

CHAPTER 1

Winning the Gentiles: Mission and Missionaries in Ancient Judaism?

The question of whether Judaism at the time of Christian origins was a ‘missionary religion’ is a well-worn track in scholarship and, as yet, no consensus has been reached.¹ As with so many lines of inquiry,

¹ Those who affirm the presence of ‘mission’ in ancient Judaism include: Bamberger, B. J. *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968; Braude, W. G. *Jewish Proselytizing in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era: the Age of Tannaim and Amoraim*. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1940; Kasting, H. *Die Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission: Eine historische Untersuchung*. BEvT, 55. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969; Moore, G. F. *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: the Age of the Tannaim*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932; Feldman, L. *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 288-415; Feldman, L. H. “Jewish Proselytism.” In *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, edited by H. W. Attridge and G. Hata. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994; Harnack, A. D. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. London, 1908; Nock, A. D. *Conversion: the Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; Jeremias, J. *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*. London: SCM Press, 1958, 11-19; Georgi, D. “Missionary Activity in New Testament Times.” In *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 83-228. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987; Carleton Paget, J. “Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?” *JSNT* 62 (1996): 65-103; Borgen, P. “Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission.” In *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World*, edited by P. Borgen, 57-77. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998; Segal, A. F. “The Costs of Proselytism and Conversion.” In *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 Seminar Papers*, edited by David J. Lull, 336-69. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988; Bedell, C. H. “Mission in Intertestamental Judaism.” In *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, edited by W. J. Larkin and J. F. Williams, 21-29. Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998. Those who (variously) deny this thesis include: Munck, J. *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. London: SCM, 1959, 264-271; McKnight, S. *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991; Goodman, M. *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994; Collins, J. J. *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*. Second ed, *The Biblical Resource Series*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, 261-72; Riesner, R. “A Pre-Christian

complications lie in one's definition. The strict definitions of 'mission' adopted by McKnight and Goodman surely, as Carleton Paget notes, "contribute to the minimal picture they create."² This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the debate is consistently framed in terms of whether or not Judaism was a 'missionary religion', that is, whether one can establish the existence of an organized, systematic 'mission' on the part of the Jews of the period to convert Gentiles.³ Such a framework assumes that Judaism was a single religious entity with an agreed-upon set of beliefs and structures represented in a coherent body of literature. This was certainly not the case, as the disparate and fragmentary literary evidence reveals.⁴

The following study, therefore, does not seek to deny or establish that Judaism was a 'missionary religion'. This concept is avoided altogether. Rather, Donaldson frames the question helpfully when he states: "What is needed is not simply a denial that Judaism was a missionary religion in this definition of the term but a more positive recognition of the distinctive ways in which some Jews, at least, did attempt to draw Gentiles under the

Jewish Mission?" In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, edited by J. Ådna and H. Kvalbein, 211-50. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000; Levinskaya, I. *Diaspora Setting. The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, Vol. 5. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, 19-49; Cohen, S. J. D. "Was Judaism in Antiquity a Missionary Religion?" In *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation, and Accommodation: Past Traditions, Current Issues and Future Prospects*, edited by M. Mor, 14-23. New York: University Press of America, 1992. However, Cohen does admit certain missionary tendencies on the part of many ancient Jews and a desire to see the Gentiles converted. See also his article, Cohen, S. J. D. "Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective: From Biblical Israel to Postbiblical Judaism." *Conservative Judaism* 36, no. 4 (1983): 31-45.

² Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 76.

³ Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 59, also "wonders whether the basic question has not been wrongly put."

⁴ Shaye Cohen provides a particularly striking example of this methodological misstep, for having outlined all sorts of useful evidence of missionary attitudes and practices amongst Jews of the Second Temple era, he closes by stating: "it seems reasonable to conclude that Judaism in the first century B.C.E. and first century C.E., in both the land of Israel and the Diaspora, was not a 'missionary religion'" ("Was Judaism in Antiquity a Missionary Religion," 20-21). Cohen does pre-empt this conclusion by admitting the "varieties of Judaism" (20) in the ancient world. Nevertheless, the quest to discover whether or not Judaism was a missionary religion appears to have obscured the more obvious conclusion of his own material, namely, that some forms of Judaism clearly did possess a sense of mission. In an earlier article Cohen speaks positively of "Jewish eagerness to gain converts." Cohen, "Conversion to Judaism," 36.

wings of the Shekinah.”⁵ Thus, in the following investigation we will be asking: Do Jewish writings of the Second Temple period provide evidence of a commitment, on the part of individuals or communities, to mission? This inquiry, when set against the conclusions of our study of Paul’s letters, will enable us to assess the level of Paul’s indebtedness to his Jewish heritage for his conception of mission-involvement.

1. The missionary mindset of ancient Judaism(s)

We begin, as do the studies of McKnight and Goodman, with the broader question of Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles, for, as Goodman notes, “A logical prerequisite for a universal proselytizing mission to convert others to a new religion is a belief that their present religious behaviour is unsatisfactory.”⁶ Did such a belief exist among Jews of the period?

1.1. Jewish attitudes toward Gentile religion

Goodman insists that Judaism(s) prior to A.D. 100 evidenced a generally “tolerant attitude toward Gentile paganism outside the land of Israel.”⁷ The anti-paganism of the Pentateuch relates only to pagans in the ‘holy land’ who may have led Israel astray. The writings of Philo and Josephus, he notes, betray a consistently friendly perspective toward Gentiles and nowhere is there an expectation that Gentiles should give up their local deities. Even when pagan literature is hostile toward Jews a Jewish desire for pagans to give up their idols is never mentioned. This desire, argues Goodman, was unique to Paul and the early Christians.⁸ Thus, for Goodman, the necessary mental framework for engaging in mission – moral dissatisfaction with paganism – did not exist among Jews prior to A.D. 100.

McKnight too is careful to stress what he calls an “integrating tendency” amongst Jews of the period. Jews, he argues, very often displayed openness toward, and even acceptance of, Gentiles and their

⁵ Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 59.

⁶ Goodman, *Mission*, 38.

⁷ Goodman, *Mission*, 51. Goodman restricts his investigation of Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles to literature written prior to A.D. 100 on the grounds that after the victory of Titus over Jerusalem (A.D. 70) Jewish feelings toward ‘pagans’ took an intensified step downward, particularly as it became apparent that Rome had no intention of rebuilding the Temple. Goodman, *Mission*, 43-44.

⁸ Goodman, *Mission*, 54.

society. He lists no fewer than eight aspects of this tendency evidenced in the literature.⁹

The ‘openness’ of Jews toward Gentiles at all these levels need not be contested. However, as McKnight himself concedes, the evidence is not so one-sided. Certain “resistance tendencies” may also be observed. McKnight points to the temple inscription forbidding the entrance of Gentiles (cf. Josephus *J.W.* 5.194), the general prohibition of intermarriage (e.g., Tob 4:12), and the consistent expectation of a future judgement on the wicked, which, as McKnight notes, included the nations (e.g., Sir 36:1-7; *Pss. Sol.* 17.3-7, 22-28).¹⁰ To this we may add the eloquent critique of Gentile worship found in Wis 13-15, the comprehensive denunciation of the nations in *Sib. Or.* 3.350-488, the consignment of all Gentiles to damnation in *Jub.* 15.16¹¹ and the ridicule of idolatry in *Let. Aris.* 134-139.¹² All this is hardly consonant with a “tolerant attitude toward Gentile paganism outside the land of Israel.”¹³ Finally, a passage in Tacitus’ *Historiae* speaks of Jewish disdain for Gentile worship and lifestyle:

Whatever their origin, these rites are maintained by their antiquity ... the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity. They sit apart at meals ... they abstain from intercourse with foreign women ... Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice, and the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the

⁹ 1) *universalism*, or the belief that under Yahweh humanity shares a solidarity; 2) *friendliness*; 3) *Gentile participation in Judaism*; 4) *citizenship* within Hellenistic and Roman societies; 5) *Hellenistic education*, which was prized by many Jews; 6) *intermarriage*; 7) *assimilation*, or the blurring of the lines between ‘Jewish’ and ‘pagan’; 8) *apostasy*, showing just how far some Jews went in their acceptance of paganism. McKnight, *Light*, 12-19. The sometimes ‘extreme’ levels of integration with Gentile society on the part of some Jews are explored also in Borgen, P. “‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ ‘How Far?’: The Participation of Jews and Christians in Pagan Cults.” In *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, 30-59. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994.

¹⁰ McKnight, *Light*, 19-25.

¹¹ Also *Jub.* 22.16 says of Gentiles: “their deeds are defiled and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable and abominable.”

¹² Goodman, *Mission*, 55-57, objects to the use of the Wisdom of Solomon and the *Sibylline Oracles* for gaining a picture of ‘mainstream’ Judaism(s) of the period on the grounds that they were preserved by ‘pagan hating’ Christians who would have cherished even the most ‘obscure’ Jewish writings so long as they supported Christian theology. Be that as it may, the Jewish provenance of these writings can hardly be doubted, and the disparate nature of our literary evidence does not allow us to judge what constituted ‘mainstream’ Judaism(s) at all.

¹³ Goodman, *Mission*, 51.

gods (*contemnere deos*), to disown their country ... The Egyptians worship many animals and monstrous images; the Jews conceive of one god only, and with the mind alone: they regard as impious (*profanos*) those who make from perishable materials representations of gods in man's image (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5 [Trans. Jackson LCL]).

It emerges from all this that Goodman's 'logical prerequisite' for a universal proselytizing mission – belief in the 'unsatisfactory' nature of pagan worship – did, in fact, exist among at least some Jews prior to A.D. 100. This is not to suggest that this was the dominant motif of Jewish discourse about Gentiles. As noted above, it is readily conceded that a positive (integrating) attitude also existed. However, it is the very ambivalence reflected in the evidence that is consonant with a 'mission-orientation'. 'Integrating tendencies' designed to commend one's religion to outsiders are precisely what we should expect of one seeking to win over those whose present religious behaviour is deemed unsatisfactory. We need look no further than the Jewish Apostle Paul to find a clear example of the mission possibilities of such integrating tendencies (1 Cor 9:19-22).¹⁴

Of course, whether this ambivalence toward Gentiles *should* be interpreted in a missionary way depends entirely on one's assessment of the wider evidence for Jewish mission-commitment.

1.2. The hope of Gentile conversion

One important aspect of Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles is the expectation, or hope, that at the end of history God would convert the Gentiles to the faith of Israel. While it is true, as Goodman and McKnight are quick to point out,¹⁵ that such an expectation does not constitute evidence of actual missionary practice, it does prove that Jews understood the conversion of the Gentiles to be a desirable thing, indeed, to be part of God's ultimate plan for humanity.

The biblical antecedents of a belief in an end-time conversion of the Gentiles have been well described in an important essay by J. Jeremias.¹⁶

¹⁴ Paul apparently expected the same integrating tendencies (with a missionary orientation) to find expression among his converts as well (1 Thess 4:11-12; 1 Cor 10:31-11:1).

¹⁵ McKnight, *Light*, 50-51; Goodman, *Mission*, 60-61.

¹⁶ Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 56-62. He observes five features of the expectation as found in the biblical writings. First, is the *epiphany of God*, in which Yahweh is revealed to the nations as the true Lord (Isa 2:2-3, 40:5, 51:4-5). This appearance is accompanied, secondly, by the *call of God*, commanding the Gentiles to look to him (Ps 50:1; Isa 45:20-22). The response to this call, thirdly, is the *journey of the Gentiles to Jerusalem*

The main elements of this motif are found throughout the post-biblical literature as well. So, for instance, in the pre-Maccabean writing *Tobit* the writer looks forward to a day when:

A bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth;¹⁷ many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven (*Tob.* 13.13).

That this is not merely the subjugation of the Gentiles before Israel is implied by the fact that the gifts are for God, not Israel. Also, those Gentiles are described in the following verse as ‘blessed forever’.¹⁸ The theme is even more explicit in *Tob.* 14.6:

Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted (ἐπιστρέφω) and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God.

