

Yes, And, But: Assessing Paul's Historical Influence: A Response to Israel Yuval's 'What Judaism Owes to Christianity'

at "The Present and the Future of Christian-Jewish Dialogue: Historical and Theological Perspectives, "An International Conference
at Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, May 13-15, 2018

©Mark D. Nanos (updated to 10-24-2023)

Israel Yuval's offers a new, important paradigm for assessing the influence of Jews and Christians on each other after the Second Temple was destroyed. There is much to agree with, and I have learned a great deal from this research. However, in this endeavor Yuval regularly describes the influence of the Apostle Paul. The construction of Paul that Yuval employs to make his "new" case relies upon the familiar, "traditional" approaches to interpreting the apostle. And therein is a problem that shapes my response.

That ("old") construction (often labeled "Paulinism") no longer guides the research projects of many Pauline and New Testament scholars, at least not as monolithically as it did in the past—and certainly not my own. I have been contesting that construction for three decades, offering alternative interpretations with implications for re-evaluating the historical developments and contemporary applications. Along with several other colleagues, including fellow contributor Kathy Ehrensperger, this new approach to Paul proceeds under the working title "Paul within Judaism" (sometimes referenced as "The Radical New Perspective on Paul").¹ The thrust of my response to Yuval's premises, arguments, and conclusions, proceeds from this new(er) perspective.²

¹ I resist the latter, because the questions posed, premises and methods employed, and conclusions pursued by (most) Paul within Judaism scholarship are not beholden to working within the confines of those developed by the New Perspective on Paul presupposed by that label. Moreover, this research project, to the degree that it represents a more probable construction of the apostle and movement, demonstrates that the traditional construction as well as New Perspective on Paul of recent decades are the ones that represent radical redefinitions of the historical Paul, even though, until recently, understood to be self-evidently faithful portrayals of the historical Paul as the quintessential convert from Judaism to Christianity ("Paulinism"), and so on. See Mark D. Nanos, "Introduction," in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, eds. Nanos, Mark D., and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 1–29.

² There are now too many publications to list here; see e.g. ed. vols: Nanos and Zetterholm, eds., *Paul Within Judaism*; Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of*

One of the several preliminary disagreements arises from the fact that Yuval regularly appeals to the influence of Paul as if he post-dated the Second Temple period. Today, many scholars—including many who are not persuaded by the Paul within Judaism paradigm—recognize the need to place the influence of Paul within Second Temple Judaism, before what became known as Christianity. Paul's influence must be distinguished from later Christian developments, including the very canonization of his letters. This means that the familiar interpretive tradition, although often repeated as if self-evidently representative of the historical figure's voice, involves historical anachronisms and questionable premises. Yuval's employment of that Paul, however reasonable that may seem, results in problematic conclusions.

Because our different research premises and interpretive decisions leads to significantly different observations and results where the historical Paul and his "intended" influence are concerned, my response will focus on Yuval's arguments with respect to Paul. Before I discuss these differences, and what difference I think that these differences make for advancing Christian-Jewish dialogue and relations in more promising directions than the traditional interpretation of Paul's voice has allowed for, I want to offer some reflections on several of the premises from which Yuval works, and some of his conclusions.

1. Yuval proposes that Christianity and Judaism were: "two sister-religions that developed in parallel. I wasn't referring, of course, to the biblical Judaism of the Second Temple. I meant the later Judaism of the Rabbis, the Talmud and the Mishnah, from the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE until the middle of the first millennium..." (1).

Second Temple Judaism (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); František Ábel, ed., *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism* (Lanham, et al: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020); and individual works by Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 1* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); idem, "What Does It Mean to See Paul "within Judaism"?" *JBL* 141 no. 2 (2022): 359–80; Kathy Ehrensperger, ed., *Searching Paul: Conversations with the Jewish Apostle to the Nations; Collected Essays* (WUNT 429; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); Anders Runesson, *Judaism for Gentiles: Reading Paul Beyond the Parting of the Ways Paradigm* (WUNT 494; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022); idem, "What Does It Mean to Read New Testament Texts 'within Judaism'?" *NTS* 69 (2023): 299–312.

Yes, this is an important observation; *but* where discussion of Paul's influence arises, the fact that 2nd Temple Judaism, and earlier still, Israelite religion, both *precede* Paul and the birth of the Christ-following subgroups, logically leads to a phenomenon probably better portrayed as the relationship of a mother to her child rather than as the relationship of two sisters born to the same mother.

2. Yuval sets up the case for his analysis from this sociological premise: "While Judaism certainly had an important function in shaping Christianity's perception of itself, because the Jew defined the limits of the "other" for the Christian, it was the majority that dictated to the minority its economic, social, political and cultural agenda, not the other way around. A minority culture tends to protect itself against the majority culture in order to preserve its identity" (1).

