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1. Introduction

This paper argues that the group of scholars studying Paul who are loosely described as 'Beyond the New Perspective on Paul' (BNP) can provide helpful insights for evangelical NT scholars. The first question is: To whom do we refer by the phrase 'Beyond the New Perspective on Paul'? We will begin by considering William S. Campbell, Kathy Ehrensperger, Peter Tomson, and Mark Nanos. Another group, which we will not consider, Richard Horsley, Joe Marchal, Pamela Eisenbaum, John Gager, Stanley Stowers, Lloyd Gaston, Krister Stendahl, Marcus Barth, and Robert Jewett, may not be as helpful for evangelical NT scholars with regard to theological normativity but still may provide some interpretive insights. Recently, Caroline Johnson Hodge, also part of this group, wrongly ascribed to this entire collection of scholars certain soteriological categories that are not accepted by all. While some in this group, e.g. Gaston, Gager, and Eisenbaum may argue that there remain two pathways for salvation for gentiles and Jews, not all hold to that view.

Michael Bird has a chapter entitled 'When the Dust Finally Settles: Beyond the New Perspective' in his book The Saving Righteousness of God. There he offers five 'Areas of Concurrence' with the New Perspective on Paul: (1) 'The Jewish Context of Pauline Theology', (2) 'The Social Function of the Law', (3) 'The Unity of Jews and Gentiles in One Body', (4) 'Justification as Covenant Status', (5) 'Righteousness and Obedience'.

However, these areas may be more contested than Bird’s analysis reveals. First, while those within the BNP agree with the focus on the Jewish context many would say E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright did not go far enough. Second, sociological and soteriological aspects are dual foci. However, the implications of the way this is distributed between gentiles and Jews is differentiated between BNP scholars. Third, ethnic ‘flattening-out’ is quite contested and represents an area where more work is required. The issues of ‘Justification as Covenant Status’ and ‘Righteousness and Obedience’ are somewhat beyond the scope of this paper; however, Bird is correct in mentioning these as possible areas of scholarly concurrence with certain expressions of evangelicalism.

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1 Zetterholm 2009: 238.
Bird’s general approach aligns with another group of scholars which move ‘beyond’ Sanders/Dunn/Wrights’ New Perspective on Paul but then back in the direction of a Lutheran understanding of Paul. Central to their approach is the idea that Paul was opposed to Judaism. This group also researches with a theological agenda which entails the admirable goal of combining New Testament studies and theological normativity. These scholars have produced important findings for Pauline studies. For example, Frank Thielman argues that Paul ‘did not simply and unambiguously disassociate himself from Judaism or even from the Torah’, rather ‘Paul’s view of the law owes its origin to an eschatological pattern common within some expressions of Judaism’.  

Furthermore, ‘Andrew Das, Simon Gathercole, and Stephen Westerholm have pointed out that although Sanders was not completely wrong, he was not completely right either’. Specifically, Sanders ‘probably overestimated the aspect of grace in ancient Judaism, while downplaying texts that imply that grace and works seem to have coexisted in Jewish thinking’. However, can we provide Lutheran-informed readings of Paul which are not offered at the expense of Jews? Thus, my particular interest in the group of scholars described as ‘Beyond the New Perspective on Paul’.

What are the characteristics of this approach? I would describe this group as scholars who: (1) reject universal/ethnic dichotomy in Paul, (2) break from Lutheran readings of Paul [I would qualify and nuance this characteristic], (3) see Paul’s focus on the justification of gentiles and not the status of humanity in general [I would also slightly adjust this to be a both/and not an either/or], (4) find no implicit critique of Israel or the Law, (5) view Paul as one who teaches his gospel using ethnic and kinship language to articulate God’s plan of salvation in terms of these identities.

So, is there any usefulness for BNP scholarship with evangelical NT studies? Not surprisingly, I would argue, ‘Yes, there is’. BNP scholars provide a few helpful correctives that may be fruitfully employed within evangelical NT scholarship. First, I would suggest that we see Paul as thoroughly embedded within Judaism; this closely aligns with Bird’s first area of concurrence. Second, the significance of Roman imperial ideology should be given its due with regard to the formation of the Christ-movement. This closely aligns with Bird’s second area of concurrence, though it will not be dealt with extensively in this paper. Third, a particularistic approach to identity should be considered. This addresses the third area of concurrence from Bird; however, it applies the idea in a different way. Fourth, that there is in Paul no explicit critique of the Law or Israel will be explored in the context of the analysis of 1 Cor. 9.20-21 that is to occur in this paper. Fifth, the use of ethnic and kinship terms will only be addressed in passing. Obviously, the more radical ideas of those within the BNP group, such as the ‘two ways’ of salvation will rightly be rejected by

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4 Thielman 1989: 49, 27. He sees Paul identifying himself as Jewish in Galatians 2.15. In Galatians 5.14 he sees an implicit command to fulfill the law based on Lev. 19.18. Zetterholm describes Thielman’s view as ‘law observance outside of Christ is impossible and brings the curse of the law upon the sinner’ (2009: 169).
7 Zetterholm notes (2009: 125) this is really the approach of N.T. Wright, who suggests that ‘Paul dealt with the general inclusion of non-Jews and the issue of how individual sinners are put right with God’.
evangelicals, and hermeneutical approaches that undermine biblical authority likewise are to be set aside. What follows is a review and discussion of four scholars: Campbell, Ehrensperger, Tomson, and Nanos as a way to introduce this interpretive stance before we apply it to one issue raised by 1 Cor. 9.20-21, i.e., Paul’s continued observance of Torah (‘a Jew who seek[s] to observe God’s commandments in the law of Moses’).\(^8\)

