

**O Dikaios Ek Pistews Zesetai' in Intercultural Translation: 'Living
Justly' as Paul's Jewish Paideia to Roman Greeks**
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I. Guideposts

What could Paul's scriptural language of 'righteousness by faith' mean to his first audience(s) in Rome? Professor Campbell highlights Paul's Judaism, arguing that the theme reflects an intra-Jewish scriptural debate with a hypothetical Jewish-Christian interlocutor and builds in part on Jewish apocalypticism and notions of divine kingship. Professor Elliott instead focuses on Roman ideology, arguing that right status before God is best interpreted against that backdrop, and Paul's hypothetical interlocutor(s) in Rom. 2, is (therefore?) rightly understood as a non-Judean interlocutor.

This essay offers a congenial counterpoint to both papers, arguing that we must move past this "Judaism-(Greco-)Romanism" divide in the interpretation of Paul's scriptural rhetoric in Romans. While both are critical, neither Paul's Judaism nor the Roman ideological and political environment *alone* reveals the meaning of scriptural themes or the identity of Paul's interlocutor(s) *to his first audience(s)*. Paul and his Roman Greek rhetorical audience lived in a complex interethnic echo chamber, the lived collision of Greek, Roman, and Judean ethnic cultures. The meaning of scriptural phrases like "o dikaios ek pistews" and the identity and rhetorical function of Paul's interlocutor(s) in Rom 1-4 must therefore be understood in this larger frame, as complex enculturated moments of interethnic *fusion and translation*, the *alchemy* of Judean and Greek religious, philosophical, and political ideas and ideological engagements with their 'others,' within the larger frame of the Roman imperial gaze of both subject groups. To understand what citations of scripture could have meant in their new contexts, we must then imagine, first, what the terms and notions embedded in those citations themselves signified to their audiences, within their complex intercultural echo chamber. Second, signification should be understood as multilayered and multivalent, so that in imaginatively (re)constructing the shape of this echo chamber, we must pay special attention to competing, sometimes conflictual interethnic (sometimes stereotyped) codings of such ideas (as justice, faithfulness, and law), and especially to the political, rhetorical, and philosophical codings that regulated not just terms (like *dikaios* and *pistis*) but, at the larger level, to what counted as the kind of high status *paideia* (or education) a teacher like Paul would give to the Romans. Thus, third, we must imagine what the rhetorical use of Israel's sacred text, by a Jewish teacher speaking to Roman Greeks, might conveyed about the status and (ethnoreligious) value of that sacred text to Paul and his rhetorical audience.

What I offer for our discussion is, then, two *performances* of this thesis about "intercultural translation," two sustained "intercultural" translations of Paul's use-of-scripture in their

rhetorical contexts, in Romans 1:1-17, and 2:17-4:25.¹ Through these performances, I wish to show that *Paul used the scriptures of Israel to call his audience of Roman Greeks to see themselves as Jews “of the heart,” to change their habits to live obediently to the God of Israel, and, thus, to live daily as just men of Israel, “living laws” capable of being loyal to their God.*

To argue this case, which is a restatement of 1:1-17, and especially, the Habakkuk citation of 1:17, I show that Paul deployed Israel's scripture to portray himself as the best Jewish teacher of Roman Greek believers in the best (that is, Jewish) way of life—better than his Roman rival (1:18-2:16) or non-Christian Jewish counterparts (2:17-4:25). In 1:1-17, Paul introduces himself to the Romans as the slave of Christ charged by the God of Israel to teach them the good news about the Son of God that is found in Israel's *scripture*. Heard in the heart of the Empire, Paul's scriptural introduction of himself, his education (*paideia*) in "dikaioyne," and charge to the audience to be obedient and loyal (1:16-17), is infused with imperial resonances of divine kingship, justice (*iusticia*), and fidelity (*fides*). This infusion gives the highest possible status to Paul's thesis—that Roman Greeks are not to be ashamed of the (Jewish) gospel because it is the power of Israel's God for salvation and in it, his supreme justice is revealed for all people. Further explored within Paul's 'philosophic' sting operation against a personified Roman opponent in 1:18-2:16, this claim delivers the counter-imperial punch that only the God of Israel, through his Son, the Davidic King, has brought true justice to all. He alone is faithful and just, and thus, he alone can save all and enable all to "live justly," in faithful imitation of Christ's faithfulness (Rom. 15:1-6). In short, the argument that God is just while Roman leaders are not teaches the Roman Greeks why they should be good Jews and live justly, by *pistis/fides* to the God of Israel, rather than give their ultimate loyalty to Rome. Having removed "the Roman way" as a more just life path than Judaism, Paul then turns in 2:17-4:25, to a personified debate with a non-Christian Jewish teacher of Gentiles, to show his audience that he is the best *Jewish* teacher of a just way of

¹ A few guides to reading Paul's use of scripture in "intercultural translation." When we read imaginatively to reconstruct "first meanings" of scripture in their new contexts in Romans, I believe we have to read at multiple levels at once: first, looking for what the specific terms and ideas within a citation mean in the cultural environment in which Paul and his rhetorical audience live (in other words, their meaning is *never* circumscribed by original context or even the lived Jewish tradition of interpretation of a given text. The pieces rather have "free" interpretive play, gathering up and retaining cultural meanings from the immediate political, ethnic, and cultural environment in which they occur, especially, in this context, to the political, philosophical, and rhetorical contexts that signified high status in Rome). Second, we must look for what terms and ideas cited mean and how they function rhetorically at a second level, within the staged pedagogical exchange between Paul and his personified interlocutors—that is, we must look for what they teach us about the overall thrust of those exchanges. And third, we need to ask what these pedagogical exchanges themselves, in which scriptural instruction is offered, signify to their rhetorical audiences. E.g., what does the fact Paul repeatedly cites scripture in debates with a fellow Jewish teacher of Gentiles, to a rhetorical audience of "wise Greeks," teach us about *what Paul is teaching his audience* about the "meaning" of scripture for them? Only by attending to all of these levels of meaning-making at once (and probably more) can we (re)construct imaginatively a portrait of how Paul's use of scripture was instruction for them.

life, which is based on the Jewish *summum bonum*, life in accord with Torah. 2:17-4:25 is a highly philosophic scriptural debate with a fellow Jewish teacher in the real meaning of Torah for God's people: Paul demonstrates that his form of Judaism retains its unique advantage (over a Greek or Roman philosophic way of life) to provide salvation and a just life path to all. He does this by redefining "law" as scriptural testimony for his internal Judaism through Christ (3:1-8, 9-20)—a Judaism which fusing Roman Stoic notions of "spirit," "mind," and "living law" to his own definition of Torah-Judaism—and by using that lawful testimony to demonstrate that the God of Israel and Jesus Christ are faithful and righteous sovereigns (3:21-26) who realize the Torah promise that Gentiles will become sons of Abraham by faith and "inherit the world" (3:27-4:25).

Paying attention to the intercultural resonances of Paul's use of scripture teaches us that the heart of Paul's good news to the Romans was a Romanized counter-Roman understanding of Israel's scripture. Scripture, in Romans was and was part of Paul's 'philosophic' Jewish Paideia in just living, offered within a high-status Greco-Roman rhetorical frame, infused with Greco-Roman philosophical and political ideas, and thus shaped to call his Romanized Greek audience to (re)turn to lives of faithfulness to Israel's God. Paul authorizes Israel's Scripture, fused to Greek and Roman cultural goods, to mediate to his Romanized Greek audience the larger 'truth' that Judaism is superior to Romanitas as a way of life and Paul's is the best kind of Jewish instruction for non-Judeans.

Final words before beginning. For the purposes of this essay, I assume a few things I argue elsewhere. 1) that Romans is a high-status, Greco-Roman protreptic speech, the first four chapters of which censure and educate his two personified rivals, a Roman Stoic Leader (1:18-2:16) and a fellow Jewish teacher of Gentiles (2:17-4:25) in the gospel in the best way of life. I have offered a brief overview of my reading of the letter, pp. 3-6 below, before interpreting the text. 2) I assume what many others have shown, that the rhetorical audience is *explicitly* identified from the beginning of Romans as upwardly mobile Greeks in Rome, and I assume that this identity is crucial for interpreting the rhetoric (and function of scripture) in Romans. All protrepsis is targeted to a specific rhetoric audience. 3) For those who are unfamiliar with my thesis that 1:18-2:16 is a prosopopoiac debate with a Roman Stoic Judge, I have appended a version of that argument, coming out in my book *Pax Christi: Empire, Identity, and Protreptic Rhetoric in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, at the end of this paper (beginning on p. 41).

II. The Shape of Paul's Roman Λόγος Προτρεπτικός

Romans is a practical protreptic exhortation to a target rhetorical audience of Roman Greeks that calls them to change their habits: to resist accommodating their identity to Romanitas, to strengthen their allegiance to the God of Israel, and to show fidelity to their God by obediently loving his people, their kin.² This, I argue, is the meaning of "living

² Paul's education was sufficient to have composed a protreptic discourse. His letters suggest that, in addition to a substantive education in scriptures of Israel, he had had the equivalent of instruction with a *grammaticus*, as well as tutoring in letter writing and elementary rhetorical exercises. See Alexander, "Paul

righteously, by faith” in Romans. Like the believers in Clement’s *Protrepticus*, who were enticed away from their Christian faith by Greek custom, the Greek target audience of Romans is rejecting both the circumcised and their Jewish identity in Christ in favor of the prestige and advantages of *Romanitas*. Paul responds by casting himself as a high-status foreigner (a Jewish teacher of Gentiles) appointed by his Lord to exhort Roman elite with his scriptural παιδεία (1:1-15).³ His scriptural exhortation is a counter-imperial, ethnic protrepsis crafted to prove that Greek believers should not be ashamed of their life-in-Christ because it reflects the absolute justice of Israel’s God, who offered his Son as a noble sacrifice potent enough to save all peoples, Jew first and also Greek. Indeed, it ends Greeks’ race against Jews for advantage, making them kin through Christ within eschatological (ethnic) Israel (1:16-17).⁴ Paul thus depicts his Judaism as superior to *Romanitas* (1:18-2:16), and he calls arrogant Greeks to embrace and obey it (5:1-15:13). But he also accommodates Greek arrogance by redefining Judaism in high-status, Roman ‘philosophic’ (Stoicized) terms—as a noetic or spiritual Judaism—to make it palatable enough to obey. That is, he internalizes Judaism and its law as a “matter of the heart” or πνεῦμα—indeed, the ruling πνεῦμα of Christ, their “master good”—so that his audience can remain externally Greek (physically uncircumcised, avoiding recognizably Jewish practices of law) while calling them as the “strong” to self-lower for their “weak” Jewish kin.

The body of Paul’s protrepsis is structured as follows. Romans 1:18-4:25 comprises Paul’s demonstration of the thesis that “he is not ashamed of the gospel” because it is the justice of God to save all people (ὁ ἐνδεικτικός). It is composed of two proofs (*probatio*) that form a three-way comparison of βίαι: philosophic (Stoicized) *Romanitas*; the Judaism of Paul’s rival Jewish teacher of Gentiles; and Paul’s noetic Judaism for Greeks. In short, 1:16-4:25 is a “theoretical protrepsis” that deploys the stereotype of protrepsis as philosophic conversion literature, within a bi-level discourse aimed at his target audience of Greeks (who are only revealed at its end, 4:23-25), to demonstrate the superiority of Pauline Judaism to *Romanitas*.

As in *Wisdom* and the protreptic speeches of Pseudo-Anacharsis and Tatian, Paul’s first proof is a debilitating censure of Paul’s leading rival in the competition for Greeks, a Roman Stoic ruler-judge who represents *Romanitas* (ὁ ἐλεγκτικός using αἰτιολογία, ἡθοποιία, and stereotype 1:18-2:16). Following standard protreptic practice, Paul censures him for inconsistency in living his *summum bonum*, life in accord with nature, by skewering him with a well-known stereotype of hypocritical sexy Stoic ruler-judges. Paul deploys it in a rhetorical “sting operation” that condemns this Roman magistrate for judging others for impiety and unnatural acts while, contrary to nature, doing them himself. Standing mute under the weight of this charge, as well as that of mental and civic impotence,⁵ the Roman judge and his emasculated judgment are vividly contrasted with the justice and magnanimity

and the Hellenistic Schools”; Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 17; and Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 29-59.

³ Cf. Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks*; *Wisdom of Solomon*; Clement, *Protrepticus*; Ps.-Anacharsis, *Ninth Letter*; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*.

⁴ Romans is compatible with *Wisdom of Solomon* on this point. On literary parallels and possible dependence between Romans and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, see Grafe, “Das Verhältnis”; Gaventa, “Rhetoric of Death”; and Winston, *Wisdom*. Winston dates *Wisdom* as late as 38-41 CE, making a genetic relationship questionable.

⁵ On the practice of leaving the censured rival mute, cf. Ps.-Anacharsis, *Ninth Letter*; Maximus of Tyre, *Discourse* 36.

of the sovereign God of Israel, who despite his righteous judgment of such practices, has given even the judge a chance to “change his mind” and do the good required by God (2:6-7). But the Roman Stoic cannot: while Paul grants theoretically that some Gentiles can do things of Torah-law naturally, even Stoics believe that few people can live the Stoic ideal of the sage as a natural “living law” (2:12-16). Paul thereby proves the Roman’s Stoic *summum bonum* of nature inefficacious as a viable means for everyone to do good, and he eliminates *Romanitas* as a rival to his way of life. (Meanwhile, he elides the “living law” of nature with Torah law as a means to do good.) By implication, Roman rulers must be recognized not as cosmic kings but as (mere) brokers of God’s wise rule. While Paul later warns believers to be subject to imperial magistrates (οἱ ἄρχοντες, 13:1-7), he, like *Wisdom* 6:1-22, subordinates them to God—and to his judgment should they act unjustly toward his kin.

Like the protreptic *Epistle to Diognetus* later would, Paul then launches a second staged argument for the benefit of his Greek audience, this time with a rival Jewish teacher of Gentiles (2:17-4:25). As the Stoic Seneca debated only Posidonius in *Epistle* 90, Paul debate “true Judaism for Gentiles” with a Jewish equal in order to demonstrate the superiority of Paul’s version to *Romanitas*. As he did with the Roman judge, Paul first censures his Jewish rival for violating his *summum bonum*, life in accord with Torah, by deploying a Greco-Roman stereotype of Jews as misanthropic law-breakers (ὁ ἐλεγκτικός using stereotype, ἠθοποιία, 2:17-24). He thereby demonstrates the teacher’s inconsistency and shows that even elite Jews cannot keep the whole law. But Paul does not thereby invalidate the teacher’s way of life or his *summum bonum* or, in fact, the ethnic practices associated with it (ἔργα νόμου). Rather, he redefines them all, using scripture to exhort the Jewish teacher through a diatribal dialogue to see that the *summum bonum* of Judaism is the internal *living law* of the spirit (ὁ προτρεπτικός using πρωσοποποιία, 2:25-4:25). Judaism is noetic—defined, as the Stoics thought, in the rightness of “the heart” or inner spiritual intention (ἐν πνεύματι, 2:29).⁶ For Greeks to live as Jews requires only a noetic or spiritual circumcision, not strict maintenance of ἔργα νόμου like fleshly circumcision. Thus, Paul redefines ethnic Judaism for Greeks, in Christ, as a Stoicized, pneumatic Judaism of the mind, and includes Greeks in ethnic Israel without circumcision or other “legal” markers of their identity as Jews.

When the Jewish teacher objects to the implicit conclusion of this argument, that Greeks with a pure “heart” can effectively remain Greek—not doing “works of law” like circumcision—and be Jews (2:28),⁷ Paul responds that the true advantage of Judaism inheres in the law’s promises regarding the nations themselves (3:2, 31). Paul argues from the law (Gen. 15-17) that because of his πίστις, God promised Abraham three things (prior to the giving of law): that circumcision would be the royal “signet ring” (σφραγίδα) sealing his promise that faith/fulness was the original marker of covenant inclusion; that Abraham would therefore be forefather not only of the fleshly circumcision, but also the spiritual circumcision, the nations who have the faith of Abraham; and as adopted kin into ethnic Israel, faith/ful nations along with the fleshly circumcision would inherit the world together, “because of the promise” based on the “righteousness of faith” (4:1-25). That promise was realized through Christ’s sacrifice (3:1-26, 4:24-25). Because it was the free gift (χάρις or *beneficium*) of God to all people revealed apart from Torah law, it acquitted all freely, thereby tearing down the dividing wall (διαστολή) between Jew and Greek, demonstrating God’s

⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 215.

⁷ Paul only fully revealed the reason in 8:1-11: Greeks with the pure πνεῦμα of Christ could be a living law, doing the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου without doing the ἔργα νόμου.

impartial justice, and proving to the Jewish teacher the superiority of Paul's spiritual Judaism in Christ. In his concluding surprise turn to his target audience of Greeks, Paul the underscores that the God of Israel has ended the Graeco-Jewish struggle for advantage by granting high standing and advantage to all people through Christ (4:23-25). All can be "just men" because of faithfulness of the living ΠΙΣΤΙΣ (Jesus) and by remaining faithful to the God of Israel by themselves living ΠΙΣΤΙΣ. Thus, in 2:17-4:25, *Paul uses scriptural citations, imagery, and the "figure" of law, within a Greco-Roman philosophical rhetoric and fused to Greco-Roman (particularly Stoic) philosophical notions of "the good," to identify the great good of Judaism as live in according with Torah, the signal feature of "Judaism of the heart" as a noetic, spiritual circumcision that allows believers to live-as-scripture/law and thus, be "living laws," "Jews of the heart." In short, Paul uses the scripture of Israel to redefines ethnic Judaism for Greeks, in Christ, as a Stoicized, pneumatic lawful Judaism of the mind, and thus, to include Greeks in Israel without circumcision or other "legal" markers of their ethnic identity as Jews.*⁸

⁸ The rest of the argument: Having proven his gospel honorable, in 5:1-15:13, *Paul exhorts self-interested Greek believers to the obedience of their Jewish faith—that is, to their duty in response to that gift, peace before God (ὁ προτρεπτικός, 5:1-15:13).* 5:1-15:13 is a coherent, practical exhortation of the Greek strong to "live by faithfulness" (1:17), changing their behavior from factiousness to community peaceableness by changing their habits of mind through the aid of their "master good," the ΠΝΕΥΜΑ of Christ (12:2). Redefining benefaction (ἀγαθοποιεῖν) as an imitation of the noble suffering of their Lord, Paul argues that Greeks' obedience or *fides* to the God of Israel is constituted in acts of peaceable self-lowering to raise up socially weak Jews. In other words, Paul calls Greek believers to demonstrate their faithfulness (*fides*/ ΠΙΣΤΙΣ) to their Lord by "doing good" (ἀγαθοποιεῖν), imitating Christ's rule and lowering themselves for "weak" (Jews) in order to make them strong. This, Paul argues, is the δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου, the goal and the work of the law for Roman Greeks (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου; 2:15, 8:4, 13:8, 15:1-6).

Calling Forth Identity: Romans as Protrepis to Roman Greeks to Obey the Rightful King
A Performance of Habakkuk 2:4 (1:1-17)

Who then is King of all things? It is God, the measure of the truth of all existence....The unjust and unfair idols find a home hidden in...the polluted soul. But the one true God, who is the only just measure because He is always uniformly and unchangeably impartial, measures and weighs all things...I would ask you...who are God's last creation and who have received your soul from him whether...you should pay homage to the tyrant instead of the rightful king?...Let us therefore change our minds (μετανοέω) and pass from ignorance to knowledge, senselessness to sense, intemperance to temperance, injustice to justice—from godlessness to God. – Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus to the Greeks*

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. – Mark 11:9-10

Passing under the shadow of the forum, by temples dedicated to emperors and an inscription to the “divine Julius Caesar,” Phoebe carried Paul’s letter from the Roman colony of Corinth to the heart of the Empire.⁹ The letter, once delivered, introduced the apostle Paul to his Roman audience as the messenger of the Jewish messianic king: “Paul, slave of Jesus Christ, called apostle, appointed for the good news of God (εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ), which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy writings, concerning his son, descended from the seed of David according to the flesh (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα), commissioned Son of God in Power according to the spirit of holiness (ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης) on account of his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν). Through him we have received favor and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations for the sake of his name—including you, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ...favor and peace to you from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-7).” Living in the Golden Age of the wise-emperor Nero Caesar and the Stoic Seneca, surrounded by the trappings of the imperial cult, the Romans must have heard loud imperial echoes when Paul named his Lord, a Jew crucified by the Romans, both seed of David and Son of God. In the words of Adela Yarbro Collins, “It is highly significant...that kings and other rulers were consistently portrayed as...‘son of god’...In the early Roman imperial period, the title θεοῦ υἱός was used for Augustus. Doubtless, residents of the Mediterranean world familiar with the ruler cult would have associated the idea that Jesus was the messiah, the king of Israel, with this usage.”¹⁰ Doubtless, the Romans did: Paul conjoins a title with strong imperial overtones to a Jewish royal title to claim that Roman believers’ rightful king, the king to whom they owed obedience, was the Davidic Messiah Jesus. As Ambrosiaster said, Paul called “the Lords of the Gentiles [to] bow before a promise made to the Jews.”¹¹

⁹ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 298-99.

¹⁰ Yarbro Collins, “Mark and His Readers,” 87.

¹¹ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* (CSEL 81:21, 23). All citations of patristic commentators on Romans come from Bray, 1998.

Put less elliptically, Paul's letter to the Romans reads as a counter-imperial protreptic speech that *from its first sentence* highlights the sovereign superiority of his Jewish God, the gospel of his Son, and scriptural παιδεία to the culture of Rome's rulers. In a world in which mere whispers of wise rule evoke the conventions of good kingship, Paul's rhetorical elevation of Jesus' lordship over Caesar's rule is not subtle. The introduction (*exordium*, 1:1-12) and thesis (*propositio*, 1:16-17) of Romans resonate with its language and themes, which repeat and crescendo in the speech's summing exhortation (15:7-13). For instance, the crucial phrase εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ (1:1) carries an implicit contrast with Roman *imperium*.¹² Septuagintal instances of the term refer to good news, especially of victory in battle and, by extension, the in-breaking of God's rule or salvation. But "for the inhabitants of the Roman Empire [the term also] had special associations with the Emperor-cult, since the announcements of such events as the birth of an heir to the Emperor, his coming-of-age, and his accession, were referred to as εὐαγγέλια. There is thus in the Christian [sic] use of the word an implicit contrast between the εὐαγγέλιον which may truly be termed εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ...and these other εὐαγγέλια."¹³ Framed as a promise foretold in Israel's scripture (1:2) and linked through apposition to Paul's self-designation as ἀπόστολος and δούλος Χριστοῦ, εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ marks the apostle as the high-status agent commissioned to deliver the scriptural news of God's in-breaking reign.¹⁴

Moreover, the subject of his instruction is the three-fold regency of Christ—Davidic king, Son of God in Power, and Lord (1:3-4, 7). Paul begins his kingship discourse by grounding the εὐαγγέλιον in the physical descent of the Son ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ (1:3). As John Collins has shown, in the first century CE, this phrase reflects the interpretation of the royal Psalms (e.g. 2, 18, 110), 2 Samuel 7, and Isaiah (11, 40-66) as references to the Davidic messiah "who would restore the kingdom of Israel."¹⁵ Called the Messiah of Righteousness, the Shoot of Jesse, the Branch of David, and the Son of God,¹⁶ the Davidic messiah was widely depicted as a political warrior-king who would decimate Israel's enemies (in this period, the Romans—the Satan or *Kittim*) and inaugurate an eschatological age of peace, justice, and holiness in Israel.¹⁷ Thus, the *Psalms of Solomon* invokes Isaiah 11:2-4 and Ps. 2:9 to call for the restoration of Davidic rule and the eradication of Gentile tyranny: "See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel...undergird him with strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers...in wisdom and

¹² None of Paul's other undisputed letters features the term as early or as prominently. See Walker, "'Paul's Offer of Leniency,'" 218 esp. n. 247; Cranfield, *Romans*, 55, 65.

¹³ Cranfield, *Romans*, 55. As a reference to the salvific inbreaking of God's reign in the scriptures, see Ps. 40:9, 96:2, Is 40:9, 52:7, 60:6, 61:1.

¹⁴ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles* (CSEL 81:16-17); Cranfield, *Romans*, 51; Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation," 135. On high-status enslavement, see Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*. Ἀπόστολος often referred to soldiers commissioned or dispatched with a message. Ἀφωρισμένος implies consecration for sacred duty (Num 8:11, Lev. 20:26). It was often used with ἀγιάζειν (cf. 1:4, 7).

¹⁵ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 209, esp. 49, 3-73. Collins traces four types of messianic figures in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other literature: king, priest, prophet, and heavenly messiah (12, 195). Each of the figures is a ruler (Walker, "'Paul's Offer of Leniency,'" 221). The royal messiah figures prominently in *Psalms of Solomon* 17, in contrast to Hasmonean rule and Pompey, and in the Dead Sea Scrolls and 4 *Ezra*, in contrast to Rome.

¹⁶ On the messianic titles, see esp. 4Q285, 4QpGen, 4Q246, 4Q252.

¹⁷ On the Romans, see 1QM, 4QM, 1QpHab 6-8, 4 *Ezra* 11-12, 2 *Baruch* 40, 72, Rev. 13. On purity from sin, see *Ps. Sol.* 17.36.

righteousness to drive out [from Jerusalem] the sinners from the inheritance” (17:21-25). Peshet Isaiah (4QpIs^a) also deploys Isaiah 11’s root of Jesse/branch of David motif to portray a Davidic messiah battling the *Kittim* or Romans at the end of days.¹⁸ Finally, both non-Christian and Christian Jewish messianic interpretations conflated the image of the Davidic messiah with the sonship of God.¹⁹ For example, the Qumran florilegium 4Q174 unites 2 Sam. 7:14, Ps. 89:26-27, and Ps. 2:2, 7-8 to praise his eschatological rule: “The Lord declares to you that He will build you a House. I will raise up your seed after you. I will establish the throne of his kingdom [for ever]. I [will be] his father and he shall be my son. He is the Branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of days.”²⁰ Contemporary Jews’ use of these texts to identify the royal Davidic messiah as eschatological restorer suggests, as Christopher Whitsett argues, that Paul’s dual identification of Jesus as seed of David and Son of God represents a fulfillment of the scriptural promise that the Jewish Messiah would come to renew Israel (9:5; cf. 3:2).²¹ Paul’s summing scriptural catenae (15:7-13), replete with allusions and citations of these psalmic texts, confirms that impression (Ps. 89:3, 18:50, 117:1, Is. 11:10). In Ambrosiaster’s words, “Why is Christ said to be from the root of Jesse? . . . It is because he is said to be the Son of David on account of the kingdom, and just as he was born [sic] of God to be king, so also he was born of David according to the flesh.”²² As the *inclusio* to 1:3 and thus, to the whole of Paul’s protreptic speech, Paul’s invocation of Jesus’ Davidic kingship in 15:12 underscores to the Romans Paul’s seminal claim that the Lord “who was and remains a servant to the circumcision” (15:8) will also “rise to rule” the Romans at the eschaton (Is. 11:10).

Thus, Paul’s assertion of Jesus’ kingship is not *simply* a fulfillment of Israelite prophecy, as Paul’s titular (scriptural) play in 1:3-4 and 15:7-13 might suggest. To his Roman audience, that fulfillment, which is based on Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, implies God’s commissioning of the Jewish king crucified by the Romans as *their* ascended Lord and Son of God in Power.²³ In other words, Christ’s just act of noble suffering gained him a kingdom, a name, and a people that included the nations. So, I believe, would ancient Romans have understood Paul’s rhetoric. In the first place, the phrase θεοῦ υἱός was repeatedly used as a title for Hellenistic and Roman rulers divinized after death (Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies, Augustus, Claudius). Augustus, for instance, is called θεοῦ Καίσαρος θεοῦ υἱοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Σωτῆρος Ἐλευθερίου, or “God Caesar son of God, Augustus, savior of freedom.”²⁴ As Yarbro Collins points out, Greeks even identified specific, living emperors by this title and participated in imperial cults to show εὐσέβεια (piety, *pietas*) to Roman emperors.²⁵ Paul’s use of the cult title as a name for the risen Christ (1:4-5) is therefore an ideological challenge both to “the most revered figure of the cult,” the emperor, and to the

¹⁸ Ibid., 57-60.

