

CHRIST AS HILASTERION (ROM 3:25).
PAULINE THEOLOGY ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT
IN THE MIRROR OF EARLY JEWISH THOUGHT

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‘Romans 3:21–26 are among the most influential verses not only of Paul, but the whole New Testament. Protestant exegesis, especially, regards them as the apex of the theology of justification. There are few verses in the New Testament about which more ink has been spilled’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 197). Indeed, they can be seen as the architectonic and theological centre of the Letter to the Romans (cf. Theobald 1998, 97). The sentences in these verses carry axiomatic significance; we must therefore assume that Paul formulated them in a very precise way (cf. Theobald 1981, 131). In spite of this, our text has to be regarded as a classical *crux interpretationis*: First of all, the question arises whether Paul here was using a pre-Pauline formula,¹ thus making it necessary for us to distinguish between the theology of the apostle and his *Vorlage*. But the real problem seems to be that among all the Pauline *homologoumena*, it is only here that the conception of atonement is expressed by using sacrificial temple-imagery (cf. Schnelle 2003). Therefore, it is very difficult to establish the correct meaning of the word ἱλαστήριον used here, which constitutes a *hapaxlegomenon* in Paul’s letters. But it can be ruled out that Paul in a pericope as crucial as this one would only have used traditional material without reflecting on its content. Admittedly, the expressions (ἐξ)ἱλάσκεισθαι and ἱλασμός are not used in any of his letters (cf. Breytenbach 1993, 66), but similar expressions of vicarious atonement are frequent in his theology. Nevertheless, the question remains as to how we are to interpret ἱλαστήριον in Rom 3. In the past, a majority of scholars voted for an interpretation according to the martyr theology in 4 Macc, an interpretation that first was put forward by Lohse in 1955.² But after a publication by Stuhlmacher in 1975, the pendulum swung back in

¹ A detailed survey on this question is offered by Schreiber 2006, 90 footnote 8, who himself does not share this opinion.

² Cf. the survey of recent research by Kraus 1991A, 4–8.

favor of interpreting ἱλαστήριον as an allusion to Yom Kippur and to the $\eta\eta\eta\eta$ mentioned in Lev 16:13–15 (cf. Kraus 1991A, 4–8). In recent research, this opinion has been challenged once again. S. Schreiber—to name just one example—rejects both of these interpretations and opts for the pagan meaning of ἱλαστήριον in the sense of a ‘votive offering’ that God would have given for us in the person of Christ (cf. Schreiber 2006, 105). According to this interpretation, the idea of atonement does not appear in Rom 3; neither do we find there an allusion to Yom Kippur (cf. Schreiber 2006, 109). Which conclusions, therefore, can we draw from this *status quaestionis*?

1. ROM 3:25 AS A PRE-PAULINE FORMULATION

A vast majority of exegetes sees in Rom 3:25 a pre-Pauline formula.³ Even if this opinion has not always been accepted in recent research, it seems very convincing to me that Paul made use of traditional material here. The structure of the text might be seen as follows (cf. Theobald 1998, 102):

²⁵ ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον
διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι

A¹ εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων ²⁶ ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ,

B¹ πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ,

A² εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον

B² καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.

²⁵ whom [sc. Jesus] God displayed publicly as hilasterion
through faith in his blood

A¹ to demonstrate his righteousness by the overlooking of the previously committed sins; ²⁶ in the forbearance of God

B¹ for the demonstration of his righteousness at the present time,

A² so that he would be just

B² and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

³ Schreiber 2006, 90, who does not share this opinion, offers a good survey of research on this question.

The concept behind the structure seems to be clear. At the beginning we have a fundamental theological statement (Christ as *hilasterion* through faith in his blood). Then a double argument for this is proposed, first focusing on God (A¹: the demonstration of his righteousness by passing over the committed sins), then focusing on mankind (B¹: for the demonstration of his righteousness at the present time). After this, a double consequence is offered. Firstly, with a view to God (A²: God himself is just), and then, looking at mankind (B²: he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus).

We might recognize the expressions set in *italics* as Pauline additions (see the text above): Faith, righteousness, being just und justifying are clearly Pauline expressions. On the other hand, ἱλαστήριον is a Pauline *hapaxlegomenon* and πάρεσις is also not typical for Paul (cf. Stuhlmacher 1992, 193). So the reconstructed pre-Pauline text might have run (cf. Theobald 1981, 155):

ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι
διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων
ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ

whom God displayed publicly as hilasterion in his blood
by the overlooking of the sins
in the forbearance of God

The strong affinity to 1 John 2:2 (καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν) is evident and lends credence to the thesis that Paul used traditional material here (cf. Theobald 1981, 156). Even if this is the only text among the Pauline *homologoumena* in which Paul uses cultic metaphors to explain the vicarious death of Christ, similar conceptions can still be found in the authentic Pauline letters: expressions like ἀπολύτρωσις (1 Cor 1:30 and Rom 8:23), προτίθεσθαι (Rom 1:13 but with a different connotation) and αἷμα (Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 10:16 and 1:25.27), ἐνδειξις (2 Cor 8:24; Phil 1:28), ἁμάρτημα (1 Cor 6:18), ἀνοχή (Rom 2:4) and especially πίστις (cf. Schreiber 2006, 90) occur also elsewhere in Pauline theology. Even if Rom 3:25 is unique in the use of cultic metaphors to describe the vicarious atonement of Christ (cf. Schnelle 2003, 507), the omnipresent topic of the atoning death of Jesus in Gal 1:4; 1 Cor 15:3 ff.; 2 Cor 5:19.21; Rom 4:25 (cf. van Henten 2008, 172 and Gaukesbrink 1999, 283–287) forms a theological bridge over this gap (cf. Söding 2005, 384). The use of cultic imagery, which elsewhere seems not to be present in Paul's theology of atonement, is used here on purpose in order to bolster his argumentation by using an already known

formula of Early Christianity. But here another question arises. Does this text really focus on Lev 16:13–15 and on the ritual of Yom Kippur?

