

Paul

Jewish Law and Early Christianity



Paul: Jewish Law and Early Christianity

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Daniel J. Harrington, "[Paul and Judaism: 5 Puzzles,](#)" **BR**, April 1993.

Jack T. Sanders, "[Circumcision of Gentile Converts: The Root of Hostility,](#)" **BR**, February 1991.

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Introduction

A major controversy in early Christianity was the role of Jewish law and traditions. As most of the first converts were Jews, some felt that the Mosaic Law and covenantal signs, such as circumcision, were still important. While Christianity was open to both Jews and Gentiles, some contended that converts first had to become Jews in order to become Christians. Others considered the outward signs of Judaism to be unnecessary for Christian life.

Paul, the author of much of the New Testament, discussed the role of Judaism among Jesus' followers in a number of his letters. Although Paul preached justification on the basis of faith in Christ, he was himself a Pharisee and addressed the place of Jewish traditions and the status of Israel in the new covenant.

This eBook, taken from articles in *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Bible Review* magazines, considers the relevant writings of Paul and brings to light some of the difficult theological issues for Jews and Christians that persist to this day. Drawing from an essay by John Gager titled "Paul's Contradictions: Can They Be Resolved?" and a reply by Ben Witherington, III, titled "Laying Down the Law: A Response to John Gager," we explore some perceived contradictions in Paul's teaching and consider different viewpoints by noted Biblical scholars. Finally, we examine Martin Abegg's fascinating treatment of the translation of the Dead Sea Scroll known as MMT and its relationship to Paul and the Law titled "Paul, 'Works of the Law' and MMT."

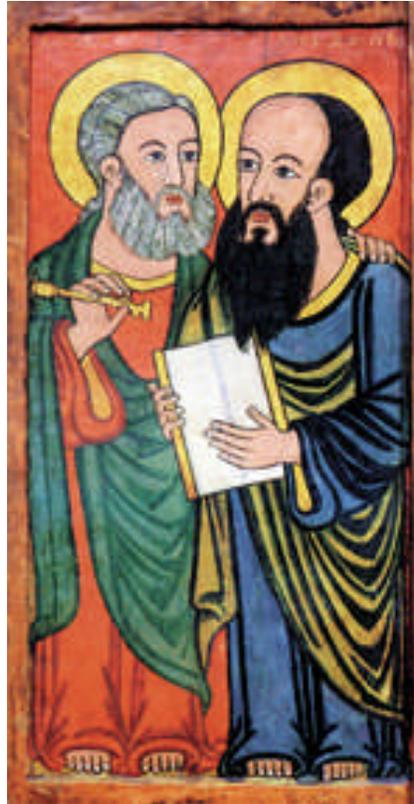
We hope that you will find this eBook interesting and thought provoking. These articles and others published in *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Bible Review* will enable you to explore further the place of the Law for Jews and gentiles in Paul's conception of Christianity.

Margaret Warker
2012

Paul's Contradictions

Can They Be Resolved?

By John G. Gager



Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa

Peter and Paul. In this 15th-century icon from Ethiopia, Saint Peter, holding the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and Saint Paul, carrying a book, are shown in the midst of an earnest, though harmonious, discussion. But the relationship between the two was anything but as affectionate as shown here. Peter and others within the Jesus movement insisted that gentile followers of Jesus could only be redeemed by converting to Judaism. Those who agreed with Peter—“anti-Paulines,” as author John G. Gager calls them—followed Paul from town to town, challenging his view that gentiles could achieve salvation outside of God’s covenant with Israel.

Gager suggests that this dispute between apostles is responsible for the seemingly contradictory messages regarding Judaism in Paul’s letters. When writing to and about gentiles, Gager says, Paul stressed the possibility of their salvation, through Jesus Christ—a path independent of the people of Israel. When writing about fellow Jews, however, Paul stressed their need to uphold Judaic law. But interpreters of Paul’s writings going back to his own lifetime have missed the reasons behind Paul’s differing statements, Gager says, and in so doing have missed the meaning behind his letters.

If we look at Paul's letters, it is not difficult to pull out what on the surface appear to be directly opposing views, anti- and pro-Israel:

I. Anti-Israel:

- "All who rely on works of the law are under a curse" (Galatians 3:10).
- "No one is justified before God by the law" (Galatians 3:11).
- "For [some manuscripts add 'in Christ Jesus'] neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is everything!" (Galatians 6:15).
- "No human being will be justified in his [God's] sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).
- "Israel, who pursued righteousness based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law" (Romans 9:31).
- "But their minds were hardened. Indeed, for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil is still there, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds" (2 Corinthians 3:14–15).

II. Pro-Israel:

- "What is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way" (Romans 3:1).
- "Do we not overthrow the Law by this notion of faith? By no means. On the contrary, we uphold the Law" (Romans 3:31).
- "What shall we say? That the Law is sin? By no means" (Romans 7:7).
- "Thus the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12).
- "To the Israelites belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the Temple, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Romans 9:4).
- "Has God rejected his people? By no means" (Romans 11:1).
- "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).
- "Is the Law then opposed to the promises of God. Certainly not!" (Galatians 3:21).

These two sets of quotations appear to contradict one another. But do they? Was the apostle to the gentiles incapable of consistent thinking? Some recent Paul scholars have made precisely this claim. The Finnish exegete Heikki Räisänen, for example, has taken what I call a “contradictionist” view of Paul’s letters, insisting that “Paul’s thought on the law is full of...inconsistencies.”¹

Other scholars have sought to resolve the dilemma by supposing that the problem was introduced by later editors. Thus the eminent Australian Bible scholar J.C. O’Neill has stated: “If the choice lies between supposing that Paul was confused and contradictory and supposing that his text has been commented on and enlarged, I have no hesitation in choosing the second.”² And so O’Neill proceeds to eliminate many passages, arguing that they were introduced into the text by later editors who profoundly misunderstood him.

Still other scholars seek a way out of the problem by psychologizing about the apostle. Paul, they claim, was trapped in a psychological bind; he had abandoned Judaism and the Law, but he was unable to admit this either to himself or to others. This appears to be the view of Robert Hamerton-Kelly of Stanford University, who writes that Paul held onto “the role [of Israel] in the plan of salvation” owing to “powerful personal factors” and a “case of nostalgia overwhelming his judgment.”³ The two sets of antithetical passages, accordingly, reflect the two horns of Paul’s own religious dilemma.