¹⁹ Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David,” 677-78.

²⁰ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 163-64.

²¹ Whitsett, “Son of God, Seed of David”; cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 34.

²² Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* (CSEL 81:463).

²³ Ὀρτίζειν means to “appoint” or “install” to office, paralleling ἀφορτίζειν (1:1).

²⁴ SEG XI 922-3. Kim, “The Anarthrous υἱός θεοῦ,” 232.

²⁵ Collins, “Mark and His Readers,” 96; citing Simon Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 79, 93. Cf. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 359.

Augustan imperial values of moral and religious excellence that such reverence implies (cf. Rom. 1:18, ἀσεβεία).²⁶

In the second place, the lordship (κύριος) Paul says Jesus attained through resurrection implies world rule. As Tae Hun Kim describes, extant inscriptions repeatedly name Claudius and Nero Caesar “Lord,” and Nero the “Savior” and “Benefactor of the Whole World.”²⁷ Paul described Christ likewise: “He humbled himself, became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:8-10). Again: “There is no dividing wall between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches upon all who call upon him. For ‘everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Rom. 10:12-13). And again: “As it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God’” (Rom. 14:11). In other words, Paul’s identification of the crucified Messiah as Son of God *in power* resonates as a counter-imperial statement about the identity of the Lord of the cosmos to whom “every knee shall bow”—the once-dead, now-ascended Christ-King is now God’s Vice Regent who will return as Savior (ὁ σωτήρ; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23-28, 43; Phil. 3:20).²⁸ Thus, by letter’s end, Paul’s introduction of the “seed of David” leaves no room for error as to its ethnic or imperial implications: Paul’s εὐαγγέλιον relays to the Roman Greeks Israel’s scriptural παιδεία that the true enthroned Lord is Jesus Christ, the crucified Davidic king, whom they should honor and obey because his resurrection promised the eschatological restoration of “all Israel.”²⁹

But the questions are by what means and to whom, this restoration (σωτηρία, 1:16)? The careful reader might worry that Paul’s announcement of God’s “good news”

²⁶ Kim, “The Anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ,” 240; D’Angelo, “Εὐσεβεία,” 141.

²⁷ For this list, see Kim, *The Anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ*, 235. Claudius: Τιβέριος Κλαύδιος κύριος (SB 4331) = “Tiberius Claudius lord”; Τιβέριος Κλαύδιος Καίσαρ Σεβαστός αυτοκράτωρ ὁ κύριος (GOA 1038) = “Emperor Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus, the lord”; θεὸς Κλαύδιος (PSI 1235; POxy 713) = “Claudius god”; θεὸς Καῖρος (POxy 808; POxy 1021) = “Caesar god”; θεὸς Σεβαστός (PMich 244) = “Augustus god”; ὁ κύριος (OPetr 209) = “The lord.” Nero (54-58 CE): Νέρων ὁ κύριος (PLond 1215; POxy 246; GOA 1038) = “Nero the lord”; Νέρων Καίσαρ ὁ κύριος (OPetr 288; POxy 246) = “Nero Caesar the lord”; Νέρων Κλαύδιος Καίσαρ... ὁ σωτήρ καὶ εὐεργέτης τῆς οἰκουμένης (OGIS 668) = “Nero Claudius Caesar... the savior and benefactor of the inhabited world”; Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀρχὴ ὧν τε πάντων ἀγαθῶν (POxy 1021) = “The good god of the inhabited world, the beginning of all good things”; τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ μεγίστου θεῶν (IM 157b) = “the son of the greatest of the gods”; ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου κύριος Νέρων (SIG 814) = “Nero Lord of the whole world.” For scholarship of the royal connotations of κύριος, see Walker, “‘Paul’s Offer of Leniency,’” 208 n. 221.

²⁸ In Paul’s letters, σωτηρία almost always refers to future eschatological deliverance from judgment (1 Cor. 5:5, 3:15; Rom. 5:9-10, 13:11; Phil. 1:28, 2:18; 1 Th. 5:8-9). On its imperial valence, see Phil. 3:20; Yarbrow Collins, “The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult.” When paired with δύναμις, the term σωτηρία can refer to healing (as in magical papyri) or as in Philippians, to the political power of lordship.

²⁹ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* (CSEL 81:13, 15); cf. Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 59. On the importance of Jesus’ Davidic heritage, see also Ignatius, *To the Smyrnians* 1 (ANF 1:86); Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 59; Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1:94-104. Augustine was basically alone in contrasting Christ’s “weak” Davidic sonship to the power of his “spiritual” sonship (*Rudimentary Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* 4.4, 5.7 [*Patrologia Latina* 35.2090-91]).

encourages real-time war with Rome: for an anti-Roman messianic warrior-king identified as Lord and Son of God in Power poses an unquestionable ideological challenge to *imperium*.³⁰ To be sure, Paul's depiction of Jesus emphasizes the identification of the Davidic Christ as the Messiah of Righteousness (cf. Rom. 10:3-13) as well as the Son of God and Root of Jesse (11:16-24, 15:12) who brings justice and holiness to Israel. Further, as I have argued elsewhere, Paul deploys a devastating censure of Roman ruler-judges' sexual, civic, and mental emasculation to undercut the ideological power of Rome over Greek believers' identity (1:18-2:16).³¹ Finally, Paul ends his letter to the Romans with an ominous statement of the eschatological hope—the promise that “the God of Peace will soon crush the Satan under your feet” (16:20; cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-27).³² But Paul's claim that Jesus Christ is supreme ruler does not imply a call for a Jewish war against Nero; if it did, Paul would ‘loose’ his audience immediately. His rhetorical goal is rather more complicated: to underscore the royal status of the crucified Messiah while reconfiguring the conventional portrait of the Davidic king to appeal to anti-Jewish Greek believers, so that they will accept their identity as Jews under the Empire and live peaceably with their kin and Roman authorities.

As we shall see, Paul makes this argument, first, by redefining the Davidic Christ as the advocate for his people; as the enthronement language of Rom. 8:33 indicates, he typically delegates the roles of eschatological judge and warrior to the Father (see 1:18-2:16, 14:10, and 16:20).³³ As Donald Walker describes in a comparison with Roman imperial trials:

When the Senate heard a trial, the emperor's interests could not be ignored. Often the Senate looked not for innocence or guilt but for the emperor's preference... The good news in Romans 8 is that God is delighted with his agent, Christ, who represents the interests of his people and pursues their acquittal. His resolve in this matter is inalienable.³⁴

The conventional assumption that the wise-ruler is clement enables Paul to cast Christ the King as a merciful Son (3:25) and advocate for his people, which includes the Greeks.

More importantly, Paul will link the Greco-Roman convention of noble suffering to Christ's salvific role (5:1-11) and call believers to imitate his behavior, thereby casting Christ as the author of peace in the present (5:1-15:6). Paul repeatedly instructs believers that they must “live peaceably with all” (12:18, 5:1), suffering with Christ if they wish to “inherit the world” (8:17, 37; 12:1, 15:1-3). In the context of a discussion of community disputes over opinions, where the language of Christ's Lordship literally skyrockets, Paul will state

³⁰ On this perceived threat, see Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 98-99. This explains why Josephus, writing for late first-century Romans, downplayed the popularity of the figure, blaming the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 CE on messianic pretenders and censuring the “seditious [Jewish] bands who, whenever they come across someone suitable, set him up as king, eager for the ruin of the commonwealth, doing little damage to the Romans, but causing extensive bloodshed among their countrymen.” Josephus, *War* 6.312-13; *Antiquities* 17.278-85; cf. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 199-209; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 4.5; Tacitus, *History* 5.13.2.

³¹ See the appendix at the end of the paper for this reading of Romans 1:18-2:16. See also “Sexy Stoics and the Rereading of Romans 1:18-2:16,” and “The Disease of Effemination and the Verdict of God.”

³² On the Satan or his earthly emissary as a reference to Rome, see Rev. 13.

³³ Cf. Walker, ““Paul's Offer of Leniency,”” 203-04, “Paul nearly ignores Christ's role in this scenario [of judgment in 2:1-16], not stipulating until verse 16 that God will judge ‘through Christ Jesus.’”

³⁴ Walker, ““Paul's Offer of Leniency,”” 204 n. 215.

unequivocally that “the kingdom of God is not [matters of dispute] but justice and peace and joy in the holy spirit.”³⁵ In 14:1-15:6, Paul will also underscore that “the one who serves Christ, [pursuing what makes for peace and upbuilding] is acceptable to God and approved by humanity” (14:5-19), implying that imitation of Christ empowers believers to live and worship God together in harmony without fear of outside disapproval (15:1-6). In other words, by letter’s end, Paul will characterize Christ’s messianic rule as the Way of Peace for all of Israel, Jew and Greek.

As this material implies, Paul’s kingship claims anchor his introductory (seminal) call for the obedience of the nations (1:5, 2:7). If the salvific way of Paul’s king is to be the *Pax Christi*, hints in the introduction, *narratio* (1:13-15), and thesis suggest that its means will be the humbling of arrogant Gentiles before Israel’s Sovereign—and fellow Jews. Paul begins this humbling subtly, through what at first seems to be a rhetoric of praise and commissioning. Describing the Romans in 1:7 as “God’s beloved” who were “called to be saints” and “to belong to Jesus Christ,” Paul underscores their high status and security.³⁶ Paul continues this complimentary characterization of the Romans’ calling when he describes the fame of their faith throughout the Empire (1:8).³⁷ In a rare sharing of his teaching authority, Paul even retreats from his initial claim to strengthen the Romans with a χάρισμα πνευματικόν in favor of mutual exhortation in the faith (συμπαρακληθῆναι, 1:11-12). “By doing this,” Chrysostom said, “he put learners in the position of teachers, not claiming any superiority for himself but pointing out that [the Romans] were fully equal to him.”³⁸

As Pelagius recognized, however, Paul’s rhetoric was prudent praise crafted “to exhort them to improve.”³⁹ “For the Gentiles at Rome were doing many things deliberately in order to upset the Jews, partly because they were the majority...and partly because they were of a higher social class.”⁴⁰ As a Jewish teacher largely unknown to the Roman Greeks, Paul needs to model humility in leadership and censure them subtly in order to *call them back* to humble obedience to their Jewish Lord.⁴¹ Paul’s praise, therefore, functions as crafty censure and subordination. We see this move as early as 1:1, where Paul begins the letter by naming himself—to an audience of upwardly mobile slaves and freedmen—as “slave of Christ Jesus.” As Theodore of Mopsuestia sees, “Paul calls himself a slave first of all, thereby exhorting the rest to do likewise.”⁴² Similarly, in 1:5-6, “Paul does not say that God called

³⁵ For the fathers’ emphasis on Christ’s Lordly rule in Rom. 14, see Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* (CSEL 81:439, 441); Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (CER 5:132, 134); Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* (PCR 142); Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans 25* (NPNF 1 11:525).

³⁶ On the patristic authors’ extension of the sonship language to the recipients, see Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1.94-104; cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Romans* [*Patrologia Graecae* 82.52]).

³⁷ Theodoret of Cyr (*Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans* [*Patrologia Graecae* 82.53]): “It could not be that what was happening at Rome should not be known all over the world. After all, it was the capital of the Empire.”

³⁸ *Homilies on Romans 2* (NPNF 1 11:345-46).

³⁹ Pelagius, *Pelagius’ Commentary on Romans* 61.

⁴⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church* (NTA 15: 166).

⁴¹ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1.108.

⁴² Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church* (NTA 15:113).

the other [nations] along with the Romans [to obedience] but the Romans along with the others.”⁴³

After identifying his protreptic purposes in the *narratio*—to strengthen and reap a harvest among the Romans (1:11, 13)—Paul continues this practice in 1:14-16. Characterizing his Gentile audience further as “Greek and barbarian, wise and fool” (v. 14)—note how he takes the Greek point of view in his stereotyped division of the world’s peoples—he simultaneously subordinates the wise as his students and “shows that they were fools, none advantaged or truly wise, unless they trusted in Christ.”⁴⁴ Finally, Paul begins the thesis of the letter (1:16-17), that the gospel is the divine power (δύναμις) of the Jewish Sovereign to save all peoples through faith, by emphasizing his refusal to be ashamed of it. Several patristic interpreters believed, I think correctly, that Paul’s refusal to be ashamed of the gospel intimated that the Romans were. As one ancient commentator put it, “there is nothing more ridiculous than the word of someone who proclaims that the Son of God was born...of Jews...and ascended to heaven as Lord of all.”⁴⁵ Likewise, Pelagius, “This is subtly intended to censure the pagans who...think we Christians should be ashamed to believe that our Lord was crucified.”⁴⁶ Finally, Chrysostom: “The Romans were most anxious about the things of the world, because of their riches, their empire, their victories, and they thought that their emperors were equal to the gods...While they were so puffed up, Paul was going to preach Jesus...who was brought up in Judea...who was not surrounded by wealth, but who died as a criminal among thieves. Since it was likely that the Romans were pretending that they did not know any of these unspeakable things, Paul understates that he is not ashamed, in order to teach them not to be ashamed of Christ either.”⁴⁷ Paul depicts his rhetorical Greek audience as ashamed of Paul’s Jewish gospel and its king; the *thesis* of Paul’s protrepsis is that they should not be, because the gospel and its king are the power of God’s salvation for all of his people, Jew *first* and also Greek.

Paul’s thesis (1:16-17) therefore has two functions. First, in language that screams (counter-)empire—εὐαγγέλιον, σωτηρία, δύναμις, πίστις and especially δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, which implies just rule⁴⁸—it both recapitulates and forecasts the scriptural promise of

⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans 1* (NPNF 1 11:341).

⁴⁴ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* (CSEL 81:33, 35). Note Ambrosiaster’s impression of the ethnic character of Paul’s audience: “He wrote Greeks...but this includes those who are called Romans, whether by birth or adoption, and barbarians (who are not Romans, whose heritage is inimical and who are not Gentiles)...He testifies that he has been sent to preach to them all. *But he says nothing about Jews, because he is the teacher of the Gentiles*” (my italics).

⁴⁵ Gennadius of Constantinople, *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church* (NTA 15:354-55).

⁴⁶ Pelagius’ *Commentary on Romans* 62-63.

⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans 2* (NPNF 1 11:348).

⁴⁸ Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ was a “technical term of late-Jewish apocalyptic for God’s saving justice, which embraces His sovereign and triumphant faithfulness to his covenant,” the world, his mercy, and his right to obedience. See 1QS 10. 25f; 11.12; 1QM 4.6; Test. Dan 6.10; Enoch 71.14; 99.10; 101.3 are appealed to). See Cranfield, *Romans*, 96; citing Käsemann, *New Testament Questions*, 172. In Israel’s scriptures, δικαιοσύνη was a relational covenantal concept founded on God’s “loving-kindness,” which implied just relations between God and Israel, among Israelites, and between Israelites and foreigners (Dunn, *Romans*, 40-41). Contra Dunn and others, Greeks and Romans did not treat it “simply” as one of the four cardinal virtues (although δικαιοσύνη does evoke Δίκη, the virgin daughter of Zeus, and *Iustitia*, as well as the cardinal Greek and Roman civic virtue of justice; see 1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22, 3:16). Rather, the virtue connoted right relations between the gods and humans and between kings and their subjects. Personified Δίκη accused those who did wrong to others and avenged that wrongdoing (Hesiod *Theog.* 902; *Op.* 256-

1:1-4, that Paul's crucified Jewish king had been empowered by his resurrection as Lord and Restorer of the people Israel. But it simultaneously forecasts Paul's instruction of arrogant Greek believers who might question the power (δύναμις) of a Jewish God whose son the Romans crucified and the sovereign justice of a God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) whose salvation (σωτηρία) prioritized the Jews.⁴⁹ Paul therefore declares himself commissioned by Christ to proclaim to the nations a kingly εὐαγγέλιον of salvation that promises the in-breaking of God's just reign over all while demanding Romans' unblinking obedience to the rule of his Son.⁵⁰ In the words of the prophet Habakkuk, the Romans are to be just men (δίκαιοι) who "will live by faith/fulness" (πίστις / fides) to their Jewish God. Cranfield sees the obligation the citation implies: "The adjective δίκαιος describes the man *whose conduct conforms to Δίκη*. It means 'observant of custom' or 'of duty,' 'just,' 'righteous'" (my emphasis).⁵¹ Likewise, πίστις implies that believers owe God fidelity for his justice in making the eschatological restoration of Israel (σωτηρία) open to all through his Son:

Πίστις and fides denote 'trust' or 'faith' and therefore 'trustworthiness' or 'faithfulness,' and refer to a moral obligation and moral judgment. Epictetus held that man is born to πίστις...Theognis sought to maintain it as the basis of his friendships...In Dio Chrysostom pistis is akin to εὐ πάσχειν, the act of being benefited...It was a standard principle of Roman life which Cicero called 'the most sacred thing in life'...The Romans took great pride in their fulfillment of it, and Heiron describes them as men who continually talk about fidelity (pistis).⁵²

The Romans are called, in the language of *Romanitas*, to *fidelity* to the God of Israel, to conform their *conduct* to his Righteousness, as the obedience of their faith.

The impact of seeing Paul's sinuous integration of Roman imperial patronage ideology with Israel's scripture in 1:17 is the recognition that the thesis, like the introduction as a whole, telegraphs the rhetorical method and main function of Paul's protrepsis to the Romans: Paul, the Jewish teacher of Gentiles, usurps and weds the language of *Romanitas* to the εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ in order to exhort Romanizing Greeks ashamed of their Jewish identity in Christ to strengthen their loyalty (πίστις) to Israel's Christ and his scriptural

264; Plato *Laws* 715E, 827E, *Epin.* 988E; Ps-Demosthenes [Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* 23]25.11 cf. also Wis 11:20). Similarly, justice, which was conjoined to wisdom as a prerequisite for good rule, represented the right action demanded of kings toward their subjects. Augustus' *Res Gestae* lists *iustitia* among *virtutis*, *clementia*, and *pietas*, and correlates it with the shield of virtues the Senate dedicated to him in 27 BCE (D'Angelo, 143). That shield was widely copied on monuments and coins (Ibid.; Wallace-Hadrill, "The Emperor and His Virtues"). It is also why Dionysius of Halicarnassus identifies Romans' δικαιοσύνη as a reason for their world-wide *imperium*: "No city, Greek or barbarian, bore men either more pious, more just (δικαιοτέρους), using greater moderation all their life or better contestants in matters of war" (*Roman Antiquities* 1.3.5). Δικαιοσύνη implies just rule.

⁴⁹ For this interpretation, see Apollinarus of Laodicea, *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church* (NTA 15:58); Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles* 81:35, 37.

⁵⁰ God's sovereignty and justice are revealed eschatologically in Jesus as Lord (Käsemann, *New Testament Questions*). The justice of that sovereign rule requires obedience (as the foregoing footnote on δικαιοσύνη attests).

⁵¹ Cranfield, *Romans*, 93. Cf. the same emphasis in Heb. 10:38-39.

⁵² Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 21-22. Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.4.1, 3; 2.22.27, 30; Theognis 74, 529-30, 811-13, 831-32; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 73.9; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.3; Diodor. 23.1.

παίδεΐα. Miming the prophet Habakkuk, Paul teaches the Greeks their duty to the God of Israel (τὸ καθῆκον/*officium*⁵³) and its benefit (ὠφέλεια)—to live obediently by Righteousness (10:4-13) and thereby “to inherit the world” (4:13, 8:16-17).⁵⁴ For “the Scripture says, ‘The one who trusts in Him will not be put to shame’” (10:11, 9:33).

⁵³ On these terms and their synonymy, see Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 23.

⁵⁴ Note the rhetorical *inclusio* with 1:2 represented by Paul’s punctuation of 1:1-17 with references to prophecy. Only by letter’s end will the meaning of the quotation from Habakkuk have become clear. That Hab. 2:4 is the thesis of letter *in nuce* is clear from later proofs (e.g., no one as a δίκαιος, 3:10-20; God as δίκαιος, chaps. 1-3, Abraham as δίκαιος, chap. 4; Jesus as δίκαιος, 5:6-11, 16; the Romans as δίκαιοι, 5:19). Later will the audience learn that ζῆσεται refers to the future benefit of immortality received by Romans who embrace the gospel (2:7; 6:15-21; 8:17); and that ἐκ πίστεως, “out of/from faithfulness” reflects the importance of faithfulness as an obedient act of imitation (of the faithfulness of God, of Abraham, and of Jesus). Hence, the debate over the identity of the δίκαιος and the referent of ἐκ πίστεως in 1:17 is unnecessary: Paul will show that God, Jesus, Paul, and the believers are (or should all be) obedient δίκαιοι and that πίστις encompasses the believers’ faith (“the one accounted righteous by faith”), the faithfulness of Jesus Messiah as noble sufferer and exemplar (Hays, “The Righteous One”), and presumes the faithfulness of God (Gaston, “For All the Believers,” 116-34). On Habakkuk 2:4, see Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1:132, 134; Smith, “Ho de dikaios ek pisteos zesetai,” 13-25; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 34-41, esp. 202 n. 14.

**‘True Judaism’: Jewish Teachers of Gentiles Debate
the Judaism of the Spirit (2:17-4:25)**

At this point [2:17] Paul turns to the Jews and says that a man should be a Jew in deed and not merely in name. – Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 73

In saying this [2:20], he repeats what he has already said to the Gentiles: In judging others they condemn themselves. – Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 6⁵⁵

As Pelagius and Chrysostom recognized, Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος marks a major shift in Paul’s rhetoric at 2:17: after censuring inconsistent Romans for living *παρὰ φύσιν*, Paul launches a second staged protreptic debate for the benefit of his target audience of Greeks, this time with a fellow Jewish teacher of gentiles. His rhetorical goals are simple: to convince his dialogue partner that Judaism and its *summum bonum*, life in accord with Torah, are internal rather than external realities, matters of the heart or spirit (πνεῦμα) rather than the flesh (2:17-29, 4:1-25); Paul’s Judaism of the spirit makes gentile believers a (Stoicized) “living law” that enables them to do the work of Torah (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου, 2:15) while exempting them from practices they dislike (ἔργα νόμου like circumcision); and thus, Paul’s gospel demonstrates the impartial justice of God and his faithfulness to his Abrahamic promise to include the nations in Israel “outside of Torah law” through the faithfulness of Jesus Messiah (1:16-17, 3:1-31). The inner-Jewish debate between Paul and the teacher therefore functions to prove Paul’s Judaism of the spirit a superior, philosophic way of life that makes Greek believers—whose interests and prejudices shape 2:17-4:25 from beginning to end—“inheritors of the world” without demanding ἔργα νόμου.

The rhetorical means by which Paul accomplishes these ends are as simple as his argument is complex. Like 1:18-2:16, Paul uses *προσωποποιία* to create a specific rival persona, a Jewish teacher of gentiles, who is inconsistent in living his *summum bonum* of life according to Torah law (2:17-24). He also weds an Isaianic charge of blindness to the purpose of the law with a Greco-Roman stereotype of Jewish misanthropic law-breaking to prove the teacher’s inconsistency and to undermine his authority (ὁ ἐλεγκτικός). But unlike 1:18-2:16, Paul turns from this censure to an extended exhortation of the rival teacher in order to prove the superiority of his Judaism for Greeks (ὁ προτρεπτικός, 2:25-4:24). Paul executes this exhortation in three sets of instruction (2:25-29, 3:9b-26, 4:2b-24) conjoined by staccato, diatribal exchanges between the teachers, the last of which forms a thematic *inclusio* on the first and each of which provides a rhetorical key in Paul’s argument: 2:25-29 coopts the (Roman) Stoic convention of πνεῦμα as a material, ruling principle (ἡγεμόνικον) to redefine Judaism as noetic or spiritual and to thereby include the nations without requiring circumcision; 3:21-31 elevates πίστις Χριστοῦ as an act of noble self-sacrifice that demonstrates God’s justice and faithfulness to his Torah promise to acquit the nations “outside of law”; and 4:1-25 demonstrates gentiles’ inclusion in Israel by the faith of their spiritually circumcised ancestor Abraham.⁵⁶ By these means Paul teaches the teacher, and so, Paul’s Greek audience, that (Paul’s) true Judaism prioritizes the internal πνεῦμα and

⁵⁵ NPNF 1 11:368.

⁵⁶ Standard prosopopoiac markers indicating shifts of speaker are clear in the text. Paul’s answers almost always begin with a negation. I have occasionally departed from Stowers’ division of the exchange, which only partially accounts for these shifts of speaker (*Rereading*, 162-166).

νοῦς/καρδία, that God reconciles gentiles by Christ's πίστις, and that he gave them his Son's πνεῦμα so they might be Jews in deed without doing the ἔργα νόμου that they despised (2:28, 8:4).

Who's the Jew and What's His Mission?: Identity and Eschatological Instruction to the Nations

Just as the interpretation of 1:18-2:16 hinges on the identity of the Roman judge, so also a historical reading of 2:17-4:25 depends on the identity of the Jew of 2:17. James Dunn states the majority view: "Paul has in mind no particular Jew, of course, but the typical Jew...that is, the Jew per se, conscious of his [ethnic] Jewishness, of his distinctiveness from the nations."⁵⁷ Stanley Stowers rejects that opinion, arguing that Paul's rival is a specific Jew, a fellow teacher of gentiles who boastfully claims to instruct the nations in right living while violating his own standard of conduct, the law.⁵⁸ As Stowers describes, everyone from

⁵⁷ Dunn, *Romans*, 109.

⁵⁸ See Stowers, *Rereading*, 126-175. As will become clear, I disagree with his understanding of the overall thrust of Paul's argument in 2:17-4:25 as an attempt to dissuade Greeks overly interested in Jewish law from Torah-obedience as a means of self-mastery. It is a defense of Torah that attends to the stereotyped anti-Judaism of Greeks by redefining law in Greco-Roman terms.