Similarly, in *I En.* 10.21 God promises a day when, “all the children of the people will become righteous, and all nations shall worship and bless me; and they will all prostrate themselves to me.” This situation is more explicitly described in Enoch’s final dream vision of the final Messianic kingdom (90.6-42). Jews (sheep) and Gentiles (beasts) alike are there described as worshipping together in the (restored) Jerusalem temple:

All those [sheep] which have been destroyed and dispersed, and all the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky were gathered together in that house; and the Lord of the sheep rejoiced with great joy because they had all become gentle and returned to his house (90.33).

Again, the Messianic kingdom described in *2 Bar.* 72 refers to those Gentiles who were ‘called’ by the Messiah and found not to have oppressed Israel (72.2-4). These “will be spared by him” and “will live”. The life of that kingdom is described in the following paragraph (73.1-6) and includes these ‘spared’ nations. A striking reference to the same motif is found in *T. Levi* 18. There the ‘messianic’ priest is said to “shine forth like the sun in the earth” and be “extolled by the whole inhabited world”

(*Zech* 8:21-23; *Isa* 60:11; *Ps* 47:10). The goal of the pilgrimage, fourthly, is *worship at the world-sanctuary* (*Isa* 45:20-24). Fifthly, and lastly, is the *Messianic banquet on the world-mountain* (*Isa* 25:6-8).

¹⁷ *Tobit* 13.13a φῶς λαμπρὸν λάμψει εἰς πάντα τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς.

¹⁸ *Tobit* 13.14 εὐλογητοὶ ἔσονται πάντες εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

(18.2-4). Thus, “In his priesthood the nations shall be multiplied in knowledge on the earth, and they shall be illumined by the grace of the Lord” (18.9). Numerous other texts throughout the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contain similar references to the participation of the Gentiles in the benefits of the *eschaton* (*T. Jud.* 24.6; *T. Zeb.* 9.8; *T. Naph.* 8.3-4; *T. Benj.* 10.9).¹⁹

Hellenistic Jewish literature also reflects this tradition. LXX Isa 54:15 interrupts the prophet’s description of the restoration of Israel to state that, “converts (προσήλυτοι) shall draw near to you (προσέρχομαι) because of me and they shall flee to you.” And, whereas in the Hebrew version of Amos 9:12 the rebuilding of Jerusalem is for the purpose of dominating the nations, in the Greek version it is, “so that (ὄπως) the remnant of human beings may seek it out [the rebuilt Jerusalem], even all the nations wherein my name has been invoked.” *Sib. Or.* 3.716-20, dated second century (B.C.), has the Gentiles declare:

Come, let us all fall on the ground and entreat the immortal king (λιτσώμεσθα ἀθάνατον βασιλῆα), the great eternal God. Let us send to the Temple, since he alone is sovereign and let us all ponder the Law of the Most High God (νόμον ὑψίστου θεοῦ φραζόμεθα πάντες), who is most righteous of all throughout the earth. But we had wandered from the path of the Immortal. With mindless spirit we revered things made by hand, idols and statues of dead men.

The same situation is described again in 3.767-775. And earlier in the oracles (3.195) a day is envisaged at the end of history when the nation of Israel will be the “guides in life for all mortals.”

¹⁹ An attempt to argue for the Christian origin of the *Testaments* is found in De Jonge, M. *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of Their Text, Composition and Origin*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975, 121-128; he has since modified his position (Hollander, H. W., and M. de Jonge. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 1985). While the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* contain obvious Christian interpolations, the Jewish origin of the texts is widely accepted. On this see *OTP* 1, 775-781; Stone, *Jewish Writings* vol 2, 331-344. Bickerman’s analysis places the composition of the *Testaments* in the first quarter of the second century B.C. (Bickerman, E. “The Date of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.” In *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, 1-23. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), though, as J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 176-77, notes, the text before us is the result of two hundred years of accumulation. The initial provenance of the *Testaments* – whether from Egypt or Judea – is not clear: see the discussion in J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 174-175.

A less strident and (typically) less eschatological version of the motif is discernible in Philo's *Life of Moses*. In his discussion of the translation into Greek of the Hebrew scriptures Philo speaks of the Greek version 'shining out' (τὰ τῆς ἐρμηνείας ἐξέλαμψε) for all – Jew and Gentile alike – to see (2.41). This is all the more surprising, he claims, since the Jewish people have not prospered for many years and, normally, a nation's treasures are clouded over when there is no prosperity (2.42-43). It is at this point that Philo then remarks:

But if a fresh start should be made to brighter prospects, how great a change for the better might we expect to see! I believe that each nation would abandon its peculiar ways, and, throwing overboard their ancestral customs, turn to honouring our laws alone. For, when the brightness of their shining is accompanied by national prosperity, it will darken the light of the others as the risen sun darkens the stars (*Moses* 2.44 [Trans. Colson, *LCL*]).

There is debate about the degree to which Philo's eschatology may be understood in a national/earthly sense.²⁰ Nevertheless, the occasional passage in his writings does betray what might be called a 'normative' biblical hope: the reunion of the exiles, prosperity in the land of Palestine, peace between man and beast (*Rewards* 165-172) and even the advent of the Messiah (*Rewards* 95). Such expectations clearly derive from the Prophets and from wider Jewish traditions current at the time, as Wolfson has shown.²¹ That *Moses* 2.44 represents a similarly biblically informed hope – namely the eschatological pilgrimage motif – is suggested, in particular, by the reference to the 'shining' of the law, a feature that clearly belongs to the pilgrimage tradition (e.g., Isa 51:4-5, 60:1-6; *T. Levi* 18:2-4). At the very least, the text reveals Philo's own desire for the Gentile world to embrace Judaism.²² That he thinks this would come about, in part,

²⁰ See the discussion on Philo's eschatology in J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 131-38.

²¹ A detailed account of Philo's belief in a future messianic age appears in Wolfson, H. A. *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948, 395-426.

²² So also P. Borgen, "Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission," 64-68. Donaldson (Donaldson, "Proselytes or 'Righteous Gentiles'?", 3-27), argues that this eschatological 'turning' of the Gentiles should not be thought of as 'conversion' in the strict sense of gaining full 'proselyte' status. Rather, the nations are to be understood as 'righteous Gentiles', that is, they receive salvation *as Gentiles* not as converts to Judaism. The point is valid but 'conversion' in the sense defined in the introduction is clearly in view. The

through the agency of the Greek translation of the scriptures is also significant.²³

1.3. *Pilgrimage of the nations as vindication of Israel?*

Donaldson observes that the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations motif is actually part of (and subservient to) the larger theme of the vindication of Israel. That is, the former is an attempt to remove “the dissonance between its self-understanding as the covenant people of the one true God and its present humble status among the nations of the world” by speaking of a day when “the preeminence of the God of Israel, of the Jerusalem temple, and of Israel itself would be universally established and acknowledged.”²⁴ While important, this observation should not be exaggerated, as if the pilgrimage motif were merely an imaginative construct devised to support belief in Israel’s final glory and, therefore, of no real value in assessing the mission-attitudes of Judaism(s).²⁵

Firstly, that belief ‘a’ supports belief ‘b’ is hardly a convincing reason to dismiss the former. Any number of Jewish beliefs would on this ground be relegated to insignificance. The vindication motif was equally well supported in the literature by a doctrine of the final damnation of the Gentiles such as that found in *Sib. Or.* 3.15-19 but this does not for a moment imply that the latter can be dismissed as an insignificant aspect of Jewish attitudes toward the nations. Secondly, and more importantly, the fact that in the pilgrimage tradition Gentiles receive the blessings of the

Gentiles give up their idols in order to worship the one God and they are portrayed as part of one eschatological community of faith, not as a separate entity.

²³ Goodman, *Mission*, 74-75, dismisses the import of this text. He believes it is “better explained as part of Philo’s rhetorical exaggeration in this eulogy of the Torah” and, furthermore, that “[t]he crucial word is ‘would’. The nations *would* convert if all these conditions were met. There is no hint here that the nations *should* convert now” (author’s emphasis). Noting the difference between ‘would’ and ‘should’ is special pleading. The passage clearly proves that Philo considered the conversion of the Gentiles to be a desirable thing – that should be enough. Furthermore, that the reference to the conversion of the Gentiles forms part of his praise of the Torah is hardly a reason to diminish the significance of the former. It is precisely the fact that the conversion of the Gentiles was such a ‘desirable thing’ for Philo that made his reference to it such an effective part of his ‘exaggerated eulogy’ of the Torah.

²⁴ Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 74.

²⁵ In dismissing the significance of the pilgrimage motif for the question of proselytism, Goodman describes it as a “pious hope for the possibly distant eschatological future.” Goodman, *Mission*, 61. This hardly reflects accurately the prophetic grandeur and certainty of the belief as it appears in the literature.

eschaton *along with* Israel and participate in the worship of God *together with* Israel,²⁶ suggests that the belief is driven by a larger (or more basic) conviction than that of the vindication of Israel. This conviction, I suggest, is the ‘universalism’ inherent in Israel’s monotheistic outlook.²⁷ As creatures of the one Creator, Gentiles too must have a place in the future plan of Israel’s God. While implicit in many of the texts quoted above (and seen especially in the contrast between false idols and the one true God), the theme is well articulated in the acclamation of the Gentiles in *Sib. Or.* 3.716-20:

Come, let us all fall on the ground and entreat the immortal king, the great eternal God. Let us send to the Temple, since he alone is sovereign and let us all ponder the Law of the Most High God, who is most righteous of all throughout the earth.

This rationale goes back to key universalistic biblical texts.²⁸

Thus, the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations may not be dismissed as a theme of little significance for the question of Jewish attitudes toward the conversion of the Gentiles. The motif reveals deep convictions on the part of some Jews about the rightness of Gentile attachment to the one true God. While this observation should not be pushed too far, it is not difficult to see how, within such an outlook, a commitment to winning Gentiles to the ‘true worship’ of God might develop and thrive.

1.4. Pilgrimage of the nations and human agency

One objection to allowing this *eschatological* motif to have any bearing upon the *historical* question of Jewish proselytism is that everywhere in the tradition it is God, not his people, who will bring about the turning of

²⁶ In one of the foundation texts of the pilgrimage motif, Isa 66:19-21, some of the rescued Gentiles are even said to be chosen by the Lord as ‘priests’ and ‘Levites’, underlining the equal status of Jew and Gentile within the conception of the tradition. So also, Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 426; Motyer, *Isaiah*, 542-43.

²⁷ For Donaldson, the eschatological pilgrimage motif (and the interest in proselytism more generally) was part of what he calls Judaism’s “patterns of universalism” (Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 51).

²⁸ The salvation of the Gentiles is explicitly linked to Israel’s monotheism in a foundational biblical text of the pilgrimage motif, Isa 45:21-23 – “There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is no one besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” So also in Psalm 96:1-6.

the Gentiles.²⁹ This is true to a point. However, we must not overlook the possibility that the descriptions of the conversion of the nations are heavily theologized, couched in the language of a divine miracle in order to emphasize God's determination of the event.³⁰ Merely observing that the conversion of the nations is God's doing does not undermine the possibility of a role for human agents in this 'miracle'.

Furthermore, several texts in the eschatological pilgrimage motif do imply or presuppose human participation in the conversion of the Gentiles. In what is perhaps a foundational text of the pilgrimage motif reference is made to "an instruction and the word of Yahweh" going forth from Zion (Isa 2:2-3). It is this 'instruction/word' that gives occasion (יָצָא / γάρ) to the journey of the nations to Jerusalem in search of (further) teaching in the ways of the Lord. Thus, some form of proclamation is thought to be the precursor to the conversion of the nations: it would be natural to understand this as the proclamation of the Isaianic prophet himself.

The same idea probably lies behind the oracle of Isa 45:18-23. There the prophet calls on the Gentiles³¹ to give up their idols, assemble before Yahweh (in Jerusalem) and call to him for salvation. Whether or not it was expected that Gentiles would ever hear this particular exhortation, the oracle does reveal the prophet's conviction about the pertinence of his message to the Gentiles. Furthermore, in content (as well as form) this oracle is precisely the sort of 'instruction/word' one might expect to go forth from Zion calling the Gentiles to Jerusalem to learn about the ways of the Lord. Conceptually speaking, Isa 2:2-3 does not seem far away at this point.