Yes, that is a valid social consideration, and these dynamics were in place later, when we can speak of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. *But* majority/minority influence is of course only one of many possible social dynamics at work. Influence can travel in the opposite direction. A minority can, by its claims on the majority, dictate the reaction of the majority, and this can include claims even against the majority by the minority.³ We will return to this topic, but for now, consider simply Josephus' claim (however true or not) that Roman non-Jews (the majority by far) were beginning to copy the (minority) Jewish communities' custom of lighting lamps on Friday evenings and observing a day of rest (*Ag. Ap.* 2.282). This claim also introduces the anomaly of how these non-Jews knew when it was the seventh day, since Roman calendrical customs did not measure weeks (sevens), and thus to perform this ritual required choosing to consult minority communities' calendrical customs.

Moreover, however useful the dynamic of minority/majority influence may be in general, posing the issue in these terms *for analyzing Paul's influence runs the risk of being*

³ Cf. Robin Martin and Miles Hewstone, "Conformity and Independence in Groups: Majorities and Minorities," in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, ed. M. A. Hogg and R. S. Tindale, 209-34 (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003). They conclude, 228: "Thirty years after Moscovici's pioneering studies on minority influence, the very 'dissentious' view of the minority remains a subject of curiosity, controversy, and sustained research. The conclusion that both majorities and minorities can, under specific circumstances, exert influence on attitudes, opinions, and judgments may seem disappointing to some. But it is surely an improvement...." See also, <http://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2010/Minority-Influence-Theory.pdf>.

anachronistic. Paul's communities were not "Christian" versus Jewish; they existed in the Second Temple period, when Christ-following groups did not constitute the majority to which (other) Jewish minority groups had to respond.

To the degree that Paul's small assemblies were subgroups within the larger Jewish communities, which were themselves minority communities outside of Judea, Paul's subgroups were the ones facing contestation for introducing novel social behavior toward non-Jews that challenged the prevailing norms practiced by the dominant Jewish groups and subgroups within any given local (albeit Jewish groups of the Diaspora were usually minority groups within the larger population), as well as the normative expectations of the majority non-Jewish population.⁴ The conflicts Paul's groups faced were probably not usually about Messiah claims per se, these were in the air and were and are to this day tolerated in later rabbinic Judaism; and, in my view, the conflicts did not arise from lack of Torah-observance either, although that is another cause commonly asserted in Pauline scholarship. Rather, resistance arose primarily in response to their claims about the arrival of the awaited age as the justification for new social arrangements with the non-Jews joining their gatherings and being regarded as full members of the people of God of the awaited age apart from becoming members of the people Israel in the present age.

Paul and his groups represented minority groups relative to other Jewish groups of the time. He suffered disciplinary action from Jewish communal leaders who represented the majority Jewish groups; his minority, subordinate status constrained him to voicing polemical accusations toward those who opposed (in his view, interfered with) his subgroup's claims and social policy adjustments to majority Jewish communal as well as Roman communal norms.

I will return to these topics in more detail.

⁴ The complexity, including the implications of recognizing how Jewish groups, including Christ-following ones, were a part of the culture of association life of the time, which is highly relevant to teasing out the kinds of influences Yuval's project engages, see Runesson, *Judaism for Gentiles*, which discusses the latest scholarship on association dynamics as well as challenging the prevailing "parting" and "not-parting of the ways" paradigms, on which also see his, "What Never Belonged Together Cannot Part: Rethinking the So-Called Parting of the Ways Between Judaism and Christianity," in *Jews and Christians: Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries C.E.? Reflections on the Gains and Losses of a Model*, eds. Jens Schröter, Benjamin A. Edsall and Joseph Verheyden, 33–56 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

3. Consider another initial premise: "The rabbinic culture consists of an intense effort to re-define who is a Jew and what Judaism is, as part of the definition of who is not a Jew. Self-definition is a lengthy and open-ended process, based not only on rejection, but also on adopting ideas, rites and symbols from outside" (1).

Yes. And, so too, the early Christ-followers—pre- and for a while post-destruction but pre-Christianity—were engaged in re-defining Judaism, although not so much who is a Jew as who is a *faithful* Jew based on their messianic convictions. *But* the real topic for Paul was how to define a new kind of non-Jew in-Messiah. Post Second Temple, the next generation of Christ-followers was also engaged in this kind of re-defining, *but* as it became Christianity *instead of* Judaism (a Jewish communal way of life), the members became more involved in defining a Jew in entirely new ways that reflect supersessionistic and replacement theological thinking and agendas (including non-Jew Christians claiming themselves to be the "true/real/spiritual" Jews and Israel). These developments were often not carried out in actual conflicts with Jews, but with other rival non-Jews (usually) who called themselves Christians too. One can see this dynamic still expressed in the commentaries to this day; e.g., by the way that they choose to translate and interpret passages like Romans 2 and 9–11 and Philippians 3, by the way that they use the term "Judaizers," among many other examples.⁵

But these developments are later; they do not represent Paul's definitional efforts.

4. Yuval clarifies his main interest thus: "In this lecture I would like to argue that it is not enough to look for sporadic allusions to polemic with Christianity in Rabbinic literature. We must reexamine its entire cultural core and understand it not only as a continuation of Pharisean Jewry and as a response to the destruction of the Temple, but also as a reaction to the advent of Christianity" (1–2).

