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The Opponents of Paul – a 2nd Century Judaizers Thesis

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Preface

My study on the opponents of Paul was conducted between 2005 and 2006. At that time, my teacher Walter Schmithals was still alive, and I was deeply engaged with his theses on the relationship between the New Testament/Paul and Gnosticism. This explains why, in some sections, the focus is heavily on this and on the somewhat outdated literature used by Schmithals. From today's perspective, Schmithals' theses, which caused quite a stir back then, are now largely considered refuted and thus anachronistic. Nevertheless, engaging with them has shown that a confrontation with his work can still be helpful, especially since Schmithals always had a keen eye for the weaknesses of his opponents, and many of his critical remarks are still relevant today.

The study is a fragment. The Epistle to the Romans was not included. I intended to add it later and thoroughly revise and correct the entire work. Now, it hasn't come to that, as time is pressing. I am publishing the study, unfinished and possibly flawed here and there, in the hope that some might benefit from it.

The thesis I present is new. I attempt to demonstrate that the author(s) of the Pauline letters are not addressing Judaizers of the 1st century but those of the 2nd century, which again implies the inauthenticity of Pauline literature.

Introduction

We have already encountered a number of arguments by which the pseudepigraphic nature of the Pauline letters could be plausibly demonstrated at certain points. Some arguments may carry more weight, others less, many derive their significance only through the interplay with others, resulting in what is called "cumulative evidence" in scientific theory—a method of proof that consists of various indications which, considered individually, may not necessarily be absolutely compelling. In any case, all of them together can contribute to shaking supposed certainties and creating an initial critical awareness that something is "not right" with the Pauline letters, including those which, according to F.C. Baur, are supposed to so unmistakably bear the character of Pauline originality that "one cannot even conceive what right critical doubt could ever assert against them."¹ Even arguments that merely highlight the contradictions and untenability of the old perspective could at least evoke that thoughtful bewilderment which (according to Plato) is supposed to mark the beginning of science.²

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In my opinion, yes, and in a sector that has always played a central role in Pauline research: the question of opponents, i.e., the question of which front of opponents or which opposing "heretics" the supposed writings of the Apostle engage with content-wise.

Although the significance of this problem regarding the inauthenticity thesis is obvious to me today, I must admit that I underestimated or did not fully recognize it for a long time. For various reasons. The question of Paul's opponents, as Köster rightly noted, is "one of the most difficult problems in New Testament scholarship."³ This explains not only the complexity and intricacy of individual solution approaches but also the difficulty in gaining clarity about the actual core of the problem amidst the thicket of scientific opinions, speculations, old and new errors, which now hopelessly overgrow this field, and a research tradition that extends back 200 years to F.C. Baur.

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Gunther has attempted to provide a systematic overview of the various identification attempts by exegetes in the introductory part of his work on "St. Paul's Opponents and their Background." ⁴ Regarding Galatians, he lists 8 different solutions: Local Jews (K. Lake), Judean pneumatics, syncretistic Jews (Crownfield), Judaizers (vast majority of commentators), Local Judaizing Gentiles (Munck), Syncretistic Jewish Christians (Fitzmeyer), Gnostic Jewish Christians (Schlier, Stählin, Wegenast, H. Köster), Libertine Gnostic Jewish Christians (Schmithals), Judaizers AND libertine pneumatics (Lütgert, Ropes, Knox, Enslin, McNeile Williams, Richardson, Stamm, Jewett). For 2 Corinthians, he identifies 13 models, for Philippians 18, 8 for Romans 16, 44 for Colossians (!), and 18 for determining the opponents in the Pastoral Epistles.

Gunther's own work impresses with the enormous abundance of material with which he seeks to prove that all of Paul's opponents were representatives of a "mystic-apocalyptic, ascetic, non-conformist, syncretistic Judaism."⁵ However, apart from the fact that this determination

remains somewhat nebulous and the exegesis is partly somewhat unclear, one misses in Gunther's work a more thorough engagement with the arguments of the proponents of the models he rejects.

Since all possibilities of identifying Paul's opponents with real or supposed Christian heretical groups of the 1st century have been thoroughly exhausted⁶, one often cannot escape the impression that the discussion today often only goes in circles and offers little increase in knowledge and clarity. Many authors of studies published in recent years on this topic seem to have capitulated to the question of opponents; in any case, one hardly finds any new perspectives, but rather much dispensable information about ancient rhetorical techniques⁷ or simple resignation⁸. Occasionally, the reader can no longer see the "forest for the trees," which might not even be an undesired side effect for some authors.

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Only by delving deeper into the core of the opponent problem did it become apparent that the previous methodology is in no way acceptable since the existence of the opposing groups reconstructed on its basis is, in most cases, a mere postulate and cannot be authenticated by any testimonies from the 1st century. We will see that a genuinely historical method, i.e., one that bases its results not only on assumptions but on historical sources, can only arrive at one conclusion in this area, namely that the profile of the opponents with whom the letter writer engages is younger than the Pauline letters claim to be. The specific constellation of certain profile characteristics clearly points to a dating of the Pauline letters in the 2nd century.

The claim represented here, that the compelling proof for a composition of the Pauline letters in the 2nd century AD is the proper resolution of the opponent question, includes the assertion that the opponent question has not been properly answered in the literature so far and that Pauline exegetes are still far from a truly historical solution to the opponent problem. On the other hand, it is also true that the strongest and best arguments for the impossibility of locating the profile of the opponents combated in the Pauline letters within the 1st century come from New Testament scholarship itself. No one has more thoroughly understood and sharply criticized the weaknesses of the previously proposed solutions than the exegetes themselves—though rarely their own, but always those of others. Given the unsatisfactory situation, which has already led some exegetes to resign and state that the opponent question can now only be described as "insoluble,"⁹ the development has long pushed for a new approach and a new methodological openness. This, however, was prevented because the fundamental error in which they operated could not be admitted—the fundamental error of taking appearance for reality and fiction for history, based on the inability to understand the pseudepigraphic character of the entire Pauline literature originating from the 2nd century.

1 Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ; his life and work, his letters and his teachings; a contribution to a critical history of early Christianity* (2 vols., 2nd ed.; Leipzig: Fues's Verl. (R. Reisland), 1866), 276.

2 μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος τὸ, θαυμάζειν· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη ... Plato, *Theaetetus* 155

3 Helmut Köster, Introduction to the New Testament: In the context of the religious and cultural history of the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 551.

4 John J. Gunther, St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings (vol. 35; Supplements to Novum Testamentum; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 1–5.

5 Gunther, St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings, 315.

6 This can easily be convinced by reading the introductory pages of John J. Gunther's book.

7 Johan S. Vos, "Paul's Argumentation in Galatians 1–2," Harvard Theological Review 87/01 (1994) 1–16. DOI: 10.1017/S0017816000031606. Cilliers Breytenbach, Paul and Barnabas and the Province of Galatia: Studies on Acts 13f.: 16.6: 18.23 and the Addressees of the Epistle to the Galatians (Brill Academic Publishers, 1996).; Thomas Soding, "The Opponents of the Apostle Paul in Galatia. Observations on their Gospel Proclamation and Their Conflict with Paul", Munich Theological Journal 42/4 (1991) 305–23. Most recently, the anthology by Stanley E Porter, ed., Paul and his opponents (vol. 2; Pauline studies; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005) was published, the contributions of which, however, also provide little enlightenment on the problem.

8 Peter von der Osten-Sacken, "Paul and the Truth of the Gospel. On the apostle's handling of the gospel, opponents and history in Galatians 1-2", in The Holiness of the Torah (Munich: Kaiser, 1989), here 54.

9 von der Osten-Sacken, "Paul and the truth of the gospel. On the apostle's handling of the gospel, opponents and history in Galatians 1-2", 120 note 8. "On the state of discussion of the opponent question, which, if the aim is a more detailed understanding, after seventy years of debate post W. Lu tgeret ... can only be described as insoluble..."

Paul versus Elchasai - the letter to the Galatians

The Epistle to the Galatians is recommended as a starting point for a proper resolution of the opponent question. This letter is particularly suitable for our purpose. On the one hand, this letter, according to all researchers, is beyond all doubts of authenticity and is considered by the "critical consensus" as the "most genuine" of Pauline literature. Demonstrating that the profile of the opponents combated in this letter with compelling evidence points to a Christian-heretical group of the 2nd century would have fatal consequences not only for the authenticity of the remaining "main letters," but it also cannot be countered by claiming that we are dealing – as in the case of the Epistle to the Colossians – with a "post-Pauline," "Deutero-Pauline" writing, which should be dated either at the end of the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century. Furthermore, the Epistle to the Galatians presents a specific constellation of the opponent's profile, which unites three prominent points:

- the demand for circumcision,
- the observance of the law – to whatever extent –
- and the worship of stoicheia.

It is mainly this specific constellation that has posed an almost unsolvable puzzle to previous research, bound by its notions, prejudices, and methods, which it has unsuccessfully worked on for over two centuries and ultimately failed. It has certainly not managed to satisfactorily solve the riddle of this Sphinx, and it will not succeed unless it is willing to open itself to a fundamentally new perspective.

Before we go into more detail, it is important to point out an anomaly that can be observed not only in connection with the Epistle to the Galatians. There, as in most other Pauline writings, the author engages with various opposing positions without naming these opponents. Most theologians do not take particular offense at this, for example, Schlier: "He [Paul] knows the guilty ones, and the Galatians know them too. Thus, he does not need to mention them by name and describe them further."¹⁰ Really? This is by no means convincing, as there is no apparent reason why the Apostle, who likes to lavishly throw around names in the salutations and greeting lists of his letters, would leave the opponents known to him and the community unnamed. Wouldn't it be the most natural and obvious thing in the world to communicate with the community also about the identity of the opponents – if only to avoid any misunderstandings? Wouldn't mentioning their names and publicly denouncing them by Paul have been the most reliable and effective method to isolate the heretics and nip the emerging error in the bud? Indeed, later ecclesiastical heresiologies proceeded in this way by compiling catalogs of heretics and lists of names of the heretics. Sensitivities were nowhere at play, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and all the others do not shy away in their heresiological works from naming names. And that Paul, who certainly was not a heresiologist, should have had greater sensitivity, still needs to be proven.

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In other words, the hide-and-seek game the Apostle imposes on his readers regarding the identity of the opponents should itself arouse suspicion. Under normal circumstances, this secrecy would be hard to understand. On the other hand, such an approach could indeed be explained if one assumes that an author writing under the pseudonym of Paul at a later time was actually referring to the heretics of his own time, whose real names he could hardly reveal if he did not want to expose himself and the pseudepigraphic nature of his writing. But more on that later.

The situation assumed in the Epistle to the Galatians can be briefly outlined as follows: Anti-Pauline Christian agitators and missionaries have infiltrated Paul's congregations and are confusing the believers there (1:7; 5:10) by

- preaching a different gospel (1:8) than the one the Apostle preached to them.
- They not only demand circumcision (5:2; 6:4)
- and adherence to the law (3:2; 5:4)
- but also the observance of certain festivals (4:10)
- and the worship of elemental spirits (4:3,9).
- Paul seems to be accused of lacking apostolic authority (1:12); his apostleship is allegedly based solely on dependence on humans and not on pneumatic authority, which the opponents apparently claimed for themselves.

8

In his letter, Paul vigorously refutes this last accusation right in the first sentence of his epistle by

- describing himself as an apostle "not from men, nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ."
- The Apostle then proves that the gospel he preaches was not received from the Jerusalem apostles, but "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:6).
- He responds to the swift apostasy of the Galatians to the gospel of circumcision and the law with mocking "astonishment."
- At the same time, he curses every preacher of the "other gospel" – even if it were an "angel from heaven."
- While reminding his community of the precedence of spirit and faith over the works of the law, he accuses the opponents of not observing the law they demand and only undergoing circumcision to avoid persecution. It would be better if his opponents were castrated altogether!
- Paul, who already hinted (5:7) that a specific person might be behind the agitation, is certain that God's judgment will fall on the one who confused the congregations with his perverted gospel (5:10).

In discussing the solution models offered to solve the opponent question in the Epistle to the Galatians, I will limit myself to the three classic main types:

- the Judaizer theory,
- Lütger's theory of a double front (Judaizers and pneumatics),
- and Schmithals' Gnostic theory.

The oldest of these is the so-called "Judaizer theory." The view that Judaizing preachers of circumcision countered the Apostle's missionary work spread early and is already found in the so-called Marcionite Gospel prologues. According to these, after Paul's departure, the Galatians were visited by "false apostles" who turned them to the law and circumcision, prompting the Apostle, writing from Ephesus, to admonish them to return to the true faith.¹¹ In this context, the Judaizing Christian opponents of the Apostle are considered "false apostles." This view was largely adopted by the early Church and persisted up to F.C. Baur, who only modified it insofar as he incorporated it into the Procrustean bed of a Hegelian historical-philosophical system of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

11 Galatae sunt Graecae. hi verbum veritatis primum ab apostolo acceperunt: sed post discessum eius temptati sunt a falsis apostolis, ut in legem et circumcisionem verterentur. hos apostolus revocat ad fidem veritatis scribens eis from Ephesus. [= 11 The Galatians are Greeks. these first received the word of truth from the apostle: but after his departure they were tempted by the false apostles to turn to the law and circumcision. The apostle recalls these to the faith of the truth, writing to them from Ephesus.]

9

The Judaizer theory has a decisive advantage over other, later theories: it has an immediate and intuitive appeal. The fact that Paul's opponents demanded not only circumcision but also adherence to Jewish ritual law seems almost beyond serious doubt based on the Apostle's statements. The assumption that the agitators in Galatia were Judaizing Christian missionaries thus appears as a natural conclusion.

However, upon closer examination, problems arise.

1. The question of the agitators' relationship to the Jerusalem "pillars" has always proven particularly problematic. If these agitators had indeed come from Jerusalem and acted on behalf of the congregation there, the agreements made between Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem, which Paul reports in Galatians 1 and 2, must either have never taken place, or they must have been deliberately and intentionally broken by the "pillars" in Jerusalem (or by Paul). This, however, is unlikely, especially since Paul's statements about the Jerusalem apostles and the tone in which he speaks of them, despite some barbs, nowhere give rise to such a suspicion. Moreover, such behavior towards Paul would hardly be adequately described by the term "disloyalty." Schmithals puts it succinctly: Either "Paul must have lied when he claimed that the pillars in Jerusalem had solemnly recognized his apostleship, or these pillars must have broken their promise in the most underhanded and dirty way, either directly or through their messengers, without Paul knowing anything about it..."¹² Schmithals considers both scenarios unthinkable.

12 Walter Schmithals, "Die Häretiker in Galatien" [= "The Heretics in Galatia"], *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* [= *Journal for New Testament Studies and the Knowledge of the Older Church*] 47 (1956) 25-67, here 35. DOI: 10.1515/zntw.1956.47.1.25.

10

Other exegetes do not entirely rule out this possibility. While it was sometimes suspected in the past that James or possibly even Peter were behind the Judaizing agitators, today the initiators of the Judaizing agitation are more often seen in the circle of the so-called Jerusalem "false brothers." However, one cannot help but suspect that the reference to the "false brothers" has become a convenient means for many exegetes to avoid addressing the difficult question of the connection between the missionaries in Galatia and the Jerusalem pillars. As long as the character of this group and their relationship to the "pillars" cannot be clearly determined, the problem remains. Therefore, it cannot be said that the proponents of the Judaizer theory have succeeded in "convincingly and sustainably connecting the heretics in Galatia with the Judaizers of Palestine."¹³

2. Moreover, early Christian sources do not provide any information about a Judaizing mission to Gentiles in the 1st century. As Schmithals rightly notes, the "false brothers" could not have been ultra-Jacobin Judaizers, as they would hardly have encountered a worldwide Gentile mission. The same applies to any other "radically reactionary part of the early community that disagreed with the stance of the original apostles."¹⁴

Schmithals also generally denies "that there was ever a Judaism after the 'Apostolic Council' that consistently demanded circumcision from Gentile Christians." Here, however, he clearly goes a step too far. Even if such a Judaism did not exist in the 1st century, it cannot be denied that a Judaizing mission to Gentiles demanding circumcision and observance of the law is well documented for Jewish Christian groups in the 2nd century. Schmithals acknowledges the existence of a Judaizing mission to Gentiles in the 2nd century but does not wish to place "much weight" on the testimony of the Church Fathers in this context.¹⁵ Why? A historically oriented investigation should not disregard the earliest evidence of Judaizing missions to Gentiles, as presented by Justin, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, Augustine, and the Pseudo-Clementines. It is indeed wise to be fully aware that all evidence of a Judaizing missionary movement relates only to Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century. In other words, the entire Judaizer theory is – exaggeratedly expressed – based on a hypothesis that there might have been a Judaizing mission to Gentiles in the 1st century, similar to what existed in the 2nd century. There are no witnesses or evidence for this. With one exception: the author of the Pauline letters, who – contrary to the testimony of later Christian heresiologists – knew of a Judaizing mission already in the 1st century. We will return to this interesting aspect in more detail below.

12 Walter Schmithals, "The Heretics in Galatia", *Journal for New Testament Studies and the Knowledge of the Older Church* 47 (1956) 25-67, here 35. DOI: 10.1515/zntw.1956.47.1.25.

13 Schmithals, "Heretics", 38.

14 Alfred Wikenhauser, *Introduction to the New Testament* (6th ed.; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1973), 417.

11

3. Another problem associated with the Judaizer theory was first pointed out by Lütgert. He noted that Paul, at the beginning of his letter, defends himself against the accusation of having received his apostleship only from men. This suggests that his opponents apparently claimed a pneumatic revelation that the apostles, as witnesses of the earthly Jesus, could hardly have claimed. Schmithals later used this argument for his own concept, which we will discuss in more detail below. For Schmithals, too, the opponents' denial of Paul's apostleship is only the flip side of their belief that they possess pneumatic abilities that legitimize their own apostleship – a claim that Paul does not question and to which he only responds competitively with his own claim. According to Schmithals, this "also" must be considered in Galatians 1:12: "I did not receive my gospel from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ,"¹⁶ similar to the opponents. By insisting that he too (1:12) is not dependent on humans, Paul acknowledges that the Galatian heretics derive their gospel and apostleship directly from their pneumatic self-awareness.¹⁷ All of this, according to Schmithals, fits with (Jewish-Christian) Gnostics but not with the witnesses of the earthly Jesus in Jerusalem. The argument presented by Lütgert and Schmithals has not been plausibly refuted by anyone to this day.

¹⁶ Walter Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg.* [= Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg.] (Theological Research; Hamburg-Bergstedt: Reich, 1965), 14; 75.

¹⁷ Walter Schmithals, *Neues Testament und Gnosis* [= New Testament and Gnosis] (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 39.

12

4. Another objection to the Judaizer theory also concerns the relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles, whose problematic nature was discussed in detail above. To the difficulties already mentioned, another one is added: the opponents' accusation of Paul's dependence on the Jerusalem apostles. How it could be that the latter or their followers could accuse Paul of dependence on themselves is an unresolved problem that the proponents of the Judaizer theory have not plausibly explained anywhere. For Schmithals, who often pointed out this open wound in the Judaizer theory in his works on this topic, the claim of dependence would not have been a reproach but, on the contrary, a commendation of the Pauline gospel. For this reason, among others, the fiction that "the authority of the Jerusalem leaders stands behind the heretics in Galatia" must be entirely abandoned.¹⁸

5. In Galatians 6:13, Paul declares that even those who are circumcised do not keep the law. If the Judaizers came from a correct (Pharisaic) direction of Judaism, as the proponents of the classic Judaizer theory claim (Kümmel, Vielhauer), this accusation would not fit them well – unless one sees in Paul's statement a polemical topos similar to Matthew 23:3; John 7:19;

Romans 2:1, as Vielhauer does.¹⁹ But this does not fit with the fact that Paul explicitly has to remind the Galatians in Galatians 5:3 that, as circumcised individuals, they are obligated to keep the whole law. Therefore, it is undoubtedly the case that the opponents do not demand a complete observance of the law at all,²⁰ and thus they cannot be Judaizers in the aforementioned sense.²¹

18 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Marburg., 17.

19 Schmithals, "Heretics", 17.

20 Hans-Joachim Schoeps, Theology and History of Jewish Christianity (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949), 23.

21 They can therefore under no circumstances belong to the τινες των από της αίρέσεως των Φαρισαίων, Acts 15:5.

13

6. Another objection to the Judaizer theory that has received too little attention concerns the profile of the opponents combated by Paul, which, in its specific constellation of demands for circumcision, observance of the law, and worship of stoicheia, presents a puzzle.²² The term stoicheia, due to its significance for our question, will be explained in more detail below:

In ancient Greek, stoicheia referred to the indivisible basic components, elemental things, or elements from which larger, more complex structures are composed. For example, for Plato, the stoicheia of words are the different letters from which individual words are formed. Regarding the cosmic domain, the stoicheia play a significant role in ancient philosophy (and beyond in the history of alchemy). They are the elements from which the cosmos is composed.²³ Therefore, the term stoicheia tou kosmou can best be translated as "basic elements of the world."

22 Although these opponents appealed to the Jerusalem authorities (Paul must emphasize in Gal 1 that his Gentile Gospel comes from God and not from Jerusalem) and they or their peers at the Apostolic Council (Paul) tried to prevent the recognition of lawless Gentile preaching (Gal 2:4 f.), their Judaism appears entirely in the guise of contemporary oriental-syncretistic religiosity: Köster 1960 - Heretics in Early Christianity.

23 The author of the 2nd Epistle of Peter also uses the term in its original sense when he speaks of the destruction of the (cosmic) elements on the Day of the Lord 2 Peter 3:10.12.

14

While Anaxagoras further developed the doctrine of the four elements (fire, water, air, earth) known since Empedocles²⁴ and popularized by the Stoics into a precursor of later atomism, Pythagoras added a fifth element to the four elements of Empedocles²⁵, which was then called "aether" by Aristotle. The celestial bodies could also be counted among the stoicheia as material elements from which the universe is composed; cf. Justin: "When God created the universe and subjected what is on earth to humans, he arranged the celestial bodies (stoicheia) for the growth of fruits and the change of seasons..." (2 Apology 5:2). A religious worship of the

Stoicheia tou kosmou as cosmic elements is especially attested among the Orphics²⁶ and the Pythagoreans influenced by them. In religious history literature, it is repeatedly asserted that their origin can be traced back to the Persians. The Christian writer Firmicus Maternus begins his work "On the Error of the Pagan Religions" with an overview of the elemental worship customary among various ancient peoples.²⁷ The worship of celestial bodies was also widespread in antiquity.²⁸

24 Empedocles is considered the actual founder of the doctrine of the elements, cf. Plut. Plac. I, 3, 2, Dox. 286, Diog. L. VIII, 2.76; Stob. Ecl. 1,10,286,288. See [The title cannot be displayed - The template "Footnote -- (Standard template)" contains no information.].

25 The individual stoicheia are: fire (tetrahedron), earth (cube), air (octahedron), water (icosahedron), ether (dodecahedron), Stob. Ecl. I, 26; cf. Diog. L. VIII, 25

26 Orph Hymn 5

27 Err ProfRel 1-5

28 It is incomprehensible how Becker can claim in view of the clear ancient source evidence: "Nowhere is it apparent so far, in view of the widely scattered evidence from Hellenistic-Roman culture, that they became mythical personifications or otherwise acquired numinous valence", Jürgen Becker and Ulrich Luz, eds., The Letters to the Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians (18th ed.; The New Testament German; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1998), 61. - The text from Jerome's commentary on Matthew hardly refers to Pharisaic Judaism of the 1st century - Commentarii in euangelium Matthaei Cl. 0590, lib. : 1, linea : 649: iudaei per angelos et urbem hierusalem et templum et ele-menta iurantes, creaturas res que carnales uenerabantur honore et obsequio dei. The examples cited by Lukyn Wilhams clearly demonstrate the reserve of official Judaism and show that the cult of angels was a phenomenon of syncretic Judaism, A. Lukyn Williams, "The Cult of the Angels at Colossae", Journal of Theological Studies 10 (1909) 413-38, here 71.

15

However, it was not the mere material substance that was worshipped, but the imagined, inherent divine-spiritual being. The elements, including the celestial bodies, were believed to be imbued with elemental spirits and considered powerful, and could also be invoked as witnesses in oaths.²⁹ In a further development of this series of ideas, the elemental spirits could be worshipped as angelic beings, star angels.³⁰

Given that ancient stoicheia worship had a strong residue of pagan pantheistic religiosity, it is understandable that Judaism, in its orthodox and Pharisaic form, proved to be extremely reserved towards it. Within the Pharisaic or rabbinic tradition, there is no evidence of religious worship of the stoicheia as cosmic elements.³¹ Particularly, the divine worship of the celestial bodies was regarded as a heretical crime and a departure from the faith in the one God of Israel.

29 The oath "often with powerful things (celestial bodies, elements in the old sense)," S. Morenz, "Oath, religious history" in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Vol. 2; Tübingen: Mohr, 1960] 347-49.

30 We can ignore the above-mentioned religious history question about the origin of this not genuinely Jewish concept complex. Persia seems to have been the home of this form of angel worship. On the angel

cult in Zoroastrianism "Every power of nature, as well as every individual, and every nation, has its own angel", Williams, "The Cult of the Angels at Colossae", 433.

31 See the collection of Talmud texts: Williams, "The Cult of the Angels at Colossae", 429. The result: "Hence of the two theories: the first, that the worship of angels was at that time common among Jews, including such Jews as were not exposed to any specially foreign conditions and forms of thought, e.g. the Pharisee party; the second, that it was only to be found among Jews in a few circles and these removed from more orthodox influences, the latter appears to be the more probable" (p. 438). - Francis "Worship of angels within Judaism is not conceivable", quoted in Eduard Lohse, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Vol. 9,2, 14th ed.; *Critical-Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968], 175. See W. Lueken, "The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians", in *The Writings of the New Testament, newly translated and explained for the present by O. Baumgarten, W. Bousset et al.* (ed. Johannes Weiß, Otto Baumgarten, and Wilhelm Bousset; Vol. 2, 3rd ed.; Göttingen., 1917] 358-83.

16

Of course, proponents of the Judaizer theory cannot interpret the *stoicheia kosmou* in Paul's writings in their original sense as "basic elements of the world." The existence of a Jewish-Christian group that combines circumcision and the law with religious element worship, akin to Orphic or Pythagorean practice, is not only unprovable in Jewish Christianity of the first century but would also be unimaginable for proponents of the Judaizer theory—especially in the vicinity of the Jerusalem apostles! Accordingly, there is a tendency to interpret the *stoicheia tou kosmou* as "celestial spirits." Galatians 4:10 is supposed to provide the justification for this, as the observance of "certain days and months and seasons and years" could be understood as a closer explanation of the dominion of the *stoicheia*. However, Paul would not have alluded to a real worship of celestial spirits among the Judaizing opponents by choosing this term. Rather, he would have used it only for polemical purposes, i.e., to denounce the Jewish-Christian opponents by equating the pre-Christian situation of the pagan Galatians with that of the Jews under the law, referring to the Jewish festival calendar,³² and branding both as slavery under the dominion of the world elements.³³

Feine stated: "For him (Paul), Jewish subjugation under the world elements and the (celestial) spirit powers that animate them is also enslavement." If Feine and the other proponents of the Judaizer theory were right at this point and we were dealing with a "religious-historical characterization" rather than a theological judgment by Paul in Galatians 4:8ff, Paul would indeed have had to pull his arguments for refuting the opponents from very far afield, or more bluntly: he would have had to concoct them. How it could have occurred to him, as a born Jew and Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), who allegedly went to school with Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), to equate pagan idolatry with the observance of Jewish holidays legally commanded by the God of Israel (as service to the gods of the world!) has not been explained to this day. Paul would have had to distance himself greatly from the roots of his former faith and Jewish tradition to identify pagan polytheism with Jewish nomism.³⁴ Moreover, it is hardly conceivable that he could have made himself heard in the Galatian community with such exaggerated and unsubstantiated arguments. Therefore, the *stoicheia tou kosmou* cannot possibly be understood as a theological judgment by Paul.

32 Just Dial Just Dial 8:4; 46:2 If you will listen to me, I already regard you as a friend. First of all, get circumcised, then observe the custom of the Sabbath, the feasts and new moons of God, and do everything that is written in the law. Then God will surely be gracious to you.

33 Paul Feine and Johannes Behm, Introduction to the New Testament (9th ed.; Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1950), 25.

34 On this problem, see Martin Hengel, "Der vorchristliche Paulus", in Paulus und das historische Judentum (Vol. 58; Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991) 177-291, here 31.

17

Additionally, the methodologically required glance at Colossians 2:8 should also rule out this possibility. There, the author warns his readers against being captured

“through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world (*stoicheia tou kosmou*), and not according to Christ.”

Colossians 2:20 further states:

“If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why do you submit to regulations as if you were still alive in the world?”

Regardless of whether Galatians and Colossians have the same author, which must be denied, it is clear that the heresies the authors are addressing in both letters exhibit significant common profile characteristics. However, if the worship of *stoicheia* combated in Colossians is an essential part of the opponents' teachings, as the context suggests, it is not possible to define the opponent profile in the Epistle to the Galatians independently of this fact (for details see pp. 53ff).

Indeed, if the term *stoicheia tou kosmou* was not introduced by Paul for polemical purposes but has a real basis among the opponents of the Apostle himself, the question arises as to where we find a group within or on the fringes of Judaism or Christianity that combines the demand for circumcision and the observance of the law with the adoption of (pagan) elemental spirit worship. In Pharisaic/rabbinic Judaism and Jewish Christianity of the first century, there are not the slightest indications of this.

18

And yet, such a unique religious-historical constellation does exist — not in Pharisaic/rabbinic Judaism or a closely related Christian group, but in a specific form of syncretistically diluted Jewish Christianity. And also not in the first century, but in the 2nd century AD! We will discuss this group in great detail below.

...

The Judaizer theory in its traditional form (from now on called the 1st century Judaizer theory, as opposed to the 2nd century Judaizer theory that I will advocate below) seems quite appealing at first glance and recommends itself as the first choice among the various solution models for the opponent question, especially as it is endowed with the authority and splendor of names like Kümmel, Vielhauer, Hengel, etc., and is supposed to prove particularly watertight against all critical concerns. But in truth, it is also just a leaky barrel with many holes that only become visible over time, namely, when it becomes clear that it actually raises more problems than it solves. Those who find the deficiencies of the other theories on the opponent question even more serious and, for this reason, and because no better solution is currently available, opt for the 1st century Judaizer theory, may do so—and watch as the precious wine of scholarly knowledge drains away. Those who do not want to miss out on the full measure should, however, set aside the 1st century Judaizer theory for the time being and look for a better working hypothesis.

Sure, there have always been new attempts to plug the holes and "patch up" the particularly problematic parts of the 1st century Judaizer theory. But these various attempts usually end up as patchwork. For the crucial questions—

- how to explain the mysterious relationship or non-relationship of the missionaries in Galatia to the Jerusalem apostles,
- how to understand their pneumatic claim,
- how to interpret the puzzling *stoicheia tou kosmou* within the framework of the Judaizer theory,
- and how to conceive of a Judaizing mission to Gentiles demanding circumcision, law observance, and elemental spirit worship in the 1st century,

for which, aside from the Pauline letters, there is no other evidence — remain unanswered to this day. And this is because such an explanation, based on the current working foundation of the recognition of the authenticity of the Epistle to the Galatians, is not even possible. But even when pointing to a syncretistic Jewish Christianity or speaking of "so-called Judaizers"³⁵ to explain points 3 and 6, as Schlier does in his commentary, the problem remains that all the evidence supposedly proving the existence of such syncretistic Jewish Christianity in the first century comes from the second century. Many passages from Jewish apocryphal literature or Qumran cited by Schlier are mostly unusable as evidence due to the inability to precisely date them chronologically. Not a single one of the passages cited by Schlier, many of which do not fit in any case, can be definitively placed in the 1st century.

³⁵ Schlier, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 136.

Chronologically, Wilhelm Lütgert's theory of a double front followed the Judaizer theory in the history of research. In 1919, the theologian from Halle published a small study titled "Law and Spirit," in which he [following W.M.L. de Wette and A.H. Francke]³⁶ drew attention to an aspect that had largely been overlooked in previous research, which was heavily influenced by F.C.

Baur. According to his theory, further developed by Ropes, several of Paul's polemical remarks in the Epistle to the Galatians could not be understood as directed against "Judaizing deceivers." Instead, they should be understood in the context of a confrontation with a left wing of Paulinism, i.e., with ultra-Paulines, pneumatics, and libertines. These are primarily those passages in the paranetic part of the letter where the author addresses the members of the congregation as pneumatics and advises them not to misuse the freedom given in the Spirit (5:13,16; 6:1,8). A controversy between Judaizers and libertines is suggested by 5:15: "But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another." Also of interest is the interpretation that the proponents of the double-front theory give to Galatians 6:12, where Paul accuses his opponents of practicing circumcision only to avoid persecution. Here, an underlying conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the congregation is implied. The pneumatics had introduced new religious practices and vices into the community. When the Jewish Christians then wanted to withdraw the protection of their *religio licita*, which they had enjoyed as Gentile Christian members, the Judaizers had forced circumcision upon them to protect them from persecution.

36 Wilhelm Lütgert, *Law and Spirit: An Investigation into the Prehistory of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Contributions to the Advancement of Christian Theology: Series 1; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1919).

20

Lütgert's study is based on a series of insightful observations. He rightly points out that the admonitions given by the Apostle in the paranetic part of his letter, such as the repeatedly emphasized accusation of vainglory, the warning against lax morals in general, and sins of fornication in particular, must have had a concrete connection to the situation of the congregation harassed by heretics as presupposed in the letter. It cannot be denied that this aspect has been given too little attention by the proponents of the 1st century Judaizer theory in the past. And it is not sufficient to argue against Lütgert by pointing out the form-critical peculiarities of the paranetic genre and claiming that Paul's admonitions were "not motivated by current issues, but traditionally formulated."³⁷ The repetition of certain fixed *topoi*, which belong to the form-critical inventory of the paranetic genre, does not mean that they must have been formulated in a vacuum or "out of the blue."

However, the conclusions that Lütgert draws from his observations are problematic. Since the accusation of lax morals does not seem to fit the Judaizing proponents of a new legality, he concludes that Paul must have had other opponents in the congregation, besides the Judaizers, to whom this accusation applied—namely, the pneumatics. But the author of the letter, as has often been noted, nowhere explicitly indicates that he had another opposing front in view besides the intrusive missionaries advocating circumcision. The problem identified by Lütgert could, if at all, only be plausibly solved in another way, that is, only under the assumption of a unified front.

37 Philipp Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers* (De Gruyter Textbook; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 125.

The first person to recognize this and utilize Lütgert's findings for his own unified opponent theory was Walter Schmithals. His Gnostic thesis, initially tested in his dissertation on "Gnosis in Corinth" and later deepened in various individual studies on the other Pauline letters, belongs to the third and final category of solution models discussed here. Its discovery and publication occurred during the Bultmann era, a time when Gnosis was fashionable among New Testament scholars. As a result, the Gnostic thesis was quite successful at the time. Although its influence has since significantly declined, it still ranks as one of the most peculiar variants among the solution models discussed regarding the opponent question.

In his study on "The Heretics in Galatia," Schmithals begins with a critique of the classic Judaizer theory, insightfully exposing its numerous contradictions and inconsistencies. Many of the sharpest weapons used above against the 1st century Judaizer theory come from Schmithals' workshop.

- The pneumatic claim to revelation by the opponents, which fits as poorly with the envoys of a Jerusalem early church as a Judaizing world mission;
- the ambiguous relationship of the agitators in Galatia to the Jerusalem apostles;
- the accusation of Paul's dependence on the latter, which from the mouths of Jerusalem envoys would have sounded more like praise than reproach;
- the strange half-heartedness of the preachers of a legalistic gospel in observing the law;
- the unusual accumulation of warnings against libertine behavior for law-abiding Christians (of the Pharisaic type):

these and other weaknesses of the Judaizer theory are ruthlessly exposed by Schmithals. The "Galatian pillar of Judaism," which, according to him, "had still stood quite unshaken,"³⁸ is to be shattered with hard hammer blows, and the historical picture of F.C. Baur and his Tübingen school, which still has a latent influence on most exegetes, is to be finally dismissed.

³⁸ Schmithals, "Heretic," 64.

But what, according to Schmithals, should replace the shattered pillar that once testified to the proud power of Judaism, and what should the new pillar be called?³⁹ The answer is clear: Jewish-Christian Gnosis. On the assumption that it was Jewish-Christian Gnostics who infiltrated Paul's missionary territory and led the congregations astray, all the objections listed above against the Judaizer theory, which ultimately made it so unpalatable, now disappear. The question of the agitators' relationship to the Jerusalemites, which proponents of the classic Judaizer theory prefer to evade or respond to with nebulous references to nebulous "false brothers," now finds a plausible explanation: there is none, because "Jewish-Christian Gnostics, whose homeland was certainly not Judea, naturally had no relationship to the 'Apostolic Council'

and its agreements."⁴⁰ The opponents' pneumatic claim to revelation, which competes with that of Paul, as is clearly evident from his statements ("not from men, nor through a man," Gal 1:1), requires no further explanation with Gnostic pneumatics. The anti-libertine thrust in Pauline parenthesis observed by Lütgert is self-explanatory against the background of an anti-Gnostic tendency; unlike Lütgert, Schmithals is not even compelled to revisit the problematic theory of a dual front of opponents. Even the most stubborn piece of the entire opponent puzzle, the *stoicheia tou kosmou* along with the observance of days, months, seasons, and years, can now seemingly be effortlessly integrated into the overall picture of a Jewish-Gnostic opponent front. This refers to Gnostic angel worship, as Schmithals notes with reference to a quote from the Book of Elchasai from the 2nd century: "These are Gnostics, and their observance of special times is connected with angel worship, i.e., with the fact that the demonic powers, which for Hellenism widely and particularly for Gnosis appear embodied in the stars, rule at certain times and threaten people at these times."⁴¹

39 Schmithals, "heretic," 64.

40 Schmithals, "heretic," 45.

41 Schmithals, "heretic," 49.

23

Although Schmithals has a solution for almost all the problems that remained unexplained by the 1st century Judaizer theory, his Gnostic thesis is surprising, if only because the circumcision demanded by the opponents, according to the general view, would have obligated adherence to the law, which has almost nothing to do with Gnosis in the conventional sense, which is associated with sharp antinomianism. However, Schmithals strives to dispel such not insignificant concerns with arguments of varying quality.

The circumcision demanded by the opponents in Galatia should not be confused with the Jewish requirement of circumcision in terms of its significance. For "Gnostic circumcision could never obligate adherence to the law." Instead, it has a purely symbolic character. Schmithals refers to Colossians 2:9 (cf. Ephesians 2:11). "In the somewhat mutilated Vorlage" – referring to the text of this passage – "the foreskin is supposed to symbolize the body of flesh," and thus the actual act of circumcision depicts "the liberation of the Pneuma-Self from the prison of this body." This would clarify the meaning of the Gnostic demand for circumcision: it is about a symbolic representation of the main concern of the Gnostics: the liberation of the Pneuma-Self.

But why did Paul then find it necessary to polemicize in such detail and with such rarely known sharpness against the way of the law as a path to salvation in his letter? Since circumcision, in the sense of those who practiced it, did not obligate adherence to the law anyway, he could have let his Galatians have this symbolic act and saved himself all the agitation and the letter. Schmithals argues that it was not a misunderstanding, as Paul himself knew well that "the Galatian heretics demanded circumcision without wanting to observe the law (Gal. 6:13)," and he had to make them aware of the full consequences. But since circumcision, in Paul's view and

"coram Deo," was in any case an attempt to "achieve righteousness through works without faith," it was ultimately irrelevant "whether the Galatians knew this themselves or not."

24

But how does Schmithals even know about the existence of those "circumcision-loving early Gnostics"? From the Church Fathers. They "consistently report that it [Gnosis], *especially in the early, Pauline period* (emphasis mine), and particularly in Gentile lands, especially in Asia Minor, preached circumcision."⁴² For those who do not recall ever encountering passages about "circumcision-loving Gnostics" in their reading of the Church Fathers, it is explained that the Church Fathers mistakenly portrayed the circumcision Gnostics as "half Judaizers" "in the later period, when not much was known about the defining Jewish component of early Gnosis."

After this barrier is cleared, Schmithals can present the testimonies of Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius about the Jewish-Christian Ebionites and Elchasaites of the 2nd century as evidence for the existence of Gnosis in the "early, New Testament, Pauline period." Since Schmithals cites the references in the Church Fathers but not the text, the complete text will be provided below for better understanding:

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.26.2, on the Ebionites (Schmithals: "Gnostic Ebionites"): "The so-called Ebionites admit that the world was made by God; but regarding our Lord, they have similar opinions as Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use only the Gospel of Matthew and reject Paul, whom they call an apostate from the Law. They interpret the prophecies in a peculiar manner. They observe circumcision and the other customs of the Law and adhere to Jewish lifestyles, as they also revere Jerusalem as the house of God."

⁴² Schmithals, "Heretic," 45.

25

Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.34: "The Ebionites admit that the world was created by the true God. Concerning Christ, they fabricate tales similar to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They live according to Jewish customs and claim that they are justified by the law, as Jesus was also justified by observing the law. Therefore, he is called the Anointed of God, since no other has fulfilled the law; but if another had fulfilled the commandments of the law, he would be the Anointed. By doing the same deeds, they too could become Anointed; Jesus was a man like any other."

Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics* 33.1: "...In his letter to the Galatians, he (Paul) harshly rebukes the observers of the law and the defenders of circumcision. It is the heresy of the Ebionites..."

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.27: "The sect of the Ebionites: Since the evil demon could not undermine others' faith in Christ the God, he found another weak spot in them and won them over to himself. The ancients aptly called these people Ebionites, as they taught poorly

and meanly about Christ. They considered Christ to be an ordinary man who had become righteous by virtue of his outstanding moral conduct and believed he was begotten by a man's union with Mary. They considered the observance of the law absolutely necessary, as if they could not be saved solely by faith in Christ and a life according to that faith. Another faction among the Ebionites avoided the aforementioned strange nonsense by not denying the Lord's birth from the Virgin and the Holy Spirit; but they too did not admit that he pre-existed as God, Logos, and Wisdom, thereby falling into impiety like the others, especially as they also adhered to the observance of the fleshly law. They believed that the letters of the apostle, whom they declared had abandoned the law, should be entirely rejected. They used only the so-called Gospel of the Hebrews, placing little value on the other writings. This faction, like the others, observed the Sabbath and other Jewish customs, but they also celebrated the Lord's Day as we do, in memory of the Savior's resurrection. Because of such teachings, these factions received the name mentioned; for the word Ebionites indicates their spiritual poverty. The Hebrews indeed used this word to denote a poor person."

26

Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.14: "He (Elchasai's Alcibiades) uses the observance of the law as a bait and claims that new Christians must be circumcised and live according to the law, partially following the previously discussed heresies. He asserts that Christ became human like everyone else, but that he was not born of a virgin for the first time now, but that it had happened earlier and often, and it continues to happen; he appears and lives, changing his manifestations and moving into different bodies, using the well-known doctrine of Pythagoras..."

Epiphanius, *Panarion* 2.30.1, 2, 26, 28, 31, 33 (all from the chapter), *Panarion* 2.28.1 ff (from the Cerinthus chapter), *Panarion* 1.19.5 (from the chapter).

The beginning sounded promising. After the already fragile 1st century Judaizer theory was shattered into pieces with a few powerful hammer blows, there was a brief moment of hope that the new Gnostic thesis could help solve the delicate problem of the opponents. - But the question remains whether the construction of the new theory can be as successful as the previous demolition. Whether the new pillar can fulfill the purpose for which its builder intended it, and whether it can indeed bear the weight of the hypotheses imposed upon it.

1. The problem begins—as so often—with incorrect terms. "Circumcision-loving Gnostics" are supposed to have been Paul's opponents in Galatia. But the detailed information we receive about them raises serious doubts—not about the sect's "circumcision-loving" nature, which is beyond question, but about their Gnostic identity. Among the testimonies from the Church Fathers cited by Schmithals, there is not one that unequivocally refers to a truly Gnostic group within early Christianity. Instead, all the texts—with the exception of those referring to Elchasai and Cerinthus, which will be discussed below—reflect the theological views of the Ebionites, a group of law-observant and circumcision-practicing Jewish Christians. At most, they could be

accused of syncretism from the perspective of orthodox Judaism, which has nothing to do with Gnosis. To be genuine Gnostics, as Schmithals attributes to Paul's opponents in Galatia, they would have had to be libertine, rather than legalistic in their thinking. For if there is something that fundamentally distinguishes Gnosis from other Christian groups, it is— as Schmithals also knows—its antinomianism and potentially its associated libertinism and dualism. But this can hardly be attributed to the Ebionites. On the contrary, their adherence to the law and the concept of monarchy* made them the bitterest enemies of Gnosis. In the figure of Simon, the rival of Peter, they fought against Gnosis—and with it Paul/Marcion.

* – *note added by Neil Godfrey*: This term is explained by Schoeps as a reaction to gnostic dualism of God (Hidden Good God and Demiurge Creator God): *"It is as champion of the monarchia tou iheou (the "single rule of God") that Peter opposes him, responding with the Jewish teaching that goodness and justice are two middoth of the highest God. . . . whoever does not believe that there is only one God (heis theos) does not have a "monarchists soul."* – Schoeps, Hans Joachim. *Jewish Christianity;: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*. Translated by Douglas R. A. Hare. Fortress Press, 1969. P.123 27

The claim that the Ebionites were only later portrayed as "half Judaizers" by the Church Fathers "in the later period, when not much was known about the defining Jewish component of early Gnosis," is a desperate attempt to divert attention from this crucial weakness in the theory. The Ebionites were never regarded by the Church Fathers as "half" Judaizers but always as "whole" Judaizers who not only demanded circumcision but also, of course, the observance of the law from their followers, which was precisely the stumbling block in their eyes. Therefore, the term Ebionitism is synonymous with Judaism and Christian nomism for the Fathers. The sect of Ebion stands for Judaistic heresy par excellence.

It is somewhat different with the other two witnesses cited by Schmithals for the existence of Jewish Gnosis, Cerinthus and Elchasai. Cerinthus, in particular, seems to be favored by Schmithals as a potential instigator of the Galatian heresy, as Schmithals does not rule out the possibility that he might have been active in Galatia. However, the question here is whether Cerinthus was a Gnostic at all. Different testimonies exist about him. He is mostly mentioned in connection with the Ebionites. All of this, along with the chiliastic beliefs of Cerinthus, attested by several Fathers, points more to a Jewish-Christian foundation. However, there is a passage in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* 1.26.1 that sounds quite like dualistic Gnosis:

28

The motif of the "unknown god," well-known from Gnosis and Marcionism, could potentially appear here. However, the problem is that this testimony stands quite isolated among the Church Fathers, and Irenaeus does not mention any libertine or antinomian tendencies in Cerinthus, which Schmithals claims were present among Paul's opponents in Galatia. Instead, Irenaeus notes shortly afterward that the Ebionites had similar views about Christ as Cerinthus and Carpocrates and also rejected Paul, (calling him a "despiser of the law.")⁴³ This implies a nomistic position in Cerinthus, from which Gnostic libertine tendencies cannot be derived in any way. If Cerinthus had been a genuine Gnostic, circumcision would not have obligated adherence

to the law for him—according to the principle established by Schmithals himself⁴⁴—which it undoubtedly did.

As further evidence that Cerinthus combined "typical Gnosis" with Jewish customs, Schmithals refers to the testimony of Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.28.45 However, the text only states that Cerinthus received revelations supposedly given by angels. Receiving revelations and angelic visions are not Gnostic specificities; otherwise, Old Testament prophets and Mohammed would also have to be considered Gnostics. Furthermore, the text indicates that Cerinthus combined chiliastic beliefs with quite materialistic ideas, as he supposedly claimed that bodies would live in Jerusalem after the resurrection "and indulge in passions and pleasures." Bishop Dionysius of Corinth mentions that the content of Cerinthus' teaching was the appearance of the Kingdom of God on earth. This has nothing to do with Gnosis. The kingdom of the Gnostics is not of this world. The text cited by Schmithals only confirms that Cerinthus seems to have been a Judaist.

43 Köster, Introduction to the New Testament: In the context and cultural history of the Hellenistic and Roman period, 63.

44 "The reasons for circumcision within Gnosticism are of course different from those within Judaism. Gnostic circumcision could never be binding on the law; Schmithals, "Heretics", 46.

45 "And Cerinth gives us, in revelations that appear to have been written by a great apostle, strange reports, which he falsely claims were given to him by angels. He says, namely, that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be on earth and that the bodies will live in Jerusalem and will again indulge in passions and pleasures. And in contradiction to the writings of God and with a seductive intention, he declares that a period of a thousand years will pass in joyful wedding celebrations."

29

Given all this, Cerinthus can hardly be cited as a key witness for the existence of a Judaistic Gnosis in Galatia. Even less can such a hypothesis with far-reaching consequences be built on such an uncertain candidate, as Schmithals does.

The same applies to Elchasai, who, of all the witnesses mentioned so far, might have the most legitimate claim to the title "Gnostic" and has occasionally been referred to as such. Even Schoeps, in his book on the „*Theologieggeschichte des Judentums*“ [=Theological History of Judaism], refers to Elchasaism as “gnostischen Ebionitismus“ [=“Gnostic Ebionitism”] — the only form of Gnostic Judaism he believes ever existed. Whether this designation, which relates to certain syncretistic characteristics of the sect that will be discussed in more detail below, is justified remains to be seen. However, according to Schmithals, Elchasai should not be cited as a key witness for a Gnostic Judaism because, as all sources consistently report, he, like Cerinthus, was a nomist, and circumcision under him indeed obligated adherence to the law, however broadly or narrowly interpreted. The circumcision practiced by Paul's opponents in Galatia, according to Schmithals, did not do this but instead liberated one to the Pneuma-Self!

However, with Elchasai, another crucial aspect comes into focus that had been consciously ignored with the Ebionites and Cerinthus, making it entirely impossible to cite him as a witness for the existence of a Judaistic Gnosis in the 1st century: chronology.

30

Elchasai and the Elchasaites are certainly phenomena of the 2nd century, and Cerinthus—with the highest probability, as now must be added—also belongs to this period, making them unsuitable as witnesses for the existence of a Judaistic Gnosis in the 1st century for this reason alone. The same applies to the Ebionites, as all Church Fathers' testimonies mentioning them refer to the form of this sect in the 2nd century. The beginnings of Elchasaism date back to the early 2nd century, which has never been disputed and is confirmed by the Church Fathers placing the origin of the Book of Elchasai, which apparently underpinned the sect, during the reign of Trajan. That Cerinthus and the sect he founded also belong to the 2nd century is attested by most of the Church Fathers, with only the somewhat confused Epiphanius mistakenly making him a contemporary of the apostles, as is generally assumed to be incorrect. Furthermore, Schmithals himself quotes the occasionally recounted anecdote of the encounter between Cerinthus and Polycarp, the legendary Bishop of Smyrna from the first half of the 2nd century, in a bathhouse in Ephesus. If Cerinthus was a contemporary of Polycarp, as the anecdote, cited by Schmithals without objection, presupposes, he must also belong to the 2nd century.

2. Particularly disputable and frequently criticized is Schmithals' claim that Paul's opponents practiced a circumcision that did not obligate adherence to the law but was intended to liberate the Pneuma-Self. Such a group of "circumcision-loving Gnostics" is nowhere known and cannot be substantiated by any of the testimonies presented by Schmithals, as circumcision here is always a prerequisite for adherence to the law. That Gnostics could interpret circumcision symbolically, as the passage from the Epistle to the Colossians exegeted by Schmithals proves, has long been known, but it is entirely different from the claim that they practiced it. Gnostics could also interpret the Mosaic law allegorically.

31

That the opponents of Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians demanded adherence to the law from their circumcised followers cannot reasonably be disputed. In this regard, one must agree with the proponents of the 1st century Judaizer theory in any case and under all circumstances, "that the Judaizers are to be understood as nomists who propagate the adoption of the Jewish law (as a path to salvation) and circumcision (as incorporation into the Jewish people of God) as a prerequisite and participation in salvation in Christ."⁴⁷

All in all, it has been shown:

a) The passages presented by Schmithals to prove a Judaistic Gnosis do not refer to genuine Gnostic groups but always to Judaizers or, in the case of the Elchasaites, to a syncretistic Jewish Christianity, in which circumcision and observance of the law went hand in hand;

b) There can be no talk of the groups to which the passages cited by Schmithals refer existing already "in the early, New Testament, Pauline period," as they are all documented only as phenomena of the 2nd century. This applies to the Ebionites attested by the Church Fathers, as well as to Cerinthus and Elchasai;

c) "Circumcision-loving Gnostics," who supposedly interpreted circumcision as liberation to the Pneuma-Self instead of an obligation to observe the law, are nowhere attested and never existed. Paul's polemic in the Epistle to the Galatians is not directed against circumcision as a symbol for liberation to the Pneuma-Self but against the law observance imposed by the opponents. Otherwise, it would be completely nonsensical.

47 Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers*, 120.; cf. Werner Georg Kümmel, Paul Feine, and Johannes Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament* (17th ed.; Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1973), 261.

32

The existence of Judaizing Gnostics in Galatia thus proves to be a fiction in all respects. It seems that Schmithals, who aimed to expunge the last remnants of Baur's historical view from the exegesis of Paul's letters, ultimately fell unconsciously under the influence of the Tübingen scholar. With the adoption of the shimmering chimera of "Gnostic Ebionites," whose alluring siren song had already led other exegetes astray,⁴⁸ the supposedly overcome F.C. Baur has ironically returned and provided Schmithals with the ammunition for attacks directed against his historical view. A double irony is that this ammunition, in the hands of the iconoclast, turned out to be a dud.

However, Schmithals apparently could not and did not want to do without this chimera. With it, that is, with the supposedly Gnostic opponents of Paul, he found the solution he needed to restore order to the early Christian world, which had been in disarray since Baur. With the help of the Gnostic thesis, he aimed to clear the apostles of the evil suspicion of lying (Paul?) or disloyalty (Peter or James?) and to show them peacefully coexisting in their missionary work without conflict. James held a protective hand over this harmony. In ecclesiastical circles, they were practically of one heart and soul at that time.

On the other hand, the supposed Gnostic Judaizers now became the scapegoats; as unruly ecstasies, filthy libertines, and vainglorious pneumatics with inflated self-esteem, they were assigned the thankless role of scapegoats, bearing responsibility for all the misdeeds and ugly quarrels among early Christians. For the "church theologian" Schmithals, this was certainly a convenient solution. It is undeniable that the Gnostic thesis also reflects the sympathies and antipathies of the Protestant theologian, such as a significant reserve against a mystical, "being-oriented" Christianity (including Plato).

48"Even in Jewish-Christian Gnosis, as it is presented in pseudo-Clementine literature (the novel written around 200, based on older sources, in which the Roman Clement plays a leading role as a student of Peter), the elements have a religious significance"; Wilhelm Bousset, "The Letter to the Galatians. The First Letter to the Corinthians. The Second Letter to the Corinthians", in *The Writings of the New Testament newly*

translated and explained for the present by O. Baumgarten, W. Bousset et al. (eds. Johannes Weiß, Otto Baumgarten, and Wilhelm Bousset; vol. 2, 3rd ed.; Göttingen, 1917] 31-223.

...

33

From "circumcision-friendly," but in truth law-free, Judaizing phantom Gnostics, who for mysterious reasons must be reminded by the Apostle of their freedom from the law, back to historical reality, i.e., to a depiction of early Christian history that is based on the available sources and their age.

A crucial point of the opponent question, both for the proponents of the Judaizer and Gnostic theories as well as for Lütgert's double-front theory, is that the existence of a Christian group combining circumcision, the law, and stoicheia worship in the 1st century is nowhere documented and cannot be substantiated based on the sources, neither among Judaizers nor among Judaizing Gnostics.

While the proponents of the classical 1st century Judaizer theory usually solve this problem with the questionable assumption that Paul was not giving a "religious-historical characterization" but merely making a "theological judgment," those proponents of the Judaizer theory who, for understandable reasons, do not and cannot share this view, such as Schlier, Köster, and others, have sought the solution in a syncretistic Christian Judaism (syncretistic Judaizer theory of the 1st century), where they have partly found it. Schmithals essentially does the same thing, only he labels the Galatian heretics differently and speaks of "Gnostics" (Gnostic theory), where others prefer to speak of "syncretistic Judaizers." The weakness of both theories, however, is that the parallel passages brought forth by their proponents, which could prove the existence of a syncretistic or "Gnostic" group combining legal elements of Judaism (circumcision) with syncretistic or "Gnostic" elements, all come from the 2nd century.

This has been made clear in several places above. Here, we will refer once more to the passage from the Book of Elchasai, cited by Schlier and also adopted by Schmithals, which both exegetes use to illustrate the religious-historical background of the presumed star worship in Galatia:

34

He (Elchasai) says: "There are evil stars of impiety. This has now been told to you, you pious ones and you students; beware of the power of the days on which they rule, and do not begin your works on their days, nor baptize a man or a woman on the days of their rule, when the moon passes through them and walks with them. Especially beware of this day until [the moon] leaves them, and then dive in and begin any of your works. But you should also have reverent fear for the day of the Sabbath, for it is one of their days..."⁴⁹

Given that the cited parallel religious-historical material is generally younger (2nd century) than the "heresy" of the Judaizing/Gnostic opponents of Paul is supposed to be (1st century), it is

surprising that exegetes have not yet considered an idea that seems obvious and asked the obvious question of whether the assumptions under which they conducted their work were correct. After all, there is the possibility that the supposed letter of Paul they are studying is not as old as the church tradition has claimed for ages. However, such a question is hardly possible without simultaneously doubting the authenticity of the Epistle to the Galatians (which in the end would amount to disputing the authenticity of all Pauline letters, which would inevitably turn out to be a collection of pseudepigraphic writings from the 2nd century). Therefore, it has likely been deliberately suppressed in the past, even when it occasionally crossed the exegete's mind. It would be a reasonable question in any case and promising for a deeper understanding of early Christian history. The parallels between the Galatian "heretics" and the syncretistic Judaism of the 2nd century, as we will see below, go far beyond the material already collected by Schlier and other diligent scholars. With the help of these parallels and a constant side glance at Ebionites, Nazarenes, Elchasaites, Sampsaeanes, Ossaeans, etc., i.e., all those Jewish-Christian groups of the 2nd century who, as the Church Fathers knew, unanimously and emphatically "rejected" Paul, it is possible not only to fully illuminate the opponent question of the Epistle to the Galatians but also that of the other Pauline letters (Judaizer theory of the 2nd century). But first, it should be shown that the unique religious-historical combination of circumcision, the law, and stoicheia worship finds its only plausible explanation here, in the syncretistic Judaism of the 2nd century—and nowhere else!