2. William S. Campbell: Particularistic Identity ‘in Christ’

William S. Campbell interacts with the concept of universalistic Christ-movement identity, concludes that this concept is not sufficiently nuanced and argues that particularistic identity is more reflective of the realities of the early Christ-movement.\(^9\) He follows aspects of the work of J. Hall, F. Barth, and P. Esler, whilst at the same time opting for a stronger component for the ‘primordial aspects of ethnicity’ when reconstructing Jewish identity.\(^10\) Campbell understands Paul to be an individual who was not looking to eradicate ethnic distinctions nor encourage gentiles to become Jews. His strategy and mission, however, required ‘a transformation in the symbolic universe of these peoples in the light of the Christ-event’.\(^11\)

Campbell sees Paul as establishing community within the context of difference. He questions the scholarly consensus concerning equality and the elimination of difference ‘in Christ’. Building on the work of Iris Young, he calls for an approach that emphasizes ‘the politics of difference in the contextuality of existence’ which ultimately produces ‘a paradigm very different from historic Paulinism’.\(^12\) His aim ‘is not only to consider historical and social aspects of identity, ethnicity, and difference in the first century but to include, in association with these, Paul’s theologizing and the outcome of this in the formation of Christian identity’.\(^13\) For Campbell, Paul’s agency is vital to the formation of identity within the Christ-movement.

Campbell evaluates Paul’s perspective of other missionary movements within the early Christ-movement. He argues for the concept of mutuality between the various leaders and understands Paul’s challenges to be related to halakhic interpretative differences rather than theological disputes. Campbell sets out to deconstruct the scholarly image of Paul as a sectarian with regard to Judaism. He concludes, rather, that Paul was a reformer seeking ‘the renewal of his own people in the new era dawning in Christ’.\(^14\) Based on this conclusion, he argues that Paul never confuses Israel and gentile followers of Christ: both groups remain intact.

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\(^8\) Rudolph 2006: 10.
\(^9\) Campbell 2006: 156. The key to understanding Campbell’s approach is ‘the retention of one’s particularity in Christ, whether Jew or gentile’.
\(^10\) Campbell 2006:4-5. Sanders assembles evidence from various Roman decrees and concludes that ‘Jews generally wished to be able to assemble, to keep their ancestral customs, to worship in their own ways, and to collect money to spend on their own community activities, or to send to Jerusalem, or both’ (1999: 2).
\(^11\) Campbell 2006: 8.
\(^12\) Campbell 2006: 10.
\(^13\) Campbell 2006: 11.
\(^14\) Campbell 2006: 47.
Campbell contends for diversity within the early Christ-movement and recognizes that Peter and Paul were not engaged in competing missions. The Roman imperial context serves as a corrective to the traditional view that the primary focal point of conflict in the early Christ-movement was between the Jews, Jewish-Christians, and Paul’s communities. Campbell develops a middle-path between the approach of Horsley and his comprehensive political reading of Paul and the view that Paul’s conflict was primarily with the Jewish community.

Transformation and reevaluation of one’s previous identity because of newness ‘in Christ’ and not its eradication and removal are central to Campbell’s approach (2 Cor. 5.17). From this perspective he develops a model of identity transformation that slightly nuances the traditional model of new creation. Within this model ‘Paul is the paradigm only for those whose former life was in Judaism rather than for gentile Christ-followers’. Campbell builds his case from 1 Corinthians 7.17-27 with its focus on ethnicity and calling. He rules out the view that, in Paul, Jewish identity was considered obsolete for those ‘in Christ’. Applying the principles of group formation, he argues for the communal nature of identity formation. Gentile Christ-followers are not to be confused with Israel nor are they the New Israel, or Israel redefined. Instead, God offers an inclusive salvation to ‘Jews as Jews and gentiles as gentiles’. The covenant was given to Israel, and the gentle Christ-followers may share in the blessings of this renewed covenant through Christ; however, it would be incorrect to propose a separate covenant for gentiles.

3. Kathy Ehrensperger: Paul’s Jewishness and the Empire

Two overarching characteristics of Kathy Ehrensperger’s work are Paul’s thorough embeddedness in Judaism and its Scriptures and the all-encompassing influence of the Roman empire. One implication of these presuppositions is the secondary use of Greek and Roman sources for understanding or explaining Paul’s line of argument. Likewise, the realization of the insidious and pretentious inclination for power and domination within the Roman empire is understood as one reason for Paul’s desire not to ‘lord it over’ the gentiles (cf. 2 Cor 1.24; Matt 20.25-26a). In her earlier work she notes, in this regard, that Paul ‘was teaching in small groups and wrote letters to tiny marginalized communities, thereby using his gospel implicitly to oppose the Roman imperial order’. She concludes that ‘Judaism, with its exclusive loyalty to the one and only God of Israel and the identity-shaping dimension this

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16 Campbell 2006: 89. This may explain some of the difficulties within the community at Corinth (4.16).
17 Campbell 2006a: 93.
18 Campbell 2006: 127.
19 Campbell 2006: 137.
20 Ehrensperger 2007: 4-11. These two are also shared by this paper.
22 Ehrensperger notes, along with Horsley, that the Roman empire’s rhetoric of power is not what Paul employed. ‘Paul’s use cannot be equated with this “imperialistic” purpose of Graeco-Roman rhetoric’. She also rightly argues that the religious and political realms should not be understood as completely separate from each other (2004: 141, 157).
loyalty had for their way of life, was actually incompatible with these goals of Roman imperial policy.\textsuperscript{23} Paul, however, was no revolutionary; he worked within the Roman system to stabilize his Christ-following communities throughout the Mediterranean basin, whilst recognizing that, because of Christ, the doom of the empire is sealed (1 Cor. 2.6-8).

