

Prologue

In 1976, Krister Stendahl called on Pauline scholars to reconfigure the paradigm by which to interpret Paul's thought, expressed in his letters. "The main lines of Pauline interpretation . . . have for many centuries been out of touch with one of the most basic of the questions and concerns that shaped Paul's thinking in the first place: the relation between Jews and Gentiles."¹ Nowhere is that question more evident than in Paul's rhetorical interaction with James the Just of Jerusalem and his two apostolic counterparts, Peter and John. All of them were operating within the religion of Judaism, and all held one conviction in common: that the Messiah had come in the historical person of the Jewish Jesus, whom God raised from the dead as a sign and seal of the salvation of "all Israel,"² and through Israel also the nations of the world.

The question of "the relation between Jews and Gentiles" became acutely political when the Jewish community of Jesus Messiah moved to implement a mission to incorporate people from the nations into the new end-time community of the risen Jesus Messiah. The community, in whatever social location, had to be of one mind and heart, and their worship of God performed in terms of their

1. Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 1.

2. Rom. 11:25–26.

loyalty to the one Jesus Messiah. The Jewish members of the new movement of Jesus kept their ethnicity, maintained their observance of the law of Israel, and proclaimed their allegiance to Jesus Messiah. The pressing issue that generated political heat between Paul and the original leaders of the new messianic movement in Jerusalem concerned the incorporation of people from outside Judaism into the community of Jesus Messiah. How much of Jewish law and culture did the “outsiders” have to adopt to be considered full and equal participants in the new fellowship of Jesus Messiah? This question runs like an undercurrent, and sometimes like a rapids, through the chapters that follow.

Readers will need to get used to the idea that Jesus had brothers and sisters who knew him better than anyone else (Mark 6:1–6; John 2:11–12; 1 Cor. 9:5). The brother closest to Jesus in age, and probably also in spirit, was named James. He carried forward the work of Jesus in Judea after Jesus’ death and became the recognized leader of the new Jewish movement of Jesus Messiah in the city of Jerusalem. His Palestinian Jewish identity remained intact throughout the remainder of his life, outliving his brother Jesus by more than thirty years. James also exerted his influence beyond the borders of Palestine, to any place where the life and ministry of Jesus were taking hold. The question was always one of identity: how are the people of the new community of Jesus Messiah to be recognized as the covenant people of God wherever they meet for fellowship and worship?

Paul was also Jewish, before and after his revelation of the risen Jesus as God’s Messiah for the salvation of all nations of the world. While Paul was not Palestinian, his loyalty to the Holy City and the temple, God’s symbols of redemption and relationship, ran deep. Paul’s primary language was Greek, the *lingua franca* of the conquered peoples of the Greco-Roman world. Paul was not a disciple of the historical Jesus, and neither did he know James the

brother of Jesus prior to his interaction with members of the new community of Jesus Messiah in Jerusalem after Jesus' death. If Paul wanted to know anything about the teaching of Jesus during his earthly life, he had to learn about it from those who had followed Jesus, especially James, who had the closest relationship with Jesus. But Paul did have an epiphany, an inner vision about the identity of the risen Jesus that propelled him into world mission. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Paul referring to his new self-identity as an apostle of Jesus Messiah as "one untimely born" (1 Cor. 15:8).³

Rather than providing a back-and-forth commentary on James and Paul, the ensuing chapters of the book are divided more or less equally between the two figures. Part I focuses on James: his identity, convictions, reputation, leadership, sufferings, and death in Jerusalem. James did not leave behind undisputed writings about his life and ministry. Most of the literary sources available about him were written many years after his lifetime, except for one source: *the letters of Paul*. Even though I have aimed at giving James his own space ahead of Paul, I was obliged to call on Paul's historical allusions to James in Galatians and 1 Corinthians in order to paint a more accurate portrait of this remarkable figure in the mid-fifties of the first century of the Common Era. Paul and James were contemporaries; they knew each other personally; Paul met with James privately and communally. It would be nothing short of folly to ignore Paul's remarks about the historical figure of James of Jerusalem in an attempt to reconstruct an image of the man. Hence the use of Paul's correspondence from the fifties to open the discussion of the historical James in part I: "James Rediscovered: 'In Step with His Brother.'"