The most common solution to the apparent tensions between the two sets of passages has been what I call the “subordinationist” solution—one set is subordinated to the other. In the subordinationist solution, however, it is always the pro-Israel passages that are subordinated to the anti-Israel passages. In short, the anti-Israel passages are representative of the true Paul; the pro-Israel passages are either explained away or ignored.

In the subordinationist solution, Paul is the father of Christian anti-Judaism. The great German historian Adolf Harnack put it this way: “It was Paul who delivered the Christian religion from Judaism...It was he who confidently regarded the Gospel as a new force abolishing the religion of the law.”⁴ Strangely enough, the subordinationist solution never starts with the pro-Israel passages and subordinates the anti-Israel ones.



Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY

The father of anti-Judaism? The anti-Israel passages in Paul’s letters have been thought to represent the apostle’s true beliefs almost since his Epistles were written; the pro-Israel passages have usually been seen as subordinate. By the time this Byzantine plaque was carved from soft green steatite in the 12th century, such an interpretation had become orthodoxy. As a result, Paul has come to be seen as the father of Christian anti-Judaism. Author Gager thinks this is because Paul has always been viewed through the lens of a later triumphal church. But Paul wrote before there was a Christianity and even before there was a New Testament. The notion that Judaism would be superseded by a later faith would have been inconceivable to Paul, Gager says. Paul’s passages relating to Israel and the Law, he argues, must be read in their entirety and in the context of when they were written, not in the context of subsequent centuries of misinterpretation.

More important, none of these positions considers the possibility that the apostle to the gentiles, writing to gentile churches and dealing with gentile issues, is, in the two sets of passages, addressing two different audiences about two different issues. Is it possible that in the pro-Israel set he is speaking of the

Law/Torah as it relates to Israel and that in the anti-Israel set he is speaking of the Law/Torah as it relates to gentile followers of Jesus Christ? That is the position I would like to explore.

To understand my argument, we must understand that I want to read the text in a way in which we hear its voice and not just our own. We read all texts within some framework. We always start with assumptions. We never begin with a clean slate. And for the most part, when we deal with texts like the letters of Paul, written in a time and a place radically different from our own, our questions and concerns will be far removed from those of Paul and his earliest readers. Most of the time, our frameworks or assumptions or presuppositions are unconscious; they are so deeply imbedded in our culture and in our cognitive makeup that they have become part of the way we think about the world. Therefore, we often make the fatal mistake of assuming that they are not there at all, that they really are just a part of the way things are. Once we become conscious of these hidden assumptions, we become aware of the possibility of changing them. Changing them makes it possible for us to understand the text based on a new hermeneutic, or principle of interpretation.

Consider the assumptions we commonly bring with us when we read Paul's letters. First, we may read Paul's letters as scripture. This means that what he writes is true—perhaps not in the sense that modern biblical literalists mean when they speak of the Bible as true, but at the very least in the sense of being powerfully authoritative. Beyond this, as part of the Christian canon, they are assumed to stand behind the basic truths of Christianity.

Second, since the time of the early church fathers until recent decades, all interpreters of Paul have read him from the perspective of the triumph of Christianity, after the decisive break between Christianity and Judaism. The reigning Christian view of Judaism during this entire period has been that the Jews have been superseded as the chosen people of God by the Christians (or

Christianity), that the Jews are no longer the bearers of God's promise of salvation and that their only hope for salvation lies in becoming Christian. In this hermeneutic, it follows that Paul, too, with his canonical status, must have held to this dominant Christian view of Judaism. And this is exactly how Paul has been read throughout Christian history. Not just 80 or 90 or even 99 percent of the time, but 100 percent of the time, without exception—that is, until recently, when a few maverick scholars began not only to question that image but to reject it altogether.

One of them, Lloyd Gaston of the Vancouver School of Theology, has put it this way: "It is Paul who has provided—historically—the theoretical structure for Christian anti-Judaism, from Marcion through Luther and F.C. Baur down to Bultmann."⁵ To summarize, what I call the old view of Paul is based on the following framework of assumptions: With the coming of Christ, Israel (or the Jews) has been rejected by God as the elect people of the covenant; Israel's faith and the law of Moses (including circumcision) has been declared invalid; Israel has been replaced as the people of God by a new people, called Christians, and from this point on, the sole path to redemption or salvation—for Jews and gentiles—is faith in Christ. According to this interpretation of Paul's teachings, Jews and Judaism no longer play any role in God's work of salvation.

This is the result when we approach Paul from our side of the time line. We live after the triumph of Christianity and the final parting of ways between Jews and Christians. Paul did not. Yet we bring that post-Pauline framework with us when we read him. And that framework has determined how we read him—at least until a few decades ago, when a number of scholars began to offer a new view of Paul.

Consider what would happen if, for just a moment, we were to consider Paul's letters from the other side of the time line, from Paul's time instead of our own. What would happen if we threw into doubt the triumph of Christianity in

Paul's time, or even the notion of the final split between Jews and Christians? Or—since we have started to ask tough questions about our assumptions—what would happen if we were to recall (here I am not inventing but simply describing) that in Paul's time there was no Bible other than the Hebrew Bible, no New Testament, or even any idea of a New Testament, and no Christianity, or even any idea of Christianity? What difference would it make to our reading of Paul if we were to bring these assumptions, this framework with us when we read his letters? The result is not just a minor adjustment here or there on the fringes of the old image. What I and others have been arguing is that the old image, the image that has been 100 percent dominant from Paul's day to our own, is 100 percent wrong, from top to bottom, from start to finish.

The best argument against the old view comes from Paul's letters themselves. The old view represents a complete misreading of Paul that began not with modern Christian theologians or with Martin Luther or even with Marcion in the second century, but with Paul's own contemporaries. And he was well aware of it. In fact, he argues vigorously against it in his letter to the Romans. Romans itself is a systematic refutation of what I have called the old view, but now with the added claim that this old view was already in circulation—under Paul's name—in his own lifetime.

