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Ioudaismos and *ioudaizō* in Paul and the Galatian controversy. An examination of supposed positions

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The use of *ἰουδαϊσμός* in the literature of the Second Temple period until Paul's time suggests a more specific meaning than Judaism in general, and points to a perception of it under siege and in need of defence. Additionally, the verb *ἰουδαίζω* describes the inclinations of non-Jews to the Jewish way of life. Both terms reflect two different ideas of Israel: one segregated from all other peoples, the other porous and more flexible. These ideas were at odds by the end of the Second Temple period and held by the groups of believers in Christ. Read in the foil of that conflict, the controversies that Paul faces in the Letter to the Galatians show the continuity and discontinuity of his life after the revelation of the Son, and explain why he considered himself a faithful Judean but no longer *ἐν τῷ ἰουδαϊσμῷ*.

Christian origins, Circumcision, Galatians letter, *ioudaismos* (*ἰουδαϊσμός*), Paul of Tarsus, Second Temple Judaism.

The Lutheran and the traditional perspective on Paul have understood his letters (Romans and Galatians mainly) as witness of an apostasy of Judaism and the beginning of a new religion called Christianity. Paul's calling, accordingly, has been conceived of as the breach of grace that liberates from the slavery of the Torah¹. This reading of Paul has been corrected by the so called "new perspective" highlighting the Judean identity of Paul and his vision of a non-ethnic Israel that caused troubles in Jerusalem, Antioch and Galatia with other Judean² Christ believers who were not so open to gentiles, i.e., more "traditionalists"³. In these conflicts, Paul is seen as a liberal and open Judean because of his calling⁴. In recent years, a new (new) perspective on Paul has questioned some of those Pauline readings and suggested an interpretation of "Paul within Judaism"⁵. Some of the supporters highlight his appreciation for the Torah and suggest that justification by faith and prohibition of circumcision are ideas addressed only to gentile Christ believers, not to Judeans (cf. Thiessen 2016: 162). In this article we do not intend to assess any of these perspectives, but to show some details of Paul's self presentation that do not totally match any of these previous images.

¹ Cf. Betz 1979: 67. About Gal. 1.12-13 he says: "As Paul tells it, his pre-Christian life rules out the assumption that he was in any way prepared for the change or that he had developed gradually towards Christianity. Rather, all developments pointed in the opposite direction".

² I use "Judean" instead of Jew throughout the article to highlight the ethnic meaning, without excluding or separating the national, religious and political dimensions of the term. I therefore avoid the mistake of projecting anachronistically the current idea of a Jew as a religious attribute, as proposed by Esler (2003: 63-74). Cf. Miller 2010, 2012, 2014.

³ This is the adjective used by Dunn (2009: 300 n.248): "traditionalist Jewish believers".

⁴ See Fee 1987: 360 (n.10); Roetzel 2003: 7.

⁵ See, for instance, Nanos and Zetterholm 2015.

One of the outcomes of the new discoveries and research in archaeology, papyrology, literature or history of the Second Temple Judaism period (Grabbe 2010) is a better understanding of the complexities and differences among the Judeans during the first century. This plurality has allowed us to read the texts in their own context, without attempting to harmonise them into a single vision of Judaism but permitting the diversity and differences to speak for themselves. The result is a richer and more complex idea of what Judeans thought of themselves, as well as a new way of understanding the Christ believers within this cradle. The Jewishness of Paul of Tarsus is not an exception in this panorama.

In this article we first explore the use of Ἰουδαϊσμός in the Jewish literature until Paul and focus on understanding its significance. We propose a possible translation that can convey its meaning for us today, taking into account the complexity and richness of the different judaisms at that time. Then, we approach some of the conflicts Paul witnessed in Galatians which have some relation with his past in Ἰουδαϊσμός. In doing so, we will have to reassess the suppositions of a “liberal” Paul against “conservative” Christ followers from Jerusalem.

1. Ἰουδαϊσμός in Second Temple Judaism

In the first verses of Galatians (Gal. 1.13-14), Paul speaks of himself in the following manner:

¹³ Ἠκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, ὅτι καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν, ¹⁴ καὶ προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων.

¹³ You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in *Judaism*. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴ I advanced in *Judaism* beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors (NRSV⁶ emphasis mine).

Most modern English translations of the Bible convey Ἰουδαϊσμός as “the Jew’s religion” or “Judaism”⁷. Several scholars noted some time ago the inaccuracy of that translation and the prejudices that it reveals and perpetuates⁸. Whereas this caution and advice receive increasing support among academics, this is not the case in other contexts, such as some texts for wide audiences or translations of the New Testament.

The noun Ἰουδαϊσμός appears only four times before Paul in the Hellenistic Jewish literature, all of them in the Maccabean books: 2 Macc. 2.21; 8.1; 14.38; 4 Macc. 4.26. After Paul, we found two occurrences in funerary inscriptions (CIJ 1.537⁹; 1.694¹⁰) and several in the literature produced by Christians. The first Christian writer who uses it is Ignatius of Antioch (Mag. 8.1;

⁶ All the references to the New Testament and the Septuagint in English are from the NRSV, except when noted otherwise.

⁷ “The Jews’ religion” (KJV, BBE, ASV, WEB), “Judaism” (ESVS, NRSV, Mounce-NT).

⁸ Cf. Amir 1982; Cohen 1999; Donaldson 1989; Lieu 2002; Mason 2007; Novenson 2014; Seland 2002; Thiessen 2016; Windsor 2014.

⁹ Dated to the end of third century or in the fourth; cf. Noy 1993: 464.

¹⁰ Dated to the end of second century; cf. Vulic 1932.

10.3 and Phil. 6.3), although after him many others utilise the noun, for instance, Tertulian, Eusebius or Athanasius¹¹.

