

# Archive Theology and the God of Paul

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The Apostle Paul is that well-known figure of Christian theology about whom little is known. Paul seems there for the taking in a way Jesus cannot be, for Paul wrote things and Jesus did not. Yet, it is quite clear now how the framework for Paul's life that largely comes from Acts is fictional. In Acts, Paul is a literary figure, not a historical one. And the letters of Paul contain Paul's rhetorical and very public style but do not reveal his private thoughts, personality, or biography to any reliable degree. Still, Paul remains interesting because of his rhetoric, his ironies mixed in with his assumed authority, and because of the longstanding interpretations of Paul that still lay a foundation for thinking philosophically about God.

Academic instincts lead one to inquire first about the historical Paul. It is natural to ask, what did Paul say and do so that we might understand him correctly. This instinct, though, is already misdirected. The true question is not so much about how to understand Paul as how to hear him. The authentic letters give us a rhetorical Paul but not a "historical" Paul. It is a mistake to confuse these two elements, just as it is a mistake to confuse them in the case of Jesus. To Robert Funk, the historical Jesus is the rhetorical Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and this insight holds true for Paul. Paul's "authentic letters" are not Paul's authentic opinions. They are his rhetorical relationship to communities in light of the gospel (the strategy—the "world transforming news") to which he was committed. A common mistake is to think we are talking about Paul when we talk about Paul.

Once the question is asked about the rhetoric of Paul, philosophy can switch into high gear. Rhetoric is about meaning: it is the production of discourse aimed at persuasion, but persuasion is of course not possible if the audience does not participate in a collective experience of meaning.<sup>2</sup> In order for rhetoric to be effective, the speaker and the audience need to share a common meaning experience. Aristotle called this the *ethos* of the rhetorician and the audience.

1. See Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 143–63.

2. Long ago Aristotle astutely identified three elements in rhetoric: *logos*, or the structure of reason; *pathos*, or the emotional appeal; and *ethos*, or the appeal to a common set of values. Explanations of these terms appear in Books I and II of *Rhetoric*. The English title is sometimes given as *The Art of Rhetoric* or *A Treatise on Rhetoric*.

Even when rhetoric is used ironically as counter-meaning, the assumption is that there is a “meaning” to counter. The “common meaning experience” pre-given to the rhetorical act can be called various names, but I do prefer the Foucauldian way of imagining this as an archive: a space in which the circulation of power moves and in which the *episteme*—the thinking style or rhetorical forms—of a given era operate to produce certain effects, that is, meaning-effects or events.

The types of philosophy that employ the images of an archive can be distinguished as archaeology and genealogy, which are the words Michel Foucault used, but to combine these two words for the purposes of analysis, as Foucault did in *Discipline and Punish*,<sup>3</sup> is to engage in an archive study. It is this latter study that needs some definition.

In structuralist thought, a word signifies a meaning, and this combination composes a basic linguistic sign. The sign has two sides, as Ferdinand de Saussure so defined, which in English are the “signifier” (*signifiant*) and the “signified” (*signifié*). I utter a word like “dog,” and the word is the signifier, what De Saussure called, among other things, “*l’image acoustique*.”<sup>4</sup> Let us call the signifier the top half of the word. But the bottom half is the concept of the thing signified. The “concept,” which in this case is a dog, is not necessarily out there as an external thing. There need not be a dog physically present for the linguistic sign to work.<sup>5</sup> The concept always accompanies the utterance, and (regardless which one is considered top or bottom, right or left) the two go together as a single, instantaneous act. The two are a linguistic sign. The structuralist philosophers who accepted this basic linguistic analysis were on many occasions able to offer a social analysis to accompany the simple signifier/signified dyad.<sup>6</sup> They were able to do so by indicating that a signified concept was a meaning experience, and a meaning experience depended upon a value system.<sup>7</sup> For example, there can be different values to the word “dog” depend-

3. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

4. De Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, 99.

5. This, to my mind, is the basic problem with religion as much as metaphysics: it is never physically there but only there in simulation, which means it can be dangerous, deceiving, mis-representing, and delusional, but fortunately it can also be helpful, insightful, community building, and comical.

6. The social analysis could be extremely creative since the dyad is unstable: the signified/signifier relationship can slide in and out of different formations and sign different edges of meaning. Roland Barthes used the fashion system to demonstrate this instability. Barthes did not think instability was always the condition of the sign, but in expressing the idea of things (like fashion), the sign was subject to arbitrary change. To make his point he succinctly wrote, “Fashion does not evolve, it changes.” Barthes, *The Fashion System*, 215.

7. John Searle replicated a similar idea with his notion of illocutionary speech acts. With this expression, Searle describes a type of background noise to every speech act that can be understood as the silent presence of a culture and mutual participation within it. De Saussure’s idea of value is similarly an implied texture that accompanies a word.

ing on the sentence, which is a string of signifiers employed. To say, “you are a dog” is an insult; to say, “there is a dog” is an indication. The two significations hold different values. In rhetoric, the question is what value is being employed and to what effect? To ask this question is to employ a structuralist analysis of linguistic signs.