Some exegetes have argued that Paul was never really able to live up to the demands of Mosaic Law and that Christianity gave him the opportunity to throw off that intolerable burden. Others hold that he finally came to view Judaism as nothing more than a religion of arid formalism, mere outer observance devoid of any real spiritual substance. The origin of that view is often identified with Paul's blinding vision of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

Several other far-fetched explanations have been proposed for Paul's supposed rejection of Judaism, which underlies what we have been calling the old view. For instance, according to one story, Paul was born a gentile, fell in

love with a Jewish woman and, as part of his efforts to win her affections, undertook a half-hearted effort to observe the Mosaic law. When she finally rejected him, he turned back to his old pagan ways and vented his frustration by attacking Judaism. This is not just a joke: It is a story that actually circulated in anti-Pauline circles shortly after the apostle's death.⁶

All of these explanations, ancient and modern, have one thing in common: Each presupposes that Paul rejected Judaism and substituted Christians for Jews as the new people of God.

However, the evidence for this comes, not from Paul's letters (the only evidence that comes from Paul himself), but from other parts of the New Testament (a collection that was not even envisioned in Paul's lifetime), especially the Acts of the Apostles. Both Acts and the New Testament as a whole are far removed from Paul in time and circumstance, yet they gave birth to the traditional view of Paul. The unmistakable message of Acts—repeatedly placed in the mouth of Paul—is that gentiles have replaced the Jews as the people of God. And Acts is strategically placed before the letters of Paul, so that it is through Acts that we first meet Paul. In other words, a clear image of Paul is presented to us that preconditions our response to his letters.

Like Acts, the overall message of the New Testament regarding Judaism is that Judaism is rejected, invalidated and replaced by Christianity. And if this is the message of the New Testament as a whole, how can we doubt that its central figure (13 of its 27 writings claim to be written by Paul, and Acts is about him) preached this same message? In short, the other parts of the New Testament, particularly Acts, have always served as the lens through which Paul has been read and interpreted.

But does this lens provide an accurate picture of Paul or a distortion of his thought? A number of recent interpreters—including Lloyd Gaston, already

mentioned, Krister Stendahl,⁷ my own former teacher at Harvard, and more recently, Stanley Stowers⁸ of Brown University—have begun to doubt everything about the old view: its assumptions, its questions and its answers—not just details, but everything.

A pretty clear indication that Paul has been terribly misinterpreted is reflected in the fact that the defenders of the traditional interpretation of Paul as the father of Christian anti-Judaism never come to terms with the central pro-Israel passages in Paul's letters (quoted at the beginning of this article).

These passages flatly contradict the traditional view of Paul as the author of Christian anti-Judaism. There is simply no way to reconcile the pro-Israel passages with that view. Indeed, they all seem to be directed against that view, as if Paul were listening to his later interpreters and shaking his head in dismay at their profound misunderstanding of his position. And that, as I shall show, is almost exactly what was happening. For the traditional view was circulating in Paul's own time. The letter to the Romans is nothing if not a systematic—though ultimately unsuccessful—attempt to correct what Paul took to be a profound distortion of his teachings in his own lifetime.

At this point, we need to establish an entirely new framework for reading Paul. Instead of using a framework outside Paul's letters, whether in Acts or in the character of the New Testament as a whole or in pseudo-psychological efforts to read his inner thoughts, let's look for a set of starting points within his letters.

Who is Paul speaking to in his letters, especially in Galatians 5:6 and 6:15, where he states that circumcision is no longer essential to salvation? And why does he insist so angrily, again in Galatians, that for gentiles a new path to redemption has been opened up, a path different from the path of Israel but also testified to and predicted by the Law and the prophets? And finally, does Paul

(who always refers to himself as the apostle to the gentiles) believe that the allegiance of gentiles to Jesus Christ leads to a repudiation of Israel and of circumcision (which for him is clearly a major symbol of Israel's relationship to God) as the pathway to redemption for Jews?



Scala/Art Resource, NY

Traditional images of Paul—like this 15th-century Russian icon—typically portray the bald, bearded apostle with a book or a parchment scroll, emphasizing his role as the letter writer par excellence of the early Church. Indeed, Paul's letters have been considered scripture by Christians since the formation of the Christian canon.

In the New Testament, Paul's letters follow the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. In that context, the letters seem to continue the message of the Gospels, teaching that the way to salvation is through Jesus and no longer through adherence to Jewish law. But when that interpretive framework is removed, Gager says, Paul can be read very differently. Paul considered himself the apostle to the gentiles, but he never speaks of the gentiles as replacing Israel as God's chosen people. For Paul, Jesus was not the Messiah of Israel but rather of the gentiles. Just as Paul could not envision gentiles seeking salvation through the Mosaic covenant, neither could he imagine Jews attaining salvation other than through that same covenant.

Before his calling to be the apostle to the gentiles, while he was still a Pharisee, Paul was anything but neutral in his feelings about the new Jesus movement. Indeed, he had been an active persecutor of Jesus-followers (Philippians 3:6). Following his call, or conversion, Paul came to see himself

exclusively as the apostle to the gentiles. As he states in Galatians 1:15–16: “God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his son to me, in order that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles.” In other words, his divinely appointed task was to bring a new message regarding the status and salvation of the gentiles, a status different from the old covenant with Israel, but not against it. As he states in Romans 3:31: “Do we then overthrow the law by this notion of faith? By no means. On the contrary, we uphold the law.”

Paul’s message was intensely eschatological: The end of the world was at hand. Within his own lifetime, the trumpet would sound, the dead would be raised, and this age would come to an end. Everything was happening at a fever pitch. “The appointed time has grown very short,” as he states in 1 Corinthians 7:29.

This eschatological intensity is especially relevant to two central themes in Paul’s thinking. The first is the expectation in numerous Jewish texts of the time when the inclusion of the gentiles as children of God will take place at the end of history.⁹ The second is the elaborate scenario that maintains that the temporary blindness of the Jews is a divinely ordained precondition for the inclusion of the gentiles (Romans 11). According to the final stage of this scenario, once the gentiles are brought into a new relationship with God, Israel will come to its senses, and “All Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26). Note that he does not say, “All Israel will come to believe in Jesus or Christianity,” just “All Israel will be saved.”

All of this was supposed to happen in Paul’s lifetime. When it didn’t happen and when later Christians began to read Paul outside his own intense eschatological framework, what was left? Just the blindness and the exclusion of Israel! But for Paul himself, to think of Israel’s blindness as a permanent

condition, or as anything other than a divinely chosen device for bringing salvation to the gentiles, would have been the height of folly.

