[23] Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship," 432.

[24] Paul Helm, "John Calvin, the *Sensus Divinitatis*, and the noetic effects of sin," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43, no. 2 (1998).

[25] Hooker, "Adam in Romans I," 297; cf. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," 417.

[26] John R. Levison, "Adam and Eve in Romans 1:18-25 and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve," *NTS* 50, no. 4 (2004): 519-534.

inadequacy of the created world to serve as a source of information about God for the Gentiles, as evidenced by their manifest failure to arrive at the truth.[27] Gentile religion is rather characterised by believing lies (2:15) and the practice of idolatry (2:13—14), and is associated with sexual immorality and various other moral transgressions.

Paul goes on in Romans 2 to indict the supposedly more moral with sin as well. It is not the case that avoiding certain named transgressions makes one sinless: the seemingly-moral Gentile is condemned in their passing judgement upon others and for having a hard and impenitent heart (2:1—8). The supposedly more moral Jew fares no better for Paul, and in fact is charged with hypocrisy for sinning whilst knowing the commands of God (2:17—27). Paul drives in this section towards his conclusion in 3:9 that both Jew and Gentile are under the power of sin; and in 3:23 that all have sinned and fall short of (or lack)[28] the glory of God. The problem extends not only to the egregiously immoral, but also to the religious. The root of the problem is an exchange of the glory of god for other things by humanity in general, and a consequent inability of human beings now under the power of sin to recognize divine revelation and respond appropriately. Outrageous sinners along with the more circumspect stand equally condemned in Paul's sight if they do not obey the gospel and seek

[27] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 50.

[28] So Käsemann, *Romans,* 94-95: "the divine likeness is here regarded as lost since the fall … [and] will be restored to a person in his participation in Christ's lordship".

salvation in Christ. The various religions would, in this perspective, be fairly said to constitute an "idolatrous human response to divine revelation"[29]

1 Corinthians 2:6—16

The idea of a limitation to human knowledge of God is also found in 1 Corinthians 2:6—16.[30] In the immediately preceding context of 1:17—2:5, Paul has been criticising the Corinthian attitude towards "wisdom" (σοφία), and has made a distinction between human and divine wisdom (1:24—25). The gospel (i.e. the "message concerning the cross") in 1:18 appears as "foolishness" (μωρία) to non-Christians but as "God's power" and "God's wisdom" to Christians (the referent of "those who are being saved"). Paul goes on in 2:6—16 to describe the "wisdom" of the gospel. It is, in contrast to human σοφία, "not of this age" nor "of the rulers of this age", but from God. In 2:10—16 Paul describes the manner in which this σοφία is to be received, and some implications of this.

The σοφία is said in 2:7 to be "a mystery not known before" (ἐν μυστηρίῳ) which has now been revealed. I suggest that the best way to understand the way in which the σοφία of God is a "mystery" is that the σοφία corresponds to the

[29] Strange, *For Their Rock is not as Our Rock,* 236.

[30] Some scholars have suggested that this is a non-Pauline interpolation on the grounds of vocabulary, although there is absolutely no text-critical argument to be made for an interpolation here. In general one should say that arguments based on linguistic considerations in the Pauline letters should be treated with a great deal of caution, given the small sample size, and I do not consider it at all likely that the text here is an interpolation. Cf. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 82.

gospel, which is God's plan expressed pre-eminently in the cross.[31] Barrett explains this as:

> "God's wise plan of redeeming the world through a crucified Messiah, a plan which none but he could have prepared, and which man can grasp only if he is willing to surrender his natural man-centred values."[32]

The gospel thus corresponds to the divine wisdom rather than human wisdom, since it appears as foolishness to a human perspective. God's plan is an expression rather of divine wisdom. It has not been understood by "the rulers of this age" since they crucified Jesus and would not have done so if they had understood God's wisdom. Here Paul may be referring either to human rulers, who would not have crucified Jesus if they had perceived him to be the Messiah (in which case their ignorance is instrumentally beneficial for those whom Christ saves by his death), or demonic powers, who would not have orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus if they had known that they would thereby have assured their own defeat.[33] This latter idea may be the more persuasive, and aligns with the later development of *Christus Victor* theologies which would see the demons as ironically complicit in their own defeat.[34]

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[31] So Schrage, *Erste Brief,* 1.250.

[32] C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1968), 68. Cf. Kim, 99, who defines it as "God's plan of salvation both for the Jews and the Gentiles."

[33] Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 70; Fee, *First Epistle,* 103-104; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 233-239.

[34] "God was using Jesus as 'bait.' God knew Satan and his cohorts would not be able to resist seizing Christ, and yet God also knew that since Jesus was divine and sinless, Satan could not 'stomach' him." Gregory Boyd, "Christus Victor," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (eds J. Beilby and P. R. Eddy; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 36.

Paul's argument in 2:13—15 centres on a distinction between the Christian and non-Christian with respect to whether they accept "the things pertaining to God's Spirit" (τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ), which coincides with the ability to recognise and appreciate God's wisdom in the gospel. Paul's proclamation of this gospel is, in contrast to something taught by humans, an act of "explaining things of the spirit to spiritual people" (my translation of πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες in 2:13). Those who are "spiritual people" receive the gospel as something which pertains to the things of the spirit, as in actuality it is. By contrast, the non-Christian, whom I take to be the referent of ψυχικός here,[35] does not receive the gospel as something from God and fails to understand it. It appears as foolishness to the ψυχικός. I suggest that this implies an impediment to correctly perceiving God's action in the gospel as wisdom, and consequently being in error concerning spiritual things. This would mean that unaided human reason is not able to receive or appreciate the gospel. This explains what Paul means when he refers to the mystery of the gospel as something "hidden" in 2:7 to unaided human wisdom, but made known to Christians through the spirit (2:10). Thus true knowledge of God is impossible for non-Christians.[36]

I suggest that this passage is crucial when assessing Paul's attitude to the prospects of non-Christians knowing truth about God. Whatever might be knowable from the world is in fact insufficient for grasping the gospel, and could in fact lead to a rejection of the gospel as "foolishness". Human beings are

[35] As Schrage, *Erste Brief,* 1.263.
[36] Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech*, 17.

depicted as incapable of perceiving the gospel as something spiritual and thus accepting it, without God's acting to persuade them of it by the Spirit. Paul has been working here, as he does throughout 1 Corinthians 1—4, with a fundamental opposition between human and divine things. This, as Barth suggests, constitutes "the secret nerve of the whole epistle",[37] an opposition between human and divine wisdom. One may only perceive the message about the cross to be God's wisdom if God so acts by his Spirit to reveal the truth. Special revelation is absolutely necessary for salvation, else idolatry is the inevitable result. The idea of a noetic effect of sin receives further support from this passage, since the ψυχικός human being is depicted as incapable of receiving the gospel as divine wisdom.

