

DAVID J. RUDOLPH

A Jew to the Jews

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility
in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23

Mohr Siebeck

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For Harumi

Preface

This monograph is an updated version of the doctoral thesis that I completed at Cambridge University in 2007 and that won the Franz Delitzsch Prize from the Freie Theologische Akademie. Since I put down my pen, a number of important books and articles have been published on Paul and Judaism, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to interact with some of these sources in the present work.

The writing of this monograph would not have been possible without the generous support of many people, first and foremost my Doktorvater Prof. Markus Bockmuehl. In addition to guiding the course of my research, Prof. Bockmuehl saw to it that my Cambridge experience included seminars, cultural events, participation in the Grantchester Meadows Group of Ph.D. students that met fortnightly at his house and visits to the Christian catacombs in Rome among other day trips. Prof. Bockmuehl regularly extended hospitality to me as well as to my family during the course of my doctoral studies and I am forever grateful for these happy times.

I am also indebted to the erudite Prof. William Horbury and Dr. Peter Head for their supervisions and wise counsel, as well as to my examiners, Prof. Richard Bauckham and Dr. James Carleton Paget, who carefully reviewed the thesis and encouraged me to publish it. Special thanks should go to the Hebrew, Jewish and Early Christian Studies Seminar at Cambridge and the Oxford-Cambridge New Testament Conference (2005) for providing me with an opportunity to discuss my research with colleagues working in the field of Second Temple Judaism and Christian origins. I am particularly grateful for comments received from Prof. Graham Stanton and Prof. Morna Hooker.

The community of scholars at Tyndale House, Cambridge, warmly welcomed me into their company and I benefited greatly from their insights. I am especially thankful to these friends whose constant encouragement and *koinonia* made my season in Cambridge a magical time. These tall pillars and mighty hammers included Wayne Coppins, Sarah Hall, Todd Wilson, Joel Willitts, Justin Hardin, Charles Anderson, John Yates, Stephen Witmer, Jonathan Moo, Bill Barker, Joel Lawrence, Barry Danylak, Poul Guttesen, Chris Vlachos, Caryn Reeder, Dr. Elizabeth Magba and Dr. David Instone-Brewer. Many of the ideas contained in this monograph were borne out of extended conversations with these extraordinary people.

Of all my dialogue partners, I particularly want to thank Wayne Coppins for the hundreds of hours we spent together in the Selwyn College Dining Hall discussing Paul and Judaism. Wayne pressed me to question every assumption and to go deeper with every argument. A special word of appreciation goes to my friend Jane Heath who read through the thesis and gave me sixteen pages of invaluable comments in the weeks leading up to submission. I am also grateful to Todd Wilson, Charles Anderson, Dr. Mark Kinzer, Kent Meads, David Kindred, Hana Rudolph, Elisa Rudolph, Yahnatan Lasko and Dr. J. Brian Tucker, who took time out of their busy schedules to carefully review the work.

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A warm word of appreciation goes to my parents Carol Ann Rudolph, Michael Rudolph, Marie Rudolph, Morimitsu Kondo and Teruko Kondo, whose continual encouragement helped me to run the race to win the prize.

Friday evenings at 14 Merton Street in Newnham, Cambridge, were always filled with *Shabbat* peace, guests at our table, Hebrew blessings and *zemirot* (Jewish hymns), beginning with the *Eshet Chayil*, "A wife of noble character who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value. Her husband's heart relies on her and he shall lack no fortune" (Prov 31:10–11). My wife Harumi believed in the importance of my Ph.D. studies and joyfully sacrificed much so that I could be a full-time student from 1999–2005. Without her companionship, encouragement and devotion to the Lord, I would have never completed this research project. "Many women have done excellently, but you my darling surpass them all" (Prov 31:29). Finally, I am grateful to my three wonderful daughters, Hana, Elisa and Miryam, who followed me to England and back so that I could live out my dream.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On the basis of Rom 9:1–4, it seems fair to say that Paul loved Jews as his own people. As for Paul’s Jewish identity in a cultural sense, some things evident to us (e.g., his use of Jewish tradition and methods of interpretation) and no doubt many ordinary things hidden from our gaze continued to be part of Paul’s Jewish identity after his call and remained dear to him. But one thing that most Jews prized as central to their cultural identity – specifically, the way of life specified by the Law – is no longer a defining mark of Paul’s identity. For proof one has only to look at Phil 3:2–11, where he says that he now counts his former Jewish identity in the Law as “garbage” because of the superior value of knowing Christ; and 1 Cor 9:19–23, where he describes his missionary strategy of becoming “all things to all people”.¹

In his essay “Did Paul Value Ethnicity?” Charles Cosgrove describes Paul as a faithful Jew, a pious Jew, a Jew’s Jew but not a Jew who considered himself under the jurisdiction of Mosaic law, at least with respect to distinctively Jewish commandments. In other words, Paul was not a “Torah-observant Jew”.² One of two decisive passages that Cosgrove cites as “proof” of Paul’s break from “the way of life specified by the Law” is 1 Cor 9:19–23. Here Paul states plainly, “To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those without the law I became as one without the law...” (1 Cor 9:20–21). Cosgrove echoes the consensus of

¹ Charles H. Cosgrove, “Did Paul Value Ethnicity?” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68:2 (2006): 289.

² The term “Torah-observant Jew” is used in this study to refer to Jews who seek to observe God’s commandments in the law of Moses. Three nuances are implied by my usage of the expression: (1) A sense of obligation with respect to observing the law; (2) A distinction between Jews who practise Judaism primarily as a response to election/calling/covenant (Torah observance) and Jews who practise Judaism primarily for other reasons (e.g. cultural expression, contextualization for mission); and (3) A recognition that Torah observance includes distinctively Jewish commandments. While the term “law observant” could communicate these nuances, this is not always the case in New Testament scholarship. For example, Bruce W. Longenecker, “Contours of Covenant Theology in the Post-Conversion Paul”, in *The Road from Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 140, suggests that “Paul saw nothing wrong with nomistic observance in and of itself, for Jewish Christians could still be law-observant if they so desired”. Longenecker, like many scholars (e.g. Olufemi Adeniyi, “The New Covenant Torah in Jeremiah and the Law of Christ in Paul” [Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2005], 186), overlooks the fact that “law” by definition is obligatory.