The point is strengthened by the description of the servant's role in the first two so called 'servant songs' (Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6). There it is clear that the servant of the Lord performs a mediatorial function, bringing the

²⁹ "Conversion to Judaism, in much of the evidence, is seen as an act of God at the end of history in which Israel plays no part; the actor is God." McKnight, *Light*, 50.

³⁰ An analogy may be found in Israel's divine warrior tradition. That Yahweh is said to defeat his enemies does not at all preclude a role for Israel (or other nations) in achieving this end. Indeed, Jewish zealotry of the period found much of its impetus from such theological descriptions of Yahweh's triumph. On this, see Hengel, M. *Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 AD*. Translated by David Smith. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1989, 271-90.

³¹ "Thus, vv.22-24 are entirely universal. The 'ends of the earth' should allow themselves to be saved – that is the message of this theophany." K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 250; so also C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 175-76; Koole, *Isaiah III* (vol. 1), 485-86.

salvation of Yahweh to the nations. In 49:1-6, in particular, it is noteworthy that – as with 45:18-23 – the entire speech is delivered directly to the Gentiles, governed as it is by the introductory, “Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!” Thus, in a speech directed toward the Gentiles a prophetic figure claims to have a divine commission to bring Yahweh’s salvation to the ends of the earth. Human agency in the conversion of the nations is clearly implied.³²

In Isa 66:18-21 the pilgrimage motif is explicitly connected with human agency and, in particular, with heralds sent out to the nations: “I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations ... to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations” (Isa 66:19).³³ The result of this proclamation is, as we discover in the following verse (v.20), that the nations will come streaming into Jerusalem carrying Israel’s children as an offering to the Lord. That this is more than a reference to the subjugation of the nations is made clear by the fact that some of these Gentiles are to be selected by Yahweh as his priests and Levites (v.21). Again, as with Isa 2:2-3, the pilgrimage of the nations is preceded by a proclamation among the nations. C. Westermann remarks concerning this passage:

This is the first sure and certain mention of mission as we today employ the term – the sending of individuals to distant people in order to proclaim God’s glory among them. This completely corresponds to the mission of the apostles when the church first began.³⁴

A similar idea emerges in *T. Naph.* 8:3-4, a passage referred to above in connection with the pilgrimage motif. There ‘Naphtali’ explains that it is through Judah that salvation will come to Israel and through them to the entire world:

³² If the ‘servant’ is here to be taken as a reference to the nation of Israel the point is still significant, for it would speak of the role of the Jewish people as a whole in mediating the salvation of Yahweh to the Gentiles. For the intriguing and, to my mind, convincing argument that the anonymity of the servant is a deliberate device of the author designed to speak ideally of the prophetic office itself, see Roth, W. M. W. “The Anonymity of the Servant.” *JBL* 83, no. 2 (1964): 171-79.

³³ It is unclear as to whether the ‘survivors’ (פְּלִיטִים /σεσωσμένους) referred to in v.19 are Jewish or Gentile. Either way, human agency in the pilgrimage motif is clear.

³⁴ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 425. Despite the seemingly parochial tone of the quotation, the comment is an apt acknowledgement of the significance of the text for our understanding of Jewish mission.

Through his [Judah's] kingly power God will appear ... to save the race of Israel, and to assemble the righteous from among the nations. If you achieve the good, my children, men and angels will bless you; and God will be glorified through you among the Gentiles.

Here it is clearly the people of Israel, rather than an individual, who are thought to perform a mediatorial role in the salvation of the Gentiles. *Sib. Or.* 3.732-740 furnishes another example. Immediately following the passage about the eschatological salvation of the nations (*Sib. Or.* 3.710-731, noted above) comes a vigorous exhortation to the 'Greeks' to repent and serve God: "Entreat the great-hearted Immortal ... Serve the great God so that you may have a share in these things." The reference to 'entreating the Immortal' in 3.733 is a conscious reflection upon 716-719 in which, in the context of the pilgrimage motif, the Gentiles are made to declare: "Come, let us all fall on the ground and entreat the immortal king ... let us all ponder the Law of the Most High God." Thus, what is essentially an eschatological hope in 716ff. becomes the subject of an explicit historical exhortation in 733. In the tradition of Isa 2:2-3 *et al* an 'instruction/word' is presented to the nations calling on them to turn and learn the 'ways' or, in this case, the 'Law', of the Lord. The same thought emerges in Wis 18:4 which describes Israel as those "*through whom* the imperishable light of the law was to be given to the world (δι' ὧν ἡμελλεν τὸ ἀφθαρτον νόμου φῶς τῷ αἰῶνι δίδοσθαι). The prepositional phrase makes plain that God's people were perceived to be the agents of God's Torah for the nations.³⁵

This is not to suggest that these references point to actual missionary activity on the part of Jews in the Second Temple era. All that is being argued here is that a conceptual framework conducive for mission was clearly present among some Jews of the period. First, the texts reveal an ambivalence on the part of Jews toward Gentiles: denunciation of pagan worship, on the one hand, and integration with pagan society, on the other – precisely the attitudes one would expect of those with a mission outlook. Secondly, it is clear that some Jews held out a grand hope that one day the Gentile world (or a part thereof) would, together with Israel, serve the one true God. This belief was not merely part of Israel's sense of supremacy

³⁵ Winston describes this passage as indicative of a tendency in Hellenistic and rabbinic Judaism to "attempt to interpret Israel's acceptance of the Torah as including the obligation to spread Torah's teachings to the Gentile nations." Winston, D. *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 43, *The Anchor Bible*. New York: Doubleday, 1979, 311.

over the nations but an implication of the conviction that Yahweh was the Lord of the whole world. Moreover, thirdly, although this ‘conversion’ of the Gentiles was regularly attributed to God’s doing, several texts imply that this ‘miracle’ would also involve human agents and, in particular, heralds who would issue an ‘instruction’ designed to draw the Gentiles to Jerusalem for further tutoring in the ways of God.

While these convictions do not constitute evidence of missionary activity they do provide a reason for taking any such evidence very seriously indeed. They also offer a conceptual context within which the evidence may be understood.³⁶

2. Evidence of Jewish missionizing

We begin with an assessment of the evidence for explicit missionizing activity on the part of some Jews in the Second Temple period.

2.1. *Evidence of Jewish proselytizing in Rome in 139 B.C.*

According to the text of two Byzantine epitomes of the early first century (A.D.) writer Valerius Maximus,³⁷ there was an expulsion of Jews from Rome in 139 B.C. by order of the praetor Cornelius Hispanus. The reason given for the expulsion, in both versions of the text, was the efforts of Jews to transmit their religion to the Romans (Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 1.3.3).³⁸ The epitome of Julius Paris (A.D. fourth century) states:

Cn. Cornelius Hispalus, Foreign Praetor, in the Consulship of M. Popillius Laenas and L. Calpurnius, ordered the astrologers by edict to leave Rome and Italy within ten days. For they spread profitable darkness with their lies over frivolous and foolish minds by fallacious interpretation of the stars. The same Hispalus made the Jews go home, who had tried to infect the Roman manners [Romanos inficere mores conati erant] with the cult of Jupiter Sabazius (Shackleton Bailey, *LCL*).

³⁶ Goodman devotes one paragraph (*Mission*, 61-62) to the eschatological pilgrimage motif.

³⁷ Valerius Maximus compiled his collection of sayings during the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) and published them in the work, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*. The passages found in the two epitomators are based on the section in this work titled *Of Superstitions* (1.3).

³⁸ On this see Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* vol. 1, 357-360; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 74-75.

The epitome of Januarius Nepotianus (A.D. fourth-fifth century) states:

Therefore Cornelius Hispalus expelled the astrologers from the city, ordering them to leave Italy within ten days, lest they tout foreign knowledge. The same Hispalus banished the Jews too from the city –they had tried to pass on their religion to the Romans [qui Romanis tradere sacra sua conati erant]) and threw out their private altars from public places. (Shackleton Bailey, *LCL*)

While both epitomists are relatively late there is no inherent reason to reject the evidence they provide, especially since, seemingly independent of one another, they agree in their reference to Jewish proselytizing.³⁹ The differences in the accounts – the reference by Paris to the cult of Sabazius⁴⁰ and the mention by Nepotianus of Jewish ‘altars’⁴¹ – may, as Carleton Paget observes, “serve to enhance the significance of the point at which they do in fact agree,” namely the reason for the expulsion. An expulsion of Jews (and of Egyptian astrologers) for transmitting their rites is made all the more believable in historical terms by the fact that the period was marked by a disdain on the part of the elite of Rome toward the increasing popularity of Eastern cults and ideas.⁴² Even Scot McKnight concedes: “However confused the report might be,

³⁹ Goodman notes the discrepancies between the accounts and then seeks to offer clarification of the whole affair (Goodman, *Mission*, 82-83). He believes that what is being referred to was something “rather less than the conversion of proselytes to Judaism.” In short, he surmises that Jews simply brought their new cult into the public life of the city and that various Romans, impressed by these Jews, set up altars in honour of the Jewish God. This led in turn led to their expulsion from Rome. The scenario accords well with Goodman’s thesis about the absence of Jewish mission in the period but it is not without its problems. First, if Romans took the initiative in honouring the Jews in this “conventional Roman fashion” (83), the expulsion of Jews appears a rather extreme measure: it is not impossible that it happened this way but it is surely more understandable if the Jews were perceived to be the instigators. Secondly, something about which epitomators both agree is that the initiative in spreading the Jewish ways did in fact come from the Jews: Nepotianus writes *qui Romanis tradere sacra sua conati erant*; Paris writes *Romanos inficere mores conati erant*.

⁴⁰ The reference in Paris to the cult of Jupiter Sabazius (a Phrygian deity corresponding to the Greek Dionysus) may be explained by the similarity between the name Sabazius and that of the Jewish ‘Sabbath’. So Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 359; Schürer, *History*, 74;

⁴¹ The reference in Nepotianus to Jewish altars may allude to items in synagogues (suggested by Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 358). On the other hand, it may refer to altars to the Jewish God erected by new adherents to Judaism.

⁴² So Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors I*, 357.

the evidence nonetheless speaks clearly of Jewish attempts to proselytize at some level.”⁴³

2.2. *Evidence of Jewish proselytizing in Rome in A.D. 19*

That a great number of Jews was expelled from Rome in A.D. 19 (under Tiberius) is widely attested. The relevant passages follow:

Josephus *Ant.* 18.81-84. There was a certain Jew, a complete scoundrel, who had fled his own country because he was accused of transgressing certain laws and feared punishment on this account. Just at this time he was resident in Rome and played the part of an interpreter of the Mosaic law and its wisdom [προσεποιεῖτο μὲν ἐξηγεῖσθαι σοφίαν νόμων τῶν Μωσέως]. He enlisted three confederates not a whit better in character than himself; and when Fulvia, a woman of high rank who had become a Jewish proselyte [προσεληλυθυῖαν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς], began to meet with them regularly, they urged her to send purple and gold to the temple in Jerusalem. They, however, took the gifts and used them for their own personal expenses, for it was this that had been their intention in asking for gifts from the start. Saturninus, the husband of Fulvia, at the instigation of his wife, duly reported this to Tiberius, whose friend he was, whereupon the latter ordered the whole Jewish community to leave Rome. The consuls drafted four thousand of these Jews for military service and sent them to the island of Sardinia; but they penalised a good many of them, who refused to serve for fear of breaking the Jewish law. And so because of the wickedness of four men the Jews were banished from the city (trans. L. H. Feldman *LCL*).

Tacitus *Ann.* 2.85. Another debate dealt with the proscription of the Egyptian and Jewish rites, and a senatorial edict directed that four thousand descendants of enfranchised slaves, tainted with that superstition [ea superstitione infecta] and suitable in point of age, were to be shipped to Sardinia and there employed in suppressing brigandage: “if they succumbed to the pestilential climate, it was a cheap loss.” The rest had orders to leave Italy, unless they had renounced their impious ceremonial [profanos ritus exuissent] by a given date (trans. J. Jackson *LCL*).