In Christ there is a renewal of this fallen mind (cf. Romans 12:2), allowing the Christian to perceive God's wisdom. One might therefore suggest that there is the possibility of a "theology of nature" rather than a "natural theology"; that the Christian, having the "mind of Christ" (2:16) is also then able to see God at work in creation. Whatever natural revelation exists is therefore intelligible given the work of the Spirit to allow the Christian to perceive this and relate it to the truth about God found in the gospel. In fact, this, if true, would explain the popularity of the idea of natural revelation among Christians, since they are now capable of

[37] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. E. C. Hoskyns; Oxford: OUP, 1933), 18.

perceiving the wisdom of God in creation.[38] Possessing the mind of Christ, their perception of creation becomes changed. As Chrysostom argues:

> "The man who can see sees everything which belongs to the blind man, but no blind man can tell him what he is doing. Likewise we who believe can comprehend both our affairs and those of unbelievers, but they are helpless when it comes to trying to understand us."[39]

Acts 14:15—17 and 17:22—31

The evangelistic sermons of Paul in Lystra and Athens are frequently appealed to as evidence of a more positive evaluation of general or natural revelation by Paul. For example, Paul Copan and Kenneth Litwak suggest that Acts 17 forms a paradigmatic example of proclamation of the gospel which seeks to connect with an already existing knowledge of God in the contemporary world, including in many religions.[40] These two sermons can be discussed together as they bear a great deal of similarity in subject matter:

ACTS 14:15—17	**ACTS 17:22—31**
	"What you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (17:23)

[38] This allows for a harmonization with biblical passages, such as Psalm 19:1, which do appear to speak of a divine revelation being perceived in nature. This revelation is perceived and related from the perspective of someone already in possession of special revelation, and is unintelligible and likely to lead to error and idolatry outside of that framework.

[39] Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 7.11.

[40] Paul Copan and Kenneth D. Litwak, *The Gospel in the Marketplace of Ideas: Paul's Mars Hill Experience for our Pluralistic World* (Nottingham: IVP, 2014), 12-14. Cf. Karl O. Sandnes, "Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech," *JSNT* 50 (1993).

“you should turn from these vain things” (14:15)	“but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” (17:30)
“to a living God” (14:15)	God “does not live in temples made by man” (17:24)
“who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them” (14:15)	“The God who made the world and everything in it” (17:24)
“in past generations he allowed all nations to walk in their own ways” (14:16)	“the times of ignorance God overlooked” (17:30)
“yet he did not leave himself without witness” (14:17)	“yet he is actually not far from each one of us” (17:27)
“for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons” (14:7)	
	“he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed” (17:31)
	“of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (17:31)

Paul here, it should be noted, does not endorse the religious practices of the pagans he addresses, but in both sermons calls explicitly for them to turn or repent from the service of idols (14:15, 17:30). Paul seeks repentance and conversion to Christianity, and not simply toleration of his teaching.[41] Both sermons are evangelistic, rather than an uncommitted analysis of Gentile religion. Paul is also addressing Gentiles who, he presumes, do not necessarily share any of his beliefs about God, and so his proclamation includes monotheism and a critique of idolatry. Far from endorsing the Athenians' altar to the unknown God, Luke has told us Paul's reaction was one of distress at the idolatry of the city (17:16), and his mention of it in his sermon is a rhetorical route in to proclaiming a true, living God, whom the Athenians do not currently know. This is, as Malina and Pilch note, an established rhetorical gambit known as *captatio benevolentiae*, which aims "to flatter the audience into paying serious attention."[42]

The content of Paul's preaching is also not things which could reasonably be expected to have been derived from natural reason. In both sermons, the idea of a creator God is put forward, which is more a characteristic Jewish belief than one which was commonplace in the pagan world.[43] In the more extensive

[41] Craig S Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary Volume 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 2625.

[42] Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Social Science Commentary; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008), 126.

[43] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 29. Cf. Bertil E. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (trans. C. H. King; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1955), 147-149.

Athens sermon, we can see that Paul is telling the Athenians beliefs about God which are grounded in the Jewish tradition and found throughout the OT rather than appealing to natural revelation. As Parsons puts it, "though Paul does not quote scripture, his monotheism is biblically grounded."[44] In fact almost everything Paul mentions in Acts 17:22—31 finds an echo or verbal allusion in the Septuagint.[45] Hence, as Keener notes, any idea of natural theology in this passage must be significantly qualified.[46] Paul does not affirm that truth about God is available in Greek pagan religion, but rather feels that he must tell the adherents of these religions very basic things about creational monotheism as part of his proclamation. He challenges the ideologies of the Lystrans and Athenians and calls upon them to turn away from their idolatry, which he condemns in similar language to that used in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 and 1 Corinthians 8:5—6.

Conscience

Aside from natural revelation in the sense of creation or history, it is sometimes claimed that there is a form of revelation in the conscience of the human being, which is an internal awareness of theological and/or ethical truth. Romans 2:13—16 is sometimes given as an example of a possibility of the Gentiles attaining truth through their consciences, which are thought to

[44] Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 246.

[45] Kenneth D. Litwak, "Israel's Prophets Meet Athens' Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17,22—31," *Biblica* 85 (2004).

[46] Keener, *Acts,* 2622.

function as a *sensus divinitatis* or interior witness to God.[47] At stake is the question of what the conscience (συνείδησις) is and whether it mediates revelation.

If we look at the use of συνείδησις in Paul there are no examples which explicitly state that the conscience is revelatory or mediates information not known to the individual to whom it appertains. A human being has a conscience, but is function is accusatory or judgemental of their actions (Romans 2:15; 9:1; 13:5) and can be defiled by their actions (1 Corinthians 8:7, 10, 12). One may have a "good conscience" if one's own conduct is good (2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3; or a "seared conscience" which fails to condemn sin (1 Timothy 4:2, cf. Titus 1:15). However the conscience is never spoken of in terms of mediating information or divine revelation. The idea of some people having "weak consciences" in 1 Corinthians 8 should alert us to the non-revelatory character of the conscience, and the fact that it does not offer information about objective morality but is rather a subjective internal voice.

As Margaret Thrall has argued, Paul's use of συνείδησις reflects Stoic usage and essentially refers to an internal judgement of one's actions and conduct, with reference to one's own understanding of morally correct behaviour.[48]

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[47] G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 165-166; Cf. idem., "General and Special Divine Revelation," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (ed. C. F. H. Henry; London: Tyndale Press, 1959); Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology,* 16.

[48] Margaret E. Thrall, "The Pauline Use of ΣΥΝΕΙΔΗΣΙΣ," *NTS* 14, no. 1 (1967).

Therefore one's conscience cannot convey knowledge which one does not already know. This view is also defended by Bruce Harris, who demonstrates that conscience does not have to do with knowledge of God or response to the gospel, but simply to do with judging whether or not one has lived up to one's own moral standards.[49] This is also how the conscience has been understood by several commentators on Romans. Barrett defines it as one's "ability to detach himself from himself and to view his character and actions independently."[50]

Thus, I suggest, we ought to reject the idea of a revelatory conscience which can function as an internal source of revelation for the non-Christian.

