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ABSTRACT

This essay offers a sampling of recent Jewish interpretations of the Apostle Paul in the last thirty years. Attention is given to the works of Pinchas Lapide, Hyam Maccoby, Alan F. Segal, Daniel Boyarin, Mark D. Nanos and Pamela M. Eisenbaum including a survey of their scholarship and an assessment of their contribution and significance for Pauline studies. This study concludes that Jewish interpretation of Paul remains highly diverse and there is not likely to be a Jewish 'reclamation' of Paul in the foreseeable future.

Keywords: Apostle Paul, history of interpretation, Jewish interpretation, Judaism.

Introduction

The Jewish reception of Paul began during Paul's own lifetime. In his epistles, Paul reports that he had received five times thirty-nine lashes which was a standard synagogue punishment (2 Cor. 11.24; cf. *m*. *Mak*. 3.10). Elsewhere he expresses anger over the fact that the Jews hinder missionaries, including himself, from speaking to Gentiles (1 Thess. 2.16). He prayed that he would be rescued from unbelievers in Judea (Rom. 15.31), he was accused of anti-nomianism (Rom. 3.8) as well as apostasy (Acts 21.21), and Acts narrates that Paul experienced concerted opposition from

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the leaders of synagogues in the diaspora and also in Jerusalem culminating in his trial and arrest (Acts 21.17–26.32). There are also possible allusions to Paul in rabbinic writings with the references to the one who 'profanes the Hallowed Things and despises the set feasts and puts his fellow to shame publicly and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father, and discloses meanings in the Law which are not according to the *Halakah*' (*m*. *Ab.* 3.12) and the student of Gamaliel who was known to have shown 'impudence in matters of learning' (*b*. *Šab*. 30b). In addition, Paul's relationship with Jewish Christians remained highly ambivalent as he advocated competing convictions about the Law and Israel that prompted dissent and opposition (Lüdemann 1989). In terms of intra-Christian machinations, Paul encountered opposition from 'those of [or *for*] circumcision' (Gal. 2.12; Col. 4.11) who may be correlated with (but not necessarily identical to) the 'false brothers' mentioned in the second Jerusalem visit (Gal. 2.4), the 'agitators' and 'trouble-makers' in Galatia (Gal. 5.10, 12), the 'super-apostles' in Corinth (2 Cor. 11.5; 12.11), the 'mutilators' referred to in Philippians (Phil. 3.2), and the persons who 'cause divisions' that Paul warns the Romans to be wary of (Rom. 16.17-18). Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.27) notes hostility towards Paul's law-free Gentile mission by the Ebionites. Similarly, Epiphanius (*Pan*. 30.16.6-9) records a belief by the Ebionites that Paul was a Greek who went to Jerusalem to marry the daughter of the High Priest, even becoming a proselyte, and when he failed to get the girl he flew into a fit of rage and wrote polemical treatises against circumcision, the Sabbath, and the *Torah*. There is also a concerted polemic against Paul in the Clementine Homilies particularly in opposition to his law-free gospel and his claim to have received personal revelations (Ps.-Clem. *Hom*. 2.17.4; 17.15.2; 17.17.5–18.2; 17.19.1-7; *Ep*. *Pet*. 2.3-4). This data has led to the postulation of a factitious division between the Petrine and Pauline missions in the early church; a position that continues to command scholarly assent (Goulder 1994, 2001; Barrett 1996; Jervell 1998; Painter 1999: 73-78). Some scholars are even given to referring to Paul as the first 'heretic' in the eyes of his Jewish Christian contemporaries (Bauer 1972: 233-36; Lüdemann 1996: 61-77).

In the midst of Paul's apostolic career, then, he was regarded as an apostate by Jews and as a schismatic by Jewish Christians, suggesting that the Jewish reception of Paul from its initial stages was mostly negative. On the other hand, not all Jewish Christians were antagonistic to his missionary endeavours (see the list of Jewish Christians in Romans 16) and if Acts is to be believed, Paul did gain some Jewish converts to his position. Moreover, Paul never repudiated Judaism but maintained that

he was of Jewish lineage (Phil. 3.3-6; 2 Cor. 11.22-23; Rom. 11.2; Acts 22.3; 23.6; 26.4-5), he regarded the Jewish Scriptures as authoritative and divinely-given (e.g. Rom. 1.2; 15.4; 1 Cor. 15.3-4; 2 Cor. 4.13), he urged Gentiles to respect Jewish scruples about food and idolatry (Rom. 14.1–15.13; 1 Cor. 8.1-13), his collection for Jerusalem was arguably an olive branch to his Jewish Christian critics (1 Cor. 16.1-4; 2 Cor. 8–9; Rom. 15.31), in Romans he was endeavouring to persuade the predominantly Gentile house-churches not to imitate the anti-Semitism of the Roman cultural elites (Rom. 9–11), and Paul remained loyal to the 'pillars' of Judaism like monotheism and election even if he redefined them (e.g. 1 Cor. 8.6; Rom. 9.1-29).

