

Article

Understanding the Letter to the Romans in the Sect-Cult Development of Early Churches

Jin Young Kim

Department of Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, USA; jinkim@okstate.edu

Received: 26 April 2020; Accepted: 12 May 2020; Published: 20 May 2020



Abstract: This article examines how the model of sect-cult development in antiquity helps us understand Paul's discussion of Jewish traditions in the Letter to the Romans. In the traditional Augustinian–Lutheran scholarship, Romans has often been interpreted within the binary framework of Judaism and Christianity, as Paul showcasing one of the earliest examples of Christian opposition to Judaism. Based on the recent studies on Second Temple Judaism and the modified model of sect-cult reflecting the ancient context, I argue that Romans reveals internal conflicts between cultic and sectarian tendencies present among early churches of the first century C.E. The cultic tendency is reflected in Roman gentile believers' assimilation of the Jewish tradition with the Greco–Roman virtue of self-mastery and their growing separation from Judaism. Paul, on the other hand, tries to establish the unity between believing gentiles and Israel as exhibiting his sectarian understanding of the gospel and the gentile mission. By placing Romans in the trajectory of sect-cult development of an early church, we stop reading it as a text that justifies the Christian antagonism to Judaism, but as a text that shows an early apostle's passionate effort to create a unified people of God in the hope for the final salvation.

Keywords: New Testament; the letter to Romans; Paul; sect; cult; anti-Jewish discourses; Jews and gentiles; unity; second temple Judaism; Roman empire

1. Introduction

One of the problems that Paul addresses in his letter to the Romans is the act of passing judgment on others. In Rom 2:1, Paul says: “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, anyone who judges others, for in judging others you condemn yourself, since you, as a judge, are doing the same things”.¹ Paul's criticism is serious as he equates the act of judging with the sin of idolatry (1:18–32). According to Paul, judging others is the same as disregarding God, who is the sole judge of the world.

Concerning the identity of this “judge” in Rom 2:1, the traditional Augustinian–Lutheran interpretation has been that he is the Jew mentioned in Rom 2:17, who “rely on the law and boast in God” (ἐπαναπαύη νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ; Oswald 1972, pp. 15–16).² According to this view, Paul is criticizing his Jewish contemporaries who stood hypocritical and arrogant over gentile believers, boasting in their possession and practices of the law (Cranfield 1975, vol. 1, p. 175; Watson 1986, p. 113; Dunn 1988, pp. 77–92; Fitzmyer 1993, p. 297; Jewett 2007, pp. 241–42). Paul is also seen here as invalidating the law and rejecting Judaism in its essence, considering it to have been superseded by the faith in Jesus Christ. This interpretation was further supported by the scholarship that understood Pauline churches within the Weberian ‘church-sect’ typology, which saw Paul as establishing a religiosity that is distinctive from Judaism (Lüdemann 2010, pp. 213–18). Paul, in other

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all New Testament translations are my own.

² Augustine, *On The Spirit and the Letter* 14. For the chapter divisions of *On The Spirit and the Letter*, I follow (Schaff 1887).

words, succeeded in transforming the initially sectarian Jesus movement into a new ‘religion’ of the Roman World, beginning the history of the Christian ‘church’. In this interpretation, Romans becomes the locus where we find the early church’s opposition to Judaism and the text that provides the historical–theological ground for legitimatizing subsequent anti-Semitic discourses in the history of Christianity (Parkes 1969, p. 52; Radford Ruether 1984, pp. 103–4; Gaston 1979; Gager 1985, pp. 197–212).

In the last couple of decades, however, studies on Second Temple Judaism and Paul began to challenge the traditional understanding of Romans as Paul’s treatise on the antithesis of Jewish law and Christian faith. For instance, E. P. Sanders (1977), in his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, revised the assumption that first-century Judaism was a legalistic religion lacking the genuine faith in God. Through his analysis of the literary corpus from the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods, Sanders argued that Jews thought that they could be justified only by God’s mercy and faithfulness, not by works of the law. For Jews, keeping the law was not to earn salvation through human works but to express their faithfulness to God and remain in the covenantal relationship. Based on Sanders’ observation, scholars could see that Paul’s idea of justification by faith in Romans is not standing in contrast to the Jewish tradition but is, in fact, in line with it (Stendahl 1963; Stowers 1994; Gager 2002; Eisenbaum 2009).³ In other words, Paul was not the ‘founder’ of the Christian ‘religion’ or ‘church’, but a Jew whose understanding of Jesus, gospel, and the gentile mission falls within the spectrum of ideas presented by other Jewish sects and groups of his time.

Studies on Romans also presented new ways of understanding the letter’s seemingly anti-Jewish elements. Stanley K. Stowers (1994), for instance, pointed out that Paul is not addressing an ethnic Jew in Rom 2:17 but a hypothetical interlocutor to refute an erroneous understanding of the law. Runar M. Thorsteinsson (2003) further argued that this interlocutor is a hypothetical gentile who wrongly understood the law. These studies show that we cannot simply assume Paul as criticizing Jews or Judaism in Romans. They also suggest that we should not read Romans as reflecting the tension between two religions—Christianity and Judaism—as the former being represented by a boastful, stereotypical Jew and the latter by Paul, who has detached himself from Judaism.⁴

In this paper, I analyze the problem reflected in Romans by utilizing the sociological model of ‘sect-cult’ presented by Stark and Bainbridge (1979), but especially the one modified by L. Michael White (1988) by reflecting the ancient usage of the terms ‘sect’ and ‘cult’. While many scholars adopted Weber-Troeltsch’s ‘church-sect’ typology to understand the origin of Christianity and the relationship between Judaism and early Jesus movements, not many have attempted reading Romans in consideration of the ‘sect-cult’ model. By locating the letter in the trajectory of ancient sect-cult development, we begin to see the coherence between Paul’s criticism of those who judge others and his extensive discussions of Jewish traditions in the letter.

Based on my analysis, I argue that the conflict we see in Romans is one that arose in the context where the Roman church was assimilating to the Greco–Roman cultural context and separating itself further from the Jewish root. This tendency was especially problematic for Paul, who, with his intrinsically sectarian understanding of the gospel, saw the danger of the gentile church drifting away from Judaism and becoming a separate entity. For Paul, who was looking forward to the salvation of “all Israel (Rom 11:26)” through Israel’s elect and the offering of gentiles, the Roman church’s cultic tendency towards separation from Judaism was particularly detrimental. In Romans, we see Paul’s

³ Sanders himself did not arrive at this conclusion but maintained the view that Paul, through his experience of the risen Christ, realized the invalidity of the law as the way of salvation in the messianic era (Sanders 1977, p. 552).