Other religions and the 'supernatural'

If general revelation is insufficient for salvation, and there is no special revelation available through one's own conscience, is there a possibility of special revelation being available through other religious traditions? This question cannot be answered definitively from Paul, and the Christian theologian would have to make an assessment on a case-by-case basis if such revelation were claimed. Nevertheless Paul does offer a framework for interpreting what might be called the "supernatural" with respect to other religious traditions. This term is not ideal since the division in Christian theology tends to be made between the Creator and created world rather than between the natural and supernatural. What I mean by the "supernatural" is to

[49] Bruce F. Harris, "ΣΥΝΕΙΔΗΣΙΣ (Conscience) in the Pauline Writings " *WTJ* 24, no. 2 (1962).

[50] Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 50.

function as a broad term for phenomena such as miracles and magic, which occur or are claimed to have occurred in numerous other religious traditions. Are these evidence of special revelation being present?

The question of whether or not such things as magic and exorcism and miracle actually happen cannot be endlessly deferred. Indeed, as Bultmann suggested, the implicit belief of modern humanity is that such things as magic and miracles do not really occur. How can one believe in such notions in the age of the electric lightbulb? Modern human beings, at least in the West, will naturally seek explanations from science for any apparently miraculous activity or event.[51] Yet Hans Dieter Betz raises the question of what, therefore, makes belief in magic so persistent, given that similar skepticism has been around since ancient times as well?

> "Why is magic so irrepressible and ineradicable, if it is also true that its claims and promises never come true? Or *do* they? Do people never check up on the efficiency of magicians? The answer seems to be that, in general, people are not interested in whether or not magicians' promises come true. People want to believe, so they simply ignore their suspicions that magic may all be deception and fraud. The enormous role deception plays in human life and society is well known to us. In many crucial areas and in many critical situations of life, deception is the only method that really works. As the Roman aphorism sums it up, "Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur" ("The world wishes to be deceived, and so it may be deceived").

[51] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York, NY: Scribners, 1958), 37-38.

> ... Magicians are those who long ago explored these dimensions of the human mind. Rather than decrying the facts, they have exploited them."[52]

Betz seems to assume that magic doesn't really happen. Although we have seen the need to distinguish magic somewhat from miracle, there is an overlap going on when it comes to our view of reality and how that informs our attitude towards what is possible. Our attitude towards magic and whether or not it might really work might tell us a lot about the range of explanatory strategies we apply to religion in general, and, for the Christian theologian, towards non-Christian religions, particularly where they lay claim to the miraculous, encounters with angels or deities, and to divine revelatory experiences. If our view of the world is that of Betz, where magic doesn't really happen, bur is rather a combination of willing suspension of disbelief and parapsychology, then out of this come a number of explanatory strategies for the religions and their claims to miracles, magic or other supernatural phenomena. First, we can respond to the claims made by these religions that they are the product of subconscious self-delusion, the human willingness to be deceived when it comes to the crucial questions of life. Second, we could respond to a religious claim by suggesting it to be a deliberate manipulation by a human deceiver. The infamous dream passages in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* hint at this in relation to the portrayal of 'Mahound' as a charlatan who deceives his followers

[52] Hans Dieter Betz, "Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri," in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including demotic spells* (ed. H. D. Betz; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xlviii.

for power and personal gain,[53] and of course this is the implicit explanatory strategy for the origin and persistence of religion in Marxist analysis. Self-delusion and manipulation by others are by no means mutually exclusive perspectives, but are both anthropogenic explanations. Christian theologians are then faced with the challenge that some specific instances of alleged supernatural phenomena in other religious traditions are not easily explained away as delusion or deception. One who rules out magic as not really happening, or as being at most a manipulation of psychology and perception, but holds to the Christian conviction that Jesus' miracles are different and done by divine power, might then be forced by their own logic either to the position that no reported miracle performed in support of a rival religion can possibly be a real occurrence, no matter how compelling the evidence, or that the reported miracles occurred by divine power and thus raise the uncomfortable idea of God enacting miracles, exorcisms, healings, and acts of revelations in support of one or more other religious traditions.

If, on the other hand, we adopt a worldview where magic can and does 'really' occur, but perhaps by demonic power, we would have an additional explanatory strategy for the miraculous in other religions. We could therefore posit that some magic really is effective; that some magicians really do perform supernatural feats, but with the assistance of demons. Likewise, stories of miracles performed in the service of the doctrines of other religious traditions,

[53] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988).

do not need to be dismissed a priori as false stories or fabrications, but might in fact relate a miracle which has truly occurred by the working of a demonic agent. Again, this does not have to be the only explanatory strategy used; opening up the possibility of demonic power being active in other religions does not commit one to credulity about all claims to miracles which occur in that tradition, nor does it close off anthropogenic perspectives, but it should be seen as a legitimate avenue for enquiry.

When we look at the attitudes towards other religions in the biblical texts, we do in fact find the claim made that false religions serve demons. Deuteronomy 32 and Pss. 95, 96 seem to adopt this perspective, as does Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:20. This co-exists with allegations that aspects of pagan religion are based on self-delusion (Jeremiah 10, Romans 1:18—32) and that the 'gods' they serve cannot save. That the idea of deliberate human deception being behind pagan religions is not unknown to the Jewish and Christian tradition can be seen from the Septuagint version of Daniel, which relates the story of Bel and the Dragon, where Daniel demonstrates that the priests have been using a secret door to take the food left as a sacrifice for Bel by scattering ashes on the temple floor, allowing the priests' footprints to be seen.

From a Christian theological perspective prepared to accept the idea of an active unseen realm including demonic powers, what might we say with reference to the reported miracles of non-Christian religions? Such reports are, it must be said, relatively more frequent outside the West, and there is a possible

patronizing bias against believing even the most credible of these claims motivated by a perspective which sees non-Westerners as irrational, primitive, or simply less credible witnesses. Christian theologians, where they do not ignore these reports entirely, have a number of explanatory avenues open to them. They may dispute the veracity of the reported magical event or miracle entirely. They may allege naturalistic or parapsychological causes, in an analogous fashion to liberal Protestant treatment of the miracles of Jesus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Conceding that a miracle or magic event genuinely took place, and involved non-human supernatural power, they may take the theologically problematic route of ascribing the miracles to the workings of the Holy Spirit, or they may ascribe them to demons.