Yet this is precisely how the traditional view interprets him.

One final factor is important in understanding Paul's letters from Paul's viewpoint: Paul's message to and about gentiles—that they were being offered salvation outside the covenant with Israel—was actively and vociferously resisted by others within the Jesus movement. These anti-Pauline groups, whom Paul himself connects with Peter and James (the brother of Jesus) insisted that gentile followers of Jesus could be saved or redeemed only by becoming members of the people of Israel. For adult males, that meant circumcision. We also know that these anti-Pauline leaders from within the Jesus movement followed Paul from town to town, trying to impose their gospel of circumcision on his gentile believers. The issue between Paul and his opponents was not whether gentiles could become followers of Jesus. They could. The issue was whether they first had to become Jews or whether, as Paul insisted, a new way for them had been opened up by the faith and death of Jesus.

It is these anti-Pauline apostles within the Jesus movement who are the targets of Paul's anger. It is against them that his arguments are directed. His concern with circumcision has nothing to do with Jews outside the Jesus movement (as he tells us explicitly in Romans 2:25–3:4). As the apostle to the gentiles, he is concerned exclusively with the issue of the circumcision of gentiles within the Jesus movement.

Two recent interpreters have addressed these questions in a way that is worth a brief detour. The first is Michael Wyschogrod, an Orthodox Jewish philosopher and longtime student of Paul. "Early in my career as a student of Paul," he writes, "I was deeply perplexed by his attitude to the law. To be quite

frank about it, I could not understand how a religiously sensitive Jew such as Paul could speak about the law as he did.”¹⁰

Wyschogrod’s anguish is of a piece with the reaction of most Jewish readers and some Christians as well. What I find to be nothing short of astonishing is that until very recently no one has thought it worthwhile to consider Wyschogrod’s simple solution, which I quote:

The question for Paul is not mainly the significance of Torah for Jews but its significance for Jesus-believing Gentiles...[A]ll the nasty things Paul says about the law are intended to discourage Gentiles from embracing the law and are thoroughly misunderstood if they are read as expressions of Paul’s opinion about the value of the law for Jews.¹¹

In other words, Paul did not say nasty things about the Law as related to Israel: He did not draw the inference that the Law brought death to Israel, and he did not ignore or deny the biblical doctrine of repentance and forgiveness for Israel.

I am prepared to take the next step: Whenever any statement supposedly explicating Paul’s thought begins with words like “How could a Jew like Paul say X, Y, Z about the Law,” the statement must be regarded as misguided. In all likelihood, Paul is not speaking about the Law and Israel, but rather about the Law and gentile members of the Jesus movement.

One of the major figures in the creation of what I call the “new Paul” is Lloyd Gaston, who puts it this way:

Paul writes to Gentile Christians, dealing with Gentile-Christian problems, foremost among which was the right for Gentiles qua Gentiles, without adopting the Torah of Israel, to full citizenship in the people of God. It is remarkable that in the endless discussion of Paul's understanding of the law, few have asked what a first-century Jew would have thought of the law as it relates to Gentiles.¹²

If we take these facts and this framework as our starting point for reading his letters, it becomes clear that Paul's primary—I would say his exclusive—concern was the new status in Christ of gentiles, not the status of Israel.

Paul was constantly on the defensive, not so much against Jews outside the movement as against other apostles within it. Especially in Galatians, his opponents should be understood as anti-Pauline apostles bent on undermining Paul's Gospel in any way possible. These people are the targets of his anger and his arguments. Thus the anti-Israel statements quoted at the beginning of this article apply only to the status of the Law for gentiles within the Jesus movement. They have no bearing whatsoever on their validity for Israel.

Although the misreading of Paul began in his own time and, until very recently, was subsequently adopted by virtually all interpreters, Paul himself is as clear as anyone can be: "Circumcision is indeed of value if you follow the Law" (Romans 2:25).

Paul never speaks of gentiles as replacing Israel. (Note that Paul never refers to gentile members of the Jesus movement as Christians; for him, humanity is always divided between Jews and gentiles.) And Paul never speaks of God as having rejected Israel in favor of a new chosen people.

I cannot deny that interpreters throughout the ages have read him in this way, but once again, I believe that Paul vehemently repudiates this misreading of his thought: “I ask, then, has God rejected his people [Israel]? By no means!” (Romans 11:1).

Above all, Paul never speaks of Israel’s redemption in terms of Jesus. Just as he can no longer think of salvation for gentiles in terms of the Mosaic covenant, so he does not imagine salvation for Jews occurring through their acceptance of Jesus. Or to borrow a line from Lloyd Gaston, for Paul, Jesus was not the Messiah of Israel.

How, then, can 20 centuries of interpreters be so wrong? The answer is that the misreading is not only understandable but inevitable given the framework within which Paul has been read in the time following his death. When people lost sight of the immediate circumstances of the letters and began to assume that his opponents were Jews outside the Jesus movement instead of other apostles within, when Paul was read through the lens of Acts and the New Testament, when Paul’s intense eschatological worldview had to be abandoned, then the old traditional reading of Paul became inevitable. It is the result of reading Paul within a distant, alien framework, rather than the apostle’s own, and of forgetting that Paul is the apostle to the gentiles and is dealing with gentiles and their new status in Christ.

It is my view that the new reading of Paul that I am advocating is not simply one among several alternatives, but the only historically defensible reading. This is a bold stance, perhaps even a foolish one. It is certainly out of step with modern theories that regard all views as possible and allow no ultimate adjudication among them. It is also highly presumptuous, even arrogant, in its insistence that 20 centuries of interpreters have been mistaken. But if I am right, all readers, well as Christian, will need to confront the reasons for the origins of the old view in the first century and for its continuance ever since.

Laying Down the Law

A Response to John Gager

By Ben Witherington, III



Giraudon/Art Resource, NY

“He is the son of God” (Acts 9:20), Paul proclaims to the Jews gathered in the synagogue of Damascus, as depicted in this 12th-century mosaic from the cathedral of Monreale, in Sicily. According to author Ben Witherington, Paul believed that Jesus was the Messiah of both Jews and Christians. In a December 1998 BR article, however, John Gager of Princeton University argued that Paul preached the gospel of Jesus as the means of salvation for gentiles alone and that he never intended for Jews to abandon the Mosaic Law (see “Paul’s Contradictions,” BR 14:06). In this response, Witherington maintains that Paul felt the Law had been eclipsed—for both Jews and Christians—by the new covenant with Jesus.

