

MARTIN SANFRIDSON

Paul and Sacrifice in Corinth

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

623

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Martin Sanfridson

Paul and Sacrifice in Corinth

Rethinking Paul's Views on Gentile Cults
in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10

Mohr Siebeck

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For Rebecca

With love

Preface

This book, which is a slight revision of my PhD dissertation, represents one step on my journey to better understand the apostle Paul, his message, and his surroundings. The completion of this study would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends, and colleagues. My supervisory committee has been vital during my four years at McMaster University, and their guidance through the program has been a considerable support. My supervisor Dr. Matthew Thiessen has been pivotal in my undertaking of this project. He was the first one to nudge me in the direction of writing my thesis on 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and the connections between these two chapters in 1 Corinthians and ancient rituals of animal sacrifice. Even though I was not thrilled about the idea initially (originally, what in the end became my dissertation was supposed to be only one chapter), I soon realised that there was an opening for my project in the scholarly discussion and that my reading of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 would add something to the literature on Paul, 1 Corinthians, and the Paul within Judaism reading of the apostle. Not only did Matt provide insightful comments, feedback, and careful corrections on my writing, he also gave me much needed encouragement about my project. Additionally, since I wrote my dissertation in my home-office during the lockdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic, I very much appreciated when we were able to meet in-person – especially the times we shared dinner and a beer at The Phoenix on campus.

I am also grateful to my other two committee members. Dr. Hanna Tervanotko provided me with many helpful comments and corrections that I would not have noticed myself. Dr. Daniel Machiela also provided me with helpful feedback and points on how to further strengthen my argument. Their joint expertise in Early Judaism and the Hebrew Bible further nuanced my thoughts in several areas of the thesis.

I also wish to dedicate a special thanks to the faculty at the Religious Department at McMaster (especially Doreen Drew) for their help during all parts of the PhD program, and especially during the latter phases of the completion of this thesis. The staff at Mills Library also deserves a special thank you. The librarians of Mills Library went above and beyond to make sure I had the books I needed – sometimes even personally delivering them to my doorstep! Without their dedication, I would not have been able to complete my research.

I am grateful to the people at Mohr Siebeck for their help and advice in turning this study into a monograph in their WUNT II-series. First of all, I would like to thank profs. Jörg Frey and Markus Bockmuehl for their insightful comments on the original manuscript. Second, I am grateful to the editorial department for their help with formatting the manuscript and turning it into the book that is now in your hands.

Finally, my family has been an endless source of support, comfort, and happiness during the writing of my thesis. For their friendship and support, I am indebted to my parents, Anders and Gudrun, as well as my in-laws, Anders and Anna. Even though they have been on the other side of the Atlantic during the completion of this project, their enthusiasm for my work has been a great support. Rebecca, my wife, was not only my biggest supporter, but, as a PhD candidate in Early Christianity at the University of Toronto, she has also been a vital discussion partner and provided helpful critique of my work, always encouraging me to think about aspects that I perhaps missed and supported me when I hit roadblocks in my writing. I dedicate this work to her with all my love.

Our two boys were both born during the writing of this book, and without their company and joyful presence, my endeavour to write this book would have been a considerably poorer experience.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AGRW	<i>Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook</i> . ed. Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASE	<i>Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi</i>
ASMA	Aarhus Studies in Mediterranean Antiquity
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BRLA	Brill Reference Library of Judaism
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . Berlin, 1862–
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament

ConBNT	Coniectanea Neotestamentica
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DHAsup	<i>Dialogues d'histoire ancienne supplément</i>
Did	<i>Didaskalia</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EC	<i>Early Christianity</i>
EKKNT	Evangelischer-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
ExAud	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GNS	Good News Studies
GOTR	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
GRA	<i>Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary. II, North Coast of the Black Sea, Asia Minor.</i> ed. Philip A. Harland. BZNTW 204. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
Hesperia	<i>Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HTA	Historisch Theologische Auslegung, Neues Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IJRR	<i>Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JAJ	<i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECH	<i>Journal of Early Christian History</i>
JGRChJ	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JJMJS	<i>Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series
JRCA	<i>Journal of Religious Competition in Antiquity</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series

