Paul and the Invention of the Gentiles
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TOWARD A GENEALOGY OF THE GOY

THIS ESSAY ADDRESSES ONE ASPECT of the story of the birth of the *goy* (gentile)—its transformation from the biblical meaning of "people" to the rabbinic "non-Jew." We begin by presenting an outline of a genealogy of *goy*, as a word and a concept[1] from the Bible to rabbinic literature,[2] and then focus on one chapter in this genealogy: the meaning and use of *ethnê* in Paul's epistles. We claim that these texts, and especially Romans and Galatians, play a crucial part in the emergence of the *goy* as a new, nonethnic, privatized, and generalized category with a whole new discursive formation hinging on it. In contrast to the scholarly consensus, according to which Paul simply borrows his binary distinction between Jews and *ethnê* from Jewish tradition, we claim that despite scattered cases where "goy" is used to refer to indefinite groups of individuals, no such tradition existed, and that Paul's *ethnê* precedes the tannaitic *goy* in consolidating the binary division between the Jews and their "others," and may have contributed in fact to the constitutive role that the term played in tannaitic discourse.

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1. "Genealogy" is used here in the sense Foucault gave to this term. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y., 1977), 139–64.

2. For a fuller version of this genealogy, see Ishay Rosen Zvi and Adi Ophir, "*Goy*: Toward a Genealogy," *Diné Israel* 28 (2011): 69–122.

Despite (or perhaps because) of the ongoing presence of the *goy* in Jewish discourses since antiquity, both as a category and as a worldview, its birth and history have received almost no scholarly attention. While different attitudes toward the *goy*, and the various ways in which a *goy* can become a Jew, are discussed at length, the construction of the category itself remains almost unnoticed. We thus wish to shift the focus from the various historical attitudes toward the *goy* to the very constitution of the concept and the dichotomy it constructs. We claim that there is nothing obvious about this concept or the naming it entails, and that it did not always function as an essential attribute of the self-understanding of Jews.

The rabbinic "goy" has no meaning outside the dyad it shares with "Jew." It assumes a dualist conception of social reality, in which Jews are juxtaposed with "everyone else," and each member of this "everyone else" is a "gentile" in the same sense and to the same extent. While it is a simple truism that every identity is based on difference and differentiation, there are various ways of achieving and securing the boundary between self and others. Defining others as "gentiles" is merely one such differentiation, the result of a certain discourse that came into being at a certain moment in time, rather than a universal sociological fact, as scholars usually assume.[3]

The introduction of the *goy* organized an entirely new discursive formation. Our work seeks to reconstruct that formation by tracing the emergence of a constellation of relations between existing categories as well as

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3. Thus, for example, Shaye Cohen: "Like numerous other groups, both ancient and modern, Jews see the world in bipolar terms: Jews versus gentiles, 'us' and 'them'" (Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* [Berkeley, Calif., 1999], 1). Cohen cites two examples from Philo and Josephus, as well as a Jewish inscription from Asia Minor, but these examples fail to distinguish between different forms of othering. For similar assumptions regarding the universalistic nature of the discourse of otherness, of which the rabbinic *goy* is but one example, see Gary Porton, *Goyim: Gentiles and Israelites in Mishna-Tosefta* (Atlanta, Ga., 1998), 288–99; Sacha Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Leiden, 1994), 4–6. See especially Porton's conclusion that one needs to analyze rabbinic discourse "in terms of any other ethnic group's treatment of the 'other'" (10). This criticism in no way diminishes our debt to these studies but only manifests the need to supplement them with a study of "the beginnings of *Goyishness.*" For a recent critic of the self-fashioning through contrast model, see Eric S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J., 2011). Gruen concludes that "the expression of collective character in antiquity . . . owes less to insisting on distinctiveness from the alien than to postulating links with, adaptation to, and even incorporation of the alien" (352).

the construction of new ones. Despite the continuous presence of some of these categories, the novelty of the discursive formation is manifested in these new constellations: an ethnic mindset charged with metaphysical and theological values, articulated through a binary division, and performed through a growing, complex, and meticulous system of rules that secure separation in an ever growing realm of interrelations. Other categories, like the Torah, the Land of Israel, the covenant, election, and above all God as the origin, the justification, and the telos of the binary division were all part of this new constellation.

As with any discursive formation, this constellation was embedded in practices, institutions, and technologies (such as the ritual of conversion or the decrees about the impurity of *goyim*) and left traces wherever these were described or alluded to, in the way key terms (Israel and the nations, Jew and gentile, Gods and idols, pure and impure, sacred and profane, Covenant and its violation, and so forth) were used, the range of their meaning, how they related to each other, how they limited and allowed description, narration, prescription, and so on. Here we will focus only on what seems to us the most fundamental category of this new discursive formation and conceptual constellation, the generalized and individualized category of the gentile. We will have to do this by following the many occurrences of *goyim* and *ethnê*[4] in literature that span approximately from the third century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. And yet it is important to bear in mind that it is *not* the history of a word that we are following here but a genealogy of a discursive formation of which, so we assume, the concept of gentile was a constitutive element.

THE *GOY* FROM THE BIBLE TO THE RABBIS: AN OVERVIEW

In the Hebrew Bible, *goy* simply means "nation," with Israel too being a *goy*, a "holy goy" indeed but still a nation among nations.[5] The election of Israel and its separation from the nations did not create a united category for the nations, let alone individual persons from which Israel has been

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4. Bearing in mind that at no point in time during this period and regarding no single text one can simply presuppose that the two terms were used in the same way or referred to the same entity.

5. Ephraim A. Speiser, "'People' and 'Nations' in Israel," *JBL* 79 (1960): 157–63; Aelred Cody, "When Is the Chosen People Called a *Goy*?" *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964): 1–6. Both attempt to explicate the distinction between *goy* and *'am*. Speiser claims that while *goy* denotes a political, territorial group, *'am* connotes consanguinity. Cody asserts that *'am* is usually preserved to Israel, while *goy* to foreign nations. Both distinctions, however, suffer from a fair number of exceptions.

separated. This is the case all the way through to the latest of the biblical books, written in the midst of the Antiochene Persecution (Dan 12.1). During the Hellenistic period, however, a semantic differentiation takes place, and *goyim* begins to be used mostly for foreign nations. A well-known lexicographical development was introduced by the Septuagint, which systematically distinguished between *ethnê*, which consistently refers to foreign nations, and *laos*, which denotes Israel alone. It avoids the plural *laoi*, using *ethnê* for both *goyim* and *'amim*; and the singular *laos* when referring to Israel. Insisting on the distinction between Israel and the other nations, the Septuagint forms conceptual distinction, even at the cost of semantic consistency.[6] Even then, however, *goyim* was not yet used to denote individuals who were not *yehudim*: the biblical term for that was *nokhri*, "stranger" (LXX: *allophulos, allotrios, allogenes*).[7]

In the Hebrew bible, *nokhri* often appears in contexts of strangeness and otherness in general. But in biblical law, the term functions as a group attribute, specifically denoting those who are not of Israel (Ex 12.43, 21.8, Lev 22.25),[8] and in the Deuteronomistic legislation, the *nokhri* is opposed to the "brother" Israelite (Dt 15.3, 23.21).[9] But even the Deuteronomistic *nokhri* does not reach the level of the rabbinic *goy*. First,

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6. See George Bertram, "People and Peoples in the LXX," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [*TDNT*], ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964), 2:364–69. This development may have been influenced by larger semantic shifts in Greek: "Since the time of Aristotle, there was a propensity to use *ethnê* for the 'nations' other than the Greeks" (James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* [Tübingen, 1995], 58, n. 7; cf. Karl L. Schmidt, "*ETHNOS* in the NT," *TDNT* 2:371). On the meanings of *ethnos* in Greek literature, see Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1997), 34–36. For possible roots of this move in the Hebrew Bible itself (but "only the first steps of this tendency are traceable in the OT"), see Ronald E. Clements, "gôy," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* [*TDOT*], ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975), 2:431–32.

7. Judith Lieu, "Not Hellenes but Philistines? The Maccabees and Josephus defining the 'Other,'" *JJS* 53 (2002): 246–63.

8. In the Priestly source (P), and especially in the Holiness code (H), the *ger* is not only subject to various prohibitions but also performs positive commandments. This is expressed in the idiom "there shall be one law for you and for the *ger*" (Num 9.14, 15.15; cf. Lev 24.16, 22). The *ger*, who "sojourn[s] with" Israel, becomes, through an act of love (Lev 19.34), "as the *ezrah*" and therefore is commanded, together with the rest of Israel, "to become holy" (Lev 20.7). See Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1995), 28.

9. Saul Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton, N.J., 2000), 63–81.

unlike the rabbinic *goy*, it does not yet signify an independent entity with independent traits but merely denotes a non-Israelite. Second, in Deuteronomy, the differentiation Israelite/non-Israelite is not quite binary yet, for not every individual fits into one of these two categories.[10] Third, and perhaps most importantly, the *nokhri* appears but five times in Deuteronomy (14.21, 15.3, 17.15, 23.21, 29.21) and does not erase the specific distinctions between various people and categories: the land of Canaan (Dt 1.7, 11.30, 32.49), the seven nations (7.1, 20.17), and the nations surrounding Canaan, each of which gains a different attitude (23.4–9).[11] We can thus discern in the Hebrew Bible a movement toward a generalized binary categorization, albeit one that is neither uniform nor complete.

So too in the case of the biblical alien resident, the *ger*.[12] In the priestly literature, the *ger* appears as a member of a group that also includes the hired hand (*sakhir*), the resident (*toshav*), the bought and the born slave, and the above-mentioned *nokhri* (see, for example, the laws of the paschal sacrifice in Ex 12.43–49). But in Deuteronomy the *ger*'s alienation is clearly emphasized: he is contrasted with "your brother" (as in Dt 24.14) and is not included in the special prohibitions imposed on Israel (thus he is permitted, along with the *nokhri*, to eat from a carcass; Dt 14.21). However, even in Deuteronomy the *ger* is referred to as *"your ger,"* and unlike the *nokhri*, is considered part of the covenant community (Dt 29.9, 31.11). He reappears there as part of the list of those who have no land, accompanying his Israelite patron on pilgrimage, and receiving charity and alms from the latter.[13] While the *ger* begins to become marginalized in Deuteronomy, he is not excluded yet, holding a hybrid position that distinguishes him from the *nokhri*. The election of the holy nation in Deuteronomy does not yet stabilize the identity of all those who are not elect nor establish a binary and comprehensive differentiation.[14] For this to happen one needs to wait for the birth of the *goy*.

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10. The *ger*, resident alien, is a clear example, as we will see below.

11. Compare the "differences of degree" attributed by Jonathan Hall to classical Greek conceptualizations of otherness (Jonathan Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* [Chicago, 2002], 180).

12. On the biblical *ger*, alien, in contrast to the postbiblical proselyte, see Jacob Milgrom, "Religious Conversion and the Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel," *JBL* 101 (1982): 169–76.

13. See Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 75–81; Cornelius van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (Sheffield, 1991).

14. On the nonelect, which the Bible distinguishes from both the elect and the anti-elect, see Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet, I Loved Jacob*: *Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville, Tenn., 2007). While Kaminsky's claim that the Bible has a tripartite division rather than a binary one is convincing, his assertion that this

As is well known, the *yehudi*[15] was born during the Persian period;[16] and yet it was not formed as the binary opposite of the biblical *nokhri*. Already in Ezra-Nehemiah and other contemporaneous works we can discern the emergence of this new collective identity that transcends both tribe (Judah) and territory (Judaea) and yet is not opposed by a unity but rather by a plurality. Thus, in the book of Esther, Mordecai *Ha-yehudi* does not face some unified gentile but rather "Haman the Agagite," "every nation," "nation and nation," "their enemies," and the like.[17] Similarly, in Ezra (9.2), the struggle against intermarriage between the "holy seed" and the "peoples of the lands" presupposes a plurality, along with references to specific geographic contexts, rather than a generic gentile. So too in Nehemiah, who introduces adversaries with ethnic epithets: "Sanbalat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite slave and Geshem the Arab" (Neh 2.19). The contemporaneous prophecies of Zachariah end in a similar tone: "In those days, ten men from all tongues of the *goyim* will hold the cloak of a *yehudi* and say: 'let us go with you, for we have heard God is with you'" (8.22–23). Again, we have a single *yehudi* facing multiple *goyim*, nations, but no singular *goy*. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to later Second Temple compositions: although at that stage there are both *yehudim* and *nokhrim*, the two do not relate to a single, all-encompassing, binary system that classifies every person in the world as belonging to either of these two groups.