Ehrensperger follows very closely the particularistic understanding of identity evident in the work of Campbell. In critiquing the work of Sandnes she rightly concludes, ‘Paul’s and his colleagues’ perception of the gospel did not bypass or in any way obliterate Israel’s identity or future’.\textsuperscript{24} She also rejects any notion ‘of Paul as “stealing” the identity of the Jews as God’s people and transferring it to the church’.\textsuperscript{25} At the same time, she emphasizes the importance of kinship language and connects it with Paul’s approach to identity formation in a manner similar to Jewish family education rather than seeing analogues within Roman education.\textsuperscript{26}

4. Peter Tomson: Halakah and Paul

Peter Tomson argues that Paul’s teaching is sourced in ‘halakah, the legal tradition of Judaism’.\textsuperscript{27} He defines halakha ‘as the tradition of formulated rules of conduct regulating life in Judaism’.\textsuperscript{28} This understanding of Paul, leads Tomson to question many of the prevailing assumptions within Pauline studies. ‘(1) the centre of [Paul’s] thought is a polemic against the Law; (2) the Law for him no longer had a practical meaning; and (3) ancient Jewish literature is no source for explaining his letters’.\textsuperscript{29} In Tomson’s understanding of Paul, following Christ and observing Torah are not contradictory, at least for Jewish Christ-followers.\textsuperscript{30} The key to understanding Paul’s ‘practical instructions’ is Jewish halakhah, which Tomson labels as ‘Apostolic tradition’ sourced in the halakhah of Jesus (and also echoes aspects of Hillelite tradition with regard to ‘openness toward non-Jews’; \textit{t. Ber.} 2.21).\textsuperscript{31} For Tomson, a theology of Law and justification can co-exist by supporting ‘equal rights “in Christ” of gentile believers and in fact it serves Paul’s pluriform ecclesiology which is rooted in actual practice’.\textsuperscript{32} So, Jewish Christ-followers may continue to observe Torah, whilst

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\item \textsuperscript{23} ‘These’ in this quotation refers to the tolerance of Rome concerning ‘cults which were compatible with the cult system of Rome’ and the ‘dominating control’ of Rome (Ehrensperger 2007: 9-10).
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ehrensperger 2007: 96. Campbell’s concern over the nature of apocalyptic within Paul is clear here (2006: 144).
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ehrensperger 2007: 158-59.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ehrensperger 2007: 47-48, 128-31, 134.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Tomson 1990: xiv.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Tomson 1990: 19. Important documents of Halakha include the classic Rabbinic documents: Mishna, Tosefta, and Talmudim. Tomson notes ‘Jewish halakha was preserved in early Christian writings in four different ways: (1) in the teachings ascribed to Jesus, his disciples and others including Paul – a unique category since these were all Jews who remained within the boundaries of Judaism, even though many of these sources were eventually written or edited by non-Jews; (2) in fragments of halakhic collections which in themselves may have been insignificant for the author but which he copied for other reasons; (3) in testimonies on the behaviour of Jews and Jewish Christians; (4) in Christian halakhot which in effect are consonant with Judaism’ (1990: 23).
\item \textsuperscript{29} Tomson 1990: 1.
\item \textsuperscript{30} see Zetterholm 2009: 139.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Tomson 1990: 220; Zetterholm 2009: 138.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Tomson 1990: 269.
\end{itemize}
gentile Christ-followers maintain something similar to what became known as the Noachide code, which coheres quite closely to ‘the Western text of the apostolic decree’ in Acts 15. Tomson’s understanding of 1 Corinthians 8-10, which this paper will follow in some respects, includes Paul’s continuing commitment to Torah and the relevance of ‘rabbinic’ halakhah on idolatry. So, for Tomson, ‘Paul’s aim’ in 1 Corinthians 8-10 ‘is to prevent the’ gentiles in Corinth (i.e. the only group Paul has in mind as he writes) ‘from getting involved in idolatry’.

Tomson’s understanding of 1 Corinthians 9.19-23 has limited usefulness because he relies on weakly supported textual variants for the primary thrust of his argument that Paul continued to be Torah-observant.

5. Mark Nanos: Jewish Identity and Rhetorical Adaptability

Mark Nanos argues that the Christ-movement remained within the synagogue community, and thus their social identity was formed within the Jewish context, a context that still maintained the vital significance of ethnicity within the Jesus-movement. Paul then is understood to be correcting approaches to communal life that might have ‘undermined the identity of these Gentiles as equals while remaining Gentiles’. This commitment to the ongoing significance of Jewish identity in the context of the gentile mission does not mean that Paul expected gentile Christ-followers to observe Torah but to ‘obey the halakhah incumbent upon gentiles who turn to God and associate with his people’.