In part II Paul is focused, but not in isolation from James. Paul's convictions and activities as an apostle of Jesus Messiah are analyzed

3. Translation of biblical texts is from the nrsv, except where another translation is identified.

in light of his interaction with James the Just of Jerusalem portrayed in part I. The discussions about Paul in relation to James are captioned in part II as “Paul under Obligation: ‘As One Untimely Born.’”

I propose now to lay out a number of assumptions that underlie the various discussions that follow. Each of these could be elaborated, and have been already in numerous publications. My purpose for presenting them briefly here is to enable readers in understanding the arguments, judgments, and conclusions presented throughout the chapters that follow this one.

Interrogating the Texts

Some of my colleagues have written dissertations on the works of living authors. At times, when the understanding of an issue is blurred, the colleague makes a telephone call to the author of the work under review to clarify an issue. In writing about James and Paul, such a luxury is not possible. We depend on the sources available to make a case one way or another. But sources do not speak for themselves, and neither are they complete descriptions of the situations, or of the characters in the narratives. Paul has gained a literary advantage over James insofar as he has left behind a record of many of his thoughts about his life and work as an apostle of Jesus Messiah. Even so, his letters are rhetorically charged, and as such require careful analysis to uncover what was really moving forward in a given situation.

However much care is given to the disciplined reading of the ancient texts, informed imagination is needed to shed light on cultural and contextual elements that undergird the shape of the texts and the thought inherent therein. Neil Elliott’s advice in this regard is well taken. “We cannot content ourselves to read the surface of a text . . . but must read beneath and behind it, or better, *through* it to get at the fundamental contestation of power that is inscribed in it.

We must read against the grain, listening for what remains unsaid . . . as much as what is said.”⁴ Even though this may come across as endorsement for arguing from silence, it is not quite that. What is said and unsaid are both present in texts, one more obvious than the other. Texts generate more questions than those explicitly stated in the texts. For example, who first declared James, Peter, and John to be “pillars” in the new community of Jesus Messiah? (Gal. 2:9). Was the complimentary title self-ascribed and then adopted by the followers? Or was it something that arose among the people under their leadership? How well did Paul accept the honorable title as rightfully applicable to these three in particular? Questions such as these arise from reading the text of Galatians 1 and 2. Clues to the answers are embedded in the texts, some clues more obvious than others. The rest comes from informed insight.

The interrogation of texts needs to be done in the company of other informed interpreters whose discipline and insight should be taken seriously, although not uncritically. The result is forever open to further insight and analysis. Consensus, if such is ever achieved, is not a sure guide to truth. I hope this posture is evident in the discussions that follow.

Terms of Reference

One of the challenges interpreters face in trying to make authentic reconstructions of ancient events and persons in their situations in life is that of keeping later terms of reference out of the picture. It is easy to fall into the trap. Current terminology is so familiar, so pervasive, it seems acceptable to overlay the discussion with the familiar terms of reference. But terms carry particular social, cultural, and political implications. Their inappropriate use is simply retrojection, which

4. Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 11.

makes the project of reconstruction anachronistic, and as such unacceptable.

My aim—whether achieved successfully or not must be decided by the reader—has been to write in such a way as to represent the persons and practices in terms that accord with the social, cultural, and linguistic realities of the time. In the list below are terms of reference that have been used—terms that many readers have come to expect in the subject area—to discuss the exigencies in play in the first century, terms that need to be set aside to allow authenticity to shine through. Suitable alternates are not easily obtained.

Christian/Christians/Christianity

Christianity was not a religion of the mid-first century, and is therefore not an appropriate term to use with reference to the missionary endeavors of James and Paul. They did not have such a noun, or any idea that such a noun would be used for the missionary work in which they were involved. It is not even appropriate to qualify “Christianity” as “primitive Christianity,” as though the earliest Jewish community of Jesus Messiah in Jerusalem had in mind the founding of a new religion under a new name. Moreover, “Christians” is also out of the question as a descriptive designation of members in the new movement under the auspices of the Jewish leadership of James and Paul, among others. More suitable alternates have to be found to render the self-definition of the faithful followers of Jesus Messiah. I have used Christ-loyalists, Christ-followers, members of Christ, and so on. Our familiar terms were not theirs, and therefore should not be imposed as descriptive of their life and times.