⁴ For assuming the existence of some type of conflicts in the Roman church based on the letter, see (Gager 1985, pp. 230–31). Even if there was no particular conflict, it still is probable that Paul saw enough of the danger in the Roman church that could develop into a problematic situation.

endeavor to bring two parting communities together, the gentile churches and Israel, in the hope of the imminent eschaton.⁵

2. Paul's Letters and the Model of Sect-Cult in the Ancient World

Sociological types of 'church' and 'sect' developed by (Weber 1922; Troeltsch 1912) have been used extensively in understanding different types of religious organizations and their developments.⁶ While many scholars further modified the Weberian 'church-sect' model and presented different definitions of the terms, 'church' is generally defined as an institutionalized organization that has priesthood and recruits its members from society through socialization. 'Sect', on the other hand, is defined as a small revitalizing group that exhibits a radical stance towards the state and society and recruits its members by voluntary conversion (Beaman 1990, pp. 19–20; Dawson 2009, p. 527).

This typology of 'church-sect' was adopted by the New Testament scholarship in analyzing the formation of early Christianity in the ancient Mediterranean world. By utilizing this model, scholars explained that Christianity originated not as a medieval and modern 'church'-like 'religion' but as a 'sect', i.e., a Jewish renewal movement centered around the charismatic leader Jesus (Daniélou 1969; Frend 1984, p. 12; Esler 1987, pp. 30–45; Elliott 1990, p. 74; Meeks 1986, pp. 99–103). This Palestinian sectarian movement then was gradually institutionalized in the Roman empire, losing its original radical features and becoming a 'religion' that we now call Christianity (Bryant 1993).

This view, however, was not without problems. In the last couple of decades, scholars began to question the application of the binary Weberian model of 'church-sect' to Judaism and the Jesus movement. For instance, many pointed out that first-century Judaism was not a static, monolithic, and institutionalized entity functioning like a 'church' (Smith 1971; Aune 1976; Sanders 1977, pp. 12–88; Neusner 1984, pp. 35–44; Grabbe 1977; Holmberg 1990, p. 91; White 1988, pp. 10–14; Schäfer 1998). What we call 'Judaism' in the ancient Mediterranean world was a loose network of diverse groups and sectarian movements proposing different explications about Jewish identity. The Jesus movement was not the only 'sect' that rose against the petrified 'church' of Judaism but one among numerous Jewish groups that had a range of reformative ideas and practices (Blenkinsopp 1981; Horsley and Hanson 1985). Jewish sects, while they shared the general sectarian tendency, also greatly diverged in their degrees of tension with the dominant religio-social culture and in formulating the group's boundaries.

Scholars also pointed out that the 'church-sect' typology does not take into account remarkably free movements of religious groups in the Greco-Roman world. Dynamic exchanges of ideas and practices resulted in varying mutations and developments of the original elements throughout different regions of the empire (Collar 2007, 2011, 2013; Price 2012; Woolf 2016, p. 480). A. D. Nock, for instance, in his study of religious conversion in the Greco-Roman antiquity, has shown that people had no qualms about accepting new religious ideas and practices in addition to their existing forms of piety (Nock 1933, pp. 1–16). When a particular religious body settled down in a place outside of its birthplace, it went through a process of assimilation to the hosting culture and separation from its root, often resulting in the loss of the group's initial sectarian identity.

Here, the study of Stark and Bainbridge on 'cult' becomes useful.⁷ In their article "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements (Stark and Bainbridge 1979)", they presented the three categories of 'church', 'sect', and 'cult' to understand religious movements. Furthering Benton Johnson (1963)'s stress on a group's state of tension with its social environment, Stark and Bainbridge defined 'church' as a religious group that moves towards less tension

⁵ Scholars debate on the primary purpose of Romans, while not excluding the possibility of multiple interrelated goals being accomplished by the letter. For studies on different purposes of Romans, such as ambassadorial, apologetic, or protreptic, etc., see (Jewett 1982; Crafton 1990; Stuhlmacher 1991; Guerra 2005; Foster 2014).

⁶ For studies on the critiques and developments of the 'church-sect' typology, see (Berger 1958; Swatos 1976; Johnson 1971; Chalcraft 2007, pp. 26–51).

⁷ For sociological discussions on 'cult', see (Wilson 1967, pp. 27–28; Campbell 1978; Dawson 1997; Richardson 1993).

with the socio-cultural context and ‘sect’ as a deviant, schismatic group that rejects its surrounding environment (p. 124). They, however, also observed that there exists another kind of religious movement that begins not by breaking off from existing religious bodies but independently through religious innovation or importation. They called this type a ‘cult’. A cult is deviant to its hosting culture like a sect, but as having no ties to a prior organization but presenting fundamentally different beliefs and practices, it is inherently alien to the society in question. One significant advantage of Stark and Bainbridge’s distinction of sect and cult is that we begin to see the different tendencies a particular group takes in a specific context. For instance, Stark and Bainbridge could state that “the Catholic Church in the United States is more sectlike than is the Catholic Church in Ireland (Stark and Bainbridge 1985, p. 124)”.

The study of Stark and Bainbridge was successfully taken into the field of early Christianity by White, who linked these sociological concepts with the categories used in Greco–Roman antiquity.⁸ In his article “Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity (White 1988)”, White points out that the terms ‘sect’ and ‘cult’ were used in the ancient world, and their uses overlap with the definitions proposed by Stark and Bainbridge. The term ‘sect’ corresponds to the Greek term *αἵρεσις* (*haireisis*; Latin *secta*), which referred to a particular school of thought or a group of shared beliefs and practices (Runia 1999, pp. 118–19; Rüpke 2007, p. 72). For instance, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus uses *haireisis* to describe Jewish groups such as Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. ‘Cult’, on the other hand, corresponds to the Latin word *cultus*, which was used to refer to a sacred rite for a particular deity and especially a set of practices of foreign ethnic groups introduced to the Roman empire (White 2004, p. 129; Cf. Ando 2009, p. 6). Thus, foreign mysteries imported from Egypt and Anatolia, as well as the Jewish traditions, were considered as *cultus*.

Extending the study of Stark and Bainbridge with the notion of symbolic worldview (Berger and Luckmann 1966, pp. 95–98), White then defined ‘sect’ in the ancient Mediterranean world as “a separatist (or schismatic) revitalization movement that arises out of an established, religiously defined cultural system, with which it shares its symbolic worldview” and cult as “an integrative, often syncretistic, movement that is effectively imported (by mobilization or mutation) into another religiously defined cultural system, to which it seeks to synthesize a basically foreign (or novel) symbolic worldview (1990, p. 17)”. According to this redefinition of ‘sect’ and ‘cult’, the same religious movement can be both called and analyzed as a ‘sect’ and a ‘cult’ depending on the particular strategies a group takes in drawing and maintaining its boundary in a given socio-cultural context. White further observed that cult rhetoric tends to highlight the similarities with the dominant culture, whereas sect rhetoric shows the tendency of stressing the differences (pp. 19–20).