New Testament scholarship when he refers to this text as evidence that Paul burst the bounds of first-century Judaism. How else could the expression “I myself am not under the law” be interpreted? Heikki Räisänen puts it bluntly, “1 Cor 9.20f. is absolutely incompatible with the theory of an observant Paul”.³ But is the “occasional conformity to Jewish law” interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 as irrefutable as commentators make it out to be? And if it can be refuted, how might one understand 1 Cor 9:19–23 as the discourse of a Torah-observant Jew? This is the central query of this monograph.

1.1 The Case for the Traditional View

Pauline scholars give three rationales for why 1 Cor 9:19–23 rules out the possibility of a Torah-observant Paul. The first rationale is an *intertextual* argument: 1 Cor 9:19–23 is part of a group of texts in the Pauline corpus and Acts that depict Paul’s Jewishness as erased or inconsequential in Christ. The second rationale is a *contextual* argument: 1 Cor 9:19–23 is consonant with Paul’s permissive stance on idol-food in 1 Cor 8 and 10, which was a radical break from Judaism. The third rationale is a *textual* argument based on 1 Cor 9:19–23: Paul’s nomistic language in 1 Cor 9:19–23 demonstrates that he did not consider himself to be under the jurisdiction of Mosaic law. Together these three rationales form a cogent case that the writer of 1 Cor 9:19–23 was not a Torah-observant Jew.

Below I will briefly unpack the logic behind each of these rationales and in so doing introduce the state of research (which will be discussed in more detail in chapters 2–4). More space will be devoted to the first rationale (the intertextual argument) in order to highlight the assertion it makes, based on 1 Cor 9:20a, that Paul no longer considered himself to be a Jew.⁴ The first rationale underscores the significance of this study, for if the “occasional conformity” reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23 is found to be weaker than assumed, and a reasonable interpretation of the passage exists that does not preclude the possibility of a Torah-observant Paul, then the far-reaching assertion that Paul no longer considered himself to be a Jew would need to be reassessed.

³ Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 75 n. 171.

⁴ Some scholars who argue for an erasure reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23 suggest, on the basis of other Pauline texts, that Paul considered himself to be a Jew on some level. E.g. James D. G. Dunn, “The Jew Paul and His Meaning for Israel”, in *A Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (ed. Tod Linafelt; New York: Routledge, 2002), 201–15. It is often unclear whether the exegete is inconsistent or if he/she views Paul as inconsistent. Moreover, the term “Jew” is rarely defined in these studies. For the purpose of this section, I am concerned only with how these exegetes interpret 1 Cor 9:19–23 and why. I discuss Paul’s definition of the term “Jew” in 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 5.5.3.

1.1.1 Intertextual Argument: 1 Cor 9:19–23 is part of a group of texts in the Pauline corpus and Acts that depict Paul’s Jewishness as erased or inconsequential in Christ

The following is a sample of contemporary scholars who have articulated the first rationale. Direct quotations have been used where possible, rather than paraphrase, to underscore the homogeneity of the argument.

Peter Richardson and Paul Gooch (1978)

Richardson and Gooch contend on the basis of 1 Cor 9:20 that Paul no longer considered himself a Jew, “Paul says that to certain Jews he became a Jew, which suggests (in *ginomai* and *hōs*) that he was not a Jew. But he was, wasn’t he?”⁵ Several pages later, they explain, “For him, Judaism was superseded, not merely altered in certain ways; he hardly regarded himself as a Jew legitimately . . . His freedom from all people and systems opens up for him a new identity ‘in Christ’. He is really a Jew no longer”.⁶

In support of their view, Richardson and Gooch build an intertextual case based on Rom 14, Gal 2:15 and other passages. With respect to Gal 2:15, they note that Paul rebuked Peter for continuing to live as a Jew:

The only place where Paul calls himself a Jew is in Galatians 2:15, but there he is arguing with Peter that although they are Jews by birth they ought not to continue to live like Jews now that they are Christians.⁷

In a follow-up study of 1 Cor 9:19–23, Gooch reaffirms his earlier view:

By defining himself only as Christ’s slave, Paul cuts himself free from other identities. This means, I think, that he no longer regards himself as a Jew. That is crucial: by disclaiming his former life Paul may justify behaviour that otherwise would indeed be inconsistent.⁸

E. P. Sanders (1983)

Sanders proposes that the only time Paul lived as a Jew was when he was in Jerusalem surrounded by Jews. Outside of Jerusalem, Paul consistently lived like a Gentile and expected other Jesus-believing Jews to do the same. Sanders points to Gal 2:11–14 as evidence of this, “The Antioch incident would seem to show that, if Jews were present, Paul would expect them not to observe the Jewish dietary laws”.⁹ Paul’s stance in Rom 14:1–6, that days and

⁵ Peter Richardson and Paul W. Gooch, “Accommodation Ethics”, *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 96.

⁶ Richardson and Gooch, “Accommodation Ethics”, 107, 111.

⁷ Richardson and Gooch, “Accommodation Ethics”, 111.

⁸ Richardson and Gooch, “Accommodation Ethics”, 137–38.

⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 177.

food were matters of personal conscience, was theory. In reality, “the factors which separated Jews from Greeks must be given up by the Jews”.¹⁰

Sanders leads into his discussion of 1 Cor 9:19–23 by noting that explicit third entity language is found in 1 Cor 10:32, “Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God”.¹¹ Paul’s all things to all people behaviour was an expression of his ecclesiology, “Nevertheless, in very important ways the church was, in Paul’s view and even more in his practice, a third entity”.¹²

The three categories in 1 Cor 10:32 are mutually exclusive in Sanders’s view. Paul considered himself a member of the third entity (“the church”) and a former Jew. To support this argument, Sanders steps outside of the Corinthian correspondence. He reminds the reader that “in Gal. 1:13 Paul can speak of ‘his former life in Judaism’. Does he not reveal here that there is a sense in which he is no longer fully described by the appellation ‘Jew’ or ‘Israelite’?”¹³

Sanders then turns to Gal 3:28. Paul regarded members of the church as “neither Jewish nor Greek” (Gal 3:28), but a third entity. Paul “viewed the movement of which he was a part as aiming toward a ‘new creation’ which would not be merely one group among others, but which would transcend and replace the old humanity, which consisted of circumcised and uncircumcised”.¹⁴ Members of this transcendent group adhered to the rule given in Gal 6:15, “For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!”