Yes! But, if we are going to consider and discuss Paul, whom Yuval invokes, we must recognize that *he was a Pharisee before the destruction of the Temple*. We have to rethink the

⁵ I challenge those decisions in, e.g., "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,' But Do They Become 'Jewish?': Reading Romans 2:25–29 Within Judaism, Alongside Josephus," in *Reading Paul within Judaism*, 127–54 (orig. 2014); several essays in *Reading Romans within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 2* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018); and in *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 4* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

origins of *his* movement *and* also of the other movements that shaped the origins of Christianity, *and measure* these also against *a model of Pharisaism*—which, of course, was not monolithic, consisting of various subgroups and factions that could differ sharply. *Actually*, we should consider to what degree the groups of Paul's time originally fit *within* the framework of the model of Pharisaism that we construct.

To consider the role of Paul and the origins of this movement in the Second Temple period, we should consider the degree to which these Christ-following and later Christian movements were themselves:

a) *also Pharisaic*; and,

b) *were already shaped in reaction* to various groups and subgroups of Pharisees with which they were in competition when not outright conflict; i.e., discuss to what degree they were originally involved in intra- and inter-Pharisaic group developments; also,

c) *to what degree other Pharisees* as well as other Jewish groups had already changed in certain directions *in reaction to* these new Christ-following *Jewish* groups but *before* the formation of that which we can later call Christianity as opposed to Judaism, as well as before what we later call rabbinic Judaism, not to mention other forms of Judaism during these periods of development.⁶ And,

d), thus how the emerging Christian sense of self *was already shaped* by the back-and-forth conflicts *with and within Pharisaism* and around various Pharisaic elements that probably shaped all of the Christ-following movements: i.e., we must seek to evaluate how *emerging "Christian" concepts and rhetoric may already reflect Pharisaic elements*; and,

e) *whether the emerging rabbinic movement would have been most likely attuned to the Pharisaic elements within and among Christians, including those developed in competition with Pharisaism*, and thus have naturally shaped the foci of their reactions, including the elements most essential to their self-identity, as something other than Christian/Christianity.

In other words, Christ-following groups began with and among Pharisees; other Pharisees and other Jewish groups reacted to the Christ-following *Jewish* groups and their influence first as *Jewish* subgroups, in some if not many cases, as Pharisaic. After all, some of the Christ-

⁶ Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Jewishly-Behaving Gentiles and the Emergence of a Jewish Rabbinic Identity," *JSQ* 25, no. 4 (2018): 321-44; idem, "Alternate Visions of Judaism and Their Impact on the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism," *JMJS* 1 (2014): 127-53.

following groups were themselves Pharisaic (Paul's and Matthew's),⁷ and other Pharisees in turn reacted to both Pharisaic Christ-followers as well as other kinds of Christ-followers, and would have emphasized differences differently in each case. The Christ-followers and other Jewish groups, whether consisting of Pharisees or Pharisaic identification, would have continued this back-and-forth influence before we can trace institutional lines that we now call Christianity and rabbinic Judaism—and this shared history would have shaped which texts and topics both sides chose to emphasize, albeit in different ways and to different conclusions.⁸

These dynamics call into question some of Yuval's premises involved in his formulation of the historical developments, including the directions of influence. There is good reason to revisit the elements of disagreement between the later rabbis and Christians, which became most salient, why, and when, how to best trace who was reacting to whom and why, and how these elements and dynamics were portrayed by them, or are portrayed by us now.

5. The rest of my response will focus on Yuval's discussion of the topic of "Torah study" rather than the "organization of sacred time" and "the messianic idea." With respect to these other two elements, *Yes*, I am basically in agreement. *And, of course*, there are other areas to explore: the emphasis on theology (as in *belief* in Jesus as Messiah) even if belief as basis is denied, is one that readily comes to mind. *But*, in view of what I am going to argue for Paul and the origins of the movement from which Christianity arose and the period of time when each of these groups were developing and interacting with and reacting to each other, I am not as inclined to see the traffic flowing as directly from one to the other—at least not from the beginning(s).

"The second Torah"

Yuval writes: "The second Torah: The rabbis' motivation in creating a second Torah was perhaps similar to that of Paul when he promoted a second doctrine. Just as Paul claimed to possess a

⁷ On the latter, see Anders Runesson, "From Where? To What? Common Judaism, Pharisees, and the Changing Socioreligious Location of the Matthean Community," in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism*, eds. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz, 97-113 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner, eds., *Matthew within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel* (Early Christianity and its Literature 27; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020).

⁸ Hedner Zetterholm, "Alternate Visions of Judaism.

new messianic doctrine of Jesus, which was the distinguishing feature of his followers, the rabbis regarded the Oral Torah they created as the corpus that served to define the identity of their adherents and distinguish them from those who focused exclusively on the written Torah" (1–2).

