

JOHN P. DICKSON

Mission-Commitment
in Ancient Judaism
and in the
Pauline Communities

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

159

Mohr Siebeck

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Herausgegeben von
Jörg Frey, Martin Hengel, Otfried Hofius

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John P. Dickson

Mission-Commitment in Ancient Judaism and in the Pauline Communities

The shape, extent and background
of early Christian mission

Mohr Siebeck

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With the deepest gratitude
to my cherished Elizabeth
τιμιωτέρα δέ ἐστιν
λίθων πολυτελῶν ἢ τοιαύτη

Preface

This book represents a revision of my doctoral thesis, “Promoting the Gospel: ‘Mission-Commitment’ in the Churches of Paul Against its Jewish Background,” submitted to the Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, Sydney, in September 2001. I am thankful to Prof. Martin Hengel for recommending my dissertation to Prof. Jörg Frey, editor of *WUNT* 2, who, upon reading the manuscript, extended to me the invitation to contribute to the series. I express my sincere thanks to him also. The various suggestions for publication made by these two distinguished *doktoren*, as well as those made by my doctoral examiners, Profs. I. Howard Marshall (Aberdeen), Terrence L. Donaldson (Toronto), and John Painter (Canberra), have led to a significantly improved work. For this I am grateful.

This volume began as a minor research paper in a Masters program at *Moore Theological College*, Sydney. Due to my curiosity, and the consequent growth of the project’s size and focus, it became apparent that the study would be more at home in the Ph.D. program of an ancient history department. I will not forget, however, the instruction and example of the *MTC* faculty members, who, since my undergraduate days, have provided me with a benchmark of scholarly faith.

At Macquarie University I was privileged to be supervised in the initial stages by Prof. Judith Lieu whose clarity of thought and relentless eye for unfounded assumptions transformed my passionate ideas into something approximating critical inquiry. After Judith’s move to King’s College London, where she is now Professor of New Testament Studies and Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, she remained an ‘unofficial’ Associate Supervisor, reading and commenting upon my work right up to the final stages. This will always be appreciated.

After a brief and encouraging period under Dr. John Prior, I found myself in the happy situation of being supervised by Dr. Brian S. Rosner, formerly of Aberdeen University. Brian’s scholarship and friendship made the final 18 months of my research – typically a time of stress – a period of joy. The final shape and successful completion of the thesis owe a lot to the blend of enthusiastic encouragement and critical insight that marked Brian’s supervision.

I acknowledge my gratitude toward the Department of Ancient History at Macquarie University, a splendid place in which to study the world of

ancient Judaism and Christianity. In particular, I wish to thank Dr. David Phillips for chairing the many stimulating post-graduate history seminars, Dr. Chris Forbes for numerous helpful conversations and emails, and Dr. Alanna Nobbs for her enthusiastic encouragement of me and my research. I look forward to a continued fruitful relationship with the Department in my capacity as Honorary Associate.

I would like to thank the staff of Tyndale House, Cambridge (UK), for their welcome and assistance during a delightfully fruitful period of research, made possible by a generous grant from the *Post-Graduate Research Committee* of Macquarie University, to whom I also extend my gratitude.

I express deep appreciation to the Rt. Rev Dr. Paul Barnett, formerly Bishop of North Sydney. His historical-critical approach to the study of early Christianity, combined with his deep piety, have made their (all too dim) mark on my life. That he also frequently read and valuably commented upon my research in his 'spare time' remains for me a source of surprise and pride.

I am grateful also to the Rt. Rev Dr. Glenn Davies, a Pauline scholar and the current Bishop of North Sydney, who read a draft manuscript of the current work and offered several pages of extremely helpful comments (and not a few corrections). He will notice that I have followed his suggestions at virtually every point.

Particular thanks go to my friends and family who have been a constant source of support, humour and perspective as they watched with bemusement this pop musician metamorphose into an aspiring scholar. Above all, I wish to express my loving appreciation to my wife, Elizabeth Joy, who, in keeping with her given names, has remained for me both a pledge of divine goodness and a deep well of happiness. It is to her that I dedicate this book.