How did Paul understand the relationship between this new creation association (the church) and the covenant people of God (Israel)? Sanders proposes that Paul’s “thought is informed by the conception of ‘true Israel’ . . . there is substantial evidence that Paul considered Christians to be ‘true Israel’”.¹⁵ What of the old Israel? In Sanders’s view, Paul considered the inheritance transferred from the old Israel to the true Israel, “Paul thought that those who ‘turned to the Lord’ (2 Cor. 3:16) were the sole inheritors of the promises to Abraham”.¹⁶

To sum up, Sanders contends that 1 Cor 9:19–23 precludes a Torah-observant Paul. 1 Cor 9:19–23 should be read in light of 1 Cor 10:32, the “third entity” text. From 1 Cor 10:32, Sanders builds an intertextual case using Gal 2:11–14, Rom 14:1–6, Gal 1:13, 3:28, and 6:15, among other passages. In the end, 1 Cor 9:19–23 is elucidated in light of Paul’s overarching

¹⁰ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 177–78.

¹¹ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 171–79.

¹² Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 178–79.

¹³ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 179, 188.

¹⁴ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 173.

¹⁵ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 173–74.

¹⁶ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 175–76.

theology of transcendence and transference. Jewish identity and lifestyle are old realities superseded in Christ and the church. For Sanders, Paul's ecclesiology is central to understanding the meaning of 1 Cor 9:19–23.

D. A. Carson (1986)

Carson posits on the basis of 1 Cor 9:20 that Paul did not view himself as a Jew any longer. Evidently “in one sense Paul does not see himself as a Jew: rather, he *becomes* like a Jew in order to win Jews (1 Cor. 9.20)”.¹⁷ Paul's status as neither Jew nor Gentile enables him to conform to the law on occasion as a matter of expediency:

Paul occupies a *third ground* and, so far as law is concerned, is prepared to move from that ground to become like a Jew or like a Gentile, because in his relationship to Torah he is neither one nor the other. This also explains why Paul could be charged with being antinomian by some of his contemporaries – because his understanding of God's redemptive purposes in history left Torah *qua* covenant superseded.¹⁸

Barbara Hall (1990)

Hall regards 1 Cor 9:19–23 as a form of the Gal 3:28 “baptismal formula”. As the “baptismal formula” explicitly refers to “no longer Jew”, 1 Cor 9:20 implicitly refers to the erasure of Jewish identity, “What does it mean that Paul, a Jew, becomes as a Jew?” Paul can say that he became as a Jew because he has in mind the baptismal formula: The Christian is now neither Jew nor Greek, but a new creation”.¹⁹ Hall's analysis, which receives broad support in the scholarly literature on 1 Cor 9:19–23, does not simply maintain that 1 Cor 9:19–23 is informed by Gal 3:28 but that 1 Cor 9:19–23 is Gal 3:28 in a restated form. It is the same “baptismal formula”. Paul emphasizes in 1 Cor 9:19–23 that the Corinthians are an eschatological community and that distinctions related to ethnicity have disappeared in the new creation:

The use of the baptismal formula in the passage sets the idol-meat issue squarely in an eschatological context. The formula proclaims the reality of a new creation, the transformation of relationships . . . To say that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts is to claim that the distinction between them is gone in Christ . . . The eschatological community has come into existence.²⁰

¹⁷ D. A. Carson, “Pauline Inconsistency: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 9.19–23 and Galatians 2.11–14”, *Churchman* 100:1 (1986): 12; cf. D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New”, in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 2:402.

¹⁸ Carson, “Pauline Inconsistency”, 37; cf. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment”, 403.

¹⁹ Barbara Hall, “All Things to All People: A Study of 1 Corinthians 9:19–23”, in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 146.

²⁰ Hall, “All Things to All People”, 147–48.

Other passages that Hall cites to build her intertextual case for an erasure reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23 include 1 Cor 7:19, Gal 5:6 and 6:15.²¹

John Barclay (1995–1996)

Barclay portrays Paul as an “apostate” from Judaism based on 1 Cor 9:20–21 and related passages, including Gal 1:13–14, 2:11–14, 3:28, Phil 3:2–11 and Rom 2:25–29, 14:1–6, 14.²² He approvingly quotes Barrett’s interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 that Paul no longer considered himself a Jew, “C. K. Barrett [1971:211] rightly comments on 1 Cor 9.20 that Paul ‘could become a Jew only if, having been a Jew, he had ceased to be one and become something else. His Judaism was no longer of his very being, but a guise he could adopt or discard at will’”.²³ In support of this reading, Barclay notes that Paul’s Jewish opponents accused him of being a chameleon:

The attempt to maintain his dual loyalties, to be, as he put it, “all things to everyone” (1 Cor 9.22) was bound to lead to charges of opportunism (Gal. 1:10) and to engender the special bitterness of a community who felt that one of its members was only masquerading as a Jew.²⁴

James Dunn (1999)

Dunn submits, on the basis of 1 Cor 9:20–21, that Paul did not consider himself a Jew:

What is striking here is the fact that Paul, even though himself ethnically a Jew, can speak of becoming “as a Jew”. To become as a Jew is obviously to follow the patterns of conduct distinctive of Jews. In other words, Paul speaks as one who does not acknowledge “Jew” as his own given identity, or as an identity inalienable from his person . . . So we ask again: Did Paul think of himself as a Jew? The answer is evidently No, for the most part. Insofar as “Jew” was an ethnic identifier (and insofar as he was an ethnic Jew), Paul wished neither to be known as such nor to identify himself as such. Insofar as “Jew” denoted a lifestyle, a commitment to the ancestral customs of the Jews, Paul wished neither to exercise such a commitment nor to insist that other Jews be true to their ethnic-religious identity.²⁵

Dunn supports this interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 by pointing to Gal 1:13–14, 2:14–15, 3:28, 5:6, 6:15, Phil 3:5–8, 1 Cor 7:19, 2 Cor 11:22, Rom 2:25–

²¹ Hall, “All Things to All People”, 148.

²² John M. G. Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy: Some applications of deviance theory to first-century Judaism and Christianity”, in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), 122–23; John M. G. Barclay, “Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 60 (1995): 103, 113; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 384–86.

²³ Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy”, 114 n. 44.

²⁴ Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy”, 117.

²⁵ James D. G. Dunn, “Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity”, *New Testament Studies* 45 (1999): 182.

29, 11:1, 14:14, 20, Acts 21:39, 22:3, and Mark 7:18–23, among other New Testament passages.

