

Translating New Testament Texts “within Judaism”: Theory and Practice

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Abstract

The familiar translations of the New Testament naturally reflect the familiar interpretations of these texts from a “within Christianity” perspective, and just as importantly, usually from a negative, even hostile perspective on Judaism as the essential rival. Any research seeking to explore alternative interpretations, such as the recent efforts to read Paul and other NT texts from various “within Judaism” approaches, will require the development of translation alternatives capable of facilitating this research and communicating the conclusions reached. This essay surveys some of the initial, often complicated theoretical and practical challenges that must be navigated, including some examples of alternative translations that have been explored to date.

Keywords

Bible Translation, Defamiliarization, Familiarity-Bias, Gloss-Bias, Luther’s Bible, KJV, NRSV

In a translation lives interpretation.¹ With respect to translating New Testament texts no less than any other text, a translator makes language choices that reflect her interpretation of the language of the source text. For those who only access the source text through her target text translation, it follows that they will suppose the NT text means what her interpretive choices communicate—for her

¹ E.g., Theo Hermans, “Hermeneutics,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2020), 31 (227–232); although this point is relatively banal, observed regularly in studies of the topic, the evidence to be discussed demonstrates the need for highlighting the continued impact of this dynamic.

readers, the translation functions as the source text. Any attempt to read and interpret, even annotate, the NT from the various “within Judaism” perspectives—or any other interpretations that challenge the traditional interpretive paradigms—must reckon with the fact that the familiar translations influence what one expects the source texts to mean.

Although able to re-write the source text into her language, the translator is not entirely immune to the dynamic impact of this “familiarity-bias.” She almost certainly became acquainted with NT source texts in target text translations before learning Koine Greek; she thus began reading the source texts with a set of interpretive assumptions based upon the translation choices—and thus interpretations—with which she was already familiar.² The circularity is compounded by the fact that when she learned Greek, her lexicons (e.g., BDAG),³ commentaries, textbooks, and instructors taught her glosses to employ when translating the NT texts. This “gloss-bias” embodies lexical choices based on the familiar interpretations of the language encountered in the source text that have long established histories, providing a sense of certainty of a word’s or phrase’s supposed historical usage without the need to undertake what one might assume would be unnecessary, tedious investigation, especially if the usage has been repeated as self-evident in the familiar commentary and lexical discussions no less than the legacy translations.

To date, NT translations proceed from premises quite different than those guiding within Judaism research; indeed, more often than not they reflect the traditional working assumption(s) of Christian translators that the NT texts developed apart from and largely in conflict with, when not expressly against, the practice of Judaism (of Jewish identification and ways of life, not least the continued role of Torah observance for followers of Christ).⁴ These viewpoints are traditional, they represent normative (often supersessionistic) theological certainties, even dogmas, albeit no longer without some recent challenges, not least from within Judaism based scholarship. It follows that, for within Judaism

² Cf. Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987; repr., Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998). Applied to Pauline studies, see Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 1* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), ix–xiii.

³ See Jesús Peláez and Juan Mateos, *New Testament Lexicography: Introduction - Theory - Method*, ed. David S. du Toit, trans. Andrew Bowden (FSBP 6; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

⁴ I use Judaism here, shorthand for Second Temple Judaism, to refer to “Jewish ways of life,” communal as well as individual, in all their cultural variety.

oriented research to flourish, not only the familiar interpretations need to be interrogated, but also the familiar translations must be investigated anew, and, when warranted, new translations offered: interpretations and translations go hand in hand, or perhaps better, hand in glove.

The promise and prospects for within Judaism based research, and for its reception, have been and will be impacted no less profoundly by the dynamics of translation theory and practice, by what is in a translation, than have been and will be any other interpretive approach to the source and target language texts. Translation is about language, to be sure, but translation is all the more about “the expression (and repository) of a culture”; language represents “one element in the cultural transfer known as translation.”⁵ Put differently, “translators do not just translate words; they also translate a universe of discourse, a poetics, and an ideology.”⁶ Umberto Eco clarifies the dynamic this way: “translation does not only concern words and language in general but also the world, or at least the possible world described by a given text.”⁷

The translator’s (or more than likely in the case of biblical texts: the translating committee’s) task is to seek to make the language of the source text accessible in the language of her target readers. She proceeds based on what she decides that the target readers ought to understand the source text to have meant—and, in the case of most if not all NT translators and their ideal audiences to date, which usually involve confessional allegiances, what it ought to mean for themselves today. Whether intentional, recognized, or neither, the translator makes choices based upon her expectations of the text’s communication aims coupled with her assumptions about the interpretive expectations of and for the contemporary audience(s) for which she “rewrites” these texts. Translation involves the subjective exercise of negotiation; the translator must decide how best to acculturate the source text so that it will communicate to her target text’s readers how she—and, most likely, how the institutions and affiliations that her translations seek to represent—interpret the meaning of these texts, so that they can understand it in just those interpretive terms.⁸

⁵ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 57.

⁶ André Lefevere, *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literary Context* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992), 94.

⁷ Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 16.

⁸ Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 11–12, passim. Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 56: “translators have to make an interpretive hypothesis about the effect programmed by the original

Most biblical translations, other than avowedly paraphrastic ones (e.g., “modern language” versions), strive to achieve *faithfulness* to the meaning attributed to the source text’s communication aims; that is, they aim to make available the semantic content of the original rather than to function as a literary text.⁹ The effort to re-write the words and word order (syntax) of the phrases and sentences in the original source (as well as metaphorical and other literary devices) as literally equivalent as possible (word to word; e.g., represented by an interlinear text), must be balanced with the need to communicate the source text language in ways that make sense for the target readers in their own language (source to source). Each translated Bible negotiates differently how best to remain close to the source text in the translated text; at one extreme, some, like Wycliffe’s, parrot the original so closely that they do not read well in the target language. The KJV and those modeled closely upon it, attempt to balance these two elements. Robert Alter’s effort “to make the Bible available for English readers in language that might at least intimate something of the power, the subtlety, and the beauty of the Hebrew” provides an instructive challenge for those involved in translating the dynamics of the Greek NT, especially for the narrative and prophetic texts. For example, he discusses the need to capture word plays and ironic twists, such as those that Paul employed but which are, as Alter brought out in his translation of Isaiah’s communication aims, often overlooked in the familiar translations.¹⁰

The more literal oriented the target text translation, the more likely it will be understood to represent the “correct” meaning of the source text, which might imply that any others are “wrong,”¹¹ although actually claiming such would defy the logical limitation of the translation process, since interpretation involves human agency, thereby introducing culturally conditioned decisions

text, or, to use a concept I like, to remain faithful to *the intention of the text*. Many hypotheses can be made about the intention of a text, so that the decision about what a translation should reproduce becomes *negotiable*” (emphasis his).

⁹ Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 90–91.

¹⁰ Robert Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), “Autobiographical Prelude,” Kindle Edition, xiv of 129; cf. Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul’s Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

¹¹ Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 6.

that are, by definition, subjective.¹² The assumption that the translation rightly represents the source text is also often associated with the first translation; and loyalty to any given translation grows more unassailable the longer it remains the primary source for its readers; this applies all the more when, over the centuries, the target text functions as the culturally conditioned liturgical and theological basis for its faithful readers' world views.¹³ And yet for the readers of a later period a translation does not function in precisely the same way that it did originally; language is contextual, it changes with time: "Translations are not made in a vacuum. Translators function in a given culture at a given time. The way they understand themselves and their culture is one of the factors that may influence the way in which they translate."¹⁴

Many NT scholars are familiar with the concept of "dynamic equivalence" advocated by Eugene Nida, which focuses on how to best express the meaning for the target text in ways faithful to the source text.¹⁵ The impact that the translator (e.g., Nida) attributes to the reader of the source text naturally depends upon the translator's (in Nida's case, Protestant evangelical) interpretation of the source text and its context, as well as on assumptions about what this will mean (perhaps, more than likely: should mean) to the targeted reader, or any readers, for that matter, in their contexts. Over the last several decades literary translation theory and practice specialists from biblical as well as non-biblical fields have analyzed Nida's approach to various conclusions, from how to best define "dynamic" to what degree other approaches to "equivalence" offer better ways to re-write source texts "faithfully," a topic that

¹² Cf. Robert Barnes, "Translating the Sacred," in *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Kirsten Malmkjær and Kevin Windle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6 of 12, Ebook: DOI:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199239306.013.0002.

¹³ Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 118–121; Eugene A. Nida, "Bible Translation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 25 (22–28).

¹⁴ André Lefevere, "Introduction," in *Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook*, ed. and trans. André Lefevere (London: Routledge, 1992; Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 1–13.

¹⁵ Nida, "Bible Translation." In contrast to "formal equivalence" (word for word), in which the target text follows as closely as possible the surface structure of the source text, e.g., keeping the source text word order as close as the target language allows, "dynamic equivalence" aims to create for its reader an "equivalent effect," i.e., it aims to capture the (supposed) impact of the source text on the original reader for the reader of the target text (source to source, as if the source text was written in the target language and cultural terms).

is itself subject to different interpretations.¹⁶ Although some biblical translations attempt to maintain elements of the source text's "foreignness" in order to raise awareness that the source text belongs to another culture, place, and time, most strive to make the translation as "invisible" as possible.

