

WAS TIMOTHY JEWISH (ACTS 16:1-3)?
PATRISTIC EXEGESIS, RABBINIC LAW,
AND MATRILINEAL DESCENT

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And he [Paul] came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. (Acts 16:1—3)¹

I

How could Paul have circumcised Timothy? In Galatians Paul asserts that circumcision has no value. At best, it is worthless; at worst, it might lead to the erroneous belief that salvation is possible through works of the law. Paul tells the men of (either ethnic or provincial) Galatia that he opposed the circumcision of Titus, his Gentile traveling companion (Gal 2:3-4), but Acts would have us believe that in a village of (provincial) Galatia Paul circumcised Timothy in order to make him his traveling companion. In Acts 15, at the great council, the pillars of the church come to accept Paul's view that Gentile converts to Christianity need not be circumcised, but Acts 16 begins with Paul's circumcision of Timothy. How can this incongruity be explained?

Although the Paul of Acts never preaches freedom from the law and never denigrates circumcision, the author of Acts 16:1-3 seems a little uneasy with the circumcision of Timothy.² Timothy was circumcised, he says, "because of the Jews, all of whom knew that his father was a Greek," In

1 In this essay NT translations are those of the RSV; all other translations are mine. One Greek uncial manuscript and several representatives of the Old Latin and the Vulgate omit *Ioudaias* from 16:1, but critics agree that this reading is secondary.

2 This was sensed by Ammonios (fifth century), who writes, "By explaining the reason why he circumcised Timothy, Paul escapes the censure of the fault-finders (PG 85. 1553).

order to win the Jews, Paul had to behave like a Jew, a common motif in Acts³ and supported by Paul's famous utterance in 1 Cor 9:20 "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews." This is Luke's explicit apology for Paul's action. He mentions another point too that may be an implicit apology: Timothy had a Jewish mother. Thus, in addition to the social setting of the incident ("because of the Jews"), Timothy's "Jewishness" seems to excuse Paul.

Not all scholars have been convinced by Luke's apologetic. Some, led by Ferdinand Christian Baur, argue that the Lucan narrative is fictional. The man who refused to circumcise Titus would not have circumcised Timothy. Luke (or his source) invented the story in order to minimize the contradiction between Paul's radical rejection of the law (suppressed by Acts) and the continued observance of the law by the "Judaizers." Perhaps some of Paul's other acts of simulated Jewish piety are believable, but the circumcision of Timothy is not. It is too inconsistent with the central teaching of Galatians, no matter the social setting of the incident or the "Jewishness" of the circumcised.⁴

Many scholars, however, accept Luke's apologetic. They concede that Paul's circumcision of Timothy seems irreconcilable with his theology, but they accept the Lucan portrait of a flexible apostle ready to compromise in order to make converts for Christ. Since Paul could make himself a Jew to the Jews, why could he not circumcise Timothy "because of the Jews?" The circumcision did not render Timothy subject to the law. In fact, it was theologically meaningless and was solely for the benefit of the mission. The rumor that Paul denies in Gal 5:11 ("If I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?") could well have arisen as a result of the circumcision of Timothy. A circumcision justified by practical reasons was intentionally misinterpreted by Paul's opponents to indicate that even he believed that

3 M. Smith, "The Reason for the Persecution of Paul and the Obscurity of Acts," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967) 261-68.

4 W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (BGBE 17; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975) 66: "... of all Paul's Jewish practices mentioned in the Book of Acts, the circumcision of Timothy was considered to be the most flagrant contradiction to Pauline doctrine, The Paul of the epistles could never have agreed to such action; of this the Tübingen critics were certain" The most detailed defense of this view remains that of F. Overbeck in *Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum Neuen Testament I*, 4, by W. M. L. de Wette, 4th ed by F. Overbeck (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1870) 248-52. For modern versions, see E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971) 478-82 (the 7th German ed. [1977] does not add anything to the discussion); P. Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," in *Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert: Studies in Luke Acts* (ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn; Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1966) 40-41; G. Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, 203--4; W. O. Walker, "The Timothy Titus Problem Reconsidered," *ExpTim* 92 (1980/81) 231-35.

works of the law were necessary for salvation. The advocates of this view follow Jerome's interpretation of Acts 16:1-3 (see below).⁵

Some scholars defend the historicity of Acts 16:1-3 by a completely different route. Freedom from the law and rejection of circumcision were preached by Paul to Gentiles, not Jews (or Jewish Christians). Paul certainly believed that Christ superseded the law for both Jew and Gentile, but although he found fault with Gentile Christians who wished to *begin* observing the law, he never found fault with Jews (or Jewish Christians) who wished to *continue* observing the law. He condemned Jews who did not accept Christ and he condemned Jewish Christians who sought to impose the law on Gentile Christians, but he never attacked the observance of the law *per se*. Hence, Paul's public displays of loyalty to the law, including his circumcision of Timothy, are *not* inconsistent with his theology. The advocates of this view follow Augustine's interpretation of Acts 16:1-3 (see below).⁶

In this essay I shall not attempt to treat all the complex problems raised by Acts 16:1-3 and Gal 2:3-5. Which of the three views sketched above is correct (that of Baur, Jerome, or Augustine) is not my concern. Instead, I am interested in two specific questions that are subsumed by the larger issues. First, in Acts 16:1-3, is the reference to the Jewishness of Timothy's mother part of Luke's apology for Paul's circumcision of Timothy? In other words, did Luke think lie was narrating the circumcision of a Jew or the circumcision of a Gentile? Second, no matter what Luke thought, did Paul and the first-century Jews of Asia Minor regard Timothy as a Jew because of his Jewish mother? The first question is exegetical, the second historical, and each shall be treated separately.

5 See, e.g., H. H. Wendt, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (MeyerK; 5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913) 241; E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* (3 vols.; Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta, 1921-1923) 3. 201-2; C. S. C. Williams, *A Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Black, 1957) 188; G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HTKNT 5; 2 vols.; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1980-1982) 2. 200-201.

6 A. von Harnack, *Die Apostelgeschichte. Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament* 3 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908) 180-81; T. Zahn, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lucas* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Deichert, 1919-1921) 2. 558-59; K. Lake and L. J. Cadbury in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake; 5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920-1933) 4. 184; S. Belkin, "The Problem of Paul's Background," *JBL* 54 (1935) 41-60, esp. 43-48; J. W. Packer, *Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966) 132; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts in the Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) 166; J. C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting* (2d ed.: London: SPCK, 1970) 104-5; Gasque, *A History*. 288; G. Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (NTD 5; 7th ed.; Göttingen. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980) 277 (comment on Acts 21-21); S. C. Wilson, *Luke and the Law* (SNTSMS 50; Cambridge: University Press, 1983) 64-65. Haenchen does not discuss this view; if he had, we may be sure that he would have rejected it. Instead he discusses (and rejects) two versions of Jerome's explanation and an incomprehensible interpretation advanced by O. Bauernfeind.