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ἱλαστήριον IN ROM 3:25

E. Lohse sought to identify the atoning death of the righteous martyrs in 4 Macc as the reference text of our pericope—instead of referring to Lev 16:13–15. The sacrificial character of the atoning death in 4 Macc is evident (cf. Klauck 1989, 670). Here sacrificial imagery of the Old Testament is used as an interpretation for the propitiating death of the Jewish martyrs (cf. Klauck 1989, 671). But if the *editio Rahlf's* writes in 17:22 τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου τοῦ θανάτου (using the substantive ἱλαστήριον), the more convincing variant must be seen as τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου θανάτου (cf. Klauck 1989, 671 and 753 footnote 22; as also Schreiber 2006, 97 f.), so that we only have the adjective ἱλαστήριος, which represents no direct parallel to Rom 3. But, in addition to this objection, dating 4 Macc to the time before the letter to the Romans has also become unlikely. Today most scholars are inclined to date 4 Macc to the end of the first century CE, perhaps 90 or 100 CE (cf. Klauck 1989, 669). Thus 4 Macc no longer can be seen as reference text for Rom 3 as maintained by Lohse. Yet on the other hand, 4 Macc demonstrates that cultic imagery of the temple could be used in a metaphoric way to describe the death of righteous persons (cf. Klauck 1989, 671), even if this proof dates back to the time *after* the fall of the temple. Jan W. van Henten and Klaus Haacker hinge their interpretation of Rom 3:25 upon this point. Even if we are no longer able to consider 4 Macc as the reference text for our pericope, the idea of the 'noble death' of the righteous was older than 4 Macc. Haacker thus refers to the pagan Roman conception of the 'noble death', where Seneca, Livius, Cicero and Lucan put forward the idea of the vicarious death of righteous persons (Haacker 1999, 91 notes 40 and 41). But in these concepts, cultic imagery clearly is missing, so that they cannot be considered as direct parallels to Rom 3. Because of this, van Henten tries to focus on the martyr theology of 2 Macc (van Henten 2008, 172). Yet this theology is not as developed as the one found in the texts of 4 Macc. In 2 Macc the explicit context for vicarious atoning is missing.⁴ Therefore,

⁴ Cf. Klauck 1989, 670: 'Hier [in 2 Macc] schon von einem stellvertretenden Sühnetod der Märtyrer zu sprechen, dürfte aber noch verfrüht sein.' Only from the later view from 4 Macc we can say: '4 Makk zieht die in 2 Makk 7,37 f. angelegten Linien aus und gelangt dabei zu einer qualitativ neuen Sicht.'

the pagan Roman conception of the ‘noble death’ and the suffering of the righteous ones in 2 Macc clearly opened up a broader horizon in which Rom 3:25 found its place, but they surely do not offer a direct parallel to our pericope. The specific vicarious atonement described with cultic imagery—as we encounter in Rom 3:25—cannot be found anywhere in these texts.

Therefore, the only remaining option is apparently to interpret Rom 3:25 as an allusion to Lev 16:13–15. To verify this assumption we first have to check the exact meaning of ἱλαστήριον (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 199 f.; Kraus 1991A, 21–32; Roloff 1992, 455–457). The word is extremely rare. Kraus lists five examples in pagan texts and 40 in Jewish ones. Of the 40 Jewish instances, ἱλαστήριον appears 21 times in the Torah, five times in Ez 43, once in Amos, six times in Philo, once in 4 Macc (but only in the *editio Rahlfs!*), twice in Symmachus, once in Josephus and once in the Testament of Solomon. In the New Testament it appears twice, once in our pericope and once in the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:5. It is noteworthy that all 21 instances in the Torah are translations of תְּפִלָּה. In addition, all six instances in Philo plus the one in the Testament of Solomon and the one in the Epistle to the Hebrews clearly refer to the תְּפִלָּה. The instances in Jewish texts where ἱλαστήριον clearly does not refer to תְּפִלָּה are indeed few and may easily be explained as translation errors (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 199 f.). Only Josephus uses ἱλαστήριον in its pagan meaning. *Ant.* 16,182 uses the expression ἱλαστήριον μνήμα, describing the building of a (propitiating) votive stele to placate the wrath of God. S. Schreiber tried to adopt this pagan meaning of ἱλαστήριον for the interpretation of Rom 3:25: God would give Christ as ‘votive offering’ for mankind, a picture describing the radical character of unconditional love for mankind that is revealed in Christ (cf. Schreiber 2006, 109). The idea of ‘atonement’ or ‘sacrifice’ according to Schreiber is completely absent in this picture. In addition, no allusion to Yom Kippur can be found here (cf. Schreiber 2006, 105 and 109). But the use of *Ant.* 16,182 clearly speaks about a votive offering to placate the wrath of God—which radically contradicts the idea of atonement in Rom 3. It is not God’s wrath that has to be placated, but it is God himself, who atones for mankind; God is the *acting subject*, not the *placated object*, of atonement (cf. Theobald 1998, 101). In addition, in the pagan conception of ‘votive offering’ the idea of ‘blood’ or the conception of ‘offering the own life’ is not important (cf. Kraus 2008, 202 and Zugmann 2009, 380 f.); the pagan meaning of ἱλαστήριον normally focused on the erection of a votive stele or some votive donations for a sanctuary (cf. Schreiber 2006,

104). It is also noteworthy that the most common expression in pagan Greek for such a votive offering was ἀνάθεμα and not ἱλαστήριον (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 200). The thesis of Schreiber, therefore, is not convincing.