Recently, Thorsteinsen, *The Interlocutor*..., has followed Stowers' lead, proposing that the interlocutor at 2:17-29 is a law-loving gentile. But five arguments mitigate against his proposal. First, as we saw, early readers understood the dialogue marker Εἰ δὲ οὐ as signaling a turn to a Jewish interlocutor. Further, the verb ἐπινομάζω (2:17) need not signal ethnic hybridity or doubt as to ethnic identity. On the contrary, it underscores the importance of the *name* λουδαίος as a marker of identity (cf. Plato, *Cra.* 397b, 406a; *Phd.* 103b, *Prm.* 133d; Th. 2.29). Consequently, the interlocutor *should be treated as a self-identifying Jew; that ethnic self-identification is what matters to Paul's argument*. Second, the Jew self-identifies as a παιδευτής of gentiles (2:20), a technical term signaling his high status as an *expert* Torah teacher; it is not a term that can be attributed with verisimilitude to a mere law-loving proselyte. Building on this point, a hypothesized, post-Claudian Rome that lacks Jewish Torah teachers because of the expulsion of Jews or curtailment of synagogal activities is not good evidence for identifying of the interlocutor at 2:17 as a gentile. By the standards of protreptic elenchus, Paul's interlocutor need not exist historically (Protrepsis, remember, employs προσωποποιία to create *rhetorical* opponents who represent anyone fitting the description Paul gives.). *There is therefore no reason to presume* that Paul's interlocutor is *actually* a rival teacher who is encouraging Roman gentiles in Torah-obedience. Fourth, protrepsis regularly portrays the leading teacher of a βίος (in this case, Paul) as engaging representatives of other ways of life in a debate over which is best. By the standards of theoretical protreptic elenchus, Paul must: 1) *stereotype* the 2) *best-representative* of rival βίοι for 3) *inconsistency* for contravening 4) his *summum bonum*. The best representative of Judaism is a Jewish teacher, an *expert pedagogue* of Torah (cf. for a parallel engagement of a rival within a βίος, see Seneca's dialogue with Posidonius in *Ep. Mor.* 90). Further, he must be *stereotyped* for word-deed inconsistency in the execution of his *summum bonum*, Torah, and his inconsistency of word and deed must be known to "all," reflecting conventional knowledge of the teacher's characteristic inconsistency in living Torah. It is this stereotyped, commonplace knowledge of the rival's inconsistency, executed rhetorically in a debate between leading, representative teachers, that ancient authors of protreptic speeches treated as the final blow to a rival teacher's authority. So the *Jewish teacher of gentiles* must be undermined for failing to live Torah *before gentiles* (2:24). As I will show, the repetition of βλασφημῶ in 3:8 forms an *inclusio* with 2:24 that signals just this, that "*the nations*" (whom Paul's interlocutor stereotypes as foolish babes) despise Jews as a lawless and misanthropic people who "do evil that good may come." Paul's stereotyped argument falls flat if the interlocutor of 2:17-29 is a (hybrid) *gentile-Jewish Torah-teacher*. The interlocutor needs to be an elite Jew whose primary error is that he has transgressed Torah while trumpeting its superiority *before the nations*, thereby embarrassing Paul's God *in their eyes*. Fifth and most importantly, 3:9b indicates that Paul's previous arguments should place

Maximus of Tyre to Plutarch and Epictetus argues that a wise man's actions must match his words for his way of life to be more than a mere "name"—an empty, external sign (like the philosopher's cloak) of status and identity. The man who wants to be wise must desire virtue, an inward character of the heart or mind.⁵⁹ Because "Paul uses the popular philosophical motif of name (*onoma*) versus deed/reality (*ergon*)" that philosophers used to deride boasters and false teachers, Stowers argues that Paul's personified rival is a Jewish teacher whose deeds did not match his name or claims about the law.⁶⁰ His inconsistent actions identified him as a bad teacher.

Two kinds of internal evidence support Stowers' contention. First, Paul has already deployed the same (word-deed) motif in 1:18-2:16 to undermine the credibility of the Roman Stoic judge (2:1). (As we know, Epictetus challenges "those who call themselves Stoics (*Diss.* 2.19.19-38; 3.7.17; 3.24.40)" but do not live according to nature.⁶¹) Paul now produces a similar result in 2:17-24 using the same technique of censure for inconsistency, this time focused on the *summum bonum* of law. Second, the language of 2:17-21 identifies the Jew as an educator of Gentiles in the law: "you who teach others, will you not teach yourself?" (2:21). Greeks would clearly hear the educational resonances associated with a Jew who identifies as a παιδευτήν ἀφρόνων and διδάσκαλον νηπίον, who has the embodiment of γνώσις in the law, and is able to approve of τὰ διαφέροντα (2:18, 20). Mentioned only once in the New Testament (Heb. 12:9), a παιδευτής in the wider Greco-Roman world was well known as a "teacher" or "paedagogue." Given that the term is paired with διδάσκαλος, it probably refers to an instructor who casts his way of life as a "more theoretical," philosophic path to virtue.⁶² Both the language of τὰ διαφέροντα and Paul's assertion that the teacher believes he has the "embodiment of γνώσις and truth in the law" further support this case. As Dunn says, τὰ διαφέροντα "is probably used in conscious contrast to τὰ ἀδιάφορα, which was already established as a technical term in Cynic-Stoic ethics in the sense of 'things indifferent, neither good nor bad.'"⁶³ Simply put, Paul explicitly identifies the Jew, in Greek and Roman 'philosophic' terms, as an instructor in the law as the source of wisdom and moral rectitude.

Isaiah as 'Law' in 2:17-24: Paul's Scriptural Censure of the Jewish Teacher for Ignorance

This identification does not function simply to reveal how some ancients characterized Judaism—as a philosophic 'school' for the pursuit of virtue. It also reflects the perspectival orientation of Paul's critique of the teacher: Paul deploys rhetoric with which *Greeks would agree* to reveal to *his Greek audience* the contempt the teacher's behavior brings on

"all humanity"—"Jew and Greek"—equally under the power of Sin. *Since 1:18-2:16 targets gentiles* (according to Stowers, Thorsteinsen, and myself), *this argument only works if 2:17-3:8 targets Jews.*

⁵⁹ Stowers, *Rereading*, 145-48; see Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.19.19, 4.8.38-39, 4.10; Plutarch *Progress in Virtue* 78e-f, 79c, 80a-b.

⁶⁰ Stowers, *Rereading*, 148.

⁶¹ Dunn, *Romans*, 112; citing Fridrichsen, "Der wahre Jude und sein Lob," 45.

⁶² See Plato, *Rep.* 493c; *IG22.1011.35*; Cranfield, *Romans* 166-67; see also the wealth of literature on ancient education popularized by Jaegar, *Paideia*; Marrou, *Education in Antiquity*; and enlivened now by, e.g., Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*; Robb, *Literacy and Paideia in Ancient Greece*; Fantham, *Roman Literate Culture*; and Too and Livingstone, *Pedagogy and Power*.

⁶³ Dunn, *Romans* 111.

Israel's God *in the eyes of the nations*. Paul effects this (ethnically biased, stereotyped) censure in two, mutually reinforcing steps: first, by deploying the teacher's scripture against him to underscore the teacher's blindness to the law's instruction as to his purpose as an educator of Gentiles; and second, by excoriating him with a Greco-Roman stereotype of Jews as misanthropic law-breakers.

Paul begins this censure by characterizing the Jewish teacher as steeped in Torah: he "has been instructed out of the law" and has the "embodiment of knowledge and truth in the law" (2:18, 20)—points Paul never challenges (cf. 7:12, 14).⁶⁴ But Paul highlights the irony of this truth in 2:20, 24, when he uses the "law" of Isaiah to portray the teacher as ignorant of what it teaches *him* about his pedagogical role (2:18, 20).⁶⁵ Paul makes this point, first, by using the language of Isaiah 42:6-7 in 2:19 to depict the Jewish teacher as arrogantly assuming that the Greeks he instructs are "blind" "children," the "foolish," and "those in darkness."⁶⁶ Listen to Isaiah: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold. . . I have put my spirit upon him to bring forth justice to the nations. . . I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations (εἰς φῶς ἔθνῶν), to open the eyes that are blind (ἀνοίξει ὀφθαλμούς τυφλῶν) . . . to bring from the prison those who sit in darkness (καθημένους ἐν σκότει)."⁶⁷ As Paul's echoes of Isaiah reveal, the irony of 2:19 is that the very same scripture that names the "nations" as "blind" and "foolish" children teaches the teacher that his job is not to feed them the "milk" of an elementary education in living *κατὰ νόμον* (i.e., ἔργα νόμου), but rather to be God's messenger who brings justice and the illumination of his covenant to the nations.⁶⁸

As Paul's use of Isaiah elsewhere in Romans shows, that means proclaiming the good news—the scriptural "word of Christ" (ῥῆμα χριστοῦ) that "everyone who confesses that 'Jesus is Lord'" and "trusts in their heart" that God raised him from the dead will be saved, for "there is no dividing wall between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon his [name] (10:9, 12, 17)."⁶⁹ In the words of Isaiah 52:7, the teacher, like Paul, is to be a "messenger who announces peace (εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοὴν εἰρήνης) . . . and salvation, saying to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Rom. 10:15; Is. 52:7). That message is that the "deliverer will come out of Zion" (Rom. 11:26; Is. 59:20) and as the "root of Jesse, shall rise to rule" the nations (Rom. 15:12; Is. 11:10), so that "all the nations" will be gathered to the God of Israel as an eschatological "offering to the Lord" (Rom. 15:16; Is. 66:18-20). Paul depicts the teacher as deaf to these intonations of Isaianic law, that his role is to proclaim the *παιδεία* of scripture, the eschatological restoration of the nations into Israel, through the "good news" of Israel's Christ.⁷⁰ Paul depicts the teacher as focused

⁶⁴ Cranfield, *Romans*, 167 n. 4.

⁶⁵ Paul uses "law" to refer to scripture broadly: he begins Romans by teaching his audience that his "good news" was foretold by "God's prophets in the holy writings" (1:2), and in 3:10-19, he uses a catena of citations from Isaiah, the Psalms, and Proverbs to argue that "the law speaks to those who are under the law."

⁶⁶ Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 167. Compare 1:14, where Paul calls them "the wise."

⁶⁷ See Cranfield, *Romans*, 166.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 167: "for the use of *νηπιος* with reference to those needing elementary instruction compare 1 Cor. 3:1; Eph. 4:14; Heb. 5:13."

⁶⁹ For my exegesis of 10:1-17, see chapter 7. On Isaiah in Romans, see Wagner, *Herald of the Good News*, who shows that Paul likely read his role as herald in partnership with Isaiah.

⁷⁰ *Contra* Stowers, who emphasizes (*Rereading*, 151) that the teachers "agree that gentiles need not be made into Jews"; rather "Jewish teachers think they can make gentiles righteous before God by teaching

on the works themselves—on mere externals, ἀδιόφορα like the philosopher’s cloak—rather than the “knowledge and truth” about Christ that is embodied in the law (2:25; cf. Gal 6:15). Like gentile idolaters’ blindness to nature’s role as revealer of its Sovereign God (1:18-32), the teacher’s failure to understand this truth of the law is linked to his law-breaking; he cannot teach himself to do the good (2:21).

Paul’s Greek audience may not hear *these* Isaianic echoes *yet*. They need not for this censure to work, for it is enough that they hear themselves stereotyped offensively by the teacher. And Paul does this effectively—facilitating not only offense but smug satisfaction among his Greek audience—by citing Isaiah 52:5 to punctuate his scriptural point at 2:24: “The name of God is derided (βλασφημῶται) among the nations *because of you*.” Paul argues that the errors resulting from the teacher’s impotence to teach himself the good, errors made before the eyes of the “morons” he deigns to instruct, bring the contempt of the nations upon his God. In other words, Paul uses Israel’s scripture to prove that the nations’ disdain for Israel results from the teacher’s failure to understand the law’s instruction—that he is a “messenger of peace and salvation” to the nations (Is. 52:7).

‘Framing’ the Jewish Teacher: Deploying the Greco-Roman Τόπος of the Misanthropic, Lawless Jew (ὁ ἄλογος, 2:17-24)

This Isaianic frame of judgment focuses Paul’s dominant line of attack: Gentiles’ contempt for Israel based on the Jew’s inability to do the law—for stealing, committing adultery, robbing temples, and law-breaking—while teaching Gentiles the opposite. James Dunn rightly underscores that this passage has “puzzled many commentators” who do not think Paul wishes to condemn “the Jewish nation *in toto*” and who do not understand the logic behind Paul’s attack, given that the high “moral caliber of Judaism was one of the features which made it most attractive to God-worshippers and proselytes.”⁷¹ The answer to this puzzle is that 2:17-24 is neither an accurate depiction of Jews *per se* nor is it addressed to Judeophilic God-worshippers and proselytes. Rather, it is a Greco-Roman stereotyped censure of Jews, a censure with which anti-Jewish Greeks could reflexively agree, that addresses Greeks’ shame in Judaism, explaining and justifying it as a function of the inconsistent and blindly arrogant behavior of Jewish pedagogues who fail to understand the Christ-revealing purpose of the law. Put another way, Paul’s censure of the Jewish teacher for inconsistency panders to typically Greek and Roman prejudices against Judaism.

Louis Feldman has shown that while some non-Jews lauded Jews for their antiquity and virtuous behavior,⁷² Greeks of the Hellenistic period and Greeks and Romans of the Republican and Imperial periods broadly caricatured Jews as a nation of misanthropes so certain of their ethnic superiority⁷³ and the truth of Torah that they were unwilling to debate the premises of their way of life⁷⁴ or to interact with their neighbors. According to Diodorus, Hecataeus (300 BCE) described them as “unsocial” (ἀνάνθρωπον) and “hostile to foreigners” (μισόξενον) (40.30.4).⁷⁵ In another report by Diodorus, people encouraged King

them to observe certain works of law.” While Stowers is probably correct that the non-Christian Judaism of Paul’s day did not have a strong missionary impulse, Paul’s did, as this reading of the letter will show.

⁷¹ Dunn, *Romans*, 112.

⁷² Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 177-286.

⁷³ Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.67; Celsus, Origen Ag. *Celsus* 5.50.

⁷⁴ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 128, 175. Apollonius Molon in Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.258.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

Antiochus Sidetes to eradicate Jews “since they alone of all nations avoid dealings with any other people and they alone look on all [other] men as their enemies” (34[35].1.1). According to Apion, Jews refused to show goodwill to aliens, especially Greeks (Josephus. *Against Apion* 2.121). Josephus even cites the Stoic Posidonius and Apollonius Molon (1c. BCE) as sources for an account by Apion that a Greek had been kidnapped by Jews and was being fattened for slaughter, after which time Jews would eat him and swear an oath of hostility to Greeks (*Against Apion* 2.79).⁷⁶ Tacitus, writing at the beginning of the second century CE, sums up the Greek and Roman stereotype of Jewish misanthropy when he remarks that Jews regard non-Jews “with all the hatred of enemies” (*adversus omnes alios hostile odium*) (*Histories* 5.5.1).⁷⁷

The assertion of ethnic supremacy that supports this charge was not without *any* basis in fact:

According to Philo [of Alexandria], the Torah differed from the law of other nations in that it was given by God to the Jews who carry a likeness of the commandments “enshrined in their souls” (*Legat.* 210). Because Jews bear within themselves the standard against which all acts are measured, openness to external influence is not a real option...In general, Philo’s attitude toward pagan religion is condescending and dismissive. Ultimately the Jews will exercise hegemony, as Philo writes in *Mos.* 2.44...In the meantime, Philo regards the spiritual supremacy of his nation as a fact of life.⁷⁸

But “fact” is irrelevant for understanding Rom. 2:17-24; what matters is the verisimilitude of Paul’s charges in Greek eyes. And according to Greek and Roman authors, Jews’ misanthropy and ethnic superiority were obvious from everything they did: from boasts of enjoyment of divine protection, even from their rulers; to a lack of patriotism, even sedition toward Rome; to a blanket refusal to eat or pray or intermarry with non-Jews; to a demand that others accept the teachings of Moses mindlessly, on blind faith rather than by an exercise of reason. Cicero, for instance, rails against the Jewish assumption of “divine protection” when he gripes that “the nation [of the Jews]...has made it clear how far it enjoys divine protection by the fact that it has been conquered, scattered, enslaved” (*Pro Flacco* 28.67). Aelius Aristides cites Jews as a “stock example of impiety [ἄσεβεία] in that they do not recognize their betters [i.e., they do not believe in the gods]” and are “somewhat unsocial and intolerant...[having] seceded from the Greeks or rather from all better people.”⁷⁹ Juvenal (*Satire* 14.100-1) emphasizes that Jews flout the Roman laws, practicing only their own, a criticism Josephus also attributes to Haman.⁸⁰ Philostratus quotes the first-century philosopher Euphrates as describing Jews’ refusal to “mingle with others in common meals, libations, prayers, or sacrifices.”⁸¹ Finally, folk from Hecataeus to Galen and Rutilius

⁷⁶ Ibid., 126. For other charges of human sacrifice, see 126-27.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 83-174, esp. 125-26. Cf. Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8.1; Josephus *Ant.* 1.194, 11.212; Lysimachus, Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.309; Pompeius Trogus in Justin, *Historiae Philippicae* 36, *Epitoma* 2.15. See Appendix 7.

⁷⁸ Mendelson, *Philo’s Jewish Identity*, 130-31.

⁷⁹ Feldman, *Jew and Greek in the Ancient World*, 129; Aelius Aristides 46 [*De Quattuorviris* 309].

⁸⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.212; cf. Seutonius, *Claudius* 25.4; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.68.

⁸¹ Feldman, *Jew and Greek in the Ancient World*, 128; *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5.33. See also Manetho, Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.250; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.2.

Namatianus scoffed at Jews' reputation for credulity; accepting their teachings on "sheer faith" and assuming that "everything in nature is due to God's will," they imitated Moses, "who framed laws for his followers without offering proofs."⁸²

As is well known, Greeks also accused Jews of displaying their ethnic distinctiveness by "mutilating" their bodies through circumcision.⁸³ Strabo, for instance, assumes that circumcision is mutilation and that it is a uniquely Jewish trait when he describes a tribe called the Creophagi who butchered their genitals "in a Jewish fashion" (16.4.9.771). Diodorus likewise associates circumcision with Jews even though other ethnic groups practiced it (1.28.3, 1.55.5). Martial and Justin Martyr even reflect the use of "circumcision" as an epithet for Jews. In Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 1, Trypho identifies himself as a "Hebrew of the Circumcision." Likewise, "it is quite clear that a Jew is the subject of Martial's epigram (7.82) about the man who, while exercising himself in public, was unsuccessful in trying to conceal the fact that he was circumcised. In an epigram (11.94) addressed to a circumcised poet, it becomes clear that the reference is to a Jew, because he declares that the poet has been born in the very midst of Solyma, that is, Jerusalem."⁸⁴ In a word, Greeks and Romans stereotyped the Jewish people as misanthropic in every possible respect—as seditious, unsocial, impious, body-mutilators who were hostile to their neighbors (μισόξενου).

Non-Jews' charges of Jewish misanthropy, arrogant ethnocentrism, and mindless legalism led inexorably to charges of lawlessness. Lysimachus (2-1 c. BCE) accused Moses of instructing the Israelites to overthrow the temples of other gods and to show no goodwill to outsiders.⁸⁵ Romans like Juvenal expressed their incredulity at Jews' arrogant, impious, and unpatriotic disregard for its laws, such as the worship of the Emperor.⁸⁶ Claudius Ptolemy accused Jews of being unscrupulous (πανουργότεροι) and treacherous (ἐπιβουλευτικοί) in economic dealings.⁸⁷ According to Josephus, Titus even charged the Jerusalem Jews with taking advantage of the Julian edict, stealing tax money properly due the Romans in order to "grow rich at our expense and make preparations with our money to attack us!"⁸⁸ Worse still, Manetho, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius accused Jews of warring against their neighbors (στάσις), and in the process, enslaving their wives and children, committing murder, and "every other kind of royal crime." Dio went so far as to say that Jews whipped into a frenzy

⁸² Feldman, *Jew and Greek in the Ancient World*, 170-71; Diodorus 40.3.6; Galen *De Puls. Diff.* 2.4, 3.3; Rutilius Namatianus *De Reditu Suo* 1.393-94; Horace *Satires* 1.5.97-103; Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.112-14; Galen *De Usu Partium* 11.14. See also the discussion of Alexander, "Paul and the Hellenistic Schools."

⁸³ On circumcision: Strabo 16.4.9.771, 17.2.5.824; Jos. *Ant.* 16.225, 11.212; Philo *Spec. Leg.* 1.1.1-2; Horace *Satires* 1.9.70; Persius 5.184; Petronius 68.7-8, 102.13-14, frag 37; Martial 7.82, 11.94; Juvenal *Sat.* 14.96-99.

⁸⁴ Feldman, *Jew and Greek in the Ancient World*, 156.

⁸⁵ Lysimachus, Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.309; cf. 1.249, 264.

⁸⁶ Juvenal *Sat* 14.100-1; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 11.212 (cited above).

⁸⁷ Claudius Ptolemy (2 c. CE), *Apotelesmatica* 2.3.65-66.29-31; cf. Juvenal *Sat.* 6.542-47, for the possible charge that Jews act like beggars when they have funds.

⁸⁸ Josephus, *War* 6.335-36; for the perceived vastness of the Temple wealth stolen from the Romans, see *War* 6.282. Dunn, *Romans* 114-15: "we can document at least one case of a Jew in Rome misappropriating funds and gifts intended for the temple—a scandal that resulted in the expulsion of the Jewish community from Rome in A.D. 19 (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81-14)."

by the pseudo-Messiah Lukas-Andreas ate the flesh of their victims, made belts from their entrails, anointed themselves with their blood, and wore their skins for clothing.⁸⁹

Can we then be surprised that Paul will exhort his audience to practice hospitality to strangers (φιλοξενία, 12:13), live peaceably (12:18), obey Roman rulers (13:1-7), pay their taxes (13:6-7), and love their neighbors as the fulfillment of Torah (13:8-10)? Given how widespread and longstanding this stereotype of Jewish lawless misanthropy was, we are on safe ground in assuming that Paul and his Greek audience knew it. Certainly, when compared with the convention, Romans 2:17-25 reads as a stereotyped ethnic censure as vitriolic as it is distinctive from that Paul leveled against the Roman judge. Paul evokes the (reflexively Greek) “truth” that the Jewish teacher is an arrogant Gentile-hater who proclaims the supremacy of Jewish law as “the embodiment of knowledge and truth” to the ways of his Greek and Roman betters, while breaking the law himself (2:17-24). Every critique of 2:17-25 reflects the convention: boastful ethnocentrism and legalism (2:17), the arrogant assumption of Jews’ special wisdom in the law (2:18-20), the treatment of Gentiles as idiotic children (2:19), the refusal to argue the superiority of the law, the focus on circumcision (2:25), the derision of the nations (2:24), and stealing, adultery, and temple-robbing (2:21-23). As Ambrosiaster knew, the focus of Paul’s censure is *not* the law, which he upholds: “The teacher of the law is right to glory in these things, because he is teaching the form of truth.”⁹⁰ The problem, as Chrysostom put it, is that, “What seems to be an advantage—being given the law—may turn out to be a disadvantage if one does not keep the law.”⁹¹ As Paul tells the teacher, “Circumcision is advantageous if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and...those who are naturally uncircumcised but keep the law will judge you who have the writing and circumcision but break the law” (2:25-27).

In short, Paul evokes the Greco-Roman τόπος of Jewish misanthropic lawlessness in order to show Greek believers that the Jewish teacher’s way of living and interpreting the law is not the best alternative to *Romanitas* because it shames Israel’s God before his “betters.” According to Paul the teacher’s problem is not simply that he breaks the Torah,⁹² contravening his *summum bonum* through his inconsistency, but that he does so while trumpeting his ethnic superiority and law-obedience *to other nations*; he makes the Jewish God and his law appear foolish, misanthropic, and lawless *before Jews’ rulers*. In the eyes of the very Greeks and Romans who stereotyped Jews as lawless, the teacher has therefore erased whatever ethnic advantage God’s gift of the law held for Jews. As Paul said, quoting Isaiah with finality, “You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.”⁹³ For as it is written, “The name of God is being defamed *among the nations* because of you” (2:24).

⁸⁹ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.76, Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8.3; Dio Cassius 68.32.1-2; cf. Apollonius Molon, Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.79; Damocritus, *Suda Damokritos*; Cicero *Pro Fonteio* 14.31.

⁹⁰ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* (CSEL 81:83-85).

⁹¹ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 6 (NPNF 1 11:368).

⁹² Cf. Ex. 20:14-5, Philo *On the Confusion of Tongues* 163; *T. Levi* 14:5; Ex 20:4-6, Dt. 5:8-10, 7:25-26.

⁹³ On reading 2:23 as a summing accusation rather than a question, cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 318 and those he cites.

**Battling the Charge of Misanthropy:
Exhorting the Teacher (and the Greeks) to Paul's
Judaism of the Spirit (ὁ προτρεπτικός, 2:25-4:25)**

However incisive this censure of Jewish advantage is in Greek eyes, Paul does not use it to erase the viability of Judaism, circumcision, or the law for Greeks. On the contrary, Paul does precisely what other Jews reacting to Greco-Roman charges of misanthropy did; he defends them. In the context of instruction and debate with the teacher—which functions rhetorically as a *reasoned argument* for his way of life—Paul redefines all three terms to be more amenable to his Romanized Greek audience: he usurps and Judaizes the Stoic idea that the spirit is naturally an internal governor that makes people a “living law” and assures right action in order to preserve the ethnic advantage of Judaism over other ways of life, while demonstrating its benefits for Greeks through πίστις.⁹⁴

Paul begins this redefinition in 2:27-29 by reminding his audience of the natural knowledge of God's law introduced in the censure of the Roman Stoic (1:18-2:16).⁹⁵ Recall that when “Gentiles who do not have Torah law naturally do the things of the law, they show that what the law requires is written on their hearts” (2:14). In 2:27-29, Paul asserts that the existence of Gentiles who do Torah naturally—however few there may naturally be⁹⁶—not only brings Gentile judgment upon Jews who break Torah law while trumpeting its ethnic advantages, it also makes Gentiles the “circumcision” (2:26).⁹⁷ That is, a Gentile who does the law naturally, demonstrating that he is a living law (2:14) with Torah “written on his heart” (2:15), is acquitted by God and deemed a “Jew” (Ἰουδαίος, 2:28). As Paul clearly states in 2:28-29, both circumcision and being Ἰουδαίος are not “apparent,” external realities but hidden realities ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι. Paul's previous use of γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς (2:27) to refer to Torah and circumcision as external markers of Jewish identity and ethno-philosophic advantage indicate that this use of γράμμα in 2:29 not only evokes the word/deed convention about the consistency required in the pursuit of virtue, it also underscores that Judaism's *ethnic* identity and advantage is *somatically* internal, hidden inside the person, in the spirit and heart which God alone can see. As Paul says in 7:6, believers have been released from the law in order to serve not under the γράμμα of the old written code but in the newness of the spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3, 6). As Paul will clarify in chapter 8, that spirit is the Spirit of God in Christ that dwells within them (8:9). Therefore, “true circumcision, the seal of perfect covenant with God,” is “an invisible [but none the less objective] sign” by which a Greek “*is constituted a Jew in the truest sense of the term—a member of the Israel of God—independent of the flesh.*”⁹⁸ Through the Spirit, Paul makes law-abiding Greeks hidden Jews of the heart.

⁹⁴ On the problems with the scholarly disjunction between “Hellenism” and “Judaism,” see Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*.

⁹⁵ On this subject, I part ways with Stowers, *Rereading*, 111-12, who does not see the relevance of “nature” and “natural law” for Paul's discussion of law in Romans. It is critically important, as I now show.

⁹⁶ For the importance of this distinction, see chapter 7 on Rom. 5-15. Christ's spirit alone, not the cosmic πνεῦμα, is the living law that enables Gentiles to be a law “written on their hearts” (Rom. 8).

⁹⁷ Cranfield, *Romans* 171 n. 4: circumcision can mean the act of circumcising, the state of being circumcised, or the community of the circumcised, i.e., the Jews. Paul implies the third, as 2:28-29 and the stereotyped synonymy between the “circumcision” and Judaism indicates.

⁹⁸ Schneider, “The Meaning of St. Paul's Antithesis,” 199-200, my emphasis.

Paul's Judaism of the Heart: The Spirit Within (2:29)

The question is what Paul could mean by this redefinition of Judaism—or more precisely, what would his target audience likely understand? As many commentators note, the language of “circumcision of the heart” is as old as Deuteronomy (Lev. 26:41, Dt. 10:16, 30:6, Jer. 4:4, 9:26); so is the claim that such a circumcision is the work of God’s spirit rather than being a natural feature of the human physique (Dt. 30:6, Jub. 1:23, Od. Sol. 11:1-3).⁹⁹ But while Jews like the teacher would no doubt recognize these echoes, Paul nowhere identifies these scriptures for his target audience as the authority for his internalization of Judaism. Rather, like Philo of Alexandria and the author of *Wisdom of Solomon*, Paul redeploys recognizably Stoic conventions about mindfulness (νοῦς), spirit (πνεῦμα) and natural law, which he already elicited in 1:18-2:16, to connect πνεῦμα and καρδία to πίστις and prove that the rightness of Gentile believers’ minds *guarantee* that they are living laws who can do the work of law God demands of them (2:6-16, 27, 8:2).