<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JSP/L</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters</i>
<i>JSQ</i>	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KD</i>	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
<i>KEK</i>	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LCS</i>	Library of Classical Studies
<i>LibCL</i>	Library of Classical Studies
<i>LNTS</i>	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible
<i>NCBC</i>	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>NEchtB</i>	Neue Echter Bibel
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NICOT</i>	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
<i>NTAbh</i>	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
<i>NTL</i>	New Testament Library
<i>NTOA</i>	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTR</i>	New Testament Readings
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NTTS</i>	New Testament Tools and Studies
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religions</i>
<i>ONTC</i>	Osborne New Testament Commentaries
<i>OTS</i>	Old Testament Studies
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
<i>PNTC</i>	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>P. Oxy</i>	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>PTMS</i>	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RGRW</i>	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
<i>RRE</i>	<i>Religion in the Roman Empire</i>
<i>RVV</i>	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
<i>SAPERE</i>	Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam Religionemque pertinentia
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLECL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
<i>SBSymS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
<i>SBS</i>	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>SBT</i>	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SCJ</i>	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>

<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum graecum</i>
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
SPB	Studia Post-Biblica
SPhilo	Studia Philonica
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religions</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>STRev</i>	<i>Sewanee Theological Review</i>
SupVC	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions
ThH	Théologie Historique
<i>ThLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
THNZ	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Chapter 1

1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and Paul's Relationship to Judaism

In 1 Cor 8:8 Paul writes to the Christ followers in Corinth: “Food will not bring us before God’s judgement; we are neither worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we eat.”¹ This, and the general gist of 1 Corinthians 8, has led several interpreters to ask questions about the apostle’s relationship to Judaism. Trent A. Rogers notes: “There is considerable debate in 1 Cor 8–10 whether Paul essentially reinforces Jewish teaching concerning idolatry or if he shapes early Christian teaching in a direction radically different than Judaism.”² Many scholars opt for the latter alternative and claim that Paul had severed his ties to his native Judaism. Peter J. Tomson remarks on 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: “Our text serves as the *locus classicus* for the near-consensus in New Testament scholarship that Paul no longer attached positive significance to the commandments of his Jewish past.”³

The reason why scholars argue that 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 are to be understood this way is that by allowing the Corinthian Christ followers to eat food offered to idols – εἰδωλόθυτος – Paul has taken a decisive step away from Judaism. In his commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ben Witherington makes the following statement: “[1 Corinthians] 8–10 make clear how *far from Judaism Paul had moved* on the matter of food.”⁴ With reference to Paul’s instruction that the Corinthians need not inquire about the origins of the food they buy at the market in 10:25, μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν, C. K. Barrett writes:

It is clear that only by careful inquiry (ἀνακρίσεις) could a Jew satisfy himself on these points [regarding the origins of the meat]; and a quick reading of *Abodah Zarah* suffices to show

¹ Unless otherwise noted all translation of New Testament texts are my own and based on NA28.

² Trent A. Rogers, *God and the Idols: Representations of God in 1 Corinthians 8–10*, WUNT II/427 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 205.

³ Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, CRINT 3/1 (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis, Fortress, 1990), 187.

⁴ Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 1995), 199 (my emphasis).

the repeated investigations διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν that were incumbent upon the devout Jew. *Paul is nowhere more un-Jewish* that in this μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες.⁵

In a similar fashion, Gordon Fee asserts Paul's supposed un-Jewishness. Commenting on 1 Cor 10:26, where Paul quotes Ps 23:1 LXX – “for the earth and everything that is in it belongs to the Lord” – in order to support his argument that the Corinthians need not ask about the origins of food, Fee argues: “[Paul's use of Ps 23:1 LXX] is *full of irony toward his Jewish heritage*. . . . Apart from Paul's radical statements on circumcision, it is hard to imagine anything more un-Jewish in the apostle than this.”⁶ Witherington's, Barrett's, and Fee's reasoning seem to be supported by other ancient Jewish texts roughly contemporary with 1 Corinthians that deal with the eating of food that has come into contact with gentile cults and/or cultic objects.