White’s modified definitions of ‘sect’ and ‘cult’ are particularly useful to analyze the different ways in which early Jesus-sects operated in different regions of the Roman empire. The Jesus movement, which originated as one among many Jewish groups in Palestine, spread throughout the empire by early missionary endeavors. In this process, the sect began to behave like a cult in the regions where Jewish beliefs and practices were inherently foreign, like the city of Rome. In forging its own distinctive identity as a cult, the group underwent both adaptations and conflicts with the existing culture, as well as gradual distinction and separation from its Palestinian Jewish root. This process also involved internal struggles concerning the particular ways of accommodation and separation,

⁸ While Stark also suggested to see Christianity as a cultic movement, he thought the shift of the Christian identity from a sect to cult has happened early when the belief in Jesus’ resurrection emerged (Stark 1986, pp. 223–24). I disagree with Stark because the belief in the resurrection was common among Jewish groups and not something religiously innovative in the first-century Jewish context. We also see continued sectarian aspects of Jesus movements in the gospels and Pauline letters. I agree with White that the diaspora settings pressured some Jesus-sects, including one of Paul, to behave like a cult (White 1988, pp. 17–18).

resulting in the development of various forms of Christianity in the ancient Mediterranean world (Bird 2002, pp. 225–46; Regev 2011, pp. 789–93).⁹

Paul's letters also reflect tensions between sectarian and cultic tendencies that coexisted in early churches. The former tries to maintain the original sectarian worldview of a Palestinian Jewish movement—often represented by Paul—by stressing the distinctiveness of the church from the dominant Roman culture; while the latter tends to connect and assimilate to the hosting culture for survival and expansion, as exhibited in some gentile members' thoughts and lifestyles (White 1988, p. 20; Cf. Mauss 1994, pp. ix–x). By reading Paul's letters in the trajectory of 'sect-cult' development in some regions of the Roman empire, we stop understanding the conflicts and polemics over Jewish traditions present in Paul's discussions as the indications of the binary opposition between Judaism and the nascent Christianity (Cf. Georgi 1995, p. 37). Instead, Paul's letters reflect the tension between different ideas concerning the core of the group's identity and how it draws and maintains its boundary in a given cultural context. The Jewish issues addressed in Romans can also be understood within the process of a particular Jewish sectarian worldview being challenged and adapted in an alien socio-cultural context of Rome (Cf. Nanos 1999, pp. 284–85).

3. Roman Church's Cultic Tendency as Reflected in Romans

What are some of the characteristics that reflect the Roman church's cultic tendency to assimilate more to the hosting culture and separate itself further from its Jewish root? As discussed earlier, the main object of Paul's criticism in Romans is the person addressed in Rom 2:1-5 and 2:17-34. Paul's critical dialogue with this interlocutor reveals the central tension present in the Roman church. Let us focus on Paul's criticism of this character to understand the main problem Paul perceived of the Roman congregation.

3.1. Misunderstanding of the Jewish Tradition

There have been extensive debates concerning the precise identity of this interlocutor in Rom 2:1-5 and 2:17-29. In the traditional Augustinian–Lutheran scholarship, this person was generally assumed to be a typical Jew who represents the legalistic and arrogant Judaism of the first-century C.E. According to this view, Paul is criticizing the Jewish hypocrisy and boasting based on their possession of the law. In the last couple of decades, however, more scholars have begun to identify this interlocutor as a gentile who was misunderstanding the function of the law and the nature of salvation (Nanos 1999, pp. 283–84; Das 2007, 2012; Thiessen 2014, pp. 378–79). This shifted view lies on the observation that Paul is not addressing an actual historical figure in these passages but using the ancient philosophical rhetoric called speech-in-character (προσωποποιία; Stowers 1994, pp. 143–50). In this rhetoric, an orator or a writer sets up an imaginative interlocutor to refute erroneous ideas and introduce the correct understanding of a particular subject matter. Thus here, the interlocutor is not an actual Jew but a straw man that Paul is setting up to make an effective argument on the law and faith. On top of this understanding of Paul's rhetoric, scholars also pointed out that Paul explicitly mentions gentiles as the implied audience of the letter (1:5; 11:13; Munck 1959, pp. 196–209; Stowers 1994, pp. 21–33; Engberg-Pedersen 2000, pp. 185–86). Paul's argument on Jewish traditions thus should be understood as specially tailored for the gentile audience in Rome, especially for those who were misunderstanding the relationship between Jewish practices and the gospel. Moreover, as Thorsteinsson correctly points out, the phrase “to call yourself a Jew (σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπὶνομάζῃ)” in 2:17 suggests that this person is not an ethnic Jew but a non-Jew who was misappropriating the title “Jew” without a proper understanding and practice of the law (Thorsteinsson 2003, pp. 195–98).

⁹ We see a different trajectory for a Jesus-group that moved to upper Galilee, which stressed its sectarian identity as the true elect over against other Jewish groups of that region. One example is the Matthean community. See (Davies 1964; Kampen 1994; Georgi 1995, pp. 53–54).

Claiming himself as a “Jew”, the main problem of this imaginative gentile interlocutor was his misunderstanding of salvation as something that he has already attained through the possession of the law, in particular, through the practice of circumcision (2:1-3, 25-29; 3:1; 4:11). Based on this false idea, he was not living a life of faith (2:21-29) but considered himself as standing at a superior position from others. As we will see more in-depth in the following discussion, for Paul, this gentile was exhibiting a complete misunderstanding of the law, faith, and salvation in the Jewish tradition, as well as the role of Jesus Christ. In his boasting and hypocrisy, the gentile also revealed that he has not yet separated himself from the wicked gentile world (1:18-32), but remaining in the same condition as other nonbelieving gentiles (2:1-3).¹⁰ While this person claims himself to be a “Jew” separated from the unfaithful world, he, in fact, is not (2:4-6).

Where is this misunderstanding coming from, and how does it reveal the cultic tendency present among the gentile believers in the Roman church? In his study of Romans, Stowers argues that the interlocutor’s erroneous understanding of the law and salvation is a result of mistaken assimilation of the Jewish tradition of law-justification with the Hellenistic ethic of self-mastery (ἐγκράτεια). According to Stowers, in the Greco-Roman world, controlling one’s body and passions was considered to be one of the most cardinal virtues of the society (Stowers 1994, pp. 42–56; Finn and Finn 2009, pp. 34–57).¹¹ It was a quality particularly expected from those who were in the superior positions of ruling others. In the culture where the world’s goods were considered to be finite, however, self-mastery was also a limited commodity that should be fought for and gained through competition against others. Stowers argues that the Roman church also shared this pursuit of self-mastery prevalent in its broader cultural milieu. For instance, in describing the gentile status in Rom 1:18-32, Paul stresses the absence of self-control among gentiles explicitly by describing their state as being full of lusts (ἐπιθυμίαις; v.24), degrading of the body (ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα; v.24), and degrading passions (πᾶθη ἀτιμίας; v.26).¹² Also in 7:7-8:8, Paul explains that a human being cannot control passions because of the weakness of the flesh, reflecting the aspiration of self-mastery prevalent among the gentiles in the Roman church.