Sydney, February 2003

John P. Dickson

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Note on Style

The Bibliography includes all works cited in the book. These, along with common abbreviations, have been presented in accordance with the guidelines set forth in *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999). With an eye to accessibility, where *The SBL Handbook* offers English titles for ancient sources, these – rather than the Latin – have been followed throughout the book.

Where English quotations from the Bible appear in block quotations, or are enclosed within double quotation marks (“ ”), they are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. Author’s translations of the Bible are enclosed within single quotation marks (‘ ’). For the biblical texts I have referred to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, edited by K. Elliger, et al (5th corrected ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997); *Septuaginta*, edited by Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979); *The Greek New Testament*, edited by Kurt Aland, et al (4th revised ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). Translations of the Septuagint are my own unless otherwise indicated.

When I have quoted an English translation of an ancient non-biblical text I have cited the source of the translation. Again, author’s translations of such passages are enclosed within single quotation marks.

INTRODUCTION

The Search for Ancient Mission

1. Mission: yes or no?

A century after the apostle Paul, the Greek intellectual, Celsus, in his attack upon the Christians pronounced: "If all men wished to become Christians, the latter would not desire such a result." Origen's reply was characteristically forthright:

Now that the above statement is false is clear from this, that Christians do not neglect, as far as in them lies, to take measures to disseminate their doctrine throughout the whole world. Some of them, accordingly, have made it their business to itinerate not only through cities, but even villages and country houses, that they might make converts to God (*Contra Celsum* 3.9.2-8. Trans. F. Crombie, *ANF*).¹

This rather sweeping denial of Christian mission-commitment with an equally robust affirmation of the same finds its counterpart in modern New Testament scholarship.

In his 1976 Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation Paul Bowers devoted one of five chapters to "The Ecclesiological Aspect of Paul's Understanding of his Mission," in which he concluded:

[W]e cannot speak of a definite concept unambiguously present in Paul of the church as an intended independent instrument of active mission ... In most cases a missionary activity by the church may lie somewhere in the conceptual background, but is not present, or cannot persuasively be shown to be present, in the text itself ...

¹ *Contra Celsum* 3.9.2-8 Εἰ ἐθελήσουσι πάντες ἄνθρωποι εἶναι Χριστιανοί, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι οἶδε ἐθέλοιεν. "Ὅτι δὲ ψεῦδος τὸ τοιόνδε, δῆλον ἐκ τοῦ τὸ ὅσον ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς Χριστιανούς μὴ ἀμελεῖν τοῦ πανταχοῦ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐπισπεῖρειν τὸν λόγον. Τινὲς γοῦν ἔργον πεποιήνται ἐκπεριέρχεσθαι οὐ μόνον πόλεις ἀλλὰ καὶ κώμας καὶ ἐπαύλεις, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους εὐσεβεῖς τῷ θεῷ κατασκευάσωσι.

It is more accurate to say simply that a concept of the church at mission failed to take any distinct shape in Paul's thinking.²

A similar conclusion was reached by Wolf-Henning Ollrog in his groundbreaking 1979 monograph, *Paulus und seiner Mitarbeiter*:

Sooft Paulus auf die missionarische Verkündigung zu sprechen kommt, ist niemals eine Gemeinde als Ganze Subjekt des Handelns. Dies gilt für alle Begriffe missionarischen Verkündigens. Stets erscheinen die Gemeinden nur als Objekt, als Empfänger der Botschaft. Sie werden auch innerhalb der Paränese nie dazu angehalten oder darauf verpflichtet, ihrerseits das Evangelium weiterzusagen, also als Missionare zu wirken. Gemessen an der Häufigkeit des Vorkommens der Verkündigungstermini, ist dieser Befund eindeutig.³

In the 1970's no 'debate' about mission-commitment in early Christianity really existed.⁴ The conclusions of Bowers and Ollrog were, therefore, stated independently and without polemic, and their respective treatments of the topic were relatively brief.⁵

Not so, two more recent studies, both of which are set explicitly against the findings of Bowers. In 1992 Peter O'Brien delivered the Annual Moore College Lectures. The topic was *Consumed by Passion: Paul and the Dynamic of the Gospel*, published the following year under the same title.⁶

² Bowers, P. "Studies in Paul's Understanding of his Mission." Ph.D., Cambridge University, 1976, 119-120.