In contrast to the scarcity of occurrences of the noun ἰουδαϊσμός, the verb ἰουδαίζω appears several times in the contemporary literature (cf. Amir 1982: 36), for instance in LXX Esth. 8.17: “In every province and in every city, wherever the king’s command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a festival and a holiday. Furthermore, many of the peoples of the country professed to be Judeans (πολλοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν περιετέμοντο καὶ ἰουδαίζον), because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them”¹². Although some scholars think that the noun derives from the verb¹³, the use of both reflects differences in the meaning. As Matthew Novenson noted¹⁴, the subject of the verb is always a non-Jew. “Judaize”, if we can translate the verb in this way, is an action that only gentiles perform. Those verbs with the -ίζω suffix generally mean imitate, adopt or support customs, appearances or loyalties that belong to another nation, people, gender, class... different to their own (Mason 2007: 462). Moreover, because of this otherness, their use bears a note of contempt, as the verbs μηδίζω (acting or imitating a Persian being a Greek, for instance)¹⁵ or γυναικίζω (acting like a woman being a man)¹⁶ show. The verb ἰουδαίζω includes three possible ways for a gentile to approach Judaism: politically supporting the Judeans in a city, adopting some of the customs that most people identify as Jewish, speaking the language or the style of the Jews (Cohen 1999: 179-180). The difference with the noun, in spite of the root shared with the verb, is that it is always an action that a Judean performs, never a gentile. The subject of the actions associated with the noun is always a Judean. That difference is important to understand the meaning of ἰουδαϊσμός.

In the Maccabean books, we found four occurrences of ἰουδαϊσμός, as we have said: 2 Macc. 2.21; 8.1; 14.38; 4 Macc. 4.26. In all four, some actions explain the meaning of the noun. It is very difficult for a modern reader not to translate it straightaway into “Judaism”. Admittedly, all four examples are perfectly clear if we do so, because all refer, in some way, to the Jewishness of the characters mentioned. However, if we resist that temptation, we will discover that the noun describes an action that not all the Judeans do. Actually, ἰουδαϊσμός describes the actions and way of life of some but not all Jews.

The first text (2 Macc. 2.19-21) relates “[t]he story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, the purification of the great temple, the dedication of the altar, the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator, and the appearances that came from heaven to *those who fought bravely for Judaism* (τοῖς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἰουδαϊσμοῦ φιλοτίμως ἀνδραγαθήσασιν)” (emphasis mine). The author notes how they “regained possession of the temple famous throughout the world, liberated the city, and re-established the laws that were about to be

¹¹ See the references in Mason (2007: 471-476).

¹² Here, ἰουδαίζω translates the Hebrew מִיְיָהִימ (miṭyah^adim), participle of the verb יָהִי.

¹³ See, for instance, Mason (2007: 461): “The Greek -ισμός noun represents in nominal form the ongoing action of the cognate verb in -ίζω. Common verbs such as ὁστρακίζω, φροντίζω, ὑβρίζω, νεωτερίζω, βαπτίζω, λογίζομαι, and σοφίζω produce -ισμός counterparts, denoting the action involved: ὁστρακισμός, φροντισμός...”.

¹⁴ Novenson 2014 § “Who Does loudaismos?”.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Herodotus, *History* 4.144: “This Megabazos was who was left in command at that time in the land of the Hellespontians, and he proceeded to subdue all who did not take the side of the Medes [μὴ μηδίζοντας]”. Thucydides, *History* 1.135.2 accuses Pausanias of having sided with the Medes (μηδισμός) and of behaving in the Persian style (Μηδικὰς ἐνδύμενος, *History* 1.130.1).

¹⁶ See, for instance, Josephus, *War* 4.561-563.

abolished" (2 Macc. 2.22). These actions identify the *ιουδαϊσμός* of the Maccabees and distinguish them from the rest of the Judeans. Most of these kept many of their customs while accepting some Hellenistic ones in order to survive the challenge of the Seleucids. We have many examples of Judeans living in the diaspora and sharing some Hellenistic customs while keeping their Judean identity without problems (cf. Barclay 2004: 2-3).

The second text (2 Macc. 8.1-7) distinguishes even more clearly between those acting in the *ιουδαϊσμός* and the rest of Judeans who live a more hybrid life: "Meanwhile Judas, who was also called Maccabeus, and his companions secretly entered the villages and summoned their kindred and enlisted *those who had continued in the Jewish faith* (τοὺς μεμενηκότας ἐν τῷ *ιουδαϊσμῷ* προσλαμβανόμενοι), and so they gathered about six thousand. They implored the Lord to look upon the people who were oppressed by all; and to have pity on the temple that had been profaned by the godless" (2 Macc. 8.1-2, emphasis mine). The author clearly distinguishes between all the Judeans, whom he calls "the people" (λαός) and those such as Judas who "had continued in the *ιουδαϊσμός*"; that is, the Jewish "people" are not totally included in the *ιουδαϊσμός*. He speaks of Judas in the following manner: "[c]oming without warning, he would set fire to towns and villages. He captured strategic positions and put to flight not a few of the enemy. He found the nights most advantageous for such attacks. And talk of his valour spread everywhere" (2 Macc. 8.6-7). This is what distinguishes *ιουδαϊσμός* from the Jewishness of the rest of the Judeans.

The third text (2 Macc. 14.37-46) tells us the story of a Judean called Razis. "A certain Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, was denounced to Nicanor as a man who loved his compatriots and was very well thought of and for his goodwill was called *father of the Jews* (πατὴρ τῶν *ιουδαίων*). In former times, when there was no mingling with the Gentiles, *he had been accused of Judaism* (κρίσιν εἰσενηνεγμένος *ιουδαϊσμοῦ*), and *he had most zealously risked body and life for Judaism* (σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ *ιουδαϊσμοῦ* παραβεβλημένος μετὰ πάσης ἐκτενίας)" (2 Macc. 14.37-38, emphasis mine). According to the author, Nicanor wished "to exhibit the enmity that he had for the Jews" and chose someone who probably represented the leadership and strength of resistance and defence of the Jewish traditions that Nicanor wanted to abolish. Although the author tells us that Razis "was very well thought of for his goodwill and was called father of the Jews", the episode tells a different story. The character of Razis is revealed when, before being caught, he decides to commit suicide throwing himself off the city wall and, having barely survived and still "alive and aflame with anger, he rose, and though his blood gushed forth and his wounds were severe he ran through the crowd; and standing upon a steep rock, with his blood now completely drained from him, he tore out his entrails, took them in both hands and hurled them at the crowd, calling upon the Lord of life and spirit to give them back to him again. This was the manner of his death" (2Macc 14.45-46). In spite of the dramatic exaggeration that the author gives to this scene, we can see the radical Jewishness that Razis represents against the background of the rest of the Jews, who do not share that stubbornness and gruesomeness associated to the *ιουδαϊσμός* of Razis.