Although Paul did promote Jesus fulfilling messianic expectations, I do not interpret what Paul did in terms of a second doctrine or a new messianic doctrine; rather: 1) Paul sought to distinguish his groups by confession of Jesus as Messiah resurrected. The distinguishing point was not so much the messianic nature of his claims for Jesus, but the argument that this signaled the need to identify the non-Jews in these groups as non-Jews "in Messiah."⁹ In other words, he advocated for these non-Jews to become culturally Jewish although remaining non-Jews among the (subgroup) assemblies of the Jews in Messiah, Jewish-ish non-Jews, if you will.¹⁰ Although other Jews and Jewish groups might grant, in principle agreement, that this is a reasonable way to view non-Jews when the end of the ages arrives, unless convinced also of the gospel claims for Jesus, they nevertheless would likely object to the social activation of this principle in their communities in the present age. If these non-Jews are being treated like those who have completed proselyte rites of passage without having also done the same, with access to status and goods, for example, this would almost certainly be contested as deviant behavior that needed to be corrected to the prevailing norms (i.e., become proselytes or remain welcome guests not entitled to certain social privileges reserved for Jews, policed to comply with Roman and other local constraints, such as tolerance of avoiding some non-Jewish cult practices for Jews and proselytes but not for their family and neighbors if remaining non-Jews, and thus beholden to cult to the gods and rulers to avoid harmful reprisals for impiety). This is what was at issue in the famous Antioch Incident, as I read it, and in Galatia.¹¹

⁹ Cf. Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism, The Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, edited by Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002 (orig. 1991), 253 (235–60).

¹⁰ Nanos, "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,' But Do They Become 'Jewish'?"

¹¹ Nanos, "How Could Paul Accuse Peter of 'Living *Ethné*-ishly' in Antioch (Gal 2:11–21) If Peter Was Eating according to Jewish Dietary Norms?" *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6, no. 2 (2016): 199-223; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26371747>. For Galatia, see Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

This change in policy regarding the way to include and treat non-Jews is also the beginnings of an oral or confessional development, not a written one (yet): 2) like the later rabbis, and apparently other Pharisees of his time, Paul drew from what is not in written Torah. And Paul cites traditions attested in later Targums but not present in Torah to support his positions on how non-Jews should be viewed and treated by Jews, and how they should view themselves and behave in Messiah (e.g., Gal 4:29).¹²

Yuval continues: "Similarly, the formation of rabbinical Judaism paralleled, albeit decades later, the emergence of the messianic doctrine of Paul and the subsequent consolidation of the New Testament. In the beginning there was the verbal message of Jesus and Paul, after which the canonical text, the New Testament, was written."

But it is highly doubtful that Paul thought he was creating canonical texts, or that he had any idea that his letters or any of the other documents from his and later hands would become something like the later New Testament. The idea that the Old/New testament "parallels" oral/written Torah seems to me both inaccurate and unhelpful; there were always traditions of interpretation, before Paul's time, during it, and afterwards, whether admitted or denied, and this process is not unique to Judaism or Christianity.

Yuval then observes: "In Christianity the New Testament had taken the place of the Old Testament, whereas rabbinic Judaism saw the Oral Torah as an integral part of the first and only Torah." (3)

Yes. But Paul appealed to oral Torah traditions in his arguments (as noted above), and defined himself as beholden "to the traditions of my fathers," which is a Pharisaic circumlocution.¹³ As worded (not "of *the* fathers," but "of *my* fathers"), Paul betrays that he still

¹² Like Paul, later Targums (e.g., *Tg. Ps-J.* Gen 21.9–11; *Tg. Onq.* Gen 21.9; *Pesiq. R.* 48.2) refer to Isaac being "persecuted [ἐδίωκεν]" (better, "prosecuted" or "discredited") by Ishmael to interpret Gen 21:9, but the written Torah refers to this as "playing [ῥῆζοντα]/παίζοντα)" (or "taunting"). On the translation of ἐδίωκεν, Mark D. Nanos and Heidi Wendt draw on Wendt's forthcoming research in their co-written, "Galatians: An Epistolary Microbiography" in *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul*, ed. Ryan S. Schellenberg and Heidi Wendt, 329–47. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2022).

¹³ Albert I. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic Paradosis," *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987): 63–77.

valued his identity in Pharisaic communal terms, or, he at least considered this an advantageous way to present himself to those in Galatia whom he sought to persuade.

On this matter, Yuval surmises that, "Apparently, the Pharisees, even before the birth of Christianity, claimed that their Halacha is not a new invention, but represents the 'tradition of the fathers'." (3) *Yes, And, But*, again, Paul already actually makes this connection, claiming to be a Pharisee and to represent "the traditions of *my* fathers" in exemplary fashion (Phil 3:5 with Gal 1:14). We must be careful to distinguish the historical Paul from the later Christian constructions of Paul ("Paulinism") when discussing this topic.