In the latter case, Lawrence Venuti helpfully explains several advantages and disadvantages worth careful consideration:

[T]he absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it [i.e., the target translation] seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text—the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the 'original.' The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to ensure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning. What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator's crucial intervention in the foreign text. The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text.¹⁷

¹⁶ Dorothy Kenny, "Equivalence," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998), 77–80; Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 7–10; Barnes, "Translating the Sacred"; Anthony Pym, "On the Historical Epistemologies of Bible Translating," in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss (Rome: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 2007), 212–215 (195–215); Stephen Pattemore, "Framing Nida: The Relevance of Translation Theory in the United Bible Societies," in *A History of Bible Translation*, 217–263.

¹⁷ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1–2, passim. See also the methodological discussion, especially the dynamics of colonizing the past and the way that existing terminological "edifices" shape our thinking and discourse, in Anders Runesson, "The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul," in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 53–77; Adam Nicolson, *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* (San Francisco: HarperCollins e-books, 2009), 9, discusses evidence for both of these strategies in the KJV: "The divines of the first decade of seventeenth-century England were alert to the glamour of antiquity, in many ways consciously archaic

The KJV's success at blending the source and target languages contributed much to the shape of modern English, naturalizing many features of the original source text (and the Latin of the Vulgate translation),¹⁸ a model case of the translators' invisibility. In fact, the KJV accomplished this feat well enough to lead some readers to suppose that the Bible was originally written in English, although this was not the translation committee's stated aim.¹⁹

The dynamic of invisibility plays to the traditional *universalizing* of biblical guidance, in some ways posing a significant obstacle for within Judaism oriented research, which focuses on understanding what the source text most likely was designed to mean *for the specifically targeted reader*; for example, in the case of Paul's letters usually, if not always, Christ-following *non-Jews*. Attending to such dynamics can highlight that his views on topics are often much more nuanced than traditionally deduced, that he likely would not argue that what he advises non-Jews to constitute faithfulness (e.g., not to become circumcised) applies without distinction to what he upholds as faithfulness for Jews (e.g., the obligation to have one's infant sons circumcised).

In addition to the habit of interpreting the guidance in these texts as if written to all followers of Christ without ethnic distinction, or even to all humans, the familiar approaches can give the impression that the source text was actually written to instruct the *later* reader of the translated text in their own context, and logically, that what is written applies similarly to all Christians everywhere and for all time (albeit qualified according to the confessional

in phraseology and grammar, meticulous in their scholarship and always looking to the primitive and the essential as the guarantee of truth. Their translation was driven by that idea of a constant present, the feeling that the riches, beauties, failings and sufferings of Jacobean England were part of the same world as the one in which Job, David or the Evangelists walked. Just as Rembrandt, a few years later, without any sense of absurdity or presumption, could portray himself as the Apostle Paul, the turban wrapped tightly around his greying curls, the eyes intense and inquiring, the King James Translators could write their English words as if the passage of 1,600 or 3,000 years made no difference. Their subject was neither ancient nor modern, but both or either. It was the universal text." Cf. Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation*, 21–23 of 129, *passim*.

¹⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 249–276.

¹⁹ McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 277–310, discusses how this became the case despite the translators' aim to convey the meaning of a text from another time, and the diverse, including very negative (largely political, i.e., Puritan), initial reactions to the KJV, before it came to achieve this level of popular regard; cf., also, Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation*, 10–11 of 129.

allegiance of the translator and her ideal reader).²⁰ This naturally raises the question whether the outcome produced for the target readers is “faithful” to the source text, since the text they read appears to address them directly rather than those of another time and place, and thus to seem applicable without requiring cross cultural engagement or critique (hermeneutical reasoning).²¹ Worth considering is whether there is a more faithful way to approach both what the source text was originally written to communicate and what someone later could or should begin to reason from it when seeking to understand what it might mean for themselves (including whether it might not apply to themselves or in their own contexts).²²

The decisive role that interpretation plays in the translated NT texts tends to be downplayed, especially when the translation is confessional or government funded, or both; instead, the translator’s cultural assumptions can be so deeply held that they seem self-evidently representative of the source text’s cultural assumptions. An example from Nida is instructive. When explaining the dynamic of source-to-source translation, that “[e]ffective translations are rarely word-for-word, because literal renderings are often seriously misleading,” Nida then clarifies the point with this example: “even traditional terms may lose their religious significance. For English speakers, *grace* may refer to the ten days that a person can wait before paying a bill, a person by the name of Grace, an aesthetically pleasing form and/or movement, and possibly a short prayer or appropriate saying before eating. These meanings are a far cry from the meaning

²⁰ Pym, “On the Historical Epistemologies,” 213, observes that “Nida’s general preference for dynamic equivalence is coherent with Modernist evangelistic ideology, where message is to be made present to all people at all times. It very much requires the fiction of equal languages, and indeed of equal cultures. We might also see something of Augustine’s divine spirit, causing translations to suit the people they address.” Cf. Matthew V. Novenson, “Anti-Judaism and Philo-Judaism in Pauline Studies, Then and Now,” in *Protestant Bible Scholarship: Antisemitism, Philosemitism and Anti-Judaism*, ed. Arjen F. Bakker, et al. (JSJSup 200; Leiden: Brill, 2022), 108 (106–124).

²¹ Runesson, “The Question of Terminology,” 55–58.

²² E.g., attention to diatribe and other shifts in pronouns from first to second or third person can highlight movement from what is being signaled to apply to the writer or intended reader/hearer, and thus from what is being argued to apply to Jews versus to non-Jews or Christ-followers versus those who are not, and combinations thereof. Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation*, 12 of 129, observes that, in addition to recovering the meanings of biblical words by establishing lexical values, attention must be given to nuance, connotation, and level of diction.

of unmerited goodness and kindness in the Greek *charis*.²³ A review of usage traced in *LSJ* makes plain, however, that despite this common Protestant refrain introducing the dynamic of *merit*, this is not a lexical element of *χάρις* in Paul's time, even if the word might be used in a context having to do with merit/non-merit. Thus "grace" may not be the best dynamic equivalent to choose in our time for a very different reason than the ones Nida notes, that is, because it introduces a later gloss-bias designed to privilege a particular Christian theological position in contrast to alternative Christian positions (which are conflated with the supposed merit rather than grace based character of Judaism) in a way that arguably does not map faithfully on to the way this language was used in the mid-first century.²⁴ Ideological criticism is always necessary; no one can escape the need thereof, because ideology is, by definition, that which one assumes to represent the established, thus self-evident "facts" from which to interpret and translate the source texts.²⁵

²³ Nida, "Bible Translation," 24 (emphasis added).

²⁴ This is a good example of the kinds of translation issues that must be approached with suspicion of the gloss-biases with which scholars today are familiarized when learning the source languages, which need to be investigated anew both in terms of the source and the target texts' communication aims. Cf. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1961), who had already thoroughly critiqued these kinds of lexical claims, although *charis* was not featured (only briefly noted, 264 n. 1). A review of *LSJ*, 9th ed., 1940, on "*χάρις*," demonstrates that "unmerited" is not lexically warranted, and that *χάρις* is regularly used for gift-exchange/reciprocity, among other uses that may involve notions of merit or expressions of thanksgiving and the recognition of obligation to the giver. A gift given out of love need not be qualified as unmerited even if it is unmerited, because the contextual dynamics may not register in terms of merit. For another example, see Matthew Thiessen, "A Worthy Cornelius and Divine Grace: Complicating John Barclay's Paul and the Gift," *CBQ* 84 (2022): 462–479.

²⁵ Bercovitch describes ideology as "the ground and texture of consensus ... the system of interlinked ideas, symbols, and beliefs by which a culture—any culture—seeks to justify and perpetuate itself; the web of rhetoric, ritual, and assumption through which society coerces, persuades, and coheres" (Emily Miller Budick, "The Holocaust and the Construction of Modern American Literary Criticism: The Case of Lionel Trilling," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser [Irvine Studies in the Humanities; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996], 131 [127–46], citing Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology in American Literary History," *Critical Inquiry* 12 [1986]: 635). Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 118: "Whether an audience is reading the Bible or other works of literature, it often wants to see its own ideology and its own universe of discourse mirrored in the translation. It likes to re-create the world in its own image, sometimes with startling

The primary biblical translations also enjoy a special status that underscores the assumption of faithfulness to the source text. Translators and readers traditionally not only viewed the original text as divinely inspired but extended the same respect to the rewritten text, which provided their only direct access to the source text.²⁶ In this vein, the Catholic Church pronounced Jerome's Latin Vulgate the only sanctioned translation (until some recent redescriptions),²⁷ and the King James Version became the "Authorized" Bible for its subjects, which some Christians continue to revere as if it represented an original source text.²⁸ A number of reformers stressed the divinity of Scripture and regarded the humans involved in its transmission, including its translation, as "passive instruments," but even many who recognized the "immanent" human element in the production of these texts and translations in various ways continued, then and into the modern period, to appeal to a "transcendent" divine factor that is not similarly attributed to non-biblical source texts and their transmission.²⁹ In other words, vernacular bible translators, even when striving

results"; 120: "The attitude that uses one's own culture as the yardstick by which to measure all other cultures is known as ethnocentricity. Cultures that do not flaunt it would if they could, but since they cannot they pretend to be free of it. An ethnocentric attitude allows members of a culture to remake the world in their image, without first having to realize how different the reality of that world is. It produces translations that are tailored to the target culture exclusively and that screen out whatever does not fit in with it."