This is a difficult route to take. Although even modern Christians notionally believe in the existence of angels and demons, in the West they seem largely to be ignored. Outside of certain circles, and certainly in mainstream academic discourse, the reigning assumption is that such beings do not really exist, or that if they do, have little to do with the reality of human experience. There are undoubtedly excesses and dangers in theologies which become obsessed with the demonic, and the pejorative term of 'magical' might be applied with some legitimacy to some practices of folk-Christianity. Yet a theological perspective which sees only God and human beings with no interest in intermediaries, or the angelic and demonic unseen powers, is a perspective with an excluded middle. In view of this, the presence of the miraculous or magical in other

religious traditions cannot be accepted as evidence for divine special revelation being present in that religious tradition.

Conclusion

Paul seems to offer a framework in which special revelation and the work of the Spirit are both required in order to come into true knowledge of God and to attain salvation. General revelation in nature or history is seen as insufficient, and in fact serves only to make non-Christians culpable of sin by leading to idolatrous responses to nature. Other religions are not affirmed by Paul, and he calls upon their adherents to repent of their idolatry and turn to the true and living God by accepting the gospel. Two possibilities are raised for the nature and origin of other religions; first that they are a human misunderstanding of divine revelation in nature, which is idolatrous in its failure accurately to describe God and to respond to him in an appropriate manner, and second that they may be a response to demonic activity and deception, which would be an appropriate explanatory strategy for the magical or miraculous phenomena which often accompany other religions.

Conclusions for a Pauline approach to the Theology of Religions

This study of Paul, focussing on issues related to the Theology of Religions, demonstrates that Paul's theology can be applied to the issues involved, and the cohesive nature of Paul's thought means that there is a certain coherence to his teaching on these issues. Consequently, it is possible to provide an outline of an approach to the Theology of Religions which is, I suggest, coherent with Paul and which supports broadly the exclusivist paradigm in the Theology of Religions.

The Adam-Christ dichotomy and Idolatry as fundamental categories for Paul

Two facets of Paul's thought which I believe should be axiomatic for a Theology of Religions which takes Paul seriously are his Adam-Christ dichotomy and his depiction of other religions as idolatrous.

Paul's understanding of salvation has an inexchangeable 'mythic' description of the human being united with Christ. Salvation is understood to occur "in Christ" and Paul's description of this requires that we understand becoming a Christian to effect a fundamental change in the human person at the very deepest levels of their being. Being "in Christ" is an ontological claim and not merely a sociological label. We are to understand that union with Christ has an effect on the human person—upon the soul—which is unique and depends upon an external divine action, mediated by the Holy Spirit.

The corollary of this for Paul is that those who have not responded positively to the preaching of the gospel through faith in Christ, and so consequently are not "in Christ", are "in Adam". This term refers to the ontological reality of human beings outside of Christ who are under the power of sin. Paul does not merely claim that human beings "in Adam" commit sins,[1] but that they are under the power of sin in a manner which is determinative for their entire existence.[2] Paul has drawn upon the use of Adam as representative in the Jewish tradition, which although not well-attested in the Hebrew Bible, was a well-established idea in first-century Judaism.[3] This idea certainly does require a view of the human person as "fallen" in some sense. How this view is to be related to one's understanding of the historicity of Adam, and, if Adam is historical, whether he is biologically the first human being or a representative human being in some other sense, lies beyond the boundaries of this study.[4]

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[1] His description of sexual immorality and other forms of egregious sinfulness in Romans 1:23—31 is in rather general terms, such that it is humanity as a whole who are indicted of these offences rather than the claim that every single human being commits every one of these offences.

[2] "It is of this state of being a sinner–and not merely of a simple misdemeanour or a failure which can be solved by the person themselves–that Paul speaks." Höfius, ""Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen" als Thema biblischer Theologie," 123 (my translation).

[3] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 86. Cf. Käsemann, 144; Douglas J. Moo, "Sin in Paul," in *Fallen: A Theology of Sin* (eds C. W. Morgan and R. A. Peterson; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 120-126.

[4] See for example, the discussion in Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: what the Bible does and doesn't say about human origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), and Denis O. Lamoureux, et al., *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

This fallenness "in Adam" is a plight from which human beings cannot extricate themselves. Divine action is required to transfer the human being from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ. There is an implicit critique here of all religion, as recognized by Barth, although his gloss of "law" in Romans 7 as "religion" is not exegetically helpful for understanding Paul's specific claims about the Mosaic Law.[5] However, Barth's critique of Christianity as another religion to be dispensed with goes too far to be reconciled with Paul and really constitutes a particularly radical form of Bultmannian *Sachkritik*, since it fails to recognise the extent of transformation which has taken place now that the Christian is *in Christ*. Nevertheless Paul's thought in Romans seems to endorse the position that other religions are insufficient for salvation since they (at best) represent human efforts to overcome a predicament which can only be overcome by divine power.

Those "in Adam" are also at an epistemological disadvantage when it comes to knowing truth about God. Revelation in nature, according to Paul, is in fact misunderstood by pagans with the result that they turn to idolatry. "Idolatry" is a fundamental category for how Paul thinks about the Graeco-Roman religions, and he describes the former way of life of his Gentile-background converts as characterised by idolatry, and captivity to idols.[6] This provides a high degree of support for the exclusivist perspective put forward by Daniel Strange, who

[5] Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 258-270.

[6] 1 Corinthians 8:7, 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:9. Cf. Galatians 4:8.

suggests that idolatry is a central category for how Christian theology should think about other religions.[7]

Paul seems to endorse the critique of idols as "mute" and "empty" commonly made in Judaism, which would align with the view that religion is a human construct aimed at explaining the noumenal, or a projection of human desire. In this sense, Ludwig Feuerbach's critique of religion finds some qualified support in the theology of Paul. This idea of religion as idolatrous human projection may be a useful category for explaining certain features of some religions, and a Theology of Religions following Paul is able to suggest this as one explanatory strategy for the diversity of religious belief and practice.

However, Paul also endorses the view that behind the idols, demonic powers are at work. His claim in 1 Corinthians 10:20—21 that what is offered to the pagan idols in fact is offered to demons, and that such religious practice constitutes a "participation with demons" is stark and inescapable. Any attempt to describe non-Christian religions which follows Paul must attempt to deal with this claim. Paul does not say that every non-Christian is demon-possessed, and there is no reason to think this from the depiction of demon-possession in the New Testament.[8] However it is certainly possible that Paul believed that

[7] Strange, *For Their Rock is not as Our Rock: An evangelical theology of religions*, 215. This is not a new perspective, but one which is represented in Christian thought throughout history, particularly in relation to polytheistic and animistic belief systems, although the evaluation of other monotheistic traditions as idolatrous is also present in the tradition.

[8] On which see the lengthy excursus on demon-possession in Keener, *Acts*, 2429-2454.

demons had inspired some of the religious teachings of the pagan religions, or were operative to produce miraculous signs in the history of pagan religions so as to deceive their adherents. This remains a legitimate explanatory strategy for the presence of otherwise inexplicable phenomena in contemporary religions. Paul's idea that Satan could disguise himself as an "angel of light" in 2 Corinthians 11:14, along with his suggestion that an angel might teach the Galatians "another gospel" in Galatians 1:8, certainly hint that demonic deception is a possibility in Paul's thought. The idea of the Antichrist producing "signs and wonders" in order to deceive humanity in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 also seems to be an expression of this thought.