With regard to 1 Cor 9.19-23, Nanos argues that any form of lifestyle adaptability interpretation has moral and ethical problems associated with it. Thus, he proposes that Paul engages in rhetorical adaptability in order to convince his hearers that his point of view is correct in the context of his evangelistic efforts (i.e. Paul ‘reasoned as’ εγενομην…ως rather than ‘became as’). To substantiate this claim, Nanos notes Paul’s practice in Acts 17 on Mars Hill, as a parallel for what he sees going on in 1 Cor 9. He also suggests that a little known but minority interpretive stance on Odysseus with regard to rhetorical adaptation provides a close parallel for what Paul is engaged in. By removing the lifestyle adaptability approach, Nanos is able to eliminate many of the ethical issues related to Paul’s alleged duplicity in 1 Cor 9 especially with regard to the ‘bait and switch’ approach in which Torah-observant Jews become convinced of Paul’s point of view only to find out later that following Christ means they must give up Torah-observance.

I should briefly address Mark Nanos’ rhetorical adaptability argument since I will be offering another approach in this paper. First, in 1 Corinthians 1-4 Paul appears to be somewhat opposed to this type of rhetorically-based complex form of argumentation or communication. How would a finely developed rhetorical strategy described in 1 Cor. 9.19-23 relate to e.g. 1 Cor. 2.1-5 or the earlier context of 1:18-

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33 Zetterholm 2009: 139.
34 Zetterholm 2009: 139.
35 Tomson 1990: 276-77.
25? Second, building on point 1, it would have been more convincing if Nanos had evidence of an example of this rhetorical adaptability from Israel’s prophetic tradition, rather than the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition. This does not mean that I am arguing for a complete cultural dichotomy here but it would have strengthened his claim. Third, Nanos provides no evidence of ἐγενόμην...ὡς as ‘reasoned as’, nor does he provide examples of this construction that are metaphorical or conceptual in nature. Fourth, Nanos’ approach raises the question whether or not it is necessary to argue that Paul was ‘completely Torah-observant. For example, in 1 Cor 9.14 Paul understands something to be a command from the Lord, but in 1 Cor 9.15 he sees a reason for disobeying that command (s.v. I will suggest a form of rights versus responsibilities argument). Here I am just wondering to what extent we may argue for Paul following either authority? Lest I weaken my argument, in 1 Cor 9.8-9 he may be doing something similar to the Law of Moses though obviously not in the main. Finally, I would suggest an approach to 1 Cor 9.19-23 that understands Paul, following Rudolph and Tomson, as having a relaxed halakah with regard to the idolatrous intentions of gentiles. While this does get into the lifestyle adaptability approach, it my serve as middle ground between these two understandings of 1 Cor. 9.19-23.

6. Summary of Overview of BNP Scholars

What emerges from this brief survey of some BNP scholars is, first, the continuing relevance of Jewish identity within the Christ-movement is a central characteristic of this group. Second, by implication, this calls into question the interpretive stance that Paul is fighting against the continuation of Judaism within the Christ-movement. He has an awareness of diverse expressions of Judaism but is more concerned with the impact of the pretentious Roman Empire (including its idolatry, see 1 Cor. 8.5) in the life of the Pauline communities. Third, a particularistic approach to Christ-movement identity that takes into account ethnic and kinship discourse may serve as a useful corrective to some dis-historicized readings of Paul’s letters. In the last half of this paper, some of the implications of this interpretive stance will be applied to 1 Cor. 9.20-21 in order to determine if there is warrant in arguing that Paul remained Torah-observant and further describing him as one thoroughly embedded in Judaism. Thus, in this last part of the paper, the particularistic approach to identity informs the analysis of these verses while the role of the Roman Empire will be somewhat in the background of this passage except in its connections with idolatry (i.e. Imperial cult).

7. One Application of BNP: 1 Cor. 9.20-21 and a Torah-Observant Paul?

1 Corinthians 9.20-21 is often understood to rule out the possibility of a Torah-observant Paul, one who continued to be embedded in Judaism. If correct, this would call into question a key aspect of the interpretive stance of BNP scholars. Specifically, questions are raised concerning the presence of ὡς in 1 Cor 9.20a (καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος) ‘and to the Jew I became as a Jew’, which seems to suggest that Paul considered himself no longer a Jew. Does not this call
into question the BNP idea of Paul's thorough embeddedness in Judaism? Did Paul continue to be Torah-observant? \(^{40}\)

The traditional view builds on the idea that 1 Corinthians 9.19-23 presents Paul's Jewish identity as inconsequential now that he is 'in Christ'.

- C.K. Barrett describes Paul in the following manner, ‘He could become a Jew only if, having been a Jew, he had ceased to be one and become something else. His Judaism was no longer of his very being, but a guise he could adopt or discard at will’. \(^{41}\)

- Likewise, Richardson and Gooch argue that Paul did not consider himself a Jew: ‘Paul says that to certain Jews he became a Jew, which suggests (in ginomai and hōs) that he was not a Jew’. \(^{42}\) Furthermore, they contend that for Paul, ‘Judaism was superseded, not merely altered in certain ways; he hardly regarded himself as a Jew legitimately…His freedom from all people and systems opens up for him a new identity “in Christ.” He is really a Jew no longer’. \(^{43}\)