²⁶ Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Afterlives of the Bible; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 208.

²⁷ See Ellie Gebarowski-Shafer, "The Bible in Roman Catholic Theology, 1450–1750," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. 3, From 1450 to 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 489–517.

²⁸ James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995); Pym, "On the Historical Epistemologies," 208–212. See McGrath, *In the Beginning*, for an accessible and interesting account of the historical developments involved in the KJV translation.

²⁹ Travis DeCook, *The Origins of the Bible and Early Modern Political Thought: Revelation and the Boundaries of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 4–35, 78–79, passim; Pym, "On the Historical Epistemologies," 203, discusses several examples as well as the general theme, including not only that "in the Preface to most contemporary versions of the Bible there is a passage saying that the translators were 'united in their faith,'" but also that Luther stated, "a false Christian or a rabble-rouser cannot faithfully translate the Scriptures." See Alan H. Cadwallader, *The Politics of the Revised Version: A Tale of Two Testament Revision Companies* (London: T&T

for probability in historical contextual terms, have been accorded divine inspiration implicitly, when not explicitly.³⁰ The Protestant ideology that Scripture interprets Scripture implies that the biblical texts, the translated texts as well as the source texts, are authoritative apart from institutional traditions or other modes of interpretation, but the fact that they exist in the forms that they do--which includes the extant source texts' postdating of the originals by hundreds of years and in many variations due to scribal practices no less than the fact that the target text's translations have been made according to interpretive premises, Luther's translation serving as a prime example--bear witness to human involvement; that is, Scripture does not interpret Scripture, people do.³¹

In spite of the traditional Protestant railing against (Catholic) tradition, and the assertion that Scripture interprets itself, every new translation effort must reckon with resistance that appeals to traditional Protestant (no less than Catholic or other) interpretative and translation legacies. As Travis DeCook demonstrates, the development of more critical approaches to the biblical texts did not eliminate the continued presence of metaphysical and theological assumptions, such as the conviction that the divine is working through the humans involved, albeit conceptualized in new ways, sometimes radical ones. These assumptions emerge in the arguments of Luther and the Reformers, Spinoza and other early modern interpreters, Karl Barth,³² and, I would add, among most if not all biblical interpreters to this day. This dynamic hardly invites the exploration of translation alternatives;³³ instead, new proposals are

Clark, 2019), for a detailed investigation of the divisive relationships among committee members and other interested parties in the case of the Revised Version.

³⁰ DeCook, *The Origins of the Bible*, examines the continued influence of theological and metaphysical assumptions in the work of those who developed critical historical method in the sixteenth century and since, reflecting their contextual frameworks, although this factor is often overlooked in prevailing approaches to this dynamic in binary terms. Pym, "On the Historical Epistemologies," discusses this dynamic, with examples, in terms of non-representative epistemologies (spirit given understanding and ability to re-express, akin to spirit-channeling) and representative ones (exact imitation of the source text in the translation).

³¹ DeCook, *The Origins of the Bible*.

³² DeCook, *The Origins of the Bible*, 26–29, passim.

³³ Note, e.g., that Augustine objected to Jerome's move to translate from the Hebrew text (instead of from the Septuagint, which also presented itself as a divinely guided translation) because it was disturbing to Christians to introduce alternative readings of the familiar divine text of the existing, Old Latin translation, which was based on the

often accused of biased interests if not also of posing harmful threats to the faithful, and those who have ventured in this direction have often experienced loss of standing and livelihood, and for some, perhaps most famously, Tyndale, loss of life.³⁴

Whether funded by confessional bodies, which has been most often the case, or not, the familiar translations of the NT reflect certain confessional (and often, political, gendered, sexualized, racialized, colonialized, capitalist, individualistic, among other cultural, often discriminatory) orientations that advance particular theological, political, and social meaning-making. Translation decisions can communicate opposition to the theological or political views of rival “Christians” of the translator’s own times, including as expressed in rival translations (see below). Few if any have aimed for historical accuracy without concomitant concern to make choices that will facilitate the reader’s salvation and edification, in which interest the Old Testament’s role has been to pave the way for the New.³⁵ Translators no less than their ideal readers have regarded the NT as the object of their faith, a conviction that extends to the translations they make and read no less than to the source texts. “The scriptures,” according to William Tyndale, a founding figure for the English language tradition, “spring out of God and flow unto Christ, and were given to

Septuagint (André Lefevere, “The Role of Ideology in the Shaping of a Translation,” in *Translation/History/Culture*, 16 [14–18], discussing Augustine’s objections in his “Letter to Saint Jerome”). Similarly, Nida, “Bible Translation,” 25, shares this anecdote: “After completing the translation of the Bible in one of the major trade languages of West Africa, the translator returned home on leave of absence and decided to take some courses in linguistics. He soon realized how many mistakes he had made in his early work, and upon returning to the field he asked the responsible committee to let him revise his translation. But he was told that he had no right to ‘change the word of the Lord!’”

³⁴ Lefevere, “The Role of Ideology,” 14, observes: “Translations can be potentially threatening precisely because they confront the receiving culture with another, different way of looking at life and society, a way that can be seen as potentially subversive, and must therefore be kept out.” Cf., also, Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, 118–121; Harry Freedman, *The Murderous History of Bible Translations: Power, Conflict and the Quest for Meaning* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

³⁵ John Barton, “Jewish and Christian Approaches to Biblical Theology,” in *Protestant Bible Scholarship*, 200–216; Harry M. Orlinsky, “A Jewish Scholar Looks at the Revised Standard Version and its New Edition,” *Religious Education* 85 (1990): 211–221, discusses his role as the first Jewish scholar to work on a Christian Bible translation committee, and even so, this invitation was specifically related to “Old Testament” texts.

lead us to Christ.”³⁶ At the extreme, translations have been developed explicitly for people who did not possess a written language in order to “convert” these people away from alternative, often indigenous cultural and religious alternatives, but similar aims are regularly attested for European language translations as well.³⁷

One can hardly overstate the implications that follow from the fact that translation decisions have historically reflected the translator’s particular faith orientation, and, even when downplayed or denied, done so as if representing the self-evident meaning of the source text for their readers. Jennifer Eyl concludes, in a challenge to this state of affairs, that “New Testament translators introduce another field” to the “several basic branches of the Humanities [that] form the basis of Translation Studies,” namely, “Theology”; therefore, unlike other branches, “Biblical translation is best classified as a type of *religious practice*.”³⁸ Although the circularity between interpretive frame and translation result that is normative need not be indulged by the historical critic, this religious practice represents a reality that must be confronted by anyone who undertakes biblical translation.³⁹ This subjective dynamic, and thus the need for

³⁶ DeCook, *The Origins of the Bible*, 56, citing Tyndale’s *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, ed. David Daniell (London: Penguin, 2000), 169. Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 128, observes, “Douglas Robinson makes the point that the assumptions behind a range of questions about the ‘effectiveness’ of a translation—and not merely Bible translation—rely on an implicit Christian model of translation as conversion.”

³⁷ The evangelistic aims of Wycliffe Bible Translators are well known, but this aim is normal if not to the same level of singular focus; see Freedman, *The Murderous History*, ch. 12, “Reworking the Bible”; Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 128. For example, facilitating conversion of the German people was also Charlemagne’s aim for ordering the translation of parts of Scripture into German centuries before Luther, and Luther rearranged the order of the NT books according to the degree to which “they expressed the core of the ‘gospel’ as the good news about salvation from evil by Christ alone”; hence, the placement of Romans to start the Pauline literature; Eric W. Gritsch, “Luther as Bible Translator,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 62–65 (62–72).

³⁸ Jennifer Eyl, “Semantic Voids, New Testament Translation, and Anachronism: The Case of Paul’s Use of *Ekklēsia*,” *MTSR* 26 (2014): 320 (315–339) (emphasis added).

³⁹ In the “Forward” to Werner Schwarz’s *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), C. H. Dodd notes a special problem for those translating scriptural texts regarded to be sacred: “Should the translator, then, be guided, or even overruled, by the theologian? Or is this an opportunity of confronting the theologian

circumspection if hoping to achieve the best historiographical results, can unconsciously guide a translator or reader who does not share the usual convictions, which extends also to anyone who might oppose them. In the case of translation of biblical texts that have shaped our cultural world, the practice of translation is difficult to disentangle from personal and communal meaning-making, regardless of whether we are for or against any given theological or philosophical viewpoint.⁴⁰

Research conducted today remains constrained by translations that embody premodern concepts and discursive patterns in spite of the fact that contemporary historiographical practices differ significantly from those in vogue when the foundational translations were fashioned. Euan Cameron helpfully summarizes this dynamic:

The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries had their own perspectives and their own views of the world. They were still pre-modern in their attitude to the divine presence in the cosmos, in their assumptions that the history of the world was the history of the cosmos, and the story of the universe was ultimately the story of God's relationship with the human species. Nevertheless, within that pre-modern framework, the biblical scholars of the age laid the foundations for the way that the modern age edits, studies and reads Scripture.⁴¹

afresh with the plain sense of Holy Scripture which, as he himself admits, is the permanent standard of reference for all Christian doctrine?" (vii [vii–viii]). See also Runesson, "The Question of Terminology"; cf. Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul, Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022), 1–12.