In the fourth and last example (4 Macc. 4.22-26) the author narrates how Antiochus "heard that a rumour of his death had spread and that the people of Jerusalem had rejoiced greatly" (4 Macc. 4.22). As a punishment against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "he had plundered them [and] he issued a decree that if any of them were found observing the ancestral law they should die" (4 Macc. 4.23). However, some "women, because they had circumcised their sons, were thrown headlong from heights along with their infants (τῶν βρεφῶν), though they had known beforehand that they would suffer this" (4 Macc. 4.25). This disobedience by some Judeans led Antiochus to desperation and extreme measures: "he himself tried through torture to compel everyone in the nation to eat defiling foods and *to renounce Judaism*

(ἐξόμνησθαι τὸν ἰουδαϊσμόν)” (4 Macc. 4.26, emphasis mine). Again, the author uses exaggeration to convey the idea that all the Jews, the whole people, disregarded the prohibitions, but as we learn from other sources and the author of 1 Macc. 2.23-24 recognises, that was not true. The archaeological diggings on the western slope of Jerusalem, for instance, revealed houses of this period belonging to several priests of Jerusalem, containing decoration, vessels and signs of the Hellenistic lifestyle. Therefore, the story of those women is a good illustration of ἰουδαϊσμός, a radical understanding of the Jewish customs felt under siege that evolved into zealous behaviour defending their own manners like the circumcision of infants¹⁷.

This last example, in addition, shows us some information about the very customs that Antiochus wanted to abolish most: the purity of meals and the circumcision of infants¹⁸, the two external marks that identify a Judean in his/her context¹⁹. The term βρέφος, used in the text, refers to a baby, a newborn or the foetus. This is an indication of the practice, witnessed by several sources (including the Book of Jubilees and Josephus), of the circumcision of male babies by the eighth day of their birth²⁰. This tradition was conceived as a way of keeping the boundaries of identity and the genealogical succession of Jewish citizenship. This usage appears related to the zeal of Mattathias in 1 Macc. 2.27 and 2.45-46 (ζηλόω), where he imposed this very practice on the rest of the Judeans in order to defend the Jewishness of the people: “Mattathias and his friends went around and tore down the altars; they forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel” (1 Macc. 2.45-46). This reveals that many Judeans followed the Hellenistic practices, did not circumcise their infants and did accept some prohibitions imposed by the Greek king. What Mattathias wanted, and after him his sons the Maccabees, was to void the prohibition forcing the Jewish families to circumcise their baby sons, even at the risk of their own lives. By doing so, the Maccabees ensured that Israel was always a people formed by those who descended genealogically from Abraham and not by any other allegiance, such as a cult or political citizenship. However, this practice diverges from the one the Asmoneans, his descendants, followed some years later. Josephus relates how “Hyrcanus took also Dora and Marissa, cities of Idumea, and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews”²¹. All these examples reveal different conceptions of Israel as a nation²². It is important to note that none of the Maccabean texts connect the ἰουδαϊσμός with the circumcision of adult gentiles²³; all the references point to the circumcision of baby boys within the limits of Israel, because many Judeans, as it turns out in the sources, did not follow this practice (cf. Thiessen 2011: 144-145). The Genesis Rabbah witnesses a dispute among the rabbis about the value of circumcision by the eighth day as opposed to the virtue of circumcision by the thirteenth year (Genesis Rabbah 55.4).

To conclude this analysis, we can say that contrary to the verb ἰουδαίζω, which describes actions that only gentiles perform in order to approach Judaism, the noun ἰουδαϊσμός explains

¹⁷ Cf. Henten 1997: 201-204; Barton and Boyarin 2016: 135-151, 148; Windsor 2014: 89; Novenson 2014 §“Who Does Ioudaismos?”.

¹⁸ See also 1 Macc. 1.61; 2 Macc. 6.10; Josephus, *War* 1.34.

¹⁹ “Jewishness consisted of proper descent and proper ritual observance”, Thiessen 2011: 143.

²⁰ Cf. *Jubilees* 15.25-26; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.214.

²¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.257.

²² Cf. Cohen 1999 §“Conclusion. The redefinition of the Jewish identity in the Hasmonean period”.

²³ Josephus narrates that he himself was against this policy of circumcising the gentiles of conquered lands: Josephus, *Life* 113.

the measures that some Judeans (and only Judeans) undertake in order to defend their identity and traditions felt to be under siege. While the verb describes practices such as the circumcision of male adults from other nations, the noun refers to the circumcision of baby boys within the borders of Israel. In other words, while the verb brings to mind the possibility of a gentile becoming a Judean through circumcision, the noun excludes that change (conversion) and restricts Israel citizenship to born Judeans²⁴.

2. The Ἰουδαϊσμός of Paul

The conclusions we have gathered from our reading of the occurrences of Ἰουδαϊσμός in the Maccabean literature indicate that only Judeans, not gentiles, joined Ἰουδαϊσμός; that only some Judeans do, not all; that those involved in it are zealous and active defenders of the traditional customs of the Judeans; that they considered their Jewish identity to be at risk of dissolution due to an identifiable aggression (Hellenism); and that the noun Ἰουδαϊσμός identifies different actions under the idea of “protection of Judaism”, as we propose to translate Ἰουδαϊσμός²⁵. All these five characteristics of the term apply to the case of Paul (cf. Mason 2007: 469), as he explains in Gal. 1.13-14: “You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in *the protection of Judaism*. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in *the protection of Judaism* beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors”.