Given this background it is unsurprising that the Apostle Paul and his letters have managed to capture the attention of Jewish scholars. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, buoyed on by the emancipation of the Jews and the wider participation of Jews in Christian society (Hagner 1980: 144-45; Langton 2005: 71-73), there were a number of concerted studies on Paul from an explicitly Jewish perspective (e.g. Wise 1883; Montefiore 1901; 1914; Kohler 1905; 1929; Klausner 1943; Buber 1951; Daube 1956; Schoeps 1961; Baeck 1952; 1961; Sandmel 1956; 1958; 1972; 1978; Ben-Chorin 1970; Flusser 1971; Rubenstein 1972; see more comprehensive surveys in Ronning 1968; Wiefel 1975; Hagner 1980 and Langton 2005). More recently, interest in 'Paul the Jew' and 'Jewish interpretation of Paul' have been stimulated by three things. First, since World War II scholars have increasingly emphasized the Jewish roots of the New Testament and early Christianity in light of fresh studies on the rabbinic writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Jewish Hellenistic literature (Neil and Wright 1988: 313-59). Second, the demise of the Hellenistic/Gnostic Paul and the advent of the 'New Perspective on Paul' (Sanders 1977; Wright 1997; 2005; Dunn 2005; Bird 2007) over and against the 'Lutheran Paul' have also created an atmosphere more congenial to locating Paul in a matrix of Jewish beliefs. Third, against the backdrop of post-holocaust sensitivities, scholarship has become increasingly focused on Jewish-Christian relations and the roots of anti-Semitism, both ancient and modern varieties. These developing areas of interest have led to the attraction and invitation of Jewish scholars to contribute to the study of Paul and early Christianity. And yet while it has been possible in contemporary scholarship to speak of the 'Jewish reclamation of Jesus' (Hagner 1984), there has been no such analogous reclamation of Paul to date. Given the controversy surrounding Paul as he relates to the origin of Christian anti-Semitism and to the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, one would have to ask whether Paul is even

'claimable' to Jewish audiences. Still, in light of the increasing number of Jewish contributions to Pauline scholarship the aim of this survey is to highlight the salient features of Jewish interpretation of the Apostle Paul in the last thirty years.

Jewish Interpretation of Paul

Part of the problem in doing a survey of this kind is trying to identify Jewish scholars who write on Paul, since Jewish scholars do not wander around conferences like the *Society of Biblical Literature* wearing a Star of David (nor should they!). It is also presumptuous to use names like 'Goldstein' and assume that an author is Jewish or identifies himself/herself as Jewish. There are also many Jewish scholars who are part of the biblical studies guild and their Jewish identity (religious or ethnic) is not necessarily advertised in their scholarship. For that reason, rather than attempting an exhaustive study of all Jewish scholars who have ventured into Pauline studies, this survey will sample those who have offered a significant engagement with Pauline studies and are known to identify themselves as 'Jewish' (we do not presuppose any particular meaning of 'Jewish').

Pinchas Lapide

In the late 1970s, a dialogue between Peter Stuhlmacher, a Protestant Christian, and Pinchas Lapide, a conservative Jew, took place over the topic of Paul. The papers were published in 1981 as, *Paulus: Rabbi und Apostel* (ET *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984]). This published dialogue represents one of the most stimulating pursuits of Jewish-Christian dialogue in the last thirty years. In the dialogue, Lapide offers a reading of Paul that counters the 'Lutheran' portrait.

Lapide opines that Paul has been wrenched from his Jewish context. Paul did not believe in the abolition of the Law, for the Law does not merely comprise rigorous commands but is full of promise, grace, and gospel (1984: 40-41). Paul only discouraged *Gentiles* from keeping the Law (1984: 42). Neither did Paul chide his fellow Jews for cold legalism or merit winning attempts at salvation (1984: 36-39). This highly flawed Lutheran portrait of Paul is not evinced in the Jewish literature or in Paul himself. The Hebrew Bible, even the Torah, emphatically proclaims the grace and compassion of God.

Thus far, Lapide may be understood along the lines of many other post-Sanders interpreters who seek to read Paul without Lutheran spectacles. Lapide goes further than most, however, in suggesting, or rather

proclaiming, that Paul did *not* believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, the one who paved the *only* way to be saved:

> That Jesus became the Savior of the Gentiles *without* being the Messiah of Israel, is in no way a contradiction… Certainly Pauline Christology *is* one of the ways to God. Israel's way is another. Has the time not come that we give God credit for more imagination than the exclusivity of a single one-way street leading to salvation? (1984: 51)

According to Lapide, then, Jesus was certainly the Messiah for the Gentiles, and '[n]o Jew living today doubts that Jesus has, as the Christ so convincingly proclaimed by Paul, become the Savior of the Gentile church' (1984: 50). To suggest that Christ is the *only* way for *both* Jews and Gentiles, according to Lapide, is evidence of 'arrogant human wisdom', 'self-righteousness', and 'a narrow-minded black-and-white schema which allows for nothing but an either-or' (1984: 51, cf. 69-69).

Lapide is to be applauded for his desire to participate in and foster Jewish-Christian dialogue. With regard to his reading of Paul, however, one gets the impression that he was staring down into a well only to find his own reflection starring back at him, as George Tyrrell described so many Jesus scholars of the nineteenth century. While Paul certainly *may* hint at ultimate universal salvation (see e.g. Rom. 11.28-32; 2 Cor. 5.19), this certainly is not the only valid reading of these texts—it certainly was not paraded by Paul as Lapide's reading suggests. Lapide is correct that 'Paul's primary concern was the unification of that division of humanity which he as a Jew had learned to consider almost a law of nature: Jews and Gentiles' (1984: 69). But for Paul, clearly this unification is accomplished *in Christ*. Thus, in spite of his commendable passion for Jewish-Christian relations, Lapide does not, to my mind, exhibit the same exegetical acuity as other Jewish interpreters of Paul examined below.

