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PAUL'S MISSIONARY STRATEGY

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A lecture given at Macquarie University, Sydney, on 1st May, 1997 and the J. E. Davey Lecture at the Union Theological College, Belfast on 18th November 1997. In memory of David Holt Roberts, minister of the gospel, born 24th December 1914; died 12th November 1997.

On the basis of Rom 4, Gal 2 and Rom 15, Paul held that Jewish believers should go on observing the ceremonial law as well as the moral law. His strategy was to set up independent Gentile congregations alongside the synagogues. When we peel off the scribal corruptions in Acts that suggest that the Jews were Paul's main enemies, and that he was forced to go to the Gentiles by their opposition, we find the strategy argued for above.

Historians of ideas have to work with simple theories, continually refined. On the one hand the evidence is endlessly intricate and hard to interpret. On the other hand there must be order in the evidence; there must be a simple rational explanation of the phenomena. So, we imagine a pattern and see if the myriad pieces of evidence fit the pattern.

But there is a further complication. Our sources may be biased, or be seeking to trick us, to hide from us the true story. Again, we need to imagine simple patterns and we have to test those patterns against thousands and thousands of pieces of evidence.

Since the eighteenth century historians of early Christianity have largely worked with the simple theory most notably proposed by Ferdinand Christian Baur in the 1830s. This theory has been endlessly refined, modified and drastically emended; but it is basically the same. It was originated by Thomas Morgan.

Baur argued that Paul was a universalist who challenged Peter the particularist. Paul's ideas were set out in Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians and Galatians. Peter's ideas were set out in the Revelation of John the Divine, primarily directed to the eventual triumph of Israel. Christianity as we know it was the gradual

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reconciliation of these two clashing systems in the synthesis of
Catholic Christianity.

Johannes Munck showed in 1951 that the theory is inherently improbable. F.C.Baur had conceded that the earliest apostles granted Paul the right to prosecute a Gentile mission, but he gave no explanation as to why they did so, if their position was particularist. "The earliest church is pictured as not having understood Paul, who rediscovers the universalism and freedom which Jesus represented; and yet its leaders, with a really incomprehensible tolerance, have admitted the right of missions to the Gentiles, and have given Paul a status equal to their own."¹

Yet Baur's theory is still very much alive. Professor J.D.G.Dunn, for example, has argued that Paul attacked the Law as a means of salvation. And why? Because it made boundary markers between Jew and Gentile. In other words, Paul was a universalist who attacked a "covenantal nomism which insisted on treating the law as a boundary round Israel, marking off Jew from Gentile, with only those inside as heirs of God's promise to Abraham."²

This is not just an eighteenth-century idea. The roots of it lie in Luther with his slogan *sola fide*. Whatever else the works of the law do, they divide Jew from Gentile; *by faith alone* excludes these works. Harnack's thumbnail sketch of the history of these ideas is an accurate if oversimplified account of how the story is still conceived of: Paul did not quite see the logic of his position and retained some Jewish particularist ideas; Marcion understood Paul better than he did himself; Luther carried the programme further; and it was left to Harnack to complete the process.³

This simple picture is unlikely to be true, for Paul expected Jews who believed to remain Jews. There are three pieces of evidence: Rom 4 on Abraham; Gal 2, the Jerusalem agreement; and Rom 15, Paul's boast about what he was trying to do.

First, Rom 4. In verses 9-12 it is taught that Abraham was the father of the uncircumcision and father of the circumcision. He was father of the uncircumcision in that he received the sign of

¹ Munck (1951, p.5).

² Dunn (1991, p. 138).

³ Harnack (1924, especially pp. 215-223).

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circumcision as a seal of the righteousness through faith he showed while he was uncircumcised. He was father of the circumcision in that he received circumcision and imposed it on his male descendants; these descendants not only live by circumcision but also follow in the footsteps of the faith Abraham showed when he was uncircumcised. So, believing Jews were to continue to circumcise their sons. Abraham was father of two sorts of people who live by faith: the uncircumcised and the circumcised.