Church, the Church, Churches

These coordinates are ours in the modern English-speaking world. “Church” is often construed as a particular kind of building used for Christian worship. If not a building, then an institution duly constituted by an authorizing body, having articles of Christian faith, and permission from the state to issue tax-deductable receipts. Any and all of these notions are foreign to the idea of the Greek term ἐκκλησία used by the authors of the New Testament. Consequently, any use of the terms “church,” “early church,” or “churches” as the manifest meaning of ἐκκλησία in the New Testament is anachronistic. These terms blunt the intended sense of the Greek word used repeatedly in the letters of Paul, for example, to signify an assembly of people gathered in the name of Jesus Messiah for fellowship and worship. The more we keep the later institutional church out of the picture, the better able we will be to understand the significance embedded in the respective texts.

The reader should expect to find in the following discussions such terms as “assembly,” “association,” “gathering,” and “community.” These terms speak to the unity of diverse members in a group around the single dynamic center of the crucified-and-resurrected Jesus as Messiah for Israel, and through Israel for the world.

Conversion, Convert

This term is most often used of Paul’s remarkable vision of the resurrected Jesus, especially as it is described in Acts.⁵ He is said to have abandoned Judaism at that point to become a “Christian” missionary to the non-Jewish world. None of this comes out of a

5. The description of the event is narrated at three points in Acts (chapters 9; 22; 26), with some variation. It is from the dramatic narration of the event that readers easily conclude that Paul was “converted,” as in a sinner to a saint, out of Judaism into Christianity.

reading of Paul's own testimony in Galatians 1, or from the three narratives in Acts that dramatize his experience. That there was a transformation of mind and a redirection of activity is indisputable. But "conversion" as it is used in modern Christian parlance implies a change of mind and behavior, and a transfer of allegiance from one deity to another. Paul did not abandon Judaism, and neither did he leave a life of immorality to become a morally responsible "Christian." His experience is best described with Paul's own term, highlighted by Stendahl, "call rather than conversion."⁶

In the case of people from the nations who accept Paul's message of Jesus Messiah, who turn away from their religions of idolatry and/or polytheism to join the assembly of the people of Jesus, Messiah of the one God of Israel, they could justly be called "converts," and they are described as such sometimes in the succeeding chapters.

Jew, the Jews

A number of modern interpreters have found the English terms "Jew" and "the Jews" inappropriate representations of the first-century Greek designation Ἰουδαῖος/οἱ. Some have adopted "Judean"/"Judeans" as fitting, even though the sense might be construed as residents of the area known as Judea. That would apply to James, but not to the many others of the Diaspora, including Paul. The argument in favor of "Judeans" as an apt translation of Ἰουδαῖοι points to such key factors as the Second Temple in Jerusalem that all Ἰουδαῖοι everywhere honored as their symbol of God's presence in the world. They willingly paid tribute to the temple authorities for the privilege of belonging to the company of Jewish worshipers worldwide. It may be, however, that the modern English terms "Jew"

6. Gal. 1:15; Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 7–23.

and “the Jews” carry a shade of meaning that would not have been true for all members of Second Temple Judaism.

In discussion with my Jewish friends and colleagues, I have found them more amenable than some New Testament scholars toward using “Jew” and “the Jews” for their forebears in pre-Rabbinic Judaism of the first century. If there is no offense and no skewing of the meaning of the terms of the text—as there would be with “Christian” and “Christianity”—then I see no valid reason to search consistently for alternate terms for “Jew” and “Jews.”