Admittedly, if we translate Ἰουδαϊσμός as “Judaism” the text is clear and comprehensible. However, that possibility reflects and reinforces the idea that Paul set in motion the separation between Judaism and Christianity when he abandoned the former and founded a new religion following the divine revelation. As we have said above, this reading, in addition to being anachronistic, implies many exegetical and historical problems because Paul conceived of himself as a Judean his whole life, as he states in Phil. 3.3-6; 2 Cor. 11.22 or Rom. 11.1. So, if we take into account the previous conclusions, new possibilities shed light on Paul and his mission, because we can coherently accept that after his calling Paul was a Judean but no longer ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ.

In Gal. 1.13-14 he unfolds his “earlier life in the protection of Judaism” (ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ) using a particular syntax²⁶, in which that behaviour is explained with three imperfect indicative verbs preceded by the ὅτι. First, he violently persecuted the church of God (καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ); second, he tried to destroy it (ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν); and third, he was more engaged in that campaign than many of his colleagues (προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου). Admittedly, when Paul says that he “advanced ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ beyond many among [his] people of the same age”, he could have been referring to all of his contemporary Judeans or to other

²⁴ Regrettably, this distinction is not always followed in recent works, as Oegema (2019: 62-63), where he links the verb to the noun to conclude that “those who are to be understood as ‘Zealots’, will automatically also promote a Ἰουδαῖζειν and see the Ἰουδαῖζειν, i.e. the circumcision of those who belong to the Ἰουδαϊσμός, as a *conditio sine qua non*”.

²⁵ Matthew Novenson proposes the following translation: “the judaization movement”; cf. Novenson 2014 §“The Silence of Galatians on Judaism”: “The point becomes clearer if we gloss Ἰουδαϊσμός not with ‘Judaism’ but with something like ‘the judaization movement’”.

²⁶ The whole section Gal. 1.13-17 is complex and a source of debate; cf. Betz 1979: 70-72.

colleagues engaged in the campaign to protect Judaism²⁷. In both possible readings, nonetheless, he highlights his extreme zeal for the ancestral traditions. According to him, this zeal for the traditions is what explains his progress among those who shared the same fervour, probably among his comrades in ἰουδαϊσμός (“for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors”, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτής ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων). This is the kind of attribute we have identified in the Maccabean literature for those, among all the Jews, who support the protection of the Judaism, and it is coherent with the details Paul shows in Galatians.

In addition, Paul clarifies the source of the aggression he identified in his “former life”: the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ. The violent persecution, the attempted destruction and the advance in the protection of Judaism had that objective. We do not know whether Paul dedicated all his time ἐν τῷ ἰουδαϊσμῷ to protecting Judaism against the ἐκκλησία or only a part of it; the imperfect tense only reveals the extension in time (certain time). What we can certainly suppose is that the choice of the noun ἰουδαϊσμός is somehow related to the perception of aggression we have identified in the Maccabean literature: Paul saw in the ἐκκλησία something similar to what the Maccabees saw in Hellenism. This is neither to say that ἐκκλησία and Hellenism were the same thing to Paul nor that both share the same challenge to Judaism. They may have only shared the sense of defiance that both pose to the ancestral customs of the Judeans. In the Maccabean literature visited above, the most identifiable challenges to the Judean identity were the annulment of the purity laws and the prohibition of the circumcision of infants. This is coherent with the data and profile we have for the Hellenistic Judeans that believed in Christ: they had acute conflicts with other Judeans because they were very flexible with the purity laws (and some might have abandoned the circumcision of their baby boys)²⁸. Actually, Paul deals with both ancestral practices in Galatians, now as a Christ believer.

All this information suggests the possibility that Paul, during his commitment in defence of Judaism, engaged in a campaign against the ἐκκλησία in order to force its members to keep the traditions of the parents, such as purity laws and circumcision of infants, as others involved ἐν τῷ ἰουδαϊσμῷ did. What we see in Galatians are, actually, the arguments to justify why he abandoned that campaign when he accepted the faith in Christ, always within his ancestral faith and traditions; and, more importantly, exactly what he rejected, adjusted or kept from that past and what he did not.

3. Judean, but no longer ἐν τῷ ἰουδαϊσμῷ

The change within Judaism is further explained in the following verses: Gal. 1.15-17.

¹⁵“Ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν [ὁ θεός] ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ¹⁶ ἀποκαλύψει τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι, ¹⁷ οὐδὲ ἀνῆλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους...

¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the

²⁷ The ambiguity here comes from the noun συνηλικιώτης, a hapax in the Bible, which could mean those “of the same age” or the members “of the same group”, “comrades”; cf. Liddell, Scott, and Jones (1966: 1715): “body of comrades or playmates”.

²⁸ Cf. Schenke 1990: 186-196; Dunn 2009: 292-308.

Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being,¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me...

To understand the way Paul is stressing both continuity and discontinuity with his past, we have to take into account the syntax of the composition. It starts with a temporal clause²⁹, “when God [...] was pleased” (Ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν [ὁ θεός])³⁰, depending on the negative verb “did not confer” (οὐ προσανεθέμην). The direct object of εὐδόκησεν is the infinitive clause “to reveal his Son to me...” (ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί...). Before that object there are two participles (ἀφορίσας and καλέσας) that qualify the subject of εὐδόκησεν: “God”. This is paramount to Paul: the same God who was pleased to reveal his Son had set him apart before he was born and had called him by grace. God is the same subject of the three actions: set apart, call and reveal. We are not interested here in clarifying the biographical links of the three actions³¹; we only need to note that the first two actions (separation and calling) occurred, according to Paul, before the third (the revelation), as the aorist tense of the first two explains. Paul’s interest in highlighting that the same God did all these actions reveals the continuity we have pointed before³².

