

Antisemitism and the Interpretation of Paul

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DRS, "Paul, the Jews, and Well-Meaning Translation: What Price *Einheit?*," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 69 (2013): 372-384

It all began with not learning a lesson about coming to lectures unprepared

Matthew 21 reports that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. That's an obvious allusion to Zechariah 9:9-10 (quoted there) where that's how the Messiah arrives, proclaiming peace to all nations: הִנֵּה מֶלֶכְךָ יָבוֹא לָךְ, צָדִיק וְנוֹשֵׁעַ הוּא; עָנִי וְרֹכֵב עַל-חֲמֹר, וְעַל-עֵיר בֶּן-אֲתָנוֹת.
.. לְגוֹיִם; וּמִשְׁלוֹ מֵיָם עַד-יָם, וּמִן-הָרַעַד אֶפְסַי-אֶרֶץ

But the New JPS translation reads: “Lo, your king is coming to you. He is victorious, triumphant, yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey foaled by a she-ass. He shall banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem; the warrior’s bow shall be banished. **He shall call on the nations to surrender**, and his rule shall extend from sea to sea and from ocean to land’s end.” With footnote to Deut 20:10-12 (לְהַלָּחֵם)
עָלֶיךָ-- וְקָרָאתָ אֵלָיָהּ, לְשָׁלוֹם. יֵא וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁלוֹם תַּעֲנֶנָּה, וּפְתַחְהָ לָךְ: וְהָיָה כָּל-הָעָם הַנִּמְצָא-בָּהּ, יִהְיוּ לְךָ לְמַס-- וְעַבְדוֹךָ.

Paul on “Judaism” (“Ioudaismos” - Ἰουδαϊσμός)

Galatians 1: [11] For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. **[12]** For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. **[13]** For you have heard of my former life in **Judaism** (ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ), how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; **[14]** and I advanced in **Judaism** (ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ) beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

[15] But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, **[16]** was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, **[17]** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus.

A deviant German translation, following Vatican II, and its correction a quarter-century later

Einheitsübersetzung, 1980

(13) Ihr habt doch gehört, wie ich früher als **gesetzestreuer Jude** gelebt habe, und wisst, wie maßlos ich die Kirche Gottes verfolgte und zu vernichten suchte. (14) In der Treue zum **jüdischen Gesetz** übertraf ich die meisten Altersgenossen in meinem Volk und mit dem größten Eifer setzte ich mich für die Überlieferungen meiner Väter ein.

Einheitsübersetzung, revised 2016

(13) Ihr habt doch von meinem früheren Lebenswandel im **Judentum** gehört und wisst, wie maßlos ich die Kirche Gottes verfolgte und zu vernichten suchte. (14) Im **Judentum** machte ich größere Fortschritte als die meisten Altersgenossen in meinem Volk und mit dem größten Eifer setzte ich mich für die Überlieferungen meiner Väter ein.

*Link to old and new [EHU](#)

Translation – It's not only philology*

Es gibt vier zentrale Veränderungen in der revidierten Übersetzung: (“There are four central changes in the revised translation “)

- Der Gottesname ist in Kapitälchen erkennbar. “God's name in small caps.”
- Die heutige gesellschaftliche Stellung der Frau ist in einer geschlechtersensiblen Sprache berücksichtigt. (“The social status of women today is taken into consideration via gender-sensitive language“)
- Es ergibt sich durch die neue Übersetzung ein anderes Juden- und Judasbild. (“The new translation engenders a different image of Jews and Judas.“)
- Einleitungen, viele Überschriften und Anmerkungen wurden völlig neu überarbeitet und auf aktuellen Stand gebracht. (“Introductions and many subtitles and annotations were revised and brought up to date“)

- * from the [explanatory material](#) accompanying the 2016 revised edition of the Einheitsübersetzung of the Bible

So too at 1 Macc 8:1, in both editions of EHU

EHU: “Judas aber, den man auch Makkabäer nennt, und seine Leute schlichen sich heimlich in die Dörfer und holten ihre Verwandten zu sich; auch gewannen sie die treu gebliebenen Juden (=the Jews who remained faithful [καὶ τοὺς μεμενηκότας ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαισμῷ]), sodass sie etwa sechstausend Mann zusammenbrachten.”