Of course, it was possible to formulate a clear, even harsh, call for Jews to keep away from other nations before such binary categorization was stabilized, but the meaning of such separation was different. The book of Jubilees, from the second century B.C.E., advocates a sharp and

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division continues to function also in rabbinic literature, changing only in early Christianity, is not.

15. We will not discuss here the appropriate translation for this term—Judaean or Jew—in the different literatures and periods during the Second Temple era. For this debate—fascinating in its own right, but barely relevant for the present discussion—see most recently Seth Schwartz, "How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011): 208–38 and the literature cited there.

16. See Marc Z. Brettler, "Judaism in the Hebrew Bible? The Transition from Ancient Israelite Religion to Judaism," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61 (1999): 429–47; 430. Brettler's essay, however stresses, the continuity between preexilic and postexilic periods.

17. See Jon D. Levenson, "The Scroll of Esther in Ecumenical Perspective," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 13 (1976): 440–51; Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Columbia, S.C., 1991), 217–20.

total distinction, based on the ontological and metaphysical uniqueness of Israel—but it is mostly a distinction from *goyim* (nations) in the plural, and the differences between these nations remain significant.[18] Jubilees 22.16–22 presents an ideology of total separation of the seed of Jacob from the nations (most likely ruling out their conversion as well)[19] but does not yet employ a category that encompasses all these nations. It thus cobbles together idolaters, the peoples of Canaan, and the Sodomites in order to substantiate the prohibition.[20] Similarly, Jubilees 30, which retells the story of Shechem and Dinah and harshly prohibits intermarriage, does not present a unified *goy* from whom the Jew ought to stay away. The object of separation is the "seed of the nations," and the legal categories used to justify the separation are those of the Molech (derived from Lev 18.21) and the defilement of the holy seed (derived from Ezra 9.2).[21] There is no collective name for all those others whom Jews ought to avoid.

The imperative to separate from the non-Jew appears in Jubilees in two distinct contexts, marriage and the sharing of meals. The gentile appears in the process of active separation and as a result of the imperative to separate. It is here that we may encounter the first occurrence of individualized gentiles: "Now you, my son Jacob, remember what I say and keep the commandments of your father Abraham. Separate from the nations (probably: *goyim*),[22] and do not eat with them. Do not act as they do, and do not become their companion" (Jub 22.16). A similar use of

18. See Cana Werman, "The Attitude toward Gentiles in the Book of Jubilees and Qumran Literature Compared with Early Tanaaic Halakha and Contemporary Pseudoepigrapha" (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1995). Werman shows the different images of and attitudes toward various biblical figures: the stark negative image of Esau (197), the positive image of Laban (175), and the in-between image of Ishmael (139). These evaluations have direct legal consequences: the Ishmaelites are obligated in some of the commandments and Jacob's sons are allowed to marry Aramaean women (cf. mSan 9.6, where "Aramaean" means simply a gentile woman).

19. See Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities* (Oxford, 2002), 73–81.

20. Compare the way Rebecca justifies her request from Jacob not to marry Canaanites based on her bad experience with Esau's wives: "They have embittered my life with all the impure things that they do because everything they do (consists of) sexual impurity and lewdness. They have no decency" (Jubilees 25.1–3; Cf. 41.2).

21. See Cana Werman, "Jubilees 30: Building a Paradigm for the Ban on Intermarriage," *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997): 1–22.

22. The word appears in the Hebrew fragments of Jubilees from Qumran. See 4Q216 (4QJub^a) II 17 (= Jub 1.15); VII 13 (= 2.21).

the term appears in Tobit, when the hero says: "Every one of my relatives and my people there used to eat the breads of the nations (*ethnê*). But I kept myself from eating such food" (Tob 1.10).[23]

In both texts it may be is more plausible to read *goyim/ethnê* as referring to a group of unidentified non-Jews than to other peoples. If this is the case, then each one from the group may be conceived as an individual *goy*, even though the singular form itself would not appear before rabbinic literature. But note the limitedness of this innovation: all the other appearances of *goyim/ethnê* in both texts are still in the biblical, collective sense (including a few verses earlier in Jubilees [22.11]).[24] Individual *goyim* appear only in a very specific context of separation,[25] whose rules are articulated through the old discursive formation, and in which the differences among nations (as well, as we will see, as among families and tribes) still count. In both cases the term does not serve as an organizing principle of the narrative. In short, the possible change in the meaning of the words does not yet yield a new concept and does not testify to the occurrence of a discursive transformation.

Scholars note other precedents for pre-Pauline use of *goyim* or *ethnê* as referring to a nondistinct group of individuals.[26] They refer especially to two adjacent verses from the Damascus Covenant that regulate relations between individuals: "No one should stay in a place close to *goyim* on the Sabbath" (CD 11.14–15), and "No one should sell clean animals and birds to the *goyim* lest they sacrifice them" (CD 12.8–9).[27] Both verses however are far from being unequivocal. The second case is especially interesting, for the line before that reads: "He is not to stretch out his hand to shed the blood of one of the *goyim* (*ish min ha-goyim*) for the sake of riches and gain." *Goyim* is here thus a kind of shorthand for "a person of the *goyim*," once the individualistic context has been established.

To these one should add several references to *ethnê* in the context of

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23. James A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Berlin, 2003), 113.

24. Cf. Jubilees 15.20; 16.17; 24.28, 31; 30.7; Tobit 4.19; 13.3; 14.6.

25. Note also the lack of uniformity between the different spheres; some are more generalized than others. Thus while regarding food Jubilees says categorically "separate from the nations" (22.16), in the context of marriage the prohibition is limited to "the descendants of Canaan's daughters" (22.20). These discrepancies will all disappear in rabbinic literature, where a unified category rules in all legal areas.

26. See Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, "'Make Disciples of All the Gentiles' (Mt 28.19)," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 359–69.

27. All the rest occurrences of *goy/im* in Qumran (around eighty) are in the biblical, collective sense; as is clear from phrases like *goy nekhar*, *goy hevel*, etc. (Hare and Harrington's suggestion to read *goy hevel* in 1QM 9.8–9 as referring to an individual is ungrounded).

local enemies in 1 and 2 Maccabees.[28] These occurrences prove that the new meaning is neither a qumranic neologism, nor is it restricted to Hebrew alone.[29] Together with Jubilees and Tobit, these sources indicate that sometimes in the second and first century B.C.E. it became possible to use *ethnê* as well as *goyim* in a way that is both generalized and open to individuation. These two processes are related. Ignoring the differences between various nations could have eased the usage of the term in indeterminate cases in which a group of individuals, rather than ethnic collectives, are concerned.

The use of the term in Qumran or Maccabees is not restricted to sharing food and marriage but its occurrence is still episodic, has no effect on the discursive formation as a whole, and cannot be considered as traces of a new concept of gentile.[30] Central first-century authors, such as Philo and Josephus (Paul's senior and junior contemporaries respectively), never use *ethnê* in this new meaning; the hundreds of times they use this term all maintain its old, biblical meaning of "peoples."[31]

Moreover, *ethnê* as local enemies in 1 and 2 Macc.[32] preserves much of

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28. For *ethnê* as referring to local enemies, see 1 Macc 2.44; 3.10, 45, 52, 58; 4.7, 14; 5.9–10, 19–22, 38, 43; 6.18, 53; 14.36; 2 Macc 6.4; 8.5, 9, 16; 14.14–15; 15.8. See esp. 1 Macc 3.45 and 4.12–14 in which *ethnê* parallels *allophuloi* or *allogenoi*, and 2 Macc 8.16 in which it parallels *polemioi*. Compare 1 Macc 1.11–15, narrating the Hellenizers making a "covenant" with the *ethnê*. Cf. Lieu, "Not Hellenes but Philistines?" 252; Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 59, n. 8. On the various interpretations of 1 Macc 3.10 (*ethnê kai apo Samareias*), see Bezalel Bar Kochva, *The Battles of the Hashmonaeans: The Times of Judas Maccabeus* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1980), 125.

29. It is improbable that this development comes from the alleged common Hebrew source(s) (see Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees* [New York, 1983], 37–42), since 2 Macc 10.1–8, a clear candidate to such a shared (official) source (compare it to 1 Macc 4.36–55 and see Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations," 32–33), does not mention *ethnê* at all, using *allophuloi* instead (10.2, 5; see Daniel R. Schwartz, *The Second Book of Maccabees* [Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2004], 205). Note also that in the second opening letter attached to 2 Macc (1.10–2.18; Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 25–26), *goyim* is clearly used in the "normal" biblical sense (1.27).

30. In a book-length study on which we are currently working, we discuss various Second Temple compositions (Jubilees; Judith; Tobit; Ben Sira; the Testaments; Ps. Aristeas; 1–4 books of Maccabees; the Dead Sea Scrolls; Wisdom of Solomon; Psalms of Solomon; Joseph and Aseneth) as well as Philo and Josephus and postdestruction compositions as 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. While we find various models in these texts, none has the exclusive binary Jews/gentiles model such as that we find in Paul and the Mishnah.

31. See Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 85, 99.

32. In his Hebrew commentary Daniel Schwartz indeed translates all *ethnê* in 2 Macc as *'amim* (peoples) (Schwartz, *Second Maccabees*, 152). He does this for a different reason than ours — to avoid the negative association of *goyim* — but the

their biblical, political connotation.[33] How different, for example, is 1 Macc 3.52: "And behold the *ethnê* come together against us" from Ps 118.10: "all *goyim* circled me"? 1 Macc 5.9–10 reads: "And the *ethnê* that were in Galaad, assembled themselves together against the Israelites that were in their quarters to destroy them, and they fled into the fortress of Dathema. And they sent letters to Judas and his brethren, saying, The *ethnê* that are round about assembled together against us to destroy us." On this verse Hare and Harrington note: "*ta ethnê en ta Gallað* must refer to 'Gentiles'."[34] But, as Seth Schwartz shows, "the nations roundabout" (*ta ethnê en kuklo auton*; cf. 5.38, 57; 12.53) is a biblical phrase referring to the nations that circle Judea (see the list in 1 Sam 14.47).[35] The fact that the author interprets the gathering of the *ethnê* in Galaad as an assembly of the "nations roundabout" does not leave much doubt as to the national context of 1 Macc's *ethnê*, even when specific local enemies, rather than whole nations, are referred to.[36]

Moreover, the existence of the term, *goyim* or *ethnê*, and even its use in a way that was open for individual reading, was not enough for stabilizing a binary division, and thus the separation had to be supplemented with ad hoc justifications. Both Jubilees and Tobit had to buttress its injunc-

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important fact is that it is possible. One cannot even think doing such a trick with Paul's *ethnê*.

33. Cf. Donaldson, who emphasizes the intermediate position of 1 and 2 Maccabees: "It is not easy to discern where the balance is to be struck between 'a collection of non-Jewish individuals' and representatives of the 'the nations' as a whole." But even in the most privatized usages the biblical meaning is preserved: "By denoting individual non-Jews as ἔθνη, these texts characterize them as members of the (non-Jewish) nations" (Terrence L. Donaldson, "'Gentile Christianity' as a Category in the Study of Christian Origins," *HTR* 106 [2013]: 433–58). Donaldson believes that the same is true for Paul. We will suggest otherwise.

34. Hare and Harrington, "Make Disciples of All the Gentiles," 361.

35. Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations," 23. On 1 Macc's habit to model wars after biblical exemplars, ibid., 27.

36. This is made even clearer when reading these verses in the context of chapter 5 as a whole. This chapter—which has ten occurrences of *ethnê* (more than any other single chapter in 1 Macc)—narrates a series of foreign campaigns of Judas and his brothers. It opens with a Bible-like narration of the "nations roundabout" taking counsel "to destroy the race of Jacob living in their midst" (5.1–2). The local attacks that follow (of enemies from Edomia, Samaria, the Transjordan, the Upper Galilee, etc.) are but manifestation of this general hatred of the surrounding nations. On 1 Macc. anti-*ethnê* ideology, see Elias J. Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees* (Leiden, 1979), 19–20; Daniel R. Schwartz, "The Other in 1 and 2 Maccabees," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa (Cambridge, 1998), 30–37.

tion to separate with specific explanations ("for their deeds are impure
. . . they sacrifice to the dead . . . Canaan was ensnared in the sin of
Ham . . ." [Jub 22.16]), and justifications ("But I kept myself from
eating; Because I remembered God with all my heart" [Tob 1.11]). Once
a new discursive formation was consolidated such justifications became
obsolete, for the reason for separation was implied in the very name "gen-
tile," which could be understood as both fact and prescription. In tannai-
tic literature the very term *goy* includes the justifications for such
separation, being by definition a negative term that captures the very
"otherness" of the "others," hence requiring no further justification.