Hyam Maccoby

Talmudic scholar Hyam Maccoby caused some waves by his forays into Pauline studies through his books *The Myth-maker* (1986) and *Paul and Hellenism* (1991). According to Maccoby, Paul was a Gentile convert to Judaism who aspired to be a Pharisee. He entered the retinue of the High Priest in Jerusalem and became part of his police force where he persecuted Christians. The early Christian movement consisted of a quietist element that awaited Jesus' *parousia*, but a more militant and anti-Roman wing fled to Damascus where Paul was on orders to illegally enter this Arabic territory and take Christians as hostages. Due to Paul's inner psychological

conflict he had some kind of experience that led him to believe in Jesus as Messiah and God. Thereafter he developed his own theology of the Christ, salvation, and the *Torah* that was indebted to Gnosticism and the Hellenistic mystery cults. Paul never was a Pharisee and the claim was a fabrication. Paul established a new religion that had nothing to do with the religion of Jesus or Judaism and he is the father of Christian anti-Semitism. Maccoby also contends that Paul invented the Eucharist and he rejects the Gaston-Gager-Stendahl view of a *Sonderweg* for Israel as being indicative of what Paul believed. In contrast to recent works that have endeavoured to place Paul on Jewish soil, Maccoby states his own aim in contradistinction to such efforts:

> The present book attempts to right the balance by pointing to the Hellenistic elements in Pauline religion and refuting attempts to align these with Judaism. The result is inevitably to widen the gap once more between Jesus and Paul. The affinity of Jesus is with the Jerusalem church and its practice of Judaism, not with the Pauline church and its abandonment of Judaism (1991: 183-84).

Maccoby's work marks a return to the thesis of an earlier generation of Jewish scholarship that located Paul in a Hellenism vs. Judaism polarization (e.g. Montefiore, Klausner, Kohler, Buber) in contrast to later Jewish authors who perceived a more dynamic interface of Hellenistic and Palestinian/rabbinic/pharisaic elements in Paul (e.g. Schoeps, Ben-Chorin, Rubenstein). Maccoby's claims have prompted much criticism including the remark that his work is 'an assertive amalgam of insightful observations, historical fancy, and inconsistent argument' (Levine 1995: 230) and that 'Maccoby's book is not good history, not even history at all. Whether it is good fiction is another matter' (Gager 1988: 250). Several perceptible weaknesses in Maccoby's approach stand out: (1) His preference for the Ebionite's account of Paul's biography over the accounts provided by Luke and Paul himself is tendentious. (2) The existence of a pre-Christian gnosticism remains contestable. (3) Paul's importation of sacrificial and cultic imagery from the mystery cults is objectionable on the grounds that analogy does not prove genealogy, and several features of Paul's worldview and terminology are better explained as the result of transformed convictions that grew out of a Jewish seedbed.

Alan F. Segal

While Maccoby's works have proven to be neither careful history nor very persuasive, quite the opposite can be said of Alan Segal. Segal is a brilliant scholar who brings a wide-ranging knowledge of Second Temple Judaism

and Rabbinics to the field of Pauline studies. In his highly acclaimed work, *Paul the Convert* (1990), Segal challenges contemporary views of Paul in many areas.

First, Segal argues that Paul should be understood as a first-century Jewish apocalyptic mystic (1990: 34-71), akin to later *Merkevah* (chariot) mystics. Paul resonates with *Merkevah* literature in his description of his 'conversion' (see below) as an encounter with Christ, the glory of God—a clear allusion to Ezekiel's own vision of God's glory (Ezek. 1.26). Segal understands Paul's vision of paradise (2 Cor. 12.1-12), which is also reminiscent of early Jewish mystical experiences, as a description of this conversion (1990: 36-37). Central to Paul's own conversion, and his theology of Christian conversion in general, is the converts' transformation into the glorious body of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.18; 4.4; Phil. 3.20-21; cf. Rom. 8.29). Paul's vocabulary used to describe this conversion/transformation exhibits an uncanny resemblance to other Jewish mystical texts (1990: 58-71). Terms such as 'image', 'form', 'transform' and 'glory' are all used by early apocalyptic mystics to refer to their ecstatic experiences with the divine. This motif of transformation is evinced in other Jewish texts where a saint is transformed into a heavenly being (e.g. *Apoc. Abr.* 10-11*; 1 En.* 70-71; *2 En.* A 22.8-10; *Asc. Isa.* 6-11). This again shows that Paul can be firmly placed on the grid of early Jewish apocalyptic mysticism.

A second significant contribution made by Segal is his thorough defence of understanding Paul's Damascus road experience as a conversion and not only a call (He says that it is both a call and conversion, 1990: 6). This, of course, was the common view among Pauline scholars until Krister Stendahl's groundbreaking work on Paul. Stendahl argued convincingly that Paul was not *converted* to a different religion on his way to Damascus; rather, he was *called* to preach to the Gentiles, a call that reflects the calling of the Hebrew prophets (Ezek. 1; Isa. 6; Jer. 1). Paul did not change religions but was called as a Jew to win Gentiles to the Jewish Messiah. Stendahl's work proved persuasive and many scholars now concur that Paul was not converted in the same manner as Augustine or Luther. Segal, however, gives perhaps the most thorough defence of the traditional view that the Damascus road experience should be understood as a conversion (1990: 12-33, 72-114). This is seen clearly once Paul's language of transformation is read against the grid of first-century apocalyptic mysticism. Since Paul was clearly *transformed* on his way to Damascus, then 'conversion' and not 'call' is a better description of this event. Segal also shows that becoming a member of a sect, or moving from sect to sect, involved conversion. And this is exactly what happened to Paul. He transferred from the Pharisaic sect

to the Christian sect, from one community to another. Segal's depiction of Paul's conversion is not simply a return to the traditional view (traditional in the sense of reading Paul through the lens of Augustine and Luther's conversion experience). Rather, Segal is much more sensitive to the historical and social dimensions of conversion in the first century. When Paul is read in his historical context, conversion, rightly defined as one's change in community, is the most appropriate description of Paul's move from Pharisaic Judaism to a follower and preacher of the Way.