However, this theme of "participation" with demons in 1 Corinthians 10:20—21 seems to have some corollaries beyond the claim that demons may have inspired pagan religious teaching, such that they actively co-opt the pagan religions for their own ends. In 1 Corinthians 10 the concept of participation is expressed by κοινωνία, a term which seems to connote a unitative or "mythic" aspect to worship in the Corinthian correspondence and in Philippians. If, as in Romans,[9] the participation/union themes imply an ontological connection with Jesus Christ, then the usage in 1 Corinthians 10:20—21 may also have this implication. Thus, Paul would be expressing an understanding that Gentile religious practices are not neutral or inefficacious, but involve participation of

[9] In Romans 6 the term κοινωνία is not used, but the concept of participation or union is clearly present, expressed through terms such as συνθάπτω and σύμφυτος.

the worshipper in (negative) spiritual realities. This makes clearer Paul's reference to the demonic, and perhaps illuminates the nuances of Paul's argument concerning idol meat and Gentile religion in this difficult passage. The implication of this is that some non-Christian religions may be, wittingly or unwittingly, used by demons to pursue destructive ends. As Augustine suggests:

> "[the demons] are more likely to grudge us happiness than to procure it for us, since their own misery is the due reward of their malice … the supporters of the demons cannot put forward any sound reason why we should worship these demons as our helpers, seeing that we ought rather to shun them as deceivers." [10]

By participating in the worship associated with these religions, their adherents put themselves at risk of co-option, oppression, or even possession by demons.

Contemporary theologians must address the issue of the demonic when addressing the question of the nature and origin of other religions. However there is also the need to determine the ontology of the demonic; whether Christian theology today can speak meaningfully about demons in similar terms to Paul. I suggest that Paul does accept the view from the Jewish tradition of demons as personal spiritual beings, which do exist in a real sense, even if they are incorporeal. The demons enslave those who worship them, and although this enslavement has been seen by some New Testament scholarship as Feuerbachian projection,[11] this interpretation of the "enslavement" language in

[10] Augustine, *City of God,* 370 (IX.23).
[11] E.g. Betz, *Galatians*, 215.

Galatians and Romans is hard to sustain in the case of the more explicit language about demons in 1 Corinthians 8:9, 10:20—22. The demons in question are also to be defined as created beings, rather than on the same level of being as God. This is in contrast to theological definitions of the demonic which seeks to depersonalize the concept into referring to historical, social, or political forces (e.g. Wink), and stands against the view that they represent and personify in a non-ontological way the idea of evil. This latter view is defended by John Hick, who adopts the Augustinian definition of evil as a privation of the good, and thus argues that the demons do not have a real personal existence but symbolize the non-being of evil.[12] Nigel Wright also suggests that this non-ontological view of the demons is the only possible one for theologians to adopt today, drawing on the thought of Karl Barth, and suggests that the traditional view draws too much on extrabiblical traditions of dubious plausibility.[13] Against this view, I suggest that the non-ontological perspective betrays its indebtedness to Enlightenment scepticism and frequently relies upon a straw-man argument in ridiculing the most exaggerated forms of belief in the ontological reality of demons. Although the descriptions of demons and their origins may be much more detailed (and perhaps speculative) in the extrabiblical literature, but this material is commonly considered to be helpful for the study of the New Testament. Furthermore, the rejection of concepts

[12] John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 132-204.

[13] Nigel G. Wright, *A theology of the Dark Side: putting the power of evil in its place* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 63-65.

found only in the pseudepigrapha and apocrypha still leaves a New Testament which contains numerous exorcisms in the Gospels and Acts, and a Pauline corpus which does refer to angels, demons, Satan and reified evil powers. Paul is certainly no demythologizer.[14] It might be objected that this resembles some non-Christian pagan beliefs, but as Heiser demonstrates, the Ancient Near Eastern beliefs in question held that the demon or spirit actually inhabited the idol, whereas Paul's approach does not affirm this, but only that the demons "stand behind" the idol.[15] It ought to be conceded at the very least that the New Testament authors believed in the reality of personal evil beings.

A different sort of objection to speaking of the reality of demons in relation to contemporary religions is the contention that the demons have been defeated by Christ's death and resurrection so that they are now entirely exorcised from the world.[16] This view is not taught explicitly in the New Testament and would seem at odds with the way Paul describes pagan sacrifices as really offered to demons in 1 Corinthians 10:20 in the present tense (θύουσιν). Other references to demons in the New Testament seem to confirm the view that these are a persistent part of the world. While it may well be true that, for the Christian, the demons are defeated and not to be feared, this is a victory

[14] Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?," 62.

[15] Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 36-38.

[16] E.g. Boyd, "Christus Victor", 50-51 ; Dibelius, 208; Paul Tillich, "The Demonic: A Contribution to the Interpretation of History," in *The Interpretation of History* (ed. P. Tillich; New York, NY: Scribner and Sons, 1936).

which applies to those in Christ and not (currently) to the whole of creation.[17] Graham Smith offers a detailed defence of an ontologically realist approach to the demons on biblical and theological grounds, and provides a helpful summary of the approach in Anglican and Pentecostal theology since the 1970's.[18] It does not seem impossible to affirm the present day existence of demons from a Christian perspective, nor to use these as part of an explanatory strategy in one's approach to other religions, but it does seem at odds with the predominant post-Enlightenment modes of thinking in the West today. Richard Bell suggests that the world (in the sense of *cosmos*) is much more mysterious than Enlightenment thought has tended to allow for, that demons form part of the world, and that Christian theologians need rather to recognise that a demythologized description of the universe fails to take account of the reality of evil.[19]

Is the category of the demonic a helpful one for explaining other religions? I would suggest that it is, with the caveat that Christian theologians ought not to identify every single feature of other religions as demonic. It is one possibility for a given religious phenomena, and given that Paul is also quite happy to describe non-Christians as having constructed idols themselves, the category of demonic deception should not necessarily displace the category of self-deception. In addition, it is wise to state that there is a difference between the

[17] Bell, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 356.

[18] Graham R. Smith, *The Church Militant: Spiritual Warfare in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016).