The repetitive, pedantic obsession with the need for differentiation
between Jews and non-Jews in Jubilees might indicate a world in which
such separation is still a matter of constant struggle, and the boundaries
are not yet clear-cut. In tannaitic literature, on the other hand, the border
is already clear and the distinction is taken as a given. This is indeed the
first corpus in which the singular form *goy* is used to denote a single
person.[37] The novelty of this usage in the Mishnah can be seen by the
fact that even there *goyim* in the plural is still much more common than
goy in the singular.[38] This is an apt expression of the completion of the
process in which the collective noun that used to denote peoples and
nations came to denote every single individual who does not belong to
one nation—with the specific, actual ethnicity of that person being com-
pletely irrelevant. The biblical *goyim* became generalized and abstracted
and at the same time "individualized."

It is not simply a shift in the meaning of the word that we witness in
the tannaitic literature. Being consistent and pervasive, this shift is a
marker of a whole new discursive formation. Within this formation, the
imperative to separate and control interaction with the non-Jew is not
meant to establish separation but is already based on it: from the fact of
separation one draws a whole set of rules of conduct. Halakhic discus-
sions thus focus on interactions between Jews and gentiles, without ques-

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37. This additional move was not available for Paul (cf. Mt 18.17: *ethnikos*),
who had to use *hellēn* when he wished to refer to a single non-Jew or to create a
contrast with a singular *Ioudaios*. See Hare and Harrington, "Make Disciples of
All the Gentiles," 361; Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 123.

38. The singular form of *goyim* continues to be, in most cases, *nokhri*. See, e.g.,
mTer. 8.11–12; m'AZ 2.1; 4.11. For a similar process regarding "Israel," denoting
in the Mishnah both the individual and the collective, see Charlotte Fonrobert,
"'Humanity Was Created as an Individual': Synecdochal Individuality in the
Mishnah as a Jewish Response to Romanization," in *The Individual in the Religions
of the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. J. Rüpke (Oxford, 2013), 489–52.

tioning the stability of these categories.[39] Furthermore, the stabilization of the Jew-goy distinction as binary system went along with a systematic effort to eliminate various hybrid identities that existed in previous discourses and to locate them within one of these two categories. Thus the *ger* becomes a proselyte, "a Jew in all regards," while the alien resident, the biblical *ger* (*ger toshav* in rabbinic terminology), is marginalized to the point that both Talmuds can actually compare him to "a *goy* in every respect."[40] The "God-fearers" are now considered gentiles;[41] Samaritans become questionable Jews, cast by the Mishnah beside the *shtuki* and *asufi,* who do not know the identity of their fathers;[42] slaves become second-tier members of the Jewish community, along with women and minors.[43] Tannaitic law insists on placing hybrid individuals in one of these two poles, erecting between them a border that includes well-guarded crossing points. This is also the significance of the appearance of the conversion ceremony in rabbinic literature, as an agent of ontological transformation that takes place at once: "[A convert] who immersed and rose [from the pool] is a Jew in all regards" (bYev 47b).[44] This ceremony serves as a new gate in a recently erected wall.

The emergence of the generalized/individualized gentile in tannaitic literature has numerous implications and is apparent in both halakha and aggada. We have discussed the division of labor between these two in detail elsewhere;[45] suffice it to say here that the aggadic segments of tannaitic midrashic compositions also express a clear binary worldview. Different nations are seen there as mere facets of a unified "gentile community"—a fact that allows homilies to skip easily from one nation to another or to *goyim* in general. Here is one example from the Mekhilta:

> *And* **Egypt** *pursued them* (Ex 14.9). This tells us that none of them stumbled, lest they see it as a bad omen (*yenahashu*) and return. And so we find everywhere, that **gentiles** practice augury (*menahashim*), as it says, *for these gentiles which you are to replace [obey augurs and oracles]* (Dt

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39. See Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, "*Goy*: Toward a Genealogy," 74–81.

40. yYev 8.1; cf. b'AZ 64b.

41. On "God-fearers," see Louis Feldman, *Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient World* (Princeton, N.J., 1993), 342–82, and the vast bibliography cited there.

42. mKid. 4.3, tKid 5.1. Cf. Lawrence Schiffman, "The Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah," *JQR* 75 (1985): 323–50.

43. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley, Calif., 2005), 120–24.

44. On this baraita, see Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 198–238, and our discussion in Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, "*Goy*: Toward a Genealogy," 78.

45. See Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, "*Goy*: Toward a Genealogy," 106–22.

18.14). *And the elders of **Moab** [and the elders of **Midian**]* went [with oracles in their hands] (Num 22.7), *and Bilam the son of Beor the Augur* [*they killed by the sword*] (Josh 13.22).[46]

Although the attribution of magical powers to the Egyptians was a popular ethnic stereotype in the ancient world,[47] the above homily easily skips over to other peoples and to gentiles in general. The prooftexts indeed cite Canaanites, Moabites, and Midianites—but not Egyptians. *Goyim* are *goyim*.

<div align="center">PAUL AND THE FORMATION OF THE *GOYIM*</div>

Starting our research under the impression of the clear difference between the biblical and the rabbinic use of *goy*, we first ascribed the birth of the *goy* to the tannaitic revolution after the destruction of the Second Temple. Noting the frequent mentions of *ethnê* in the epistles of Paul, we thought at first that this represented nothing more than an interesting example of the stages preceding the rabbinic dichotomous model. A closer inspection, however, reveals Paul to be a more perplexing and complex case, an explication of which will drive the remainder of this essay.

Paul makes extensive use of the *ethnê* in his letters (mainly in Romans and Galatians).[48] He mentions the term forty-five times, far more than any other collective designation.[49] Some of these (Rom 1.5–6, 13; 9.24; 11.13; 1 Cor 12.2; Gal 2.12, 14) refer explicitly to his addressees, members of eastern Mediterranean congregations, which Paul established or

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46. Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, *Vayehi* 2 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 91).

47. Gideon Bohak, "Ethnic Stereotypes in the Greco-Roman World: Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Jews," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 2000), division B, 7*–15*; Bohak, "The Ibis and the Jewish Question: Ancient 'Anti-Semitism' in Historical Perspective," in *Jews and Gentiles in the Holy Land in the Days of the Second Temple, the Mishna and the Talmud*, ed. M. Mor et al. (Jerusalem, 2003), 27–43.

48. Romans 29 times; Galatians 10 times; 1 Corinthians 3 times; 1 Thessalonians 2 times; 2 Corinthians once. For a fuller review of the occurrences of *ethnê* in Paul's epistles, see Schmidt, "*ETHNOS* in the NT," *TDNT* 2:369–72; Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 57–134. In what follows we will analyze Paul's discourse in broad terms, over and above the local circumstances and rhetorical gestures of the specific letters. While we are aware that this is less and less common today, we believe that this approach is justified by our search for the emergence and consolidation of a new discursive formation in Paul.

49. See the table cited in Christopher Stanley, "Paul the Ethnic Hybrid? Postcolonial Perspectives on Paul's Ethnic Categorizations," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. C. Stanley (Minneapolis, Minn., 2011), 119.

supported during his lengthy travels. Many other unspecified occurrences of *ethnê* can also be understood only when assuming Paul's specific mission to his communities. "I speak to you *ethnê*," he declares in Romans 11.13, adding, "inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the *ethnê*."[50] Elsewhere he addresses his congregation in Corinth with the words "you were *ethnê*" (1 Cor 12.2).

Even when speaking *about* (rather than *to*) gentiles, he often implicates his addressees. Thus his story of Christ's call to "proclaim him among the *ethnê*" in Galatians (1.16) leads directly to the narration of his specific missions to those *ethnê* in Antioch (2.12) and the other congregations (2.2, 9; cf. a similar connection between Rom 15.18 and 19). Individualized context is apparent when Paul complains that Peter compels the *ethnê* to live as Jews (Gal 2.14), or when he describes the *ethnê* who fulfill the law although they have no law (Rom 2.14). It is also evident when *ethnê* is paralleled with "uncircumcised" as in Rom 3.29–30 and Gal 2.7–9. When biblical verses on *goyim* are cited or paraphrased they are also applied by Paul to his own congregations (Rom 4.17;[51] 10.19–20;[52] 15.9–12;[53] Gal 3.8–9).[54] Other occurrences also make sense only if referring to groups of individuals (Rom 2.14; 3.29–20; 9.30; 15.16, 27; 16.27; 1 Cor 10.20). In fact only very few cases can be reasonably read as referring to "nations" exclusively according to the old, biblical sense of the term (Rom 1.5; 16.4).[55]

Paul, as we have seen, is not the first to present gentiles as a unified category. He is also not the first to privatize this corporate body by using *ethnê* to denote individual *goyim*. But in two of his letters the generalized-individualized (or individualizable) *ethnê* are no longer passing references,

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50. For an alternative translation, see Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*: *Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 288.

51. Paul calls the "many *ethnê*" of Gen 17.5 "things that do not exist" (in Abraham's time, that is). Cf. Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 246.

52. Dt 32.21 and Isa 65.1 are read as pertaining to the faithful among the gentiles.

53. See James A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, 1993), 706–7.

54. Thus, the fact that "of the forty-five times that *ethnos* appears in Paul's letters, approximately 30 percent occur in conjunction with Old Testament citations" *does not* mean that "Paul's use of *ethnos* follows that of the Septuagint" (Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 121). The same mistake is made by Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2008), 46.

55. On Rom 16.4, see Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 125. The meaning of other cases (Rom 2.24; 11.11; 16.26; 1 Cor 1.23; 5.1; 2 Cor 11.26; Gal 3.14; 1 Thess 2.16; 4.5) cannot be decided based on context alone.

episodic usages of a word that slowly changes its meaning (along with other terms like *'am-ha-arets* and *Israel*, which also came to designate kinds of individuals rather than collectives). Rather, *ethnê* had become marker of bigger discursive shift. Paul mentions them at the critical junctures of Romans and Galatians: his mission (Rom 1; Gal 1), the death of Jesus (Gal 2), the law (Rom 2–3), ethics (Rom 15), and redemption (Rom 11). Although he often uses the opposition between the Jew and the Greek, this opposition is subsumed under the more general opposition between Jews and gentiles, of which it is both an explication, a metonym, and a replacement (for lack of a term to designate an individual non-Jew).[56]

Paul also presents the term in a sense that is unprecedentedly independent of the biblical ethnic context by cutting off the *ethnê* to whom he appeals from their ethnic origin.[57] His generalized and privatized appeal to the *ethnê* erases ethnic distinction between the different groups that he is approaching, in contrast not only to the biblical heritage but also contemporary Jewish writings.[58] He took a marginal use, radicalized it, and made it into a core of his thought. He was, in other words, the first author we know of to systematically capitalize on the possibilities that the shift in the meaning of *ethnê* opens. It is this specific move that is not to be found in Qumran, in the books of Maccabees or, to the best of our knowledge, in any other pre-Pauline composition.[59]

56. See, e.g., Rom 3.9 vs. 29, and our discussion of the beginning of Romans below.

57. Donaldson, "Gentile Christianity," claims that the reference to nations and its political implications are blurred only in the seventeenth-century Authorized Version: "it was broken—or at least obscured from view—when the Latin gentiles became the English 'Gentiles'"; "while 'Gentiles' captures the element of non-Jewishness, it occludes the element of 'nations' that ἔθνη usually denotes or evokes." We would argue that Paul already anticipates, discursively, this semantic shift. Paul's effort to convince his believers that they are *ethnê* is exactly this attempt to break, or obscure (or, from his perspective, liberate from), their particular ethnic identities. He renders *ethnê* as members of the non-Jewish nations into non-Jewish individuals. We would therefore contest Donaldson's claim that "Paul saw the ἔθνη to whom he was called not merely as non-Jewish individuals, but as members of the non-Jewish nations."

58. See the discussion on 1 and 2 Maccabees, Philo and Josephus above. Cf. Christopher D. Stanley, "The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters," in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, ed S. E. Porter and A. W. Pitts (Leiden, 2012), 177–201.

59. Most scholars do not bother to trace this new usage. Thus: "There is generally a marked dissolution of the concept of nation and people in Jewish piety, so that references are to the Gentiles rather than the nations" (Bertram, "People and Peoples in the LXX," 368). At best they present a general scheme: "When,

Many recent scholars accept the claim that Paul addresses his letters
to non-Jews only, rather than to mixed Jewish/gentile congregations,[60]
and that the theological issue he is grappling with is the ability of non-
Jews to enter into Israelite history without adopting Jewish ancestral
practices. Paul's problem is how to bring gentiles into the Jewish *heilsge-
schichte*, which begins with election and ends with redemption. It thus
should not be surprising that it is in his letters that the category functions
discursively, probably for the first time, as the gentiles become the core of
an entire theological formation. An indication for this novelty may be
found in the effort Paul invests in establishing this distinction—explicitly
modeling it, as Rom 1.14–16 shows, on the Greek/barbarian distinction.
Another indication may be drawn from his recurring "translation" effort
of the biblical *ethnê* to the Christ believers to whom he appeals. Thus, in
Rom 15.9–12 Paul cites a catena of verses discussing the *ethnê* joining the
praise of God, while applying them to the members of the community in
Rome. This translation effort is most apparent in verses such as Gal
3.8–9, where after the citation of Gen 12.3 (mixed with 18.18), "All *ethnê*
will be blessed through you," he explicitly adds an explanation that brings
the point home: "**So** (*ôste*) those who have faith are blessed along with
Abraham, the man of faith" (cf. Rom 4.17).