The structuralist analysis was modified in post-structuralism, where it was noticed that a signifier signifies another signifier. In other words, the meaning of a signifier is already a social event: it is a consequence of the history of signification, and it is also a consequence of the interrelationship of all signifiers. If this is put in a simple way, the word “dog” has a history, and so no one can assume that its meaning (value) in the first century of the Roman empire will be the same as its meaning today. We can say that at different times signifiers have different social weights. There is then in post-structural analysis a recognition of diverse historical weights held in the function of signifiers in given contexts. This is what Foucault called archaeology: the historical uncovering of the system of weights of signifiers. Foucault, of course, did not explain himself in this way, but effectively, in such works as *The Order of Things*,<sup>8</sup> he is examining the archaeological position or value of words in the schema of different epochs.

The second point that post-structuralism raises is a very elementary one: How do we know what a signifier signifies? In order to answer that question signifiers must be employed. Accordingly, a signifier signifies a signifier on an endless string with no central or master signifier around. To think there is a master signifier around that puts an end—and here we might mean *telos* as well as *terminus*—to the signification of signifiers is to be guilty of logocentrism, to use Jacques Derrida’s signifier. To put this another way, there is no underneath part of a signifier; there is only the surface. A signifier signifies a signifier, which in turn signifies again. My “dog” has a value, but this time not so much as a weight but as a strategy. I still like the structuralist understanding of the weighted value of a signifier, but in a post-structuralist way the right signifier to use (that is, the better description) is the couplet “strategic-value.” When I call someone a dog, as opposed to referring to my friendly pet, I am strategically employing a signifier based on the value that this signification can hold in a system of signification. Finally, the “system of signification”—the location of all the words and the strategic value each holds in relation to others—is the archive in which I live. Foucault called this system of signification a system of power-knowledge, and the study of such a system in which knowledge is an event of power is genealogy. Putting these two elements together for theological

8. Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

considerations, we can call the study of the system of theological production “archive theology.”<sup>9</sup>

When we employ archive theology there are several key words that need to be explained. Among these words are horizon, event, and transgression. These three are of particular importance when considering Paul’s letters as rhetorical strategy. These words allow us to step beyond the question about what Paul describes (his meaning) to the question about what Paul enacts (his strategy). The second question is a constructive question that asks what horizon is Paul engaging and what is the status of his rhetoric in relation to it?<sup>10</sup>

When we think about an archive as an epoch in which an active regime of signifiers operates, we can open up several ways to understand how meaning is an event of human rhetorical experience.<sup>11</sup> In place of thinking that words describe things, the idea is that words position things. Words place things in relation to other things, and it is in relationships that words and things carry meaning (or value or strategy).<sup>12</sup> The meaning, then, is an effect of the relationships engaged. Meaning is not an independent thing or even a hidden thing. Theological history is filled with attempts to uncover the hidden thing as the basic structure of being. Existential theology, in its modern expression, was about this very “structure” alienated from the immediate experience of living in the fluctuations of time. To Paul Tillich, this state of living in time alienated from the structure of Being was the condition of sin (estrangement).<sup>13</sup> In archive

9. I am not certain to what degree anyone in the philosophical study of theology has used this term. It was central to my own work in *Archives and the Event of God*, and I have noticed that some writers have tried to use the same or similar analogies elsewhere. In her M.A. thesis, entitled “Archives and the Event of Islamophobia,” Emma Sturgeon attempts to use some of these ideas. Professor Mehmet Karabela, also of Queens University, positively regarded these ideas in his “Review Essay: David Galston’s *Archives and the Event of God: The Impact of Michel Foucault on Philosophical Theology*,” 11–14.

10. There is one significant word missing from the three mentioned above, which is repetition. In the archive, the word “repetition” takes a distinctive meaning from how it is otherwise employed in hermeneutical analysis of religion. Repetition in the archive relates to expectation (or anticipation), and thus transgression interrupts repetition—which of course is why it is called transgression. In this essay, however, repetition is not engaged. The different ways repetition is used can be seen in comparing Kierkegaard and Foucault. For Kierkegaard, repetition is positive, going-forward, affirming the new; in Foucault, repetition is the timetable, discipline, and normalization.

11. An “event” in this archival way of thinking is distinct from “event” in general hermeneutical philosophy. In the latter an event is like the oncoming future, whereas in the former an event is like “recognition” in the immediate circumstances of power relationships composing the instant. Slavoj Žižek’s understanding of “event,” in his book *Event*, is closer to an archivist understanding, but Žižek lacks the dynamic analogies of power that one finds in Foucault and Deleuze.

12. The French title of Foucault’s *The Order of Things* was indeed *Les Mots et Les Choses* (*Words and Things*).

13. For Tillich, the existential condition of human beings is estrangement from our essential nature. This is the foundational way Tillich understood “sin”; sin is not an act, something we do or refrain from doing, but the human condition. Tillich’s presentation of estrangement as the condition of being human is pervasive in his thinking. The most careful presentation occurs in Chapter 1 of the second volume of *Systematic Theology*.

theology, there are no such structures; there are rather events. Structures are the product of events. In this way of thinking, the event of a word refers to its strategic location in relation to other words, and if that word in particular signifies a dominant strategy, it produces the horizon of the archive to which it belongs (the horizon being the epistemic setting of the archive operation). The repetition of the word reinforces the horizon in which strategies operate. Two things are to be noted in this act. One is the emphasis on the relationship of the signifier in a regime of signifiers. No signifier exists in isolation; a signifier is an event because in its appearance and its effect it is related to the signifiers that position it in the archive. If I talk about theology in highly metaphysical ways, such that I talk about God as the *ens realissimum*, I am employing a positioned linguistic sign—a strategic linguistic move—that places my meaning in the family of metaphysical signifiers and in relation to all the linguistic signs that give the expression “most real being” its sense. There does not have to be a “most real being” actually for there to be a “most real being” strategically. And, we can even add, the strategy of “the most real being” is more real than the doubtful actuality of the thing itself. In the Middle Ages the strategy of the most real being was deadly, and we can argue that the strategy of the most real being continues to linger in deadly form in society and international politics today.