Considering the cultural emphasis on self-mastery, as Stowers argues, it seems that some gentiles in the Roman church were developing the false idea that they could attain this virtue by keeping parts of the Jewish law.¹³ Even if we do not assume actual opponents of Paul influencing the Roman believers, we can safely assume that Paul perceived the danger of some gentiles being misguided by this wrong assimilation of the law-justification with the practices and attainment of self-control. This gentile misunderstanding is especially plausible when we consider the tendency among Hellenistic Jewish writers to present the law as the supreme path for cultivating self-mastery in the ancient world (Stowers 1994, pp. 57–65).¹⁴ We also see in Paul’s other letters repeated conflicts he had to face against Judaizing apostles and circumcised gentile converts, who were preaching the law on top of the faith in Christ (e.g., Gal 2:14; 5:2-6).

Paul, of course, here is not saying that the virtue of self-mastery itself is wrong or that believers cannot or should not attain it through their faith. The idea that believers could become one with self-control would have even helped the gospel to take root in the Roman environment as a point of assimilation. As Rodney Stark notes, one of the strategies that a new cult implements in a foreign environment is appealing to the needs of the people (Stark 1986, p. 219). In Paul’s letters, we indeed find that he often presented his gospel by connecting it to the virtue of self-mastery. For instance, in 1 Cor 9:24-27, Paul compares believers to athletes who strive to exercise self-control in everything (Stowers

¹⁰ For the reading of Rom 1:18-32 as describing the typical gentile state, see (Stowers 1994, pp. 83–125).

¹¹ E.g., Plato, *Laws* 625E–626E; Galen, *The Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul’s Passions* 10.8.

¹² Scholars pointed out other “gentilizing” tendencies among the Roman gentile believers. See (Elliott 1990; Campbell 1992; Wright 1992, p. 251; Nanos 1996, pp. 75–84).

¹³ I should admit that here both Stowers’ and my discussions of self-mastery is mainly concerned with male gentile believers in the Roman church. Self-mastery (or self-control) was considered to be a virtue exhibiting one’s masculinity and thus belonged to the realm of males (Wilson 2014, p. 369–71).

¹⁴ E.g., Philo, *On the Special Laws* 4.55; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.120–21.

1994, pp. 48–49; Cf. [Garrison 1993](#)). In Rom 6:1–14, he says that the acceptance of the redemption through Jesus' death and resurrection enables a person to control passions and live "in newness of life (v.4)".¹⁵ He urges the believers: "Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you succumb to its lusts (v.12)". In contrast, Paul accuses false preachers and members as "slaves of their own stomach (δουλεύουσιν ἄλλὰ τῇ ἑαυτῶν κοιλίᾳ; Rom 16:18)" or as those who serve their belly as their gods (ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία; Phil 3:19). What worried Paul about the Roman believers was not their pursuit of self-mastery itself but their misunderstanding of the law as the means through which they could guarantee salvation. According to Paul, this idea seriously undermined God's mercy that is central to human salvation. It also invalidated the role of Christ for gentile believers, who paid the due for their inexorable sins through his death and made them stand blameless in the starting point toward the final salvation at the time of judgment.

3.2. Growing Separation from the Jewish Root

Together with the erroneous assimilation of the law-salvation with the Greco–Roman idea of self-mastery, another tendency of the Roman church that Paul perceived to be problematic was its growing separation from its Jewish root. This tendency is seen in the idea that unbelieving Jews are now superseded by believing gentiles, one that Paul refutes thoroughly in Romans. After correcting the misconception of circumcision and salvation (2:1–29), Paul immediately turns to the question of the "advantage (τὸ περισσὸν)" of an ethnic Jew (3:1). With a hypothetical question and an answer, he asserts, quite strongly, that the privilege of Israel as the recipient of God's oracle and faithfulness remains intact. In 3:3–4, he says: "If some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God? Absolutely not (εἰ ἡπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσῃ; μὴ γένοιτο)!" According to Paul, while some Jews are showing their unfaithfulness at present in their rejection of Jesus and the gospel, God's faithfulness upon them is never annulled, and Israel is not superseded ([Oropeza 2007](#), p. 58).

Paul's discussion in Rom 9–11 also reveals the gentiles' wrong assumption about the fate of unbelieving Jews. Paul, up until Romans chapter 8, devotes his letter in presenting the correct ideas of the law and salvation, which is educating gentiles with the proper understanding of the Jewish tradition. Then, in Rom 9–11, he quickly dives into the subject of the Jewish unfaithfulness at present and gentiles' judgment over Israel. After a lengthened explanation about the necessity of Jewish unfaithfulness in God's plan for salvation (9:6–11:24), Paul expresses his firm conviction in God's faithfulness and mercy that will save "all Israel" at the time of his judgment (11:25–36). Paul's assertion of the miraculous salvation of all Jews indicates that some gentiles assumed unbelieving Jews' destruction at the final judgment. Concerning the situation in the Roman church, Mark D. Nanos summarizes that gentile believers in Rome were developing an "inadequate grasp of the priority, privilege, and irrevocable place of Israel in the history of salvation ([Nanos 1999](#), p. 290)". This arrogance is reflected in Paul's exhortation to the gentile audience: "They [unbelieving Jews] were broken off because of their unfaithfulness, but you [gentiles; 11:13] stand only through faithfulness. So do not become proud, but stand in awe (11:20)". As assuming unbelieving Jews as having a fundamentally different status in salvation, gentile members were separating themselves further from the root of Judaism and building an independent identity.

Then, can we place the growing cultic tendency of gentile believers within the broader historical context of the churches in Rome? While space is limited for an in-depth analysis, we can ask whether there was any political change that has influenced the Roman community. In the churches of Rome, the tendency to assimilate to their cultural context would have existed from the very beginning when the groups were formed. The Roman administrative policies in the years preceding Paul's letter to the Romans, however, seem to have accelerated this process as resulting in conflicts and divisions

¹⁵ For more discussion, see ([Wasserman 2008](#)).

among the members of the Roman church. In 41 C.E., according to Dio Cassius, Claudius ordered Jews “not to hold meetings” while continuing their traditional Jewish lifestyle (*Roman History* 60.6.6; Jewett 2007, p. 18; Rutgers 1998, pp. 184–89; Williams 2004, pp. 38–39). Then later in 49 C.E., according to Suetonius, Claudius “expelled from Rome the Jews constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (*Claudius* 25.4; Jewett 2007, p. 19; 1979, pp. 36–40, 100–3)”. Many scholars interpret this edict as reflecting struggles among Jews concerning Jesus (Johnson 2000, p. 91; Rock 2012, pp. 88–89). In this political context, some gentile members, consciously and unconsciously, were pressured to assimilate more to the Roman worldview to avoid unnecessary tension and distance themselves further from the Jewish tradition. When the edict was annulled after 54 C.E., and some Jewish believers returned to Rome (cf. Acts 18:3), the tension between gentile and Jewish members exacerbated (Rock 2012, pp. 89–90).¹⁶ Thus for Paul, addressing the growing breach between gentile and Jewish members and gentile believers’ separation from Judaism was of a direct importance (Cf. Beker 1986, p. 16). This internal tension was all the more problematic for Paul’s gentile ministry as a whole, which he considered to be consummating in the salvation of Jews and elect gentiles, the unified family of God.