John Gager’s thoughtful essay on “Paul’s Contradictions,” **BR 14:06**, raises important questions about how we ought to understand Paul’s thought. It makes good sense to moderns to suggest that Paul might have believed that there were two different ways of salvation, even two different peoples of God, and that what applied to one group did not necessarily apply to the other. In a religiously pluralistic age, this sort of argument makes life much easier for all of

us who would like nothing better than to see anti-Semitism erased once and for all from the face of the earth. But unfortunately, dialogue between Jews and Christians on these issues cannot be based on these sorts of arguments because, however noble or well intentioned, they misrepresent Paul in crucial ways.

At the start, we must state as clearly as possible that of course Paul did not see the Mosaic Law as a bad thing or as somehow not being a revelation from God. Gager's quotations, especially from Romans 7–11, make this apparent. The issue then is not whether Paul might have been anti-Law, because he wasn't. Rather, the issue is how Paul viewed the Law's role in the larger picture of salvation history. And what Paul says as clearly as he can in Galatians 3–4, in 2 Corinthians 3 and even in Romans is that the Law, though a very good thing, has been eclipsed by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and must now be seen as obsolescent:

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the Law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the Law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

Galatians 3:23–25

For Paul, the new covenant in Christ is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, and like the earlier covenant, it is available to all because Abraham had both Jewish and gentile heirs. Paul views the Mosaic covenant as an interim solution for God's people, and he believes that the covenant's day has passed. In Galatians 4, Paul likens the Mosaic covenant to a minor's guardian who plays an important role—but only until the youth comes of age. But as Galatians 4:4 says, when the fullness of time had come, God sent “forth his Son...born under the

Law to redeem those who were under the Law.” Paul can only be referring to persons like himself, namely Jews. In other words, whether we agree with him or not, Paul believes Jesus is indeed the savior of Jews as well as gentiles. He believes that Jews need to be redeemed from the Law, not because the Law is a bad thing, but because it cannot save fallen human beings; it cannot make them new creatures. As Paul puts it: “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the Law... Since God is one... he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith” (Romans 3:28–30).

Paul does not believe that Jews will be justified one way and gentiles another: He believes they will both be justified by a saving faith in the one Messiah for both Jews and gentiles, Jesus of Nazareth.

We must make no mistake: In Romans 9:5, when Paul says the Messiah comes from Israel, he means the Messiah anticipated by Jews as their redeemer, whom he believes has now come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul never refers to anyone other than Jesus as “the Christ.” As Paul says in Romans 1:16–17, the good news (that is, the gospel about Jesus) is the power of salvation “for everyone who has faith to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles.” Such statements cannot be dismissed simply as rhetorical flourishes intended solely for gentiles to make them feel they have equal standing with Jews before God.

Whether we are happy with such arguments or not, this is what Paul said and believed about Jesus. It is ironic that while recent Jewish interpreters of Paul, such as Alan Segal and Daniel Boyarin, have recognized the radical nature of Paul’s arguments, gentile interpreters, including Krister Stendahl, Lloyd Gaston and John Gager, have tried to exonerate Paul. In the wake of heinous anti-Semitic acts in this century, it is understandable why some in the Christian tradition would want to expunge the notion that Paul was claiming that salvation for Jews is to be found in Jesus and in company with his followers. But, alas, to

argue this way is not to allow Paul to be the difficult fellow he in fact was. It ought to be a rule in dealing with scriptural texts that any time they make us very uncomfortable and we are tempted to deny them, expunge them or explain them away, that is precisely when we need to listen to them even more carefully and avoid dismissing them. Perhaps the problem lies with our assumptions rather than with the ancient texts.

Throughout his letters, Paul makes it clear that he believes that the people of God are not just Jews alone or just gentiles alone (for Paul did not believe gentiles had displaced Jews as God's people), but rather Jews and gentiles united in Christ: "There is no longer Jew or Greek...for all of you are one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). This is why he consistently uses the Greek Old Testament term for God's community—the *ekklesia*—to describe the unity of Jews and gentiles in Christ. So, while it is true that Paul was especially the apostle to gentiles and that he primarily addressed gentiles, it is clear that he did not think his arguments applied only to gentiles. A text like 2 Corinthians 11:24–25, which describes Paul being flogged by the synagogue leaders, makes it quite apparent that Paul presented his gospel in the synagogues because he believed that his message about salvation in Jesus was intended for the Jew first, as well as for the gentile. In Paul's view, there has always been only one God and one people of God and one means of salvation throughout the successive covenants God has inaugurated in salvation history.

Gager is right to emphasize Paul's eschatological orientation. Paul believed the eschatological age had come, inaugurated by the coming of Jesus as the Messiah of both Jews and gentiles. It is clear in Romans 9–11 (especially Romans 11) that Paul thought that one day Jews and gentiles would indeed be united in Christ. In the meantime, Paul believed that both Jews and gentiles needed to hear the gospel since all had sinned, all had fallen short of God's vision for humankind. While one may fault Paul for having such views, it is

special pleading, based on a selective reading of a few texts, to say he did not believe these things.

I agree with those who say Paul is not anti-Semitic, just as I agree that some of Paul's teaching has been used—and is still being used—in anti-Semitic ways. However, neither the abuse of Pauline texts nor the misuse of his ideas negates what he said about Jesus the Jew as the world's savior. The belief that the Jewish Messiah had already come and that he was Jesus, the one redeemer for all humankind, is not an anti-Semitic idea. Indeed, Paul would insist it is the very fulfillment of the promises God made in the Hebrew Scriptures to Abraham and others. Thus, Gager's argument is not merely with modern interpreters of Paul, but with the apostle himself.

Paul believed it was time to lay down the Law and to take up the gospel, not because no good or grace could be found in the Law, but because the good and grace found in Christ was greater still. Paul the Pharisee had previously viewed salvation history through the lens of the Law, but since Damascus road, he viewed it through the prism of the gospel.