When we say that the “strategy” is more real than reality, the reference is to two basic things in archive theology: the production of things, and the horizon of things produced. It is in the act of production that there is a consequent reinforcement of strategies, and this constant reinforcement or even constant re-enactment means that the horizon of the event (its historic sense) is made actual in an experience of recognition. We can say then that the experience of recognition is an epistemic event of power-knowledge that produces the horizon. For example, so-called “Islamic fundamentalism,” as Ebru Thwaites indicated,<sup>14</sup> is the power-knowledge event around which is produced the horizon of Homeland Security. The event is the recognition (the location of power-knowledge), whether justified or not, of fundamentalism, and the horizon of the event emerges in the apparatuses of the archive; the horizon is the way the archive “kicks-in,” so to speak, through the productive strategies of recognition.<sup>15</sup> Now, the “event” here of fundamentalism is not isolated. It does not just happen. Since the horizon is the *episteme* or reasoning of the archive that

14. Thwaites, “Review of David Galston’s *Archives and the Event of God*,” 291–92.

15. Keep in mind that in Archive Theology a recognition is similar but not the same as Husserl’s notion of *Vorzeichnen* (pre-sketching: anticipating and to a degree pre-determining the thing in advance of its full experience). *Vorzeichnen* is quite private in Husserl, and he only attempts to counteract this limitation in his last “introduction” to phenomenology, *The Crisis of European Sciences*. It seems that every work of Husserl’s was an introduction to phenomenology, and this makes a certain sense. Since phenomenology travels backwards, each work must precede and introduce the one before. In an archive, by contrast, recognition is intended socially and in relation to power-knowledge. It is a product and is productive rather than pre-structural like *Vorzeichnen*.

kicks-in with the event, the horizon is the always already present setting of the sense of an event. The archive analysis in this way is a more perceptive social analysis than traditional hermeneutics. It is what sets Foucault's analogies in history apart from Derrida's, where Foucault can be said to hold the texture of history in his concerns for power, epistemic events, and the horizon of events. So, in the example of fundamentalism, archive analysis will hold that fundamentalism is a product of the archive in which it appears. It is an expression of forces circulating in the archive and producing its horizon. Fundamentalism is a "recognition" within a specific circulation of power that folds back on—reinvests—the horizon in the productivity of strategic values. This does not mean that fundamentalism should be judged evil or good. Such a judgment searches in the depth of things for the nature of things. Archive theology, like post-structuralism, stays on the surface. The point is the productivity of fundamentalism as a strategy; the question is about why this "strategy" is making sense in our time, and if there are not ways to counteract a strategy that has proven itself so harmful.

Now comes the hardest but the most central concept: the forces expressed in events create the horizon that folds back on the event as the setting of its sense. Both Deleuze and Foucault have the concept of the "folding back" of power,<sup>16</sup> and here in archive theology that concept is expressed as the return of the event to the horizon as its sense.<sup>17</sup> The event of fundamentalism produces an horizon of insecurity, then the horizon folds back as the justification of Homeland Security—the justification of violence against violence. It is to be sure hard to make these concepts of events, horizons, and the folding back of horizons sound practical, but they are incredibly practical: an event like colonialism produces the horizon of the sense of colonialism and thus encourages the repetition of the event. The British empire goes into India ostensibly to engage in trade, but the act of creating ports of trade and holding properties of value in an unstable political environment<sup>18</sup> produced an horizon that justified (folded back) further occupation. The system of colonialism was and remains, in the many traces of its legacy, a system of power-knowledge events that formed and folded back an horizon of justified occupation—a *raison d'être* or system of reasoning for colonialism.

In an archive, events produce an operating system of signification. They produce, that is, an horizon that folds back as the sense of things. This is why

16. Deleuze attributes this idea to Foucault, but it seems the expression really comes from Deleuze's analysis of Foucault. See Deleuze, *Foucault*. One can say quite seriously that Deleuze understood Foucault and the implications of Foucault's thought significantly better than Foucault did.

17. It is a type of haunting of the event in the horizon and gives us another way to think about hauntology.

18. The era was that of regional states replacing the collapsing Mughal empire.

an event is “power” and a system of repetition is power-knowledge: the repetition of colonial acts, for example, was the power-knowledge expression of a so-called enlightened British society.

