

Paula Fredriksen, *Pablo el judío, apóstol de los paganos*

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## **Enter Paul: On Paula Fredriksen’s “Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle” and “When Christians Were Jews”**

**By Brad East**

IF THE MODERN WORLD belongs to Dante and Shakespeare, as T. S. Eliot once suggested, the ancient world belongs not to two poets but to two saints: Paul and Augustine. The world they created –the world those poets inherited– we call Western Christendom, and they divide it between them: there is no third.

Oh, there are others, not least the master they served, Jesus of Nazareth, who (they said) converted each of them, one on the road to Damascus and the other in a Milan garden, to an allegiance so singular it has long inspired and frightened less zealous hearts. But Jesus never wrote anything. Nor was his influence a function of his *thought*. It was, as the theologians say, his person and work that are front and center for the community that arose in his wake.

And yes, before the stable in Bethlehem, there were others who could claim a portion of the ancient world, Plato and Aristotle chief among them. Their influence continued into Christendom, albeit baptized, and thus sometimes chastened, but ubiquitous nonetheless. And there were other apostles, other church fathers, besides Paul and Augustine: Peter, James, and John; Irenaeus, Origen, and Athanasius; and many more still.

But if we ask the question: Whence the great civilization that sprang up across western Europe in the patristic and middle ages? What are the taproots of the cosmic vision common to Dante’s Italy, two centuries before the Protestant revolution, and Shakespeare’s England, half a century later? What wellspring –intellectual, moral, political, theologica – sourced that vision, so that those on each side disagreed, not about the relevant texts or their authority, but solely about how to interpret them? The answer: St. Paul, Jewish apostle to the gentiles, and St. Augustine, Catholic bishop of Hippo.

Paula Fredriksen has made a career of studying these two men and the Lord they loved. This is no mean ambition. Many scholars study Jesus and Paul together –though by now the secondary literature on each is so vast as to be virtually unreadable in one lifetime– given their proximity in time, culture, and religious context. But Paul’s life (his activity as an apostle tracks the middle third of the first century) precedes Augustine’s by three and a half centuries. Moreover, Augustine was a gentile, the firstborn son of a North African civil servant who had little interest in religion, much less the humble faith of the Crucified. Though we know next to nothing of Paul’s parentage or childhood, the Book of Acts reports that he was a Greek-speaking diaspora Jew from Tarsus, in modern-day Turkey. Augustine’s Greek was poor, while his Latin was luminous. And whereas Paul traveled thousands of miles, usually staying only a few months at a time, never more than a couple years, Augustine lived the latter half of his 76 years in a single city, Hippo, in modern-day Algeria.

An unlikely pairing, then, and an even more unwieldy scholarly one. But Fredriksen has managed the trick. Over the last 40 years she has published, among other works, a monograph on Jesus<sup>1</sup>; a magnum opus on Augustine and the Jews<sup>2</sup>; and now two further books on related themes: *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* and *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation*. The latter is an accessible synthesis of her scholarly work, focused on the first four decades of the church (from about 30 CE, the year of Jesus's crucifixion, to 70 CE, the year of the Jerusalem temple's destruction). But the former is a provocative intervention in Pauline studies, staking out new (and sometimes old) ground in these overlapping fields of study.

Looking at the whole, one can see how the puzzle pieces fit. This is why framing the conversation with Paul and Augustine –themselves centered on Jesus– is so helpful. Not only is it the case that, historically, there would be no church filled with gentiles worshiping the God of Abraham were it not for the inexhaustible efforts of Paul; nor that, intellectually, Augustine's interpretation of Paul set the sociopolitical and religious terms on which European civilization would develop in the millennium following his death. Beyond historical and intellectual influence, Paul and Augustine viewed together at once pose and answer a fundamental question presented by the figure and first followers of Jesus.

Put it this way: an itinerant rabbi from the Galilee –the backwaters of Palestine– leads a popular movement among the Jews, one that comes to an ignominious end when he is executed for sedition by the Roman authorities. Some of his followers form a small community in Jerusalem, proclaiming that not only was this rabbi and prophet the longed-for Messiah of Israel, but he is alive, in glory with God, vested with impregnable power and heavenly authority. These messianic Jews share goods in common and worship daily at the temple, praying and waiting eagerly for Jesus's imminent return, when he will drive out the pagan occupiers and restore his people's fortunes.