Yuval argues that the rabbis' denial of divine voice beyond Torah represented a counter claim to the monotheism of Christianity (3). *Yes*, that may be correct. *But* I wonder if this development can be only attributed to Christian influence. There also was an ongoing debate among rabbis and between rabbis and other Jews who were not Christ-followers about two-powers and other kinds of mediator-figure convictions, and this continued in the mystical traditions, or returned in them.¹⁴ After all, there were many other Jewish groups besides the emerging rabbinic movement, about which we know little to nothing. Moreover, this may represent more of a *prescriptive* development in rabbinic Judaism; hermeneutics are a form of appeal to rightly represent the divine voice/intention even when appealing to existing texts that others have interpreted differently, perhaps even that those who now argue against those interpretations once held—this applies to Paul no less than the rabbis or anyone else. The idea, e.g., one often encounters, that the Sadducees were literalists, is as naive as is the claim by fundamentalist Christians that they are. I have yet to meet one who has poked out his eyes or cut off his hand, but surely a few have experienced lust and stolen property; no?

Regarding the topic of *orality*, which Yuval discusses for the Pharisees and rabbis (4–5), I am in general agreement, *Yes*. *But* appeal to the authoritative role of orality applies equally to Paul. On the one hand, as is well known, Paul appeals to divine guidance for his authority, not least to personal revelation (2 Cor 12:1–5; Gal 1:11–17). And in several cases he appeals to textual traditions that are only attested in later rabbinic Targumaic texts to make his arguments, rather than to the extant language of the biblical texts (e.g., in the allegory of Gal 4:21—5:1). On

¹⁴ Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2002; orig. 1977); Peter Schäfer, *Two Gods in Heaven: Jewish Concepts of God in Antiquity*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

the other hand, Paul also appeals to his personal interaction with the Corinthians to mitigate the authority of his rivals' letters of authority (2 Corinthians 10; see also 11–13). Paul reasons similarly in Galatians, where he argues that they have received and experienced God's "gospel" *in the spirit* to unsettle any prospect that his non-Jew addressees will be convinced by those who are apparently contesting their claims to full membership among the righteous ones apart from circumcision (3:1–5; 4:28–29). Whoever these influencers were, they probably appealed to texts in Torah about the role of the rite of circumcision for Abraham's descendants, although those texts do not enjoin non-Jews to become circumcised except in the case of slaves (and *gerim* who wish to partake of Passover), which, I have argued, Paul uses against them in his allegorical argument in Gal 4 and in his case that this creates a curse instead of a blessing in Gal 3, since the rite of circumcision is not enjoined for the purpose of making non-Jews into Jews, that is, for completing (male) proselyte transformation.¹⁵

Yes, Yuval's observation that the rabbis prescribe that their positions remain unwritten is astonishing, *but* the reasons that they did so are not self-evident. For example, was this because rival Jewish groups were writing down their interpretive decisions any more than were the rabbis? After all, we are aware of this prescription because it was written down by the rabbis. Paul, for example, argues that his personal presence is more authoritative than his rival's written introductions to the Corinthians (ch. 10), but he does so in a written letter that is itself full of prescriptions.

I wonder too, in the case of Paul for comparison, *if a letter is the same as a text such as the Talmud, or the Christian doctrinal pronouncements and commentaries*. Letters were described as conversations in the handbooks, and Paul does seem to use them this way.¹⁶ Paul, for example, does not appeal to his earlier letters to substantiate arguments in subsequent letters, even if he will refer to an earlier one from himself or them in a single location like Corinth, when there was a conversation that continued. And Paul did not write these letters; secretaries did.

¹⁵ Interestingly, here Paul uses an argument that requires an extra-biblical (oral) interpretive tradition to argue against the rival extra-biblical interpretive tradition advocating proselyte transformation. See my, "The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul's Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus's Advisors to King Izates," in *Paul Within Judaism*, 105-52; idem, "Re-Framing Paul's Opposition to *Erga Nomou* as 'Rites of a Custom' for Proselyte Conversion Completed by the Synecdoche 'Circumcision,'" *JMJS* 8 (2021): 75–115.

¹⁶ Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians*.

They include syllogisms and conventions from which secretaries shaped the letter that put our knowledge of Paul himself further from our grasp than current Pauline scholarship would lead one to suppose.

6. In his conclusion, Yuval writes: "it is important to understand that Christianity was not only a persecutor in terms of Judaism. It also played a significant role in shaping Judaism, albeit in the context of opposition and conflict."

Yes. But, as I already signaled, the influence on the Judaism of the rabbis (and earlier, on the Pharisees) was already a factor before the emergence of Jewish Christ-following groups and all the more of Christianity; it arose from rivalries and interaction with other Jewish groups, and some of those groups influenced the way that the Christ-following groups were shaped. The Jewish Christ-following groups represented a minority movement, one that had to respond to the prevailing Jewish groups and norms, since they began and emerged within Judaism(s). They were thereby shaped by various Jewish norms even when opposing certain groups and norms, and they would have been shaped again by the later rabbis and other Jewish groups reacting to their reactions, and on and on.¹⁷ This back-and-forth begins earlier, before Christianity was an imperial religion but still rather very much a contested minority movement—which remained the case for roughly 250 years after Paul's time. They were perhaps marginalized more than most other Jewish groups were until then. The Christ-following groups that continued to consist of Jews and to practice Judaism continued to suffer contestation as a minority movement not only from (Gentile) Christianity no less than did the rabbis, but also contestation from other Jewish groups, including the rabbis, thus making the direction of influence difficult to assign.