This distinction depends on a distinction between the moral law and the ceremonial law. This distinction is clearly presupposed in Romans. In Rom 2.25 the Jew is addressed: If you, the circumcision, are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision is become uncircumcision. The argument is continued in the next verse by pointing to the Gentile who, though uncircumcised, keeps the righteous commandments of the Law. Will not God account the uncircumcision as circumcision? That does not mean that circumcision is a matter of indifference. The phrase τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου, the righteous commandments of the Law, refers to the moral law distinguished from the ceremonial law. The argument implies that the Jews were required to keep both the moral law and the ceremonial law, whereas Gentiles, who remained Gentiles, were to keep only the moral law.

Secondly, the Jerusalem agreement according to Gal 2.7-10. This passage implies five points. It implies that God had worked through Peter and Paul in distinctive ways. Peter had been successful as an apostle to the Circumcision, Paul successful as an apostle to the Gentiles. Then it implies that the Jerusalem leaders acknowledged that Paul's work was the result of God's grace. Then it records that the Jerusalem leaders, by giving the right hand of fellowship, were agreeing that henceforth Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles and that James, Cephas and John would go to the Circumcision. Then it lays down one condition: that Paul and Barnabas would not forget the Poor (meaning the Poor in Jerusalem). This entailed their getting Gentiles to send money to Jerusalem. That implied that Paul would establish Gentile congregations, for the Jewish synagogues were accustomed to send money to Jerusalem already, in the form of Temple tax. This is

O'Neill, *Paul's Missionary Strategy*, IBS 19 Oct. 1997 presumably a fulfilment of the prophecy that the wealth of nations would be sent to Jerusalem (Isa 60, especially 60.11). Finally, Gal 2, in using the term *Circumcision* for Jews and the terms *Gentiles* and *Uncircumcision* for non-Jews, showed that those who believed in Jesus Christ were to remain divided into two distinguishable groups, Jews and Gentiles. Paul boasted that he was an apostle to the Gentiles and used the term τὰ ἔθνη to speak of his special work (Rom 1.5; 11.13; 15.16,18; Acts 9.15; 22.21; 26.17 &c.). F.C.Baur on Romans had to translate τὰ ἔθνη as *The Nations* (meaning all nations, including the Jewish nation) in order to preserve his central idea that Paul was a universalist.⁴ What ignorance.

Thirdly, Paul's boast in Rom 15.14-29. Through the grace of God, he argues, he has been able to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles (Rom 15.15-16a). This ministry has enabled him to act as a priest of the Gospel of God so that the offering brought by the Gentiles should be acceptable to God as sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15.16b). Later he says that he aspired to preach where Christ was not yet named so that he was not building on another's foundation (Rom 15.20).

There is no statement that Paul's view of himself as an apostle to the Gentiles precluded him from going into the synagogue when he visited a new city. He would naturally try to persuade both the Jews and proselytes on the one hand and the Godfearers on the other hand that Jesus was the Messiah. But he

⁴ Baur (1845; English translation, vol. 1, pp. 333-4): "As to what he [Paul] says at the beginning of the Epistle, of his vocation to proclaim the Gospel to the ἔθνη, that is not to be understood, as Neander takes it, as an intimation that his being the Apostle of the Gentiles had made him feel it his duty to write to the Romans. It must not be overlooked, and the better commentators have drawn attention to the fact, that the ἔθνη of [i.] vv. 5 and 13, are not the Gentiles, but the nations generally. The Apostle refers to the obligation attaching to his apostolic office of preaching the Gospel to all men, without distinction of race and culture, as the reason why he writes to the Christians of Rome...In order to meet the objection that he was an Apostle of the Gentiles and had nothing to do with Jewish Christians, he speaks of the Jews as one people under the general term of the ἔθνη."