Pause the frame there. Nothing about this picture offers even a hint that this same community –one defined by exclusive loyalty to Jesus, Israel's Messiah and Lord– will, centuries hence, find itself filling the Roman Empire, legalized and endorsed by that same empire, dominated by gentiles, not Jews, and led by men like Aurelius Augustinus Hippoensis.

How did this happen? Why did it happen? To answer, we need to leave Augustine behind and follow Fredriksen into the world of the eastern Mediterranean in the first century of the common era, specifically Jewish life under the thumb of the Roman Empire.

“Paul lived his life –as we all must live our lives– innocent of the future,” Fredriksen writes. “As historians, we conjure that innocence as a disciplined act of imagination, through appeals to our ancient evidence.” This is a lovely description of the historical task, and it is one Fredriksen lives up to. Using what evidence we have, what vision of the early Christian movement does she conjure in these books?

Even before we've begun, terminological difficulties rear their head, not least that contested name “Christian.” The New Testament itself says that the earliest believers were not so called, but labeled as such by others, years later. Paul never uses the word. So what to call those first women and men who gathered “in the spirit” of Jesus, to experience his power and petition his appearing? The challenge only increases today in light of popular usage of “Jewish” and “Christian” as mutually exclusive religious designations. This falsifies both the present and the past, since there are descendants

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<sup>1</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*, Vintage Books, London 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, Yale University Press, Yale 2010.

of Abraham today who keep Torah and confess faith in Jesus as Messiah, and the earliest such confessors were entirely Jewish in makeup. Hence Fredriksen's title: this is a story about when Christians were Jews.

Two emphases drive Fredriksen's study of the early church and its premier apostle. First, that "the Jesus movement's first generation [...] thought that they would be history's last generation." Indeed, "they foresaw no extended future," no centuries turned millennia of church history. Why? "They passionately believed that God was about to fulfill his ancient promises to Israel: to redeem history, to defeat evil, to raise the dead, and to establish a universal reign of justice and peace." As for Paul, he too believed "that he lived and worked in history's final hour," and this belief "is absolutely foundational, shaping everything else that Paul says and does."

The scholarly term for this interpretation of the early church's faith is "apocalyptic" (from the Greek word for "unveiling" or "revelation"). In Fredriksen's hands, it means the expectation that soon God will act definitively to complete the story he began at creation. Now "complete" need not mean "end" in the sense of "the end of the world." God's decisive action, as Fredriksen describes it, terminates the mundane run of things: injustice, idolatry, evil, death. But it doesn't terminate "the world" or human life; it transfigures them so profoundly as to be almost beyond recognition. Almost: The just, the holy, the faithful will, in accordance with God's goodness and almighty power, be secured an unbroken, invulnerable existence in the transformed creation to come.

Such apocalyptic conviction is neither culturally generic nor limited to Jesus-followers: it was, in the first century, a feature of irreducibly *Jewish* scripture and faith. This is the second emphasis in Fredriksen's account. Whether in the Galilee with Jesus, in Jerusalem with James, in Antioch with Peter, or in Corinth with Paul, we are in an irreducibly Jewish context. This is not to deny the Greco-Roman milieu in which they lived and traveled and worked. But it is to insist that we not forget for a moment that, when we read the New Testament, when we imagine the early *ekklesia*, or assembly, of the Jesus movement, we are dealing with Jewish persons, practices, principles, and spaces. Contemporary prejudices, in both senses of the word, are constantly obstructing our view here. The "discipline" of historical imagination has to work tirelessly to exorcise those demons. And unfortunately, it is the legacy of Paul, or rather Paul's interpreters, that has had the biggest role in de-Judaizing Christianity, the early Jesus movement, and even Paul himself.