4. Paul’s Effort of Establishing the Unity between the Roman Church and Israel: Stressing the Sectarian Identity of the Roman Church in the Gentile World

Then how is Paul preventing further separation of the gentile believers from the root of Israel? How is he establishing a unified identity of Jews and elect gentiles as the people of God? When we read Romans by using the model of sect-cult development in antiquity, we begin to see that Paul’s discussion of the Jewish tradition throughout the letter is not to distance the church from Judaism but to create a shared foundation upon which Jews and elect gentiles could stand together in the messianic era.

4.1. Law, Salvation, and the Fate of Unbelieving Jews

The first thing Paul is doing in Romans is correcting the mistaken assimilation of the law with the Greco-Roman practice of self-mastery. As discussed earlier, some believers, based on their knowledge of the law and circumcision, were misperceiving their present status as having already earned salvation that immunes them from God’s final judgment, as judging others and boasting about their status. To address this problem, Paul, throughout Romans, stresses the futuristic aspect of faith and salvation. In 1:16–17, which functions as the guiding statement of the whole letter, Paul cites Hab 2:4b to confirm faith as the ground upon which God justifies an individual, regardless of one’s ethnicity and former sins (Hultgren 2011, p. 45). In the Habakkuk intertext, Israel is unfaithful, and God seems to have abandoned Israel (2:2–4). Despite the prophet’s agonized outcry, God even uses the wicked gentile nation of Chaldeans to exacerbate the hopeless situation for Israel (1:5–2:1). Then finally, God intervenes as reminding the prophet of God’s faithfulness and the necessity of the Israelites remaining faithful to God’s promise of salvation. The central theme of Habakkuk is thus faithfulness, which denotes an individual’s faith in trusting God’s promise for saving Israel as well as God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise for Israel, which will be fulfilled shortly (Beker 1986, p. 15). Paul, with his use of Habakkuk, stresses the fact that salvation is inherently futuristic and that faith in Christ entails hope for the future vindication that God will save those who remain faithful until the end (Quarles 2003).

Besides 1:16–17, Paul repeatedly stresses this futuristic aspect of faith and salvation throughout Romans (Colijn 1990; Dailea 1990, pp. 26–27; Cf. Gal 5:5). In 2:1–16, for example, as criticizing those who boast over their saved status, Paul says that there is the future judgment which will come when

¹⁶ For studies on the historical context of the Romans letter, see (Wiefel 1991; Longenecker 2011, pp. 43–45; Sanders 1993, pp. 129–51). Nanos further suggests the tensions between gentile and Jewish members as occurring within the synagogues in Rome (Nanos 1999, pp. 293–94).

God judges “the secrets of men (v.16)”. In 5:1-5, Paul says that while Paul notes that gentiles were justified by faith, what they can boast about is the hope in the future that relies solely on God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise. He says: “We boast in the hope (ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι) of the glory of God (v.2)”. In the continuing passage of 5:6-11, Paul further says that the present reconciliation with God will save them from the divine wrath at the time of judgment, which he also places in the future (σωθησόμεθα; v.9). According to Paul, perceiving salvation like a virtue that one can attain at the present time is a serious misunderstanding of faith and salvation in the scheme of God.

Based on the sound understanding of salvation, Paul then corrects the gentile believers’ wrong idea about the fate of unbelieving Jews. After discussing God’s impartial judgment upon Jews and Greeks (2:25-29), in 3:1-8, Paul addresses the issue of Israel’s unfaithfulness and its fate. In this passage, Paul, while acknowledging God’s wrath as a just due for the Jewish unfaithfulness, still trusts in God’s faithfulness in keeping his promise for Israel’s salvation (vv. 3-4). Later in chapters 9-11, Paul explains that the Jewish rejection of the Messiah is happening under God’s larger plan of hardening part of Israel for the sake of saving elect gentiles (e.g., 11:11-12, 25). He hopes for the salvation of “all Israel (11:26)” based on God’s mercy that was shown in his forgiveness of sinful gentiles (Hays 1989, pp. 160–63; Nanos 1999, p. 292; Oropeza 2007; Eastman 2010; Staples 2011; Krašovec 2014). Paul says in 11:25-26:

For I do not want you to be uninformed of this mystery, brethren, so that you may not be wise in your own estimation, that a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in, and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: “There shall come forth out of Zion the deliverer, He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.

As we see in this statement, Paul in Romans is not in opposition to Judaism or unbelieving Jews. The correction of the mistaken idea about unbelieving Israel’s fate also serves to prevent the gentile believers from drawing a firm boundary between themselves and Israel.

4.2. *Emphasis on the Jewish Root of the Church*

The second strategy that Paul is using to imbue the sectarian identity to the Roman believers is reminding them of the Jewish root, which is the basis of their faith and salvation. As many scholars have observed, Romans is replete with Jewish themes. For instance, Paul makes an unexplained reference to Jesus’ messianic descent from David (1:3-4; 15:12; Nanos 1999, p. 289; Cf. Garlington 1991, p. 237). He also cites and alludes numerous scriptural passages as his argument proceeds in Romans (Evans 1993, p. 14). Paul’s extensive use of the Jewish tradition in Romans has two major functions. One is to criticize gentiles who think that they possess the core knowledge of the Jewish heritage and assimilates it with those ideas and practices of the Greco-Roman world. By interpreting numerous passages from the Hebrew scripture in light of the faith in Christ, Paul debunks the gentile ignorance and presents a correct understanding of the Jewish tradition. Another function is to remind the Roman audience of the fact that the message of salvation through faith is fully rooted in the Jewish tradition, which is promised to Israel and has been the way through which God justified human beings throughout the history of Israel (3:30-31; 4:1-25).