In relation to the sense of things, then, there are strategic acts and counter-acts. Since the event produces the horizon that folds back as sense, there is an apologetic relationship to the folding back—which consists of strategic acts—and a transgressive relationship to the folding back—which consists of counter-strategic acts. Archive horizons come into being—that is, operate and collapse, persist and desist—in the activities of strategies and counter-strategies. Sometimes counter-strategies go unnoticed. Sometimes they are anonymous.<sup>19</sup> The horizon can give a certain permission that allows a counter-strategy to make more sense than the strategy it replaces. Foucault talked about the strategy of prisons, which is to reduce crime, but prisons effectively increase crime. Thus the archive of criminal justice produces the non-sense of its strategy and the sense of its counter-strategy. When this occurs, there is an anonymous shift in the archive arising in its forms of recognition. In relation to prisons specifically, Foucault, along with the public support of Jean-Paul Sartre, actively sought prison reform, which was an obviously sensible (counter-strategic) goal given the (strategic) non-sense of prisons.<sup>20</sup> Other times, a counter-strategy focuses on a movement or an individual. Any movement of justice-making can be at once a counter-strategy set against the anonymity of the archival operations that either do not notice or have too much to gain from an unjust situation. In Canadian history, Louis Riel (1844–1885), as a member of the métis nation, experienced injustices aimed at indigenous peoples in Canada. He also defended the rights of the French-speaking population of Western Canada. In the system of the archive of Canada at that time his revolt was threatening, unjustified, and treasonous. He was executed. But his acts changed the archive of a national experience, and today his statue stands on the legislative grounds of Manitoba and there is a public holiday in his honor. He became the focal point of a significant counter-strategy that now defines a new meaning for his life and that continues to draw a nation to repentance. A counter-strategy corrupts the dominant archival horizon, it transgresses, and in so doing it produces the potential, which we can call the counter-horizon or even the promise of a reformed archive. Riel had no idea that this would be his fate, but neither do other such figures—like Jesus and Paul—have any clue in their lifetimes what will come after. The point is that a philosopher can look back on a figure of history and see in that figure a theme or a trace of something different that was not in the immediate circumstances of the horizon. Despite the protests of professional historians and the all too com-

19. “Anonymous” is an important word in Archive Theology that holds a second meaning I will explain in my comments about Paul.

20. The advocacy for prison reform was through the *Groupe d’information sur les prison*, founded in 1971 by Michel Foucault, Jean-Marie Domenach, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet.

mon critique of “anachronism,” a philosopher is justified to see in an historical figure a counter-horizon that the figure did not know about.<sup>21</sup>

Archive studies, then, can be summarized with these terse statements. An archive is the composite activity of signifying strategies; the employment of a strategy is an event; power is the productivity of events; events fold back the horizon onto the setting to form sense (the active *episteme*). In addition, archive studies can take two forms. They can take the form of the study of apologetic events, and they can take the form of the study of transgressive events.<sup>22</sup> When the events mentioned occur with and through theological rhetoric, then the study of the events is archive theology.

### Paul as Rhetorical Event

When talk is directed toward a “new” Paul, that is, a way to see Paul outside of the traditional narrative of conversion, from the archivist point of view the discussion centers on a different way in which Paul is rhetorically an “event” in an archive. This means that the horizon in which Paul resided is a rhetorical setting, the employment of signifiers by Paul is a rhetorical strategy, and the way in which his strategy was employed is either an apologetic or transgressive event. This kind of inquiry is different from the traditional questions about Paul’s identity, whether Jewish or proto-Christian, and Paul’s theology, whether conservative or liberal. In place, the central concern of his rhetoric draws attention to the way in which certain linguistic signs are “strategic values” that hold certain functions in Paul’s rhetoric.

One of the pioneering scholars advocating a new understanding of Paul was Lloyd Gaston (1929–2006). In many respects Gaston went further in his analysis of Paul than most scholars both before and after his career. In a significant book, *Paul and the Torah*, Galston collected his key essays on Paul. He demonstrated the difficulties involved in translating Paul, and he offered some genuinely insightful reinterpretations of Paul. Like anyone who works on sincere problems, Gaston both knew and did not know what he was doing. His main idea, however, seems sound. For Paul, “Christ” is a gentile version of the Torah. This means, for Gaston, that Albert Schweitzer was right at least about one thing: the central problem for Paul is not justification by faith but life in the body of

21. In “Historical Integrity, Interpretive Freedom: The Philosopher’s Paul and the Problem of Anachronism,” Paula Fredriksen suggests the philosophers are guilty of reading Paul in a-historical, anachronistic ways. While Fredriksen’s concern holds merit, it only goes so far. Half of the problem of history is getting history right, but the other half of history involves understanding it well. To put this another way, history as a discipline cannot speak without the philosophy of history as its companion. The philosophy of history names the event of history, which is not the same as the discipline of history. Equally, sometimes the event of history is more historical than history.

22. There are, of course, many “in-betweens” to the two forms named here.

Christ. In the Scholars Version of the letters of Paul, Christ is translated as “the Anointed,” and this gives sense to why life in the body is central to Paul. It is so because the Anointed is a trustworthy representative of God’s intention for the nations. To put this in an archive theology way, the event of Paul’s rhetoric takes place in the horizon of Roman imperial theology, and in this archive Paul expresses in Christ a counter-strategy rhetoric. That is the heart of the “new” Paul. Much of this insight rests on understanding how Paul uses the word, the strategic signifier, “law” (*nomos*). I will focus briefly but specifically on Gaston’s interesting and still unique approach to translating *nomos* in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

In *Paul and the Torah*, Gaston claimed that we have to assume Paul knew as much about the Torah (covenantal nomism) and salvation (soteriology) in ancient Judaism as E. P. Sanders does.<sup>23</sup> In other words, Gaston is saying in his often subtle but comical way, that it would be both peculiar and implausible to assume that Paul did not know the Judaism of his own time. To think that Paul was guilty of a “fundamental misapprehension” of the Torah or that he was so Hellenized that he forgot the Torah is the promise of salvation constitutes a certain foolishness similar to that of Gal 3:1.<sup>24</sup> Against such conclusions that ought to be implausible, Gaston holds the reasonable assumption that Paul did understand the Torah and that the problems with Paul arise from the fact that many Christian commentators do not. In particular, Gaston focused on *nomos*, usually translated as law. If the way Paul uses “law” seems unacceptable from a Jewish perspective, this ought to mean that Paul did not mean it this way and that it is far more likely we are not hearing—and perhaps even can no longer hear—the rhetoric of Paul. Salvation comes from the Torah, for the Torah is the promise of salvation; it ought to be assumed that Paul believed this with all his heart.