So: There the community is, some hundred or perhaps a thousand or more messianic Jews worshiping the God of Israel in the "spirit" of the crucified and risen Jesus in and around the second Jerusalem temple –that ancient city and rebuilt house of God– awaiting his return with bated breath. But at this time Jews live not just in Jerusalem or in the surrounding regions, but in every direction on the map: they had been "dispersed" from the land centuries before, and there are Jewish communities in the Parthian Empire and Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece and Rome. These Jews, faithful to their ancestral traditions and to the God of their fathers, make regular pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Naturally, the message about Jesus ("the gospel") makes its way from Jerusalem to the major urban centers of the empire, precisely through the long-standing networks of synagogues. Messengers of the gospel ("apostles") serve as traveling teachers who either spread the news or instruct uninformed initiates. Just as the Jerusalem assembly still observes Torah and worships at the temple, so diaspora Jews who are baptized –immersed in water "into" the name of Jesus, for the cleansing of sins– keep Torah and attend synagogue. Only now they think Messiah, coming, has come, and will come again.

Though suspicion and hatred of the Jews is perennial, respect and admiration are too. Not a few gentiles find themselves drawn to the synagogue. What's not to like? Here is an ancient people with a venerable law, marked above all by deep piety toward their jealous, powerful, gracious god. Fredriksen

is very helpful here: though it is true that Jews believed that their Lord, YHWH, is one, it is misleading to project back onto this time our notions of “monotheism” and “polytheism.” Everyone agreed there were gods in the plural; you might as well ask someone today if the sun is the only star in the universe. What mattered was the relationship between them. In this sense, for Jews, the gods of the nations were not fictional, even if their power was subject to YHWH’s; so that idolatry names the worship, not of nonexistent beings, but rather of entities that are not worthy of it, as YHWH alone is.

Gentiles of all kinds were curious about this god of the Jews. Some converted, submitting to circumcision and the total claim of the Torah’s commands; such gentiles were no longer gentiles, but Jews. Most, though, sought a mediating position as “god-fearers,” patronizing the synagogue with their presence and their wealth. They thus honored YHWH, but as *gentiles*, unbound by Torah and –this is the key point– continuing to honor other gods.

Now comes the gospel. Gentile eavesdroppers hear the message and, with the Jews whose god they honor, they come to believe the good news. This is unanticipated. What to do with these gentiles? And what does Jesus mean for them?

Enter Paul.

In his letter to the gentile believers in the city of Philippi, Paul writes that he was “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless.” In an earlier letter, to the gentile believers in the region of Galatia, he writes of his “former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.” Why was Paul persecuting the messianic assemblies? And what led to him not only stopping, but joining those very assemblies –indeed, laboring and suffering for their expansion and growth?

The second question first: Paul unexpectedly encountered the risen Jesus, an experience he described as a “revelation” (*apocalypse*) that forever changed him. If the pretender Messiah crucified by the Romans was in fact alive, then God raised him from the dead, and that could mean only one thing: vindication of Jesus’s claim. He must be the Messiah, the long-awaited anointed one who would execute God’s final purposes in the world on behalf of God’s people, Israel.

But unlike his ancestor David, Jesus wasn’t reigning on a throne in Jerusalem. Rome still called the shots. Injustice and idolatry still abounded. The world was the same. Or was it?

Paul came to realize that he and his fellow Jews had misunderstood the divine plan. Poring over the scriptures, they had surmised –with good reason!– that God would send the Messiah, royal and powerful, to enact retribution against the wicked, restore the fortunes of Israel, raise the righteous dead back to life, and *then* idolatry would come to an end because all the nations, the gentile idolaters, would stream forth to Jerusalem to worship the one true god, YHWH.

But God had turned the timeline on its head: the Messiah and his kingdom of justice would come in two stages, not one. First, God dealt once and for all with the true enemies holding humanity in bondage –sin, death, and the devil– through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That resurrection was a kind of surety on what was to come for the faithful in the End; the powerful presence of the living Jesus (his “spirit”) was the subjective side of this pledge for those who entrusted themselves to him. But there was more than one twist to the story. Not only did the Messiah suffer death rather than slay his enemies: the gentiles would indeed join their voices to Israel’s in the praise of YHWH, but not, as supposed, *after* God’s kingdom came. Rather, the “time in between the times” –the period in between Jesus’s first and second comings– was the moment for the gentiles to come in.