Daniel Rode (2002)

Rode posits in his exegetical study of 1 Cor 9:19–23 – “El Modelo de Adaptación de Pablo Según 1 Corintios 9:19–23” – that Paul transcended his identity as a Jew in the Gal 3:28 sense:

Why did Paul need to show himself “as a Jew” if he indeed was a Jew? The declaration that to the Jews he became “as a Jew” is notable since it shows how radically he conceived of the demand for Christ, and this position forced him to transcend all cultural allegiance, “To relate to Jews as a fellow Jew (cf. Acts 21:17–26) is for Paul now seen as an act of accommodation!”²⁶ . . . The apostle occupies a third entity perspective, which transcends ethnicity. Above all things, he is a Christian more than a Jew; thus, becoming a cross-cultural missionary . . . he knew that in Christ “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28) . . . he was above all these differences.²⁷

David Horrell (2005)

Horrell looks to 1 Cor 9:20 as evidence that Paul considered his Jewish identity “displaced” and “dissolved” in Christ.²⁸

The evidence from Paul’s letters indicate that for Paul himself a new and defining identity ἐν Χριστῷ implies a radical transformation of his Jewish identity and practice (1 Cor 9:20; Gal 2:15–20; 4:12; Phil 3:8, etc.). Similarly, Paul is clear that the identity distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, is now “nothing” (οὐδέν) since both are part of God’s new creation in Christ (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15).²⁹

The Greek text of 1 Cor 9:20 (“I became *as a Jew* [ὡς Ἰουδαῖος] . . . I myself am *not under the law* [ὑπὸ νόμον]”) is quoted by Horrell as proof that Paul was no longer a “law-abiding Jew”.³⁰ Further attestation that Paul viewed his Jewishness as dissolved in Christ is that “Paul speaks of his ‘former life in

²⁶ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 153.

²⁷ Daniel Rode, “El Modelo de Adaptación de Pablo Según 1 Corintios 9:19–23”, in *Pensar la Iglesia Hoy: Hacia una Eclesiología Adventista, Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico-Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen* (ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil et al.; Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 337–38.

²⁸ David G. Horrell, “‘No Longer Jew or Greek’: Paul’s Corporate Christology and the Construction of Christian Community”, in *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole* (ed. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 333.

²⁹ Horrell, “No Longer Jew or Greek”, 343; cf. David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 18, 260 n. 50.

³⁰ Horrell, “No Longer Jew or Greek”, 334; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 18.

Judaism' (Gal 1:13–14)".³¹ For Paul, the Jew/Gentile distinction is "obsolete", belongs to a "former era" and is "transcended by a new identity in Christ".³² "In both Galatians and Colossians the declaration is that now 'there is no longer Jew and Greek'".³³ In Rom 14, Paul "stands on the 'Gentile' side of the division" in declaring that nothing is unclean (Rom 14:14a, 20). Thus, "Paul's convictions seem hardly to be those of a Torah-observant Jew, nor of one who urged that 'Jews and Gentiles should each stick to their respective ways of life'".³⁴ Paul has joined a third entity as indicated by the tripartite language in 1 Cor 10:32.³⁵ In 1 Cor 10:18 Paul implicitly refers to the church as spiritual Israel, even as in Gal 6:16 he apparently regards the Christian community as the Israel of God.³⁶

Wolfgang Schrage (1995), Anthony Thiselton (2000), Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner (2010)

The view that Paul regarded his Jewishness as erased or inconsequential in Christ, based on 1 Cor 9:19–23, is a commonplace in contemporary New Testament scholarship. In addition to the exegetes mentioned above who make this intertextual case and link it to 1 Cor 9:20, several critical commentators will be noted to round off this section. Schrage interprets 1 Cor 9:20 in light of Gal 3:28 and depicts Paul as no longer a Jew. Through freedom in Christ, Paul became "as a Jew" to win Jews:

Paul does not simply become a Jew or heathen but like a Jew and like a heathen . . . We see that in Ἰουδαίους ὡς Ἰουδαῖος. For how can Paul who has been born a Jew (cf. Gal 2:15 Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι) become a Jew only now? It is not a coincidence that there is missing a μὴ ὢν Ἰουδαῖος in analogy to the following two examples. But can't he only become something that in a certain way he has not been lately? Indeed this is true because in Christ we have neither Jew nor Greek (Gal 3:28; cf. 1 Cor 12:13). Paul is, even as a born Jew, not simply a Jew any longer but he is becoming one in order to win Jews. We see here that the γίνομαι ὡς is not simply a natural identification but the thing that comes from ἐλευθερία and moves into δουλὸν ἐμαντόν. It is a movement set in motion by freedom to the other thing which comes from love, to put oneself next to the other.³⁷

Thiselton writes, "The phrases ὡς Ἰουδαῖος and ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον are especially revealing of Paul's theology of the new creation . . . (cf. Gal 2:15; 3:28; and 1

³¹ Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek", 334; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 18.

³² Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek", 322.

³³ Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek", 327.

³⁴ Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek", 340; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 15–19.

³⁵ Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek", 341; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 259.

³⁶ Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek", 341; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 19.

³⁷ Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag and Benziger Verlag, 1995), 2:340.

Cor 12:13)”.³⁸ Quoting this statement, Ciampa and Rosner underscore that Paul no longer identified as a practising Jew in a covenantal sense, “Although Paul is a Jew in terms of his ethnicity and heritage, he no longer understands himself to be part of Judaism, and would not consider himself a Jew if that word is defined by those who understand their relationship with God to be based on their adherence to the Mosaic covenant”.³⁹

1 Cor 9:19–23 and Luke’s Portrait of Paul

In the same way that 1 Cor 9:19–23 is often connected to Pauline texts that emphasize the erasure of Jewish identity (e.g. Gal 2:14, 3:28; 1 Cor 7:19; Rom 14), 1 Cor 9:19–23 is also commonly related to Lukan texts that depict Paul as a Torah-observant Jew.⁴⁰ Commentaries on Acts and 1 Corinthians often make this correlation. The vast majority of 1 Corinthians and Acts commentators identify Acts 16:3 and Acts 21:17–26 as instances of Paul applying his 1 Cor 9:20 principle of adaptation in a Jewish setting. Leon Morris, for example, comments on 1 Cor 9:20, “But in approaching Jews he conformed to practices that would enable him to win *those under the law*. The sort of thing in mind is his circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1–3) and his joining in Jewish ‘purification rites’ (Acts 21:23–26)”.⁴¹