³ Ollrog, W. *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission*. Edited by F. Hahn and O. Steck. Vol. 50, *WMANT*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979, 130.

⁴ As far as I can discern, the only 'debate' on this theme in the 1970's is found in four brief 'ecclesiastical' articles: Robinson, D. W. B. "The Theology of Evangelism." *Interchange: Papers on Biblical and Current Questions* 3 (1971): 2-4; Robinson, D. W. B. "The Doctrine of the Church and its Implications for Evangelism." *Interchange: Papers on Biblical and Current Questions* 15 (1974): 156-162; Foulkes, B. "The Church and Evangelism: a Rejoinder." *Interchange: Papers on Biblical and Current Questions* 17 (1975): 156-62; Robinson, D. W. B. "The Church and Evangelism." *Interchange: Papers on Biblical and Current Questions* 21 (1977): 62-63.

⁵ Attention should be drawn also to two brief articles (of limited value) on the theme: Eichholz, G. "Der ökumenische und missionarische Horizont der Kirche, eine exegetische Studie zu Röm 1,8-15." *EvT* (1961): 15-27; Schweizer, E. "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ." *NTS* 8 (1961-1962): 1-11.

⁶ O'Brien, P. T. *Consumed by Passion: Paul and the Dynamic of the Gospel*. Homebush: Anzea, 1993. The book was republished as O'Brien, P. T. *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995. O'Brien provides a helpful summary of his position in Köstenberger,

O'Brien provides an impressive refutation of the proposition that converts did not, or were not expected to, participate in the propagation of the faith. Focusing on the Pauline material, O'Brien argues that the key to a proper understanding of the issues lies in the apostle's conception of the gospel as a compelling force in the life of the church calling upon all believers, by virtue of their faith in the good news, into the 'evangelistic' enterprise. This demanded, among other things, the explicit proclamation of the gospel on the part of believers. Paul, "expected them, therefore, to be committed to evangelism just as he was. Paul's ambitions were to be theirs."⁷

A ringing endorsement of this thesis was given by James P. Ware, first in a short article on 1 Thessalonians appearing in *ZNW* and then substantially in his 1996 Yale dissertation, *Holding Forth the Word of Life: Paul and the Mission of the Church in the Letter to the Philippians, in the Context of Second Temple Judaism*. As the title suggests, Ware brings to the discussion two important emphases. First, he provides a most rigorous study of one of Paul's letters. Secondly, Ware sets his discussion in the context of 'mission' in Second Temple Judaism. Concluding that there never was a mission in ancient Judaism, Ware nonetheless argues that 'attraction' to the light of the Torah was for many Jews a prominent feature of their self-identity. Ware believes Paul transposed these Jewish conversion motifs into his own mission context and in so doing turned a 'centripetal' mission into an enthusiastic 'centrifugal'⁸ one in which all believers were called upon to herald the gospel to the wider world.⁹

A. J., and P. T. O'Brien. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*. Vol. 11, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove: Apollos, 2001, 161-201.

⁷ O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 107.

⁸ Ware borrows this distinction from Blauw, J. *The Missionary Nature of the Church*. London: Lutterworth, 1964, 29-43. A recent monograph has sought to argue for a *centrifugal* mission in the Old Testament also: Kaiser, W. C. *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000.

⁹ The only other major scholarly contribution to this question is a short monograph written in Dutch: Van Swigchem, D. *Het missionair Karakter van de christelijke Gemeente volgens de Brieven van Paulus en Petrus*. Kampen: Kok, 1955. As the title suggests, van Swigchem explored evidence for congregational mission commitment in the Pauline and Petrine epistles and concluded in the affirmative: converts, like their apostles, engage in the mission of the church. The monograph has been largely overlooked despite the presence at the end of the book (256-66) of a detailed summary written in English. I should make mention also of the dissertation of Robert L. Plummer (submitted to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in May 2001, and not yet published), *The Missionary Nature of the Church: The Apostle Paul and his Churches*.