Why then would Paul write, “Those from (ἐξ) the works of the law are under a curse” (3:10)?<sup>25</sup> Gaston has a significant hypothesis about what Paul means, and an archivist can hold interest here because Gaston’s version of the rhetoric of Paul constitutes, in the horizon in which Paul participates, a counter-strategy directed at the people of the nations in Galatia. Gaston assumes Paul knows the Torah is a blessing and on several occasions makes this advantage of the Jewish people clear. “We who are justified by birth and not Gentile [*ethnē*] sinners know that a Gentile is not justified by works of the law but rather through the faithfulness of Christ” (Gal 2:15). We might note that *ethnē* is better translated in

23. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 65.

24. Gaston refers to Schoeps, who charged Paul with a misapprehension, and to Betz, who suggested Paul denied the contemporary Pharisaic understanding of salvation.

25. It is interesting how Gaston employs “from” in his translation of this passage. Very few translators, from what I have observed, translate the preposition this way in English. Where Gaston read “for all who are from,” most translations have “for all who rely on” (NRSV, ESV, and SV). This minor word translated differently can make a major difference.

the Scholars Version (SV) as a member of the nations, but Gaston's point stands. Paul sees the people of the nations as those under the law (works) who are distinct from those born under the promises of the law (Torah). The work of Christ, that is, the faithfulness of Christ to the will of God, was to include the nations under the promises. Regretfully, Paul only has one Greek word to talk about these two types of law, the law of works and the law of promises. The works of the law are the powers that confine and condemn the nations, whereas the promises of the law are liberation and justification for the nations. That there can be two senses to one word is not only confusing but sometimes baffling. How does one translate "tell me you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law" (Gal 4:21; NRSV)? The Scholars Version does not solve the difficulties of this verse when it offers, "Those who want to live under the law, tell me: Don't you hear what the law says?" Are both laws the same in this phrase? The reader is left to wonder both what the translators think and what Paul is rhetorically offering.

To Gaston, Paul employs irony with *nomos* because he can use it in two senses, but English translators do not always hear the distinction. Gaston otherwise and uniquely translates the passage with two senses employed: "Tell me you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the Torah?" With one word Paul is able to create a contrast of worldviews, what Funk called an antithetical couplet.<sup>26</sup> In Paul's case, the couplet of law and Torah occurs in the single word *nomos*. Gaston creatively picked up the distinction and expressed it in his translation, but many hide this distinction when in English only one word is used. The difference from the archivist point of view is not just the missed irony; it is the missed transgression. Paul is transgressing works of the law with the promises of the Torah.

Gaston noted the transgression in the way he commented on how the Jewish people in Paul's lifetime knew and distinguished themselves from the people of the nations. While God is one, for Paul God was not equally available to the nations as to the Jews except through the indirect routes of *stoicheia* ("natural elements"). Paul is explicit. The people of the nations who now know Christ had formerly served "gods who were not gods" (Gal 4:8), gods that were "weak" and "impotent *stoicheia*" (Gal 4:9), and that made the people of Galatia and other nations like "children" who were under a "guardian" (Gal 4:2) in need of a disciplinarian (Gal 4:3), that is, "under the law" (Gal 3:25; 4:5). Gaston makes this point admitting that "it would have been much simpler for everyone if Paul had used a different word than *nomos* when he wanted to speak of the law outside the context of the covenant."<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, Paul did no such thing, and a modern translator is left to wonder when *nomos* refers to being inside the

26. Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 151.

27. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 43.

covenant and when it refers to being outside the covenant, when it is Torah and when it is works of the law. When Paul uses expressions like “works of the law” (Gal 2:16), “curse of the law” (Gal 3:13), and “the law works wrath” (Rom 4:15), it should be obvious that he does not mean the Torah.

When returning to the problematic Gal 3:10, it is now clear why Gaston places significance on translating ἐξ directly as “from.” If the Scholars Version had followed suit, it would have relayed the Greek as “Whoever is from traditional religious practices is under a curse” and recognize that Paul knows this because the Torah says so: “Cursed is everyone who does not remain in all the things written in the book of the law to do them” (Deut 27:26; Gaston). Paul exaggerates Deuteronomy, both in making his point and in confusing the sense of the Deuteronomic passage. But presumably he has done so deliberately to effect a rhetorical point. He wants to say to the Galatians that their syncretistic practices, like combining circumcision and observing times of the year, are the works of the law, that is, works derived from natural elements. Having been given the “world transforming news” (gospel) about how indirect and abusive natural practices have been replaced by the direct and promised faithfulness of Christ, the Galatians have turned back to the works of the law. They seek promises under works, and they act like they are “from” the works. Paul employs a rhetoric that undermines if not shames the Galatian practices. He reverses their reversion back to natural elements, indicating how embarrassing it is for them to start with wisdom (the spirit) and return to materialism (the flesh). “Are you so ignorant,” Paul asks, “that you start with metaphors and end with literalism” (Gal 3:3; Galston)? And then, when he reaches the point of 3:10, Paul employs the ambiguous *nomos* to undermine the whole sense of the order—the foundation or justification or horizon—of the Galatian experience. To expand the sense of that phrase, Paul poses the question, “if you continue to live as if you are derived from the works of the law, you will not hear how the Torah condemns those who live outside it.” Paul’s rhetoric gets away from him, and we do not know which law is which in his charged phrase, but it makes sense to think that Paul understands the Torah explains the curse over the nations rather than that Torah legalism is a curse.