These two aspects of Segal's study are, to my mind, his most significant contribution to the field of Pauline studies. Segal also has argued for a different reading of Romans 7 that is worthy of mention in light of the importance that this passage bears on Paul's theology of Law (1990: 224-53). Segal argues that Paul is not speaking rhetorically of all people in Romans 7; neither is he speaking of his experience as a pre-Christian Jew. Paul, rather, is speaking *personally* of his *post-conversion* experience, yet his personal experience 'illustrates a general religious truth which he hopes his audience will come to agree' (1990: 225). Segal argues that Paul is referring to a time after his conversion when he tried to accommodate the weaker, Jewish believer by observing certain food laws. For Paul, however, this return to the ceremonial law incited in him a desire to return to a Jewish way of life, a way of life that has already proven to result in death. He writes:

> It is the confession of a man who could and did live as a Pharisee but finds ceremonial Torah a backsliding temptation after his transformation to a new spiritual body. He still has desires to live as a Pharisee; indeed, it is a simpler position because it is easier to observe the laws than to try to walk the fine line between the two communities of Christians (1990: 244-45).

Segal thus concludes: 'Paul's soliloquy in Romans 7 is his own reflection on his attempt to make a single community by accommodation in ritual but not in principle—the issue that brought him into trouble at Jerusalem. Romans 7 is the stuff of tragedy' (1990: 253). Romans 7, then, according to Segal, is an expression of Paul's failure to accommodate the weaker brother. In returning to his former kosher laws, Paul began to backslide into a Pharisaic way of life.

Segal's work carries many ramifications for Pauline studies. In particular, his view of Paul as a first-century Jewish apocalyptic mystic sheds fresh light on Paul's Christology, his understanding of conversion, and the *parousia* (see e.g. Newman 1992; Sprinkle 2007). His study of 'conver-

sion' in its social and psychological context is also illuminating. The one potential danger that I find with Segal's construal of Paul is his emphasis, perhaps over-emphasis, on the social dimension of Paul's thought. To be sure, Segal has helpfully wrenched Paul's letters from the fetters of a heavy-handed systematic reading (even Romans!), but my fear is that Segal's sociological reading may eclipse Paul's Christology. His reading of Romans 7, while certainly creative, is not convincing. While clarifying some aspects of this difficult chapter, it fails to do justice to the clear allusions to the Adam-narrative (esp. Rom. 7.7-12) and Paul's argument in Romans 8. Nevertheless, Segal's ambitious project will cause the most skilled Pauline scholar to return to the text to see whether these things are so.

Daniel Boyarin

Boyarin's stimulating work on Paul, *A Radical Jew* (1994), evinces a blend of creativity and historical acuity. Boyarin, a Talmudist and cultural critic—and admittedly *not* a Pauline scholar, offers a fresh synthesis of Paul's theology gleaned largely from Romans and Galatians, which embraces many elements of the New Perspective on Paul. In agreement with E.P. Sanders, James Dunn, and others, Boyarin believes that the 'Lutheran' (or Reformational) reading of Paul is significantly flawed. Paul's Jewish contemporaries were not legalists and did not hold to a view of God as devoid of compassion and grace, nor did Paul accuse them of being so. Where Boyarin departs from Sanders is in the so-called 'solution-plight' scheme. According to Sanders, Paul reasoned *from* the solution—salvation is found only in Christ—*to* the plight that all humanity is sinful and in need of such salvation. Contrary to Sanders, Boyarin says that Paul's plight that preceded the solution was that Judaism failed to address Paul's desire for universal salvation. Paul, as a Hellenistic Jew, was deeply concerned with the salvation of Gentiles on the same ground as Jews, yet Judaism could not provide the solution. This was Paul's *pre-conversion struggle*; his Damascus road experience, then, addressed his struggle. Paul's desire for universal salvation becomes, for Boyarin, the driving force in Paul's mission. Paul was, therefore, troubled by and critical of the post-biblical religion of his contemporaries, which 'implicitly and explicitly created hierarchies between nations, genders, social classes' (1994: 52).

Significant for Boyarin's construal is the interaction between Paul's Jewish and Hellenistic roots. Paul is to be read as a Hellenistic Jew whose dualistic thought-world is very similar to Philo's (1994: 14-38). And it is this thought-world which fostered his desire for universal salvation:

> By virtue of his training, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, while clearly, by virtue of his linguistic culture at least, he was also a Hellene. He could very well have been formed and informed by two nearly contradictory cultural tendencies, one toward a universalism which emphasized the capacity for all human beings to be saved and the other a reaction against this universalism which re-emphasized the particular privileges of the Jewish People in the eyes of the sole God. That powerful and tense combination, whereby Paul becomes a synecdoche of the Jewish cultural situation, gave rise to Paul's religious passion (1994: 59).