As with the Celsus-Origen debate, it is striking that such contrary conclusions about Pauline mission expectations can be derived from the same evidence. The burden of the current thesis, then, is to subject the entire Pauline corpus to an inductive historical and philological study in an effort to answer the question: In what ways and to what extent were Paul's converts expected to promote their new-found faith to unbelievers?

2. Paul the missionary *par excellence*

Focusing on the Pauline material is conducive to our aims in several ways. First, the Pauline epistles are the earliest extant literature of primitive Christianity. As such, they take us back as far as we are able to go within the vast array of ancient Christian writings. It may have been true that Christians of Origen's time felt compelled to "take measures to disseminate their doctrine," but did the movement begin this way?¹⁰

Secondly, the Pauline corpus provides the single clearest window into the congregational life of one very significant strand of early Christianity. While we cannot assume the Pauline school spoke for all, the fact that we

Essentially, Plummer's argument is that Paul's injunctions to imitate him include the obligation to reflect his missionary proclamation. This theme will be discussed at length in the present study.

It will be clear that the theme of congregational mission-commitment has received very little direct attention in scholarship. Indeed, as recently as 2000, in an article tentatively endorsing the position of P. T. O'Brien, I. Howard Marshall, lamented: "There have been only a few contributions in recent years" (Marshall, I. H. "Who Were The Evangelists?" In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, edited by J. Adna and H. Kvalbein, 251-63. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 252). While several pages of footnotes could be filled with references to scholars and commentators who, in passing, make mention of the theme (Ware, *Holding Forth*, 3-4, provides a small selection), focused studies on congregational mission-commitment remain remarkably scarce. Of course, in popular church culture, books on personal/congregational 'evangelism' constitute a veritable industry. Among the most influential of these are Green, M. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. East Sussex: Highland Books, 1990, and Chapman, J. *Know and Tell the Gospel*. Sydney: St Matthias Press, 1998.

¹⁰ Hvalvik, R. "In Word and Deed: The Expansion of the Church in the pre-Constantinian Era." In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, edited by J. Adna and H. Kvalbein, 265-87. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, demonstrates that missionary activity in Origen's day was not as vigorous as this statement at first implies. An extensive account of the mission methods of the 2nd – 4th century (CE) church is offered by Brox, N. "Zur christliche Mission in der Spätantike." In *Mission im Neuen Testament*, 190-237. Freiburg: Herder, 1982.

possess no fewer than thirteen epistles associated with that tradition means that the findings of such a study are neither obscure nor arbitrary. To offer a converse example, a study of mission-commitment, say, in the Petrine literature would be of limited value for our knowledge of mission in early Christianity since the corpus is small and little can be determined about the *Sitz im Leben* of the writer and his communities.

Thirdly, the apostle Paul is widely regarded as the missionary *par excellence*. It is reasonable therefore to expect his letters above all other ecclesiastical writings of the period to provide us with the most material relevant to our topic. Fourthly, (and as a consequence) the few monographs relating directly to this question treat the Pauline material almost exclusively.¹¹

Eight letters within the Pauline corpus are regarded as *primary* evidence of the convictions of Paul himself. These are 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, Colossians¹² and Philemon. So as to gain a more comprehensive perspective on what may be called 'Pauline Christianity', however, the remaining five epistles will also be investigated, being treated as *secondary* evidence only. This heuristic distinction between primary and secondary Pauline epistles should not be thought to imply any decision on my part about the authorship or pseudonymity of the latter.

¹¹ An exception is the monograph by Van Swigchem referred to above.