The other side of addressing Romans, Galatians, or Corinthians as gen-
tiles is the total lack of interest in "the bewildering ethnic diversity of the
native population of Asia Minor."[61] All the sources mentioned above in
which we've found episodic use of *goyim* or *ethnê* that necessitates or is
open to individualized reading are still concerned with specific nations

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in the Babylonian and Persian periods, the term 'Judaean' added to its former
tribal and territorial meanings, the new religious one of 'Jew', the meaning of
goyyim also changed accordingly—it came to refer not only to nations, but also to
groups of non-Jews, 'Gentiles', conceived as pluralities of individuals" (Morton
Smith, "The Gentiles in Judaism: 125 BCE–CE 66," in *The Cambridge History of
Judaism*, vol. 3, *The Early Roman Period*, ed. W. Horbury et al. [Cambridge, 1999],
192–249). One of the few scholars who does refer to gentility historically, simply
says: "A new conception of the Judaean and the other peoples arose during the
Maccabean period, setting the stage for the beginning of Judaism" (Stowers, *A
Rereading of Romans*, 34).

60. This claim is most powerfully argued by Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*
(Vancouver, 1987); Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans* (Sheffield, 1990); Stowers,
A Rereading of Romans, 29–33. For a recent defense of the mixed congregation
thesis, see Robin N. Longnecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most
Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2011), 55–91.

61. Stanley, "The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters," 184, n. 16.

and their particular characteristics. Only Paul, the great traveler who took constant pain in communicating with each community according to its specific conditions and problems, who was "all things to all people," failed to acknowledge their ethnic-cultural differences and instead— except for two notable verses (Gal 3.1 and 2 Cor 9.4)[62]—treated his addressees, whether straightforwardly or implicitly, as gentiles.

Another sign that this is not simply a Jewish tradition inherited by Paul can be extracted from the very different way in which gentiles are conceptualized in Q, the reconstructed Greek written source of idioms and narratives that is (hypothetically) more or less contemporary to Paul.[63] Q mentions *ethnê* just once or twice (Q 12.30 and probably Q 6.34)[64] and in none of these cases is the term part of a binary, privatized division such as is found in Paul. As Christopher Tuckett shows, Q still represents a relatively traditional Jewish identity,[65] and we do not find there the urge to create a new community of God out of the *ethnê*;[66] an urge that pushed Paul toward a new conceptualization of the "gentiles."[67]

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62. On these two verses, see Stanley, "The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters," 199–201.

63. For the history of Q scholarship, see Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel, the Book of Q and Christian Origins* (New York, 1993), 1–49; James M. Robinson, "Introduction," in *The Sayings Gospel: Q in Greek and* English, ed. J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, and J. S. Kloppenborg (Minneapolis, Minn., 2002), 11–72. On its original language, see Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1996), 83–92. We will not discuss here the speculative layering of Q. See John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia, 1987); Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and the Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2000).

64. On Q 6.34, see James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2000), 70–71. Note the exchange between "gentiles" and "tax collectors" (based on Matt 5.46–47; Luke 6.32–33 characteristically has "sinners" in both) in Q 6.32, 34.

65. Tuckett, *Q*, 431–34. For an analysis of Q local Galilean identity, see William Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2001).

66. Tuckett, *Q* (393–404) shows that Q espouses relative lack of interest in a mission to the gentiles. It thus seems that Paul's full-blown conceptualization of the gentiles depends on and follows from his actual mission to the gentiles and does not precede it.

67. Cf. Boyarin's analysis of Acts 11.26: "I think it is no accident that this naming occurs in a context where the entry of 'Greeks' into the Christian community is thematized" (Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* [Philadelphia, 2004], 17). While Boyarin is thinking about Acts and "Christians," we claim that the same holds true with regard to Paul and "gentiles."

This new conceptualization is tightly connected to Paul's unprece-
dented project of creating a new universal *ekklesia*.[68] Paul was not the first
to preach to non-Jews and conceive this as a mission (otherwise, how
was the *ekklesia* in Rome established?), a practice that perhaps originated
at the community in Antioch (Acts 11.20). But if there were other preach-
ers who conceived themselves as "apostles to the gentiles" (Rom 11.13;
cf. 15.16), dedicated from the womb to do that and only that (Gal 1.15–
16), they left no trace in our archives. Paul was probably also the first
known author to supply a *systematic* justification and reflection to this
practice, in reaction to growing oppositions (notwithstanding Acts' later,
idyllic and harmonistic narration of both Peter's [10.34–43; 11.4–17;
15.7–11] and James's [15.13–21] justification of the gentile mission).[69]
On the basis of this evidence we cannot exclude the possibility that Paul
actually invented the new *concept* of the gentile and made it into a constitu-
tive element of a new discursive formation. But this does not mean that
we have to go back to a conception of the history of "great men" and
ingenious authors and inventors. Our claim is that Paul's letters are the
textual site for the first known appearance of a new discursive formation
in which a generalized-individualized category of gentile—still pro-
nounced in the plural, *ethnê*—served as a key element for a whole concep-
tual constellation.

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68. "At this time the Jesus Movement was still a diffuse network of prophets,
teachers, missionaries, village communities and urban assemblies"; and "although
his assemblies were still quite distinct in their cultural traditions, language and
costumes, he would attempt to forge them into a new kind of global
community—a family of righteous brothers and sisters whom God has adopted"
(Richard A. Horsley and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom*
[Minneapolis, Minn., 1997], 139, 162; On Horsley's thesis of Paul's *ekklesia* as
"an alternative global society," see Edward Adams, "First-Century Models for
Paul's Churches: Selected Scholarly Developments since Meeks," in *After the First
Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years
Later*, ed. T. D. Still and D. G. Horell [New York, 2009], 60–78; 75). For the
terminological traces of the formation of this new, global community (*ekklesia* in
its metalocal sense, as in 1 Cor 10.32; Rom 16.4,16; "the saints" in Rom 15.26,
31, and more), see William Arnal, "The Collection and Synthesis of 'Tradition'
and the Second Century Invention of Christianity," *Method and Theory in the Study
of Religion* 23 (2011): 193–215, 196–97, and n. 7 (we would add *ethnê*, in its new
meaning, to the list of community building terms). For post-Pauline develop-
ments of universal *ekklesia* (especially in Ephesians), see James D. G. Dunn,
*Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest
Christianity* (2nd ed.; Harrisburg, Pa., 1990), 351–52.
69. On Luke's inclusive ideology, see Howard C. Kee, *Who Are the People of
God: Early Christian Models of Community* (New Haven, Conn., 1995), 179–207.

Scholars of both the "New Perspective"[70] and the "*Sonderweg*"[71] schools brought the issue of the gentiles to the fore of Pauline research, and yet they unquestionably assume that gentiles and Jews are preexisting, mutually exclusive categories. In his groundbreaking 1963 paper "Paul among Jews and Gentiles," Krister Stendhal laments the lost centrality of "Jews and Gentiles" in the modern study of Paul. But even this pioneering paper does not question or historicize the distinction itself. "As a Jew," Stendhal simply states at the opening of his essay, "Paul was used to dividing humanity into these two parts."[72] So too Sanders: "The gospel, says Paul, is for 'the Jew first and also . . . the Greek.' The thrust of this is not to claim superiority for the Jew: that is virtually presupposed. Paul is, in effect, arguing the equality of the Gentile."[73]

This view, according to which the problem is traditional and only the solution is Pauline, is as conventional as it is long-lasting. In her sensitive study *If Sons, Then Heirs*, Caroline Johnson Hodge discusses anew all of Paul's ethnic categories—but even she assumes that the distinctions themselves were given,[74] and that Paul's discursive effort is dedicated to

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70. The most helpful survey of the "New Perspective" and its various trends is still Sven Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapid, Mich., 2004).

71. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*; John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford, 1983); Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford, 2000). For a critic of the Gaston-Gager hypothesis, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, 1983), 192–98 (arguing against Stendahl, who later retracted from the two-tracks thesis; see his *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Minneapolis, Minn., 1995], x); Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert* (New Haven, Conn., 1990), 117–25; Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994), 272–73, n. 9; Terrence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1997), 230–35; Donaldson, "Jewish Christianity, Israel's Stumbling and the Sonderweg Reading of Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2006): 27–54; Reidar Hvalvik, "A 'Sonderweg' for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25–27," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 87–107. A recent defense of the hypothesis was offered by John Marshall, "Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion's Transformation of the Sonderzeit Paul," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20 (2012): 1–29; 5–11.

72. Krister Stendhal, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia, 1976), 1.

73. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London, 1977), 488–89.

74. In other cases she does identify innovations in Paul's use of labels and categories—Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford, 2007), 60–63. Cf. Nina E. Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable*

grappling with them: "Paul, like many Jewish authors of his time, con-figured the world with oppositional categories of Jews and non-Jews."[75] So also Christopher Stanley, in a brilliant analysis of the relevance of the concept of "hybridity" to the study of Paul: "It seems likely that Paul, as a *Ioudaios* growing up in a Greek city, would have been trained from infancy to interpret human diversity through a binary lens . . . In fact, binary thinking was probably so natural to him that the idea of rejecting it never crossed his mind."[76] As far as we have been able to discern, this is a salient feature of Pauline scholarship. Scholars have unanimously ascribed the solution to Paul, while the problem and the categorization that undergird it have been treated as traditional or simply taken as self-evident.

This misconception has ancient roots. Already the second-century deutero-Pauline letter to the Ephesians presents Paul in a similar way. According to Ephesians 2.12–13, the believers in Ephesus have been gen-tiles in the past (*pote*) but are no longer so,[77] for Jesus "has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall" (Eph 2.14).[78] Ephesians already assumes the binary and narrates Paul's mission as breaking down this division. As scholars including John Marshall and

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Symbol (Tübingen, 2010), chap. 4, which meticulously analyses the changes these names undergo in Paul's letters.

75. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 49. Compare ibid., 65: "For the most part, Paul's ethnic language is drawn from scripture. It reflects a Jewish perspec-tive which divides the world's peoples into two oppositional groups: Jews and non-Jews." Cf. "Paul's self-designation as an 'apostle to the Gentiles', in fact, betrays a fundamentally Israel-centered view" (Terrence L. Donaldson, "Israe-lite, Convert, Apostle to the Gentile: The Origin of Paul's Gentile Mission," in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul's Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. R. N. Longenecker [Grand Rapids, Mich., 1997], 62–84, 76–77). The problem with these statements is that they assume that *goy* is a simple, almost logical derivative of *yehudi*, while in fact Jews (or Israelites and Judeans) lived for hundreds of years without gentiles as their unified counterparts, as the short historical survey above shows.

76. Stanley, "Paul the Ethnic Hybrid," 125. Unlike most scholars, Stanley emphasizes the Greek background of Paul binary divisions.

77. Contrast to Paul's confession about his own "earlier (*pote*) life in Judaism" (Gal 1.13). A self-conscious *Ioudaios* (2.15), he is no longer part of *Ioudaismos* (cf. Phil 3.5–7; 1 Cor 9.20; and see Benjamin Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* [Leicester, 1998], 53–65).

78. On the various theories regarding the nature of the "wall of hostility," including the one that reads it as referring to the actual fence that separated Jews from gentiles in the Jerusalemite Temple, see Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (New York, 1974), 283–87.

William Arnal have recently shown, the modern conception of Paul is in many respects a result of his presentation by second-century texts—first and foremost by the deutero-Pauline letters—which concentrated on the formation of Christian community; a mission still missing from Paul's own epistles.[79] Ephesians has a major role in this process.[80] "Ephesians, while not mentioning the 'Christians' or 'Christianity,' begins to deal with the problem of a third category in its rhetoric of union."[81]

But things are different for Paul.[82] If there is a consistent effort in his letters, it is to *erect* "the dividing wall," and not just to "break [it] down." Before the two can become one in Jesus (Eph 2.15),[83] they must first appear as two; they must be radically and systematically differentiated.[84] If the above analysis is correct, then this discursive wall did not exist in a manner that is totally dichotomous (every person is either Jew or gentile), generalized (all peoples are gentiles to the same extent with no sig-

79. Arnal, "The Collection and Synthesis," 197.

80. In this context, we should mention Edgar Goodspeed's thesis that Ephesians was designed by the collector of the Pauline corpus to open the redacted collection (Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Meaning of Ephesians* [Chicago, 1933]).