One name can help us definitively clarify the opponent question of the Epistle to the Galatians. Given the chapter heading and the statements already made above, this name should be no secret to the reader. It is the Jewish-Christian sect founder Elchasai. With regard to him, his book, and his teachings, which are preserved only in a few but revealing fragments, the riddle of the Sphinx, which the Epistle to the Galatians has always posed to exegetes, can finally be solved.

49 Schlier, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 206. - Schmithals, "Heretics", 49.

35

Before we proceed, we must first make some introductory remarks about the Elchasaite sect and its founder.

In the chronological mire of early Christian literature, we can consider ourselves fortunate when we occasionally find firm ground. In this context, the figure of Elchasai⁵⁰ and his sect is one of the few fortunate cases that allow for a reasonably reliable chronological placement. The most important and oldest testimony in this regard comes from Hippolytus, who, alongside the later Epiphanius, is one of the main sources. In his heresiological compendium, the *Refutation of All Heresies*, which likely originated at the beginning of the 3rd century, the contemporary and opponent of the Roman Pope Callistus (218-227) tells us about a man named Alcibiades. This "cunning, thoroughly wicked man from Apamea in Syria" supposedly came to Rome during the time of Callistus [around 220?] to promote his new gospel. This gospel was none other than that

of Elchasai, a "righteous man" who, according to Hippolytus, appeared in the third year of Trajan, i.e., 100, and in 116 in "Serri in Persia" wrote a book with prophecies for his followers, the Sobiai [i.e., the Baptizers, Washers = Sampsaeans] 51 in the original Aramaic language. The book, which, as Epiphanius additionally notes, was later also read by Jewish Christians such as the Ossaeans, Ebionites, and Nazarenes, was said by Origen to have fallen from heaven. Its content, Hippolytus further states, was inspired by an angel, ὀπό ἀγγέλου (from an angel).

50 In the ancient and patristic sources different spellings are encountered: "Elchasai", "Elxai", "Elkesaios", "Alchasaio" or "Elkesaiten" or "Heikesaiten". Here and in the following I adopt the spelling suggested by Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 1., for practical reasons: "Elchsaï" and "Elkesaiten".

51 or a man named Sobiai

36

"whose height is 24 schoinoi [a Greek unit of measurement] = 96 miles, whose width is 4 schoinoi, and which measures 6 schoinoi from shoulder to shoulder. Its foot length is 314, which equals 14 miles, the width is 114 schoinoi, and the height is 14. It also includes a female being whose measurements match those mentioned above; the male being is called the Son of God, and the female is called the Holy Spirit."

As the parallel in Epiphanius "irrefutably confirms,"⁵² this vision was apparently received by the sect founder himself. For Epiphanius quotes immediately after the excerpt from his book: "'But how did I find the measurements?' he [Elchasai] says. 'I saw among the mountains that their peaks were at the same height as theirs, and by observing the height of the mountains, I learned the measurements of Christ and the Holy Spirit.'"⁵³

According to Hippolytus, the Book of Elchasai contains the following, also proclaimed by Alcibiades, good news,⁵⁴ with which the sect founder aimed to confuse foolish Christians:

52 Wilhelm Brandt, *Elchasai, a founder of religion and his work: contributions to the Jewish Christian and general history of religion* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912), 9., cf. Epiph 30.17.5

53 In the Gospel of Peter, too, the risen Christ and the two angels accompanying him are depicted as beings of gigantic size; while the heads of the two reach up to heaven, they even tower over that of Christ, who is being led by the hand, EvPetr 10.

54 Hipp Ref 9:13: εὐηγγελίσθαι

37

"[He proclaimed that] a new forgiveness of sins was announced to the people in the third year of the reign of Trajan; he [Elchasai] establishes a baptism, which I will discuss later; indeed, he says that those who have defiled themselves with all manner of lust, impurity,

and lawlessness, even while being Christians, if they repent and listen to the book and believe in it, will receive forgiveness of sins through baptism."

The "gospel" of Elchasai, which addresses already baptized Christians, consists of the proclamation of a new forgiveness of sins for those who repent and wish to receive a second baptism. As is evident from the passage quoted above and confirmed by the baptismal formula later cited by Hippolytus, the forgiveness baptism primarily concerns sexual sins of all kinds, sodomy, homosexuality, incest, adultery, and fornication:

"Children, if anyone has sinned with an animal or a man or his sister or his daughter, or if he has committed adultery or fornication and wants to receive forgiveness of his sins, let him, as soon as he hears of this book, be baptized a second time in the name of the great and highest God and in the name of His Son, the great King..."

For the rigorist Hippolytus, who had previously criticized his arch-enemy, Pope Callistus, the real stumbling block lies in the re-baptism proclaimed by Alcibiades following Elchasai. He sees in it the same lax morality that he had previously condemned in Callistus and the Callistians. Callistus had allowed the readmission of grave sinners into the church community through his notorious decree of penance. In a vivid depiction, the deplorable conditions that had since infiltrated the Roman church, for which people like Alcibiades are also apparently responsible, according to Hippolytus, are presented: By appealing to the fact that Christ forgave all people, bishops cannot be deposed even after committing a mortal sin, bishops, priests, and deacons who are married two or three times are allowed to be ordained, Christian women commit adultery and murder simultaneously by choosing lovers, using contraceptives, and having abortions. Those who oppose this are referred to the words of Matthew: "Let the weeds grow with the wheat" or to Romans 14:4: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" It is no wonder, then, that Callistus has great popular support and that his school, which also calls itself the "Catholic Church," is filled with the scum of Rome.

38

The baptismal formula from the Book of Elchasai quoted above has an interesting continuation. After invoking "the great and highest God and in the name of His Son, the great King," the person being baptized is to

"be cleansed and washed and call upon the seven witnesses recorded in this book as testimony: the heavens and the water and the holy spirits and the prayer angels and the oil and the salt and the earth."

What is particularly noteworthy about this passage from the Book of Elchasai is the invocation of the seven oath witnesses: heaven, water, holy spirits, prayer angels, oil, salt, and earth. The passage in Hippolytus has two parallels in Epiphanius, who also knows that the Elchasaites used to invoke a group of seven witnesses during washings. However, Epiphanius lists the group of seven in different forms. At one point, he writes that Elchasai recommends his followers to revere "salt, water, earth, bread, heaven, ether, wind," and at another, he names the

witnesses as "the heaven, the water, holy spirits, the angels of prayer, the oil, the salt, the earth." According to Brandt, the latter group of witnesses, shared by both Epiphanius and Hippolytus, is not the original one since the "holy spirits" and "the prayer angel" break the number seven. Instead, Brandt suggests that the first group of witnesses mentioned by Epiphanius is the original one. The correctness of this claim can probably be accepted as given. However, the question of which series is more original need not concern us further in this context. It suffices to note that the Elchasaite baptism involved invoking seven oath witnesses, which, according to ancient understanding, could only be considered as stoichea or elements.

And indeed, they are referred to by Hippolytus elsewhere in his work exactly in this manner! In *Refutation of All Heresies* 10.29, the various witnesses are not named individually but collectively as stoicheia. According to Hippolytus, the Elchasaites practiced their invocations and washings by invoking the stoicheia.

39

χρῶνται δὲ καὶ ἑπτα(οι)δαῖς καὶ δαιμόνων ἐπικλήσεσι καὶ βαπτίσμασιν **ἔΤΙ ΤΗ ΤΩΝ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΩΝ ΟΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ**55. ["They also use incantations and invocations of demons and baptisms based on the confession of the elements."]

Hippolytus uses the term in the same original sense as many other ancient authors when they wanted to refer to the fundamental substances from which, according to their worldview, the cosmos was composed, such as the four elements [fire, water, air, earth].

These elements, which were worshipped by the Elchasites and invoked as witnesses during baptism, oaths or incantations, are, as Brandt noted in his book on the "founder of religion and his work", both cosmic and sacred in character for Elchasai. Those with a cosmic character include water, earth, sky, ether, wind, i.e. the ancient five elements that Elchasai may have already known from ancient philosophy, except that he replaced the fire of the Pythagoras and Aristotelians with the sky because he was "at war" with the fiery element. Epiphanius quotes a text from the book of Elchasai in which the sect leader warns against the deceptive fire, since even from a great distance it seems as if it is very close:

Those with a cosmic character include water, earth, sky, ether, wind, i.e. the ancient five elements, which Elchasai could have already known from ancient philosophy, except that he replaced the fire of the Pythagoras and Aristotelians with the sky, because he was "at war" with the fiery element.

"Children, do not go to the appearance of the fire, lest you be misled; for such is deception: you see it very close, while it is actually far away. Do not go to its appearance, but rather follow the voice of the water."

This rejection of fire, which corresponds with the Ebionite hostility toward burnt offerings, has rightly been seen as a reaction by Elchasai to the ancient fire cults practiced in Asia Minor, influenced by Parseeism from India.

55 Likewise - following on from this - Theodoret. Haer Fab 83,393,21: τίςμασιν ἐπι τῶν στοιχείων ομολογία.

56 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 328.

57 Wilhelm Bousset, *Main Problems of Gnosis* (Vol. 10; *Research on the Religion and Literature of the Old and New Testaments*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 136.

40

The close affinity to water is not surprising for a representative of a typical Baptist sect. According to Epiphanius's possibly exaggerated remark, water was revered, even considered divine, in most Jewish-Christian Baptist sects, such as the Cerinthians, Merinthians, Ebionites, Sampsaeanes, and Elchasaites.⁵⁸ Specifically, regarding the Sampsaeanes, among whom a descendant of Elchasai named Marthana still lived at the time of Epiphanius, it is said: "They honor water above all and consider it God, for they claim it is the source of life."⁵⁹ Water as the primordial element of creation is also mentioned in Jewish-Christian pseudoclementine literature.⁶⁰

According to Brandt, bread and salt, which played an important role in the communal meals of the Ebionites and even earlier among the Therapeutae and Essenes, belong to the *stoicheia* with a sacred character.⁶¹ Their use in the oath formula suggests that bread and salt, like the invoked cosmic elements, could have been attributed with a harmful effect. Brandt also refers to the *Contestatio Iacobi*, which, along with the preceding *Epistula Petri*, forms the prologue to the *Clementine Homilies*.

In the originally Jewish-Christian and later Catholic reworked *Epistula Petri*, Peter asks James not to entrust his appended sermons to any unworthy or foreign person. After James gathers the elders, he responds in his *Contestatio* that Peter's request will be honored. Only after a six-year probationary period should the "pious applicant for the teaching office, who is faithfully circumcised," standing by a river or spring, take the following vow:

58 Epiph Anacephalaeosis 30: The Ebionites are very similar to the Cerinthians and Merinthians, with whom the heresy of the Sampsees and Elkeseans also agrees in some respects. ...They abstain from eating meat, and consider water to be God... Finally, in order to sanctify themselves, they perform ritual washings in summer and winter, as the Samaritans do.

59 Epiph Haer 2.4.53

60 Rec 6:8 Hom 11:24

61 VitCont 1:37, 73,81

41

"I call as witnesses Heaven, Earth, Water, which encompass everything, and also the all-pervading Air, without which I cannot breathe, that I will always be obedient to the one who gives me the books of the sermons, and that I will not pass on the books he gives me to

anyone in any way, neither will I copy them, nor will I pass on a copy, nor will I let a copy be made..."

After all possible ways to prevent the loss of the valuable writings have been considered, the applicant for the teaching office finally calls upon the four elements mentioned above—Heaven, Earth, Water, and Air—as witnesses once more:

"But that I will act in this way, I again call Heaven, Earth, Water, which encompass everything, as witnesses, and also the all-pervading Air, without which I cannot breathe: I will always be obedient to the one who gives me the books of the sermons, I will keep them in all things as I have vowed, and even beyond. If I observe these agreements, my portion will be with the saints; but if I act against my vow, may the whole universe and the all-pervading ether and God, who stands above all, who is mightier and more exalted than any other, be hostile to me. But even if I come to believe in another god, I swear by him, whether he exists or not, that I will not act otherwise. To all this, if I am faithless, I will be cursed living and dead and suffer eternal punishment. - And after this, he should partake of bread and salt with the one who gives him the books."

The extremely interesting passage from the prologue of the Pseudoclementines is not only a remarkable evidence of the prevailing fear in certain ancient Christian circles that their canon of sacred writings could fall into the wrong, i.e., adversarial hands—apparently with the not unfounded assumption that they could be falsified there—but it also shows that elements of Elchasaism have evidently penetrated into the pseudoclementine writings, such as the veneration of the stoicheia. In the vow of the Contestatio, however, only the classic four cosmic elements are encountered, with fire again replaced by heaven. Salt and bread are mentioned separately and apparently point to a communion following the vow.

62 EpPtr 2:4

42

The infiltration of Elchasaite elements into the theological mindset of other Jewish-Christian groups is explicitly testified by Epiphanius, who speaks of a "connection" between the Ebionites and the teachings of Elchasai.⁶³ According to Schoeps, the invocation of witnesses in the Contestatio is already "Christianly softened," while such an invocation in Elchasai is "more than custom and ceremony, rather true *θηρσκεια* (theurgy)," suggesting that even monotheism was "already in a dangerously softened state" in Elchasai. The "central deification of natural elements" in Elchasai's teachings belongs to the heroic part of the Elchasaite "religious mixture" for the former Erlangen religious historian.⁶⁴

...

In addition to the veneration of stoicheia and the second baptism for the forgiveness of sins, the Elchasaites also demanded something further and decisive: circumcision and the associated observance of the law, as required by all Jewish-Christian groups.

That this was a core component of Elchasaite doctrine is indicated by Hippolytus, who quotes the Elchasaite Alcibiades:

63 Epiph Haer 19.5.4. Elchasaite and Ebionite influence each other, 30.3 and 17; Osseans associate with Sampsees and Elchasaite, 20.3; 19.2; the book of Elchasai is read by Ebionites, Sampsees and Osseans, 19.5: 53.1. Cf. Günther 20.

64 PsCl Hom 10:25, however, there is a warning against considering the elements to be God: "... for it is not right to consider them [the elements] to be God... αὐτίκα γοῦν τὰ πρῶτα τέσσαρα στοιχεῖα θεός εἶναι οὐ δύναται τὰ ὑπὸ ἄλλου γεγόμενα ...

43

He [Alcibiades] offers the observance of the law as bait and claims that new Christians must be circumcised and live according to the law, partially adhering to the previously discussed heresies.

A look at Epiphanius makes it unequivocally clear that the circumcision demanded by Alcibiades as a condition for the observance of the law goes back to Elchasai, who apparently already found it in the Ossaeen sect. The followers of this sect, to which Elchasai initially belonged, "led a Jewish life according to the observance of the Sabbath rest, circumcision, and the observance of the law." Besides the Sabbath, circumcision, and the law, the sect's Jewish characteristics also included the Qibla towards Jerusalem, i.e., the commandment to turn towards Jerusalem when praying. The prayer direction towards the east (towards the rising sun), which is customary for Christians, was rejected by Elchasai:

"He forbids praying towards the east, saying that one should not turn that way, but should direct one's face towards Jerusalem from all regions..."

Hippolytus indicates that the Elchasaite observance of the law was indeed quite peculiar, referring to the "apparent adherence to the law by Elchasai." In fact, Elchasai took many liberties in interpreting the law, leading Epiphanius to claim: "Originally, he [Elchasai] was a Jew with Jewish beliefs, but later he did not live according to the law." Instead, as Epiphanius continues, he introduced the veneration of elements with salt, water, earth, bread, heaven, ether, and wind as oath witnesses, thereby distancing himself significantly from his Jewish roots. Other peculiarities of the sect were also incompatible with genuine Jewish thought, such as the condemnation of sacrifices and their replacement by water baptism, criticism of the Mosaic Law (possibly also the prophets), and the acceptance of false pericopes. What exactly Elchasai's criticism of the law targeted cannot be determined from the few surviving testimonies. It is clear only that Elchasai's circumcision obligated one to a law that had little to do with Jewish law, which could lead to the impression conveyed by Epiphanius that he did not observe the law at all.

6519.5.1

66 Τίς ἡ καινὴ ἐπιδημία τοῦ ξένου δαίμονος Ἡ λχασαί, καὶ οἱ <ἐστὶ> ἔπη τῶν ἰδίων σφαλμάτων τὸ δοκεῖν προσέχειν <τῶν> νόμων

Even though Elchasai shared these peculiarities with other Jewish-Christian groups, as Schoeps has shown in his book on the "Theology of Jewish Christianity," they appear in a context with him that has led some scholars to deny or consider the Jewish character of the sect insignificant. Bousset outright declared the fundamental core of Elchasaite doctrine to be "essentially oriental-pagan." Schoeps, whom we have already cited, also considers the "Jewish and Jewish-Christian elements to have been artificially grafted on." Only Brandt, whose book on Elchasai has become somewhat outdated in some respects, emphasized the Jewish character of the sect founder Elchasai. However, the validity of such assessments can remain unresolved in our context, as we are not concerned here with a religious-historical classification of the Elchasaites, but with their theological profile, which, as we have long since established, fits precisely with the opponents of Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians.

Before we resume the investigation of the opponent question, we will learn about some additional characteristic features of this peculiar Jewish-Christian sect based on the available sources from the Church Fathers. These features could prove significant not only for the exegesis of the Epistle to the Galatians.

67 Eus Hist Eccl 6:38 The sect rejects certain parts of every scripture, but uses words from the entire Old Testament and from all the Gospels.

68 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 330.

69 Brandt, *Elchasai, a founder of religion and his work: Contributions to Jewish Christian and general religious history*, If.: "Elchasai was of Jewish origin... He impressed upon his believers the obligation to be circumcised, to observe the Sabbath, and generally to live a legal life... He made marriage obligatory... expressly forbade praying facing east; he issued a complicated instruction for the direction of prayer towards Jerusalem, which is very similar to a paragraph of the same instruction in the Jerusalem Talmud ... the Elkhasaic texts express the Jewish belief in the One God, in the Last Judgement, in various kinds of angels..."

It was previously mentioned that re-baptism was central to the gospel proclaimed by Elchasai. Washings also played a significant role in the sacramental practice of his sect. One well-known ritual practiced by the Elchasaites was the baptism for someone bitten by a rabid dog. The formula for this baptism has been preserved by Hippolytus:

"We have also said that they used incantations for those bitten by dogs and for other purposes; we will now confirm it; for he says: 'If a rabid dog, in which is the spirit of destruction, has bitten a man or a woman or a youth or a girl, or has torn their clothes or touched them, the person should immediately run with all their clothing and enter a river or a spring, wherever there is a depth, and immerse themselves with all their clothing, invoking the great and highest God with heartfelt faith, and then call as witnesses the seven mentioned in this book: See, I call as witnesses the heavens and the water and the holy

spirits and the prayer angels and the oil and the salt and the earth. I call these seven witnesses to testify that I will never again sin, commit adultery, steal, do wrong, cheat, have enmity, despise anyone, or take pleasure in anything sinful.' Under such words, they should immerse themselves with all their clothing in the name of the great and highest God."

In an article on the treatment of rabies among the Elchasaites, E. Peterson convincingly showed that the bite of a rabid dog was likely a metaphor for seduction to sexual sin, corresponding to the use of this imagery in some places in the pseudo-Clementine writings, where it is mentioned that desire should be fled from like a rabid dog. Given the zeal with which the sect founder addressed the issue of sexual sins and their prevention in his community, this thesis has merit. As mentioned earlier, the gospel of forgiveness primarily addressed severe sexual sins. To avoid these, Elchasai particularly urged the early marriage of his followers. He completely rejected abstinence. This pragmatic approach to sexuality, which starkly differentiated Elchasai from other Christian groups of his time, such as the Marcionites or Encratites and their ideal of virginity or celibacy, is also reflected in other Jewish-Christian texts, such as the aforementioned pseudo-Clementines. In line with Elchasai's teachings, the presbyters of the community were instructed to ensure early marriage.

46

not only for the young people, but also for the older ones, so that rising desire does not pollute the community through fornication or adultery. For more than any other sin, God abhors the sin of adultery because it not only corrupts the sinner himself but also those who dine and maintain friendship with him; it is like rabies, having the property of spreading its own madness.⁷⁰

Very peculiar and deviating from both Pauline and Catholic teachings is what Elchasai teaches about Christ. From the vision quoted above, which apparently formed the beginning of the Book of Elchasai, it was already evident that Christ (alongside his female counterpart, the "sister," the Holy Spirit) was counted among the angels by the sect founder. This "degradation" of Christ to an angelic being (from a Pauline perspective) is also a characteristic feature in the Christology of Jewish-Christian sects of the 2nd century.⁷¹ Unusual, however, is the Elchasaite doctrine of ensomatosis (transmigration of souls), which Hippolytus attributes to Alcibiades, but seems to go back to Elchasai, as shown by the subsequent section from Refutation of All Heresies 10:29:

"Christ, he says (Elchasai), became man in the way common to all [people]: he says that he was not born from the virgin for the first time now, but that he had already been born earlier and since then many times - being born and becoming born - appearing and coming into being, changing births and taking one body after another, according to the doctrine of Pythagoras."⁷²

"... but they do not acknowledge one Christ as [only] one, but the upper [Christ] is one. However, he is poured into many bodies many times from one to another, and now [he was] in Jesus; likewise, he was sometimes generated by God's provision, sometimes appeared as a spirit, sometimes [born] from a virgin, and sometimes not. And henceforth, he will be

poured into many bodies (from one body to another) and will appear at many different times."

70 PsCI Hom 3:68

71 Günther, St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings, 236.

72 Hipp Ref 9:14

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The testimony of Hippolytus can be supplemented with further information we obtain from Epiphanius. However, these are somewhat contradictory to what Hippolytus reported. For example, Epiphanius states that the Elchasaite consider Christ to be "created and appearing at various times. First, he was formed in Adam; however, he can take off and put on the body of Adam whenever he wishes." The difference from Hippolytus's testimony is that, according to Hippolytus, Christ has multiple bodies of appearance, whereas, according to Epiphanius, he has only one, that of Adam. Brandt explains this as a misunderstanding by Epiphanius, who may have confused Elchasaite Christology with that of the Ebionites, which is quite possible. Without resolving this question here, we content ourselves with the understanding that the Elchasaite Christ—actually, one should speak of several (incarnated) Christs—in every respect, and not only because he is presented as an angelic being, is different from, for example, the Pauline Christ.⁷³ According to Schoeps, the reincarnation of Christ for Elchasai culminated not in Jesus, but in himself, so that the Christological predicates could subsequently also be transferred to the sect founder.⁷⁴

73 Brandt, Elchasai, a founder of religion and his work: Contributions to Jewish Christian and general religious history, 82., deduces the following common model from the various Christological testimonies: "All things are created by God: even the mighty higher being Christ, the great king, is his creation. He was not only born once, but already in the course of time many times as a human being like others or appeared as a spirit. Whether the Elchasai model also declared Adam to be an incarnation of the great king remains questionable..."

74 Schoeps, Theology and History of Jewish Christianity, 327.

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The Greek word for "pour out" quoted by Hippolytus is a Pythagorean term for the ensomatose of souls. This indicates the direction from which the sect founder might have derived inspiration for his peculiar Christology: the doctrine of the transmigration of souls from Pythagoreanism, which likely also influenced the stoicheia worship. In any case, the Elchasaite movement proves to be a thoroughly syncretistic religious mixture in its Christology, composed of Jewish, Jewish-Christian, and Orphic-Pythagorean (possibly also Persian⁷⁵) elements.

Especially the Christological ideas of the Elchasaite, along with their stoicheia worship, have led many scholars, starting with F.C. Baur, to label them as "Gnostics" or "Jewish-Christian

Gnostics." Even Schoeps, who vigorously opposes this entrenched but misleading and incorrect terminology regarding the Ebionites, calls the Elchasaites a "highly Gnostic sect" without adequately explaining how the features he labels as "Gnostic" such as stoicheia worship and ensomatosis Christology, deserve this designation.⁷⁶ He would have done better to speak of syncretism rather than Gnosticism because the sect is undoubtedly syncretistic, as evidenced by its borrowing from Orphic-Pythagorean elements while simultaneously adhering to Jewish and Jewish-Christian elements. That they are also supposed to be Gnostic is not equally evident. Many of the arguments Schoeps presents to support his thesis that the Ebionites were "never Gnostics, but on the contrary, their most vehement opponents"⁷⁷ can also be applied to the Elchasaites. The Elchasaite texts, as Brandt rightly emphasizes, consistently profess belief in the One God (of Israel, as seen with Qibla). The Jewish belief in creation was evidently also self-evident for them, as they knew nothing of subordinate demiurgic creator powers, which play a significant role in Gnosticism. In short, Gnostic dualism was entirely foreign to them. Their belief in angelic powers was shared not only with some Gnostics but also with Jews and other Jewish Christians. The explicit recognition of the marital state clearly distinguishes them from the Marcionites and most Gnostics. The legalistic orientation of the Elchasaites stands in contrast to Gnostic antinomianism (or the rare libertinism present here). Finally, the Elchasaites, along with other Jewish-Christian sects, not only rejected but vehemently opposed Paul—who was held in high regard by Gnostics and Marcionites as the authoritative apostle.

⁷⁴ Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 327.

⁷⁵ The question of the extent to which Elchasaitism also incorporated Parsist elements will not be pursued here.

⁷⁶ Criticism of this can be found in Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the tamiian Jewish Apocalypht of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists*, 18., who also complains about the lack of justification, note 52.

⁷⁷ Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 305.

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At this point, let us linger a moment on Jewish-Christian Christology and take a side glance from Elchasai's Christology to that of the Ebionites. The difference between the two is primarily that the doctrine of the transformation of the true prophet, which we learned about from Elchasai, is combined with the Ebionites' doctrine of syzygies, that is, the doctrine of oppositional pairs.

In this central tenet of Ebionite Christology, known from the pseudo-Clementine writings and to be clearly distinguished from similar Gnostic-Valentinian ideas, theologically simplified, it involves a speculation that the bad (= left, the female, false prophecy, the weak, the small, the "world") historically precedes the good (= right, the true, male prophecy, the strong, the great, eternity): Cain precedes Abel, Ishmael precedes Isaac, Esau precedes Jacob, the priest Aaron precedes Moses. Thus, John the Baptist was followed by Jesus Christ, and Simon was followed by Peter, to replace his gospel of error with that of truth. As the true prophet, consubstantial with the primordial human Adam, Christ passed through salvation history, appearing in ever-new forms to proclaim the true prophecy, as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and

finally as Jesus. Thus, the doctrine of syzygies, in combination with the transformation of the true prophet, culminates in a proper listing of different "genealogies."

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According to the unanimous opinion of ancient witnesses, mathematical, astrological, and magical elements played a significant role for the Elchasaites—again reflecting Pythagorean influence! This included magical words, incantations, and spells for the possessed and the sick.⁷⁸ Passages dealing with astrology have already been cited above, particularly those sentences often used as evidence for the alleged (Gnostic) worship of angels and spirits among the Galatians: "There are evil stars of impiety. This has now been told to you, you righteous and you disciples; beware of the power of the days when they rule, etc."

With visible indignation, Epiphanius and Origen (in Eusebius) also inform us that Elchasai permitted his followers to practice mental reservation in times of persecution. According to the sect founder, it was not a sin to worship idols if persecution was imminent. One could deny the religion with the mouth as long as it was not denied in the heart.⁷⁹ Elchasai cites as an Old Testament example Phineas, the priest from the tribe of Levi, of Aaron and the old Phineas, who escaped death in Babylonian captivity by worshipping Artemis in Susa.

Finally, Elchasai also seems to have enforced strict disciplinary secrecy in his communities. Referring to the passage in Matthew where Jesus warns against casting pearls before swine, he admonishes his followers:

... not to let these great and hidden mysteries be trampled underfoot or cast among the masses; he advises them to guard them like precious pearls [Matt. 7] and says: "Do not read this book to all people, and guard these teachings well, because not all men are believers and not all women are righteous."

⁷⁸ Hipp Ref 10:29 ... They boast of their astrology, their mathematics, and their magical arts. They call themselves seers of the future.

⁷⁹ Eus Hist Eccl 6:38 It claims that denying faith is meaningless. In time of trouble, the reasonable man would deny faith with his mouth, but not with his heart.

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It was shown above, with the example of the *Epistula Petri* and the related *Contestatio Iacobi*, that special precautions existed in Jewish-Christian circles to prevent sacred scriptures from falling into adversarial hands (see p. 41).⁸⁰ The parallels repeatedly discovered between the worldview of the pseudo-Clementines and Elchasaitism indicate that the Elchasaites apparently exerted significant influence on the Jewish Christianity of their time. This is also confirmed by Epiphanius, who mentions that Elchasai had associated with other Jewish-Christian sects, such as the Ebionites, Ossaeans, etc., and that they had been "bewitched" by his influence. Although Schoeps tries to downplay the "connection" to Elchasai's teachings asserted by Epiphanius,

limiting it to the late "period of decay," the lasting impact of Elchasaitism on the entire Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century is undeniable.⁸¹

Little is known about the fate of Elchasaitism. The connection to Manichaeism, suggested by the *Fihrist* of al-Nadim from the 10th century but often disputed in the past, was recently confirmed by a manuscript discovery, the so-called "Cologne Codex." This is a biography of Mani, indicating that the founder of the great ancient world religion spent his youth with his father in the baptist sect of the Mughtasilah. As its founder (ἀρχηγός), Elchasai is named here, as already mentioned in the *Fihrist*.⁸² The nature and extent of Mani's influence on Elchasai are still debated.

80 See also Günther, *St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings*, 281.

81 Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, 17.]: "Unfortunately, in all these chapters [of the Panarion] - but especially in the Ebiobaean chapter - the characteristics of two very different religions - Ebionism and Elksaitism - have been mixed up, so that a completely false overall picture of Ebionism emerges and one must first isolate the rather rich Ebionite components of this mixture." However, the program of de-mixture favored by Schoeps is strongly suspected of being biased. Schoeps, whose heart clearly beats for Ebionism, pursues the "de-mixture" because he wants to separate the elements of Elksaitism, which he finds unpleasant because they are "gnostic," from Ebionism. and in a certain sense wants to represent the ideal of a Judeo-Christian religion that has remained largely untouched by syncretistic elements, perhaps even in order to save it for the present (?).

82 A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, "Elchasai and Mani," *Vigiliae Christianae* 28 (1974) 277-89.

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Influences of the Elchasaites on Islam can also be traced. The Sabaeans mentioned in the Quran⁸³ are likely the Sampsaeans, who, as we know from Epiphanius, were demonstrably influenced by Elchasai⁸⁴.

The question of whether Elchasai was a historical figure has also been raised. Skepticism might arise from the explanation of the name given by Epiphanius himself. He claims that the Elchasaites called their master "hidden power" because "ηλ" means power and "ξαι" means hidden, which would correspond to the Semitic writing חַי ל כּוּסִי : "hidden power." Just as the name of the Ebionites ("the Poor") was later derived by church fathers, always on the lookout for spiritual forebears, from a supposed heretic named "Ebion" (Tertullian, Epiphanius), the Elchasaites, as worshipers of the "hidden power"—possibly once a divine title—might eventually have adopted a prophetic founder named "Elchasai." However, given the large number of ancient witnesses, there is justified reason to believe that a prophetic founder figure with this name actually existed, most likely either adopting this name himself or being given it by his followers. Brandt: "Just as, according to the canonical Acts of the Apostles [8:10], the followers of Simon Magus said he was 'the great power of God,' so the Elchasaites could have given their master the name 'the hidden power'..."⁸⁵ Furthermore, the two descendants of Elchasai mentioned by Epiphanius support the idea that the sect founder Elchasai existed as a historical figure. In any case, this question is, as we will see, secondary for our context.

83 Sur 2:62; 5:69; 22:17

84 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 334f.

85 Brandt, *Elchasai, a founder of religion and his work: contributions to Jewish Christian and general religious history*, 8.

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Thus far, a summary of the Elchasaite doctrine, which has been partially directed towards the upcoming renewed examination of the question of opponents in the Epistle to the Galatians. The most important result can be noted: our search for the unique synthesis of circumcision, law observance, and stoicheia worship, which gives the opponents of Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians their characteristic profile, can now be considered completed. This combination, which exegetes have unsuccessfully sought in the first post-Christian century—hence their need to invent various adventurous Christian-Gnostic or syncretistic groups—exists, from a religious-historical perspective, only once: namely, in Elchasaiteism. This, however, is clearly a phenomenon of the 2nd century, so any conceivable attempts and efforts to find testimonies and traces of this sect already in the 1st century or even to discover "pre-Elchasaites" (just as "pre-Marcionites" were supposedly discovered) to save the authenticity of the Epistle to the Galatians would be doomed to failure from the outset.

Knowledge of the specific Elchasaite understanding of the law and the stoicheia worship is absolutely essential for interpreting the corresponding passages in the Epistle to the Galatians in a way that avoids the aporias of the solutions previously offered for the question of opponents.

1. With regard to Galatians 4:3,9, what has been said immediately becomes clear. The problems into which the proponents of the Judaist theory of the 1st century, but also Schmithals with his Gnostic theory, entangled themselves in their exegesis of these passages have already been discussed in detail above. They either attribute to their Paul the monstrosity of having identified the observance of the Jewish festival calendar with pagan star worship, as the proponents of the classical Judaist theory of the 1st century do, or they recognize with Schlier, Köster, or Schmithals a Jewish syncretism or Judaizing Gnosis from the 1st century among Paul's opponents, where the sources they cite consistently date from the 2nd century. If one assumes, however, that the Elchasaite Jewish Christians were the opponents against whom the author of the 2nd century polemicized using the mouthpiece of the Apostle Paul from the 1st century, then the original meaning of the contentious passage can be explained quite easily: when Paul in Galatians 4:3 speaks of the Galatians' enslavement to the elemental spirits of the world, he indeed initially thinks of the pre-Christian element worship, as attested, for example, by the apologist Aristides for paganism. Aristides speaks of the other (i.e., non-Jewish) nations who engage in...

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"rolling before the elements (stoicheia) of the world... They grope as if in the dark because they do not want to recognize the truth and stumble like drunkards, dragging one another and falling."⁸⁶

A relapse into this darkest time of paganism must be feared by the author of the Epistle to the Galatians when he looks at the state of the (Marcionite) communities threatened by the Elchasaites, where parts have apparently already begun to practice a service alongside the law and circumcision. They invoke "salt, water, earth, bread, sky, ether, wind," or "the sky, the water, holy spirits, the angels of prayer, the oil, the salt, the earth" as witnesses in their washings or oaths, or—worse still—revere the element of water "as if it were God." Thus, it is a valid question why those who did not know God and were slaves to those who by nature are not gods, now, having known God, are turning back to the weak and beggarly stoicheia. The stoicheia to which they are now turning are indeed the same as those they worshipped back then. The turn to Elchasaite teaching as a worse relapse into Hellenistic polytheism: this is an assessment that would certainly be accepted by modern religious scholars—and it makes sense. How strained, artificial, and psychologically unlikely appears, by contrast, the interpretation assumed by the proponents of the Judaist theory of the 1st century, that the Jew Paul would identify Jewish law observance with pagan idol worship.

Incidentally, it is evident that the designation "weak and beggarly elements" fits better with the four or five basic elements than with the star spirits or angels favored by the proponents of the syncretistic Judaist theory of the 1st century and the Gnostic theory. Even if it cannot be entirely ruled out that the author of the Epistle to the Galatians, who polemicizes against the Elchasaite stoicheia-service, also thinks of angels—consider the "angels of prayer" mentioned in the second, although probably not original (see above), series of Elchasaite oath witnesses—the expression better suits the veneration of material things like earth, water, wind, etc., rather than cosmic angelic beings.

86 Aristide Apollo 16:6

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Also, the triple "we" in Galatians 4:3, which connects the pre-Christian past of "Paul" with that of the Galatians ("So also we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world"), finds a plausible explanation for anyone who has understood the pseudepigraphic nature of the writing and recognized that the Jewish guise of Paul here and elsewhere is merely a masquerade. The entire "letter" is the product of a non-Jewish author who, at this point, becomes momentarily inattentive and inadvertently reveals himself by identifying with the pagan past. This likely corresponded to the historical facts but unfortunately not to the epistolary fiction that the letter's author is the Jew Paul.

2. The service to the stoicheia is closely connected with the observance of the law and circumcision among Paul's opponents. These three components are also closely interlinked in Elchasai's teachings. All ancient witnesses confirm that Elchasai demanded circumcision and law observance from his followers. There is no doubt that circumcision in Elchasai's teachings

was intended to obligate the observance of the law. However, the nomism (legalism) of this peculiar sect founder is quite different from Jewish Pharisaism. Epiphanius even thought that Elchasai himself did not adhere to the law, despite his clear demand for its observance, as Epiphanius himself stated. Similarly, Paul, or rather, the author writing in his name in the 2nd century, faces a peculiar phenomenon. On one hand, his opponents demand circumcision and law obedience; on the other hand, those who get circumcised do not keep the law themselves (Galatians 6:13). Because the law is evidently interpreted very arbitrarily by these legalistic sectarians and therefore only partially fulfilled, the Galatians must be reminded of what circumcision truly entails in the Jewish (Pharisaic-Rabbinic) sense: it includes observing the entire law: "I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law" (Galatians 5:3). Such a statement, as Schmithals has correctly recognized, is not addressed to Jewish Christian legalists of the Pharisaic kind, as proponents of the 1st-century Judaist theory assume or must assume due to the false premises of their theory. But the reproach fits even less for "Gnostics" because they did not practice circumcision, and all speculations about such a Gnostic practice as the "liberation of the pneuma-self from the prison of this body"⁸⁷ have no basis in the sources. However, this reproach fits the Jewish Christian Elchasai and his followers perfectly! Elchasai demanded circumcision and observance of the law, but his law had nothing to do with the Pharisaic understanding! With the combination of stoicheia-service, baptism, opposition to sacrifices, and criticism of the law, he had distanced himself far from genuine Jewish legal practice. The accusation of demanding the law but not keeping it oneself fully applied to him and his followers. What Schoeps says about the Jewish Christian sects of the 2nd century in general applies to Elchasai in a very special way: "The Ebionite theory of the law represents the classic case of heresy from the perspective of orthodox Judaism..."⁸⁸ This had also been noticed by the author of the Epistle to the Galatians, albeit from a very different perspective.

⁸⁷ Schmithals, *New Testament and Gnosis*, 27.

⁸⁸ Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 319.

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After clarifying the crucial foundations for justifying and understanding our chapter heading "Paul versus Elchasai," it is advisable for the sake of better overview to sequentially compare the various characteristics of Paul's opponents' profile in the Epistle to the Galatians with that of the Jewish-Christian Elchasaites. I will recall in keywords the following profile characteristics, which will be commented on in more detail after being listed; those already discussed are in square brackets.

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The Opponents of Paul

- 1** worship elemental spirits
- 2** and demand circumcision and observance of the law -
- but they themselves do not fully fulfill the law]
- 3** the *gospel* they preach
- 4** *confuses* the Congregations
- 5** the agitation comes from an *individual*
- 6** he/she makes a *pneumatic* claim
- 7** and denies the legitimacy of the Pauline *apostolate*
- 8** they *boast* of their circumcision
- 9** but in the eyes of "Paul" they represent a *lax morality*
- 10** they reject *martyrdom*
- 11** for them Paul is an "enemy", a "servant of men" ["deceiver"]
- 12** they operate from the outside as an *anti-Pauline counter-mission*

3. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul expresses his astonishment that his Galatians have so easily turned away from "the one who called you by the grace of Christ to a *different gospel*" (Gal 1:6). Strangely, exegetes have in the past taken little offense at the fact that the legalistic error opposed by Paul takes the form of a *gospel*. One would actually expect Paul to marvel at the Galatians' turn to the law, not at their inclination to a "different gospel." It must be assumed that the errorists have advertised their law as gospel. This is not self-evident. Most importantly, where in the history of early Christianity is the existence of such a gospel recorded, which is essentially a law, or a law that comes in the guise of a gospel? - With Elchasai! From Hippolytus's report on the activities of the Elchasaite missionary Alcibiades in Rome (Hippolytus, Refutation 9.13.4), we learn that Elchasai proclaimed the "gospel" of a new remission of sins in the third year of Trajan's reign; a second baptism, combined with circumcision and obedience to the law, could wash away even the worst sexual deviations, including sodomy. Hippolytus, quoting this passage, uses the word εὐηγγελίσθαι, which in early Christian sources is a technical term for gospel proclamation. There can be no doubt: Elchasai regarded his message as gospel - albeit a legalistic one and thus one that, in the eyes of the author of the Epistle to the Galatians, is not truly a gospel (Gal 1:7).

4. Twice (Gal 1:7; 5:10), the author of the Epistle to the Galatians claims that the opponents aim to confuse the congregation in Galatia with their gospel proclamation. Once he speaks of those doing this in the plural ("οἱ ταρασσοῦτες"), and another time in the singular ("ὁ δὲ ταρασσὼν ὕμας"). Although the specific term ταρασσεῖν appears elsewhere in early Christian polemics against heresy, it should be noted that Hippolytus says similar things about Elchasai and his sect as Paul does about his opponents, using the same Greek term twice: ταρασσεῖν. The sect leader wanted to confuse the foolish Christians (ταρασσεῖν τοὺς μωροὺς); the sect confused simple Christians with their astrological and magical matters (καὶ τοῦτοις χρώμενοι ταρασσοῦσι τοὺς ἄφρονας), so much so that these Christians eventually believed they possessed real magic spells. This might be a coincidence, but it is more likely a polemical topos that could easily suggest itself, especially regarding the Elchasaites, due to their syncretistic profile, which swung between Judaism, Christianity, and Pythagoreanism. A truly "confusing" sect!

5. But who does Paul mean by the "troubler" (ταρασσὼν), the instigator of the heresy he fights against? There is disagreement in commentaries and introductions about this person's identity. However, there is consensus that a specific individual is behind the agitation in Galatia. Two remarks by Paul unmistakably suggest this: apart from the verse Gal 5:10 quoted above, Gal 5:7 also refers: "You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?" Within the framework of the Judaizer hypothesis (1st century), the possibilities for identifying this mysterious τίς are naturally limited to a few figures from the early Christian community, with James or Peter often proposed. If this were true, it would be quite strange that Paul, at the points in the letter where he mentions these two by name, does not even hint that we might be dealing with one of the instigators of the anti-Pauline agitation in Galatia. The proponents of the Judaizer hypothesis (1st century) also appear completely perplexed on this crucial question, unless they have altogether decided to divert to an agitator collective and blame the mysterious "false brothers" for everything. However, this has the drawback that the identification of the τίς must be completely abandoned, and the answer to a crucial exegetical question postponed indefinitely. But perhaps this is seen as an advantage by those who advocate for the "false brothers."

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Based on the perspective developed here (Judaist hypothesis of the 2nd century), solving the problem is not difficult, and the solution, in turn, confirms our view excellently—according to the law of the hermeneutic circle. Naturally, the instigator, the agitator, the τίς, will have been none other than Elchasai. The 2nd-century Marcionite author of the Epistle to the Galatians, writing under the guise of Paul, engages in a dispute with the most dangerous sect leader of his time in Asia Minor, one who was particularly attractive to Marcionite congregations: Paul versus Elchasai. And of course, it was utterly impossible for him in this battle, an intellectual struggle he leads under false pretenses, to mention the name of Elchasai. Hints had to suffice. All earnest warnings about the new heresy could only refer to the matter, not the person, to avoid giving himself away. Dark hints about demands for circumcision and the law and stoicheia service practiced by Paul's opponents had to be enough for the Marcionite communities to recognize the dangers of the present in an exemplary case decided by the authority of the Apostle in the past (cf. 1 Cor 4:6) and draw the necessary consequences.

This does not mean, however, that Elchasai personally intruded into Pauline (actually Marcionite) missionary territory to catch his sheep, although that cannot be entirely ruled out. What can be asserted, independent of the question of whether a historical figure of that name even existed, is that in any case, the book of Elchasai will have caused "confusion" in the Marcionite communities, and that the author of the Epistle to the Galatians viewed the author of this book as the true instigator of the unrest. Whether this $\tau\iota\varsigma$ was physically present in Galatia is irrelevant, for in spirit and through his book, he was undoubtedly there. Likewise, the Paul of the letters, if the thesis of this book is correct, was not physically present in his communities but was always there in spirit (1 Cor 5:3)!

6. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul defends himself against the accusation that his apostleship came from men (1:1). Lütgert, who was the first to draw attention to the pneumatic claims of Paul's opponents, a point largely ignored by proponents of the 1st-century Judaist theory, saw this as an indication of a pneumatic revelation claim by Paul's opponents. By taking up the gauntlet thrown down by the opponents and referring to his pneumatic authority and personal revelation experience, Paul indirectly acknowledges that the opponents make the same claim.

This observation could not be explained within the framework of the 1st-century Judaist theory, because, as Lütgert stated, "Judaist circumcision and pneumatic claims exclude each other."⁸⁹ Therefore, he advocated a dual-front stance, suggesting that Paul wrote against both Judaists and Pneumatics. Schmithals agreed in principle but, unlike Lütgert, considered a dual-front stance unthinkable. Instead, he sought to find Paul's opponents within a Judaizing Gnosticism, claiming that "Gnostic circumcision and pneumatic claims fit well together." However, Schmithals found few supporters for his discovery of a "circumcision-friendly" Gnostic pneumaticism. Rightly so, as it is a figment of the imagination with no support from religious historical sources.

⁸⁹ Lütgert, *Law and Spirit: An Investigation into the Prehistory of Galatians*, 36.

Schmithals was too quick to applaud Lütgert. A look at the various Judaizing, circumcision-practicing sects in early Christian times would have shown that the alternative Lütgert posited is not a real one. In reality, Judaistic circumcision and pneumatic claims do not exclude each other. Even Judaistic circumcision can be combined with pneumaticism. This is particularly evident in the case of Elchasai and the Elchasaites.

Elchasai is, as we saw earlier, a Pneumatic. His book begins with the account of a vision in which Christ and the Holy Spirit appeared to him in the form of oversized heavenly angelic beings. He even provided their dimensions, likely "to give his story a credible appearance."⁹⁰

Based on the introduction of the book, it can be inferred that the revelations given to the sect founder were further elaborated and included instructions and directives for the sect's followers.

These instructions were authorized by their direct attribution to the words of these heavenly angelic beings. The gospel proclaimed by Elchasai would have been revealed here.

Alongside his visionary talent, there was an intense engagement with astrological and magical matters, which was consistently attributed to Elchasai and his followers by later heresiologists. This included the invention of incantations, spells, and remedies for diseases and the fight against evil spirits. In the revelation and communication of all these "wonderful, mysterious, and great mysteries," the pneumatic charisma of the master and sect founder is evident. He was so convinced of the divine truth of his revelations that he could give his followers and those who adhered to them confidence for the Day of Judgment and assure them: "I am a witness over you on the day of the great judgment." Thus, it is clear: pneumatic charisma, Jewish Nomism, the practice of circumcision, and faith in Christ are wonderfully balanced in this peculiar sect founder.

90 Brandt, Elchasai, a founder of religion and his work: contributions to Jewish, Christian and general religious history, 59.

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This gives us the key to solving the difficult question of the origin of the pneumatic self-understanding among the apparently nomistic opponents of Paul. This pneumatic element would be hard to find in the first century, and the exegetes would have found it long ago if it actually existed. The situation is entirely different in the second century, which has been largely ignored by New Testament exegetes so far.

That an apostle of Christ, worthy of the name, must possess the Pneuma, be a visionary, and a recipient of divine communications, in whom the Son of God personally and directly revealed himself ("in him" [Gal 1:16])—this Paul could hardly have learned from the Jerusalem eyewitnesses and hearers of Jesus. He could have learned it from the Gnostics—if Schmithals were correct and his circumcision-prone Gnostic Pneumatics a) were actually Gnostics and b) existed in the first century. But since all these possibilities are excluded and a Judaistic pneumaticism is only documented in the second century, the author of the Epistle to the Galatians could only be challenged to defend his own pneumaticism at this time, apparently by none other than Elchasai.

That the polemic of the letter actually targets the Pneumatic Elchasai or his book might be shown by Galatians 1:6ff, where Paul earnestly warns his Galatians against the "other gospel" and in a very peculiar verbal intensification curses all those who preach such a gospel:

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."

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How could "Paul" come to think that the "other gospel" could be preached by an angel in heaven? Lietzmann informs us that "the angel was inserted at this point merely for rhetorical enhancement without serious reflection on the possibility of such an antichristian angelic preaching." Schlier also sees the appearance of the angel as a hypothetical case devised by Paul since "it is neither likely nor even possible that the apostle himself or a heavenly messenger would preach a gospel that bypasses the one Paul preached to the Galatian Christians... Paul does not have a specific angelic figure in mind."

Really? The angel was only inserted for rhetorical enhancement, and Paul had no specific angelic figure in mind? After all, what we have learned so far about the Book of Elchasai does not support this view. At the very beginning of the book, presumably in a sort of heavenly calling vision, Christ appeared in the form of an angel to convey to the prophet and pneumatic Elchasai his gospel of new forgiveness of sins. We can be certain that the angel cursed by Paul is none other than the Christ-angel of Elchasai.

7. But the Judaistic opponents not only claim a pneumatic authority for themselves, they also deny the pneumatic authority of the apostle and question the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship, apparently asserting that Paul was merely a subordinate of the Jerusalem apostles and had received his gospel second-hand, a gospel "of human origin," learned and received from people, rather than a gospel of divine revelation like theirs. Indeed, the boldest accusation seems to be that he himself had preached circumcision (Gal 1:8). We can clearly deduce all these accusations from those passages in the Epistle to the Galatians where the author addresses them, emphatically assuring his readers of the contrary.

91 Hans Lietzmann, *To the Galatians* (vol. 3, 5 vols.; *Handbook of the New Testament: The Letters of the Apostle Paul*; Tübingen: Mohr, 1910).

92 Schlier, *The Letter to the Galatians*, 39f.

93 Eusebius tells us in *Hist Eccl* 3:28 from the source of Gaius that the often mentioned sect founder Cerinth wrote a book which allegedly contained revelations in the name of a great apostle, which were also said to have been inspired by angels. A consideration that has freed itself from the prejudice that the opponents of "Paul" must be sought in the 1st century will examine the possibility of whether Gal 1:8 could refer to a corresponding passage in the work of the Jewish Christian Cerinth. However, since the other profile features fit Elchasai much better than Cerinth, one will have to refrain from this.

64

Here we find ourselves at a difficult point. If we were to continue with the current method, we would have to try to show from the few available sources that such accusations, which were evidently meant to discredit the apostle's image in the Christian communities of the 2nd century, were either made by Elchasai himself or his followers. However, direct testimonies specifically from Elchasai are not preserved, at least none that are specifically Elchasaitic. Although it is known that the Elchasaites rejected the apostle just as the other Jewish Christians did, the specifics of this polemic against Paul, at least concerning Elchasai, remain hidden from us. The content of the Book of Elchasai is only preserved in a few fragments and citations by the Church Fathers.

We do not have to settle for a negative result at this point due to the lack of direct sources tracing back to Elchasai or his followers because Elchasai, whom we recognize as an exponent of the opposing movement the author of the Epistle to the Galatians fought against under the guise of "Paul," is embedded in the broader stream of 2nd-century Jewish Christianity and fully participates in its theological ideas, practices, and literary testimonies. This "connection" of Elchasai to the Jewish Christianity of the Ebionites, etc., previously mentioned (cf. p. 42 and footnote 63), is particularly secured by the testimony of the early Church heresiologist Epiphanius. In Haer 19.5.4, the Church Father states at the end of his section on Elchasai that Elchasai had "joined" with the Ebionites and Nazoreans. In his section on the Ebionites, he claims that Ebion did not yet know the Elchasaite invocation of the oath witnesses like Heaven, Earth, Salt, etc., and that only his successors, who "joined" with Elchasai, then had circumcision and the Sabbath from Ebion but the imagination of Elchasai.⁹⁴ Here and in other places, it becomes clear that Elchasaism gradually permeated all Jewish Christian sects in the 2nd century and left its mark on them in one way or another. This means that it is methodologically entirely legitimate, in specific cases where no other testimonies are available, to supplement with such Jewish Christian sources, even if their Elchasaite origin is not explicitly established.

94 Haer31.17.5

65

The somewhat pointed chapter heading "Paul versus Elchasai" would generally need to be slightly relativized. The struggle of the author of the Pauline epistles should first be characterized as a general confrontation with Jewish Christianity, though - and this is the crucial distinction from the Judaist theory of the 1st century - directed against the Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century. Only against this general background does it become clear that the confrontation in some cases focuses on particular exponents of Jewish Christianity. These exponents may vary from letter to letter. While the Epistle to the Galatians is directed against Elchasaite demands for circumcision, Nomism, and stoicheia worship, the confrontation in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians involves the resurrection doctrine of Cerinth.

The key point is to always keep in mind that the thrust of the Pauline struggle is directed against the syncretistic Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century, encompassing its entire diversity and breadth. Several groups form one front.

Anyone searching for the origin of those accusations that the polemic of the Epistle to the Galatians uses to degrade Paul to a "servant" of the apostolic princes in Jerusalem cannot ignore the Acts of the Apostles. In a preliminary study on the opponents in the Epistle to the Galatians, I had already attempted to show that the portrayal of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles contains traits that must have provoked the (Marcionite) author of the Epistle to the Galatians to present his "counter-narrative."

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a) Saul in the Acts of the Apostles, like Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, is the recipient of a revelation. However, while the latter immediately knows of his commission as a missionary to the Gentiles, even without first consulting with "flesh and blood" (Gal 1:16)⁹⁵, Saul is explicitly directed to the community: "Go into the city, and it will be told you what you must do!" (Acts 9:6). The revelation has a deficient character, requiring the recipient to be told by "men," i.e., the community or its representatives, what he must do. Only after meeting Ananias and receiving the Holy Spirit or being baptized does it dawn on Saul, enabling him to fulfill his missionary task. In Jerusalem, Saul must initially make a sort of "courtesy visit"⁹⁶ with Barnabas to the apostles before he can preach the gospel there. Without consulting with "flesh and blood," without the mediating intervention of the church official Ananias, and the tacit approval of the Jerusalem apostles, Saul/Paul, according to the depiction in Acts, would never have become the called proclaimer of the gospel.

b) The subordinate position that Paul holds in relation to the other apostles is also evident at the so-called Apostolic Council. While the Paul of the Epistle to the Galatians, "to fully maintain his independence, lest the fact that he explained his gospel to the leaders in Jerusalem makes him appear dependent and unself-sufficient, asserts... that he went to Jerusalem 'as a result' of a revelation granted to him" (Gal 2:1), according to the Lucan account, he follows a decision of the Antiochene community (Acts 15:2).

c) While Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians states that no requirements were imposed on him by the Jerusalem pillars (Gal 2:6), the so-called Apostolic Decree is imposed on the Gentile Christian communities according to the account in Acts. The Jerusalem church leadership decides to impose "no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality" (Acts 15:28).

⁹⁵ Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959], 58.

⁹⁶ Rudolf Steck, *The Epistle to the Galatians examined for its authenticity together with critical remarks on the main Pauline letters* (Berlin: Reimer, 1888], 93.

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d) Finally, Luke portrays the apostle as a Jew who, unlike the Paul of the Epistle to the Galatians and the other letters, seems never to have broken with his past. In Acts 21:21, he cites the concern of some Jewish Christian zealots for the law, who had heard rumors that Paul was teaching apostasy from Moses, saying that they should not circumcise their children or follow Jewish customs. To give these Jewish Christian zealots public proof of his adherence to the law, Paul is to join in the purification rites of four men who have taken a vow, which he does. The Paul of the Acts of the Apostles does not merely approve of circumcision but even practices it (Acts 16:3: the circumcision of Timothy). The Paul of the Epistle to the Galatians denies the rumor that he would still preach circumcision (5:11). It is hardly conceivable that he could have practiced it himself.

The contradictions between the depiction in the Epistle to the Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles have often been noted. How are they explained?

Since, according to traditional opinion, the Epistle to the Galatians precedes the Acts of the Apostles in time, dependency on the part of the author of the Epistle to the Galatians cannot be admitted. The usual conclusion drawn from the above observations is therefore as Jürgen Becker formulates in his book on Paul: "The author of Acts, who lived at least a generation after Paul, did not know Paul personally." Therefore, he "was not a student or travel companion of the apostle to the Gentiles," as he presents "such grave, irreconcilable differences from Pauline statements... that he cannot have been a disciple or travel companion of Paul." Up to this point, one could agree with Becker even if one does not share his premise that the author lived a generation after Paul. The old church tradition, first evidenced by Irenaeus, that Luke was a travel companion of Paul,⁹⁷ indeed, clashes with the contradicting details provided by the author of Acts and should thus, assuming anyone still believed it, be dismissed. However, Becker takes it a step further and claims that the author of Acts "did not even use a single letter of Paul. He probably did not even know of this correspondence. His knowledge is based on general church tradition..."⁹⁸ Becker asserts this on the grounds that Luke does not mention any Pauline letters. Nevertheless, it remains questionable whether this is due to a total lack of knowledge of the Pauline literature. It is possible that Luke simply ignored them. One must consider that the author of Acts is not merely in "compact historical error about the life of Paul" but his portrayal stands in such stark contrast to that of the Epistle to the Galatians that the assumption that he knew but ignored it is far more plausible. This suggests that Luke's depiction was intentionally set in contrast to that of Paul, which has more likelihood than the thesis by Becker, Vielhauer, and others that it came about through sheer ignorance, meaning pure coincidence.

⁹⁷ Iren Haer 3 1:1

⁹⁸ Becker and Luz, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 13.