Not only the general use of the scripture but Paul’s use of particular analogies also reminds the audience of their inseparable connection to the Jewish tradition. For instance, in Rom 11:13-24, Paul adopts the analogy of an olive tree by identifying Israel as the rich root, unbelieving Jews as branches that were cut off temporarily, and believing gentiles as “wild olive branches (v.17)” that were grafted to the tree. Paul then warns the gentile believers not to boast over the Jews who were cut off due to their unfaithfulness and reminds them of the rich root of Judaism that is the foundation of their hope for salvation (Buell and Hodge 2004, pp. 249–50; Khobnya 2013; Gordon 2016). Also, in Rom 4:11, Paul presents Abraham as the “ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised (4:11)”, linking the gentile believers to the ancestral lineage of Judaism. Presentation of Abraham as the common ancestor of Jews and believing gentiles is connected to Paul’s use of “adoption” language in describing

the gentile believers. In 8:12–17, Paul compares the transformed status of believing gentiles to “children” and “heirs” of God (Cf. Gal 4:7). Paul’s repeated use of familial language is inherently disrupting to the Roman social order centered around family and adoption since it symbolically detaches the gentile members from the Roman world and ties them to the Jewish root (Cf. Meeks 1986, p. 129; Buell and Hodge 2004, pp. 244–46; Lassen 1997).¹⁷

4.3. Reinstating the Sectarian Boundary

Finally, Paul directs his audience to draw the boundary not against Judaism, but the world. In Romans, we see that Paul emphasizes the sharp opposition between the lifestyles of the world and believers, as imbuing his audience with a robust sectarian spirit (White 1988, pp. 17–19; Cf. Wilson 1959, pp. 10–12; Stark and Bainbridge 1985, pp. 23, 49–60). As several scholars have noted, the decline narrative in 1:18–32 and the vice list in 2:21–22 describe the stereotypical gentile condition (Stowers 1994, pp. 83–125; Porter 1994; Martin 1995, p. 175; Thorsteinsson 2003, p. 212; Thiessen 2014, pp. 381–82). This negative depiction of the gentile world comes quite abruptly in the letter, immediately following Paul’s thanksgiving in 1:8–15 and confidence in his gospel in 1:16–17. The radical shift from a positive to negative emotion is rhetorically powerful in contrasting the worlds of believing and non-believing gentiles. Paul thus strongly urges his audience to separate from the gentile world by abandoning their arrogance over salvation, which makes them remain in the wicked gentile condition.

A similar effort of drawing the boundary against the Roman world is also seen in Rom 12. After forming the communal identity of gentile believers and Israel up to chapter 11, Paul from chapter 12 focuses on teaching the required lifestyle of believers, which distinguishes them from the world. In 12:1–2, Paul begins his exhortation concerning believers’ proper behaviors. He says:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, through the mercies of God to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, sanctified, acceptable to God, your logical service. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you discern what is the will of God, the good and acceptable and perfect.

Here, Paul makes it clear that the boundary should be drawn against “this age”, and believers need to become “perfect (τέλειον)”. Paul’s exhortation strikes the core of Jewish sectarian identity, which asserts that through their purity from the world, they play the role of the “elect” awaiting God’s ultimate salvation (Cf. Rom 8:33; 11:7).¹⁸ Based on his correction of the gentiles’ misunderstanding of the law in previous discussions, later in chapters 12–15, Paul explicitly lays out specific practices that fulfill the teachings of the law (13:8). Here, he also stresses the original Jewish sectarian worldview that the eschatological end is near (12:11–12) and the necessity of building a harmonious community of God that is ready for the day of judgment (15:5–6). According to Dieter Georgi, Paul in Romans is building “a renewed covenantal community” that grows out of the people of Israel, which is “not supposed to be an entirely different Israel, but a purified one, and thus, a restored Israel, the avant-garde of God’s future (Georgi 1995, p. 41)”.

For sure, Paul is not urging the Roman believers to dissociate from their context completely but allows room for assimilation and adaptation to the hosting culture. For instance, he encourages believers to become good citizens by maintaining social harmony with neighbors (12:14–21; Cf. 1 Cor 10:27) and obeying the secular authority (13:1–7). The boundary, however, is clear. They should correctly

¹⁷ It is also noticeable that Paul never uses a term that rips the gentile believers out from the boundary of first-century Judaism and identifies them as a separate group, for instance the terms like “Christian”. He rather uses the typical Jewish sectarian terminologies such as “elect (Rom 8:33)”, “chosen (Rom 11:5; 16:13; Cf. 1 Thess 1:4)”, “holy ones (Rom 1:7; 15:25–26, 31; 16:2, 15; Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 16:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1, 12; Phil 1:1)”, “the just (Rom 5:19)”, “the poor (Rom 15:26; Cf. Gal 2:10)”. (Georgi 1995, p. 40).

¹⁸ For general features of a sect, see (Wilson 1961, pp. 1–2; Dawson 2009, p. 527). For other sectarian ideas and rituals used in Paul’s letters, see (Meeks 1983, pp. 84–107).

understand the gospel in the tradition of Judaism, should not judge unbelieving Jews to whom God has given his faithful promise for salvation, and should form a community of the elect which does not conform to the world.¹⁹

The stress on the unity between the gentile believers in Rome and Israel is directly connected to Paul's plans of delivering the Jerusalem collection (15:15-21, 25-29) and accomplishing his final mission to Spain (15:23-24; [Aus 1979](#)). Paul's delivery of the gentiles' gift to the saints of Jerusalem is a symbolic acknowledgment of the irrevocably privileged place of Israel in the history of God's salvation. For Paul, this collection also signifies the unity and fidelity between Israel and gentiles, who are now included in the chosen family ([Nanos 1999](#), p. 290). It was also a demonstration of Paul's identity as a Jewish "priest (λειτουργὸν; 15:16)" who offers the purified gentiles to God, as anticipating the imminent eschaton and God's ultimate vindication of Israel. Finally, Paul wraps up his letter by asking the gentiles for supportive prayers for his missions (15:30-33).

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I argued that we need to read Romans not within the antithetical framework of Judaism–Christianity but as a text reflecting the conflicts between a cultic tendency represented by the gentile members in the Roman church and a Jewish sectarian tendency shown in Paul's arguments. Based on Romans, we learn that some gentile members were assimilating the Jewish law as a means of attaining the Greco–Roman virtue of self-mastery. With this erroneous understanding, they were thinking that they have already attained salvation and were standing in a superior position compared to others. For Paul, this understanding of the law was seriously problematic because it misunderstands the Jewish tradition centered around faith, which is also in line with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Another problem was the assumption that gentile believers have now replaced Israel and that unbelieving Jews are destined for destruction. For Paul, this was also an incorrect understanding of God's faithfulness and mercy that saved gentiles will save "all Israel" at the time of eschaton.