The soul (ψύχη), according to the Stoic Chrysippus, is:

... πνεῦμα connate with us, extending as a continuum through the whole body as long as the free-flowing breath of life is present in the body. Now of the parts of the soul assigned to those of the body... [the highest part,] the part where [all others] meet, is in the heart (καρδία), because it is the governing part (ἡγεμόνικον) of the soul.”¹⁰⁰

Wedding the medical theory of the human ψυχικὸν πνεῦμα developed by Aristotle and Diocles of Carystos to cosmology, Stoics invented the monistic theory of a divine πνεῦμα that permeated all of nature, including humans, as a “body” or “substance” (σῶμα, οὐσία) of “invisibly fine corporeality.”¹⁰¹ From “its seat in the heart, the center of the soul’s life,” πνεῦμα then circulates throughout the body, functioning as ἡγεμόνικον to regulate not just its vital functions but especially the activities of mind and soul (conceiving, speaking, and thinking).¹⁰² In this way, the divine πνεῦμα (*spiritus sacer*) embodies God inside man (Seneca *Ep.* 41.2), and from the heart, the governing ἡγεμόνικον channels the πνεῦμα of nature throughout the body, enabling the “νοῦς of Zeus” to assure the good government of the body. Thus, on the Stoic model the internal government of the divine πνεῦμα is all that is necessary to guarantee right action.

The author of *Wisdom of Solomon* and Philo of Alexandria usurp and Judaize this Stoic notion of the πνεῦμα as an internal governor in order to identify Judaism as uniquely philosophic, its God as philanthropic, and in Philo’s case, to define and defend circumcision. Modifying Stoic monism, the author of *Wisdom* identifies a πνεῦμα, distinct from the natural breath of life the author assumes God plants within all people (15:11, 16, 16:14), which

⁹⁹ See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 322; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 44. For a recent treatment of this subject using “intertextuality,” see Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart*.

¹⁰⁰ Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 287-89K; De Lacy, *Galen*, 170.

¹⁰¹ Kittel and Friedrich, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός,” *TDNT* 6.354; Cf. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*. Chrysippus, Fr. 310 (v. Arnim 2.112.33); 442 (2.145.41); 786 (2.218.34); Cleanthes Fr. 484 (v. Arnim 1.108.28); Chrysippus Fr. 897 (2.246.15).

¹⁰² Kittel and Friedrich, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός,” *TDNT* 6.355; Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*, 37-120, esp. 64.

morally pure men receive from God through prayer (7:7). Synonymous with divine wisdom (7:7), this πνεῦμα is holy, powerful, intellectual, and is “the only begotten” (μονογενής) of God. Pure and oriented to the good, it makes itself available to, and works for people beneficently (εὐεργετικόν) and philanthropically (φιλόανθρωπον, 1:7). Thus, for morally pure men who pray to receive it, the πνεῦμα of wisdom both permeates their thinking (7:7, 9:17) and as “the capacity for thought and power of moral resolve...present within them...is already an outworking of the permeating πνεῦμα which enables them to see the concrete will of God which is to be done.”¹⁰³ The spirit of Israel’s God is, in other words, a Stoicized spirit of instruction (πνεῦμα παιδείας, 1:5) in law that God gives to wise men (7:7), making them πνεύματα or “living laws” able to live morally upright lives (7:23).

Wisdom’s stoicization of Judaism and law via πνεῦμα is repeated by Philo of Alexandria, who believes that Torah epitomizes the law of nature, which is the standard of conduct writ upon Jewish souls (*Op. 3, Cher. 42*).¹⁰⁴ Like *Wisdom*, Philo assumes the Stoic notion that matter (including humanity) is permeated and held together by πνεῦμα and is dependent on νοῦς as the governor of the soul.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, Philo distinguishes (without dichotomizing) this breath from the heavenly πνεῦμα θεῖον that God gives as a good gift (ἀγαθόν) to people both to produce virtue and give them the zealous desire to pursue it (*Leg. All. 1.34, Spec. Leg. 4.123*). As in *Wisdom*, people who strive for virtue know God through the divine spirit of wisdom God gives them (*Leg. All. 1.38*). But the other side of the coin is that divine πνεῦμα is grounded in behavior: the νοῦς is τοῦ δὲ ἡγεμονικωτάτου πνεύματος θεῖου in those who act right, demonstrating that they live by divine reason (*Rer. Div. Her. 55, 57*). In other words, right action evidences the presence of πνεῦμα θεῖον, which “in Stoic terms Philo” presents as God’s imperishable gift of “πνεῦμα to the νοῦς of man” (ἀίδιος, cf. Rom. 1:20).¹⁰⁶ Like *Wisdom*, Philo has circumscribed the Stoic πνεῦμα as a gift of Israel’s God and identified its governing function as the internal, physical source of right action.

I mean that literally as well as rhetorically. Well aware of non-Jews’ distaste for circumcision (*Spec. Leg. 1.1-2*), Philo both describes other Jews’ “spiritualization” of circumcision as a response to criticism, and he does it himself. In *Migration of Abraham* 89-93, Philo refers sympathetically to Jews who emphasize the symbolic character of circumcision, which “does indeed portray the excision of pleasure and all passions, and the putting away of the impious conceit, under which the mind supposed that it was capable of begetting by its own power” (92).¹⁰⁷ But he adds, “let us not on this account repeal the law laid down for circumcision.” Philo instead defends it by the same means.¹⁰⁸ In *Special Laws* 1.1.4-1.2.10, for example, Philo lauds external circumcision because it assimilates the penis as the body’s generating member to the spirit force of the heart, which is “the unseen and superior element [of the body] to which the concepts of the mind (τὰ νοητὰ) owe their existence.” External circumcision symbolizes the mind’s ability to govern the body, “excising pleasures that bewitch the mind” and “banishing from the soul the grievous malady of conceit.”

¹⁰³ Kittel and Friedrich, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός,” *TDNT* 6.371.

¹⁰⁴ Mendelson, *Philo’s Jewish Identity*, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Kittel and Friedrich, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός,” *TDNT* 6.372.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹⁰⁷ Mendelson, *Philo’s Jewish Identity*, 55-56.

¹⁰⁸ See Philo *Spec. Leg.* 1.1.2; *Quest. Gen.* 3.46-48, 52, 61-62.

Whereas *Special Laws* justifies external circumcision based on the superior circumcision of mind—that is, the noetic self-control—that it signals in the Jew,¹⁰⁹ in *Questions on Exodus 2.2*, Philo argues that mental circumcision is sufficient for Gentile proselytes to Judaism. “The sojourner [i.e., Gentile proselyte to Judaism] circumcises not his uncircumcision but his desires and sensual pleasures and the other passions of the soul...and what is the mind (διανοία) of the sojourner if not alienation from belief in many gods and familiarity (οἰκείωσις) with honoring the God and Father of all?” As the Stoic language of οἰκείωσις signifies, Philo argues that dedicating his mind to the God of Israel makes a proselyte a προκόπτων, a “progressor in wisdom” who is, by definition, a Jew capable of regulating his actions.¹¹⁰ Finally, Philo justifies his noetic redefinition of Judaism-for-Gentiles by reminding Jews that they should understand the needs of Gentile “sojourners.” Like them, Jewish “sojourners” had endured with great self-restraint (ἐγκρατεία, καρτερία) the *misanthropy* of their betters when they were slaves in Egypt.

The relevance of this passage to the practices of actual Gentile proselytes is highly debated, and we need not force Philo’s noetic reading of circumcision into a prescriptive statement in order to see its relevance for Rom. 2:29.¹¹¹ Philo reveals that other Jews interpreted circumcision noetically in order to avoid the criticisms of Gentiles, and Philo himself circumcises Stoic ideas about νόϋς in response to the same pressure. When we read Paul in concert with *Wisdom*, Philo, and the Jews Philo addresses, Paul’s insistence that Judaism and circumcision are ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι takes Philo’s argument only one step further. The logic of Paul’s points in 2:29—suggested in the language of καρδία and ἐν πνεύματι and understandable on a Judaized, but conventionally Stoic physiology of πνεῦμα as internal governor¹¹²—are consistent with those of other Jews dealing with the stereotypically Greco-Roman denigration of Judaism: the God of Israel gives anyone who seeks it a holy and pure πνεῦμα; God therefore prioritizes a pure internal πνεῦμα over the circumcision of the flesh; a true Jew is defined by having a pure internal πνεῦμα; a pure πνεῦμα governs the body (as ἡγεμόνικον) and engendered right action; and therefore a Gentile with a pure πνεῦμα can control his passions, do the work of the law (cf. 2:15), and thus, be a Jewish living law. The difference between Philo and Paul on the definition of Judaism is therefore one of degree. Philo argues (in *Special Laws*) that the Judaism of the mind should be reflected on the Jewish body, whereas for Paul, internal Judaism *rules* the body, making its bearer, whether externally Greek (uncircumcised) or Jew (circumcised), a Jewish living law. Like the *Wisdom of Solomon*, therefore, Paul mimics the Stoic idea of πνεῦμα-as-internal-governor to portray Judaism as a βίος of the philanthropic πνεῦμα that

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Migr. Ab.* 89; *Ques. Gen.* 3.48.

¹¹⁰ See Engberg-Pedersen, 2000, 53-73, esp. 71; and chapter three.

¹¹¹ See Collins, “A Symbol of Otherness,” 173-75, 184; Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo’s Thought*, 200; and those she cites in n. 21.

¹¹² As Annas describes (*Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*), and Stowers’ discussion of the word-deed convention implies, other philosophies, such as Platonism, highlighted the importance of the “inner man” in the pursuit of virtue. Paul certainly employs tropes associated with Platonism elsewhere: the heavenly versus the earthly body (1 Cor. 15:48-49); taking off the transient earthly “tent” of the earthly body (2 Cor. 5:1). But Paul’s interest at 2:29 is not merely to prioritize internality, but to highlight the spiritual government of the body, the ‘hegemonic’ function of the spirit to regulate the body’s functions, make believers mindful, and thus, to determine right action. This was broadly recognized as a Stoic convention. It is the association of Stoicism with that convention—especially in its political, empowered dimension as a bulwark of *Romanitas*—that I believe Paul highlights for his Roman audience.

enables right action and welcomes both Jews and Greeks as internal, spiritual Jews without requiring external ἔργα νόμου.

The Advantage of Pauline Judaism: The Scriptures (Law) of Israel Prove the Faithfulness and Impartial Justice of God (3:1-3:26)

Paul's internalization and consequent ethnic expansion of Judaism has two potential effects—that Jews have lost their ethnic advantage over Greeks in the pursuit of virtue; and that the law, absent the need for ἔργα νόμου, has no place within it. Much as the Stoic Seneca debated his equal, Posidonius, in his protreptic *Epistle* 90, Paul now enters a hortatory dialogue with his Jewish equal over these objections to his “Judaism for Gentiles” (3:1-4:25). Within that dialogical frame, Paul answers the teacher's objections, and simultaneously counters Greek charges of misanthropy and lawlessness, by portraying Judaism as a lawful, philanthropic way of life. He demonstrates that Judaism retains its advantage and its law by redefining “law” as scriptural testimony for his internal Judaism through Christ (3:1-8, 9-20), testimony that proves the God of Israel a just sovereign and Jesus Christ his faithful Son (3:21-26) who realize the Torah promise that Gentiles will become sons of Abraham by faith (3:27-4:25).

As the questions in 3:1 underscore, the teacher's main objection to Paul's argument that Judaism is internal is that it removes the ethnic advantage of Judaism over Greeks that Jews possess in Torah law. The first diatribal exchange between the teacher and Paul (3:1-8) addresses this concern by underscoring that the abiding validity of law lies in its scriptural promise to include the nations, and thereby, prove God's *fides* to his promises (πίστις):

JT: Then what (τί οὖν) advantage does the Jew have, or what is the benefit of circumcision? (3:1)

Paul: Much in every way (πολὸν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον). First of all, the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God. (3:2)

JT: Ok, then what (τί γάρ)? If some [Jews] were untrustworthy, does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God [to Israel]? (3:3)

Paul: Certainly not (μὴ γένοιτο). Let God be true [to his covenant promise] even though every man be false, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged.” (3:4)

JT: But if (εἰ δὲ) our injustice serves to show the justice of God, what shall we say (τί ἐροῦμεν)? [Obviously not (μὴ) that] ‘God is unjust to inflict wrath on us’ (I speak humanly)?

Paul: Of course not (μὴ γένοιτο)! For then how could God judge the world? (3:6)

JT: But if (εἰ δὲ) the truthfulness of God abounds to his glory by means of my falsehood, then why am I judged to be a sinner? (3:7)

Paul: And why not (καὶ μὴ καθῶς) say--as we are slandered, as some charge us with saying--“Let us do bad things that good may come”? Their condemnation is just. (3:8)

As his reply in 3:2 indicates, Paul answers the Jewish teacher that the true advantage of Judaism inheres in God’s choice to entrust Jews with his scriptures, which point to the inclusion of the nations (3:2, 31). Stanley Stowers, building on the work of Sam Williams, has already demonstrated this claim.¹¹³ Williams argues that when Paul uses τὰ λόγια (3:2), which typically refers to the oracles or promises of the gods,¹¹⁴ he is alluding to the Abrahamic promise to include the nations. Williams points out that Paul regularly uses the passive of πιστεῦω (3:2) to refer to being “entrusted” with the gospel’s scriptural promise of God’s restoration of Israel.¹¹⁵ This is why, as Stowers notes, Paul introduces Romans with the announcement that his gospel was promised in the scriptures (1:1; cf. Gal. 2:7, 1 Thess 2:4, 1 Cor. 9:17). As Paul says in Galatians 3:8, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations based on faithfulness, proclaimed the good news beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’” Since in Romans 4 Paul addresses “the promise to Abraham and his seed, that they should inherit the world” (4:13), Williams concludes that τὰ λόγια in 3:2 refers to God’s scriptural promise to embrace the nations through Abraham and share with them his gifts.¹¹⁶

Building on this foundation, Stowers argues that Paul’s debate with the teacher effectively rebukes him for refusing to share God’s scriptural promise with the Gentiles. Paul intimates in 3:2 (as he did already in 2:17-24) that God had commissioned the teacher to proclaim the gospel of “Jews first and also Greek,” and the teacher has failed in his task as God’s agent (cf. 10:14-16).¹¹⁷ According to Stowers, Paul then leads the teacher through questions and answers, like Socrates would a student, to discover the implication of that failure for himself. While on my read, the teacher appears actively to guide the direction of their discussion, the point is the same¹¹⁸: God could be charged with faithlessness (3:3) and his justice questioned for what was ultimately the fault of Jewish leaders like him (3:4). While the teacher dislikes being used as an *exemplum* of a “bad Jew” who excludes the nations from God’s promises (2:17-29, 3:7), he nevertheless agrees with Paul’s basic point that God’s faithfulness to his promises must prevail, even if that results in God’s judgment of the teacher’s unfaithfulness (3:5). As Paul says, concluding this section of the debate, if *Paul and the teacher* do not agree that God’s faithfulness must prevail, *they* (“we”) would rightly be charged by outsiders with lawlessness (τὰ κακά, 3:8).

Because Stowers believes that Paul writes Romans to counter the influence of Jewish teachers on Judeophilic Gentiles, he interprets 3:8 as Paul’s response to Jewish teachers’ accusation of Christian antinomianism.¹¹⁹ But Stowers does not see the interethnic issue at

¹¹³ Stowers, *Romans*, 166-67.

¹¹⁴ Philo, *Somn.* 2.220; Stowers, *Romans*, 167; Manson, “LOGIA” 87-104.

¹¹⁵ Williams, “The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans.”

¹¹⁶ Williams, “The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans,” 269.

¹¹⁷ Stowers, *Rereading*, 167.

¹¹⁸ I disagree with Stowers’ characterization of the teacher as an ignorant student Paul leads through Socratic questions to the truth. Rather, the teacher actively asks incisive questions, to which Paul responds. In other words, Paul portrays the teacher (and his Judaism) as a real rival, not as a youth.

¹¹⁹ Stowers, *Rereading*, 173.

play in their debate over God's promise to the nations: Greco-Roman charges of Jewish stasis and misanthropy lump Paul and the Jewish teacher together in Greek eyes. The charge leveled in 3:8—"let us do bad things that good may come, as we are slandered (βλασφημούμεθα) with saying"—is not the Jewish teacher's charge of Pauline (Christian) antinomianism, but Paul's polemical restatement of the stereotyped Greco-Roman charge of Jewish lawlessness leveled in 2:17-24. It is the Greco-Roman charge that Jews treat wrongdoing as reflecting well on their God, a charge to which both Paul and the teacher are vulnerable (3:2, 5, 7; cf. 2:17-24).

In other words, 3:1-8 serves as a responsive *inclusio* on 2:17-24. To his Greek audience, Paul argues against the *reputation* of Judaism *among the nations* as lawless and misanthropic—as “derided (βλασφημείται) among the nations”—contending instead that it is lawful and that its lawfulness is proven by God's faithfulness to his Torah-promise to embrace and judge Jews and Greeks impartially. Put in the terms used by other Jews responding to similar charges of misanthropy, the standing of Judaism *before the nations* rests on the proof of God's *fides* to all peoples (3:3).¹²⁰ This interethnic aspect of Jewish group-definition explains why Philo argues that the law required Jews to have *κοινωνία* with everyone,¹²¹ and why Josephus says the law expressed God's liberality to all (χρηστότητα; cf. Rom. 3:12, 11:22): “God bestows this abundance of good things not for our enjoyment alone, but that we may also share generously with others; and God desires that by these means the special favor that he bears to the people of Israel and the bounty of his gifts may be manifested to others also.”¹²² In *Against Apion*, Josephus similarly describes the law as designed to promote philanthropy and “our legislator” Moses, as requiring Jews to share the “wealth of our table” with neighbors and enemies alike.¹²³ Finally, while *Wisdom* requires unwavering trust in God from Gentile rulers (1:2), it also proves that God deserves that trust by depicting him as a philanthropic King who created the world for immortality (1:15-16) and gave it a champion, Wisdom, who loved the earth's peoples and freed them from sin (10:1).

Paul's answers to the teacher's question about Jewish advantage read, like those of *Wisdom*, as protreptic proofs (cf. τὴν ἐνδειξίν, 3:25-26) that the God of Israel is a wise sovereign who has given all peoples a champion to free them from sin through his πίστις. For Paul's argument to “fly” with Greeks, Paul must answer the teacher's questions, and distinguish himself from the teacher, in terms amenable to them. This is why Paul responds to the teacher's questions about advantage (3:1, 3) by using the language of Greco-Roman wise rule, grounded in the law *of Israel*, to prove God's impartial justice and faithfulness. Thus he argues, “Let God be true though every man be false, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and you may prevail when you are judged” (3:3-4). As Cicero said, “The foundation of justice is good faith (*fides*)—truth and fidelity to promises and agreements. Therefore we may follow the Stoics... accepting their statement that ‘good faith’

¹²⁰ See Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 133-149.

¹²¹ Philo, *Spec. Laws* 2.29.167.

¹²² Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.236-37. Josephus also describes Joseph as a virtuous statesman who distributed grain to strangers because of their common kinship under one Father; the justice of kings David and Solomon as evidence of God's goodness to all people; Jonah's sea-rescue as an indicator of God's mercy to Gentiles; and the Egyptian Reuel's adoption of Moses as a sign of God's fatherhood over all. See Josephus, *Ant.* 2.94 (cf. Plutarch *Alexander* 27); 7.391; 8.117; 9.206-14; 2.263.

¹²³ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.146, 211-13.

(*fides*) is so called because what it promised is ‘made good.’”¹²⁴ Because ancients deemed justice the foundation of good rule, the Greco-Roman specter of Jewish misanthropy requires that Paul “make good” God’s *fides* to the law by judging the Jewish teacher impartially for failing to proclaim the Abrahamic promise to the nations (3:9).

The teacher, whom Paul depicts as understanding his argument perfectly, responds by querying whether Jews are disadvantaged vis-à-vis Greeks under the law because of God’s judgment of the faithlessness of Jews like him (3:9).¹²⁵

JT: Then what (τί οὖν)? Are we [Jews] now disadvantaged? (3:9)

Paul: Of course not (οὐ πάντως), for we have already charged Jews and Greeks as all being ‘under sin,’ just as it is written... We know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are ‘under the law’ [=2:12] in order that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human being will be accounted just in God’s sight by means of works of law, because knowledge of sin comes through law (3:10-20).

A resounding “No!” marks Paul’s answer to the question of Jewish disadvantage and frames the theme of Paul’s second body of instruction to the teacher (3:10-26). Paul argues on two bases that Jews are not disadvantaged: God’s common judgment of all under Torah law (3:9-20); and his common acquittal of all through Christ outside of Torah law (3:21-26).

According to 3:9-20, Jews are not disadvantaged vis-à-vis Greeks because “the law” (a catena of citations from the Psalms and Isaiah) testifies to what Paul had already demonstrated, that both Greeks (1:18-2:16) and Jews (2:17-24) *as groups* are controlled by the power of Sin (3:10).¹²⁶ Paul’s law of scripture frames their situation as a negative restatement of 1:17: neither Jews nor Greeks are δίκαιοι who lived by faithfulness (1:17, 3:10). All lack understanding (3:11); none show liberality (3:12); all are factious (3:15); none know the way of peace (3:17). By having scripture, defined as law, speak for God in 3:10-18, Paul displays God’s sovereignty and *fides* to his Torah-promise in subjecting “the whole world,” inclusive of Jew and Greek, to his impartial judgment on the same standard of law (3:19). This imperative of just rule, that the sovereign’s law must speak to *all* “so that *every mouth* may be stopped and the *whole world* held accountable to God” (3:19), explains why Paul argued in 2:12-16 that lawful Gentiles were naturally under the aegis of Torah law—so that Paul can now argue that God impartially judges all peoples unjust by the standard of Torah (3:9-20) and, thus, impartially determines all peoples’ need for justification “outside of Torah.” (3:21-26).

¹²⁴ Cicero, *On Duties* 1.7.23.

¹²⁵ On προεχόμεθα as a true passive, indicating the worry that Jews might be excelled or surpassed by Greeks if some Jews proved unfaithful, see Stowers *Rereading*, 173-74. However, I read 3:9 as the beginning of a new diatribal movement that runs through 3:26.

¹²⁶ On Sin’s function as a hypostasized Tyrant who enslaves all, see the exegesis of 5:12-21 in chapter 7. The unstated logic of Paul’s claim here, that all are under the power of sin, is not the model of ‘original sin’ by which every individual on the planet is “infected” with sin at birth, but the model of *group* identity and association with group leaders who have proven their ways of life sinful, inefficacious in guiding people in right action. (Otherwise, statements like 2:27, that individual Gentiles who can do law naturally, are illogical.) The logic of Paul’s argument about attribution of group identity and shame is relational rather than autonomous and individualistic. It is “the one to the many,” a logic he will apply positively to Christ in 5:12-21.

3:21-26, then, functions as the acquittal of God's sovereign justice and thus, as a seminal proof of the advantage of Paul's (ἔργα νόμου-free) Judaism for Greeks (3:20): Justifying all through his favor (χάρις) as a *beneficium* (δωρέα) through manumission (ἀπολυτρώσις) in Christ Jesus, the God of Israel destroys the ethnic dividing wall (διαστολή) between Jews and Greeks that is signaled interethnically by ἔργα νόμου like circumcision.¹²⁷ As Paul will later argue (5:20-7:25), since the positive role of Torah is to disclose the power of Sin in the mind,¹²⁸ the ἔργα νόμου cannot remedy, but only reveal, Sin's power (3:20). Hence, God displays his sovereign justice by acquitting all outside the Mosaic code (γράμμα, 2:29)—although witnessed by the law and the prophets¹²⁹—by means of the freeing faithfulness of Christ (πίστις Χριστοῦ, 3:21-26).¹³⁰ As I showed in chapter three, the *fides* or πίστις of a king to Zeus and to his subjects was a fundamental indicator of the justice of a king's reign. He was charged by Zeus, as the embodiment of his πνεῦμα on earth, to free, save, oversee, protect, and shape the character of his subjects. The breadth of power and divine grounding of this concept explains why the *fides* of Roman emperors like Nero was so prominently memorialized in inscriptions and debated in political dialogues of the period.¹³¹ The king's *fides*/πίστις was the benchmark by which the peoples under the king's care judged the power, wisdom, and divinity of their sovereign. Given Paul's earlier emphasis on πίστις/*fides* as a marker of God's faithfulness to his promises (1:16-17, 3:2), his use of πίστις Χριστοῦ in 3:21-26 almost certainly implies the following royal claim: The God of Israel has commissioned his Son, the Davidic Messiah (1:3), as his agent to free and distribute his *beneficia* to all peoples.

The unusual language of 3:21-26 supports this reading. First, Paul justifies the need for Christ's act as the weakness or "falling short" (ὕστερέω) of all peoples, Jew *and* Greek, in the race for virtue (3:23). In so doing, he highlights the interethnic competition between Jews and Greeks for advantage that has been assumed since 1:18, and he underscores that God ends that interethnic race for the benefit of all through the πίστις Χριστοῦ. Paul thereby names the faithfulness of Christ God's response to the Greco-Roman charge of Jewish exclusivism and misanthropy (cf. 9:31, 11:11): through his Son, all people are given advantage in Judaism.

Second, God's intervention in the race between Jews and Greeks takes the form of his προτίθημι of Christ as a ἰλαστήριον (3:25). Προτίθημι can have two meanings, "commissioning" and "putting forward publicly," and most commentators argue that the

¹²⁷ As I discussed in chapter one, the phrase οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή in 3:22b-23 does not imply the eradication of differences between peoples. διαστολή denoted a "fence line" or "boundary marker" separating one piece of land from another. The argument in 3:22, an ethnic argument, is that through Christ, God the good shepherd has removed the "fence line" and welcomed everyone into his "pasture" regardless of their ethnic differences. The argument is not that in that welcome, the differences between peoples ceased to be, but that God is *impartial* in his inclusion of *peoples* in Israel. Cf. Eph. 4:14-15.

¹²⁸ See my discussion below and Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 2:94; Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 7 (NPNF 1 11:375-76).

¹²⁹ Recall that Christian authors of protreptic speeches, who were seeking to establish the "traditions" that supported their upstart way of life, repeatedly used scripture as testimonia for them. The language of testimony recurs throughout the gospel: 1:2, 4:1-25, 9:25-33, 10:6-13, 11:1-10, 26-29, 15:8-12.

¹³⁰ See Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*. For further discussion, cf. those he cites (150-157); and Stowers, *Rereading*, 352 n. 1.

¹³¹ See Georgi, *Theocracy in Paul's Praxis and Theology*, 36-7, 83-4, 88, 95-100; Walker, "Paul's Offer of Leniency," 208.

latter represents Paul's emphasis: Christ's public shaming and expiatory self-sacrifice through a bloody crucifixion. Stanley Stowers stresses instead that Christ's is a kingly act of mercy.¹³² But allowing for the multivalence—and mixed, elite and humiliating connotations—of *προτίθημι* and *ἰλαστήριον* offer a suggestive interpretation of Christ's sacrifice as a royal act. As is well known, *ἰλαστήριον* was a decidedly Jewish term used almost exclusively in the Old Greek scriptures to refer to the lid of ark of covenant, or “mercy seat” that contained the Jewish law, stood in the center of the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple, and was the site of sacrificial offerings. But it could also signify the self-sacrifice of martyrs (4 Macc. 17:22) or God's sovereign mercy, since the *ἰλαστήριον* was the “symbol of the gracious power of God” (Philo).¹³³ Since in Romans Christ's work as a *ἰλαστήριον* proved the kingly justice of God's *ἀνοχή* or divine forbearance in postponing the judgment of Gentile impiety (cf. 2:4),¹³⁴ our interpretation of *ἰλαστήριον* should probably wed kingly graciousness and self-sacrifice in Christ's identity as the “mercy seat.”¹³⁵ (Paul will repeatedly emphasize the noble and exemplary character of that suffering in 5-15.) In short, in Paul's decidedly Jewish Christ the royal quality of mercy and the humiliation of self-sacrifice for all peoples were fused as the substance of *πίστις Χριστοῦ*.