Suetonius *Tib.* 36. He [Tiberius] abolished foreign cults [externas caerimonias], especially the Egyptian and the Jewish rites, compelling all who were addicted to such superstitions to burn their religious vestments and all their paraphernalia. Those of the Jews who were of military age he assigned to provinces of less healthy climate, ostensibly to serve in the army; the others of that same race or of similar beliefs [reliquos gentis eiusdem vel similia sectantes urbe summovit] he banished from the city, on pain of slavery for life if they did not obey. He banished the astrologers as well, but pardoned such as begged for indulgence and promised to give up the art (trans. J. C. Rolfe *LCL*).

⁴³ McKnight, *Light*, 73. He adds immediately, “Whether these were political or religious attempts and whether these were exceptional or typical are not known.”

Cassius Dio 57.18.5a. As the Jews had flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways [συχνούς τῶν ἐπιχωρίων ἐς τὰ σφέτερα ἔθη μεθιστάντων], he banished most of them (trans. E. Cary *LCL*).⁴⁴

The minor historical differences between the accounts are several.⁴⁵ However, it is the reason given for the expulsion that concerns us at this point. Tacitus and Suetonius provide no explanation at all, Josephus puts it down to the conduct of four Jewish scoundrels and Cassius Dio, the latest of the sources, explicitly connects it with widespread proselytizing on the part of the Jews.

Goodman rejects Cassius Dio's explanation of events on the grounds that he is both late and the only one of the sources to make mention of missionary activity.⁴⁶ Williams further dismisses the explanation on the grounds that evidence for Jewish proselytism in Rome in the period is slender.⁴⁷ She then ventures her own interpretation which, it must be noted, finds no support in any of the four sources.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ M. H. Williams (Williams, M. H. "The Expulsion of the Jews From Rome in A. D. 19." *Latomus* 48 (1989): 765-84, 767) and M. Goodman (Goodman, *Mission*, 83), cast suspicion over the textual validity of this passage (before moving on in their respective articles to treat the text as original). The statement is preserved as a mere citation of Dio by the seventh century writer John of Antioch. However, this does not make the passage "a fragment without a context" (Williams, "Expulsion," 767), for the context of John's quotation places it somewhere within Dio's description of the events of A.D. 17-20, thus tallying with the date given by Tacitus (i.e., A.D. 19), as Stern rightly notes (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors* II, 70). The fact that the widespread expulsion of the Jews at this time is attested by two earlier Roman authors makes it likely that Cassius Dio too would refer to the event.

⁴⁵ For instance, Tacitus and Josephus mention the involvement of the senate, while Suetonius and Cassius Dio say it was the emperor's doing. Suetonius speaks of Jews being sent to various 'provinces', whereas Tacitus and Josephus refer exclusively to Sardinia. For a full (if somewhat exaggerated) discussion of the differences, see Williams, "Expulsion."

⁴⁶ Both Goodman and Williams are insistent that Josephus makes no mention of mission activity. Goodman, *Mission*, 68, 83; Williams, "Expulsion."

⁴⁷ She notes that only seven of the 500 Jewish inscriptions refer to proselytes. This is a weak argument since, as Carleton Paget observes, most of the inscriptions date from A.D. third or fourth centuries (Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 89) and, in any case, there is little reason to assume that all proselytes would have distinguished themselves from Jews. Proselytes were regarded as full Jews.

⁴⁸ She notes that between A.D. 14-23 the city of Rome was marked by civil unrest, mostly relating to the shortage of corn supply. A.D. 19, in particular, was a year of climactic public remonstrations. On the grounds that Jews were mostly of the poorer

That Cassius Dio is late does not in itself rule out his explanation of events,⁴⁹ particularly if, as will be argued, the other sources provide partial confirmation of proselytism. We begin with the earliest of our sources, Josephus. While Goodman and Williams deny that *Ant.* 18.81-84 contains any reference to mission activity, this is a rather simplistic reading of the matter. It is true that Josephus' account concentrates the reader's attention on the financial misdeeds of four Jewish scoundrels, but in such an obviously defensive account⁵⁰ it is important to assess not only what the writer *states* but also what his words *imply* or, indeed, (attempt to) *obscure*. First, it is not without significance that the entire account revolves around a woman who is described as *προσεληλυθυῖαν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς*. As a Roman 'convert', Fulvia presents us with a specific example of Dio's more generalized reference to many 'native' converts. The fact that two explanations of this event⁵¹ refer at all to the apparently rare phenomenon of pagan conversion to Judaism is historically revealing. This point takes on further significance when we note that the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius also contain references to those who had attached

classes and were known for their "tendency to take to the streets" (782), Williams proposes that the unruly Jews became conspicuous in their protests that year and so were expelled by a 'hyper-sensitive' Tiberius. Astonishingly, Williams claims that this interpretation "best explains all the evidence we have" (782). However, it does not explain why no mention whatsoever is made of this scenario in the sources. This is especially strange in view of the fact, as Carleton Paget notes ("Jewish Proselytism," 89), that Tacitus records both the unrest connected with corn and the expulsion of the Jews in close proximity to each other without drawing any connections. Furthermore, it does not explain why in three of the sources the expulsion also involves members of the Egyptian cults.

⁴⁹ Goodman argues that, if original, the passage should be interpreted only as evidence for "a new Roman awareness of the possibility of proselytism since the end of the first century, and perhaps as evidence for a real proselytizing mission in Cassius Dio's day" (*Mission*, 83). But, we may ask: What "new Roman awareness" of the possibility of Jewish mission? On Goodman's own assessment, "it was only in the third century that we can be certain that some rabbis began assuming the desirability of a mission to proselytize" (*Mission*, 152). It is difficult to see how the growing assumption of 'some rabbis' could have come to influence Cassius Dio's understanding of the expulsion of all the Jews from Rome.

⁵⁰ Josephus' final and somewhat 'proverbial' words ("And so because of the wickedness of four men the Jews were banished from the city.") suggest that he seeks to defend the actions of the whole by blaming the few.

⁵¹ By exaggerating the differences between the accounts of Dio and Tacitus, Williams ("The Expulsion," 767-68) thinks the two passages refer to two separate events. That two *mass* expulsions of the Jews took place during this period is extremely unlikely.

themselves to the Jews: the phrase “*ea superstitione infecta*” (*Ann.* 2.85) probably refers not to those born Jews but those subsequently ‘tainted’ with the religion; the distinction in *Tib.* 36 between those “of that same race” and those “of similar beliefs” (“*vel similia sectantes*”) must also refer to non-Jewish adherents to Judaism.⁵² Thus, it emerges that all four sources, with varying degrees of specificity, mention the phenomenon of pagan attachment to the faith of the Jews. This striking element in such diverse materials is best explained by positing that all four writers were aware – with varying degrees of interest – of a situation which only Dio states explicitly.

Secondly, Josephus’ account centres not only on a convert but on those dedicated to the convert’s instruction, that is, on those who could easily have been perceived as ‘proselytizers’. In 18.81 we are introduced to a lone itinerant of dubious origin who took on the role (*προσοποιέω*) of a Jewish teacher: *ἐξηγεῖσθαι σοφίαν νόμων τῶν Μωυσέως*. He does not appear to have performed this function ‘officially’ – that is, through the synagogue – but privately,⁵³ perhaps assuming the position of a household philosopher. This one teacher quickly becomes four teachers,⁵⁴ and the reference to them recouping their ‘expenses’ (*τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀναλώμασιν*) suggests that all four considered the roles as something of a vocation. Whether or not we are to suppose that these characters were responsible for Fulvia’s initial ‘conversion’, the fact that they clearly assumed responsibility for her ongoing conformity to the worship of God accords well with Dio’s comment about Jews turning native Romans toward Jewish customs (*ἐς τὰ σφέτερα*).

It is true, as Williams emphasizes, that some elements in Josephus’ account are suspiciously a-historical: Why can he not supply the names of the teachers, or even their place of origin? Why does he not narrate their fate? Why the rather obvious and sermonic ending?⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the

⁵² This point is noted by Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors II*, 71, 73; Carleton Paget, “Jewish Proselytism,” 89. It is conceded by Williams, “The Expulsion,” 770, 772, who explains it as misleading attempt on the part of Tacitus to make the Jews look even worse.

⁵³ This is implied by the reference to Fulvia meeting with the ‘interpreters’ on a regular basis (*ἐπιφοιτᾶω*). That this was not merely a meeting occasioned by friendship is implied by the use of the didactically significant word, *πείθω*, and by the content of the persuasion itself – the need to send offerings to the Jerusalem temple.

⁵⁴ That the other three are also to be understood as teachers is clear from the use of the plurals verbs in 18.82.

⁵⁵ See Williams “Expulsion,” 775-77; Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul*, 92-93.

conclusion that the account is purely ‘novelistic’ and akin to a work of ‘New Comedy’ or ‘Hellenistic romance’ is probably to overstate the matter.⁵⁶ We should rather seek to explain the account in terms of Josephus’ rhetorical intentions, which, as previously noted, are clearly revealed in the concluding pronouncement: “And so because of the wickedness of four men (διὰ κακίαν τεσσάρων ἀνδρῶν) the Jews were banished from the city.” I propose that Josephus’ story is not so much a ‘fiction’ but an historical sleight of hand. Josephus, like Dio, knew that widespread proselytism was at the centre of the controversy so, rather than denying it outright or attempting to defend it, he tries to shift the blame from Jewish mission *per se* to one isolated and perverse example of mission. This is not to say that Josephus created the story from scratch. The account may, in fact, point to historical realities. It is just this sort of scandalous event, occurring in the upper echelons of Roman society,⁵⁷ that might have triggered the senate (or Tiberius himself) to take such extreme measures against a group of people long known for “converting many natives to their ways”, to use Dio’s description.⁵⁸ This interpretation of events has in its favour the fact that it reasonably accounts for all the main elements revealed in the four sources at our disposal.⁵⁹ It is precisely this that leads even as skeptical a writer on Jewish mission as McKnight to conclude:

⁵⁶ Williams’ assessment of the novelistic element verges on the fantastic: “As for the villain of the piece in the Fulvia story, the plausible rascal who set himself up as a bogus teacher of the Mosaic law, he vanishes into thin air, taking his stolen gold and purple and his three accomplices with him. As a folk-tale this works perfectly – the underdog triumphs and authority is made to look faintly ridiculous. As history, it does not” (“The Expulsion,” 777). This comment is wide of the mark. It is clear that Josephus is trying to cast his teachers as anything but heroes who outwit the authorities. His aim is to lay the blame fairly and squarely at the feet of these rogues.

⁵⁷ Fulvia’s husband, Saturninus, is said by Josephus to have been a friend of Tiberius (18.83).

⁵⁸ Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch*, 63, rightly draw attention to the wide social diffusion of Judaism implied by the evidence of the *senatus consultum* of A.D. 19: Tacitus refers to lower-class converts (“descendants of enfranchised slaves”) and Josephus to an upper class one (Fulvia).

⁵⁹ Similarly, Georgi, *Opponents*, 95, and Stern, *Greek and Roman Authors II*, 365. Goodman rejects this interpretation suggesting that if proselytism on the part of the Jews were that well known, Josephus would have done better to defend Jewish actions than to hide them (*Mission*, 83). What Josephus would or would not have been better to do is difficult to assess. It seems to me, however, that the account as it stands is not an outright denial but an effective shifting of emphasis.

Admittedly, this evidence is solid and the data point plausibly to missionary activity of some proportion in Rome ... I would like to hazard the suggestion that the evidence from Rome is perhaps only an exceptional and sporadic situation.⁶⁰

McKnight offers no explanation of why, in A.D. 19, the practice of Jewish mission should all of a sudden emerge from nowhere, and Feldman is right to respond by pointing to this activity in the capital as evidence of Jewish boldness and confidence in mission: in other cities of the empire, where official restrictions will not have been so great, it would presumably have been easier to engage in proselytizing.⁶¹

2.3. *Jewish mission in Romans 2:17-24?*

Before leaving Josephus' account of the scurrilous Jewish instructors in Rome, it is worth noting that the episode may find partial confirmation in another Jewish document composed almost half a century earlier and written to the capital itself. In a highly rhetorical speech ostensibly directed at a Jewish teacher, the apostle Paul writes:

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Rom 2:17-24

F. Watson⁶² notes that several aspects of Paul's denunciation coincide with Josephus' description of the renegade Jewish teacher in Rome in A.D. 19. First, it is striking that Paul's attack is directed at a single Jewish instructor whose self-conception is as one who teaches *ὁ νόμος* to non-Jews.⁶³ Secondly, Paul too accuses his instructor of stealing (*κλέπτω*). Thirdly,

⁶⁰ McKnight, *Light*, 74.