⁴⁰ The essays and annotations in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), sometimes exemplify the way that traditional Christian translations (in this case, based on the NRSV) no less than interpretations can continue to shape what non-Christians (in this case, Jewish scholars, some of whose research does not focus on NT texts) may assume the original text aimed to communicate.

⁴¹ Euan Cameron, "Introduction," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. 3*, 14 (1–14). Leading up to this conclusion, Cameron noted, "Biblical translations after the Reformation—and this applies even to those produced in Roman Catholicism—were written and issued with the laity in mind. Moreover, their editors worked with the controversies of the age very much in view. Some made their theological positions extremely clear, either through the programmatic use of certain vernacular words rather than others (as in Tyndale), the expressing of preferences for some biblical books over

In addition, we must take account of the fact that the translations we use today were *not* undertaken to offer new translations but rather to make *modifications* to the traditional ones, and thus perpetuate legacy theological assumptions.⁴² In other words, they choose new words and ways to communicate in the target language, but these choices perpetuate the same basic understanding of the meaning of the source texts rather than interrogating them. Bruce Metzger's explanation for the NRSV many of us use today in universities confirms Cameron's generalization:

[T]he New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized *revision* of the Revised Standard Version, published in 1952, which was a *revision* of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which, in turn, embodied earlier *revisions* of the King James Version, published in 1611.⁴³

Alan Cadwallader develops this point further, highlighting an important dynamic with which any effort to offer a new translation will have to reckon:

The English Bible known as the King James Bible, aka 'the Authorized version,' was neither a translation nor

others (as with the early Luther) or through expository annotations in the margins (as in the Geneva Bible)" (13). In this volume, see also Cameron, "The Bible and the Early Modern Sense of History," 657–685.

⁴² E.g., Cadwallader, *The Politics of the Revised Version*, 17: "The King James revisers themselves were keen to accent that their work was simply an improvement. One of their number (Miles Smith), doubtless aware of the muskets levelled at the work, wrote a long explanatory preface (often dropped in later printings of the text) in which full flights of forensic rhetoric defended the efforts: 'Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation ... but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against.'"

⁴³ Bruce Metzger, "To the Reader," in *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testament: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xi (xi–xv) (emphasis added). The very contextualized period, place, and patronage concerns that guided the translations of the KJV have been regularly discussed from different historical and ideological perspectives, as have the contextual factors for previous and subsequent translations; e.g., White, *King James Only*; Freedman, *The Murderous History*; Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*.

authorized.... [T]he homogenization of language...the ‘steamroller’ effect—was due to the fact that the work of translators that became the 1611 publication was both the result of the evaluating scrutiny of committee supervision, and the heavy borrowing (enforced by the commissioning edict of King James in 1604) from previous translation—the Geneva Bible, the Bishop’s Bible, the Coverdale, Matthew, Whitchurch and Tyndale translations.⁴⁴

The process goes back even further, of course, because Tyndale began from a combination of the Vulgate, Erasmus’s Latin translation from the Greek, and Luther’s German version.⁴⁵ To a large degree, the English translations have built upon each other with the primary aim of updating language and orientation, whether convictional or national, such as the various American revisions.

Today’s widely used translation revisions were largely developed to address the controversies of their own times, such as those that animated the preaching of Augustine and Jerome, the Reformers and their Catholic rivals, and Protestant competitors within each vernacular. Those who developed the Geneva Bible with Calvinist sensibilities communicated their interpretations in prefaces to each book and through copious annotations, which the Scottish Presbyterians and Puritans championed. Those who developed the KJV sought to counter these developments, under the direction of the King himself, and thus, for example, eschewed annotations to avoid any resistance to the authority of the Crown and the Anglican Church that the marginal comments in the Geneva version could foment.⁴⁶

In this direction, a brief consideration of the historically conditioned context of Luther’s Bible’s impact is warranted. That Luther translated the target text in idiomatic German in ways that humanized and Germanized biblical figures, and that his effort profoundly shaped the evolution of what became

⁴⁴ Cadwallader, *The Politics of the Revised Version*, 17.

⁴⁵ Harry M. Orlinsky and Robert G. Bratcher, *A History of Bible Translation and the North American Contribution* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 32–34.

⁴⁶ Cf. Nicolson, *God’s Secretaries*, 110–111, 300, *passim*; ch. 4 discusses each of the rules for translation developed to meet the king’s aims; on 110, Nicolson summarily notes: “This was the king’s commission and James hovers in the background of every instruction. It was ‘his Highness’ who was busy drawing up the rules for the Translators to follow. It was ‘his Majesties pleasure’ that the most learned men should be drawn in.”

common literary German, are well known.⁴⁷ Luther's translation (like Wycliffe's), just like his interpretations, were at the time anything but normative; rather these were not only highly contingent and driven by "anti-papist" polemical aims, they were also "perceived as undermining both ecclesiastical authority and the institutions of the State."⁴⁸

Especially interesting for our purpose is Euan Cameron's observation about the precariousness of the success of Luther's interpretation and translation: "It is by no means easy to see how and why this interpretation gained so much traction in sixteenth-century Europe."⁴⁹ Cameron offers several explanations for how Luther, "tormented by his sense of unworthiness" as a monk, nevertheless managed to appeal to the general population; for example, his assertions "resonated with philosophical doubts about the church's claims to purvey its material 'stuff' for the good of souls" that were already in the air, but the appeal of Luther's assertions probably derives largely from the way that indulgences were being "advertised as available to assist the souls of the departed from purgatory to heaven.... Those who marketed them engaged in a fairly transparent effort to raise money for various ecclesiastical causes."⁵⁰ In this specific context, Luther's translation in terms of "faith alone" based on "God's grace," defined as "unmerited favor" versus "works," defined as "human effort to gain salvation by observing law," which meant Jewish as well as "any" other law performed to merit God's favor or appease God's wrath,⁵¹ made some sense to a wide audience of his time. But this declaration was highly contingent: that salvation was by Christ *alone* was polemical, aimed at the papal leadership, albeit by way of conflating their errors with those he attributed to the Jews in his interpretation of the biblical texts. Luther argued that the addition of *allein* was warranted by the specific dynamics of German language usage, although, not without significance, he recognized that it was not similarly appropriate to retain the addition when translating his Bible from German into Latin.⁵²

⁴⁷ Gritch, "Luther as Bible Translator," 70–71; Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 115–119.

⁴⁸ Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 119.

⁴⁹ Cameron, "Introduction," 9.

⁵⁰ Cameron, "Introduction," 9.

⁵¹ Gritch, "Luther as Bible Translator," 68.

⁵² Martin Luther, "On Translating: An Open Letter [1530]," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, American ed. (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1958–1986), 177–202; Gritch, "Luther as Bible Translator," 66–67; Mickey L. Mattox, "Luther," in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerholm (Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 380 (375–390).

Luther's interpretation of the meaning of the source text according to his specific contextual concerns remains, some six-hundred years later, the prevailing framework for understanding Paul's, and thus Christian, especially Protestant, theological reasoning on these and related dynamics. However, when Luther and other Reformers developed the meaning of "faith" in opposition to "works" and "law," these formulations were highly contextualized in ways that do not map onto the cultural concerns of our times; when invoked as if timeless truths, they can (and likely do) create not only new cultures, but also do so in (gloss-biased) ways that may misrepresent the messages of the source texts even though they use language that appears to be dynamically if not also formally equivalent (e.g., translating πίστις as "faith," ἔργα as "works," νόμος as "law").

Defamiliarizing options should be explored to translate even the most familiar words, which may arguably be more faithful to the source text. For example, many NT scholars today argue that πίστις refers to "faithfulness/loyalty/trust" rather than just faith as in believing in a propositional claim. Moreover, although in Paul's time νόμος could signify a custom that had become *law*, most often νόμος signified a *custom/principle*. Therefore, the translator should not assume that Paul refers to formal laws or to "Torah" whenever he uses this terminology—or that he sought to draw a contrast between Torah/Law and Faith/Trust; rather, he could argue about what constituted faithfulness to Torah, God's guidance for Israel. In this direction, I have proposed that ἔργα in the phrase ἔργα νόμου signifies "rites" for completing the religio-ethnic passage into proselyte standing completed by the "custom [νόμος]" of circumcision for males, not unrelated ritual (e.g., Sabbaths, diet) or the moral behavior enjoined in Torah (i.e., Torah-observance per se).⁵³ Paul's argument is that the completion of these transformation *rites* (culminating in the rite of *circumcision*) by non-Jew Christ-followers would not represent *faithfulness* in their case (even if it had become *customary* practice in some Jewish communities to make this rite of passage available to non-Jews seeking full membership standing among Jews). Seldom noticed is the fact that Paul proceeds from the premise that the development of the custom of proselyte conversion rites violates written Torah, creating a curse rather than a blessing (Gal 3:10). In other words, Paul can appeal to Torah to make his case against the

⁵³ Mark D. Nanos, "Re-Framing Paul's Opposition to *Erga Nomou* as 'Rites of a Custom' for Proselyte Conversion Completed by the Synecdoche 'Circumcision,'" *JMJS* 8 (2021): 75–115.

particular practice of ἔργα νόμου for non-Jews on offer in Galatia, although this point has gone unrecognized in Pauline interpretive traditions. He argues from the fact that Torah enjoins Jewish parents to *faithfully* complete the rite of circumcision for their eight-day old sons, yet nowhere does Torah enjoin or describe circumcision as a religio-ethnic transformation rite by which non-Jew (non-Israelite) adult males can become Jews (Israelites), so-called proselytes.