The benefits of that fusion clearly reflect on his royalty. First, as liberator, Christ frees all peoples from enslavement (*ἀπολύτρωσις*) to Sin (3:9). As Origen put it:

Ἀπολύτρωσις is the word used for what is given to enemies in order to ransom captives and restore them to their liberty. Therefore people were held in captivity by their enemies until the coming of the Son of God, who became for them not only the wisdom of God and righteousness and sanctification, but also *ἀπολύτρωσις* [1 Cor. 1:30]. He...rendered himself to our enemies and poured out his blood on those who thirsted for it.¹³⁶

As agent of God's power, Christ justifies all by God's favor, as a *beneficium* or gift. By his act of gracious self-sacrifice he also proves God a *δίκαιος* who “lived by faithfulness” (1:16-17; 3:26) and gives all people a chance to do likewise (3:10, 26). Through his *πίστις* Christ

¹³² Stowers, *Rereading*, 218-19.

¹³³ Philo, *Mos.* 2.95-97 (anarthrous); *Fug.* 100; cf. Bailey, “Jesus as the Mercy Seat.”

¹³⁴ In *On Mercy* Seneca counseled Nero that a wise king meted out punishment when appropriate; doing so both refined the person punished and demonstrated the king's justice. “Pity,” said Seneca, was a weakness of mind and an embarrassment to both the king and his subjects. See Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event*; Stowers, *Rereading*; and my note on *ἀνοχή* in 2:4.

¹³⁵ Reading the term as “mercy seat” has made well-meaning Christians concerned about the Christian supersessionism it implies about the temple structure (e.g., Stowers, *Rereading*, 209, who goes so far as to say it assumes a typological reading of Judaism). But supersession (in the way they use it) implies that Paul is not a Jew. Philo saw no problem in defining the term as he saw fit, and Paul has done the same. With regard to the problem of Christian supersession of Judaism, it is equally important to discuss what Paul has *not* done to Judaism (superseded it with Christianity) as it is to discuss what modern Christians *have* done to Jews, traditional Judaism, and the Judaism of Paul.

¹³⁶ The term is used in both the OT and in Greco-Roman literature to refer to manumission from slavery, and to the next of kin's right to redeem an enslaved kinsman or a prisoner from war. Cf. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 2.110; Dunn, *Romans*, 169.

thereby proves that God has broken down the “fence line” separating Jews and Greeks.¹³⁷ In sum, in 3:21-26, Paul demonstrates to the teacher (and his Greek audience) that the bloodied Christ crucified by the Romans was commissioned by the God of Israel to be a royal “mercy seat” for all peoples, in order that he could justify, free, and (as Paul shows in chapters 5-15) shape their characters.¹³⁸

The Advantage of Pauline Judaism: Gentiles as Sons of Abraham and Inheritors of the World Through Faith (3:27-4:25)

This is a decisive proof of the advantage of Paul’s Judaism for Greeks: it welcomes all as a divine gift of God through Christ. But however conclusive it may seem, 3:21-26 does not end Paul’s hortatory dialogue with the Jewish teacher. The teacher sees the implication of Paul’s message, that the Jewish boast of ethnic superiority over Greeks has been removed by the gift of universal manumission through Christ (3:27-8), and he wishes to know whether the Jewish *summum bonum* of law can still be maintained, particularly without basing its advantage in works. What happens to these things if God now justifies the fleshly circumcised ἐκ faith and the uncircumcised διὰ faith (3:30)? Introducing the example of their forefather Abraham, the teacher asks (rhetorically) whether “we have found (εὐρηκέναι) Abraham to be our forefather *according to the flesh*? For if Abraham was justified ἐξ works, he has something to boast about” (4:12a).¹³⁹ The teacher’s question places three burdens on Paul in 4:2b-24, two of which scholars have discussed. First, he must confirm that the gospel of “God’s Gentile-embracing grace” maintains the Jewish *summum bonum* of law.¹⁴⁰ Second, he must show that it does so, as Torah proves, by the law of faith as a favor (χάρις) rather than as something due (ὀφείλεμα) Abraham for his efforts (Gen. 15-17).¹⁴¹ Third, in order to foster unity between the circumcised and uncircumcised, so that they “may both regard Abraham as [their] father” in Christ,¹⁴² Paul must prove Abraham the *physical, ethnic* forefather of both Greeks and Jews ἐκ πίστεως—that is, by Paul’s internal Judaism of the mind (4:16).

As Stanley Stowers sees, ἐκ is a marker of lineage, kinship, and group identity. Lucian uses it to identify Peripetatics (οἱ ἐκ τοῦ περιπατοῦ; *Vit. Auct.* 43), while in 1 Chronicles 5:2, David is ἐκ Judah. Hence, “Jn 1:13 speaks of ‘those who are not born out of [ex] bloods, nor out of [ek] the will of the flesh, nor out of [ek] the will of a man but out of [ek] God.’ Jos. *Ant.* 12.226-27 and 1 Macc. 12:20 give versions of a letter purportedly sent from Areios, king of Sparta, to Onias the high priest, referring to documents proving that the Jews and the Spartans are ‘of one people’ (*ex henos eien genous*; *Ant.* 228) since they are ‘from a common

¹³⁷ Once more on διαστολή: the term was also used by philosophers and in the Old Greek scriptures (Ex 8:23) to separate the wise from the foolish. Paul claims that God, through Christ, gives his benefits of wisdom, etc., to all.

¹³⁸ Cf. Campbell, “Romans III,” 254-55: Paul’s gospel is “universal not in opposition to Jewish particularism...but precisely on the basis of that Jewish particularism which, through the fulfillment in Christ of the promises to Israel is now opened up to include the Gentiles also.” Paul’s concern is “peace in the new aeon” (255).

¹³⁹ For this translation, see Hays, “Have We Found Abraham to be our Forefather According to the Flesh?”; and Stowers, *Rereading* 234.

¹⁴⁰ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 54; cf. also “Have We Found Abraham to be our Forefather According to the Flesh?”

¹⁴¹ Stowers, *Rereading*, 234.

¹⁴² Campbell, “Romans III,” 261.

descent relationship by virtue of Abraham (*ek tēs pros Abramōn oikeiōtētos*, *Ant.* 228-29). Jews and Spartans are brothers “from the lineage of Abraham (*ek genous Abraam*, 1 Macc. 12:22). For Paul, Jews and Gentiles are now related [ethnically] because Christ has made Abraham father of gentiles, so that the two sets of peoples share the same progenitor.”¹⁴³ Just so. While Paul asserts that Jews and Gentiles are justified by slightly different means in Christ (ἐκ or διὰ faith, respectively; 3:30), he argues in 4:2b-25 that “*ek pisteōs* is generative for both Jews and gentiles.”¹⁴⁴ That is, in Christ ἐκ πίστεως refers to a group of people,¹⁴⁵ the uncircumcised whom God promises, on account of the πίστις of Abraham, will be united with the circumcised through Abraham as ethnic kin—but not according to flesh (4:1), *according to the spirit* (cf. 1:3). In 4:2b-25, Paul redefines and expands the ἔθνος of Israel through the internal, spiritual πίστις of Abraham.

4:1-25 makes this point not by arguing that Abraham was the father of Jews and Gentiles (both the teacher and Paul assumed that Abraham was ancestor of the Jews), but by arguing that God rewarded Abraham’s trust while uncircumcised by making him the father of the uncircumcised (or more precisely, the spiritually circumcised) and extending to them his promise, made before the giving of law and circumcision, that they would inherit the world. Listen to Origen, Chrysostom and Theodoret, respectively:

In that Abraham was justified while still uncircumcised, it is obvious that he is the head and father of all uncircumcised believers.

See how the uncircumcised had Abraham as their father before the circumcised came into existence!

If an uncircumcised Gentile follows Abraham’s faith, which is manifested before being circumcised, he will not be rejected. For the God of all, since he has foreseen as God that he would gather one people from both Jews and Gentiles and prepare for them the salvation by faith, had appointed Abraham their father as well. Paul had demonstrated that Abraham had acquired righteousness by faith before being circumcised. . . Hence, Paul called him the father of the Gentiles who believe.¹⁴⁶

Romans 4:1-25 is a Torah proof-text to Gentiles that Paul’s Judaism is both just (faithful to the promise to include the nations) and philanthropic. The reason for it, as Ambrosiaster recognized, is to “invite the Gentiles to share the faith of Abraham, who trusted God while still uncircumcised.”¹⁴⁷

To make this point, Paul gives several arguments in an excursus on Genesis 15—that God reckoned Abraham’s faith as righteousness, God through David had blessed those whom the Lord chose not to reckon their lawlessness, and Abraham’s faith was reckoned to him as righteousness before he was circumcised—that build toward his first main conclusion of 4:11-12: Torah proves that God reckoned righteousness to Abraham by faith as a favor

¹⁴³ Stowers, *Rereading*, 239, 240-41.

¹⁴⁴ διὰ connotes means (see 3:22, 3:24, 4:13). See Stowers, *Rereading*, 240.

¹⁴⁵ *Contra* Stowers, *Rereading*, 241.

¹⁴⁶ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 2.180; Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 8 NPNF 1 11.388; Theodoret of Cyr, *Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans* [*Patrologia Graecae*] 82.89, 92].

¹⁴⁷ Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* 81:143, 145.

apart from works (4:4) and blessed him on that basis (4:6-8).¹⁴⁸ On this point most interpreters agree. But scholars who focus on faith (versus works) often miss the shift of subject at 4:9 (“Is this *blessing* therefore pronounced only upon the [fleshly] circumcised or also upon the [fleshly] uncircumcised?”) and emphasize that 4:11-12 makes Abraham the ancestor of both the uncircumcised (4:11) and of the circumcised *who have faith* (4:12). That is, while they note that in 4:12, the phrase **πατέρα περιτομῆς, τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν... Ἀβραάμ**, should refer to *two* circumcised groups (despite the odd placement of οὐκ following the first τοῖς), they generally conflate the groups into one, the circumcised who are not “works-righteous” but have the faith of Abraham.¹⁴⁹

But a reading of 4:10-12 more consistent with the thrust of Paul’s Gentile-oriented argument is that 4:12 *redefines circumcision for a second time*, this time in relation to πίστις. That is, 4:12 clarifies 4:10-11 by asserting that Abraham’s faith made him the father of two groups of the “spiritually circumcised,” those who are externally circumcised (Jews) and those who have the faith of Abraham (Gentile-Jews of the heart). Recall that in 3:27-31, the teacher’s concern is whether Paul’s redefined “law of faith” really upholds the Torah even though it removes the boast in ἔργα νόμου (*like circumcision*). By prioritizing faith as the origin of Abraham’s blessing in uncircumcision (4:2-10), Paul addresses this concern by showing that the law of faith is both prior to *and* the foundation of the Mosaic code and circumcision.¹⁵⁰ In other words, 4:1-12 does not focus on the priority of faith *per se*, but on the relationship of faith to circumcision. The point of 4:10-12 is that Abraham received the *external* sign of circumcision as God’s “royal seal” or “signet ring” (σφραγίδα) of a *temporally prior, internal bodily reality*, the righteousness of faith that Abraham had in uncircumcision (4:10). The result of God’s royal approval of Abraham’s faith-in-uncircumcision is that God promises he will become the father of those who trust in uncircumcision (4:11), *even* (καὶ) the father of the *spiritual* circumcision (4:12), not only those who are externally circumcised (τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνον) but also those who follow the faith of Abraham in (fleshly) uncircumcision. In other words, Abraham’s faith in uncircumcision has the effect of defining true circumcision internally, as a matter of the spirit, before the advent of the law. The boast of Jewish advantage implied in ἔργα νόμου is erased because Abraham’s prior, internal circumcision by faith promises the adoption of the faithful-uncircumcised as his spiritual sons.

This reading is not as odd as it may at first appear. In the first place, J. Swetnam has already proposed that **πατέρα περιτομῆς** refers to the “spiritually circumcised,” and J. Fitzmyer, following him, divides the groups of 4:12 as I have.¹⁵¹ Rhetorical evidence also supports this reading. In 4:16 Paul uses the same οὐ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ construction to argue that the promise of Abrahamic sonship and cosmic inheritance (4:13) depends on faith so it can rest on God’s royal favor (4:13; cf. 4:10, 3:24) and be granted to two groups—“not only

¹⁴⁸ A quick review of εὐρίσκειν in Genesis (6:8, 18:3, 19:19, 30:27, 32:5-6, 33:8) suggest that the principal characters (Noah, Abraham, Jacob) repeatedly “discover” favor (χάρις), mercy, and righteousness before God.

¹⁴⁹ E.g., Dunn, *Romans*, 210; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 382. Among ancient commentators, Origen concurs with this reading (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 2:180, 182).

¹⁵⁰ Theodoret, *Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans* [*Patriologia Graecae* 82.89]: “Paul demonstrates that faith was not only older than the law, it was older than circumcision as well.”

¹⁵¹ Swetnam, “The Curious Crux”; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 382.

those ἐκ τοῦ νομοῦ but also those of (ἐκ) the faith of Abraham.” The two groups of 4:16 (ἐκ τοῦ νομοῦ, ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ) are the same two groups as those in 4:12 (τοῖς ἐκ περιτομῆς, τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἰχνεσιν τῆς ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ πίστεως... Ἀβραάμ). Indeed, Paul’s description of the groups in 4:16 assumes that the reader recognizes the prior thrust of 4:10-12: that “those ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ” refers to Gentile faithful and that God’s royal approval of Abraham’s faith prior to the giving of the law had conjoined the two subgroups into one spiritual (internally circumcised) kinship group in Abraham. In short, there is no need to make the two groups of 4:12 into one group of “faithful circumcised.” Paul argues in 4:10 that God gave Jews external circumcision as his royal seal symbolizing (σημείον, 4:11) both a prior, internal, pneumatic reality of *fides* (spiritual circumcision) and a future inheritance for the Gentiles. By implication, Jewish males (like the teacher and Paul) carried on their bodies the royal seal of God’s oldest covenant with Israel—the law of Abrahamic faith that made Paul’s spiritual Judaism the oldest, truest sort. Paul’s answer to the teacher’s question in 4:1 was that, “We have found Abraham to be our forefather, as well as that of the Gentiles, *according to the spirit.*”

Significantly, Ambrosiaster and Pelagius support this reading of 4:10-12 and highlight its connection to the Judaism of πνεῦμα in 2:29. According to Ambrosiaster, “Paul says this [4:12] because Abraham by believing became the forefather of the circumcision, but of the heart, not only of those descended from him but also of those who, from the nations, trust in the way he did.”¹⁵² Likewise Pelagius: “Therefore all the Gentiles who trust are children of Abraham when faith alone is credited to them as righteousness and they too receive the circumcision of the heart.”¹⁵³ Thematic connections between mind and faith in the remainder of chapter four support the fathers’ assumption that Paul united faith with the circumcision of heart. Paul argued in 4:18-19 that Abraham “trusted in the hope” of God’s promise that he would become the father of the nations, refusing to “weaken in faith” when he thought (κατενόησεν) of his nearly dead body. Further, Paul said that Abraham became “strong in faith” and fully convinced of mind (πληροφορηθεῖς; cf. 14:5, ἐν...νοὶ πληροφορεῖσθω) that God was a δυνατός who could make good on his promise to make Abraham the father of nations (4:21). In other words, Paul assumes an intimate connection between Abraham’s active dedication to God and the strengthening of his “faith” and “mind.” This connection should be familiar from the earlier discussion of the Gentile proselyte in Philo’s *Questions on Exodus* 2.2 (cf. 2:29). Philo argued that the act of dedicating his mind to honoring God transformed the Gentile “sojourner” into a προκόπτων or Jewish “progressor in wisdom,” a δυνατός strong enough to do God’s will. Paul argues similarly that Abraham’s glory and trust in God transformed him into a strong man. Indeed, Paul says that his union of πίστις and νοῦς in the act of worshipping God was the reason “Abraham’s faith was reckoned to him as righteousness” (4:22).

At the level of the text, Paul’s philosophic connection between πίστις and νοῦς or πνεῦμα, and thus link between 4:1-24 and 2:29, is subtle. But the connection between these terms in Roman Stoicism and in Philo of Alexandria’s treatment of Abraham shout loudly in the cultural echo chamber of Paul’s protrepsis to the Romans. While πίστις undoubtedly evokes the call to loyalty and obedience visible not only in the scriptures of Israel but also as *fides* and *pietas* in elite Roman culture, πιστεύειν also connoted “belief” and “mental assent” in Greek philosophical discussions of theology. According to Plotinus, for instance, a person

¹⁵² Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* 81:137.

¹⁵³ Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 86.

“ought to be led by knowledge to belief in” god because the subject of faith can only be $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$.¹⁵⁴ The Corpus Hermeticum reflects this link when it asserts that a person’s $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ responds to proclamation by rising to truth and attaining to faith (4.4, 1.1). While for Roman Stoics the use of $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ was not “religious” (in the modern sense of the word), it did imply that the person who directs his moral purpose ($\pi\rho\omicron\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$) to the things $\epsilon\phi\prime\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$, to be in harmony with nature ($\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\mu\phi\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\eta\ \phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota$) and thus the divinity of nature, is $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ and his $\eta\gamma\epsilon\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$ is $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$. He is unalterably reliable, free, unhindered, honorable—in short, a “living law.”¹⁵⁵

In his Stoicized middle Platonism, Philo of Alexandria embraced this connection of $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ and $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha/\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ to extol “believe in the one God and trust in his providence.”¹⁵⁶ He emphasized, on the one hand, that the point of Jews’ faith in God was to turn from the perishable world to the eternal God. But Philo also stressed that $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ is a “disposition of the soul ($\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, *Config. Ling.*, 31), an $\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\acute{\eta}$, indeed, the $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\acute{\alpha}\tau\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ (*Rer. Div. Her.*, 91)...the $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ (*Abr.* 270). To attain it is... $\mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \omicron\lambda\upsilon\mu\iota\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\omicron\nu\ \delta\iota\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$; it is the $\acute{\alpha}\theta\lambda\omicron\nu$ which Abraham won. It is very closely related to the $\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\acute{\eta}$ of $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\beta\epsilon\iota\alpha$...It is also the $\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\epsilon\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \beta\acute{\epsilon}\beta\alpha\iota\omicron\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{\omicron}\nu$.” Thus, “in so far as $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ means turning from the corruptible...to the eternal Philo follows the Platonic tradition. But in so far as [faith] is described as the disposition of soul he follows the later Stoa...In place of the $\epsilon\phi\prime\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ to which [one’s] intention should be oriented acc. to Stoicism Philo [simply] sets God.”¹⁵⁷ In other words, when Philo describes the $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ of Abraham in *On Abraham*, he does so by usurping Roman Stoic commonplaces about $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha/\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ to laud “faith in God the one sure and infallible good...the fulfillment of bright hopes” (268); to declare that the “oracles of God ($\omicron\acute{\iota}\ \chi\rho\eta\sigma\mu\omicron\acute{\iota}$) attested [Abraham’s] possession of the queen of virtues, faith in the existent” (270); and to depict Abraham as a sage whom God “repaid with faithfulness by confirming...the gifts which he had promised...so that his mind ($\delta\iota\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\acute{\alpha}$) might be established more securely than before” (273). Philo even concludes his discussion of Abraham’s $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ by saying that the “founder of the [Jewish] nation” was “not taught by written words but by unwritten nature to follow [God...He was] himself a law and an unwritten statute” (275-77). In short, Philo deploys Roman Stoic conventions about the mindfulness of nature to argue that Abraham exemplifies the sage’s God-given natural ability to express the $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ and $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$ of his mind in the government of his body.

Paul’s use of $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ in Romans 4 is similarly “apologetic.” Like Philo he “circumcises” Roman Stoic conventions about the internal government of the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ to argue in terms amenable to his Greek audience that Abraham’s $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ made him an unwritten “law of faith,” a $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ that did not let “weakness of faith” deter him from trusting in God’s faithfulness to make him father of many nations (cf. 2:15, 3:31). It is this philosophic union of $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ and $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha-\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ in the internal government of Abraham’s Gentile-Jewish body that allows Paul to turn from the statement that Abraham’s $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ was “reckoned to him as righteousness” (4:18-22) to tell his Greek target audience directly, and

¹⁵⁴ Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.8.11; Kittel and Friedrich, “πιστεύω κτλ.,” *TDNT* 6, 180. Vettius Valens asserts that the deity brings the impious to faith, connecting $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ to $\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\beta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (9.1).

¹⁵⁵ Epictetus *Diss.* 2.4.1, 1.4.18, 2.22.25; Kittel and Friedrich, “πιστεύω κτλ.,” *TDNT* 6, 182.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 202.

for the first time since 1:15,¹⁵⁸ that God’s Torah-promise to the “founder of the Jewish nation” was written especially for them, so that they might trust in the God who acquitted them through the death of “Jesus our Lord” (4:23-25). Paul’s “surprise reveal” of his audience and his pointed direction that the Torah speaks also to them (v. 24) highlights the rhetorical τέλος of his exegetical labors: Paul has defined Abraham as both the forefather of the uncircumcised and an *exemplum* of a high-status, pneumatic Roman Greek-Judaism that will “give Greeks the world” *if they are loyal and practice trust* in the God of Israel.¹⁵⁹ In other words, Paul’s summing Torah-instruction on the faith of Abraham forms a thematic inclusio with 2:25-29, conjoining Paul’s Judaism of faith (3:21-26) with his Judaism of the πνεῦμα for Greeks (2:25-29), in order that the whole may serve as the second proof of Paul’s thesis that the Romans must live by πίστις (1:16-17). Faith, for Paul, is the king of virtues, the Jewish *summum bonum* that God promised his chosen before the giving of the law, a superior, internal philosophic reality realized in Christ that enables all of the spiritually circumcised, Greek as well as Jew, to be an Abrahamic living law (a “law of faith,” 3:27) and to do the work of God without the need for written instruction.

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Romans 1-4 is a powerful protreptic call of Greek believers to recognize that ultimate advantage lies squarely within their Jewish βίος and thus, to embrace their Jewish identity in Christ. After announcing his commission to proclaim the εὐαγγέλιον of their Jewish Lord and subtly censuring the Romans for arrogance toward its lowliness (1:1-17), Paul strengthens and corrects them by delivering a protreptic demonstration that his scriptural εὐαγγέλιον about a crucified Jew is in fact the power of their Sovereign to save all peoples through faith. That demonstration is executed by staging an exoteric protreptic exhortation of rivals for the instruction of adherents.¹⁶⁰ Like Pseudo-Anacharsis, Clement, and the author of *Wisdom*, Paul inaugurates his λόγος προτρεπτικός by censuring the preeminent representative of his most cultured rival, in this case, Stoicized Roman rulers. Charging them with contravening their natural *summum bonum* while judging others for doing the same, Paul demonstrates the impotence of *Romanitas* as the imperial alternative to his παιδεία while placing them and their law under the judgment and law of his King. Even after 2:14-16, Paul’s rhetorical question to the Romans lingers, palpable: if only a few of the most elite can live κατὰ φύσιν, how can *Romanitas* be the salvation of the world?

With Roman rulers left mute, Paul must target the established alternative to *Romanitas*, his equal, a fellow Jewish teacher of Gentiles, to prove his Judaism better. Within a censure and exhortation of the teacher over the true character of Judaism, Paul deploys not only the standard protreptic tools of censure, exhortation, ethnic stereotype, and

¹⁵⁸ Stowers, *Rereading*, 251.

¹⁵⁹ Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 93-95, but *contra* Hays, 91. Abraham could still serve as an *exemplum* of faith. By modeling for Gentiles the right orientation of a “sojourner” toward God and demonstrating the advantages that accrue as the result of faith, Abraham points proleptically forward to the benefits realized in the πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ. Paul is clear in 3:26 and 4:23-25 that those benefits are only realized through Christ—eliminating the possibility of misunderstanding the Abrahamic *exemplum*. Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* 81:147, 149 (on Abraham as a model to be imitated).

¹⁶⁰ On the use of protrepsis to educate insiders, see again Epicurus, *To Menoceus*, Ps-Crates *To Aper*, Ps-Anacharsis, *Ninth Letter*, Clement, *Protrepticus*, Clement, *Protrepticus on Endurance*, *Wisdom of Solomon*.

characterization. He also Judaizes the Stoic notion of πνεῦμα as an internal governor and Greco-Roman conventions of wise rule in order to defend the faithfulness of the Jewish Sovereign to his scriptural promises, to redefine the Jewish *summum bonum* as the living “law of faith,” and to counter Greek and Roman charges of Jewish exclusivism and misanthropy—in short, to teach Greek believers that his internal Judaism of the spirit is not just honorable but superior to all rivals. By welcoming Greeks as (uncircumcised) Greeks, Paul’s εὐαγγέλιον silences outside charges of Jewish misanthropy, realizes God’s Torah-promise to Abraham by restoring all Israel, Jew and Greek, through the faith of his Son, and promised believers the world.

Every formal element placed in service of these goals—its bi-level construction, its stereotyped denunciation of Roman culture, its personified debate, and censure and exhortation of, with multiple rivals, its elevation of Scripture as the source of the good, its surprise turn to the target audience at the end,¹⁶¹ and thus, its use of the stereotype of protreptic speech as a “conversion to a philosophic way of life”—was grounded in a long-standing and well-attested protreptic tradition of culture critique. Romans 1-4 is thus a protreptic rhetoric of cultural critique and identity that demonstrates the superiority of Paul’s Judaism to *Romanitas* as God’s just and benevolent embrace of all the nations through Christ. In an environment of Graeco-Jewish strife and Greco-Roman charges of Jewish lawlessness and misanthropy, the social power of this argument is substantial. Unlike the *beneficium* of Julius Caesar, which had only engendered strife between Jews and Greeks, the gifts promised by Paul’s sovereign God proclaimed the end of their interethnic race for advantage. In Romans 1-4 Paul demonstrates that the great advantage of his Judaism of the spirit over *Romanitas* is its embrace of all peoples, Jew and Gentile, by the *fides* of Christ. As the final, surprise turn to Paul’s target audience indicates (4:23-25), Paul delivers this protrepsis especially to remind Roman adherents that God’s Abrahamic promise to welcome the nations had been written especially for them (1:11-12).

¹⁶¹ On turns to an insider audience, see Clement, *Protrepticus* (explicit), Anacharsis, *Ninth Letter*, *Wisdom of Solomon*.

**Exit *Romanitas*: God's Sovereign Justice and the Judgment
of the Roman Judge (ὁ ἐλεγκτικός, 1:18-2:16)**

Therefore, Sir, every judge (ὦ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων), you are without a defense. For in the matter in which you judge the other you condemn yourself, for you, the judge, are doing the very same things [as they]. We know that the judgment of God upon those who do these things is true. Do you suppose, Sir, when you judge those who practice these things and do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? (2:1-3).

Paul begins the first proof of his thesis with a reiterated act of revelation (ἀποξάλύπεται, 1:17-18) that shifts the discourse from the assertion of God's sovereign justice to a demonstration of his wrath on the "impiety and injustice of those who by their injustice suppress the truth [of his eternal deity and power]" (ὁ ἐλεγκτικός, 1:18-2:16). The syncretic contrast between God's justice and the injustice of the impious signaled by Paul's play on δικαιοσύνη projects the two-pronged thrust of this censure: an evisceration of personified Roman judges and their Stoic *summum bonum* of life in accord with nature; and a demonstration that the merciful God of Israel can alone judge rightly and grant "glory, honor, and immortality" to all.¹⁶² Rom. 1:18-2:16 is a staged elenchus that functions to convince Paul's Greek audience of the mindless injustice of his Roman rival and to elevate the impartial justice of his Sovereign God.