81. Marshall, "Misunderstanding the New Paul," 27. Cf. "Far more than any other canonical appropriation of Paul, Ephesians emphasized the value of Judaism as that to which Gentiles have gained access" (23); "It seeks a unity of the Jews and Gentiles that was of little utility in the Pauline eschatological crisis, but became more and more an element of the social landscape of formative Christianity in the wider Roman world" (25); "the Judaism that Ephesians lyrically described as available to union with Gentiles is one point in the continuum of second-century Christian discourse on Jews and Judaism" (28).

82. This transformation of agenda supports the general assertion that "the pseudo-Pauline letters already began to modify Paul to serve the churches' agenda in the post-apostolic period, and to an extent to accommodate the word of the cross to the interest of empire" (Neil Elliott, "The Anti-Imperial Message of the Cross," in *Paul and Empire*, ed. R. A. Horsley [Harrisburg, Pa., 1997], 167–83, 178).

83. See, e.g., Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 24, on Paul's "desire for univocity—'when the two become one.'"

84. We should recall that Paul thinks in a binary manner in other contexts too. Reflecting on Gal 5.2–4, Alan Segal notes "Paul's polarized sense of the choices available." "For him," he adds, "the choice is Pharisaism or Christianity —There can be no lukewarm observance of law" (Alan F. Segal, "Some Aspects of Conversion and Identity Formation in the Christian Community of Paul's Time," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. R. A. Horsley [Harrisburg, Pa., 2000], 187). Segal ascribes this dichotomous thinking to Paul's Pharisaic background, while others, especially when discussing his cosmic binarization in 2 Cor 6.15, refer to him as a "sectarian." Our case shows that we ought to account for Paul's dichotomizations in terms of his own thought, rather than ascribe them to his Jewish, Pharisaic, or other, background.

nificant distinctions among them), and individualized (every member of
a non-Jewish nation is a gentile) before Paul.

In what follows we will attempt to reconstruct the discursive condi-
tions and form of reasoning underlying Paul's new formation.

WHY DOES PAUL REQUIRE THE INDIVIDUALIZED, GENERIC GENTILE?

Reflecting on Paul's binary ethnic thinking, Christopher Stanley offers a
sharp description of its historical and cultural context:

> The apostle Paul grew up in a multi-ethnic environment and spent
> much of his adult life traveling and working among people representing
> a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and identities. It is thus surprising
> to note how circumscribed is the language that he uses in his letters
> when speaking of ethnic differences. Though he varies his terms from
> passage to passage, Paul consistently defines ethnicity in binary terms.
> For him, the world is divided into *Ioudaioi* and non-*Ioudaioi* (commonly
> described as *ta ethnê*, "the nations"). In the few places where he men-
> tions *Hellēnes* ("Greeks")—a term that any audience member would
> have recognized as an ethnic self-designation of a particular people-
> group—he invariably couples it with *Ioudaioi* to form a binary pair.[85]

Stanley then notes that in a world full of cases of cultural hybridity, Paul's
strategy is diametrically opposed to hybridization processes that "break
down binary thought-patterns." This strategy he finds to be "strange in
view of the looseness with which he treats other aspects of ethnic iden-
tity."[86] It is also unique in comparison to other Jewish writers such as
Philo and Josephus.[87] Stanley justly avoids accounting for Paul's binary

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85. Stanley, "Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters," 186. For Paul "bipolar dis-
tinctions," compare Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 173. Paul's binari-
zation is so widespread that scholars have treated it as "natural." See, for
example, Stowers's summary of Romans 9–10: "Individuals and groups may rebel
and fall, but God will make a future for *both peoples* as peoples of God" (*A Reread-
ing of Romans*, 306; emphasis added).

86. Stanley, "Paul the Ethnic Hybrid?" 124.

87. Stanley, "Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters," 187. This ethnic blindness
casts doubt on theses about Paul's anti-imperial, multiethnic vision, such as the
one promoted by Davina Lopez: "Paul's representation of Judaism . . . emerges
as a counter-narrative to the Roman imperial project of world conquest . . . Paul
is, then, not just the apostle to the Gentiles; he is the apostle to the defeated
nations" (Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission*
[Minneapolis, Minn., 2010], 167–68). Cf. Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 46.

mode of thinking on the basis of his Jewish heritage alone. Instead he proposes one relate "this strange phenomenon" to the local rhetorical effects the binary language might have had on Paul's listeners: "some of his less obviously 'ethnic' argumentation might have been crafted to address the problem of interethnic tensions within his churches."[88] While we are in full agreement with Stanley's depiction of the rhetorical phenomenon, we propose here a different interpretation.

We begin with two assertions, both are well grounded in current scholarship, but their combination forms a paradox of a sort. The first is that Paul's monotheistic God still retains his ethnic mark and affiliation.[89] His new conception of God emerged in a period and within cultures in which the gods had clear ethnic affiliations. A god was usually part of the shared world of an ethnopolitical entity in which he was recognized as one of its constitutive elements, like the traditions of its forefathers, its city walls, agora, or constitution. The biblical God was already different from most other national gods because even before monotheism he had been considered as the God of the cosmos, the king of the universe, but at the same time he had a special relationship with a people, a land, and a city. Paul certainly changed the balance between the universal and the particular moments of this God in a way that was much more radical than the late prophets, but he never gave up on that duality. While the new covenant is open to all nations, Paul's God still had clear ethnic history that Paul was not willing to erase. He could not disregard the fact of the election of Israel without thereby canceling the historical narrative that led from creation to salvation in Christ (see Rom 5.12–14; 1 Cor 10.1–6; Gal 3.16). His description of Israel in Romans was merely a digest of the story of biblical election and the sacred history that follows (Rom 9.4–5).[90] He

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While most scholars neutralize Paul's nonethnic usage of *ethnê*, treating it as a simple Jewish convention, Elliott and Lopez ignore it, equally missing Paul's novelty.

88. Stanley, "Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters," 201. Stanley elaborated on this point in his "'Neither Jew nor Greek': Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 64 (1996): 101–24. Cf. Paul Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2009).

89. This assertion is most strongly argued by Paula Fredriksen, "What 'Parting of the Ways': Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City," in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed (Tübingen, 2003), 35–64; Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 232–52.

90. On the centrality of the *Heilsgeschichte* to Paul's thought, see the review of Victor P. Furnish in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. E. J. Epp

accepted election as the main form of God's intervention in the world, which could not be separated from the promise (Rom 11). And so the Israelites "are beloved for the sake of their ancestors" (Rom 11.28), and the memory of God's special relation to and covenant with one people was retained.

But at the same time Paul firmly objects to circumcision as a condition for joining the new community (Rom 4.11; 1 Cor 7.18; Gal 2.3; 5.3,11; Phil 3.2),[91] an objection that stands at the center of his dispute with other apostles in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Galatia.[92] His monotheistic God is already cosmopolitan enough that joining his congregation cannot be done on ethnic grounds.[93] Scholars speculate on the possible reasons that

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and G. W. MacRae (Atlanta, Ga., 1989), 334. Cf. the reconstruction of Paul's preaching in Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Columbia, S.C., 1998), 65–67. Pace Heikki Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs: The Thought World of Early Christians* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2010), 260: "Paul does not seem to think of Abraham as an ancestor of the covenant people at all, but as an exemplary individual who received promises that aimed far into the future. The history of Israel as God's chosen people is ignored." But in fact in Rom 9.1–14 and Gal 4.21–31 the history of Israel is reinterpreted, not ignored. Moreover, in both Rom 4.12 and 11.1 Abraham appears explicitly as the father of the Jews, with whom the gentile believers join.

91. We assume, with many recent scholars, that he does not address Jewish circumcision but only proselytism. See, e.g., Peter Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law* (Leiden, 1990), 87–89.

92. On whether we should equate all those opponents (debated ever since the Tübingen school), see Mark Nannos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2002), chap. 7. The scope of the debate depends on the reconstruction of the Antiochian controversy. We join those scholars who claim that the dispute, at least as far as Paul was concerned, was not only about table fellowship and kosher food but also circumcision (Gal 2.3; Acts 15.1) and probably other *mitsvot* included in the term "to live as a Jew" (*Ioudaizein*; Gal 2.14). For the debate, see Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 222–36.

93. Paul's cosmopolitanism is fleshed out most clearly by scholars who uncover Paul's imperialistic alternative to Rome. See Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford, Calif., 2004). Cf.: "Paul too proclaimed one who was Lord, Savior, Redeemer, and Liberator. He announced one who was Divine, Son of God, God, and God from God. But Paul's new Divinity was Christ, not Caesar. His was a radically divergent but equally global theology" (John D. Crossan and John L. Reed, *In Search of Paul* [New York, 2004], 10). Cf. Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 25, 46; William E. Arnal, "Doxa, Heresy, and Self-Construction: The Pauline Ekklesiai and the Boundaries of Urban Identities," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Iricinschi and H. Zellentin (Tübingen, 2008), 50–101, esp. 88, 89, n. 109.

brought Paul to his universal commitment,[94] such as his biblical or Jewish Hellenistic heritage; a backward conclusion from Jesus's death; or a result of the division of labor between the apostles (Boyarin, Sanders, and Watson, respectively). Paul's cosmopolitanism brings to an extreme a trend that existed already in the later biblical prophets and reached its apex with second (and third) Isaiah.[95] But unlike these biblical prophets,[96] Paul is not interested in nations qua nations. Paul's opponents regard joining the *ekklesia* as becoming members of the chosen people and so require the new members to circumcise and observe the commandments. Paul, on the other hand, strives to distinguish between a new community of faith and an old community of flesh, a people.

The two assumptions, however, are clearly at odds with each other: God is ethnic or at least has some ethnic features while the new community does not, and observance of Jewish laws—mainly circumcision and food laws, but also Sabbath and holidays (Gal 4.10)—cannot be a condition for membership in this community (even if Jewish believers continue to perform them). In what follows we will not track the way in which Paul solves the conflict by letting gentiles, as gentiles, enter into the Abrahamic covenant.[97] Instead, we will examine the unfolding and ramifications of this tension itself.

Paul turns to non-Jews and demands that they cease their own ancestral worship (e.g., 1 Thes 1.9; Gal 4.8; 1 Cor 10.14–22) and turn their backs on their gods (a demand that, at least according to Luke, meets with much disapproval; see Acts 14.11–18; 16.20–21; 17.18; 19.23–34). A Greek, an

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94. Paul developed universal motivation and aspirations found in both biblical prophecy and Hellenistic philosophy. For the latter, see Harold C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (Cambridge, 1965). On the Stoic concept of *kosmopolites*, see Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (Cambridge, 1991), 57–92. On the effect of Stoic ideas on Paul, see the vast bibliography cited in C. A. Evans, "Paul and the Pagans," in *Paul: Jew, Greek and Roman*, ed. S. E. Porter (Leiden, 2008), 137–138, nn. 34–35.

95. For a review of different scholarly approaches to the roots of Paul's gentile mission, see Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, chap. 1.

96. On which Kaminsky justly notes: "The idea of 'salvation' implies a corporate restoration rather than the later notion of individuals receiving immortal life" (*Yet I Loved Jacob*, 149). Non-Israelites thus join either as "select few" (145) or as whole nations "subordinated to God and his people" (150).

97. A novel understanding of Paul's solution (gentiles enter the Abrahamic covenant through a figurative genital circumcision) was offered lately by Joshua D. Garroway, "The Circumcision of Christ: Roman 15.7–13," *Journal of New Testament Studies* 34 (2012): 303–22.

Egyptian, or a Scythian who joins the *ekklesia* cannot simply transfer from
one ethnic god to another. The Greeks who are baptized in Christ must
abandon their ethnic gods and are left without a new one. The god of Israel
is an ethnic god, but not *theirs*: he becomes their god only when they join
the new community. Thus the Greeks do not join the *ekklesia* as Israelites
but cannot join as Greeks either, since joining the community cancels ethnic
differences. This scandal was well formulated by Paula Fredriksen: "Since
they were neither proselytes not god-fearers, they fit no previously known
social category . . . not requiring complete affiliation with Judaism via
circumcision, insisting nonetheless that native cult be renounced, the early
apostles walked these Christ-fearing pagans into a social and religious no-
man's land."[98] We claim that it is this "no-man's land" that stimulated the
formation of the *goyim*; a middle ground between Paul's cosmopolitanism
and his insistence on keeping the Jewish identity intact.