The discontinuity appears in the new horizon that God himself gave Paul in the revelation of his Son: “so that I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles”. God had set Paul apart before he was born; while the link of the verb ἀφορίζω to the pharisaic party is weak³³, the relation to the former life ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ is possible. As he points out in another letter, he was “circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee” (Phil. 3.5). This is coherent with the extreme zeal “for the traditions of my ancestors” and his violent persecution of those other Judeans (members of the ἐκκλησία). His former campaign to protect Judaism, according to him, had a clear target: other Judeans. His goal was to convince or even to force them to keep the ancestral customs against the temptation of compromising. However, the revelation of the Son changed, in addition to other things, the target: now it was no longer his fellow citizens, but the gentiles. The new goal is to proclaim to them the identity of the Son of God, the Crucified (cf. Gal. 3.3)³⁴. This new purpose in his life reveals a deep change in his Judaism: Paul

²⁹ The main verb of this sentence comes at the end of Gal. 1,16 (οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι) and deals with the main point Paul wants to focus on: that he did neither confer with a human being nor go to Jerusalem, so his gospel does not depend on others but God. Cf. DeSilva 2018: 145 and 148.

³⁰ The verb εὐδοκέω, in addition to OT allusions (such as Ps. 39,14; 43,4; 149,4; Isa. 62,4...) is the same verb used in the story of the baptism of Jesus in Mark Gospel: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased (ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα)”. Paul uses a similar expression to refer to his revelation: “Ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν [ὁ θεός]. For the possible connections between Paul and Mark see: Marcus 2000; Wischmeyer, Sim, and Elmer 2014, and Becker, Engberg-Pedersen, and Müller 2014.

³¹ See: Betz 1979: 70; Bruce 1982: 92.

³² Saldarini (1988: 143) affirms: “If the Pharisaic teaching sought to reform and strengthen the Jewish community by influencing other Jews to live in a certain way, then Paul, when he began to follow Jesus, understood the new way of life in Jesus to be an alternate mode of reforming Judaism and vigorously promoted it”.

³³ Although Schmidt (TDNT V: 454), relates the verb ἀφορίζω with the pharisaic connection of Paul. See also: Schlier 1949: 54 or Bruce 1982: 92. On the Phariseism of Paul see: Sanders 1977: 131-254; Fredriksen 2017 §“Circumcising gentiles?”.

³⁴ In Gal. 3.1 he reminds the Galatians that “Christ crucified” was exhibited before their eyes, an expression he uses again in 1 Cor. 2.2 speaking of himself. The innovation is closely linked to the revelation of the Crucified, as this idea appears in Galatians: Gal. 2.19; 3.1; 5.11,24; 6.12,14; six times in a brief letter, out of all the eighteen occurrences in his original letters.

no longer conceives of it as under siege and in need of defence, but as good news to be spread (ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). This personal transformation from looking inward to looking outward speaks of a new understanding of his own identity in Judaism in which proselytising replaces protection. These two changes, the new idea of Judaism and the proclamation of the good news to gentiles, come with the sense of a final countdown: the time is up and this mission to the gentiles must be done very quickly.

It is probably unnecessary to repeat that these changes were, in Paul's mind, within the limits of his Judaism. While his former life in the protection of Judaism followed the model of Pinhas (Num. 25.10-13; LXX Wis. 45.23-24) or Mattathias or Judas the Maccabee³⁵, the new life after the revelation of the Son is more similar to the model of Jeremiah or Isaiah, who are called by God to be light to the nations and prophets³⁶. Gal. 1.15-16 seems to convey the idea of this change of pattern among the possible ones within Judaism: from the protection of it to the proclamation of God's good news to the nations. In other words, what Paul seems to stress is that God's sending him as His apostle to the nations implied the abandonment of his former life in defence of Judaism. Paul does not suggest that God has changed His mind. On the contrary, Paul stresses His continuity and coherence. What Paul seems to transmit is his advancement by grace of God, his progress in the way of living as a faithful Jew; and also the fault he incurred in when he understood his life against those Judeans who had abandoned some ancestral traditions because of Jesus the Messiah. The revelation, according to him, changed this mistaken idea. He had previously thought that a crucified Messiah could not justify laxness of the Jewish customs; but the revelation of the crucified as the Son of God changed this idea, giving great credibility to the followers of that Messiah. This revelation brought a judgment of his former life in defence of Judaism and a new horizon proclaiming the good news of the Son of God.

To conclude this point, we remember Paul's appreciation of the privileges of Israel (Rom. 9.1-4), including the value of circumcision (Rom. 3.1-2) as a coherent reminder of the continuity of his Jewish identity³⁷. This evolved, however, within the plurality of Jewish parties. It shifted from being centred on the defence of his way of life to being a missionary to the gentiles proclaiming the good news because God revealed his Son to him. He had previously thought that being a faithful Judean involved the protection of his own customs, especially when they were challenged by fellow Judeans. However, God revealed to him that the Crucified proclaimed by the ἐκκλησία was his Son, so he had to reassess both his former convictions about his life of faith, and those of the fellow Judeans who belonged to the ἐκκλησία. That revelation changed, accordingly, many things, although not everything: he kept the idea, before and after his calling, that circumcising male gentile adults was not possible, and he never did so. However, many within the ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ did not think like him.

4. Ἰουδαῖζω as a side effect in Antioch

In Gal. 5.11 Paul defends himself against the charge of preaching circumcision in other places: Ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι; ἄρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ ("But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed"). What is interesting for our purpose now is that Paul does not say that the accusation was false in the past, but that it

³⁵ Cf. Donaldson 1989; Seland 2002; DeSilva 2018: 141-142.

³⁶ Cf. Isa. 49.1-6; Jer. 1.5; cf. Sandnes 1991: 48-69.