In conclusion, one cannot avoid observing that in the overwhelming majority of cases, ἱλαστήριον in Early Judaism was used as a *terminus technicus* for the יָצִיטִי. It is 'hard to imagine that Greek-speaking Christian Jews, who were supposedly familiar with the Septuagint, did not immediately make an association with the most frequent usage in the Septuagint, especially considering the mention of blood and sins in the context. (...) Paul (and the tradition adopted by him) is most probably referring to the use of ἱλαστήριον in the best-known text, i.e. as *kapporet* in the Torah, and therefore to the ritual of Yom Kippur.' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 200). This argument is also supported by the fact that an allusion to Lev 16:13–15 fits perfectly into the trajectory of argumentation in Rom 3 and into the whole theology of Paul: it is Christ's atoning and vicarious suffering that Paul explains here by using cultic imagery that refers to the Yom Kippur (cf. Söding 2005, 384).

A further question remains to be solved if one chooses this interpretation. Were gentile-Christians readers of Rom 3:25 able to understand this Jewish-ritual allusion, or do we assume too much Jewish knowledge in Paul's readers?—It is quite probable that Paul did not only intend this letter to be read by the Romans, but that he also focused on Jewish Christians in Jerusalem as readers of this writing. This already has been stated by M. Theobald (Theobald 1998, 26) and G. Theißen (Hartwig and Theißen 2004). The first 11 chapters of Rom offer a veritable 'superabundance of argumentation' (Theobald 1998, 26) that exceeds the situation of Roman Christians. Paul scheduled a visit in Jerusalem before his voyage to Rome. Therefore, before going to Jerusalem he might have tried to solve the tensions between Jews and Christians in his elaborate argumentation in the first 11 chapters of Rom. Using temple imagery to explain the atoning death of Jesus by picking up a formula that was well-known among Jewish Christians in Jerusalem⁵ clearly seems to be a logical consequence of this intention.

⁵ See below where arguments are listed that support the assertion that the pre-Pauline formula of Rom 3:25 originated in Stephan's circle of the 'Hellenists'.

3. DID ROM 3:25 INTEND AN ABROGATION OF TEMPLE SERVICE?

Having decided on the right interpretation of ἱλαστήριον in Rom 3:25, a new question now arises. Nearly all scholars who support an interpretation of ἱλαστήριον in Rom 3:25 in the sense of ἡγερέ, also state that this formulation comprises an abrogation of the temple service in Jerusalem. Stuhlmacher sees here a radical critique of the cult in the temple in Jerusalem.⁶ Wilkens mentions the 'abrogation' of Jewish temple service by Early Christianity that can be seen in Rom 3:25.⁷ Gaukesbrink focuses on Christ as ἱλαστήριον, which—according to his opinion—renders temple service obsolete and offers the reason, why Early Christianity would no longer have participated in the temple cult.⁸ The argumentation of Knöppler runs along the same lines: Christ as ἱλαστήριον makes the Jewish Yom Kippur obsolete (cf. Knöppler 2001, 116). And Breytenbach asserts: the propitiatory presence of God is transferred from the sanctuary in Jerusalem to the cross and leads to a radical rupture with the temple. It is here that we can find the reason for the abrogation of temple service by Early Christianity.⁹ Theobald also concludes: after the interpretation of Christ as ἱλαστήριον, temple service has now become anachronistic for Christians (Theobald 1998, 101). And Roloff states: The typological interpretation of ἱλαστήριον shows that Yom Kippur and its cultic atonement are now abrogated.¹⁰

⁶ 'Die Gleichsetzung von Christus auf Golgotha mit der kapporaet impliziert eine radikale Kritik am Sühnopferkult im Jerusalemer Tempel: Der von Gott gewollte Sühnetod Jesu am Kreuz hebt den Sühnekult auf dem Zionsberg auf (...)' (Stuhlmacher 1992, 194).

⁷ 'Mit der Abrogation des Kultes ist ein tiefer, ja, *der* entscheidende Bruch urchristlicher Religion mit der zeitgenössisch-jüdischen geschehen.' (Wilkens 1987, 240).

⁸ 'Christus ist von Gott her zum eschatologischen Sühneort geworden. (...) Christus ist der neue Sühneort (...) und verweist den Tempel und seinen Sühnekult in den Bereich des Überholten, Überbotenen und Veralteten. Das Bekenntnis zu Christus als ἱλαστήριον gibt den Grund an, warum die Christengemeinde recht bald dem Tempelkult kritisch gegenüberstand.' (Gaukesbrink 1999, 232 f.).

⁹ 'Dann ist der Gekreuzigte nicht nur öffentlich aufgerichteter Sühneort bzw. Sühnmal, sondern Ort der sühnenden Gegenwart Gottes; dieser Ort wird vom Heiligtum zum Kreuz verlegt. (...) Radikaler kann man den Tempelkult und den großen Sühnetag nicht durchberechnen.' And: 'Die urchristliche Ablehnung des Tempelkults wird hier sichtbar.' (Breytenbach 1989, 166 f.)

¹⁰ '(...) in dem das Sterben Christi typologisch vom Versöhnungsritual her gedeutet wird: Es ist das von Gott her eingesetzte endzeitliche Sühnegehehen, das die bisherige kultische Sühne überbietet und zugleich aufhebt.' (Roloff 1992, 456).