Gaston’s point also makes archive sense, for Paul is transgressing the normal expectation of life in the nations with the new expectations of the promises (of the Torah) faithfully brought to the nations in Christ. Paul, in his rhetorical style, identifies with the nations and speaks to the people of the nations as if he were one with them. He uses the contrast of old and new not for himself but for the sake of this identification. Sometimes he slips and speaks to the people of the nations as a Jew, accusatively saying, “Formerly you were slaves.” But other times Paul is with them, sharing their identity as former slaves, saying, “God’s Anointed set us free” (Gal 5:1; SV). Paul already knows the promises and was already “from” the promises (born of them), so he does not need to be set free. But rhetorically he speaks as a member of the nations and employs “us” out of

his identification with their status. This means that for Paul there are not only two senses to *nomos* but also two senses to *ethnē*. There is an older sense of *ethnē*, which refers to people bound in ignorance and enslaved in the elements of the world (Gal 4:3), but now in place of this older order of the *ethnē* there is a new, transgressive, community of *ethnē* who are known by God and are the children of promise. In another troubling metaphor, the old *ethnē*, as Paul has it, are the children of Hagar and the new *ethnē* are the children of Sarah. The old remain slaves; the new are heirs to the promises (Gal 3:21ff.).<sup>28</sup>

This brings us to a point where archive theology can indicate what is at stake in the rhetoric of Paul and where one of the significant insights about the “new” Paul can be emphasized. Bernard B. Scott, in *The Real Paul*, places some focus on the underlying revolution—to use an anachronistic but surely appropriate word—of which Paul is an advocate among the new communities. The new *ethnē* of promise effectively do not hold the same “strategic value system,” the same regime of truth, exercised in the old. They transgress the old and fold back a new order in the archive horizon. They do this in many ways, but Scott reminds us of the setting or archive in which this occurs. The features of the Roman horizon that fold back the normal practices of life include the assumed weakness of women, the assumed centrality of Roman family values, and the assumed civilization of the Roman way. Paul, in contrast, when recognizing the apostleship of Junia and the ministry of several collegial women (such as Aquila, Phoebe, Prisca, and others), counter-values women participating in the body of the Anointed. Paul also undermines Roman family values with his equal emphasis on male and female partners (1 Cor 7:1ff.), and transforms the Roman way, in a fashion typical from the Jewish perspective of that time, from morality to immorality founded upon idolatry. Pauline communities, like Philippi, who got the point, reverse the world order in which they lived by placing Roman heroic gods underneath the glory of the Anointed who humbled himself to become like one of a defeated nation. One cannot project back on antiquity ideals about equality that we hold today, and cannot fail to notice that women in the first century Roman empire did hold certain powers,<sup>29</sup> but it is still significant that in Paul’s reversals, as Scott indicates, “the crucified one is God’s Anointed” who “corrodes the implication of any compromise with the empire.”<sup>30</sup> What is significant, Scott implies, is how Paul folds back the horizon in acts of transgression for the purpose of re-setting the sense of the archive on a final foundation of justice. Paul, of course, expected justice to arrive imminently. He expected the founding of Jerusalem as the central governing body in

28. The allusion to Hagar and Sarah is troubling for a couple of reasons. One is that Paul does not name Sarah but only Hagar, and the second is that over time Hagar would emerge as a central, liberating, figure in Islam.

29. Corley, *Women and the Historical Jesus*, 141.

30. Scott, *The Real Paul*, 236.

a transformed creation. Equally, he assumed that the Torah was the revelation of this very aim, and his evidence for this was the Anointed. But what makes Paul transgressive is not this vision. It is the way in which this vision, despite how none of it ever came to pass, opened a way to be in the world transgressively. The Anointed in Paul is counter-strategy; the Anointed is the ironic corrosion of the normal that will finally reveal the abnormality of the normal. Counter-strategy is that which resides in the normal horizon as its corrosive agent. Both the rhetoric of the historical Jesus and the authentic Paul strike this startling note. In parable, Jesus employs the corrosive image of leaven and of mustard seeds that undermine authority, but in Paul, Jesus becomes the corrosive element. The Anointed became a curse of the law, someone outside the Torah<sup>31</sup> for the sake of the nations who were outside the Torah and under a curse.

Archive theology, in this analysis, sees in Paul the rhetorical activity of transgression that rested on his basic vision of a transformed world order. If the vision is placed in brackets, such that we are not side-tracked by a transformation that never happened, the effectiveness of the transgression can be discussed. One might say that while Paul was incredibly effective in the memory of the Church, in his immediate lifetime his effect was limited to a few scattered communities among the nations humiliated under Roman defeat. He enabled, perhaps inspired by Second Isaiah, a rhetorical strategy in which a defeated people could think of themselves as the very vehicle of salvation. Despised and rejected, they are, in the body of the Anointed, heirs to the promises. Who then is the God of Paul in light of God being the power of corrosion that dwells among the despised?