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wanted to build where no one else had laid the foundation, that is among Gentiles who had not even attached themselves to a synagogue where they would have heard Christ talked about as expected. Messianic expectation was central to synagogue worship and Paul wanted to work where the coming of the Messiah had not previously been talked of.

The description of his work as priestly service that ensured that the sacrifice of the Gentiles was acceptable to God shows that the Gentiles were to become in each place a separate congregation that would be responsible for causing their sacrifice to ascend to God. Paul was to establish separate congregations and to fulfil his ministry by seeing that the Gentiles offered worship that was pure and undefiled.

We must conclude, on the evidence of these three passages from Paul's epistles, that the Apostle was working with the full agreement of the Jerusalem leaders, that his primary mission was to go where Christ had not yet been named and to establish Gentile congregations that would send gifts to Jerusalem and that would offer acceptable sacrifice to God as a result of Paul's ministry. Synagogues that came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah were to continue to live under the full teaching of the law in both ceremonies and in morals. The Gentile congregations were not to become Jews but to observe that part of the law, the moral commandments, that applied also to them.

It will be objected that two parts of Galatians contradict this assumption that Paul meant Jews who believed that Jesus was Messiah were to go on observing the ceremonial law of Moses. The first is the rebuke to Peter from withdrawing from eating with Gentiles (Gal 2.11-14) and the second is the statement that, if anyone received circumcision, Christ would be of no benefit to them (Gal 5.2-6).

We know from the Epistle of Aristeeus that it was possible for devout Jews and Gentiles to eat together, and from the story of the conversion of the royal family in Adiabene (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.34-96) that circumcision was not always required of Gentiles who wished to become Jews. Possibilities were wider than later practice may have suggested, but that story of Izates of

Adiabene shows that there were also Jews who insisted that Gentiles had to become Jews and accept circumcision if they were to be truly obedient to the Law of Moses (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.43-48).

It is perfectly feasible, then, for Peter to change his mind about eating with Gentile Christians if that eating would hinder his mission to those of the circumcision who had not yet accepted Jesus as the Messiah. These Gentile Christians in Antioch would have been Godfearers who were attached to synagogues that accepted Jesus as Messiah. Peter would not be expelling them from the synagogue by refusing to eat with them. In fact, the Jerusalem decree recorded in Acts 15 may well have been a response to that problem, laying certain restrictions on Gentile Godfearers in Christian synagogues so that table fellowship could be secured. Nevertheless Paul would have opposed Peter for his action because it could well suggest that the Gentiles should become proselytes in order to be able to join in eating with the Jewish members of the synagogue. But Paul's opposition to Peter did not imply that he had changed his mind and now maintained that Jewish Christians should cease to observe the full ceremonial law of Moses. He opposed Peter because Peter threatened the live-and-let-live spirit of the Jerusalem agreement, not because he thought Peter should abandon the ceremonial law.

Gal 5.2-6 has often been read as a statement by Paul directed to all Christians that, if any of them received circumcision, Christ would be of no benefit to them. Gal 5.4 indeed says, "You will have been severed from Christ, whoever of you who would be justified in the Law; you will have fallen away from grace." However the context makes it clear that those who were seeking to be justified by the keeping of the whole law were Gentile believers who were seeking to take on the ceremonial law required of the Jews as well as the moral law required of both Jews and Gentiles. They were Gentiles who had become Christians while remaining Gentiles. If such Gentiles, who had been baptized, who had shared the bread and wine of Christ, should now become proselytes (while still confessing Jesus as Messiah), they would be suggesting that Gentile Christians were not proper Christians. Paul, whose chief

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task was to bring Gentiles as Gentiles to receive Jesus as Messiah, was fighting for the pact that had been made at Jerusalem which fully recognized these Gentile Christians. At all costs he must prevent people he and the Jerusalem leaders regarded as full Christians from suggesting that they lacked something; that they had to go on to become Jews in order to be saved. Again, nothing in the fierceness with which Paul defends his position can be taken as showing that he thought that all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, had to abandon the ceremonial law. He assumed that Jewish Christians would remain full Jews.