Finally, Yuval concludes: "The examples discussed here substantiate the claim that Christianity played an important role in the creation of rabbinical sacred text, sacred time, and the history of salvation."

Yes, this is a wonderful contribution.

¹⁷ Karin Hedner Zetterholm, "Isaac and Jesus: A Rabbinic Reappropriation of a 'Christian' Motif?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47, no. 1 (2016): 102–20.

But, Yuval continues: "I would like to condense this new approach into a single sentence: Had there been no Paul, there would have been no Rabbi Akiva. This should perhaps have been the title of my lecture...."

To this I must respond, quite simply, *No*, I strongly disagree. You will probably not be surprised at this point to learn that I do not see how this sentence or this suggested title are warranted by the case that has been argued, or apart from it either. The announcing of messianic and related features was not new with Paul, and Paul was not the originator of most of what has been attributed to him later in Christianity, to which the rabbis might have reacted in the ways Yuval has skillfully traced, to much of which I can answer, sans Paul, *Yes*. *But* I want to most of all challenge Yuval's understanding of Paul—perhaps shared by many of you gathered at this conference. *That* Paul, often referred to as "Paulinism," is based on constructions of the apostle that I do not believe represent the historical figure Paul and his original aims or influence. Regardless of how widely held the traditional view of Paul may be, or how often repeated, or how seemingly self-evident it may appear based on the prevailing translations and interpretations of his texts, I submit that it is largely if not entirely mistaken. I do not blame Yuval for assuming *that* Paul represented a relatively secure historical fact, *but it is not secure anymore*. *And that "fact" undermines the certainty if not also the cleverness of the premise upon which Yuval's alternative title depends*. I hope you will indulge an explanation of why I state this so emphatically.

7. Reading Paul "within Judaism," as I advocate, leads to a number of very different ways to conceptualize the influences that Yuval seeks to understand, not least the best ways to describe the entities and probable direction of their influence on each other. To my mind, Yuval works with a construction of Paul that is not historically probable for the original figure and the interpretation of his aims or arguments and thus of his original influence. Moreover, that construction is not as helpful with respect to advancing Christian-Jewish dialogue in new more promising directions offered by the constructions of Paul advocated from a Paul within Judaism perspective. I can here only offer a brief explanation.

7.1) To begin, I want to return to a basic sociological premise in Yuval's paper, which was also a premise in *Two Nations in Your Womb*:¹⁸ "whenever we find a similarity between Judaism and Christianity, and we do not have grounds to suggest a shared heritage, we may assume that it is indicative of the influence of the Christian milieu on the Jews, and not vice versa, unless it may be proved that the Jewish sources are more ancient. The reasoning for this assumption is quite simple: minority cultures tend to adopt the agenda of the majority culture."¹⁹

7.1.a) *But*: As already discussed, this observation is based on the traditional way of defining Paul and his direct actions as outside of Judaism, as the quintessential convert from Judaism to Christianity, which is the familiar paradigm from which Yuval works—but it has been contested, and is no longer sufficient to the task to which Yuval's puts it. If Paul operated within a sect of Judaism (of Jewish communal ways of living), and, just as importantly, that this was how those he influenced understood him and their own identities and ideals, and that those who initially contested his influence and their self-understanding also understood these assemblies to be Jewish subgroups, albeit deviant ones whose members needed to be brought back into compliance with prevailing norms, including, when necessary, by way of minority communal disciplinary mechanisms permitted to them by the ruling Romans to police their communal members—then the evidence required for Yuval's judgement is unfounded. Thus, rather than discussing Paul's Christianity *or* Judaism, which is central to Yuval's premises and evaluations, we would instead evaluate the similarities and differences and influences of Paul just as we would any other figure working within Judaism, including his rivalries with other Jews and Jewish groups/subgroups.

7.1.b) *And*: If Paul represented Pharisaic and other 2nd Temple Jewish sources *that are more ancient* than both the Christianity *and* rabbinic Judaism too, then his writings meet the criteria for exception that Yuval allowed: this changes the way we go about the research as well as how we present the issues where Paul is concerned.

7.1.c) *And*: If we grant, for the sake of argument, the observation that minority cultures tend to adopt the agenda of the majority culture—which is not a given (noted above, and in 7.1.d

¹⁸ Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006), 21-22.

¹⁹ I did not find reference to any sociological or other research upon which this insight depends.

below), especially when we are talking about intra-group as well as contested group dynamics—we would nevertheless have to approach the matter acknowledging that Paul and his groups did not represent the majority culture of the Jewish communal networks, but a new, emerging but during his time minority culture with a very small number of people and very few subgroup assemblies. *And* we would also have to take into consideration that all Jewish groups were themselves minority cultures within the majority Roman (and Greco-Roman) culture, certainly Diaspora groups of Jews, such as was the case for Paul's groups, and others to which he wrote (Rome). So their concerns were already shaped by the majority cultures' ideologies, etc., to which they felt compelled to speak on behalf of (their various expressions of) Judaism. Defense of God as "one" would likely arise in just such contexts, likewise defense of the authority of Torah, ideas like resurrection and end of ages expectations for a divine ruler, and how to best mark time, would all be salient concerns with Greco-Roman civic rulers and neighbors.