¹² While acknowledging the stylistic, linguistic and thematic arguments against the Pauline authorship of Colossians, I remain unconvinced they carry sufficient force to exclude the epistle from this investigation. I cannot, of course, rehearse the issues here. I simply alert readers to my awareness of the problem and draw attention to several robust critiques of the supposition of the letter's pseudonymity: Percy, E. *Die Probleme der Kolosser -und Epheserbriefe*. Lund: Gleerup, 1946; Rist, M. "Pseudepigraphy and the Early Christians." In *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 75-91. Leiden: Brill, 1972; O'Brien, P. T. *Colossians, Philemon*. Edited by R. P. Martin. Vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco: Word Books, 1982, xli-xlix; Barth, M. & Blanke, H. *Colossians*. Vol. 34b, *The Anchor Bible*. New York: Doubleday, 1994, 114-26; Murphy-O'Connor, J. "Contemplation at Colossae." In *Paul: A Critical Life*, 231-251. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. See also the study by Richard Bauckham ("Pseudo-Apostolic Letters." *JBL* 107, no. 3 (1988): 469-94) who examines the important issue of the *genre* of the 'pseudepigraphal letter' among the Jewish pseudepigrapha and the NT apocrypha, and who includes Colossians among those letters "whose authenticity could be regarded as vindicated by this study" (492).

3. The focus of the study

Scholars of mission have usually concerned themselves with issues of chronology and geography or with the apostle's so called 'theology of mission' or his place in the wider Christian mission. While the present enquiry necessarily relates to this scholarship at points, it is distinctive in at least three ways. First, the focus of this study is upon the relation of Paul's *converts* to the mission rather than that of the apostle himself. Thus, what follows attempts to provide a history from 'below' rather than from 'above'. It is surprising that this line of enquiry is so seldom explored given the fact that the Pauline epistles are more about the practices of converts than the personal religious life of Paul.

Having said this, secondly, the study has to do with Pauline 'expectations', that is, with the concepts and practices laid upon converts by the apostle. At times it will be difficult to discern whether such expectations corresponded to any real practice amongst members of the community. For instance, that Paul requests prayer for his mission does not of necessity mean that converts were faithful in this. Attention will be paid to this distinction between 'expectation' and 'practice' throughout the study.

Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, the entire investigation is set within the socio-historical context of Judaism in Paul's era. While James Ware has attempted something similar in his dissertation, his approach was largely 'theological', concerning himself with identifying grand distinctions between Paul's mission-motifs and those of Judaism – the contrast he makes between centripetal and centrifugal mission is a case in point. The present study, however, endeavours to provide a detailed historical account of the specific mission orientations and activities of Jews as evidenced in the variegated literature. One of the most important results of the research is the discovery of many points of continuity between Jewish practices designed to 'win' Gentiles and those expected of Paul's converts.

To set the study within a Jewish context is not to prejudice the outcome, nor to deny the profound influence of non-Jewish Greek thinking on early Christianity. Indeed, when I commenced my research, *mission in pagan tradition* was to have occupied one discreet section of the book. Nevertheless, I find myself convinced by the conclusion of Martin Goodman and others that 'mission' (in the sense defined below) essentially did not exist

among the cults and philosophies of the Roman empire.¹³ Hence, except for an excursus on the motif of 'commission' among Cynic preachers (in Chapter Five) I have opted for an integrated approach to the analysis of the relevant Greco-Roman material, referring to it as and when it sheds light upon a particular aspect of the missionary thought and practice of Jewish and/or Pauline communities.

4. A definition of mission

The concept of 'mission' is problematic. Strictly speaking the term denotes *sending for a task* (Lat. *missio*) and one recent New Testament study has restricted itself to this concept of movement towards a goal.¹⁴ However, in the secondary literature, the term has come to connote the efforts of religious communities to promote themselves among non-members. It is this wider 'technical' sense of *mission* which provides the focus for the present study.¹⁵

¹³ Goodman, M. *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994, 21-37. A similar conclusion is reached by T. Engberg-Pedersen in relation to the two most significant philosophical protagonists, Stoicism and Epicureanism, in "The Hellenistic *Öffentlichkeit*: Philosophy as a Social Force in the Greco-Roman World." In *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World*, edited by P. Borgen, 15-37. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998. The case of Mithraism may provide an ancient exception, since the growth of the cult between the first and fourth centuries does appear (on archaeological grounds) to have been significant. However, the paucity of literary evidence in relation to Mithraism – in stark contrast to that of Judaism and Christianity – makes a study of Mithraic mission expectations impossible. In this regard, see Aune, D. E. "Expansion and Recruitment Among Hellenistic Religions: The Case of Mithraism." In *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World*, edited by P. Borgen, 39-56. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.