The correspondence between 1 Cor 9:19–23 and Paul’s nomistic practices in Acts would seem to be self-evident. Acts 16:3 explicitly states that Paul circumcised Timothy “on account of the Jews”. Paul apparently viewed circumcision as a matter of expediency and circumcised Timothy to please the Jews of Derbe and Lystra in order to win them to Christ. In Acts 21:17–26, Paul followed James’ advice to undergo ritual purification in the temple and thereby make it possible for four Nazirites to offer sacrifices in the temple in keeping with their vows. Paul presumably agreed to this in order to conciliate the Jews in Jerusalem who were “zealous for the law” and concerned that he was teaching Jews not to circumcise their children or live according to the customs of the fathers. It seems clear from both of these examples in Acts that Paul does not practise Jewish ritual as a response to commandment, but as an expedient. For the apostle, Torah observance was a matter of indifference.

³⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 702.

³⁹ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 425–26.

⁴⁰ The only ostensible examples of Paul participating in distinctively Jewish practice (or helping others to participate in distinctively Jewish practice) are in Luke’s portrayal of Paul (e.g. Acts 16:3, 18:18; 21:17–26). The historical reliability of Acts 21:17–26 will be discussed in 2.2.1.6.

⁴¹ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1985), 136.

1.1.2 Contextual Argument: 1 Cor 9:19–23 is consonant with Paul’s permissive stance on idol food in 1 Cor 8 and 10, which was a radical break from Judaism

The second rationale for the traditional case posits that Paul did not regard idol-food as forbidden for Jesus-believers, a perspective in conflict with the Torah-observant life. The 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 pericope was prompted by a query that Paul received from the Corinthians concerning idol-food (Περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων [1 Cor 8:1; cf. 7:1]). Because Jews regarded idol-food as forbidden food, Paul’s response to the query provides the exegete with something of a barometer of his Jewish convictions. If Paul’s stance on idol-food was permissive, it stands to reason that he was not a Torah-observant Jew. What was Paul’s stance? The modern consensus interpretation of 1 Cor 8 and 10 is that Paul was indifferent to idol-food. Since an idol was nothing, idol-food was also nothing (1 Cor 8:4–8; 10:19–20). Idol-food was not spiritually contaminated or dangerous as ‘the weak’ thought (1 Cor 8:7–8). There was nothing wrong with eating it. However, because eating idol-food in a temple might cause the weak to stumble, Paul counselled the strong to renounce their ἐξουσία (1 Cor 8:9–12).

Though Paul prohibited the eating of idol-food in a temple, he permitted the Corinthians to eat freely from the meat market, “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience” (1 Cor 10:25). They could also eat freely in the homes of polytheistic Gentiles. Only if they were explicitly informed that the food before them had been offered to idols were they to refrain from eating it. Declining in this situation was not because idol-food was dangerous, but because of the other person’s conscience, “If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. But if someone says to you, ‘This has been offered in sacrifice’, then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience, I mean the other’s conscience, not your own” (1 Cor 10:27–29).

Most commentators agree that Paul’s approach to idol-food burst the bounds of Judaism. C. K. Barrett remarks that “Paul is nowhere more un-Jewish than in this μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες [‘without raising questions’, 1 Cor 10:27]”.⁴² Gordon Fee describes Paul as an “absolutely liberal” Jew who goes “quite over against his own Jewish tradition”.⁴³ Dunn sums up the standard view, “The usual understanding of Paul’s advice in the matter is that it disregarded traditional Jewish sensibilities: the Paul who counselled the Corinthians not to raise questions (*mēden anakrinontes*) about the source of the

⁴² C. K. Barrett, “Things Sacrificed to Idols”, *New Testament Studies* 11 (1965): 49.

⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 360 n. 10.

meat served (10.25, 27) was no longer governed by the characteristically Jewish antipathy to idolatry so fundamental to Jewish identity. The issue of Christian liberty and desirability for Christians to maintain social involvement and responsibilities (10.23–30) had taken precedent. The parallel with Romans 14 seems to settle the issue”.⁴⁴

Since Paul’s stance on idol-food in 1 Cor 8 and 10 appears to contravene normative standards of Second Temple Judaism, and since 1 Cor 9:19–23 occurs in the middle of the 1 Cor 8–10 pericope, it is concluded that 1 Cor 9:19–23 was not written by a Torah-observant Jew.

1.1.3 Textual Argument: The nomistic language in 1 Cor 9:19–23 demonstrates that Paul did not consider himself to be under the jurisdiction of Mosaic law

The third rationale for the traditional case contends that Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 9:20b (“*I myself am not under the law*”) is an explicit renunciation of Mosaic law. Almost all contemporary studies of the passage maintain that “not under the law” means *not under the authority of Mosaic law*. C. K. Barrett provides a succinct explanation of the expression, “To be a Jew is to be under the law and thereby related to God in legal terms. Paul is no longer related to God in this way; at the most he may pretend to be so related. He is not under the law; he behaves as if he were under the law. The law here means the law of Moses; but if this is repudiated by an *a fortiori* argument all less important and directly divine laws are repudiated. Paul is now related to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1.30), and no room is left for law”.⁴⁵ Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 9:20a (“To the Jews I *became as a Jew*”) adds to the case that Paul no longer considered himself a Torah-observant Jew (1.1.1).

That Paul only occasionally conformed to Jewish law is indicated by 1 Cor 9:21, “To those without the law *I became as one without the law* . . . so that I might win those without the law”. Paul became as a Gentile (one who was without the law) when he was with Gentiles. What does this mean practically? The consensus view is that Paul did not observe distinctively Jewish practices when he was with Gentiles. Paul’s statement that he is “in Christ’s law” (1 Cor 9:21) also leaves the impression that Paul did not remain Torah observant. While commentators vary in their interpretation of “in Christ’s law”, almost all concur that it does not include distinctively Jewish commandments. Seyoon Kim takes this a step further and argues that being “in Christ’s law” includes embracing the teaching of Jesus that all foods are now clean, “This line of reasoning suggests that Paul not only sees ‘the law of Christ’ as emphasizing the love command but also dispensing with the food/purity rules of

⁴⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 702.