7.1.d) *And*, it must be said that, although influence does often flow from the majority to the minority, it can flow in the opposite direction, and there is plenty of evidence that it does. A minority culture can emphasize its own culture to preserve it or for other strategic reasons; it can also reject the majority, rebel against it, subvert it, introduce new ideas to it, and even appeal to the norms the majority also prescribes but does not (perhaps sufficiently) practice. Moreover, a minority group or culture can attract adulation, even emulation, by majority groups and cultures. Earlier I noted that Josephus's claim—regardless of how widely practiced or even true—bears witness to the fact that he expected his readers to find believable that (some) Romans had begun to adopt the Jewish custom of lighting candles and resting on the Jewish Sabbath (*Ag. Ap.* 2.282); I also cited modern social psychological studies of minority influence on majorities.

And: My reading of Paul's rhetoric has led me to surmise that he hoped that by prescribing how Christ-following non-Jews in his and other Christ-following subgroups should think and behave—including how to think about and with and behave toward Jews inside and outside of these subgroups—he would convince the Jewish representatives of prevailing majority norms to join him and his minority movement, or at least allow it to flourish.²⁰

²⁰ See e.g., my, "The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Reading Romans within Judaism*, 40–64 (orig. 1999).

7.2) *And*: Paul based his arguments supporting this Jewish subgroup's decision to include Christ-following non-Jews as non-Jews who worship the One God alongside of Jews as equal members of these assemblies apart from also becoming Jews upon a theological premise inherent in the confession of the *Shema* (see esp. Rom 3:29–31;²¹ 15:5–12; Gal 3:28),²² which was already a Jewish communal tradition, albeit no doubt interpreted to apply to this matter in various ways, some likely antithetical to Paul's application. He also appealed to other traditions that predated himself, including the role of Scriptural authority, prophetic expectations for the end of days, and the experience of God's spirit. Paul insisted that the non-Jews in this Jewish movement remain non-Jews but begin to practice a Jewish way of life even though that meant they were not under Torah technically; the arguments throughout his letters work from the premise, implicit when not explicitly stated, that they were joining Jewish groups whose definitions of righteousness were derived from Torah as Guidance for those beholden to the God to which the gospel brought these non-Jews, and thus they anchored the norms applicable to anyone joining this Jewish movement.

And: This leads to questioning how well the rabbis knew Paul's arguments apart from what they learned from later Christian theological developments of them in non-Jewish directions (Paulinism). For example, if the later rabbis were readers of Paul and informed about his earlier way of reasoning and practicing a contested Christ-following Judaism that gave birth to Christianity, one wonders if they would have argued from the *Shema* in a way similar to Paul about the status of non-Jews when the age to come does arrive. But they do, similarly appealing to the logic of the confession of the *Shema* and the prophetic hope in Zechariah 14:9 in *Sifre* on

²¹ Rom 3:29–31: "Or is God the God of Jews only? Not the God of members of the other nations also? Yes, of members of the other nations also, since God is one, who will justify the circumcised out of faithfulness and the foreskinned through the faithfulness [of Christ]. Do we then nullify the Torah by the faithfulness [of Christ]? By no means! On the contrary, we establish the Torah."

²² Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and the Jewish Tradition: The Ideology of the *Shema*," in *Reading Paul within Judaism*, 108–26 (orig. 2012).

Deuteronomy 6:4 (Piska 31).²³ Likewise, later, Rashi argues similarly.²⁴ This way of reasoning from the Shema, if already a strategy among Pharisees, may also have some bearing on arguments about the oneness of God in Paul and rabbinic Judaism.

7.3) *And*: Paul argued that *his subgroups represented the ideals of Judaism*, not that they departed from them or represented a new reality that conflicted with Jewish ideals. It would be some time before other Jewish groups could form a united response to Paul's position, framing it as schismatic and to be regarded as something other than authentic Judaism, if you will. To a large degree, they were reacting to a school of Paul that, in my view, no longer represented the historical Paul, a school that we refer to as Paulinism to this day, however. But the historical Paul appealed to his ideal Jewish identity and behavior to defend himself against those Jews who opposed him, and he regarded his suffering discipline at their hands as unjust, an intra-Jewish development that requires that Paul was still working within their realm of authority. Paul was not an outsider or leader of movement that had left Jewish communal life and administrative jurisdiction.