   Those who hear the calling and join the new community, finding their
vocation in Jesus Christ, are also those for whom any membership,
status, and identity are revoked. The revocation of statuses (1 Cor 7.17–
31), one of the most intriguing passages in Paul's letters, does not only
state that each person (should) lead the life that the Lord has assigned to
him (1 Cor 7.17; cf. Rom 12.7–8; 13.7; 1 Cor 12.28; 2 Thes 3.12). It also,
quite emphatically ("this is what I mean, brothers" [29]), states that,
while awaiting the Messiah, in the time that remains,[99] the person called
upon for this or that vocation should live *as not* (*hos me*). Revocation
here means a *theological* suspension of differences, or the annulment of
the theological value of all differences.[100] Every distinction and difference

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   98. Paula Fredriksen, "Paul the Convert," in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline
Studies*, ed. R. B. Matlock (Oxford, forthcoming). Cf. Philippa Townsend's thesis
that it was specifically for the Pauline gentile communities that the Romans cre-
ated the name "Christians," as they did not fit into any recognizable group (Phil-
ippa Townsend, "Who were the First Christians? Jews, Gentiles and the
Christianoi," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Irinschi and H. Zellentin
[Tübingen, 2008], 212–30). Both scholars see the scandal from a pagan perspec-
tive only. We believe that Paul was coping with the same scandal, and that his
use of the biblical *ethnê* (in its new, privatized meaning) was his way of finding
name and forming status for these "ex-pagan pagans" (as Fredriksen wittily
names them).
   99. On the in-between status of the time between Easter and the Parousia, see
Jörg Frey, "Eschatology in the New Testament: An Introduction," in *Eschatology
in the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. J. G. van der Watt (Tübingen,
2011), 3–32, esp. 15–20.
   100. Our analysis of "revocation" is influenced by Giorgio Agamben's insight-
ful reading of this passage (without adhering to all its details): *The Time That
Remains* (Stanford, Calif., 2009), 19–29. For a sociological reading, which sees

(between master and slave, man and woman, rich and poor, etc.) remains as it is in the mundane life[101] yet ceases to signify anything with respect to what really matters—the word of the cross. This means, of course, that believers cannot join the *ekklesia* as Greeks or Romans either.

There is, however, a crucial difference between revoking all other statuses and revoking membership in an ethnic community. Leaving one's own ethnic gods behind must be expressed through a series of changes in mundane, overt practices. Non-Jewish believers *cannot* maintain the same standing as do women or slaves (that is, continuing to worship their gods *as not* worshiping them), since they must actively renounce their ethnic gods, without, however, gaining a new one in their place. The "Greek" who cannot join the new community as an Israelite is thus marked as "non-Israel" and carries this mark with him into the new community. By joining[102] the *ekklesia*, he brings to the fore the fact that circumcision in the flesh does not apply to him, and thus that the historical election did not apply to him either. The new members who responded to the call were thus called neither as members of the chosen people, the *laos*, nor as members of any other nation, but merely as non-Jewish individuals.

Joining the *ekklesia* is thus the moment when the new member becomes an individual, a generalized non-Jew: *individual*, since the newcomer leaves his or her ancestral tradition and joins the new community on his or her own; *generalized*, for at the moment of joining he or she has no

this passage as an attempt to bridge the gap between Paul's eschatological demands and the urban nature of his communities, see William H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1984), 104–5.

101. Contrast with the Corinthians' self-conception of living *already* beyond this world, therefore not being subjected to its social and ethical bonds, as indicated by their slogan "Everything is permissible" (1 Cor 6.2; 10.23). See Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (Nashville, Tenn., 1971); John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield, 1992).

102. We refrain from using "conversion" to describe Paul's mission to the gentiles, for there was no ethnos for these followers to which they could convert (and yet no concept of religion that would supersede it). For the conflicting definitions of Paul's own transition, "conversion" or (based on Gal 1.15) "call," compare, on the one hand, Segal, *Paul the Convert*; and Seyoon Kim, "Paul's Conversion/Call, James D. G. Dunn, and the New Perspective on Paul," in *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Tübingen 2002), 1–35, with Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 3–34, and Fredriksen, "Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time Has Come to Go," *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses* 35 (2006): 231–46.

ethnic identity, except for his or her negative "non-Jewishness." At this very moment, the *goy* is born.

Let's examine this situation more closely. The Greek cannot join the *ekklesia* as a "Greek"—a category which has no theological meaning (no significance in the history of salvation), nor as a "universal human"—a category that Paul, who relies on the biblical narrative, cannot grasp; nor as a Jew—since he was not circumcised. Other traditional tracks discussed by scholars, such as God-fearers,[103] or the eschatological pilgrimage model,[104] are also not good enough for Paul, since he wants new believers to be integral members of the *ekklesia* and not an appendix to it.[105] As far as we can tell, no Jewish eschatological account, either biblical or postbiblical,[106] promises non-Jews that much:[107] they will come to

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103. For a skeptical attitude toward the usefulness of the category of "God-fearer" for understanding Paul's apostleship, see Judith Lieu, "The Race of the God-Fearers," *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1995): 483–501. Elsewhere she remarks sharply that "Paul himself, who notoriously fails to mention the synagogue in his letters, seems to assume that his Gentile audience is just that, Gentile" (Judith Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?" *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 56 [1994]: 19–101, 31); cf. Arnal, "Doxa," 78: "Some of the very comments in the Pauline corpus that prevent us from identifying his adherents as Jewish seem almost as unlikely to have been directed at anyone devoted to the Jewish God." The attempt to find precedents to the Pauline conceptualizations of the gentile believers is part of a larger trend to lessen Paul's innovativeness, ascribing his "radical" ideas to his diasporic origin.

104. This model, advocated most powerfully by Nicholas T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1991), was first espoused by Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. Montgomery (1930; London, 1953).

105. Compare Donaldson's critique of both models, for failing to account for "Paul's unshakable determination to defend not only the gentiles' righteousness but also their membership in Abraham's 'seed'" (*Paul and the Gentiles*, 234). For other critics of the eschatological reading of Paul, see Donaldson, "Israelite, Convert, Apostle," 78–79; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 35–36. Cf. Staples's critic of the *Sonderweg* theory: "The circumcision controversy makes sense only if the debate is over full Israelite status . . . Gentiles saved as Gentiles are no concern" (Jason A. Staples, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel': A Fresh Look at Romans 11.25–27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 [2011]: 382). The puzzle is of course how to combine this with Paul's "stubborn persistence of 'Jew' and (ethnic) 'Israel' as categories with ongoing theological significance" (Donaldson, "Israelite, Convert, Apostle," 76).

106. Such as 1 En 10.21; 90.33; Tob 14.6; SibOr 3.716–720; 2 Bar 72–73. On the various Jewish eschatological traditions, see Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, Tex., 2007).

107. See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity and Transformation* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2003), 85. Even sec-

Jerusalem to worship the one God, but they will not become "Abraham's seed (*sperma*)" as per Paul (Rom 9.8; Gal 3.29).[108] Paul insists that the new believers become an integral part of the community of a god that was still the God of Israel, without, however, becoming Jews.

The result is that the Greek can join the *ekklesia* only as a *goy*. Indeed, Paul says so much at the very opening of Romans: "I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the *ethnê*" (Rom 1.13). He does not address, here or anywhere else in this epistle, the Romans qua Romans.[109] Instead he tells them that he turns to them because they are gentiles, and he, as the apostle to the gentiles, is committed to all gentiles equally: "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish—hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome" (Rom 14–15).[110]

Traditionally scholars read *Hellênes* (Greeks) as similar to *ethnê*,[111] or at least to the *ethnê* that Paul is involved with: "Paul as a missionary to the Gentiles does not embrace the whole of the heathen world but confine

ond (or third) Isaiah, which go perhaps furthest in promising that the nations will provide priests to officiate at the cult of the one God in Jerusalem (Is 66.21), still insists (in the very next verse) that Israel's distinctiveness remains valid (Is 66.22). Cf. Joel Kaminsky, "Israel's Election and the Other in Biblical, Second Temple, and Rabbinic Texts," in *The Other in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. Harlow et al. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2011), 17–30, 20; cf. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 151.

108. See Pamela M. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York, 2009), 200–207.

109. A fact that enabled Ernst Renan and others to suggest (after omitting 1.7 and 15) that it had originally nothing to do with Rome (Longnecker, *Introducing Romans*, 99–101, 115). This lack is especially noteworthy in light of what scholars justly identify as Paul's anti-imperial message in Romans. See Dieter Georgi, "God Turned Upside Down," *Paul and Empire*, 148–57.

110. In a paper read at the *SBL* annual meeting (Chicago, 2012) James Harrison claimed that Paul is presenting, while at the same time subverting, a tripartite division—Greek, barbarian, Roman—similar to what is found in contemporary Roman sources (see James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome* [Tübingen, 2011]). In fact Paul is saying the exact opposite. He repeats ("*as I have*"; "*hence my eagerness*") the fact that he approaches the people of Rome as part of his universal mission, not as a unique category. For the debate as to whether the second dichotomy (wise/foolish) is similar to the first (Greek/barbarian), compare Charles E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, 1975), 1:83–84, with Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York, 1993), 251.

111. Based on exchanges such as Rom 3.9 vs. 29; 9.30–31 vs. 10.12; or 1 Cor 1.22, 24 vs. 23. See Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 2007), 140, n. 53.

himself to the *Hellênes* in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Illyria and ancient Hellas.''[112] But more recently more care was given to the rhetorical effect of this use. The most critical factor in this regard is that Paul refers to *Hellênes* always in contrast to Jews (Rom 1.16; 2.9; 10; 3.9; 10.12; 1 Cor 1.22; 24; 10.32; 12.13; Gal 3.28) and once to barbarians (Rom 1.14).[113]

As Caroline Johnson Hodge meticulously shows, Paul uses the traditional distinction between Greeks and barbarians as a tool to introduce the only distinction that matters, theologically speaking—that between Jews and non-Jews. As he explicitly puts it in Rom 1.16, ''it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek'' (the slogan is repeated in 2.9–10). The Greek—representing the superior *ethnos*, the best of *ethnê*—appears here as inferior to the Jew.[114] The Hellenistic hierarchy is deliberately subjugated to the Jewish one, according to which Greek is no different, again, theologically speaking, from barbarian.[115] Paul does not create a universal person here, since his division depends on the biblical narrative of election; but he does create a universal *goy*: an individualized, generalized category that applies to any person but the Jew.[116]

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112. Hand Windisch, ''Hellên,'' *TDNT*, 2:504–16; 513. Cf. Scott, *Paul and the Nations*, 124: ''*Hellēn* may well indicate the particular focus of Paul's mission.''

113. The only exception is the description of Titus as a Greek in Gal 2.3.

114. Paul thus preserves the Greek perspective but subjects it to the Jewish one. This strategy differs from the one which 2 Maccabees adopted, in which *barbarism* is opposed to Judaism (2.21), thus ''inverting the conventional polarity'' (Lieu, ''Not Hellenes but Philistines?'' 250). Cf. the inversion of *allophulismos* (foreignness) in 2 Macc 4.13.

115. Caroline Johnson Hodge and Charles Stanley offer conflicting explanations of this phenomenon. According to the former, ''This pairing subverts the typical hegemonic position of 'Greeks' . . . When paired with *Ioudaios*, 'Greek' becomes subordinate, representing the other . . . Paul positions *Ioudaioi* as the norm'' (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 59). According to the latter, ''Paul's passing references to *Ioudaioi* and *Hellēnes* are part of a subtle rhetorical strategy by which he seeks to ameliorate the ethnic tensions that lurked just beneath the surface of the ethnically mixed congregations that he had been creating across the Greco-Roman world'' (Stanley, ''The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters,'' 198). While Stanley reads Paul's ''Greek'' as a specific ethnic designation, Johnson Hodge reads it as a deliberate subversive usage of Hellenistic self-identification, meant to integrate the hearers into a new division: that between Jews and all others.

116. This hierarchy undermines the humanistic attempts to see ''these constructions of difference as occurring on the bottom, *among minority groups* in relation to the Romans in charge, and not between the Jews who are positioned to be in charge and Gentiles who are not'' (Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 177, n. 19). From Paul's biblical standpoint the Jews indeed *are* ''positioned to be in

The individual-generalized gentile is thus born at the moment of baptizing into the *ekklesia*. But this moment reforms the existence of the individual as a gentile both before and after joining. If he is not a Jew, an individual cannot join the church except as a gentile. Approaching the community of faith, even gradually, forces the prospective member to take on the identity of a gentile, in anticipation of the moment when he could become the seed of Abraham without being a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus Paul can only present himself as "an apostle to the *ethnê*."[117]

After having joined the community and become a member of the *ekklesia*, alongside Jews, his lack of circumcision makes his non-Jewishness an unchangeable marker of his past (as long as the Jewish past of Christianity is not obliterated as well). As the slave remains a slave, so the gentile remains a gentile, even after his baptism. But just as the slave's status and his difference from the master is theologically revoked, so is the gentile's status and his difference from the Jew. This is the meaning of Gal 3.28, which cancels all differences—even gendered ones—"in Christ Jesus." This is therefore the Pauline order of things: first, the differences between one ethnos and another are revoked in the generalized gentile, and only then is the difference between gentile and the Jew revoked as well, in the spirit. Paul cannot move directly from ethnicity to universal humanity, as many scholars assume. The gentile is a necessary step in his narrative of redemption.