⁶¹ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 304. That we do not have evidence of such activity in other cities only illustrates, argues Feldman, the fact that we possess little evidence in general for areas outside the capital.

⁶² Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 114.

⁶³ That Paul's teacher instructs Gentiles is clear both from the context and from the reference to guiding the *τυφλός*, being a light to those in *σκοτός* and correcting the *ἄφρων*, phrases that could not apply to (synagogue) instruction of Jews.

Paul's reference to ἱεροσυλέω could well connote a crime against the Jerusalem temple such as that committed by Josephus' instructors.⁶⁴ Fourthly, Paul says that the scurrilous activity of this Jewish teacher resulted in the slandering of God's name among the Gentiles. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome by order of the pagan emperor and his senate would certainly constitute such a βλασφημία.⁶⁵ Overall, the 'co-incidences' are striking. If, in broad terms, Josephus' account is to be believed, Paul's tirade against a Jewish teacher of the Gentiles whose deceptive conduct led to a grand dishonouring of God's name among pagans could not have failed to remind his Roman (Jewish)⁶⁶ readers of the scandal which took place in their city just 35 years before.

If a connection between Rom 2:17-24 and *Ant.* 18.81-84 is not accepted, the former may still provide further independent evidence of missionizing activity by Jews (in Rome at least). McKnight suggests that the Romans passage speaks of "nothing other than an attitude of national privilege."⁶⁷ This is difficult to sustain. The Jew is clearly a teacher whose concerns revolve around the proclamation (κηρύσσω v.21) of the Torah and Torah-obedience. Thus, at the very least, as Donaldson points out, Rom 2:17-24 demonstrates "Paul's thorough and intimate familiarity with the type of religious self-consciousness which made the attraction of God-fearers and the reception of proselytes possible."⁶⁸

What ever one's assessment of the connection between Rom 2:17-24 and the events described in *Ant.* 18.81-84, it remains that proselytism does seem the most likely explanation for the expulsion of Jews from Rome in A.D. 19. That a similar event – for precisely the same reasons – appears to

⁶⁴ A few commentators have taken this as a reference to Jewish complicity in the robbery of pagan temples: Käsemann, *Romans*, 71; Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Röme I*, 150. However, others suggest the possibility of 'sacrilege' against the Jerusalem temple: Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 114; Bruce, *Romans*, 93; Cranfield, *Romans I*, 169-70; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 114. *T. Levi* 14.5 speaks of Jews robbing the Jerusalem temple.

⁶⁵ Whether or not the remaining accusation of 'adultery' also coincides with the incident involving Fulvia and her male instructors, as Watson suggests, is difficult to determine. Watson writes: "Josephus tells how the proselyte Fulvia began to meet regularly with the Jewish teacher and his companions, and it is easy to see how the charge of adultery could arise from such meetings as these" (Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 114).

⁶⁶ Whether the Roman congregation(s) contained many born Jews at the time of Paul's writing is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it is clear from the content of the epistle that the Roman Christians were immersed in Jewish traditions.

⁶⁷ McKnight, *Light*, 105.

⁶⁸ Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 283.

have occurred in the same city a century and half before makes this conclusion all the more significant.

2.4. *The conversion of the house of Adiabene*

Another passage in *Antiquities* recounts the conversions of certain members of the royal house of Adiabene in northern Mesopotamia circa A.D. 30.⁶⁹ Josephus devotes an unusually large amount of space to the story of this family (20.17-96)⁷⁰ but, as Schiffman notes,⁷¹ it is the account of the conversions of the Queen Mother, Helena, and King Izates (20.34-46) that takes pride of place in the narrative. This is made all the clearer by the fact that Josephus introduces the entire section with the words: “At the same time Helena, queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates became converts to Judaism (εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον) under the following circumstances ...” (20.17).

Sent away from Adiabene for his own safety the young prince Izates is given into the protective care of the king of Charax Spasini until such time as he could assume charge of his homeland. It is there that Izates comes into contact with a Jewish teacher named Ananias:

Now during the time when Izates resided at Charax Spasini, a certain Jewish merchant named Ananias visited the king’s [i.e., king of Charax Spasini] wives and taught them to worship God [ἐδίδασκεν αὐτὰς τὸν θεὸν σέβειν] after the manner of the Jewish tradition.⁷² It was through their agency that he was brought to the notice of Izates, whom he similarly

⁶⁹ The event is also referred to in rabbinic literature: M. *Nazir* 3.6; T. *Sukkah* 1.1; *Bereshith (Genesis) Rabbah* 46.11.

⁷⁰ On the sources and general historicity of Josephus’ account, see Schiffman, “The Conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene,” 293-312; Neusner, “The Conversion of Adiabene to Judaism,” 60-66.

⁷¹ Schiffman, “Conversion,” 297. Schiffman explains Josephus’ motivations for including such a long account of the Adiabene family as partly historical – the family’s part in the Jewish war against Rome was significant – and apologetic, in as much as the story refutes the suggestion that Jews hated non-Jews, a theme Josephus was also to explore in *Against Apion*.

⁷² Strangely, Goodman cites Ananias’ attempt here to persuade the royal family at Charax Spasini “to worship God” as an example of ‘apologetic mission’ (*Mission*, 86-87). By this he means simply “active Jewish enthusiasm for Gentile recognition of the power of the Jewish God” (86). This is hardly a convincing reading of the goal of Ananias’ instruction, especially since the passage says that the women were taught to worship God ὡς Ἰουδαίοις πᾶτριον. Such a phrase could not possibly refer to the mere recognition of God’s power.

won over [ὁμοίως συνανέπεισεν] with the co-operation of the women (20.34-35 trans. L. H. Feldman *LCL*).

Returning home to Adiabene the newly converted Izates discovers that his mother, Helena, “had likewise been instructed by another Jew and had been brought over to their laws (ὕφ’ ἑτέρου τινὸς Ἰουδαίου διδαχθεῖσαν εἰς τοὺς ἐκείνων μετακεκομίσθαι νόμους 20.35). Excited by his mother’s new-found devotion to the Jewish law Izates wishes to confirm his faith by being circumcised.⁷³ It is at this point in the narrative that the question of the necessity of circumcision dominates. Ananias, who has traveled with Izates back to Adiabene and is now in the king’s service, advises Izates against circumcision on the grounds that it might be interpreted by his countrymen as a denial of their culture. Furthermore, as Ananias explains, the king could “worship God even without being circumcised if indeed he had fully decided to be a devoted adherent of Judaism” (20.41).⁷⁴ Nevertheless, some time later another Jew, named Eleazar, came from Galilee and urged the king to be circumcised. The king promptly submitted and was circumcised.⁷⁵

⁷³ Schiffman, “Conversion,” 302-03, points out that in 20.35 Izates is presented as a God-fearer (θεὸν σέβειν) until in 20.38 he desires to become a full proselyte.

⁷⁴ It is impossible to discern what technical status Izates will have had in the mind of Ananias. Schiffman, “Conversion,” 303, suggests that Ananias believed under the circumstances ‘God-fearer’ or ‘semi-proselyte’ status was all that God would require of the king, an opinion which Eleazar clearly did not share. G. Gilbert, “The Making of a Jew,” 299-313, on the other hand, draws attention to the fact that some Jews in antiquity believed “circumcision was not necessary for establishing Jewish identity” (301). He proposes that Ananias considered Izates to be a full Jew before his circumcision, a view that may not have been shared by Josephus himself. That some Jews in Alexandria held Ananias’ view is clear from Philo’s castigation of the “spiritual allegorists” who had abandoned Sabbath keeping, certain feasts and circumcision and yet who still retain Jewish identity (*On the Migration of Abraham* 89-93). While Philo clearly does not agree with the allegorists, in *Questions and Answers on Exodus 2.2* he concedes that a προσήλυτος need not necessarily be circumcised, for “he is one who circumcises not his uncircumcision but his desires and sensual pleasures and the other passions of the soul ... But what is the mind of the προσήλυτος if not alienation from belief in many gods and familiarity with honouring the one God and Father of all.” Donaldson offers yet another category. He refers to the “natural law proselyte”, someone who has “rejected idolatry, worshipped the God of Israel, revered the temple, and followed a basic moral code,” and was thereby, “acceptable to God” (Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 65).

⁷⁵ On the process of Jewish conversion in the period see Schiffman, “Conversion,” 304-06; Cohen, “Conversion to Judaism,” 31-45; Cohen, “Rabbinic Conversion Ceremony,” 177-203.

Goodman denies the significance of this story for the question of Jewish proselytism:

In describing the two Jewish teachers of the Adiabeneans, Ananias and Eleazar, Josephus made no suggestion that any such teachers travelled abroad specifically in order to win converts or even to provide instruction. On the contrary, Josephus made it clear that Eleazar's intention in coming to Adiabene was not to convert anyone but simply to pay his respects to the royal family. The initiative in this, as in all cases, came from the would-be converts, not the converter.⁷⁶

In the case of Ananias, it is correct to note that Josephus does not suggest the man made his journey to visit the royal wives of Charax Spasini in order to convert or teach them. But how significant is this observation? The reality is, no reason at all – missionary, commercial or otherwise – is given for the visit. And in any case, the point is not whether Ananias was self-consciously a traveling ‘missionary’ but whether as a Jew he deliberately engaged in winning non-Jews over to the worship of the Jewish God. This much is clear. Having said this, several facts may imply that Ananias did consider himself to be more than an ἔμπορος. First, no mention at all is made of Ananias' business dealings. Wherever he appears in the narrative his sole role is that of a Jewish instructor (20.34-35, 40-42, 46). Secondly, it is clear from the account that after Izates' conversion Ananias enters into the king's service, returning with him to Adiabene where he remains for the rest of the narrative. This is difficult to understand unless Ananias was as self-consciously a ‘teacher’ as he was a ‘merchant’. This interpretation is confirmed, thirdly, by the explicit designation of Ananias as ὁ διδάσκαλος of the king (20.46), and this in the same breath as the mention of the king's physician (ὁ ἰατρός 20.45). In light of this, it is not difficult to accept Carleton Paget's suggestion that just as Paul the ‘tent maker’ was also self-consciously Paul the ‘missionary’ so too Ananias the ‘merchant’ may have thought of himself as Ananias the ‘teacher’ of Gentiles.

In the case of Eleazar, Goodman is incorrect to insist that his purpose in coming to Adiabene was merely to pay his respects to the king. Josephus states:

⁷⁶ Goodman, *Mission*, 84. McKnight adopts a similarly minimalist position when he writes: “This text does not teach that there were such things as Jewish missionaries or that these supposed missionaries were zealous; rather, it provides evidence for traveling merchants being involved in explaining Judaism to those who were interested in it” (*Light*, 56).

Afterwards, however, since he had not completely given up his desire, another Jew, named Eleazar, who came from Galilee and who had a reputation for being extremely strict when it came to the ancestral laws, urged him to carry out the rite. For when he came to him to pay him his respects (ἐπεὶ γὰρ εἰσηλθεν ἀσπασόμενος αὐτόν) and found him reading the law of Moses, he said: “In your ignorance, O king, you are guilty of the greatest offence against the law and thereby against God” (20.43-44 trans. L. H. Feldman *LCL*).