This revision of the traditional Jewish understanding explains both the subsequent behavior of Paul and why he initially persecuted the Jesus community, which was our first question. Gentile god-fearers who came to faith in Jesus were “turning [...] from idolatry, to serve a living and true god,” as Paul later puts it; they were ceasing to honor their family and civic gods, and were beginning to live like Jews. Only they *weren’t* Jews, because neither were they taking on Torah observance, represented most prominently by male circumcision. This was an unprecedented and unworkable state of affairs: such persons were neither pagans nor Jews. In Fredriksen’s words, they were “ex-pagan pagans,” still gentiles but devoted exclusively to the Jewish god. Both their Greek and Roman neighbors and their Jewish co-worshipers naturally wanted them to pick a side, if only so as not to provoke the god(s) of either group.

This, Fredriksen argues, is the rationale for Paul the Pharisee persecuting the early Jesus assemblies. They were misreading the scriptures, getting the timeline and thus God’s will backward, and moreover calling down angelic, demonic, perhaps even divine judgment upon their heads.

But once Paul becomes persuaded –by Jesus himself– he joins the movement full throttle. Because if this is indeed the plan, then there is nothing to do but to join the front lines. The very same zealous energies that had animated Paul’s persecution he now puts in the service of proclaiming the gospel to anyone who will listen: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” Like Israel’s prophets before him, Paul’s calling is divine: the Lord “set me apart before I was born [...] that I might preach him among the gentiles.”

In comparison to this vocation, moreover, all else is secondary: every token of religious status or worldly blessing that Paul once possessed “I count as loss for the sake of Christ. [...] For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.” For Messiah’s sake, therefore (“Christ” being the Greek translation of the Hebrew title), Paul is “content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” He did suffer, greatly, and eventually died a martyr for Jesus in Rome.

A list of Fredriksen’s contributions in these volumes would be lengthy indeed, divided evenly between complex historical judgments (concerning there and then) and nuanced interventions in contemporary historical scholarship (in the here and now). Of these, I will discuss three.

First, Fredriksen de-emphasizes the centrality, radicality, and divinity of Jesus for Paul. She thinks any attempts to read Paul as worshiping or confessing Jesus as “*the Lord*,” as somehow identical to or inseparable from YHWH, are anachronistic projections of later church doctrine that good history should disclaim. Furthermore, she appears to leave intact more or less all of Paul’s scriptural and theological convictions prior to his encounter with Jesus *except for* those details in the eschatological timeline altered by his resurrection, so that Jesus is “slotted into” a preexisting structure. Paul remains as he always was, only now he thinks gentiles coming to know God happens in a different order than he once supposed.

This severely underplays the irruptive, shattering effect that encountering Jesus had on Paul – by his own testimony. Not only did everything change as a result of this encounter: Jesus became the single driving fact of his existence. *Everything*, not just in Paul’s life but in the very cosmos, revolves around this one reality-encompassing man. Paul’s language about and relationship to Jesus bears every characteristic of the way a Jew of his day would have spoken about and related to YHWH. Jesus was not merely an elevated human figure, or the crucified man of Golgotha (though he was all those things too). He was God’s beloved Son, Lord of heaven and earth.

Scholarly historiography should indeed avoid being “cheerfully Nicene,” as Fredriksen accuses N. T. Wright of being; Paul had no doctrine of the Trinity. But the architects of that doctrine in the fourth and fifth centuries were not spinning out abstruse metaphysics from thin air. They were exegetes of the

biblical text, not least the letters of Paul. They were attempting, in language and conceptuality different from his, to capture his fundamental judgments about Jesus, Jesus's relationship to the One he called *abba* (father), and consequently Jesus's status vis-à-vis the distinction between creator and creature. Fredriksen is right that that very distinction is a historical and theological achievement: it is not simply "there" in the Bible. But as Rowan Williams points out in his recent book on the doctrine of Christ<sup>3</sup>, there is a line to be drawn from St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, and the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople all the way back to the writings of St. Paul. It has to be *drawn*, but the line is intelligible nonetheless. In seeking to avoid anachronism, Fredriksen unduly resists the possibility of something truly new, perhaps without parallel or precedent, being found in Paul's teaching about Jesus.