As seeing the danger of gentile believers being drifted away from the root of Judaism, Paul, throughout the letter, strives to reinstate the sectarian boundary and the symbolic unity with Israel. For this goal, he first corrects the gentile misunderstanding of law and salvation by stressing the futuristic aspect of salvation and God's sovereignty in judging humanity. Paul also corrects the wrong idea about the fate of unbelieving Jews by elaborating on God's faithfulness promised to Israel and the overarching divine plan for salvation. Paul also reminds his gentile audience of the Jewish root of their faith, while stressing the separateness of the church from the Roman world. Throughout these efforts, Paul tries to create a united community consisted of believing Jews and gentile, which functions as the group of elects in the time of eschaton, but in no way separated from Judaism.

Did Paul succeed? From the late first-century C.E., we begin to see more churches in different regions of the empire establishing their identities separated from contemporaneous Jewish groups. We also observe the emergence of Christian anti-Jewish polemics, which continued throughout the history of Christianity. In this sense, it might be argued that Paul, ultimately, have failed in uniting two separating groups together and setting up a model for later Jewish–Christian relations. Reflecting the history of opposition between Christians and Jews throughout centuries, however, Paul's ardent appeal for unity in Romans seems to be more meaningful than ever.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

¹⁹ For Paul's other efforts to demarcate a firmer boundary of the Roman church from its cultural context, see ([Rock 2012](#)).

References

- Ando, Clifford. 2009. *The Matter of the Gods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Aune, David E. 1976. Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism? A Response to N. J. McEleney. *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 7: 1–10. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Aus, Roger D. 1979. Paul's Travel Plans to Spain and the 'Full Number of the Gentiles' of Rom. XXI 25. *Novum Testamentum* 21: 232–62. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Beaman, Warren Jay. 1990. From Sect to Cult to Sect: The Christian Catholic Church in Zion. Ph.D. dissertation, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA.
- Beker, Johan Christiaan. 1986. The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans. *The Harvard Theological Review* 19: 10–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Berger, Peter L. 1958. Sectarianism and Religious Sociation. *American Journal of Sociology* 64: 41–44. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor.
- Bird, Fredrick. 2002. Early Christianity as an Unorganized Ecumenical Religious Movement. In *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*. Edited by Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime and Paul-André Turcotte. Walnut Creek: AltaMira, pp. 225–46.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph. 1981. Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History. In *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Vol. 2: Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*. Edited by E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson. Philadelphia: Fortress, pp. 1–26.
- Bryant, Joseph M. 1993. The Sect-Church Dynamic and Christian Expansion in the Roman Empire: Persecution, Penitential Discipline, and Schism in Sociological Perspective. *The British Journal of Sociology* 44: 303–39. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Buell, Denise Kimber, and Caroline Johnson Hodge. 2004. The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123: 235–51. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Campbell, Bruce. 1978. A Typology of Cults. *Sociological Analysis* 39: 228–40. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Campbell, William S. 1992. *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- Chalcraft, David J. 2007. The Development of Weber's Sociology of Sects: Encouraging a New Fascination. In *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances*. Edited by David J. Chalcraft. London: Equinox, pp. 26–51.
- Colijn, Brenda B. 1990. The Three Senses of Salvation in Paul's Letters. *Ashland Theological Journal* 22: 29–41.
- Collar, Anna. 2007. Network Theory and Religious Innovation. *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22: 149–62. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Collar, Anna. 2011. Military networks and the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus. In *Von Kummuh nach Telouch: Historische und Archäologische Untersuchungen in Kommagene. Dolichener und Kommagenische*. Edited by Engelbert Winter. Bonn: Habelt, pp. 217–45.
- Collar, Anna. 2013. *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crafton, Jeffrey A. 1990. Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans: Toward a New Understanding. *Novum Testamentum* 32: 317–39. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Cranfield, C. E. B. 1975. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed. 2 vols, Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Dailea, Thomas F. 1990. To Live or Die: Paul's Eschatological Dilemma in Philippians 1:19–26. *Union Seminary Review* 44: 18–28. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Daniélou, Jean. 1969. Christianity as a Jewish Sect. In *The Crucible of Christianity*. Edited by A. Toynbee. London: Thames and Hudson, pp. 275–82.
- Das, Andrew A. 2007. *Solving the Romans Debate*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Das, Andrew A. 2012. The Gentile-Encoded Audience of Romans: The Church Outside the Synagogue. In *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Edited by Jerry L. Sumney. Atlanta: SBL Press, pp. 29–46.
- Davies, Williams David. 1964. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Dawson, Lorne L. 1997. Creating 'Cult' Typologies: Some Strategic Considerations. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12: 363–81. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Dawson, Lorne L. 2009. Church-Sect-Cult: Constructing Typologies of Religious Groups. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Peter B. Clarke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 525–44.
- Dunn, James D. G. 1988. *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1–8*. Dallas: Word Books.
- Eastman, Susan Grove. 2010. Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11. *New Testament Studies* 56: 367–95. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Eisenbaum, Pamela. 2009. *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*. New York: Harper One.
- Elliott, Neil. 1990. *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. 2000. *Paul and the Stoics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Esler, Philip F. 1987. *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13–17.
- Evans, Craig A. 1993. 'It is Not as though the Word of God Had Failed': An Introduction to Paul and the Scripture of Israel. In *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*. Edited by Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Finn, Richard, and Richard Damian Finn. 2009. *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 1993. *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday.
- Foster, Robert L. 2014. The Justice of the Gentiles: Revisiting the Purpose of Romans. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 76: 684–703.
- Frend, William Hugh Clifford. 1984. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Gager, John G. 1985. *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gager, John G. 2002. *Reinventing Paul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garlington, Don B. 1991. "The Obedience of Faith": A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Garrison, Roman. 1993. Paul's use of the athlete metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9. *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 22: 209–17. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gaston, Lloyd. 1979. Paul and the Torah. In *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity: Twelve Christian Theologians Explore the Development and Dynamics of Antisemitism within the Christian Tradition*. Edited by Alan T. Davies. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, pp. 48–72.
- Georgi, Dieter. 1995. The Early Church: Internal Jewish Migration or New Religion? *Harvard Theological Review* 88: 35–68. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Gordon, Benjamin D. 2016. On the Sanctity of Mixtures and Branches: Two Halakic Sayings in Romans 11:16–24. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135: 355–68.
- Grabbe, Lester L. 1977. Orthodoxy in First Century Judaism: What Are the Issues? *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 8: 149–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Guerra, Anthony J. 2005. *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter..* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hays, Richard B. 1989. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Holmberg, Bengt. 1990. *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Horsley, Richard, and John Hanson. 1985. *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*. New York: Winston-Seabury.
- Hultgren, Stephen. 2011. *Habakkuk 2:4 in Early Judaism, in Hebrews, and in Paul*. Pendé: J. Gabalda et Cie.
- Jewett, Robert. 1979. *A Chronology of Paul's Life*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Jewett, Robert. 1982. Romans as an Ambassadorial Letter. *Interpretation* 36: 5–20. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jewett, Robert. 2007. *Romans: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Johnson, Benton. 1963. On Church and Sect. *American Sociological Review* 58: 539–49. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Johnson, Benton. 1971. Church and Sect Revisited. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 10: 124–37. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Johnson, Ronald W. 2000. The Christian and the State: Romans 13:1–7. *Review and Expositor* 97: 91–95. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kampen, John. 1994. The Sectarian Form of the Antitheses within the Social World of the Matthean Community. *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1: 338–63. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Khobnya, Svetlana. 2013. 'The Root' in Paul's Olive Tree Metaphor (Romans 11:16–24). *Tyndale Bulletin* 64: 257–73.