- E.P. Sanders, in discussing Rom. 14.1-6, says that ‘factors which separated Jews from Greeks must be given up by the Jews’. \(^{44}\) This introduces his discussion of 1 Cor. 9.19-23. Sanders references 1 Cor. 10.32 and presents the idea that ‘Christianity’ is for Paul, ‘a third entity’. \(^{45}\) In Sanders’ view, Paul identifies himself with ‘the church’ and furthermore as a ‘former Jew’. This last phrase, Sanders imports from Gal. 1.13, ‘For you have heard of my former life in Judaism’. Sanders then asks the question, ‘Does he not reveal here that there is a sense in which he is no longer fully described by the appellation “Jew” or “Israelite”?’. \(^{46}\)

- D.A. Carson argues, ‘In one sense Paul does not see himself as a Jew: rather, he becomes like a Jew in order to win Jews (1 Cor. 9.20)’. \(^{47}\) Furthermore, ‘Paul occupies a third ground and, as far as law is concerned, is prepared to move from that ground to become like a Jew or like a Gentile, because in his relationship to Torah he is neither one nor the other. This also explains why Paul could be charged with being antinomian by some of his

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\(^{40}\) Rudolph (2006: 10) notes three nuances with regard to Torah-observance: '(1) A sense of obligation with respect to observing the law; (2) A distinction between Jews who practice Judaism primarily as a response to election/calling/covenant (Torah observant) and Jews who practice Judaism primarily for other reasons (e.g. personal cultural expression, contextualization for mission); and (3) A recognition that Torah observance includes distinctively Jewish commandments'.

\(^{41}\) Barrett 1968: 211.

\(^{42}\) Richardson and Gooch 1978: 107.

\(^{43}\) Richardson and Gooch 1978: 111; Barrett 1968: 211.

\(^{44}\) Sanders 1983: 177-78.

\(^{45}\) Sanders 1983: 178-79.

\(^{46}\) Sanders 1983: 179, 188.

contemporaries – because his understanding of God’s redemptive purposes in history left Torah *qua* covenant superseded*.\(^{48}\)

Barrett, Richardson and Gooch, Sanders, and Carson, as representative of the traditional understanding of this passage bring to the fore three ideas. (1) Paul keeps Torah as a matter of expediency. (2) Paul’s view of idol-food in 1 Cor 8-10 is in conflict with continued Torah observance. (3) His statement ‘I myself am not under the law’ is understood as a renunciation of the Mosaic Law.

There are some problems with the traditional view of this passage. (1) The ethnically diverse contexts in which Paul ministered would have limited his ability to actually be ‘all things to all people’. (2) The Jews that Paul engaged with would have recognized Paul’s changing social-religious practices. (3) His inconsistent behaviour with regard to Torah-observance would not have been an effective mission approach. (4) There are verses in Paul that also point out that he may have continued to be Torah-observant, e.g. his participation in the purification rites in Acts 21.17-26; his statement concerning those who are circumcised are ‘obliged to obey the entire law’ in Gal. 5.3; and the previously mentioned 1 Cor. 7.17-24. (5) It is also difficult to see Paul, as Augustine notes,\(^{49}\) not following his own ‘rule in all the churches’, as in 1 Cor. 7.18, 20, that Jews are to remain Jews and not to live as gentiles. Would Paul not also follow this rule? Though, we may not be able to prove that Paul continued to be Torah-observant from this study we can at least suggest that those who preclude this possibility may need to reassess their scholarly framework. In this way, the research of BNP scholars may assist evangelical NT scholars.

7.1. Paul’s Interaction with Diverse Expressions of Judaism – Identity Salience

1 Corinthians 9.20-21, ‘\(^{20}\) to the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. \(^{21}\) To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law.’

In 1 Corinthians 9.20-21 - does the ως in 1 Cor 9.20a (καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ως Ἰουδαίος) ‘to the Jews I became as a Jew’, suggest that Paul considered himself


\(^{49}\) Augustine *de Opere monachorum* 11[12]; cited in Rudolph 2006: 199. Augustine wrote referring to Paul, ‘his actions were the manifestation of a free and openly acknowledged conviction which prompted him to say: ‘Was one called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised [1 Cor. 7.18], that is, let him not live as if he had not been circumcised...he actually conformed to obligations which he was considered to have simulated by those who did not understand or who paid scant attention. For, he was a Jew and he was called after having been circumcised; he did not wish to return to his former state, that is, he was unwilling to live as if he had not been circumcised. For, this was within his power. He was not under the Law as were those who observed it slavishly; nevertheless, he was in the law of God and of Christ. For the Law of the Jews was not one law and that of God another’. Cf. Schrage 1995: 2.351.
a former Jew? First, in 1 Cor. 9.20 Paul does not say, ‘To the Jews I became as a Jew’, (though I myself am not a Jew). Paul would not write that last phrase because his Jewish identity was still salient ‘in Christ’ (see Phil. 3.5-8). Second, the presence of ὁ Ἰουδαῖος may be a reminder of ‘the diversity that existed in the worldwide community of “Jews”’ (Acts 6.1; Tob. 1.6-8; Jos. Ant. 14.245; Philo, Legat. 156). In this understanding, ‘To the Jews I became as a Jew’ is a statement of the principle of social identity adaptation. Though Given’s approach is similar to this, his idea of ‘temporarily assuming a different identity’ overlooks that for Paul, identity is of fundamental significance and not something easily set aside (even if that were possible). The phrase ἐγενόμην Ἰουδαῖος... ὁ Ἰουδαῖος may be understood as an indicator of situational identity salience. It points to a shift in Paul’s identity hierarchy when his mission is brought to the fore. Thus, he adjusted to the diverse expressions of Judaism throughout the Roman Empire. Third, the phrase, ‘the Jews’ (τοὶ Ἰουδαῖοι), also describes Paul’s interaction and hospitality with the vast majority of Jews living around the Mediterranean basin.