And so when Paul declares in Rom 11.13, "I speak to you gentiles," he is not simply defining his audience but interpellating them, in the full Althusserian sense, into gentility.[118] Paraphrasing Althusser, we might

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charge." Cf. Hans Conzelman, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia, 1975), 46; Georgi, "God Turned Upside Down," 151; Philip Francis Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, Minn., 2003), 138–39.

117. According to Paul's narrative, the Jerusalem council already decided that Paul and Barnabas "should go to the *ethnê*" (Gal 2.9). But even if we accept this as a historical fact, the title "an apostle to the *ethnê*" appears only in Paul's own self-definition.

118. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York, 1971), 170–86. The very fact that Paul interpellates his followers into their new identity is quite obvious (Rom 1.6; 1 Cor 1.12; Gal 3.1 are but three examples of his various attempts to tell his followers who they *really* are). It is *this specific type of interpellation* that was not noticed by scholars. Here is one example. In a recent paper ("Who Were the First Christians?") Philippa Townsend claims that the term *christianoi* was first directed not at Jewish messianists or at mixed communities but specifically at gentile followers of Paul (probably in Rome). She further suggests that this "external" naming was only a Latinized form of Paul's own

say that Paul (who is actually one of Althusser's favorite examples for explaining this ideological operation)[119] "'recruits' . . . [gentiles] among the individuals . . . or 'transforms' the individuals into [gentiles] by . . . *interpellation* or hailing."[120] Paul calls upon them to recognize themselves as gentiles—a Jewish category—and at the same time renders this recognition all too obvious and transparent. Once responding to the call, these people recognize themselves as gentiles who have always been gentiles. Paul interpellates the Romans into "gentility," so they may later become men and women of the spirit. Discursively, he creates the "two" so that he can then turn them into one.[121]

Paul can therefore tell the Romans that they are *ethnê*, and, at the same time, explain to the Corinthians that they *were ethnê* (1 Cor 12.2) but are no longer (cf. 1 Cor 5.1; cf. 1 Thes 4.5).[122] Scholars attempt to solve this paradox by using the Roman concept of adoption (the gentile believers become an adopted sons of Abraham; see Rom 8.15; Gal 4.5)[123] or offer

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designation of his followers as "those of the Christ" (*hoi tou chrisou*, 1 Cor 15.23; Gal 5.24, rather than "those of Paul," 1 Cor 3.4). We would add that in order to teach his gentile followers that they were Christians, Paul had to teach them that they were gentiles first.

119. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 171.

120. Ibid., 174. "Gentiles" here substitutes Althusser's "subjects."

121. Here we see an affinity with the core of E. P. Sanders's claim that Paul engineers a problem to fit the solution (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 442–47. See also his *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* [Oxford, 1991], 115–17). Sanders makes this claim with respect to the Law: if Christ redeems, the Law cannot redeem anyone, not even Israel; and if there is a new covenant, the old one must have failed. We believe the same can be said of gentiles: Paul introduces the gentiles as an explanation for the rift Christ healed.

122. The latter verse is explained by some scholars as a traditional Jewish admonition cited by Paul (see, e.g., Sanders, *Very Short Introduction*, 134), but this cannot account for the texts from 1 Cor.

123. On this idea, its biblical as well as Roman roots, and its scholarly history, see James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of* Huiothesia *in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen, 1992); Menachem Kister, "Body and Sin: Romans and Colossians in Light of Qumran and Rabbinic Texts," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature*, ed. J.-S. Rey (Leiden, 2014), 188, n. 65. Stowers (*A Rereading of Romans*, 246) and Fredriksen ("Judaizing the Nations," 244) further explain that these gentile believers become offspring of Abraham (*kata pneuma*) but not of Isaac and Jacob, but this distinction hardly suits Rom 9.7–13, where the election of Isaac and Jacob is cited as a precedent for that of the gentile believers. Since this passage is preceded by Paul's assertion that "the children of the promise are counted as descendants" (9.8), it is hard to see how it can be read as but an example of God's actions according to larger purposes (as per Stowers) or simply sovereign will (as per Gaston). Cf. Michael Cranford, "Election and Ethnicity: Paul's view of Israel in Romans 9.1–13," *Jour-*

other categories or metaphors of hybridity such as "a third race,"[124] "honorary Jews,"[125] "ex pagan pagans,"[126] "the lost tribes of Israel,"[127] or even "gentile-Jews."[128] But these definitions only name the paradox; they do not explain why it was necessary in the first place. We believe that the paradox was in fact unavoidable: the claim "you are no longer gentiles" is what makes the members gentiles. Discursively, gentility and its revocation come together, as seen above.[129] This may explain why Paul regards himself repeatedly as an apostle to the *ethnê* and yet addresses his readers explicitly as *ethnê*, in second person, only once (and only as part of his own self-identification, in Rom 11.13), while implicating them in their gentility in several other places.[130]

PAUL, THE GOY, AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

We have thus far made a dual claim. Logically, we have explained why Paul *needed* the new gentile; genealogically, we have demonstrated how he worked with available discursive materials and constraints. But the perspective of the formation of the *goy* allows us to go even further and to offer a rereading of Paul's theopolitical alternative to the existing order,

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nal of New Testament Studies 50 (1993): 27–41; Heikki Räisänen, "Paul, God and Israel: Romans 9–11 in Recent Research," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner (Philadelphia, 1988), 178–206.

124. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 171–79. Sanders is referring to all the believers, Jews as gentiles, but it is clear that his conceptualization is meant to cope first and foremost with the status of Paul's gentiles believers. For a critique of using this second-century Christian self-designation in the context of Paul, see Peter J. Tomson's forthcoming paper "Paul's Jewish Identity in Debate, Then and Now."

125. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 5.

126. Fredriksen, "Paul the Convert."

127. Staples, "A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27."

128. Joshua Garroway, *Paul's Gentile Jews: Neither Jew nor Gentile, but Both* (London, 2012). Garroway claims that a Roman who was baptized into Jesus became a gentile-Jew (see especially chap. 2: "Paul 'Christians' as 'Gentile-Jews'"); we believe he simply became a gentile. There is no need, in other words, to invent a new, hybrid, in-between, heuristic category for these newcomers; Paul has already done that. That's exactly how *ethnê* (a category that is revoked in baptism and, at the same time, remains relevant as a reminder of difference) functions in his letters. Garroway's neologism is thus insightful but redundant.

129. To be more precise, a person becomes a gentile when she expresses an interest in the new *ekklesia*, and when baptized she retroactively becomes someone who *was* an actual gentile. More about that below.

130. Cf. Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 291, who reads Rom 9–11 as revealing Paul's "most fully developed authorial persona."

recently a topic of great interest for both New Testament scholars[131] and philosophers.[132] In converting the Romans (or Galatians or Corinthians) into gentiles and calling them to join the new *ekklesia*, Paul models himself, as scholars repeatedly have noted, on the biblical prophetic call to the *ethnê*.[133] But this is only a part of the story, as can be seen by looking at two alternative biblical models Paul could have used instead of *goyim* in order to denote non-Jewish individuals, without referring to any ethnic marker: uncircumcised (*akrobustia*), and pagans or idolaters (*eidôlatroi*),[134] both of which could naturally be used in the singular. While Paul occasionally uses these terms (the second only in 1 Cor),[135] he also introduces *ethnê*, turning *it* and not them into his main form of address. Why, then, did Paul choose the new meaning of *ethnê* over one of these two ready-made biblical terms for the generalized-individualized non-Jew?

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131. "The most exciting developments today in the study of Paul" (Nicholas T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics*, 160). Beside the references mentioned above, see Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, trans. J. Bowden (London, 1987); Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1994); and the three volumes edited by Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire*; *Paul and Politics* (Harrisburg, Pa., 2000), and *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, Pa., 2004). Cf. Jeremy Punt, "Postcolonial Approaches: Negotiating Empires, Then and Now," in *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*, ed. J. A. Marchal, (Minneapolis, Minn., 2012), 191–208, and the bibliography in 206–7.

132. See, e.g., J. D. Caputo and L. M. Ackoff, eds., *Paul among the Philosophers* (Bloomington, Ind., 2009); J. Milbank, ed., *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Ada, Mich., 2010).

133. Especially Jeremiah's self-identification as a "prophet to the gentiles," and second Isaiah's prophesies of the future coming of all *ethnê* to Jerusalem. See Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, trans. F. Clarke (1954; Richmond, Va., 1959), 26; Karl O. Sandnes, *Paul: One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding* (Tübingen, 1991), 61.

134. Note that Paul calls the Christ believers in Rome *ethnê* (1.13; 11.13) long after they ceased being pagans, and keeps calling them both *ethnê* and ex-*ethnê*. This deliberate choice of words is blurred by translations which alternately use "gentiles," "pagans," and "heathen" for *ethnê* (see Donaldson, "Gentile Christianity"). This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences in New Testament (not only Pauline) scholarship. Thus, for example, Hans D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1995), admits that "the 'pagans' or 'gentiles' are viewed here [i.e., Mt 5.47], as elsewhere in the SM, in purely negative terms" (320) but later explains (away) the criticism in cultural terms: "paganism is identified with materialism and consumerism" (480). Translating *ethnê* as pagans thus opens the way for "cultural," apologetic explanations of anti-gentile utterances.

135. *akrobustia*: Rom 2.25–27; 3.30; 4.9–12; 1 Cor 7.18–19; Gal 2.7; 5.6; 6.15. *eidôlatroi*: 1 Cor 5.10–11; 6.9; 10.7. Cf. Gal 5.20.

Why is he "an apostle to the *gentiles*," and not to the uncircumcised or to the pagans?

Being uncircumcised is a fact sealed in the flesh.[136] An advocate for circumcision could still be an apostle to the uncircumcised; but for someone who believes that circumcision makes no difference, identifying people according to this mark amounts to a performative contradiction, which in fact bestows an excess of presence on that mark (consider, for example, a contemporary address: "I speak to you of colored skin: in our society all are equal under law"). Paul would thereby be addressing people on the basis of a difference that has lost any value or meaning after Christ. Gentiles, in contrast, are created by Paul's very address and call. Being addressed as gentiles, they already belong to the world of spirit and of loyalty to Israel's god. The uncircumcised become gentiles at the very moment they approach the new *ekklesia*. The same logic also explains why "idolater" cannot substitute for "gentile." In such a case joining the *ekklesia* would first bring idolatry to the fore by overcoming it and would then preserve its trace as that which has been overcome.

"Uncircumcised" highlights a continuously present yet theologically irrelevant fact, whereas "idolater" highlights a practice that is to disappear completely. Only "gentile" highlights a fact that still exists *and* remains relevant—the ethnic remainder of an ethnic world that includes the "remnant" of Israel (*leimma*: Rom 9.27; 11.5), which must remain in order to uphold the basic categories of the narrative of election and redemption. From a biblical perspective, this is the only theologically relevant distinction, and it is relevant even *after* joining the new community, since the story of redemption is mediated through, and continues within, the Jewish story of election. Gentiles are the people not chosen by God, and now they too are invited to take part in his redemptive narrative.

This also sheds a new light on Paul's debate with the other apostles regarding circumcision (Rom 2.28; 4.10; Gal 2.3; 5.3, 11; 6.12–13; Phil 3.2). Why does Paul insist on this point when he himself refers to circumcision as a matter of indifference (Gal 5.6; 6.15; 1 Cor 7.19)?[137] The prob-

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136. The gender economy of circumcision is beyond the rather limited scope of this essay. For a useful discussion of the biblical context, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston, 1994); for the rabbinic context, see Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?*

137. Note that the question is not why he opposes *conditioning* joining on circumcision, but why he opposes non-Jews *choosing* circumcision as one *possible* gate into the new *ekklesia*. Some suggest that Paul does *not* in fact oppose this choice, as long as this proselyte observes the commandments. See Peter J. Tomson, "Halakhah in the New Testament: A Research Overview," in *The New Testa-*

lem with circumcision is not its being a commandment but that it
sanctifies Israel *kata sarka*. We agree with Daniel Boyarin that Paul does
not want to make carnal Israel disappear, but that he is not willing to
sanctify (or reify) it either.[138] Its disappearance cannot be reconciled with
the narrative of election, as it would undermine the divine promise (Rom
11.1), while its sanctification would contradict the content of the "good
news" and its cosmopolitan horizon.