II

The plain meaning of Acts 16:3 is fairly clear. “Because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” implies that Timothy was a Gentile like his father. The advocates of a matrilineal understanding of Timothy’s pedigree must interpret the passage as follows: for the Jews all knew (that Timothy’s mother was Jewish and therefore that Timothy was Jewish as well; they also knew) that his father was a Greek (and therefore that Timothy was not circumcised). In this interpretation the crucial part of the argument is missing from the text.⁷ Furthermore, if Luke means to imply the falsehood of the rumor spread abroad about Paul’s antinomianism (“and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs,” Acts 21:21) and if Luke’s portrait of Paul is consistent—two debatable assumptions—Acts 16:1-3 cannot refer to the circumcision of a Jew. The phrase “because of the Jews in that vicinity” implies that, were it not for them, Paul would have left Timothy uncircumcised. This implication confirms the charge that the Lucan Paul tries to deny in Acts 21:21. The two passages are consistent only if Timothy is a Gentile.⁸

Neither of these arguments “proves” anything, but each implies that the author of Acts 16:1-3 thought that he was narrating the circumcision of a Gentile who happened to have a Jewish mother.⁹ Patristic exegesis confirms this interpretation. Ancient and medieval scholars never doubt the veracity and harmony of scripture, but they are not prevented by their faith from seeing many of the difficulties that modern scholars see. The fathers of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries and their medieval continuators are disturbed by the apparent discrepancy between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of Galatians. Incapable of the skepticism that would later characterize the Tübingen school, these scholars explain Paul’s circumcision of Timothy by appealing to the social setting of the incident (“because of the Jews”). The vast majority of them, however, do not appeal to Timothy’s Jewishness, because an exegete who is not preconditioned by a knowledge of the

7 Overbeck, *Handbuch*, 249; H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HNT 7; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1963) 89 (“besser wäre ein Hinweis—statt auf den Vater—auf die Mutter, sol Offenbar ist Lk über das jüdische Recht nicht genau im Bilde”); D. Daube, *Ancient Jewish Law: Three Inaugural Lectures* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) 25-26.

8 Jerome assumes that the rumor of Acts 21:21 is true, but Augustine and most modern exegetes assume that it is false. see below.

9 If the reference to Timothy’s Jewish mother is not part of Luke’s apology for Paul, what is its function? Prof. J. Louis Martyn suggests to me that Luke imagines that the early Christians confront a world consisting of three groups: Jews, Gentiles, and those in between, that is, “sympathizers;” “God-fearers” and the like. Timothy, by virtue of his mixed lineage, is a member of this middle group. He is neither wholly a Jew nor wholly a Gentile. Martyn’s insight must be developed; perhaps Luke’s larger conception will explain Timothy’s status.

rabbinic law of status (see section III below) cannot imagine that Timothy's identity will have been determined by his mother and not his father. These exegetes follow the plain meaning of Acts 16:1-3.¹⁰

Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen deduce from Paul's strange behavior in Derbe¹¹ that Paul could occasionally act against his own principles if the setting demanded it. To some extent Clement and Origen anticipate Jerome; they also anticipate most of modern scholarship by citing 1 Cor 9:20 in this connection. There is no sign, however, that any of them regarded Timothy as a Jew.¹² John Chrysostom is clearer. He explains that Paul circumcised Timothy "in order to abolish circumcision." Although Timothy "was half-gentile, being the son of a Greek father and a Christian mother" (Chrysostom omits her Jewishness), he consented to the circumcision in order to abolish the law and propagate the faith in Christ. Timothy was not a Jew."

10 Jewish and, to some extent, Christian scholarship has long recognized the continuing value of much of medieval Jewish exegesis for an understanding of the Hebrew Bible, and I do not understand why contemporary scholarship on the NT (excluding, of course, textual criticism) ignores practically all works that predate the nineteenth century. For example, the scholars listed in notes 5 and 6 seem not to know that their opinions are virtually identical with those of Jerome and Augustine. Haenchen imagines that the world of scholarship began in Tübingen in 1830 and ignores everything before that date, even J. J. Wetstein (or Wettstein). Ward Gasque devotes fewer than two pages (*A History*, 7-8) to the scholarship on Acts between the third century and the sixteenth, and fewer than thirteen pages (8-20) to the scholarship between the sixteenth century and the early nineteenth. He lists (7 n. 1) nineteen homilies or commentaries on Acts written between the third century and the twelfth, but their number is much higher; see F. Stegmüller, *Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi* (7 vols.; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Francisco Suarez, 1950-1961). See too F. Bovon, *De Vocatione Gentium: Histoire de l'interprétation d'Act. 10,1-11,18 dès les six premiers siècles* (BGBE 8; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1967) 21-22 and the bibliography on 323-24. Gasque is aware that this subject deserves further study.

11 Or was it Lystra?

12 Tertullian *De Monogamia* 14.1 (CChr 2. 1249); *Adv. Marc.* 5.3.5 (CChr 1. 669); *Praescr.* 24.3 (CChr 1. 206); *De Pudicitia* 17.19 (CChr 2. 1317). Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 6.124.1 (GCS 52. 494) and 7.53.3 (GCS 17.2. 39). Origen *Joh. Comm.* 1.42, 10.30, and 13.111 (GCS 10. 12, 177, 242); *Mat. Comm.* 11.8 (GCS 40. 46). I owe these references to Overbeck and to *Biblia Patristica* (ed. J. Allenbach et al. 3 vols.; Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 1975-1980). Jerome claims that he is merely following Origen in his interpretation; see M. A. Schatkin, "The Influence of Origen upon St. Jerome's Commentary on Galatians," *VC* 24 (1970) 49-58. esp. 53.