To mention but a few examples, we clearly see how the rabbis who are recorded in the Mishnah strongly opposed the type of food Paul seemed so lax about. In *m. Avodah Zarah* 2.3, we read: “Meat which is being brought into an idol is permitted. But that which comes out is prohibited, because it is like sacrifices of the dead.”⁷ In the Jewish work *Joseph and Aseneth*, Joseph refuses to kiss Aseneth due to the fact that her mouth has been in contact with food offered to idols.⁸ As he puts it in the narrative, he cannot kiss someone who “blesses dead and mute idols with her mouth and eats bread of strangling from

⁵ C. K. Barrett, “Things Sacrificed to Idols,” *NTS* 11 (1965): 138–53, 146 (my emphasis).

⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 532 (my emphasis). Fee's point is that, whereas Ps 24:1 (= 23:1 LXX) was used by the rabbis in order to bless their food, which was, in Fee's words, “thoroughly investigated” before it was eaten, Paul used the words from the Psalm to justify the eating of all kinds of food, “even those forbidden in his own Jewish heritage.” There are a couple of problems with Fee's argument. First, Paul's statements on circumcision are neither radical nor un-Jewish – for a counterargument against the notion that Paul was against circumcision, see my “Are Circumcision and Foreskin Really Nothing? Re-Reading 1 Corinthians 7:19 and Galatians 5:6; 6:15,” *SEÁ* 86 [2021]: 130–47; Ryan D. Collman, *The Apostle to the Foreskin: Circumcision in the Letters of Paul*, BZNT 259 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023). Second, the approach of Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner (*The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 489) is more historical: “Paul's citation of Psalm 24:1 is consistent with the prevalent Jewish understanding of its relevance for the way God's people approach the food that he graciously provides. Paul is thoroughly Jewish and biblical in his understanding that creation is good and that the food we receive has been provided for us by God and should be received with thanksgiving (cf. 1 Cor. 10:30) and with the understanding that food, like everything else in creation, exists to fulfill the purpose God has in mind for it, namely, his glory (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31).”

⁷ Translation from Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁸ There has been debate regarding the question if this is a Jewish or Christian text. The majority view today is that it is a Jewish text. Cf. John J. Collins, “*Joseph and Aseneth*: Jewish or Christian?” *JSP* 14 (2005): 97–112.

their table and drinks from their cup of libation” (8.5).⁹ Indeed, Aseneth herself testifies to the defiling nature of food offered to idols in 11.9: “I ate from their sacrifices and my mouth has been defiled from their table.”¹⁰ The *Didache*, a text written with both Jewish and gentile Christ followers in mind, instructs Christ followers that they “make certain to stay away from food offered to idols (ειδωλόθυτος); for it is the worship of dead gods.”¹¹

Two additional examples will further demonstrate how inconceivable it was to some Jews in Paul's time to eat food offered to idols. The author(s) of the Community Rule from Qumran does not only forbid members of eating food offered to idols, but prohibits any member of the community to “eat of *any* of their possessions, or drink or accept anything from their hands” (1QS 5.16).¹² According to Josephus, every member of the community strictly followed this rule – even those who the community expelled:

Those they have convicted of sufficiently serious errors they expel from the order. And the one who has been reckoned out often perishes by a most pitiable fate. For, constrained by the oaths and customs, he is unable to partake of food from others. Eating grass and in hunger, his body wastes away and perishes.¹³

Our final example comes from the book of *Jubilees*. In a similar fashion to 1QS, *Jubilees* 22:16 instructs the Jewish reader to “separate from the nations,

⁹ My translation, based on the Greek text from Eckhart Reinmuth, ed., *Joseph and Aseneth*, SAPERE 15 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). Greek text: ἤτις εὐλογοῖ τῷ στόματι αὐτῆς εἰδῶλα νεκρὰ καὶ κωφὰ καὶ ἐσθίει ἐκ τῆς τραπέζης αὐτῶν ἄρτον ἀγχόνης καὶ πίνει ἐκ τῆς σπονδῆς αὐτῶν ποτήριον.