That Paul is a Hellenistic Jew is not a novel claim; however, Boyarin's ability to construe Paul as a neo-Platonist without creating a Gnostic out of him is ingenious. Boyarin's Paul is able to embrace a dualistic worldview without devaluing the body. The body is not a mere shell or tomb in which the soul must escape, yet '[t]he spirit is higher and more important' than the flesh (1994: 64). In short, Paul maintains a Platonic dualism without abandoning a Hebraic anthropology. From this combination, Boyarin is able to construct a hermeneutic for understanding Paul, a hermeneutic that is presented in the form of a 'flesh/spirit' antithesis. Paul is not an anti-Semite; rather, he believes that the Jews are a 'concrete signifier of the fulfilled spiritual signified', Christian Church (1994: 156). Likewise, Paul is not against the Law *per se*; rather, the Law is allegorized to signify the 'Law of faith' ('faith' is the allegorical meaning of the Jewish practices of the law [1994: 231]). Historic Israel and the Law are 'allegorized out of real historical existence' (1994: 156). That is, historic Israel ('according to the flesh') is the physical shadow of the spiritual church ('according to the spirit'). While Paul is not an anti-Semite, he is a supersessionist.

Boyarin's reading is certainly provocative and has challenged the views of many who, unlike Boyarin, have made the study of Paul their primary vocation. For this, Boyarin's work is to be commended. As a practising post-modern Jew, Boyarin brings a fresh perspective to the biblical text and to the field of Pauline scholarship. There are a few points of criticism, however, that I wish to make. First, Boyarin's appraisal of Paul's desire for universal salvation is, one could say, thin on its Christology. Indeed, Paul is a 'passionate striver for human liberation and equality' (1994: 9), but I am not quite sure that Boyarin has accurately represented Paul's passion for equality and liberation *achieved through the death and resurrection of Christ* (Pamela Eisenbaum [see below] offers a way forward here). Christ is certainly the epicentre of Paul's concerns for ethnicity and gender equality. Second, Boyarin has chosen Gal. 3.28 ('There is neither Jew nor Greek,

there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus') as the key text for reading Galatians and admitted that this is a hermeneutical choice without giving a very thorough defence of this choice, yet he criticizes others for choosing a different text. For instance, Boyarin accuses Hamarton-Kelly of committing a 'moral monstrosity' by selecting 1 Thess. 2.14 as a centre for Paul's thought. If it is indeed a hermeneutical choice, however, I see no *a priori* reason why another text—even one as unattractive as 1 Thess. 2.14—should be denounced on moral grounds. Moreover, I also wonder how beneficial it is to reflect on Paul's thought by singling out a single Pauline text as the lens through which we can read Paul. Third, Boyarin is able to rid Paul of any anti-Semitism by embracing Sanders's view of covenantal nomism (for the most part). Paul, according to Sanders, Boyarin, and others, did not criticize Judaism as a deficient religion. What is wrong with Judaism was its ethnocentric focus, its desire to maintain difference as a main feature in religion, whereas Paul, with his passion for universal salvation, sought to overcome difference with 'sameness'. I fail to see how this depiction can adequately account for the gravity of the plight in Paul's thought. If Paul can be read along the lines of the Hebrew prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.), then his construal of the plight can maintain its emphasis on sin and rebellion—a rather reformational reading—without understanding this critique as anti-Semitic. (Did not the Qumran community criticize *other fellow Jews* as being cursed and outside the covenant as it were? Yet, of course, the Qumranites were not anti-Semitic.) Boyarin has rightly captured a significant feature in the plight, Judaism's inability to address the need for salvation of all, but I think that he has unjustly written off other features of this plight (sin, rebellion, and the inability to do the law) as anti-Semitic.

Mark D. Nanos

Nanos is arguably the most creative and constructive Jewish author engaged in Pauline studies at the moment. His attention to the ideological, social, and rhetorical texture of Paul's epistolary discourses has resulted in several stimulating and engaging proposals, which pose fresh challenges to well-worn assumptions about the Apostle Paul and his relationship to Judaism. In two major volumes (Nanos 1996; 2002a) and a number of ancillary publications (Nanos 1999; 2002b; 2005a; 2005b; 2005c), he has endeavoured to revise the Apostle's relationship to Jews and Judaism and so correct what has been a Christian (mis)interpretation of Paul that has had horrifying effects in the history of interpretation (e.g. Nanos 1996: 16; 2002a: 2, 4). Central to that thesis is his conception of Paul as an essentially *Torah*

observant Jew and the corollaries that follow from it (see Nanos forthcoming; 1996: 9-10; 2002a: 3, 7-9).