13 *Hom ad Acta Apost. 34* (PG 60. 247-49); *Hom., ad Gal. 2* (PG 61, 636): cf. *Hom ad II Tim. 1* (PG 62. 602). The poor state of the text of these homilies (see Bovon, *De Vocatione Gentium*, 6-7) does not affect our discussion. Two works that closely follow Chrysostom say explicitly that Timothy was "from the Greeks": see the commentary of Theophylactus (PG 125. 725) and the note of an anonymous writer in J. A. Cramer, *Catena Graecorum Patrum in Novum Testamentum* (8 vols.: Oxford: University Press, 1838-1841) 3. 262. Ephraem (or Ephrem) the Syrian (ed. F. C. Conybeare in *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 3. 428-29), whose commentary is closely related to that of Chrysostom, also omits the Jewishness of Timothy's mother. Jerome also places Chrysostom as his forerunner.

The most detailed patristic contribution to our question is the epistolary debate between Jerome and Augustine concerning Paul's rebuke of Peter in Gal 2:11-14.¹⁴ After the arrival of certain friends of James, men of the circumcision, Peter stopped eating with Gentile Christians, and Paul rebuked him for his duplicity. But did not Paul himself often act like a Jew with the Jews? How could he rebuke Peter for conduct of which he himself was guilty? Pagan critics of Christianity attacked Paul's insolence.¹⁵

Jerome suggests that Paul's rebuke of Peter was as insincere as Peter's observance of the law in the presence of the men of the circumcision. Both actions were "white lies," Peter simulating piety in order to keep the Jews loyal to Christ, Paul simulating a rebuke in order to keep the Gentiles loyal to Christ. Jerome develops this interpretation by demonstrating that both Peter and Paul believed the law to be totally devoid of sanctity but that both feigned loyalty to it when the occasion demanded. One of his proofs for Paul's ability to simulate is, of course, the circumcision of Timothy. Jerome turns to Paul and asks:

14 The debate was provoked by Jerome's commentary (written about 387) on these verses of Galatians (*PL* 26. 363-67): see also the commentary on Gal 5:11, *PL* 26. 431-32 [these are the column references for the 1884 printing of *PL* 26; in other printings the numeration is different]. Augustine first sketched his position around 394/395 in his commentary on Gal 2:11-16, 5:1-3, and 6:15-16 (CSEL 84. 69-71, 112-13, and 139-40), and in his *De Mendacio* 8 (CSEL, 41. 422-24). Between 395 and 405 Augustine and Jerome debated the issue. Augustine fired the first salvo with two epistles to Jerome, numbers 56 and 67 in the collected letters of Jerome (CSEL 54. 496-503 and 666-74), which are identical with numbers 28 and 40 in the collected letters of Augustine (CSEL 34,1. 103-13 and 34,2. 69-81). Jerome responded with epistle 112 (CSEL, 55. 367-93) = epistle 75 (CSEL 34,2. 280-324) and was answered by Augustine in epistle 116 (CSEL 55. 397-422) = epistle 82 (CSEL 34,2. 351--87). The other matters discussed in these epistles and the further ramifications of the debate in the other works of Jerome and Augustine do not concern is here. For a detailed analysis see F. Overbeck, *Über die Auflassung des Streits des Paulus mit Petrus in Antiochien (Gal. 2,11ff.) bei den Kirchenvatern* (Basel. 1877; repr Darmstadt Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968) 49-70. For more recent bibliography see R. Kieffer, *Foi et justification à Antioche* (Paris: Cerf, 1982) 96 n. 60. I cite the epistles of both fathers from the collection of Jerome (CSEL 54 and 55, edited by I. Hilberg). Some commentators on Galatians refer to this debate (see J. B. Lightfoot, "Patristic Accounts of the Collision at Antioch," in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* [London: Macmillan, 1865] 128-32; T. Zahn, *Der brief des Paulus an die Galater* [2d ed.; Leipzig: Deichert, 1907] 110-11 n. 39; F. Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* [HTKNT 9; Freiburg: Herder, 1974] 146-67), but, as far as I know, Overbeck is the only modern commentator on Acts to refer to it.

15 Jerome writes that his interpretation refutes the blasphemies of Porphyry, who had accused Paul of *procacitas* (Jerome *Epist.* 112.6 [CSEL 55. 372-73] and commentary on Gal 2:11-13 [*PL*, 26. 366]; Augustine *Epist.* 116.22.3 [CSEL 55. 413]). See A. von Harnack, *Porphyrius, 'Gegen die Christen'* (Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Jahrgang 1916. Nr. 1: Berlin: Reimer, 1916) fragments 21 (p. 53) and 26 (p. 56); M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem. Israel Academy of Sciences. 1974-1984) #459d (2. 450-53). Centuries later Acts 16:1-3 still provided ammunition to anti-Christian writers: see Isaac Troki (1533-1594), *Faith Strengthened* (trans. M. Mocatta; London, 1851; repr. New York: Ktav, 1970) 88 (part I c. 19) and 279 (part II c. 74).

O blessed apostle Paul, you who found fault with the insincerity through which Peter withdrew himself from the gentiles on account of his fear of the Jews who came from James, why were you compelled, against your own belief, to circumcise Timothy, the son of a gentile man and likewise a gentile himself and not a Jew, inasmuch as he had not been circumcised? You will answer me “Because of the Jews that were in those places.” Therefore, you who pardon yourself for your circumcision of a disciple coming from the gentiles, pardon Peter too, your predecessor, for doing something through fear of the Jewish Christians.¹⁶

Jerome deduces that Paul only pretended to rebuke Peter.

Jerome absolves Paul of the charge of insolence. His explanation, however, lays Paul open to the charge of hypocrisy and mendacity.¹⁷ One fourth century father had to respond to the following question: “Why does Paul say that he makes himself all things for all people, when this appears to be the work of a sycophant and a hypocrite?”¹⁸ This was the point that so deeply disturbed Augustine about Jerome’s interpretation. Refusing to believe that the heroes of sacred scripture could promote any kind of untruth, even *officiosa mendacia*, Augustine argued that in Paul’s time it was still theologically permissible for a Jew (and a Jewish Christian) to continue observing the law. Jerome believed that the arrival of Christ rendered the law not only *mortua* but also *mortifera*. Christianity was *bonum*; Judaism and paganism alike were *mala*.¹⁹ Hence, if Peter and Paul occasionally Judaized, they must have been acting out a charade. Augustine, however, believed that the observance of the law, during the period when grace through faith was first revealed, was neither *bonum* nor *malum*. It had become (for Jews) indifferent.²⁰ The ceremonies of the Jews once had been

16 *Epist.* 112.9.3 (CSEL 55. 378). That Paul was “compelled” to circumcise Timothy appears also in Ambrosiaster; see below.