¹⁰ My translation. Greek text: καὶ ἔφαγον ἐκ τ<ῶν> θυσι<ῶν> αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ στόμα μου μεμίεται ἐκ τῆς τραπέζης αὐτῶν.

¹¹ My translation, based on the Greek text from *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed., ed. and trans. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). Greek text: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ εἰδωλοθύτου λίαν πρόσεχε, λατρεία γὰρ ἐστὶν θεῶν νεκρῶν.

¹² Translation from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). The reference to “their” possessions, drink and anything from their hands seems to be a reference to everyone outside the Qumran community, not only gentiles. Cf. Alison Schofield, *From Qumran to the Yahad: A New Paradigm of the Textual Development for The Community Rule*, STDJ 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 203.

¹³ *The Jewish War* 2.143. Translation from Steve Mason, *Judean War 2*, Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 1B, (Leiden: Brill, 2008). In addition to the community's strict rules regarding what members were allowed to eat, the Damascus Document goes further and forbids members to “sell clean animals or birds, to the gentiles (גוֹיִם) lest they sacrifice them” (CD^a 12.8–9; translation from García Martínez and Tigchelaar). For discussions on the Qumran community, and especially the Essene-Qumran hypothesis, see Sidnie White Crawford, *Scribes and Scrolls at Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 269–308; John J. Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

and do not eat with them.”¹⁴ The issue here, as in IQS, is not only that Jews should stay away from food offered to idols, but from all food connected with gentiles.

When we read Paul’s seemingly lax statement about eating food connected to gentile cults in 1 Cor 8:8 alongside these texts, it appears as though Witherington, Barrett, Fee, and other like-minded scholars are correct in their remarks on how far Paul has moved away from Judaism.¹⁵ This provides a serious challenge to one of the more recent developments in Pauline studies: the Paul within Judaism school.¹⁶ In short, scholars in the Paul within Judaism school argue that Paul never left Judaism or his Jewish way of life; rather, the apostle remained a faithful Jew. Moreover, he never saw the Jewish law as invalid *per se* – it just did not apply to *gentile* Christ followers – and he still regarded Judaism as something positive and drew on his Jewish heritage when instructing gentile Christ followers with regards to how their life in the Jesus movement should look.¹⁷ This school has made several contributions to the re-

¹⁴ Translation from James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020).

¹⁵ The idea that Paul left Judaism for something else (which scholarship up to recently labelled “Christianity”) has been around almost since the time of Paul himself and can be found in the New Testament. The author of Acts describes how some are spreading a rumour about Paul and that he is teaching Jews to abandon the law of Moses: “And they have heard that you teach all Jews who are living among gentiles to defect from Moses, saying that they should not circumcise their children, not live according to the customs” (Acts 21:21). The elder of the *ekklesia* in Jerusalem tells Paul to prove this rumour to be false by purifying himself along with other four men, in order to show his faithfulness to the Jewish law. This Paul agrees to do. Later, in Acts 25:8 (cf. 28:17), Paul is brought before Festus in Caesarea and some Jews from Jerusalem start accusing him. Paul answers by saying that he has done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews (τὸν νόμον τῶν Ἰουδαίων), the temple, or Caesar. These two reports in Acts show that there were from an early stage in the Jesus movement those who clearly thought Paul had acted in violation with the Jewish law an encouraged other Jews to do the same. However, it is also evident that this is not the picture the author of Acts agrees with, since he clearly rejects the rumours in Acts 21 and portrays Paul’s defence in 25:8 as something that represents the “true Paul.” According to Acts, Paul lives according to the law (cf. 21:24b). Cf. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 131; Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, & Identity in Ancient Judaism & Christianity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 119–20; Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 75.

¹⁶ Even though the Paul within Judaism school has in many ways gone beyond the conclusions of E. P. Sanders’ magisterial work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* published in 1977, and indeed has criticized some of Sanders’ conclusions, this work remains the foundation that set off the Paul within Judaism school.