The notion of a well-known Jewish teacher⁷⁷ traveling from Galilee to Adiabene merely to ‘pay respects’ to a Gentile king is historically unlikely and not at all demanded by the text. Where in 20.44 we read ἐπεὶ γὰρ εἰσηλθεν ἀσπασόμενος αὐτόν this does not reveal the purpose of the whole visit – no purpose construction is present – but merely the circumstances in which the conversation and subsequent circumcision took place. In other words, it was when Eleazar entered the court to offer his official greeting that these events occurred. The explanation of why he traveled to Adiabene in the first place is more naturally (albeit implicitly) found in Josephus’ introductory sentence: Eleazar was zealous for tradition and wanted to urge the half-converted king to carry out the rite of circumcision.

As for Goodman’s insistence that Eleazar and Ananias took no initiative, this is a most unusual reading of the relevant passages. Ananias taught the royal wives of Charax Spasini to worship God (ἐδίδασκειν αὐτὰς τὸν θεὸν σέβειν) and then (together with the women) persuaded Izates to do the same (συνανέπεισεν). There is nothing in the account whatsoever to imply that these converts initiated their own instruction. Actually, the only initiative taken by the converts is in seeking to win over another to their new-found faith. The fact that the women helped Ananias persuade Izates to worship God (note the prefix συν-) is in itself a striking example of ‘Jewish’ commitment to promote allegiance to the true God among non-believers.

To these three examples of deliberate proselytizing (Ananias, the royal women of Charax Spasini and Eleazar) can be added a fourth. In 20.35 we learn that the Queen mother of Adiabene had, in Izates’ absence, been converted by yet another Jew about whom we are unfortunately given no

⁷⁷ Eleazar is not described as having a profession (as in the case of Ananias). However, the fact that he had a reputation for strict interpretation of Jewish tradition (περὶ τὰ πάτρια δοκῶν ἀκριβῆς) implies that his vocation was in fact that of a Jewish teacher and, in this case at least, a traveling one.

details. Here again, Goodman's insistence that would-be converts took the initiative does not fit with Josephus' description of events at all: "Helena had likewise been instructed by another Jew and had been brought over to their laws" (Ἑλένην ὁμοίως ὑφ' ἑτέρου τινὸς Ἰουδαίου διδαχθεῖσαν εἰς τοὺς ἐκείνων μετακεκομίσθαι νόμους).

Whether or not we are to describe Ananias, Eleazar and the unnamed teacher of 20.35 as 'missionaries' in the technical sense is not clear, and is not really the point. These three Jews took it upon themselves to instruct Gentiles and to convert them to the worship of the Jewish God. That the royal women of Charax Spasini imitated their teacher in seeking to convert Izates too is also striking.

We note finally that Izates was in part responsible for the conversion of his brother and his brother's kinsmen. Josephus notes that, "Monobazus and his kinsmen, seeing that the king because of his pious worship of God had won the admiration of all men, became eager to abandon their ancestral religion and to adopt the practices of the Jews" (20.75). They are promptly circumcised. We note, however, that it was Izates' 'good worship' (εὐσέβεια) not his active persuasion that influenced the others to adopt Judaism.

2.5. *Philo and the mission of the market-place (Special Laws 1.320-323)*

In his discussion of the commands against temple prostitution in Deut. 23:18 Philo launches an attack on the mystery religions of Alexandria, contrasting the dark secrecy associated with unprofitable religions (the mysteries) with the great openness of a profitable one (Judaism). In so doing, Philo presents us with evidence of his own missionary outlook.

For tell me, ye mystics, if these things are good and profitable, why do you shut yourselves up in profound darkness and reserve their benefits for three or four alone, when by producing them in the midst of the market-place you might extend them to every man and thus enable all to share in security a better and happier life? For virtue has no room in her home for a grudging spirit.³²¹ Let those who work mischief feel shame and seek holes and corners of the earth and profound darkness, there lie hid and keep the multitude of their iniquities veiled out of the sight of all. But let those whose actions serve the common weal use freedom of speech and walk in daylight through the midst of the market-place, ready to converse with crowded gatherings, to let the clear sunlight shine upon their own life and through the two most royal senses, sight and hearing, to render good service to the assembled groups, who through the one behold spectacles as marvellous as they are delightful, and through the other feast on the fresh sweet draught of words which are wont to gladden the minds of such as are not wholly averse to learning.³²² Cannot you see that nature also does not conceal any of her glorious and admirable works ... [here follows a list of natural examples]

³²³ Were it not well, then, that we should follow her intentions and display in public all that is profitable and necessary for the benefit of those who are worthy to use it? (Trans. F. H. Colson, *LCL*)

Philo's argument is striking. The 'mystics' (μύσται) conduct their ceremonies in secrecy and with only a few initiates precisely because their actions are mischievous (βλαβερός) and lawless (άνομία). If it were otherwise they would produce their teachings in the market-place for the benefit of all (321). By contrast, those whose religious activities promote the common good (τοις δὲ τὰ κοινωφελῆ δρῶσιν) ought with frankness of speech (παρρησία) to address great crowds of people (πολυανθρώποις ὁμίλοις) in the centre of the market-place, presenting their teachings to all (προτιθέναι πᾶσι) in the clear light of day (μεθ' ἡμέραν / ἡλίῳ καθαρῷ).

That these 'open' and 'beneficial' teachings are those of Judaism is obvious.⁷⁸ The significance of this passage, then, is clear. Despite Philo's verbose language, he makes it plain that in his view the teachings of the Torah must not be hidden but, instead, ought to be promoted widely amongst the pagans of Alexandria.⁷⁹ This sense of obligation throughout, implied by the frequent use of imperative verbs, is probably to be explained by Philo's belief that the teachings of Moses are not merely individually 'beneficial' (χρήσιμος) but 'urgent' or 'necessary' (ἀναγκᾶς), serving the common good (κοινωφελία).

The fact that Philo is so adamant Judaism must be proclaimed in the market-place ought to be taken as evidence of his own missionary activity or at least of a missionary ideal which found some historical expression in Alexandria and of which he thoroughly approved. Otherwise, the discussion would fail entirely to have any effect amongst his Jewish readers in Alexandria, for the dissonance between his words and reality would be plain to all. That the principal audience of the discussion is the Jewish community is clear from the introduction to the section (315-319).

⁷⁸ This is put beyond doubt by the paragraph introducing Philo's discussion (319). There Philo contrasts the teachings of the mysteries, which he describes as belonging to the darkness of the night (τὰ νύκτα καὶ σκότος), with those of Moses, which he says are worthy of the full light of day (τὰ ἡμέρας καὶ φωτὸς ἄξια). The entire discussion to follow is characterized precisely by this night/day metaphor. Furthermore, the phrase "a draft of words" (λόγων ποτίμων), employed here in relation to the market-place teaching Philo insists upon, is used also in Philo's famous description of the synagogue service (*Spec. Laws* 2.62) to describe the instruction of the Sabbath Day teacher.

⁷⁹ The references to the 'market-place' clarify that he is not discussing the activities of the synagogue.

Thus, the passage is significant in terms of Philo's own *raison d'être* as one who, in contrast to the μύσται of Alexandria, sought to promote his teachings in the public arena. As McKnight concedes, "It cannot be denied that Philo values public conversation about the glories of Judaism."⁸⁰

But what of the wider Jewish community? Does the text imply that other Jews did feel or should have felt this way? The immediate contrast in the passage is between the 'teachers' of the respective traditions. The use of plurals, combined with the imperative verbs, may therefore imply that the point is especially relevant to other Jewish teachers in the city.⁸¹ Perhaps Philo is subtly taking issue with some among his peers who have a tendency to conceal rather than to promote Judaism. This seems to be the import of the conclusion to the discussion: "Were it not well, then, that we should follow her [nature's] intentions and display in public all that is profitable and necessary for the benefit of those who are worthy to use it? (323)."⁸²

2.6. *The mission of the Jerusalem Pharisees (Matthew 23:15)*

A text which has been thought to offer clear evidence of Jewish proselytism is Matthew 23:15,⁸³ in which Jesus pronounced this 'woe' against the scribes and Pharisees:

⁸⁰ McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles*, 55.

⁸¹ The fact that Philo's attack of the mysteries is directed specifically against the *initiators* rather than the *initiates* probably implies that his contrast relates to the corresponding Jewish leadership only.

⁸² The use of the first person plural here contrasts the use of the second person in both 322 ("cannot you see ...") and 320 ("tell me you mystics"). The latter paragraphs are clearly directed at Philo's rhetorical opponents; the first person plural pronoun ἡμεῖς in 323 is best understood, therefore, as an appeal not to the mystics – as if he were challenging them to display their beneficial teachings – but to Philo's readership. The surrounding use of first person plurals confirms such a reading. See 316 and 317, for instance. The section dealing with the mysteries is structured in the following way: One (319): third person indicatives and imperatives introducing the commands for Jews to avoid the mysteries; Two (320): second person imperatives and indicatives and vocatives attacking the mystics themselves; Three (321) third person imperatives contrasting the mystic and the Jewish teacher; Four (322) second person indicatives again attacking the mystic; Five (323) first person plural imperatives and vocatives exhorting the Jewish community to act upon the discussion.

⁸³ For discussion of the text and its relation to the question of Jewish mission, see Derwacter, *Preparing the Way for Paul*, 42-46; Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 264-71; Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 17-19; Flowers, "Matthew Xxiii, 15," 67-69; Hoad, "On Matthew xxiii.15 A Rejoinder," 211-212; Kuhn, *TDNT* 6, 742; De Ridder, *The Dispersion of the People of God*, 120-27; Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

The text has been rejected as a Matthean creation by some, relegating it to a situation at the end of the first century when Christians battled against Jews for converts.⁸⁴ However, in light of the many semitisms, demonstrated by Jeremias,⁸⁵ most scholars regard the saying as “more or less authentic,”⁸⁶ or at least belonging to an old Aramaic tradition.⁸⁷ Here, then, Jesus castigates the Pharisees and Scribes⁸⁸ for the *effect* of their enthusiastic proselytizing,⁸⁹ that is, for turning their convert/proselyte (προσήλυτος) into a (double) ‘son of Gehenna’. But what type of proselytizing is on view? Three broad answers have been proposed. First, a majority of scholars opt for what might be called the plain reading of the text, that is, understanding it as a reference to Jewish proselytism of pagans.⁹⁰ Secondly, McKnight⁹¹ and Barnett⁹² have suggested that the text has in view the drawing in of ‘God-fearers’ to become full converts.⁹³ Thirdly, Goodman⁹⁴ and Levinskaya,⁹⁵ building on a brief suggestion by

129-31; McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles*, 106-108; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 298-99; Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 69-73; Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 36-39; Barnett, “Jewish Mission,” 271-72; Newport, *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew* 23, 135-137

⁸⁴ So Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 490; Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 267; Flowers, “Matthew xxiii. 15”; Derwacter, *Preparing the Way*,” 45; Munck, *Paul*, 267.

⁸⁵ Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise*, 17-18.

⁸⁶ Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 39.

⁸⁷ Barnett, “Jewish Mission,” 271; Hoad, “Matthew xxiii. 15”; McKnight, *Light*, 106-07; De Ridder, *The Dispersion*, 120; Newport, *Sources*, 136; Goodman, *Mission*, 69.

⁸⁸ Goodman insists only a reference to the Pharisees is to be understood, *Mission*, 70.

⁸⁹ As most scholars note, Jesus does not denounce proselytism *per se* but merely the results of proselytism, i.e., the way these Jewish leaders turn the converts into hypocrites like (or worse than) themselves.

⁹⁰ Cohen, “Missionary Religion,” 18; Carleton Paget, “Jewish Proselytism,” 95; Kuhn, “Προσήλυτος,” 742; De Ridder, *The Dispersion*, 120; Garland, *Intention*, 129f; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 298.

⁹¹ McKnight, *Light*, 107.

⁹² Barnett, “Jewish Mission,” 272.

⁹³ So also Davies and Allison, *Matthew* vol. 3, 289, without providing reasons for this judgement.

⁹⁴ Goodman, *Mission*, 70.

⁹⁵ Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 38-46.

Munck,⁹⁶ argue that the woe is directed against the “Pharisees for their eagerness in trying to persuade *other Jews* to follow Pharisaic halakha” (author’s emphasis).⁹⁷ Since the first two options constitute types of proselytizing, only the third poses a serious challenge to the use of Matthew 23:15 in support of the claim that Jews in the first century (A.D.) engaged in mission.