[19] Bell, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 341-344, 350-351.

theological statement that a given belief or religion is demonically inspired, and the political concept of "demonization". This concept, which patently originates in theological vocabulary, in contemporary political usage is to do with vilification of one's opponent, especially in an inaccurate or misleading way.[20] Demonization functions to banish the one demonized, although ironically to be accused of demonization is also to be banished from the realm of legitimate discussion. It should be stated both that the theological description here is not an attempt to demonize the adherents of other religions, nor is it a statement which should be excluded from the realm of legitimate discussion in the Theology of Religions, since it is a real possibility. Finally, we should also not straightforwardly identify the gods of other religions as demons, as in Heinrich Heine's short story *Gods in Exile* which depicts the gods of pagan antiquity as being dethroned by Christ, but, being immortal demons, unable to die and so exiled to the furthest reaches of the earth.[21] Rather, Ro Mody is more likely correct to identify the demons as "co-opting" the image and idea of deities in other religions, at most using these gods as a "mask".[22]

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[20] Berman, Nathaniel. "Demonization". [accessed 28 June 2016] <http://www.politicalconcepts.org/demonization-nathaniel-berman/>.

[21] Heinrich Heine, "Gods in Exile," in *Heine's Prose Writings* (ed. H. Ellis; London: Scott, 1887) Heine's story, originally written in 1853, bears some affinity with more modern fantasy writing, such as Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), which posits a real existence and agency to the gods of antiquity, along with more modern gods, although these are created and sustained by human belief. These fictional depictions are to some extent closer to a worldview where demons seek to co-opt human belief systems for their own agenda or benefit than the "demythologized" universe of Bultmann and other modern scholars, but are mentioned here primarily as an imaginative contrast.

[22] Mody, 277.

Paul did not invent the tradition of identifying "the gods of the nations" as idolatrous and/or demonic; rather it has deep roots in the Jewish tradition. However, the same tradition about God is claimed by several other religions today whose adherents claim, and sincerely believe, that they worship the same God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The question then arises as to how Christians evaluate this claim: should Islam be described as idolatrous, for example, when its tradition holds it to worship the same God as Christians do? In addition, the Qur'an and other Islamic authorities demonstrate an abhorrence of idolatry and a repudiation of the traditions of pre-Islamic Arabia as 'times of ignorance' (*jāhiliyya*). Modern discussion is polarized and can conflate a number of issues, though Denys Turner notes that the theological sticking points tend to be, on the Christian side, concern that Islamic monotheism may not be compatible with Christian belief in the deity of Christ and belief in the Trinity, and on the Muslim side, a reluctance to assent to Christian claims that Trinitarian belief is compatible with monotheism.[23] David Burrell notes that Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions have a common sense of a transcendent creator distinct from all other beings, in a way which qualitatively differs from ancient paganism and other religious traditions of our own time, but that a christological "distinction" remains between Christianity and the other two major Abrahamic traditions.[24]

[23] Denys Turner, "Christians, Muslims, and the Name of God," in Miroslav Volf (ed.), *Do We Worship The Same God?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 26.

[24] Burrell, "The Christian Distinction Celebrated and Expanded," in John Drummond and James G. Hart (eds), *The Truthful and the Good* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996), 192, 200-203.

A full articulation of the various responses to this question lies outside the scope of this study, and it would be unnecessarily reductive to affirm simply either of the two propositions that Islam's God and Christianity's are identical, or that the God worshipped in Islam is straightforwardly akin to Demeter, or Baal. However, a way forward may be seen in an examination of the ways in which Islam has been described as idolatrous, or non-idolatrous.

Hawting discusses the origins of Islam in relation to its repudiation of idols and claim to represent authoritative divine revelation. He allow that the traditional account of the origin of Islamic monotheism within a culturally isolated and polytheistic society is supportive of its claim to divine revelation,[25] though we could note that this argument does not exclude the possibility of a historical 'revelation' from a demonic source. Hawting, however, suggests that scholars ought to be sceptical of the traditional Islamic account, in view of some the historical problems associated with it, and the likely influence of Christian and Jewish tradition upon Islam.[26] Angelika Neuwirth and collaborators on the *Corpus Coranicum* project have drawn scholarly attention to these, including some examples which seem to suggest a direct literary dependence upon earlier sources, such as the influence of the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* upon the Qur'an's depiction of the birth of Isa (Jesus).[27] In my

[25] Gerald R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 149-150.

[26] Ibid., 151.

[27] Angelika Neuwirth, "The House of Abraham and the House of Amram: Genealogy, Patriarchal Authority, and Exegetical Professionalism," in Angelika Neuwirth, Nicholas Sinai, and Michael Marx (eds), *The Qur'an in Context:*

view it is likely that the authoritative literary texts of Islam have direct and indirect influence from Christian texts and theologies, which provides a historical or cultural mediation of genuine revelation. It is thus not straightforward to dismiss the god worshipped by Muslims as an idol in the same sense as the gods of pagan antiquity, or analogous contemporary gods in non-Abrahamic religions.

Maimonides also demonstrates some ambivalence about whether or not Islam ought to be regarded as idolatrous from a Jewish perspective. A number of early medieval rabbinic writers considered Islam idolatrous because of Islamic veneration of the *Kaaba*.[28] The fourth of Maimonides' thirteen principles of Judaism stresses the imperative to worship God exclusively, and forbids the worship of false gods. Maimonides displays an antipathy to Islam, regarding it as error and Muhammed as a deceiver.[29] Yet Maimonides wrote to crypto-Jews who were under social pressure to convert to Islam in Morocco that to do so should not be considered as idolatry.[30] This raises the question of whether or not Islamic monotheism should be considered the same as Jewish monotheism from a Jewish perspective. Maimonides is hard to interpret on this issue, and it is possible that the suggestion that crypto-Jews who converted to Islam were not

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Historical and Literary Investigations Into the Qur'anic Milieu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 512, 521-523. Cf. Ronald Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1997).

[28] Marc Shapiro, "Islam and the Halakhah," *Judaism* 42, no.3 (1993), 333.

[29] George Hourani, "Maimonides and Islam," in William Brinner and Stephen Ricks (eds), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 153-158.

[30] Shapiro, "Islam and the Halakhah," 335.

guilty of idolatry may be premised on the assumption that they did not really believe Islamic doctrine, but only outwardly acceded to it.[31] Although Maimonides is frequently appealed to as a model for religious pluralism, his position is essentially that of an exclusivist in the Jewish tradition who believes that Islam and Christianity are erroneous where they differ from Judaism, and that faithful Jews and righteous Gentiles will attain salvation.[32] Maimonides is explicit elsewhere that following the teachings of Islam is incompatible with being a righteous Gentile who obeys the Noachide commandments, and indeed that Gentiles ought not to adduce any further religious doctrines beyond the Noachide commandments.[33] Elsewhere he describes Christianity as idolatrous, on the grounds that belief in the Trinity and Christological claims mean that Christians have a sufficiently different conception of God to Jews that they cannot be meaningfully said to serve an identical God.[34] The implication that there is a material aspect to God, implied by the doctrine of the incarnation, is particularly objectionable to Maimonides.[35] This argument is a mirror of the

[31] Ibid., 336.

[32] Howard Kreisel, *Judaism as Philosophy: Studies in Maimonides and the medieval Jewish philosophers of Provence* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2015), 21-22.