¹⁷ For a selection of the key works produced by the Paul within Judaism school (and readings adjacent to it) see: Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); Gabriele

Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016); Rafael Rodríguez and Matthew Thiessen, eds., *The So-Called Jew in Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016); Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); *idem*, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); *idem*, "Paul's Non-Jews Do Not Become 'Jews,' but Do They Become 'Jewish'?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 within Judaism, Alongside Josephus," *JMJS* 1 (2014): 26–53; *idem*, "'Callused,' Not 'Hardened': Paul's Revelation of Temporary Protection until All Israel Can Be Healed," in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker, LNTS 248 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 52–73; *idem*, *Reading Paul within Judaism* (Eugene: Cascade: 2017); Paula Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 235–60; *eadem*, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52; *eadem*, "The Question of Worship: Gods, Pagans, and the Redemption of Israel," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 175–201; *eadem*, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Matthew Thiessen, "Paul's Argument against Gentile Circumcision in Romans 2:17–29," *NovT* 56 (2014): 373–91; *idem*, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); *idem*, "Paul, the Animal Apocalypse, and Abraham's Gentile Seed," in *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*, ed. Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen, SBLECL 24 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 65–78; Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Olive Trees and Ethnicities: Judeans and Gentiles in Rom. 11:17–24," in *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in Early Imperial Rome*, ed. Jürgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn, JSNTSup 243 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 77–89; *eadem*, *If Sons, then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); Anders Runesson, "Placing Paul: Institutional Structures and Theological Strategy in the World of the Early Christ-Believers," *SEÅ* 80 (2015): 43–67; *idem*, "Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology," *JGRChJ* 1 (2000): 120–44; Rafael Rodríguez, *If You Call Yourself a Jew: Reappraising Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Eugene: Cascade, 2014); Matthew V. Novenson, "The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question," *JBL* 128 (2009): 357–373; *idem*, "Paul's Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*," in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospels, and Ethics in Paul's Letters*, ed. Mark W. Elliot et al (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 24–39; Kathy Ehrensperger, "'Called to be Saints'—The Identity-Shaping Dimension of Paul's Priestly Discourse in Romans," in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker, LNTS 248 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 90–109; *eadem*, "The Question(s) of Gender: Relocating Paul in Relation to Judaism," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 245–76; *eadem*, *Searching Paul: Conversations with the Jewish Apostle to the Nations*, WUNT 429 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: T&T Clark, 2008); *idem*, "Reading Paul in Relation to Judaism: Comparison or Contrast?" in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton*, ed. Alan

reading of Pauline texts which non-Paul within Judaism scholars often have regarded as decisive texts in their argument that Paul abandoned his native Judaism. Despite this, the Paul within Judaism school has given little attention to 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and the challenge it provides to the Paul within Judaism school.¹⁸ This lacuna in the Paul within Judaism reading of Paul is somewhat strange, since, as Peter S. Zaas points out: “Paul’s treatment of the question of whether or not the Corinthians brethren are free to eat meat originating from pagan sacrifices ... is perhaps the most crucial case in point for understanding Paul’s need to promote his audience’s observance of the halakhic requirements for Gentiles.”¹⁹ The question is, then, do 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 provide a challenge to the Paul within Judaism school that bares its Achilles heel? Or, can we read Paul’s instructions in these two chapters of 1 Corinthians as something that belongs within Judaism? In contrast to Witherington, Barrett, and Fee, I think we can.

The way forward, I propose, lies in understanding the background and demography of the ancient city of Corinth, the Corinthian *ekklēsia*, and a nuanced understanding of animal sacrifice in Greek and Roman antiquity – and how these rituals affect our reading of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. By paying close attention to these three things, we can (*I*) solve what has long been a quagmire in Pauline studies, namely the supposed contradictions

J. Avery-Peck, Craig A. Evans, Jacob Neusner, BRLA 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 120–50; *idem*, *The Nations in the Divine Economy: Paul’s Covenantal Hermeneutics and Participation in Christ* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).