The rhetorical means by which Paul prosecutes this proof is as elegant as it is vicious. He invokes a Greco-Roman stereotype of inconsistent Stoic rulers who have unnatural sex while trumpeting their unique ability to be "living laws" who judge and rule justly over the masses.¹⁶³ Paul begins this sting operation on the "wise" judge of 2:1 by launching a philosophic elenchus with which Stoics like Seneca could agree, an attack on the mental blindness that led masses to idolatry, moral decline, and unnatural acts (ἀτιολογία, 1:18-32).¹⁶⁴ In keeping with the convention of the sexy Stoic, Paul then turns the charge of unnatural acts on the personified Roman judge (ὦ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων, 2:1; ὦ ἄνθρωπε ὁ κρίνων, 2:3). Paul implies that the judge is as worthy of death as those he condemns, since God demands right deeds from all (2:5-6). Evoking two Stoic truisms—that nature revealed the Good and that there were few truly wise Stoics—he argues that the *summum bonum* of nature should point Roman elites to its Creator, the sovereign God of Israel. It did not, however, because these 'sagacious' rulers had minds (καρδία, νοῦς) as dull as the masses.¹⁶⁵ Given the political alignment of Stoicism and Roman rule under Nero, the implication of this charge is clear: Paul deflates the balloon of Roman supremacy into

¹⁶² Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1:166-68.

¹⁶³ I first described this convention in "Sexy Stoics and the Rereading of Romans 1:18-2:16." I refined the argument to apply more broadly to Romans in "'Disease of Effemination': The Charge of Effeminacy and the Verdict of God."

¹⁶⁴ Educated Greeks and Romans applied the term οἱ πολλοί to "barbarians" or non-citizens and to Greeks and Romans who lacked a philosophical education. See *Ep. Par.* 19[3.55].1; *Herm.* 1, 5; *Vit. auct.* 10; Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 5.3.

¹⁶⁵ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1:116-68, 174, 182, 184, 186.

which Stoics, both before and during the quinquennium of Nero, had blown so much hot air. Since so few Romans leaders actually lived the Stoic ideal of the living law, *Romanitas* is hardly a better way of life than the gospel. As Pelagius said, “Judges and princes [‘who are in a position to pass judgment’] are being put on trial.” Similarly, John Chrysostom believed Paul had “the rulers of the city in mind [in 2:1], because at that time they ruled the entire world. He was telling them...that when they passed sentence on someone they are passing sentence on themselves as well.”¹⁶⁶

Who’s Judging Whom? The Identity of the Judge of 2:1

Given that the majority of modern interpreters understand the object of Paul’s censure as a fallen human or a hypocritical Jew, Chrysostom and Pelagius’ belief that Paul’s first censure targets Roman rulers must seem bizarre. But there are several reasons for heeding them: the rhetorical coherence of 1:18-2:16; Greek and Roman philosophers’ use of moral decline narratives to censure opponents; the unlikelihood of the judge being a Jew; protreptic authors’ leading attacks on tyrannical rulers; and the convention of the sexy Stoic judge.

Stanley Stowers and Jouette Bassler have argued that 2:1-16 is an integral part of the argument begun at 1:18: textual evidence and the repeated theme of God’s impartiality indicate that the censure of the judge runs through at least 2:1-11.¹⁶⁷ Paul’s use of *inclusio* and thematic repetition beyond 2:11 show that 2:12-16 is in fact its culmination. For instance, main themes of 1:18-32 recur in 2:12-16. References to mind (καρδία), mindfulness and mindlessness (1:21-24, 26-27) that structure 1:18-32 occur in 2:15. Allusions to unnatural sex (1:26-27) are paralleled by the claim to live the law naturally in 2:14. The internal mental struggle of the συνείδησις with sin forms book ends in 1:21 and 2:15 (διαλογισμοῖς, λογισμῶν). So also, the themes of God’s apocalyptic judgment (2:16), ability to make people just (2:13), and alignment of judgment with the gospel (2:16) repeat the thesis of the letter in 1:16-17. In like manner, the theme of judgment that begins 1:18 and recurs in 2:1-5 also frames 2:12-16. What looks like a new theme in 2:12, that of νόμος, actually continues the argument of doing the good naturally (2:14) evoked by φύσις in 1:18-2:11. Even the passage’s supporting cast of linguistic cues—to God (2:2, 16), the judge (2:1, 16), being defenseless (2:1, 15), and “doing” vice (2:1, 8, 13)—riddle 2:12-16. Theses clues indicate that the censure of mindlessness and unnatural acts in 1:18-32 is the rhetorical set-up for a contrast (συγκρίσις) between the unjust judge of 2:1 and the impartial justice (δικαιοσύνη) and ultimate judgment (δικαιοκρίσια) of God (2:1-16). They ground the indictment of the Roman judge by a superior ruler.

Stanley Stowers has also proven that philosophers used decline narratives to censure the masses and their opponents.¹⁶⁸ Most scholars agree with early commentators that 1:18-32

¹⁶⁶ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 5 (NPNF 1 11:360).

¹⁶⁷ Stowers, *Rereading*, 12, 100-109; Bassler, “Divine Impartiality,” 43-58; *Divine Impartiality*, 131-134. Only after *Codex Fuldensis* and *Codex Amiatinus* became popular in the sixth century CE was 2:1 understood as a break in the argument begun at 1:18. Before then, the *kephalaia majora* and *Codex Alexandrinus* marked off 1:18-2:12 as one unit. Bassler argues that 2:1-11 is an integral part of 1:18-2:11, as a demonstration of God’s divine impartiality.

¹⁶⁸ Stowers, *Rereading*, 97-104.

attacks Gentiles.¹⁶⁹ After all, Romans 1 closely resembles (Jewish) decline narratives like the *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Jubilees*, in which past Gentile idolatry led to rampant immorality. Because the rhetorical audience shifts from “they” to “you” at 2:1, scholars usually interpret 2:1-16 as a censure of a self-satisfied, law-abiding Jew who condemned Gentiles while himself doing wrong.¹⁷⁰ The implication is that Jews hearing 1:18-32 as invective against Gentile immorality would “find [themselves] addressed by the same word of judgment...[so that] the conventional attack on Gentile idolatry turns out to be also a description of the universal human condition.”¹⁷¹ A related result is that the emphasis on Jewish inconsistency found in 2:17-24 is pushed forward to the beginning of Paul’s argument in Romans 1:18.

Unfortunately, these moves downplay the role of Gentile wrongdoing in Paul’s argument and foster a misleading gospel-versus-Judaism dynamic. Stowers, recognizing these problems, counters that the hypocritical judge of 2:1 must be a non-Jew.¹⁷² In the first place, the hortatory use of “decline of civilization” narratives (ἀτισιολογία) was not a Jewish purview; Greek, Roman, and other authors of protreptic speeches employed stories that blamed Greek vice on primitive acts of greed or idolatry. In the Cynic *Ninth Letter*, the Scythian Prince Anacharsis described Greece as immoral in order to convince King Croesus to live virtuously. In *Discourse 36*, Maximus of Tyre blamed the death of the Golden Age on the discord and dissension of those who did not reverence the reign of King Saturn. In his *Letter 90*, Seneca likewise detailed the ruin of early human harmony by greed, an act that led to hybris and false wisdom.¹⁷³ In other words, the presence of an ἀτισιολογία of Gentile impiety and idolatry would not have led an ancient audience to conclude that the inconsistent judge was a Jew (see Appendix 5 for a comparison of decline narratives).

Second, the judge of 2:1 need not have been a generic human because Paul used the vocative ὦ ἄνθρωπε. Rather, ancients generally employed the vocative to mean “sir,” that is, as a direct address to an interlocutor. In Athenaeus, for example, a certain Theognetus says, “you’ll be the death of me, *sir*, ...you have stuffed yourself sick with the puny dogmas of the Painted Porch!”¹⁷⁴ Consequently, ὦ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων means “you Sir, every judge” or “every one of you who judges,” not “O man, whoever you are, when you judge another” (RSV). Third, 2:1-2 accuses the inconsistent judge of doing the very same wrongs (τὰ τοιαῦτα) as the Gentiles censured in 1:18-32, not wrongdoing generally; in Greek prose, the term τὰ τοιαῦτα normally refers to things listed previously in a narrative. In 1:32-2:3, the phrase “those who practice τὰ τοιαῦτα” occurs three times, once at the end of 1:18-32 (v. 32) and twice at the beginning of 2:1-16 (vv. 2, 3). The repetition of τὰ τοιαῦτα across the two subsections of the proof underscores the fact that the hypocritical judge is condemned for judging *and doing* the acts listed in Romans 1.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 33.1; Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 3; Pelagius, *Com. Rom.* 66; Augustine, *Exp. Quar. Prop. Ep. Rom* 3; Ambrosiaster, *Com. Ep. Paul.* 81:47, 49; Gennadius of Constantinople, *Ep. Rom.* (NTA 15) 358.

¹⁷⁰ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 297. For a list of scholarly opinions, see Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, 149 and n. 36.

¹⁷¹ Hays, “A Rereading of Romans,” 404-405 n. 21.

¹⁷² On Romans 1 as a decline of civilizations narrative blaming pagan idolatry on ancient figures in the unspecified past (e.g., Cain, Enosh), see Stowers, *Rereading*, 91-100, Martin, “Heterosexism,” 332-355, esp. 335.

¹⁷³ See also Anacharsis, *Ep.* 9 and Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 90.

¹⁷⁴ *Deip.* 3.104. Cf. also Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks* 25, referring to a Cynic: “You sir, who behave like a dog...” (ὁ ζῆλον ἄνθρωπε τὸν κύνα...).

There are three problems with attributing these things to a Jew. First, in 2:17-24 Paul charged a Jewish teacher of Gentiles with inconsistency for boasting about the Jewish law while committing faults such as stealing and adultery. *None* of the Jew's misdeeds repeat vices attributed to Gentiles in Romans 1. If the vices listed in 1:18-32 definitively condemned an inconsistent *Jewish* judge of Gentiles (the rhetoric of 2:1-16 presumes that they were potent enough to do so), the explicit judgment of Jewish inconsistency in 2:17-24 is superfluous. Making a Jew the subject of 2:1-16 also requires that we ignore the clear rhetorical shift to a Jewish teacher in 2:17. There, as in 2:1, the rhetorical audience changes from "they" to "you," and the shift is marked by εἰ δὲ σὺ. *Lives at Auction* 1 and 14 contain two examples of this device:

Lives. 1: Zeus (to attendant one): "You arrange the benches and make the place ready for the men that are coming." (Zeus to attendant two:) "But you (δὲ σὺ) bring on the (philosophical) lives and line them up; but first group them, so that they will look comely and attract as many takers as possible." (Zeus to Hermes:) "You (δὲ σὺ), Hermes, be auctioneer and call them together."

Lives. 14: Buyer: "no indeed, but you yourself (ἀλλὰ σὺ) are truly a hollow mockery and an infinite ass. Oh, what effrontery! Will you never stop laughing?" (To the other:) "But you (δὲ σὺ), why do you cry? For I think it is much more becoming to talk with you."

While not every change of address in *Lives at Auction* is indicated by δὲ σὺ, every occurrence of δὲ σὺ marks a change of address. In Romans 2:17, likewise, δὲ σὺ accompanies a shift of addressee (cf. also 14:1). The function of δὲ σὺ as a marker of a shift among Paul's interlocutors was clear to ancient commentators on Romans. As Pelagius described, "At this point [2:17] Paul turns to the Jews and says that a man should be a Jew in deed and not merely in name."¹⁷⁵

Finally, most scholars agree that male anal intercourse is the most potent rhetorical barb in Romans 1. Of all the vices listed, it is first in order as well as priority, described most explicitly and at greatest length, and, as "unnatural sex," is most clearly contrasted with the "natural world" that should have led Gentiles to worship God. The problem is this: first-century Jews were not vulnerable to the stereotyped charge of having male anal intercourse; indeed, contemporary Jewish writers—including Paul—treated it as a uniquely Gentile sin.¹⁷⁶ Josephus (*Antiquities* 4 § 290) and Philo (*Special Laws* 1.324-335) took pains to emphasize that Jewish men did not engage in gender-bending activities such as male anal intercourse¹⁷⁷;

¹⁷⁵ Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 73.

¹⁷⁶ Martin, "Heterosexism," 336; Thess 4:5, Gal 2:15, and 1 Cor 5:1.

¹⁷⁷ Josephus assumes this τόπος when he describes Zealots (his "bad guys") as insatiable louts who dressed effeminately, "imitated the passions of women," and attacked and murdered Roman soldiers while parading about "with mincing steps" (*J. W.* 4 § 561-563). For Roman and Jewish audiences, this description assumed two conventions that functioned together to deprecate Zealotry. For Josephus' Roman imperial clients, the Zealots fit their stereotype of the overly passionate barbarian who lacked the manliness of the good soldier and the self-control of noble, educated Romans. For his Herodian audience living in Rome, Josephus evoked not only this, but another, "other," a group of utterly polluted, no-longer-Jews who turned their backs on the law, a people who thereby placed themselves, in the eyes of law-abiding Jews, outside the ethno-religious bounds of Judaism. Josephus' description of Zealots' gender transgression works as a denunciation precisely because Jews assumed that Jewish men did not dress like women or have

further, contemporary non-Jewish writers did not censure Jews for male anal intercourse. Thus, Romans 1:18-32 is unconvincing as a censure of Jews.

In sum, the Gentile use of decline narratives, the meaning of ὧ ἄνθρωπε as “sir” rather than “human,” the specific function of τὰ τοιαῦτα in 1:32-2:3, Paul’s subsequent judgment of a Jewish teacher for different vices than those listed in Romans 1, and the assumption that male same-sex intercourse was a Gentile activity, all indicate that ancients should have identified the inconsistent judge as a non-Jew.¹⁷⁸ In fact, they did. Early commentators identified the judge either generally, as everyday (Gentile) hypocrites and evil men who judged poorly or by human laws,¹⁷⁹ or specifically, as Roman rulers, judges, and philosophic leaders.¹⁸⁰ The “Jewish reading” of 2:1 only took off after Augustine interpreted the judgment as including, along with Gentiles, those Jews “who wanted to judge the Gentiles according to the law” (*On Rom.* 7-8 5).

Stanley Stowers is therefore on excellent ground when he argues that 2:1-16 censures a Gentile boaster and functions as a warning to Paul’s Greek audience about pretension.¹⁸¹ But the same rhetorical effect is achieved by censuring a more specific target that represents a “high-status” way of life the author wants its target rhetorical audience to avoid. This is, in fact, the tactic of culturally critical protreptic speeches, which resist outside cultural domination by attacking those cultures’ tyrannical rulers. For instance, the *Ninth Letter* deploys the figure of the Scythian prince Pseudo-Anacharsis to attack the King Croesus for acting like a typical “tyrant” who is enslaved to the passions, and it exhorts him to turn from the excessive ways of the Greeks with which he is enamored to the “natural way” of the Cynics. The author’s rhetorical audience learns from a leading example to avoid an entire “high-status” way of life. Similarly, the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* frames his discourse on the wisdom of Judaism with a warning to Greek and Roman rulers who “judge the earth” (οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν, 1:1) to love justice (ἀγαπήσατε δικαιοσύνην) and seek the God of Israel, rather than testing God or being faithless (τοῖς ἀπιστοῦσιν). *Wisdom* 6:1-23 continues this warning, telling kings (βασιλεῖς), magistrates (δικασταί), and princely tyrants (ὧ τύραννοι)—the terms are interchangeable in *Wisdom* 6—that though they were ministers of God’s kingdom, they “judged not rightly” (ὑπηρέται ὄντες τῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλείας οὐκ ἐκρίνατε ὀρθῶς) nor kept God’s law naturally (οὐδὲ ἐφυλάττετε νόμον, 6:4). The author of *Wisdom* warns these rulers that God, as Creator of all, shows no partiality (οὐ γὰρ ὑποστελεῖται πρόσωπον ὁ πάντων δεσπότης, 6:7), so if they wish to keep

(passive) intercourse. On Lev. 19:18, 20:13, and Rom. 1:27 as dealing with male anal intercourse only, particularly as a problem of effeminacy, see Olyan, “And with a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying Down of a Woman”; Boyarin, “Are There Any Jews in ‘The History of Sexuality?’”; Michael Satlow, “They Abused Him Like a Woman”; and Swancutt, “Disease of Effemination.”

¹⁷⁸ See also Aune, “Romans as a *Logos Protreptikos*”; Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*.

¹⁷⁹ See Ambrosiaster, *Com. Paul. Ep.* [CSEL 81.63]; Constantius, *Frag. ap. Paul.* [ENPK 17]. Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 4.33.15), Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Aut.* 1.14), and Origen (*Com. Ep. Rom.* 1.174, 182, 184, 186) read 2:1-8 as condemning Gentile detractors or heretics.

¹⁸⁰ Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 5 [NPNF 1 11:360]; Pelagius, *Com. Rom.* 69; Origen, *Com. Ep. Rom.* 1.170, 172, 174, 182, 184, 186.

¹⁸¹ Stowers, *Rereading*, 100-109; cf. Mark Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*; and Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, who agree that Romans 2:1 addresses Gentiles. On the boaster as a type, see Ribbeck, *ALAZON*. For the suggestion that 2:1 might refer to a “sophisticated Greek like Juvenal” or “the Stoic who would agree that such vices as those listed in 1:29-31 were ‘unfitting,’” see Dunn, *Romans*, 79.

their kingdom, becoming wise and prudent kings (6:24), they must imbibe the παιδεία of Israel's Sovereign (6:25), obey his law, and be merciful to his people.

The parallels between these protreptic speeches and Romans 1:18-2:16 are impossible to miss. An ἄνθρωπος πᾶς ὁ κρίνων can undoubtedly refer to Roman magistrates and rulers who οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν but οὐκ ἐκρίνατε ὀρθῶς οὐδὲ ἐφυλάξατε νόμον (*Wisd.* 1:1, 6:4) naturally. This is why Chrysostom and Pelagius were on very good ground in believing that Paul targets “the [Roman] rulers of the city” who govern “the whole world” naturally. As Plutarch (echoing Aristotle) said, kingship was “the most perfect and greatest type of government” because the wise ruler can use his superior understanding to govern justly.¹⁸² Dio Chrysostom affirmed this truism: “the business of the true philosopher is none other than to rule over humanity.”¹⁸³ Like a benevolent herdsman, emperor, or king of antiquity, they who “excelled in virtue” should dispense justice.¹⁸⁴ Building on the Stoic-inspired notion of the ideal city, he even argued that “the justice of a city is guaranteed if the leaders are just.”¹⁸⁵ This is why, for example, Augustus' *Res Gestae* lists *iustitia* among *virtutis*, *clementia*, and *pietas* as one of his signal virtues,¹⁸⁶ and why Dionysius of Halicarnassus identifies Romans' δικαιοσύνη as a reason for their world-wide *imperium* (*Roman Antiquities* 1.3.5): δικαιοσύνη implies just and wise rule, and injustice reflects foolish tyranny. Paul inaugurates his protreptic discourse about the superior justice of the God of Israel by vividly displaying the mental incapacity and unjust judgment of Roman rulers.

The Convention of the Inconsistent Stoic ‘Wise-Ruler’

Hugely popular, the convention of the sexy Stoic, deployed within the standard frame of protreptic elenchus, is the means by which Paul identifies them and effects their disgrace.¹⁸⁷ As I showed in chapter two, protreptic speeches *always* stereotyped and censured a speaker's rivals, and they often did so in series and/or without naming them. The skilled use of characterization (prosopopoiia), particularly of ethnic and political cultural stereotypes, permitted a speaker to identify and censure the “personality” of a rival with assurance that his audience could recognize his target. For instance, Lucian's *Lives at Auction* satirizes (and sells) representatives of several unnamed, but perfectly recognizable philosophies: the Pythagorean is followed by a Cynic, Cyrenaic, Democritean, Heraclitean, Peripatetic, Stoic, and Sceptic. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* 1-9 (particularly 1.4-1.5, and 2.3-6.2), Justin Martyr discusses philosophy generally, then the Stoics, Peripatetics, Pythagoreans, and Platonists, before comparing them less favorably to Christianity. In *Oration to the Greeks*, Tatian follows a censure of Greeks immediately by an attack on specific philosophers.

¹⁸² Plutarch *PP* 805 B-D, 802D; Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* 8.

¹⁸³ Dio Chrysostom 49.13.

¹⁸⁴ Dio Chrysostom 49.1-5.

¹⁸⁵ Dio Chrysostom 36.21; cf. 18-23. For this argument, see. Shepherd, “*Homonoia*,” 249.

¹⁸⁶ D'Angelo, Εὐσεβεία, 143.

¹⁸⁷ On the importance of invective in formal comparison (σύγκρισις), see Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth* 51-53. On the use of laughter in invective against opponents, see 55-56. “Generally speaking, the use of ridicule against an opponent is two-fold: a. to show by contrast how much more favoured in every way the ridiculer is than is his enemy... b. to ensure the public humiliation and disgrace of the enemy.” (52).

Moreover, *Epistle to Diognetus* 2-4, 8 first censures unnamed Greeks for idolatry, Jews for prideful overattention to the law, and Gentile philosophers for ridiculous ideas about nature. Romans 1:18-2:16, upon which *Diognetus* may be modeled, follows this pattern: after censuring Gentiles for idolatry and mindlessness (1:18-32), Paul condemns a hypocritical Gentile leader and judge. Paul then proceeds to teach a Jewish teacher, through censure and exhortation, about true righteousness (2:17-4:25). Romans follows a protreptic rhetorical pattern familiar to ancients: the teacher Paul debates more than one rival about the virtue of their *summum bonum*, and he inaugurates his protrepsis by reproaching his chief cultural rival, Roman ruler-judges.

The popularity of the stereotype of inconsistent Stoic wise rulers, which was current in the first century CE and applied by and to Roman rulers, greatly strengthens the likelihood that Romans would have identified the judge of 2:1 as a Roman Stoic leader. The most frequent characterization of Stoics by satirists and moralists was that they possessed a preposterous, but unshakable, belief in their own perfection. According to both Greek and Latin sources, Stoics asserted that the masses were fools while they were models of consistency, the embodiment of the four cardinal virtues. Their consistent virtuosity meant that they alone were a living law or standard of conduct and, thus, that they alone could be perfect rulers or judges.¹⁸⁸ Satirists and enemies scoffed at these perceptions, reveling in Stoics' imperfections while repeating the conventions.¹⁸⁹ Addressing the Stoic self-identification as rulers, the early Latin satirist Horace (65-8 BCE) quipped: "the wise man is only surpassed by Jove, He is well off, respected, handsome, the free king above/all kings. And above all being RIGHT in the head, He's always quite well...lest a cold keeps him in bed."¹⁹⁰ In *Lives at Auction*, Lucian likewise sniped, "[In the Stoic] I see virtue itself, the most perfect of philosophies...he is the only wise man, the only beautiful, just, manly man--a king, rhetor, wealthy man, lawgiver, and everything else there is."¹⁹¹ Quoting Menander acidly, Plutarch added, "If one has gotten virtue from the Stoa, one can ask, 'if there's anything you wish: all will be yours.'"¹⁹²

As I described in chapter three, Cicero, Laertius, and Dio Chrysostom likewise attributed to Stoics like Chrysippus the notions of perfection and unique ability to rule, judge, or execute other public duties (καθήκοντα)¹⁹³:

¹⁸⁸ See Chrysippus (Plutarch *Mor.* 9.1035C), Cicero (*De Leg.* 1.6.18), Musonius Rufus, and Diogenes of Babylon said a Stoic should govern and judge since he alone was a living law. Cf. also Plutarch *Fort. Alex.* 329 A-B (*SVF* 1.262); Laertius *De Vit. Phil.* 2.7.87-89, 128; Pindar frg 69 *On Law* (*SVF* 3.314, 1.537, lines 2, 24); Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.24.13, 3.24.42; Klassen, 1985; and Martens, 1994, 55-67, esp 64-66. On the necessity of being a good judge, see also Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.7.21, esp. 30-33. On kingship, see *Diss.* 3.22.34.

¹⁸⁹ Plutarch *Mor.* 13.2 1034.7D; Diogenes Laertius, *De Vit. Phil.* 7. 92.

¹⁹⁰ *Ep.* 1.1.106-108

¹⁹¹ *Vit. auct.* 20, 23.

¹⁹² *Mor.* 13.2 1058. Of course, Plutarch thought this made Stoics into leeches, and he retorted that the only sources of income acceptable to them were gifts from kings and friends, and as a last resort, lecturing (1043).

¹⁹³ On duties, see chapter three; cf. Laertius, *De Vit. Phil.* 7.108-110. On judging and rule, see chapter three and Cicero, *De Fin.* 4.74; cf. also Laertius, *De Vit. Phil.* 7.122; cf. also *S.V.F.* 1, fr. 222. The assumption is also present in the discourses of Dio Chrysostom (40-120 CE) on kingship, particularly in *Or.* 1.9, 3.4-11 to Trajan. Formerly against Stoicism, particularly that of Musonius Rufus, Dio later embraced Stoic (as well as other schools of) thought, including the Stoic τόπος of the ideal king. Laertius, *De Vit. Phil.* 7.122: "Moreover according to them not only are wise men (σοφοί) free, they are also kings; kingship being

...according to them not only are wise men (*sophoi*) free, they are also kings; kingship being irresponsible rule, which none but the wise can maintain. So Chrysippus in his treatise vindicates Zeno's use of terminology. For he holds that knowledge of good and evil is a necessary attribute of the ruler, and that no bad man is acquainted with this art. Similarly the wise and good alone are fit to be magistrates, judges (*dikastikous*), or orators, whereas among the bad there is not one so qualified. Furthermore the wise are infallible, not being liable to error.¹⁹⁴

Plutarch cared less about the origin of the convention than about its usefulness for (repeatedly) charging Stoics with inconsistency:

Zeno, his conciseness considered, wrote quite a bit, Cleanthes much, and Chrysippus a very great deal about government, ruling, being ruled, judging, and pleading cases; and yet in the career of none of them can there be found any military command or legislation or attendance in council or advocacy at the bar or military service or...¹⁹⁵

As many as do enter government, however, are contradicting their own doctrines still more sharply, for in holding administrative and judicial offices, in acting as councilors and legislators, in meting out punishments and rewards they imply that they are taking part in the government of genuine states and that those really are councilors and judges who are at any time so designated by lot...so when they take part in government they are inconsistent too.¹⁹⁶

Well then, should the first object of our proceedings be the common and notorious notions which even they (Stoics) in easy-going admission of the absurdity themselves entitle paradoxes, their notions as to who alone are kings, and who alone are opulent and fair, and alone are citizens and judges...?¹⁹⁷

Greek and Latin authors from the first century BCE to the third century CE roundly charged Stoics with inconsistency for asserting that they were perfect and uniquely qualified to rule, judge, and guide the affairs of the *πολιτεία*.

They also criticized the basis of the commonplace, the Stoic tenet that the universe, or nature (*φύσις*), was the source of their ethics. According to Plutarch and Laertius, Stoics thought divine *λόγος* or *πνεῦμα* infused nature, that their own minds (*νοῦς*) alone could apprehend it, and thus, that Stoics alone were truly a "living law" in accord with nature (*κατὰ φύσιν*). Because their minds were attuned to divine reason, they could rely on their *νοῦς* and their inner conviction (*συνείδησις*) to extirpate passions (*πάθη, ἐπιθυμία*) and

irresponsible rule, which none but the wise can maintain. So Chrysippus in his treatise vindicates Zeno's use of terminology. For he holds that knowledge of good and evil is a necessary attribute of the ruler, and that no bad man is acquainted with this art. Similarly the wise and good alone are fit to be magistrates, judges, or orators, whereas among the bad there is not one so qualified. Furthermore the wise are infallible, not being liable to error."

¹⁹⁴ Cicero, *De Fin.* 4.74.

¹⁹⁵ *Mor.* 13.2 1033.2C.

¹⁹⁶ *Mor.* 13.2 1033.3.