³⁷ See: Rom. 3.1-4; 7.12; 9.1-5; etc. Cf. Fredriksen 2017 §"The 'Law-free' mission and the 'law-free' apostle?".

is false in the present (εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω). Paul could have denied the practice of circumcision in his past, but he has not refuted it; he denies it only in the present. This is coherent with his past ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, as we have pointed out above³⁸. Some scholars think that the accusation could have been fabricated³⁹, but Paul does not deal with it as a false statement, but only as part of his past, not his present⁴⁰. This accusation reveals, on the other hand, the position of some of Jesus's followers who do proclaim circumcision. This becomes evident if we connect three situations that Paul describes in Galatians⁴¹.

In Galatia, "some who are confusing [the Galatians] and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1.7) have arrived and proclaim the circumcision of gentiles that believe in Jesus the Messiah: "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised -only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Gal. 6.12). This situation is not new for him because, according to his record of past events in the letter, on two other occasions after his revelation he had to deal with it: in Jerusalem and in Antioch⁴².

In the first case, Paul had to face the "false brothers (ψευδαδελφους)" who wanted Titus to be circumcised⁴³, probably as a token of all the gentiles from Antioch who, like him, had accepted the faith in Jesus but did not undergo circumcision (Dunn 2009: 454-455). Against that position, Paul received the support of "James and Cephas and John" (Gal. 2.9) who "contributed nothing to [him]" (Gal. 1.6), except "that [they] remember the poor" (Gal. 1.10), giving Paul and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship" and agreeing that they "should go to the Gentiles" (Gal. 1.9). Paul does not say explicitly that the "pillars" rejected circumcision for gentile believers; he only notes their acceptance of his mission to gentiles without asking for circumcision. Admittedly, this was not a principle for all the gentile believers, but probably a kind of exception for the assemblies in Antioch, accepted and symbolized in the person of Titus.

In the second case, we find in Antioch the commensality of Judeans and gentiles as a common practice in that ἐκκλησία and initially accepted by Peter, who himself contributed to that fellowship. It was not "until certain people came from James (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου)" that he "drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction (ὑπέστελλεν καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτὸν φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς)" (Gal. 1.12)⁴⁴. Although Paul does not

³⁸ Campbell (2011) dismisses that possibility, perhaps because he does not consider the meaning of Ἰουδαϊσμός.

³⁹ Cf. Betz 1979: 268-269. Others consider that maybe he preached circumcision before his calling: DeSilva 2018, 437-438; also see the authors cited in the following note.

⁴⁰ Mathew Thiessen (2016: 40-41) has argued recently that this accusation proved that Paul's former life in Ἰουδαϊσμός was a proselytizing mission addressed to gentiles. Before him, others have suggested a similar interpretation: Schoeps 1961: 219; Donaldson 1997: 273-284. Against that reading: Novenson 2014 § "Maccabean Invention of Ioudaismos".

⁴¹ The literature dealing with the Galatian conflict is unfathomable. See the very rich *status questions* in Álvarez Cineira (2019).

⁴² For the chronology of these events, see: Dunn 2009: 438-494. I follow the most accepted sequence of events: first the Jerusalem assembly and afterwards the Antiochian conflict.

⁴³ Regarding the possibility of these false brothers appearing before in Antioch, as Acts 15.1-2 suggest, see: Bruce 1982: 115-117.

⁴⁴ The problem behind this pericope is much debated. The most accepted explanation is a problem related with the purity laws (cf. DeSilva 2018: 198-203), although Nanos (2002: 152-154) may be correct in pointing to the persons instead the food. See also Fredriksen (2017 § "The synagogue"), which points to the problem of abandoning the idols for those sitting at the same table as the Judeans and thus provoking harassment from their neighbors.

explicitly say that those “from James” are “the circumcision faction”, Peter feared the latter when the former arrived in Antioch. The Antiochian situation described in Galatians and the position of all the characters are unclear and much discussed⁴⁵. Here Paul probably witnesses an evolution in Jerusalem from the time of the council, where James is now the only mentioned leader. The “circumcision faction” has gained support there and the main policy appears to be that of the circumcision of gentile believers in Christ (Löning 1993). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Paul points to those from James, along with Peter and the rest of the Judeans that separated, as those that “were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel (οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου)” (Gal. 2.14). The problem in Antioch was that the influence of the people from James reached not only Peter, but also Barnabas and many Judeans in the assembly of Antioch. For Paul, this is similar to what the agitators (οἱ ταρασσόντες) are trying to do against the Galatians: they “want to pervert the gospel of Christ (μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ χριστοῦ)” (Gal. 1.7).

What is more important for our narrative is the fact that the influence of the men from James on Peter and others caused them to draw back and the table fellowship fell apart. Before the arrival of those from James, all the Judean believers were living like gentiles (ἐθνικῶς Gal. 2.14) because they ate at the same table with gentiles without asking them to keep Jewish customs (Gal. 2.12). After their arrival, Peter “drew back and kept himself separate”, the rest of the Judeans “followed the hypocrisy” of Peter (συνυπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ), and even Barnabas “was led astray by their hypocrisy (συναπήχθη αὐτῶν τῇ ὑποκρίσει)” (Gal. 2.13). According to Paul’s reaction to Peter (Εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐκ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις Ἰουδαῖζειν; Gal. 2.14), the men from James forced Peter and the Judeans in Antioch to act Ἰουδαϊκῶς, i.e., to live keeping their Jewish customs, including that of separating from gentiles at the table, as the outcome of that decision shows (Gal. 2.12).