In his first book *The Mystery of Romans* (1996), Nanos proposes that Paul wrote to urge the Gentiles in Rome to live in respectful service with non-Christian Jews. Accordingly Paul was a 'good Jew' who functioned within the context of Judaism, gave priority to Israel, and fought against the ethnocentric exclusivism of his countrymen that prohibited Gentiles entering the community of the righteous (1996: 9). The Gentile Christians in Rome were deeply entrenched in the Jewish synagogues and Paul was not attempting to safeguard them from the *Judaizers*. Rather, Paul was concerned about the *gentilizing* of the Gentile Christians which would result in the fermentation of anti-Israel sentiment and render them as non-law observant. To the contrary, the 'obedience of faith' that Paul advocates is the observance of the Apostolic decree or adherence to the Noachide commandments prescribed by the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 (Nanos 1996: 35-39). While Paul challenged the ethnocentric exclusivism of his compatriots that stipulated that Gentiles had to become Jews in order to become equal co-participants in the blessings of God, he never advocated a purely 'law-free' way of life for Gentiles. The Gentiles are even called to submit to synagogue authorities in Rome. The 'weak' in Romans 14–15 are not Jewish Christians but rather non-Christian Jews (Nanos 1996: 85-165). What makes them weak is their failure to believe in Christ and accept the universal implications that Christ has for Gentiles. Thus, in contrast to the New Perspective proponents who argue that Paul seeks to defend Gentile Christians freedom from Jewish ethnocentrism, Nanos claims that Paul is seeking to restrain Gentile Christian freedom *halakhically* (Langton 2005: 101 n. 147). In the end, the *mystery* of Romans is how the Gentiles have an important role in enabling the restoration of Israel.

There is much to affirm here. (1) One should not assume that the 'weak' were Jewish Christians and the 'strong' were Gentile Christians. After all, Paul could consider himself one of the 'strong' and Gentiles with a long history of Jewish observances could easily comprise the 'weak'. (2) The extent that Gentile Christians remained in association with Jewish synagogues should remain an open question. While it is possible that the tumults associated with 'Chrestus' may have led to the expulsions of the *Christiani* from their midst, this is not certain. Some Gentiles may have remained in, around or beside the Jewish synagogues in some way, and the same must be true of Jewish Christians. (3) Nanos gives much needed stress to Paul's concern for the restoration of Israel. It is probably Rom. 15.8-9 rather than 1.16 which constitutes the link between Jesus and Paul.

Nonetheless certain criticisms remain. (1) While Nanos's contention that the 'weak' are non-Christian Jews is innovative, it is not altogether convincing (see Gagnon 2000; Witherington 2004: 330-33). Paul implies in Rom. 14.1–15.13 that the 'strong' are in a position of ascendancy over the 'weak'. In fact, Rom. 14.23 suggests that the 'strong' could get their way in forcing the 'weak' to eat against their conscience which is most improbable in a synagogue context. The Pauline principle in Rom. 14.14 implies a complete relativization of the Jewish purity code which Jews unfamiliar with the Jesus tradition (e.g. Mk 7.15, 19) would be unlikely to accommodate. If the faith of the 'weak' includes an attachment to Jewish boundary markers then the absence of any mention of circumcision in Rom. 14.1–15.13 is peculiar. Additionally, similar language is used in 1 Corinthians 8 but without an intra-Jewish context. (2) According to Paul, Israel's problem is not purely their ethnocentric exclusivism (something that Nanos refines in his Galatians volume [2002a: 109 n. 43]), but that they failed to believe in the Messiah and Paul even offers a call for Jewish evangelism in Rom. 10.14-15. (3) Paul did not need the message of the gospel to know that God was not the God of the Jews only; the Hebrew Scriptures through Genesis to Jonah demonstrate God's universal concern. Also, it was possible for Jews and Gentiles to be united together under the Law. Jewish Hellenistic Apologetic literature, such as *Aristeas* and *Joseph and Aseneth*, arguably commends the Law to Gentiles and is in some sense universalistic (Bird 2007: 102). (4) Apart from the historical problems associated with the apostolic decree, it is hardly warranted to correlate Acts 15.19-32, 16.1-5, 21.25 with the 'obedience of faith' in Rom. 1.5, 16.26.

In a revised version of his doctoral thesis *The Irony of Galatians* (2002a), Nanos argues against the 'consensus view' that Galatians is to be understood as a window into an intra-Christian debate where Paul responds to the activities of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem or Antioch who have begun harassing his Galatian converts in order to compel them to add Law observance to Paul's gospel. Instead, Nanos advocates that the 'influencers' are Jews or possibly proselytes who are part of the Jewish communities of Galatia that have begun urging the Galatian Christians to be circumcised in order to resolve the anomalous situation of these Gentiles believers in relation to the synagogue and to also avoid the stigma of their uncertain attachment to Judaism in the eyes of pagan authorities. These non-Christian observers are not against Christ or Paul's gospel; it is simply not their concern. Thus, the letter is part of an intra-Jewish debate whereby Paul offers an ironic rebuke to the Galatians to avoid circumcision which subverts the value of Christ for Gentiles. He writes:

> This reevaluation of the evidence suggests that the Galatian influencers were not believers in Jesus Christ, nor was their message good news of Christ. Their concerns did not arise from an inter-Christian opposition to Paul or his supposed Law-free gospel, and they did not arrive suddenly from outside Galatia… Rather, I suggest that the influencers represented Jewish communities in Galatia that were concerned about the integration of these particular Gentiles, who were, through their involvement in the (still Jewish) Jesus subgroups, an integral part of the larger Jewish communities at this time (Nanos 2002a: 317).

There are discernible strengths to this study. (1) Many widely held views about Paul's opponents in Galatia are assumptions bequeathed to scholarship by the legacy of F.C. Baur and need re-evaluation. (2) It is inappropriate and indeed tautological to call Jews 'judaizers' since only Gentiles can properly judaize. (3) Even if the 'influencers' are Jewish Christians, as I would argue, they may have found a warm reception, support and assistance from a local Jewish synagogue, and perhaps they have even begun to make in-roads among the Gentile Christians in Galatia. In which case we must reckon with the possibility that Paul's unnamed opponents in Galatia consists of a hybrid coalition of Jews, Jewish Christians, and Christian Gentile proselytes although the actual composition is beyond our capacity to investigate.