Does Paul declare by his use of οὐ ὑπὸ νόμον ‘not under the Law’ that he no longer observes Torah in the way other Jews do? Does this phrase indicate that Paul no longer thinks he is required to obey the law? The traditional view of this phrase, represented by Schrage, suggests that ὑπὸ νόμον refers to ‘Jews living under the authority of Mosaic law’. However, this overlooks the following. (1) ὑπὸ νόμον is an ambiguous phrase which could mean ‘under the curse of the law’ (Gal. 3.10, 13); ‘under the sin-strengthening regime of the old age’ (Rom. 6.14-15). (2) Paul’s use of this phrase in other contexts is quite differentiated (Cf. Gal. 3.23; 4.4, 5, 21; 5.18; with Rom 6.14-15 and 1 Cor. 9.20). (3) The use of the phrase to simply refer to Jews is redundant and would not explain why Paul would use it right after writing τοὶ Ἰουδαίοις in the first part of verse 20. Scholars such as Lightfoot and Bockmuehl have suggested another reading for ὑπὸ νόμον as referring either to those holding to a more ‘strict interpretation of the law’ or more specifically to the

51 Rudolph 2006: 198, 182n.21; cf. Acts 6.1; 2.9-11. Jos. Ant. 14.245: ‘Prytanes, the son of Hermes, a citizen of yours, came to me, when I was at Tralles, and held a court there, and informed me that you used the Jews in a way different from my opinion, and forbade them to celebrate their sabbaths, and to perform the sacred rites received from their forefathers, and to manage the fruits of the land, according to their ancient custom; and that he had himself been the promulger of your decree, according as your laws require’. Philo Legum allegoriarum 3.156 ‘I myself, at all events, know that it has done so with regard to many of the passions, for when I have gone to entertainments where no respect was paid to discipline, and to sumptuous banquets, whenever I went without taking Reason with me as a guide, I became a slave to the luxuries that lay before me, being under the guidance of masters who could not be tamed, with sights and sounds of temptation, and all other such things also as work pleasure in a man by the agency of his senses of smell and taste. But when I approach such scenes in the company of reason, I then become a master instead of a slave: and without being subdued myself win a glorious victory of self-denial and temperance; opposing and contending against all the appetites which subdue the intemperate’. Tobit 1:6 ‘But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all Israel by an everlasting decree. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the first fruits of the crops and the firstlings of the flock, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep’.
‘Pharisees’. This view is preferred for the following reasons. (1) In Philippians 3.5, Paul refers to himself and says, ‘as to the law, a Pharisee’ (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαίος). (2) Pharisees were known for a more strict observance of the law, compared to the halakha of Jesus (cf. Josephus on differing levels of Torah-observance with Sadducees and Qumran in which Pharisees were more lenient in their table fellowship; Ant. 1.14; 20.38-46, 201; C. Ap. 2.144, 175, 187; JW 1.110; 2.119; Philo Spec. 1.186). (3) This understanding distinguishes the small group from the previously mentioned larger group (i.e. the Jews). This distinction between the Pharisees and the rest of the Jews is furthermore evident in Mark 7.3 (‘the Pharisees and all the Jews’) and Luke 7.29-30, as well as Josephus’ JW 1.110. So, this proposed understanding of ὑπὸ νόμον as ‘those following a [strict interpretation] of the law’ would suggest that Paul no longer follows the Pharisee sect/interpretation of the law; however, it could also indicate, as suggested by Rudolph, that he may adjust his approach e.g. to table-fellowship, when necessary. Thus, this phrase should not be taken to preclude a Torah-observant Paul. 1 Corinthians 9.20a can plausibly be read as Paul’s interaction with diverse expressions of Judaism rather than a rejection of his own Jewish identity with regard to Torah-observance.

7.2. Adaptation/Accommodation with Gentiles - Lenient Halakhah

This raises another question, Does not the next phrase, ‘To those without the Law, I became as one without the Law’ (τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἀνόμοις), indicate that Paul has violated biblical law (in that the context is addressing the eating of idol-food, something prohibited by the Mosaic law)? I would argue that it does not; rather it is Paul’s way of describing his principle of adaptation/accommodation with regard to the gentiles. Rudolph rightly notes that Paul became this (i.e. as one without the Law), ‘by visiting Gentile homes, sharing table-fellowship with Gentiles and conforming to the customs of his Gentile host’. This is not to be construed as a thorough-going antinomianism on Paul’s part but rather, as noted by Tomson, ‘a moderate view’ with regard to the ‘idolatrous intention[s]’ of the gentiles with which he was eating, but only ‘as far as the flexibility of his tradition [see 1 Cor. 11.2] allowed him to’ (see also Judith 12.17-19; Aristeas 181).