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In fact, such an explanation has been favored by an exegete who has delved more deeply into the problem than Becker. In his study "The Twelve Apostles," the New Testament scholar Günter Klein, who, like Becker, is convinced of the priority of the Epistle to the Galatians but assumes its knowledge by the author of Acts, meticulously describes the Lukan technique of consciously rewriting and distorting the image of Paul.⁹⁹ Klein speaks of the Lukan "reorientation of the concept of apostleship."¹⁰⁰ This is characterized, on the one hand, by the "leveling of Paul's Jewish past and the strong emphasis on his persecuting activity," and on the other hand, by "mediating and subordinating Paul to the pre-Pauline church."¹⁰¹ By portraying Saul as merely a "typical Jew" (leveling) and emphasizing his role as a persecutor (horrorization), Luke consciously creates a counter-image to the "real" Paul of the letters. By "mediating," Klein means the observed tendency in Acts to limit Paul's sovereignty and simultaneously integrate him into the tradition of the pre-Pauline church in Jerusalem and its representatives, the Twelve Apostles. This is done by presenting the revelation to Paul as

deficient and by inserting the figure of Ananias as a connecting link to pre-Pauline Christianity. "The immediate contact with the heavenly world," Klein states, "is thus exhausted in the purpose of leading Paul to the threshold of the encounter with Ananias and remains on this side of any substantial instruction. This—and thus the conversion of the disoriented Paul into the orientation of faith—remains the exclusive prerogative of the representative of the church." In this way, Paul is "reduced to a subordinate level."¹⁰²

99 Günter Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea* (Vol. 77 = N.F. 59; FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961).

100 Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea*, 213.

101 Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea*, 211.

102 Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea*, 212.

69

Leveling, horrorization, mediation, subordination—but to what end? Klein's answer: "In no case is there an aversion to the person of Paul... The reason can only be found in the objective situation of the church at the time of Luke." The church found itself not only in an "acute defensive struggle against the Gnostic movement that had sprung from its midst," but also, as Klein continues with reference to Marcion, in the danger that the "Gnostic opponents had begun to claim the figure and teachings of Paul for themselves... If the orthodox church did not want to lose the greatest figure of their church, they had to develop methods to make Paul unsuitable for Gnostic claims."¹⁰³ These methods included the aforementioned leveling, horrorization, mediation, and subordination, as well as the suppression of Pauline writings, because "the assumption that Luke was moving in a conscious tactic of suppression regarding the Corpus Paulinum [emphasis added] gains... a lot of plausibility."¹⁰⁴

103 Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea*, 213.

104 Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea*, 201.

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Klein's observations are brilliant and methodologically stringent, presented with conceptual clarity. His conclusions are certainly more convincing than those of other exegetes who assume Luke's ignorance of Pauline writings. Klein's conception, however, has one drawback: it cannot explain why the protests against these very accusations from the 2nd century (preaching a human gospel, being merely dependent on the Jerusalem apostles, etc.) should have already surfaced half a century earlier against the author of the Galatians letter. Should its author have been so prescient as to combat accusations that were only raised much later? Despite all the prophetic abilities we attribute to Paul—not likely! Klein seems to have pondered something similar at one point in his investigation and considers whether the accusation of Paul's dependence on men "might have some basis in events concurrent with and immediately following his conversion." But his answer remains nebulous. After rejecting Schmithals' Gnostic

thesis, which would indeed answer this question, he initially hints vaguely that Paul's defense might have been "prophylactic" in nature, only to dismiss it as "uninteresting."¹⁰⁵ The terse tone at this point betrays understandable embarrassment.

We have seen that the majority view among exegetes today—that Luke formulated his depiction of Paul, which not only deviates from but opposes the Pauline position expressed in the Galatians letter, without any knowledge of it—is extremely improbable. More plausible is the thesis that the author of Acts knew the Galatians letter and contradicted it, but otherwise, for the purpose of generally suppressing Pauline writings, ignored it entirely, i.e., engaged in "conscious suppression tactics" (Klein).

¹⁰⁵ Klein, *The Twelve Apostles: Origin and Content of an Idea*, 260.

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However, the most likely assumption, which I will now discuss, appears to be the reverse, previously considered impossible due to conventional chronological agreements but logically resulting from our previous observations: the author of the Galatians letter formulated his depiction in conscious opposition to the Acts of the Apostles or one of its sources. This assumption would address the objections raised against Klein's theory. It is hard to accept that Paul would have polemicized "purely prophylactically" against accusations that were raised only half a century later. Much more plausible is the assumption that the author of the Galatians letter had the Acts of the Apostles or one of its sources before him and polemically engaged with its portrayal of Paul.

This is further suggested because his writing contains no information beyond what the Acts of the Apostles provides; on the contrary, our understanding of his polemic relies entirely on the Acts, and without it, we could hardly understand the background of the conflict.¹⁰⁶ Should we not expect more from the author of the letter, purportedly an eyewitness, offering information "from the first hand," so to speak?

Moreover, it would become clear why the author of the Galatians letter seems at certain points to refer to an older source containing a contrasting portrayal of his relationship with the apostles. In his book on the Galatians letter, Swiss scholar Steck points out the completely unheralded opening words of the Antioch conflict, "But when Cephas came to Antioch," and remarks: "To tell a story as it is done here... can only be done by someone who is referring to something already known."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Steck, *The Epistle to the Galatians examined for its authenticity, together with critical remarks on the main Pauline letters*, 84.

¹⁰⁷ Steck, *The Epistle to the Galatians examined for its authenticity, together with critical remarks on the main Pauline letters*, 118.

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Finally, the one-sidedness with which the author of the Galatians letter seeks to prove his complete independence from the Jerusalem apostles becomes understandable, especially when he repeatedly exceeds the bounds of historical probability. For instance, when he claims, in connection with the so-called Apostolic Council, that he went to Jerusalem “because of a revelation,” it seems suspiciously apologetic, as Dutch scholar Pierson noted, raising the suspicion that the author lost sight of the historical plausibility (or implausibility) of a “revelation” prompting him to arrive in Jerusalem precisely in time for the Apostolic Council. Steck similarly refers to an “idealization from a later hand” in this context .108

Against the backdrop of the Judaist theory of the 2nd century, the problematic and still unresolved issue of Paul’s relationship with the Jerusalem apostles finds a satisfying explanation.

a) The accusation of Paul’s dependence on the Jerusalem pillars, which would have sounded peculiar and more like praise than criticism if coming from the pillars themselves, now makes sense. Schmithals, who clearly recognized this problem ignored by proponents of the 1st-century Judaist theory, resolved it by placing a theological and geographical distance between the Jerusalem apostles and the Gnostic agitators. However, since the group of Judeo-Christian Gnostics he postulated is unknown or non-existent in the 1st century, a temporal distance must instead be assumed. The accusation of dependence does not originate from the Jerusalem authorities but from Judaistic missionaries of the 2nd century.

These missionaries seem to have used their portrayal of Paul not only to defame the apostle but also, as we shall see below, as a tactical move to missionize the Pauline communities.

b) This also explains the other peculiar fact that the author of the Galatians letter never attempts to involve the Jerusalem apostles in the conflict, either positively or negatively. He does not criticize them, for instance, by accusing them of breaking an agreement; there seems to be no contact between them and him. It is as if they had nothing to do with the present conflict and were entirely unable to influence it in any way! Indeed, this was the case. The author of the Galatians letter had no way to involve the apostles in Jerusalem because they were figures of early Christianity, and the agitation in Galatia did not originate from them but from the Judaistic missionaries of his time, i.e., the 2nd century. His wrath was directed at them.

108 Steck, *The Epistle to the Galatians examined for its authenticity together with critical remarks on the main Pauline letters*, 107.

It is very likely that these Judaistic missionaries claimed to be backed by the then-authorities in Jerusalem, especially James, and sought to legitimize themselves with his supposed letters, as we will see below. However, the author would have likely done himself no favors by attacking the pillars who were evidently respected even in his own communities. He could only afford the occasional sharp remark about those who “seemed to be something” (Gal 2:6).

In my previous work on the issue of the opponents, I distinguished between early Catholic and Judeo-Christian opponents and, along with a group of left-Pauline Pneumatics, I identified three fronts of opposition. However, unlike Lütgert, I already considered the Galatians letter not an authentic letter of the Apostle but a circular letter directed to all Marcionite communities (in the manner of an encyclical). Therefore, a triple front of opponents was quite justifiable in exegetical terms, given that I believed the author had in view the Christian ecumenism of the 2nd century. From my current perspective, however, the distinction between Judeo-Christian and Catholic opponents is no longer tenable. The supposed third front of left-Pauline Pneumatics or libertine Gnostics, whom the author of the letter admonished for their lax morality, never existed. Rather, it is clear that the author of the Galatians letter—like others—was indeed engaging with a single adversary: the Judeo-Christians of the 2nd century who rejected Paul. Individual phenomena, which from my earlier standpoint appeared "Catholic" or as manifestations of Pauline Pneumatism, are in reality attributable to this context upon closer examination of 2nd-century Judeo-Christianity.

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I initially assumed a Catholic front mainly because only the Acts of the Apostles, which must undoubtedly be characterized as early Catholic in its entire tendency, could be the source of those accusations that the author of the Galatians letter polemically addresses. I overlooked the possibility that certain aspects of the Pauline image crafted by Luke could have already been present in the Judeo-Christian sources he used or might have circulated as oral tradition in the Judeo-Christian communities.

...

The conflict hinted at in the Galatians letter between Judeo-Christians and Marcionites likely unfolded in several phases, two of which must, in my opinion, be clearly distinguished:

a) In the first phase, Judeo-Christian groups leveled accusations against Paul, the patron of the Marcionite communities, such as a lack of pneumatic and apostolic authority, the dependence of Paul and his gospel on the apostles in Jerusalem, and so on. It is presumed that these allegations were already present in a now-lost Judeo-Christian apostolic history, used as a source by Luke for his work, which the author of the Galatians letter knew.

Since Elchasai and his followers were among those Judeo-Christians who "rejected" the Apostle, it must be assumed that they were familiar with this portrayal of Paul, whether in written or oral form, and used it polemically against the patron of the Marcionite communities. It is also possible that the Book of Elchasai contained passages that discredited the Marcionite Apostle as dependent on Jerusalem, provoking the sharp reaction from the author of the Galatians letter. Although only a few fragments and citations from church fathers of the Book of Elchasai have survived, making this assumption speculative, it is clear that the Judeo-Christian polemic against Paul must have been closely associated with Elchasaism in the view of the Galatians author, even if the exact nature of this connection is not entirely clear.

That the portrayal of Paul as dependent on Jerusalem is based on any historical facts is doubtful. It reveals too much of a particular bias. Here, we are entering the realm of purely virtual "history." This image of Paul was likely useful to the Judeo-Christian side for conducting missions within Pauline, i.e., Marcionite, communities. By depicting the community patron (Paul) as a dependent of the Jerusalem apostles, they simultaneously claimed these communities as legitimate mission fields for the Judeo-Christian missionaries who aligned themselves with the Twelve. The downgrading of Paul to a dependent of Jerusalem was a clever strategic move intended to ambush the Marcionite communities, which identified with Paul, by Judeo-Christian missionaries.

This situation called for the intervention of the author of the Galatians letter: It was necessary to fiercely reject the attempt to demean the Apostle, which was essentially a strategy of co-opting him, in order to preserve him as the sovereign champion of a law-free gospel for the Marcionite community. The author used the then-common method of pseudepigraphy, allowing the Apostle to metaphorically rise again from the past, speak to his communities in his own voice, and firmly say No! to all attempts to co-opt him.

As we will see more thoroughly below, the considerations about a Judeo-Christian missionary movement at the beginning of the 2nd century are not without support in the sources. The most important evidence comes from the Pseudo-Clementines, in which Peter—as a representative of the Judeo-Christian movement—proclaims his mission to the Simonians (Marcionite/Pauline communities) "after the destruction of the holy place and the erection of the abomination of desolation"—referring to the erection of the statue of Zeus Olympios by Hadrian after the Bar Kochba revolt in 135.

Due to such missionary interests, the allegation likely arose that the community patron of the Marcionites, "Paul," had also practiced circumcision himself as a loyal executor of the Jerusalem apostles' directives, for instance, by circumcising Timothy (Titus?). The Judeo-Christian missionaries could hardly have wished for a better model for their own circumcision practices than a circumcision-advocating Paul.

The fact that manipulating the image of the respective community patron (along with falsifying opposing writings) could be a successful means to enforce one's own ecclesiastical interests was something that the Judeo-Christians had to learn as well. Their Peter, who was their model and embodiment of Judeo-Christian law-abiding Christianity, seems to have been later accused of antinomian tendencies. He complains to James:

EpPtr 1:2 ... Some from the Gentiles have rejected my lawful preaching and preferred a lawless and senseless doctrine of the hostile man. 4 And indeed, some have already in my lifetime attempted to distort my words through various interpretations, as if I taught the dissolution of the law and, although I held this view, did not express it openly... 7 If they

falsely claim such things during my lifetime, how much more will those who come after my death dare to do so.

As we know, the attempt by the author of the *Epistula Petri* to preserve his image of a law-abiding Peter from manipulative changes by the opposition was ultimately doomed to fail. The predominant image of the Catholic Peter, as presented by the author of *Acts*, has prevailed, whose relationship to the law was, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, already in a concerning state of dissolution.

All in all, the passage in the *Epistula Petri* can at least show that not only the Judeo-Christian side was adept at certain tactics to rewrite history—or what they considered history—in their own theological and ecclesiastical interests.

...

b) If the first phase of the conflict was strongly characterized by Judeo-Christian provocation and a response to the degradation of Paul as a dependent of Jerusalem, the second phase was apparently marked by the counterreaction of the Judeo-Christians to the gradually emerging "Pauline" literature and its portrayal of Paul. After the image of the apostle as a visionary Pneumatic was impressively established through the *Galatians* (and the *Corinthian letters*), the Judeo-Christian side began to discredit the apostle's Pneumatic status and the quality of his revelations. This is evident from the Pseudo-Clementine writings, where a fierce dispute with the *Galatians* and the revelatory claims made by Paul (= Simon) is conducted in several passages.

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The entire dispute is very instructive as it also provides an interesting insight into the Christological development of the early church. In the conversation that Peter has with Simon (=Paul), Peter vehemently rejects Paul's claim to revelation, asserting that it is known that "many idolaters, adulterers, and other sinners have seen visions and true dreams, but some have also had visions that were worked by demons." In contrast, Peter claims "that the eyes of mortals cannot see the unfleshly nature of the Father or the Son because it is surrounded by an unbearable light. Therefore, it is a sign of God's mercy, not of his ill will, that he is invisible to people living in the flesh. For whoever sees him must die... No one can see the unfleshly power of the Son or even that of an angel. But whoever has a vision should recognize that this is the work of an evil demon."¹⁰⁹ The genuine revelation, on the other hand, unfolds for Peter only to the "pious, natural, and pure mind" and is not acquired through a dream but is granted to the "good through understanding."

Therefore, according to Peter, it is not dreams or visions that can convey divine revelation but only understanding, insight (*σύνεσις*). With an allusion to *Matthew 16:16*, Peter cites himself as an exemplary recipient of such revelation gained through understanding:

"For in this way the Son was also revealed to me by the Father. Therefore, I know the power of revelation, having learned this from him himself. For as soon as the Lord asked how

people named him - although I had heard that others gave him another name - it arose in my heart, I do not know how, and I said, 'You are the Son of the living God'."110

109 PsCI Hom 17:161

110 PsCI Hom 17:18

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According to Schoeps, this passage, which acts as a protest against Paul's claim of calling through visions and revelations, "clearly illustrates the sharply anti-mystical and anti-gnostic stance of the Ebionite groups, which are much closer to the more intellectual piety of the Pharisees than to the mystics of their own Christian confession."111 Although the contrast between the Judeo-Christian Ebionite concept of apostleship and that of Paul (Marcionite) is undeniable, it should not be equated with the Catholic perspective of the Acts of the Apostles, as Schoeps seemingly does. In the Acts of the Apostles, only eyewitness testimony, specifically being with Jesus, constitutes an apostle (Acts 1:21). However, for the author of the homily, it is (yet) not about eyewitness testimony, even if a year-long companionship with Jesus is implied, but rather about a specific insight, σύνεσις, which, unlike that of Simon, is based on rational consideration and not on visions or dreams. This may indicate that we are in a transitional stage in Christology, where the subject of revelation remains undefined and fluctuates between a pneumatic-spiritual and historical existence. It was only with the increasingly clear anti-Marcionite stance that the concept of a "historical Jesus" began to emerge, a figure likely unknown to the Judeo-Christian baptist sects, just as it was to the Marcionites or Gnostics. For neither the Ebionite syzygies nor the Elchasaite ensomatose messiah can be considered historical figures.

Our hypotheses about the originally pneumatic character of the Christ revered by the Judaizers can be further supported by another observation. As our exegesis of Galatians 1-2 has shown, in the eyes of the author of the Epistle to the Galatians, the apostles in Jerusalem have nothing over Paul. Additionally, it became clear that the polemical situation forced the author to emphatically stress the equality of Paul's revelation with that of the original apostles.

111 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 426.

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A question that has been asked too rarely: Why is the author of the Epistle to the Galatians able to place the Pauline revelation on the same level as that of the original apostles, who were eyewitnesses and earwitnesses of the historical Jesus? Shouldn't we expect that in his argument, he would address the central difference in the character of these two revelations, whether or not he accepted the historical "added value" of the revelation received by the eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ? Wasn't he bound to be prepared for his opponents to point out this Achilles' heel in his argumentation? If the attack in Galatia had indeed been about disputing "the similarity and equality of his office with that" of the original apostles, "who had physical contact with the earthly Jesus," as Schoeps still assumed, the reaction would have had to be

very different. In connection with the recognition of his apostleship by the older apostles, "Paul" would have had to say: "Even though my apostleship is of pneumatic origin, it was confirmed by the older apostles in Jerusalem." However, the idea of being an eyewitness to the "earthly Jesus" does not play any role in the argumentation of the Epistle to the Galatians. Its focus, as Schmithals has shown, is clearly on proving that Paul also received his revelation directly from God. The author of the Epistle to the Galatians has his Paul indirectly say: "Because my apostleship is also of pneumatic origin, it was recognized in Jerusalem" (cf. Schmithals and his interpretation of Gal. 1:12 in the sense of: "I did not receive my gospel from any man, but - like the opponents - through a revelation of Jesus Christ").

This leads me to only one conclusion: the author of the Epistle to the Galatians did not see any essential difference between the Christ revelation received by the original apostles and that received by his Paul. In his view, both were recipients of a spiritual message of Christ, however it may have been conveyed, and not eyewitnesses or earwitnesses of a historical Jesus in the sense of the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles.

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This means that we are still in a very early developmental phase of Christological dogma. There were no eyewitnesses or earwitnesses of a historical Jesus because a historical Jesus did not yet exist! This concept is a later stage in Christological development, a new element in Christological thinking. Not only Paul, but all early apostles, as suggested by the argumentative structure of the Epistle to the Galatians, are witnesses of a pneumatic Christ.

The idea of a historical Christ emerges later. We encounter initial signs of this in the previously mentioned discussion between Simon and Peter, which in reality pertains to the debate between Jewish Christians and Marcionites in the 2nd century. The often-noted duality in Peter's argumentative structure shows that the idea of a spiritual Christ (in Peter's view) is not yet fully overcome, but the concept of a historical person is also not fully developed¹¹². In any case, it was likely in such disputes that the idea of a "historical" Jesus figure was first conceived. This concept had the invaluable advantage of allowing the respective gospel to be legitimized through connection to historical eyewitnesses, while at the same time undermining all other Christian groups that referred to a merely spiritual Christ. This method of dogmatic assurance and differentiation through historical establishment and exclusion of other Christian groups was continued and further cultivated by the later Catholic Church with the so-called "proof of antiquity."

¹¹² Andreas Lindemann is different, Paul in the oldest Christianity: The image of the apostle and the reception of Pauline theology in early Christian literature up to Marcion: Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Göttingen, 1977 (vol. 58; BHT; Tübingen: Mohr, 1979), 396. "It is particularly clear at this point that Peter of the Catholic Church had to allow the law of action and argumentation to be imposed on him to a certain extent by his opponent, Simon -Paul: The reference that he had accompanied Jesus directly was evidently not sufficient to authorize Peter; the fact that the apostolate requires an ἀποκάλυψις is recognized in principle by the author." - Strange that a group of Judaists (those behind the Catholic Church) disagree with Paul's Simon's claim to revelation. competed, while others, those in Galatia, denied Paul any revelation. It is strange that a group of Judaists (those behind the KII) competed with the revelation claim of Paul-Simon, while others, those in Galatia, denied any revelation to Paul.

8. Another characteristic of the opponents is their self-glorification. Galatians 6:3 reproaches their arrogant attitude: "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself." There may be a specific allusion to the "instigator" of the agitation in Galatia, the aforementioned τις. The idea continues in Galatians 6:4: "Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else." The boastfulness of the opponents might also be targeted in Galatians 5:26: "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." Finally, the motif of self-glorification is echoed in Galatians 6:13, where the author links self-glorification with circumcision, accusing his opponents of wanting "you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh."

The accusation of self-glorification in itself is not very significant. It appears frequently in early Christian polemical literature and is used by authors to refer to various Christian groups. Therefore, based solely on this accusation, without connection to other distinct characteristics, it is impossible to assign it to a specific Christian group. Sometimes it is the Judaizers who are accused of vanity and boasting by (Catholic) church fathers, sometimes Gnostics, or other heretics—in any case, it is always the others.

Schmithals believed that the gnostic background of the opponents is evident here. He argued that they "provoke each other with their pneumatic-ecstatic gifts." The term προκαλέω in Galatians 6:13 (provoke) is supposed to demonstrate this. "The ecstatic displays of the Pneumatic," according to Schmithals, "challenge others to awaken the Pneuma within themselves." If successful, it is a reason for self-glorification; if not, the ecstatic practice is "a challenge to envy."¹¹³ Schmithals draws a connection to the Corinthian letters, where the motif of self-glorification plays a central role.¹¹⁴ There, too, Paul combats those boasting of their spiritual gifts, identifying them as gnostic Pneumatics. Schmithals completely excludes a reference to Judaizing opponents: "The idea of boasting about circumcision is hardly convincing. The notion of envying others for their circumcision (which one could undergo at any time) is utterly inconceivable."¹¹⁵ Moreover, the accusation of physical weakness, which the opponents leveled against Paul (4:13), is "entirely unmotivated" for Judaizers.

¹¹³ Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul*: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Marburg., 34.

¹¹⁴ 1 Cor 5:6; 9:15f; 2 Cor 1:14; 5:12; 9:3

¹¹⁵ Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul*: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Marburg., 34.

It is quite bold to conclude from Galatians 5:26, 6:3f, and 6:13 that there is a gnostic background to the opponents, as the quoted passages do not even hint at such a connection. What Schmithals claims about the ecstatic "performances" of the Pneumatics, which supposedly led to self-glorification or envy in the community, is read into the texts. In 6:3f, there is merely a general parenetic warning against inflated vanity. It is possible that the author had people in mind who were proud of their "perfection" or their righteous way of life, but such people existed among both Gnostics and Judaizers, as we will see below. Galatians 6:13 also shows no connection to Gnostics. On the contrary, the fact that the "circumcision people" boast about the "flesh" of those they have circumcised is a clear indication that the opponents' boasting is related to being circumcised. They are boasting about the circumcised "flesh" rather than the Pneuma, which we would expect if we followed Schmithals.¹¹⁶ It is evident that we are dealing with Judaizers. Even if it seems "hardly convincing" that someone could boast about their circumcision since it could be performed on oneself at any time, one should acknowledge that there are numerous references in literature that confirm just this: the pride of the circumcised in belonging to the chosen people of God. More on this below.

¹¹⁶ Epiph Haer 2. 30. 33 τί δέ καυχῶνται Ἐβίων περὶ περιτομῆς;

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The question of whether others could be envied because of their circumcision, which Schmithals denies with the strange argument that it could be performed on oneself at any time, does not need to be decided. It only arises from Galatians 5:26 if one, like Schmithals, assumes a connection between self-glorification and circumcision, which is not necessarily the case here. That Paul was considered "fleshly" by his opponents cannot be deduced from Galatians 4:13. When would a Pneumatic, for whom the "flesh" meant nothing and the Pneuma meant everything, judge another by the "weakness of his flesh"? And the argument that Paul was accused of not being a Pneumatic because of this is utterly convoluted.

Overall, the arguments Schmithals presents to suggest that the opponents' self-glorification ultimately expressed the Gnostics' pride in possessing the Pneuma are not convincing. Self-glorification and vain boasting also existed among Judaizers. That the author of the Epistle to the Galatians actually had this in mind was already evident from Galatians 6:13, where the connection between self-glorification and circumcision is so obvious that it can hardly be disputed.

The pride of the Judaizers in their circumcision is frequently mentioned in patristic literature. Epiphanius, in particular, reports on this. In the section on the heresy of the Ebionites, he mentions that they boast about their circumcision,¹¹⁶ wondering about such boasting since circumcision is also practiced by idolaters, Egyptian priests, and others. Moreover, many of these mentioned groups practiced circumcision "not because of the Law, but because of senseless tradition." Later, it is mentioned again that the Ebionites are proud of their circumcision and "boast that it is the mark of the patriarchs and the righteous people who lived according to the Law."¹¹⁷ Epiphanius also knows that other Judaizers, such as Nazoreans, Cerinthians, and Merinthians, boast of their circumcision.¹¹⁸

117 Eriph Haer 2 30 26 Αύχοῦσι δε πάλιν περιτομήν εχοντε\$;

118 Eriph Anac 28 Κηρινθιανοί, οί και Μηρινθιανοί. ουτοι οί από Κηρίνθου και Μηρίνθου Ιουδαίοι τινες περιτομήν αύχοῦντ ες Of the Nazarenes Eriph Haer 2 29 8

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There can be no doubt that Jewish Christians were proud of their circumcision as proof of their belonging to the chosen people of God and boasted about it. And it is clear that Epiphanius spoke of the Jewish Christians of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, as he had no others in mind.

...

9. The extensive paraenetic passages in Galatians 5:13-6:10 once served as evidence for Lütgert's thesis that, besides Judaizers, Pneumatics with libertine tendencies also operated in Galatia. The behaviors criticized by the author of the letter, such as sexual immorality and debauchery, did not fit well with law-abiding Judaistic opponents but matched antinomian and libertine tendencies, who would engage in wild orgies and debauchery to demonstrate their newfound freedom and were thus rebuked by the apostle.

The proponents of the Judaizer thesis (1st century) could not deny that the paraenetic statements posed puzzles if they were directed at observant Jewish Christians of a Pharisaic type from the 1st century. However, they disputed Lütgert's assumption of situational exegesis and explained that Paul, in his paraenetic statements, had no specific opponent front in mind but was merely offering some traditional warnings that did not target specific community conditions.

It was only Schmithals who again used Paul's paraenetic statements as an argument for deciding the opponent question, this time in favor of Gnostic libertines. Especially the severe sexual sins that Paul denounced at the beginning of his list of vices, according to Schmithals, clearly pointed to Gnostic origins.

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The arguments previously raised against Lütgert by the proponents of the Judaizer thesis (1st century) were now also applied against Schmithals. Vielhauer sees in the situational interpretation of Galatians 5-6 a methodological error, namely the "ignorance of the form-critical character of paraenesis." Schmithals, on the other hand, points out that it is inadmissible to play "the traditional formulation of Paul's paraenesis on the one hand and its current motivation on the other" against each other. From a formal aspect, it remains "inconceivable how one could fossilize the paraenesis in Galatians 5-6 into something merely traditional and general" .

Lütgert and Schmithals are, of course, right. Paraenetic passages are in a form-critical context, but it would be a very unhistorical view to think that their authors placed them in a kind of vacuum, i.e., completely devoid of any situational context. The proponents of the Judaizer thesis (2nd century), such as Vielhauer, are generally well aware of this. They cannot accept the

situational exegesis of the paraenesis in Galatians 5-6 simply because they cannot explain how accusations such as "immorality," "debauchery," or "sorcery" fit the Judaizers from the 1st century, whom they favor as Paul's opponents.

Lütgert and Schmithals are at least methodologically one step ahead in this point, only their answers to the question of which opponents the paraenetic statements should refer to, if understood situationally, are problematic. These do not point to left-Pauline (Lütgert) or Gnostic libertines (Schmithals), but to Judaizers of the 2nd century, especially Elchasai and his followers. This can be verified point by point.

Galatians 5:19ff warns the readers of the Galatian letter against the "works of the flesh" and then lists them one by one:

119 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Marburg., 34.

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19 The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The behaviors condemned by the author can be categorized into six different groups:

1. Sexual immorality (porneia), impurity (akatharsia), debauchery (aselgeia) (luxuria)
2. Idolatry (eidololatreia)
3. Sorcery (pharmakeia)
4. Hatred (echthrai), discord (eris), jealousy (zēlos), fits of rage (thumoi), selfish ambition (eritheiai), dissensions (dichostasiai), factions (haireseis) (ira)
5. Envy (phthonoi), jealousy (zēlos) (invidia)
6. Drunkenness (methai), orgies (kōmoi) (gula)

1) It is noteworthy that the author first condemns sins of sexual immorality (luxuria) and begins his list of vices with the "triad" of sexual immorality (porneia), impurity (akatharsia), and debauchery (aselgeia). Schmithals claims that these are "typically Gnostic behaviors."¹²⁰ However, such a judgment would be problematic even if one were to take the polemical disparagements of the Gnostics by the Church Fathers at face value. Even they do not dare to reduce Gnostic ethics to the libertine excesses of some exotic fringe groups like the Phibionites. The picture they draw of Gnostic ethics is much more nuanced and complex. There is little talk of "ecstatic licentiousness"; instead, there is much more about their asceticism, which must have been a thorn in the side of the Fathers rooted in Jewish creation theology.

Though they criticize it, even their criticism often carries a hint of admiration for a Christianity that takes its beliefs seriously and consistently pursues the path of overcoming the world through world-renunciation. Therefore, there is no way that these sins of sexual immorality can

be considered "typically Gnostic behaviors." It is quite strange that the image of Gnosticism for some theologians is still determined by some peripheral Gnostic splinter groups. In the accounts of the great Gnostic schools of Valentinus or Marcion, we find hardly any mention of libertine excesses. It is also strange that Schmithals nowhere attempts to specify the supposed Gnostic opponents of Paul or to provide any concrete details about the type of Gnosis Paul was combating. Only the name Cerinthus appears occasionally, with a footnote suggesting that it might have been the Cerinthians who were active in Galatia.¹²¹ Schmithals wisely avoids making the obvious attempt to verify this assumption historically based on the heresiological evidence. He seems quite satisfied with his vague, fluctuating concept of Gnosis, believing he has managed to lump together completely different phenomena like asceticism, libertinism, angel worship, and circumcision with the magic word "Gnosis." However, a specific Gnostic group that exhibits all the profile characteristics observed by Schmithals is historically untraceable.

120 Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul*: also Univ., *Habil.-Schr.-Marburg.*, 36.

121 Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul*: also Univ., *Habil.-Schr.-Marburg.*, 26.

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However, as we have seen, there were Judaizing Christians in the 2nd century to whom the accusation of "sexual immorality" applies perfectly: Elchasai and his followers. Hippolytus' account reveals a Christian group for whom, in matters of sexuality, from incest to adultery, homosexuality, and even sodomy, almost nothing human was foreign. Otherwise, there would have been no need to proclaim a second baptism for serious sexual sinners in the Book of Elchasai. Especially for Marcionites, among whom the Pauline literature presumably arose, the compulsory marriage demanded by Elchasai—which in their eyes was nothing but πορνεία—must have been an outrageous provocation. Not to mention the "hatred of continence" (*enkrateia*), that is, the Elchasaitic rejection of continence, also attested by Epiphanius, which certainly seemed like an attack on their holiest beliefs.¹²² There were enough reasons why Judaizers, especially those who were followers of Elchasai, must have appeared from the perspective of Marcionites and Encratites as representatives of a godless sexual morality, from whom the communities needed to be protected. In other words, the warning of the author of the Galatians against sexual immorality (*πορνεία*), impurity (*ἀκαθαρσία*), and debauchery (*ἀσέλγεια*) is certainly aimed at none other than the Judaizing Christians of the 2nd century, particularly of the Elchasaitic type.

122 Eriph Haer 1.19.1 ἀπεχθάνεται δὲ τῆ παρθενία μισεῖ δὲ τὴν εγκράτειαν ἀναγκάζει δὲ γαμεῖν

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2. The author's warning against idolatry (*εἰδωλολατρία*) undoubtedly has the Elchasaites and their harmful influence on the Marcionite communities in mind. He sees their *stoicheia* service, as shown in Galatians 4:8ff, as real idolatry and a regression to former paganism.

3. Hippolytus informs us that sorcery (φαρμακεία) was also part of Elchasaite Christianity. He tells us that the Elchasaite, like the Pythagoreans with whom they shared the stoicheia service, engaged in mathematics, astrology, and magic, and possessed "powerful words," that is, magical words or spells. Hippolytus also mentions that "incantations and spells" were used by the Elchasaite to heal diseases and possession.

4-5. The vices listed under anger (ἔρις) and jealousy (ζηλοτυπία) likely refer to the factions and discord caused by the Judaizers' agitation. The zeal (ζήλος) mentioned in Galatians 4:17 possibly criticizes the Judaistic missionary zeal, which leads to the "poaching" of Christians from Pauline communities. The sin of envy (φθόνος) might refer to the Judaizers' jealousy of the success of the Pauline mission, as suggested in Homilies 18:10.

6. The final vices mentioned—drunkenness (μέθαι) and carousing (κῶμοι)—are less likely to be specific criticisms of the opponents' behaviors. Warnings against such vices also appear elsewhere (Romans 13:13; 1 Peter 4:3).

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Conclusion: The author of the Epistle to the Galatians had ample reasons to accuse the Judaistic agitators of the Elchasaite type, who demanded adherence to the law without themselves observing it, forced marriage while detesting continence, offered a second baptism for the forgiveness of sins to the gravest sinners, engaged in idolatry (stoicheia worship), and practiced "sorcery," of having lax morals.

...

10. The opponents attacked by the author of the Epistle to the Galatians not only advocate a lax moral code, but they also refuse martyrdom. "They compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12). Circumcision is used by them as a means to avoid persecution. "Paul" feels the need to reiterate the central core of his gospel message to them and his congregation: "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). The cross entails a willingness to face martyrdom for "Paul."

It is clear that the author of the Epistle to the Galatians accuses the opponents of lacking the willingness to embrace martyrdom. The specifics of the persecution are less clear. It is commonly noted that individual synagogues were granted jurisdiction by the Roman state to adjudicate matters concerning their members, both Jews and Jewish Christians. Those who, like Paul, preached a law-free gospel were thus under the pressure of persecution from the synagogue. This pressure could be evaded by those who either left the synagogue or ensured that converted Gentiles were circumcised and thus brought under the synagogue's legal umbrella. This could give rise to Paul's accusation against his opponents that they sought to have the Gentile Christians in Galatia circumcised to gain favor with the synagogue. "The preaching of circumcision protects against persecution by the synagogue."

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That all sounds very plausible. However, it is quite unfortunate that the Jewish sources from the 1st century are completely silent on these events, making the entire hypothesis of Christian persecution in the 1st century rely solely on the information we obtain from early Christian, especially New Testament, writings (Paul!). As long as the dating and authenticity of these sources remain disputed, one would be reluctant to rely on them for methodological reasons.

Conversely, both Jewish and Christian sources document the so-called Aposynagogos. With the cursing of the Minim and the subsequent cursing of the Nozerim in the Eighteen Benedictions, all Jewish Gnostics (minim) and Jewish Christians (nozerim) were excluded from the synagogue community. Deprived of the legal protection previously afforded by the Jewish synagogue, they were now often subject to the persecution of Roman state authorities. In his dialogue with Trypho, Justin Martyr describes the interplay between Jewish and Roman authorities, which resulted in the death of many Christians:

"You can see with your own eyes what happens. For in your synagogues, you curse all those who have become Christians through Jesus, while the Gentiles execute those who merely say they are Christians, making your curse effective. Yet we all respond to them: 'You are our brothers; recognize God's truth!' Even though they, both Gentiles and you, strive violently to make us renounce the name of Christ, we prefer death and suffer in the conviction that God will grant us all the good things He has promised through Christ."¹²⁵

When exactly the synagogue ban took effect, which Justin describes as a present reality for the Christian community in the mid-2nd century, cannot be determined with certainty. It is commonly referred to the synagogue of Jamnia at the end of the 1st century. However, since the cursing of the nozerim = Jewish Christians was only added to the **Eighteen Benedictions** after the condemnation of the minim at Jamnia, a theoretical date up to Justin's time is conceivable.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Just Dial 96:2; cf. Just lApol 1:31; Just Dial 16:4; 47:5; 93:4; 95:4; 108:3; 133:6

¹²⁶ See more recently Daniel Boyarin, *Border lines: The partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (1st paperback ed.; *Divinations*; Philadelphia, Pa.: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 104, <http://www.gbv.de/dms/bowker/toc/9780812219869.pdf>.

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As can be seen, the references to the martyrdom situation in the Galatians letter can be understood without difficulty against the historical backdrop of 2nd-century Christianity. It is quite possible that groups somehow associated with the Nozerim, such as the Elchasaites, sought to avoid exclusion from the synagogue (and thus persecution) by combining mission work with the practice of circumcision. By gaining favor with the synagogue in this manner, they were initially protected from persecution.

While this interpretation would require abandoning the fiction of the letter-writing apostle from the 1st century, it would account for the silence of Jewish sources regarding the alleged persecution of apostate believers from the 1st century.

The lack of willingness to endure martyrdom is, as our sources indicate, a characteristic of Elchasaite Jewish Christianity. Fiery zeal for martyrdom, as seen in Marcionite or Gnostic circles, was apparently unknown here; the attitude was marked by straightforward pragmatism. It is recorded of Elchasai that during persecutions, he advised his followers to practice "mental reservation" and claimed that denying the faith verbally was insignificant. In times of distress, the sensible person would deny the faith with their mouth but not with their heart.

A greater contrast to the Ignatian letters (presumably from Marcionite circles) with their fervent glorification of martyrdom can hardly be imagined.

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The Elchasaite stance on martyrdom must, however, be seen in a broader context. It concerns the fundamental attitude towards theologia crucis. It is very noticeable that this concept plays no role at all in Jewish-Christian writings. In the Pseudoclementines, the death of Jesus is mentioned only once (Horn 3:19f). Already F.C. Baur noted: "The death of Christ had no essential significance for all Jewish Christians..."¹²⁷. Irmischer: The "basic attitude [of the Clementine literature] is the rationalism of the Apologist period. Earthly righteousness provides the guarantee for successfully enduring the Last Judgment; rationabiliter vivere is the demand arising from such a way of life. Faith plays only a subordinate role, Jesus' death has no religious significance, and the Christological problem hardly exists"¹²⁸. And Schoeps states: "Just as there was no supernatural birth, so on the ground of Jewish Christianity there was no soteriological Christology based on Jesus' crucifixion"¹²⁹. According to Theodor bar Konai, who described a Jewish-Christian sect of his time, its members were still rejecting the veneration of the cross (including baptism and Eucharist) at the beginning of the 7th century¹³⁰. As can be seen, Jewish Christians at no time were particular friends of the cross or of any theology based on it, as it was especially taught in the Pauline or Marcionite and subsequently also in the Catholic communities as the core and heart of the Christian faith. We will need to return to this point in connection with the Philippians and the "enemies of the cross" mentioned there.

127 Baur also refers to Ambrosiaster's commentary on Romans, hi (the Jewish Christians) sunt qui et Galatas subverterant, ut a traditione apostoli recedentes iudaizarent. quibus ideo irascitur apostolus, quia docti bene facile fuerant transducti; Romanis autem irasci non debuit, sed et laudare fidem illorum, quia nulla virtutum videntes insignia nec aliquem apostolorum susceperant fidem Christi quamvis corrupto sensu; non enim audierant mysterium crucis Baur, Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ; his life and work, his letters and his teaching; a contribution to a critical history of early Christianity, 391.

128 Johannes Irmischer, "The Pseudo-Clementines", in New Testament Apocrypha in German Translation (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher and Edgar Hennecke; Vol. 2; Tübingen: Mohr, 1971) 323-98 .

129 Schoeps, Theology and History of Jewish Christianity, 26.

130 Schoeps, Theology and History of Jewish Christianity, 332.

11. We now return to the image of Paul as perceived by his opponents, as reconstructed from the Letter to the Galatians. In addition to the accusation discussed in section 7—that Paul was dependent on the Jerusalem apostles and preached a "human gospel"—two more indirect accusations can be identified. Paul was accused of being a "people-pleaser" (Gal 1:10), of trying to persuade people, and of becoming an "enemy" (Gal 4:16). The accusation of deceit, which the authors of 2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians had to defend against, is not addressed by the author of Galatians.

The claim that Paul was a people-pleaser is distinct from the accusation of dependence on others (i.e., the Jerusalem apostles). It is generally accepted that this criticism implies that Paul sought to persuade as many people as possible by compromising the true gospel, making it more palatable than the strict moral demands of the Judaizers.¹³¹ This is reflected in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, where the author insists they speak not to please people but to please God who tests their hearts. However, the accusation of people-pleasing is not always refuted. In 1 Corinthians 10:33, the author acknowledges that they seek to please everyone in everything, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of many, so they may be saved. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Paul" expresses a desire to win people over.

Schmithals attempts to use Galatians 1:10 to support his Gnostic hypothesis by interpreting it as follows: Paul, according to his opponents, only tried to persuade people but withheld the "ecstatic demonstrations" expected of a true apostle. Schmithals argues that such an accusation could only be of Gnostic origin and could only come from Gnostics.¹³²

¹³¹ Lietzmann, *4n the Galatians*, 230.

¹³² Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters*: also Univ., *Habil.-Schr.-Marburg.*, 39.

Exegesis has indeed stretched its imagination in the past to explain the origin of the accusation against Paul. It is peculiar that the anti-Pauline literature of the 2nd century was largely ignored in this context.¹³³ This would have made it evident that the accusation of people-pleasing against Paul is clearly a topos of the 2nd-century Judaeo-Christian polemic against Paul, as seen in the pseudo-Clementine literature.

In Homilies 18:10, we read about a public debate between Peter and Simon (who, again, represents Paul/Marcion). Simon just acknowledged that the Son is just and that the revelation of the Son could only be given to those who are worthy of it. Therefore, the work of revelation rightly belongs to the Son, who alone knows who is worthy of it. Simon cannot even understand what Peter has declared to him. Under the pressure of Peter's "syllogisms," Simon blushes and rubs his forehead. However, he is not ready to give up and assures the audience that he,

Simon, deemed all present worthy of the revelation of the unknown Father. Peter, Simon claims, is just jealous because Simon wants to do good for everyone (cf. 1 Cor 10:33).

Peter responds:

"Since you have spoken in this way to please the people present (Ἐπειδὴ ἀρεσκόντεος τοῖς παροῦσιν οὐλοῖς οὕτω ζ εφης), I will speak to them not to please them, but to tell them the truth (ἐγὼ ἐρῶ οὐκ ἀρεσκόντως, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῶς)."

The polemic against Simon continues elsewhere. In Homilies 20:18, Peter reports that Simon has incited the crowd in Antioch. In Homilies 4:2, the deceiver Simon "steals the souls of many," meaning he beguiles the crowd with his speeches. In Homilies 2:37, Peter's followers infiltrate the enemy camp, pretending that Simon's persuasion has convinced them. Recognitions 3:63 reports that Simon plans to go to Rome to please the people so that, thinking him a god, they would honor him with divine reverence. Before a discussion with Peter, Simon stands surrounded by the crowd in the marketplace, attempting to win over the ears of the people with his evil persuasions (... persuasionibus pessimis praevenire aures populi cupiens).

133 Schoeps is the honorable exception

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The selection might suffice to show that the image of Simon-Paulus, who beguiles the crowd with his persuasion skills, is a topos of anti-Pauline polemic.

This also applies to the second accusation against Paul, that he has become an "enemy," cf. Gal 4:16: "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" The accusation is surprising, as one wonders how and under what circumstances the Apostle and founder of the community, who was recently received as an angel (4:14), could suddenly—apparently only due to some outside false teachers who had infiltrated the communities—be considered an "enemy." Why this abrupt change in sentiment?

The Galatians letter does not provide an answer. Its author did not need to explain because he was evidently familiar with the designation of Paul as an "enemy" from the Judeo-Christian literature of his time, which later formed the basis for the pseudo-Clementine novel. Simon-Paulus is here considered the ultimate enemy along with his followers. His entourage is likened to a hostile army camp, into which spies are sent to discover his intentions (Hom 2:37). In Homilies 17:18, Peter compares his revelation with that of Simon Peter, finally stating: "You see now how it is an expression of anger to act through visions and dreams; friendly encounter is found, however, where one speaks face to face, in outer appearance, and not through riddles, visions, and dreams, as with an enemy" (ὡς πρὸς ἐχθρόν). At night, Simon is tormented by angels who harass him because he is an "enemy of the proclaimer of truth" (ὡς ἐχθρόν ὄντα τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας κήρυκι) (Hom 20:19). In another passage from the pseudo-Clementine Homilies (Clem Hom 2:18), which will be discussed in more detail below in connection with the Corinthian letters, Peter speaks of his "predecessor" Simon-Paulus in various paradoxes: Although he (by the crowd) is received as a friend, he is in truth an enemy (Σίμω ν... και ὁ ἐχθρός ὡς φίλος

ἀποδέδεικται). In a section from the *Epistula Petri* 1:2, which precedes the pseudo-Clementine novel, Peter warns of imminent divisions. Some from the Gentiles have rejected his lawful proclamation and instead preferred a lawless and senseless teaching of the hostile man (κήρυγμα τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἀνθρώπου). Here, too, the enemy is of course no other than Paul, as the reference to Gal 2:11-14 in 2:4 shows. It is claimed that Peter is slandered for the dissolution of the law (εἰς τὴν τοῦ νόμου κατάλυσιν). Lindemann: "The keyword in connection with the very clear quotation from Gal 2 makes Peter appear almost as an incarnation of Satan".¹³⁴ The *Recognitions* also know the *homo quidam inimicus*. In Rec 1:70, he appears as a persecutor of James and his followers. Rec 3:52 has Niceta describe Simon as an enemy of God (Simon qui adversatur deo). Peter also describes Simon in Rec 2:16 as an "enemy of God" (*inimicum se exhibet deo*). The "enemy" is closely related to the ἀντικείμενος, as Simon-Paulus appears in PsClem Hom 1:22; 8:9; 17:19; 18:12; 1 Cor 16:9; Phil 1:28 this accusation is "returned" by "Paul".¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Lindemann, *Paul in the oldest Christianity: The image of the apostle and the reception of Pauline theology in early Christian literature up to Marcion*:Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Göttingen, 1977,105.

¹³⁵ Whether this is the case depends on how one judges the authenticity of 2 Thess.

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The question now is whether and in what way the pseudo-Clementines refer to the Letter to the Galatians or whether the author of the Letter to the Galatians refers to the pseudo-Clementines or their sources.

Strecker holds the view that it cannot be proven that the pseudo-Clementine author used any traditional material that goes back to the early Christian community.¹³⁶ Thus, there would be only a purely literary relationship, in that the Pauline letters and the presentation of the Lukan Acts of the Apostles would have provided the material for his writing. Only the motive was "the same as that which drove the post-New Testament Judaists to fight Paul." However, it is very hard to imagine how the little we learn from the Pauline letters about Simon, the people-pleasing persuader, or enemy, could have inspired the author of the pseudo-Clementine foundational document to his much broader depiction.

¹³⁶ Georg Strecker, *Jewish Christianity in the Pseudo-Clementines* (Vol. 70, 2., ed. and expanded; *Texts and Studies on the History of Early Christian Literature*; Berlin: Akad.-Verl., 1981), 196

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One could therefore, with Schoeps, suspect that we are dealing here and elsewhere with individual elements of anti-Pauline polemics, which the author of the pseudo-Clementine foundational document drew from the oral tradition about Paul. The arguments used by the author would thus be much older and would have already been expressed during the Apostle's lifetime. However, aside from the fact that the pseudo-Clementines would consequently have to be granted a much greater significance for the historical image of Paul than has been the case so far, it remains unclear what purpose would have been served by preserving the old polemic

against Paul for over a hundred years only to neutralize or render it practically incomprehensible in the 2nd century by merging it with Simon/Marcion.¹³⁷ Wouldn't such a polemic against Paul have had to fizzle out completely by then?

137 Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Urgemeinde, Judenchristentum, Gnosis* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), 19.,...that we must have all the arguments of the Judaists from the Pauline letters together in one speech. Now there is no doubt that this polemic is carried out in a diction and is linked to ideas and designations that are only possible in the second century at the earliest. Currently, this speech is obviously directed against Gnostics who have appealed to the Pauline vision. It also seems certain to me that the author of this artistic literary document had Pauline letters and canonical acts in front of him, so that we are dealing here with a much later anti-Paulinism. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we are justified in assuming that the old arguments of the Judaists against Paul have been used and preserved here. It is from this literature that they gain colour and context."

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In Strecker's above-cited remark that the polemic between the pseudo-Clementines and Pauline literature is "literarily determined," there is indeed some truth. The conflict between the author of the Galatians and the Jewish Christians of the 2nd century could indeed have taken place primarily on the literary level. However, in this literary feud, it is not the pseudo-Clementine source author referring to the Galatians but rather the author of the Galatians referring to the pseudo-Clementine sources of the Clementine novel.

...

12. It is generally assumed by proponents of both the Gnostic hypothesis and the 1st-century Judaist hypothesis that the agitators in Galatia infiltrated the communities from the outside and conducted missionary work there. According to Schmithals, "Gnostic false teachers...can be continuously detected in the Aegean region since the third missionary journey of the Apostle Paul." For this reason, it is "necessary to assume a Gnostic competition or parallel mission already in the apostolic age."¹³⁸ This claim is substantiated by references to the Pauline letters, including Colossians, Ephesians, and Pastoral letters, as well as Revelation, Jude, 2 Peter, 1 John, and Acts. The reference to Acts 20:29f is particularly surprising, as Paul (on his 3rd missionary journey) in Ephesus, in his farewell speech in Ephesus, explicitly announces the appearance of (Gnostic) false teachers only for the time "after his departure" (meaning the Apostle's death)¹³⁹.

138 Schmithals, *New Testament and Gnosis*, 153.

139 Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Vol. 3, 7., translated and amended; *Critical-Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 568. "But what is meant is not Paul's departure from Ephesus or the East, but his departure from this world: according to Likas, the false teachers only penetrated the communities after the time of the apostles [emphasis mine]."

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Acts 20:29-30: "I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

The passage supports the opposite of what Schmithals intends to demonstrate, namely, that Paul—at least from Luke's perspective—did not have to contend with Gnostic false teachers during his lifetime, and that the Gnostic threat to the communities was a phenomenon of the post-apostolic era. The remaining New Testament writings cited by Schmithals to prove the existence of a Gnostic counter-mission in the 1st century—apart from the letters considered genuinely Pauline—are dated by even conservative exegetes either to the 2nd century (Pastoral letters, Jude, 2 Peter) or towards the end of the 1st century (Colossians, Ephesians, Revelation), but not to the apostolic age. As for the genuinely Pauline letters, they would only attest to the existence of a Gnostic counter-mission in the 1st century if a) the opponents could be clearly identified as Gnostics and b) the letters could be definitively dated to the 1st century. Both assumptions are questionable.

The first assumption is not shared by the majority of exegetes today, who, in various modifications, support the 1st-century Judaist hypothesis. However, the proponents of the 1st-century Judaist hypothesis are no better off than Schmithals regarding their required proof of a Judaistic counter-mission. We have already pointed out the problems. Not only is there no mention of a Judaistic counter-mission in the early Christian sources—outside of the Pauline letters—but it is also unlikely, as Schmithals has shown, because the global Gentile mission by ultra-conservative Judaists (of the Pharisaic type), who alone come into question here (Acts 15:5), would be a contradiction in terms.

C. Breytenbach, based on these and other considerations, particularly with the argument that there is no evidence of itinerant missionaries for proselyte recruitment except for Matthew 23:15, has concluded that the conflict in Galatia is a local dispute, specifically a conflict between synagogue-affiliated Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.¹⁴⁰

140 Breytenbach, Paul and Barnabas and the Province of Galatia: Studies on Acts 13f: 16.6: 18.23 and the addressees of the Epistle to the Galatians, 141f. "Now it should not be denied that since the third century there has been a movement in Judaism that aimed at the integration of proselytes.⁷ The question that arises in our context, however, is whether there was a Jewish missionary movement before 70 AD. This question in particular has been answered negatively by various parties in recent years" - with reference to [The title cannot be displayed - The template "Footnote - - (standard template)" contains no information.], [The title cannot be displayed - The template "Footnote - - (standard template)" contains no information.] and other Jewish researchers. "As for Matthew 23:15, an unprecedented polemical cry of woe from the special material of the Gospel of Matthew: Even if such a Pharisaic practice had existed before 70 AD, it is only documented after 70 and only once. It is questionable whether one can conclude from such a narrow basis that there was a general practice of Jewish (Pharisaic) itinerant mission."

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Breytenbach's hypothesis of a local conflict aligns with the negative finding that there are no sources to support the claim of a widespread Judaistic counter-mission encompassing the Christian ecumene in the 1st century. However, against his hypothesis of a purely local conflict

speaks the fact that the other Pauline letters also contend with opponents whose profiles, in many respects and with varying modifications, share similar characteristics with those of Paul's opponents in the Letter to the Galatians.

This dilemma, as previously suggested, can be resolved by the 2nd-century Judaistic hypothesis. If the author of the Letter to the Galatians is contending with Judaists, which, given the observations made above, cannot be doubted, and if the agitation opposed in the Letter to the Galatians is part of a larger systematic anti-Pauline competition and parallel mission, as also evidenced by comparisons with other Pauline letters, yet this cannot be traced anywhere in the 1st century (outside of the Pauline letters), it is advisable to look beyond the horizon of the 1st century and seek evidence for an anti-Pauline counter-mission that the author of Galatians might be referring to in the 2nd century—especially since the Judaists in question are of the Elchasaitic type, which only appears in the 2nd century.

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Indeed, within this very timeframe, i.e., the first half of the 2nd century, we find several indications that can demonstrate the existence of Jewish-Christian or Judaistic missionary activities. Justin confirms the existence of two different Jewish-Christian groups around the middle of the 2nd century: a tolerant faction that did not shy away from fellowship with Gentile Christians living in law-free conditions and an intolerant faction that separated itself from the Gentile Christians and sought to impose the Law upon them.

"There are some people who would not even dare to engage in conversation with the aforementioned individuals or be in the same room with them. I do not agree with them. If those people, in their spiritual narrowness, wish to combine the hope in our Christ with the observation of the eternal and naturally grounded legal precepts and religious practices, and as much as possible, all those Mosaic customs, which, in our opinion, were enacted because of the hardness of the people's hearts, if they decide to live together with the Christian believers without, as I said, persuading them to circumcision, Sabbath observance, or similar, then I think they must be accepted and treated in all things as blood relatives and brothers." "But if, O Trypho," I continued, "your countrymen, who claim to believe in our Christ, compel the Gentile Christians to live according to the Mosaic law (νόμον ἀναγκάζουσι ζην, cf. ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμας περιτέμνεσθαι, Gal 6:12; cf. Gal 2:14) or refuse to have fellowship with them, in this case, I also do not acknowledge them in the same way."¹⁴¹

Schoeps suspects that this is a projection of the conditions described in Acts from the apostolic era into the present.¹⁴² Yet aside from the fact that it is not even clear whether Justin knew the Acts of the Apostles at all,¹⁴³ the opposite is much more likely. The more reasonable assumption is that the situation described in Acts 15 reflects the conditions of the 2nd century. In any case, it cannot be seriously disputed that Justin's testimony provides unequivocal evidence of the presence of Jewish-Christian missionary activities in the 2nd century. A characteristic feature of this faction is its separation from Gentile Christians and its adherence to the Law. Whether these groups demanded strict or less strict observance of the Law cannot be inferred

from Justin's testimony. What is clear is that circumcision and the Sabbath commandment were naturally included.

141 Just Dial 47:2-3

142 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 14.

143 See F. Overbeck, *On the Relationship of Justin Martyr to the Acts of the Apostles*, ZWTh, 15, 1872, p. 336:

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We find further evidence of Judaistic missionary activities in later times with Jerome (ad Jes. 1:12, concerning the Ebionites) and Augustine, who said of the Nazarenes of his time that "they compel the Gentiles to live as Jews" (cogerent judaizare).

A much too neglected, almost classic proof of the existence of Jewish-Christian missionary intent in the 2nd century, along with its theological justification, is provided in the passages from the Pseudoclementines, Hom 2:17 and Rec 1:64, which we briefly discussed earlier. The concept of both pseudoclementine writings includes the "persecution motif." Peter must follow his "predecessor," the Gentile missionary Simon, from city to city to correct the false gospel he has preached (in public disputation with his opponent).

In Hom 2:17, this is justified by the idea that:

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"First, a false gospel from an imposter must come, and then, after the destruction of the holy place, a true gospel can be sent out to correct the coming sects."¹⁴⁴

The reason for this order, where the better follows the worse, is seen in the Syzygian order:

"According to this order, one could recognize where Simon belongs, who was the first to go to the Gentiles before me, and where I belong, who followed him as light follows darkness, knowledge follows ignorance, healing follows sickness."

Here we find the Jewish-Christian Syzygian concept already mentioned above. In the divine economy of salvation, the stronger follows the weaker, the greater follows the lesser, light follows darkness, the true gospel follows the false, and Peter follows Paul. The true gospel is, of course, the legalistic, i.e., Jewish-Christian one, sent to correct the false gospel from the deceiver Simon, and this happened after the destruction of the Temple.

The peculiar "achronological"¹⁴⁵ depiction—Peter starting his mission after the Temple's destruction—is clearly due to the perspective of the 2nd-century author. He is already looking back on the history of Christian mission. For him, Peter represents a Jewish-Christian oriented Christianity, while Simon represents the Marcionite segment of the then-Christendom that referred to Paul. The Jewish-Christian mission follows the Pauline-Marcionite one, aiming to

correct the deceitful gospel that originated from Simon, behind which a clear allusion to Marcion is made in the pseudoclementine literature.

144 οὕτως ἢ ὡς ὁ ἀληθῆς ἡμῖν προφήτης εἶρηκεν πρῶτον ψευδὲς δεῖ ἔλθειν εὐαγγέλιον ὑπὸ πλάνου τινὸς καὶ εἶθ' οὕτως μετὰ καθαίρεσιν τοῦ ἁγίου τόπου εὐαγγέλιον ἀληθὲς κρύφα διαπεμφθῆναι εἰς ἑπ' ἀνόρθωσιν τῶν ἔσομένων αἰρέσεων

145 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 190.