Whether we agree or disagree with Paul, we must allow him to have his say.

*For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Ben Witherington's *Grace in Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998) and *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).*

Dead Sea Scrolls

Paul, “Works of the Law” and MMT

By Martin Abegg



Biblical Archaeology Society

“Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah” read the words highlighted in the Dead Sea Scroll fragment above. The phrase gives the document its shorthand name—**MMT**. But what does it mean? Scholars have varyingly translated it as “some precepts of Torah” or “some legal rulings of Torah.” Both translations miss the mark, writes Martin Abegg, who suggests the proper rendering is “pertinent works of the law.” If Abegg is right, MMT casts important new light on the thinking of Paul, who uses the expression “works of the law” in his letters to the Galatians and the Romans.

The usual translation of *Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah*—*MMT*—obscures its relationship to Paul’s letters. This Dead Sea Scroll and Paul use the very same phrase.

On March 15, 1988, as part of my duties as the new graduate research assistant to Professor Ben Zion Wacholder, I climbed the three flights of stairs of the Klau Library at Cincinnati’s Hebrew Union College to pick up his mail. The large brown envelope at the bottom of the stack was not in itself strange, but the lack of a return address seemed odd. Back in his office I opened the envelope and found a 12-page photocopy of a handwritten Hebrew manuscript whose first line read “*elleh miqsat debareynu*” (these are some of the words).

This was all I had read before Professor Wacholder reasoned that this could only be a bootleg transcription of *Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah*, already well-known in the scholarly world by its acronym MMT. Three years earlier John Strugnell and Elisha Qimron had described it in two preliminary articles.¹ And indeed MMT it was. The following spring, Hebrew Union College listed in its graduate catalog a course entitled "Hellenistic Literature 25"; in fact, the course was devoted solely to studying MMT.² From that time until now, MMT has never been far from my thinking.^a

As of this writing, I have not seen the official publication of MMT (reviewed in "MMT as the Maltese Falcon," in this issue), but I understand that it does not discuss the importance of MMT for New Testament studies. This short article will discuss one significant aspect of that subject. If I am correct, MMT enables us to understand in a new way what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, and perhaps to the Romans as well.

The connection lies in the very title given to this obscure Dead Sea Scroll. MMT, as noted earlier, stands for *Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah*, which Strugnell and Qimron translate "Some of the Precepts of the Torah." This translation unfortunately obscures MMT's relationship to Paul's letters.

In this case, *miqsat* does not mean simply "some." The same word is used in Genesis 47:2, where Joseph presents five of his brothers to Pharaoh. Here the word could be understood to mean the most important of the brothers or perhaps the choice or select. In other words, when the word is used in MMT, it does not refer just to some random laws; these laws are important to the writer. A similar understanding of the meaning of the word can be gleaned from its use in the Talmud.³ Thus we might translate the word more accurately as "some important" or "pertinent."

More significant for our purposes, however, are the other two words, *ma'ase ha-torah*. Strugnell and Qimron translate this phrase as “precepts of Torah,”⁴ while Lawrence Schiffman offers “legal rulings of Torah.”⁵ These translations are accurate enough, but they nonetheless cloud the Paul connection.

A few minutes with a concordance of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, leaves little doubt that the Greek equivalent of *ma'ase ha-torah* is likely *ergon nomou*.^b *Ergon nomou* is commonly translated in English versions of the New Testament as “works of the law.” This well-known Pauline phrase is found in Romans 3:20, 28 and in Galatians 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10.

It is striking that when the British Bible Society translated the New Testament into modern Hebrew in 1976—at a time when the text of MMT was known only to half a dozen scholars—they consistently translated *ergon nomou* (works of the law) as *ma'ase ha-torah*.

In short, *ma'ase ha-torah* is equivalent to what we know in English from Paul’s letters as “works of the law.” This Dead Sea scroll and Paul use the very same phrase. The connection is emphasized by the fact that this phrase appears nowhere in rabbinic literature of the first and second centuries A.D.—only in Paul and in MMT.

The works of the law that the Qumran text refers to are obviously typified by the 20 or so religious precepts (*halakhot*) detailed in the body of the text. For the first time we can really understand what Paul is writing about. Here is a document detailing works of the law.

To appreciate what can be learned from this connection, let us probe a little more deeply into MMT. The remains of nearly two dozen legal issues are recorded in MMT. Perhaps there were as many as a dozen more precepts that

perished; the aim of the work, however, as seen by its composer, was clearly to call attention to matters that trespass the boundaries between the pure and impure. The topic of the work is reflected in the phrase *tohorat haqodesh*, “the purity of the holy.” Stated simply: “Do not allow the holy to be profaned by what is impure.”

The issues include bringing Gentile corn into the Temple, the presentation of Gentile offerings, and the cooking of sacrificial meat in unfit (impure) vessels. Other rulings concern cleansing of lepers, admitting the blind and the deaf into the Temple; and permitting intermarriage with Ammonite and Moabite converts, long forbidden to enter the congregation of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:3). Other issues involve the transmission of impurity by a flow of water (*musaq*), the intermixture of wool and linen (*sha’atnez*), plowing with diverse animals (*qilayyim*) and perhaps the climax of the discussion: the intermarriage of priests with the common people.

Most of the rulings espoused by the author of MMT are based directly upon Biblical law (for example, the prohibition against plowing with unlike animals in Deuteronomy 22:10). A few others are interpretations or amplifications of Mosaic prescriptions (for example, bans on Gentile offerings and dogs in the Temple). The list clearly reflects a conservative reaction against a relaxation of Torah precepts.

As Professor Schiffman has noted, the Qumran sect spurned the rabbinic extensions called *Talmud*, which effectively built a fence around the Torah, successive layers of which have become codified in the rabbinic works of the Mishnah and the two Talmuds.⁶ The Qumranites were the “Bible only” group of their day.

The fact that the phrase *miqsat ma’ase ha-torah* (“pertinent works of the law”) appears nowhere in rabbinic literature suggests that the theology of the

Qumran sect was not destined to become normative for Judaism. That of course was the case. We find no certain record of the Qumran sect after the Roman suppression of the first Jewish revolt (66–70 A.D.). But that was after Paul wrote.