To fix the broken fellowship, gentile believers in Christ in Antioch are forced “to live like Jews (Ἰουδαῖζω)” (Gal. 2.14). The verb used here, according to what we have said before, is an action that Non-Judeans perform; only gentiles can Ἰουδαῖζειν, while the adverbs ἐθνικῶς and Ἰουδαϊκῶς refer to actions Judeans perform. The verb means adopting some of the customs that most people identify as Jewish (Cohen 1999: 179-180). It is unclear exactly what the Judeans demanded from the gentiles to keep the Antiochian commensality, but we can exclude circumcision because Paul does not mention it at that very moment. Actually, the verb Ἰουδαῖζω did not necessarily include circumcision. This is evident, for instance, in LXX Esth. 8.17: “many of the gentiles *circumcised and lived as Jews*, because of the fear of the Jews (καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν περιετέμοντο καὶ Ἰουδαίζον διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων)”, where circumcision is something additional to Ἰουδαῖζω⁴⁶. What Peter does after the arrival of the men from James is, admittedly, according to the Jesus tradition as it is remembered in Mt. 5.17-19, in which Jesus asks his followers to keep even “the least of these commandments”⁴⁷, and Paul probably knew that (cf. Wedderburn 1989). However, nobody mentions the question of circumcision of gentiles in the conflict. It seems that it was enough for Peter and the rest of the Judeans to ask the gentiles to keep some Jewish customs (such as purity laws) included in

⁴⁵ Cf. Bruce 1982: 130-131; DeSilva 2018: 197. Burton (1921: 107) thinks that the “circumcision party” includes those “from James”.

⁴⁶ Also in Josephus, *War* 2,454.

⁴⁷ In Gal. 1.16 Paul says that after the revelation he “did not confer with any human being” (οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι). However, the tradition contained in Matt 16.16-17 presents Jesus praising Peter because his confession “was not confer with any human being” (ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψέν σοι). Cf. Refoulé 1992. About the polemic relation of both traditions, see: Sim 2002; 2009.

the verb *ιουδαίζω*⁴⁸. Circumcision is mentioned in Antioch only as a label to identify those who Paul fears (*φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς*), not as a proposed imposition.

Nevertheless, Paul relates both conflicts, that of Jerusalem and that of Antioch, with the current one in Galatia when he writes the letter. Although the first one took place in Jerusalem, it was about circumcision of gentile believers in Christ who lived in Antioch. It was solved, perhaps as an exception or provisionally, with the decision not to circumcise gentiles. The second one was about gentiles being forced to keep Jewish customs at table (*ιουδαίζω*) in Antioch, because of the influence of “those from circumcision”. It seems that this conflict was not solved and was the reason why Paul left Antioch. The third one in Galatia was again about circumcision of gentile believers in Christ, and it prompted Paul to bring the three conflicts together. This is due to the fact that those who want to impose circumcision in Galatia (Gal. 6.12) are connected to “those from the circumcision” who persuaded the Judeans in Antioch (Gal. 2.12) and to the “false brothers” in Jerusalem (Gal. 2.4-5). None of those three groups is identified but all are somehow connected with Jerusalem, as we will see later. This reveals the existence of groups of believers in Christ who wanted to impose circumcision on the gentile fellow believers and were probably gaining wider influence among the believers. Their presence in Galatia after the preaching of the gospel by Paul there (Gal. 4.13) reveals this.

5. The persecution related to circumcision

As we have said, one of the arguments of these troublemakers in Galatia was that Paul preached circumcision in other places: “why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? (*εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι;*)” (Gal. 5.11). Furthermore, judging from Paul’s anxiety in the letter⁴⁹, it seems that they are about to convince the Galatians to undergo circumcision (Gal. 5.2). His arguments to defend himself include, as we have seen above, disclosing the connection of the agitators in Galatia to the “false brothers” and to “those from the circumcision”. In addition, Paul presents those three conflicts as examples of the continuous persecution he undergoes after the revelation of the Son. Starting with the second journey to Jerusalem (Gal. 2.1), Paul was the target of those who wanted gentile believers like Titus circumcised, which happened again in a similar manner in Antioch as it is happening now (at the time of the letter) in Galatia (*τί ἔτι διώκομαι;*). This continuous harassment evidences his coherence and, consequently, the falseness of the agitators: if Paul had preached circumcision in the past he would not have been persecuted in those places.

The other mentions of this persecution in the letter (Gal. 4.29; 6.12) reveal more about the origin of the agitators. The first one (Gal. 4.21-31) is the closing of the Biblical argument to support his position against circumcision of gentiles. This is seen in the allegory of two women and their children, in which he explains that Hagar and Sara represent two covenants: “Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother” (Gal. 4.25-26). Both women, who represent different people, gave birth to one child each: Ismael and Isaac. The allegory concludes with the persecution of Isaac by Ismael (absent in the Hebrew Bible)⁵⁰, to illustrate the harassment of the Galatians by those who force them to circumcise: “just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also” (Gal. 4.29). This conclusion identifies Ismael with those who persecute the gentile believers in Christ in Galatia,

⁴⁸ Cf. Overman 1990; Saldarini 1994.

⁴⁹ Cf. Betz 1979: 279; DeSilva 2018: 437.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Genesis Rabba* 53,11; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1,215.

and with those who come from “the present Jerusalem” (Gal. 4.25)⁵¹. These could be Judeans from Jerusalem or believers in Christ from some group there⁵². However, the second reference further explains this point.

In Gal. 6.12 Paul mentions the persecution that the agitators seek to avoid by forcing the Galatians to circumcise: “It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ”. The last part is the same argument he has used in Gal. 5.11 to explain his situation: “Why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed”. According to Paul’s argument, the agitators must be other believers in Christ like him. Otherwise, the accusation he poses against them of avoiding persecution for the cross of Christ would be annulled. In addition, Paul accuses them of “perverting the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1.7), which would make no sense if they were not other believers in Christ⁵³. Adding this information to previous findings, we can conclude that the persecutors are other Judean believers in Christ from Jerusalem.