The new *ekklesia* requires a complete transformation of the status of
the *ethnê* in the complex of relations between God and the world. Nations
no longer occupy the position of mediators between individuals and gods,
and one needs not be a member of a particular nation to belong to the
true God. The gentiles, as a generalized people, and as an undifferentiated
mass of individuals, are "everything" (1 Cor 9.22), the universal human—
minus the one nation that cannot be done away with, Israel.[139] In this
sense, gentiles are the universal that carries and preserves the negated
particular. Thus the new community of faith would be formed out of a
double negation of particularism, the two parts of which must be joined
together, for each of these negations alone does not suffice to secure the
universal openness of the community. On the one hand, the gentile is
defined by overcoming an inherited particular identity. On the other
hand, the Jew, as a member of a particular nation, loses his exceptional
status vis-à-vis God: his election is conceived as belonging entirely to the
past and should be remembered as such.[140] This is the special significance
of the concept of the "remnant": the ethnic remainder in the cosmopolitan
ekklesia,[141] the mark of the historical difference that cannot be revoked
even when faith becomes universalistic.

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ment and Rabbinic Literature, ed. R. Bieringer et al. (Leiden, 2009), 184, 187. This
seems to us an overly literal and decontextualized reading of Gal 5.3.

138. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 13–38.

139. Thus even when Paul uses the concept of "all" (as in Gal 3.22; 1 Cor
15.22; Rom 11.32) without dividing it to Jews and *ethnê* (as in Rom 1.16), the
context leaves little doubt that such distinction is assumed. This is also true
regarding Rom 1.5, as evidenced in the rest of the chapter.

140. The possibility that this particularity will once again become important
in the end-time depends, of course, on the interpretation of the "secret" in Rom
11.26. For a review of the different readings of *pas Israel*, see Andrew Das, *Paul,
the Law and the Covenant* (Peabody, Mass., 2011), 102–10; Staples, "A Fresh Look
at Romans 11.25–27."

141. Stowers suggests that it is merely an instrument of the salvation of Israel
as a whole: "The remnant . . . resembles Israelites who rallied around Elijah and
his movement to restore Israel to the true worship of God"; "the few now will

By forming this model, Paul rejects two other models that were available to him: the ethnopolitical model, in which circumcision is the only legitimate road into the Jewish collective (as per James and the Jerusalem party); and the eschatological model, whether in its radical version, in which entire nations accept Israel's God (as in Is 66.18–24), or in a more moderate one, in which the nations accept God's law while maintaining their own gods (as in Mic 4.1–5 reworking of Is 2.2–4).[142] Both models sanctify the very thing Paul wishes to overcome: the borders and uniqueness of the Jewish ethnic group. In the first model, membership is granted on an individual basis and is contingent upon preserving the borders of that group. In the second, all nations remain separate, like semi-autonomous cities that join an empire. But while Paul rejects these models, they do not altogether disappear; instead, the generic-individual gentile is the result of melding all three together. By rejecting the eschatological models Paul is rejecting the ideas of gentiles joining the Law, and of entire nations joining the covenant, while maintaining the signifier *ethnê* to designate those who come into the covenant. By rejecting circumcision as relevant for the new *ekklesia*, he rejects the act of cutting the flesh but accepts the individual choice to join the elect.

And just as the connection between Israel according to the flesh and to the spirit is preserved (Rom 9.6), a similar connection has to be maintained regarding the *goyim*. *Ethnê* as nations are the counterparts of Israel according to the flesh. They too are part of the story of election and promise, which enables the gospel of salvation. Traces of this can be found in the way Paul uses the prophets' verses that mention *goyim*, peoples, applying them to his own audience. We saw above how Rom 15.9–12 cites various verses that discuss the *ethnê* joining the praise of God, applying them to members of the Rome community. We would now add that these verses explicitly equate gentiles (*goyim*; *ethnê*) with peoples/nations (*amim*; *laoi*): "Rejoice, O gentiles, with his people"; "Praise the Lord, all gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him."[143] By citing these specific verses, Paul thus discloses the biblical ethnic origin of the term and highlights its semantic shift. And thus the old meaning of "gentiles" as peoples does not disappear altogether: it is still encapsulated in the

lead to the survival of the whole" (*A Rereading of Romans*, 296–97, 302). Our reading of the "remnant" is different from and theologically "stronger" than his.

142. For postbiblical developments of these models, see n. 106 above.

143. On the scriptural catena as a whole, see Garroway, "The Circumcision of Christ," 309–10.

word *ethnê*, articulating the recognition that the effort to overcome ethnic markers occurs in a world that remains ethnic and is populated by ethnic gods.[144]

At the end of the day, the gentiles are those that allow for the radical distinction between the political and the theological. "Gentiles" is a political category stripped of concrete ethnic, national, and geographical meaning, thereby challenging any existing politics. As long as the door was open to join the new community through circumcision, the new faith did not change the theopolitical structure of the Jewish world, in which God was and remains the Lord, the world's sovereign. The Christ of the apostles to the Jews brings a gospel of radical transformation of political existence, but not of its borders as a matrix in which the relationship between God and his people is exercised. But when a Roman or Corinthian individual is dubbed gentile, the political community is cleft in two: on the one hand, that individual remains the son of his city, not wishing to change his status nor that of the city itself in the time that remains (Rom 13.1–14);[145] on the other hand, the individual is a member of the community of brothers whose politics takes place in parallel with mundane politics (Phil 3.20). It is this rift that creates the tension between Paul's political radicalism and his conservatism, a tension that generated much confusion, scholarly and other.[146]

Thus by claiming above that the gentile functions as a discursive cate-

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144. Thus although it is true that "Paul thinks in nations" (Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 52), one cannot deduce from it, as both Neil Elliot and James LeGrand do, that Paul does not *also* think of "personal salvation of individuals" (Elliot, *The Arrogance of Nation*s, 46; James LaGrand, "Proliferation of the 'Gentile,' in the NRSV," *Biblical Research* 41 [1996]: 86). His use of *ethnê* not only combines individuals and nations but also, as we show above, marks the transformation between the two.

145. Neil Elliott notes the link between Paul's conservative politics in vv. 1–7 and his imminent eschatology in vv. 11–14 (Neil Elliott, "Romans 13:1–7 in the Context of Imperial Propaganda," in *Paul and Empire*, ed. Horsley, 184–204). See also John W. Marshall, "Hybridity and Reading Romans 13," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (2008): 157–78

146. "Rom 13.1–7 has been used as a justification for tyrants and a basis for acquiescence in the face of rulers' gross injustice and abuse [. . .] Advocating judicious restraint in certain volatile circumstances did not in any way lessen the general opposition to the Roman imperial regime" (Horsley in idem, *Paul and Empire*, 146–47); "It is unfortunate that a single Pauline text from an uncharacteristic Letter—namely Romans 13:1–7—has been used to control the interpretation of Paul's politics, when so many other indications point in exactly the opposite direction" (Arnal, "Doxa, Heresy, and Self-Construction," 81, n. 92). Cf. Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 5.

gory, we mean not only that it is a basic concept that appears repeatedly but also that it organizes an entire matrix of other categories. First and foremost this discursive knot is crossed by and gives sense to the distinctions between spirit and flesh, faith and law. Jews who refuse to follow the Messiah remain within the realm of the law, living the life of the flesh, and are doomed to sin. The followers of Christ belong to the realm of faith and live the life of the spirit. Gentiles, however, do not belong to either category but to a zone of indistinction that enables the very distinction between these categories. With them the lower category (flesh, law) is transgressed or revoked while still preserved alongside its higher, opposite counterpart (spirit, faith).[147] Gentiles carry with them the negation of flesh and law into the new *ekklesia*, by their very separation from the Jews, who are not expected to turn their backs on their own laws and ethnos or ignore their election according to the flesh even after their joining.[148] The sharp distinction between spirit and flesh and between faith and law is not simply presupposed but has to be performed, and it can be performed only through and by the gentiles, because they are not yet fully separated from ethnicity (being the fusion of law and flesh) and have not yet achieved the spirit. Only they can fully separate themselves from ethnicity, the law, and the flesh.[149]

When "Christians" will make their appearance, the scandal of the gentile will dissolve into the new universal Christianity.[150] This new membership will have at best a dubious ethnic meaning,[151] the dualism of flesh

147. A further analysis would help us establish a structural similarity between the middle place occupied by the gentiles and that of the body (*soma*), between the flesh (*sarx*) and the spirit (*pneuma*). Like gentiles, the body too is a third category which allows the distinction between the two; and it too can take part in both spirit and flesh, as well as pass from one to the other. On the *soma* as a middle ground, see Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms* (Leiden, 1971).

148. This is true whether or not Paul sees the Law as still relevant for the salvation of the Jews.

149. The web of concepts woven around the gentile is even more extensive. In an expanded version of this essay we hope to show that the formation of the *goy* is connected with a whole series of terms, whose meaning Paul radically transformed: *apostolos, exousia, euangelion, klesis, christos,* and others.

150. Townsend, "Who Were the First Christians," 229.

151. For the Christian invention of the concept of universal, metaethnic religion, see Boyarin, *Borderlines*; Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism." Cf. Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York, 2005), for the various ways early Christian writers still use ethnic reasoning to construct the boundaries and legitimacy of Christianity. These writers, however, use already a transformed, fluid conceptualization of peoplehood: "*genos* is redefined as that which is the marker of difference but potentially (if

and spirit will be stabilized and reified as simple and exclusive, with no remainder, and the rift between theological and political will gradually blur, until its resolution with the conversion of the Roman Empire. Unlike "Christian," "gentile" preserves the irreconcilable gap between the theological and the political. Accepting Taubes's emphasis on Paul's radical political challenge to the Hellenic political world, as well as to the imperial organizational matrix with Rome at its center, we argue that this challenge was performed first and foremost through the "conversion" of Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians into gentiles.[152]

But "gentile" is a threshold concept that is not expected to last. Second-century (gentile) Christian writers started using *ethnê* as designation of pagans in general with no added ethnic connotation.[153] Others, especially the apologetics, use it as a *self*-designation.[154] At the same time, the tannaim adopted the Jew/*goy* distinction, used the term in the singular, and placed it at the foundation of their legal system.[155] We should

never actually) universal, like Roman citizenship" (Buell, *Why This New Race*, 31–32). As a result, Justin Martyr can claim that Christians are both the true Israelites and "another race" (*allo genos*; *Dial*. 19.4; 138.2). Cf. David Brakke, "Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 453–81.

152. Our analysis somewhat reduces Paul's "anomaly," argued by John Barclay: "Paul combines this culturally conservative form of Judaism with a social policy which seemed to his contemporaries dangerously assimilative" (John M. G. Barclay, "Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate," *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 60 [1995]: 110). In other words, Paul thought like a Jew, while living like a gentile. According to our analysis Paul's thought was not less radical than his way of life, for what Barclay considered simply as a "simple biblical division between Jews and the nations" (107) was in fact a new, revolutionary distinction that enabled him to let the *ethnê* in.

153. Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1994), 14. As Goodman claims elsewhere (Martin Goodman, "Romans, Jews and Christians on the Names of the Jews," in *The Other in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. Harlowe et al. [Grand Rapids, Mich., 2011], 398–341), in the second century Christian writers start calling themselves "Israel" as a way to distance themselves from the "Jews." On the development of the supersessionist theory in second-century Christianity, see Räisänen, *Rise of Christian Beliefs*, 247–82.

154. These "others" could also be the same person in different contexts. Compare Justin's *Dial*. 135.6 (Christians are the real house of Jacob) to his 1 Apol. 53 (Christians are gentiles, and are opposed to the house of Jacob). See further Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh, 1996), 177–78.

155. As we show in detail in Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, "*Goy*: Toward a Genealogy."

now go on to study the possible relationships between Paul and the early rabbis,[156] as well as the transformations of the *ethnê* in post-Pauline Christianity. Here we have sought only to isolate one specific, formative moment in the story—the full breadth of which is yet to be unfolded—of the birth of the *goyim* in the Pauline Epistles.

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156. For specific claims about rabbinic sources that should be read as responses to and polemics with Pauline texts, see, e.g., Israel J. Yuval, "All Israel Have a Portion in the World to Come," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities*, ed. F. E. Udoh (Notre Dame, Ind., 2008), 114–38; Yuval, "Christianity in Talmud and Midrash: Parallelomania or Parallelophobia?" in *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians throughout History*, ed. F. T. Harkins (Notre Dame, Ind., 2010), 50–74.