All these statements stand in sharp contrast to the fact that temple service was actually still practiced by Early Christianity—and there is even evidence that the celebration of Yom Kippur was also still valid for at least some groups in Early Christianity. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20 shows the apostles attending the temple day after day. Even Paul is depicted by Acts 21:26 f. as observing temple worship. Jewish feasts as well are omnipresent in the book of Acts: Pentecost (2:1; cf. also 1 Cor 16:8), Passover (12:3 f.) and the feast of Unleavened Bread (20:6), but also ‘the fast’ (27:9), which clearly means Yom Kippur—*νηστεία* is the common expression for Yom Kippur in Philo’s wording (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 108 note 137 and 214 f.). Here it is not enough to observe that Luke was simply using the Jewish calendar, but he obviously still accepted these Jewish feasts. ‘Without evidence to the contrary, the working assumption should be that most Christian Jews (...) continued to observe the same festivals as they had done before. Philo and Josephus boast that many God-fearers observed Yom Kippur’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 214). It is quite probable that Luke was a God-fearer writing to God-fearers. His attitude to Yom Kippur in Acts 27:9 seems to be one of perceiving it as a revered and observed festival. And, furthermore, Paul himself ‘enumerates the temple service (*ἡ λατρεία*) positively among the God-given gifts for Israel (Romans 9:4) (...)’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 203). But there is also explicit evidence that Christian Jews continued observing Yom Kippur. ‘A considerable number of third- and forth-century Christians in Syria-Palestine celebrated Yom Kippur together with their neighbors. Origen, Chrysostom and Byzantine legal texts provide ample evidence for this. While these texts demonstrate that the leading theologians considered observation of Yom Kippur to be anti-Christian, a (...) part of the population continued to be attracted to this means of atonement without perceiving the observation as being theologically problematic’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 221 f.).¹¹

Returning to our pericope, we must conclude: in Rom 3:25 we simply have no hint of a substitutionary effect of Christ’s blood for the temple service! On the contrary, there seems to be evidence that some groups

¹¹ The texts mentioned here are: Origen’s twelfth Homily on Jeremiah and his tenth Homily on Leviticus. Further Chrysostom’s first Homily against the Jews 1:1:4 and 1:1:7; as also Canon 70 of the Canons of the Apostles, the final part of the Apostolic Constitutions (8:47:1–85). We do not know for certain, if the here criticized persons have been either Judaizing Christians or Jewish Christians (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 273).

of Early Christianity still celebrated Yom Kippur. The metaphorical use of cultic imagery—as we have it in Rom 3:25—was not aiming towards an abrogation of the real cult, but was very widespread and common in Early Jewish thought.

Thus, for example, the mythopoetic potential of Yom Kippur had a strong apocalyptic connotation. In *1 Enoch* 14 and in *T. Levi* 3¹² the high-priestly entrance to the holy of holies served as imagery for describing heavenly ascents entering the holy of holies of the heavenly temple and offering intercessory prayer or atonement there (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 79.82 f. and 91). And in the famous 11Q Melchizedek scroll of Qumran (cf. II, 7–8) Melchizedek as leader of the heavenly forces will atone on the day of Yom Kippur for all sins of the sons of light at the end of the tenth jubilee. ‘1 Enoch and 11 Q Melchizedek perceive Yom Kippur as an eschatological day of liberation (...)’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 95). We can therefore conclude: ‘The annual Yom Kippur was perceived, at least by some, as a ritual anticipation of the eschatological purification of God’s creation from sin’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 89). Using cultic metaphors was certainly not linked to abrogating the real temple in Jerusalem, but rather to opening up the broader horizon of an eschatological view. Even when we take into account that the Qumran community regarded the temple in Jerusalem as no longer valid, it did not aim towards an abolishment of temple-cult *eo ipso*, but simply replaced the temple in Jerusalem with the temple formed by living men—i.e. the Qumran community itself. The ritual prescriptions of the temple service thus underwent a spiritualization in Qumran. The thanksgiving of the community now replaced real sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem (cf. Tiwald 2008, 369–375). But the idea of temple-service itself was not rejected, but rather fulfilled in a spiritualized way. Philo Alexandrinus does not share the eschatological interpretation of Yom Kippur, but he ‘completely spiritualizes the temple ritual’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 101); he also ‘does not reject the temple ritual (...)’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 102). In *Spec.* 2, 139–222, Philo describes Yom Kippur in its ‘diaspora form: Consequently, blood, sacrifice, incense, the temple and the Aaronic priesthood play no role in this kind of Yom Kippur. Abstinence and prayer are its principal features’ (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 108). But while ‘he clearly prefers Yom Kippur’s symbolic

¹² *T. Levi* in its core is a genuine Jewish writing that has been reworked by Christians. Since we have fragments of one of its sources or traditions, the Aramaic *Levi* from Qumran and a fragment from the Cairo Genizah, we can, with care, use *T. Levi* for reconstructing Early Jewish conceptions (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 83 note 19).

meanings, it is amazing to note that (...) he holds on to the literal meanings and does not abolish Yom Kippur and its institutions' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 114). Therefore, for Philo 'Yom Kippur is "the fast", not "the day of propitiation"' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 107). When we take these tendencies into account, it does not astonish that after the fall of the second temple Yom Kippur imagery could be used in a metaphoric way to describe the vicarious atoning death of the righteous ones. 'The portion of 4 Maccabees 17 uses Yom Kippur imagery in post-temple Jewish martyrology, a phenomenon parallel to Christian Jewish thought' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 78; cf. also Klauck 1989, 671). In view of this constellation, 'it would have been odd if the most important festival of Second Temple Judaism and the essential theological concepts connected to it had not influenced the interpretations of Jesus' death' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 145). Due to the abundant parallels of the spiritualization of Yom Kippur in Early Judaism, we can draw two conclusions: 1) Yom Kippur is indeed the imagery behind Rom 3:25. And 2) this imagery does not contain an abrogation of the real temple in Jerusalem nor of the spiritualized celebration of Yom Kippur in the Diaspora. It was only later that the view of Christ as eschatological *ἰλαστήριον* could be seen as one of the preparatory steps for an abolition of temple service, but Paul himself did not intend this—as is clear from the strong parallels in Early Jewish thought as well as from Paul's short-term eschatological perspective (cf. Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 204).