My thesis must face a further massive objection, this time not from Paul's epistles but from the Acts of the Apostles. On a superficial reading of Acts, far from suggesting that Paul always had a settled policy of establishing separate Gentile congregations alongside the synagogues that believed Jesus was Messiah, the book presents an entirely different picture. Paul preached in the synagogues but so infuriated the Jewish members of those synagogues that they drove him out and forced on him the Gentile mission. The implication is that his universal gospel threatened the distinctiveness of Judaism; Jewish rejection of this principle left Paul with no alternative but to go to the Gentiles instead. If Acts is correct, the reading of Paul's missionary strategy I have been arguing for is unlikely to be right.

My case will be that the superficial reading of Acts just given is in fact well grounded in the text of Acts as we have it now: Paul is said to arouse Jewish hostility in almost every city, and this Jewish hostility is what is said to make him turn to the Gentiles. However, the features of Acts that convey this impression turn out to be scribal corruptions that have been imported in the second century to an original narrative. That original narrative itself provides us with clear evidence to show that Paul in fact followed the strategy we have deduced from his own letters.

On the general hostility of the Jews, note first that there was a tendency of scribes to insert a reference to the Jews when the original text is likely to have had no particular designation of the people involved. Nestle-Aland's twenty-sixth edition prints *The Jews* in the text of Acts 69 times. Other manuscripts have *The Jews*

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16 more times (Acts 1.12; 4.13; 6.1,7;13.14,42; 17.19; 18.17; 20.24; 23.25,30; 26.17,20; 27.9; 28.29; 28.30). Of the 69 cases in our standard printed text, there are 11 cases where at least one manuscript omits the term. There are a further 16 cases where the term appears in at least two different positions in the verse, and that fact could indicate that the term *The Jews* was a gloss; glosses tend to get put into the text in different places. To sum up, of 85 possible occurrences, 43 are doubtful. A scribe has even inserted the note into the narrative of Paul's visit to Athens that it was the Jews who led Paul to the Areopagus (Acts 17.19 minuscule 1838).

Some of the cases of *The Jews* where all known manuscripts give the term are intrinsically unlikely. For example, when Paul is dragged before the judgment seat of Gallio in Corinth (Acts 18.12-23), his captors said that Paul was persuading men to worship God *against the law* (Acts 18.13). They must have meant against civic law, since Roman law was tolerant of all religions. Gallio says he is ready to punish wrongdoing, but is not going to rule on talk of the names of the gods and on Corinthian civic law. The crowd then beat up an official called Sosthenes who could have been either a Jew, proof that the crowd were not Jews, or a Greek (ἀρχισυνάγωγος is a Hellenistic term as well as a Jewish term)(Acts 18.17). No subject is expressed, but some minuscules supply *The Greeks* (307. 431. 45. 2818) and others supply *The Jews* (36. 453). It was common in Greek to leave the subject of third person plural verbs unexpressed, and that gave scope for scribes to make false specifications. The process is, I believe, responsible for the specification of the *The Jews* as Paul's enemies in another passage, that concerned with the events in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13.50). Notice that Acts 13.50 ends by stating that those who raised the persecution against Paul and Barnabas drove them out of *their* boundaries. The Jews of Pisidian Antioch would not be said to regard the city boundaries as their boundaries; the term most naturally suggests that the citizens of Pisidian Antioch were expelling Jewish trouble-makers from their territory.

There are ten occasions when the present text of Acts makes the Jews the instigators of riotous persecution of Paul from a city: in Damascus (Acts 9.23-24); in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13.50);

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in Iconium (Acts 14.2); in Lystra, when Jews are said to come from Antioch and Iconium (Acts 14.19); in Thessalonica (Acts 17.5); in Beroea, when Jews from Thessalonica are said to come to stir up the crowd (Acts 17.13); in Corinth (Acts 18.12-17); in Ephesus (Acts 19.23-41); in Greece (Acts 20.3); and by report in Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20.19). Not one of these reports is historically plausible. Jews were the victims of riots, not the instigators, and if we remove the glossing references to the Jews we recover a plausible story of Gentile opposition to what they would have perceived as Paul's Jewish mission.