⁴⁵ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A & C Black, 1971), 212.

the law of Moses. With ‘the law of Christ’ Paul refers to Jesus’ setting aside the food/purity rules as well as his stressing the love command. Only so could Paul, guided by ‘the law of Christ’, accommodate himself to the Gentiles ‘as one outside the law’, that is, ignoring the food/purity regulations of the law of Moses. This conclusion points to Jesus’ ruling about food/purity in Mark 7:15/Matt 15:11, the *mashal* saying of Jesus whose intent Mark correctly interprets: ‘Thus he declared all foods clean’ (Mark 7:19).⁴⁶

Taken together, the nomistic language in 1 Cor 9:20–21 suggests that Paul did not consider himself a Torah-observant Jew. He explicitly states that he is not under the law, that he sometimes lives as one without the law and that he upholds another law (“Christ’s law”) that, in the view of some scholars, not only excludes distinctively Jewish commandments but is based on Jesus’ repudiation of the Mosaic food/purity regulations.

1.2 The Inadequacy of the Traditional View

Despite the apparent strength of the argument surveyed in 1.1, there are underlying weaknesses. A few of these weaknesses will be pointed out below; others will be commented on in the course of the investigation. The most obvious problem is that the traditional portrayal of Paul as all things to all people is not historically realistic. It does not fit the first-century socio-historical context or what is known of Paul’s character. There are multiple problems:

1. Paul could not have been “all things to all people” all the time as the standard interpretation maintains. When Paul is viewed in his historical setting, it is apparent that he was often around Jews and Gentiles together, thus restricting his ability to be “all things to all people”.⁴⁷
2. The standard interpretation portrays Paul as simpletons. It implies that Jews did not notice that Paul observed Jewish law only when he was around them. More likely, however, the Jewish community knew how Paul lived. According to Luke, Paul’s congregation in Corinth met in a house that was next door to the synagogue (Acts 18:7).⁴⁸
3. It is doubtful that Paul employed such a foolhardy strategy. Once his inconsistency with respect to basic Torah commandments became known, it would have caused to “stumble” the very people he was trying to “win”.

⁴⁶ Seyoon Kim, “Imitatio Christi (1 Corinthians 11:1): How Paul Imitates Jesus Christ in Dealing with Idol Food (1 Corinthians 8–10)”, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13:2 (2003): 203; Cf. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 490 n. 70; Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 177.

⁴⁷ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 177–86; Gerhard Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians* (trans. David Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 115.

⁴⁸ Bart J. Koet, “As Close to the Synagogue as Can Be: Paul in Corinth (Acts 18.1–18)”, in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 409.

His behaviour would have been seen as unprincipled and devious, thus bringing his message into disrepute. Was Paul so lacking in common sense? As Wilfred Knox put it, “Obviously no Jew would be in the smallest degree influenced by the fact that he observed the Law when it suited his purpose to do so; obedience to the Law was a lifelong matter”.⁴⁹ Francis Watson concurs, “Occasional conformity to the law is entirely alien to the Jewish way of life, and could never have helped him to ‘win those under the law’”.⁵⁰ Even today, Jewish writers describe Paul as a proponent of ‘trickery’,⁵¹ ‘deceit’⁵² and ‘pious fraud’⁵³ based on the traditional explanation of 1 Cor 9:19–23. By contrast, Paul claimed to be one who did not “practise cunning” when he proclaimed the gospel of God (2 Cor 4:1–2; cf. 1 Thess 2:3). Surely, there is something missing here!

4. Proponents of the traditional view of 1 Cor 9:19–23 do not typically respond at length to Pauline or Lukan texts that appear to be at variance with the view that Paul was only occasionally Torah observant (e.g. Acts 21:17–26; Gal 5:3; 1 Cor 7:17–24). 1 Cor 9:19–23 is used as a hermeneutical starting point or hermeneutical centre; “problem” texts are expected to come into alignment with 1 Cor 9:19–23. There is no overriding reason, however, to maintain this presupposition. One could just as easily argue that 1 Cor 9:19–23 should come into alignment with Paul’s “rule in all the churches” in 1 Cor 7:17–20 that Jews are to remain Jews and not live as Gentiles.

1.3 The Need for Reassessment

Only three studies of noticeable length in contemporary scholarship have attempted a reassessment of the case that 1 Cor 9:19–23 precludes a Torah-observant Paul. One is Peter Tomson’s *Paul and the Jewish Law* (1990), of which the last eight pages are devoted to 1 Cor 9:19–23. Tomson’s approach to the “all things to all people” passage is a text-critical argument. He proposes omitting ὥς (“as”) in 1 Cor 9:20a, based on several late manuscripts, and translating the phrase: “I was born the Jews a Jew”.⁵⁴ Tomson’s study

⁴⁹ Wilfred L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 122 n. 54.

⁵⁰ Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 29.

⁵¹ Beth Moshe, *Judaism’s Truth Answers the Missionaries* (New York: Bloch, 1987), 212.

⁵² Gerald Sigal, *The Jews and the Christian Missionary: A Jewish Response to Missionary Christianity* (New York: Ktav, 1981), 272.

⁵³ Michael Drazin, *Their Hollow Inheritance: A Comprehensive Refutation of Christian Missionaries* (Safed: G. M. Publications, 1990), 18.

⁵⁴ Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 276–77.

also recommends omitting the restrictive clause *μη ὢν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον* (“though I myself am not under the law”) based on “late manuscripts, including the majority of Greek minuscules which all follow one main tradition”.⁵⁵

While Tomson’s text-critical argument was a helpful reminder to re-examine variant readings of 1 Cor 9:19–23, it lacked the necessary weight to convince most scholars. The widespread rejection of Tomson’s approach ironically had the reverse effect from the one Tomson hoped for. Rather than causing scholars to reconsider the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23, the seemingly extreme lengths to which Tomson went to make his argument only reinforced the impression that 1 Cor 9:19–23 precludes a Torah-observant Paul. Sentiments to this effect are found in dozens of books and articles that reference 1 Cor 9:19–23. For example, Kim writes:

Tomson’s interpretation of the crucial text of 9:19–23 is very revealing. Against the overwhelming manuscript evidence, he, first of all, seeks to eliminate the *ὡς* before *Ἰουδαίος* as well as the phrase *μη ὢν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον* in v. 20 (pp. 276–79) . . . It is amazing to see the extent to which Tomson’s presupposition of Paul as a law-observant Jew pushes him to go in distorting the Pauline statements about the law.⁵⁶

Horrell similarly remarks, “It is telling that Tomson must delete a number of these Pauline statements, on the basis of weak textual evidence, since they conflict with the picture of Paul he presents”.⁵⁷ While Tomson’s treatment of 1 Cor 8 and 10 has been well received by many scholars, I am not aware of any who have adopted his text-critical argument for interpreting 1 Cor 9:19–23.