4. SPIRITUALIZATION AND METAPHORICAL USE OF CULTIC RITUALS IN EARLY JUDAISM

Cultic metaphors and the spiritualization of ritual imagery were widespread in Early Judaism. We must not forget that the *כַּפֻּרָה* no longer existed in the second temple, having gotten lost in wake of the destruction of the first temple in 586. Therefore, even in the second temple in Jerusalem the celebration of Yom Kippur had to deal with a certain adaptation and transformation of rituals (cf. Schreiber 2006, 95). The need for adaptation grew even more urgent for Diaspora Jews and for the community of Qumran. Both groups had no regular access to the temple in Jerusalem. Thus the spiritualization of rites and the metaphorical use of cultic language was a logical consequence of the need for an adapted celebration of Yom Kippur. Accordingly, in Qumran (4Q174 III Frg. 1 + 2 + 21) three temples are mentioned: the temple in Jerusalem that

now is disgraced by God, the present $\square\text{TA } \Psi\text{TKM}$, a temple formed by the living community of the Qumran members and not by stones, where sacrifices of animals are replaced by thanksgiving and praising God (cf. Ådna 2000, 105) and the eschatological temple, which is to be built at the end of days (cf. Ådna, 2000, 104). But Philo also spiritualizes temple service in *Spec.* 1,66–67 (cf. Ådna, 2000, 123): Here Philo distinguishes between the ‘highest and truest temple of God’ (ἀνωτάτω καὶ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἱερόν)—according to stoic philosophy, this is the ‘universal world’ (σύμπαντα κόσμον)—and the temple in Jerusalem, which is only χειροκμητος (made by human hands). This clearly puts the temple made with hands in the second place, but does not abolish it! And in *Somn.* 1,215 Philo mentions the rational soul (λογικὴ ψυχὴ) as being the temple of God, in which the real true man takes the position of the priest. Philo thus did not only spiritualize the temple service, but he also ‘democratized’ it: every soul is a temple and every true man is priest. This finds a certain parallel in Pharisaic tendencies. Pharisees ‘democratized’ the purity laws of the temple. The requested ritual purity of temple-priests is now transferred to the everyday life of all Pharisees—and in this way offers a possibility of participating in ritual purity. For Pharisees, one’s own home was held to the same purity standards as the temple (cf. Neusner and Thoma 1995, 191 and also Breytenbach 1989, 201). But they clearly did not abolish the temple. Therefore, the spiritualization and metaphorical transformation of cultic rituals did not point towards an abrogation of the real cult, but were the only possibility of participating in these rituals for the majority of the Jewish population—not only in the Diaspora, but in Palestine itself.

The scholarly terms ‘spiritualization’ and ‘metaphorical use of cultic concepts’ have long been the subjects of controversy among scholars (cf. Vahrenhorst 2008, 10–16 and Janowski 2005, 110 f.). Spiritualization has sometimes been interpreted as substitution of the real cult (cf. Hossfeld 1993, 23). This is definitely not the case in Philo, nor is it in Qumran—as we have already seen. But, in consequence, some scholars have preferred to talk about ‘the use of metaphorical imagery’ (cf. Janowski 2005, 110 f.) instead of ‘spiritualization.’ But this also presents problems. Metaphoric language indicates a transformation (μετα-φέρω) from the literal meaning to a transformed one, from true sense to a transferred one. But when 1 Cor 3:16 calls the Christian community ‘God’s temple’, this is not only metaphorical use. The community is not only *compared to* the temple, but it *is* the temple (cf. Vahrenhorst 2008, 12). But on the other hand, Christian community is no substitute for the temple in Jerusalem, because

the temple still existed at the time of 1 Cor and Jewish Christians still worshiped there. Thus, in Early Judaism the spiritualization and the metaphorical use of cultic language were more complex than a too narrow use of these two concepts would make us believe (cf. Schröter 2005, 63).—In my opinion, the eschatological view of Early Judaism might put these two concepts in an even broader horizon. For the spiritual meaning and the concrete reality were expected to become one in eschatological times. It was a widespread assumption, for example, that the temple in Jerusalem would not prevail in eschatological times, because the handmade temple had to be replaced by the true eschatological temple of God. This eschatological temple already existed in heaven—as one could see in the depiction of heavenly ascents and their entrance in the heavenly holy of holies mentioned before. But in the *eschaton*, this heavenly temple would be transferred down to earth. According to 4 Ezra 10:46–55, the eschatological temple has to replace the temple in Jerusalem ‘for no work of man’s building could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed’ (4 Ezra 10:54).¹³ 1 Enoch 90:28–29 also expects a new eschatological temple to be built (cf. Paesler 1997, 156–165) and so did the community of Qumran. At the present time, a group of men can represent the temple—as we have it in Qumran, and in 1 Cor 3:16. But Christ’s suffering can also be explained by using the cultic imagery of Yom Kippur in Rom 3: here—as in the conception of Philo as well (*Somn.* 1,215)—not only a community, but a single person can symbolize the temple. For Paul, it is now Christ who represents the atoning salvation of the temple. But nowhere in all these texts can we find a single proof that spiritualization or the metaphoric use of cultic concepts intended to abolish the real temple! From the eschatological point of view, a replacement of the real temple by its deeper symbolic meaning was absolutely unnecessary, because in the end of times, the spiritual meaning would fulfil what the temple of Jerusalem now stood for. Thus the actual temple of Jerusalem itself was only symbolic, because it referred to the real fulfilment in eschatology. Consequentially, the borderline between the real temple and its deeper symbolic meaning might have been fluid in many theological conceptions of Early Judaism, but in the *eschaton* these two concepts would always coincide. Besides—as we can see repeatedly in the