Our present text of Acts not only creates the general impression that the Jews were the main persecutors of Paul. There are also three occasions where Paul states that he is turning to the Gentiles because of the hostility of the Jews: in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13.45-47); in Corinth (Acts 18.6); and finally in Rome (Acts 28.25-28). When we look closely at these three explicit statements we find each of them in turn to be suspect.

Take the case of Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. We have already seen that the seizing of Paul and Barnabas by the mob and the appeal to Gallio was not likely to have been the work of the Jews.

In Acts 13.45 the Jews are said to be full of *jealousy* at the success of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. But the word ζήλος can just as well mean *pride as jealousy*, and pride is more likely.

When Paul explains why he is turning to the Gentiles, he cites Isa 49.6, "I have appointed you a light to the Gentiles so that you will be their salvation to the end of the earth." Who did the prophet mean by *you*: "I have appointed you"? In context he must mean Israel as a whole. The logic of the argument from Isa 49 is that Israel, having first heard the good news of the Lord for themselves, must then become a light to the Gentiles. This is exactly Paul's argument in Galatians.

I suggest that the little word ζήλος and the general hostility of the second-century church to the Jews led scribes to fill out the argument by suggesting that Jewish hostility drove Paul to the Gentiles. The words, "and they disputed the words spoken by Paul, reviling him" (Acts 13.45b) are an insertion. Similarly the words,

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“Since you have thrust away the word of God and do not judge yourselves worthy of eternal life” in Acts 13.46b are a gloss.

A few verses earlier we find another precious piece of evidence that the original text of Acts assumed the strategy agreed at Jerusalem and reported in Galatians. In Acts 13.43 we are told that many Jews and Godfearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas from the synagogue where they had been speaking. Then it is reported that Paul and Barnabas “spoke to them and persuaded them to remain in the grace of God.” This must mean that Paul taught them to remain faithful members of the synagogue. Proselytes were Jews, and they and the born Jews who believed Jesus was Messiah were to stay faithful members of the synagogue. Paul had no remit to detach either born Jewish believers in Jesus Christ from their allegiance to the synagogue, or Gentiles who had become Jews by becoming proselytes.

The first dogmatic statement that Paul went to the Gentiles because of Jewish hostility proves to be embedded in a context that teaches otherwise. It is a second-century gloss.

The second similar dogmatic statement occurs in Acts 18.6 reporting Paul's work in Corinth.

The external facts of Paul's life provide us with the first clue. At the beginning of his visit he went to live with a Jewish fellow-tradesman, Aquila, and Aquila's wife Priscilla. He preached every sabbath in the synagogue and his audience naturally included interested Greeks as well as Jews. When Silas and Timothy joined him he was free to stop work and turn to his main vocation. Presumably his mission to the Gentiles prospered because he could then move his work from the synagogue into the house of the Gentile Titius Justus, who lived next to the synagogue. Presumably Paul still continued living with Aquila and Priscilla (despite the reading of Codex Bezae, Acts 18.7), for Aquila and Priscilla accompany him on the next stage of his journey, to Ephesus, where he left them to settle (Acts 18.18-19). The move of the work to a Gentile house argues a sufficiently self-conscious group of Gentiles who could support Paul in the eighteen months of successful preaching and teaching to follow (Acts 18.11).

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That outline of events is perfectly understandable once we know Paul's strategy, as we do from Galatians; there is no intrinsic need for any event in the synagogue in Corinth to precipitate his full-time work among the Gentiles. If any event made full-time work possible, it was the arrival of Silas and Timothy.