[33] Maimonides, Law of Kings 10:9, ET in *The Code of Maimonides: The Book of Judges,* (Translated by Abraham M. Hershman; Vol. 14; New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1949).

[34] Maimonides, Avodah Zerah 9:4, ET in *The Book of Knowledge: From the Mishnah Torah of Maimonides,* (Translated by Helen M. Russell and Rabbi J. Weinberg; New York: Ktav, 1983). The text condemns the "Canaanites" but this is a designation for Christians, as can be seen by the description of their holy day as Sunday. Cf. David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A justification* (Oxford: OUP, 1992), 57-72.

[35] Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue,* 60.

argument from the Christian perspective that monotheisms which exclude, implicitly or explicitly, the divinity of Christ or the trinitarian nature of God, are nonidentical with Christian monotheism. Consequently the claims made by early Christian writers that second- and third-century Jews were idolaters can be seen in this context as criticism that they did not, in fact, worship the true God correctly. Examples of this include Justin Martyr, who accuses the Jews of idolatry and apostasy (Dialogue 93, 119) on these grounds, even though they are avowed monotheists. Other examples can be found in the Epistle to Diognetus 3,which supposes that the Jews err in similar manners to the Gentiles by needing a temple and sacrifices to worship (the destruction of the Temple is unexplained by the text, and perhaps the Temple at Elephantine is in view, or a general critique of past practices), and the so-called Epistle of Barnabas 16:2—8, which acknowledges the destruction of the Temple but also associates it with idolatry.

If my reading of Paul is correct, idolatry is a category which would encompass other religions for him, and would be term used primarily to describe worship of other gods and to warn Christians of the dangers of syncretism. If other religions are idolatrous, what does this imply for the way in which Christians often at the popular level describe other things as idolatrous? Are Christians all also idolaters, as Merold Westphal suggests?[36] Westphal

[36] Merold Westphal, "Theological Anti-Realism," in *Realism and Religion: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives* (ed. A. Moore and M. Scott; Abingdon, Oxon: Ashgate, 2007), 153-154.

suggests that he has never prayed to a God who isn't an idol, but since Westphal is a Christian this seems at odds with the New Testament usage of "idolatry". Westphal means that his mental picture of God is inaccurate and incomplete, and so his idea of God is an idol he has constructed and which is marred by human sin and finitude. In Westphal's epistemology even the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, Scripture, and history is insufficient to overcome this deficiency in human cognition; a theologically-contentious claim and one which I think is in significant tension with the affirmations found in Paul and other New Testament writers that Christians *do* know God truly, even if partially.[37] The predominant biblical use of idolatry is, however, serving different gods. We might distinguish between externally-directed and internal-directed uses of the term "idolatry", where the critique is fundamentally different. Externally-directed critique of other religious beliefs and their adherents as idolatrous is an allegation that false gods are being served. Idolatry here is not to do with having the wrong idea about the true God, but about serving other gods. Internally-directed use of "idolatry" language in the New Testament can be warnings against syncretism and the worship of other gods in addition to the true God, but can also function metaphorically as a critique of deficient practice or theology. Certainly greed is described as idolatry in Colossians 3:5 and Ephesians

[37] Sudduth, who holds to a similar position of human noetic limitation on account of sin, notes that the historic position of Reformed theology has been a question of the scope of knowledge about God rather than the very possibility (*The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology,* 118) and that the Holy Spirit is often held to guarantee efficient knowledge of the true God for the Christian believer (ibid., 78-79).

5:5, but it should be noted that this is a metaphorical use of idolatry which depends on the literal idea of serving other gods, but is not identical to the first sense.[38] The application of the language of idolatry to Christians in the same manner as the externally-directed critique, particularly in the popular sense whereby almost any behaviour can be described as idolatrous, is inappropriate from a Pauline perspective. Paul views Gentile Christians he writes to as having formerly served idols, but no longer doing so, viewing pagans as idolaters rather than Christians. Describing a Christian as "idolatrous" in this sense is a strong claim and should really be reserved for the literal syncretist rather than as a game of one-upmanship with respect to piety. There is a danger in a univocal use of the language of idolatry for describing the phenomena of worship of gods who are unambiguously other than the true God, and a lack of wholehearted devotion to the true God among worshippers. In view of this I would suggest further that idolatry in the sense discussed here is fundamental category for describing *other* religions from a Christian perspective, but not a category which ought to be equated with internally-directed Christian theological self-critique. My concern here is to avoid an appeal to the use of the category "idolatry" which elides internal and external critiques with the aim of establishing an equivalence between deficiencies and lacunae in the theology and practice of Christians and other religious adherents. Such a move may seem appealing to pluralism, but it would seem exegetically misplaced. Biblical and systematic

[38] Cf. Matthew 6:24 where avarice is personified as a god, Mammon.

theologians ought to be sensitive as to the difference between the externally-directed and internally-directed uses of idolatry-language, and to take note of the distinguishable usages in the New Testament.

A final point to make is that I do not wish to imply by the term "externally-directed" that I think that the biblical and other ancient texts I have discussed are written with the Gentile audience in mind. Rather they seem largely to be directed towards believers, whether Jewish or Christian. The discussion of idolatry may therefore serve a function to warn against syncretism or apostasy, and also, as noted by Randall Chesnutt in his study of Joseph and Aseneth, to remind the "in" group of their distinctiveness vis-à-vis the "out" group.[39] In Second Temple Jewish texts a concern to warn against assimilation to pagan culture may be particularly in view, as is the case in Paul's idolatry discussion in 1 Corinthians which attempts to parse the boundaries of Christian participation in cultural activities associated with Greco-Roman religion in Corinth. Much of the language condemning idolatry was therefore not written as an appeal to those construed as idolaters, although some early Christian texts do seem to represent this tendency. Whether or not this would be a useful thing for Christian evangelists to replicate in the contemporary world is a nuanced discussion which requires the application of practical experience and judgement, and the purpose of the present discussion is more academic and aimed at describing the theoretical basis for the consideration of other religions.

[39] Chesnutt, *From Death to Life,* 230.

Universalism in Paul?

The Adam-Christ language used by Paul is sometimes appealed to as potentially universalist language.[40] The claim is that Paul views all humanity as having been condemned in Adam, and each and every human as also redeemed in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:22 we find Paul writes "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνῄσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζῳοποιηθήσονται). Romans 5:18 is a similar case, with Adam's trespass which brings death for all (πᾶς) contrasted with Christ's act of righteousness which leads to justification for "all" (πᾶς). As with the discussion on Romans 11:26 in chapter 2, the referent of "all" is the crux of the discussion. Almost every commentator on the passage in 1 Corinthians agrees that the second "all" in 15:22 is not to be taken to refer to "all humanity".[41] Rather, it refers to all those who are *in Christ.* If this were otherwise we might expect "for as in Adam, all *died,* so in Christ all will be made alive" (i.e. ἀπέθανον rather than the present ἀποθνῄσκουσιν). We should be clear that the point of correspondence in the comparison is not that both have happened to a coextensive group of people, but that the resurrection will happen just as certainly. Paul is arguing for the certainty of the resurrection of Christians rather than arguing for the universality of salvation in this passage. The Romans

[40] E.g. Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 41-43; Richard H. Bell, "Romans 5:18 and Universal Salvation," *NTS* 48, no. 3 (2002).