- Krašovec, Jože. 2014. Justification of God in His Word in Ps 51: 6 and Rom 3:4. *Vetus Testamentum* 64: 416–33. [CrossRef]
- Lassen, Eva Marie. 1997. The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor. In *Constructing Early Christian Families*. Edited by Halvor Moxnes. New York: Routledge, pp. 119–36.
- Longenecker, Richard N. 2011. *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Lüdemann, Gerd. 2010. *Paul: The Founder of Christianity*. Amherst: Prometheus Books.
- Martin, Dale B. 1995. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mauss, Armand L. 1994. *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Meeks, Wayne A. 1983. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Meeks, Wayne A. 1986. *The Moral World of the First Christians*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Munck, Johannes. 1959. *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. Translated by Frank Clarke. Richmond: John Knox Press.
- Nanos, Mark D. 1996. *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Nanos, Mark D. 1999. The Jewish Context of the Gentile Audience Addressed in Paul's Letter to the Romans. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61: 283–304.
- Neusner, Jacob. 1984. *Judaism in the Beginnings of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Nock, Arthur D. 1933. *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Oropeza, Brisio J. 2007. Paul and Theodicy: Intertextual Thoughts on God's Justice and Faithfulness to Israel in Romans 9–11. *New Testament Studies* 53: 57–80. [CrossRef]
- Oswald, Hilton C., ed. 1972. *Luther's Works: Vol. 25: Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia*. Saint Louis: Concordia.
- Parkes, James. 1969. *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism*. London: Soncino Press. First published 1934.
- Porter, Calvin L. 1994. Romans 1:18–32: Its Role in the Developing Argument. *New Testament Studies* 40: 210–28. [CrossRef]
- Price, Simon. 2012. Religious Mobility in the Roman Empire. *Journal of Roman Studies* 102: 1–19. [CrossRef]
- Quarles, Charles. 2003. From Faith to Faith: A Fresh Examination of the Prepositional Series in Romans 1:17. *Novum Testamentum* 45: 1–21. [CrossRef]
- Radford Ruether, Rosemary. 1984. *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Regev, Eyal. 2011. Were the Early Christians Sectarians? *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130: 771–93. [CrossRef]
- Richardson, James T. 1993. Definitions of Cult: From Sociological-Technical to Popular-Negative. *Review of Religious Research* 34: 348–56. [CrossRef]
- Rock, Ian E. 2012. *Paul's Letter to the Romans and Roman Imperialism: An Ideological Analysis of the Exordium (Romans 1:1–17)*. Eugene: Pickwick.
- Runia, David T. 1999. Philo of Alexandria and the Greek Hairesis-Model. *Vigiliae Christianae* 53: 117–47. [CrossRef]
- Rüpke, Jörg. 2007. Religio and Religiones in Roman Thinking. *Les Études Classiques* 75: 67–78.
- Rutgers, Leonard V. 1998. *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Sanders, E. P. 1977. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Sanders, Jack T. 1993. *Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants: The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations*. London: SCM.
- Schäfer, Peter. 1998. Diversity and Interaction: Messiahs in Early Judaism. In *Toward the Millennium*. Edited by Mark Cohen. Leiden: Brill, pp. 15–35.
- Schaff, Philip, ed. 1887. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series. Vol. 5*. Peter Holmes, and Robert Ernest Wallis, transs. Revised by Benjamin B. Warfield. Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, Available online: http://oll-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/2118/ChurchFathers_1330.05_Bk.pdf (accessed on 20 March 2020).
- Smith, Morton. 1971. *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*. New York: Harper One.
- Staples, Jason A. 2011. What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with "All Israel"? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27. *Journal of Biblical literature* 130: 371–90. [CrossRef]

- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1979. Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 18: 117–31. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1985. *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stark, Rodney. 1986. The Class Basis of Early Christianity: Inferences from a Sociological Model. *Sociological Analysis* 47: 216–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stendahl, Krister. 1963. The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West. *The Harvard Theological Review* 56: 199–215. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stowers, Stanley K. 1994. *Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles*. New Haven: Yale.
- Stuhlmacher, Peter. 1991. The Purpose of Romans. In *The Romans Debate*. Edited by Karl Paul Donfried. Peabody: Hendrickson, pp. 231–42.
- Swatos, William H. 1976. Weber or Troeltsch?: Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 15: 129–44. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Thiessen, Matthew. 2014. *If You Call Yourself a Jew: Reappraising Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Eugene: Cascade.
- Thorsteinsson, Runar M. 2003. *Paul's Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. 1912. *Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*. 2 vols, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- Wasserman, Emma. 2008. Paul Among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Romans 6–8. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30: 387–415. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Watson, Francis. 1986. *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1922. Religionssoziologie. In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der Verstehenden Soziologie*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- White, L. Michael. 1988. Shifting Sectarian Boundaries in Early Christianity. *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 70: 7–24. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- White, L. Michael. 2004. *From Jesus to Christianity*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Wiefel, Wolfgang. 1991. The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity. In *The Romans Debate*. Edited by Karl Paul Donfried. Peabody: Hendrickson, pp. 85–101.
- Williams, Margaret H. 2004. The Shaping of the Identity of the Jewish Community in Rome in Antiquity. In *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in Early Imperial Rome*. Edited by Jürgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn. London: T & T Clark, pp. 33–46.
- Wilson, Brittany E. 2014. The Blinding of Paul and the Power of God: Masculinity, Sight, and Self-Control in Acts 9. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133: 367–87.
- Wilson, Bryan. 1959. An Analysis of Sect Development. *American Sociological Review* 24: 3–15. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wilson, Bryan. 1961. *Sects and Society: A Sociological Study of the Elim Tabernacle, Christian Science and Christadelphians*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wilson, Bryan, ed. 1967. *Patterns of Sectarianism: Organisation and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements*. London: Heinemann.
- Woolf, Greg. 2016. Movers and Stayers. In *Migration and Mobility in the Early Roman Empire*. Edited by Luuk de Ligt and Laurens Ernst Tacoma. Brill: Leiden, pp. 438–61.
- Wright, N. T. 1992. *The Climax of the Covenant*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