Translation practices such as this can help facilitate the option of reading Paul—like other Torah-oriented Jews—to have viewed Torah as a gift given by God to *guide Israelites* to think and behave according to a *particular way to be faithful* to God and neighbor. But the situation Paul addressed was complicated by the fact that Torah was not given to the other peoples/nations who, because of their *trust* in the gospel message, were assembling in Christ-following Jewish subgroups alongside of Jews, and thereby (in many cases, at least) also with Jews and non-Jews who did not share their convictions about the gospel claims for them. Paul’s innovative gospel-based interpretations of the standing of non-Jews convinced about Jesus as Messiah naturally created confusing conundrums in the Jewish sub-group communal gatherings that his letters sought to address, and among outsiders to their subgroups, for these non-Jews were beholden to live righteously, which was exemplified in normative Jewish cultural practices derived from the interpretation(s) of Torah (and, obviously, variously construed within and between Jewish communities of the time, not least with respect to the role of circumcision for non-Jews). Although these non-Jews were not technically under Torah because not members of Israel/Jews, and although Paul prohibited them from completing the transformation rites (ἔργα νόμου) that some other Jews advocated in such cases, which disrupted certain prevailing customs, Paul was at the same time enculturating them into a Jewish way of life, into Judaism, into Jewishness—creating a very messy, easily misunderstood social reality. I provide this example to demonstrate how revisiting translation choices to test a different set of pre-Christianity, first-century assumptions about Paul, his audiences, and related matters, can introduce new opportunities to consider and debate the most probable meaning of his texts, whereas simply repeating the received translations reinscribes the received interpretations without provoking further examination of their faithfulness to the original texts.

New interpretive proposals from within Judaism or any other perspective can expect to encounter defensive a priori arguments from and on behalf of those who have internalized the familiar as true, having likely trusted such premises to guide their lives to date. Moreover, new proposals will likely

create challenges also for those who welcome them—they too may find some aspects difficult to grasp or retain or even to trust fully, because neither the premises nor interpretations are easy to square with that which is assumed to accurately mirror the source text in the translations with which they are familiar. In other words, what they find printed in “the Bible” and encounter in all the commentaries, monographs, and so on available to them may undermine confidence, making the new interpretations and accompanying discussions, and, all the more, new translations, seem deviant, even dangerous, and perhaps prudent to avoid.⁵⁴

Christian translations of the NT frequently appear to proceed from the premise that Jewish identification and religious ideals and practices represent the negative binary contrastive “other,” the cultural “them” who, variously constructed for different contextual purposes, serve as the “foil” by which to communicate the superior ideals of Christianity. In such cases, the Christian culture of the translating “us” runs the risk of communicating that Christians transcend and replace the identity and culture of the Jewish “them.” Prevailing translations tend to depict Jewish people and groups and the Jewish ideas and practices (e.g., Torah observance, especially ritual practices) that arise in these texts in ways that map onto the translator’s religious rivals. These rivals are seldom actually Jews or even Christians practicing Judaism, but rather alternative “Christian” groups with different ideas and practices with whom the Jews and their ideas and practices are conflated. Negative assessments of Jewish translation practices are part of this historical legacy, regularly (mis)represented as “literal” in the sense of “fleshly” to provide a foil that demonstrates not only the superior “spiritual” aims of Christian translators, but also their unique capability of performing this “sacred” task properly.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ To the many challenges must be added reconsideration of the text critical decisions, which are also influenced by interpretive assumptions and paradigms.

⁵⁵ Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, offers many important insights, explicitly stating, “In reframing translation history as theological polemic rather than methodological inquiry or linguistic theory, I also hope to clear space for the expression of Jewish alternatives to the consensus that has shaped translation in the West” (78). Among the relevant observations we cannot discuss here, Seidman’s comments about Luther’s translation agenda sharpen the point; e.g., “while Basel and other Protestant centers of Christian Hebraica continued to rely on medieval Jewish exegetical resources ... Luther worked hard to assemble in Wittenberg a center of Christian Hebraica absolutely untainted by Jewish influence”; and, regarding the OT, “For all Luther’s dependence on Jewish sources ... Luther measured the distinctiveness of his own translation by its distance both from

For within Judaism interpreters, these and related translation dynamics are profoundly relevant. These new approaches interpret source texts for contemporary audiences. Even if to date most of the research published has not offered new translation alternatives (some examples are listed or discussed below), they are (or should be) committed to best historiographical practices—which include nurturing awareness/suspicion of the translator/interpreter’s own cultural biases and preferred outcomes. This research and the communication thereof are also conducted in the culturally conditioned context of contemporary NT studies and its audiences, which naturally impacts the research processes undertaken no less than the ways considered to communicate the results. In addition to researchers coming to the task aware of and in conversation with the familiar interpretations and translations, part of the research process involves becoming familiar with the alternatives offered over the centuries, furthering the process of “familiarity-bias.” Regardless of how the major interpretive topics and trajectories repeated from commentary to commentary are valued, for example, they represent the status quo.

This familiarization process can inductively limit consideration of wholly different hypotheses and the methodologies used to explore them, as well as limit how to assess whether new ideas, especially if not adumbrated in scholarship to date, are worth advancing. In other words, whether interpreters pursuing new approaches suspect the familiar translations to be correct, mistaken, or misleading, they will likely remain to some degree constrained by what they are able to imagine possible, the methods they have learned to employ, the sensibilities they will trust, and the kinds of conclusions they will be comfortable drawing. Limitations of these kinds cannot be avoided entirely, but perhaps by raising awareness of the ineluctable influence of these cultural influences on the translation process for everyone who undertakes the task, future research can be undertaken by means less bound to the familiar premises’ ends.⁵⁶

In summary, for within Judaism oriented research to reach its potential, in addition to qualifying and redefining the meaning of the language characteristic of the discipline, such as special terms one encounters in

the Hebrew style of the Bible and the Jewish exegetical tradition by which the Bible had been read. Luther frequently expressed his conviction that neither Hebrew grammar nor Jewish exegesis could be the ultimate guide for a Christian translation” (120).

⁵⁶ Cf. the recent compatible reflections, *mutatis mutandis*, of the German Lutheran NT scholar Jörg Frey, in “Anti-Judaism, Philosemitism, and Protestant New Testament Studies: Perspectives and Questions,” in *Protestant Bible Scholarship*, 149–181.

translations and commentaries, the research undertaken should explore the development of translation alternatives that better communicate the interpretive alternatives advanced. The translations that interpreters and their audiences know and use today not only do not support within Judaism research premises, they often undermine the conclusions reached and thus blunt the impact, leading to convoluted arguments and the retention of premises and conclusions that limit the probability of advancing paradigm changing research.⁵⁷ Annotations and explanations are helpful, of course, but they can seem like, and be assailed as, special pleading. Repeating the familiar translations, even when arguing for different interpretive outcomes, implicitly corroborates the interpretive legacies those translations embody instead of raising suspicion thereof. In contrast, introducing defamiliarizing new translations, when warranted, might bring awareness to other premises that live on in the familiar translations, including gloss-biases, and likely reveal just how much the initial probes from within Judaism premises have remained constrained by the paradigmatic assumptions and interests of previous generations of interpreters. Moreover, exploring new translations will likely provoke awareness of interpretive possibilities to date unforeseen.

Reading the NT *within Judaism* is in its early stages. Like several other contemporary research agendas seeking to interpret these texts in new ways that are arguably more historically viable as well as more respectful of the minority other,⁵⁸ this effort is logically constrained by the translations from which within Judaism interpreters presently work. Thus they must regularly argue that a particular text does not mean what it ostensibly appears to mean in the translation language of interpreters and other contemporary readers, because interpretation lives in translation.

Recent Translations that Facilitate “within Judaism” Interpretations

Within Judaism oriented research is a relatively recent development. Although most of the within Judaism scholarship over the last three decades has focused on Pauline texts, especially where Paul’s rhetoric addresses Jewish, often Torah

⁵⁷ Cf. DeCook, *The Origins of the Bible*, investigates the way that pre-modern theological assumptions remain present in more historically oriented interpretive efforts, e.g., from Spinoza on.

⁵⁸ E.g., “historical” Paul and Jesus quests, and post-colonial, feminist, African-American, post-Holocaust, among other approaches that are beginning to challenge the ideological premises as well as conclusions that animate the dominant interpretive paradigms.

related, topics,⁵⁹ in the last few years research from within Judaism premises has extended to examination of other, if not every NT text, and into reception history as well.⁶⁰ The jury is hardly in on whether or to what degree other NT texts, including the Deutero-Pauline texts, or those of subsequent generations, are best approached from within Judaism, but there is good reason to suspect that looking at each of them from the angles this perspective brings to the research will lead to some new insights, regardless of whether in some cases the conclusion may be that a text does not represent Judaism, that is, would not be best classified “within” Jewish ways of thinking and living, and perhaps even be better understood as “without” or “against” Jews and Judaism.⁶¹

Within Judaism research has, for the most part, sought to demonstrate interpretive alternatives from within lines of the familiar translations; however, several translation alternatives have been advanced in this process. Herein I can only name a few.