¹³ Adna 2000, 47–48, points out that the temple in 4 Ezra is depicted as part of the old, destroyed city of Jerusalem (10:46), as well as of the heavenly, new city of Jerusalem (10:55). This makes it clear for him that in 4 Ezra too, the soiled, human temple will be replaced by the temple of God.

theology of Paul—he plays with concepts of Early Jewish theology in a highly-skilled manner. His concepts always seem to shift between the real meaning of assumptions and their symbolic imagery (cf. Tiwald 2008, 403–409). Mentioning Christ as ἱλαστήριον therefore does not mean an abrogation of the temple cult in Jerusalem, but it also might be more than the mere use of metaphorical language. This point becomes important if we look at the group in which the pre-Pauline formulation of Rom 3:25 most probably originated.

5. STEPHEN'S CIRCLE: THE 'HELLENISTS' OF ACTS 6:1 AND ROM 3:25

Stephen's circle and the 'Hellenists' mentioned in Acts 6¹⁴ fit perfectly into the picture we have seen. They did not seek to abolish the temple—as often maintained,¹⁵ but rather wished to reform temple worship in a spiritualized way, i.e. by turning temple worship into a kind of synagogue worship without purity laws (cf. Theißen 1996, 335).¹⁶ They adopted Jesus' temple criticism (cf. the cleansing of the temple in Mark 11:15–17 and the temple logion in John 2:19; cf. Mark 14:58, where the logion is placed in the mouth of Jesus' adversaries) and added their own theology, as we find it in Mark 11:17: 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'. This quotation of Isa 56:7 (LXX) presents Gentiles with access to the temple and allows for a reinterpretation of temple worship in a

¹⁴ The question how much historical information Acts 6–8 really contains is a matter of fervent discussion among scholars (cf. the excellent *status quaestionis* of Braun 2010, 6–32). As result of all these quite different positions two points might be generally accepted: *On the one hand* Act 6–8 has to be considered as "theologische Geschichtsschreibung oder Geschichtserzählung im Stil antik-hellenistischer und jüdischer Historiographie" (Braun 2010, 31). For Luke Acts 6–8 is clearly a "Schwellenerzählung" (Braun 2010, 448), depicting the beginning of the worldwide mission, leaving the boundaries of Jerusalem behind. But *on the other hand* it seems quite unlikely that Luke would have invented one of his most crucial records—the beginning of the mission of gentiles without circumcision (cf. 11:19–26)—without any historical background. For me it seems historical correct to connect the upstarts of the mission of gentiles with the "Hellenists" and with their theological concepts (cf. Tiwald 2008, 379–383), even if many parts of Acts 6–8 are due to Luke's redaction (especially the long speech of Stephen) and even if Luke tries to conceal the historical start of the mission of gentiles (cf. Acts 11:19–26) behind the authority of Peter (cf. Acts 10).

¹⁵ Thus Wilckens 1987, 241 mentions the 'Abrogation des jüdischen Tempelkults im Urchristentums' and especially refers to the 'Hellenists' of Acts 6.

¹⁶ Kraus 1999A, 46 argues in the same way. As for the historical implications of Jesus' temple prophecy, cf. Theissen and Merz 1997, 381. Cf. also Weiser 1986, 159–163.

spiritual sense. These ‘Hellenists’ also interpreted the purity laws and ritual prescriptions in the same way as Philo describes the position of the ‘radical allegorists’ in *Migr.* 89. These persons—obviously Jews, because they lived according to the prescriptions of the Torah—subjected the ritual commandments to an exclusively allegorical and ethical interpretation. They meet with harsh criticism by Philo, who himself interpreted ritual prescriptions of the Torah in an allegorical way, but who also underlined the necessity of not neglecting the ritual aspects. In Early Judaism, there seems to have been a vast movement towards an ethical interpretation of ritual laws. Also in *Ep. Arist.* 143, according to the λόγος φυσικός (the order of nature), food cannot be impure in itself. It is only the symbolic meaning that makes food impure, as *Ep. Arist.* 144–150 concludes, because impure animals are notoriously known for their immoral behaviour, and staying away from such impurity is considered a good training for morality. *Ep. Arist.* sees the necessity of continuing to observe the ritual laws of the Torah, but only as a training for morality (cf. Tiwald 2008, 339–364).¹⁷ But some liberal Jews seem to have gone a step further by interpreting ritual and cultic prescriptions in an exclusively ethical way—and thus no longer observing cultic aspects of the Torah. In Josephus’ *Antiquities* we encounter liberal Jews who criticise ritual prescriptions of the Torah. In *Ant.* IV, 145–149 Zambri argues against ritual laws as a late invention that does not correspond with God’s will (cf. Tiwald 2008, 315 f.), a parallel to Mark 7:7 and Col 2:22. And in *Ant.* XX, 17–53 Ananias states that circumcision no longer is necessary to become ‘thoroughly a Jew’ (βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος). Ananias does not reject the Torah, but no longer sees its fulfilment in ritual prescriptions. The ‘Hellenists’ of Stephen’s circle might have argued in exactly this way. In Acts 6:13–14, Stephen is accused of ‘talking against this holy place (= the temple) and the law’. He is charged further with ‘changing the traditions (ἔθνη) which Moses gave to us’. Even if Stephen’s accusers tried to present his position as amounting to an abrogation of the law and the temple, it is historically more probable that Stephen only intended a new interpretation of temple worship. When Luke uses the word ἔθνη he always refers to cultic traditions (Luke 1:9: priests; 2:42: Passover; Acts 15:1: circumcision). It is therefore very likely that in Acts 6:14 only the ritual