¹⁴ Köstenberger, A. *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

¹⁵ The term 'mission' has significant currency, of course, in the theological discipline known as 'missiology'. The theological and pastoral orientations of missiologists, however, make their definitions of mission less appropriate for an historical investigation. Senior and Stuhlmeuller (Senior, D. & Stuhlmeuller, C. *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983) in an important book on missiology are keen to distance the term 'mission' from what they see as the narrow and outmoded notion of 'propaganda'. For them mission involves far more than 'making converts'. It is a complex and holistic attempt to "fulfill the divine mandate given to the church that humanity reflect God's own life as one people drawn together in love and respect" (3). The definition of mission proposed by the late David Bosch (*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology

Two important monographs in recent years have sought to clarify the concept of mission, particularly as it relates to Judaism(s) of the New Testament period.¹⁶ For Scott McKnight mission refers to “behavior that intends to evangelize nonmembers so that these nonmembers will convert to the religion.”¹⁷ While the term ‘evangelize’ in this context is not altogether clear, the thrust of the definition is plain: ‘mission’ aims to draw non-members into a religious community. M. Goodman offers further explication of the concept, proposing four distinct categories of ‘mission’: 1) mission as *information*, which is not unlike the idea of ‘advertising’; 2) mission as *education*, which has as its goal the further enlightenment of its members; 3) mission as *apologetic*, the chief aim of which is merely to defend the religion against criticisms or to gain a political advantage, and; 4) mission as *proselytism*, or the attempt to ‘convert’ others. This last category is understood in two distinct ways: a) *restricted proselytism*, which seeks to convert only members of the same (or similar) religious or ethnic tradition (for example, Pharisees attempting to win other Jews to Pharisaism); b) *universal proselytism*, which aims to convert any and everyone to an exclusive way of life.¹⁸ Goodman restricts his investigation of Jewish ‘mission’ to the last of these (4b) and like McKnight concludes that ancient Judaism never had a mission.

While scholars are free to define their field of inquiry in the way they wish, the studies of McKnight and Goodman are notably minimalist. *Information*, *apologetic*, *education* and *proselytism* are not so neatly separated. Rather than being distinct types of mission, these categories ought to be viewed as points along a continuum of mission, the ultimate goal of which is the ‘conversion’¹⁹ of the outsider, conversion being

Series, No. 16. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991) runs four pages in length (8-11) and focuses on the church’s participation in God’s “self-communication in Jesus Christ”.

¹⁶ McKnight, S. *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991; Goodman, M. *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.

¹⁷ McKnight, *Light*, 5. On this definition McKnight concludes that Judaism(s) in the Second Temple period possessed no real sense of mission.

¹⁸ Goodman, *Mission*, 3-6.

¹⁹ For a review of social-scientific research on conversion see, Rambo, L. R. “Current Research on Religious Conversion.” *Religious Studies Review* 8 (1982): 27-47; Staples, C. L., and A. L. Mauss. “Conversion or Commitment? A Reassessment of the Snow and Machalek Approach to the Study of Conversion.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26 (1987): 133-47. For conversion in Judaism see, Cohen, S. J. D. “Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective: From Biblical Israel to Postbiblical Judaism.”

understood principally as a *new socio-religious allegiance*.²⁰ By excluding mission as *apologetic*, for example, both writers ignore the fact that apologetic practices often have as their larger goal the winning of outsiders. This is particularly true of what will be defined as 'ethical apologetic', or moral behaviour designed to impress or attract outsiders. This form of 'mission' is plainly evident in early Christian literature²¹ and, as will be shown, featured within some traditions of Judaism as well, something McKnight himself concedes.²²

The definition of mission adopted in this study coincides with that of McKnight and Goodman to the extent that the inclusion of 'outsiders' (conversion) is seen as the intended goal of mission. However, with