¹⁹⁷ *Mor.* 13.2 1060B.

live wisely.¹⁹⁸ As Laetius said, Stoic teachers taught that “virtue is the goal toward which nature guides us” and “living virtuously is equivalent to living in accordance with [nature].”¹⁹⁹ Simply put, it was Stoics’ unique access to the common law or reason of nature that made them a living law and, thus, perfect rulers and judges.²⁰⁰ Further, since their reasonable minds (λόγικος νοῦς) gave Stoics endurance and self-control (αὐταρχεία, σωφροσύνη), it follows that overly passionate behavior was self-deception, an involuntary error (πλάνη) of judgment.²⁰¹ Athenaeus assumed both ἀπαθεία and the importance of mind for right action when he applauded Celts for “stoical endurance” and cited the Stoic Posidonius as saying “other people can’t control themselves because of the weakness of their minds.”²⁰² As for κατὰ φύσιν, many philosophers talked about living naturally; Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*, written in the fourth century (384-332) BCE, may be the earliest famous exhortation for humans to live in harmony with nature. However, Seneca did say, “our motto, as you know, is ‘Live According to Nature.’”²⁰³ His statement assumed that people associated this phrase with Stoics. His contemporaries, Persius (34-62 CE) and Plutarch, confirm the assertion.²⁰⁴ Speaking about non-Stoics, the satirist Persius said that “the self-evident law of nature limits/the actions of incompetents and half-wits.”²⁰⁵ Likewise, Plutarch remarked testily that, “the common nature and the common reason of nature [must be] destiny and providence and Zeus, of this not even the Antipodes are unaware, for the Stoics keep harping on them everywhere.”²⁰⁶ Criticisms of Stoics’ proprietary claims to live and to rule others κατὰ φύσιν evidence a general awareness of the commonplace.

This criticism leads to the seminal component of the τόπος. Although they did not usually level this charge at other philosophic groups, satirists and moralists frequently denounced Stoics who espoused “natural” living but effeminized their younger male sex-partners by shaving or sexual penetration or effeminized themselves by sexual passivity or transvestitism.²⁰⁷ In the third and second centuries BCE, the poets Cercidas and Hermeias

¹⁹⁸ On νοῦς in Stoic thought and Romans 7, see Stowers, *Rereading*, 260-284; Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.20, 3.22.30-22. On Stoics as passionless wise men, cf. Laetius, *De Vit. Phil.* 7.117.

¹⁹⁹ *De Vit. Phil.* 7.87.

²⁰⁰ As I described in chapter three, this was crystallized only later in Cicero as a νόμος φύσεως (*lex natura* in *De Rep.* 3.33), although early Stoics discussed a common law that existed by nature, was equivalent to *logos*, attributed to Zeus, and comprehended only by the sage. Although unlike early Stoics Cicero argued that proximate goods enabled men to become virtuous gradually, the function of “nature” and “natural law” in Cicero and the early Stoics were compatible, enabling later Stoics to assert that those who acted according to nature, right reason/νοῦς, and their συνειδήσις could live well and free themselves from troubling passions (πάθη). Cf. e.g., Marcus Aurelius 7.31. Thus, attendance to nature made the Stoic a living law. On the strong ruling the weak as a guiding principle of nature, cf. Plato, *Gorg.* 483A7-484C3; Cicero, *De Rep.* 3.23-33; Lact. *Inst.* 6.8.6-9.

²⁰¹ On both error and passion, cf. Laetius *De Vit. Phil.* 7.110-115.

²⁰² Athenaeus *Deip.* 4.160E, 6.263.

²⁰³ *Ep. Mor.* 5.4: Nempe propositum nostrum est secundum naturam vivere.

²⁰⁴ Cf. also Laetius *De Vit. Phil.* 7.86-110; Athenaeus *Deip.* 7.233C; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2-3.

²⁰⁵ *Sat.* 5.98-99.

²⁰⁶ *Mor.* 13.2 1050. Cf. *Mor.* 13.2 1060.4C-6E on nature, 1069.A-E on benefit, 1071.B and 1072.B-E on the goal (τέλος) of philosophy, and 1073.A-D on love. Cf. also Laetius *De Vit. Phil.* 7.86-87, who says Zeno of Kitium was the first to designate “life in agreement with nature” as the τέλος of the philosophical life.

²⁰⁷ Greek and Roman authors charged various individuals and groups (e.g., soldiers, statesmen, philosophers), but not particular schools of philosophy other than the Stoa with effeminacy and/or sexual

and the biographer Antigonus of Carystus called Stoics “merchants of twaddle” and “verbiage-fakers” for having sex with boys.²⁰⁸ Athenaeus followed suit, charging Stoics with controverting nature through transvestitism and with requiring their boyfriends to shave their chins and butts in order to extend pederastic liaisons until their “boys” reached the extraordinarily advanced age of twenty-eight. “Your wise Zeno,” he said, “[saw] the lives you would lead and your hypocritical profession...that you give the name of effeminate (κιναιδός) to those who put on perfume or wore slightly dainty garments. You shouldn’t then, when rigged up in that fashion...take in your train lover-lads with shaven chins and posteriors.”²⁰⁹

Lucian and Plutarch repeat this commonplace to imply that Stoics inverted the appropriate (hierarchical) relationship between themselves and their students, making themselves passive recipients of their students’ sexual advances and thereby corrupting their common pursuit of virtue. Lucian assumed the convention of the sexually passive sage in his attack on Stoics who charged their students fees for their (educational) services:

Buyer: Then we are to say the same of the fees that you get for your wisdom from young men, and obviously none but the scholar will get paid for his virtue?

Stoic: Your understanding of the matter is correct. You see, I do not take pay on my own account, but for the sake of the giver himself: for since there are two classes of men, the *disbursive* and the *receptive*, I train myself to be receptive and my pupil to be disbursive.

Buyer: On the contrary, the young man ought to be receptive and you, who alone are rich, disbursive!

Stoic: You are joking, man. Look out that I don’t shoot you with my indemonstrable syllogism.

Buyer: What have I to fear from that shaft?

Stoic: Perplexity and aphasia and a sprained intellect...²¹⁰

passivity. These barbs were generally used to poked fun, embarrass, or humiliate the accused, thereby reducing their status in the eyes of others. “Philosophers” as a generic group also received such insults. On this subject, see N. Rudd, *Themes in Roman Satire*, 215-225. However, among first- and second-century philosophers, Stoics were uniquely repudiated as inconsistent hypocrites for effeminacy and sexual passivity (Martial *Epigram*. 9.47, which targets individual philosophers of different schools [Democritus, Zeno, Plato, Pythagorus], is the exception that proves the rule). Stoics seemed to have inherited this dubious honor from Socrates and his ilk, who were regularly the butt of jokes in classical Athens. See Richlin, “Not Before Homosexuality,” 523-573, esp. 544.

²⁰⁸ Cercidas, *Meliamb* 5.5-15, 6.14-15; Athenaeus, *Deip.* 13.563D-E (citing Hermeias) and 565D-F (citing Antigonus).

²⁰⁹ Athenaeus *Deip.* 13.564F, 605D (παρα φύσιν). See Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 88, 181 n. 6.

²¹⁰ *Vit. auct.* 24.

The inversion of power and sexual position between sage and student occurs even earlier in two essays by Plutarch. The first passage alludes to the ugliness of the neophyte and contends that even though he tries to pass as a manly just king, the Stoic is really a foolish, effeminate youth:

...the sage of the Stoics, though yesterday he was most ugly and vicious, today all of a sudden has been transformed into virtue...the Stoic love consorts with the ugliest and most unshapely and turns away when by wisdom these are transformed into shapeliness and beauty...Among the Stoics the one who is most vicious in the morning, if so it chance to be, is in the afternoon most virtuous. Having fallen asleep demented and stupid and unjust and licentious, and even, by heaven, a slave and a drudge and a pauper, he gets up the very same day changed into a blessed and opulent king, sober and just and steadfast and undeluded by fancies. He has not sprouted a beard or the tokens of puberty in a body young and soft. But in a soul that is feeble and soft and unmanly and unstable has got perfect disposition, knowledge, free from fancy, and an unalterable habitude and this not by any previous abatement of his depravity but by having changed instantaneously into what may almost be called a kind of hero or spirit or god.²¹¹

In the second passage, Plutarch used the same language to claim that by extending sexual liaisons with students into adulthood, Stoic sages obliterated their claim to live naturally:

Comrade: Yes, for love, they say, is a kind of chase after a stripling who is undeveloped but naturally apt for virtue.

Diadumenus: Why then, my dear sir, are we now trying to do anything else but convict their system...? For if passion is not at issue, no one is trying to keep the zeal of sages about youths from being called a “chase” or a “friend-making”; but one ought to call “love” what all men and women understand and call by the name: “All of them hotly desired to be couched by her side in the bride bed”...Yet, while casting their theory of morals off upon troubles like [*eros*], “twisted, unsound, and all circuitous,” they belittle and disparage the rest of us as if they alone uphold nature and common experience...²¹²

The subject of the passage is the inconsistency of the Stoic doctrine of love, which most people assumed was desire for sex, but according to Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius (2.7.130), Stoics defined as “an impulse to make friends.” Of greatest interest to us is Plutarch’s allusion to “ugly, stupid” youths who matured into “beautiful, wise” men while retaining their sex appeal to pederastic sages. Like Lucian and Athenaeus, therefore, Plutarch assumed that the Stoic *desideratum* to be a perfect, a manly wise ruler and natural “living law,” was a ruse.²¹³

²¹¹ Plutarch, *Mor. (Stoicos Absurdiora Poetis Dicere)* 13.2 1057.2E-1058.B.

²¹² *Mor. (De Communibus Notitiis Adversus Stoicos)* 13.2 1073.A-D.

²¹³ The same complex occurs in Athenaeus *Deip.* 13.605D with the phrase παρὰ φύσιν.

Among Roman satirists, Martial (40-103 CE) and Juvenal (60-130 CE) also scourged Stoics for looking manly and criticizing vice when they were *cinaedi*.²¹⁴ In *Epigrams* 1.24, for example, Martial needles a lawyer named Decianus for appearing the stern-faced, patriotic Stoic while acting the sexual passive (cf. 1.8, 2.5). In *Epigrams* 1.96, a jurist named Maternus gets much the same treatment. As in 1.24, Maternus is never explicitly named a Stoic but is rather identified as one by his hypocritical “manly” behavior: walking about somberly attired and critical of others’ gay apparel, he nevertheless loves effeminate colors and gazes longingly at stiff and strapping athletes. Juvenal brings these elements of the *τόπος* together even more fully in *Satires* 2 (100-112 CE),²¹⁵ when he describes Rome as lying in ruins because of the unnatural behavior of Roman Stoic judges. Initially unidentified by Juvenal, these fools appeared masculine—with hirsute limbs (2.11), taciturn speech (2.14), and crew cuts (2.15)—and as such went about their normal civic roles, defended the city from license (2.39) as judges and lawmakers (2.51, 76).²¹⁶ Using the voice of the female character Laronia, Juvenal later unveiled the culprits as “our Stoic brethren” (2.64) who swished about like women soliciting advances from manly men. Taunting them with hypocrisy, Laronia sneered, “Do any of *us* plead at the bar, or set up to be experts in civil law?... *You* card wool, and when you’ve finished, you carry the fleeces back in baskets, twirl the big-bellied spindle, and finger the fine-spun thread” (2.51-57). Juvenal then chimed in, depicting a particularly debauched Stoic judge named Creticus who wore a transparent toga to court (2.64-81) and visited people who dressed in drag (2.84-116), donned chartreuse outfits (2.97), and held mirrors, props always associated with women (2.99).²¹⁷ Juvenal even thanked Nature for rendering these “androgynous monsters” sterile (2.138-139). Their houses might be “crammed with plaster casts of Chrysippus,” but in these Stoics a “third Cato” has hardly fallen from the skies (2.5, 40).

Thus, the charge of Stoic hypocrisy based on unnatural sex had an august history. Flowering fully in the first and second centuries CE, the convention of the unnatural, cinaedic Stoic enabled various authors to undercut the school’s claims to sagacity and Romans’ claim to right rule. In Martial’s *Epigrams* and Juvenal’s *Satires* 2, even unnamed Stoics had their political clout as perfect Roman judges and legislators erased through allusions to inconsistency in living “according to nature.” Likewise, Plutarch, Lucian, and Athenaeus deployed the convention to subvert Stoics’ authority as natural rulers and as manly instructors of maturing youths. In the first century of the Common Era, therefore, denouncing Stoics as transvestites, sexual passives, or pederasts who effeminated their students was a typical way to strip authority from Stoic claims to live naturally and lead Rome well.

The political currency of this convention lay precisely in the precision with which it targeted Stoic gender standards for good governance of their bodies and the body politic.²¹⁸ Sharing an ideological abhorrence of weakness and femininity with other ancients, Stoics named passion “feminine,” and treated a variety of “feminine” activities, including but not

²¹⁴ Cf. Martial, *Epigram*. 2.36, 6.56, 7.58, 12.42.

²¹⁵ Juvenal’s first five satires, which were “published” as one book, contain a reference to the trial of Marius Priscus (1.49-50) and were therefore written before 112 CE.

²¹⁶ Richlin, “Not Before Homosexuality,” 544. On the very old connection between manliness and lawmaking, cf. Plato, *Rep.* 429c.

²¹⁷ I am paraphrasing Richlin’s colorful description (“Not Before Homosexuality,” 545).

²¹⁸ See Nussbaum, “The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions”; *The Therapy of Desire*.

exclusive to receptive sex among men, as overly passionate, gender-bending behaviors that could habituate them to femininity and eventually transform them, contrary to nature, into *cinaedi* (androgynous girly-men). Since the philosophical pursuit was, in large part, a daily quest to extirpate femininity and perfect their masculinity, Stoics decried *any* activity that challenged their *vivility*. Hence, particularly among Stoics, *cinaedi* were portrayed as depilating their beard—the sign of adulthood—and otherwise crafting their body to remove their manhood.²¹⁹ As Maud Gleason notes, “Stoics liked to moralize about hair because it was a term in the symbolic language of masculinity that could be construed as not merely a conventional sign, but as a symbol established by Nature itself.”²²⁰ Thus, Musonius Rufus, Seneca, and Epictetus railed against coiffing and depilating since the presence and roughness of hair announced from afar “I am a man. Approach me as such.”²²¹ Influenced by Stoic thought, Dio Chrysostom and Clement of Alexandria also aligned this behavior with debauchees who “violated nature’s laws” and engaged in “unnatural acts.”²²² Likewise, Panaetius disliked ribald humor and banned all references to genitals or sexual intercourse.²²³ Musonius Rufus attempted to reduce the threat of excess desire to Stoic self-control by proclaiming that procreative sex between husband and wife was the only “natural” sex.²²⁴ Epictetus likewise castigated Epicureans, saying that according to nature the sage’s duties (καθήκοντα) were “citizenship, marriage, begetting children, reverence to God...to hold office, judge uprightly...[thus] no woman but your wife ought to look handsome to you, [and] no boy...”²²⁵ Seneca, like Epictetus, condemned the *voluptas* he saw among Epicureans, twice coupling it with the traits of an effeminate.²²⁶ Finally, several Stoics said that adultery was contrary to nature.²²⁷ In short, Roman Stoics intent on governing their bodies well circumscribed “natural sex” to married, procreative intercourse and criticized non-Stoics as immoderate effeminates.

Since Stoicism and Roman ideology were coupled under the Republic and early Empire, it is unsurprising that Stoic teaching on this matter influenced Roman politics, strengthening already-tough Roman standards for manliness and giving Roman politicians means to criticize others for effeminacy. For instance, the Stoic politician Scipio Africanus won a reputation for great self-control, condemning the pederasty that reportedly increased among young Romans after the introduction of Greek culture to the city.²²⁸ In 141 BCE, he even attacked the soldier P. Sulpicius Galus by charging that if he made himself up in front of a mirror, wore a woman’s tunic, and plucked his eyebrows, he was most certainly a

²¹⁹ Gleason, “Semiotics of Gender,” 399-402.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 401.

²²¹ Musonius Rufus, fr. 21; *Diss.* 1.16.11, 3.1.26-27, 31; Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 52.12, 95.21. Cf. also Atheneus’ report about Diogenes, who censures a man with a plucked chin by saying “It cannot be, can it, that you fault nature because she made you a man instead of a woman?” (*Deip.* 13.565B-C).

²²² Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 33.52, 60; *Paid.* 3.15.1-2, 19.1.

²²³ Cicero, *On Duties* 1.104, 127.

²²⁴ Ward, “Musonius and Paul on Marriage,” 281-89.

²²⁵ *Discourses* 3.7.26, 21.

²²⁶ *On the Beautiful Life.* 7.3, 13.4; *On Mercy* 4.2, 13.

²²⁷ *Discourses.* 2.4.10-11; Origen *Against Celsus* 7.63; *SVF* 1.58.11-15; Fr. 244.

²²⁸ Polybius 31.25.2.

cinaedus.²²⁹ Lucilius repeated Scipio's hatred for *cinaedi*, charging Scipio's political opponent Appius Claudius Pulcher with being *pulcher* ('fine') and an *exoletus* (a pathic).²³⁰ Importantly, however, Velleius also decried the perceived degeneracy of Rome by censuring the luxury and effeminacy that Scipio's son Aemilianus had introduced there. Both the elder and younger Senecas agreed, roundly condemning freeborn Romans who welcomed the advances of their elders and charging a loss of imperial virility as the source of Rome's problems.²³¹ This concern for Roman manliness explains why in *Satires* 2 Juvenal complains that effeminate Stoic judges made him want to leave Rome (2.1-2). Effeminacy was a disease threatening the Empire from within, and it had to be eradicated lest the Romans be left as *cinaedi* servicing another man's imperial house. In other words, however conventional the τόπος of the sexy Stoic ruler, it was also a serious critique of imperial leadership. Particularly in an environment in which Seneca tutored the young Nero and their government of the Empire was publicly *conjoined*, to censure a Roman judge using the τόπος of the mindless, sexy Stoic was a devastating critique of *Romanitas*. It was the same as saying that the Roman Empire was run by women.

Censuring the Roman Judge in 1:18-2:16:

The Judgment of Living Contrary to Nature

This is the charge Paul levels at the judge of 2:1. When we compare the τόπος of the inconsistent Stoic wise-ruler to Romans 1:18-2:16, the 'Gentile decline' narrative (1:18-32) resounds with Stoic commonplaces turned rhetorically to censure Roman leaders who "ruled the world" according to nature and yet judged others for unnatural acts in which they themselves indulged (Pelagius *PCR* 69). In 1:18-32, Paul elicits several common Stoic notions—ideas about the cosmos, attention to nature through a mind attuned to λόγος, moderate, manly sex, public duties, and perfect wisdom and judgment—in order to remind Paul's audience of Stoic judgments about non-Stoics, particularly other philosophers, for foolishness and overpassionate, effeminate sex. In 2:1-16, Paul then explicitly evokes the convention of the sexy Stoic, together with an allusion to the sage as "living law," in order to turn these judgments back upon the Roman Stoic ruler. By revealing the utter inadequacy of his judgment and self-rule, Paul embarrasses the Roman judge, undermines the efficacy and seeming supremacy of Stoic way of life in Rome (2:1-11), and subjects the Stoic *summum bonum* of life "in accord with nature" to the final judgment of Paul's God (2:12-16).

Paul's deployment of the τόπος follows immediately on the heels of his declaration of God's verdict against the impiety and injustice of idolaters (1:18, cf. 1:32). The first proof, a proof strong enough to leave the adjudged without a defense (1:20, 2:1), is that the created world teaches them what can be known of God (1:19-20). This statement coheres nicely with the Stoic τόπος, which depicts the universe, or nature, as revealing divinity because the divine rationality permeates it. Although Stoics were known for identifying the universe as God, even the language of God as "Creator" of nature (1:20) and of the impiety (ἀσεβεία)

²²⁹ Gellius 6.12.5. See also Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.14.7.

²³⁰ Rudd, *Themes in Roman Satire*, 216.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 219, 221; *Contr.* 1, *praeef.* 8; *Ep. Mor.* 114.22, *Natural Questions* 7.31.2-3.

of those who did not worship God (1:18, 21) is consistent with Stoic thought. Laertius nicely describes the Stoic understanding of God: “The deity, [Stoics] say, is a living being, immortal, rational, perfect, intelligent in happiness, allowing entry to nothing evil, taking providential care of the world and everything in it, but he is not of human shape. He is, however, the artificer of the universe and the father of all, both in general and in the particular part of him that is all-pervading.”²³²

The language here is scarcely characteristic of earliest Christian thought (*kathorao*, “perceive” and *theiotes*, “divinity, divine nature,” occur only here in the NT; *aidios*, “eternal” elsewhere only in Jude 6; and *poiema*, “what is made,” only here and Eph 2:10). It also for the most part plays an insignificant role in the OT. But it is familiar in Stoic thought: the closest parallel to the *aorata/kathoratai* wordplay comes in Pseudo-Aristotle, *de Mundo* 399b.14ff. . . and for *theiotes* cf. particularly Plutarch, *Mor.* 398A; 665A. . . Paul is trading upon, without necessarily committing himself to, the Greek (particularly Stoic) understanding of. . . [reality known] through the rational power of the mind.²³³

The role of mind (νοῦς) in recognizing the relationship of nature to the divine introduces the second allusion to the τόπος. Inaugurated by the ἀόρατα/καθοράται (invisible things/perceive) wordplay in v. 20, the language of (false) reasoning skyrockets in Romans 1:21-23: knowing (γνόντες) God is juxtaposed to the befuddling (εματαιώθησαν, ἐμωράθησαν, ἐσκοτίσθη) of those who are senseless (ἄσυνετος) in their reasonings (διαλογισμοῖς, καρδία).²³⁴ As in the convention, the involuntary false thinking of senseless minds leads fools into other forms of falsehood (v. 23, 25), which are also involuntary errors of judgment (see πλάνη, v. 27). Typical of αἰτιολογία, the foremost error is the idolatry of fools who mistake representations of nature for its Creator (1:23, 25).²³⁵ Paul’s reversal of the categories of the wise man and fool (1:22, cf. 1:14) and allusions to the created world (vv. 20, 23) underscore the irony of this mistake: those claiming to be sages (σόφοι) with access to the logic of nature were really weak-minded fools.²³⁶

²³² Laertius *De Vit. Phil.* 7.147, Cf. also 7.134-136. Chrysippus identified the Universe with God (Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* 2.38), but Epictetus discussed God as creating its constituent parts. *Diss.* 1.14.10. Laertius emphasizes that Stoics saw themselves as both godlike and pious worshippers of the gods or God (7.119). Paul distinguished God from the universe in a way Stoics did not, but this distinction is not important for 1:18-32 to function as a censure of Stoics; Paul’s opponent only had to believe that people were judged for not recognizing God-in-nature and that God was worthy of worship.

²³³ Dunn, *Romans*, 57-8.

²³⁴ Stowers, *Rereading*, 253. He analyses the use of terms such as these in philosophical literature dealing with the function of reason in the pursuit of virtue.

²³⁵ Cf. *Wis* 13-14; Ninth Letter of Anacharsis; Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* 90.

²³⁶ On the damage—not just dishonor but somatic emasculation—that this could cause God, see Swancutt “Disease of Effemination.” Writers from Aristocles to Diogenes Laertius and Origen believed that Stoics thought god was a body, the active material principle that created the world order and acted upon passive bodies within it (Origen, *Contra Celsus* 4.14 (SVF 2.1052); Diogenes Laertius 7.134, 137 (SVF 2.300, 2.299, 2.526); Aristocles (Eusebius, *Evangelical preparation* 15.14; SVF 1.98). See Alexander *On Mixture* 225.1-2 (SVF 2.310); Aetius 1.7.33 (SVF 2.1027); Diogenes Laertius 7.135-6 (SVF 1.102). See also Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 273-74.). Epicurus also believed the gods were “imperishable” beings who appeared as human “images” and “likenesses” nature imprinted on the mind (Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 123-24; Cicero *Nat. d.* 1.43-49.). Consequently, worshippers’ minds had to be free of unworthy

Deleted: of the universe

The third allusion to the convention occurs in 1:24-27: the false reasoning about nature that led them to idolatry now precipitates women's and men's involuntary exercise of passions in unnatural, immoderate sex (1:26-27).²³⁷ In vv. 24-27, as in the convention, the vice of unnatural sex is a "form of ignorance of those things whereof the corresponding virtues are the knowledge."²³⁸ The virtue or "good" (cf. 2:8, 10) is intercourse in which male and female partners enacted "natural" sex roles: men were active penetrators of passive women; sex roles, in other words, that accorded with the work of nature's Creator. The language of vv. 26-27a indicates that the idolaters were guilty of reversing this norm: not only is the "natural" hierarchical gender pairing (woman-man) introduced,²³⁹ the women are portrayed as actively "*exchanging* (μετήλλαξαν)" the natural use of intercourse for the unnatural, while men merely "gave up (ἄφεντες) the natural use of women"—thereby embodying idolatry in their intercourse (μετήλλαξαν, v. 23).²⁴⁰ Given this allusion to sex role reversal, the depiction of θήλειαι (women/females) and ἄρσενες (men/males) engaging in unnatural sex undoubtedly functioned as the critical proof of the mindlessness of their idolatry, of the ignorance underlying their failure to recognize God as the Creator of nature. Significantly, the thrust of 1:24-27a parallels that of Epictetus' discourse on providence (προνοία): "Assuredly from the very structure of all made objects we are accustomed to prove that the work is the product of a technician...do not visible objects and vision and light reveal him? And the male and female, and the zeal they have for sex, and the faculty which makes use of the organs that have been constructed for this purpose, do not these things reveal their artificer?"²⁴¹ In vv. 24-27, as in Roman Stoicism, women and men's exchange of natural for unnatural sex represented a mindless inversion of the natural gender hierarchy, arguably the most important work of the Artificer.

This point is further illuminated by the second allusion to the convention in vv. 24-27, the role of passion and desire in the inversion of the natural gender hierarchy. Like the τόπος, passion is portrayed as the result of false thinking. As Laertius put it, "according to the Stoics, "falseness results in distortion, which extends to the mind...from this distortion

beliefs lest "the holy divinity of the gods" be "damaged" and "do you harm...you will be unable to visit the shrines of the gods with a calm heart and incapable of receiving...the images of their holy bodies which travel into men's minds to reveal the gods' appearance." (Lucretius 6.68-79). Stoics like Seneca decried this theology of "images," lest the gods be reduced to deaf and ineffectual divinities, "passive" matter (Seneca, *Ben.* 4.19.1-4; 4.4.1-3; *De Vita Beata* 7.4; Cicero *Nat. d.* 2.75-76.). But Paul uses the idea that divinity could be degraded by foolish worship to imply that Gentiles *claiming* to be wise (1:22) were actually **idiots** (like the Epicureans); believing that they should worship the immortal God of Israel as "an image of the likeness of mortal man," they damaged the appearance of His divinity, degrading His masculinity as Creator to the status of created things.

Deleted: fools

²³⁷ The involuntary character of the actions is underscored by Paul's repeated use of *paredoken*. God is portrayed as the actor who "hands over" the idolaters to their lusts (vv. 24, 26). The idolaters then act on their lusts, but the point of the narrative is that false thinking *inevitably* leads to these consequences, and God causes these results.

²³⁸ *De Vit. Phil.* 7.94. Laertius was discussing Stoics' understanding of vices in general.

²³⁹ For the gender hierarchy inherent in ancient conceptions of nature, see Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 229-249; Brooten, *Love Between Women*; Swancutt, "Sexy Stoics."

²⁴⁰ Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 245-46: "The active verb (*metellaxan*) with a feminine subject is striking. The specific verbs for sexual intercourse are usually active when they refer to men and passive when they refer to women...in the context of the widespread cultural view of women as sexually passive, for women actively to 'exchange natural intercourse for unnatural' stands out."

²⁴¹ *Diss.* 1.6.8-9.

arise many passions, which are causes of instability. Passion is, according to Zeno, an irrational and unnatural movement in the soul or an impulse in excess.” Desire (ἐπιθυμία), one type of passion (πάθη), is an “irrational appetitive burning (ὀρέξις)” which exhibits itself, among other things, as love.²⁴² Vv. 24-27 screams this language of passion, from “the lusts (ἐπιθυμία, v. 24) of their hearts” (the synonym of a lustful mind “irrationally and unnaturally moved”²⁴³) to “passions of dishonor” (πάθη ἀτιμίας, v. 26), the “unnatural use of sex” (παρὰ φύσιν, v. 26-7), and men’s “consumption in their burning” (ὀρέξει, v. 27) for each other.²⁴⁴ Given that the need to subjugate femininity and control passion is inherent in the Stoic τόπος and Roman gender ideology, we should expect that in vv. 24-27 immoderately indulged passion would turn natural gender relations on their head.