Yet there was a period between the arrival of Silas and Timothy while Paul was still teaching in the synagogue. What was he doing then? Our printed texts state that Paul was διαμαρτυρόντες τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις εἶναι τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (Acts 18.5b). That is odd, for earlier, before Silas and Timothy came, it was also said that Paul reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath and persuaded Jews and Greeks. Surely that means he persuaded them that Jesus was the Messiah. The second reference to the later period of full-time activity must have had a different character. Because we know Galatians, we understand that Paul would now be deliberately gathering the Gentile Godfearers for further instruction. Most manuscripts, however, say that he was addressing Jews—Jews exclusively. (Remember that before Silas and Timothy came he persuaded both Jews and Greeks of the gospel, Acts 18.4). Concentration on the Jews is nonsensical. The Codex Alexandrinus and codex 014 omit τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις in Acts 18.5, and we should accept their reading.

The Codex Bezae of Acts 18.6 provides us with a further valuable clue. The verse opens with two genitive absolutes: πολλοῦ δὲ λόγου γινομένου καὶ γραφῶν διερμηνευομένων, “a great deal of teaching took place and the scriptures [that referred to the Messiah (Blass)] were *either* translated *or* explained [the verb can have both meanings; cf. Acts 9.36 and Luke 24.27].” Of course if the audience were purely Jewish, the scriptures would be interpreted; if the audience were Greek, both translation and interpretation would be in order.

If we ignore the words that set forth the theory that Paul only went to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected the messiahship of Jesus, we get a perfectly straight-forward story. Paul first preached for many sabbaths and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. He had obviously convinced Aquila and Priscilla, and he must have convinced other Jews. When Silas and Timothy came from

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Macedonia, he could devote himself to his main task. From Galatians we can deduce that his main task was to found a Gentile congregation alongside the synagogue. He first, surely with the approval of the synagogue authorities, engaged in teaching the Gentiles on synagogue premises, teaching that involved translating and interpreting the scriptures. His success then led him to move the purely Gentile group next door to the house of Titius Justus. There he stayed eighteen months.

The alien theory is contained in our Acts 18.6 (*The Jews* having already been inserted into 18.5 as audience): "When they objected and reviled him, Paul tore his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your head; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'" These words embody the theory that the Jews killed Jesus unjustly and must as a race bear that guilt (Matt 27.25; cf. Acts 5.28). They also announce a future course of conduct: "From now on I will go to the Gentiles." Both features of this verse are anachronistic. Many Jews had been converted and there was no call to say that The Jews as such were willing heirs of those Jews who wanted Jesus put to death. Secondly, Paul subsequently followed exactly the same procedure as he had done in Corinth and in every other city he had so far visited: he went to the synagogue first. The verse is a gloss that reflects second-century conditions. Organised Judaism had adopted the Test Benediction that effectively excluded from synagogue worship anyone who held that Jesus was the Messiah. That exclusive policy made it very difficult for Christian missionaries to work among Jews and effectively forced them to confine their preaching to Gentiles. Paul and his contemporaries were operating under no such conditions and they still received a ready welcome in the synagogues. Of course there was opposition, and Paul was eventually taken into custody in Jerusalem for precipitating a riot, but there was far less Jewish opposition to Paul in the cities of Asia Minor and Greece than our present text of Acts would suggest. It was his successful preaching to the Gentiles that often aroused Greek opposition to the dethronement of the local gods.

The reference to The Jews in Acts 18.5 and the whole of Acts 18.6 in our printed text represents a second-century theory

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intruded into an account that fits what we can deduce from Galatians.

The final occurrence of what we are coming to recognise as a second-century theory intruded into the text of Acts is at the end of the book, in the report of Paul's house arrest in Rome.