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The author evidently has to acknowledge that the Pauline-Marcionite communities have a chronological precedence over the Petrine ones and that the Pauline-Marcionite gospel is therefore older than the Jewish-Christian one (at least in this geographical area).

More specific details about the beginning of the Jewish-Christian missionary activities can be found in Rec 1:64, where the representatives of Judaism are told in the form of a prophecy:

"Because you refuse to recognize that the time of sacrifices is now over, the temple will be destroyed, and the abomination of desolation will be set up in the holy place; and then the gospel will be preached to the Gentiles as a testimony against you."

This passage not only makes it clear that the Jewish-Christian missionary movement began after the destruction of the temple according to the author. Unlike in Hom 2:17, where it is unclear whether the temple destruction refers to the year 70 or 135, the author of the *Recognitions* is more precise: he additionally mentions the setting up of the "abomination of desolation," i.e., the statue of Zeus Olympios erected by Hadrian in Jerusalem after the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135). Therefore, the beginning of the Jewish-Christian mission falls precisely in this time, i.e., the time of Antoninus Pius (138-161), the time of Justin (see above), and Marcion. This is also the period during which we may consider the letter to the Galatians to have been written, as a response by a Marcionite Christian (possibly Marcion himself?) to the missionary and expansionist tendencies of a Jewish-Christianity of the Elchasaite type. Despite the pseudepigraphical address "to the Galatians," the letter was likely aimed at Christians in Asia Minor, possibly in Coele-Syria, which Strecker also considers as the homeland of the author of the pseudoclementine base text. Strecker mentions that "in the earliest church history ... in Syria, the confrontation with Jewish Christianity - by Ignatius of Antioch ... - had already begun; there, the Jewish influence on Christianity was strong for a long time."¹⁴⁷ There are several similarities between the heretics addressed by the original author of the Ignatius letters (as a witness to an aggressive Judaistic mission in the 2nd century) and those in the letter to the Galatians, which we will show later. A significant common feature, for example, is the demand for circumcision and the observance of the law, although the "service" is not mentioned in the Ignatius letters (the so-called "Docetism" of the opponents in the Ignatians was later inserted by the Catholic editor).

146 ... et quia vos non vultis agnoscere, emensum esse iam tempus hostias offerendi, whether hoc destruetur et templum, et abominatio desolationis statuatur in loco sancto, et tunc gentibus evangelium praedicabitur ad testimonium vestri... [= ... and because you do not want to acknowledge that the time for offering sacrifices has already passed, for this reason it will be destroyed and the temple, and the abomination of desolation shall be established in the holy place, and there the gospel shall be preached to the nations to your testimony...]

147 Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* [=Theology and History of Jewish Christianity], 260.

...

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I hope that the previous explanations have made it clear that there can only be one solution to the question of the opponents in the letter to the Galatians: the Judaizing theory of the 2nd century. This theory avoids the problems faced by the proponents of the Judaizing theory of the 1st century or the Gnostic theory while being able to integrate the legitimate questions and accurate observations they raised on a "meta-level." The proponents of the Judaizing theory of the 1st century were and are correct in insisting on the Jewish background and the legalism (Nomismus) of Paul's opponents. There can indeed be no doubt about that. However, apart from the fact that they failed to establish a plausible connection between Paul's opponents and the Jerusalem pillar apostles, they were unable to explain the syncretistic features in the opponents' profile plausibly. Here, the proponents of a "syncretistic" Judaizing theory of the 1st century and those of the Gnostic theory were superior. The plausibility of their explanation, however, suffered greatly because they, in turn, could not plausibly prove the existence of a syncretistic Judaism in the 1st century, as the evidence they provided all came from a later period and mostly referred to the Jewish Christianity of the 2nd, not the 1st century. Not to mention that it is unacceptable to deny the legalism of Paul's opponents, as Schmithals had to do with unwavering consistency to save his Gnostic theory.

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The Judaizing theory of the 2nd century avoids all the one-sidedness and narrowness of the previous solution approaches. We neither need to simply deny the syncretism of the opposing Jewish Christians, nor do we need to close our eyes to the fact that such syncretistic Jewish Christianity simply did not exist in the 1st century; there is not a single piece of evidence for it. The main advantage of the Judaizing theory of the 2nd century is that it alone can explain the connection between the stoicheia service, legalism, and circumcision among Paul's opponents. As mentioned, this constellation is recorded only once in religious and church history: with Elchasai and his followers, thus only in the 2nd century! Therefore, one can rightly state that—speaking in Hegelian terms—the thesis (Judaizing theory of the 1st century) and antithesis (Gnostic theory, syncretistic Judaizing theory of the 1st century) have long been pushing towards a synthesis in which the various elements of truth are truly sublated. The Judaizing theory of the 2nd century can undoubtedly be described as such a synthesis,

Elchasai in the Letter to the Colossians

We continue our investigation of the opponent question with the Letter to the Colossians. The Letters to the Galatians and the Colossians are—despite all the differences, which we will still address—connected by a "link": the service to the *stoicheia* by the opponents. In the discussion of the *stoicheia* service in the Letter to the Galatians, we already made a comparison with a corresponding passage from the Letter to the Colossians, which shows that the opponents fought against there also knew and practiced an elemental service. Associated with the *stoicheia* service is the worship of angels (2:18) "and the spiritual beings that fill the world and have power over humans, possibly also the astral powers."¹⁴⁸

Apart from the *stoicheia* or angel service, which we want to note again under 1 in our list of profile features, the profile of the opponents fought against by the author of Colossians includes other peculiarities, some of which match those of the heresies fought against in the Letter to the Galatians, and some of which differ:

2. The heretics apparently demand and practice the rite of circumcision and observe certain holy times like the new moon and Sabbath (2:16).
3. Additionally, they adhere to certain dietary regulations (2:16, 21). In all of this, they refer to ancient traditions (2:8, 22). But these commandments, in the eyes of the author of Colossians, have only an appearance of wisdom. The self-righteous piety, humility, and asceticism are worthless and only satisfy the flesh, i.e., vanity.
4. Their teaching is either described by themselves or by the author of Colossians as philosophy (2:8).
5. An individual opponent might play an important role (2:8, 18).
6. The opponent makes a pneumatic claim and refers to visions (2:18).

¹⁴⁸ Kümmel, Feine, and Behm, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 296.

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on false humility and worship of angels, taking pride in what they have seen, and being puffed up without reason by their fleshly mind.

When comparing the two profiles of the opponents in Galatians and Colossians, the similarities are immediately apparent: Points 1 and 2 correspond with the respective points in the list of characteristics of the opponents in Galatians presented earlier. Point 3 introduces another characteristic of the false teachers, the adherence to certain dietary regulations, which was not

mentioned in Galatians. The designation of the opposing teaching as "philosophy" (Point 4) is also significant compared to Galatians. On the other hand, Points 5 and 6, as we will see more clearly below, can certainly be compared with the corresponding characteristics of the false teachers in Galatians.

A key difference, however, is the absence of current polemics directed against Paul personally, which takes up considerable space in the Letter to the Galatians and compels the author to defend the Apostle, shaping the theme of the letter and significantly influencing its style (Points 11 and 7 above). Similarly, the issue of the law recedes into the background. Instead, Christological statements, which are relatively rare in the Letter to the Galatians, dominate. Additionally, the accusation of lax morals among the opponents cannot be explicitly derived from the Letter to the Colossians. The author of Colossians cannot help but acknowledge that their humility, piety, and asceticism have an "appearance of wisdom," but it is only an appearance. They are self-serving and serve the flesh, i.e., vanity and vainglory (similar to how circumcision was only a cause for boasting among the opponents in the Letter to the Galatians, see Point 8). The prominence of sexual sins in the parenetic section of Colossians 3:5 is reminiscent of Galatians 5:19f and could indirectly suggest a lax sexual morality among the opponents. The attached accusation of idolatry, also known from Galatians, might similarly refer to the *stoicheia* service practiced by the opponents. Nothing can be gleaned from Colossians about the opponents' attitude toward martyrdom. Whether and to what extent the opponents' propaganda is part of a targeted anti-Pauline counter-mission remains unclear. However, it does not seem to be an "endogenous phenomenon of the community,"¹⁴⁹ as was the case in Galatians.

¹⁴⁹ Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 193.

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The heresiological classification of the false teachers in the Letter to the Colossians is not without controversy, although it is not as contentious as that of the Letter to the Galatians. The division between proponents of the Gnostic thesis and supporters of the Judaizing thesis is by no means as clear-cut and unambiguous as it is in the case of Galatians. Advocates of the Judaizing thesis concede syncretistic or even Gnostic elements in the false teachers, while a proponent of the Gnostic thesis like Schmithals fully acknowledges the anti-Judaic character of some passages in the Letter to the Colossians. Furthermore, the group of supporters of a 1st-century Judaizing thesis is not homogeneous but is divided into several factions: those exegetes who consider the letter genuinely Pauline or, for other reasons, advocate for a 1st-century origin, and those who see it as a pseudepigraphic product from the "Pauline school." Among the latter, there have been and still are a few who do not entirely rule out a late 2nd-century origin. In other words, in the case of Colossians, there are both proponents of the 1st-century Judaizing thesis and proponents of the 2nd-century Judaizing thesis, something that does not exist in the case of Galatians.

At this point, unlike in the previous section, we do not intend to engage in a fundamental critique of the various positions, especially since these positions are much less clearly distinguishable

than they are in Galatians. Instead, we will address other positions on a case-by-case basis, only to the extent necessary for our discussion. Otherwise, the primary focus will be on demonstrating that the opponents in Colossians are also representatives of that large Jewish-Christian anti-Pauline opposition of the 2nd century, as we have just encountered in the Letter to the Galatians, specifically of a Jewish Christianity of the Elchasaite type. We will proceed systematically, as in the previous section, by discussing the various profile characteristics of the false teachers in Colossians one by one and comparing them with those of 2nd-century Elchasaite Jewish Christianity.

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As with Galatians, situating the opponents of the Letter to the Colossians in the second century naturally includes the assertion that the Letter to the Colossians itself originated in this period, thereby implying its pseudepigraphical nature. Unlike in the case of Galatians, this demonstration may not present anything fundamentally new to some exegetes, at least in principle, since the pseudepigraphical nature of the Letter to the Colossians as a "Deutero-Pauline" writing has long been established for them, and even the thesis of the letter's second-century origin is already known. However, the specific variant of the 2nd-century Judaizing thesis proposed here, with its focus on Elchasaite Christianity, might indeed provide a few new perspectives in the interpretation of the letter—beyond what Bornkamm has already contributed on this topic in his excellent study "Die Haresie des Kolosserbriefs."

1. The *stoicheia* service of the false teachers is mentioned twice in the Letter to the Colossians. In Colossians 2:8, the author of the letter warns his readers against the teachings of the opponents:

"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ."

A similar argument structure to Galatians 4:9 is encountered in Colossians 2:20. While Galatians argues that it is (at least theoretically) impossible to return to the *stoicheia* service after receiving the knowledge of God, for the author of Colossians, it is inconceivable that a Christian, who has died to the elements of the world (through baptism), would subject themselves again to regulations:

"If with Christ you died to the elements of the world, why do you submit to regulations, as if you were still living in the world?"

Colossians 2:8 shows more clearly than the corresponding parallels in Galatians that the term *stoicheia tou kosmou* could not have been introduced by the author himself, but rather, it must have already played an important role in the "philosophy" of his opponents. If this were not the case, his argument would have likely been incomprehensible to his readers. While one might—with much imagination and without regard for the alleged Jewish background and upbringing of the former Pharisee Paul¹⁵⁰—explain the *stoicheia* service assumed in Galatians 4:10 as an interpretative construct by the author, who saw in the observance of Jewish festival

times a form of the old pagan worship of astral spirits, such a helpful clue is entirely absent in Colossians 2:8. The meaning of the phrase remains obscure, as it is difficult to understand what is meant by a philosophy "according to the elements of the world" without such a clue.

150 Phil 3:5, Acts 23:6.

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Luz, who in his commentary on Colossians would still like to understand the "elements of the world" as an interpretation by the author, sees it as a "phrase to be set in quotation marks, referring back to Galatians 4. What Jesus said to the Pharisaic ritualists and what Paul said to the Judaizing opponents in Galatia, therefore, also applies to those whom the Colossians are dealing with."¹⁵¹ Yet, even as an allusion to Galatians 4, the sentence would hardly be understandable, especially since it is not even proven that the readers (or the author) knew the Letter to the Galatians at all.

Unlike Luz, however, most New Testament exegetes today have little difficulty admitting that *stoicheia tou kosmou* is an opponent's term. Since they generally consider the Letter to the Colossians to be a Deutero-Pauline writing from the post-apostolic period, they can apparently accept more readily the assumption associated with such an interpretation—the existence of a syncretistic Judaism during this time. Even Vielhauer, who strongly argued with regard to the Letter to the Galatians that the *stoicheia tou kosmou* is an interpretation by the opponents, cannot help but acknowledge, given the relatively clear evidence in the Letter to the Colossians, that here "unlike in Galatians 4:3, 9 ... it is not an interpretation by the author, but rather a keyword and indeed a fundamental concept of the opponents."¹⁵² The likelihood of such a "double interpretation" of a phenomenon within a relatively cohesive text corpus, like the Pauline corpus despite all its undeniable divergences, has already been critically noted above.

151 Becker and Luz, *Galater, Epheser, Kolosser*, 220. Schenke 160.

152 Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 193.

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If we understand *stoicheia tou kosmou* in Colossians 2:8 as an opponent's term, in the same sense as in Galatians 4, the meaning of the sentence poses no great difficulties. The author of Colossians takes up the opponents' claim that they have developed a universal Christian teaching, which represents the highest wisdom ("philosophy"), based on tradition and belief in the *stoicheia*.

However, with this accusation, the author could not have had any teaching other than the Elchasaite doctrine in mind, as it is the only early Christian heresy in which a *stoicheia* cult can be demonstrated. As we have seen, the teaching of Elchasai attributed extraordinary significance to the cult of the elements, to the point that these could be invoked as witnesses during washings and immersions. Such cultic worship of the elements, which is attested to us,

likely represented only the tip of the iceberg. Behind this must have stood a comprehensive cosmology with an extensive *stoicheia* doctrine, which we can no longer reconstruct given the few fragments of the Book of Elchasai that we possess. We only know that astrology, mathematics, incantations, medicine, divination, etc., were combined in Elchasai into a peculiar Christian universal science and religion, in which the followers recognized the highest "wisdom" (*sophia*) (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 2:17), and for this reason, it also rightly deserved the name of a philosophy (in the ancient sense).¹⁵³

153 Ewald aptly characterizes the teaching of Elchasai: "He [Elchasai] established a doctrine concerning all things in the world [emphasis mine], as if everything individual were created or at least shaped as either male or female, and as if there were, as the Chaldean astrologers taught, certain unlucky stars and unlucky times."—Theodoret also says of Cerinthus (in *Compendium of Heretical Myths* 83.389.14) that after he had spent much time in Egypt... Even Augustine, in his *Enchiridion* (ch. 9), counts **engagement with the elements** among the characteristics of philosophy: "Thus, when the question is raised as to what one must actually believe as pertaining to religion, it is not a matter of investigating the nature of a thing in the way it is done by those whom the Greeks call physicists. Nor need one be afraid if perhaps a Christian knows nothing about the power and number of the elements, or about the movement, order, and eclipses of the stars, or about the shape of the celestial vault, or about the classes and nature of living beings, plants, stones, springs, rivers, and mountains, or about the magnitude of spatial and temporal dimensions, or about the signs of climatic phenomena, or about all the myriad things that those scholars have actually discovered or at least believe they have discovered." Heinrich Ewald, *History of the Outcomes of the People of Israel and the Post-Apostolic Age* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1859), 158.

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The doctrine of Elchasai was not only a "philosophy" grounded in a cosmology "according to the elements of the world," but as a Jewish-Christian religious philosophy, it naturally also relied on the principle of tradition; as a "tradition of men," it was an interpretation of the Law, to which circumcision obligated. There is little doubt that Elchasai appeared as an interpreter of Scripture (cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 19.1,8-9), even if he interpreted it in his own way and, with his interpretation, certainly far exceeded the boundaries of orthodoxy in the eyes of a devout Jew. In doing so, he did nothing different from the representatives of other Jewish groups of his time. Of these, Hippolytus says in *Refutation of All Heresies* 9:28:

"Due to their particular opinions, they bear special names. They adhere to the ancient tradition and constantly dispute over what is clean and unclean according to the Law."

We receive an interesting, previously entirely unnoticed indication of the existence of such a cosmological system within early Jewish Christianity from the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, which have often been attributed Elchasaite tendencies.¹⁵⁴ In it, Peter unfolds the following doctrine:

"When God created the world, as Lord of the universe, He appointed princes (*princeps* = *archon*) over the various creatures, even over the trees and over the mountains and the springs and the rivers and over all things that He made, as we have told you... Therefore, He appointed an angel as prince over the angels, a spirit over the spirits, a star over the stars, a demon over the demons, a bird over the birds, a wild beast over the wild beasts, a serpent over the serpents, a fish over the fishes, a man over the men, who is Jesus Christ."¹⁵⁵

154 However, see Waitz, *Das Buch Elchasai, Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 46 (1921), 87-104, who emphasizes the contrasts; cf. Luttikhuizen, *Revelation*, 16ff.

155 "Deus cum fecisset mundum, tamquam universitatis dominus singulis quibusque creaturis principes statuit, ipsis quoque arboribus montibusque et fontibus ac fluviis et universis, ut diximus, quae fecerat. 2 multum enim est ire per singula. statuit ergo angelis angelum principem et spiritibus spiritum, sideribus sidus, daemonibus daemonem, avibus avem, bestiis bestiam, serpentem serpentibus, piscem piscibus, hominibus hominem, qui est Christus Iesus." – Cf. also *Testament of Job* 25.

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This is not the place to delve into the various religious-historical roots and entanglements of this strange doctrine. It is not impossible that there are connections to the oriental *Aion* theology, as Bornkamm once suggested.¹⁵⁶ However, it is clear that in this text, influenced by the syncretistic Elchasaite Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century, we encounter precisely those ideas against which the author of Colossians directed his polemic. Against the image of a cosmos divided into different realms of dominion, where all individual beings are subject to the rule of a divine *archon*, the author opposed his Pleroma-Christology. His Christ—unlike the Christ of the syncretistic Jewish Christians—is not an individual being that coexisted with and alongside other beings; rather, these beings have their existence only in and through him, since the entire fullness of the Godhead dwells in him (Colossians 2:9).

Interestingly, in Colossians, the *stoicheia* are indiscriminately placed alongside personal angelic beings. *Stoicheia*, "powers and authorities," and angels are ranked on the same level. This is naturally related to the fact that the *stoicheia*, for the author of Colossians, also have a personal aspect. This is shown in 2:9-10, where the philosophy of the false teachers, based on elemental belief and human tradition, is contrasted antithetically with Christ as the fullness of the Godhead and the head of all powers and authorities. According to Lohse's interpretation, the contrast with Christ indirectly indicates that the *stoicheia* are "personal and cosmic powers." The broader context shows, according to Lohse, "that the elements of the world are precisely those demonic figures that seek to exert their dominion over humanity (2:10, 15)."¹⁵⁷ Explicit mention of the worship of personal angelic beings is then made in Colossians 2:18:

156 Günther Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien* (Bd. 16; Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie; München: Kaiser, 1958), 142.

157 Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, 150.

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No one should disqualify you, taking pleasure in false humility and the worship of angels, dwelling on what he has seen, becoming conceited without reason, puffed up by his fleshly mind.

As a parallel for this juxtaposition of seemingly purely elemental and personal powers, one could point to the Elchasaite invocation of the elements as witnesses. One of the cited invocations was directed to "Heaven and Water, the holy spirits and the prayer angels and Oil and Salt and Earth." Here too, the elemental powers (Heaven, Water, Oil, Salt, and Earth) are

indiscriminately placed alongside the personal spiritual powers (holy spirits, prayer angels). This is naturally only possible because, as already mentioned on page 15, the concept of *stoicheia* contains both a material and an ideal side. The worship was not directed at the matter itself but at the divine-spiritual essence inherent in it, the respective *numen* or elemental spirit or angel that animated it. While the author of Galatians focused more on the material aspect (Water, Earth, etc.) and could speak of the "weak and miserable elements,"¹⁵⁸ the author of Colossians apparently viewed the *stoicheia* more from the ideal aspect as spirit and angelic beings. All of this, as mentioned, is not in contradiction but fully in line with the Elchasaite texts, where this connection, as seen in the oath formula cited above, is already established.

It is therefore incorrect when Luz, in defense of his thesis that *stoicheia tou kosmou* is an interpretation by the author, claims that the opponents had nothing to do with the world elements and then continues: "Rather, they worshiped angels; but at that time, the world elements were not considered angels."¹⁵⁹ Such an alternative did not arise in the thinking of the Elchasaite. The same applies to Wolter's argument.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ However, Bornkamm is not entirely wrong when he writes: "Paul could hardly have compared them [*stoicheia*] in Gal 4:2 with the *epitropoi* and *oikonomoi* to whom the children are subject until their maturity, and called them in 4:8f. *physei me ontes theoi*, in whose service the Galatians stood, if the *stoicheia tou kosmou* had not appeared to them as personal, divine beings." Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien*, 50.

¹⁵⁹ Becker and Luz, *Galater, Epheser, Kolosser*, 124.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* (Bd. 519, Orig.-Ausg.; Gütersloher Taschenbücher Siebenstern; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus Mohn [u.a.], 1993), 124.

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It is indeed true that the angel worship hinted at in Colossians is not of genuinely Jewish origin. Kümmel considers the "religious-cultic angel doctrine" represented by the false teachers to be Hellenistic.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Wikenhauser notes: "However, the angel worship, which is foreign to Judaism, likely points beyond Judaism."¹⁶² While the worship of angels was mostly rejected by official Judaism,¹⁶³ it was highly popular in Jewish syncretistic circles, especially where they were exposed to Zoroastrian influence, as angel worship seems to have its roots in Zoroastrianism (see footnote 30). It is certainly no coincidence that, according to Hippolytus, Elchasai is said to have received his book in Persia (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9:13).

The close relationship between the false teaching in Colossians and Elchasaite beliefs has not been entirely overlooked by previous research. For instance, Schenke recognizes a connection between the false teachers in the Letter to the Colossians and Elchasai: "... one could easily imagine the *stoicheia* cult in accordance with the prescriptions of the Book of Elchasai regarding the observation of the 'evil stars of godlessness.'" Schenke cites in this context the instructions from the Book of Elchasai to beware of the "stars of godlessness":

"Beware of the power of the days on which they rule, and do not begin any work on their days! Do not baptize either man or woman on the days when they have power, when the

moon passes over them and walks with them! Wait for the day until the moon leaves their path, and then baptize and begin everything you have to do. Also, observe the Sabbath day, for it is one of these days! But be careful not to begin anything on the third day after the Sabbath!..."

161 Kümmel, Feine, and Behm, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 297. However, on the next page, he speaks of "Jewish angel speculation."

162 Wikenhauser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 467.

163 See footnote 31.

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Unfortunately, Schenke later does not pursue this lead pointing to Elchasai and his followers any further. It seems that traditional prejudices about the age and origin of the heresy opposed by the author of Colossians come into conflict with this. In any case, Schenke concludes just a few sentences later: "The heretics in Colossae, after all, are real Gnostics, early exponents of the Gnostic movement, as we had assumed and claimed earlier." Probably because the Elchasaites cannot be considered either early (i.e., "around 70 A.D.") or truly Gnostic—in the narrower sense meant by Schenke—he refrained from further exploring the connections between Elchasai and the heresy in the Letter to the Colossians, limiting himself to quoting a small passage of text.

In the end, it is once again the ambiguous and unclear concept of Gnosis that prevents the exegete from seeing clearly. The fact that the false teachers in Colossae, whom Schenke considers "Gnostics," were not true Gnostics should have been evident from their demand for circumcision (2:11) along with the associated Sabbath observance (2:16). It is also clear that the circumcision demanded by the false teachers must have obligated them to observe the Law, as the view proposed by Schmithals—that this was merely a symbolic act representing liberation from the Pneuma-Self—is untenable. If the false teachers were nomists, to whatever extent, they could hardly be Gnostics in the sense Schenke suggests.

On the other hand, Schenke identifies a problem that proponents of the Gnosis thesis often ignore. As Schenke correctly points out, for true Gnostics, a high regard for the elements, as revealed by the false teachers in Colossae, is "hardly conceivable and, in any case, completely abnormal." The archontic angelic powers alluded to here were generally regarded by Gnostics as hostile forces and, for this reason alone, could hardly become objects of religious worship. Therefore, Schenke advocates for a "modern" negative interpretation of the *stoicheia* cult. For the Gnostic, according to Schenke, only two extreme attitudes were possible towards the evil angelic powers, both equally negative: either opposition or disguise. While most Gnostics usually chose opposition, the false teachers in Colossae, according to Schenke, preferred disguise. "Why should a Gnostic not also disguise himself during his lifetime by participating in their cult?"¹⁶⁴ Schenke refers in this context to the emperor sacrifice, which some Gnostics performed. However, Schenke's sympathetic plea for a "disguise hypothesis" can hardly be considered successful. After all, the emperor sacrifice, cited as an alleged parallel, involved the

question of impending martyrdom. In that context, "disguise" might indeed seem justified. But what purpose such a hide-and-seek game before evil astral powers would have served is difficult to comprehend. Therefore, answering the question posed by Schenke becomes unnecessary, especially since it presupposes a rather strange view of Gnostic spirituality. A Gnostic worship of angelic powers for the sake of disguise is thus hardly realistic. The real Gnostic is not the false teachers in the Letter to the Colossians, but the author of the letter himself when he criticizes the worship of elements.

164 Hans-Martin Schenke, *Der Same Seths: Hans-Martin Schenkes kleine Schriften zu Gnosis, Koptologie und Neuem Testament* (edited by Gesine Schenke Robinson, Gesa Schenke, and Uwe-Karsten Plisch; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 97.

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Schenke is not the first to point out parallels between Colossians and Elchasai. Before and after him, others had already drawn attention to the similarity between the elemental worship in Colossians and the Elchasaite *stoicheia* worship.¹⁶⁵ However, none of these exegetes have yet attempted to systematically demonstrate the identity of the heresy in Colossians with Elchasaite beliefs beyond making incidental remarks. This is primarily due to chronological concerns. Since the Letter to the Colossians, even when considered a Deutero-Pauline writing, was generally placed in the 1st century, it was naturally believed that there could not have been any influence of Elchasaism on the heresy in Colossians. Perhaps some even thought that a kind of "pre-Elchasaism" had left its traces in Colossians.

165 Schoeps; Bornkamm; Luz mentions parallels: the weak Jewish Christians in Rome, the law-abiding Jewish Christians in Galatia, the world- and marriage-hostile ascetic Jewish Christians opposed in the Pastoral Epistles, "and finally, around the time of Trajan, the Jewish Christian Elkesaites with their visions, their angel worship, their Sabbath observance, and their ascetic tendencies." Becker and Luz, *Galater, Epheser, Kolosser*, 219.

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2.-3. The assertion that the opponents in Colossians demanded circumcision can only be indirectly inferred from Colossians 2:11. Following the warning against the philosophy of the false teachers, which is based on human tradition and *stoicheia tou kosmou*—with Christ being antithetically presented as the fullness of the Godhead—the text states:

"In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made by hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." (2:12) "You were buried with him in baptism; in him you were also raised through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

However, according to Luz and other exegetes, Colossians 2:11 should not be interpreted as evidence of an opponent's practice of circumcision. Schmithals also considers such a conclusion to be "very daring."¹⁶⁶ But why? According to Luz, only polemical sections should be used for reconstructing the Colossian philosophy. Since the interpretations of the foundation of faith in Colossians 2:9-15 have a "thetic character," it is not legitimate to draw any

conclusions about the nature of the heresy from them. But this view is not tenable. The passage does not necessarily have to be understood as purely "thetic." It is clear that in Colossians 2:11f, circumcision and baptism are contrasted with each other. In contrast to traditional Jewish circumcision practices, baptism is presented as the true, genuine circumcision, not made by human hands (cf. "according to human tradition," 2:8), through which the body of flesh is put off, buried, and the believer is raised by the power of God. What reason would the author of Colossians have had to make such a contrast and emphasize the opposition between baptism and circumcision if he had not been directly prompted by his opponents, with whom he was previously contending? In other words, it is evident that the opponents practiced and demanded circumcision as a prerequisite for fulfilling the law—however interpreted—including Sabbath observance, observance of (Jewish) festivals (2:16), dietary regulations (2:16, 21), fasting (2:20), etc. It would indeed be very strange if the latter had been required without prior circumcision.

166 Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg.*, 70.

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As previously mentioned, in addition to circumcision, the opponents demanded the observance of the Sabbath and certain festivals, as well as dietary regulations and fasting. Colossians 2:16 states:

"So let no one make you feel guilty about food and drink or regarding a specific festival, new moon, or Sabbath."

Colossians 2:21-3:1 says: 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch?" 22 All these regulations refer to things that are all destined to perish with use, based on human commands and teachings. 23 These rules have indeed an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, false humility, and harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."

Vielhauer describes this as "ascetic observance," which clearly indicates "the dualistic character of the opponents' philosophy."¹⁶⁷ This is particularly evident in 2:23, which Vielhauer translates as "mortification of the body." He also interprets 2:11 as referring to the "putting off of the body of flesh," which Vielhauer sees as "liberation from the bondage to ungodly matter and thus the purification of the self and its ascent into the pleroma."¹⁶⁸

However, such an interpretation hopelessly overburdens the text. There is no evidence to support the assumption that the opponents viewed matter as an ungodly force in line with a Gnostic dualistic worldview. All the characteristics of the heresy mentioned can be explained by Jewish roots: The festivals "festival, new moon, Sabbaths" (2:16) are, as Luz points out, referencing Hosea 2:13; Ezekiel 45:17; and 1QM 2:4, a "biblical-Jewish triad." The dietary regulations also have little to do with dualism and can be understood as Jewish dietary laws and purity regulations.¹⁶⁹ The "putting off of the body of flesh" is not, as Vielhauer mistakenly interprets, a concept of the opponents, but rather an interpretation of baptism by the author of

the letter himself. The "harsh treatment" (*ἀφειδία*) of the body (2:23) does not necessarily point to Gnostic asceticism but rather parallels the "false humility" mentioned earlier and thus appears to be nothing more than a description of fasting.¹⁷⁰

167 Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 194.

168 Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 194.

169 Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 194.

170 Becker and Luz, *Galater, Epheser, Kolosser*, 217. – Cf. the Jewish or Jewish-Christian material on the topic of "asceticism" presented by Gunther, 95-133.

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After a long period in exegesis, particularly within the Bultmann school, where a Gnostic interpretation of the aforementioned characteristics of the opponents was predominant, a majority of exegetes today recognize once again their Jewish character. Schmithals also counts the passages cited above among the "anti-Jewish passages," that is, those in which the author of Colossians polemicizes against his Jewish-Christian opponents. However, since he also perceives an anti-Gnostic tendency in Colossians, he arrives at a literary-critical solution to the problem. The basis of the letter, according to him, is an "original letter of Paul,"¹⁷¹ which was later revised with anti-Gnostic elements. In the original letter, the Apostle supposedly warned the "personally unknown Christians of Colossae against Jewish-Christian legalism." Through the anti-Gnostic redaction (e.g., in 2:4, 8, 18), the original letter was updated to address the Gnosis of that later period.

171 Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg.*, 75.

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It is surprising that the most prominent proponent of the Gnostic thesis would assume an anti-Judaic stance within a (genuine) Pauline letter, especially since, according to him, the Apostle, in almost all his other letters, only had to deal with Gnostics. Schmithals devotes all his argumentative strength to showing that what was previously considered Jewish Christianity was actually Gnosis. That the situation in the Letter to the Colossians should be entirely different is a striking admission of the limitations of such a theory and shows that more than just a few remnants of the "proud power of Judaism" have apparently survived.¹⁷²

The parallels to Elchasaite beliefs have been frequently observed in the past: Lohse notes that the demand for the observance of festivals and the Sabbath is not based on the Torah but rather cosmologically, on the idea that humans are "subject to the elements of the world through birth and fate." In this context, he refers to "the teaching of Elchasai, who instructed his followers to observe the Sabbath because the Sabbath is one of the days that, due to the course of the

stars, must be observed with anxious care,"¹⁷³ with a reference to Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.16.2.

Furthermore, the high regard for specific dietary laws, purity regulations, and fasting among the Elchasaites is explained both by the Jewish origins of the sect and by its syncretistic character. For example, the vegetarianism practiced by the Elchasaites, as well as by some other Jewish Christians, is syncretistic. The fact that the Elchasaites (like the Ebionites¹⁷⁴) were vegetarians is clearly attested by Epiphanius.¹⁷⁵ The Sampsaean, who were related to the Elkesaites, also abstained from meat according to Epiphanius.¹⁷⁶ The Jewish-Christian followers of Dositheus even practiced an early form of "veganism" by rejecting eggs and milk, i.e., liquids of animal origin.

¹⁷² Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg.*, 43.

¹⁷³ Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg.*, 171, note 3.171 A 3, cf. Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien*, 150.

¹⁷⁴ *Panarion* 30.15.3

¹⁷⁵ *Panarion* 19.3.6

¹⁷⁶ *Panarion* 53.1.4

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Jewish-Christian vegetarianism and the observance of purity laws are also frequently attested in the Pseudo-Clementines, which were influenced by Elchasaitism. The Peter of the Pseudo-Clementines seems to live only on bread, olives, and vegetables. Moreover, he carefully observes the prescribed purity laws, washing his hands after touching strangers, before eating, after eating, and before praying.¹⁷⁷ For him, abstinence and fasting are the most effective means against demons.¹⁷⁸

To what extent the contact taboos, widespread among the Ebionites,¹⁷⁹ played a role among the Elchasaites cannot be determined with certainty, but it is very likely due to their close connection with their Ebionite relatives. In the Cologne Mani-Codex, edited by Hinrichs and Koenen, it is stated that it was customary among the Elchasaites to ritually wash fruits and vegetables.¹⁸⁰

Colossians 2:21ff is closely related in content to the letters to the Philippians (3:16) and Romans (16:17), where the author, with even stronger polemical language, opposes the Jewish-Christian deification of the "belly," i.e., the dietary laws (see p. 150 and **Error! Bookmark not defined.**).

¹⁷⁷ *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 8:15; 12:6; for the vegetarianism of Jewish Christians, see Schoeps 203.

¹⁷⁸ *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 9:10.

¹⁷⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.3; Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2:119, regarding the Essenes, who washed their

hands after touching strangers.

180 A. Hinrichs and L. Koenen, "Ein griechischer Mani-Codex," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 5 (Bonn 1970) 144-45; cf. GUNTHER, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings*, p. 140.

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4. The author of Colossians refers to the opposing false teaching in 2:8 as "philosophy." It is widely recognized that, in this context, we should not only think of the philosophical schools of the Greeks but also "of various secret astronomical-scientific wisdom."¹⁸¹ However, it is disputed whether this term originated from the opponents themselves or was introduced by the author of Colossians. While a majority of exegetes tend to assume that the author adopted a term used by the opponents, others believe that he used it to disparage the "teaching of men." The teaching could, in any case, have been referred to as *sophia* by the opponents themselves. The wording in 2:23 ("which has an appearance of wisdom") suggests that the author is responding to the opponents' claim that their teaching was wisdom.

The Elchasaite teaching, as we mentioned earlier, corresponded in every respect to what was expected of a "philosophy" in antiquity. With its various branches, including astrology, mathematics, incantations, medicine, and divination, it provided its adherents with a key to a universal interpretation of the world. Although it is not explicitly stated in the little that we have from Elchasai, Hippolytus seems to have known that Elchasai referred to his teaching as a philosophy, as he mocks this claim at several points in his report on Elchasai. For example, he sarcastically exclaims, "Oh, the incomparable wisdom and the powerful incantations!" In 9:17, Hippolytus again mocks the wisdom of Elchasai, which supposedly surpassed all the wisdom of the Egyptian sages and even that of Pythagoras. The following sentence makes it clear that Elchasai was placed by his followers alongside other great philosophers like Pythagoras, Thales, Solon, Plato, and the other Greek sages. There is not the slightest doubt: Elchasai was also regarded as a philosopher by them, and his teaching as a philosophy! His teaching is what the author of Colossians denounces as empty deceit when he refers to the opponents' philosophy.

181 Lueken, "Die Briefe an Philemon, die Kolosser und die Epheser," in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt* by O. Baumgarten, W. Bousset, et al. (eds. Weiß, Baumgarten, and Bousset), 2:349.

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5. In the context of Galatians, we already pointed out some passages that, according to the opinion of many exegetes, suggest the suspicion that an individual may have played a special role in the agitation. Galatians 5:10 and 5:7 mention a "troublemaker" (*ταράσσω*) and a certain *τις* (someone), whose identity, however, remains unknown. It has gone unnoticed so far that there are several *τις* passages in Colossians that could suggest a similar suspicion. Colossians 2:8 warns against a *τις* who wants to captivate the congregations with "philosophy" and empty deceit (*ὁ συλαγωγῶν*). Colossians 2:16 also contains a warning against a *τις* who imposes regulations regarding food, drink, festivals, and the Sabbath.

Colossians 2:18 warns that the Colossians should not let anyone (*μηδείς*) disqualify them from their prize. Who is this person? Colossians 2:8 hints that it may be an individual who will appear in the future, as the author says: "See to it that no one takes you captive" (using the future indicative: *Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται*). Colossians 2:16 is similarly structured with its sequence of *τις ὑμᾶς*, but here, instead of the verb in the future indicative, there is a present imperative (*κρινέτω*).

Colossians 2:8 gives the impression that the author of Colossians wants to put a prophecy into the mouth of his apostle, warning the congregation about the appearance of a false teacher who is yet to come. It is, in my opinion, quite possible that the author, aware of the temporal distance he assumed between himself and the apostle, considered the idea of portraying his apostle as a prophet of future events, although he did not carry this out consistently.

In any case, the *τίς* whom the author of Colossians warns his congregation about can only be, as our previous investigation has shown, one individual: the sect founder and Christian heretic Elchasai. The warnings of the apostle refer to him—or to his book.

6. This aspect should also be taken into account in the treatment of the much-discussed exegetical problem in Colossians 2:18.

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"Let no one disqualify you, delighting in false humility and the worship of angels, baselessly puffed up in his fleshly mind, dwelling on what he has seen during the 'entry' (*embateuōn*), or ascension (into the heavenly sphere)."

This dark and linguistically difficult passage has led to various speculations about the nature of the "entry" mentioned here, which is apparently associated with a visionary experience: "It seems that 'initiations' or mysteries were being observed, involving a 'vision' of the beyond, and in practicing these rites, the true worship of the Redeemer was seen" (Conzelmann¹⁸²); "The passage 2:18 ... must be understood to mean that the followers of the sect boasted of ecstatic experiences and that an initiation rite was used upon their admission into the community."¹⁸³

The above translation, following Fridrichsen and Blass-Debrunner, is one of several possible translation variants.

a) Grammatically, it would also be possible (cf. Colossians 3:6) to connect "what he has seen" with the preceding "humility and worship of angels," "regardless of the different grammatical gender of the reference words."¹⁸⁴ The phrase "humility and worship of angels" could then be understood either as a genitive of object or a genitive of subject. In the latter case, the angels would not be the object but the agents of worship. The vision could then, for example, refer to a heavenly worship service of the angels, which the visionary had glimpsed. In the first case, which most exegetes prefer, the phrase is usually thought to refer to the performance of an initiation rite, as suggested by the term "entry" (*embateuōn*), often used as a technical term in this context. The initiate might have experienced and performed the worship of angels "also in sensory experience," as Lohse suggests: "as he saw it during the initiation." – However, Lohse

does not explain how what the initiate saw in a visionary experience during the initiation was supposed to be realized in the later worship service.

182 Becker and Luz, *Galater, Epheser, Kolosser*, 145.

183 Wikenhauser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 467.

184 Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, 177, note 3.

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b) Another translation proposed by Dibelius was also discussed: "entering what he has seen." In this case, "what he has seen" (ὃ ἑώρακεν) would be regarded as the object of "entering" (ἐμβατεύων). After the initiate had viewed sacred symbols, i.e., had a preparatory "vision," he was supposed to enter what he had previously seen when entering the sanctuary. However, this translation, which tried to better account for ἐμβατεύων as a technical term in the language of mysteries, was later abandoned by Dibelius himself for various reasons.

c) According to Schenke and other proponents of the Gnostic thesis, it is not necessary to see ἐμβατεύων as a specialized term in the language of mysteries. Instead, ἐμβατεύων should be related to the "entering" that occurs during the postmortem ascent of the soul. The meaning of the sentence would be: The (Gnostic) visionary enters what he previously saw in the vision.¹⁸⁵ – However, Colossians 2:18 speaks of the living, not the dead.

d) Following Preisker, Luz and others hold the view that ἐμβατεύων has the meaning of "investigate" (cf. 2 Maccabees 2:31). It is suggested that the opponents in Colossae had visions (perhaps of angels?) and tried to laboriously penetrate their meaning.¹⁸⁶ Preisker states: "If one follows the path of the Colossian heretics, one must repeatedly wait for such moments of visionary sight, only to laboriously investigate what one has seen in such ecstasy over and over again." – This is a strained and (religious-) psychologically highly improbable interpretation.

e) The translation first proposed by Fridrichsen, which connects ὃ ἑώρακεν ἐμβατεύων with what follows, is both linguistically correct and substantively plausible: "puffed up without reason by his fleshly mind, dwelling on what he has seen during his initiation (or during the visionary entry into the upper world)."¹⁸⁷

185 Hans-Martin Schenke and Karl Martin Fischer, *Einleitung in die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Lizenzausg.; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus Mohn, 1978), 159.

186 *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, 532.

187 Anton Fridrichsen, *Exegetical Writings: A Selection* (Bd. 76; Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament; Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 174, note 2. – Cf. Eduard Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* (EKK; Zurich: Benziger, 1976), 124, [link to GBV](#). Cf. Blass-Debrunner §154 and the parallels listed there, Romans 6:10; Galatians 2:2.

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With this translation, we are now able to combine some of the observations made so far and draw the decisive conclusion for understanding Colossians 2:18:

If we specifically relate *ἐμβατεύων* at this point to the visionary's ascent into the upper world; if we further note that the author formulates his warning against the false teaching here and elsewhere repeatedly in the singular, as a warning against a *τις* or *μηδείς*; and if we finally recall that the Book of Elchasai was introduced with the description of a vision, and that the depiction of visions likely made up a large part of the book, the particular focus of the author's polemic becomes immediately clear: In fact, the accusation of arrogance is not directed at the opposing Christians as a whole; rather, the author specifically aims to target the writer of that book, which we may assume was held in high regard by many Christians and garnered widespread admiration due to the pneumatic authority claimed by its author: Elchasai. Such an explanation would also relieve the interpretation of the difficulty it has been burdened with so far. It required assuming that the author of Colossians was addressing an entire collective of Christians who boasted about their visionary experiences. While it is possible that such a phenomenon existed and that visionary experiences occurred collectively across entire groups,¹⁸⁸ it is more likely that the issue here concerns a single prominent individual, the author of a book, against whom the accusation of arrogance is directed, especially since the singular formulation at this point suggests this. From the little that has survived of the Book of Elchasai, the profile and strong self-confidence of the pneumatic and visionary clearly emerge, and it is likely that due to his special charismatic gifts, his teaching was respected and recognized even in Pauline (or Marcionite) communities. This is precisely what the author of Colossians takes offense at. He seeks to strike out against the visionary, who is baselessly puffed up, boasts about his visions (in his book), and even believed he knew the measurements of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

188 As most exegetes have thought up to now. Gunther suggests that the initiates were prepared for receiving visions through fasting and cites, for comparison, *The Shepherd of Hermas Vision 3:10:6*: "Every prayer needs a humble disposition; fast, therefore, and you will receive what you request from the Lord." Gunther: "Similar methods may have been used by the false teachers in Colossae," Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings*, 272.

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Finally, attention should be drawn to another significant anti-Judaic point. We find it in Colossians 2:14: "He erased the certificate of debt (*χειρόγραφον*) that was against us with its legal demands, and set it aside, nailing it to the cross." In its literal sense, *χειρόγραφον* refers to a handwritten document or certificate, from which the meaning "certificate of debt" is derived—a translation choice favored by most exegetes. According to Lohse, this passage alludes to a myth in which the handwritten certificate represents a debt contract that humanity made with the devil, binding them to a life of sin and death in exchange for the services Satan was supposed to provide.¹⁸⁹

The fact that the term *χειρόγραφον* appears in some Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi could suggest a Gnostic myth and thus a Gnostic origin for this concept. In the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (14.1ff), it speaks of the Son of God, sent to his "younger brothers," who, after proclaiming the Father's decree, removes the *χειρόγραφον*.

"... when the great Son was sent to his younger brothers, he spread out the Father's decree and proclaimed it, opposing the entirety [of it]. And he removed the certificate of debt, that of condemnation. And this [is the] decree that existed: 'Those who made themselves slaves were condemned in Adam. They have been brought out of death, they have received forgiveness for their sins, and they have been redeemed...'"

189 Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, 162.

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The *Evangelium Veritatis* might also be familiar with such a motif.¹⁹⁰ It is possible that, similar to the *Interpretation of Knowledge*, it builds upon the usage of the term in Colossians.

However, exegetes have yet to recognize that the passage in Colossians 2:14 actually has a polemical character and refers to a specific Jewish-Christian viewpoint of the 2nd century. Once again, we can almost "witness firsthand" how the author of our "Pauline letter" and the author of the source of our pseudo-Clementine text are "in dialogue" with each other. The verse gains its illumination from *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 3:45! In his anti-Simonian, thus anti-Pauline (=anti-Marcionite) polemic, the author argues against the hidden god of Simon-Paul (= Marcion) and questions how it could be possible that the one who created heaven, gave light to the sun, and established the stars in their unmovable order, could remain hidden: "Therefore, Simon, the handwriting of God (*χειρόγραφον τοῦ θεοῦ*) is revealed—I mean the heaven—the clear and firm decree of the Creator." The author aims to present a creation-theological argument (apparently in reference to Psalm 19) for the Nomos, which has always been evident from heaven (=God's handwriting), and thereby refute the Marcionite theory of a hidden god (cf. Romans 2).¹⁹¹

The author of Colossians is familiar with the pseudo-Clementine interpretation of *χειρόγραφον* and builds upon it. He correctly understands it as a description of the Nomos (revealed by God's "handwriting," i.e., the heavens) with its regulations. However, for him—unlike for the author of the Jewish-Christian source text, but similarly to the author of the *Interpretation of Knowledge*—this was "nailed to the cross" with the appearance of Christ, i.e., it was done away with. Therefore, in Colossians 2:14, we have a powerful image illustrating the statement that Christ is the end of the Law. There is no mention of a human-god-devil myth.

190 *Evangelium Veritatis* 20: "Therefore, Jesus appeared; he clothed himself in that book; (25) he was nailed to a tree; he posted the Father's decree on the cross. Oh, what great and sublime teaching!" The passage is, however, obscure. There is no mention of the destruction of the *χειρόγραφον*, but rather of a public presentation of the paternal edict, in accordance with *Interpretation of Knowledge* 14.30ff.

191 The heavens and the stars moving according to eternal laws as an image of the Nomos, among others, also in *Psalms of Solomon* 18:10: "Great is our God and glorious, who dwells on high, who has arranged the luminaries in their paths to determine the times year in and year out, so that they do not deviate from the path you have commanded them."

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Bornkamm held the view that the "correspondences between the Ebionite and Elchasaite teachings and the Colossian heresy" that he identified were not sufficient "to equate the latter with the former." His reasoning: "Every individual feature could surely be more extensively documented from a wealth of other systems, if we had more precise knowledge of early Christian and late Jewish sectarian history, than is already the case."¹⁹²

However, it seems highly questionable to conduct scholarly exegesis in such a hypothetical manner. Of course, it would be desirable if we had evidence of early Christian sectarian history from the 1st century beyond the material from the 2nd century. But as long as we do not have this evidence, we are not even strictly entitled to assume that such a history existed at all. We are compelled to make do with the comparative material we have and to make identifications based on the available evidence. Since all of this material originates from the 2nd century, we should, consequently, place Colossians chronologically where it belongs, together with the opponents it combats: in the 2nd century.

However, even with the demonstration of significant agreement between the Colossian heresy and the Ebionite-Elchasaite heresy, the arguments presented by proponents of the Gnostic thesis have not been entirely answered. They mainly rely on the Christological passages of the letter that have not yet been discussed. According to their view, the creation-theological statements there—Christ as the mediator of creation and redeemer (Col 1:17ff)—clearly show an anti-dualistic tendency aimed at countering the Gnostic devaluation of creation as a product of lower angelic powers. Colossians 1:16 is said to strip the allegedly "highly esteemed intermediate powers" of Gnostic heretics of any significance.¹⁹³ Additionally, the explicit reference to redemption "through his [Christ's] blood on the cross" is intended to "exclude Gnostic spiritualization and individualization."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien*, 150.

¹⁹³ Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 202.

¹⁹⁴ Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, 202.

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At least in one case, the anti-Gnostic tendency of Colossians cannot be denied. The striking emphasis on Christ's role as the mediator of creation in Colossians 1:16 ("For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...") could indeed be anti-Gnostic, anti-dualistic polemic. But does this passage even originate from the author of the original letter? Doubts are warranted because the Marcionite version of the text significantly differs from the existing Catholic text at this point. The text quoted by Tertullian from the *Apostolikon* lacks the crucial passages: Harnack notes, "Therefore, 15b, 16, and very likely 17b were missing." A parallel comparison of both texts could bring clarity.

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Canonical Text	Marcion
Col. 1:15-19 15 He is the image of the invisible God,	Col. 1:15-19 15 He is the image of the invisible God.
the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.	
17 And he is before all things,	17 And he is before all things.
and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.	
19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.	19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

According to Harnack, the text in the right column was "thus shaped by deletions" by Marcion. However, as we have extensively demonstrated in this chapter, the opposite is true, and the Marcionite version almost always represents the older and more original version. The creation-theological statements do not belong to the original body of the letter but are later Catholic additions. The anti-Gnostic polemic, which is undoubtedly present at this point, was inserted into the original (Marcionite) text by later editors.

Furthermore, I consider Vielhauer's judgment that Colossians 2:16 aims to strip the "highly esteemed intermediate powers" of the Gnostics of their significance to be a misjudgment. The Archon powers were either feared or despised by the Gnostics, depending on the context (see

Schenke), but there is no mention anywhere of them being highly esteemed. This is different only in Elchasaite belief. However, its angelology and cosmology were not accepted by the later Catholic theology represented by the editor. In this sense, the interpolation of Colossians 2:16 could have further intensified the original polemic of the author. However, it is more likely that the editor simply wanted to emphasize the concept of Christ as the mediator of creation, which he found missing in his source.

The mention of Christ's blood (Colossians 1:20) does not necessarily indicate Gnostic spiritualization or Docetism. It is certainly within the realm of what is possible in Marcionite thought.¹⁹⁵

Other arguments in favor of a Gnostic opposition in Colossians refer to the author's use of language. For example, the following keywords might have been Gnostic terminology:

¹⁹⁵ This is clearly evident from Esnik's anti-Marcionite treatise: "And Marcion speaks in vain: We are the price of Jesus' blood. For his blood was not shed, nor were we purchased, because, according to their statement, the cross and death were mere appearance, but not truth." According to Marcion's own understanding, believers are indeed freed by the blood. The notion that this was not real blood due to Marcion's Docetic Christology is a Catholic interpretation.

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σοφία (wisdom) - Colossians 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5

σύνεσις (understanding) - Colossians 1:9, 17; 2:2

γνώσις (knowledge) - Colossians 2:3

ἐπίγνωσις (full knowledge) - Colossians 1:9f; 2:2; 3:10

ἐπιγινώσκω (to know fully) - Colossians 1:6

τελειότης (perfection) - Colossians 3:14

τέλειος (perfect) - Colossians 1:28; 4:12

πλήρωμα (fullness) - Colossians 1:19; 2:9

πληρώω (to fill) - Colossians 1:9, 25; 2:10; 4:17 ¹⁹⁶

But apart from the difficulty in deciding whether the appropriation of opposing vocabulary is present, all these terms are also abundantly found in the rest of early Christian literature, including the Clementines and Pseudo-Clementines. Therefore, it is hardly possible to ascribe a specifically Gnostic connotation to them.

Thus, the assumption that the opponents combated in Colossians belonged to a Gnostic group ultimately proves to be a historical fallacy, brought about by a misleading concept of Gnosis or by the disregard of the literary-critical connections outlined above.

Another question is whether and to what extent the author of Colossians borrowed language and ideas from Gnosis. This possibility is acknowledged by various exegetes. According to Biedermann, Paul supposedly presented his Christological ideas "in the form of Gnosis," but they were "turned against Gnosis"; according to Schenke, it should be noted "that the author of Colossians himself was strongly influenced by Gnosis."¹⁹⁷ Schmithals also affirms the question

of adopting Gnostic language and ideas. Besides the frequently mentioned supposed Gnostic interpretation of circumcision as "liberation from the Pneuma-Self," which Schmithals claims to have found in Colossians, he also points to the Gnostic-like "triumphalism" (2:12f. 15 cf. 3:1).¹⁹⁸

Given the assumptions of previous exegesis, the Gnostic elements in Colossians could be explained as linguistic and intellectual "borrowings" by the author from Gnosis. The possibility of a Gnostic or Marcionite authorship of Colossians had, of course, not even been considered until now, and as far as I know, no one has asserted it. Here again, the recognition that the opponents in Colossians represent a form of Elchasaite Judaism from the 2nd century presents a different situation. With the changed front and the associated redating of Colossians to the 2nd century, it becomes clear that this letter must also be included in the broader context of the tension between Marcionism and syncretistic Jewish Christianity, which characterizes the situation of early Christianity in the 2nd century as a whole. We will delve into this further in the following section, including the question of how the absence of typical Gnostic dualism should be assessed in this context.

¹⁹⁶ Hans-Martin Schenke, "Der Widerstreit gnostischer und kirchlicher Theologie im Spiegel des Kolosserbriefes," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 61 (1964) 391–403, here 392. Schenke and Fischer, *Einleitung in die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, I, 159.

¹⁹⁷ Schenke and Fischer, *Einleitung in die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, I, 163.

¹⁹⁸ Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.–Marburg*, 79f.

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Representatives of the "Judaism Thesis of the 1st Century" tend to sharply distinguish the opponents in Colossians from those in Galatians. Rather than highlighting the commonalities (such as the worship of stoicheia), they emphasize the differences. They argue that the concept of the *Nomos* (Law) is absent in Colossians, and that "the categorical demand for circumcision and the strict form of legalism, which Paul usually opposes with his either-or of faith and works,"¹⁹⁹ is missing. They also note that angelic powers are not mentioned in Galatians, and the festivals referenced are entirely different.

Those who consider Colossians to be a deuteropauline letter from the 1st century generally assume the existence of two different heresies, with the heresy in Colossians being the later one and possessing a distinctly syncretistic character in contrast to the first. Feine succinctly states the difference: "The heretics of Colossians were not Judaizers or converted Pharisees like the opponents combated in Galatians, 2 Corinthians, or Philippians." However, whether Paul's opponents in Galatians (and in 2 Corinthians and Philippians) were "converted Pharisees," i.e., representing a Pharisaic type of Jewish Christianity, is, as we have already seen in the section on Galatians, also very doubtful.

Within the framework of the "Judaism Thesis of the 2nd Century" presented here, it is not necessary to see the opponents in Colossians and Galatians as different groups. The

differences can be explained, on the one hand, by the two different authors, their differing temperaments, and their respective perspectives, and on the other hand by the fact that the same opponent front, i.e., the 2nd-century Judaism of the Elchasaite type, appeared in different regions and groups with likely quite varied characteristics. Against this background, a completely uniform or identical appearance of the opponents in Galatians and Colossians is not to be expected from the outset. What is crucial is what fundamentally connects the opponents in Galatians and Colossians: a pronounced *stoicheia* cult combined with a strong Judaizing tendency, including circumcision, observance of the Law, adherence to festivals, and indications of a leading individual with a pneumatic claim. This combination is so significant and unique in religious history, as exegetes have so far failed to sufficiently recognize, that it demands a clear identification of the opposing groups combated in both letters. In contrast, the observed differences are of little consequence and can, as mentioned, be explained either by the internal perspective of the authors (or their subjective theological priorities) or by the differing external perspectives of the opponents (the regionally varied self-presentation of the opposing group).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: zugleich Univ., Habil.-Schr.—Marburg*, 189.

²⁰⁰ That the opponents in the Epistle to the Colossians might have been Elchasaites was already suggested by Neander; cf. David Friedrich Strauss, *Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (2 vols., 3rd ed.; Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1838), 217.

To the Philippians - Against the Elchasaite "Dogs"

While the literary unity of the letters to the Galatians and Colossians remains largely undisputed, the letter to the Philippians is generally considered today to be a composition made up of various letters. It is believed that three letters were combined by an editor, who omitted the framework of two of the letters, to form a single letter. There is fundamental agreement on the approximate extent of the three writings, with differences only in the details of their delimitation. According to Schenke, the entire composition of the letter consists of the following three letters:

- Letter A: 4:10-20 (a "receipt letter")
- Letter B: 1:1-3:1 and 4:4-7 and 4:21-23 (a "letter of recommendation")
- Letter C: 3:2-4:3 and 4:8-9 (a "battle letter")

Exegetes feel justified in adopting such and other similar division hypotheses due to the numerous contradictions they find in the letter to the Philippians, which indeed present no small difficulties in the exegesis of the writing. For example, how should one explain the situation presupposed in the letter, where Epaphroditus, as the bearer of a monetary donation from Philippi, fell dangerously ill while with the Apostle, and the Apostle did not express his thanks until news of the illness reached Philippi and the now-recovered Epaphroditus was sent back to the Philippians with the letter? "According to the current text, Paul would have waited the entire time to express his thanks despite the lively communication between his place of imprisonment and Philippi, only doing so on the occasion of Epaphroditus's return. That is not very likely."²⁰¹ Indeed. Other literary-critical arguments add to this, not least a remark by Polycarp, who in his letter to the congregation in Philippi speaks of the "letters" of the Apostle to the Philippians—a passage which, however, does not necessarily have to be interpreted as evidence for the existence of various Pauline letters to the Philippians, but can also be understood differently (see below).

²⁰¹ Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers*, 161.