7.3.a) *And* Paul constantly appealed to his identity and behavior as beholden to the ideals of Judaism, of Tanakh, of Torah and its interpretation from a Pharisaic viewpoint, couched in a chronometrical claim that the awaited reconciliation of the nations had arrived. This, he argued, resulted in concomitant social changes, and it is primarily these changes, which impacted the social life of others who were not similarly convinced of the gospel claims, both fellow Jews as well as non-Jews, that brought contestation. He could expect his revelation based innovative claims to be disputed by other Jews and groups, which led him to argue that he was a Jew's ideal Jew (e.g., Rom 1; 9–11; 2 Cor 11; Gal 1–2; Phil 3). He called his addressees to behave according to Judaism's ideals for living rightly (lovingly, justly, graciously, as if circumcised even if not,

²³ "'The LORD, our God,' over us (the children of Israel); 'the LORD is one,' over all the creatures of the world. 'The LORD, our God,' in this world; 'the LORD is one,' in the world to come, as it is said, '[T]he LORD shall be king over all the earth. In that day shall the LORD be one and His name one' (Zech 14:9)."

²⁴ "The LORD who is our God now, but not (yet) the God of the (other) nations, is destined to be the One LORD, as it is said, 'For then will I give to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent' (Zeph 3:9). And (likewise) it is said, 'And the LORD shall be king over all the earth; on that day shall the LORD be One and His name One' (Zech 14:9)."

etc.), to be culturally Jewish/Israelitish although remaining ethnically non-Jews/non-Israelites (non-Jewish).²⁵ This is not replacement theology; it is factional rhetoric based upon appeal to what the faction beholden to Paul's Judaism believes that all would agree the norms are, which he argued should be upheld. However, in this case, Paul appealed to a certain interpretation of the present reality that is disputable on empirical grounds: What demonstrates that the end of the ages has arrived? Other Jews and groups could agree *in principle* but not agree with the chronometrical time-scheme claims made to warrant the changes to social behavior *now*, specifically, to how to include non-Jews as non-Jews and yet full members of the Jewish communities rather than guests. Disputing the timing is different than disputing that these are the ideals to be enacted—*mutatis mutandis*—when the time does arrive.

7.3.b) The ideals of Jewish identity and behavior are exemplified by the way that conflicts with other Jewish groups, and with non-Jewish groups and culture, are justified. In Romans 2, as I read him, Paul argues from the ideal categorization of the Jew who is circumcised and observes and teaches Torah torahishly. Philippians 3 argues for the ideal categorization of the communities as Jewish and thus defined by circumcised norms, even though their gatherings included those who were not circumcised (not that much of a stretch, since this was already the norm and rhetoric, regardless of the presence of females in "circumcised" communities).²⁶

²⁵ Nanos, "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,' But Do They Become 'Jewish'?"

²⁶ Stephen Reicher and Fabio Sani, "Introducing SAGA: Structural Analysis of Group Arguments," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 2, no. 4 (1998): 267-84, on 269-70 state: "[P]recisely because the definition of social categories may shape collective action, we would expect those seeking to shape collective mobilization--politicians, social movement activists, those one might call the "entrepreneurs of identity" to seek to construe social categories in such a way as to present their projects as prototypical for the maximum number of people. In a number of studies, we have shown how such entrepreneurs construe both their own position and the categorical nature of their audience in such a way as to (a) make the maximum proportion of the audience part of a common in-group with themselves, (b) portray themselves as prototypical of the in-group and hence in a position to influence it, and (c) portray their message as exemplifying the content of the in-group identity. We have also shown that, in so doing, they engage with and challenge alternative constructions by rival entrepreneurs seeking to win the audience to different projects. In short, we have sought to demonstrate that the rhetorical debates over self-categories are important because of their social-cognitive consequences...." Note also relevant is the comment on 271: "when different group members construe the relationship between suggestions and group identities in different ways (either through the way they construe the suggestions, the group identity, or both) and when at least one subset of the group construes the position of others as violating essential elements of group identity, then schismatic

Conclusion:

Reading Paul *within Judaism* is a relatively new way to read the apostle's arguments, although advocated in various scholarly venues for a few decades now. Yuval does not indicate awareness of this development: his Paul reflects the more familiar received readings of Paul. Nevertheless, even if the traditional construction of Paul was widely—until recent years, universally—held to be the way to read Paul, this is no longer the case, and, as I have tried to indicate, the implications for Yuval's project are many. I believe the recommended approach will open new, more promising avenues to explore for Yuval and others who want to avoid the harmful legacies of the past where new, historically viable interpretive options are now on offer. I would expect Yuval to bring to the discussion any number of new, so far unanticipated insights for his project, and those that his work influences.

My response has focused on disagreements; however, sans Paul, I am largely in agreement with many of Yuval's important observations, have learned much from his work, and want to thank him very much for his research. I also want to express gratitude to the organizers for the opportunity to engage in this quest to get our history as right as we can by working together. Although Yuval and I both come to this shaped by Jewish sensibilities, I sincerely hope that by working together as Jews and Christians we might also find both more accurate and more promising ways of talking about and to each other across the Christian/Jewish divide.

factions will develop. Moreover, each schismatic faction will then construe its own position as defending the group identity and the position of the others as subverting that identity." I think this kind of analysis is much more useful for trying to understand Paul's intra-(Jewish)group rhetoric and sub-group community building in rivalry.