Concurrently there are several objectionable points to Nanos's thesis. (1) The need to resolve the uncertain and marginalized status (Nanos 2002a: 6, 93-98) of these Galatians as pagan guests dissipates when it is remembered that the position of adherent or 'of but not in' was a familiar religious stance in antiquity and not one that needed immediate defence (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 88). (2) One cannot assume that Christ-belief would have been a matter of indifference to Jews (Nanos 2002a: 15). Jesus as crucified Messiah was a lasting point of contention in Christian and Jewish relations (1 Cor. 1.18–2.2; Rom. 9.32-33; Gal. 5.11; 6.12-14; Phil. 3.18; Justin, *Dial. Tryph*. 108). (3) Nanos claims that when Paul calls the influencers' message a 'gospel' that he is doing so as a non-technical term of εὐαγγελια ('glad tidings') so as to offer an ironic caricature of their message (Nanos 2002a: 52-53, 141, 284-316). Yet that remains at odds with the rest of Paul's letters and indeed the whole New Testament where 'gospel' is clearly a technical term for the Christian message of salvation and not a general publication of glad tidings. The mere fact that the influencers' message competed with the message of Christ is insufficient for it to be deemed a 'gospel'. (4) While it may be possible to see Paul's biographical section in Gal. 1.11–2.21 as

consisting of analogies and not rehearsals of the same debate with the same opponents, the description of the trouble-makers as seeking to avoid persecution because of the offence of the cross in Gal. 6.12 surely intimates that Paul's opponents are in some sense Christian (Nanos' [2002a: 219-24] explanation for 6.11-12 is that the influencers wish to avoid the associated shame and loss of legal rights for failing to convince the Galatians to proselytize because of their continued commitment to a Jewish martyr). The reference to Paul being 'unknown' to the churches of Judea (Gal. 1.22), the origin of his gospel through an unmediated revelation (Gal. 1.11-12), and the accusation that Paul still preaches circumcision (Gal. 5.11) all suggest that Paul is countering misinformation that is being spread about him. (5) The Pauline gospel is more than a challenge to the limitation of righteous identity to Israelites but addresses the nexus between law-sin-flesh that alienates humanity from God, both Jew and Gentile (see Bird 2007).

Pamela M. Eisenbaum

Pamela Eisenbaum brings unique credentials to both Pauline scholarship and Jewish-Christian dialogue: she is a modern Jewish New Testament scholar who teaches at a Christian seminary (Iliff School of Theology, Dever, CO; a seminary of the United Methodist Church). Eisenbaum, who identifies herself as both a Jew and a feminist (2001–2002: 1), is one of the most prolific recent contributors to Jewish views on Paul. She places herself in the broad spectrum of the New Perspective (2005: 227-33), resonating most with more 'radical' scholars such as Mark Nanos, Neil Elliott, Paula Fredriksen, Lloyd Gaston, John Gager, and others (2005: 232), finding 'their position historically and ethically preferable' (2005: 233). The difference between these scholars, including Eisenbaum, and other New Perspective scholars, such as E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright, is that these latter contributors, while emphasizing Paul's Jewishness, still maintain what she calls an 'essentialist framework', that is, 'Christianity is defined by devotion to Christ; Judaism by devotion to Torah, albeit a devotion not marked by legalism, but by covenantal participation' (2005: 232). In other words, Christian identity is still defined in opposition to Judaism. Eisenbaum, in fact, urges the scholarly community to stop using the term 'Christian' when speaking about Paul:

> Since most modern Jews and Christians see belief in Christ as the quintessential boundary marker between Judaism and Christianity, labeling Paul Christian reinforces essentialist definitions of Christianity and Judaism as mutually exclusive, and thus makes claims to Paul's Jewish identity confusing at best, impossible at worse (2005: 237).

Paul was not a 'Christian', according to Eisenbaum; he does not use the term and his primary anthropological categories are *not* 'Christian' and 'non-Christian', but Jew and Gentile (2005: 237). Paul was a Jew who believed that the eschatological ingathering of the Gentiles was being accomplished through the death of Christ (2004a: 674-77).

Similar to Lapide, Eisenbaum believes that Paul's Christology carries significance for the Gentiles, not for the Jews. Christ's sacrifice was the necessary means by which the Gentiles are given full kinship into Abraham's lineage (see especially her stimulating recent *JBL* article, 2004a).

> Christ's death on the cross constitutes the sacrifice that integrates Gentiles into the lineage of Abraham—that is the essential 'logic' that connects Paul's Christology to his mission to incorporate Gentiles into Israel (2004a: 685).

Eisenbaum thus argues with a minority group of scholars (Nanos, Stowers, Gaston, Gager) that Paul does not address the universal human condition in Romans 5–8, but 'one particular portion of humanity, namely, Gentiles' (2004a: 695). Understanding Paul's Christology in this way amounts to a 'two-way salvation' theology: Christ is essential for the salvation of the Gentiles (viz., their grafting into Abraham's promise) but the Jews by way of the covenant are already 'in' as it were (cf. 2004a: 672 n. 3).