Again the external circumstances suggest a different picture from the purport of some of what is said. Paul is visited by a Jewish delegation that reports that they have received no letters about him from Judaea, nor ill reports of him from fellow Jews who had visited Rome or had been in correspondence with them (Acts 28.21). They want to hear what he thinks (Acts 28.22a). They fix a day and a large body of Jews waits on Paul and hears him speak of the Kingdom of God and Jesus, arguing on the basis of the Law and the Prophets from early in the morning until dusk. Some were persuaded and some did not believe him (Acts 28.24). Some manuscripts of the summarizing verse 30 about Paul's two-year imprisonment before his crucifixion add the information that "he received all who came to him, Jews and Greeks" (614. 2147. some manuscripts of the Vulgate, Syrian Harcleian **). This is very plausible and the reference to both Jews and Greeks as his visitors would be likely to be omitted only by the scribal advocates of the second-century theory we are examining. That theory is embodied in the present context of the "one word" that Paul leaves his audience with as the sun sets on their appointed day of discussion. As our present text stands, there is not one word but two. The first is a long quotation from Isa 6.9-10, cited as showing that Israel as a whole would reject the prophet's message. The second is the statement that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28.28). That is of course a standard part of the expectation of the prophets, that when the day of the Lord came, the Gentiles too would flock to Jerusalem to worship (Isa 49.6,23; 60.3-22; 66.23 repeated at the end by the Masoretes). Paul concludes, *αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀκούσονται* "They too will hear", a verse that is usually mistranslated to convey the sense, "They will hear [even though you do not]."

Again we should conclude that Acts 28.22b and 25b-27, the misuse of Isaiah's prophecy about the hardening effect of his work,

O'Neill, *Paul's Missionary Strategy*, *IBS* 19 Oct. 1997 is an alien intrusion of the second-century theory that the mission of Paul to the Gentiles was the result of the rejection of the gospel by the Jews. The theory is unlikely; it contradicts the reasons Paul gave in Galatians; and it flies in the face of much of the evidence of Acts. But we need to read Acts alert to the anti-Jewish glossing that introduced a late theory into the original account.⁵

Of course there was some Jewish opposition to Paul. Because Paul preached that Gentiles, as Gentiles, could be saved, he raised the possibility that Jews might think that they could neglect the ceremonial law and be saved. It could be said, quite unjustly, that Paul taught that Jews who lived in the Dispersion should forsake Moses, cease circumcising their sons, and stop observing the other customs (Acts 21.21). The report in Acts that he certainly did not so teach is perfectly accurate.

There are three pieces of evidence from the early centuries of the church's life that Jewish Christian synagogues that observed the ceremonial law as well as the moral law continued to exist. In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, Justin defines his own position with regard to such groups. He attacks Jewish Christians who taught that Gentiles had to become Jews if they were to be saved. He of course deplored Gentile Christians who became Jewish proselytes and denied that Jesus was the Messiah. But he tolerated Jewish Christian synagogues that kept the whole law (in so far as it was possible after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem) and that also acknowledged Gentile believers in Jesus Christ as full Christians without trying to persuade them to be circumcised or to keep the sabbath or to follow the other customs (*Dialogue* 47). This is precious evidence that Jewish Christian synagogues continued into the second century.

⁵ In Acts 19.8-10 it is often assumed that the reviling of Paul by the Jews in the synagogue led to the move from the synagogue to the hall of Tyrannus. It is likely that the original synagogue mentioned in verse 8 was a secular civic building. A number of important minuscules in Acts 19.9 report that the reviling came from some Gentiles among the large audience of Gentiles (257. 383. 614. 1765. 2147). A dispute of Greek against Greek led to the move from the public meeting place to the hall of a local philosopher who accepted Paul's teaching.

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Secondly, the party in the church labelled Quartodecimans are likely to have been members of Jewish Christian synagogues. They celebrated Easter on Nisan 14-15, whatever the day of the week, not, as elsewhere, on the following Sunday. This usage was followed by Melito of Sardis, Apollinarius of Hierapolis and Polycarp. Polycarp visited Rome about AD 155 and sought to persuade Anicetus to conform to quartodeciman usage. Anicetus tolerated the use. Later Pope Victor tried to suppress the practice. Polycrates of Ephesus refused and was excommunicated by Victor (Eusebius, *HE* 5.23-26). Later still, those who kept to this practice formed a separate church which survived into the fifth century. I guess that the Quartodeciman churches were synagogues which retained Passover and which celebrated Easter at Passover. This practice had been abandoned by more liberal synagogues who wanted Easter Day to fall on a Sunday.