A second reassessment of the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 is Mark Nanos’s 2009 essay “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy ‘to Become Everything to Everyone’ (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)”.⁵⁸ Nanos

⁵⁵ Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 277.

⁵⁶ Kim, “Imitatio Christi (1 Corinthians 11:1)”, 212–13.

⁵⁷ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 18.

⁵⁸ Mark D. Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy ‘to Become Everything to Everyone’ (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)”, in *New Perspectives on Paul and the Jews* (ed. Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt; Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming). Paper presented at the New Perspectives on Paul and the Jews: Interdisciplinary Academic Seminar, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium, 14–15 September 2009. Cited 26 December 2010. Online: <http://www.marknanos.com/1Cor9-Leuven-9-4-09.pdf>. Below I reference page numbers from the online version (rev. 9-4-09) but quote from an updated version that Mark Nanos kindly sent me (rev. 1-13-10). See his earlier discussions of 1 Cor 9:19–23 in Mark D. Nanos, “Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul’s Judaism?” *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle* (ed. Mark D. Given; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 120–23; Mark D. Nanos, “The Polytheist Identity of the ‘Weak’, and Paul’s Strategy to ‘Gain’ Them: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1”, in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (ed. Stanley Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 179–210; Mark D. Nanos, “A Torah-Observant Paul? What Difference Could It Make for Christian/Jewish Relations Today?” (paper presented at the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations, 4–6 June 2005), 33–39.

argues that 1 Cor 9:19–23 refers to Paul’s “rhetorical adaptability” (in the manner of Socrates or Antisthenes’ Odysseus) and not to “conduct” or “lifestyle adaptability”.⁵⁹

Such “rhetorical adaptability” consists of varying one’s speech to different audiences: reasoning from their premises, but not imitating their conduct in other ways . . . This behavior arises when one seeks to express views in vocabulary and by way of models and examples that are calculated to persuade. One thus works from the audiences’ premises or world-views, even though seeking to lead them to a conclusion that is based on another set of premises or world-views. Teachers normally seek to relate to students in this way. It is highly useful for making a persuasive argument in any context, especially in philosophical or religious debates, including recruitment and discipleship, as well as for apologetical purposes. That is just how Socrates approached his interlocutors, starting from their premises in a way calculated to lead them step by step to conclusions they had not foreseen and might otherwise be unwilling to accept . . . I propose Paul’s self-description here [1 Cor 9:19–23] refers entirely to his evangelistic tactic of rhetorical adaptability, and did not include the adoption of conduct representing his various audiences’ convictional propositions, but not his own. He could undertake this argumentative tactic as a Jew faithfully observing Torah, even when speaking to lawless Jews, Jews upholding different halakhic standards, and non-Jews of any stripe. Thus Paul’s behavior can be described as free of the duplicitous conduct which serves as the basis for the charges of moral dishonesty, inconsistency, and so on, that arise logically from the prevailing views.⁶⁰

Nanos points to Acts 17 as an example of Paul “becoming” (i.e. reasoning) as a Jew to the Jews and as an idolater to idolaters.⁶¹ In the history of interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23, many commentators have argued that Paul’s “all things to all people” principle *included* rhetorical adaptability as evidenced by Acts 17 and other texts.⁶² However, Nanos uniquely contends that lifestyle adaptability is *not in view at all* in 1 Cor 9:19–23 and that the text therefore does not preclude a Torah observant Paul.⁶³

Nanos’s essay makes an important contribution by showing how presuppositions of Paulinism – “privileging of gentileness, freedom from Torah and Jewish identity”⁶⁴ – inform the traditional reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23 and *ipso facto* validate a hyper-literal interpretation of the text. Nanos is also correct that Paul’s accommodation language in 1 Cor 9:19–23 can have a range of meaning and there is no reason to exclude rhetorical adaptability. However, there are a number of reasons in my view to interpret 1 Cor 9:19–23 as *including* some element of lifestyle adaptability:

⁵⁹ Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy”, 11, 17, 25–28.

⁶⁰ Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy”, 16–18.

⁶¹ Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy”, 28–33.

⁶² See Henry Chadwick’s seminal essay, “‘All Things to All Men’ (I Cor IX.22)”, *New Testament Studies* 1 (1955): 261–75, and 4.1 below.

⁶³ Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy”, 18 n. 42, 26–27.

⁶⁴ Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy”, 3.

1. As Mark Given has demonstrated, the expression ἐγγερόμην . . . ὥς, in both literal and figurative contexts, refers to “concrete, observable changes”.⁶⁵
2. Paul’s repeated use of nomistic language in 1 Cor 9:20 (“I became as one under the law . . . I became as one without the law [though I am not without the law of God but am in Christ’s law]”) would seem to indicate that lifestyle is in view. The second restrictive clause (“though I am not without the law of God”) likely points back to “the commandments of God” in 1 Cor 7:19,⁶⁶ and suggests that Paul’s conduct in relation to the ἄνομος could be misunderstood. The restrictive clause is Paul’s way of saying, “Do not misunderstand the nature of my close association with these people. I remain law observant”.⁶⁷
3. 1 Cor 9:27 (“but I punish my body and enslave it”; cf. v. 19 “slave to all”) reinforces the impression that Paul is speaking about lifestyle adaptability in the previous verses.
4. 1 Cor 10:32–33 (“Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved”) is a recapitulation of 1 Cor 9:19–23. The language of trying to “please everyone in everything” presumably includes lifestyle adaptability (cf. 1 Cor 7:32–34; 9:1–18; 2 Cor 5:9).⁶⁸ Moreover, the following verse, 1 Cor 11:1 (“Be imitators of me as I am of Christ”), points back to Paul’s *imitatio Christi* ethic in 1 Cor 8–10 and 9:19–23.⁶⁹
5. The 1 Cor 8–10 context focuses on food-related accommodation. There are more than twenty-five references to food and commensality in the pericope.⁷⁰ Also, in 1 Cor 10:27b, Paul appears to echo Jesus’ rule of adaptation with respect to being a guest in another’s home (“eat what is set before you” [cf. Luke 10:8]). This is lifestyle adaptability.⁷¹
6. A compelling case can be made that Paul applies his 1 Cor 9:19–23 principle of accommodation to the “strong” in relation to the “weak” in Rom 14–15.⁷² Here Paul emphasizes lifestyle adaptability, not rhetorical adaptability.