### **The God of Paul**

For Paul, God acted in the Anointed because of the faithfulness of the Anointed to the righteousness of God. In this way, God became, as it were, activated toward the nations because of the faithfulness. The Christian Church historically claimed the God of Paul as an independent, true reality transcending the false, human reality. But in the rhetoric of Paul, the independence of God is not central. God is only indirectly accessed through the faithfulness of the Anointed. It is due to the faithfulness that Paul knows God acted to extend the promise. So, Paul does not have "faith in God"; neither does God "exist" directly for Paul. Rather, the faithfulness of the Anointed created a ripe condition for God to act. Paul recognized God because the Anointed acted faithfully, and the recognition

31. In this case, Paul, in his ambiguous way, indicates that if you hang on a tree you are outside the Torah and therefore cursed (corrupt). So, the Anointed in the crucifixion becomes a curse (outside) of the Torah in order to save those outside the Torah who are in a cursed state. Here again, because Paul uses "law" (*nomos*) in two ways, it is essentially impossible to know exactly what he means. In considering this problem according to the new Paul, the rhetoric cannot be construed such that the Torah is the problem. For Paul, rather, the Torah reveals the solution.

that Paul experienced even surprised him as one untimely born (2 Cor 15:18). If the Anointed had not been faithful, the time of salvation for the nations would not be upon us. So, in effect, it is the Anointed who made God take on a new shade of meaning, who awoke God from a dogmatic slumber.

Though the authentic Paul would not like the conclusion that God's activity in the Anointed renders God as an idea secondary to the faithfulness of the Anointed, for it is the faithfulness that makes the promises actual, still Paul expresses the promises in this way. They are an alternative horizon. The promises come about because of the faithfulness, and the faithfulness is evident in the alternative communities of the Anointed where imperial forms of power corrode. Paul's gospel strangely shifts the reality of God from God to the Anointed and then to the communities of the Anointed. It is at the level of the communities that the faithfulness of the Anointed has its meaning. The alternative promises gained through the Anointed are set at the transgressive edge of the norms the nations had heretofore known. The first thing that might be said about Paul and the God of Paul from the archivist point of view is that the reality of God is not about God but about the strategies of transgressive communities.

Then, if consideration is given to Paul as an event of an archive, there are at least three more highlights worthy of consideration. One is how Paul catches a glimpse of an alternative and how his whole rhetorical presentation involves setting this glimpse against the working norms of the empire. In his lifetime, Paul is actively a counter-strategy. Yet, secondly, over time, Paul suffers the fate of archive anonymity. He becomes not a counter-strategy site but the central site of normative power-knowledge in Christian theology. Paul is not just the author of authentic letters; indeed, the historical Paul is lost to an anonymous cluster of signifying events called "Paul." Then, in a third way, because the real Paul became an anonymous power-knowledge event in Christian theology, an archivist can focus on the absence of the "real" Paul in Christianity and the presence of the anonymous Paul.

To begin with, the way Paul catches a glimpse of a counter-strategy is as hard to pin down as his rhetoric. He seemingly refers to "revelation" for his base of authority (Gal 1:12), but it is a revelation that holds no specific details outside of his being a messenger to the nations. Then, when Paul does appeal to an astonishing revelation, he does so as if to mock the very idea of revelation (2 Cor 12:2). He describes an individual "of the Anointed" who got caught up in the third heaven. To be caught up in the "third" heaven is already a bit of a disappointment; this is not even half way to the ultimate seventh.<sup>32</sup> But even further, the individual concerned, who perhaps is Paul, heard things that cannot be said.

32. The second book of Enoch has ten heavens, but it is presumed that the shorter version of the book, which ends at chapter 21 with the seventh heaven, is the original recitation. At the third heaven, the author describes the Garden of Eden as a place prepared for the righteous. That is not bad, but it is still not the seventh heaven where the throne of God resides, where the angel Gabriel is met, and where one is placed before the face of God.

Accordingly, what's the point? Paul exaggerates the significance of revelation not for the sake of revelation but, apparently, satire. He indulges in theological instability, which challenges the normal expectation of things. He employs a comic reversal where a heightened religious experience is deflated through humor to insignificance. Revelation does not hold a master narrative but is rather reduced to foolishness. It is indeed in foolishness (weakness) that the nations, scattered into the body of the Anointed, are to understand the promise. Paul engages counter-strategies in order to invoke a vision of a counter-horizon that is formed in his communities where the corrosive elements of a new *ethnē* are formed.

Christian theology has rarely seen the real Paul as a satirist and counter-strategy genius. More often, Paul is contrasted with Jesus. Usually, Jesus is innocent of dogma and a much gentler, more sympathetic figure; Paul is the dogmatic theologian and fervent creator of Christianity.<sup>33</sup> Yet, on a rhetorical level, Paul and Jesus remain very similar. Both pierce through the edge of the archive to fold back an alternative horizon where the strategy, the operating *episteme*, is called "faithfulness" by the one and the "empire of God" by the other. Equally, both suffer from a similar fate: that of anonymity. Their metaphors about God become master narratives for God. In archive theology, anonymity is the tragic fate of a metaphor when it becomes a master narrative. It means that neither the historical Jesus nor the real Paul can account for the ways in which their rhetoric produced the linguistic signs (*episteme*) of a future horizon. In the case of Jesus and Paul, the horizon was eventually called Christianity, and Paul in particular became an anonymous effect that justified the strategies of Christian theology.