For the individual letters, exegetes now construct specific situations with much imagination, creating a novel-like image of the relationship between the Apostle and the congregation. According to Schenke, the correspondence began with a simple letter of thanks: "A is simply 'amount gratefully received,' but this purpose is fulfilled in a Pauline manner."²⁰² Only after the composition of A was Paul arrested and waited a long time in prison for his trial. B was then created after the recovery of Epaphroditus, who was with him, and was given to him as a kind of "certificate of conduct" for his visit to the Philippians. C was written after Paul's release. Instead of coming himself as announced, the Apostle, who was occupied with his rebellious Corinthians, sent Timothy first, who in the letter, after the editor's retouching, is now addressed as a

"yokefellow" [4:3]. The main theme of the letter is the "flood-like offensive of the official church against Paul's mission,"²⁰³ which, besides the communities in Galatia and Corinth, is said to have also affected the one in Philippi. From the polemic against Paul's old arch-enemies, Schenke believes he can infer that "the concerned community does not listen to the opponents."

Such and other complex scenarios, adorned with great attention to detail, with which the division hypothesis is associated by different authors, are meant to explain the contradictions that inevitably arise from a coherent reading of the letter to the Philippians. That not all problems are resolved with them, but rather new ones are created, is another matter. One peculiarity, which has not yet been explained even by the division hypothesis, should be pointed out here. The strange circumstance that Epaphroditus feels compelled to document his health condition to the Philippians through a personal visit, instead of continuing to rely on the lively communication that functioned so well between A and B even without him. A short convalescence period would surely have been better for the (from what exactly?) deathly ill person than another strenuous and completely unnecessary journey.

202 Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers*, 127.

203 Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers*, 128.

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These and other problems are further complicated by the question of the place where the letter to the Philippians was written. The possibility of the letter being written in Rome, suggested by Phil. 1:13 and 4:22 and by later (or simultaneous?) tradition, is dismissed by modern exegetes primarily because the lively flow of information between the imprisoned Apostle and the congregation in Philippi (about 1200 km from Rome to Philippi via the Via Egnatia or vice versa) would be difficult to explain under this assumption. Since Caesarea is also relatively far from Philippi and poses similar problems as a place of composition, scholars have recently settled on Ephesus. This city is closer to Philippi, but the disadvantage is that the author of the Acts of the Apostles does not mention any imprisonment of Paul in Ephesus. However, exegetes are willing to overlook this minor flaw in their theory, as Ephesus seems much more realistic to them as a place of composition than Rome or Caesarea. The contradictions in the letter to the Philippians do not necessarily need to be resolved through literary-critical treasure hunts and imaginatively constructed hypothetical situations, as they might also indicate the handwriting of a pseudepigraphical author who often does not take the realism of the fictional situation he presupposes very seriously.

It should be noted, in regard to the question of authenticity, that the letter to the Philippians—like the second letter to the Corinthians—would no longer be accepted as an authentic letter by most exegetes without literary-critical "emergency operations," and the entire romantic fiction of the Apostle writing to his congregation from prison can only be maintained through profound literary-critical rearrangements and hypothetical situations. These division hypotheses probably

still appear more attractive to many modern theologians than the inauthenticity of the letter to the Philippians, first claimed by F.C. Baur.

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Regarding the origin of the opponents fought against in the letter, literary-critical questions have no further significance—except that they direct exegetes seeking to identify Paul's opponents primarily to "Letter C," the so-called "battle letter," i.e., to the polemical section of the letter, which covers 3:2-4:3.

Although the author of the letter consistently engages polemically with his opponents in this section, it is not easy to get a clear picture of them due to the few suggestive remarks. The complete absence of any names, persons, or other details that could give the heresy a concrete historical shape for the reader is striking. We encounter this phenomenon repeatedly in Paul's letters. Schmithals's assumption that "the recipients of the letter knew what was being talked about, even better than Paul himself" is a mere speculation and only comforting for those who already firmly believe in the letter's authenticity. Those who are more skeptical will not shake the suspicion that this approach could betray an author writing under the pseudonym of Paul, who speaks in vague and suggestive terms about his opponents because he could not reveal his own later standpoint as a pseudepigraphical author. In any case, the unclear references in chapter 3 of the letter to the Philippians have inevitably led to the formation of quite different opinions among exegetes about the identity of the opponents. This results in a similarly complex picture as with the question of the opponents in the letter to the Galatians. On one side stand the proponents of the Judaist theory of the 1st century, who, continuing the views of "the Tübingen school," saw anti-Pauline Judaists of the 1st century being fought in Phil. 3. On the other side are the proponents of a Gnostic theory, who, with varying emphasis, speak of "Gnostic Jewish Christians," "Judaizing Gnostics of Jewish origin," "law-abiding Jewish Christians of Gnostic observance," etc. In the middle stands Lütgert and his small following, who suspected a dual front of Judaists and Gnostics. The view, also held regarding the letter to the Galatians, that the opponents of Paul were Jews, is also represented here by Lohmeyer, Jülicher, Dibelius, Munck, etc.

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In contrast to all these attempts to solve the question of the opponents based on the conventional paradigm—the letter to the Philippians as an authentic Pauline letter from the 1st century—we will now try to show that the letter can only be adequately understood in the context of the conflict with Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century. Before we prove this, the profile of the opponents, as it emerges from the 3rd chapter of the letter, should be briefly outlined:

1. They are Jewish Christians (3:2ff; 3:20);
2. They boast of their circumcision and Jewish heritage (3:2);

3. They demand and claim "perfection" (3:12-16; cf. Col. 1:28; 3:14; 4:12); perhaps they boast of their revelations (3:15);
4. Nevertheless, in the eyes of "Paul," they have a lax sexual morality (3:19);
5. They are "enemies of the cross" (3:18);
6. They are "evil workers," meaning they operate as an anti-Pauline counter-mission (3:2).

1. The author of the letter to the Philippians derides his opponents in 3:2 as "mutilators." Not they, but the Christians he represents, who do not rely on the flesh but serve God in the spirit, are the true circumcision (3:3). This is a polemical reference to the opponents' status as "the circumcised," though it is unclear whether this refers to circumcised Jews or Jewish Christians. Lohmeyer, Dibelius, and others have chosen the former possibility and seen the heretics as Jews. However, the arguments they present are not convincing. The claim that the author wants to "target people who rely on the privileges of Judaism" can, as Dibelius himself concedes, refer to both Jews and Judaizers. None of the arguments listed by Klijn convincingly demonstrate a specifically Jewish character of the heresy fought in the letter to the Philippians. All the characteristics mentioned and examined for their Jewish background ("mutilators" as a derogatory term for Jewish circumcision, self-glorification and pride in Jewish ancestry, gnosis as knowledge of the law, polemic on justification, and demand for perfection) can just as well be attributed to a Jewish Christian group and indeed, as we will see, should only be attributed to them. The term "evil workers" [τούς κακοὺς ἐργάτας], certainly not applicable to Jews but rather to rival Christian missionaries, speaks against Jews as the opponents of "Paul." Peter is also called an "evil worker" [κακίας ὑπηρέτης] by Simon-Paul in PsCl Hom 17:2 (cf. 2 Cor 11:13). Conversely, Peter can also refer to Simon-Paul in this way, PsCl Hom 7:11. If the "adversaries" in 1:28 refer back to the preceding verses, which is very likely, this too shows that the opponents can only be viewed as Christian competitors or heretics. As in the letter to the Galatians, the author is not concerned with a confrontation with the (Jewish) law but with another—namely, legalistic—gospel.

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Another indication of the Jewish Christian origin of the opponents, which has been somewhat overlooked by exegetes, can be indirectly inferred from 3:20. The author of the letter emphasizes that the citizenship of these Christians is in heaven. According to Dibelius, πολίτευμα in this context is used as a specialized term, meaning a "colony of foreigners whose organization mirrors the homeland polity in a smaller scale and is accordingly named after it." The sense is roughly: "We have our homeland in heaven and on earth we are a colony of heavenly citizens." However, what Dibelius and most other exegetes have not yet recognized is that this is an antithesis to the Jewish Christian opponents who placed the greatest value on their Jewish πολίτευμα. In contrast, the author of the letter emphasizes his transcendent standpoint: "Our pride is not in the Jewish πολίτευμα, but in the citizenship of heaven."

Of course, this could theoretically also be a distancing from Jewish opponents. However, a passage from the heresiology of Epiphanius shows us that this claim was also made by Jewish Christians—specifically by Elchasaites! In a concluding summary, Epiphanius characterizes the Elchasaites he has previously described in detail, whom he here calls "Ossenes," with the

following words: "This is the sect of the Ossenes, who walk in the citizenship of the Jews (ἡ πολιτευόμενη μὲν τῶν Ἰουδαίων πολιτεία) with Sabbath observance, circumcision, and keeping the entire law."²⁰⁴ This passage clearly shows that circumcision, according to the understanding of Elchasaite Christians, incorporated one into the Old Testament covenant people and in this sense (even after the end of the Jewish state) could be understood as a sign of "Jewish citizenship."

204 Epiph Haer 1 19:5

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2. The polemic of the author of the letter to the Philippians shows that circumcision and Jewish heritage are considered by his opponents to be special privileges they boast about. The author calls this "relying on the flesh" (3:4). He claims that he too could boast of the Jewish heritage praised by them if he wanted to, as he also comes from the "people of Israel," "of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee." But he does not do this because what he once—along with his opponents—considered an advantage is, from a Christian perspective, just "rubbish" (3:8).

The pride in Jewish heritage and circumcision, evident from 3:3f, is not found only among Jews, as some interpreters like Klijn think, but also among the Jewish Christians of the 2nd century. Again, it is Epiphanius who testifies to this regarding the Nazarenes (29:8) and Ebionites (30:26.33). The fact that the author indeed has Jewish Christians in mind is evident from 2 Cor. 11:22f, where he also deals with the self-glorification of his opponents based on Jewish heritage: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am speaking as if insane—I more so!" Here, as Klijn also admits, it is entirely clear that the "pseudo-apostles" being fought are Jewish Christians and not Jews, since the latter would hardly call themselves "servants of Christ." It is quite obviously a parallel to Phil. 3:3-6, which also shows that the same opponents are being fought in both "letters."

205 A. F. J. Klijn, "Paul's Opponents in Philippians III", *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964) 278-84, here 280.

206 Haer 1.330.13 - Haer 1.330.13

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In the context of his Gnostic thesis, Schmithals feels compelled to assert that even Jewish Christian Gnostics would have boasted of their Judaism.²⁰⁷ However, such a statement is untenable and misunderstands the nature of Gnostic thought. Gnostics did not accept national, cultural, or social privileges. What mattered to them was solely the possession of the divine Pneuma. A classic expression of this is a verse from the Gospel of Philip:

49 (p.62,26-35): If you say, "I am a Jew," no one will be moved. If you say, "I am a Roman," no one will be confused. If you say, "I am a Greek," "a Barbarian," "a slave," "[a] free

person," no one will be disturbed. [If] you [say]: "I am a Christian," [that one] will tremble. Oh, that I [had] [such a] Lord, whose name [that one] cannot bear to hear!²⁰⁸

The statement that salvation comes from the Jews (John 4:22) is not that of a Gnostic (the author of the Gospel of John), but rather that of a later interpolator.

Passages like Phil 3:3-6 and 2 Cor 11:22, where the author defends his identity as a born Jew against his opponents, contribute to the reader's impression of the "inexplicable," "authentic." One might think, what reason would a later pseudepigraphical author have had to put a defense of his Jewish heritage into the mouth of his "Paul"? Wouldn't such a personal statement be more expected from the historical Paul?

Not at all. The notion that a historical person named Paul engaged with opponents who disputed his Jewish heritage could very well be a fiction, especially considering that it would have been apparent to Paul's contemporaries, making any attempt to deny it doomed to failure and thus likely avoided. The accusation that the apostle was not a genuine, circumcised Jew is much more plausible from the later perspective of the 2nd century when the dispute over the "true" image of the apostle was in full swing.

207 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters: also Univ., Habil.-Sehr.-Marburg. ,65.

208 EvPhil 1:49; Hans-Martin Schenke, Ursula Ulrike Kaiser, and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, eds., Nag Hammadi German: Study Edition; NHCI-XIII, Codex Berolinensis 1 and 4, Codex Tchacos 3 and 4 (3rd ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 149.

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Indeed, he was also elevated. Epiphanius, in his account of the Ebionites, shares with us a curious tradition whose significance for the interpretation of the Pauline letters has not yet been recognized. Epiphanius knows of Jewish Christian Acts of the Apostles in which he found "lying inventions" about the apostle. According to this tradition, he was actually the son of a Greek father and a Greek mother and fell in love with the daughter of the high priest in Jerusalem. To marry her, he became a proselyte and had himself circumcised. However, when this was refused to him, he began, in anger, to polemicize against circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Law.²⁰⁹

The Jewish Christian tradition reported by Epiphanius shows how easy it apparently was in later times to create a portrayal of Paul that stood in complete opposition to the image of Paul given to us by the letters. One wonders how this was still possible in the 2nd century when, according to most exegetes, the Pauline letters were already in circulation as a collection in Christian circles. Did the Jewish Christians of that time indeed only reject Paul's theology, as is generally thought, or perhaps also the authenticity of the letters, so that the "Paulum recusant" referred to this? In the latter case, it would be understandable how completely contrary traditions of Paul, like the one cited above, could arise. Since there was no genuine historical tradition about the apostle, arbitrariness was given free rein at that time, and every Christian group could make of

Paul what they wanted or could model their image of Paul in polemical disputes with other groups according to their own theological interests. It makes sense that the author who chose the most personal literary genre, the "letter," would have the greatest success in asserting his image of Paul.

209 30.16.8; cf. especially 25.1, where reference is made to Phil 3:5. Epiphanius correctly recognizes that the author of Phil is dealing with the image of Paul held by the Jewish Christians, who assume that he is of Greek origin.

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Against the background of the Ebionite depiction of Paul, the insistence of the author of the Letter to the Philippians on the Jewish heritage of his apostle, in whose name he writes, is easily explained. Of course, his claim that Paul was a Jew is as much a fiction as the claim of his opponents that he was the son of a Greek mother and a Greek father. However, it served the author's interests better, as it gave him a welcome opportunity to show that the apostle also possessed everything his opponents boasted about. His entire superiority was based precisely on the fact that he could now dismiss all of this as "rubbish" from the height of the Christian faith he proclaimed!

3. The pride in circumcision is accompanied by the demand for perfection from the opponents, known from other Pauline letters (cf. Col 1:28; 3:14; 4:12; 1 Cor 2:6ff; 14:20; 2 Cor 3:4), as seen in Phil 3:15. For Schmithals and other exegetes, this is an indication that we are dealing with Gnostics. "The teleioi are Gnostic pneumatics who, through Gnosis and in their ecstasies, reach the perfection of their eschatological existence. In their circles, the term τέλειος with related words is widespread as a technical term."²¹⁰ It is undeniable that the term was preferably used by Gnostics.²¹¹ But Schmithals is mistaken in believing that one can necessarily conclude a Gnostic background from it. The talk of perfection (τέλειος) and the perfect (τέλειοι) is, as Klijn points out following Michel and other exegetes, also quite common in Judaism (of the Pharisaic type): "Paul is speaking about a perfection attained by strict observance of the law."²¹² Günther points out that the demand for perfection was also common in syncretistic Judaism, and he demonstrates this with several passages from the Qumran literature.²¹³ Finally, it is also encountered - and this is certainly the most interesting in our context - in Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century. The evidence for this is abundant and comes mainly from the pseudo-Clementine literature. In the Recognitions 1:39, the author explains the significance of baptism, through which Jewish sacrificial service has been replaced by the appearance of the true prophet. By invoking his name, not only is the forgiveness of sins made possible, but also immortality for those who follow the perfect (= lawful) life (et de reliquo perfectam vitam sequentes in immortalitate durarent). In Homilies 3:26, it is said of the true prophet: He makes merciful, commands justice, seals the perfect, reveals the word of rest.²¹⁴ Rec 1:22 guarantees the instruction of the law as "perfect knowledge" (plenius de omnibus perfectius que cognoscas). Thus, the Gnosis given by the true prophet is also perfect²¹⁵ (PsCI Hom 2:5). The ninth book of the Recognitions serves to demonstrate that God's law is just and perfect (PsCI Rec 3:75). PsCI Rec 4:5 aims to show that love for Moses and Jesus in doing good works

reaches the highest level of perfection.²¹⁶ The bishop Maro, appointed by Peter, is "perfect in all things" after receiving instruction. Love for everyone is the male part of the "perfect philanthropy" (PsCI Hom 12:32).

210 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: at the same time Univ., Habil.-Sehr—Marburg., 73.

211 Classic: Iren Haer 1 6:4 Et alia multa odiosa et irreligiosa facientes, nos quidem, qui per timorem Dei timemus etiam usque in mentibus nostris et sermonibus peccare, arguunt quasi idiotas et nihil scientes; semetipsos extollunt, perfectos uocantes et semina electionis.- Fas Book LibTh 145:4 (15) in that you are united to him and he is united to you from now on until forever. Amen." - The Book of Thomas: The Athlete, writing to the perfect.

212 Klijn, "Paul's Opponents in Philippians III", 281.

213 Günther, St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectar 132ff.

214 τοὺς τελείους αὐτῶν σφραγίζει

215 ἡ τέλειος νους

216 sit ex utroque perfectus, cf. Schoeps Paulus 260

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But evidence for this can also be found outside of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, in early Jewish Christian or Jewish Christian-influenced writings. For example, in the First Epistle of Clement, where the author speaks in 1:2 of the glory of the "perfect and reliable knowledge" of the Corinthians. The Corinthians' gaze is to be directed to those models of faith "who have served His [God's] exalted glory in perfection" [9:2]. Perfection is shown through love expressed in works [50:3.5]. The prayer of the community should also serve sinners so that they may obey the will of God; this will benefit them and lead them to perfection [56:1]. Finally, the author mentions Esther, who is "perfect" in faith [1 Clem 55:6]. Furthermore, the author of the Didache promises perfection to those who "can bear the whole yoke of the Lord," i.e., submit to the observance of the law [6:2]. The essential point is that the Christian is found "perfect" at the Lord's return [16:2].

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Finally, corresponding examples can also be found in New Testament literature influenced by Jewish Christianity, such as the Epistle of James. "Faith is perfected by works" [2:22; cf. 1:4,17, 25; 3:2]. And in Matthew 5:48, it says, very much in the spirit of the Pseudo-Clementines: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect!"

Thus, it is clear that there can be no talk of the opponents in Philippians representing "elements of an ideal of perfection" that "bears entirely Gnostic features [cf. 3, 12 ff. 19]" as Köster formulated. The author of the Letter to the Philippians is by no means opposing the claim to perfection by Gnostic pneumatics, for which there are no significant indications in the letter, but

rather against the Jewish Christian claim that only a way of life based on the law guarantees Christian perfection. However, this likely pertains to the Jewish Christians of the 2nd century, i.e., of the Elchasaite type. This will become completely evident in the following points 4 and 5.

Before we get to that, a brief mention should be made of an exegetical observation by Schmithals that has a certain plausibility. He suggests in connection with 3:15 that the formulation "God will reveal that also to you" could be an indication that Paul's opponents boasted of their revelations. This cannot be entirely ruled out. The opponents would then, however, hardly be the Gnostic ecstasies assumed by Schmithals, but rather the Jewish Christian and recipient of revelations, Elchasai, whose followers the author, as we have seen, referred to directly and indirectly on several occasions.

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4. In Philippians 3:19, the author launches a sudden and vehement polemical attack on his opponents: "Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame; they are focused on earthly things."

According to Schmithals, "an objective exegesis can only refer verse 19 to Gnostic libertines." Schmithals argues that Gnostic libertinism is not a sign of religious laxity but, on the contrary, a pronounced expression of Gnostic religiosity. "The orders that respect human flesh serve the demonic world powers to keep people imprisoned in the flesh. Therefore, it is essential for the Gnostics to escape these orders through asceticism or libertinism. This means that there are essentially only two behaviors by which libertinism caused offense: sexual licentiousness and disregard for dietary laws. These two behaviors are the constant target of the polemics of all ecclesiastical fighters against Gnosis, including Paul."²¹⁷

Specifically, Schmithals suggests that the author's use of the phrase "their god is their belly" in 19b refers to the disregard of dietary laws. Since the Jewish Christian Gnostic considered his body to be a prison of the Pneuma-Self created by demons, he would have rejected the Jewish dietary laws. "The body is fundamentally impure." In his interpretation, Schmithals differs from some other exegetes, such as Dibelius, who also assume that the author of Philippians is addressing libertines but suspect that his reference to κοιλία (belly) alludes to their gluttony or indulgence or sexual excesses.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: also Univ., Habil.-Sehr.-Marburg. ,79.

²¹⁸ Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: also Univ., Habil.-Sehr.-Marburg. ,93.

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19c is then supposed to address the other "manifestation of Gnostic libertinism": "sexual licentiousness." However, the author does not refer to the circumcised male member or "private parts," as Ewald and Lipsius assumed, but rather to sexual libertinism or sexual transgressions

in general, of which the Gnostics boasted, as evidenced by 1 Corinthians 6:12, 5:1f, or some testimonies from the Church Fathers (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.13.6 and Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.19.5).

Regardless of whether the general remarks on Gnostic "spirituality" are accurate or whether Schmithals and other exegetes were rather influenced by a caricature of Gnosis by the Church Fathers, it must be noted that the phrase "their god is the belly" does not necessarily imply the disregard of dietary laws. Someone who maintains that a true Gnostic can eat everything available in the meat market (1 Corinthians 10:25) will hardly criticize the violators of dietary laws in the manner the author of Philippians does. Moreover, the accusation that they elevated their belly to their god does not quite fit in this context, especially since in the extensive section 1 Corinthians 8-10, where the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols is thoroughly discussed, such a polemic against the proponents of eating food sacrificed to idols is nowhere evident. Furthermore, such an interpretation would hardly align with the terminology the author of Philippians otherwise uses to combat his opponents.²¹⁹

The verse could therefore be better understood as a criticism of the anxious observance of dietary laws rather than their disregard, as several exegetes have also interpreted it.²²⁰ Additionally, the interpretation suggested by Dibelius, that the author was alluding to the gluttony or sexual excesses of the opponents with the term "belly," is rather unlikely.²²¹ To the author of 3:19b, the belly is considered a god, or rather an idol, because dietary laws in his view are a kind of idolatry that misses true worship. Although Schmithals argues that "such a judgment about his own past would be unthinkable for Paul,"²²² why should someone who can dismiss his pre-Christian past entirely as "loss and rubbish" (Phil 3:8) not also consider dietary laws in the same way—apart from the fact that such criticism would not affect the assumption of an author writing in the name of "Paul" from the 2nd century.

219 This 'belly-service' had nothing to do with the antinomian gluttony or inifference, which would be incompatible with Paul's terminology in this context and with the Judaism of the chapter. In actuality Paul was attacking those who were following special food laws" Günther, *St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings*, 98.

220 Günther, *St. Paul 's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings*, 98.

221 "An identification of these people with the κύβεξ 3 2 cannot be carried out", Schmithals, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen: auch Univ.*, 99.

222 Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters: also Univ.*, *Habil.-Schr.-Marburg.*, 80, 169. Similarly with regard to Rom 16:18.

However, even closer than to the Jewish dietary laws, it makes more sense to think of Jewish Christian vegetarianism in this passage, as evidenced in chapters 14-16 of the Epistle to the Romans (Romans 14:2, the weak eats only vegetables) and especially as sharply criticized in Romans 16:18, with the same words as in Philippians 3:19. Of those who practice it, it is said:

"such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites." This brings us again into the context of syncretistic Judaism of the 2nd century, i.e., with Elchasaites, Ebionites, Dositheans, etc. That the Elchasaites, who were already considered opponents in the Epistle to the Galatians, were vegetarians is unequivocally attested to by Epiphanius in two places:

In Panarion 53.1.1: In Perea, there exists a heresy of the Sampsaeans, also called Elchasaites... Some of them abstain from eating meat or anything that has life in it.

And also in Panarion 19.3.6:

Note the madness of the deceiver [Elchasai]... who rejects the common Jewish practice of eating meat.

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We will return to the Jewish Christian vegetarianism, consistently and sharply rejected by the author of the Pauline letters, when discussing Romans 16 [(see p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**ff)]. Here, it should be noted that Philippians 3:19b must be understood in the same context as Romans 16:17-20 and can therefore be sensibly interpreted as a criticism of a Jewish Christian vegetarianism that elevates the κοιλία (belly) to an idol and false god—this again points to the writing's origin in the 2nd century.

Just as a "factual exegesis" is not compelled to refer 3:19b exclusively to libertines, it is not compelled to do so regarding 3:19c either. The sentence can be understood in various ways, and for each of the interpretations previously presented, more or less significant arguments can be made. It is clear that after his criticism of the dietary laws (or vegetarianism), the author now apparently wants to address another characteristic trait of the opponents by disqualifying their δόξα as αἰσχύνη (shame). This can mean several things:

1) If we consider the δόξα (glory) of the opponents as what they are proud of and boast about, i.e., their "honor" or "glory," and αἰσχύνη (shame) in the sense of "sexual licentiousness" or "sexual sins,"²²³ as Schmithals, Friedrich, and others do, then the sentence can indeed mean: The opponents' pride is in their immoral conduct. In this case, it could be Gnostic libertines who take pride in "bringing the carnal to the carnal" (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.6.3) or, like the Simonians of Hippolytus, who even glorify their unrestrained sexual activity (Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies 6.19.5).

2) Several passages from the Septuagint translation of the Prophet Ezekiel show that the term αἰσχύνη could also be used in the sense of "nakedness": "They uncover the nakedness of their fathers and force women during their impurity..."

²²³ Martin Dibelius, To the Thessalonians I, II, To the Philippians (Vol. 11, Third, revised.; Handbook of the New Testament; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1937), 93.

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(Ezekiel 22:10; regarding female nakedness 16:36f; 23:10, 18, 29; also Revelation 3:18 224). Philippians 3:19c could then be translated as: "Their glory is their shame," which could mean: The opponents of the author have made the belly (dietary laws) their god and seek their honor in their shame (circumcision!)²²⁵. If the author rhetorically and skillfully spoke of belly worship in 3:19b, he now goes even further "below the belt" by alluding to the αἰσχύνη of his opponents and, in a paradoxical and sarcastic twist, designates their shame as the object of their self-glory. In this case, the opponents would not be libertines, but Judaizers, who would be ridiculed by the author for their pride in their membership in the Jewish people of God, which is documented by circumcision. We encounter such an interpretation referring to Judaizers in the oldest commentary on Paul, the Ambrosiaster:

"Those he mentions are from the number of those who overturned the Galatians. For, walking with deceit, they destroyed (undermined) the churches, preaching that Judaism must be practiced under the name of Christ, as if Christ were promised there. He mentions them with pain and tears because they opposed the salvation of believers by raising questions about what foods to eat and what not to eat, as if salvation lay in food or the belly were God, which they thought, according to the law, should be pleased with clean foods, boasting in circumcised private parts. This is to think earthly things; but he who thinks spiritually glories in faith, hope, and love."

Exegetes like Bengel, Ewald, and Lipsius also understood the verse in this way, interpreting αἰσχύνη specifically as the male "private part" and thus deriving the sense of the verse: the opponents seek their honor in their private part by getting circumcised.

224 On Revelation cf. also ThW 1,190, Bultmann

225 Cf. Lueken, "The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians", in *The Writings of the New Testament newly translated and explained for the present* by O. Baumgarten, W. Bousset et al. (eds. Weiß, Baumgarten, and Bousset), 2:398.

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3) Finally, a somewhat more sophisticated theological interpretation should be mentioned. For Gnilka²²⁶, Gunther²²⁷, and others, "αἰσχύνη denotes the experience of God's judgment, which includes the scornful situation in which the one destined for destruction then finds himself." The Greek Bible is also "familiar with the contrast between glory and shame," as suggested with references to Isaiah 45:24, Philippians 1:20 (Gnilka), or Romans 9:33, 2 Corinthians 9:4, 10:8, 1 Peter 2:6, 3:16 (Gunther). Gunther quotes Bultmann: "Its contrast with [glory] links it with the primary reference in the Septuagint to 'shame', which divine judgment brings especially to those 'who are full of proud confidence and expectancy'."²²⁸

The context argues against the interpretation presented by Schmithals, Friedrich, and others, apparently following Dibelius and Bultmann, which has long been popular in German exegesis. The false teachers in Philippians are undoubtedly not Christians who rejected the law, but Judaizers (see page 144ff), i.e., apparently Jewish Christians. Even if the sexual morality of

these Judaizers differed in many ways from that of other Christian groups, the accusation that they boasted of sexual libertinism would be decidedly too far-fetched.

Apart from that, the image Schmithals presents of the “Gnostic libertines” is quite problematic. This has been frequently criticized. The morally degraded libertine pneumatics, torn between ecstasy and coitus, never actually existed. While Irenaeus knows of Gnostics who participated in idol sacrifices and said one must “bring the carnal to the carnal,” aside from the fact that Schmithals's formulation that they “boasted of doing so” does not appear in Irenaeus at all, the Gnostics mentioned by Irenaeus are isolated cases. Moreover, moral defamation has always been a popular means of discrediting opponents, and the Church Fathers' texts must be read very critically in this regard. The majority of Gnostics, as the Nag Hammadi texts also show, were ascetic-oriented, world-denying dualists. It is possible that there were individual charlatans (like Marcus) who could be accused of “earthly-mindedness,” but generally, it was the ecclesiastical Christians who, due to their lax penitential practice or more liberal views on marriage and sexuality, had to endure this accusation from Gnostics who were unwilling to make any worldly compromises²³⁰—and rightly so!

226 Joachim Gnilka, *The Epistle to the Philippians: Interpretation* (Vol. 10, Fasz. 3, 2., revised; Herder's theological commentary on the New Testament; Freiburg im Breisgau, Basel, Vienna: Herder, 1976), 205.

227 Günther, *St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study and Jewish Sectarian teachings*, 98.

228 Günther, *St. Paul's opponents and their background: A study of apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian teachings*, 98.

229 Iren Haer 1 6:3

230 K. Koschorke, *The Polemic of the Gnostics against Church Christianity* (Brill, 1978), 109.

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The third interpretation of Philippians 3:19, proposed by Gnilka, Günther, and others, largely aligns with the second explanation discussed above, particularly in that it also assumes the author is contending with Judaizing opponents. However, in my opinion, it is too sophisticated and complex to be truly convincing. After the vivid “Their god is their belly,” the reader expects another concrete example after “their glory,” not an abstract term. If one takes *αἰσχύνη* instead—corresponding to Ezekiel 22:10—in the sense of male “nakedness,” a clear connection emerges²³¹: After the author criticized the observance of dietary laws or the vegetarianism of his opponents as “belly worship,” their pride in circumcision is now ridiculed with the sarcastic remark “Their glory is their shame.”

5(? sic). Closely related to the section discussed above is the insult of the opponents by the author of the Letter to the Philippians as “dogs” (3:2), which introduces the polemical part of the letter: “Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.” The claim that these people cannot be identified with those in 3:2 because something “new” begins with 3:17 is an arbitrary assertion by Dibelius, who simply wants to defend his two-front thesis in this way.²³² Including 3:2 is methodologically not only correct but also necessary.

231 The objection raised by Schmithals that there is no parallel for such a translation turns out to be incorrect. The passages in the LXX are clear.

232 Dibelius, *To the Thessalonians I, II, To the Philippians*, 93.

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The designation of opponents as "dogs" has puzzled many. In the ancient Near East, dogs were generally not seen as "man's best friend," but as unclean animals.²³³ Consequently, in Judaism, the often considered unclean Gentiles were frequently referred to as "dogs." Islam and later Christianity followed this practice, where non-believers or the unbaptized could also be labeled with this insult.

If the author, as suggested by both the aforementioned and the context with the terms "evildoers" and "mutilators of the flesh," were to refer to his Judaizing or Jewish opponents as "dogs," meaning unclean, a problem arises. According to Schmithals, such an insult would be unthinkable in the mouth of Paul towards his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3); the former Jew Paul could not possibly have meant Jews by this. Furthermore, Judaizers are not to be considered either, as Schmithals believes, since he argues that Paul could never have insulted the "Jewish Christian group of the one common church" as "dogs." After all, Paul had amicably divided the missionary field with them and had even zealously collected money for them, not to mention that Paul's manner of speaking about James nowhere suggests a deeper discord.²³⁴ Therefore, Schmithals finds it unavoidable to conclude that by "dogs," Paul must have meant Gnostic libertines, aiming to brand their immoral behavior.

Despite valid criticism of Judaism and Jewish Christianity, one would be reluctant to accept Schmithals' solution. His theory of "circumcision-happy Gnostics," which he needs here again to explain why the "dogs" could simultaneously be called "mutilators of the flesh," has been extensively criticized above. There is no evidence for the existence of such a group in either earlier or later times. There can be no doubt about the Judaizing character of the heresy fought by "Paul."

233 An exception is Parsism, where dogs were considered sacred animals.

234 Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters*: also Univ., *Habil.-Schr.-Marburg*, 63.

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On the other hand, Schmithals is indeed correct when he points out to the proponents of the Judaizing thesis that there are no indications in the Pauline letters of a conflict with Jacobin Jewish Christianity, and thus the assumption that Paul could have referred to his (Judaizing) opponents as "dogs" is fraught with significant difficulties. Assuming that the Letter to the Philippians is a genuine letter from the historical Paul from the 1st century, the validity of Schmithals' criticism cannot be denied. His Gnostic thesis, despite all its problems, is an attempt to escape the impasses of the Judaizing thesis, which Schmithals sees more clearly than

others. However, his own solution ultimately fails to resolve the impasses, and the entire problem seems insoluble in light of the failure of all attempts at a solution.

We should consider whether there might be another, previously overlooked possibility to solve the riddle of the "dogs."

In his essay on "The Treatment of Rabies among the Elchasaites according to Hippolytus," Erik Peterson made some remarkable observations. He refers to the practice mentioned by Hippolytus in *Refutation of All Heresies* 9:15, where Christians bitten by a rabid dog were baptized according to Elchasaite custom. According to Hippolytus, during the baptism, which was to be performed fully clothed, after the usual invocation of the elements, the following promise had to be made: "not to sin anymore, not to commit adultery anymore, not to steal anymore, not to do wrong anymore, not to deceive anymore, not to harbor enmity anymore, not to despise anyone anymore, not to take pleasure in anything sinful anymore."

In interpreting the section extensively quoted above, Peterson notes a fundamental contradiction. Although Hippolytus had previously announced an incantation formula, "the text he quoted has nothing magical about it."²³⁵ Instead, the bath is accompanied by the promise not to sin anymore. The entire text cited by Hippolytus clearly deals not with disease or possession but with sin. Peterson concludes that "the quoted text should not be seen as a recipe against rabies, but rather as a purification from sin, symbolized by a bite from a rabid dog or snake." Peterson supports his claim that rabies could be used as a symbol for sin among the Elchasaites with material primarily from the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Notably, in *Homilies* 4:21, the Pseudo-Clementine author concludes a brief treatise on the sin of adultery and abortion with the following comparison: "For just as a rabid dog destroys everything it touches and infects with its invisible rage, so does the hidden sin of adultery, though unknown, cause the separation from offspring."²³⁶ Also relevant is *Homilies* 3:68, which highlights the importance of early marriage in a typically Elchasaite Jewish Christian manner.

²³⁵ Erik Peterson, "The Treatment of Rabies in the Elchasaites According to Hippolytus. A contribution to the history of the rite and theology of early Christian baptism", in *Early Church, Judaism and Gnosis* (ed. Erik Peterson; Rome, Freiburg, Vienna Herder, 1959) 221-35, here 226.

²³⁶ ὡσπερ γάρ ὁ λυσσῶν κύων τοῦ τους ἀναίρει ὡνπερ ἀν ψαύσῃ τῆς ἀφανέστατης λύσσης μεταδιδοῦς οὕτως καί τῆς μοιχείας τὸ κρύφιον κακὸν κἀ ἀγνοῖται τῆς διαδοχῆς τὴν ἐκκοπὴν ἐξεργάζεται.

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"These (the presbyters) should urge not only the young but also the older people to marry, so that the burning desire does not contaminate the community through fornication or adultery. For more than any other sin, God hates the sin of adultery because it not only corrupts the sinner himself but also those who feast with him and keep his company; it is like rabies, as it has the property of spreading its madness."

With these and other quotations, Peterson demonstrates that the Elchasaites used "rabies" or "rabid dogs" to denote sexual desire and that baptism was employed not as a means of curing a

disease but “against the overgrowth of sexual passion.”²³⁷ The connection between rabies and concupiscence was later misunderstood when Hippolytus or his editor compiled the Elchasaite material, so that the “rabid dog” was mistakenly taken literally and the quotation was interpreted as instructions for treating actual rabies.

237 Peterson, "The treatment of rabies among the Elchasaite according to Hippolytus. A contribution to the history of the rite and theology of early Christian baptism", 230.

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The considerations presented by Peterson in his essay are convincing. The fact that the immediately preceding quotation by Hippolytus from the Book of Elchasai deals with the sin of adultery suggests that both quotations in the Book of Elchasai originally had a close and direct connection, which was then disrupted by Hippolytus or the editor of the book, who did not understand the symbolic character of the "rabid dog."

With the explanation provided by Peterson, we are now able to explain the puzzling insult of the opponents as "dogs" in the Letter to the Philippians. Apparently, the author wants to strike the opponents with a title taken from their own perspective. He adopts from them or the Book of Elchasai, which he also knows, the image of the [rabid] dogs, which they used to describe sexual desire or the adulterer seized by it, and turns it against them. The reason for such polemics could have been the sexual morality of the Elchasaite opponents, which was discussed extensively above and, with its forced marriage, rigorous rejection of the ideal of abstinence, and baptism even for sodomites, must have seemed to the author the epitome of depravity. At the very least, it was completely incompatible with the encratic sexual ethics he himself advocated.

The author of the Letter to the Philippians is not the only one who had to deal with Jewish Christian "dogs." Ignatius also shows us this. In his warning against opponents in Ephesians 7:1, he also refers to them as "dogs," as "rabid dogs":

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It has become common that some, in reprehensible deceit, display the (Christian) name but do other things unworthy of God; you must avoid them like wild animals. They are rabid dogs that bite in secret; you must beware of them, for their bites are hard to heal.

The parallels to the Letter to the Philippians are interesting throughout this argument. A significant characteristic of the opponents of "Ignatius" is that they "do things unworthy of God." This seems to suggest sexual immorality (see also 2 Timothy 3:6). The author of the Letter to the Ephesians is therefore dealing with, just like the author of the Letter to the Philippians, who, as we will see below, is theologically closely related to him (both coming from the same "stable," that of Marcion), the lax sexual morality of the opposing "dogs" in his eyes. He too apparently fights against the Elchasaite. This assumption could also be supported by the following passage:

One is the physician (thus no worship of stoicheia or angels), both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God in the flesh, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first capable of suffering, then incapable of suffering, Jesus Christ our Lord.

This passage could polemically refer to the medicine of rebaptism prescribed by Elchasai in cases of "rabies," i.e., sexual misconduct. The author of the Letter to Ignatius would have opposed this (and the associated invocation of stoicheia and the "highest God") with his confession of Christ (7:2): Not stoicheia and rebaptism, but rather: One is the physician.

Finally, he also adds to his warnings about the false teachers a reference to the theological significance of the cross—presumably due to a given reason: the cross apparently played no role in their theology.

I have learned that some had to leave because they had bad teaching; you did not let them sow their seeds among you, blocking your ears so that you would not receive the seeds they scattered, as stones for the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, raised up by the hoist of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, while the Holy Spirit served as your rope; your faith is your guide upward, love the way leading to God (Ign. 9:1).

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It is certainly no coincidence that in the Pauline polemic, the accusation that the opponents are "enemies of the cross of Christ," which we will discuss in the next section, stands at a central point.

It should be clear that the designation of the opponents as "dogs" is another indication supporting the assertion here that we are dealing with Jewish Christians of the Elchasaite type. From the already cited statements of Elchasai, it emerged that his sexual morality was offensive to stricter moralists. One need only recall the commandment for early marriage²³⁸ and his rejection of the encratic ideal of virginity. Or consider the Elchasaite baptismal formula for the baptism of forgiveness, which contains an extensive list of sexual deviations whose existence one would hardly have suspected in Christian circles of that time: the range of sexual transgressions extends from homosexuality, incest, adultery, and fornication to bestiality. In the perception of stricter Christian circles, in which we can undoubtedly place the author of the Letter to the Philippians (as well as that of the Ignatian Letter to the Ephesians), the mere mention of such offenses might have been enough to provoke disgust and indignation and to accuse their opponents of "earthly-mindedness" for this reason. Hippolytus, who also advocated a rigorist stance against his opponent Callistus, likewise not entirely unjustly associates the active Elchasaite Alcibiades with Callistus.²³⁹

²³⁸ PsCI Hom 3:26 marriage is also commanded by the true prophet, but also abstinence is permitted.

²³⁹ On the carnal mindset of the Jewish Christian Cerinth: Eus Hist Eccl 3:28 ... He says that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be on earth and that the bodies will live in Jerusalem and will again give themselves over to passions and pleasures ... The content of his teaching was namely: the kingdom of Christ will appear on earth. What he himself, who was in love with his body and had a completely carnal mind, longed for, he dreamed that the kingdom of Christ would consist in, i.e. in the satisfaction of the

stomach and the even deeper organs, that is, in food and drink and lying with other things and - by which he thought he would make a better impression - in festivals, sacrifices and the slaughter of sacrificial animals." This is how Dionysius reports.

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So, when early Christian authors criticize sexual licentiousness, it does not necessarily mean they are referring to "Gnostic libertines." Such a connection between sexual libertinism and Gnosis, as regularly perceived by Schmithals and other exegetes in most Pauline letters, is very unlikely, primarily because the majority of Gnostics were strict ascetics (e.g., Marcionites!). Even if there were a few exceptions and some peculiar offshoots like the Phibionites or other sects that occupied the imagination of the church fathers more than their actual significance warranted, the scant material is far from sufficient to make these few outliers representative of Gnosis as a whole. Generally, the ethical standards of Gnostics were much higher than those of Catholic church Christians—though proponents of "church theology" may not like to hear this.

5. Closely related to the accusation of lax moral conduct is another: the "many," whom the author of the letter had previously warned about, are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil 3:18).

Köster suggested that the accusation refers to the fact that they sought righteousness not in the cross but in the fulfillment of the law. Although such an interpretation cannot be ruled out (due to Phil 3:9), the close connection with Phil 3:19, where the "fate and nature of the enemies of the cross" are characterized,²⁴⁰ shows that the author of the Letter to the Philippians sees the cross being devalued by the unspiritual conduct of his opponents.

For Schmithals, the designation "enemies of the cross of Christ" again points to the Gnostic character of the false teachers Paul opposed. He sees an analogy in 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5, where Paul accuses the Corinthians of emptying the cross of Christ through their wisdom teaching. Since the denial of the salvific significance of the cross in Corinth was due to the influence of Gnostic missionaries, these were presumably also active in Philippi. This assumes that the analysis of the opponents in the Corinthian letters is accurate, which, as we will see below, is not necessarily the case. More important is a second argument. According to Schmithals, the rejection of the salvific significance of the cross can be observed in Gnosis generally. "For the Docetists, the event on the cross could only be an illusion. Where the reality of the fleshly Jesus was asserted in Gnosis, the cross was held in the same contempt as the flesh itself and, therefore, also the 'Christ according to the flesh.'"²⁴¹ He points to several passages from early Christian literature to support his claim, among which PolPhil 7:1 is particularly interesting²⁴² because Polycarp makes a similar accusation against his opponents as the author of the Letter to the Philippians.

²⁴⁰ Köster, Introduction to the New Testament: In the context of the religious history and cultural history of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, 205.

241 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Marburg., 78, note 167. See Walter Schmithals, The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Corinthian Letters (Vol. 66 = N.F., 48; Research into the Religion and Literature of the Old and New Testaments; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 128-33.

242 The other testimonies Iren Haer 1 26:1, Hipp Ref 10:21 can be ignored here, since they once again speak of Cerinth, whose position on Gnosis is quite unclear. In IgnTrall 10 and 1 Joh 4:2; 5:6, Christological doctrines are opposed. That these are "enemies of the cross" still needs to be proven. This is not clear from the text.

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Polycarp 7:1: "For everyone who does not confess that Christ has come in the flesh is an antichrist; and whoever does not confess the testimony of the cross is of the devil; and whoever perverts the words of the Lord according to his own desires and denies the resurrection and the judgment, that one is the firstborn of Satan."

One might also add Polycarp 12:3, where the term used by the author of the Letter to the Philippians appears verbatim:

"Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings and rulers and princes and for those who persecute and hate you and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest among all, so that you may be perfect in him."

Since the author of the Letter to Polycarp is familiar with the Letter to the Philippians, he likely used the expression in connection with it. Despite similar sounding phrases, however, there are no significant indications in either case that the author is opposing Gnostics at this point. In 12:3, Christians who reject martyrdom are clearly meant. This could have been the case in both Gnostic and Jewish Christian circles, so the author might have been thinking of the followers of Elchasai and the mental reservation he recommended in times of persecution. While Polycarp 7:1 clearly references the typically Gnostic heresy of Docetism in its first part and fights against the Gnostic denial of the [future] resurrection in its third part, it would be problematic to assume such a reference for the second part without further evidence. It is much more likely that the author of the Letter to Polycarp is thinking of those opponents of martyrdom whom he then calls "enemies of the cross" in 12:3. As we know, these do not need to be sought only among the Gnostics.

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In general, Gnostics and Marcionites cannot be considered "enemies of the cross." The Gnostic rejection of the cross or the *theologia crucis*, repeatedly claimed by Schmithals and other exegetes, never existed. The criticism from the Gnostics was solely about the physical reality of the crucifixion. Since the spiritual salvation of the Gnostic, unlike that of the church Christian, did not depend on the physical reality of the cross, the salvific significance of the cross was not called into question by its denial. It is not the rejection but, on the contrary, the glorification of the cross that is typically Gnostic or Marcionite. The great early Christian hymns of the cross, in

which the salvific significance of the cross (usually sung by a martyr apostle) is celebrated, all originate from Gnostic circles and are predominantly found in Gnostic Acta literature, which is also notably associated with an encouragement to martyrdom:

Acts of Peter 1:37: "O name of the cross, hidden mystery; O inexpressible grace that is spoken with the name of the cross... I will not conceal the secret of the cross, once hidden and concealed from my soul. The cross should not be to you, who hope in Christ, what it appears to be..." Acts of Andrew 3:8: "Hail, O cross! For you may indeed rejoice. Well do I know that you will rest in the future, for you have been weary for a long time and have stood up, waiting for me. I have come to you, knowing you as my own; I have come to you, who longs for me..." Acts of John 98 (about the cross of light): "... 'John, one must hear this from me; for I need one who will listen. This cross of light will soon be called the Logos by me for your sake, sometimes Reason, sometimes Jesus, sometimes Christ.'" Unknown Berlin Gospel 14: "... 'First stand up (...), O cross, (...) you (and) lift yourself up to heaven, for this is your will, O cross. Do not be afraid! I am rich and will fill you with my wealth...'"

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For the Marcionites, too, the cross and the faith in the Crucified One were central to their doctrine. That the death was a crucifixion was "particularly welcome to Marcion; for the world creator had pronounced a curse upon it and therefore had not intended it for his Christ" (Tertullian III, 18; V, 3; I, 11). Apelles taught: "The death of the Good (Christ) became the salvation of mankind" (Adamantius II, 9). And in the conversation between Rhodon and Apelles reported by Eusebius, Apelles confesses this as the decisive core of his faith: "He declared that whoever places their hope in the Crucified One will find salvation, provided they are found in good works" (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5:13). In Marcionite soteriology, even the blood of the Redeemer is not omitted: "We are the price of the blood of Jesus." The salvific significance of the cross is also acknowledged in many Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi. In the Epistle of the Apostles 6.1, the Savior can even say: "Truly, I say to you: No one will be saved unless they believe in my cross."

It is evident that Gnostics and Marcionites could hardly be considered "enemies of the cross." The denial of the carnal reality of the Redeemer (1 John 4:2; 5:6) is a different issue and should not be confused with this.

243 Adolf von Harnack, Marcion, The Gospel of the Foreign God: A Monograph on the History of the Foundation of the Catholic Church (Unchanged reprographic reprint of the 2nd, revised and enlarged; Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 123.

244 Eznik v. Kolb, De Deo 4.8.

245 Epjk NHC I 2 5.30f; 6.1f; EvVer NHC I 3 20.25; EvTh NHC II 2 Logion 55; EvPhil NHC II 3 Logion 67; 91; 95; 125; ExVal NHC XI 2 33.15.

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On the other hand, the true enemies of the cross are found precisely where modern exegesis least expects them: among the Jewish Christian groups of the 2nd century.

In the context of interpreting Galatians 6:12, some scholars have been cited who observed the absence of a *theologia crucis* in the Jewish Christian literature of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. In his book on the history of Jewish Christianity, Schoeps simply denied the existence of a soteriological Christology based on Jesus' crucifixion:²⁴⁶ "The death of Jesus is mentioned only once in the K.Π. (Recognitions 3,19f) - for it was not his salvific death that enthroned him as the messianic ruler, but the early community's expectation of the Son of Man ... only anticipated salvation from his return in heavenly glory. Jewish Christian controversies in rabbinic literature of the first three centuries therefore do not know the soteriological theme." A brief statistical overview of the use of the words *crux* and *σταυρός* in the Pseudo-Clementine literature confirms the Jewish Christian disinterest in the cross. In the *Recognitions*, the term *crux* appears only four times,²⁴⁷ always in passages referring to the crucifixion of the "teacher"—i.e., without any theological relevance. In the *Homilies*, the term *σταυρός* does not appear at all! It is only mentioned that the teacher was "nailed" (*ὁ διδάσκαλος προσηλωθείς*) in Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 11:20. This is then connected with the exhortation to follow him (even in suffering). This passage likely entered the work under the influence of later ecclesiastical theology. It is not genuinely Jewish Christian, as following him is otherwise always primarily related to fulfilling the renewed law given by the true prophet.

The absence of a *theologia crucis* with corresponding soteriology can also be observed in canonical Christian literature and the Apostolic Fathers, insofar as they are Jewish Christian, e.g., the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, 2 Peter, Revelation, Q, 1 and 2 Clement, Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas.

²⁴⁶ Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 76.

²⁴⁷ PsClem Reeg 1:41, 53; 3:47; 6:5;

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In Ambrosiaster's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, the Roman congregation is described as Jewish Christian and is characterized precisely by the absence of a theology of the cross: *non enim audierant mysterium crucis Christi* (for they had not heard the mystery of the cross of Christ).²⁴⁸

Evidence that veneration of the cross was rejected in Jewish Christian circles can be found in later times. The testimony of Theodor bar Konai has already been mentioned. In the *Toldoth Jeschu* (Ms Strasbourg 12), which may trace back to ancient Jewish Christian traditions, Shimeon Kefa appears as a Jewish Christian who observes purity laws and lives exemplary. It explicitly states about him, "And he did not worship the cross."

Overall, there were numerous reasons to see the Jewish Christians of the 2nd century as "enemies of the cross." This was especially true for the author of the Letter to the Philippians, who derived all his religious and ethical energies, his readiness to follow in suffering, his turning

away from this world, and his longing for a transcendent world, "to depart and be with Christ," solely from the cross and the *theologia crucis*. Naturally, anyone who questioned this, not so much through open opposition but through indifference and a worldly, pragmatic way of life, must have been a thorn in his side. Whether he was alluding to the Jewish Christian Elchasaite reluctance for martyrdom with the remark "enemies of the cross" (as the author of the Letter to Polycarp did) cannot be determined precisely but is unlikely due to the context. It is more likely the - in his eyes - unspiritual conduct of his Jewish Christian opponents that prompted this remark.

Schmithals, Köster, and others consider the demand for perfection (cf. 3:12 ff. 19) and the rejection of the cross (3:19), which we discussed earlier, as well as their supposed rejection of the Parousia and the future heavenly citizenship (3:20), as indications of the Gnostic character of the heresy Paul opposed. 249By vehemently advocating for the future nature of heavenly citizenship, the author of Philippians indirectly reveals that this was apparently rejected by the opponents. They represented a realized eschatology and, like typical Gnostics, believed that the resurrection had already occurred, and Christians were already living on this earth as "citizens of heaven."

248 Introduction 2.

249 Köster: "Jewish-Christian Gnostics are first attested to in Phil 3 (Philippians). Circumcision and Jewish origin (Phil 3:2-5) are part of an ideal of perfection which, moreover, has entirely Gnostic features (cf. 3:12 ff. 19). Preaching on the cross (3:19), expectation of the parousia and future citizenship of heaven (3:20) and resurrection or transformation of the dead are rejected (3:10, 21). Judaistic influences are also shown by the heretics of the Colossians letter" Helmut Köster, "Heretics in Early Christianity" in *Religion in History and the Present* (Vol. 3; Tübingen: Mohr, 1960) 17-21.

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Insofar as this interpretation relies on Philippians 3:20, it must be rejected because the contrast here is not between "now" and "future," but between "earthly" and "heavenly." The author had just spoken of the earthly mindset of his opponents (3:19), and now, with the introductory "ἡμῶν γάρ," he highlights the heavenly citizenship of Christians. The author clearly intends to challenge the pride of his opponents in their "Jewish citizenship" by contrasting their Jewish, i.e., earthly, citizenship with the purely heavenly citizenship of true Christians.

This heavenly citizenship of the Christian is, for the author, just as real in the present as that of his Jewish Christian opponents, who boast of their Judaism—even though the final consummation is still to come. But this would hardly have been questioned even by Gnostic opponents. Therefore, when the author subsequently emphasizes the impending transformation of the humble body, it can hardly be polemically aimed at the claim of the opponents to already be perfect in this regard (how could one think of that, could they seriously have claimed to already walk on earth in a "glorified" body?), but rather at their earthly mindset, as they pay too much attention to bodily matters in his eyes.

6. It was already noted above that the "evil workers" in Philippians 3:2 are to be seen as

competitors of "Paul," i.e., Christian missionaries. This is also the opinion of most exegetes. The Letter to the Philippians thus attests, as do Galatians, Colossians, and especially 2 Corinthians (which we will discuss further below), the existence of an anti-Pauline counter-mission. Such a counter-mission is not attested anywhere in the 1st century outside of the Pauline letters. Here, again, we are referred to the Jewish Christian groups of the 2nd century. Evidence of their missionary activities, which began either after 70 AD, but more likely after 135 AD, has already been discussed in detail above.

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That the Jewish Christians of the 2nd century indeed took the accusations made by the author of Philippians and 2 Corinthians 11:13 upon themselves—the best proof that they were indeed the targets of the accusations—is evidenced by passages from the Pseudo-Clementine literature, which will be discussed in more detail in the context of the following section on the Corinthian letters.

Paul versus Cerinthus - 1st and 2nd Corinthians

First, a few methodological preliminaries are in order. They concern a) the [literary] unity of the letters and b) the consistency of the opposing front.

a) As with the letter to the Philippians, the question of the literary unity of 1 and 2 Corinthians does not significantly contribute to identifying the opponents. However, the textual critical question concerning the oldest text version can prove quite useful regarding the opponent issue, by eliminating glosses and later additions, and determining the opponent profile in the original text layer. Conversely, reading the text "coherently" reveals a number of features that do not fit into a consistent, closed image of the opponent's false teaching.

A striking example of how certain statements are misinterpreted and wrongly categorized through "coherent" reading is 1 Corinthians 12:3: "Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." As Schmithals correctly noted, the cursing of the earthly Jesus is by no means the non-Christian or Jewish synagogue rejection of Jesus, as some exegetes believe. It is highly unlikely that a non-Christian or unbaptized person, speaking "by the Spirit of God," would curse Jesus in a Christian community assembly. The assumed situation is significantly more complex. According to Schmithals, the situation is such that "the community is hesitant to deny the ecstatic their Christianity, even though they curse Jesus."²⁵⁰ But what kind of Christians could these be who curse Jesus? The answer Schmithals provides is convincing: they are dualistic Gnostics who condemn the physical Jesus, or the "Christ according to the flesh," cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16, because their reverence is solely for the pneumatic Christ, the "Christ according to the Spirit." Such Gnostics are first attested in early Christian literature by Origen in his work against Celsus: they are Ophites who, according to Origen, "do not admit anyone to their community who has not first cursed Jesus" (Origen, *Against Celsus* 6:28). Although Origen understandably does not want to consider them true Christians, it is clear that we are dealing with a grouping of Christian Gnosticism. In this context, reference should also be made to Irenaeus's testimony about the Gospel of Judas, which he attributes to the Cainites. According to him, Judas "alone knew the truth and completed the mystery of the betrayal; he separated all earthly and heavenly things. They call this writing the Gospel of Judas."²⁵¹ Schmithals correctly interprets the passage "he separated all earthly and heavenly things" (*quem et terrena et caelitia omnia dissoluta dicunt*) when he states: "Here, the betrayal of Jesus as the carnal part of the Redeemer is glorified similarly to his cursing."²⁵² After the discovery of the Gospel of Judas, having knowledge of its contents, this analysis can be unreservedly agreed with, which from today's perspective must be considered remarkably insightful. Indeed, this fact is unambiguously expressed in the Gospel of Judas. Jesus says to Judas there, "You will sacrifice the man that clothes me."²⁵³ This means that, according to the Gnostic author of the Gospel of Judas, Judas's salvific act consists in him delivering the carnal part of Christ to death. The Gnostic dualistic devaluation of the earthly Jesus, which consistently leads to a glorification of Judas, is thus evident.²⁵⁴

250 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 119.

251 Iren Haer 131:1

252 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 121.

253 CT p. 56, 19ff. Cf. Peter Nagel, "The Gospel of Judas", *Journal for New Testament Studies and the Knowledge of the Old Church* 98/3-4 (2007) 213-87, here 233. Johanna Brankaer and Hans- Gebhard Bethge, *Codex Tchacos: Texts and Analyses* (Vol. 161; *Texts and Investigations into the History of Old Christian Literature*; Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 338.

254 The dualistic Christology of the early Christian Gnostics with their devaluation of the earthly Jesus can also be found among their later descendants, the French Cathars. They too make a distinction between the evil, i.e. the earthly, and the good, i.e. the heavenly, Christ: They also said, in their secret doctrine, (in secreto suo) that that Christ who was born in the visible, and terrestrial Bethlehem, and crucified in Jerusalem, was a bad man, and that Mary Magdalene was his concubine; and that she was the woman taken in adultery, of whom we read in the gospel. For the good Christ, as they said, never ate, nor drank, nor took upon him true flesh, nor ever was in this world, except spiritually in the body of Paul.... See Samuel Roffey Maitland, *Facts And Documents Illustrative Of The History, Doctrine, And Rites Of The Ancien & Waldenses* (London: Rivington [et al.], 1832), 392/394.