Gentile, Gentiles

The term comes from the Latin *gentilis* with the sense of a family, clan, or nation. Jerome’s Vulgate used the term to translate the Greek ἔθνος/ἔθνη, hence its entrance into English Bibles to refer to non-Jewish people. In its Greek plural usage in the New Testament, ἔθνη meant people of the nations of the world, not including the Jewish people (cf. Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47).

Throughout the discussion I use “gentiles” interchangeably with “people of the nations,” or simply “the nations,” depending on the context. I do not capitalize “gentiles” in that the designation is nonspecific, unlike Scythians and Greeks and Judeans.

Messiah, Christ

Paul uses the Greek term Χριστός exclusively to identify the risen Jesus as the Anointed One according to the Hebrew Scriptures. The equivalent Hebrew term is מְשִׁיחַ, transliterated Messiah. In Israelite history priests and kings were anointed with oil as a sign and seal of their qualification and appointment to the service of the Lord. The Israelite king in particular was appointed to deliver the Israelites from their oppressors. The Greek Χριστός and the Hebrew מְשִׁיחַ

carry the same sense of “anointed one” for the purpose of deliverance or salvation. The Fourth Gospel is the only document of the New Testament where the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah) is used, and that only twice (John 1:41; 4:25), and both times it is translated into Greek, Χριστός. English merely transliterates the Greek term as “Christ.”

Unfortunately, “Christ” has come to mean little more than a second name for Jesus. The two words are commonly used interchangeably to refer to the same person with little indication that one (Christ) is a loaded *title*, while the other (Jesus) is a *given name* that identifies the historical figure. When Paul uses the term Χριστός he understands it to mean God’s Anointed One for the salvation of Israel along with the human family, and not least the redemption of the whole creation (Rom. 8:18–30). As such “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:11). In the ensuing chapters I use “Christ” and “Messiah” interchangeably to encourage readers to gain a sense of the weight of Paul’s use of Χριστός (Christ) as equivalent to the Hebraic idea of מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah).⁷

Common Judaism

The term “common Judaism” is closely associated with the masterful work of E. P. Sanders in rediscovering Second Temple Judaism. Sanders’s investigation of myriad sources written within and around the period 63 BCE–66 CE has yielded what I consider to be credible results that point to one Judaism with diversity constitutive with the social location of the particular Jewish communities in the Greco-Roman world of the time.

In his groundbreaking work, published in 1977 under the title *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, Sanders captioned the pattern of Jewish religion he had discovered in the

7. It should be noted that when a source is cited, the terms of reference used by the author are retained.

multifarious sources from the Second Temple period under the term “covenantal nomism.”⁸ Scholars ever since use the term as a tag for identifying the theology that undergirds the common practice and belief of Jewish people, whatever their language and social location in the time of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. Sanders identified eight parts to covenantal nomism thus:

(1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. The Law implies both (3) God’s promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God rewards obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God’s mercy belong to the group which will be saved.⁹

Professor Sanders reaffirmed his conclusion in 1992 in *Judaism: Practice and Belief*. In that volume he highlighted the need to look for the practice of Judaism among the “common people,” not merely the elite. Judaism is often viewed as consisting of three parties, or philosophies: *Pharisees*, an educated class that sought to interpret and enjoin the law for the Jewish people of the Second Temple period; *Sadducees*, a priestly class, from whom the servants of the temple were selected, including the high priest; and *Essenes*, who appear to have separated themselves from the politics of Jerusalem, assembling in ascetic communities in remote areas. The people who produced the DSS in the Judean desert are usually associated with the Essenes discussed in the writings of Josephus.¹⁰ In addition to these three parties of Judaism, Josephus writes about a fourth philosophy, the

8. “Nomism” is a coinage based on the Greek νόμος, usually translated “law,” “custom,” “principle.” Implicit in the two terms, adjective and noun together, is the idea of a covenant that includes observing the law inherent in the creation of the covenant agreement.

9. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 422.

10. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief: 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 341–79.

origin of which he identifies with a notable Jewish militant, Judas the Galilean.¹¹ Of this sect Josephus writes:

These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kind of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord.¹²

But Sanders sought to go beyond the ideologies of the different parties of Judaism to the larger Jewish population of common people, otherwise called people of the land.¹³ He was largely dependent on Josephus for clues about the practice and belief of the common people. They were largely nonliterate and therefore left behind little or no documentary information about themselves. From the works of Josephus, the practice of the ordinary Jewish people was in keeping with covenantal nomism, with some variation depending on their situation in life. Sanders concludes as follows:

Virtually all [people of the first century] believed that there really was a divine sphere and Jews believed that the God of their ancestors had given them his law, and that it was to be kept. God was one “whose eye no criminal escapes” (*Ant.* 4.286), and it was he who was to be thanked for every blessing of life. There doubtless were exceptions to this general loyalty—people who, though perhaps with some fear and trepidation in the dark watches of the night, lived as if there were no God—but the adherence of most Jews to the national religion cannot be doubted. It repeatedly led to difficulties with the rest of the world.¹⁴

I would place James the brother of Jesus among those “Jews [who] believed that the God of their ancestors had given them his law, and

11. This man resisted the census instituted by Quirinius in 6 CE.

12. *Ant.* 18:23.

13. The KJV of Mark 12:37 renders the “large crowd” of people who listen to Jesus gladly as “the common people,” implicitly the Jewish people other than the people of the parties of Judaism.

14. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 144–45.

that it was to be kept.” What then of Paul, apostle to the nations? Was he true to his Jewish heritage in his mission that incorporated gentiles into end-time communities loyal to the Jewish Jesus Messiah? Did he subscribe to covenantal nomism? Sanders answers in the negative in his conclusion to *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*:

Paul polemicizes . . . against the prior fundamentals of Judaism: the election, the covenant and the law; and it is because these are wrong that the means appropriate to “righteousness according to law” (Torah observance and repentance) are held to be wrong or are not mentioned. In short, *this is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity*.¹⁵

This conclusion is flawed on at least two points. First, Christianity was not a newly recognized religion at the time of Paul, separate from Judaism. Sanders does not take full account of Paul’s call to incorporate gentiles into Christ as full partners with their Jewish counterparts without taking on some of the marks of Jewish identity. That exigency pushes him to interpret the Jewish covenantal categories accordingly. Paul did not abandon Judaism, as we shall see momentarily. Second, the conclusion ignores the fact that Paul uses the Jewish Bible to instruct his gentile converts in being loyal to the person and power of the Jewish Messiah Jesus through whom they become “Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).

In 2008 Sanders reaffirmed common Judaism in all its variety with these words (among others): “The Bible is the basis of common Judaism (though just which parts of it each group of people observed, and precisely how they observed those parts, varied).”¹⁶ By this token Paul stood well within this broad definition of common Judaism. He cited the Bible repeatedly during his mission among the gentiles, and

15. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552, italics original.

16. E. P. Sanders, “Common Judaism Explored,” in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 23.

interpreted it accordingly, as later Jewish rabbis were prone to do in different situations. Paul's practice represented a new orientation commensurate with the end-time world mission in which he was involved, but not a departure from his Jewish religious heritage. He maintained his Jewish identity to the end, as evidenced in his final journey to Jerusalem to bring an offering of the gentiles to the sacred center of Judaism. Paul could be called a radical Jewish thinker on a mission to win the world to honor Israel's one and only covenant-making God represented in the Bible, and focused on Jesus Messiah crucified and raised at the turn of the ages.

The Turn of the Ages

Paul wrote his letters as one engaged in an urgent undertaking, for "the appointed time has grown short" (1 Cor. 7:29). One might say he thought he was living between the times: between the old creation and the new. The new had already *begun to dawn* while "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31). This eschatological frame of reference governed Paul's way of thinking in his letters, together with his activity in his mission to the nations.