Goodman’s interpretation of Matthew 23:15 is thought to be supported by several arguments. First, he notes that the crucial term προσήλυτος is rare in the literature of the period and so the usual rendering of a ‘convert to Judaism’ should not be forced in every case. Secondly, Goodman seeks to demonstrate the flexibility and non-technical quality of the term. He notes the way Philo prefers the word ἐπήλυτος over προσήλυτος, which suggests to his mind that the latter term did not carry a technical quality. He also points to Philo’s comment in *QE* 2.2 wherein Philo seeks to explain how it is that προσήλυτος could be used in LXX Exodus 22:20 in relation to Israelites. While Philo finds such a reference odd, the fact that he does not change the term at this point (perhaps to πάροικος) suggests to Goodman that προσήλυτος for Philo is a suitable word when describing Jews. This flexibility is further implied, according to Goodman, by *Spec. Laws* 1.51,⁹⁸ wherein Philo points to the etymology of προσήλυτος apparently to suggest that a proselyte is one who has merely “come to a holy life from a different one.”⁹⁹ Such a ‘soft’ understanding of the word, inherent in the etymology, may easily be applied to Jews who move toward a more holy life (such as that claimed for Pharisaism), infers Goodman. As additional support, he claims that the verb προσέρχομαι, connoting an ‘approach toward something sacred’, can be found elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Tim 6:3; Heb 7:25, 11:6, 12:22; 1 Pet 2:4).¹⁰⁰ Thus, according to Goodman, the word προσήλυτος was in the first century (A.D.) only *becoming* a technical term. Levinskaya, thirdly, adds her own observation that later Christian use of προσήλυτος and cognates confirms

⁹⁶ Munck, *Paul*, 267.

⁹⁷ Goodman, *Mission*, 70.

⁹⁸ *Special Laws* 1.51 τούτους δὲ καλεῖ προσηλύτους ἀπὸ τοῦ προσηλυθέναι καινῇ καὶ φιλοθέῳ πολιτείᾳ

⁹⁹ Goodman, *Mission*, 73.

¹⁰⁰ Apart from 1 Tim 3:6 where the word simply means ‘to agree with’ Goodman fails to note that each of his New Testament references can just as easily be taken as references to ‘converting’ toward the sacred.

Goodman's understanding of the term as a reference to an approach toward a new godly constitution.¹⁰¹

Several things may be said in response. First, although the term προσήλυτος appears to have been relatively rare in this period, where it does appear (LXX, Philo, New Testament) it overwhelmingly refers to a Gentile convert to Judaism.¹⁰² That this is plainly the usual meaning of the word in this literature should caution us against too quickly looking for alternative meanings, especially when the former sense suits the present context so well. Secondly, as several scholars have noted, προσήλυτος nowhere in our literature refers to a Jewish convert to a Jewish sect.¹⁰³ Thirdly, that Philo prefers ἐπήλυς over προσήλυτος tells us nothing about the technical/non-technical nature of the latter,¹⁰⁴ and is probably to be explained by Philo's desire to use words which were more comprehensible to a non-Jewish audience.¹⁰⁵ Fourthly, Philo's comment in *QE* 2.2 may indeed be turned against Goodman's case. The fact that Philo felt the need to explain the presence of προσήλυτος in Exodus 22:20 suggests that in his day the term was not used of Jews but of circumcised converts from paganism.¹⁰⁶ Philo's allegorical interpretation of the word is in fact "an answer to the exegetical problem posed"¹⁰⁷ by the biblical text.¹⁰⁸ Fifthly, *Spec. Laws* 1.51 hardly invites the conclusion that

¹⁰¹ Leviniskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 39-46.

¹⁰² In the LXX προσήλυτος is the translation of גֵר on 77 occasions (14 instances of the Hebrew word are translated by other terms such as πάροικος). The προσήλυτος/גֵר refers to one who temporarily or permanently resides in the land and who thus has some attendant religious duties. This is true even in the earliest of the references, Exodus 22:20. In the time of the Diaspora the terms lose their geography-specific connotation and refer to a religious state, i.e., the full conversion of a Gentile. On this see Kuhn, "προσήλυτος"; Allen, W. C. "On the meaning of proselutos in the Septuagint." *Expositor* 4, no. 10 (1884): 264-275. In Philo the term appears as a title for a religious convert: *Special Laws* 1.51, 1.308-309; *Questions on Exodus* 2.2. The three other New Testament occurrences of the word clearly refer to Gentile converts to Judaism (Acts 2:11, 6:5, 13:43). The term does not appear in Josephus.

¹⁰³ Noted by Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 17; Derwacter, *Preparing the Way*, 44; Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 96; Barnett, "Jewish Mission," 272.

¹⁰⁴ So also Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 96-97.

¹⁰⁵ So Kuhn, "προσήλυτος," 731.

¹⁰⁶ So also Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 299.

¹⁰⁷ Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 96.

¹⁰⁸ Even in Exodus 22:20 itself the term גֵר is not at all employed as a typical description of Israelites. Naming Israelites as גֵר (understood in the geographic sense only) is simply a piece of rhetorical speech designed to exhort Israel to treat with kindness the גֵר within her borders. It is only because the Greek term προσήλυτος by

προσήλυτος can mean one who merely “comes to a holy life from a different one.”¹⁰⁹ In this text Philo is in fact discussing the Gentile convert to Judaism and he uses the obvious etymology of the word to make the point that a proselyte has moved from paganism to the godly ‘commonwealth’ (πολιτεία) which is Judaism.¹¹⁰ There can be little doubt, as G. F. Moore states emphatically, that, “an examination of all the passages in Philo shows conclusively that προσήλυτος and its synonyms designate a man who has not merely embraced the monotheistic theology of Judaism, but has addicted himself to the Jewish ordinances and customs.”¹¹¹ Sixthly, that Christianity later adopted the term to refer to Christians hardly helps Goodman’s case since in every occurrence quoted by Levinskaya¹¹² the term refers directly to a ‘convert’ to Christianity. This hardly suggests that the word may convey “the idea of approaching anything new.” It simply shows that Christians took over the technical conversion language of Judaism and incorporated it into their own vocabulary. If anything, Levinskaya’s observations illustrate the opposite case, though it is difficult to see how such references could support any argument about the Jewish use of προσήλυτος centuries before.

In short, the interpretation of Matthew 23:15 offered by Goodman and Levinskaya lacks any positive evidence whatsoever and succeeds in becoming a *possibility* only because the term προσήλυτος is used infrequently in the literature up to the first century. One suspects that Levinskaya’s critique of others may equally be applied to Goodman and herself: “One’s position in the discussion about this *locus classicus* [Matt 23:15] quite often, though not necessarily, depends upon the position one takes in the general discussion on Jewish proselytism.”¹¹³ Bamberger’s

the time of Philo has come typically to refer to a converted/circumcised Gentile that Philo perceives a problem in the biblical account.

¹⁰⁹ Goodman, *Mission*, 73.

¹¹⁰ Note the similar use of πολιτεία with reference to Israel in Eph 2:12. See also the use of the term in Phil 1:27 and 3:20 to designate the ‘commonwealth’ of Christians.

¹¹¹ Moore, *Judaism*, 327-28.

¹¹² Justin’s *Dialogue* 28.2, 122; Theodoret of Cyrus (PG 81, 445); Procopius of Gaza (PG 87, 2544D); Didymus the Blind on Psalm 21:31 (published in Doutreleau, L., and A. Gesche and M. Gronewald, ed. *Didymos der Blinde, Psalmenkommentar (Tura-Papyrus) Teil 1: Kommentar zum Psalm 20-21*. Vol. 7, *Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen*. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1969.); Asterius of Amasea, *Homilies* III 15,2; VIII 25,4; VIII 29,1; VIII 27,6; VIII 7,1 (in Datema, C., ed. *Asterius of Amasea: Homilies I-XIV. Text, Introduction and Notes*. Leiden: Brill, 1970.); Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 7,14.

¹¹³ Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 36.

statement about Matt 23:15 is apposite: “For some inexplicable reason the learned have been unwilling to believe that the passage means what it obviously says.”¹¹⁴

But what of the first two interpretations of the text? Barnett’s reason for rejecting a reference here to the conversion of pagans is stated succinctly: “The transition from outright idolator to circumcised proselyte is too large a single step to be easily imaginable.” McKnight argues further that a wide scale ‘aggressive’ Jewish mission cannot be demonstrated from the evidence of the ancient world and so should not be read into this text. He believes also that Jesus’ castigation of the Pharisees for their “zeal for Torah minutiae” provides the clue for the type of ‘proselytizing’ they were doing – the total “Torah proselytization” of God-fearers.¹¹⁵

To respond: Firstly, while Jesus’ castigation of the Pharisees for their devotion to ‘Torah minutiae’ may explain why the convert becomes a ‘son of Gehenna’,¹¹⁶ it tells us nothing about the religious status of the convert prior to being made a proselyte. Whether a ‘God-fearer’ or an outright pagan, if the convert were to adopt the Pharisaic teachings (as critiqued by Jesus) s/he would inevitably reflect the image of the teacher and so become a child of hell.

Secondly, as for whether the broader evidence speaks of a Jewish mission we must allow the entire discussion presented in this chapter to determine. And in the end, as Carleton Paget notes, McKnight’s argument “has a circular feel to it. Mt. 23.15 cannot refer to Jewish proselytic activity because evidence for such activity has not been found elsewhere.”¹¹⁷

Thirdly, although Barnett’s observation is a reasonable one, we must not allow our own estimation to determine absolutely what was and was not a difficult step for an ancient convert to take. The cases of Izates (*Ant.* 20.38), Monobazus and his kinsmen (*Ant.* 20.75-76) seem to fly in the face Barnett’s conjecture. For all of these men eagerly desired circumcision when they embraced Jewish monotheism. It was only as a result of Ananias’ dissuasion that the king’s circumcision was not immediately

¹¹⁴ Bamberger, *Proselytism*, 267. Similar judgements are expressed by De Ridder, *Dispersion*, 120, and Carleton Paget, “Jewish Proselytism,” 95.

¹¹⁵ McKnight, *Light*, 107.

¹¹⁶ Garland, *Intention*, 129, believes the proselyte becomes ‘twice a son of Gehena’ because of his reliance on “legal and ritual values for salvation.” This is probably incorrect. The context suggests that the damnable offence is obedience to Torah minutiae while ignoring weightier matters of the law.

¹¹⁷ Carleton Paget, “Jewish Proselytism,” 97.

carried out. In any case, Jesus' woe does not speak of a *successful* campaign of proselytism, only of Pharisaic enthusiasm in the task. In fact the reference to 'a single convert' (ἕνα προσήλυτον) may bear testimony to the very meager results of the mission efforts of Palestinian Pharisees, a point already made by Kuhn.¹¹⁸ This, surely, is more 'easily imaginable.' In my opinion, Matthew 23:15 does not provide evidence of a large-scale mission on the part of a majority of Jews. It simply presents us with another isolated example of *some* Jews engaging in *some* proselytizing.

There seems to be no compelling reason to accept the reading of McKnight and Barnett over the 'traditional' one. But are there positive arguments for taking Matthew 23:15 as a reference to Jewish efforts to convert pagans? Perhaps. First, Carleton Paget may be right to see in the words "sea and land" (τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν) a reference to a Gentile convert to Judaism.¹¹⁹ Kasting, who otherwise affirms the existence of Jewish mission, insists "Meer und Festland durchziehen ist also nicht wörtlich zu nehmen, sondern metaphorische Ausdrucksweise für den großen Aufwand der Propaganda."¹²⁰ Likewise, McKnight calls the expression 'idiomatic' and, therefore, not to be taken as a "precise geographical description."¹²¹ He cites LXX Jon 1:9, Hag 2:21, 1 Macc 8:23 and 1 Macc 8:32 in support. The point is not convincing. That the phrase is 'idiomatic' and 'imprecise' is obvious but this hardly means it does not still refer – in an idiomatic way – to geographical distance. In fact, one need only glance at the texts cited by McKnight to discover that the phrase is more likely an idiomatic reference to the earth in its entirety (see especially Jon 1:9; Hag 2:6, 21). Far from meaning simply 'großen Aufwand,'¹²² Jesus' statement, however vague in its geographic description, must at least be taken to refer to journeys (περιάγω), with specific missionary intent, outside the borders of Israel. Thus, would-be converts from pagan nations are on view. Whether these are to be thought of as God-fearers or outright pagans cannot be ascertained, but without positive evidence for supposing the former, it does seem more natural to assume the latter.