⁵⁹ Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism*; earlier, see Mark D. Nanos, “Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul’s Judaism?” in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark Douglas Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 117–160; revised in idem, *Reading Paul within Judaism*, 3–59; see also, e.g., Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); František Ábel, ed., *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); idem, “What Does It Mean to See Paul ‘within Judaism’?” *JBL* 141 (2022): 359–380.

⁶⁰ E.g., Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner, eds., *Matthew within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel* (ECL 27; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020); John R. Van Maaren, “The Gospel of Mark within Judaism: Reading the Second Gospel in Its Ethnic Landscape” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2019); Isaac W. Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology: The National Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Wally V. Cirafesi, *John within Judaism: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 112; Leiden: Brill, 2021); for additional recent research from within Judaism perspectives on these and other texts in the NT and thereafter, see Karin Hedner Zetterholm and Anders Runesson, eds., *Within Judaism? Interpretive Trajectories in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2023).

⁶¹ Cf. Cirafesi, *John within Judaism*; alternatively, Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018).

In addition to offering methodological insights related to translation theory and practice, Anders Runesson draws on his extensive research of synagogue developments to explain the historical warrants for translating *ἐκκλησία* as “assembly” rather than “church,” and how this usage was compatible with the use of *συναγωγή*, which is now supported and advanced in various ways, perhaps most notably by “association” studies.⁶² These investigations also demonstrate why it is not only anachronistic but unhelpful to use “Christian” and “Christianity” to discuss the matters related in NT texts, a view now widely held and practiced. Paula Fredriksen translates *ἔθνη* as “pagans” and Christ-following *ἔθνη* as “ex-pagan pagans” to reinforce the linkage between ancestral custom, cult, and ethnicity.⁶³ She also explains how Rom 1:4, translated literally, refers to Jesus “appointed son of God ... by resurrection of the dead (*ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν*),” that is, at the general resurrection of the dead yet to come, and not, as the RSV translates the phrase, “by his resurrection from the dead,” which masks the apocalyptic eschatology and can instead (not surprisingly) (mis)represent the resurrection of Jesus as initiating a new “religion.”⁶⁴ William S. Campbell translates *διαστολή* in Rom 10:12 as “discrimination” rather than the

⁶² Runesson, “The Question of Terminology.” See also Ralph Korner, “*Ekklēsia* as a Jewish Synagogue Term: Some Implications for Paul’s Socio-Religious Location,” *JJMJS* 2 (2015): 53–78; idem, *The Origin and Meaning of Ekklēsia in the Early Jesus Movement* (AJEC 98; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017); Eyl, “Semantic Voids.” The bibliography for association research, although also a relatively recent development, is extensive, offering many new insights for constructing the historical settings of these texts, and thus what they probably meant in their own times; see, e.g., Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009); John S. Kloppenborg, *Christ’s Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Richard S. Ascough, *Early Christ Groups and Greco-Roman Associations: Organizational Models and Social Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022).

⁶³ Fredriksen, *Paul*, 74–77; I similarly avoid “gentiles” by using “non-Jews/non-Israel(ites),” to avoid the familiar (anachronistic) assumption that Christian (and Christianness) and gentile (and gentleness) are not only synonymous but stand in contrast to Jewish (and Jewishness). Cf. Paula Fredriksen, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time Has Come to Go,” in *Israel’s God and Rebecca’s Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal*, ed. David B. Capes, et al. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 25–38, explains problems with “conversion,” “nationalism,” “*religio licita*,” and “monotheism.”

⁶⁴ Fredriksen, *Paul*, 141–145.

familiar “distinction” or “difference,” in order to highlight that Paul is not collapsing ethnic difference but rather emphasizing corresponding equality of standing for those in Christ, Jew and non-Jew, even though still ethnically distinguishable in the ἐκκλησία.⁶⁵ Rafael Rodriguez and Matthew Thiessen edited a collection of essays challenging the traditional interpretations and some elements of the translations of Rom 2; I offered several as well.⁶⁶ Heidi Wendt challenges the familiar translation of διώκω as “persecute” when discussing Paul’s usage (which problematically can connote anything from violence to discipline to a vague sense of disapproval), on the lexical grounds that this usually refers to “pursuing”—in rhetorical terms to “pursuing an/in argument,” in judicial terms to “prosecuting” or “accusing,” options that describe Paul’s activities in more salient, informative ways, and bring into question whether Paul was involved in the violence toward the nascent movement in the manner usually portrayed.⁶⁷ Hans Förster argues for a number alternatives that challenge anti-Jewish biases for translating the Gospel of John, offers a new reading of the language in 1 Thess 2:14–16, explains and offers more probable alternatives for the questionable translation choices around which turns the quintessential traditional case for reading Paul converting from Judaism in Gal 1:16–19, provides several studies of anti-Jewish biases manifest in the word studies of the *TDNT*, and examines the problematic influence of Latin on the Greek lexicons we consult.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ William S. Campbell, *The Nations in the Divine Economy: Paul’s Covenantal Hermeneutics and Participation in Christ* (Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2018), 129–135; see also several translation alternatives offered in, idem, *Romans: A Social Identity Commentary* (T&T Clark Social Identity Commentaries on the New Testament; London: T&T Clark, 2023).

⁶⁶ Rafael Rodriguez and Matthew Thiessen, eds., *The So-Called Jew in Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); Mark D. Nanos, “Paul’s Non-Jews Do Not Become ‘Jews,’ But Do They Become ‘Jewish’?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 within Judaism, Alongside Josephus,” *JJMJS* 1 (2014): 26–53, updated in idem, *Reading Paul within Judaism*, 127–154.

⁶⁷ Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 158 n. 43; idem, “A Violent Life in *Ioudaismos*?: Reconsidering Paul as ‘Persecutor’ in Galatians 1.13–14,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Historical Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Stanley Porter and David Fuller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁶⁸ Hans Förster, “From Inner-Jewish Debate to Anti-Jewish Polemic? The Transformation of the Gospel of John within Its Textual Transmission,” in *Liturgy and the Living Text of the New Testament: Papers from the Tenth Birmingham Colloquium*

Earlier in this essay I explained the warrant to re-translate and interpret Paul's usage of ἔργα νόμου (usually "works of [the] law") in very specific terms of undertaking the "rites of a custom/customary rites" involved in religio-ethnic transformation related to non-Jews becoming Jews, completed by circumcision for males, in contrast to the traditional habit of conflating the initiation rites signified by circumcision with the observance of Torah for those who have been initiated (as infant boys, by parental observance of Torah, or as proselyte males, by choice). I argue that this phrase did not signal opposition to behavior ("works") per se, whether Jewish Torah or tradition based (*contra* New Perspective on Paul descriptions that conflate circumcision, which is a part of one time rites of passage, with observing days and diets, which pertain instead to Torah observance for those who have completed said rites of passage; cf. Gal 5:3), or more general behavior, such as when Paul's opposition is understood to refer to human effort to observe any kind of law, ceremonial or moral.⁶⁹ This research also supports the growing chorus of NT scholars who contend that πίστις should be translated "faithfulness," "loyalty," and "trust," rather than with the familiar glosses "faith" and "belief."

In a series of exegetical studies of the language in Rom 11 (and ch. 9), published over the last fifteen years, I advance a number of translation alternatives, many now collected together with a translation of 11:11–33.⁷⁰ These

on Textual Criticism of the New Testament, ed. Hugh A. G. Houghton (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2018), 245–267; idem, "Der lange Schatten eines 'Nazi-Professors': Überlegungen zum ThWNT und zu seinem Einfluss auf Übersetzungen," *Kirche und Israel*/36 (2021): 45–58; idem, "Ein philologischer Vorschlag zu 1 Thess 2,14–16," *SNTSU* 46 (2021): 19–40; idem, "Translational Choices and Interpretation in Galatians 1:13–16: An Appraisal," *ThTo* 80 (2023): 74–87 (cf. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism*, 29–40); Hans Förster, "Translating from Greek as Source Language? The Lasting Influence of Latin on New Testament Translation," *JSNT* 43 (2020): 85–107. Cf. John A. L. Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (Studies in Biblical Greek 8; New York: Peter Lang, 2003); idem, "The Present State of Lexicography of Ancient Greek," in *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography: Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Danker*, ed. B. A. Taylor, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 66–74; Eyl, "Semantic Voids, 331–334.

⁶⁹ Mark D. Nanos, "The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul's Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus's Advisors to King Izates," in *Paul within Judaism*, 105–152; idem, "Re-Framing Paul's Opposition."

⁷⁰ Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Romans within Judaism: The Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, Vol. 2* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), which includes an essay on the translation of 9:6 that argues Paul's point is to affirm the identity of all Israelites as Israel, several essays on ch. 11, and an essay considering the dynamics of translation committee choices

studies—from which I will now draw several examples—substantiate new ways to read Paul’s arguments, not only within Judaism but also in directions that challenge central elements of various supersessionistic translations and interpretations that prevail to this day.