17 An objection well made by Augustine *Epist.* 116.22.3 (CSEL 55. 413).

18 Pseudo-Augustine *Quaestionum Novi Testamenti Appendix* 48 (CSEL 50. 443). This text is generally ascribed to “Ambrosiaster”; see below.

19 The ceremonies of Judaism are *perniciose et mortiferae* Christianis (Jerome *Epist.* 112.14.2 [CSEL 55. 382]). See too *Epist.* 112.16.2 (CSEL 55. 386): *Observare autem legis caerimonias non potest esse indifferens, sed aut bonum est aut malum est.*

20 Augustine *Epist.* 116.13-17 (CSEL 55. 405-9). According to Augustine, the history of the law is tripartite: the period before Christ (in which the law was still *bonum*), the period of transition (in which observance of the law was indifferent), and the period after Christ (in which observance of the law is *malum*). This aspect of the debate is well analyzed by Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* prima secundae, q. 103 art. 4 [with a parallel discussion in his commentary on Galatians; see Kieffer 100-101]). For a modern discussion see B. Blumenkranz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins* (Basel, 1946; repr. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1973) 135-137. Augustine states that the transition period ended with the promulgation of the gospel, but he does not specify a date. Lenain de Tillemont (*Memoires pour servir à l’histoire ecclésiastique* [2d ed.; Paris: C. Robustel, 1701] 1. 227-28) suggests that Augustine means 70 CE. The transition period certainly ended sometime in the first century: after that date the ceremonies of Judaism are *perniciosae et mortiferae* for Augustine as well (*Epist.* 116.18.1 [CSEL, 55. 409]). Augustine is not the originator of the view that in the apostolic period the

holy, the foreshadowings of what was to come, and although they were now being cast aside, they were not to be treated with the contempt that was appropriate for pagan observances. Jewish Christians could continue to observe these ceremonies as their ancestral custom (*mos patrius* and *consuetudo*). Hence Paul, a Jew by birth, observed the law when dealing with the Jews not through simulation and deceit but through compassion and pity (*non fallaciter sed misericorditer*), in order to win them for Christ. And why did he circumcise Timothy?

He circumcised Timothy for the following reason, lest the gentiles who believed in Christ appear to the Jews, and especially to Timothy's maternal relations, to detest circumcision just as idolatry is to be detested, although the former was commanded by God and the latter was induced by Satan. And he did not circumcise Titus for the following reason, lest he give support to those who were saying that believers in Christ could not be saved without such circumcision and who, in order to deceive the gentiles, boasted that Paul himself thought the same way.²¹

Paul circumcised Timothy so that Gentile converts to Christianity would not seem to the Jews (including Timothy's Jewish relations) to revile the Jewish ceremonies, which, unlike those of paganism, are of divine origin. In sum, for both Jerome and Augustine, Timothy is a Gentile because he is the son of a Gentile father and is uncircumcised; his Jewish mother does not affect his status at all. Jerome had little incentive to emphasize Timothy's Jewishness, since he argued that even Jews were no longer allowed to observe the law after the appearance of Christ. Augustine, however, had great incentive to emphasize Timothy's Jewishness, and his failure to do so is remarkable. Rather than appeal to the insult that would have been felt by Timothy's Jewish relations had Timothy remained uncircumcised, Augustine should have appealed to Timothy's Jewishness, which would have made his circumcision licit. Later commentators on Acts and Galatians, confronted by a debate between two doctors of the church, generally chose to follow Augustine, but they too did not take the step that Augustine refused to take. For them too Timothy was a Gentile.²²

observance of the law was indifferent; it is as old as Justin Martyr. See Overbeck, *Streit des Paulus*, 9. 61: T. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law* (SBLDS 20; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975) 127-30.

21 *Epist.* 116.12.1 (CSEL 55. 404); see also *De Mendacio* 8 (CSEL, 41. 423).

22 On the triumph of the Augustinian view see Overbeck, *Streit des Paulus*, 70-72; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 132; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 146-67. It is no surprise that all of the modern followers of Jerome listed in n. 5 above regard Timothy as a Gentile and that most of the Augustinians listed in n. 6 above regard Timothy as a Jew (see below). The followers of Augustine include Bede (*Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractatio* [ed. M. L. W. Laistner; Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1939] 134-35); John Calvin (*Ioanni Calvini in Novum Testamentum Commentarii, Vol. IV: In Acta Apostolorum* [ed. A. Tholuck; Berlin: G. Eichler, 1833] 316-17); and Cornelius à Lapide (*Commentaria in Acta Apostolorum* [Antwerp: vidua I. Meursy, 1684] 251). Bede paraphrases Augustine's distinction

The first scholar to argue that Timothy was a Jew by birth was the older contemporary of Jerome and Augustine known to modern scholarship as “Ambrosiaster.” A set of Latin commentaries on the Pauline epistles, ascribed by both the manuscript tradition and medieval scholarship to Ambrose, the fourth-century bishop of Milan, was declared by Erasmus to be the work of someone else, whom he named “Ambrosiaster” (or “ps.-Ambrose”). Ever since Erasmus’s discovery, scholars have been trying to determine the identity of this author and the number of his works. The commentaries were written in Rome during the second half of the fourth century, but who wrote them remains a mystery. Most scholars ascribe to Ambrosiaster not only the Pauline commentaries but also the *Questions on the Old and New Testament* which is attributed to Augustine by the manuscripts. Numerous other works too have been bestowed upon this *ignotus* by enthusiastic source critics. In addition to these uncertainties, the manuscript tradition of both the Pauline commentaries and the *Questions* is very complex because each work was revised at least once or twice by the author (or by someone else). Here I assume that “Ambrosiaster” is the author of all the extant versions of the *Questions* on the NT and the commentaries on the Pauline epistles.²³

Ambrosiaster anticipates the major points of Augustine’s interpretation:²⁴ Paul did not “lie” or simulate piety; circumcision and the other Jewish ceremonies were not *periculosae* but *superfluae et inanes*; Paul

between the circumcision of Timothy and the noncircumcision of Titus. (He adds an ingenious chronological note: Paul’s circumcision of Timothy prompted rumors that he too preached a gospel of circumcision, and in order to refute these rumors Paul refused to circumcise Titus.) *Calvin’s sepienda synagoga cum honore* echoes Augustine *Epist.* 116.20.5 (CSEL. 55. 412). Cornelius A Lapide adopts Aquinas’s summary of Augustine’s position: *legalia enim erant mortua, sed necdum motifera* (on Aquinas see below). Cassiodorus (*Complexiones in Actus Apostolorum* 38 [PL 70. 13941]) seems to follow Jerome. All of these scholars either say or imply that Timothy was a Gentile. For the followers of Chrysostom see n. 13 above. Thomas Aquinas and Nicolaus of Lyra follow Augustine but add that Timothy was a Jew; see below.