¹⁸ Even though Romans and Galatians often are the focus of the Paul within Judaism school, scholars have dealt with parts of 1 Corinthians as well, see David Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23*, 2nd ed. (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016); Mark D. Nanos, “Paul’s Relationship to Torah in Light of His Strategy ‘to Become Everything to Everyone’ (1 Corinthians 9.19–23),” in *Paul and Judaism: Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt, LNTS 463 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 106–40; Caroline Johnson Hodge, “Married to an Unbeliever: Households, Hierarchies, and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 7:12–16,” *HTR* (2010): 1–25; *eadem*, “‘Mixed Marriage’ in Early Christianity: Trajectories from Corinth,” in *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah A. James, and Daniel N. Scholwaller, NovTSup 155 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 227–44; Anders Runesson, “Paul’s Rule in All the *Ekklēsiai*,” in *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesiastical Context and Biblical Foundations*, ed. David Rudolph and Joel Willitts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 214–23. There are, however, to my knowledge only a handful of contributions to the reading of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, see chapters one and two in Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Corinthians and Philippians within Judaism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017); Kathy Ehrensperger, “To Eat or Not to Eat – Is this the Question? Table Disputes in Corinth,” in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Nathan MacDonald, Luzia Sutter Rehman, and Kathy Ehrensperger, LNTS 449 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 114–33.

¹⁹ Peter S. Zaas, “Paul and the Halakhah: Dietary Laws for Gentiles in 1 Corinthians 8–10,” in *Jewish Law Association Studies VII: The Paris Conference Volume*, ed. S. M. Passamaneck and M. Finley (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 233–45, 236.

between 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 – see below – and (2) read the apostle's instructions as something that belongs within Judaism and the ongoing debate on how to be faithful to the god of Israel when living in a city dominated by gentile norms, customs, and cults.

I argue that Paul was engaged in something many Jews were at the time, namely the question of how to relate to and fit into a mainly gentile society and not becoming socially ostracised. Furthermore, most likely Paul does not address Jewish Christ followers in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, but gentile ones (cf. 1 Cor 8:7), and he does not apply Jewish dietary laws, or other Jewish laws as seen in 1 Cor 7:18, to *them*. As Zaas notes: “[Paul’s] apostolic vocation forced him to wrestle with the question of the application of the halakhah to the community life of non-Jews.”²⁰ Consequently, 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 say nothing about Paul’s understanding of Jewish food laws as they apply to those they were intended for, i.e., himself and other Jews. In addition, there was no *one* view of food in the Judaism of Paul’s time, and there existed many approaches to what Jews could eat and with whom they could eat.²¹ As Karin Hedner Zetterholm points out: “Far from declaring Jewish law null and void, Paul is engaged either in *establishing* a halakah concerning idol food for Jesus-oriented gentiles, or *teaching them an existing* local Corinthian Jewish halakah.”²² Hence, my view is that Paul is trying to navigate the gentile Christ followers’ status as exclusively committed to the god of Israel and to the Jewish Jesus movement on the one hand, and that he is trying to give them instructions that will allow them to continue their daily life in Corinth with as little disruption as possible on the other. Therefore, Paul has two interests in mind: the Jewish requirements of the Jesus movement and the demands that came with living in a predominantly gentile society.

²⁰ Zaas, “Paul and the Halakhah,” 233.

²¹ On Jewish flexibility with regards to Torah, see Anders Runesson, “Entering a Synagogue with Paul: First-Century Torah Observance,” in *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, ed. David Miller and Susan Wendell (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 11–26. With regards to food in particular, see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 216; *idem*, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 281; David Rudolph, “Paul and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Romans 14:14, 20,” in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 151–81.

²² Karin Hedner Zetterholm, “The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 79–103, 99 (emphasis original). Hedner Zetterholm (*ibid.*, 96) even notes that Paul’s type of reasoning in 1 Corinthians 8 “bears resemblance to the rabbinic idea of *mar’it ‘ain*, the principle according to which one must refrain from acts that are permitted but inappropriate because they may lead a less knowledgeable Jew to draw false conclusions and cause him or her to do something that is not permitted.”