In 1967 J. Louis Martyn wrote a striking article entitled "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Cor. 5:16." The text of 2 Cor. 5:16 reads as follows: "Thus, from this time forward we know no one according to the flesh; even if we did know Christ according to the flesh, now, by contrast, we know him that way no longer."¹⁷ It is plain to see from reading this text how Martyn arrived at the title of his article. From Paul's encounter with the crucified and risen Jesus, his understanding of himself and the world in which he lived had changed. His new way of knowing did not arise out of his unique experience of the resurrected Jesus, as though

17. My translation.

he were buying into a triumphalist theology and eschatology. On the contrary, as Martyn states so well, “The cross is the epistemological crisis for the simple reason that while it is in one sense followed by the resurrection, it is not replaced by it. . . . At the juncture of the ages the marks of the resurrection are hidden and revealed in the cross of the disciple’s daily death, and only there.”¹⁸ Doubtless Paul was arguing against a form of realized eschatology in 2 Corinthians. Some of the members, or more likely interlopers, in the Christ-community in Corinth were probably making claims about the arrival of the new age of the Spirit. In the strength of this understanding, the ones influencing the community could claim knowledge beyond the ordinary. Paul counters such thinking, especially when it diminishes the extraordinary insight that comes from knowing the crucified Messiah.¹⁹ The new age, or new creation, is glimpsed already since the death and resurrection of Jesus. But the final installment is still in waiting. “Paul’s treatment of the turn of the ages resists the temptation . . . to substitute despair about the inevitable domination of the powers of the old age with the confidence and arrogance that the new age and its powers are unambiguously present.”²⁰

The question, which must remain so, is whether James thought and behaved along such apocalyptic lines. We know that Paul did. He believed that the new creation was guaranteed by the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, but its full flower was still future. How James

18. J. Louis Martyn, “Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 286.

19. In 1 Cor. 1:18–24, Paul extols the virtue of the cross. “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

20. Thomas E. Boomershine, “Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages in Paul, Jesus, and Mark: Rhetoric and Dialectic in Apocalyptic and The New Testament,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 147.

construed his role as theological leader of the new community of Jesus Messiah crucified and raised can only be imagined from the few clues we have from Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Corinthians, less so from later ecclesiastical sources that tend to elevate James as one appointed by Jesus to restore the glory of Israel's worship in relation to the temple of Jerusalem. This is not to say the historical James did not think in apocalyptic terms, but that he appears as one committed to restoring the house of Israel to a right relationship with God through faithfulness to the law on the one hand and loyalty to Jesus on the other. The picture of James and Paul that emerges in the chapters that follow should at least reveal something of the pattern of their thought and life in their respective missions at the turn of the ages.²¹

Politics of Identity

Identity is shaped by a number of dynamic factors impinging on human personality. Our interest is with people in agrarian societies of the first century CE. The list could be long. I shall limit the number to those I consider to be particularly relevant to the subject matter of this book: *genealogy* (kinship, ethnicity, names), *location* (geographical, social, cultural), *language* (primary, secondary), and *governing authority* (imperial, local). Each of these deserves much fuller discussion than it will receive in this prologue. I cite them here in brief as assumptions interwoven through the various discussions in the forthcoming chapters. For example, does it matter that James made the city of Jerusalem his home base following the death of Jesus, his brother? How was his identity as a Galilean reshaped by that move and that experience? Why does Paul feel obliged to identify himself as

21. J. L. Martyn's 1967 view of Paul's thought in mission as having been influenced profoundly by his encounter with Christ crucified-and-risen, thus living and working at the juncture of the ages, comes across again in his commentary on *Galatians*, 1997, cited in subsequent chapters.

“a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews,”²² and also belonging to the particular sect of the Pharisees (Phil. 3:5)?²³

I shall offer a paragraph or two on each of these factors. A summary comment at the end must suffice concerning their potential for generating political jockeying for or against the full acceptance of groups of Christ-loyalists from the nations as equal participants with their Jewish counterparts. The two leading figures exercising such political will at the time were James of Jerusalem and Paul of the Diaspora.