56 Rudolph 2006: 176. Jesus was probably in the middle between the Pharisees and the general population of Jews with regard to Torah-observance. (Bockmuehl 2000:10-12). This does not mean that he violated biblical law but see Luke 11.37-41 and the hand washing issue.
58 Rudolph (2006: 188-190) conjectures ‘that when Paul returned to Tarsus or Israel (see Acts 9.11, 28-30; 11.25; 21.39; 22.3; 26.4-5), he received hospitality from Pharisees he knew intimately. After all, he was from a family of Pharisees (Acts 23.6; 26.4-5; cf. Phil. 3.5; Gal 1.14). In such situations, it is proposed that Paul became as one under the law to win those under the law’ (Cf. Matthew 23.15). Thus, ‘Paul remained a Pharisee in kinship, custom, and education, but he violated Pharisaic halakhah by closely associating with Gentile sinners and not consistently eating tithed, ordinary food in a state of ritual purity. In sum, he was no longer under the authority of Pharisaic halakhah (κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαίος)’ (Rudolph 2006: 196) Cf. Acts 23.6; 15.10.
60 Tomson 1990: 276.
The phrase ‘I became as one without the Law’, however, could be misconstrued so he continues, ‘not being outside the Law of God’ (μὴ ἄνομος θεοῦ). An important question here is to what does ‘the Law of God’ refer? With other scholars, I would suggest that it refers to the Law of Moses. This view is based on the following. (1) νόμος θεοῦ ‘God’s law’ was a way to refer to the Law of Moses in Second Temple texts (e.g. Ezra 7.12, ‘…to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of God’ (νόμου του θεου) (cf. Neh 8.8 ‘they read from the book, the Law of God’; Sirach 41.8 ‘the Law of the Most High God’). (2) Paul refers to the Law of Moses as ‘the law of God’ (τῶ νόμῳ του θεοῦ) in Romans 7.22. Moo notes concerning this verse, “The law of God” is again the Mosaic law, the torah, to which Paul as a Jew was devoted.⁶¹ (3) ‘The Law of God’, in 1 Cor. 9.20, reiterates what he has just argued in 1 Cor. 9.8-9, with regard to the continuing role of ‘the Law of Moses’ (τῶν νόμων του θεοῦ) within the Christ-following communities.⁶² (4) Bockmuehl notes, regarding the Torah’s authority, ‘The apostle himself in 1 Corinthians 7.17-20 makes clear that his “rule for all the churches” is for Jews to keep the Torah…and for Gentiles to keep what pertains to them – and only that. In either case, what matters are the applicable commandments of God’.⁶³ Thus, ‘not being outside the law of God’ may suggest that Paul continued to live by ‘God’s law’, i.e. ‘the Law of Moses’. This may be further reinforced by Acts 21.24b, in which Paul is described as one who participates in a Temple ritual sourced in Numbers 6.9-12 (i.e. the so-called Nazirite vow). The conclusion of the episode reads, ‘Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law’ (ESV).⁶⁴

Paul further qualifies the statement ‘I became as one outside the Law (though not being outside the Law of God…)’ by the phrase ‘…but am under Christ’s law’ (ἔννομος Χριστοῦ). Scholars rightly connect this phrase with ‘the Law of Christ’ (τοῦ νόμου του Χριστου) in Galatians 6.2. For example, Martyn notes ‘the expression ἔννομος Χριστοῦ in 1 Cor. 9.21b is surely to be taken together with ὁ νόμος του Χριστου of Galatians 6.2, the Law [of Moses/God’s Law] as it has been taken in hand by Christ’.⁶⁵ Horrell, after discussing both Gal. 6.2 and 1 Cor. 9.21b, concludes that ‘being ἔννομος Χριστοῦ denotes the form of Paul’s moral obligation, and stands in distinction to being under the law’ (2005: 231). While, Horrell is close in this regard, he too quickly imports the idea of ‘distinction’. The context is not a polemic against the law; rather Paul is seeking to overcome potential misconceptions about his phrase ‘without law’. So, Paul’s moral obligation could be described as standing in comparison to the Law. This subtle distinction would allow for the development of halakhic flexibility based on, as convincingly argued by Seyoon Kim, the imitation of Christ found e.g. in 1 Cor. 11.1 ‘be imitators of me, as I am of Christ’. In this regard,

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⁶¹ Moo 1996: 461.
⁶³ Bockmuehl 2000: 171.
⁶⁴ Dunn (2009: 234) has his doubts about Paul’s involvement or if it was a departure from his normal approach. I would suggest it is in accord with his Halakhic flexibility. Acts 22.17 shows Paul praying at the Temple and in 21.20 those who have come to faith in Christ are ‘zealots for the law’.
⁶⁵ Martyn 2003: 584n.23.
Hays is helpful when he suggests that what we have here is an approach to life based on ‘the paradigmatic self-giving of Jesus Christ’.\(^66\)

So, how does Paul seek to combine his personal commitment to God’s Law as a Jew and the Law of Christ in his mission among the gentiles? Horrell, though I disagree with his universalistic approach to early Christ-movement identity, correctly points to 1 Cor. 10.33 for insight: ‘just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved’. Horrell notes that ‘Paul’s fundamental obligation…is to set aside his own rights…in seeking the benefit of others’.\(^67\) Though Paul thinks that it is proper to relinquish a personal right granted in the Mosaic Law, it does not follow that he thinks he is free from the responsibilities associated with the Mosaic Law (cf. Acts 21.24; Gal. 5.3), an interpretive move that Horrell makes.\(^68\) Similarly, in 1 Cor. 9.14 Paul thinks it is proper to relinquish a personal right granted from the teaching of Jesus, possibly from Luke 10.7-8 (‘the labourer deserves to be paid…eat what is set before you’ [cf. 1 Cor. 10.27 ‘eat whatever is set before you’]), though it does not follow, as noted by Thielman, that he now thinks he is free to disobey the Lord’s requirements \textit{in toto}.\(^69\)