For example, in spite of the statements in *Nostra Aetate* 4 (based primarily on appeal to Rom 11:28b–29), which precipitated similar statements from other Christian institutions, that call for an end to the tradition of interpreting Paul to have regarded his fellow Jews, if not followers of Jesus, as cut out of covenantal standing and replaced by Christians, no translations (known to me) of Rom 11 available for liturgical readings, sermons, study, or reflection, support such pronouncements. In other words, as welcome and well-meaning as these statements are, they rely upon a passage or two in Rom 11 but otherwise do not align with the translation choices presented in the rest of the chapter—including even in v. 28a, where the NRSV presents the members of Israel as “enemies of God,” although “of God” is not attested in any manuscripts, and one might expect ἐχθροί to read *estranged*, grammatically mirroring the adjectival translation of ἀγαπητοί as *beloved*. Moreover, translation decisions throughout chs. 9 (esp. v. 6) and 10, which are part of the argument that extends from 9–11, also appear to contradict these generous pronouncements. As a result, tradition altering statements, such as those in *NA* 4, not only remain vulnerable to (translation) text-based criticism from detractors, but also they do not provide the kind of comprehensive text-based way forward that those who welcome these calls for change might need to confidently embrace them as authentic representations of Paul’s overall viewpoint or to be enabled to mount challenges to the supersessionistic and replacement based legacies they likely still encounter regularly. Simply put, the dramatically more positive dispositions toward Jews and Judaism that *NA* 4—and many other Christian bodies since—have enjoined, often by appeal to specific statements in Rom 11:26 and 28–29, do not appear to be supported by the translations of the arguments in which they are embedded, or, to make matters worse, by the commentary discussions of these passages.⁷¹ This need not remain the case.

since the Shoah with regard to these chapters; see also, published subsequently, Mark D. Nanos, “‘All Israel Will Be *Saved* or ‘*Kept Safe*? (Rom 11:26): Israel’s *Conversion* or *Irrevocable Calling* to Gospel the Nations?” in *Israel and the Nations: Paul’s Gospel in the Context of Jewish Expectation*, ed. František Abel (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021), 243–269.

⁷¹ The fact that the language in vv. 28–29, to which these new pronouncements appeal, was there to shape Christian translations and interpretations all along, but was largely

Turning to the details of Paul's olive tree allegory in 11:17–24, and the passages on either side of it (vv. 11–16 and 25–33), there are many translation alternatives worth exploring; here I can only offer a brief survey of a few examples. To begin with, since Rom 9–11 trades in many metaphors, some echoing when not citing scriptural texts that also trade in metaphors, and the olive tree is an allegory (extended metaphor) toward which Paul builds in the preceding verses and from which he continues to draw in the rest of ch. 11, attention to stylistic dynamics is warranted.⁷² Preceding the olive tree imagery itself, in 11:11–15, there are several translation alternatives that would maintain the metaphorical register in Paul's graphic description of some fellow Israelites "stumbling" presently yet at the same time emphatically insisting they have *not* "fallen"; that is, this development is *temporary*, things are not as they might seem to be. To communicate this message in metaphorical register, one might expect choices such as "misstep" rather than "transgression" for παράπτωμα, "lagging behind" or "discomfort" rather than "failure" or "defeat" for ἥττημα, and "delay" or "falling back" or "missing out" rather than "rejection" for ἀποβολή. After this metaphor, and making a similar point around the parts sanctifying the whole (starter for the entire loaf, roots for all the branches) in v. 16, one would expect him to make a logically congruous case when he turns to developing the olive tree allegory in vv. 17–24; namely, that although some branches have been "broken" as in "bent" they have certainly *not* been "broken off" the tree—but that is not at all what one encounters in the translations.

neglected, is also telling; this history is traced by Joseph Sievers, "God's Gifts and Call Are Irrevocable': The Reception of Romans 11:29 through the Centuries and Christian-Jewish Relations," in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (Romans through History and Culture Series; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 127–173; and from a different angle, see Mark D. Nanos, "Neue Früchte von einem vertrauten Ölbaum? Probleme und Perspektiven neuer Einsichten aus Röm 11 nach der Shoah," trans. Carla Weitensteiner and Hermut Löhr, in *Nicht Du trägst die Wurzel, sondern die Wurzel trägt Dich.* Gegenwärtige Perspektiven zum Rheinischen Synodalbeschluss "Zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden" von 1980, ed. Wolfgang Hüllstrung and Hermut Löhr (Leipzig: Evangelischen Verlagsanstalt, 2023), 101–129 (English base version available at: www.marknanos.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/New-Fruit-for-Website-revised-6-29-21b.pdf).

⁷² See Jean Boase-Beier, "Stylistics and Translation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Kirsten Malmkjær and Kevin Windle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–8, Ebook: DOI:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199239306.013.0002.

Instead, the translations of 11:17 depict Paul describing Israelites who are not persuaded of the gospel (more likely, I think, not persuaded that this gospel should be proclaimed to non-Jews),⁷³ unlike himself, as branches from an olive tree that have been “broken/cut *off*.” In some translations, such as the NRSV, their omission from the tree is magnified in replacement theology terms by describing the insertion of the wild shoot “in their place [ἐν αὐτοῖς]” (we will return to this matter below). The original branches are not only portrayed as judged and cast out, but their former place is now filled with the new branches (the Greek only indicates one wild shoot inserted, which ought to make one wonder how one shoot takes the place of the “some” branches supposedly removed). Sure, metaphors can be messy and inconsistent; nevertheless, something is awry—either in Paul’s argumentative strategy within and between these metaphors, or in the legacy translations.

Although the Greek word Paul employs in v. 17, a cognate of κλάω, is translated “broken off,” it can denote something that is broken as in “cracked” or “bent,” in which case it remains in the tree, from which it, like the newly inserted wild shoot, draws its sap.⁷⁴ If *bent* but still in the tree, this translation would align with elements in Paul’s argument and the overall point of co-

⁷³ An insight noted first, to my knowledge, by Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 116–134, 135–150.

⁷⁴ For details, see Mark D. Nanos, “‘Broken Branches’: A Pauline Metaphor Gone Awry? (Romans 11:11–36),” in *Reading Romans within Judaism*, 112–152; orig. 2010. In contrast, in vv. 21–22, after Paul turns from describing the state of some branches *bent* to warning the (single) wild shoot poked into the tree that it must not arrogantly disregard the suffering of the natural branches, he instead uses cognates of ἐκκόπτω to describe what they will suffer, which does instead denote the different fate of being “cut off” as in pruned from the tree. The familiar translations not only conflate these terms, they also make other choices that do not bring out the tension between the branches natural to the tree Paul is defending and the solo wild shoot that he is sharply reproofing. Note, e.g., in v. 22 the familiar translation of the last phrase, ἐπεὶ καὶ σὺ ἐκκοπήσῃ, is “otherwise you also will be cut off” (NRSV), which expresses similarity of fate; instead, the contrast would be conveyed by translating this, “otherwise, you will be cut off even.” In v. 20, the familiar translation of μὴ ὑψηλὰ φρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ is, “So do not become proud, but stand in awe” (NRSV), which is far less threatening than the context and the use of the imperative warrants: “Do not be proud minded, on the contrary, be afraid”; or, to bring out the metaphorical register, in this case of this newly introduced (singular) twig arrogantly looking down on the suffering of some of the branches natural to the tree: “Do not be high-minded [i.e., toward these bent branches], instead, be afraid [i.e., of being cut off entirely; eventually stated plainly in v. 22, as just discussed].”

existence and inter-dependence much better than the legacy translations, which instead conflict with those elements and that message enough to be characterized as contradictory. In addition, the image of *bent* branches still on the tree rather than broken *off* would establish continuity with the metaphorically laden point he made before this allegory in vv. 11–16, as just discussed, as well as after it. In vv. 28–29, he argues that these same Israelites are God’s *beloved* [ἀγαπητοί] even if some are presently *estranged* [ἐχθροί], because “the gifts and calling of God are *irrevocable*”—a conclusion that stands in sharp contrast to the replacement oriented message encountered in the familiar translations. Moreover, throughout the allegory and the chapter, Paul strains to explain that the success of the non-Jews addressed (the “you”) is inter-dependent upon the success of the Jews being discussed (the “them”), which is what would be communicated if both kinds of branches (a newly introduced wild one among natural ones, some *bent* to make room for it) now live together in the same tree drawing from the same sap (i.e., God’s favor).

Notwithstanding the NRSV decision to translate ἐν αὐτοῖς as “in their place,” most translations more faithfully reflect the Greek, “in/among them” (v.17). But none of the translations—or commentary discussions—to date (to my knowledge) reflect that the Greek for “them,” being masculine plural, refers to being placed among the *branches* (κλάδων, masculine plural) described as “broken [ἐκκλάω].” If those branches are understood to be broken *off*, removed from the tree, then the wild shoot is not being inserted into the tree but into branches no longer on it. Clearly that is not Paul’s aim; instead, the wild branch is being reminded that it now draws its life from the sap of the tree *just like the natural branches do*, including the ones presently suffering a “break” of some kind (suffering temporarily, that is, for Paul argues before and after this [albeit in zero sum terms] that this development is to the benefit of the wild shoot placed “among them”).