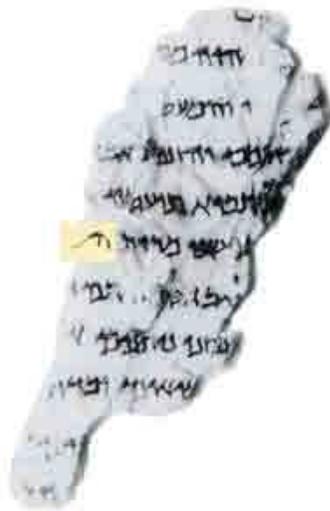
Looking at Galatians and Romans in the light of MMT, it seems clear that Paul, using the same terminology, is rebutting the theology of documents such as MMT. I do not mean to suggest that Paul knew of MMT or of the zealous members of the Qumran community, but simply that Paul was reacting to the kind of theology espoused by MMT, perhaps even by some Christian converts who were committed to the kind of thinking reflected in MMT. Paul's answer is that "No human being is justified by works of the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16).

Let us look more closely at MMT to see what Paul is reacting against.

Both Galatians and MMT are efforts to guide and correct compatriots; they are not addressed to enemies. MMT was written by one sectarian to another, much along the lines of Paul's letter to the Galatians: "I [we] exhort you [who have wandered from the truth] to stand firm against them [the trouble makers]."

In the past, Strugnell and Qimron, as well as some others, have argued that the oft-quoted MMT phrase, "and we separated ourselves from the majority of the people," used toward the end of the document, denotes the sect's departure from mainstream Judaism, its separation from Pharisaism. In part, this interpretation depends on the reconstruction of the word translated "the people." The Hebrew is *ha'a[m]*; but, as the bracket indicates, the last letter has been reconstructed; it is not there. There are other possible reconstructions, however: *ha'etsah* (the council) or, even more likely, *ha'edah* (the congregation). These terms appear frequently in Qumran literature and are much more likely to be the correct reconstruction in MMT. That is, the separation is probably not from the people, but from the council or the congregation—in other words, their own

crowd. This leads me to conclude that MMT concerns an intra-communal dispute that precipitated a schism among sectarians. And the tone, as in Galatians, is conciliatory. Near the end of MMT, the writer characterizes what he has written as “what we thought would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen [that] you possess insight and knowledge of the Torah [law].” This is hardly the tone one would expect if the Qumran sectarians were addressing their mortal enemies. The author of MMT seems to be trying to persuade his disciple or colleague to rethink the differences that have separated them.



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“The People” or “The Community”? The tinted area above highlights a partially preserved word in MMT. It occurs at the end of the phrase, “and we separated ourselves from the majority of ...” Scholars agree on the first two letters of the next word: a heh and an ayin (only the curved portion of the latter remains, on the very edge of the fragment). The letter that followed remains open to debate. Some have suggested that it was a mem, making the word “the people.” According to this interpretation, the author of MMT was explaining why his group had split from the wider community. Martin Abegg notes, however, that the word could just as well have been ha’etsah (the council) or ha’edah (the congregation). By this reading, MMT concerns a split among sectarians—an intra-communal dispute.

The author is clear about what will flow from adherence to the important precepts being espoused. Toward the end of the document, the reader is told to “consider all these things and pray to Him” with the positive result “that He might set your counsel/council straight.” In other words, meditation on the law and a calling out to God will result in His acting to mend your council. Secondly, the

addressee is told to “keep yourself away from evil thought and the counsel/council of Belial” [i.e., Satan; perhaps a reference to the Pharisees]. In other words, separate yourself from those who have infected you with their evil thought and teaching. The addressee and his associates had evidently expressed willingness to compromise with Belial’s council/counsel. The addressee may have advocated a compromise with both group’s mutual opponents, the Pharisees. If you follow my advice and adhere to these precepts, MMT says, “you shall rejoice at the end of time when you find the essence[again the word *miqsaf*] of our words true.” The messianic era, it is implied elsewhere, will arrive soon. And “you will be reckoned righteous, in that you have done what is right and good before Him.” This claim is “to your own benefit and to Israel’s.”

I have italicized the word “reckoned righteous” because of their special importance—both to the author of MMT and to Paul. Unlike Paul, however, the Qumran author does not offer righteousness on the basis of his reader’s belief, but rather “in that you have done what is right and good before Him.” For MMT’s author, it is the “works of the law” that fuel such a reckoning.

The provocative final statement in MMT, “you will be reckoned righteous,” is reminiscent of Genesis 15:6: “And Abraham *believed* God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” This Biblical quotation was of course used by Paul to support his understanding that faith, rather than works, leads to a reckoning of righteousness. But this is not the view of MMT’s author. How then did he arrive at his conclusion, despite the implication of Genesis 15:6? One possibility is that he relied on Genesis 22:16, where, following Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac at God’s command, God blesses Abraham because of “what you have done.” I believe, however, that MMT relies on another text.

Psalm 106 commemorates an incident recounted in Numbers 25:1–8, in which the Israelites, on their trek to the Promised Land, fraternize with the Moabites, worship their gods and sleep with their daughters. As punishment, God

sends a plague on the Israelites. When Phinehas the priest catches an Israelite in *flagrante delicto* with a foreign woman, he spears the couple through their bellies with a single spear. And the plague is lifted. For his deed, we are told in Psalm 106, Phinehas was regarded as eternally righteous:

“Then Phinehas stood up and interposed;
And so the plague was stayed.
And it was reckoned to him as righteousness,
from generation to generation forever.”

(Psalm 106:30–31)

Upon examination of the Hebrew text of MMT, it becomes clear that MMT echoes this passage from Psalm 106. The same passive verb—“it was reckoned” in Psalm 106 and “you shall be reckoned” in MMT—is one clear reflection of this dependence. The only difference is that the past tense of the verb in Psalm 106 is changed to the future tense in MMT to convert it into a promise for the addressee.^c

Two other considerations point to this relationship between Psalm 106 and MMT. In the psalm, the poet celebrates what Phinehas did when there was an unholy mixture of an Israelite with a foreign woman. Similarly, the central theme of MMT is the call to turn from the sin of unholy mixture. Secondly, the Qumran covenanters refer to themselves as the Sons of Zadok. Zadok was the high priest during the reigns of David and Solomon. He was a direct descendant of Phinehas, both Zadok and Phinehas being of the priestly line of Eleazar the son of Aaron. For the Qumran sect, a priestly paradigm of righteousness would have been especially pleasing.