¹⁷ The interpretation of ritual laws as training for an ethical correct behavior is also present in Josephus’ *C. Ap.* II, 172 f.: Here practicing *external* rituals bolsters *internal-ethical* behavior (cf. Tiwald 2008, 294 f.).

aspects of temple worship are criticised, but not the temple itself.¹⁸ This proves true when we read Acts 7:42. Here Stephen quotes Amos 5:25–27 with the purpose of postulating a temple service without sacrifices: in its forty years of wandering in the desert, Israel did not offer any sacrifices to God. Hence, sacrifices might not be necessary for God. Then, Stephen's reasoning based on Acts 7 connects this argument to a second one: a temple worship consisting of sacrifices is also unnecessary, for—as Acts 7:48–50 states (with a quotation of Isa 66:1 f.)—‘the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands (ἐν χειροποιήτοις), as the prophet says: “Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. What house will you build for me? says the Lord, Or what is the place of my rest? Has my hand not made all these things?”’ The argument that God prefers a temple that is not hand-made also occurs in Philo's theology, as we have already seen. It is likely that this was a common figure of argumentation among Hellenistic Jews. The other ‘Hellenists’ seem to have shared this opinion. They were driven out of Jerusalem (Acts 8:1) because of their reinterpretation of temple worship, but not because they believed in Jesus: the ‘Hebrews’, in contrast to the ‘Hellenists’, could stay in Jerusalem and were not persecuted. Later on, the ‘Hellenist’ Philippus begins with the mission of the Samaritans and baptizes the Ethiopian. All of these events prepare the way for the mission of Gentiles without circumcision, which according to Acts 11:20 was begun in Antioch by the ‘Hellenists’ driven out of Jerusalem. It seems quite likely that the ‘Hellenists’ were convinced already in their pre-Christian period that ritual laws—like temple sacrifices and circumcision—should be interpreted in a spiritual way and not be practiced as a cultic reality. Their belief in Christ now triggers the last stage in this development: their belief in Christ now replaces a cultic understanding of the Torah and the temple and opens up the possibility of a spiritualized interpretation. It is obvious that in this setting the temple and the Torah were reinterpreted—but not abrogated! Indeed, such a reinterpretation was already an actual option in

¹⁸ Cf. the argumentation of Kraus 1999A, 48–49, and Theißen 1996, 335 and 334 (footnote 26). But cf. the directly opposed interpretation of Wilckens 1987, 240–241, who mentions the ‘abrogation of the Jewish temple-service in Early Christianity’ and in the ‘Hellenistic Christian traditions’ (meaning especially the Hellenists around Stephen and Paul; author's translation). For my part I cannot see such an ‘abrogation’ by Paul and Stephen—this would also be unique in Early Judaism! The main concern in Early Judaism was the authentic interpretation of the Torah and the temple, the question of an ‘abrogation’ never arises (not even in the temple-critique of Qumran). We have to distinguish strictly between a harsh critique of the temple and a so-called ‘abrogation’.

pre-Christian Judaism, as we have seen. In Acts 11:26 and 13:1 we read that the apostle Paul obtained his Christian formation in Antioch. Here he might have adopted the ideas of the ‘Hellenists’. In Rom 12:1 he argues that a ‘reasonable service’ (λογικὴ λατρεία) consists in the presenting of ‘your bodies as a living, holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God’. Here we find a parallel to Philo, who states that the reasonable soul (λογικὴ ψυχὴ) is the real temple of God, and to Zambri, who does not want to fulfil unreasonable cultic prescriptions. But if a ‘reasonable service’ consists in presenting our ‘bodies as a living, holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God’—as Paul says in Rom 12:1—then it is easy to describe Jesus’ death by alluding to the Yom Kippur.¹⁹ When persons are able to symbolize the temple—as it is the case in Qumran, in Philo’s theology and in 1 Cor 3:16–17 and 6:19–20—, then Jesus’ death also may symbolize the eschatological Yom Kippur. So there seems to be a high possibility that the pre-Pauline formulation Rom 3:25 originated in Stephan’s circle of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.²⁰

The meaning of this imagery should not be interpreted too narrowly. Therefore—in my opinion—the question does not arise as to how it was possible for Christ to sprinkle his own blood on the כַּפֹּרֶת if he himself, after all, was compared to the כַּפֹּרֶת.²¹ In metaphorical language, such tensions between imagery and reality are not unusual.²² In the same way, a further question fiercely debated among scholars might prove unimportant. Does the sprinkling of blood on the כַּפֹּרֶת in Lev 16:13–15 atone for the sins of Israel or does it only purify the temple? And in consequence: did Christ atone for mankind or did he consecrate a new temple? In the

¹⁹ These trajectories can be traced up to Eph 2:19–21, where the Gentiles are integrated into the temple of living men, and to 1 Pet 2:5, where the temple of living men offers πνευματικὰς θυσίας (‘spiritual sacrifices’).

²⁰ This opinion is maintained by many exegetes, such as Theobald 1998, 101; Merklein 2000, 1100; Zugmann 2009, 377 f.

²¹ This objection is forwarded by Lohse 2003, 135; Haacker 1999, 91; Schnelle 2003, 508; and Schreiber 2006, 96.