23 G. Bards, “Ambrosiaster;” *DBSup I.* 225-41; A. Stuiber, “Ambrosiaster;” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie II* (ed. G. Krause and C. Müller et al.; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1978) 356-62. I cite the *Quaestiones* from CSEL, 50 (edited by A. Souter) and the commentaries from CSEL 81 (edited by H. I. Vogels).

24 In *Epist.* 116.24.1 (CSEL 55. 414) Augustine claims that he is following the interpretation of “Ambrose,” by which he probably means the author of the commentaries on the Pauline epistles. See J. H. Baxter, “Ambrosiaster cited as ‘Ambrose’ in 405,” *JTS* 24 (1922-23) 187. As far as I have been able to determine, Ambrosiaster deems the observance of the law in Paul’s time *rea superflua* (see next note) but does not clearly articulate Augustine’s theory of a tripartite history of the law. Ambrosiaster says instead that Paul was “compelled” by the circumstances to Judaize (*Appendix Quaest.* 60.2 [CSEL 50. 455] and commentary on Gal 2:12 [CSEL 81,3. 26]), a notion that is not easily reconciled with Augustine (it appears in Jerome; see n. 16 above).

rebuked Peter because Peter sought to impose the law upon the Gentiles.²⁵ When he explains the circumcision of Timothy, however, Ambrosiaster makes a significant addition: Timothy was a Jew because of his Jewish mother. In the following quotation from Ambrosiaster's commentary on Gal 2:4-5, square brackets indicate words that are found only in the first edition, and braces indicate words that are found only in the later edition."

"But because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might subject us to bondage," that is, they slipped in with guile and deceit for this purpose, in order to subject our liberty to bondage by forcing us to be subject to the law of circumcision. "For the moment we yielded to subjection," that is, for the moment we subjected ourselves to servitude, humbling ourselves to the law, so that by the circumcision of Timothy the guile and scandal of the Jews should cease. For they were prepared, as is readily understandable, to rouse a tumult and an uprising against him. Indeed, there was a reason that they had an opportunity for making a slanderous accusation. Timothy was born of a mother who was a Jew but a father who was a Greek [that is, a proselyte]. Consequently, he was not circumcised as an infant according to the law [because his mother was already a believer]. The apostle, however, wishing to take him and ordain him bishop, as he in fact did, because, he says, everyone provided good testimony about him, suffered an ambush from the Jews. For they were spying on him, to see whether he would take an uncircumcised son of a Jewish woman, and were preparing an uprising against him, because if he replied that the men of the Greeks were not to be circumcised {as had been decided in an epistle on this subject from the apostles}, he ought not to forbid the circumcision of the sons of Israel {because the apostles indicated nothing about them in that epistle. By its authority the Jews who were believers attacked with even greater ferocity, because that epistle did not prohibit the Jews from circumcising their own sons}. Then, he says, "taking him, he circumcised him on account of the Jews that were in those places." They did not, however, have a scandal about the gentiles, whence Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.

Following a "Western" reading of Gal 2:5, which omits the negative particle, Ambrosiaster explains that Paul yielded to the Judaizers when he circumcised Timothy. As we have seen, most exegetes differentiate between the circumcision of Timothy and the noncircumcision of Titus on the basis of the social setting of each incident. Ambrosiaster, however, regards the settings as identical—in each case Paul is confronted by Jews and Judaizers—and

25 Paul did not lie or simulate: *Appendix Quaest.* 48 and 60.2 (CSEL 50. 443-44, 455); commentary on 1 Cor 9:20 (CSEL 81,2. 103-4). Jewish ceremonies are not *periculosae* but *superfluae*: *Appendix Quaest.* 48 (CSEL 50. 443); commentary on Gal 2:14 (CSEL 81,3. 27). Peter sought to impose the law upon Gentiles: *Appendix Quaest.* (30 (CSEL 51). 453-55); commentary on Gal 2:14 (CSEL 81,3. 26-27).

26 CSEL, 81,3. 20-21; part of this text reappears verbatim in the commentary on Gal 2:14 (CSEL 81,3. 27). I ignore the minor variations between the editions because they do not affect our discussion.

therefore substitutes a different distinction. The council of Acts 15 decreed that Gentiles need not be circumcised but made no such declaration concerning the Jews. Titus was a Gentile; therefore, in his case, there was no scandal and no compulsion. Timothy, however, was a Jew. In the first edition of his commentary, Ambrosiaster suggested that Timothy's father was a proselyte. The point of this suggestion, I suppose, is to explain how a pious woman like Eunice (2 Tim 1:5) could have married a "Greek." If his mother was a Jew and his father a proselyte, why was Timothy not circumcised? Because, as a good Christian, Timothy's mother would not permit it! This ingenious but somewhat far-fetched explanation was replaced in the second edition by the simple statement that Timothy was not circumcised because his father was a Gentile. What is important for us is that Ambrosiaster, in both the first and the second edition, regards Timothy as a Jew because he was born of a Jewish mother.²⁷

Here then is an "Augustinian" interpretation of Acts 16:1-3 (actually written in anticipation of Augustine) which is more elegant than that of Augustine himself. In Timothy's time Jews could still observe the law licitly. Timothy was a Jew; therefore his circumcision is unobjectionable. Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) preferred Augustine's argument to Jerome's, but when he came to explain the circumcision of Timothy he abandoned Augustine's exegesis for Ambrosiaster's.

Those who converted to Christianity from Judaism were able to observe the works of the law licitly.... For those, however, who converted to Christianity from paganism, there was no reason that they should observe them. Therefore Paul circumcised Timothy, who was born of a Jewish mother, but refused to circumcise Titus, who was born of pagan parents.²⁸

How did Ambrosiaster know that the offspring of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father is a Jew? Since by itself Acts 16:1-3 does not imply this idea, Ambrosiaster must have derived it from elsewhere. The most likely possibilities are Roman law and rabbinic law, subjects to which I shall turn in section III. The former is suggested by Nicolaus (or Nicholas) of Lyra (ca. 1270-1340) in his commentary on Acts 16:1-3:

This circumcision was not insincere (*ficta*), as Jerome says, but sincere (*vera*), as Augustine says, because at that time those born under Judaism and converted to Christ, were able to observe the Law licitly. Indeed, offspring follows the womb. Because there is greater certainty about the

²⁷ Parallel to *explorabant enim (Iudaei) si filium Iudaeae incircumcisum susciperet* on p. 21 is *explorantes si cum qui Iudaeus natus erat incircumcisum adsumeret* on p. 27. Ambrosiaster's commentary on Gal 2:4-5 is copied verbatim by Rabanus Maurus (*TL* 112. 267-68).