To list a few of the other significant translation alternatives in ch. 11, in vv. 23–24, where the familiar translations indicate that the natural branches can be “grafted in” again because it is assumed that they have been removed from the tree (“broken off”), Paul’s use of ἐγκεντρίζω can instead indicate that these branches are being “poked,” “prodded,” or “spurred on” again. Translated in this direction, Paul would be referring to the *reinvigoration* of branches that remained on the tree in an injured state (broken as in *bent* or *cracked*) without suggesting that they have ever been detached from the tree (broken *off*). Moreover, in the last clause of v. 24 Paul attributes this invigorating activity, undertaken on behalf of the natural branches, to the effort “by/for their own

olive tree [τῆ ἰδίᾳ ἐλαίᾳ].” Reading this (metaphorically) to indicate the invigoration, once again, of the natural branches, would also play off the way that the wild shoot was introduced into the tree: even though, unlike the cultivated branches it was not native to the tree’s growth, it was poked into it. This imagery comports with oleoculture practice: a shoot can be poked in so as to invigorate the host tree. Paul may mean to communicate that although the first prodding (i.e., the poking in of the wild shoot) did not bring the rest of the Israelites to the intended fruitful outcome (of all Israel heralding the gospel to the nations), a secondary prodding of its branches can still do so, and that would still be “all the more” natural for the tree to do (or receive) than was the initial introduction of a shoot that it had not grown. Translated in this direction, Paul’s overall argumentative effort remains salient: he seeks to put the non-Jews in Christ represented by the singular wild shoot in their subordinate and precarious rather than superior and smugly secure place by highlighting that the gifts and calling of Israel(ites) (i.e., the natural branches in the tree of Abrahamic descent whom they now find themselves alongside, whether Christ-followers or not) remains irrevocable.

The usual translation of v. 25 portrays “part of Israel” or “Israel partially” in a “hardened” state. But the Greek word Paul uses here is *πώρωσις*, which usually refers to a “callus” formed to protect a limb, whether on a human body, or, drawing on the allegory Paul has just developed, on a tree’s damaged limbs.⁷⁵ Moreover, the “callus” is described as useful for Israel “for a while” or “temporarily,” “*until* the fullness of the nations begins.”⁷⁶ Translating *πώρωσις* as “callus” highlights a positive valence that fits the aims of the chapter much better than does the arguably gloss-biased “hardened,” which trades on the negative valence from the description of Pharaoh’s heart as hardened; but when referring to Pharaoh, Paul uses a different Greek term, *σκληρύνω* (in 9:18; as does Exodus), even though the usage of two different Greek words are not distinguished in the familiar translations. In other words, the tree is protecting itself, hardening in the positive sense of developing a callus until healed so that the nourishment

⁷⁵ Mark D. Nanos, “‘Callused,’ Not ‘Hardened’: Paul’s Revelation of Temporary Protection until All Israel Can Be Healed,” in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 52–73, updated in *Reading Romans within Judaism*, 153–178.

⁷⁶ Paul uses *ἀπὸ μέρους*, an adverbial phrase about how long the callus is intended to do its job (“until”), rather than the language one might suppose from the familiar translations “part of” or “partially,” as if adjectival, defining Israel.

can continue to flow to the limbs to again produce fruit, in the meantime avoiding vulnerability to disease at the point of damage, which would instead put the entire tree—including the newly introduced wild shoot—at risk.

Paul’s reference to “all Israel will be *saved*” in v. 26, as positive as this gloss may appear to be, depends upon the premise that the Israelites Paul is discussing (“them”) have at this point “lost” their covenant standing and thus are now in need of salvation “just like gentiles,” to use the familiar phrasing. But if “they” are not understood by Paul or his addressees to have *lost* their covenant standing—in metaphorical terms, if some are bent “for a while” but “protected”—then *σώζω* can be translated according to its normal usage, as “protected/kept safe.”⁷⁷ This would illustrate Paul’s overall argument that these Israelites remain in covenant standing even though suffering temporarily. Regardless of present appearances, “all Israel will be *protected/kept safe*” during this process. Paul thereby emphasizes that the non-Israelites addressed need to understand their role in this mysterious, God-designed scheme, calls for humility and concern for the Jewish other rather than arrogance and disregard, and maintains that successful completion of this plan depends on a shared need for God’s mercy.

Skipping to vv. 30–32, where this interdependency is featured in more straightforward rather than metaphorical terms, the familiar translations attribute the current estranged state of these Israelites to their “disobedience,” but the cognates of the Greek word Paul uses (*ἀπειθέω*) signify a state of “non-persuadedness.”⁷⁸ If translated to represent not being persuaded yet (or: doubtful) instead of glossed in the legacy direction of willful disobedience, as if rejecting what they know to be true, this would highlight the shared disposition that Paul is trying to emphasize. The Israelites he is discussing may be unpersuaded about the gospel’s claims now, but this applies equally to his readers, because formerly, they, as non-Israelites, likewise were not persuaded of the claims for Israel’s God. He seeks to elicit empathy for the Israelites he is discussing, who have not been persuaded *yet* that these non-Israelites have now, because of their trust in the claims made in the gospel message, *already* become full fellow members of the people of God (i.e., by the gospel claim to facilitate the restoration of all the other peoples to the One Creator God) apart from

⁷⁷ Nanos, “All Israel Will Be *Saved* or ‘*Kept Safe*’? (Rom 11:26).”

⁷⁸ See also Matthew D. Jensen, “Some Unpersuasive Glosses: The Meaning of Ἀπειθεία, Ἀπειθέω, and Ἀπειθής in the New Testament,” *JBL* 128 (2019): 391–412.

becoming members of (the people) Israel.⁷⁹ Paul's message remains consistent on this reading (even if shaped by zero sum reasoning): they are all co-dependent upon the mercy of God and thus ought to be generous toward the needs of the other rather than arrogant and dismissive. That message contrasts sharply with the judgment -of-the-Jewish-other's intentions as the rejection of what "Jews" know to be true that is embodied in the glosses one encounters in every version of which I am aware.⁸⁰

Although the translation choices I propose still portray Paul expressing judgment of some of his fellow Jews—that they, like bent branches, suffer this negative condition for not (yet) joining him to herald the gospel to the nations (represented by the single wild shoot, also, arguably involving a negative valence)—the message of the allegory, and chapter, communicate a much more respectful message about the state and fate of his fellow Jews than do the familiar translations. These changes allow Paul's text to express rivalries developing within Judaism, which he attributed to God's design, rivalries that revolve around different responses to the gospel's claims at the moment in time Paul was addressing, which he believed could and would result in a very different, positive outcome than present appearances might lead the non-Jew addressees to conclude. These translation alternatives demonstrate that Paul's argument can be read without the usual supersessionistic assumptions and conclusions, even if they do not change the fact that Paul thought his understanding of what all should believe and do was the correct one, or that what he argued did not take place in his lifetime (or since) in the ways that he described.

Conclusion

The familiar legacy translations and interpretations have been incorporated into the prevailing cultural ways of thinking and living and talking about these texts for so long that many likely consider them to be self-evident. However, "NT within Judaism" research is exploring new ways to interpret the source text that

⁷⁹ Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and the Jewish Tradition: The Ideology of the *Shema*," in *Celebrating Paul. Festschrift in Honor of Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.*, ed. Peter Spitaler (CBQMS 48; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2012), 62–80; updated in idem, *Reading Paul within Judaism*, 108–126.

⁸⁰ On this theological legacy, see Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

challenge long-held views. For some, these new interpretations will likely provoke an immediately defensive reaction; after all, they can challenge deeply held theological convictions that live in the familiar NT translations, translations that embody the interpretations around which their confessional commitments turn. These convictions have shaped identification, affiliations, ways of life, discursive patterns, and so on, and are expected to continue to do so. At the same time, many who welcome the new interpretive alternatives offered may also struggle to fully comprehend and communicate these alternatives, especially if they rely solely upon the familiar translations to access what is written in the source texts, which, as discussed, often embody interpretations that can a priori appear to disqualify the new alternatives proposed.

If scholarship conducted from within Judaism premises is to achieve its potential, almost certainly it will require the development of translation alternatives capable of facilitating the research involved as well as of communicating the conclusions reached. Discovering translation alternatives that defamiliarize as well as communicate the changes proposed may also help clarify the interpretive developments and differences. Continued use of familiar language as well as theological terminology will continue to make it difficult to escape the self-evidentiary force of dynamics such as those I have referred to throughout as familiarity-bias and gloss-bias.

To be clear, the challenge is not only to find new ways to *restate* the legacy interpretations of the source texts by way of translation *revisions*, which has been the aim of widely used legacy translations (e.g., explicitly noted in cases of the KJV and RSV, discussed above), but to thoroughly interrogate what the source texts were probably designed to mean by the first-century authors for their readers, and to translate accordingly, despite the complications involved in re-writing for today's reader, some of which this essay has surveyed. This challenge will involve reevaluation of the textual variants and the rubrics employed for making difficult choices. In short, within Judaism research should offer translations in which newly developed and developing interpretations of the historical source texts' more probable communication aims can live.