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There is no need to delve further into the criticism of this interpretation here, as it is mostly irrelevant. Our objection to Schmithals, however, is that he considers the verse to be "Pauline," i.e., he regards it as part of the original text and attributes this identified profile feature to the account of Paul's opponents. According to Schmithals, these opponents must have been Gnostics, as is unmistakably evident from the verse, since cursing Jesus is a typically Gnostic trait. Schmithals does not recognize that 1 Corinthians 12:3 is an interpolation. In 12:1, the author introduced his topic, the various gifts of the Spirit. Instead of following through consistently, he gets entangled right at the beginning, in 12:2-12:3, in reflections and warnings that do not quite fit at this point. Only 12:4, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit," meaningfully connects back to 12:1. It is clear that 12:2-3 is a later insertion, with which the Catholic editor wanted to warn against the Gnostic dualistic rejection of the earthly Jesus. This suspicion is confirmed by a look at the Marcionite recension, in which 12:1 is attested, but there is a gap between 12:2-7. Although the reconstruction of the Marcionite version does not allow for a judgment on what was missing between 12:2-7 and what the wording of the passage may have looked like in detail, it is methodologically quite legitimate to see it as a support for the view presented here.

It has thus become clear that determining the textual basis concerning the determination of the opponent profile in the Pauline letters, even if only in a few places, is of great importance. If this is omitted, the opponent profile is either wrongly determined, as with Schmithals, who, although he can substantiate his Gnostic thesis with 1 Corinthians 12:3, can only carry it out with extremely forced exegesis in most other places, or it becomes a hodgepodge of various dogmatic directions and tendencies that contradict each other and for which a suitable Christian-heretical grouping in early Christian history cannot be found - and therefore is very often simply invented.

b) Is it methodologically legitimate to assume a unified opponent profile in the two letters to the Corinthians and to presume a unified stance of the author in 1 and 2 Corinthians? Or must the two letters be understood against the background of a double opponent front?

For F.C. Baur, the answer to this was clear. He stated, "that the Apostle's polemic against the same opponents who are contested in the first letter extends to the second"²⁵⁵ and uniformly considered the opponents fought by the author of 1 and 2 Corinthians to be Judaizers. While in 1 Corinthians he saw the Apostle in conflict with the factional spirit "created by the influence of Judaizing opponents,"²⁵⁶ which he supposedly encountered primarily in the enigmatic Christ party, the οί του Χρίστου, in 2 Corinthians it concerns the Judaism of Christian teachers who unmistakably appear with "all claims of born Jews." Although Baur concedes that the conflict with Apollos in the first part of 1 Corinthians plays a role and that the Apostle does not make the principles otherwise spread by Judaizing opponents the immediate "subject of his dispute" in the first letter, unlike in Galatians or Romans, he believes that the light shed by 2 Corinthians on 1 Corinthians fully justifies his theory of unified opponents of Paul. - Among others, Manson and Schoeps follow him, albeit with some reservations.²⁵⁷

Like his mentor Bultmann, Schmithals also assumes a unified opponent front in both letters to the Corinthians or the seven Pauline letters he reconstructed, but for him, Paul is not contending against Judaizers, as with Baur, but, as usual, against Jewish-Christian Gnostics. With regard to F.C. Baur's Judaizer theory, Schmithals formulates his rejection categorically (almost in the style of an *Abrenuntiatio diaboli*): "The thesis that Paul contends with Judaizers in the letters to the Corinthians," he states, "must be abandoned without reservation in every form and every mitigation."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Baur, Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ; his life and work, his letters and his teaching; a contribution to a critical history of early Christianity, 331.

²⁵⁶ Baur, Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ; his life and work, his letters and his teaching; a contribution to a critical history of early Christianity, 289.

²⁵⁷ "But the main opponents must have been Judaists", Schoeps, Paul: The theology of the apostle in the light of Jewish religious history, 71.

²⁵⁸ Schmithals, The Gnosis in Corinth: An investigation into the Corinthian letters, 113.

In the remaining exegetical literature of recent times, even in places where simpler solutions are usually preferred, the assumption of a unified opponent front has been abandoned, even by a conservative exegete like Kümmel. According to him, the Apostle in 1 Corinthians is contending against an "enthusiastic Gnostic front," and in 2 Corinthians against "newly arrived opponents who engage in a Gnostic-Palestinian-Jewish-Christian anti-Pauline opposition [sic!] and simultaneously against a community not yet completely freed from Gnostic ideas (cf. 12:20f) and undecided in its stance towards the opponents..."²⁵⁹. Kümmel is unable to detect any traces of

"Judaizing," i.e., radically Jewish-Christian views, in either 1 Corinthians or 2 Corinthians²⁶⁰. According to Kümmel, the Apostle faces a highly complex constellation of opponents. Attempts to historically locate the "Gnostic-Palestinian-Jewish-Christian anti-Pauline opposition," which is initially nothing more than a postulate of Kümmel's, beyond 2 Corinthians and independent of it within the framework of early Christian history known to us, are not undertaken. Understandably so. For neither Kümmel nor other exegetes holding similar views are likely to ever find such a group in the 1st century.

Even if one concedes with Baur that "the principles otherwise spread by Judaizing opponents" hardly play a role in 1 Corinthians and are not the "subject of his dispute" for the author, there is nevertheless a crucial link connecting 1 and 2 Corinthians even on the issue of opponents: 1 Corinthians 9:1f. The apology for the apostleship presented here already belongs to that conflict which is sharply fought out in 2 Corinthians in the chapters. Moreover, a closer analysis shows that the first chapters of 1 Corinthians also contain several indications that justify the assumption of the Judaizer theory (2nd century).

They reveal facets of a Jewish Christianity that Baur did not recognize as such because he assumed a hypothetical (Pharisaic-influenced) Jewish Christianity of the 1st century from the outset and did not see that the author of both letters was contending with (syncretistically influenced) Judaizers of the 2nd century. The entire dispute over Sophia, which is carried out at the beginning of 1 Corinthians, is, as we shall see, a confrontation with Jewish-Christian opponents of the 2nd century who, like the Elchasaites, liked to present their teachings as "philosophy." On the other hand, the dispute over the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 also points to Jewish-Christian opponents, specifically Cerinthus, who, as we know from Epiphanius, belonged to the Jewish-Christian deniers of a resurrection.

²⁵⁹ Kümmel, Feine, and Behm, Introduction to the New Testament, 248.

²⁶⁰ Kümmel, Feine, and Behm, Introduction to the New Testament, 237; 248.

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Before we get to that, we want to, as usual, create an overall profile of the opponents and then discuss it point by point (whereby some repetitions and references back to what has been said so far are unavoidable):

1. In the author's view, the opponents proclaim a (human) wisdom/Sophia, 1 Cor 2:5; 2 Cor 1:12 (cf. Col 2:8) and take pleasure in clever words, 1 Cor 1:17, and word battles, 1 Cor 1:20.
2. By doing so, they "empty" the cross, 1 Cor 1:17-2:5, and consider it foolishness (cf. Phil 3:18).
3. They regard themselves or their wisdom as "perfect" (cf. Phil 3:12-16; Col 1:28; 3:14; 4:12).
4. They apparently place value on baptism and washings, 1 Cor 1:13-17.
5. There is an individual behind the agitation, 2 Cor 11:4; 10:11 (cf. Gal 5:7, 10 and Col 2:8, 18).

6. They proclaim another gospel, 2 Cor 10:11; 11:4 (cf. Gal 1:7).
7. They proclaim another Jesus (and another spirit), 2 Cor 11:4.

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8. They boast of their Jewish origin, 2 Cor 11:22 (cf. Phil 3:5f), their close relationship to Christ, 1 Cor 10:7; 11:23, and their spirituality, they have revelations, 2 Cor 12:1, 7 (cf. Gal 1:1).
9. They possess letters of recommendation, 2 Cor 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 10:12; Paul is to derive his call to apostleship from himself, 2 Cor 3:5.
10. They come from outside, 2 Cor 11:4.
11. They have claims to support and turn the gospel into a business, 1 Cor 9:4ff; 2 Cor 11:21.
12. They are referred to by the author as "super-apostles," 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11 (cf. Gal 2:6, 9), and as "false apostles," cf. 2 Cor 11:13, as "false brothers," 2 Cor 11:26 (cf. Gal 2:4), as "deceitful workers," 2 Cor 11:13 (cf. Phil 3:2) who transform themselves into apostles of Christ, as "servants of Satan," 2 Cor 11:14 (cf. Gal 1:7).
13. On the other hand, Paul is not an apostle to the opponents, in other words, they dispute his legitimacy, 1 Cor 9:2 (cf. Gal 1:1), because he has not seen Christ, 1 Cor 9:1.
14. because he does not possess pneumatic authority, 2 Cor 12:1ff; 13:3.
15. They criticize his "weakness," 2 Cor 11:21, 29; 12:10; 13:3f, 9.
16. and refer to him as a deceiver or impostor who works secretly, 2 Cor 4:2; 2 Cor 6:8, who corrupts the word of God, 2 Cor 4:2, who persuades people, 1 Cor 2:4, and pleases people, 1 Cor 10:33 (cf. Gal 1:10), who is "out of his mind," 2 Cor 11:16, 19; 12:6, 11 (cf. Acts 26:24), who boasts, 2 Cor 10:13.
17. whose proclamation does not correspond to the regula fidei, 2 Cor 10:12f, 15f (cf. Gal 6:16).
18. and is obscure, 2 Cor 4:3.
19. The opponents deny the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor 15:12, and practice baptism for the dead, 1 Cor 15:29.
20. They do not participate in idol sacrifices.

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1] The first three chapters of 1 Corinthians are dominated by the discussion of wisdom; the author contrasts earthly wisdom with the message of the cross as true wisdom or the "wisdom of the perfect." The keyword Sophia has led most exegetes astray and tempted them to assume an anti-Gnostic stance of the author at this point. "There is nothing in 1 Corinthians resembling a polemic against 'Judaistic,' i.e., radically Jewish-Christian views," says Kümmel. The whole letter should instead "show a front against a Gnostic reinterpretation of the Christ message," which attributes full salvation and unconditional moral freedom to the Pneumatic as one freed from the σαρκί.²⁶¹ This is one of the few instances where Kümmel exceptionally aligns himself with Schmithals, who had already extensively argued for an anti-Gnostic stance in his "Gnosis in Corinth." According to Schmithals, Paul in 1 Corinthians aims to demonstrate "that and why precisely this word proclaimed by him and known to them (i.e., the word of the cross) is the

power of God unto salvation, and not the Sophia, which they have recently begun to preach as the true gospel."²⁶²

Indeed, it cannot be denied that Sophia is a central Gnostic concept. However, as with the discussion of "perfection" and its derivatives in the letter to the Philippians, the Gnostics were by no means the only ones using the term Sophia. For example, it has so far - even by F.C. Baur - been completely overlooked that "wisdom" or "God's wisdom" also held significant importance in Jewish-Christian theology. In the Recognitions, Peter introduces Barnabas to Clement as the greatest representative of "dei sapientia."²⁶³ Forgiveness of sins and purification do not happen through sacrificial blood but through God's wisdom. The purification leads to "perfect life": "He (i.e., the true prophet) introduced the water baptism among them, through which they would be absolved from all their sins by invoking his name and would expect future immortality, walking in a perfect life, purified not by the blood of animals but by the purification of God's wisdom."²⁶⁴ God's wisdom helps those who love the truth (PsCI Rec 1:40). It was involved [as a mediator] in God's creation (PsCI Hom 16:12; cf. Wis 9:9) and is still present in his creation today (PsCI Rec 8:20; 8:22; 8:28; 8:32f; 10:33), and its knowledge is gained by persistently hearing his word or the sayings of the true prophet (PsCI Rec 3:62; 8:37; 6:14 = the words of the true prophet).

²⁶¹ Kümmel, Feine, and Behm, Introduction to the New Testament, 237.

²⁶² Schmithals, Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians, 129.

²⁶³ PsCI Hom 1:15; PsCI Rec 1:12 Here is, Peter, what is most important in the knowledge of the Lord, that is, what is left of you without cessation.

²⁶⁴ PsCI Rec 1:39: *baptisma eis per aquam statuit, in quo ab omnibus peccatis invocato eius nomine solverentur et de reliquo perfectam vitam sequentes in immortalitate durarent, non pecudum sanguine sed sapientiae dei purificatione purgati*

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The wisdom in the pseudo-Clementine writings is essentially God's wisdom of creation, which can be recognized with the help of reason (from his works). This concept of a *revelatio generalis*, widespread among Jewish Christians (cf. also 1 Clem.), Stoics, and Christian apologists of the 2nd century, is vehemently attacked by the author of 1 Corinthians. Against the view that the *Sapientia Dei* lies openly exposed and can be recognized by any rational person, he sets his proclamation of a hidden wisdom, the word of the cross. If the world were indeed so rationally ordered by the archons or world rulers as "satellites of the 'god of this age'" (i.e., of course, the creator god)²⁶⁵, as the proponents of this philosophy believe, then - the logic goes - the Son of God could never have been crucified. That they themselves had him crucified is the proof of their blindness and thus of the blindness of the worldly reason represented (mythologically) by them. Therefore, the cross is the stumbling block at which all human standards of reason are nullified and every "rational" theodicy must fail. The natural man, i.e., natural reason, is never capable of attaining God's wisdom; this is only possible with the help of the Spirit of God for those who have now received him.

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While the Jewish-Christian Stoic view opposed by the author is characterized by a strong rational and worldly optimism, accompanied by a characteristically inclusive understanding of revelation, the author himself represents, at this point, the rational and worldly pessimism as well as the exclusive concept of revelation found in Marcion and the Gnostics. For them, the idea of a *revelatio generalis* as proof of God from his works was completely impossible because creation showed them nothing but the face of an inferior creator. Their God was therefore "incomprehensible and unknown to all," just like the God of Simon (= Paul), known from the *Recognitions* (PsCI Rec 2:38).

The fact that in the author's confrontation with his opponents in the two letters to the Corinthians, two very different concepts of revelation clash, is also evident from 2 Cor 4:3. It is easy to infer from this passage that the apostle was accused by his opponents of having a hidden gospel, in contrast to theirs. Indeed, it is repeatedly observed that the author(s) of the Pauline letters frequently use the schema of revelation to express the totally different and novel nature of their revelation (Col 1:26-28, 3:4-7, 8-12; Rom 16:25f.; cf. 1 Cor 2:6-10, 2 Tim 1:9f.; Tit 1:2f.; also IEph 19). The fundamental idea is that God's counsel has been hidden since eternity and was neither revealed through the *Nomos* nor through a "natural theology" (not even through the gradual revelation of the "True Prophet!"), but only now, in the present (through the spirit of the apostle), has it been finally unveiled. From the accusation made against the apostle, one can indirectly infer the opponents' standpoint, which was based on an opposite concept of revelation, in other words, they assumed a wisdom apparent to reason. This is further evidenced by the author's later accusation that they were proclaiming themselves, which is not entirely false, as the identification of human and divine reason is, in a certain sense, a prerequisite of natural theology.²⁶⁶ Since the entire Jewish-Christian Stoic theology of revelation was based on the cognitive abilities of human reason, it had to appear to the author of 1 Corinthians as worldly or human wisdom (2:6f), even if its adherents considered it the highest form of *Sapientia Dei*.

²⁶⁶ See the discussion between Peter and Simon PsClemRecg 3:51, in which Peter demands of Simon the proof of a human sense organ to know its hidden truth: "But believe me that you would never know what light is, unless you had received from the light itself the sight and the understanding to see: so also in other things: now that you have received the understanding, you conceive, as it were, as in a dream, something greater and higher, the occasion of which is taken from the senses, to whose giver you are ungrateful. But be sure that until you find a new sense which is outside these five which we all use, you cannot assert a new God."

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The author of Colossians, as we have already seen, used the term "philosophy" to describe the teachings of his opponents, thereby not entirely missing their self-understanding. The Elchasaites seem to have regarded their teachings as "philosophy." With Justin and the apologists of the 2nd century, who were very close to the Jewish Christianity of their time in this

regard, this was certainly the case, as we know. For them, Christianity was indeed a philosophy among many, though the highest one.²⁶⁷

It is possible that the author is also addressing the disputation mania prevalent in Jewish-Christian and apologetic circles, as we know it not only from the apologetic literature of the 2nd century but especially from the Pseudo-Clementine writings with their extensive sections of disputations and discussions, where everything revolves philosophically around the συζητεῖν of truth.²⁶⁸ It is possible that the author of 1 Corinthians had this genre of literature in mind when he rhetorically asks in 1:20 where the (truth-)seeker, συζητητής, who has recognized God is. 1 Corinthians 1:17 shows that the "wisdom of the word" is considered by the author as an obstacle to his proclamation, a "nullification" of the cross of Christ. He does not want his Paul to be seen as a rational disputant, "with words taught by human wisdom" (1 Cor 2:13), as the Pseudo-Clementines, especially with Peter, who boasts of knowing the Ordo Disputationis exactly, but as a revealer of secret divine knowledge.²⁶⁹ - The author of the Pastoral Epistles also struggles with opponents who are "sick with disputes and word battles" (νόσων περιζητήσεις και λογομαχίας; 1 Tim 6:4). As we will see, these are also Jewish Christians.

267 Just Dial 8:1; cf. 2:1; Tat Or Graec 31:1.2; 42:1

268 PsClem Reeg 1:17, 19f, 23, 66, 68; 2:25, 36; 3:32, 70; 7:2, 32; 8:7, 36, 39, 58, 60f; 9:1; 10:6f; PsClem Hom 1:6; 3:10, 38; 16:1, 13; 17:13, 15; 19:2f, 7f, 24; 20:11 Compare the verbal battles with the Jewish-Christian opponents in Tit 3:9.

269 Cf. PsCI Rec 3:39 3 Simon (to Peter): "It seems to me that you, who boast of knowing the course of the debate, are now answering contrary to it." (and Simon: Videris mihi tu qui iactas disputandi ordinem nosse, nunc contra ordinem respondisse)

PsCI Hom 18:9 Simon = Paul is cornered by Peter in terms of argument and is defeated by him, cf.. Simon finds his last refuge in the objection that the weakness of the argument of the defeated does not necessarily mean that his position is wrong: οὐ γάρ ἡ ἀσθένεια του νικωμένου ἀλήθειά ἐσπιντοῦ ἐκδικούντος.

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With his criticism of human rational wisdom, the author remains essentially true to himself and to the spirit of the [Marcionite] school he represents. He holds no different stance than Gal 4:8 (the Gentiles served gods because they did not know God) and 1 Thess 4:5 (cf. 2 Thess 1:8), where it speaks of the Gentiles who know nothing of God; also in Eph 4:17-19, it says that the understanding of the Gentiles is darkened, and they are alienated from the life of God through their ignorance. The passage Rom 1:19-2:1, often cited as evidence for the presence of a theology of natural knowledge of God in Paul, is, as demonstrated above, interpolated. In the original part, 2:12-2:16, the author does not speak of a prior natural knowledge of God through creation (revelatio generalis), but of the natural moral law (lex naturalis) revealed in the conscience—two entirely different things.

The theme of the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians is, as we see, primarily determined by the theology of revelation. They are not done justice if interpreted christologically, as Schmithals does, who attempts to understand the section from 2 Cor 11:4, i.e., from the rejection of the

earthly Jesus.²⁷⁰ There is no evidence to support the assumption that 1 Cor 1-3 is combating Gnostic Docetism, especially since it is not clear what Gnostic Docetism and "human wisdom" would have to do with each other. The logos of the cross is not opposed by a Christology that rejects the human Jesus, but by worldly wisdom, which is to be attained through knowledge by means of reason, i.e., through rational disputation (συζητήσῃ), and was particularly sought in Christian apologetic and Jewish-Christian circles of the 2nd century. It is against these circles that the author directs his word of the cross pointedly at the beginning of the letter. For him, it is impossible to attain wisdom through reason, as all reason is once and for all discredited by the behavior of the world-creating powers themselves, who crucified the "Lord of Glory."

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2] The accusation that the Jewish-Christian opponents "emptied" the cross has already been mentioned. Aside from the apparent allusion to the Jewish-Christian and apologetic penchant for disputing and philosophizing, the cross held no significance in the Jewish-Christian theology of the 2nd century, as was elaborated above.

3] The statement of the author in 1 Cor 2:6, "But we speak wisdom among the perfect," could also be directed against Jewish-Christian opponents. The emphatic mention of "among the perfect" seems to polemically refer to the Jewish-Christian claim of teaching the perfect way. In the discussion of the letter to the Philippians, we have already encountered several passages from Jewish-Christian literature of the 2nd century, where the Jewish-Christian way is described in this manner, such as PsCI Rec 1:39, where the author assures that baptism and perfect (= legal) life promise immortality to all Christians. It should also be noted PsCI Rec 1:22, where Peter promises Clement that he will attain perfect knowledge through him. For the author of the Didache, perfection consists in bearing "the whole yoke of the Lord," that is, in a legal way of life. As a self-designation for Jewish Christians, the term appears in Hom 3:26, where it is said that the true prophet seals the perfect. The gnosis given by the true prophet is perfect.²⁷¹ (PsCI Hom 2:5). Also, in the 1st letter of Clement, the author speaks in 1:2 of the glory of the "perfect and reliable knowledge" of the Corinthians. In contrast, the author knows only one perfect gnosis: the knowledge of the folly of the cross.

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4] A polemical jab at Jewish-Christian theology also seems to be behind 1 Cor 1:17, where the author asserts that he was called not to baptize but to preach the gospel. Köster: "Paul ... wants to have as little to do with baptism as possible."²⁷²

Indeed, the author is likely thinking of the emphasized importance placed on baptisms and washings in Jewish-Christian hemerobaptist circles.²⁷³ The author wants to relativize their significance by polemically distancing himself from them.

5] As in Gal 5:7.10 and Col 2:8.18, there are indications in 2 Corinthians that a single individual has a prominent role in the agitation of the false teachers. In 2 Cor 10:11, the accusation that

Paul is strong in his letters but weak in his physical presence and contemptible in his speech might point to this. The singular form *b τοιοῦτος* could indicate this. 2 Corinthians 11:4 mentions the "one who comes" (*ὁ ἐρχόμενος*) who preaches another Jesus, another Spirit, and another Gospel than Paul, and who is certainly not an "arbiter" (as Schiatter suggests) but rather a "leader"²⁷⁴ and an anti-Pauline agitator.²⁷⁵ Bultmann suggests that the article in this instance could be "generic."²⁷⁶ This may be the case. However, if this refers to the leader of a Judaizing mission, the question of this *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*' identity need not remain open; then—despite all the caution that such identifications require—an attempt at an answer can be made. It is either Elchasai or Cerinth.

272 Köster, *Introduction to the New Testament: In the context of the religious history and cultural history of the Hellenistic and Roman periods*, 556.

273 PsClem Reeg 1:19, 38f, 48, 54f, 63, 69; 2:71f; 3:66ff, 75; 4:35f; 6:8f, 15; 7:33ff, 38; 8:53; 9:12; 10:49; PsClem Hom 3:29; 7:8; 8:22; 11:25ff; 13:9ff, 20f; 14:2, 8; cf. the Eichasaiten Hipp Ref 9:15; Epiph Haer 1 19.1ff

274 Feine and Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 159.

275 Ernst Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", in *The Image of Paul in Recent German Research* (ed. Karl Heinrich Rengsdorf; *Ways of Research*; Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges., 1964] 475-521, here 481.

276 Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 204.

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6] According to 2 Cor 11:4, the false teachers proclaim a "different gospel." We already know the "different gospel" as a designation for the proclamation of the Judaistic false teachers in Gal 1:7. This alone suggests a connection between the two passages, and that 2 Cor 10:11 may also refer to the same Judaistic false teaching. However, Bultmann argues that some other keywords used by the false teachers in connection with the "different gospel" exclude a Judaistic background. Bultmann states: "It cannot be the Judaistic gospel of the Galatian agitators, because then the antithesis in v.6 would not be understandable; for the Judaizers could not appear with the catchwords of *λόγος* and *γνώσις*, furthermore, because the law debate in chapters 10-13 [or in 2 Corinthians as a whole] does not play a role."²⁷⁷

Of the two arguments presented, the first is the weakest. This is because a] it is not at all certain that in both cases, these are opponent's keywords. It certainly seems that the accusation was made against Paul that he was an *ιδιώτης τω λόγῳ*, i.e., he possessed only inadequate rhetorical training. But the statement that he nonetheless has knowledge, i.e., *γνώσις*, seems to come from the author, who cleverly parries the accusation against Paul in this way. Whether he thereby tied into the opponent's high regard for *γνώσις* is by no means certain and must remain open.

277 Bultmann, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*.

b) But even if that were the case, it would not be proof of an anti-Gnostic tendency on the part of the author. As we have seen with other vocabulary considered "typically Gnostic," the term "Gnosis" is not exclusive to Gnostics. The term also enjoys considerable esteem in Jewish-Christian literature. The Didache and 1 Clement know and use it.²⁷⁸ The Recognitions speak of knowledge (agnitio) or knowledge of God (agnitio Dei) about 30 times,²⁷⁹ and the similarly used term (scientia) appears quite frequently.²⁸⁰ In the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the term Gnosis (in a religious sense) is central and appears more than 50 times.²⁸¹ The effort of the authors of this literary genre is ultimately aimed at instructing the reader in the correct Gnosis in a novelistic and didactic form. This is, of course, the legal Gnosis of the true prophet. According to the doctrine of syzygies, the knowledge of truth occurs gradually. First come the prophets of this world who prophesy falsely, then those who possess the true Gnosis of eternal things. Therefore, Peter, as a representative of divine Sophia, follows Simon "like light follows darkness, like knowledge follows ignorance" (PsCl Hom 2:17).

c) Only Bultmann's second argument remains: the absence of a law debate speaks against Jewish-Christian opponents. However, this must also apply to the letters to the Philippians and Colossians, where the dispute over the law is also not present. Nevertheless, it was shown above through numerous clear indications that their authors undoubtedly contend with Jewish-Christian opponents. The absence of the law debate cannot be used to determine the opponents or to exclude Jewish opponents, neither in this case nor in others.

278 IClem 1:2; 36:2; 40:1; 41:4; 48:5; Did 9:3; 10:2; 11:2

279 PsClem Reeg 1:2,9,20, 34.63; 2:25.41; 3:34; 4:17; 5:5,12; 6:4,6,8; 7:23,36, 38; 8:27, 59.61; 9:6,31; 10:44

280 4 1 m a J

281 PsClem Hom 1:17; 2:5f, 11,15, 17, 33; 3:31; 4:8; 7:7; 9:19; 10:12; II:18f, 29; 12:7, 23; 18:12,16, 21; 7:20 p.m.; 20:lf

The fact that the Jewish-Christian gospel was indeed a gospel—and not regarded as a new law, which would also have been possible²⁸²—was evident from the testimony of Hippolytus already cited above (Ref 9.13.4). The written gospel of Cerinthus and the Ebionites is considered to be the Gospel of Matthew (Irenaeus, Haer 1.26.2; 3.11.7; Eusebius, Hist Eccl 6.17). The Ps-Clementine Recognitions 1:6, 41, 64; 9:29; 10:45 and Ps-Clementine Homilies 1:6; 2:17 also speak of the gospel and the proclamation of the gospel—albeit not very often.

7] Besides the "other gospel," the opponents proclaim "another Jesus" and "another spirit" (2 Cor 11:4). According to Lütgert, Paul is combating a Christological heresy that "made something different out of the historical Jesus than what he really was."²⁸³ The question of what Jesus "really was" and whether the Christ image of "Paul" was more historical than that of the heretics he opposed can safely be set aside here. What is correct is that the author of 2 Corinthians

refers to a Christ image that contradicts his own just as the "other gospel" contradicts his own. To answer the question of what this deviation might have consisted of, most exegetes refer to 2 Cor 5:16: "Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer." Clearly, the author refers here to an opposing position, which he characterizes as knowledge of Christ "according to the flesh."

Is this his own theological evaluation, in which he wishes to qualify the opposing knowledge as "fleshly," similar to how he speaks in chapter 8 of Romans about those who still "walk according to the flesh" (8:4), "are in the flesh" (8:5), and "live according to the flesh" (8:4, 12, 13)—as opposed to those who already walk and think according to the Spirit (8:4, 5)? Or does the author respond to the opponents' claim to know not only a pneumatic but also a physical Christ, or even to have had a personal acquaintance with him? In other words, does he use the term in a neutral sense, as he can elsewhere simply to denote Jesus' descent from the seed of David (Rom 1:3), belonging to the physical patriarch Abraham (Rom 4:1), or to the Jewish kinsmen "according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3)? So what is meant by knowing Christ according to the flesh (γινώσκειν Χριστόν κατά σάρκα)?

282 In fact, the term *Euangelium* or *εὐαγγέλιον* and the derived *evangelizo* or *εὐαγγελίζω* do not occur very often in the pseudeoclementine literature; *εὐαγγέλιον* *εὐαγγελίζω* only PsClem Hom 1:6; 2:17; *evangelium*, *evangelizo* only PsClem Reeg 1:6,41, 64; 9:29; 10:45

283 Lütgert, *Law and Spirit: An Investigation into the Prehistory of the Galatian Epistle*, 67. According to Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation of II Corinthians 10-13", 483.

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The question can only be correctly answered in context. In 5:14-15, the author had programmatically stated that the believer, through co-dying and co-resurrecting, is brought into a new form of existence, enabling him to "no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again for them." This new (pneumatic) existence allows him to disregard the fleshly advantages of humans entirely (5:16a). This also pertains to the form of Christ (5:16b). What others may find in this *κατά σάρκα*, whether because they still judge according to their fleshly existence or feel attracted to the fleshly advantages of this Christ—both of which are inseparable—is irrelevant to the author, as he stands on a higher pneumatic level of existence: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

But what does the author mean by the fleshly advantages of Christ, which attract the fleshly judging person? The author is likely contending with the belief propagated by his Jewish-Christian opponents in a (coming) Messiah, the son of David (and Son of Man?), who is supposed to fulfill Israel's hopes and establish an earthly kingdom of peace. According to Gaius, cited by Eusebius, Cerinthus taught that "after the resurrection, the kingdom of Christ will be on earth, and that the bodies will live in Jerusalem and once again indulge in passions and pleasures."²⁸⁴ Similarly, Dionysius of Alexandria reports on Cerinthus's views (also in Eusebius): "the kingdom of Christ will appear on earth," and he polemically adds, "in the

satisfaction of the stomach and the lower organs, that is, in eating and drinking and sexual indulgence."²⁸⁵ Clearly, to the eyes of "Paul," the Jewish-Christian Christ, as the ruler over this "kingdom of God," must have seemed as fleshly as the utopia over which he was supposed to rule at some point.

284 Eus Hist Eccl 3:28

285 Eus Hist Eccl 3:28

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Thinking of the Jewish-Christian Messiah is also plausible because, shortly before, in verse 12, he criticized his opponents' boasting, which, as we know from 2 Corinthians 11:22, referred to their Jewish heritage. The Christ *κατά σάρκα* therefore refers to the Jewish-Christian Messiah, who promises earthly happiness and peace to all who follow him and impresses with his outwardly splendid appearance.

It remains entirely open whether the Messiah is presented as a bodily human, an angel, or a mythological being, as *κατά σάρκα* does not make any statement about the corporeality or historicity of this Christ, but merely seeks to qualify the belief in him as fleshly. It is possible that the author himself first learned the Christian faith in this form as faith in the Messiah. Now, however, this is seen as vain and limited, a faith for people still entirely attached to their old, self-centered, fleshly existence. In contrast, the pneumatic "being in Christ" is presented as the new and better possibility of Christian existence. The level of faith on which his opponents still stand, boasting of their external advantages and thus their affiliation with Christ *κατά σάρκα*, has been abandoned by the author. He would no longer want to have anything to do with this (Jewish-Christian Messiah) Christ as a fulfillment of human, all-too-human desires, even if he had once known him.

In this interpretation, it is not necessary, with Schoeps and others, to assume that the author of 2 Corinthians is addressing opponents who derive claims from their personal acquaintance with Jesus. Of course, *κατά σάρκα* could, in principle, also be understood in a neutral sense. But aside from the fact that most of the passages where "Paul" uses this formulation in a non-judgmental sense are interpolated,²⁸⁶ such an interpretation would be much harder to reconcile with what precedes, while the theological interpretation, as presented above, arises quite naturally. Above all, it must not be overlooked: According to 5:16, the non-recognition of a Christ *κατά σάρκα* is only a special case for the assertion that Paul would henceforth "know no one according to the flesh." Surely, the author did not mean to say that he was no longer personally acquainted with any human being.²⁸⁷

286 Rom 1:3; 4:1; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 10:18; Gal 4:29 - exception only 1 Cor 1:26 (Eph 6:5; Col 3:22)

287 Anders Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 149. "Just as the Gnostic is no longer interested in the *sarx* of the dead, he no longer recognizes any *κατά σάρκα* among the living." This may be true for pneumaticists, but does it also apply to sarks?

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Schmithals also advocates understanding κατὰ σάρκα in a neutral sense, similar to Rom 1:3; 4:1; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 10:18; Gal 4:29, though not in the sense of a personal acquaintance. However, he encounters significant difficulties with his interpretation of 5:16 because he defends the Gnostic thesis. If the opponents were indeed Gnostics, it remains puzzling why they would proclaim a Christ "according to the flesh." The opposite would be expected. As dualists, they would have to reject a Christ "according to the flesh" and proclaim a pneumatic Christ. Conversely, Paul would reject a purely pneumatic Christ and preach a Christ "according to the flesh."

Schmithals sees it similarly. Since 5:16 rejects "the earthly form of the man, the man Jesus as the dwelling of the heavenly light being," it is, in his view, no longer reconcilable with Pauline theology.²⁸⁸ His conclusion: He treats the passage along with 2 Cor 3:17 in the chapter: Two Gnostic Glosses in the Second Letter to the Corinthians²⁸⁹ and declares the passage an interpolation by a "visiting heretic" (!)²⁹⁰ for both content and formal reasons. However, as we have seen above, the connection between 5:16 and the preceding verses is too close for the verse to be dismissed as an interpolation.

²⁸⁸ Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Letters to the Corinthians*, 297.

²⁸⁹ Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Letters to the Corinthians*, 286 f.

²⁹⁰ Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Letters to the Corinthians*, 297.

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However, those who proclaimed "another Jesus" were in no case, not even according to Schmithals, Gnostics, but adherents of a Christ "according to the flesh"—that is, as elaborated above: Judaizers. It is clear that their Christology had significant divergences from that of the author of the Corinthians letters. The Jewish-Christian Messianism and Chiliasm, condemned by the Church Fathers, which may have seemed to the author of 2 Corinthians to warrant speaking of an "other," "fleshly Christ," have already been addressed. Other peculiarities showing the complete incompatibility of "Pauline" and Jewish-Christian Christology remain unmentioned: e.g., the doctrine of syzygies, the angel Christology,²⁹¹ and the doctrine of ensomatosis.²⁹² They also present a completely "other Jesus," but the accusation of "fleshly" would be less applicable to these Christological concepts.

8] The kauchesis, the self-boasting, as already in Galatians and Philippians, is also one of the characteristics used to define the profile of the opponents in the two Corinthian letters. While this motif remains general in 1 Corinthians and (probably except for 4:7, see below) does not need to be related to a specific Christian group (1 Cor 1:29, 31; 3:21; 4:7), the situation is different in 2 Corinthians: Here, the author specifically addresses the self-boasting practiced by his opponents in most cases. They boast of their Jewish heritage (11:2), pride themselves on being "servants of Christ" (11:23), and probably, if 12:1ff is a reaction to opponents' pretensions, also with their revelations. The author of the Pauline letters cleverly counters the fleshly boasting of the opponents with an impressive lesson on the true boasting of the genuine Pneumatic and preacher of the cross of Christ, illustrated by the adventurous fates of the

apostle himself. In 5:12, likely also in reference and response to opponents' boasting, he wants to give his congregation the opportunity to boast of their apostle. In 10:4, he takes up the opponents' challenge and boasts of his own special apostolic authority, which, unlike that of the opponents, is intended for the edification and not the destruction of the congregations.

291 Tertullian carn 1:14 They claim that Christ had the nature of an angel.

292 Hipp Ref 9:14 He claims that Christ became a man like all others, but that he was not born of a virgin for the first time, but that this had happened before and many times, and that it still happens; that he appears and lives by changing his generations and by migrating into other bodies, whereby Alcibiades uses the well-known doctrine of Pythagoras. Hipp Ref 10:29

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Schmithals, following Bultmann, has attributed the motif of self-boasting to Gnostic opponents and tirelessly derives this from the specific premises of Gnostic self-consciousness. Since the Gnostic knows themselves to be saved by nature, they possess a certainty of salvation that cannot be compared to Christian certainty of salvation. From this certainty of salvation arises a self-assessment that must seem like shameful arrogance to others.²⁹³ - However, as we have seen above, this does not always require specifically Gnostic premises, as religiously based arrogance also existed elsewhere, for example, in the Jewish-Christian groups of the 2nd century, whose claim to election inherited from Judaism hardly fell short of the Gnostics in terms of certainty of salvation. Ultimately, only the context can decide the question: Gnostics or Judaizers? In the case of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, the context suggests little for a Gnostic and much for a Judaistic background.

For example, pride and boasting about Jewish heritage (cf. Phil 3:5f) can hardly be derived from Gnostic premises, nor from Gnostic-Jewish ones, as an individual's belonging to a nation, gender, race, or class is entirely irrelevant to the Gnostic, who only values the possession of the divine pneuma.²⁹⁴ On the other hand, it fits very well with the Jewish Christians of the 2nd century, as we have already encountered them in various places in Epiphanius. I refer here only to the passages from the heresiology of Epiphanius cited above in connection with the Letter to the Galatians, which clearly show that Jewish Christians like the Ebionites, Cerinthians, and Merinthians boasted of their affiliation with the old covenant people and "boasted" of their circumcision.²⁹⁵ The fact that the opponents in the Second Letter to the Corinthians boasted of their special affiliation with Christ as "servants of Christ" is also not a significant indication of their Gnostic origin, as this claim was likely made by many Christian groups in the early period. F.C. Baur saw the existence of the Corinthian Christ party as an indication of the Jewish-Christian origin of the opponents, as this designation, in his view, expressed the claim to have been eyewitnesses of the historical Jesus—as opposed to Paul—as the "eighth mark" of apostolicity.²⁹⁶

Moreover, the claim that "the opponents are indeed Pneumatics and emphasize this even to the Apostle"²⁹⁷ does not necessarily lead to Gnostic Pneumatics, as a pronounced Pneumatism also existed, especially in Jewish-Christian circles, as we have already seen. Outstanding representatives of this type of Jewish-Christian Pneumatism have already been noted: Elchasai

and Cerinthus. Equipped with visionary and prophetic gifts, they wrote apocalyptic writings—"strange reports," as Gaius says about Cerinthus, "of which he falsely claims that they were given to him by angels."²⁹⁸ In these writings, they initiated their followers into the "wonderful, mysterious, and great mysteries," where pneumatic charisma was strangely mixed with Jewish nomism, the practice of circumcision, and belief in Christ. In short, there is little to support the assumption of Gnostic boasting, but much to support Judaistic boasting—especially with regard to 2 Cor 11:22. The author of the Second Letter to the Corinthians also contends with the Judaistic opponents already known from other letters and with the Jewish-Christian preference for revelations and pneumatic experiences typical of the 2nd century.

293 Schmithals, *Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 169.

294 EvPhil 1:49

295 Epiph Anac 1.236.6 Κηρινθιοί, οί και Μηριυθιοί. ουτοι οί από Κηρίνθου και Μηρίνθου Ιουδαίοι τινες περιτομήν αύχοῦντ ες 296 Baur, *Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ; his life and work, his letters and his teaching; a contribution*

to a critical history of early Christianity, 300.

297 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostles. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 484.

298 Eus Hist Eccl 3:28

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Among the most thought-provoking arguments that Schmithals presents to support his claim that the background of the opponents' self-boasting is Gnostic is his reference to 1 Cor 4:7f. We need to examine his interpretation of this passage more closely, especially since it can be shown that this very passage should be regarded as one of the strongest pieces of evidence for a Jewish-Christian background of the opponents' boasting.

After the apostle or the author writing in his name had presented the relationship between the apostle and Apollos as a model of Christian interaction, which he also wants to apply to the community, he warns against arrogance, "so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another." No one has an advantage over the other because all are recipients. And yet there seem to be factions in the community that refuse to accept this insight. The author addresses them in 4:8: Already you are filled (KeKopeogeui)? Already you have become rich? Without us, you have become kings? And indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we might reign with you.

The "consciousness of perfection" of the opponents is thus ironically characterized by the author with the terms "fullness," "richness," and "kingship." In the past, scholars have often referred to Stoic parallels to understand this passage, where the wise man was praised as the true king of the world.²⁹⁹ However, such citations contribute little to understanding the verse, as they, as Schräge notes, "have nothing to do with eschatology."³⁰⁰ But it seems to be eschatology that is at issue in 1 Cor 4:8. Following Kuhn, it is often said that Paul's opponents advocated a realized

eschatology, meaning the view that "all that the coming aeon will bring is already in hand."³⁰¹ This could be indicated primarily by the "already" (ἤδη) at the beginning of the verse. Representatives of such eschatology are mainly regarded as Pneumatic enthusiasts and Gnostics.

299 Horace, Ep 1.1.196f; Sat 1.3.123f. Cic Fin 3.22.75; Philo Sobr 57, Migr 197, Abr 267f, Sacr 49.

300 Wolfgang Schräge, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 6,12-11,16* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1995), 338.

301 Schräge, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 6,12-11,16*, 338.

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Schmithals has, for quite plausible reasons, decided in favor of the latter. 1 Cor 4:8 is supposed to express "the fundamental feeling of the Gnostic who boasts of his salvation as a secure possession and expects nothing more from the future." Even the "idea originally underlying βασιλεύειν... is typically Gnostic... The Pneumatic, when in possession of Gnosis, rules over the demonic angelic powers that want to hold him back in the chains of matter."³⁰² Schmithals refers in this context to the Carpocratians mentioned by Irenaeus, who claimed "they had the power to rule over the princes and creators of this world and, moreover, over all creatures in the world."³⁰³

For the sake of theological clarity, which is often associated with the term realized eschatology, it is better to refrain from using it here. However, it is true that the opponents in Corinth are Christians who firmly believe they possess the future goods of salvation. In this respect, there is a close connection to Phil 3:12, 15, which also refers to Christians who boast of their "perfection" and whose "already now" position contrasts with the author's emphasis on the "not yet" of his own Christian existence.

However, just as in the case of the Letter to the Philippians, where this was much more evident (3:2f), the opponents in 1 Corinthians do not necessarily have to be Gnostics. Their strong certainty of salvation need not be associated with Gnosis any more than the self-designation "perfect," which, as we have already seen, was common not only in Gnostic but also in Jewish-Christian circles. As earlier interpreters (such as Weiss and others) have shown, it can be derived entirely from underlying Jewish assumptions, i.e., from the idea that the righteous will rule the world in the end times.³⁰⁴ The strongest indication that these are indeed Jewish Christians comes from Origen³⁰⁵:

302 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 171.

303 Iren Haer 1 25:3

304 Jubilee 24:29; Athens 38:5; 48:9; 90:19; 95:3; 96:1; 98:12, cf. Str-B IV, 2.1095, cf. Rev 20:4.6

305 De Principiis 2 11:2

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Certain persons, then, refusing the labour of thinking, and adopting a superficial view of the letter of the law, and yielding rather in some measure to the indulgence of their own desires and lusts, being disciples of the letter alone, are of opinion that the fulfilment of the promises of the future are to be looked for *bodily pleasure and luxury*; and therefore they especially desire to have again, after the resurrection, such bodily structures as may never be *without the power of eating, and drinking, and performing all the functions of flesh and blood*, not following the opinion of the Apostle Paul regarding the resurrection of a spiritual body. And consequently they say, that after the resurrection there will be marriages, and the begetting of children, imagining to themselves that the earthly city of Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, its foundations laid in precious stones, and its walls constructed of jasper, and its battlements of crystal; that it is to have a wall composed of many precious stones, as jasper, and sapphire, and chalcedony, and emerald, and sardonyx, and onyx, and chrysolite, and Chrysoprase, and jacinth, and amethyst. Moreover, they think that the natives of other countries are to be given them as the ministers of their pleasures, whom they are to employ either as tillers of the field or builders of walls, and by whom their ruined and fallen city is again to be raised up; and they think that they are *to receive the wealth of the nations to live on, and that they will have control over their riches; that even the camels of Midian and Kedar will come, and bring to them gold, and incense, and precious stones*. And these views they think to establish on the authority of the prophets by those promises which are written regarding Jerusalem; and by those passages also where it is said, that they who serve the Lord shall eat and drink, but that sinners shall hunger and thirst; that the righteous shall be joyful, but that sorrow shall possess the wicked. And from the New Testament also they quote the saying of the Saviour, in which He makes a promise to His disciples concerning the joy of wine, saying, "Henceforth I shall not drink of this cup, until I drink it with you new in My Father's kingdom." They add, moreover, that declaration, in which the Saviour calls those blessed who now hunger and thirst, promising them *that they shall be satisfied; and many other scriptural illustrations are adduced by them, the meaning of which they do not perceive is to be taken figuratively*. Then, again, agreeably to the form of things in this life, and according to the gradations of the dignities or ranks in this world, or the greatness of their powers, think they are to be kings and princes, like those earthly monarchs who now exist; chiefly, as it appears, on account of that expression in the Gospel: "Have thou power over five cities." And to speak shortly, according to the manner of things in this life in all similar matters, do they desire the fulfilment of all things looked for in the promises, viz., that what now is should exist again. Such are the views of those who, while believing in Christ, understand the divine Scriptures in a sort of Jewish sense, drawing from them nothing worthy of the divine promises. Text MPG

In the extensively cited text, the Alexandrian theologian characterizes the eschatological views of "certain persons" who, he claims, interpret Scripture in a "Jewish sense" (Hoc ita sentiunt qui Christo dem credentes, Judaico autem quodam sensu Scripturas divinas intelligentes). It is clear that these are not Jews, but Jewish Christians, as Origen speaks of their belief in Christ and their interpretation of Christian scriptures. Origen accuses them of interpreting Scripture only in a literal sense and expecting eschatological salvation in the form of bodily pleasures.

They believed that the earthly Jerusalem would be rebuilt, with walls of jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, etc., and that they would reign as kings and receive the wealth of the whole world.

In the eschatological scenario described in detail by Origen, we encounter the same notions as with Paul's opponents in the first letter to the Corinthians, only here it is briefly hinted at rather than elaborated. Yet the keywords "being filled," "being rich," and "reigning" in 1 Cor 4:8 clearly indicate the origin and the underlying complex idea, especially since the author follows the same order of salvation goods as Origen. Like Origen, he seems to oppose the proponents of a purely worldly conceived kingdom of God, for whom satisfaction, wealth, and rulership have an exclusively materialistic meaning. Their great confidence in salvation, however, has nothing to do with Pneumatism or "spiritual consciousness,"³⁰⁶ but rather with an arrogant certainty of salvation, which they believe they possess due to their supposed privileges as "Hebrews," "Israelites," and circumcised "sons of Abraham." This leads them to transcend reality in their imagination and already place themselves in the future kingdom of God as if it were the present. "Are you so certain of your salvation," the author asks ironically, "that you already consider yourselves filled, rich, and reigning?"³⁰⁷

306 Hans Conzelmann, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 107.

307 The idea of a "realized eschatology" was not unknown in Jewish texts, however. The Qumran texts clearly show this. With regard to this, Kuhn says: "The eschatological-present statements of the Qumran texts examined are based on the saving presence of God on the basis of the 'temple symbolism', and the community is the place where future salvation is already present."

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It would be interesting to know which specific Jewish-Christian group Origen has in mind when he speaks of "certain persons." It would be reasonable to think of Cerinthus, who, according to church fathers, is considered the main representative of the expectation of a purely sensual or earthly conceived kingdom of God. According to the Alexandrian Patriarch Dionysius (ca. 190/200-264/65) quoted in *Eus Hist Eccl* 7:25, Cerinthus taught that "the kingdom of Christ would be an earthly one. And according to his own desires, being in love with his body and entirely fleshly-minded, he dreamed that the kingdom of Christ would consist of such things." This view corresponds with that of Gaius, also quoted in Eusebius, who claimed that Cerinthus asserted "after the resurrection, the kingdom of Christ would be on earth, and that the bodies would live in Jerusalem and again indulge in passions and pleasures." Both quotes may give a distorted view of the teachings of the historical Cerinthus, but they show that the Jewish-Christian heresiarch must have been very close to the "certain persons" cited by Origen.

Regarding our question about the opponents, this could mean that the author of 1 Corinthians is specifically contending with a Jewish-Christian faction of Cerinthian influence.³⁰⁸ We have already touched upon this possibility in other contexts (e.g., with Christ κατά σάρκα). This will be definitively reinforced in the discussion of 1 Corinthians 15.

308 The fact that Revelation omits the depiction of physical pleasures in the new Jerusalem, which Cerinth is said to have preached, is not a counter-argument, since we do not know what the Apocalypse of John

looked like in its original form. Later ecclesiastical eradication of particularly blatant chiliastic ideas would be only natural.

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Of particular interest in this context is the observation that Origen's opponents seem to base their eschatology on the Apocalypse of John. The depiction of the heavenly Jerusalem with its walls of precious stones and its crystalline pinnacles clearly shows the influence of chapters 20-21 of Revelation. This observation is noteworthy for the following reason: if the "certain persons" mentioned by Origen are indeed representatives of the Cerinthian sect, it would now be understandable why they refer to the Revelation of John. According to some early church figures, the author of this book was none other than Cerinthus! Consider the testimony of Dionysius quoted in part above from Eusebius. He cites the opinion of some Christians who claim that the Revelation of John was not written by the apostle but by Cerinthus, who merely wanted to give his forgery a credible name. This corresponds to Gaius's claim that Cerinthus wrote revelations "that seem to be written by a great apostle."³⁰⁹

Apart from the parallel description of the heavenly Jerusalem with its walls of precious stones in Origen, further traces of the influence of the Revelation of John can be recognized. For example, the motif of co-reigning (*regessefore et principes arbitrantur*), which resonates twice: "These (the souls of the martyrs) came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years," εβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Rev 20:4 - "Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. Over such, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years," βασιλεύσουσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, Rev 20:6. The motif of wealth (*ei arbitrantur quod facultates gentium accipiant ad edendum, et in divitiis eorum dominantur*): "And the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it," Rev 21:24.

³⁰⁹ Eus Hist Eccl 7:25

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It is questionable, however, whether Origen was aware of this connection, as he considered the Revelation of John to be a canonical scripture of the Apostle John in other places—like his teacher Clement³¹⁰—and nowhere does he show that he shares the views of his student (!) Dionysius.³¹¹

In favor of Schmithals and his Gnostic thesis, it must be conceded at this point that among the comparative Jewish and Jewish-Christian texts, there are some that show a proximity to Gnosis. This is not only the case with the saying in Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654, cited by Schmithals, with its parallels in Clement of Alexandria.³¹² Most notably, this is evident in the so-called Epistle or Apocryphon of James discovered at Nag Hammadi. In this letter, which is supposed to be addressed by James to Cerinthus (!), there is also twice mention of the attainment of rulership by the Christian Pneumatic:

EpJk 3.25 Remember that he healed you when you were sick, so that you might attain rulership. Woe to those who rested from their illness, they will return to their illness. Blessed are those who were not sick and have known rest before they became sick. Theirs is the kingdom of God.

310 CI Strom 6 13:106; CI Quis Div Salv42:lf

311 In Joh 2.5, Eusebius Hist Eccl 6:25. - Whether the hypothesis of the origin of the Apocalypse of John from the Cerinthian workshop, which would be subject to other difficulties, can be confirmed, could of course only be shown on a larger scale. Due to the poor state of the sources and the little confused information we have about Cerinth, it is to be feared that it cannot be decided at all.

312 He who seeks should not stop (seeking) until he finds, and when he has found, (he will be amazed, and he who has marveled will rule as king, and (he who has come to kingship will find) rest (cf. CI Strom 5 14:96: "The seeker will not stop until he has found; but when he has found, he will be amazed; when he has marveled, he will become king; but when he has become king, he will rest"; 2 9:45: "He who was amazed will become king; and he who became king will find rest").

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EpJk 10.1 Truly, I say to you: It is easier for a pure one to fall into defilement and a luminous one into darkness than for you to attain rulership—or not attain it.

Additionally, in EpJk NHC I 2 2:6; 3:2, 8; 4:1ff; 12:6f; EvVer NHC I 3 24:5; 26:3; 35:8; 36:7; 38:5—as in Paul—there is also mention of the Pneumatic being filled. The word κεκορησμένοι is usually translated as "satisfied" in 1 Cor 4:8 but could in its original sense also mean "filled" and thus, in a figurative sense, refer to the spirit, perhaps even to Sophia, which the opponents claim.³¹³

Nevertheless, a Gnostic background is doubtful because the Gnostic origin of EpJk, like that of the other citations, is disputed and cannot be conclusively verified. The "Gnosis" of the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of Thomas, and EpJk appears in striking connection with James, suggesting a Jewish-Christian root. The Gnostic elements likely were not part of the original composition. It is more plausible that a Gnostic spiritualization of the old Jewish-Christian messianic ideas occurred only later.

Also, in:

EvTh Logion 2 Jesus said: Let the seeker not stop seeking until he finds. And when he finds, he will be troubled; and when he is troubled, he will marvel, and he will reign over the All.

LibTh 145.3 For when you come out of suffering and passions, you will find rest before the Good. And you will reign together with the ruler.

313 Thus Peter can say of the one who follows the words of the True Prophet: "Although he rejoices in the riches of wisdom which he has found, he insatiably desires to enjoy them and delights in the practice of good works", PsCl Rec 5:7

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2ApokJk 56.1 [For your sake, they will be instructed about [these things] and will find rest. For your sake, they will attain rulership [and will] become kings.

2LogSeth 59.15 When we came out of our house, (20) when we descended into this world and entered the world in bodies, we were hated and persecuted, not only by those who were ignorant but also (25) by those who believe that they are rich in the name of Christ, as they are vain in ignorance. They do not know who they are, like mute animals. (30) Those who were freed by me, they persecute, because they hate them.

The keyword "ruling" in 1 Cor 4:8 echoes in various forms. Even these passages are only somewhat useful as parallels to 1 Cor 4:8. It is likely that the figurative use of "ruling" is a later development of the originally messianic-chiliastic concept. In any case, this does not fit with the Χρίστος κατά σάρκα opposed by Paul. The author of the Corinthian letters is undoubtedly opposing, in 1 Cor 4:8, opponents who still believe in the literal sense of being filled, being rich, and ruling.

PS: 1 Cor 6:2 is a Catholic interpolation: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to try trivial cases?"

9] 2 Cor 3:1 shows that the author is aware of letters of recommendation by which the opponents commend themselves to the communities. Such letters of recommendation are also indirectly and polemically referenced in 2 Cor 4:2; 5:12; 10:12. The function of these letters and the envoys equipped with them is disputed. Käsemann, following Vogelstein, calls the envoys "executive officers of the (Jerusalem) central authority"³¹⁴ and recalls the apostles sent from Jerusalem to warn Jews in the Diaspora against Christians. Justin informs us of this in his mid-2nd century Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.³¹⁵ Käsemann sees, analogously, in the apostles "visitors of the primitive community, which regards itself as the legal successor of the Jewish central community and its claims to the authentic transmission and interpretation of sacred tradition" and sees in the Corinthian conflict the "clash of two conceptions of office on the grounds of early Christianity."³¹⁶

314 H. Vogelstein, "The Origin and Development of the Apostolate in Judaism", Monthly Magazine for History and Science of Judaism 49 (1905) 427-49, here 498.

315 Just Dial 17:1: You,,,... have now sought out select (εκλεξάμενοι) men from Jerusalem and sent them out into the whole world to proclaim that a godless sect has arisen in Christianity"; cf. 108:2

316 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 498.

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Schoeps agrees with Käsemann and also considers the letters of recommendation to be an institution of early Jewish Christianity. He suspects that these were Jerusalem emissaries who "presented themselves as authorized messengers of the primitive community with letters of accreditation."³¹⁷ However, he believes that the letters were not issued by James himself, "but by leaders of the Jerusalem Judaist group, who were the real ancestors of the Ebionites... James appears here as the supreme teaching and official authority..., only his testimonium -

probably a kind of 'letter of recommendation', like the Judaists had in Corinth [2 Cor 3:1] - excludes false apostles..."³¹⁸ Schoeps also refers to Cont 1 and 5, where the kerygma is sent to James, "Peter and the 12 apostles appear as 'emissaries of James to spread the messianic faith among the Jews' and must report back to him on their missionary activities."

Köster also assumes that the letters of recommendation were presented by Jewish-Christian missionaries. Unlike Käsemann and Schoeps, he suspects that these contained "confirmations of their mighty deeds and their missionary success."³¹⁹ Since Köster provides no evidence for his thesis, it is difficult to verify—and therefore worthless.

Schmithals is quite brief in his discussion of the letters of recommendation. This is not very helpful as it contradicts more than it characterizes—recommendation letters?³²⁰ According to Schmithals, Gnostics derive the proof of the legitimacy of their proclamation primarily from their "ecstatic performances,"³²¹ so how could a letter of recommendation be of any help? Schmithals cannot provide us with Gnostic analogies.

³¹⁷ Schoeps, Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History, 70.

³¹⁸ Schoeps, Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History, 124.

³¹⁹ Köster, Introduction to the New Testament: In the Context of the Religious History and Cultural History of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, 561.

³²⁰ "But where does the true apostolic authority show itself in Corinth? In the false teachers themselves! For they do not appeal to any human authorities who are the true apostles. Rather, they are apostles themselves." According to Schmithals, the "true apostle" speaks "according to the Gnostics, on his own authority" (166). The existence of letters of recommendation contradicts this.

³²¹ Schmithals, The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Corinthian Letters, 34.