Second, Fredriksen is adamant that both the earliest believers, and Paul among them, for the first three to four decades of the Jesus movement, trusted that Jesus would return in their lifetimes. This apocalyptic understanding of the first generation of the church traces itself back to German scholarship in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially the work of Albert Schweitzer.

For the most part, I want to affirm and recommend this feature of Fredriksen's work, both as a historical judgment and as a corrective to other prominent New Testament scholarship. There can be no doubt that the early Jesus-confessing Jews in Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, and Syria were apocalyptic in just this way. Indeed, I fail to see on what basis one might come to a different conclusion.

Furthermore, Fredriksen's doggedness on this point—which is part of what makes reading her work such an exhilarating experience—cuts against the grain of much biblical interpretation today that depicts the church of the apostles as envisioning a "long haul." One sees this in theological or ecclesial scholarship that reads the New Testament as offering a guide to political participation, or ecological conservation, or cultural curation, or civic engagement. Fredriksen pops each of those bubbles with relish. No: while those things may be good endeavors, the New Testament imagines nothing of the sort. The End is near, the texts announce, just barely around the corner. Be ready.

Here, though, is where Fredriksen overplays this point. She implies, and at times explicitly claims, a connection between the sort of apocalyptic hope of Paul and Peter and James and the millenarian prophecies of groups who predict the date and time of the end of the world. But Paul never hazarded any such prediction. Neither he nor any of his brother apostles were ever shown up in their false prophecies: they made none, so there was nothing to disconfirm. The irony is that Fredriksen seeks to show historical respect to Paul by describing his faith as it ostensibly was; but to do so, in this case, is quite the backhanded compliment, since it means that he must have been flat wrong.

Fredriksen also errs in another way. She regularly refers to the "problem" of the Lord's "delay." But on her own terms there is no evidence for such a thing. For she believes, rightly or wrongly, that only seven of the New Testament's 27 texts come from before the year 70, when the temple was destroyed in Rome's sack of Jerusalem. Each of those seven texts is a letter from Paul, in her estimation all from the sixth decade of the first century. She is right that in each of them Paul eagerly hopes for the Lord's appearing "any day now." But she is wrong that "by the time that we hear from him, mid-first century, the Kingdom is already late." It isn't late. Paul says nothing in these letters about "lateness," nor does he come close to it. She asks, "Why—*how*—after the passage of so much time," that is, two or three decades after the crucifixion, "can Paul still be so sure that he knows the hour on God's clock?" But the question answers itself. He doesn't know the hour. That's why he evinces not one ounce of anxiety or self-doubt regarding the fact that Jesus has yet to return.

The logical distinction here is between the claim that Jesus *may* return *at any time* and the claim that Jesus *will* return within a specific, known time frame. Fredriksen infers the latter position from

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<sup>3</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, Bloomsbury Continuum, London 2018.

Paul's letters (and, possibly, from other New Testament texts). I believe she is mistaken. Paul's language of "soon," "at hand," "nearer now than when we first believed," and so on, while patient of such a reading, admits of an alternative. In fact, such an alternative might go some ways toward making sense of why the Jesus movement continued to grow apace both before and after Rome crushed the Jewish revolt in Judea and Jerusalem just a few years after Paul's death.

The most salutary aspect of Fredriksen's scholarship, across the whole of her career, is her disavowal of anti-Jewishness in all its forms. The phenomenon is endemic in scholarship of the Bible because it is endemic in Christian history and theology. And it is nowhere more prevalent than in interpretation of Paul. So here is the third, final, and most controversial contribution of her books: Paul's identity –before and after encountering the risen Jesus– as a Torah-observant Jew.

Common Christian teaching on this point says something like the following. The coming of Jesus is the end of the Law of Moses. The Law was once the means of knowing and obeying God's will, and thus of shaping the life of God's chosen people. But now God's people is the church, not Israel, defined by faith in Jesus, which is available to all humanity. The works of the Law fail because humans cannot do enough good to achieve the righteousness requisite for life with God; it is the tragedy of the Jews that they think they can save themselves through such efforts, refusing the free gift of salvation through Jesus. If any ethnic Jews accept that gift, and come to faith, then they should cease Torah observance, for otherwise they would be continuing in the old way of things. The result: A new people of God, shorn of theologically relevant ethnic distinctions, universal in every way, a "new humanity" of Jews and gentiles indistinguishable one from the other. More than any other author in the New Testament, Paul is claimed as proponent and progenitor of this view. Fredriksen begs to differ.