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* prima secundae, q. 103 art. 4 (Blackfriars edition [1969] 29. 248-49).

mother than about the father, and, by contrast, although his father was a gentile, he was considered then to be a Jew.²⁹

Nicolaus's argument ("offspring follows the womb" and "there is greater certainty about the mother than about the father") echoes Roman legal terminology.³⁰ What is implicit in Nicolaus is made explicit by J. J. Wetstein (or Wettstein, 1693-1754), who, in his commentary on Acts 16:1-3, adduces various Roman texts to prove that the status of the offspring of intermarriage is determined by its mother, not its father.³¹

Perhaps, then, Roman law served as the basis for Ambrosiaster's exegesis. Or perhaps it was rabbinic law. In his commentary, Wetstein also adduces various rabbinic texts to prove that the status of the offspring of intermarriage is determined matrilineally. Ambrosiaster knew Roman law well and was familiar with the Jews and Judaism of his day, so that both alternatives are possible, although I shall try to show in the next section that the rabbinic law is a more likely source than the Roman.³² (Even Nicolaus, who echoes Roman legal terminology, may have been influenced here by his knowledge of rabbinic law; he was one of the finest Christian Hebraists of the Middle Ages.³³) Inspired by his knowledge of either Roman or rabbinic law, Ambrosiaster suggested that Timothy was Jewish. Wetstein's commentary ensured a secure place for this view in modern scholarship.³⁴

29 *Biblia Sacra cum Glossis ... Nicolai Lyrani* (7 vols.; Lyons, 1545) 6. 192b.

30 *Proles enim sequitur ventrem* is a paraphrase of Ulpian 5.5, *partus sequitur matrem. Major est certitudo de matre quam de patre* echoes the Digest 2.4.5, *semper [mater] certa est*.

31 J. J. Wetstenius, *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (2 vols.; Amsterdam: Officina Dommeriana, 1752) 2. 552.

32 On Ambrosiaster's knowledge of Judaism and Roman law, see Bardy, "Ambrosiaster"; Stuiber, "Ambrosiaster"; and the chapter on Ambrosiaster in A. Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927). Many scholars identify Ambrosiaster with a Jew named Isaac who converted to Christianity. Some of the enthusiastic source critics mentioned above ascribe to him the *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legion Collatio*. Souter notes that a study of Ambrosiaster's knowledge of Judaism is a *desideratum* (*Latin Commentaries*, 72). In particular, it would be important to determine the sort of Judaism with which he was familiar.

33 H. Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963); Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982) 174-91.

34 Haenchen says that this view was introduced to modern scholarship in 1852 by H. Thiersch. Among the scholars who regard Timothy as a Jew are Lake and Cadbury, Belkin, Packer, Hanson, O'Neill, Stählin, and Wilson listed in n. 6 above as followers of Augustine. Other advocates of this view are E. Preuschen (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [HNT 4.1; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1912] 98-99 [who quotes Wetstein]), H. Strack and P. Billerbeck (*Str-B*, 2. 741), O. Bauernfeind (*Kommentar und Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* [WUNT 22; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980: the commentary was first printed in 1939] 204), H. Conzelmann (*Die Apostelgeschichte 7*: Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1963] 88-89), J. Munck (*Acts of the Apostles* [AB 31: Carden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967] 155), and M. Hengel (*Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 64). Most of these scholars refer to the rabbinic principle, a few quote the Roman principle as well.

This lengthy survey of the history of the exegesis of Acts 16:1-3 demonstrates that the vast majority of exegetes, from the second century to the eighteenth, did not explain Paul's conduct by appeal to Timothy's Jewishness. As the son of a Gentile father, Timothy was a Gentile. The reference to the Jewishness of Timothy's mother was considered by these scholars to be inconsequential and virtually irrelevant. This approach is all the more remarkable because Augustine and his followers would have found the circumcision easier to explain had they insisted that Timothy, as the son of a Jewish mother, was a Jew. But this interpretation was advanced only by some proponents of the Augustinian view (Ambrosiaster, Thomas Aquinas, and Nicolaus of Lyra), and they, at least to some extent, read Acts 16:1-3 in the light of data (Roman and rabbinic) not contained in the text itself. When read on its own terms, Acts 16:1-3 clearly implied, and implies, that Timothy was a Gentile.

III

Although Luke did not consider Timothy to be a Jew, perhaps Paul and the Jews of Asia Minor did. Luke knew from his source that Timothy had a Jewish mother, but perhaps he did not understand the consequences of this fact.³⁵ The scholars who argue that Timothy was a Jew rely upon Roman law, rabbinic law, or both. Will either of these help us understand Acts 16:1-3?

The Roman law of persons is completely irrelevant. It is of interest in this context only because it is closely analogous to the rabbinic law of persons, which is relevant. According to Roman law, a child is in the *potestas* of his father and follows the status of his father only when a legal marriage (*justum matrimonium*) exists between the mother and the father. The capacity to contract a legal marriage (*conubium*, also spelled *connubium*.) was possessed only by Roman citizens and by select others. Without *conubium* a marriage is valid but is not *justum*; and without a *justum matrimonium*, the status of the child follows that of the mother since it has no legal father. Consequently, if a Roman citizen marries a noncitizen woman, the children are noncitizens. If a Roman citizen has intercourse with a slave woman, the children are slaves. According to the legal theory, if a Roman matron marries a noncitizen, the children are citizens, except that the *Lex Minicia*, a law of uncertain date (apparently of the first century declared that the children of such unions follow the parent with the lower status, that is, the children are not citizens.³⁶

35 See Conzelmann in n. 7 above, anticipated by L. Löw, "Eherechtliche Studien" in *Gesammelte Schriften* (5 vols.; Szegedin, 1889-1900; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1979) 3. 123. This is not the place for a discussion of Luke's knowledge of Judaism.