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But naturally, he cannot allow the conclusion of a Judaistic background either. Against Käsemann's claim that the letters of recommendation were official letters from the early church, he argues that this is impossible because Paul in 2 Cor 3:1 "equates the letters given to them in Corinth with those they brought."³²² In other words, since the author of the letter knows not only recommendation letters "to" the community in Corinth but also such "from" it, the idea of a "Jerusalem central authority" cannot be considered.

However, the "from you" (which is not present in all manuscripts) does not necessarily contradict this interpretation. Schmithals overlooks that Jewish "apostles," who according to Käsemann are the model for the Judaistic opponents Paul combats, could be sent not only from the central authority to the communities but also vice versa—from the communities to the central authority, especially when it involved financial matters, i.e., the delivery of collections from the communities to the central authority.³²³ That recommendation letters were given in such cases is also documented.³²⁴

³²² Schmithals, Die Gnosis in Korinth: Eine Untersuchung zu den Corintherbriefe, 108.

323 He evidently corrected the oversight in his work *Das kirchliche Apostelamt* (The Church's Apostleship). There it says 92: "The -hypothetical- Jewish community apostolate, which knew messengers who were sent by many to Jerusalem to deliver a tax..." - so it was!

324 Vogelstein: "For our investigation, only the representatives of the central religious authority and then the representatives of the individual communities are of importance... The bearers of these funds received an explicit mandate from the communities concerned; they were representatives, not of the central authority to the communities, but the other way around, of the communities to the central office"; Vogelstein, "The Origin and Development of the Apostolate in Judaism", 429.

The authority to issue letters of credence was therefore not tied to a central location but rather to a central organization, whose representatives were certainly not only based in Jerusalem, even if they had their headquarters there. Anyone who wants a letter of recommendation from the Catholic Church does not therefore need to travel to Rome.

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In any case—and on this point, the vast majority of exegetes, in whose tradition Käsemann and Schoeps also stand, are undoubtedly in agreement³²⁵—it is more plausible to think of Judaistic emissaries rather than Gnostic missionaries, since the latter would likely have relied on their Pneuma to prove their apostolic authority, much like Paul, rather than on letters of recommendation.

There are also some clear indications of the existence of such letters outside of Jewish contexts, in early Christian literature, which show us that this was a common practice in Jewish Christianity as well.³²⁶ Again, it is the pseudoclementine writings from Jewish-Christian circles that provide us with more details. PsCI Rec 4:35 1 admonishes Peter in a lengthy speech to his disciples:

325 Holl, Seufert, Batifoll, J. Weiß, Bachmann etc. Schiatter also recalled the customs of the rabbinate in this context, in: Adolf Schiatter, *Paul, the Messenger of Jesus: an interpretation of his letters to the Corinthians* [Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1934], 650.

326 Strangely, ThW 417 does not address this.

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Therefore, be extremely cautious and do not believe any teacher unless he brings a testimony (testimonium) from James, the brother of the Lord, from Jerusalem or from someone who follows him. Anyone who does not come from there and is not proven to be a suitable and credible teacher for preaching the word of Christ—anyone who does not bring a testimony from there, I say, should not be received. For no other prophet or apostle can be expected by you than ourselves. For there is one true prophet, whose words we, the twelve apostles, preach, for he is the awaited "Year of the Lord" and has made us apostles as the twelve months.³²⁷

And in the Homilies, Jewish-Christian students are also advised to compare the Christian preaching with the kerygma of James:³²⁸

Our Lord and Prophet, who sent us, told us that the Evil One, who had disputed with him for 40 days and could not prevail against him, would send out to deceive all the apostles. Therefore, I warn you above all not to receive any apostle, teacher, or prophet who has not first compared his teaching with James, who is called the brother of my Lord and to whom the Church of the Hebrews in Jerusalem was entrusted, and who is called upon, although he comes to them with witnesses:329

Although one searches in vain for a reference to these passages in recent commentaries, they have been known for a long time. F.C. Baur was the first to point out that the pseudoclementine writings also speak of such letters of recommendation as we encounter in 2 Corinthians. They were meant to serve the legitimation of Christian teachers.330

327 PsCl Rec 4:35 1 propter quod observate cautius, ut nulli doctorum credatis, nisi qui Iacobi fratris domini ex Hierusalem detulerit testimonium, vel eius quicumque post ipsum fuerit. 2 nisi enim quis illuc ascenderit et ibi fuerit probatus quod sit doctor idoneus et fidelis ad praedicandum Christi verbum, nisi, inquam, inde detulerit testimonium, recipiendus omnino non est; sed neque propheta neque apostolus in hoc tempore speretur a vobis aliquis alius praeter nos. 3 unus enim est verus propheta, cuius nos duodecim apostoli verba praedicamus. ipse est annus domini acceptus, nos apostoloshabens duodecim menses.

328 Psalm 11:35

329 ὡς ὁ πονηρός τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας διαλεχθεὶς αὐτῷ καὶ μηδὲν δυνακῶν ἐπηγγελλετο πρὸς ἀπάτην τόλους πεμψαί. διὸ πρὸ πάντων μεμνησθε μηδένα δεχεσθαι ἀπόστολον ἢ διδάσκαλον ἢ προφῆτην μη πρότερον ἀντιβαλόντα αὐτοῦ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰακώβω τῷ λεχθέντι ἀδελφῷ τοῦ κυρίου μου καὶ πεπιστευμένῳ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ τὴν Εβραίων διέπειν ἐκκλησίαν

330 Baur, Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ; his life and work, his letters and his teaching; a contribution to a critical history of early Christianity.

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Schoeps picked up on this reference and compared the recommendation letters of Paul's opponents in Corinth with the "testimonium" of James as the supreme teaching and official authority.331

However, the often-criticized problem with Baur and Schoeps is that to explain the Pauline text, which, if authentic, should come from the mid-1st century (as both exegetes assume), they have to rely on testimonies from a later period.332 It is undisputed that even the earliest parts of the pseudo-Clementine literature could not have been written until the 2nd century. This is generally accepted. Therefore, if the Pauline literature is about a century older than the pseudo-Clementine literature, it is methodologically problematic to attempt to illuminate passages from Paul's letters with passages from the Pseudo-Clementines. Unless, of course, it can be plausibly demonstrated that the pseudo-Clementine texts are based on traditions that reach back to the 1st century. Since this is not possible, Schoeps must be content with the mere assertion that the Pauline writings "only gain color and context" from this literature.333

It would be more reasonable, however, to take the next step and recognize that what matches in content also belongs together in time; in other words, that the Pauline literature and the earliest parts of the Pseudo-Clementines are approximately contemporaneous.³³⁴

331 Schoeps, Paulus: The Theology of the Apostles in the Light of Jewish Religious History, 124.

332 Especially with regard to 2 Cor : "Baur uses second-century (or later] texts to reconstruct the history of the first-century church ..." Jerry L. Sumney, Identifying Paul's opponents: The question of method in 2 Corinthians (vol. 40; Journal for the study of the New Testament: Supplement series; Sheffield: JSOT Pr., 1990], 21.

333 Schoeps, Paulus: The Theology of the Apostles in the Light of Jewish Religious History, 81.

334 So already Adolf Hilgenfeld, "Rudolf Steck: The Epistle to the Galatians examined for its authenticity", for scientific theology 32 (1889] 485-94, here 334.

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We will delve into this problem more thoroughly in the context of the anti-Pauline polemic in the Corinthian letters, which will be addressed in the following sections. One final question that needs to be clarified in this context is the location of the Jewish-Christian central authority, which must be assumed if the opponents in 2 Corinthians were indeed emissaries or "visitors." For Käsemann, this question is easily answered: it was, of course, located in Jerusalem. However, the answer is more challenging if we assume that the polemic in 2 Corinthians targets Jewish Christians of the 2nd century. Jerusalem would then be excluded as the central seat, as the city had become inaccessible to both Jews and Jewish Christians after 70 AD, and especially after 135 AD. Nevertheless, Judaism continued to send out emissaries from a central location, as we know from Justin and various other sources. According to Vogelstein, the seat of the Jewish Patriarch after 135 was located in Beth-Din. From there, the legally prescribed temple tax was replaced by voluntary contributions to support the study houses in Palestine.³³⁵

Similarly, after 135, a central authority outside Jerusalem likely emerged on the Jewish-Christian side, sending out its emissaries. This authority probably had its main seat somewhere in the East Jordan region or Transjordan, which played a significant role in early Jewish Christianity.³³⁶

2 Cor 11:4 (cf. 10:12-18) shows that the opponents combated in Corinth were missionaries who had infiltrated the Pauline communities from outside, possibly under the leadership of a specific individual (ὁ ἐρχόμενος, see above). Bultmann states, "The case in Corinth is that another mission has penetrated there." The reason why the agitators in Corinth are generally distinguished from those in Galatia lies in the fact that the Corinthian letters lack clear indications of a nomistic heresy. According to Lügttert, "the main proof that they are not nomists lies in the fact that Paul himself never says this about them."³³⁷ Indeed, unlike in the letter to the Galatians, the dispute over circumcision and the law is nowhere explicitly addressed in the two letters.

335 Vogelstein, "The Origin and Development of the Apostolate in Judaism", 440.

336 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 262 ff.

337 Lütgert, *Law and Spirit: An Investigation into the Prehistory of the Epistle to the Galatians*, 60.
Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 483.

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And yet, such an argumentation, precisely because it is so simple and obvious, falls short. Firstly, because the issue of the law is also absent in other Pauline letters, such as the Letter to the Philippians, although an anti-Judaistic stance is hardly disputable there as well (see above). Secondly, because such an argumentation misunderstands the special character of the Pauline letters as pseudepigrapha. As we have seen, these letters were not written on specific occasions to individual communities but were conceived from the outset as a literary collection for the entire church. This is suggested by the beginning of 1 Corinthians with its ecumenical address "to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours" (1 Cor 1:2). One can therefore assume that the authors deliberately chose different thematic emphases for each letter to avoid repetitions that would inevitably have occurred otherwise. The absence of the issue of the law and circumcision in Philippians, Colossians, and the Corinthian letters is thus not an indication that we are dealing with a different front of opponents in these texts but rather a sign that all these letters adhere to different rules than so-called "occasional letters."

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We are therefore fully justified in assuming a unified anti-Pauline counter-mission originating from 2nd-century Jewish Christianity in the Pauline literature. However, this appears differently in each case due to the literary nature of the "letters."

11. With the reasoning that "the worker deserves his wages" (cf. Mt 10:10 and Did 13:1 338), the claim for support and financial assistance from the communities, apparently demanded by Paul's opponents, is especially found in Jewish-Christian writings. For example, in Homilies 3:71, concerning the appointment of Zacchaeus as bishop:

"Even he (Zacchaeus) has needs for his livelihood, but no time for himself. How should he then procure the necessary support? Would it not be right for all of you to take care of his needs without waiting for him to ask? For that would mean begging, and he would rather starve than want to do that. And how could you not be guilty if you do not remember that the worker deserves his wages? Also, let no one say, 'Should the word received for free be sold?' By no means! If someone who has the means to live still accepts something, then he sells the word; but if someone has nothing and accepts support for his livelihood, he does nothing wrong. For the Lord also accepted hospitality and among friends at the time when he, who was later to possess everything, had nothing. Similarly, you should honor presbyters, catechists, useful deacons, widows of good conduct, and orphans as children of the community. But if expenses are required for any purpose, you should all contribute."

338 1 Tim 5:18 the quotation is probably not original but interpolated.

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This corresponds to Jewish customs, cf. Vogelstein: "The apostles' maintenance was covered by the communities; the proof of this was the letter of accreditation from the patriarch."³³⁹

12. The pointed polemic of 2 Corinthians allows for the compilation of a "catalog" of accusations made against the opponents by the author. He calls them "super-apostles," 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11, "servants of righteousness," 2 Cor 11:15, "false apostles," 2 Cor 11:13, "false brothers," 2 Cor 11:26, "deceitful workers," 2 Cor 11:13, and "servants of Satan," 2 Cor 11:14.

Among all the terms, the designation of the opponents as "servants of righteousness" most clearly points to the Judaistic character of the anti-Pauline heretics being combated here.³⁴⁰ It is highly unlikely and undocumented that Gnostics would have called themselves "servants of righteousness." On the other hand, this designation fits well with Jewish Christians, particularly those known from the Pseudo-Clementines, where the author, in a paraphrase of Matthew 5:6, says they "served righteousness" (eos qui iustitiam servaverint, PsCl Rec 1:61 341). Their pursuit of "perfection" and "righteousness" is mentioned in numerous places and is, of course, to be understood against the background of the Old Testament pious being called "the righteous."³⁴²

Against an interpretation of the "servants of righteousness" as "teachers of the law," i.e., Judaists, Bultmann argues that the author would have had to add "servants of the righteousness that is from the law" for clarification. In the context, "servants of righteousness" must correspond to "angels of light" and specifically designate the mask (emphasis mine) of genuine servants of the law.³⁴³

³³⁹ Vogelstein, "The origin and development of the apostolate in Judaism", 444. See Käsemann, "The legitimacy of the apostle. An investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 498.

³⁴⁰ So already Weiß, *Das Urchristentum* 256, who finds "the entire justice program" behind the expression 11:15, see Käsemann, "The legitimacy of the apostle. An investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 482.

³⁴¹ See Luke 1:74 - In addition to the question *mortalis an immortalis est anima*, the question *quae sit iustitia* is the core theme of the recognitions (PsCl Rec 1:14).

³⁴² PsClem Reeg I:51f, 61; 2:17, 20f, 28, 36,46; 3:20 etc.

³⁴³ Bultmann, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 211.

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Bultmann is correct to the extent that, in this context, the term is not intended to designate the servant of Christ himself but his "mask." However, he overlooks that the term "servants of righteousness," due to its ambiguity (righteousness through faith? righteousness through works/law?), precisely accomplishes this and that, therefore, the addition "those who are from the law" would not only be completely superfluous but would also destroy the point of the

sentence. The point is that the opponents do not clearly present themselves as servants of the law but disguise themselves with the term righteousness, which is also approved by the author (cf. 2 Cor 3:9; cf. Rom 6:19), which they then interpret in their way, in the sense of righteousness through works and the law. Thus, there is no question that the "servants of righteousness" are Judaists (disguised with the term "righteousness" in a way that can also be understood in a Pauline sense).

The so-called "super-apostles" of 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11 are usually identified with the "false apostles" of 2 Cor 11:13.³⁴⁴ These are not the original apostles from Jerusalem but the heretical teachers in Corinth, as Paul would otherwise not have been able to call them "false apostles" and would hardly have been able to claim that he was more of a servant of Christ than they were.

But is the underlying identification of "super-apostles" and "false apostles" justified, and are they really one and the same group? Käsemann asks: "How can Paul create an unbridgeable chasm in relation to the heretics by describing them in 11:3, 13ff. as bearers of satanic deception and accusing them in 11:4 of preaching another gospel, another Jesus, and another spirit, only to conclude that he is not less than they are? This cannot even be explained as sarcasm. There is no comparison with servants of Satan. Thus, we are left with the only option of referring the title 'super-apostles' to the original apostles of Jerusalem."³⁴⁵ Indeed, there is much to suggest that the "super-apostles" refer to the original apostles of Jerusalem, not least the fact that the title "super-apostle" would hardly have been appropriate for the intruders in Corinth. On the other hand, this connection naturally leads to the "pillars" and the "those who seemed to be something" of Gal 2:6, 9, who are also understood to be the apostles in Jerusalem. Although the author of Galatians mentions them with ironic detachment, he never includes them as masterminds of the agitation in Galatia or as current opponents in this conflict.³⁴⁶

344 Hans Conzelmann, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 205. Schmithals, *Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation of the Corinthian Letters*, 205.

345 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostles. An Investigation of II Corinthians 10-13", 468.

346 Anders Schmithals: "The super-apostles are active in Corinth; they personally disturb the community. This is irrefutably clear from 2 Cor 11:4f. These verses cannot be torn apart; the people who come to Corinth to proclaim a 'different gospel' are the super-apostles themselves, not their emissaries"; Walter Schmithals, *The Church's Apostleship: A Historical Investigation* (Vol. 81 = N.F., 63; FRLANT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 165. But where is the justification? Exegetically, Käsemann's separation of super-apostles = original apostles and "false apostles" ^ the agitators in Corinth cannot be criticized.

Unlike the "super-apostles," the "false apostles," according to Käsemann, were a delegation sent by the early church in Jerusalem. Only then does their insistence on their purely Jewish descent and their claim to the titles "Christ's apostles" and "servants of righteousness" gain specific relevance, as does the reference to their letters of recommendation.³⁴⁷ Käsemann believes that these emissaries came with a "more general inspection mandate," which also involved scrutinizing the legitimacy of the apostle. The direct principals were probably not the

"nobilities" in Jerusalem; instead, the initiative came from circles close to them who were hostile to Paul and sought to play the "super-apostles" against him, but these did not receive official recognition from the original apostles.

347 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 490.

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One could, in principle, agree with Käsemann. The distinction between "super-apostles" and "false apostles" is not only plausible but also exegetically necessary. The agitators' insistence on Jewish descent and letters of recommendation makes perfect sense as long as one sees them as a delegation somehow connected with the apostles in Jerusalem. Käsemann sensitively and accurately describes the conflict in which the author of 2 Corinthians seems to find himself: "He [Paul/the author of 2 Corinthians] is supposed to settle accounts ruthlessly with the intruders in Corinth but does not want to and cannot come into conflict with Jerusalem and the original apostles."³⁴⁸

Nevertheless, it is challenging to imagine the scenario described by Käsemann in concrete historical reality. One wonders how it could have been possible for the Jerusalem pillars to have been "only indirectly involved" in the conflict, namely, "insofar as their authority is being used against Paul."³⁴⁹ Is such "indirect" involvement even possible? Wouldn't the inclusion of the Jerusalem "nobilities" in the conflict, in any manner, be the natural, obvious, and ultimately unavoidable outcome, especially if they were not the actual principals behind the emissaries in Corinth? Wouldn't both parties in the conflict, especially Paul, have been interested in resolving the conflict by directly involving the apparently universally recognized Jerusalem authorities? Why doesn't this happen? Why does the otherwise so active apostle not send any associates from Corinth to Jerusalem to clarify the situation, resolve the misunderstanding, and undermine the agitators who refer to the original apostles?

348 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 493.

349 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 492. Similarly, Schoeps, *Paulus: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, 68. He "does not have the impression that the Circle of Twelve or the *στῦλοι* as their organ directly attacked Paul's apostolate. There are no source evidences for this... However, the Judaistic emissaries who penetrated his communities and attacked his apostolate appealed to their reputation and used the Jerusalem concept of apostolate to undermine the legitimacy of the Pauline apostolate."

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Instead, the "nobilities" remain conspicuously silent, as they do in the Letter to the Galatians. Not even their names are mentioned. The author allows his opponents to appeal to these figures without making the slightest effort to leverage their authority for himself.

What is difficult to explain within the framework of the Judaist theory of the 1st century is easily understandable against the background of the Judaist theory of the 2nd century. The puzzle is explained by the particular situation in which the pseudepigraphical author found himself, trying

to resolve a conflict of his time, i.e., the 2nd century, with an alleged letter of the apostle from the 1st century. Against this background, it becomes clear why the author could not appeal to the "nobilities"—even if he had wanted to—because they were not contemporary figures but rather figures from the early Christian period. This is subtly indicated by the author of Galatians, when he says that it does not matter to him "what they once [ποτέ] were" (Gal 2:6).

The nobilities remain silent because the distance to them was not spatial, theological, or personal, but chronological. The author apparently lacks the testimonies that would allow him to clearly define the relationship of his apostle to the original apostles. Moreover, his own relationship to them seems rather ambivalent, which was undoubtedly due to the fact that his opponents confidently referred to the original apostles. On the other hand, he does not want to entirely cede the Jerusalem authorities brought into the argument to his opponents or completely abandon the connection to tradition. In the end, he resolves his dilemma by referring to the original apostles with an ironic tone as "super-apostles" (or "pillars" and "those who seemed to be something," Gal 2:6,9), thereby expressing both recognition and distance, as Käsemann rightly observes.³⁵⁰ In any case, he distinguishes them from the "false apostles," "false brothers," "deceitful workers," and "servants of Satan" who appeal to them, i.e., from the Judaistic missionaries agitating in the present, against whom all his anger is directed.

350 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostles. An Investigation of II Corinthians 10-13", 492. - One remembers the Gal. The conflict in which its author writhes has been aptly described by Bruno Bauer: "... the author himself had so little clear understanding of the historical position of these (i.e. the original apostles) that he sees himself forced to carefully keep his presentation in suspense. For example, when he says [v. 6]: 'but as for those who want to be something', he leaves it unclear whether they themselves believed they were something or, as in v. 9, where they are considered pillars by others, were considered something special by others - he continues: 'Whatever they once were', he leaves it unclear what they were in the end and in fact." Bruno Bauer, *Critique of the Pauline Epistles*: 3 sections in one volume (Berlin: Hempel, 1850), 22.

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As a designation for Judaistic heretics, the term "apostoli falsi" already appears in the Marcionite prologues to the Pauline letters.³⁵¹ Similarly, Epiphanius informs us that not only the followers of the Judaist Cerinthus were referred to as such, but also the heresiarch himself.³⁵² However, it was not only Judaists who were labeled with such titles by their opponents; designations such as "false apostles" and "false brothers" were used as slurs against adversaries on all fronts. For Peter, anyone who preached a message not in accordance with the word of the true prophet was a false apostle—even he himself would be considered one in that case: *falsus ero apostolus*, PsCI Rec 2:33. In Hom 16:21, Peter quotes an apocryphal saying of the Lord, in which it is said that false apostles, false prophets, and heresies strive for dominion, which Peter assumes originates from Simon. Certainly, these are not meant to be Judaists but rather the Marcionite and Gnostic followers of the arch-heretic Simon. The Catholic Justin knows of a similar saying of the Lord in Dial 35:3, which he also seems to apply to Gnostics and Marcionites: "Many false Christs and false apostles will arise and will deceive many of the faithful." The list could be extended further. It shows that while all these designations could also be used for Judaistic opponents, they carry no significant meaning as they were used by virtually all early Christian parties to defame their adversaries.

351 Corinthi sunt Achaei. et hi similiter ab apostolo audierunt verbum veritatis et subversi multifarie a falsis apostolis, quidam a philosophiae verbosa eloquentia, alii a secta legis Judaicae inducti. hos revocat apostolus ad veram [et] evangelicam sapientiam scribens eis ab Epheso per Timotheum. Post actam paenitentiam consolatorias scribit eis a Troade et conlaudans eos hortatur ad meliora.

352 Haerl.316.Ilf-4.

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The "deceitful workers" of 2 Corinthians 11:13 are certainly equivalent to the "evil workers" of Philippians 3:2, which, as we have already noted, refers to Judaistic missionaries and not Jews. In PsCI Hom 17:2, Peter is referred to by Simon-Paul as a "wicked worker" (κακίας ὑπηρέτης), the reverse being true in PsCI Hom 7:11. Anyone who considers PsCI Hom 17:2 as part of the reception history of the Pauline letters in the 2nd century should ask why the author of the source text would apply the derogatory term to his revered Peter so naturally. He could not have derived it from Philippians and 2 Corinthians. Clearly, the situation is a bit more complex, and he knew much more about the author of 2 Corinthians and the conflict from which it arose than he could have known as merely a later reader of Philippians and 2 Corinthians in the 2nd century.

13. The struggle for the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship, as led by the author of 1/2 Corinthians, is particularly evident in 1 Corinthians 9:2, where he has to concede that he, "Paul," is "not an apostle to others," meaning he is apparently not recognized as a true apostle by other Christian groups. It is interesting not only that the author defends Paul's apostleship with a phrase that closely mirrors a passage from the diatribes of Epictetus (*50 AD)³⁵³, but also that he appeals to having seen the Lord Jesus³⁵⁴.

The question here is: Against whom is Paul's apostleship being defended? Against Judaistic Christians or Gnostics? Schmithals, who argues for the latter, assumes that Paul's opponents at this point insisted on proof of a vision of Christ, which, in their view, legitimized the Gnostic apostle for his office³⁵⁵. In other words, the opponents would have disputed the apostle's pneumatic authority, which was crucial to them as Gnostics. Other exegetes also frequently interpret the "seeing" of Jesus as referring to the resurrected Christ, not his earthly personality³⁵⁶. Such an interpretation is exegetically possible. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the opponents must necessarily have been Gnostics, as the appeal to visions, etc., also played a significant role within Judaistic Christianity, as we have seen. Consider Judaistic Christian writings attributed to apostles, such as the Revelation of John or those of Elchasai and Cerinth, which were also considered revelations purportedly inspired by angels or a pneumatic Christ³⁵⁷. That Paul's opponents demanded similar evidence from the apostle and that his most fervent apologist, i.e., the author of his letters, addressed this claim is very plausible (see point 14).

353 The freedom that the author of 1 Corinthians defends has nothing to do with Gnostic freedom. As the connection with Epictetus makes clear, it is about the defense of (Cynically conceived) autarky. The apostle was apparently accused of having given up his freedom by claiming the right to maintenance. The author of 1 Corinthians corrects the judgment by referring to his explicit waiver of the right.

354 EpictDiss3 22:48.

355 Schmithals, *The Church's Apostleship: A Historical Investigation*, 24.

356 Schräge, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 6:12-11:1* 287.

357 Eus Hist Eccl 3:28

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Of course, the possibility suggested by Baur, Weiß, Reitzenstein, Schoeps, Käsemann, and others cannot be excluded, that the author is dealing with opponents who demanded personal acquaintance with Christ from an apostle. That is, it is possible that they demanded a different kind of "seeing" from Paul than the vision, for instance, mentioned by the author of Galatians, one that included personal acquaintance with the earthly Jesus. Käsemann sees such an understanding reflected in 1 Corinthians 9:1, and Schoeps also presupposes it in his description of the general early Christian and specific Pauline concept of apostleship. In this case, it must be assumed that "the opponents played out their relationship to the historical Jesus against Paul along with their Judaistic heritage." A more legally oriented ecclesiology of the early church, "which is based on a personal relationship with the earthly Jesus and only allows for an official apostleship,"³⁵⁸ would stand in opposition to Paul's purely pneumatic ecclesiology. In any case, even in this scenario, the opponents of "Paul" would be Judaistic Christians.

358 Schoeps, *Paul: The theology of the apostle in the light of Jewish religious history*, 68.

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The fact that the debate about the different concepts of apostleship played a significant role, especially in later Judaistic Christian literature of the 2nd century, was already discussed in connection with the Epistle to the Galatians. There, some passages from the pseudoclementine literature (Homilies 17) were cited, in which the controversy between Peter (as the representative of Judaistic Christians) and Simon (as the representative of Paulinism/Marcionism) sharpens to the question of the nature of the Christ-revelation granted to them. Peter's polemic is directed against Simon/Paul's appeal to visions, arguing that these are unreliable and difficult to verify. A vision could also be the work of an evil demon. Only the immediate presence of the master guarantees the correctness and authenticity of the message. Simon counters this argument by saying:

PsCI Hom 17:13 1 "...You had claimed to know your master's teaching exactly because you had heard and seen him directly, whereas it would not be possible for another to know the same through a dream or vision. 2 I will show that this is false: One who hears something directly has no certainty regarding what was said. For he must test whether he is not being deceived because what he encounters is only a man. A vision, on the other hand, produces certainty along with the appearance that one sees something divine."

Thus, the crucial question is whether eyewitness testimony or visionary revelation authorizes apostleship. Peter essentially represents the position already systematically elaborated by the author of the Acts of the Apostles, according to which only companionship with Jesus qualifies

as a constitutive feature of apostleship (Acts 1:21). In contrast, Simon defends the Pauline broader concept of apostleship, according to which visions or revelations of a Pneuma-Christ can also call someone to the apostolic office.

Remarkably, this debate, which, if we assume that Acts was written at the end of the 1st century, should have been definitively concluded by then, is still conducted in the Judaistic Christian writings of the 2nd century as if it were still "hot off the press." Schoeps explains this by suggesting that "an old polemical writing was used a century later, whereby a polemic originally directed against Paul was now turned against Simon-Marcion, who had just invoked Paul and rejected Peter along with the Judaistic apostles"³⁵⁹. But might it not be more plausible, as Steck suggests, that such a polemic, as conducted in the Pseudoclementines, becomes fully understandable "only when it is directed against a movement belonging to the recent past and partly also the present, and not against documents that had been in use in the church for 100 years"³⁶⁰?

³⁵⁹ Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 425.

³⁶⁰ Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, 334.

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In general, it can be noted that the divine authority of Paul's apostleship was never questioned by the Gnostics in early Christian times; rather, the opposite was true. Schmithals fails to consider that the Gnostics and Marcionites of the 2nd century vehemently referred to "their apostle," often even pitting him against the other twelve, as in the case of Marcion or the Cainites, by holding him as "solus Paulus," the true transmitter of the authentic Christian message - in contrast to the others. In her study *The Gnostic Paul*, Pagels has depicted the reception of Paul in Gnosis and impressively demonstrated that Gnostics "dare to claim his letters as the primary source of gnostic theology" and "revere him as the one of the apostles who - above all others - was himself a gnostic initiate"³⁶¹. Pagels considers this partly a misunderstanding. Be that as it may, why should the Gnostics of the first century, if they existed, have held a different stance towards Paul than those of the second, who were his most ardent admirers?

Overall, it is clear that not Judaistic Gnostics but Judaizers rejected Paul's apostleship. That these were the Judaizers of the 2nd century is, of course, not yet said, although much points to it, as we saw, such as the debate about the concept of apostleship in the Pseudoclementines. Besides, one must not forget that only the Judaistic Christians of the 2nd century are explicitly and repeatedly testified to have "recusant," i.e., rejected the apostleship of Paul³⁶². There are no corresponding testimonies from the Church Fathers for the Judaistic Christians of the 1st century.

³⁶¹ Elaine H. Pagels, *The gnostic Paul: Gnostic exegesis of the Pauline letters* (1st ed.; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1992), 1.

³⁶² Iren Haer 1 26:2; Orig Cels 5:65; Eus Hist Eccl 3:27, 6:38

14. 2 Corinthians 12:1ff. [13:3] shows that "Paul" appears to be in a kind of pneumatic struggle with his opponents. Abandoning his usual restraint, he intends to boast of his "visions and revelations" for once. This is followed by the well-known account of his rapture into paradise. As noted in another context, this paradise for him is not in the seventh heaven, as one might expect from a former Jewish Pharisee, but in the third [where Marcion, along with the apostle, is also said to have heard the ineffable words].

For Schmithals, it is clear that the rapture account, as part of the "fool's speech," is a response by the apostle to a gnostic challenge, since "the Corinthian Gnostics have known and practiced ecstatic raptures"³⁶³. Visions and revelations are the "highest form of [gnostic] ecstasy"³⁶⁴.

³⁶³ Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 198.

³⁶⁴ It goes on to say: "During the duration, the pneuma-self of man anticipates the state of future perfection. The 'soul' of the Gnostic thus leaves the body and temporarily immerses itself in the cosmic σώμα Χριστού." But where is all this? At what point does Paul "refer back" to it? The author speaks only of "appearances and revelations." And they also know the Jewish-Christian pneumatics. Significantly, the term σπτασία is encountered primarily only in Jewish or Jewish-Christian literature and its environment. Schmithals, *Die Gnosis in Korinth: Eine Untersuchung zu den Korintherbriefen*, 199.

Regardless of whether Schmithals correctly characterizes Gnostic religiosity³⁶⁵, it is now perhaps superfluous to point out that ecstasies, raptures, etc. were also highly valued, especially in Jewish and Judeo-Christian contexts. The content of the Judeo-Christian Apocalypse of John is a "revelation of Jesus Christ." Late Jewish and Judeo-Christian literature is essentially revelation literature³⁶⁶. Even in the Jewish-Christian Shepherd of Hermas, the section on visions forms an important part of the book. It has been repeatedly noted that leading Judeo-Christians of the 2nd century, such as Cerinthus and Elchasai, were charismatics and authors of revelation writings. Therefore, it is a methodologically narrow and one-sided approach to associate every revelation or vision with Gnosis or to conclude from every "heavenly journey" a Gnostic provenance—as Schmithals unfortunately does continuously. The equation of pneumaticism with Gnosis is far too simplistic to be accurate. It ignores the fact that in the first two post-Christian centuries, particularly the second, Judaism and Judeo-Christianity had a close liaison with pneumaticism.

That the author of the Corinthian letters engages with Judaistic pneumatics was first recognized by Käsemann with great clarity: "Pneumatics," according to Käsemann, "are the opponents, but in a way that could only grow on Jewish soil, where tradition and legitimacy always carried particular weight. By closely linking office, tradition, and legitimacy, they turn the church-founding and -sustaining Pneuma into the divinely ordained power of a legitimacy principle"³⁶⁷. Käsemann's assumption of an anti-Pauline front of opponents combining Jewish tradition and pneumaticism has been dismissed by some exegetes as a "bold construction"³⁶⁸. To the extent that Käsemann presupposes conditions of the 1st century, the criticism may be valid. However, Käsemann's thesis is not entirely wrong and is certainly more accurate than the

talk of "Gnosticizing pneumatics" with which his critics try to solve the problem. If Käsemann had recognized that the Judeo-Christian pneumaticism he described was a phenomenon of the 2nd century—and that consequently, the author of the Corinthian letters belongs to this time—he would have come much closer to the historical truth than his critics.

365 A term like ΟΙΓΗ, which occurs frequently in the NHC writings, would, in my opinion, be much more accurate.

366 4Esr with its visions, 10:40,59; 12:10; 13:21,25; 14:17; 15:28

367 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 496.

368 Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers*, 149.

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Visions of Simon, who is also Paul, are an important theme in the Pseudoclementine writings. Their authors respond to the visionary claims made by Simon-Paul in 2 Corinthians (and Galatians) and sometimes outright reject them. In the conversation with Nicetas, PsCl Hom 2:29, Nicetas denies that Simon knows "unspeakable things" (τι των απορρήτων ελθεvai)—surely an allusion to 2 Corinthians 12:3-4, where Paul claims to have heard unspeakable words in the third heaven (ήκουσεν αρρητα ρήματα). Schoeps has already pointed out that the "unbearable light," which mortal eyes cannot endure according to PsCl Hom 17:16, refers to 2 Corinthians 12:7 369; see also the passages in the section de immensitate lucis, PsCl Rec 2:49, 62, 68; 3:14. PsCl Rec 2:65 is particularly clear, rejecting Simon-Paul's claim to know the things "above the heavens" unless he can recognize the thoughts of those around him.

It should also be noted that the author of the Ignatian letters once feels challenged in a very similar way by his Christian competitors as the author of 2 Corinthians does. In IgnTrall 5:1, he responds to his opponents' accusation by asking, "Can I not describe the heavenly things to you?" Unlike the author of 2 Corinthians, however, he refrains from recounting his own pneumatic experience. Instead, he excuses himself by claiming that revealing his revelations could harm them: "Forgive me, then, so that you do not perish miserably because you cannot comprehend it."

369 Schoeps, *Theology and History of Jewish Christianity*, {429.

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Were the opponents of "Ignatius," as will be discussed in more detail below, competing Judaistic Christians of the 2nd century, it becomes clear once again that the contest for greater pneumatic authority was evidently instigated by them. In contrast, Marcionism, of which I consider the author of both the Ignatian letters and 2 Corinthians to be representatives, was generally more reticent in this area—exceptions notwithstanding. This would largely correspond with Harnack's

observation that Marcion never “relied on revelation that had come to him” and that “as far as the sources of his teaching are concerned, he rejected all ‘apocrypha’”³⁷⁰.

15. One of the main accusations the Apostle must defend against is that he is “weak.” The term ἀσθένεια and its various derivatives appear frequently in the Pauline letters without any specific polemical character (Gal 4:13; Rom 4:19; 5:6; 14:2; 1 Cor 1:27; 4:10; 8:7, 10)³⁷¹. This is different in 2 Corinthians. Here it is clear that the author is responding to an accusation made against the Apostle. The entire presentation in 2 Corinthians 11:22ff, as Käsemann rightly notes, is “brought to the common denominator of ‘weakness’”³⁷². The opponents criticize the Apostle for writing letters that are “weighty and strong” from a distance, but when he is present, he is weak and his speech contemptible (2 Cor 10:10). Even and especially where the author boasts of his weakness, the underlying accusation is still clearly audible (2 Cor 11:29; 2 Cor 11:30; 2 Cor 12:5; 2 Cor 12:9; 2 Cor 12:10). The Apostle’s weakness stands in contrast to those Christians who consider themselves “powerful” (2 Cor 13:9), whom the author already had in his sights in 2 Corinthians 4:8, when he criticized the assurance of salvation of those who “already feel full, already rich, and as rulers”; ironically, the Apostle prays for the perfection of those who consider themselves already perfect, i.e., for the realization that God’s power is made perfect not in the strong but in the weak. In his weakness, the Apostle is like Christ (2 Cor 13:4); the powerful Christ (the eschatological Messiah of Judaism or the “other Jesus” of 2 Cor 11:4, the Christ known κατὰ σάρκα, 2 Cor 5:16), who is powerful among them, is clearly distinguished from the weak Christ who is operative in the Apostle.

370 Harnack, Marcion, *The Gospel of the Foreign God: A Monograph on the History of the Foundation of the Catholic Church*, 94.

371 The term is used here in general terms for people, cf. ThW Stählin, 488

372 Käsemann, “The Legitimacy of the Apostles. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13”, 499.

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Although the accusation of “weakness” plays a dominant role in 2 Corinthians, it is not easy to identify its concrete background: does it refer to the apostle’s frail outward appearance (cf. 2 Cor 10:10)? To an illness (2 Cor 12:7; cf. Gal 6:14)? To his pneumatic or rhetorical deficiencies (2 Cor 12:1; 2 Cor 10:10)? Arguments for and against almost every suggested possibility have been put forward, but a definite answer has not yet been given due to the peculiar, almost abstract way in which the author uses the term.

As in other cases, a look into the pseudoclementine literature might shed new light on an old question. The Syzygy doctrine taught there, previously mentioned, is a soteriological speculation that distinguishes in a dualistic manner (often mistakenly considered “gnostic”) between two spheres, one of which is identified with the right hand of God and the other with the left hand. PsCI Hom 2:16 states: “Just as God, who is one person, in the beginning, as if with the right and left hand, first created the heaven and then the earth, He has also subsequently established all pairs of opposites. However, with humans, He no longer behaves this way;

rather, He reverses all pairs here. If with Him the first is the stronger and the second the weaker, we find the opposite with humans, first the weaker and then the stronger."

While Peter is naturally on the side of the strong, right hand for the homilist, Simon-Paulus belongs to the side of the weak, left hand: "Following this order, one could recognize where Simon belongs, who went to the Gentiles before me, and where I belong, who came after him and followed him like light follows darkness, knowledge follows ignorance, healing follows disease"³⁷³. PsCl Hom 2:15 explicitly states that "Simon, who now confuses everyone, is merely an assistant of the weak left hand (of God, i.e., of the evil)"³⁷⁴. In the Judaeo-Christian Syzygy schema, Peter is clearly on the side of "strength," whereas Simon-Paulus is on the side of "weakness"; he is a co-worker of the left, weak hand of God (τῆς ἀσθενούς ἀριστερᾶς ἐστὶν συνεργός), the symbol of "weakness."

373 Psalm 2:17

374 ὅτι ἐπλανήθησαν ἄλλα καὶ νῦν ἂν ἐγνώκεισαν ὅτι Σίμων ὁ νῦν πάντας θορύβων τῆς ἀσθενούς ἀριστερᾶς ἐστὶν συνεργός.

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In the Acts of Peter, which also originate from the environment of pseudoclementine literature, Simon/Paulus announces his flight before an assembled crowd in Rome with the words: "Tomorrow I will leave you godless and impious people and will fly up to God, whose power I am, though I have become weak (ἀναπήσομαι πρὸς τὸν θβόν, οὐ ἡ δύναμις ἐγώ εἰμι ἀσθα'ήσασα)³⁷⁵."

In my opinion, it is clear that the author of 2 Corinthians was familiar with the Judeo-Christian Christology and the Judeo-Christian critique of Simon/Paulus and engaged with it in his own way. However, he did not leave the statements about the "weakness" of Simon-Paulus, who stands on the left side of God, in their original abstract context but transposed them to a concrete personal level. As a result, they appear oddly vague in the context of 2 Corinthians, making it difficult to this day to assign them a concrete "setting in life" of the apostle, i.e., his life, character, and appearance.

16. 2 Corinthians indirectly reveals that several accusations were brought against the apostle by his opponents, such as the charge that he was a deceiver or seducer (2 Cor 6:8), that he falsified the word of God (2 Cor 4:2), persuaded people (1 Cor 2:4), or sought to please men (1 Cor 10:33; Gal 1:10).

Schmithals understandably does not pursue this polemic further. Otherwise, he would have to attempt to demonstrate that behind it lies gnostic anti-Pauline sentiment, for which he could not provide the slightest evidence from the sources. The origin of this polemic against the apostle is evident; if one had consistently traced its roots in the anti-Pauline literature of the 2nd century, one could have saved many detours and dead ends and much written paper about the supposed gnosticizing, gnostic, enthusiastic, libertine, or gnostic-libertine character of the

anti-Pauline polemic: all the accusations brought against the apostle can be evidenced in the Judeo-Christian literature of the 2nd century.

375 ActPetr 1:31

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This observation, which will be substantiated by numerous examples shortly, is important because it makes clear that the personal polemic against the apostle in the 2nd century was fully present in literary form. The objection often raised against the radical thesis denying the authenticity of all Pauline letters, such as Galatians or 2 Corinthians, on the grounds that these letters contain too many personal allusions, difficult for outsiders to understand and explainable only from the immediate situation, is misguided. This is because all the polemical attacks on the apostle can be derived entirely from Judeo-Christian literature of the 2nd century, and there is no need for a "historical Paul" as an explanatory model. The formation of the Pauline Corpus is sufficiently explained if one sees their authors as pseudepigraphical writers who engaged in an apologetic-literary debate with the hostilities that the revered legendary community patron faced in the Judeo-Christian literature of the 2nd century. Their aim was not only to preserve the memory of their patron from slander and defamation but also to defend their Pauline (Marcionite) theology against Judeo-Christian missionaries. And there was hardly a better way to do this than by letting him speak himself in a "letter."

The following is a brief overview of the various accusations made against the apostle by his opponents in the Corinthian letters, each with references to parallels in the pseudoclementine literature. Just as the pseudoclementine literature draws its light from the Paulines, the meaning of many passages in the Pauline Corpus is illuminated only through the Pseudoclementines.

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Paul the Deceiver, Fraud: In 2 Corinthians 4:2, the author responds to the accusation of "shameful underhandedness." He rejects all the cunning [πανουργία] that his opponents attribute to him. In 2 Corinthians 6:3, a longer section begins in which the author defends the office of the apostle against accusations and suspicions through an extensive apology. After the author has shown how the apostle proved his office in various adversities, 6:8 continues with the well-known series of antitheses, in which he "recommends" himself (2 Corinthians 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 10:12), not with letters of recommendation, unlike his opponents, but as someone who has been tested "through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise; as deceivers (πλάνοι) and yet true, as unknown and yet well-known, as dying and behold, we live, as chastened and yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing everything." The πλάνοϛ (seductor) is, as Bultmann correctly notes, "the wanderer, the vagrant, the charlatan, but also the seducer, so here"³⁷⁶.

There is a striking parallel to these two sections in the pseudoclementine Homilies, which, as far as I know, has hardly been noted by exegetes³⁷⁷. In PsCl Hom 2:18, Simon speaks of Simon-Paul, who, according to the law of syzygies, had to precede him. If people had known

this law, they would not have believed Simon; only because they did not know it, they trusted him:

But since he remained unrecognized, they unjustly trusted him. 2 Thus, the lover who acts as the haters do is received as an enemy like a friend; they long for him, who is death, as a savior, they take him, though he is fire, for light, he is received, though a deceiver (πλάνος), like a preacher of the truth.

376 And, one might add, also Mt 27:63; 2 Cor 6:8; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 John 1:7

377 Schoeps, Geschichte 431, refers to the passage without noticing the structural similarity of the parallels. Schoeps, Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums, 431.

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The similarity with 2 Corinthians 6:8 is unmistakable and can be further highlighted by the following synopsis:

2 Cor 6:8 ff	Hom 2:18
1 in honor and dishonor, in bad reputation and in good reputation; διά δόξης κα'ι ατιμίας, διά δυσφημίας καί εύφημίας*	1 But now that he remained unrecognized, people wrongly trusted him. νυν δε αγνοούμενος ούκ όρθώς πεπίστευτ
2 as seducers and truthful ones, ώς πλάνοι καί αληθείς	2 So the one who does what those who hate do finds love
3 Unknown and [yet] recognized, ώς αγνοούμενοι καί επιγινωσκόμενοι,	3 the enemy (cf. Gal 4:16] is received as a friend, καί ό εχθρός ώς φίλος αποδεδεκται
4 like those who are dying, and behold, we live, ώς άποθνήσκοντες καί ιδού ζώμεν,	4 one longs for him, who is death, to bring salvation καί θάνατος ών ώς σωζων πεπόθηται
5 as those who were chastised but not killed, ώς παιδευόμενοι καί μή θανατούμενοι,	5, although he is fire, he is considered light, καί πυρ ών φως νενόμισται
6 as though we were sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, ως λυπούμενοι άε'ι δε χοαροντες,	6, although a seducer (πλάνος], he is heard as a proclaimer of the truth. καί πλάνος ών ώς άληθαύων άκούαται.
7 like those who are poor and have many, ώς πτωχοί πολλούς δα πλουτίζοντας; άντα κατέχοντας.	
8 as those who have nothing and have everything, ώς μηδαν αχοντας καί πάντα κατέχοντας.	

The parallels between the two text passages are so striking despite the different order of the antitheses—2/6, 3/1, and 4/4 even partially overlap word for word—that the explanation cannot be left to chance. The difference between the series of antitheses is only that, in the Homilist, the emphasis is on exposing the deceiver, who until then had hidden as a proclaimer of truth, while in 2 Corinthians, it is about the revelation of the truth proclaimer who had previously been vilified as a deceiver. It is clear that one of the two authors used the text of the other as a template and reinterpreted it in their own way. The question is, which one?

According to traditional early Christian chronology, the Homilist or the author of the source text must have known 2 Corinthians, and thus Homilies 2:18 would be part of the reception history of 2 Corinthians. However, from a substantive standpoint, the opposite is much more plausible, as the series of antitheses in the Homilist is integrated into the syzygy schema and emerges quite organically from it. Therefore, it would be much more likely that the author of 2 Corinthians extracted the antitheses from the syzygy schema of the Homilist and reinterpreted them positively, rather than the Homilist adapting the antitheses to his syzygy schema.

This does not generally deny that the author of the source text might have known the Pauline letters and possibly also 2 Corinthians—for instance, Rec 10:61, where 2 Corinthians 12:7 is quoted. However, this apparently applied the other way around as well: the author of 2 Corinthians also had sections from some source texts of the Pseudo-Clementines at his disposal, to which he polemically referred. Therefore, the author of the source text and that of 2 Corinthians essentially "kept a sharp eye on each other" in their work, to borrow a phrase from Bruno Bauer (who said the same about the relationship between Acts and Galatians and their authors).³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Bauer, *Critique of the Pauline Epistles*, 327.

Be that as it may, the accusation that Simon=Paul is a deceiver or seducer is encountered in many other places in pseudo-Clementine literature. In PsCI Rec 3:13, a long passage is dedicated to the seductor Simon, in which Peter speaks at length about his art of seduction. It essentially consists of Simon claiming to proclaim the truth without actually knowing it:

If you are surprised that those who know you not only do not love you but even hate you, learn the reason from me. Because you are a seductor, you claim to proclaim the truth and for this reason you had many friends who wanted to learn the truth. But when they saw that you contradicted what you proclaimed, they began, because they are lovers of the truth, as I said, not only to not love you but even to hate you. Yet you were not immediately abandoned by them, because you promised that you could show them what was true. So, as long as there was no one to show them, they put up with you, but since the hope of a better teaching dawned on them, they despise you and seek to know what they think is better. But you, because you practice wicked things, at first thought you could hide yourself, but you are not hidden (cf. again Hom 2:18 and 2 Cor 6:8). You were harassed and made known, contrary to

your hope, not only because you did not know the truth, but also because you did not want to hear it from those who did know it. For if you had wanted to hear, that word of him who said:

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"Nothing is hidden that will not be revealed, nor is there anything secret that will not be revealed" (cf. Mt 10:26).

Simon Paulus is further referred to as a deceiver or seducer in PsClem Rec 2:5; 2:10 (circumvenire, see below); 3:13 (seductor), 63; 9:36; 10:61 ()); PsClem Hom 2:17f; 4:2; 20:19 (πλάνος) PsCI Hom 2:29 (ἀπατάω) and elsewhere. Also, EpClem 14:1; 19:1 likely refer to Simon and his followers. PsClem Rec 10:60f; PsClem Hom 17:2; 20:18f show that this accusation could also be directed from Simon against Peter. Rec 3:45 5 speaks of the "secret evils" of Simon, the "mala eius, quae in secretis habebat et in occultis", which are revealed by Peter. This also reminds us of 2 Cor 4:2.

Paul corrupts the word of God, 2 Cor 4:2. This accusation, which the author returns to Paul's opponents in 2 Cor 2:17, is closely related to the aforementioned charge of deceit or seduction. It would then consist of preaching the gospel not in harmony with the Judeo-Christian apostles and preaching error under the guise of truth. Thus, according to PsCI Hom 11:35, Simon-Paulus, as an apostle, is sent by the Evil One himself to "preach in the name of our Lord under the appearance of truth and to sow error." Similarly, PsCI Rec 2:5 warns that the uneducated masses might consider Simon someone who defends the truth, while he actually spreads only error.³⁷⁹ The true apostle is recognized by comparing his teaching with that of James and aligning it with the (Judeo-Christian) rule of faith (τής αλήθειας κανών, EpPtr 1:3; cf. 2 Cor 10:13, 15f; Gal 6:16). The opponent's deceit, however, goes further in the Pseudo-Clementines; it can also consist of arbitrarily changing the tradition. Here too, the Pseudo-Clementines refer to the "lawless and senseless doctrine of the enemy" (cf. Mt 13:25), which, of course, refers to none other than Simon-Paulus. He and his followers attempted, even during Peter's lifetime, "to twist my words through various interpretations (τούς ἐμούς λόγους μετασχημάτιζεν, cf. 2 Cor 11:13ff, though there applied to Paul's opponents), as if I taught the dissolution of the law and, though of this opinion, did not express it openly. But let this be far from [the truth]" (EpPtr 1:1)!

379... falsa allegans putetur vera defendere...

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Yet fortunately, Peter counters the false and deceptive words of Simon-Paul everywhere with words of truth (PsCI Rec 2:40 and others).

What reinterpretations and distortions of true doctrine the author of EpPtr has in mind becomes clear from the following. EpPtr 2:5 shows that he is thinking not only of oral proclamation but also of the falsification of books (βιβλοι). Therefore, the holy scriptures should only be entrusted to trustworthy people who have previously declared their will with an oath and under the

invocation of the three elements of heaven, earth, and water not to hand them over to anyone unworthy (i.e., followers of Paul). This safeguard is necessary because "if we leave the books to everyone indiscriminately and if they are falsified and defaced by bold men—as you have already heard that some have done—then it will happen that even those who earnestly seek the truth will be led into error at all times."

It is not entirely clear which opposing writings the author is referring to here. In any case, Simon who is also Paul is also literarily active. How else could Peter ask him if he came to know the unknown God he proclaims from the Old Testament, from the Greeks, or from his own writings (an *ex tuis propriis scriptis*)? From Marcion, the most ardent apologist for Paul in the 2nd century, we know that he left a rich, albeit unfortunately only fragmentarily preserved, literary oeuvre. As a "critic and restorer" of that Christianity which he considered original, he made a great name for himself among his followers, for example, through the reconstruction of his own gospel, which he had freed from Judaizing additions. In the eyes of his opponents, this was of course an arbitrary falsification.

Paul persuades people, 1 Cor 2:4. Paul is pleasing to men, 1 Cor 10:33 (Gal 1:10, 1 Thess 2:4). Both accusations, as already demonstrated in the discussions about the Epistle to the Galatians, are antipaulinic *topoi* that the author of the Epistles to the Corinthians would have known from the pseudoclementine source writings.

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Paul is "out of his mind." This accusation against the Apostle, which can be inferred from 2 Cor 5:13; 11:16, 19, 21; 12:6, 11, is explained, as the context makes clear (especially 12:6.11), apparently against the background of his claim to be a visionary. Directly, this accusation is not made against Simon in the Pseudoclementines, as far as I know, but indirectly, it is. In the dispute about the immensity of light, Peter engages with Simon's argument for a while, trying to prove through an example that he, too, was capable of receiving visions. It is only through the words of his brother Andrew that he realizes these were dangerous human delusions. Like Peter, many have been driven away by vain things that have no being. This, however, comes from a certain mental exhaustion (*ex languore quodam animae*) and affects those especially who suffer from madness (*qui frenesim patiuntur*). Andrew's reproach is meant for Peter, but the actual target, of course, is Simon with his visionary claims. The *topos* is also found in the Acts of the Apostles, where Festus calls Paul "insane" (Acts 26:24). Here, it is not visions but "much learning" that is the cause of Paul's madness. (Also Jesus is said to be out of his mind, Mark 3:21) PsClem Hom 17:13, 16 considers the vision to be the work of an evil demon.

Paul boasts, 2 Cor 10:13. The magician Simon is also accused of seeking glory in the large Simon section of the 2nd book of the Recognitions, PsCI Rec 2:7, *gloriae ac iactantiae supra omne genus hominum cupidus*, though it is a desire for evil glory, for he is *malae gloriae cupidus*, PsCI Rec 2:8. As long as he does not have such glory, he cannot enjoy his Luna/Helena.

17. Paul does not adhere to the "measure of the rule" (μέτρου του κανόνας). 2 Cor 10:12f, 15f (cf. Gal 6:16) show that, according to his opponents, Paul's preaching does not conform to the "measure of the rule" with which the opponents measure the legitimacy or "orthodoxy" of Christian proclamation. It is generally recognized that Paul uses the term μέτρου του κανόνας here, a concept of his opponents. In its original sense, κανών refers to the measuring "line" or "rule" used as a standard (cf. Philo, Post 28). In a figurative sense, it became the "guideline" or "infallible standard for judging things."³⁸⁰ Apparently, Paul's opponents had a "substantive and historically well-defined 'canon' that the latter lacks. Their position is specified by the mission of Jesus, by verifiable 'apostolic signs,' and by the recognition of the entire Christian community as documented in the provision of support. It is precisely controllable because it has a fixed μέτρου." Because Paul lacks this canon, "his apostleship lacks verifiable clarity. His authority is not 'legitimate.'"³⁸¹

380 ThW Beyer 601

381 Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostle. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 495.

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Driven into the defensive and under pressure to prove himself, the author of 2 Corinthians 10:12-13 responds:

"For we do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves [like the opponents who write letters of recommendation for each other]; but when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they do not understand. 13 But we will not boast beyond measure, but according to the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you."

The apostle does not want to be measured by the human standards of his opponents, which (as their example shows) paradoxically leads to "boasting beyond measure" (see also 2 Corinthians 10:15), but solely by the measure allotted to him by God. This measure, concretely, is that Paul, as the founder of the church, brought the Gospel to the Corinthians. Unlike his opponents, who dispute his glory and encroach on his mission territory, Paul does not want to exceed this measure or boast in someone else's work (10:15).

Exegetes who consider Paul's opponents to be Gnostics must explain how they interpret the μέτρου του κανόνας (measure of the sphere). This is no easy task! Since a "concretely and historically defined canon," as Käsemann thought, is hardly applicable to Gnostic Pneumatics, Schmithals considers the Pneuma-Self: "Since for the Gnostic everything depends on his Pneuma-Self, self-recommendation and self-comparison are the most factual, necessary, and by no means unethical expressions of his religiosity"³⁸². Judaizers could not be considered opponents because they would measure not by themselves but by the law.

382 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: also Univ., Habil.-Schr.-Marburg., 176.

Schmithals overlooks two things: 1. Paul was also accused by his opponents of preaching himself (4:5): The accusation of self-preaching, self-recommending, and self-comparing could therefore not only be related to the Gnostic opponents. 2. the author is not even thinking of the law in 10:12 ff, but of "letters of recommendation," as it becomes clear that he refers to them as those "who commend themselves" (τισιν των εαυτούς συνιστανόντων), which corresponds with 2 Corinthians 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 10:18; 12:11. These letters, with which Paul's opponents boast, evidently play a significant role in assessing the "canonicity" of the opponent Christian missionaries, making the legitimacy of a Christian missionary's preaching dependent on them.

All this has nothing to do with the free Pneuma of Gnosis, but very much with that "closely intertwined with office, tradition, and legitimacy"³⁸³ Jewish Christianity and those Judaizing missionaries we already encountered on p. 206. Therefore, attention should again be drawn to those passages in the Pseudoclementines where Peter admonishes to believe no teacher "if he does not bring a testimony (testimonium) from the brother of the Lord, James, from Jerusalem, or from someone who follows him" (PsCI Rec 4:35) and further:

"Do not accept any apostle or teacher or prophet who has not first compared his teaching with James (ἀντιβαλόντα αὐτοῦ το κήρυγμα Ἰακώβω), who is called the brother of my Lord and to whom the church of the Hebrews in Jerusalem was entrusted" (PsCI Hom 11:35).

³⁸³ Käsemann, "The Legitimacy of the Apostles. An Investigation into II Corinthians 10-13", 496.

The mutual comparing and measuring of the Judaizing missionaries, criticized in 2 Corinthians, undoubtedly has its origin in the described practice here, i.e., in the issuance of letters of recommendation from a central authority with which they legitimized themselves.³⁸⁴ That the "canon principle" is indeed at home here, i.e., in Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century, is evidenced by several other passages. This is seen already in the framework section of the Pseudoclementine novel, Epistle of Peter to James 1, where Peter warns James in a letter not to pass on the enclosed Homilies to the unworthy. Only after a relevant examination of the candidate may they be passed on, just as Moses handed over his teaching office to the seventy. "For the members of his people," says Peter,

"preserve everywhere the same rule in their faith in the one God and in their way of life, without being led astray by the multifaceted writings to adopt another attitude. Rather, they attempt, based on the tradition handed down to them, to reconcile the contradictions of the scriptures, where someone who does not know the traditions might be perplexed by the ambiguous voices of the prophets. Therefore, they allow no one to teach before he has learned how to use the scriptures. Hence, one God, one law, and one hope prevail among them."