Rudolph summarizes by noting that ‘there is a difference between a right and a responsibility. One typically has freedom to relinquish’ a right ‘but not’ a responsibility.\(^70\) Thus, as Bockmuehl rightly concludes, ‘Paul has come to follow a lenient halakhah’ with regard to the gentiles, based on the paradigmatic model of Christ, who ate with sinners but remained Torah-observant (Matt 5.17-20; Luke 10.8; Philippians 2.5-8). Being under Christ’s law was a lenient Halakha that formed the social identity of the early Christ-movement.\(^71\)

7.3. Paul’s Obedience of Biblical Law - Halakhic Flexibility

Thus, we return to the question: based on his teaching and/or practice in 1 Corinthians 8-10 concerning idol-food, Has Paul violated biblical law? Peter Gooch concludes that we have no direct evidence from 1 Cor 9.19-23 about whether or not Paul ate idol-food and thus violated biblical law. Moreover, there is indirect evidence that he did not. First, Paul’s view with regard to eating idol-food may be an indication that he did not eat it. Gooch notes that Paul ‘thinks it dangerous, thinks it will

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\(^67\) Horrell 2005: 231.
\(^68\) Horrell (2005: 230) notes that Paul was seeking to ‘counter the impression that he is actually obligated to the Jewish law by insisting that he is not himself under the law’. Cf. his critique of Tomson, 230n.86.
\(^69\) Thielman 1992: 244.
\(^70\) Rudolph 2006: 200 n. 54.
\(^71\) Bockmuehl 2000: 171. Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners to ‘save’ the lost (Luke 19.7-10) and to call the disciples (Mark 2.14, 17; Matt 9.9, 13; Luke 5.27, 32), cf. Rudolph 2006: 176. Rudolph (2006: 196) notes ‘for the ordinary Jew, occasional conformity to Pharisaic halakhah took place within the parameters of a lifestyle of covenant keeping. Pharisaic halakhah was on the stricter end of the spectrum of ways that a Jew could keep his covenant responsibilities. Occasional conformity to the Torah, however, was very different. Here the Jew burst the bounds of covenant keeping as a lifestyle by regular and intentional violation of his covenant responsibilities. Pharisees would have viewed occasional law observance by a Jew as hypocrisy and the conduct of a sinner’.
threaten partnership with his Lord, and recommends that the Corinthian Christians not eat it".72 Second, if he had eaten idol-meat this would be a strong point to support his contention that the Corinthians Christ-followers should give up their rights for the benefit of others (i.e. the weak).73 Furthermore, there is no evidence that Paul had knowingly eaten unclean food. Paul had ‘halakhic flexibility’, Kinzer notes, ‘but not a complete freedom from halakhah’.74 Moreover, 1 Cor. 9.19-23 ‘gives us no grounds for thinking that [Paul] ever actually violated basic Jewish practice (i.e., by eating non-kosher food or by profaning the Sabbath or holidays)’.75 Finally, 1 Cor. 9.20-21 may be an indication that Paul continued to be Torah-observant, in line with his ‘teaching in all the ekklesia’ .1 Corinthians 7.17 reads, ‘Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches’. Thus, Jews ‘in Christ’ may continue to relate to God as Jews and gentiles ‘in Christ’ as gentiles. Kathy Ehrensperger addresses a similar issue in Roman 14-15 and concludes ‘that people who are different must respect and support each other mutually in their abiding differences. In Christ, they do not have to overcome differences. Instead, [differences] are a presupposition for real unity’.76 For, ‘to accommodate to him/her in his/her difference as Paul does (9.19-23) is proper imitation of Christ’.77

8. Conclusion

BNP scholars provide a useful set of tools for evangelical NT scholars particularly in the area, as argued in this paper, of Paul’s Jewishness, the continuing significance of Jewish identity ‘in Christ’. It also brings to the fore the interpretive context of the Roman Empire in the development of the earliest Christ-movement, though this was not dealt with in this paper. While the approach should not be used uncritically, to dismiss the advances put forth by these scholars leads to a continuation of a dis-historicized interpretation of Paul that then increases the likelihood of mis-application of his discourse in our context. BNP, as a group that provides a corrective to the New Perspective on Paul scholarship, should not be ignored but fruitfully engaged by evangelical NT scholars.

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72 Gooch 1993: 95.
73 Gooch 1993: 93, 95.
77 Ehrensperger (2007: 153) notes, ‘as in Romans 14-15, Paul points to what really matters in living in Christ is what serves the purpose of building up the community. The issue of eating and drinking is significant not merely as an ethical appendix to Paul’s theology...Of interest are the guidelines which Paul proposes as an adequate way of dealing with the problems around eating and drinking. The call to become ‘imitators of me as I am of Christ’ here implies that the primary ‘principle’ is ‘to seek the advantage of the other’ (10.24; 10.33). The well-being of the other is the testing ground of a life in Christ. He/she is the limit to any freedom in Christ. To accommodate to him/her in his/her difference as Paul does (9.19-23) is proper imitation of Christ’.
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