This is exactly what happens in v. 27, the rhetorical center of the decline narrative. After introducing the charge of gender reversal in vv. 26b-27a by inverting the “natural” gender polarity and sex roles, the narrative moves quickly to highlight what Paul treated as most important rhetorically, the actions of men “who gave up the natural use of women” for effeminating intercourse παρὰ φύσιν (v. 27). As I have argued elsewhere, Paul constructed every phrase in 1:27 to emphasize the somatic emasculation that resulted when men indulged inordinate passion and “worked deformity” in each other by penetrating men as if they were women: they received in their bodies the “penalty due for their error.”²⁴⁵ As John Chrysostom and Clement of Alexandria saw it, unnatural sex transformed the men into androgynous beings who were neither women nor men, but “softies” of less worth than a dog (*Homily* 4.1, 3). Their concerns echo those of Hypereides: “Nature would be shocked and astonished that any man would not think it a most blessed gift for him to have been born a man and [then] spoiled Nature’s kindness to him, hastening to transform himself into a woman [when “he misused his own body in a feminine way”].”²⁴⁶ According to Epictetus, the result is that “the wages of fighting against God and disobedience (ἀπειθείας) will not be paid by ‘children’s children,’ but by me myself in my own person.”²⁴⁷ In short, from its emphasis on nature to its reversal of sex roles and effemination of men through indulgence of passion, Romans 1:24-27 coheres with Stoic denunciations of non-Stoics (both Epicureans and the “foolish masses,” v. 22) who ignore the reason, or law, of nature and who practice immoderate, unnatural sex.²⁴⁸

Romans 1:18-32 ends with one more allusion to the convention of the inconsistent Stoic: the idea that idolaters’ enfeebled minds prohibited them from doing their natural duties as citizens (καθήκοντα). As described in chapter three, the subject of public duties

²⁴² *De Vit. Phil.* 7.110, 113.

²⁴³ Καρδία (heart) and νοῦς (mind) were synonyms, as scholars have long recognized (see n. 45).

²⁴⁴ Typically treated as a uniquely Jewish formulation, the language of impurity (ἀκαθαρσίαν, v. 24) that dishonors is consistent with this portrait. See Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 8.

²⁴⁵ Swancutt, “Disease of Effemination.”

²⁴⁶ Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*, 61.

²⁴⁷ Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.24.24, 22-39.

²⁴⁸ See Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 254. The presence of the τόπος in Romans 1 may explain why ancient commentators thought Romans 1 targeted Gentile philosophers as fools and traitors to nature. See Origen, *Com. Ep. Rom.* 1:142, 156, 158; Chrysostom, *Ep. Rom.* 3 (NPNF 1 11:354), 5 (1 11:360); Ambrosiaster, *Com. Ep. Paul.* (CSEL 81:43); Augustine, *Exp. Ep. Rom.* 3, *De Civ. Dei* 8.10; Psuedo-Constantius, *Frag. Paul* 25; Prosper of Aquitaine *Grace and Free Will* 12.4 (FC 7:380).

(*officium*) was a popular topic among Stoics.²⁴⁹ The Stoic founder “Zeno was the first to use the term καθήκον of conduct,” which is “an action in itself adapted to nature’s arrangements.” By extrapolation:

Befitting acts (καθήκοντα) are all those which [natural] reason prevails upon us to do; and this is the case with honoring one’s parents, brothers, and country, and intercourse with friends. Unfitting or contrary to duty (παρὰ τὸ καθήκον) are all acts that reason deprecates, which are these very things (τὰ τοιαύτα): to neglect one’s parents, to be indifferent to one’s brothers, not to agree with friends, to disregard the interests of one’s country, and so forth.²⁵⁰

Panaetius and Posidonius agreed, and Cicero made the ideas foundational for his *De Officiis*.²⁵¹ In Romans 1:28-32, Paul evokes the Stoic notion of natural duties left undone (τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα, v. 28) to extend the theme of the unnatural results of ignorance from their destructive effects on idolaters’ bodies (vv. 24-27) to their factionalizing effects on the body politic (vv. 29-31). This rhetorical effect in v. 28 proceeds by several steps: charging the idolaters with ignorance for a fifth time (v. 18-19, 21, 23, 25, 28); juxtaposing their poor judgment about God in a wordplay on mental fitness (ἔδοκιμασσαν ἀδόκιμον); describing them for a third time as “handed over” (vv. 24, 26, 28) to the result of ignorance, an unfit mind (ἀδόκιμον νοῦν) that disables just acts toward others (ἀδικία, v. 29); and offering a vice list (vv. 29-31) that emphasizes passions with interpersonal effects.²⁵² Since justice was a fundamentally relational concept, the prime placement of injustice (ἀδικία) in the vice list colors the remaining passions as relational errors. Precisely the kind of errors Laertius lists, these passions also underscore the contrast between idolaters’ mindless injustice and the justice of the God (1:17) who now judges them (1:18, 32). Hence, the reference to idolaters’ knowledge of God (ἐπιγινόντες) in v. 32 is an ironic inclusio of both vv. 28-32 and the whole decline narrative: the irony is that the mental confusion of idolaters past and present is so complete, and their distance from the Creator of the nature by which they supposedly determine right action so total, that they highly esteem (συνευδοκοῦσιν) those guilty of the unnatural acts that God deemed worthy of death.²⁵³ In *Letter* 39.3-6, Seneca makes the same point by describing the man who had wholly succumbed to passion, and thus, wholly lost his mind:

No man of exalted gifts is pleased with that which is low and mean...The only excuse that we can allow for the incontinence (*inpotentiae*) and mad lust (*insanae*

²⁴⁹ Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 21.

²⁵⁰ *De Vit. Phil.* 7.107-109. See also 7.25.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Cf. Laertius, *De Vit. Phil.* 7.110-115. Other passions include contentiousness, envy, rivalry, jealousy, anger, resentment, grief, pity, anguish, and distress. See Dunn, *Romans* 67.

²⁵³ Commentators widely agree that God’s δικαίωμα (v. 32), that “those who practice such things are worthy of death,” does not refer to a specific judgment of the Jewish law, but appeals to a culturally accepted “truth,” placed in God’s mouth, that people who are so wholly out of tune with acceptable conduct are refuse worthy of the worst punishments. V. 32 reflects the widespread idea that God or the gods punish these people, who are unjust, for the passions that ruin their minds (see esp. 13:3-4, where rulers are empowered by God to inflict capital punishment for wrongdoing [Dunn, *Romans*, 764]). Stoics taught that death was inconsequential and not to be feared by *sages*, but the idea of (divine) punishment of *fools* is present in Stoic thought (Stobaeus, i.3.50; Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.2.15, 7.36, 24.41-43; 2.1.13).

libidini) of [certain men prone to excess] is the fact that they suffer the evils which they have inflicted upon others. And they are rightly harassed by this madness, because desire must have unbounded space for its excursions, if it transgresses nature's mean...for this reason they are most wretched, because they have reached such a pass that what was once superfluous to them has become indispensable. And so they are the slaves of their pleasures...*Then the height of unhappiness is reached, when men are not only attracted, but even pleased, by shameful things*, and when there is no longer any room for a cure, now that those things which once were vices have become habits.²⁵⁴

In Romans 1:18-32, the impious fools who dishonored God by worshipping the creation were precisely these insanely passionate men. Thus, from its emphasis on the importance of knowledge and judgment, unnatural sex, and failure to do one's natural public duties, to the idea that the universe revealed its Creator through a mind attuned to nature, Romans 1:18-32 is consistent with criticisms ancients thought Stoics used to distance themselves from the 'uncivilized' and to degrade other schools of philosophy.

Exit *Romanitas*: The Roman Judge and the Lawful Judgment of God (2:1-16)

The coherence of the convention of the Stoic wise ruler within 1:18-32 is what makes it so devastating as a criticism of the inconsistent Roman judge in Romans 2:1-16. The convention shows that even when criticized anonymously, as he was in 2:1-3, Stoics were widely recognized for thinking themselves the perfect judges of the Empire and the perfect instructors of young men in virtue. Recall from chapter three Cicero's assertion that the Roman judge was the perfect Stoic "living law":

As the laws govern the magistrate, so the magistrate governs the people and it can be truly said, "*The magistrate is a speaking law and the law is a silent magistrate.*" Nothing is so completely in accord with the principles of justice and the commands of nature as is government, without which existence is impossible for a household, a city, a nation, humanity, physical nature, and the universe itself.²⁵⁵

According to Cicero (and the Roman Stoics), the Roman Stoic magistrate is the living law of the Empire. Of course, as the convention shows, the problem was that Roman Stoic politicians were as vulnerable as Epicureans to Stoic charges of effeminacy and indulging passions contrary to nature. Indeed, even as Roman Stoics touted strict gender differentiation, circumscribed natural intercourse to procreative sex, and called for the renewed virilization of the Empire, fellow Romans indulged in intercourse with whomever they wished, and Stoic founder Zeno chased his students, lauded the communal sharing of wives, and bid "men and women to wear the same dress and keep no part of their bodies entirely covered."²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ On foolishness as insanity, see Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.15.13-15. Cf. *T. Ash.* 6:2.

²⁵⁵ Colish, *The Stoic Tradition*, 102; Cicero *On Law* 3.1.2-3.

²⁵⁶ See Laertius *De Vit. Phil.* 7.17, 21, 33, 131.

Of the possible targets of Romans 2:1, therefore, the inconsistent Roman Stoic was the most vulnerable to censure for being the opposite of the “perfect judge” he claimed to be. Like Martial’s *Epigrams* and Juvenal’s *Satire 2*, Romans 2:1-16 accuses an unnamed judge, in the vocative (“you sir”), of judging others in Rome while behaving effeminately. Hear again the parallel with Juvenal:

Why every street is full of you stern-faced pederasts. How can you lash corruption when you are the most notorious furrow among our Socratic fairies? ... It’s a happy age [in Rome] that has you, Sir, to reform its morals... what a garb for presenting new laws and enactments before a community... think of what *you* would say if *you* saw such clothes being worn by a judge. I question if even a witness would appear in chiffon!²⁵⁷

The patristic commentators had good reason indeed for thinking that Paul had “the rulers of the city in mind.”²⁵⁸ The judge of Romans 2:1 did *exactly* the same unnatural things as Juvenal’s Roman Stoic judge and *exactly* the same unnatural things (1:32, 2:1-2) as the fools upon whom he passed judgment in 1:18-32. By effeminating maturing youths or being effeminated by them (1:27), making a mockery of his dedication to his public duties, and demonstrated his total mindlessness, he demonstrated that he could not *live* his *summum bonum*, life according to nature. In fact, since he modeled his life on the teachings of Stoic forebears, his mind must have been so thoroughly effeminated that he “approved of” Stoics who acted unnaturally (1:28-32, esp. 32). Hence, because of his incapacity to determine the good naturally, he lacked the wisdom necessary to guide the affairs of the Empire, including the public duty of judging people justly (1:28, 2:1).

Depicting himself rhetorically as the instructor of the Roman judge, Paul highlights the consequences of these judgments in a careful comparison (συγκρίσις) between the Roman’s rule and that of God.²⁵⁹ First, Paul argues that the weakness of the Roman Stoic’s mind proves that living “according to nature” cannot bring adherents the benefits of virtuous living, honor, and immortality. Interrogating the judge in diatribal style, he instructs him that his unnatural actions are proof that he is weak and certain to be condemned in God’s final judgment (v. 3). According to God’s lawful standard, good *actions* are the proof of the viability of the Roman’s lifestyle. Since his actions warrant execution, Paul argues that the Roman magistrate must recognize the superior liberality (χρηστότητος, χρηστὸν) and forbearance (ἀνοχῆς, μακροθυμία²⁶⁰) of a *real* wise ruler—the Patriarch of Israel—who

²⁵⁷ *Satire 2.9-10, 38-39, 72, 75-76.*

²⁵⁸ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans 5* (NPNF 1 11:360).

²⁵⁹ Cf. Paul’s use of the same *topos* in 1 Cor 4:1-13.

²⁶⁰ See Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event*; Stowers, *Rereading*, 104-107. They argue that ἀνοχῆ, “forbearance,” and μακροθυμία, “patience” connote God’s delay in punishing Gentiles until the final judgment. They describe a rich Jewish tradition that contrasts Jews, who did not accumulate God’s wrath at the final judgment because God mercifully meted out punishments over time, with Gentiles who accumulate God’s wrath at the final judgment because they did not have access to the means (law) by which repentance and right action were measured. Hence, God’s delayed judgment of Gentiles is a sign of God’s impartiality toward them in allowing them time to have a μετάνοιά and assent to being retrained in δικαιοσύνη through the gospel. But for Gentiles who do not repent, God’s delay brings condemnation. Thus, Williams and Stowers illuminate the ideology represented in the language of judgment in 2:3-11.

has endured his wrongdoing so that the Roman will have the chance, *in good protreptic fashion*, to “change his mind” (μετανοία, v. 4), be retrained in God’s δικαιοσύνη, and reap its benefits (2:7-11).²⁶¹ By deploying the idea fundamental to the Greek concept of nature, the idea that the strong naturally rule the weak, Paul shows that God’s superior power (δύναμις, 1:16, 20) and kingly benevolence (2:4) demonstrated his right to rule over the weak Roman judge.²⁶²

Propos of the τόπος, however, the personified Roman judge remains impenitent of mind because of his supposed natural superiority (vv. 5, 8) and continues to believe that death is irrelevant because “glory and honor and immortality” are his sure reward (v. 7). As Epictetus said:

As for me...[trying to make my own moral purpose tranquil, unhampered, constrained, free] is what I wish to be engaged in when death finds me, so that I may be able to say to God, ‘Have I in any respect transgressed your commands? Have I in any respect misused the resources which you gave me?...and now I am full of gratitude to you that you have deemed me worthy to take part in this festival with you and to see your works (ἔργα) and to understand your governance.’

Why, what else [will you make of death] but make it your glory, or an opportunity for you to show in deed thereby what kind of person is a man who follows the will of nature.²⁶³

Since he lived “according to nature,” the Roman Stoic thought he was just and did not need to “change his mind.” In Paul’s view, the judge’s mental incapacity had rendered him impotent to recognize his own “unnatural acts.” Thus, the Roman Stoic ruler was “storing

Stowers does not see the role of kingship ideology in this dynamic. Repeated twice in this verse, in 3:12, and 11:22-36 (cf. also 15:7-13), the χρηστότης or “liberality” of God (2:4) has a significantly more positive valence than a mere “forbearance” that awaits a later, more devastating, judgment of Gentiles. It is a synonym of φιλανθρωπία (cf. Tit 3:4), or the “love of peoples” attributed to God and rulers in middle Stoicism and employed in other ethical material (e.g., Cicero *Off.* 1.20-22; Wis 1:6, 7:23; 12:19; Philo *De Virt.* 51-174; *Ques. Gen.* 2.60, Josephus *Con. Ap.*). It connotes not only the prohibition of injustice, but also active beneficence toward others and the imitation of those who practice it. It is treated here as a prime feature of God’s δικαιοσύνη. It is likely that imitating the χρηστότης of God in Christ is the content of the training in the gospel which Paul assumed the judge of 2:1 required (cf. 12:3-21, 13:8-10, 15:1-6). Thus, in 2:4 the “forbearance” of God threatened the unrepentant ruler, but God’s “kindness” positively emphasized the beneficence of his impartiality to Gentiles (2:11, 3:22) and hints at the character of the Paul’s “way-of-life” as it is described in Rom. 5-15.

²⁶¹ On μετανοία as a “change of mind” in protrepsis, see chapter 2; Marcus Aurelius 8.10; Lucian, *Herm.* 86, *Nigr.* 38. On μετανοία as “repentance,” see Ez 33:11; Ps-Aristeas 188; y. *Mak.* 2.6, 31d; b. *Yoma* 86b. Jews like Philo considered μετανοία a virtue, the mark of a man of wisdom (*Virt.* 177; *De Abr.* 26; *Somm.* 1.91; *Spec.* 1.103; *QG* 2.13).

²⁶² Walker, “Paul’s Offer of Leniency,” has demonstrated that Paul previously applied the τόπος of the good king, with its attendant feature of clemency to the weak, to Christ in 2 Cor. 10.

²⁶³ Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.7.7-11; 3.10.13-14. Stoics treated death as inconsequential to the sage (cf. 3.3.15, 3.18.2; 4.7.15-18). Sages who lived according to nature were raised to the level of gods and enjoyed immortality as their reward.

up for himself? divine wrath; if he continued his indulgence of self-interested (ἐξ ἐριθείας) and factious behavior, he would reap punishment at his death.²⁶⁴

The irony of Paul's rhetoric for Paul's Roman audience is that they knew nature would have led a real wise man to recognize that the Creator of nature was the God of the gospel.²⁶⁵ Only the God of Israel (1:1-6), as the author of nature, could truly be a just and impartial judge of the creation (2:11). The correlate of this claim is that only the God of Paul's gospel was free to choose the standard or law by which right action was determined and just men (δίκαιοι) granted the benefits of "glory, honor, and immortality" (2:7, 1:17). This is the thrust of 2:2-11 and as such, the first critical support of Paul's thesis (1:16-17). Against the Roman Stoic who thought himself a "living law" because of his exclusive ability to pursue wisdom naturally and, consequently, his superiority to the masses, Paul argued that God was just precisely because he was merciful to *everyone*, even the undeserving. He was merciful because he postponed the immediate condemnation due the Roman judge (and the Gentiles generally) for impious and unnatural acts in order to give the Roman (and by extension, the Gentiles) time to change his weak mind and to receive instruction in the good that leads to eternal life—the εὐαγγέλιον. Unlike Stoicism, which at best benefited Roman elites at the expense of the masses, the gospel about Paul's God and his merciful justice benefits all (1:1-6, 14-17; 2:8-11).

Romans 2:12-16 reinforces this point—which targets his Greek audience as much as at the Roman judge—by juxtaposing two elements of the Stoic τόπος, attention to nature as the yardstick of good conduct and Stoics as a living law. Paul invokes the "living law" motif to place Gentiles, with Jews, under the obligation to do the work of the law (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου, v. 15) while undercutting the efficacy of nature as a sufficient guide in good conduct. He does this most clearly in 2:13-14 when he grants the inconsistent Roman Stoic the point that Gentiles like himself could in theory do justice naturally. "It is not hearers of the law who are δίκαιοι before God, but doers of it who are accounted just. When Gentiles who do not have the law do naturally what the law requires, they are a law to themselves...they show that what the law requires is written on their hearts..." Taking the adverb "naturally" to function here as it did in 1:26-27, to modify the main action in the sentence,²⁶⁶ this statement seems to support the Roman Stoic's position that the sage was a living law taught by nature to do the good. However, Paul overturns this central tenet by evoking another commonplace shared by Stoics and their enemies, that only a few real wise men had ever lived.²⁶⁷ In fact, the Roman Stoics repeatedly said that very few people truly practiced Stoic ethics.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ This judgment is coherent with, and may echo, Wis 6:1-21.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks* 4, 6, 13, 15; *Ep. Diognetus* 8.2, which censure Stoic philosophers for their wrong-headed cosmology. *Ep. Diognetus* also explicitly says that they should have known God from nature. Epicureans' criticized Stoics similarly. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.18-23.

²⁶⁶ Grammatical and syntactical arguments about whether the adverb φύσει should be linked with ἔχοντα ("those who possess the law") or with ποιῶσιν ("they do the law") are inconclusive (contra Dunn, *Romans*, 98). A decision about how to read v. 14 is necessarily subjective, based on an overall reading of the passage. I read the passage as our earliest extant audience overwhelmingly did, as referring to some Gentiles' ability to do right naturally. See Origen, *Com. Ep. Rom.* 1. 228, 230; Tertullian, *Ad. Marc.* 5. 13; Pelagius, *Com. Rom.* 73; Ambrosiaster, *Com. Ep. Paul.* 81.75.

²⁶⁷ See Martens, "Romans 2:14-16: A Stoic Reading," 66, esp nn. 45-46; See also Hock, "By the Gods." E.g., Cicero, *De. Off.* 3.16, *De. Nat.* 1.23, *De. Leg.* 1.6.18; Plutarch *Mor.* 13.2.1035C.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.7.

Two consequences follow from this argument. First, God in his mercy was offering Gentiles a second chance to act rightly, which meant acting in accord with God's law which they, like Paul, thought encompassed nature²⁶⁹; but *at most*, only a few wise Gentiles, not Gentiles as a group, were able to be law—to be δίκαιοι—by doing naturally what the Jewish law required. Thus, in 2:12-16, Paul accepts the convention that Gentile sages like the Roman judge could be a living law naturally, but *argues* that very few Gentiles do so. According to vv. 15-16, the language of the conflicted mind underscores Paul's doubt about their good judgment: “[a few wise Gentiles] show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, *although* their inner conviction (συνείδησις) testifies and their conflicting thoughts bring accusations or even make defenses among themselves on that day when according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”²⁷⁰ Because the συνείδησις was the “knowledge within the self of past action performed by the subject, a conviction of past misdeeds; and as such it is portrayed as a pain, a disease, or an agent that punishes and inflicts pain,” its testimony was almost always negative.²⁷¹ The conclusion of 2:1-16 is consequently that the Stoic *summum bonum* of living according to nature was inefficacious, by itself, for the majority of Gentiles. Unlike the gospel about the Christ, which offered life to anyone who had faith/fulness in God's faithfulness and mercy (1:16-17), the Stoicism of the Roman's 'philosophic' culture promised everything to the few, and delivered nothing to the many.

Scholars have missed the thrust of this reading largely because they understand 2:12 as contrasting Jews as hypocritical hearers of the law with Gentiles who actually do it. They translate: “All who have sinned outside the law (ἀνόμωσ) perish outside the law (ἀνόμωσ), and all who have sinned under the law are judged/condemned (κριθήσονται) by the law,” and so conclude that Paul is disparaging the law and arguing that God would judge Gentiles on some other basis than the law, such as nature. However, the commonplace that very few Gentiles actually *were* a “living law” able to *do* the law's requirement naturally is strong evidence that Paul's argument is unconvincing if it contrasts Jews who merely hear the law with Gentiles who actually do it. Paul has labored hard to show that even elite Gentiles like the Roman judge does not provide a superior example of right action. Second, again, evidence from sources as wide ranging as *Wisdom of Solomon*, Epictetus' *Discourses*, Pseudo-Aristeas, and Philo indicate that Greeks and Jews used the language of law to link nature to the will of God. As I mentioned above, *Wisdom* 6:4 censures Gentile kings and judges for failing to judge according to the “law.” As David Winston shows, νόμος cannot be cleanly separated from the Wisdom of God's law, but here it refers to the natural reason that allows Gentile rulers to judge rightly (thereby fulfilling God's law).²⁷² In like manner, Paul's instruction of the *Roman* judge makes far more sense if we assume that nature points to God's will as evidenced in the law (e.g., 1:32) rather than diverging from it.

²⁶⁹ Roman believers, like Paul, would have assumed the coherence of nature and God's law. For the elision of nature into the law of God in Judaism, cf. Wis 6:4; Ps-Aristeas 161; 4 Macc 1:16-17, 5:25; Philo *Op.* 3, 143; *Leg. All.* 1.46, 93; *Mos.* 2.52; *Abr.* 16, 60.

²⁷⁰ For the concessive genitive absolute, see Dunn, *Romans*, 101; cf. Rom 1:21, 3:21.

²⁷¹ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 180. Cf. Seneca *On Anger* 3.36.1 and *Ep. Mor.* 28.10. See also my extended discussion on 5:12-21.

²⁷² Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 153.

More importantly, the normal meaning of ἀνόμος, the adverb translated “outside the law” in 2:12, is “wickedly” or “lawlessly.”²⁷³ As Stowers has recognized, a better translation of 2:12 is “for all who sin lawlessly will perish lawlessly, and all who sin under the aegis of the law will be evaluated (κριθήσονται) through the law.” (When Paul wants to describe something “outside the law” (3:21, 7:8), he is perfectly able to use χωρὶς νόμου. Further, in 3:4, Paul uses κρίνεσθαι, “to be judged,” with the same sense it bears here, evaluation not condemnation. In 3:4, God’s “judgment” is assumed to have a positive outcome.) Read this way, 2:12 actually recaps the argument of 2:2-11: Because his justice is merciful and impartial, God offers lawless, factious Gentiles, even the Roman Stoic who claims exclusive access to natural wisdom, a second chance to *do* the just requirement of the Jewish law. In sum, in 2:12-16, Paul argues against the ‘philosophic’ Roman conception that nature is a sufficient rule of conduct in order to place Gentiles under the obligation of the law, while also eradicating the idea that *natural reason alone* enables them to do the good work demanded by the law. (This argument is nonsensical if, as scholars typically think, Paul’s goal at this point is to undercut the Jewish law.) God’s law has to apply impartially to all peoples for God to be accounted just and his gospel, the path to salvation for all peoples. The problem with the Roman judge, after all, is that *his* “natural” judgment is *not* impartial—and thus *Romanitas* cannot bring δικαιοσύνη and σωτηρία to the world.

In sum, into a city in which Stoics served as magistrates and Seneca and Nero crafted the quinquennium as the Golden Age of a Stoic ruler, Paul sends a protreptic letter that begins by censuring a Stoicized Roman judge for governing himself and Rome “like a girl.” Paul does so by weaving an αἰτιολογία on Gentiles’ mindless inattention to the Creator of nature and several allusions to the τόπος of the inconsistent Stoic wise ruler into a censure that contrasts the mindless impotence of the Roman judge with the merciful justice of Paul’s God. 1:18-2:16 was therefore a bold engagement with *Romanitas* as the ‘cultured’ rival to his εὐαγγέλιον that undercuts its cultural power over the sensibilities of his Greek audience. Since the Romans’ masculinist ideology of nature stabilizes not just their culture (παιδεία), but the cosmos itself, Paul’s charge of the Roman judge with unnatural sex left no room for the *summum bonum* of nature—or its proponents—to save face. His censure poses the question: if wise rulers deem themselves a “living law” and tout living naturally act contrary to nature, how can they bring others wisdom or advantage? The answer: they cannot. Romans 1:18-2:16 deploys gender stereotypes about unnatural intercourse to shatter the credibility of *Romanitas* and to remove the possibility that Roman believers would accept the Stoic philosophy of “natural living” as efficacious *on its own*. Rather, nature points beyond itself to the justice of Paul’s God revealed in the εὐαγγέλιον of his Son. Mercy, we will discover, is God’s yardstick for both inclusion and right action for all the people of God, Jew and Greek. Compared to *that* kind of justice, the “justice” of Roman rule is no rival. By implication, the call for believers to obey imperial magistrates (οἱ ἄρχοντες)—whom Origen, significantly, calls “judges”²⁷⁴—is a politically expedient (13:1-7); but as we shall see, it is hardly an unambiguous endorsement of Roman rule.²⁷⁵ Like *Wisdom* 6:1-20, which culminates its censure of the rulers of the earth with a warning to submit to Israel’s God,

²⁷³ Stowers, *Rereading*, 134-38. I disagree with Stowers about the thrust of the argument; he denies that “nature” in 2:12-16 refers to the common law of nature. As I will show, the elision of natural ‘law’ with Torah-obedience is a crux for understanding law-obedience in Christ in Romans.

²⁷⁴ Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 5:94, 96.

²⁷⁵ So also Elliott, “Romans 13:1-7.”

Romans 13:1-7 both subordinates and subtly warned Roman rulers that divine vengeance will fall, as burning coals, heavy upon their unjust rule (12:21; cf. 8:38, 9:17, 16:20).