The agitators who arrived in Galatia use to their benefit some correct information about Paul’s past in Ἰουδαϊσμός, but not accurately. Before the revelation of the Son to Paul, he zealously observed the Jewish traditions including, probably, the circumcision of baby boys but not of gentile adults. This conviction did not change after that revelation nor after the conflicts in Jerusalem and Antioch. Likewise, we have learnt that he was a defender of other Jewish customs such as the purity laws for Judeans. His experience in Antioch with the commensalism between Judeans and gentiles led him to relativise that practice when they forced gentiles to observe them⁵⁴. Accordingly, the accusation that the agitators posed in Gal. 5.11 could have been partially true: Paul could have preached circumcision in his former life in defence of Judaism, but only to other Judeans, not to gentiles. This crucial detail is silenced by the persecutors. To face that accusation, Paul brings the best and incontestable answer: he is being persecuted.

This argument is simple and strong enough to answer the accusation of still preaching circumcision: as he is being persecuted, he certainly cannot preach circumcision. If he preached, he would not suffer persecution. This is the same argument used against the agitators: those who force circumcision to avoid persecution⁵⁵. It is not necessary to

⁵¹ Cf. Bruce 1982: 220. DeSilva (2018: 399) thinks that Paul involves in the present Jerusalem all the Judeans, including the believers in Christ. Betz (1979: 246), however, thinks that Paul alludes only to the non-believer Judeans in Christ, but this reading bears an anachronistic burden: “Paul’s intention is clear; he wants to create a dualistic polarity between ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’”.

⁵² In Gal. 4.25-26, Paul uses the term Ἱερουσαλὴμ, the most common one to refer to the Holy City in his letters (Rom. 15.19,25-26,31; 1 Cor. 16.3); in addition, it is feminine and matches well with the allegory. In all these occurrences he alludes to the Holy City as a missionary city, the part of it that has received the Gospel. However, in Gal. 1.17-18 and 2.1 (and in no other place in his letters) he uses Ἱεροσόλυμα, perhaps to highlight the geographical or political dimension of the City. Cf. Bruce 1982: 220. See the discussion in: Murphy-O’Connor 2012: 48-53.

⁵³ Cf. Jewett 1970: 201 and 204. Esler (1998: 73-74) affirms: “The involvement of representatives from the Jerusalem Church [...] is strongly suggested both by the close parallel [...] between the situation in Antioch and in Galatia and by the fact that at 4.25 Paul states that ‘the present day Jerusalem is in slavery (*douleuei*) together with its children’”.

⁵⁴ Furthermore, this is coherent with the argument in 1 Cor. 8.1-13, for instance.

⁵⁵ Cf. DeSilva 2018: 439: “if he still promoted circumcision as part of his mission, he would not continue to be persecuted by his fellow Jews (see Acts 13.50; 14.2,19-20; 2 Co 11.24) because his gospel

understand why those behaviours are at odds (circumcision and persecution), but to recognise that all the characters on stage seem to accept that opposition.

Summarising this point, we can say that for Paul, the accusation of preaching circumcision of gentiles was always completely false: he never preached circumcision of gentiles. However, he probably did preach circumcision of Judean children in his former life in defence of Judaism. The troublemakers in Galatia could have known this former activity of Paul and used that information to defend the value of circumcision and convince gentile Galatians to undergo the operation. They probably wanted the Galatians to assume that Paul had mistakenly changed but they silenced the fact that he never preached circumcision *of gentiles*, only *of Judeans*. Whether they consciously concealed this detail or not, we do not know. The Letter to Galatians seeks to prove the coherence of Paul from his former life to the present through his calling.

6. Conclusions

Now, we can reach two conclusions. Firstly, Paul did not dismantle the accusation of having preached circumcision in the past and, thus, implicitly confirms the point we have made from the beginning: Paul could have defended circumcision of Judeans within the eight day after birth, but not of gentile adults in his former life in *ιουδαϊσμός*. After the revelation, however, he abandoned his zeal and determination to force Judeans to keep the Jewish customs, but not all of his convictions about them. On this point the coherence before and after the revelation is clear, and his opposition to circumcision of gentiles does not come from the revelation of the Son, but from his former life, which he would have found consistent with the cross of Christ. However, the observance of the purity laws by Judeans is left aside if keeping them would force gentiles to live like Judeans (*ιουδαίζω*) within the *ἐκκλησία*, invalidating the mission God gave him. Both positions, the negative one on circumcision of gentiles and the relativisation of purity laws in the *ἐκκλησία*, are consistent with the gospel of the crucified Son.

Secondly, the identity of Paul's opponents gives them a precise location within the map of the believers in Christ. Those Judean believers in Christ from Jerusalem want gentile adult believers in Christ of Galatia to be circumcised. This position was not the one defended by the strict or zealous Judeans involved in *ιουδαϊσμός*, for instance, but the practice of proselytism and expansionism practiced by Hasmoneans in Idumea, which is identified with the verb *ιουδαίζω*⁵⁶. For these Hasmoneans, the borders of Israel were porous and flexible, while for those involved in *ιουδαϊσμός*, like the authors of Jubilees or Paul in his former life, the borders of Israel were impermeable and fixed⁵⁷. This point clearly explains why Paul, in the theological core of the letter to Galatians (Gal. 3-4), unfolds a complex and detailed argument to include gentiles as heirs of the promises by grace of the adoption. If this is correct, the opponents in Galatia, and in some other Mediterranean cities, were not strict or "traditionalists" about the identity of Israel and the *ἐκκλησία*, as many scholars say. The dichotomy between the "liberal Paul" against the "strict judaizers" is false and does not reflect the complex map. Paul abandoned his zeal and protection of Judaism after the revelation but did not involve himself in any campaign to convert gentiles into Judeans; he respected and included them both in a new project he called *ἐκκλησία*. The conflicts he faced in this mission reproduce ancient tensions within Judaism as well as new anxieties among believers in Christ.

would no longer be a threat to the Mosaic covenant and to the loyal obedience of all Jews (whether or not they claimed Jesus as Messiah) to that covenant".

⁵⁶ Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13,257; *Life* 113.

⁵⁷ Cf. Jubilees 15,25-26; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1,214.

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