[41] Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 352; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 269; Fee, *First Epistle*, 750.

passage requires similar notice to be paid to what the point of comparison is. Romans 5:16 has already established a discontinuity in the comparison: Adam's trespass is not like Christ's obedience in all respects. Thus even within the immediate context of Paul's analogy here we are told that the comparison is not something which corresponds in every single respect.[42] Rather, as 5:17 suggests, the "all" in 5:18 is restricted to "those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" (ESV). In addition we should note that Paul speaks elsewhere (even within Romans!) of divine judgement in terms which suggest strongly that he is not a universalist, and any claims that the Adam-Christ passages are universalist should be weighed against the more unequivocal evidence that Paul assumed a "double exit" whereby not every human being is saved in the end.[43] Even proponents of the view that 5:18 is universalist acknowledge the predominance of the "double exit" perspective in Paul.[44] To affirm universal salvation would then require that we view Paul as self-contradictory on this point.

Who is a Christian?

One other implication of the idea that all humanity is either in Christ or in Adam is that there is an objectivity to one's status before God. Put simply, there is a definitive answer to the question of whether or not an individual is a

[42] Schreiner, *Romans*, 291.

[43] See Douglas J. Moo, "Paul on Hell," in *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* (eds C. W. Morgan and R. A. Peterson; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

[44] Bell, "Romans 5:18 and Universal Salvation," 432.

Christian. We ought to qualify this by saying that this is an ontological rather than an epistemological statement, but the ontological reality would be knowable to God. The implication of this for a Theology of Religions is that when Christians make the claim that salvation can be found in Christ alone, this cannot be identified with the claim that mental assent to specific doctrines is sufficient for salvation. This is compatible with both an Exclusivist and an Inclusivist approach. The problem with the mental assent view is that it is entirely subjective and focusses only upon the cognitive content of belief (or, possibly, upon the identity of the object of faith). However, if we adopt Paul's theology of union with Christ, which implies an ontological reality to one's identification (or not) with Christ, then there is more to the claim above than the superiority of a set of doctrines. Rather the claim is reliant upon divine grace in effecting the transfer of the human person from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ. This concept may also be useful in dealing with the variety of Christian theological positions, and in dealing with the issues surrounding aging and impaired mental facility (a Christian with dementia or who is severely brain-damaged may subjectively no longer believe the creed, for example, but could still be said to have been united with Christ).[45]

The epistemological uncertainty from a human perspective as to whether or not someone is united to Christ ought not to discourage good-faith attempts to ascertain this by the person themselves, or by the church. The church can make

[45] I tend to agree with the implication of Calvin, *Institutes*, 186-188 (II.3.11-12) that salvation is a trap-door function and irreversible.

a provisional judgement in general and specific terms about who is a Christian without having definitive certainty. In many denominational traditions, baptism or confirmation serve this purpose, and these are practically and pastorally helpful measures.[46]

Inclusivism

Inclusivism is hard to justify from Paul. The description of the human being outside of Christ as "in Adam" and destined for judgement suggests that outside of the realm of those united to Christ, the prospects of the adherents of other religions are bleak. Paul does not have a positive appraisal of other religions, and does not seem to view their adherents as potentially already united to Christ without knowing it. His insistence upon the necessity of faith in Romans 10:9 strongly suggests an implicit "gospel exclusivist" perspective.

The case of Israel in Paul's thought illustrates this starkly. To employ the *a fortiori* mode of argument, if even ethnic Israel who seek to serve the same God as Paul is not viewed by him as saved or united to Christ, how much more would this be the case with pagans who worship a different God or gods? And if a reading of Paul which sees two parallel covenants (Judaism and Christianity) is

[46] From a reformed Baptist perspective, which I share, the church might see baptism as necessary for church membership which provides a high level of clarity that a church considers someone to be a Christian. "The new covenant is more than an invisible, spiritual reality. It has a visible, public shape, and baptism draws the edges of that shape … Since the new covenant creates a public people, entrance into the covenant requires a public promise, namely baptism." Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015), 77.

not sustainable, what credible argument could there be for God having established other parallel covenants with more dissimilar religions?

Paul's view of natural revelation as being insufficient to lead to salvation is also a feature of his thought which points away from Inclusivism. What is knowable about God from nature leads in practice to idolatry rather than to worship of the true God. Furthermore, the gospel is described as a "mystery" which is only knowable through special divine revelation.

The appeals of inclusivism to the good works and high standards of ethical conduct present among many non-Christians and encouraged by their religion are irrelevant from a Pauline perspective. The situation of the human being in Adam is so dire that one cannot attain salvation through even the best imaginable moral conduct. Paul's verdict is that "no one does good" (Romans 3:10) to an extent which would make them righteous before God. The closest possibility to inclusivism which might be arguable from Paul is the idea of a post-mortem encounter with Christ (discussed in chapter 2 above), but this would technically be a form of Exclusivism, reliant upon conscious faith in Christ for salvation.

The propriety of evangelism

Paul is perhaps best known as the "apostle to the Gentiles" which highlights the importance of mission in his ministry. According to Acts, Paul engaged in evangelistic preaching in many cities in the eastern Mediterranean with the express aim of persuading Jews and Gentiles to convert. Paul saw the preaching

of the gospel as appropriate for both Jew and Gentile audiences. No matter what the religion of non-Christians, whether similar or dissimilar, monotheist or polytheist, the implication of Paul's theology is that they are in a predicament from which the only possible rescuer is Christ, and further that they need to hear this message. There is a place and a propriety for Christian participation in forms of inter-religious dialogue which aim solely at mutual understanding. Adherents of other religions may even form valuable co-belligerents on social and political issues where their interests align with those of Christians. The propriety of evangelism, however, ought not to be forgotten, since it is an indispensable ministry of the church. Paul's writings express something of his passion for mission,[47] and this needs to be remembered in the context of his otherwise strongly exclusivist perspective. Paul viewed non-Christians as under the power of sin, spiritually dead, and potentially manipulated and oppressed by demons. He did not wish to leave them in this predicament. Knowing that non-Christian religions were idolatrous and powerless to effect a transfer from the realm of Adam to the realm of Christ, Paul sought at great personal cost to preach Christ to those who did not know him. It is incumbent upon Christians who adopt an exclusivist approach to the Theology of Religions to own the consequences of this view and to support evangelistic work as best as they are able.

[47] See Eckhart J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Nottingham: IVP, 2008).

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