Conservative Judaism 36, no. 4 (1983): 31-45; Cohen, S. J. D. "Rabbinic Conversion Ceremony." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 41 (1990): 177-203. For conversion in early Christianity see, Nock, A. D. *Conversion: the Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; Macmullen, R. "Conversion: A Historians View." *Second Century* 5 (1985): 67-81; Macmullen, R. "Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity." *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 174-192. For conversion in biblical theological perspective see, Balthasar, Hans Urs von. "Conversion in the New Testament." *Communio* 1 (1974): 47-59; France, R. T. "Conversion in the Bible." *Evangelical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1993): 291-310; Gaventa, B. R. *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986; Löffler, P. "The Biblical Concept of Conversion." In *Mission Trends No. 2: Evangelization*, edited by Gerald Anderson & Thomas Stransky, 24-45. New York: Paulist, 1975; McEleney, N. J. "Conversion, Circumcision, and the Law." *New Testament Studies* 20 (1973): 319-341; Neill, S. C. "Conversion." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 3 (1950): 352-362; Pyne, R. A. "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Conversion." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993): 203-218; Smalley, S. S. "Conversion in the New Testament." *The Churchman* 78, no. 3 (1964): 193-210; Witherup, R. D. *Conversion in the New Testament*. Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994.

²⁰ There is a tendency in the literature to understand 'conversion' principally in its social dimension as a transfer from one social group (with its attendant plausibility structures) to another. The social aspect of conversion should not be ignored, nor should it occupy the center of our conception of the phenomenon. By "new socio-religious allegiance" I am describing conversion as a change in loyalties from one value-system, god or human leader to a divergent value-system, god or human leader. This allegiance may express itself *cultically* (e.g., adopting the sevenfold rite of Mithraism), philosophically (e.g., embracing the teachings of a cynic preacher), morally (e.g., submitting oneself to the Torah) or socially (joining a Christian ἐκκλησία).

²¹ See, for example, Matt 5:14-16; Titus 2:10; 1 Pet 3:1-2; Ign. Eph 10.1-3.

²² "This form of converting Gentiles [good deeds] is a consistent feature of the evidence and probably formed the very backbone for the majority of conversions to Judaism." McKnight, *Light*, 68.

Carleton Paget²³ — a perceptive critic of the studies of McKnight and Goodman — the parameters of mission are understood more broadly, taking into account the complex relationship that exists between apologetic, information, proselytism, and so on. A “missionary religion,” in the words of Paget, is one which by a “variety of ways makes it clear that conversion to that religion is a desirable thing.”²⁴ Unsatisfied with the ‘broad’ definition of Carleton Paget, Rainer Riesner has recently insisted that “every meaningful definition of a missionary religion should include the factors of both intentionality and activity.”²⁵ The point is a good one so long as it does not imply that an activity is ‘missionary’ only if conversion is the *directly intended* result: we must allow for a continuum of mission wherein some activities are merely *oriented* toward conversion.²⁶ Thus, combining Carleton Paget’s concept of a ‘missionary religion’ with Riesner’s emphasis upon intentionality and activity, ‘mission’ in this study is defined as *the range of activities by which members of a religious community desirous of the conversion of outsiders seek to promote their religion to non-adherents*.

The effect of this definition is that activities such as *ethical or verbal apologetic, financial assistance of missionaries and prayer for the conversion of humankind* cannot be ignored simply because they do not directly ‘evangelize non-members’. Rather they must be given their proper place as real expressions of the mission-commitment of a community. This, I believe, constitutes one important advance on previous studies of the topic. The works of Ollrog, Bowers, O’Brien, Ware and Van Swigchem focus almost exclusively on proclamation as the indicator of mission-commitment and, in so doing, miss the significance of a great portion of the evidence, both Jewish and Pauline.

We begin, then, in Chapters 1 and 2 with an investigation of mission-commitment in the various strands of ancient Judaism.

²³ Carleton Paget, J. “Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?” *JSNT* 62 (1996): 65-103.

²⁴ Paget, *Jewish*, 77.

²⁵ Riesner, R. “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?” In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, edited by J. Adna and H. Kvalbein, 211-50. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 223.

²⁶ Congregational prayer for Paul’s proclamation is an obvious example but many others exist, as will become apparent.

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