Genealogy

Ancestry has become a hobby for many people in the present time. It is fun to find cousins, however distant, in various parts of the world to add to the family tree. For an ancient individual, however, genealogy was treasured as providing a sense of belonging to a clan that spanned years of treasured traditions. Names carried meaning when they were passed from one generation to another. They still do. Kinship was a significant factor in shaping identity. If a member of an ancient society were to gain significant leadership within the larger kinship group, they would have to come up with a genealogy to attain the position and the recognition. Genealogy relates to ethnicity. A person descends from a particular nation (ἔθνος) or clan, and cites the descent as a badge of honorable identity. The genealogies of the Bible function in this way, especially those of Matthew and Luke with

22. See Kathy Ehrensperger, “Speaking Greek under Rome: Paul, the Power of Language and the Language of Power,” *Neotestamentica* 46, no. 1 (2012): 10: “Paul claims that he is ‘A Hebrew of Hebrews,’ a man who calls himself by a Latin name and writes in Greek to people who live under Roman rule in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, and at the centre of this ruling power, in (*sic*) Rome.”

23. Helpful for grasping the significant particularity of Paul’s Jewish identity would be Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

respect to Jesus. Conversely, if a writer wants to reduce the leadership status of someone, the best way is to *label* the person rather than using their proper name.

Another way is simply to allow the name to stand without genealogical connection. The writer of Acts, for example, mentions a figure bearing the common name, James, but does not want this James to override the stature of Paul. James, then, is made to stand without pedigree, even though he really was the brother of Jesus! For the author of Acts to alert the reader to that biological qualifier would tend to elevate the status of James beyond that of Paul, the real hero of Acts—other than Jesus himself.

Location

We sometimes speak of location, or place, in metaphor. It is sometimes said of a person that they do not know their place. People also use the term “social location.” But the prior and principal notion of location is geographical: an area with mountains, and rivers, and lanes, and towns, and shops, and so much more. All of these marking a place of belonging, a comfort zone where patterns of thought are formed, for good or ill. A familiar place is where work and play come to expression, where friends and neighbors interact in accordance with that place. Ways of thinking about one’s self develop on location. Permit a brief personal note here. I was raised in a place called Drumbeemore in Northern Ireland. When I returned to that familiar farming location, after having earned a PhD and obtained a professorship in a university in Canada, a neighbor still living in that remote place remarked: “It’s hard to believe that you grew up in Drumbeemore,” as though that farming community had determined my identity for life, which did not include teaching and research in a university. Moreover, the location where a person lives is not merely a piece of neutral geography. Social and cultural habits of the

heart are formed in relation to particular places. Linguistic accents take shape in relation to place. Terms of reference spring up out of a geographical environment.

Cultural mores are located in the human mind and heart, to be sure, but they are also tied in with particular geography in all its distinctive character. A Jewish person born and raised in Rome of Italy in the first century could hardly be expected to be of the same mind and emotion as a Jewish person born and raised in Jerusalem of Judea. Identity accrues very much from location, understood physically, socially, and culturally. Sometimes a place is viewed from the “outside” as an unlikely place to live honorably. Consider the question of Nathaniel when he learns of Jesus from Nazareth (John 1:46): “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” The same would be true of James, the brother of Jesus, before he took up residence in Jerusalem.

Language

Kathy Ehrensperger’s article “Speaking Greek under Rome: Paul, the Power of Language and the Language of Power” illustrates well the complexity of language in its multiplicity and emotive quality in cultural context. “Language is not a neutral tool of communication between people, nor a mere system of signs applied to exchange information. . . . Language and power are intrinsically linked.”²⁴ They are linked, I submit, because language is first and foremost the formation of thought prior to expression. Bernard Lonergan made much of the investigation of the human self as seeking understanding for the purpose of living responsibly in the world. Human understanding is not a dormant entity within the human psyche, but a pattern of thought that invariably comes to meaningful expression

24. Ehrensperger, “Speaking Greek under Rome,” 16.

in the world with meaningful sounds (speech) and signs (text). Here are some of Lonergan's thoughts on "linguistic meaning," which speak inexorably to the question of identity.