36 J. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967) 36-68 ("The Law of Status"), esp. 40-41; A. Watson, *The Law of Persons in the Later Roman*

The Roman law of persons has no bearing on Acts 16:1-3 because there is no sign that either Timothy's mother or father was a Roman citizen. Furthermore, the Roman law of persons determined whether one was citizen or peregrine, free or slave, in the eyes of the state; it did not determine whether one was a Jew or a Gentile. And it certainly did not determine whether one was a Jew or a Gentile in the eyes of the Jews of Asia Minor, the point that is at issue here.³⁷

Rabbinic law did determine whether one was a Jew, and that law is strikingly similar to the Roman law.³⁸ The basic text is *m. Qidd.* 3:12:

Wherever there is potential for a valid marriage (*qiddûšîn*) and the marriage would not be sinful, the offspring follows the male. And what is this? This is the daughter of a priest, Levite, or Israelite who was married to a priest, Levite, or Israelite.

Wherever there is potential for a valid marriage but the marriage would be sinful, the offspring follows the parent of lower status. And what is this? This is a widow with a high priest, a divorcee or a "released woman" [Deut 25:5-10] with a regular priest, a *mamzeret* or a *nētînâ* [Ezra 2:43-58, etc.] with an Israelite, an Israelite woman with a *mamzēr* or a *nātîn*.

And any woman who does not have the potential for a valid marriage with this man but has the potential for a valid marriage with other men, the offspring is a *mamzēr*. And what is this? This is he who has intercourse with any of the relations prohibited by the Torah.

And any woman who does not have the potential for a valid marriage either with this man or with other men, the offspring is like her. And what is this? This is the offspring of a slave woman or a Gentile woman.

I leave the term *mamzēr* untranslated because the English terms "bastard" and "illegitimate child" have connotations that are absent from the Hebrew. A *mamzēr/mamzeret* is a Jew, either male or female, who, because of the circumstances of his birth, is permanently barred from marrying another Jew. If he (or she) does marry a Jew, the children are *mamzērîm*. Except for this single (but rather serious) legal disability, the *mamzēr* is a Jew in all respects.

The intricacies of this legislation need not detain us. The crucial point is that in the rabbinic conception, like the Roman, only citizens have the

Republic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) 27-28. The major primary texts are *Digesta* 1.5; Ulpian *Tituli* 5: Gaius *Institutiones* 1.48-96

37 It is unclear whether Nicolaus and Wetstein believed that the Roman law applied to the marriage of Timothy's parents or whether they adduce the Roman law merely to indicate a parallel to their understanding of Acts 16:1-3.

38 L. M. Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942) 174; B. Cohen, "Some Remarks on the Law of Persons in Jewish and Roman Jurisprudence," *PAAJR* 16 (1946-47) 1-37, esp. 12-15; S. J. D. Cohen, "The Matrilineal Principle in Historical Perspective," *Judaism* 34, 1 (Winter, 1985) 5-13; idem, "The Origins of the Matrilineal Principle in Rabbinic Law," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 10 (1985) 19-53.

capacity to contract a legal marriage, and only the children of a legal marriage have a legal father. Consequently, the children of legal marriages between citizens follow the status of the father: the children of marriages between citizens and noncitizens follow the status of the mother since they have no legal father. Briefly put, the offspring of intermarriage are judged matrilineally. A Jewish woman bears Jewish children, a Gentile woman bears Gentile children. The Mishna in *Qiddûšîn* explicitly addresses the case of a Gentile mother and a Jewish father. Elsewhere the Mishna addresses the opposite case and declares the child of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father to be a *mamzēr* (*m. Yebam.* 7:5). This ruling was disputed in the Tosepta and the Talmudim, since many rabbis felt that such offspring were Jews of blemished ancestry (and permitted to marry all Jews except priests), not *mamzērîm*. This view ultimately prevailed. All rabbinic authorities, however, seem to agree that the child of a Jewish woman by a Gentile man was a Jew. The rabbis never passed a law parallel to the *Lex Minicia*.³⁹

If the rabbinic law of persons was already in existence in the first century C.E., and if the Jews of Asia Minor observed it, then Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father, would have been considered an uncircumcised Jew (perhaps a *mamzēr*) by the Jews of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, and perhaps by Paul himself. But both of these assumptions are debatable.

First, was this law in existence in the first century C.E.? Both *m. Qidd.* 3:12 and *m. Yebam.* 7:5 are anonymous, and the difficulty of dating anonymous rabbinic texts is notorious. *M. Qidd.* 3:12–4:12 (or 4:14) is a series of anonymous texts on genealogical matters, into which comments by named authorities, almost all of them Yavnean, have been inserted. This implies that 3:12 is Yavnean (if not earlier). R. Aqiba and other Yavneans debate the precise legal definition of *mamzēr* (*m. Yebam.* 4:13), but it is unclear

39 For a survey of the rabbinic debate see B. Cohen, "Law of Persons," 15-24; L. Schiffman, "Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Vol. 2, Aspects of Judaism* (ed. E. P. Sanders et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 115-56, esp. 117-22 (this essay has now appeared in expanded form as *Who was a Jew?* [Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1985]). I say "seem to agree" because there is room for doubt. *T. Qidd.* 4.16 quotes the opinion of R. Simeon (the manuscripts provide various readings) that the child of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father is not a *mamzēr*. What is it, then? A Jew or a Gentile? We are not told. Some medieval exegetes (see V. Aptowitz, *HUCA* 5 [1926] 268) claimed that when the Talmud rejected the view that such a child was a *mamzēr*, it meant that it was a Gentile, not that it was a Jew. This is clearly not the simple meaning of the talmudic texts (see, e.g., b. *Yebam.* 14b-45h and parallels), and Jewish law has ignored this interpretation; but perhaps this is what B. Simeon meant. In spite of the fact that the rabbinic legislation is succinctly and accurately presented by Billerbeck (see n. 34), Belkin (see n. 6), and others, some NT exegetes do not understand it. See, e.g., Hanson, *Acts*, 166; F F Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Tyndale, 1951) 308 (after misinterpreting one rabbinic law, Bruce refers to his discussion on p. 86 where he misinterprets another).

whether their debate includes the case of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. If it does, as most commentators assume,⁴⁰ both halves of the matrilineal principle can be dated to the first quarter of the second century C.E. at the latest. This gives us *a terminus ad quem*.