Revised Standard Version: “But Judas, who was also called Maccabeus, and his companions secretly entered the villages and summoned their kinsmen and enlisted those who had continued in the Jewish faith, and so they gathered about six thousand men.”

Two Pauline texts that typically fostered Antisemitism

Galatians 3

[1] O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? [2] Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? [3] Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? [4] Did you experience so many things in vain? -- if it really is in vain. [5] Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? [6] Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6)

[7] So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. [8] And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed" (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). [9] So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith. [10] For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them" (Deut 27:36).

[11] Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Habakkuk 2:4); [12] but the law does not rest on faith, for "He who does them shall live by them" (Lev 18:5).

[13] Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree" (Deut 21:23) -- [14] that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Romans 10

[1] Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. [2] I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. [3] For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. [4] For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.

[5] Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it (Lev 18:5 – 6 [אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם]). But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down), [7] or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

[8] But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); (Deut 30:11-14), [9] because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[10] For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.

[11] The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame" (Isa 28:16: הַמֵּאֲמִיִן לֹא יִחְיֶה — καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ καταίσχυσθῆ). [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon⁷ all who call

Post-Holocaust Recognition

J. Isaac, *Jésus et Israël* (1948; English 1971)

J. Isaac, *The Christian Roots of Antisemitism* (1960)

R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (1974)

Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity (ed. A. Davies; New York: Paulist Press, 1979)

Attempts to neutralize Paul's anti-Jewish statements, "on the part of those whose eyes have been shocked open" (Gaston)

1. Emphasize Paul's "Jewishness" and love for Israel, esp. Romans 9-11 [next slides]

W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948)

J. Munck, *Christus und Israel: Eine Auslegung von Römer 9-11* (1956; English 1967)

K. Stendahl, *Der Jude Paulus und wir Heiden: Anfragen an das abendländische Christentum* (1978) [*Paul the Jew and We Pagans: Questions Put to Western Christianity*]

P. Lapide, *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle* (1984)

Paul's Jewish Matrix (ed. T. G. Casey and J. Taylor; Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011)

2. Emphasize Gentile addressees (so denying validity of Law does not apply to Jews)

L. Gaston, "Paul and the Torah," in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (ed. A. Davies; New York: Paulist, 1979), 48-71

S. Ruzer, "Paul's Stance on the Torah Revisited: Gentile Addressees and the Jewish Setting," in: *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (ed. T. G. Casey and J. Taylor; Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011), 75-97

3. Deny that Paul was right about Jews viewing Torah as means to salvation. Rather: "covenantal nomism."

esp. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (1977), including long opening chapter (pp. 33-59) on "The Persistence of the View of Rabbinic religion as one of legalistic works-righteousness" (*Werkheiligkeit*)

Romans 9-11

Romans 9: [1] I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, [2] that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. [3] For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. [4] They are **Israelites**, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; [5] to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.

Romans 11 [1] I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an **Israelite**, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.* [2] God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. [...] [25] Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of **Israel**, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, [26] and so all **Israel** will be saved; as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; (Isaiah 59:20-21; 27:9) [27] "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." [28] As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. [29] For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

**So too Paul in Philippians 3:5: [4] Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:*

*[5] circumcised on the eighth day, **of the people of Israel**, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born*

The 1980 EHU avoidance of Paul's statement at Galatians 1, that he had formerly been a Jew, is an example of no. 1

Namely, if Paul gave up something, it was not being a Jew; rather, it was adherence to Jewish legal practice. But of course he remained a Jew.

A quarter-century later, revisers of the EHU could revert to accurate translation without giving up that stance – by adopting one of the other two possibilities.

This is similar to scholarship on Zealots: after a decade or two in which, to overcome an impetus to Christian hatred of Jews, Jesus was made to be a anti-Roman rebel, scholarship backed away from that extreme but without giving up the good intentions that it bespoke.

Q.E.D.

Thank you very much