Paul was not the only Jew in antiquity that tried to balance these two interests, and to argue that he has left his Jewish way of life behind because he allows his Christ followers to eat food offered to idols is, I think, unwarranted.²³ In addition, if we take into account that Paul is most likely addressing *gentile* Christ followers in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 – something I argue in chapter four – it is even more problematic to say that Paul had abandoned his Jewish way of life or Judaism as a whole.²⁴ Rather, Paul’s instructions were part of a *Jewish* discussion: “From a Jewish-legal point of view, Paul’s position is highly intelligible, and it is consistent with both contemporary and subsequent Jewish attitudes toward Gentile observance of the halakhah.”²⁵

1.1 The Interpretative Crux of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10

Virtually all literature on 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 recognise that there are tensions between these two chapters.²⁶ The primary source for these tensions, as

²³ Alex T. Cheung (*Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy*, JSNTSup 176 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 154) points out that, “it is not at all clear that the scrupulous inquiry about food, supposedly encumbering upon devote Jews, was something prevalent in first-century Diaspora Judaism, or became only the stance of the most zealous Rabbis after the two revolts. Paul’s advice might be no more liberal than that of many Diaspora Jews of his time who wished to maintain their participation in the wider community.”

²⁴ As Ehrensperger (“‘Called to be Saints’,” 106) notes: “That ‘the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it’ (Ps. 25.1) is not questioned in any way by the setting of the laws that regulate which parts of God’s creation are at the disposition of the people of Israel. The impure animals are impure for the covenant people, as is emphasized in an almost mantra-like manner in Leviticus 11: ‘it is unclean/impure for you (11.4, 5, 6, 7); ‘they are unclean for you’ (11.8); ‘they are untouchable for you’ (11.10–11, 12, 23) etc. As with other purity regulations, these apply to the covenant partner Israel and not to the nations. Gentiles are not required to keep purity laws, particularly not (all of) those that are related to ritual impurity, as these are only relevant for Jews in their relationship with God.”

²⁵ Zaas, “Paul and the Halakhah,” 237.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 have been the focus of a number of studies. The more significant works on these two chapters in 1 Corinthians include, Gerd Theissen, “Die Starken und Schwachen in Korinth: Soziologische Analyse eines theologischen Streites,” *EvT* 35 (1975): 155–72; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum ersten Korintherbrief*, NTAbh 15 (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1982); Wendell Lee Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10*, SBLDS 68 (Chico: Scholars, 1985; repr. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004); Herman Probst, *Paulus und der Brief: Die Rhetorik des antiken Briefes als Form der paulinischen Korintherkorrespondenz (1 Kor 8–10)*, WUNT II/45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993); Peter D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8–10 in Its Context*, SCJ 5 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993); Paul D. Gardner, *The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian: An Exegetical Study of 1*

most scholars perceive it, is that Paul allows, albeit reluctantly, the Corinthian Christ followers to eat “food offered to idols” (εἰδωλόθυτος) in 1 Corinthians 8. Two chapters later, however, he strictly forbids the Christ followers to eat it – this time expressed as drinking the cup of *daimonia* and partaking of the table of *daimonia* (1 Cor 10:21). Because of the contrasts between 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, and due to this supposed contradiction in Paul’s instructions, scholars have offered a plethora of solutions.²⁷ I put forth a reading of Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 that seeks to resolve any tensions between the two chapters. Moreover, I argue that when we pay close attention to the historical context the Corinthian Christ followers would have found themselves in, the tensions others have found are in fact not there. Paul’s instructions are both consistent and coherent. Here, I present a brief outline below of the various views scholars have of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, and then offer a concise sketch of how my proposed reading both resolves many of the tensions others have perceived and differs from the majority of scholarship on 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

Gregory W. Dawes perfectly catches the conundrum that faces the interpreter of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10:

Corinthians 8–11:1 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994); Christoph Heil, *Die Ablehnung der Speisegebote durch Paulus: Zur Frage nach der Stellung des Apostels zum Gesetz*, BBB 96 (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1994); Derek Newton, *Deity and Diet: The Dilemma of Sacrificial Food at Corinth*, JSNTSup 169 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth*; John Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A Social-Rhetorical Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1*, WUNT II/151 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Richard Lion-Seng Phua, *Idolatry and Authority: A Study of 1 Corinthians 8.1–11.1 in the Light of Jewish Diaspora*, LNTS 299 (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Rogers, *God and the Idols*.