What is *the terminus a quo*? Most scholars believe that Ezra introduced the matrilineal principle into Judaism, but this view is unconvincing. Before the period of Ezra numerous biblical worthies married foreign women, and we are never told that these women “converted” or that their children were not Israelites. A foreign woman’s act of marriage with an Israelite was functionally equivalent to the later act of conversion to Judaism, and the Bible assumes that the children of these marriages are Israelite, that is, that they follow the status of the father.⁴¹ The Bible narrates only a few cases of Gentile men marrying Israelite women. In all likelihood the children of these marriages were considered Israelite only if the family lived among the Israelites. Lineage was matrilineal when it was matrilocal. When the Israelite woman moved abroad to join her Gentile husband, her children were considered Gentile.⁴²

Ezra attacked this system, at least in part. He interfered with the marriages of the Jerusalem nobility, although marriages with foreign women had usually been tolerated previously. He attempted to expel not only the foreign women but also their children, another innovation. Did he regard these children as Gentile because of their Gentile mothers? This is not the place for a discussion of Ezra’s policy, its political background, or its degree of success, but it is clear that his action is susceptible to various interpretations. The fact that he did not interfere with the marriages between Jewish women and Gentile men does not necessarily indicate that he regarded these marriages as more tolerable (because the children, following the mother, are Jewish) than the marriages of Jewish men and Gentile women (where the children, following the mother, are Gentile). It is just as likely that he regarded the children of these Jewish women as Gentiles, following their fathers, and regarded the women themselves as out of reach and lost to the Jewish community of Jerusalem.

No matter how Ezra’s policy is understood, the matrilineal principle did not take hold after Ezra. It is not attested in the apocrypha or the

40 See Schiffman. J. Neusner argues that *m. Qidd.* 3:12 is Yavnean because Rabbis Eliezer and Tarfon refer to it in *m. Qidd.* 3:13 (*A History of the Mishnaic Law of Women* [5 vols.: SJLA 33; Leiden: Brill, 1980] 5. 173). The conclusion probably is correct, but the argument certainly is wrong. Eliezer and Tarfon debate whether a *mamzēr* can ever produce children who are not *mamzērîm*: they do not discuss the definition of a *mamzēr* and do not presume the principles outlined in 3:12. See further S. J. D. Cohen, “Origins” (n. 38 above).

41 S. J. D. Cohen, “Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective From Biblical Israel to Post Biblical Judaism,” *Conservative Judaism* 36, 4 (Summer, 1983) 31-45.

42 Matrilocal: Lev 24:10; 1 Chr 2:17, probably preferable to 2 Sam 17:25; 1 Chr 2:34-35, adoption of a slave. Non matrilocal: 1 Kgs 7:13-14, cf. 2 Chr 2:12-13.

pseudepigrapha, Josephus or Philo, Qumran or the NT (Acts 16:1–3 aside). In its long invective against marriage with Gentiles, *Jubilees* betrays no knowledge of the matrilineal principle.⁴³ In Josephus's narrative the Jewishness of Herod depends not upon the identity of his mother (an Arab) but on the pedigree of his father and grandfather.⁴⁴ Philo knows nothing approximating the matrilineal principle.⁴⁵ Neither does Paul in his discussion of intermarriage in 1 Cor 7:14 (which apparently implies that either a Christian father or a Christian mother can consecrate the children). And rabbinic literature itself preserves relics of a nonrabbinic (prerabbinic?) patrilineal view.⁴⁶

In sum, the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* for the rabbinic law are identical. The law does not appear in any premishnaic text and is ignored by all extant works of the Second Temple period. The only possible exception is Acts 16:1-3.

But even if the matrilineal principle is of first-century origin, it cannot be assumed that the Jews of Asia Minor observed. Unlike George Foot Moore, the classic exponent of the theory of "normative Pharisaic–rabbinic Judaism," contemporary scholars emphasize that rabbinic Judaism was only one type of ancient Judaism and that there is no evidence for the assumption that all the Jews of antiquity listened to the rabbis and obeyed rabbinic norms. Such an assumption is the result of confusing theological belief (rabbinic Judaism is authentic) with historical judgment (rabbinic Judaism was widely observed).⁴⁷ Even if the matrilineal principle existed in the prorabbinic circles of first-century Palestine, we cannot assume that it reached and won the acceptance of the Jews of Asia Minor.

A final note. Although Timothy is mentioned a dozen times in the NT (aside from Acts 16:1-3), not a single passage implies that he was a Jew by

43 In *Jub.* 30:7-10, the prohibition of Molek worship (Lev 18:21) is understood to refer to a Jew who gives his daughter to a Gentile; in *b. Meg.* 25a the same verse is understood to refer to intercourse between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman. The rabbinic passage is based on knowledge of the matrilineal principle, the passage of *Jubilees* is not. This point is not appreciated by G. Verrnes, "Leviticus 18:21 in Ancient Jewish Bible Exegesis," in *Studies in Aggadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann* (ed. J. J. Petuchowski and E. Fleischer; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981) 120.

44 Josephus *Ant.* 14.1.3 §§8-10, 14.7.3 §121, and 14.15.2 §403; cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7.11-14.

45 S. Belkin argues that Philo was familiar with the matrilineal principle (*Philo and the Oral Law* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940] 233-35); Belkin would have avoided this error had he checked the references in I. Heinemann, *Philons griechische und jüdische Bildung* (Breslau: Marcus, 1932) 313-14.

46 The argument of this paragraph is developed in greater detail in Cohen, "Origins" (n. 38 above).

47 E. M. Meyers and J. F. Strange *Archaeology, The Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981); S. J. D. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis." *JQR* 72 (1981) 1-17; the classic statement of this view is E. B. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (13 vols.; Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Foundation/Princeton University, 1953-1968).

birth. Even the two passages that speak of his home life (2 Tim 1:5 and 3:15) do not imply that he was a Jew.⁴⁸

IV

Was Timothy Jewish? In all likelihood Luke did not think so. The vast majority of ancient and medieval exegetes did not think so. There is no evidence that Paul or the Jews of Asia Minor thought so. Ambrosiaster and his medieval followers did think so, but in all likelihood this interpretation is wrong because there is no evidence that any Jew in premishnaic times thought that the child of an intermarriage followed the status of the mother. Was Timothy Jewish? The answer must be no.⁴⁹

48 They do not even imply that his mother was a Jew, a point unappreciated by Haenchen, *Acts*, 478 n. 3.

49 I am grateful to Prof. J. Louis Martyn of Union Theological Seminary for his suggestions and advice, to the Nisson Touroff Fund of the Jewish Theological Seminary for its generous support, and to the staff of the library of Union Theological Seminary for its exemplary cooperation.