⁶⁵ Mark D. Given, *Paul’s True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 109. See 4.4.2 below.

⁶⁶ Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 104; cf. 101. See 2.2.3 and 4.4.5 below.

⁶⁷ See 4.4.5 below.

⁶⁸ Also Rom 15:1–3, “We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself”.

⁶⁹ See 4.3, 5.1 and 5.3 below.

⁷⁰ See 5.5.1 below.

⁷¹ See 5.4.4, 5.4.5 and 5.5.4 below.

⁷² Carl N. Toney, *Paul’s Inclusive Ethic: Resolving Community Conflicts and Promoting Mission in Romans 14–15* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 189–90, 205. See 2.1.4 below.

7. As I propose in chapter 5 of this monograph, Paul's accommodation language in 1 Cor 9:19–23 likely refers to halakhic adaptability in different table-fellowship contexts, with ordinary Jews, strict Jews and Gentiles.⁷³ This interpretation does not portray Paul as duplicitous and therefore mitigates the need for an exclusively “rhetorical” reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23.⁷⁴

A third study that challenges the consensus view is Mark Kinzer's *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (2005); three pages are devoted to 1 Cor 9:19–23. Kinzer argues that ὑπὸ νόμον (“under the law”) in 1 Cor 9:20 refers to Jews who relate to God in a pre-New Covenant way, “The term has more to do with status than with observing particular behavioural norms”.⁷⁵ Kinzer superimposes his interpretation of ὑπὸ νόμον in Gal 3:23–26/4:4–5 onto 1 Cor 9:20. Should it be assumed, however, that the meaning of ὑπὸ νόμον in Galatians is the same as in 1 Corinthians? And what of Rom 6:14–15? In addition to not fully addressing this intertextual question, Kinzer offers no interaction with the context of 1 Cor 8:1–11:1. Moreover, the problem of repetition that results from his interpretation of ὑπὸ νόμον in 1 Cor 9:20 is not resolved. Why would Paul mention the same group twice in 1 Cor 9:20? Quoting Markus Bockmuehl, Kinzer raises the possibility that Paul's accommodation language in 1 Cor 9:19–23 may reflect halakhic flexibility but he does not elaborate on what this might mean exegetically or practically.

It may be reasonably concluded that contemporary scholarship lacks a full-scale reassessment of the traditional view that 1 Cor 9:19–23 precludes a Torah-observant Paul. The lack of such a reassessment has resulted in a fairly one-sided debate over the meaning of the passage in the scholarly literature. A more critical engagement is in order, especially given that 1 Cor 9:19–23 is crucial for understanding how Paul understood the relationship between his Jewishness and his being in Christ.

⁷³ See 5.5 below.

⁷⁴ J. Brian Tucker, “‘Beyond the New Perspective on Paul’ and the Evangelical New Testament Scholar: Is Paul Torah-Observant in 1 Corinthians 9.20–21?” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, New Orleans, 20 November 2009), 6–7, argues that Nanos overstates the case for a rhetorical reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23, “First, in 1 Corinthians 1–4 Paul appears to be somewhat opposed to this type of rhetorically-based complex form of argumentation or communication. How would a finely developed rhetorical strategy described in 1 Cor. 9.19–23 relate to e.g. 1 Cor. 2.1–5 [‘I did not come with superior eloquence . . . My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words . . .’] or the earlier context of 1.18–25? . . . I would suggest an approach to 1 Cor 9.19–23 that understands Paul, following Rudolph and Tomson, as having a relaxed halakah with regard to the idolatrous intentions of gentiles”. See my discussion of Greco-Roman *topoi* in 4.1 below.

⁷⁵ Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 86.

1.4 Aim and Method

In chapters 2–5, the objective is not to prove that Paul was a Torah-observant Jew (this is beyond the scope of this study and perhaps the available evidence). Rather, the primary aim is to demonstrate that scholars overstate their case when they use 1 Cor 9:19–23 as incontrovertible evidence that Paul was not Torah observant. Such overstatement is demonstrated by pointing out holes in the traditional reading, a task which takes up the bulk of the monograph. A secondary aim is to show how one might understand 1 Cor 9:19–23 as the discourse of a Torah-observant Jew.

In order to fulfil the primary aim of the monograph, the three rationales given for why 1 Cor 9:19–23 precludes a Torah-observant Paul must be reassessed. This is done in Part I (chapters 2–4). Part II (chapter 5) puts forward a fresh interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23. The organization of the monograph is as follows:

PART I

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| Chapter 2 | Reassessment of Rationale 1 (Intertextual Argument) |
| Chapter 3 | Reassessment of Rationale 2 (Contextual Argument) |
| Chapter 4 | Reassessment of Rationale 3 (Textual Argument) |

PART II

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|-----------|--|
| Chapter 5 | A Proposed Interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 |
|-----------|--|

It is important to point out that even if one does not accept my proposed interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19–23 in chapter 5, the primary thrust of the monograph – the reassessment of the traditional view in chapters 2, 3 and 4 – still stands. The argument in Part I that 1 Cor 9:19–23 does not preclude a Torah-observant Paul is the larger and more important part of the monograph. By demonstrating that the three rationales which underpin the traditional view do not stand up under close scrutiny, I destabilise the consensus reading and open the door for scholars to take a fresh look at 1 Cor 9:19–23. This is a significant contribution to New Testament studies because 1 Cor 9:19–23 is used by many scholars as a hermeneutical lens for understanding Paul. It is a paradigm-shaping text.

1 Cor 9:19–23 may be compared to the hub of a wheel that is connected to many spokes. These spokes represent various biblical and theological issues. Because of the eclectic nature of the arguments that make up the traditional reading of 1 Cor 9:19–23, it is necessary to use more than one method of exegesis to address the standard interpretation and present a counter case. In chapter 2, examination of the intertextual argument will for the most part employ conventional historical-critical methods of exegesis. At the same time, in dealing with Lukan texts (e.g. Acts 16:3 and 21:17–26), historical-literary criticism is also utilized. Since chapters 3–5 are mainly an attempt to under-