Thirdly, the Ebionites seem to be Jewish Christians who, as the Poor, saw themselves as standing in the line of the Jerusalem and Judaeon churches. According to Jerome, Matthew composed a Hebrew Gospel for use of those of the circumcision who believed. A copy of this Hebrew Gospel was in the library at Caesarea in Jerome's day, and he knew that it was used by Nazorae in Beroea, a city of Syria (*de viris inlustribus* 3). We can gather from Origen and Eusebius that the Ebionites, described by Origen as "Jewish believers who have not left behind the law of their fathers" (*contra Celsum* 2.1), refused to give the Pauline epistles canonical status. They observed the sabbath and circumcision and the customs, in addition to celebrating the eucharist on Sunday (Origen, *contra Celsum* 2.1; 5.61, 65; Eusebius *HE* 3.27; 5.8.10; 6.17.1).

In conclusion I offer a tentative sketch of church history in the first two centuries. My first hunch is that the Pauline Gentile churches simply faded away or became Marcionite or became Gnostics. It is a fact that Justin Martyr, who discusses many of the issues that Paul faced in his epistles, never mentions Paul's name and never actually cites Paul.⁶ (Rom 3.11-18 reproduces an old catena of extracts from the Psalms; Justin reproduces a shorter

⁶ See O'Neill (1961, pp. 26-27).

O'Neill, *Paul's Missionary Strategy*, IBS 19 Oct. 1997 version of the catena in *Dial 27*, but he is not citing Romans). This silence of Justin argues for the disappearance of the Gentile congregations he founded, or their absorption into the main church. Of course his epistles were preserved and enhanced somewhere until they were given as a corpus to the main church.

But what is this main church that I speak of? This main church was, I think, made up of flourishing Jewish synagogues that believed that Jesus was the Messiah and that succeeded in attracting hosts of Gentile Godfearers to their worship. These synagogues became more and more liberal in their observance of the ceremonial law, largely by intermarriage between Jewish Christians and Godfearing Gentile Christians. In other words, Catholic Christianity was the eventual outcome of the success of believing synagogues in the Dispersion in attracting large numbers of Gentiles to their services. As Wellhausen acknowledged, Theodor Mommsen, the great historian of the Roman Empire, had seen with exemplary clarity that "the Jewish Diaspora is the mother of the church and, because of the events of AD 70, the daughter steps into the inheritance of the mother."⁷ In short, when we ask what happened to Greek-speaking Judaism, the answer seems to be that it became catholic Christianity.

Some synagogues that believed in Jesus as Messiah remained solidly Jewish. If they tolerated as Christian other congregations that had become liberal, they were tolerated by the majority. There were pressures to make them conform on such matters as the date of the celebration of Easter, but nevertheless they could still survive. Believing synagogues that cut themselves off from liberal Christianity produced a distinct Jewish Christianity or faded away or were absorbed back into Judaism.

If I am right that Paul's actual Gentile churches failed to flourish, certain momentous conclusions follow. It seems that Catholic Christianity developed without his direct theological influence, but that in the second half of the second century a corpus of his epistles was accepted as part of the canon and began to exert

⁷ Julius Wellhausen in a letter to Theodor Mommsen, Halle, 19 January 1885; Bammel (1969, p. 243).

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an enormous influence on all subsequent Christian theology. When the actual Paul of the epistles was read in the light of the second-century theory of the Pauline mission foisted upon Acts by the scribes, Christianity began to turn against the Jews in a way that would have horrified Paul. The Paul who fully accepted the view that Jewish Christians should go on observing the entire law of Moses was turned into Paul the universalist who wished to abolish anything that distinguished Jew from Greek. Paul's missionary strategy has become strange to us. If we can rediscover its logic, we shall also recover Paul's true theology.

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