Along with her contributions to the New Perspective and Paul's understanding of Jew and Gentile salvation, Eisenbaum engages in current debates over Paul and gender (see especially 2001–2002). With Boyarin (2001–2002: 6-7), Eisenbaum takes Gal. 3.28 ('There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ') as the summary of Paul's theological vision (2001–2002: 1-2). But unlike many feminist and liberal scholars (and against Boyarin)—the camp with whom she admittedly resonates (2001–2002: 5)—Eisenbaum does not think that Paul 'use[s] the language of equality' in Gal. 3.28. Paul does not want to do away with 'difference' (e.g. Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised, etc.), but wants to build a community, or family, where difference is no longer a barrier to kinship. Eisenbaum sums up her treatment of Gal. 3.28 as follows:

> The standard liberal interpretation of Gal. 3.28—that Paul wanted to break down barriers or erase human differences—is not a helpful way to understand Paul's vision. 'Neither Jew nor Greek' ought not be read as Paul's attempt to transcend ethnic and cultural difference so that we might all live in one equal but homogenous society. Paul does not think in terms of 'society' or 'community', at least not as we moderns do anyway. The alternative metaphor I would like to put forth for describing Paul's

> vision in Gal. 3:28 is the building of family… While people, both ancient and modern, think of families as biologically related groups of people who are, in fact, alike or at least similar, families generally are made up of people who are by some measure different (2001–2002: 10).

As a family, the new community that Paul is seeking to create is able to maintain their essential differences while relating to each other in a meaningful way and committing themselves to each other's well-being (2001–2002: 12).

Eisenbaum's understanding of Paul is provocative and convincing in many ways. What is most refreshing is her ability to critique her own school of thought, as seen above regarding Gal. 3:28, if such a critique is needed. She also makes a very strong contribution to the view that Christ is the means of salvation for the Gentiles, not the Jews, and her articulation of the role of Christ's sacrifice in the ingathering of the Gentiles (2004a) is provocative. Nevertheless, this view (Christ is the agent of Gentile salvation only) runs into several problems that have not been answered in a satisfactory way. First, Paul explicitly calls Jesus the 'son of David', the one who confirmed God's promise in the holy Scriptures (Rom. 1.2-3), and 'the Christ (Messiah?) according to the flesh' (Rom. 9.5). Second, the universal lordship of Christ (Phil. 2.9-11; cf. 1 Cor. 15.23-28; cf. Col. 1.15-20; Eph. 1.20-23) suggests that Christ is more than the agent of salvation for the Gentiles. Another problem in particular with Eisenbaum's reading of Romans is, third, that Paul seems to level the playing field, as it were, between Jews and Gentiles in Romans 1–2 so that he can demonstrate the universal need for Christ. That Jews are just as guilty as the Gentiles seems to be the unambiguous point Paul makes in Rom. 2.1–3.20. This seems to be the most natural reading of the early chapters of Romans and also seems to be a foundation for the rest of the letter. Thus, in light of the above three points, it seems difficult to say that Paul did not believe that Christ was the Jewish Messiah or the agent of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. Yet, of course, counter arguments can be and have been made. Despite these points of criticism, Eisenbaum's work on Paul makes a clear and provocative contribution to the field.

Conclusion

Is there a Jewish view of Paul? The answer to that question is 'no' since there are a number of diverse portraits of Paul which a contrast of Maccoby and Nanos aptly demonstrates. Yet a primary and shared concern that emerges in these works is that of correcting the misrepresentation of Judaism that is presented by either Paul or by contemporary Pauline scholarship. That is

something that many non-Jewish scholars also resonate with (e.g. Moore 1921; W.D. Davies 1955; Sanders 1977; 1983; Lee-Linke 2005).

What is the distinctive contribution of Jewish scholarship on Paul? One obvious point would be their contribution to the recovery of the Jewish Paul after the dominance of the Hellenistic/Gnostic Paul as was advocated by R. Reitzenstein, W. Bousset, R. Bultmann and W. Schmithals in the early to mid twentieth century. Jewish scholars have contributed to the trend of identifying Paul as a very Jewish thinker and have been probing as to how that Jewishness interfaced with a variety of other philosophical, cultural and social horizons (on Paul's Jewishness see also Young 1997; Wright 1997; 2005; Chilton 2004). Another distinctive feature is the ideological undercurrents that run beneath these contributions as authors use the aegis of Pauline scholarship to critique Christianity, to bring about reconciliation between two faith-communities, or feed into intra-Jewish debates about Jewish identity and acculturation (Brumberg-Kraus 1997: 121-52; Langton 2005: 69-70, 77).

Perhaps the reason why there will never be a Jewish 'reclamation' of Paul is because, in Helmut Koester's words, Paul was trying to 'accomplish the impossible'. That was 'to establish a new Israel on a foundation that could include both Jews and Gentiles' (Koester 1995: 26-27). Whereas Paul could say that for Christians the 'end of ages have come' (1 Cor. 10.11), and 'now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor. 6.2) such a claim is indefensible to many Jewish people who believe that the world is anything but redeemed (Buber 1990: 131). Ultimately Paul's re-reading of Scripture, his incorporation of Jesus into the divine identity, his acceptance of Gentiles without proselytism, his relativization or annulment of the *Torah*, his lowering the currency of Israel's election, his claim that the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ, and his proclamation of a crucified Messiah could be not be sustained even within the diverse array of Second Temple Judaism (cf. Hagner 1980: 158). While some may want to find in Paul a gateway to reconciliation, in Jewish eyes, Paul is perhaps destined to remain a heretic at worst or an anti-hero at best.

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