¹¹⁸ Kuhn, "προσήλυτος," 742.

¹¹⁹ Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 97.

¹²⁰ Kasting, *Die Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission*, 21.

¹²¹ McKnight, *Light*, 154.

¹²² McKnight, *Light*, 107, similarly renders the phrase "great lengths." Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 39 likewise insists: "The expression 'the sea and the land' has a strong idiomatic colouring and it seems that we need not view it as an itinerary of missionary journeys." She does no more than cite McKnight in support.

Secondly, as Carleton Paget again points out, Jesus' statement in Matt 10:5-6 forbidding his 'missionaries' to take their message to the 'Gentiles' and 'Samaritans'¹²³ may imply that Jewish proselytizing (of the type referred to in Matt 23:15) did on occasion reach non-Jewish groups. Otherwise such an emphatic restriction (note its first position in the discourse) would be redundant.¹²⁴

So then, there is no compelling reason to believe that Matt 23:15 refers to the conversion of a God-fearer. This is an interpretation born of the prior conclusion that mission to Gentiles did not occur.

2.7. *Saul of Tarsus: 'preacher of circumcision'?*

The existence of Jewish teachers, indeed Jerusalem Pharisees, taking it upon themselves to instruct Gentiles in the worship of God provides a context within which a seemingly opaque statement of another Jerusalem Pharisee, the apostle Paul,¹²⁵ becomes understandable and relevant to the discussion of a pre-Christian Jewish mission.

In the context of his dispute with certain Judaizing followers of Christ, the apostle Paul offers a brief refutation of the charge that he had at some time or other proclaimed to Gentiles the importance of the rite of circumcision:

But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision (εἰ περιτομήν

¹²³ On the traditional nature of the saying see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 2, 168-69; Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 19f. We note: 1) εἰς ὁδόν is not characteristic of Matthean redaction; 2) the mention of 'Samaritans' is unique in the gospel; 3) the tension this text creates with Matt 28:16-20 is real, suggesting it was part of an early source, probably Q. That Luke would omit this saying from Q is easily explained in terms of his obvious interest in Gentile mission.

¹²⁴ Barnett, "Jewish Mission," 273, rejects this inference on the grounds that Jesus' restriction "is more likely eschatological," that is, prior to the passion/resurrection the mission goes to the Jews; after that time the mission goes to the nations (Matt. 28:16-20). However, as Davies and Allison (*Matthew*, vol. 2, 169) point out, such an understanding is too subtly presented in Matthew. If this were his intention, "he would have been a bit more careful and more explicit, and we should expect to find more than just the uneasy juxtaposition of 10.5f. and 28.16-20."

¹²⁵ Since the publication of Unnik, W. C. van. "Tarsus or Jerusalem, the City of Paul's Youth," in *Sparsa Collecta I: Evangelia - Paulina - Acts*, 259-320. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973, it has become widely accepted that while Paul was born in Tarsus he actually grew up in Jerusalem. Paul will have enjoyed strong educational ties with the Greek-speaking synagogues of Jerusalem. See further: Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, 31-50; Hengel, M. *The Pre-Christian Paul*. London: SCM Press, 1991, 54-62.

ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι)? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. (Gal 5:10b-11).

Most scholars suggest that the accusation Paul refutes here was one of ‘inconsistency’. The agitators had learned of Paul’s occasional circumcision of Gentile converts (Timothy, for instance, in Acts 16:3) and of his radical policy of missionary accommodation (1 Cor 9:19-23), and had used this information against Paul in Galatia.¹²⁶ This scenario does helpfully explain what might have prompted the opponents’ accusation against Paul but it by no means fully explains the apostle’s retort. If moments of inconsistency were all that were involved here, we would expect Paul to have either (a) denied outright that he had ever been inconsistent or (b) argued that the ‘inconsistencies’ in question did not amount to a breach of his calling, to a ‘preaching of circumcision’. Instead, Paul in v.11 effectively concedes that he *had* at one time preached circumcision – though he does so no longer. This is the unavoidable implication of the presence of the temporal adverb ἔτι (‘still’).¹²⁷ Such a concession (if referring to events in his Christian ministry) is completely at odds with the argument of Galatians that his divine commission (since turning to Christ) entailed the proclamation to Gentiles of a circumcision-free gospel. More must lie behind the statement of Gal 5:11.

If the ἔτι belonged to the accusation of the agitators they must have said something such as: “When it suits Paul, he does advocate proselyte

¹²⁶ Among others, Martyn, *Galatians*, 476-477; Dunn, *Galatians*, 278-79; Fung, *Galatians*, 239-40; Ramsay, *Galatians*, 163.

¹²⁷ Of the fifteen occurrences of ἔτι in Pauline corpus (Rom 3:7, 5:6, 5:8, 6:2, 9:19; 1 Cor 3:2, 3:3, 12:31, 15:17; 2 Cor 1:10, Gal 1:10, 5:11 [twice], Phil 1:9; 2 Thess 2:5) only two carry a non-temporal sense (1 Cor 12:31; Phil 1:9) and on both occasions the adverb is intensive (‘*even more*’), a sense clearly not suited to Gal 5:11. Martyn, *Galatians*, 476, rejects a temporal sense for ἔτι on the grounds that (a) it is difficult (for him) to imagine what the agitators might have meant by a reference to Paul’s past preaching of circumcision, and (b) Paul’s letters give no indication that he continued to preach circumcision. He thus renders the adverb ‘in addition’ (“if I am *in addition* – as part of the gospel message – preaching circumcision ...”) and suggests that the agitators in Galatia had been saying that from time to time Paul *adds* the demand of circumcision to his preaching. In response, several things can be said: a) Martyn’s rendering of ἔτι is not a natural one; b) the proposal offered above provides a very simple way in which to ‘imagine’ what the agitators’ reference to Paul’s past preaching of circumcision might have meant; c) that the agitators accused Paul of occasionally adding circumcision to his preaching (i.e., that he was ‘inconsistent’) is widely accepted, and is precisely why ἔτι (understood temporally) is used – the accusation was that Paul’s inconsistency was proof that he still preached circumcision as he had done before his conversion.

circumcision as he *used* to.” If, on the other hand, the ἔτι belongs merely to Paul’s retort, the apostle is in effect saying: “I once preached circumcision, but let no one think that I do still.” Thus, we must ask: When did Paul preach circumcision? The only plausible answer is that he did so in his *pre-Christian* days. For, as Seyoon Kim observes, “it is impossible to imagine that there was ever a time after Paul’s conversion in which he preached circumcision.”¹²⁸

Reading the statement of Gal 5:11 as an allusion to a pre-Christian phase of Paul’s ministry becomes all the more plausible in light of a similar statement made earlier in Galatians: ‘If I were *still* pleasing men, I would not be Christ’s slave’ (εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἤρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην. Gal 1:10). The passage has obvious formal affinities with Gal 5:11: in response to a perceived criticism,¹²⁹ Paul retorts with a conditional statement introduced by εἰ in which he insists that what was once true no longer (ἔτι) holds. This formal correlation takes on greater significance when we realize that Paul’s contrast here between being a ‘man-pleaser’ and being ‘Christ’s slave’ is, in the context of chapter one, nothing other than a contrast between his former zeal in Judaism and his calling as ‘Christ’s slave’ (= ‘apostle’: cf. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1).¹³⁰ For, in the connected paragraphs which follow (vv.11-13: γάρ ... γάρ ...), Paul goes on precisely to contrast his divine commission as an apostle with the *modus operandi* of his ‘former life in Judaism’ when, as Martyn aptly writes, he displayed a “consumptive zeal to please his nomistic teachers,”¹³¹ persecuting the church, advancing beyond his co-religionists and striving for the ancestral traditions in a most rigorous way.

Thus, when in Gal 5:11 Paul offers a similar retort, insisting that a previous *modus operandi* no longer (ἔτι) pertains, it is most natural to understand him as referring once again to his ‘former life in Judaism’ when he preached circumcision to the Gentiles. This is not to say that Paul was a ‘professional’ Jewish missionary – such a thing does not appear to have existed prior to the Christian movement – it indicates merely that in a manner analogous to, say, ‘Ananias the merchant’ (or perhaps better, the stricter Eleazar: *Ant.* 20.34-48), the pre-Christian Paul sought from time to

¹²⁸ Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, 39. So too Longenecker, *Galatians*, 233.

¹²⁹ Paul’s retort may not reflect an actual criticism but merely a point which Paul wishes to make perfectly apparent. As Betz, *Galatians*, 56, rightly notes, “Not every rhetorical denial is an accusation turned around!”

¹³⁰ So Betz, *Galatians*, 56; Fung, *Galatians*, 50; Martyn, *Galatians*, 140.

¹³¹ Martyn, *Galatians*, 140.

time to convince Gentiles, whether god-fearers or outright ‘pagans’, that they ought to submit themselves to proselyte circumcision.¹³²

This conclusion is not without significance for the rest of the study. In the following chapter (Chapter Two) I shall explore four expressions of ‘mission-commitment’ evidenced in Jewish writings of the period: ethical apologetic, intercession on behalf of Gentiles, the missionary dimension of public worship and verbal apologetic. In Chapters 6-10, furthermore, I will go on to show that precisely the same motifs emerge in Paul’s writings in relation to his converts’ involvement in mission. The correspondences here are striking, and in themselves invite the suggestion that the apostle Paul transferred into his Christ-believing communities the mission-traditions of his Jewish heritage. However, if prior to his conversion Paul himself ‘preached circumcision’ (albeit, informally, sporadically and in a thoroughly Judaic manner) this provides a meaningful historical context within which to understand this *transferral* of traditions. “Paul’s Gentile mission,” then, as Terrence Donaldson has put it, “may be understood as the christological transformation of a proselytizing concern already present in his pre-conversion days.”¹³³

3. Conclusion: mission and missionaries in Judaism

The above study has not sought to deny or to establish that Judaism was a ‘missionary religion’. Rather, it has aimed to discover whether some forms of Judaism in the period expressed various types of missionary commitment.

It was observed, firstly, that a conceptual framework conducive for mission was clearly present amongst some Jews of the period. The literature points to an ambivalence on the part of Jews toward Gentiles: denunciation of pagan worship, on the one hand, and integration with pagan society, on the other. It was noted that these are precisely the attitudes one would expect of those with a mission outlook. Furthermore, the fact that some Jews held out a grand hope that one day the Gentile world (or part thereof) would, together with Israel, serve the one true God,

¹³² So also Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, 39-40; Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 273-84; Schoeps, *Paul*, 219; and a number of commentators on Galatians: Bruce, *Galatians*, 236-37; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 232-33; Matera, *Galatians*, 184; Fung, *Galatians*, 238-39.

¹³³ Donaldson, “The Origin of Paul’s Gentile Mission,” (in *The Road from Damascus*, ed. R. Longenecker), 81.

makes it clear that Gentile conversion was at least a desirable thing to some. This, combined with the fact that this eschatological ‘miracle’ is said to involve human agents, provides a reason for taking any evidence of such missionary agency very seriously indeed.

Secondly, it was found that sporadic evidence of intentional missionizing activity on the part of some Jews is present in the literature, and that attempts to call into question the reliability of the relevant texts or to minimize their significance failed to convince. This is not to say that proselytizing activity was the obligation or interest of Jewish communities in general, only that, whether in Rome or Alexandria, Jerusalem, Galilee or Adiabene, some Jewish teachers took it upon themselves to instruct Gentiles in the way of the Torah. They thus assumed a role analogous to that of a ‘missionary’, a role the zealous Pharisee of Tarsus would – as the apostle Paul – come to embody *par excellence*.