The crucial second point, then, is that Paul is the anonymous effect of the history of Christian thought. Another way to say this is that the unstable rhetoric the real Paul created, as he emerged in the memory of Western history, held certain side-effects for Christian theology. These are necessarily called "anonymous" effects because they do not derive from Paul as an historical author; they derive from Paul as a power-knowledge event. Like Marx or Freud—figures who are not authors, or not only so, but literary clusters of power-knowledge effects<sup>34</sup>—Paul creates historic discourse despite himself. These discourses reflect

33. This is certainly the spirit of Lüdemann in his *Paul: The Founder of Christianity*. Lüdemann is not shy to accuse Paul of a basic misunderstanding of Judaism. He also concludes that due to Paul's amalgam of Hebrew and Greek ideas, he was fundamentally different from, and a distortion of, the Jesus of history.

34. Foucault examines this distinction in the essay, "What is an Author?" 205–22. Foucault and Roland Barthes talked about an author-function and indicated that this function is a product of individualization arising through the Enlightenment era. But once that function is in operation, there can be (what I have called here) an author-event in which a certain named personality anonymously collects a regime of statements, ideas, and actions or movements. In the history of Christianity, Paul effectively becomes an author-function and anonymously creates theologies like justification by faith or action narratives like conversion. Neither of these theologies relates to the historical Paul, and yet "Paul" created as an author-function, as an event.

the anonymity of Paul as power-knowledge, and the case must be made that various theological insights, like justification by faith, while not reflective of the authentic Paul, are still Paul authentically. In other words, the productivity of strategies creates Paul and Pauline theology out of Paul, who remains anonymous in relation to these effects. The Paul of real social, historical, and ecclesial power is an anonymous Paul, a Paul who never existed. This is a genuine problem for philosophical theology because the social reality of Paul, which is Paul as power-knowledge, exists despite Paul and despite corrective efforts, such as those of Gaston or Scott, to mend Paul of his anonymous ways. The problem for philosophy in relation to history, on this level, is the anonymity of power. The philosophical question about Paul is not about Paul historically but the legacy of Paul strategically.

If Paul is anonymous in the history of Christian thought, then the third point addresses the God involved in the instability of anonymity. Paul's God is encountered indirectly in the faithfulness of the Anointed, but this makes God elusive. The God of Paul is the hope of the nations promised through the Anointed, but the Anointed, by way of crucifixion, is absent. By way of crucifixion, the Anointed "became a curse" on behalf of the nations in order that the nations might no longer be under a curse. But this makes the communities the reality of the Anointed. This makes the communities the substitute—simulacrum—of the Anointed in the absence of the Anointed. The communities are glimpses of the promise.

Much theological effort is spent defining Paul's God without reflecting on the absence of Paul's God. The divine reality for Paul is that which recedes into the horizon. The God of Paul, in absence, becomes the imperative of a new strategy of promise to be realized in community, but due to the absence of God the horizon always lays open. The new horizon for Paul, in his ironic twists and demanding imperatives, plays out as if a theater of transgression. The horizon for Paul is malleable: something to be worked, twisted, and cajoled into being the reality of the promise, but this depends on the instability of God, which comes with absence and which allows Paul to re-create God as transgressive rhetoric for the nations.

The metaphor of the promise of the Torah was for Paul about the liberation of the nations, but due to anonymity the metaphor easily slipped through the hands of the Church to become a metaphor about the Torah as "works of the law." The defining problem of religion is exactly that it can be re-strategized in different power-knowledge complexes. Paul's God can be sexist or anti-Jewish or Greek inasmuch as Paul's God can be liberating, transgressive, and visionary. There is no safeguard in religion against these eventualities. The anonymity of Paul and how it recreates Paul in power-knowledge strategies is evidence in archive theology of the sincere problem of God as a strategic-event in human history.

For the purposes of discussion, some of the significant points can be summarized. First, the main concern about Paul and Paul's God, when understood in an archive way, is not about what Paul believed. It is concern for Paul as an event, and this directs focus to Paul's rhetoric and the strategy of his rhetoric. With the help of scholars like Gaston and Scott, we can see that Paul's rhetoric, while unstable, proposes a glimpse of God as a transgressive or corrosive element in the archive of his time. This glimpse comes to Paul in the faithfulness of the Anointed. Second, there is not, though, a "real" Paul and a "false" Paul when Paul is thought about in an archive way. In place, there is a real Paul and an anonymous Paul. The first is the historical figure behind the rhetoric of the authentic letters. This Paul can be called the rhetorical Paul. The anonymous Paul is the legacy of Paul as a power-knowledge event in the archives of Western history. This anonymous Paul is no less real in the regimes of power that employed him. In archive theology, reality is not real as an independent thing but real as a real product of strategy. The question about Paul as power-knowledge strategy is sometimes even more real than the "real" Paul. Third, the philosophical question related to Paul is justifiably not about the accuracy of history. It is about the effects in history. These composite effects, even when metaphysical, form the horizon in which the strategic values of signs play out. The troubling aspect of religion is that it is anonymous. It is not properly an object of study in history but a strategic event that produces history and the manner in which certain strategies are justified as reality.

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