So it is that conscious intentionality develops in and is moulded by its mother tongue. It is not merely that we learn the names of what we see but also that we can attend to and talk about the things we can name. The available language, then, takes the lead. It picks out the aspects of things that are pushed into the foreground, the relations between things that are stressed, the movements and changes that demand attention. So different languages develop in different manners and the best translations can express, not the exact meaning of the original, but the closest approximation possible in another tongue.²⁵

Language and identity are integral to each other. The primary language, what Lonergan calls the "mother tongue," is especially powerful in shaping thought and practice within a ethno-cultural group. Aramaic was most likely the primary language of home and religion for Jewish people in Palestine, more especially in Judea, during the Second Temple period. The Scriptures that were read in synagogue were in Hebrew script and communicated in the Hebrew tongue, closely related to Aramaic. The Jewish people of Palestine identified with the language because it was their own primary language. Jewish communities in the Diaspora, on the other hand, whose primary language was Greek and whose Scriptures were also in Greek, could hardly be expected to feel at home in a communal setting where Aramaic was the familiar pattern of expression. Identity and language are intrinsically linked in human consciousness. The Greek general Alexander and his followers, engaged in imperial conquest in the fourth century BCE, saw the political value of having one "official" language for all the people. Language is the principal vehicle used to convey political will. In the lesser world of James and

25. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 71.

Paul the issue of language may have played a part in their less-than-amicable relationship. It is not clear whether Paul spoke Hebrew/Aramaic fluently, despite his comment about being a Hebrew of Hebrews as though the Hebrew language might be familiar to him. As Ehrensperger observes, “the reference to a Hebrew of Hebrews may indicate more than a language affiliation.” The phrase may mean that he and his family connection can claim undiluted lineage to the original tribes that constituted Israel. One way or another, honorable identity is at issue.

Governing Authority

In the first century, political regions such as Palestine, Greece, and Egypt all came under the imperial rule of Roman emperors, the senate, and the militia. Smaller nations appointed their own rulers, approved by Rome, and thus always subject to the higher power emanating from Rome. The local or regional domains devised ways of collecting their own taxes from the respective population for the upkeep of the local institutions and infrastructure. The temple of Jerusalem, operating under the rule of the high priest and his associates, functioned in Palestine as the central bank. But Rome also required taxes to conduct imperial business, not least the equipping of the massive military in the event of a major uprising, such as the one that happened among the Jewish people of Palestine in 66 CE. The power of ruling authorities enters the lives of the people of the nations, shaping their thinking and their sense of who they are in their social location. If the power is found to be oppressive instead of good, the people resist, and their identity as people of a particular place and honorable heritage is threatened.

On a communal level the same holds true. If a community enjoys harmony within its inherited patterns of thought and life under its local leaders, then a new and different element invariably constitutes

a threat to the tried-and-true sets of symbols and rituals that have served the community well over time and circumstance. The Jewish community in Palestine is the case in point within the parameters of this book. James, as a Palestinian Jewish leader of the new Jesus-movement in Jerusalem, tried to preserve the valued marks of identity within the new movement, including obedience to the law of Israel. That course was bound to run into difficulty when gentiles sought to enter the movement as equals without observing the rules that made full membership possible.

One final comment about the politics of identity seems in order. People experience a vast array of phenomena in the course of life, even within a very limited region. That is true of all human communities, ancient or modern. And people try to understand the physical and social world of kinfolk, neighbors, and also enemies. In so doing they use particular language, engage in particular rituals, and resist any rule that would shatter their beliefs and practices.

But this assessment cannot remain in theoretical mode. For an outsider to understand the inner workings of a society, a concerted effort has to be made to understand the particularity of the people in their communal environment. For example, when a disruption of the accepted norms occurs, as happened in Paul's efforts to incorporate gentile Christ-loyalists as equal partners with Jewish counterparts, defensive mechanisms swing into play to maintain deeply held convictions and practices that belong to the particular identity. Compromise is often viewed as betrayal of the forebears who gave the rules for meaningful life. In the case of a religious community, such as that of James of Jerusalem, compromise appears as a betrayal of the God of Israel who gave the laws that shaped covenantal identity through the ages. The aim of the chapters that follow is to sort through such identity issues that arose between James the Just and Paul the apostle during the expansion of the grace of God in Jesus

Christ at the turn of the ages, between the old creation and the new
(Rom. 8:19–23; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:16).