Therefore, only when the candidate is examined and found worthy are the scriptures to be handed over to him in the manner of Moses,

"so that they may preserve the doctrines and everywhere pass on the rule of truth (τῆς ἀληθείας κανών), interpreting everything according to our tradition and not, through ignorance and doubt of the soul, being dragged into error and bringing others into the same abyss of destruction" (EpPtr 3).

384 ἡ πρότφον ἀντιβαλόντα αὐτοῦ τῶ κήρυγμα Ἰακώβω τῷ λεχθεντι ἀδελφῷ τοῦ κυρίου μου

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With Epistle of Clement 2, we already enter Catholic or proto-Catholic realms. Peter performs the episcopal consecration of his successor Clement with the words addressed to the others present:

"For he will bind what must be bound, and loose what must be loosed, as he knows the rule of the church."

Other ecclesiastically significant *regulae* are found in EpClem 5; 16; 19; PsClem Rec 1:16; 3:36; 8:56; 10:42. PsClem Rec 4:18 also knows of a *fides mensura*, and PsClem Rec 1:52 of a *norma iustitiae*.

It is certainly no coincidence that the term *κανών* does not appear at all in the Apostolic Fathers—with the exception of the Catholic *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (MartPol 23:2)—whereas it appears three times in the Jewish-Christian and likewise Clementine-related 1 Clement 1:3; 7:2; 41:1.

All in all, it should be clear that the author of 2 Corinthians is quoting a central concept in the Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century with *μέτρον τοῦ κανόνο*.

Galatians 6:16 is, as we noted in the first section, a Catholic interpolation.

18. The proclamation of Paul being obscure (2 Cor 4:3) or hard to understand is an old accusation, which is famously voiced already in the Jewish-Christian 2 Peter (2 Pet 3:16).

19. The opponents deny the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor 15:12, and practice a baptism for the dead, 1 Cor 15:29. According to 1 Corinthians 15:12, the opponents (or "some among you"³⁸⁵) claim that there is no resurrection of the dead. At the same time, the custom of getting baptized for the dead seems widespread among them, 1 Cor 15:29. From this, the author derives an important argument for the resurrection of the dead: If the dead do not rise at all, why then do they baptize for them?

Although the author repeatedly quotes the slogan of the resurrection deniers (12.12.15.16.21.29.32), the backgrounds and motives of the opponents fought by the apostle remain obscure.³⁸⁶ No wonder that the question of the origin of the resurrection deniers opposed in 15:1-58 remains one of the most discussed problems in New Testament exegesis to this day.

385 The kv ὑμῖν is missing in Marcion

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In the past, the opponents were often thought to be Greek skeptics or Epicureans.³⁸⁷ However, the argumentation shows that the author addresses Christians (cf. 15:12). The vicarious baptism practiced by the opponents does not seem to fit either.

According to Albert Schweitzer, the opponents were converted Jews with an "ultra-conservative" eschatology.³⁸⁸ Already in 1 Thessalonians, Paul had opposed the view that only those who are alive at the Parousia can attain salvation. In contrast, Paul emphasized that the living would have no advantage over the dead at the Parousia. - The fact that Jewish-Christian eschatology was often still shaped by Jewish ideas was - as we will see - not at all unusual. However, the problem remains how to fit the vicarious baptism into such an opponent's picture. Schweitzer's approach could be modified with Conzelmann to assume a misunderstanding by Paul, suggesting that Paul only thought this doctrine had entered Corinth,³⁸⁹ even though it was actually of an enthusiastic character. But such a gross misrecognition of two fundamentally different positions is hardly likely.

Bultmann, Köster, and others speak of (gnosticizing) enthusiasts. For Köster, they are "the same religious enthusiasts ... who are also attacked elsewhere in this letter," whether they "advocated a doctrine of the immortality of the soul or believed that the full participation in salvation with Christ had already been realized before the Parousia ..." ³⁹⁰.

³⁸⁷ Schräge, The First Letter to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 6,12-11,16,111.

³⁸⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1954), 94.

³⁸⁹ Conzelmann 310

³⁹⁰ Köster, *Introduction to the New Testament: In the context of the religious history and cultural history of the Hellenistic and Roman periods*, 559.

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The boundaries between enthusiasts and Gnostics are fluid and difficult to define. For Schmithals, the opponents that Paul fought against are clearly Gnostics. They rejected the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh in favor of their spiritualized concept of resurrection. As Gnostics, they held a view similar to that of the opponents confronted in 2 Timothy 2:18, who claimed that the resurrection had "already happened." They merely expressed their fundamental dogma in a slightly different form. Regardless, the statement that there is no resurrection for them is "the triumphant message of one who can relinquish all hope because he already possesses his salvation by nature"³⁹¹.

Schmithals can support his thesis with numerous testimonies from the Church Fathers. These sources indicate that the Gnostic spiritualization of the resurrection concept was often seen as a denial of the resurrection. For example, Irenaeus knew Gnostics who claimed that "the

resurrection from the dead is nothing other than the knowledge of their so-called truth" (Haer 2.31). Justin, in Dial 80:4, quotes [Gnostic] teachers who "dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and further claim that there is no resurrection of the dead, but their souls are taken up to heaven at death." Here, the view of an immediate resurrection (of the spirit) after death, advocated by the Gnostics, is contrasted by Irenaeus with the ecclesiastical idea of a future resurrection (of the flesh). For Justin, the former view constitutes a denial of the resurrection. Tertullian, in his Praescr Haer 33:1, constructs an odd development line from the Sadducean denial of the resurrection to the Gnostics. Referring to Paul's condemnation of resurrection deniers in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he states: "This doctrine properly belongs to the Sadducees. Marcion, Apelles, Valentinus, and the remaining destroyers of the resurrection doctrine take on their role."

At first glance, the Gnostic theory seems plausible and, thus, still finds many supporters today. However, upon closer inspection, several problems become apparent:

391 Schmithals, Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small letters of Paul: also Univ., Habil-Schr.-Marburg., 149.

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a) If the author is dealing with proponents of a purely spiritual resurrection, the argumentation should reflect this in some way. The author would have had to focus more on or center the idea of the resurrectio carnis against the Gnostics. However, this does not happen at all. As Conzelmann notes following von Soden, the author never emphasizes the physicality of the resurrection!³⁹² His entire argumentation is aimed at proving that Christ has risen – and with him, all those baptized in his name.

This problem can only be solved by resorting to a misunderstanding as an explanation³⁹³. It is said that Paul misunderstood the opponents' position; he failed to recognize the Gnostic background of the opposing position. According to him, the opponents believed that death was the end of everything³⁹⁴. Only in 2 Corinthians was Paul better informed about the nature of the heresy. Indeed, one must admit that given the complicated textual situation, it is hardly possible to solve the problem without assuming a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of the letter's author³⁹⁵. The question is, what kind of misunderstanding this was.

The main reasons against the idea that the opponents were actually Gnostic deniers of the resurrection are:

b) The author himself espouses eschatological views in other places that can only be described as Gnostic. For example, in the subsequent discussions about the resurrection body (15:35-57), which are connected to the Christ-Adam speculation (15:45). In this section, a small apocalyptic reminiscence from 4 Ezra was later inserted, presumably by the hand of a Catholic redactor (15:52)³⁹⁶. The author juxtaposes earthly and heavenly bodies, mortality and immortality, dishonor and glory, the natural body and the spiritual body in a gnostic dualistic manner, with the latter always seemingly surpassing³⁹⁷ the former: 1 Cor 15:46 But it is not the spiritual first, but

the natural, and then the spiritual. The fact that these two realms are entirely incompatible is shown in 1 Cor 15:50: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

392 Hans Conzelmann, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 309.

393 See also Dinkler "Against Gnostic deniers of the bodily resurrection (: V] Paul sets out to provide proof of its reality - as 2 Cor 5:1 ff. shows, in a misunderstanding of their position as a denial of any hope of resurrection" - *Corinthian letters* cf. RGG vol. 4, p. 20

394 Hans Conzelmann, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 248.

395 Hans Conzelmann, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 310.

396 κν ττ| έσχάττι σάλπιγγι· σαλπίζει γάρ

397 Against Schmithals, who claims that the passage is an ecclesiastical protest against the Gnostic thesis that the pneumatic is older. The author is not concerned with precedence, but with the surpassing of the Sarkic/psychic by the pneumatic. Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics: Investigations into the small Pauline letters*: also Univ., *Habil-Schr.-Marburg.*, 159.

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That the author here moves within Gnostic or Marcionite circles of thought is immediately clear. No wonder that Gnostics and Marcionites made this passage one of their favorite texts and cited specific verses against the church's belief in the resurrection (as attested by Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, etc.). Irenaeus says with reference to 1 Cor 15:50: "All heretics in their madness use this passage against us to show that the creation of God cannot be saved"³⁹⁸. "Why," asks Esnik, "do Marcion, Mani, and others of their kind not believe in the resurrection of the flesh? They claim that the apostle teaches that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God and that perishable things do not inherit the imperishable"³⁹⁹. Similarly, the Gnostics of Irenaeus echo Paul, saying "that nothing psychic enters the Pleroma"⁴⁰⁰.

Bultmann and Schmithals believe that anti-Gnostic polemics can be detected in this passage for reasons that cannot be elaborated on here. If that were the case, the Gnostic and Marcionite heretics must have been thoroughly mistaken when they used this section to support their doctrine of spiritual resurrection.

398 Haer 5 9:1

399 Esnik 4:15

400 Further material in Pagels, *The gnostic Paul: Gnostic exegesis of the Pauline letters*, 85ff.

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2 Corinthians 5:1ff must also be mentioned, where the author contrasts the earthly house, this tent, i.e., the human body, with the eternal building in heaven, built by God and not made with hands, with which man will be clothed after his death. Schmithals admits that "our passage presents almost insurmountable difficulties if one tries to use it directly as a source for

determining Paul's anthropology and eschatology." His own attempt to deal with these problems is rather cumbersome and substantively unproductive⁴⁰¹.

Initially, he has to assume that Paul has since better informed himself about the real position of his opponents, whom he accused in 1 Corinthians 15 of fundamentally denying the resurrection, and now knows who he is dealing with. The core of the argument then boils down to the idea that Paul's opponents longed for the nakedness of the soul, which had lost its mortal garment through death, and that their desire to remain naked identified them as Gnostics. Paul's "anti-Gnostic" polemic consists of misunderstanding his opponents once again and opposing their thesis of the body's naked existence with the heavenly garment with which the souls would be clothed upon entering the afterlife. This can also be read in a similar form in Bultmann⁴⁰². He also considers 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 to be a polemical excursus intended to secure the Christian hope against Gnosis⁴⁰³.

But these are unnecessary hairsplittings that only aim to gloss over the obvious weaknesses of the alleged "Gnosis in Corinth" theory. It is not at all the case that Paul affirms "the corporeality of man"⁴⁰⁴ in 1 Corinthians 15.

401 Schmithals, *New Testament and Gnosis*, 246-61. *Gnosis* 247

402 Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 138.

403 Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 141.

404 Schmithals, *New Testament and Gnosis*, 31.

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The author of 2 Corinthians does not become an opponent of Gnosticism merely by polemicizing against the idea of a naked pneumatic soul, just as the opponents do not become Gnostics merely by rejecting the idea of a spiritual heavenly garment—which, incidentally, they do not reject anywhere. The author would be an opponent of Gnosticism if he had clothed souls in the afterlife with a body of flesh (just as the opponents would be Gnostics if they denied it)—but that is, of course, not the case, since for him flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The idea of a heavenly garment favored by the author of 2 Corinthians is, in other words, no less Gnostic than that of "nakedness." Therefore, it is mistaken to construct a contrast between two views that always coexisted peacefully in the various currents of Gnosticism and for which there is no evidence in the sources. The image of the heavenly garment appears, as Schmithals must admit, in countless Gnostic texts, including such classics as the Hymn of the Pearl and the Gospel of Truth 20:38: "After he [Jesus] had put off the perishable rags, he put on [the] imperishability that no one can take from him." There is simply no evidence in the sources that for the Gnostic "any dwelling [i.e., even the spiritual-pneumatic one]... appeared as a fetter that would hinder the return to the pneumatic unity of the original man"⁴⁰⁵. Schmithals, who understands the problem of 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 better than Bultmann, posits this merely because he sees no other way to uphold his thesis of the Gnostic resurrection deniers⁴⁰⁶.

c) In Philippians 1:23, the author clearly expresses the expectation of being with Christ immediately after his death, i.e., being taken directly into the afterlife upon his departure. This too is not an anti-Gnostic, but a Gnostic idea, as we have already seen with Justin, who accuses the Gnostics in Dialogue 80:4 of daring to claim "that there is no resurrection of the dead, but their souls would be taken up to heaven immediately upon death." Thus, the author of Philippians (who is not mentioned anywhere by Justin) apparently stands on the side of the Gnosis or Marcionism, which Justin opposed⁴⁰⁷.

405 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 254.

406 Asc Is 9:7-9 7 And there I saw all the righteous from Adam, and there I saw the holy Abel and all the righteous. And there I saw Enoch and all who were with him, stripped of their fleshly garments, and I saw them in their higher garments, and they were like the angels who stand there in great glory.

407 1 Thess does not contradict this; on the contrary, the living have no advantage over the dead.

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It is strange that an important text has been entirely overlooked in the search for Paul's opponents, namely, a passage from the Panarion of Epiphanius. This is particularly puzzling because Epiphanius claims to know the opponents with whom the Apostle contended, which alone deserves attention. According to Epiphanius, these opponents were none other than Cerinthus.

In the context of presenting the teachings of the heresiarch, Epiphanius touches upon Cerinthus' eschatology and provides the following interesting information in a lengthy passage. In his usual manner, he begins with an insult, calling the heretic a fool, and then continues, saying that Cerinthus dared

to claim that Christ suffered and was crucified but has not yet (μήπω) risen; he will rise at the general resurrection of the dead. But this position is untenable—both the words and the thoughts. Therefore, the Apostle, astonished by those who do not believe in the future resurrection, says: "If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," and "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" Furthermore, for those who say Christ has not yet (μηδέπω) risen, he provides proof by saying: "But if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith. We would then be found false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised." For certain persons also appeared in Corinth, saying there is no resurrection, as if the Apostles had preached that Christ has not yet (μηδέπω) risen and the dead have not yet been raised.⁴⁰⁸

408 Haer 1.318.14 - Haer 1.318.15

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For their school was at its height in this land, in Asia, and throughout all Galatia. In these places, we even heard of a tradition that said: If any of them die without baptism, others would be baptized in their name, to prevent them from being punished at the general resurrection for being resurrected unbaptized and to make them subjects of the world's creator. The tradition we heard explains that the Apostle said: "If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?" But others interpret the text well, saying: As long as they are catechumens, the dying are allowed to be baptized before death, hoping to show that the one who died will rise and therefore needs baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Some of them preached that Christ has not yet (mhde/pw) risen but will rise with all; others that the dead do not rise at all (o(/lwj). Therefore, the Apostle came and refuted both and the other sects in one with the text he fully presented to give the sure proof of the resurrection, redemption, and hope for the dead. He said: "This perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality," and again, "Christ has been raised as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep," to refute both sectarian positions and thus truly deliver the unadulterated message of his teaching to everyone willing to know God's truth and the doctrine of redemption.

This passage shows that Epiphanius distinguishes two different positions among the Cerinthians: 1. Christ has not yet risen and has not yet raised the dead, but he will rise at the general resurrection of the dead and then also raise the dead. 2. The dead do not rise at all. Furthermore, according to Epiphanius, there also seem to have been Christians among the Cerinthians, especially in Asia and Galatia, who practiced vicarious baptism.

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The first position essentially corresponds to what we know from other Church Fathers' testimonies about Cerinth, although it is not always possible to decide to what extent these are already dependent on Epiphanius. The *nondum* or *μήπω* of Christ's resurrection is a significant feature of Cerinthian eschatology for all heresiologists. Augustine mentions that the Cerinthians believed Christ had not yet risen but would rise in the future (*nec resurrexisse, sed resurrecturum asseuerantes*). Similarly, Filastrius of Brescia, a 4th-century heresiologist, informs us that Cerinth proclaimed that Christ had not yet risen from the dead but would rise in the future (*Christum nondum surrexisse a mortuis, sed resurrecturum*).⁴⁰⁹ Also, Arnobius Younger noted that they claimed Jesus was merely a man who had not yet risen but would still rise (*Iesum hominem tantummodo fuisse, nec resurrexisse, sed adhuc resurrecturum esse memorabant*). However, the claim by Epiphanius that Cerinth and his followers fundamentally denied the resurrection is not mentioned elsewhere, which suggests a certain independence from Epiphanius's testimony.

Regarding the authenticity of Epiphanius's account of Cerinth, there is little reason to assume that Epiphanius's testimony is unreliable. The expectation of a future general resurrection fits well with the Jewish background of Cerinth, which we discussed in detail above. It is quite possible that the Judeo-Christian heresiarch reinterpreted the resurrection testimony⁴¹⁰ and saw Christ's resurrection as a future event preceding the general resurrection. The eschatological expectation of a future resurrection could then easily be connected with vicarious

baptism [3]; as Epiphanius suggests, it was likely performed for deceased relatives to prevent them from being punished as unbaptized at the general resurrection. However, it is more difficult to reconcile vicarious baptism with the second group of Cerinthians mentioned by Epiphanius, who supposedly completely denied the resurrection (*o//w*). Epiphanius seems to have overlooked the contradiction with vicarious baptism. Was this a group that did not practice vicarious baptism? Did this group even exist? Or is their mention based merely on a misunderstanding by Epiphanius, namely, that the belief in a future general resurrection of Christ and his followers was considered by some Christians to be a denial of the resurrection (see below)? This question remains unanswered.

409 Augustinus Hipponensis - De haeresibus Cl. 0314, cap.: 8, linea: 1 [*] cerinthiani a cerintho idem que merinthiani a merintho, mundum ab angelis factum esse dicentes, et carne circumcidi oportere, atque alia huiusmodi legis praecepta seruari; iesum hominem tantummodo fuisse, nec resurrexisse, sed resurrecturum asseuerantes. mille quoque annos post resurrectionem in terreno regno Christi, secundum carnales uentris et libidinis uoluptates, futuros fabulantur, unde etiam chiliastae sunt appellati.

Filastrius Brixiensis - Diuersarum hereseon via Cl. 0121, cap. : 36, linea : 1 Cerinthus successit huius erroris et similitudini uanitatis, docens de generatione itidem saluatoris de que creatura angelorum, in nullo discordans ab eo, nisi quia ex parte solum legi consentit, quod a deo data sit, et ipsum deum iudaeorum esse aestimat qui legem dedit filiis Israel. Docet autem circumcidi et sabbatizari, et Christum nondum surrexisse a mortuis, sed resurrecturum adnuntiat. Apostolum paulum beatum non accipit, iud- dam traditorem honorat, et euangelium secundum mattheum solum accipit, tria euangelia spernit, actus apostolorum abicit, beatos martyres blasphemat.

Arnobius Iunior - Praedestinatus, about I cap.: iesum hominem tantummodo fuisse, nec resurrexisse, sed adhuc resurrecturum esse memorabant.

410 Another, in my opinion more likely, possibility: Cerinth represented the oldest and original form of Christian belief in the resurrection. But that would have to be explained and justified in more detail, which cannot be done here.

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Can we indeed relate the statements in 1 Corinthians 15 to Cerinthus as Epiphanius does?

1. In favor of this idea, Epiphanius provides us with a profile of Cerinthian heresy (from his own observation!^[411]), which fits well with the statements in 1 Corinthians 15, in that the denial of the (future) resurrection is associated with vicarious baptism for the dead.

2. Against this idea, it seems that the author of 1 Corinthians 15 is addressing opponents who generally deny the resurrection of the dead, while Cerinthus did not fundamentally deny the resurrection but viewed it as a future event. However, this might indeed be a misunderstanding—the same one that Epiphanius might have been subjected to. The author of 1 Corinthians apparently did not understand the specific character of Judeo-Christian eschatology and interpreted the yet-to-come resurrection of the dead, as taught by Cerinthus, as a denial, as if there would be no resurrection of the dead at all and as if Christ had not risen^[412].

411 See the "We have heard"

412 Perhaps statements such as Revelation 20:5 ("The resurrection of the Son of Man is the beginning of the world") were misunderstood by the author as a complete negation of the resurrection.

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A parallel can be found in the ecclesiastical writer Justin. Here, however, the circumstances are reversed. In the already cited section, Dial. 80:4, Justin wants to recognize only the future physical resurrection as the true resurrection, whereas he sees in the spiritual resurrection, favored by the Gnostic heretics and occurring immediately after death, a denial of the resurrection itself. Unlike Justin, for the author of 1 Corinthians, only the spiritual resurrection is real, while the future general resurrection of the body, as taught by Judeo-Christians like Cerinthus, is seen as a denial of the resurrection.

In truth, 1 Corinthians 15 does not simply confront belief in the resurrection with its denial; rather, it contrasts the Pauline (Marcionite) idea of a resurrection already occurring now (namely immediately after death, as in Phil. 1:23) with the Judeo-Christian Cerinthian belief in a yet-to-occur general resurrection of the dead. This latter belief is misunderstood by the author as a complete denial of the resurrection. The claim by Bornkamm that Paul himself supposedly "defended the future aspect of the resurrection" in 1 Corinthians 15 against his opponents is incorrect, although Bornkamm does not provide specific verse references for this claim.⁴¹³ Isolated verses that might be interpreted this way (1 Cor. 15:23-28) derive from Jewish apocalyptic literature (4 Esra 7:28) and are insertions by the Catholic interpolator who sought to reconcile Pauline/Marcionite eschatology with Judeo-Christian eschatology through these additions.⁴¹⁴

413 Günther Bornkamm, *Paulus* (with literary supplement, 7.; Urban-Taschenbücher 119; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993), 90.

414 It is correct that the author shares the early Christian expectation of the parousia, but this has nothing directly to do with the problem of the resurrection. Daniel Völter, *Paulus und seine Briefe: Kritische Untersuchungen zu einer neuen Grundlegung der Paulinischen Epistolischen Literatur und ihre Theologie* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1905), 64ff.

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3. Apart from the previously discussed misunderstanding where the author interprets the "not yet" of the resurrection as a "not at all," another difference needs to be highlighted: While the emphasis in Epiphanius's report on Cerinthus is that Christ has (not yet) risen, the author of 1 Corinthians 15 seems to combat the view that the dead cannot rise (12, 12, 15, 16, 21, 29, 32).

For the author, the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead should not be seen as opposites, since the resurrection of Christ in Cerinthus's view is the prerequisite for the general resurrection of the dead and initiates the beginning of the general resurrection. Both are thus interconnected. Therefore, when the resurrection of the dead is mentioned, Christ's resurrection is always implied as a prerequisite, and vice versa. Additionally, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 shows that not only is the proof of the resurrection of the dead in general an important concern for the author, but also the historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ in particular. The author

would not have included the detailed "historical proof" for the resurrection of Christ if he had not known the objection "Christ is not risen," which he interprets as "Christ is not risen at all." He could only have known this from Cerinthus.

4. A final difficulty lies in the chronology, which, in the case of Cerinthus, as already shown, is quite complex. According to most historians, the heretic is a figure from the 2nd century. This indeed corresponds to the view of the majority of ancient witnesses. Only Epiphanius makes an exception here by bringing the historical figure of Cerinthus into contact with that of Paul, thereby necessitating that he dates him to the 1st century. For W. Bauer, with whom most exegetes agree, we thereby "enter the realm of the incredible"⁴¹⁵.

415 "With this we enter the area of the unbelievable, in which Epiphanius also moves when he 28, 2 ff.) makes C. a contemporary of the original apostles and attributes to him a pronounced Judaism" - Walter Bauer, "Cerinth", in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Vol. 1; Tübingen: Mohr, 1960) 1632, here Art. Cerinth.

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Most likely, we find them in the realm of the traditions processed by Epiphanius. From these traditions, Epiphanius could have derived that Paulinism and Cerinthianism were two hostile and opposing directions within early Christianity, which was undoubtedly correct. Furthermore, these traditions might have preserved the memory that the conflict between these two directions did not occur successively but synchronously, leading Epiphanius to firmly believe in the contemporaneity of these two adversaries.

If Epiphanius, as a historian, wanted to take this idea of the synchrony of the two directions seriously, he would necessarily have to connect their representatives. Since it was hardly possible to make Paul a contemporary of Cerinthus, he made Cerinthus a contemporary of Paul, placing the heresiarch in the first century. Although this contradicted the majority of other sources, it had the advantage of clearly illustrating the close relationship between Paul and his opponent Cerinthus, showing that chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians indeed responded to the Jewish-Christian heresiarch and his resurrection doctrine.

If our assumption is correct, we would have a significant argument for the late dating of the Pauline letters in general and 1 Corinthians in particular: the historically incorrect attempt by Epiphanius to link Paul and Cerinthus would be based on the historically accurate memory of the contemporaneity of Paulinism or Marcionism and Judaism or Cerinthianism. However, due to the established chronological data regarding Paul's lifetime, Epiphanius could not and did not want to place this memory in the second century.

In summary, it can be said that the author of 1 Corinthians 15 was not concerned with rejecting a Gnostic or Gnosticizing "spiritualized afterlife expectation," as the majority of exegetes still assume today. There are no indications in the author, who himself holds a spiritualistic approach (1 Corinthians 15:50), for such an assumption. Instead, he deals with an eschatology in which the general resurrection and the resurrection of Christ were seen as future events. The author misunderstands this position as a general denial of the resurrection and is puzzled that his

opponents simultaneously practice vicarious baptism. That we are dealing with the Jewish-Christian heresiarch Cerinthus is testified by Epiphanius. The statements he cites on the eschatology of Cerinthus can be considered reliable insofar as a) his position is presented in essential agreement with other Church Fathers' testimonies and b) a connection between the Pauline statements in 1 Corinthians 15 and Cerinthus's position is indeed recognizable. Moreover, Epiphanius testifies that in Cerinthus's communities, not only were statements found that could be misunderstood as a denial of the resurrection, but vicarious baptism was also widespread. That Epiphanius makes Paul and Cerinthus contemporaries is not fundamentally wrong. Paulinism and Cerinthianism were contemporaneous, albeit not in the first but in the second century—when a Marcionite author, under the guise of Paul, combated the Cerinthian resurrection doctrine in a fictional letter to the Corinthians!

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Finally, we must address those previously unconsidered passages in 1 Corinthians where some exegetes believe they also find evidence for an anti-Gnostic opponent front. However, as closer examination reveals, these passages only pertain to internal community disputes. These include the sections on the issue of meat sacrificed to idols (in chapters 8 and 10). According to proponents of the Gnostic theory, these passages indicate that the opponents, as true Gnostics, demonstrated their superiority over demonic world powers by thoughtlessly eating meat sacrificed to idols⁴¹⁶.

In reality, the author addresses, in 8:1-13 (=A), community members who apparently participate in idol feasts and thereby burden either their own conscience or that of their fellow Christians. The author introduces the relevant section with a brief fundamental statement that appears to be a quote from the proponents of participation in such meals: "We know that we all have knowledge (Gnosis)." This knowledge is further specified in verse 4. It consists in the understanding "that an idol has no real existence and that there is no God but one." In other words, for the Gnostic, idolatry cannot exist because idols are not real. Based on this understanding and the belief in the nullity of pagan idols, consuming meat sacrificed to idols is essentially not a problem. Therefore, the author explicitly acknowledges the fundamental freedom to participate in such meals. A problem arises only when weaker community members are burdened in their conscience by this action. For the sake of the weaker brother, it may sometimes be necessary to refrain, as the author states: "Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to stumble."

⁴¹⁶ Schmithals, *New Testament and Gnosis*, 32.

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After the author exemplifies this principle with the example of the apostle, who, as an apostle, is also "free" and, despite his apostolic right to support, forgoes it for the sake of the gospel, he resumes directly with the content in 10:23-32 (=C). He links the slogan of freedom espoused by the strong with an appeal to consider the weak: "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive" (10:23). He concludes

with reflections on buying meat sacrificed to idols at the marketplace. To avoid burdening the conscience (of the weak), it is best not to inquire about the origin of the meat.

From the cited passages, it is evident that the "strong" in Corinth hold a position that, indeed—as correctly recognized by proponents of the Gnostic theory—largely aligns with the stance found in early patristic testimonies regarding Gnostic and Marcionite circles, where participation in idol feasts was also not only considered harmless but even seen as an expression of true Gnostic knowledge and freedom. However, it is also clear that the issue here is not about defending against any external opponents, i.e., against opposing missionaries (as before), but about an internal community problem, i.e., the relationship between the strong and the weak within the community.

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Even though the author does not advocate the position of those Gnostic "hardliners" we know from Irenaeus' testimony about the Valentinian Gnostics (Haer 1 6:3),⁴¹⁷ and rejects the one-sidedness of such a purely "libertine" standpoint, he leaves no doubt about the fundamental freedom. By allowing the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols wherever it can be done without burdening consciences, he shows that he essentially thinks no differently than the strong. He merely recommends a different, more sensitive approach to exercising this freedom, so that participating in idol feasts and eating meat sacrificed to idols does not cause the weak to stumble (1 Cor 8:9).

This substantial alignment of the author with the "strong" in the Corinthian community has been and is still greatly underestimated by exegetes. This should give proponents of the Gnostic theory pause for thought. For one cannot label the "opponents" of the author, i.e., the "strong" in the community, as Gnostics without simultaneously acknowledging that the letter's author himself adopts a standpoint that fundamentally agrees with theirs.

If this is correct, it must also be noted that the author of 1 Corinthians stands in open opposition to most other representatives of the 2nd-century church, who did not recognize such freedom. Instead, they fundamentally rejected participation in idol feasts and the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols, and condemned all those who held a different view as heretics. In the so-called Apostolic Decree, Acts 15:20, which Paul significantly never quotes, Christians are urged to "abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." For the author of the Book of Revelation, Satan resides where one adheres to the teaching of "Balaam,"⁴¹⁸ who once led the Israelites to "eat things sacrificed to idols and commit fornication" (Rev 2:14). And Justin also knows of such people who, though "called Christians," eat food sacrificed to idols without claiming to suffer any harm from it (Dial 35:1). He also knows who these people are: "Some are called Marcionites, others Valentinians, others Basilidians, others Saturnilians, each named after the founder of their system [just like the parties in Corinth]."

⁴¹⁷ They eat idol sacrifices without hesitation and do not believe that they are defiling themselves by doing so. They are the first to arrive at every heathen holiday celebration that is held in honor of idols.

418 Balaam is often identified with Paul in anti-Christian Jewish literature, cf. Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudic Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges., 1978), 118.

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But doesn't 10:1-22 (=B) clearly speak against any attempt to place the author of 1 Corinthians close to such heretics? Doesn't the passage clearly show that he opposes not only participation in idol worship but also the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols, thus contradicting the indifference of Gnostic Christians?

Indeed, section B does not seem to fit into the previous argumentation. The author's negative stance on the topic of idol offerings is prepared with a typological interpretation of the Old Testament. The Israelites also had their baptism (crossing the sea) and their communion (manna and water from the rock, which is Christ) — and yet neither could protect them from God's wrath. All Christians should use the Old Testament example as a warning so that they do not turn back to idol worship (10:14). What the author specifically means by this is further explained in 10:15ff: it concerns idol offerings and meat sacrificed to idols. Just as the Eucharist creates fellowship with Christ, participation in idol offerings creates fellowship with demons. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:21: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons (τροπατέζης δοαμοιήωη = mensa daemoniorum).

"That these verses 10:1-22 do not agree with chapter 8 and cannot be from the same author" seemed clear to some older exegetes like Völter. Von Soden has systematically summarized the various content and theological contradictions in his study "Sakrament und Ethik bei Paulus"⁴¹⁹:

⁴¹⁹Hans Freiherr von Soden, "Sacrament and Ethics in Paul", in *The Image of Paul in Recent German Research* (ed. Karl Heinrich Rengsdorf; *Ways of Research*; Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges., 1964) 338-79.

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a) B interrupts the cohesive connection between A and C. b) In A and C, the author seems fundamentally on the side of the strong, whereas in B he fundamentally agrees with the weak by pointing out the danger of eating sacrificial meat through scriptural evidence. c) While eating or not eating in A and C is inherently meaningless (8:8), in B, eating and drinking sacrificial meat, analogous to the Eucharist, creates communion with demons: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake at the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (10:21). d) In A and C, everything depends on conscience, either one's own or that of another. "In B, the involvement of conscience is not considered at all." A and C offer an ethical, completely "unmagical" view of the problem, while B provides a "biblicist-sacramentalist decision."

However, not only is the content and theological position of 1 Corinthians 10:1-22 completely different from that of chapter 8, but linguistically the two sections also differ significantly. Note the many hapax legomena: δαιμόνιου [4x], γογγύζω, ἀκολουθέω, έάω, εἴκοσι, έκβασις,

ἐκπειράζω, ἐπιθυμητής, καταστρώννυμι, ὀλοθρευτής, παίζω, πόμα, συμβαίνω, τυπικῶς, ὑποφέρω, χιλιάς. Some terms are used in a non-Pauline sense, such as κατὰ σάρκα ("Consider Israel according to the flesh!" 1 Corinthians 10:18), which in the original passages in the Pauline corpus is never used in a neutral sense but always theologically. The "blessed cup" of 1 Corinthians 10:16 is a Jewish expression. The original author uses the term εὐλογεῖν, which here is equated with εὐχαριστεῖν, only in the sense of intercession for enemies (4:12; cf. Romans 12:14) or doxologically for thanksgiving in worship.⁴²⁰ Further peculiarities of language usage can be found in Schräge, who explains them by the adoption of community tradition.

⁴²⁰ Schräge, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*: 1 Cor 6,12-1 492.

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Due to the strong substantive and formal inconsistencies, older exegetes, as mentioned, often resorted to interpolation or compilation hypotheses. Today, the contradiction between chapters 8 and 10 is generally resolved by assuming a change of topic: In A and C, Paul wrote about the question of eating idol meat, whereas B = 10:1-22 deals with whether Christians may participate in pagan cultic activities. The first was affirmed, the second rejected. Schräge: "Unlike eating idol meat, participation in pagan cult meals is absolutely forbidden. It means *eo ipso* a renunciation of the Lord"⁴²¹. In other words, participation in pagan worship is not possible for a Christian, but there is nothing wrong with the non-cultic enjoyment of sacrificial meat.

However, such a distinction is artificial and read into the text by exegetes. The author's argument does not aim to prohibit participation in pagan cults but to warn Christians against eating sacrificial meat because by consuming it, they partake in the "fellowship of evil spirits" [10:20]—that is, the question of eating sacrificial meat is clearly at the forefront here as well. Only that it is answered negatively in contrast to chapter 8. In any case, it is impossible to consider eating idol offerings as somehow permissible in light of the author's statements in 1 Corinthians 10:1-22. The principle of freedom, bound only by conscience and love, granted by the author in chapter 8 (and 10:23ff), is here rescinded. For the author, idol meat is demonically "contaminated" meat, through the consumption of which the Christian enters into fellowship with evil spirits. The Christian has no choice but to abstain [10:20!]. The question of whether consumption occurs in a cultic or non-cultic context is entirely irrelevant in light of this grave threat to spiritual well-being. Any such differentiation is made not by the author but only by the exegetes, who apparently do not know how to attribute 10:1-22 to the author of chapter 8. Since they cannot bring themselves to a literary-critical cut, they try to extricate themselves by the artificial assumption that the author spoke about something different in chapter 8 than in chapter 10.

⁴²¹ Schräge, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*: 1 Cor 6,12-11,16,448.

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Interestingly, the distinction demanded by the exegetes is not observed by them. For example, Schmithals can cite a passage from Justin as a parallel to 10:1-22 [B], even though it is clearly

only about eating and not about participating in any cultic act; cf. Justin, Dial. 35:1: Trypho objected: "But as I have learned, many of those who claim to acknowledge Jesus and are called Christians consume food sacrificed to idols without asserting that they suffer any harm from it." Even in the passage from Irenaeus cited by Schmithals (Haer. 26:3 regarding the Nicolaitans: "They teach that it is of no importance whether one commits adultery or eats food sacrificed to idols"), it is merely about eating!

Finally, the assumption of many exegetes that Paul speaks about εἰδωλόθυτον in A and C, while in B he is concerned exclusively with εἰδωλολατρία 422, cannot be correct because the author in 8:10 tacitly assumes presence in the εἰδωλεῖον, i.e., presumably during a cultic act, which should not be the case if this section is devoted exclusively to the topic of εἰδωλόθυτον, as assumed by the exegetes and required for their central thesis, and if the author meant the non-cultic consumption of sacrificial meat. According to Schmithals, Paul "of course chose an extreme example" in 8:10 423. But this example demonstrates that the assumption, also assumed by him, that Paul would only speak of the non-cultic consumption of sacrificial meat here, must be incorrect. Other exegetes, regarding 8:10, speak of the "temple restaurant" 424 where the scenario constructed by the author ad hoc, the encounter of the weak with the strong, is supposed to take place. But this is problematic because "all meals were embedded in the sacrificial context" 425. And the idea that Paul cannot have had participation in sacrificial rites in mind due to 10:14 is only valid if A and B have the same author—which is precisely what is disputed 426. If the author of this section were truly the same as that of B, he would hardly have missed the opportunity to warn against participation in idolatry at this point or would not have even thought of constructing the entire scenario.

422 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Letters to the Corinthians*, 215.

423 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Letters to the Corinthians*, 215.

424 Hans Conzelmann, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 175.

425 Hans-Josef Klauck and Rudolf Schnackenburg, 1. (Vol. Commentary on the New Testament; *The new Echter Bible*; Würzburg: Echter-Verl., 1984), 248.

426 The strange argument that the weak could not have met the strong in the temple because they themselves did not enter it (263f) is based on a strangely unrealistic standpoint.

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Result: B is in an insoluble contradiction to A and C and behaves as a foreign body overall. Once again, we are dealing with an extensive interpolation by a later editor, who sought to balance the indifferent or positive Marcionite position regarding food sacrificed to idols with the rejecting Jewish-Christian position, which apparently long remained the "Catholic" (proto-orthodox) position⁴²⁷. Indeed, we encounter the conceptual framework underlying 10:1-22 (=B) precisely where we would least expect it, if we did not already know that the intellectual environment of the Catholic editor is located here: in the anti-Pauline Pseudoclementines.

In PsClem Hom 7:1ff, Peter is asked by the inhabitants of Tyre, who have fallen ill because of Simon's actions, to heal them. Peter seizes the opportunity to show in his sermon that "God, who created heaven and all things" lacks no power "to save those who want to be saved." Indeed,

he [Simon] is the power of God on the left (ἀριστερά τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμις) and has the power to harm those who do not know God, such that he was able to make you sick. But through these illnesses, because you sought and found the one who can heal you, you were forced to submit to God's will for the sake of your body, and to think of faith so that you may have saved bodies and redeemed souls. I hear now that he [Simon] has invited you to a feast after the sacrifice of a bull in the middle of the market, and that, heated by much wine, you not only made friends with evil demons but also with their prince, and that in this way most of you were seized by these illnesses and inadvertently drew the sword to destruction against each other with your own hands. For these demons would never have had power over you if you had not first eaten with their prince. Therefore, from the beginning, a law was imposed by God, the creator of all things, on both princes, the one on the right and the one on the left, that neither should have power over anyone they wished to do good or harm before they sat down to eat with them. For by partaking of food sacrificed to idols, you became servants of the prince of evil... As you were deceived by my predecessor Simon, and your souls died to God and were tormented in your bodies, so now, if you repent and submit to what is pleasing to God, you will gain new strength in your bodies and heal your souls. What is pleasing to God is to pray to him and ask him, as the one who gives everything according to a just law, to stay away from the table of demons (τραπέζης δαιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι), to enjoy no dead flesh, to touch no blood, to cleanse yourselves from all defilement. Let the rest also be said to you as it was to the God-fearing Jews, in one word, that you show yourselves, as many as you are, to be of one mind: "What one wishes for oneself, let him also recognize for his neighbor!"...

427 Parts of 10:1-22 are attested in Marcion. But this only proves that the textual witnesses could no longer have had the original text in front of them.

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In Hom 7:8 Peter describes the service pleasing to God:

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To worship Him [God] alone and to believe only in the Prophet of Truth, to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and thus to be reborn to God through pure baptism with the saving water, to stay away from the table of demons, that is, from food sacrificed to idols, from carrion, from animals strangled or caught by wild beasts, and from blood; to no longer live uncleanly, to wash after sexual intercourse, that women also observe the law of purity, that everyone be sober-minded, diligent in good works, unfit for bad ones, looking for the eternal life of the Almighty God and seeking to obtain it through prayers and persistent supplications.

A similar passage can be found in Hom 9:23.

Also, in Rec 4:36, Peter of the Recognitions instructs us in the same way as the author of 1 Cor 10:20f about the dangers of eating food sacrificed to idols and then elaborates on his warning in detail:

And the things that defile both soul and body are these: participating at the table of demons [participare daemonum], that is, eating what is sacrificed, blood, or strangled, or dead animals, or whatever is sacrificed to demons.

One can immediately see the parallel to 1 Cor 10:20f, especially as the term τράπεζα δαιμόνων, which does not appear elsewhere in Paul's writings, reappears here as daemonum mensae. It is noteworthy that we only encounter this term within early Christian literature (aside from Origen and later Church writers) here, that is, within the pseudo-Clementine literature, a clear indication that we must suspect the interpolator to belong to the intellectual milieu of the pseudo-Clementine Jewish Christianity of the 2nd century.

Among the hapax legomena listed in 10:1-22, the following terms are found in the Pseudo-Clementines:

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δαιμόνιον [demon]: PsClem Hom 1:6, 11; 2:34; 3:36; 4:12; 5:4f; 6:17f; 7:3f, 8, 10; 8:8f, 14, 17, 20, 22f; 9:8ff, 19ff; 10:5f, 26; 11:14f, 36; 15:11; 17:2, 11, 14, 16; 19:14f, 22; 20:13

ἀκολούθησον, ἀκολουθέω [follow me, follow]: PsClem Hom 2:17; 4:8; 6:19 etc.; vgl. Philo All 2:34

ἔασι, ἔάω [allow, let be]: PsClem Hom 1:11, 18; 2:2; 3:73; 11:6; 13:3; 17:1

ἐπιθυμητήν [desired]: PsClem Hom 5:21 ἐπιθυμητικόν

ἐκβασιν [result]: PsClem Hom 2:36; 3:44

όλοθρευτής [destroyer]: PsClem Hom 10:13; 11:9; 19:12 όλοθρεΰσαι

παίζειν, παίζω [they play, I play]: PsClem Hom 5:11

πόμα [drink]: PsClem Hom 3:36

συνέβαινεν, συμβαίνω [to happen]: PsClem Hom 4:21; 5:24f; 6:25; 7:2; 12:11; 19:20f

ύπενεγκειν, ύποφέρω [to endure]: PsClem Hom 12:33

The extraordinarily frequent occurrence of the word δαιμόνιου and its derivatives demonstrates that this theme plays a significant role in the Pseudoclementines. The Recognitions and Homilies indeed contain a pronounced demonology. This cannot be further elaborated here. It should be noted, however, the difference with the Pauline epistles (in their original form), where the word δαιμόνιου (except for 1 Cor 10:20) does not appear elsewhere.

Particularly interesting: In 1 Cor 10:4, the author speaks of the "spiritual rock" that followed the people of Israel during their wilderness wanderings, from which all drank the same spiritual drink, namely, Christ. The verse contains two curious motifs: the latter (Christ the Rock) originates from Philo's Judaism - this will not be pursued further here. For the origin of the motif of the wandering/following Horeb rock, which is not attested in the OT and can only be inferred from Num 20, reference is often made to late Jewish rabbinic parallels⁴²⁸. However, there is another closer and much less noticed parallel, namely PsCI Rec 1:35. There, we find a parallel depiction of the wilderness journey of the people of Israel, "to whom manna was given as bread, and who drank from the following rock (sequenti petra)."

⁴²⁸ Bill III406, ThW VI 96f Schräge, The First Letter to the Corinthians: 1 Cor 6,12-11,16, 394, note 68.

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Finally, another insightful observation should be noted. In 1 Cor 10:12, the author warns his readers: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (μή πέρση). Exegetes often interpret this verse as a general warning against spiritual security. However, it has not yet been recognized that the verse contains an allusion that can only be understood against the backdrop of the conflict between Paulinism/Marcionitism and Judeo-Christianity. The allusion refers to the person who was regarded by the Judeo-Christians of the 2nd century, especially due to his stance on idol sacrifices, as the main enemy par excellence (see p. 260) and who also comes off poorly in this interpolation: Simon, who haunts the Pseudoclementine and heresiological literature as the "Standing One" or as the one "who stands, has stood, and will stand"⁴²⁹.

In PsCI Hom 2:22, it is told about him that he appears with the claim "to be regarded as a mighty power of the God who created the world." It continues: Occasionally, he also presents himself as the Messiah and calls himself the Standing One (στησόμειος). He uses this title because he will exist eternally and has no cause of destruction, "so that the body may fall" (πεσεῖν Aor. Inf. Akt. von πίπτω, to fall).

Just like in 1 Cor 10:12, the wordplay revolves around the two concepts of ἵστημι (to stand) and πίπτω (to fall): At the center is Simon, who is considered the "Standing One" and claims to be unable to "fall," i.e., to be immortal. Similarly, in the passage from the Acta Petri cited on p. 226, in which Simon announces his imminent flight: For tomorrow I will leave you godless and impious ones and will fly up to God, whose power I am, though I have become weak. If you have fallen, behold, I am the Standing One (Εἶ οὐς ὑμεῖς πεπτώκατε, ἰδέ εγώ εἰμι ὁ Ἔστῶς). And I will go up to the Father and will tell him: They also wanted to bring me, your standing son,

down [Κάμε του Έστώτα υιόν σου κατακλῖναι ἠθέλησαι·]; but I did not get involved with them, but returned to myself."

429 Psalm Reeg 2:7, 11; Psalm Hom 2:22, 24; 18:14; Hipp Ref 6:12f, 17f; 10:12

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Finally, Simon, the "Standing One," must fall in response to Peter's prayer "that he may fall from above but not die" (τάχυνον κύριε την χάριν σου, και καταπεσόντος αυτού άνωθεν). In the end, his power is broken and his claim to be the "Standing One" is exposed as a delusion and ungodly presumption. "And he fell from above (Και καταπεσόντος αυτού άνωθεν) and broke his leg. Then they threw stones at him, and each went home, giving their trust to Peter instead"⁴³⁰.

This wordplay is encountered at other points within the anti-Simonian and anti-Pauline literature of the 2nd century⁴³¹. The assumption that the interpolator of 1 Cor 10:1-22 also directed his warning in verse 12, "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall," specifically with reference to Simon/Paul, who in all Judeo-Christian literature is regarded as the main instigator and seducer to idolatry, is therefore plausible. The hidden reference to Simon—clearer the interpolator could not be—fits perfectly into the context, as the dire consequences of presumptuous spiritual security, which, in the eyes of Jewish Christians, was the critical foundation when consuming idol meat, could not be exemplified more clearly than by the fate of Simon's hubris, the "Standing One" who ultimately fell⁴³².

430 The flying Simon too: PsClem Reeg 3:47, 57; Passio Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli 32, Act Pt et PI 75. It is also interesting that Balaam, who is also traditionally regarded as a seducer to idolatry and is therefore often equated with Paul in Jewish literature; cf. [Maier, Jesus of Nazareth in the Talmudic tradition, 68f.: "Simon Magus in particular had the character of Balaam from both the Jewish and Christian perspectives, and in the inner-Christian polemics, law-abiding Jewish Christians evidently endowed Paul, who appeared to them as a gnostic antinomian, with the features of Simon Magus and Balaam") a miracle of flight is reported (Beth ha-Midrash V,III, Samuel Krauss, The Life of Jesus according to Jewish sources (2nd reprint of the Berlin 1902 edition; Hildesheim: Olms, 1994), 224. - On the flying Jesus: The motif could have originally been the basis of the passage. cf. Luke 4:31, where Jesus "came down" to Capernaum (as well as Matthew 4:5ff).

431 Simon-Dositheus PsClem Hom 2:24

432 Rom 14:4 ("Who are you to judge another's servant? He either stands or falls before his master. But he will stand, for the Lord is able to uphold him") is also a Catholic interpolation and probably belongs in this context too.

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Just as 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:14-22; 10:23-11:1 cannot be considered evidence for the existence of a gnostic self-awareness among the opponents, neither can 1 Corinthians 5:1-11 be viewed as an indication of such.⁴³³ The section does not suggest that the case of incest being addressed has anything to do with the opponents' alleged lax ethics. According to the author's portrayal, the incestuous individual being sternly reprimanded is merely a "fallen"

member of the community, not a (theological) adversary. There is no evidence in the text for a "principled demonstration of pneumatic 'freedom'".

However, whether we are dealing with an actual case, i.e., a "sordid love affair" within the Corinthian community (Vielhauer)⁴³⁴, seems doubtful to me as well. The vagueness and generality with which the author handles the matter could suggest that, as in previous chapters, the author's main goal was to establish a general rule regarding the sexual morality of the communities by citing an exemplary individual case.⁴³⁵ The example set by the author does not derive from a specific incident but was likely not invented ad hoc either. Instead, it probably stems from the Christian apologetics of the 2nd century, as becomes apparent once one recognizes that the entire letter belongs to a later context and can only be understood from that perspective. Indeed, alongside accusations of Christians being "atheists" and participating in cannibalistic meals, the charge of incest also played a significant role during this time.

The apologist Athenagoras knows of three accusations against Christians in his defense: "atheism, Thyestean feasts, Oedipodean unions" (Athenagoras, Supplication 1:3). Similarly, the "philosopher" Aristides of Athens, in his apology, claims that the Greeks, themselves committing "shameful acts through unions with males and with mother, sister, and daughter," attributed these acts to Christians (Aristides, Apology 17:2). Finally, in the letter of the martyrs of Lyon, preserved by Eusebius, it is mentioned that Christians were slandered with false accusations of having Thyestean meals, engaging in Oedipal relations, and doing many other things "which we cannot discuss or even think about, and of which we do not even believe that such things ever occurred among humans" (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 5:1).

433 Schmithals, *The Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Corinthian Epistles*, 32.

434 Vielhauer, *History of Early Christian Literature: Introduction to the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Apostolic Fathers*, 133.

435 Bauer, *Critique of the Pauline Epistles*, 35. "The fornication of which he (the author) has heard is the relationship that a member of the church has with his father's wife. But he says nothing about whether the criminal lives with his father's wife as a man or as a prostitute, whether his father is dead or not, whether in the latter case he still has the wife as a wife or whether he is divorced from him - the gossip of people had not told him anything about this - rather, he does not want to get involved in this detail and does not need to, since his only concern was to establish a rule that was particularly dear to his heart regarding the forbidden degrees of kinship, to portray marriage with the stepmother as an abomination and to prove his hierarchical omnipotence in the destruction of the abomination."

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It is astonishing and can only be explained against the background of the rarely questioned image of Paul held by exegetes that any reference to this context is missing in the commentaries on 1 Corinthians 5. The notion that the incestuous man merely married his stepmother, as most exegetes—even Bruno Bauer and F.C. Baur—speculate, is a conciliatory interpretation used to make the outrageous accusation the author is responding to more understandable. In reality, it all boils down to the fact that the author of 1 Corinthians 5 is indeed thinking of an "Oedipal union" and is thus dealing with the same accusation as the apologists.

However, unlike the apologists, he makes no attempt to deny the accusation as such or to fundamentally reject the occurrence of the incident within the Christian community. His "apology" consists of publicly delivering the fornicator to the worst possible punishment. In this way, he could make it exemplarily clear that incest was fundamentally condemned in a Christian community, so that any corresponding accusations, even if they had a concrete basis, ultimately missed their mark. Perhaps he also wanted to highlight the general difference from some Judaic Christian groups, where Christians, even if guilty of incest or sodomy, could still hope for absolution (through baptism or washing); see the section on the Elchasaites on page 37. To what extent the whole accusation was based on rumors, which might have been fueled by the above-cited section from the Book of Elchasai or similar Christian texts, is an open question that does not need further exploration, just as the origin of the strange Christian accusation does not need to be further discussed here. What is crucial is that the author of 1 Corinthians is not thinking of any specific case of incest but is addressing an accusation familiar to him from the apologetic literature of the 2nd century, thereby proving himself to be a contemporary of the apologists, i.e., a Christian writer from the middle of the 2nd century.

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In the section 1 Corinthians 12-14 on charismatic gifts and speaking in tongues, Schmithals, along with several other exegetes, recognizes anti-Gnostic polemics. Schmithals considers this "ensured by the context" without providing closer evidence for it.⁴³⁶

However, it seems more likely to me that the entire section on speaking in tongues already refers to Montanist opponents (of the 2nd century). 1 Corinthians 14:7 might suggest this, where the author tries to make the senselessness of the tongue-speakers' actions apparent with a remarkable comparison from the musical realm: "Even inanimate things that produce sounds, whether a flute or a harp: if they do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what tune is being played on the flute or harp?" Here, one naturally thinks of the well-known saying attributed to the founder of the Montanist heresy, Montanus, in which the state of the ecstatic is also compared to a musical instrument:⁴³⁷ "Behold, the man is like a lyre, and I fly to him like a plectrum. The man sleeps, and I wake. Behold, it is the Lord who removes the hearts of men and gives men a new heart".⁴³⁸ It is not out of the question that the author of 1 Corinthians knew the saying of Montanus and took up the image to polemically turn it against Montanist speaking in tongues. - A connection between Montanism and the Judaeo-Christian tongue-speakers apparently targeted by the author is not entirely dismissible. Already Friedrich Schwegler, following F.C. Baur, tried to demonstrate the Jewish roots of Montanism in his book on "Montanism and the Church of the 2nd Century." His thesis: "Montanismus ist Ebionitismus", [=Montanism is Ebionitism], which will not be elaborated further here, has largely fallen into oblivion today. Perhaps unjustly so.

⁴³⁶ Schmithals, *Gnosis in Corinth: An Investigation into the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 164.

⁴³⁷ See also OgeEn 60 I am the instrument (30) of your spirit. Understanding is your plectrum; as well as IgnEph 4:1 Therefore it is fitting for you to walk according to the will of the bishop, as you do. For your venerable presbytery, worthy of its God, is connected to the bishop as the strings are to the zither. Therefore

the song of Jesus Christ resounds in your unity and unanimous love; OdSal 6.1 ff As the hand moves through the zither and the strings sound, so the Spirit of the Lord sounds in my members.

438 Epiph Haer 48.4.1

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In the slogan 6:12: "Everything is permissible for me," Schmithals and others see a Gnostic catchphrase.⁴³⁹ However, a Cynical influence cannot be ruled out. Yet, this is not the main point. What matters is the stance the author takes towards this slogan. When he warns some of his congregation members in 6:12 against an abusive use of this slogan, which has proven itself as a rule for the question of consuming idol-offered meat (10:23), it surely has nothing to do with a general anti-Gnostic stance. The passage shows that there is a fundamental agreement between the author and the congregation members in rejecting any form of Christian nomism, that is, Jewish Christianity (as a common opponent). The difference, once again, is that the author takes a more moderate position compared to the more radical forces and wants to warn against libertine misunderstandings.

439 Diss 2.1.21-28; 3.22.13; Ench I.If

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Another problem frequently associated with the question of opponents in Corinth, often even forming the starting point of the investigation, will be addressed here briefly and last: the question of the identity of the so-called Christ Party. Since F.C. Baur first inferred from the mention of "Εγώ δὲ Χριστοῦ" the existence of an anti-Pauline Judaizing party based in Corinth, which became the pivot of his theory, much debate has ensued about the Christ Party, with various possible and impossible notions being imputed to it. This passage also appears as the cornerstone of a completely different theory, opposed to Baur's, in Schmithals, who used it as the foundation for his Gnostic theory. Baur supported his position by pointing out that in "τοῦ Χριστοῦ" the "immediate connection with Christ as the main characteristic of genuine apostolic authority" is expressed: "The concept of the Messiah should be put forward to designate as fully valid mediating organs of messianic happiness and blessing ... only those who had received everything that belongs to it from the most immediate tradition, from an externally and factually verifiable connection with the person of Jesus as the Messiah".⁴⁴⁰ In contrast, Schmithals believes he can discern signs in "I belong to Christ" that the representatives of his Gnostic Christ Party "emphasized their substance-identity with the Redeemer and could therefore also refer to themselves as Christ or of Christ (1 Cor 1:12; 4:10; 2 Cor 10:7; 11:23; 12:1ff; 13:3, 5)".⁴⁴¹

However, apart from the question of whether it is permissible to burden the small hook of "Εγώ δὲ Χριστοῦ" with the heavy weights of a groundbreaking New Testament historical theory—especially since the three words are missing in some manuscripts and in 1 Clement, raising the likelihood that it could also be a later gloss—it is, in my opinion, doubtful whether the author, assuming the hypothesis is correct and there was a Christ Party, could have regarded them as opponents. From the exemplary model of his relationship with Apollos, the

congregation should learn that both, and thus the representatives of all mentioned parties in Corinth, should be recognized as "God's fellow workers," 1 Cor 3:9. In later statements, however, these "God's fellow workers" would have turned into "false apostles," 2 Cor 11:13, "false brothers," 2 Cor 11:26, "deceitful workers," 2 Cor 11:13, and even "servants of Satan," 2 Cor 11:14, implying a complete break with them.⁴⁴² Thus, there must have been a rapid escalation of the confrontation in a very short time.

440 Bauer, *Critique of the Pauline Epistles*, 298.

441 Schmithals, *New Testament and Gnosis*, 32.

442 I recall Käsemann's apt sentence, already quoted on page 129: "There is no comparison with servants of Satan" - let alone cooperation!

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If one does not want to completely dismiss this possibility and still wishes to maintain that the author of 1 Corinthians actually refers to an existing Christ Party, Baur's perspective deserves preference, in my opinion. The primary argument against the existence of a Gnostic Christ Party is the linguistic form, as the genitive Χριστού would merely express belonging rather than identity with the heavenly spiritual Christ. However, according to Schmithals, the issue is supposed to be about Gnostic "substance-identity with the Redeemer."

As we have seen from many other indications, these considerations are unnecessary. Even without a Christ Party, one can reasonably argue that the opponents addressed in both Corinthian letters are Judaizers, albeit those from the 2nd century and not the 1st, as F.C. Baur believed.