First, she says that this view makes mockery of the history and election of the Jews. God calls them and gives them the Law, only to punish them for seeking to obey it. Second, it undermines the goodness and trustworthiness of God. God unconditionally and irrevocably bound himself to Abraham's descendants as his people forever. Yet here he is said to have replaced them with another, on other grounds. How could this be the same God as the One spoken of in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah? Third, it does not fit the evidence of the New Testament itself. The Book of Acts makes no mention of the apostles or early believers giving up the Law. The only relevant question is whether gentiles who believe *ought also* to keep the Law. The answer is no *for them*, but not for Jews –Jews, that is, who belong to the church and have faith in Jesus. The fact that gentile believers were tempted to keep the Law suggests that their example was Jewish "Christians": messianic Jews who kept Torah like they always had done, but who now gathered the day after the Sabbath with baptized gentiles to pray together for the return of Jesus the Messiah.

This picture suggests the fourth and most important point, connecting back to Paul. The vision of the gospel gathering gentiles to Israel before Jesus's victorious reappearance only makes sense if the resulting community consists of *distinct Jews and distinct gentiles*. That is why Paul fought so hard against, then worked so hard for, gentiles to remain gentiles even as they spurned idols for worship, in Jesus's spirit, of the one God alone. How could the gentiles be distinct as gentiles if the Jews did not remain distinct as Jews? Jews aren't distinct by mere parentage: their sons are circumcised, they rest on the Sabbath, they observe *kashrut*, and so on. For Paul or the other apostles to reject the Torah *for themselves and fellow Jews* would be to give up their Jewish identity<sup>4</sup>, and thus to compromise the project of a single community worshiping the God of Israel "with one voice," as Paul puts it — Jews-as-Jews and gentiles-as-gentiles.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2004.

Now, it is possible in good faith, and for good historical reasons, to dispute this account<sup>5</sup>. Fredriksen might be wrong. There are some passages in Paul's letters that give support to the opposing view (often termed "supersessionism," meaning the church supersedes or replaces Israel as God's people<sup>6</sup>), and Paul has some harsh things to say about the Law. Fredriksen has answers here, not least that Paul is always or nearly always writing to primarily or entirely gentile congregations; whatever he counsels about the Torah concerns the Torah *in relation to gentile believers in Jesus*.

Having said that, it is nevertheless necessary to point out that many forms of Pauline supersessionism rely on, trade on, or positively perpetuate anti-Jewish beliefs. In most extreme form this is called Marcionism, named after Marcion of Sinope, who taught in the second century that Israel's sacred writings were not holy scripture for Christians, and that the god of the Jews was evil, responsible as he was for the material world. In modified form it becomes the suggestion that the Jews failed their God, or neglected to accept their Messiah (or, with sole and lasting culpability, murdered him), and God rejected them in favor of the gentiles. Still another version, recently given new life by a prominent evangelical pastor<sup>7</sup>, views the Jewish scriptures as "less than" the writings of the New Testament, by comparison backward, immature, unevolved, untrustworthy. If you have ever heard or read someone refer to "the God of the Old Testament" –never an approbative epithet— you're in the ballpark. For Jews, however, there is *no god but* the God of the Old Testament; and for Christians, that God is identical to the God of the New Testament. It's little more than slander against the Jews and, if uttered by Christians, a revealing self-denial of the very faith they profess.

—One comes to see the impetus for Fredriksen's ceaseless reminders of Jesus's and Paul's Jewishness. Gentiles are apt to forget. Gentile Christians are sometimes eager to do so. But remembering, as Fredriksen well knows, makes for good history and even better theology. For jogging our collective memory, and with such erudition and elegant prose, we are all in her debt.

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(<https://lareviewofbooks.org/contributor/brad-east>)

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<sup>5</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2017.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/02/supersessionism-hard-and-soft>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christians-must-unhitch-old-testament-from-their-faith-says-andy-stanley-223818/>