MMT is couched in the exact language of what Paul was rebutting in his letter to the Galatians. MMT claims that adherence to the works of the law “will be accounted to you as righteousness”; Paul’s answer is that “No human being is

justified by works of the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16).⁷

MMT espouses works of the law as exemplified in Phinehas’s deed; those who perform works of the law will be reckoned righteous unto eternity. So says Psalm 106, recounting Numbers 25:1–8.

Like MMT, Paul too is addressing his wandering flock:

O foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you ...? Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ... Thus Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In thee shall all the nations be blessed.” ... For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. (Galatians 3:1–10)

It is quite possible that some Essenes or other Jewish sectaries who were familiar with the phrase “works of the law” had become followers of Jesus the Nazarene. They would understandably have concerned Paul, lest his teaching that the Mosaic law played only a supporting role in God’s program—that of “tutor” or “schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24)—be undermined. Paul must have felt his missionary work threatened by those teaching that the law was the channel of God’s salvation.

Some scholars have suggested that Paul misunderstood the Jewish teaching of his day or, at the very least, that he created a straw man to bolster his own teaching regarding faith versus law. In the past, this view was supported by the fact that the phrase “works of the law” nowhere appears in the

foundational books of rabbinic Judaism. MMT, however, provides the “smoking gun” for which students have been searching for generations, not from the pages of rabbinic literature, but from the sectarian teachings of Qumran. MMT demonstrates that Paul was not jousting with windmills, but was indeed squared off in a dramatic duel—not with mainstream Judaism but with a sectarian theology—that ultimately defined Christianity. If I have understood rightly, the importance of MMT for New Testament research is nothing short of revolutionary.

Authors

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Ben Witherington III is Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, in Wilmore, Kentucky, and on the doctoral faculty at St. Andrews University in Scotland. He is the author of several books, including *The Paul Quest* (InterVarsity Press, 2001).

Notes

Paul's Contradictions

Endnotes (numbered)

1. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), p. 264.
2. J.C. O'Neill, *The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1972), p. 47.
3. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 11–12.
4. Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), p. 190.
5. Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1987), p. 15.
6. The story is preserved in the writings of the fourth-century Christian bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* (also known as *Refutation of All Heresies*) 30.16.6–9. For a translation, see *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York: Norton, 1972), pp. 177–178.
7. Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); *Final Account, Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
8. Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1994).
9. See the discussion of W.D. Davies in "Paul and the People of Israel," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977), pp. 7–8.
10. Michael Wyschogrod, "The Impact of Dialogue with Christianity on My Self-Understanding as a Jew," in *Die Hebraische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte*, ed. Erhard Blum et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), p. 731. Wyschogrod wavers a bit, but in the end seems convinced (p. 733). George Foot Moore, in his magisterial *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), made a similar observation, but like much else in his work, no one bothered to follow up on it: "He [Paul] was, in fact, not writing to convince Jews but to keep his Gentile converts from being convinced by Jewish propagandists, who insisted that faith in Christ was not sufficient to salvation apart from the observance of the law" (vol. 3, p. 151). The "Jewish propagandists" are Paul's opponents in the Jesus movement.
11. Wyschogrod, "Dialogue," p. 723.
12. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, p. 23.

Paul, "Works of the Law" and MMT

Endnotes (numbered)

1. Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, "An Unpublished Halakhic Letter from Qumran," *Israel Museum Journal* (1985), pp. 9–12, also in *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*, Jerusalem, Apr. 1984, ed. J. Amitai (Jerusalem; Israel Exploration Society, 1985), pp. 400–407.
2. I owe much of the content of this article to the other members of this class: Rabbi Shira Lander, Dr. James Bowley, Mr. Lee Fields, Dr. Wave Nunnally and Dr. Keri Wynn; we all are indebted to Professor Wacholder for a unique experience.
3. Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamot* 47a-b.
4. Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, "An Unpublished Halakhic Letter from Qumran," p. 400.
5. Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The New Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect," *Biblical Archaeologist* 53 (1990), p. 67.
6. Lawrence H. Schiffman, "New Light on the Pharisees," in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Hershel Shanks (New York: Random House, 1992), pp. 219–20.

7. I am in agreement with Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992), in connecting “works of the Law” with the Apostle Paul; and “reckoned as righteousness” with Phinehas and Psalm 106:31.

BAS/BAR and general notes (lettered)

- a. In February 1993, after Professor Wacholder and I had begun to publish fascicles of Dead Sea Scroll transcripts that had been reconstructed with the aid of a computer (see “**BAS** Publishes Dead Sea Scrolls,” **BAR** 17:05; “Computer-Generated Dead Sea Scrolls Texts 98% Accurate,” **BAR** 18:01; “**BAS** Reprints Facsimile Edition of Scroll Photographs,” **BAR** 18:04), we received a letter from Professor Qimron’s attorney warning us that we could not “make any use” of his and Strugnell’s reconstruction of MMT. Admittedly, we cannot expunge from our minds the results of our study of the handwritten transcript we anonymously received in 1988. We are continuing our work on MMT as well as on other scrolls. We have also brought suit against Professor Qimron in an American court, not for damages, but simply for a declaration that Professor Qimron does not own the copyright in MMT, so that we can proceed with our work (see “American Professors Seek to Block Qimron’s Control of MMT,” **BAR** 19:06).
- b. The most common Greek word for *ma’ase is ergon*. The Greek word *nomos* most commonly translates *torah*.
- c. In addition, the MMT text echoes the Hebrew text of Psalm 106:31 by using the passive *niphal* stem of *hashab*, rather than the active *qal*. Also, the preposition *lamed* is used to indicate the “product” of the reckoning in both Psalm 106:31 and MMT (“as righteous”), whereas in Genesis 15:6 “righteous” is the direct object of the verb. Psalm 106:31 and Genesis 15:6 are the only Biblical verses that contain both the verb *hashab*, to reckon, and the noun *sedaqah*, righteousness. Jubilees 30:17 records this same statement (probably referring to Psalm 106 as well) made to Simeon and Levi concerning their zealous act against the Shechemites (Genesis 34:25), even though in the Biblical passage their father condemned them (Genesis 34:25, 49:5).