There are also several studies that look into the rhetorical structure of 1 Corinthians, including chapters 8 and 10. Since my focus is on the historical situation and the practice of eating food offered to idols and the Greek and Roman practices of animal sacrifice, and how those practices can inform our reading of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, I do not engage with the rhetorical structure of the letter. Some of the more important works on this topic include, Wilhelm Wuellner, “Greek Rhetoric and Pauline Argumentation,” in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken, ThH 53 (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 177–88; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Rhetorical situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 386–403; John Fotopoulos, “The Rhetorical Situation, Arrangement, and Argumentation of 1 Corinthians 8:1–13: Insights into Paul’s Instructions of Idol-Food in Greco-Roman Context,” *GOTR* 47 (2002): 165–98; *idem*, “Arguments Concerning Food Offered to Idols: Corinthian Quotations and Pauline Refutations in a Rhetorical ‘Partitio’ (1 Corinthians 8:1–9),” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 611–31; Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*; Probst, *Paulus und der Brief*. Joop F. M. Smit, “The Rhetorical Disposition of First Corinthians 8:7–9:27,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 476–91.

²⁷ I will explore these under the next heading.

For many years chaps. 8 and 10 of 1 Corinthians have posed difficulties for interpreters. The principal difficulty has been that of finding a consistent teaching on the issue of ‘food offered to idols’ (8:1). At first sight, 1 Cor 8:7–13 would seem to imply that the eating of food offered to idols is itself a morally neutral act which should be avoided only because of the effect it may have on others. This position seems to be repeated in 10:23–11:1. Yet chap. 10 also contains a passionate denunciation of idolatry, and 10:14–22 suggests that eating food offered to idols is quite simply unacceptable.²⁸

Hence, the tension that arises from the contrast in Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 8, and what he later writes in chapter 10, is the key in why these two chapters have presented scholars with an interpretative dilemma. The most common solutions are as follows.

Johannes Weiss proposed one solution to the tensions between 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 in the early 1900s.²⁹ He suggested that the two chapters came from two different letters and that someone other than Paul joined together these two letters, which in turn led to the appearance that the apostle contradicts himself.³⁰ The predominant reason as to why some have suggested that 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 is made up of more than one letter is the disruptive nature of 10:1–22.³¹ Indeed, for Weiss the crux lay in Paul’s severe tone in 10:1–22 and the more lax, allowing tone in chapter 8 and 10:23–11:1.³² Even though the suggestion that 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 consists of more than one letter would provide us with a neat solution to the problem, scholars have, by and large, abandoned this suggestion and now view 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 as one, integral, and cohesive unit, and that these chapters of 1 Corinthians were meant to be read as such in its original

²⁸ Gregory W. Dawes, “The Danger of Idolatry: First Corinthians 8:7–13,” *CBQ* 58 (1996): 82–98, 82.

²⁹ Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, KEK 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910). Several scholars have followed Weiss, see, *inter alia*, Wolfgang Schenk, “Der 1. Korintherbrief als Briefsammlung,” *ZNW* 60 (1969): 219–63; Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings*, AGJU 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 23–27; Walter Schmitals, “Die Korintherbriefe als Briefsammlung,” *ZNW* 64 (1973): 263–88; L. L. Welborn, *An End to Enmity: Paul and the “Wrongdoer” of Second Corinthians* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 400; Khiok-Khng Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic*, BIS 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

³⁰ Cf. David R. Hall (*The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, JSNTSup 251 [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 46): “It is often asserted that 8.1–13 and 10.1–22 must belong to different letters because they present two inconsistent points of view.”

³¹ Cf. Barrett, “Things Sacrificed to Idols,” 149.

³² Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 212.

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