²² Cf. Janowski 2005, 110, who underlines that in metaphoric language the tension between the imagery on one hand and the real meaning of a word on the other hand, is preserved. So he concludes: ‘(...) eine Sprengung des “Blut(es) Christi an die Kapporet, die er selbst wäre”—so das Argument E. Lohses—, [ist] von vornherein nicht im Blick. Es geht nicht um den Kult, sondern um das Kreuzesgeschehen, das durch *umwertende Metaphorik* christologisch reflektiert wird’ (Janowski 2005, 113). Cf. also Schröter 2003, 65: ‘Der gelegentlich vorgebrachte Einwand, Jesus könne nicht gleichzeitig derjenige, dessen Blut vergossen wird, und Ort der Sündenvergebung sein, verkennt dagegen, dass der metaphorische Prozess gerade darin besteht, dass beides vom Tod Jesu her verstanden und von daher ineingesetzt wird.’

opinion of Kraus, Rom 3:25 has to be interpreted as the consecration of a new sanctuary and not as atonement for mankind (cf. Kraus 2008, 208.214 f. and Kraus 1991B, 168).—But such a differentiation seems to be an over-interpretation.²³ I think that ἱλαστήριον in Rom 3:25 should be interpreted as a metonymic *pars pro toto* expression: Yom Kippur was the most important celebration in the second temple. And the קִפּוּרִים was the holiest place of the temple. Even if it no longer existed in the second temple, its mythic importance continued unbroken. Therefore, by using the expression that God has displayed Christ publicly as ἱλαστήριον, Paul maintains that in Jesus' death the apex of fulfilment of all the expectations of redemption has now been reached. Christ is the fulfilment of all hopes to obtain salvation and atonement. In this *pars pro toto* view two different aspects of interpretation, which sometimes have been seen as a contradiction, may also coexist:²⁴ Christ now becomes the eschatological *atonement for our sins* (this is the one meaning connected with the קִפּוּרִים) and he also becomes the *place of the presence of God in this world*²⁵ (this is the other meaning contained in קִפּוּרִים).²⁶ This pre-Pauline imagery perfectly reflects the so called 'pro-existence' of Jesus. In his whole existence—until to his violent death—Jesus understood his life as service for mankind. Jesus did not seek his death in Jerusalem, but he also did not want to abandon his responsibility for the upcoming *basileia*. So he even would risk his life for his message. This faithfulness to God, to his own message of the *basileia* and to mankind could be interpreted in the Early Church as vicarious atonement: the only faithful one

²³ Cf. Schreiber 2006, 91. In Lev 16:17 (cf. also Lev 16:33) we can read: καὶ ἐξιλάσεται περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ καὶ περὶ πάσης συναγωγῆς υἰῶν Ἰσραὴλ.

²⁴ A good survey to different opinions of scholars can be found in Janowski 2005, 111 f.

²⁵ This point of view is taken by Schenk 1994, 566: 'In dem Ausdruck Röm 3,25 ὃν προσέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον wird Jesus nicht mit den Manipulationen des Priesters verglichen, sondern ist gewissermaßen selbst schon der die Gnade Gottes darstellende Ort der Gegenwart Gottes.'—According to Schenk in Rom 3:25 the idea of an atoning sacrifice is not existent! The argumentation of Vahrenhorst 2008, 272 runs along similar lines: 'Das Ritual zielt also nicht auf Sühne, die am Volk vollzogen wird, sondern auf die Reinigung des Heiligtums. (...) Hält man sich eng an die biblischen Bezüge, so wird Jesu Tod hier nicht als Sühne für die Menschen verstanden, sondern als Einsetzung eines (neuen) Sühneortes (...)'.

²⁶ Kraus 1999B, 24 underlines the connection of these two concepts: 'Hilasterion meint den Ort der Sühne, der Epiphanie und der Präsenz Gottes.' In the same way argue Wilckens 1987, 192 f., and Janowski 2005, 115. Cf. also Schröter 2003, 65: 'Für den Rezeptionsvorgang ist demnach entscheidend, dass sowohl die Sünden beseitigende Wirkung des Blutes als auch der Ort, an dem sich dieser Vorgang vollzieht, auf Jesus übertragen werden.'

is vicariously atoning for our own missing faithfulness.²⁷ The concept of the suffering servant of God in Isa 53:4f. proved helpful for this interpretation. Therefore, we must not be astonished that the imagery of the most important feast of the second temple—Yom Kippur—was also used to describe Jesus' death in a metaphorical way.

But—and this is the last crucial question that we have to solve—is Yom Kippur now doubled? When Rom 3:25 does *not* abrogate the temple-service, we would have to reckon with an 'additional (...) Yom Kippur' (Stökl Ben Ezra 2003, 204) in the person of Christ. Does this make sense? As mentioned before, the eschatological perspective of Paul may put the picture into a broader horizon. In Early Judaism, the idea was very widespread that the temple in Jerusalem would not prevail in eschatological times; God would send his new temple from heaven—not as an abrogation of the old temple, but as the fulfilment of the deepest meaning of the temple itself: the presence of God among us and the atonement for our sins. Paul—in his eschatological view—now sees exactly these two points fulfilled in Christ! So Christ is the eschatological *ἰλαστήριον*—not as rejection and not as abolition of the old temple, but as the deepest fulfilment of all that temple service stood for in the now upcoming *eschaton*.²⁸ After the fall of the temple, the picture changed. For Rabbinic Judaism, which evolved in the second century CE, the study of the Torah, and thus especially the study of the cultic and sacrificial instructions of the temple took the place of the no longer existent temple service—but it clearly did not abrogate the temple as such.²⁹ Temple service was here also practiced in a somehow 'spiritualized' way by

²⁷ Jesus' pro-existence has repeatedly been pointed out by scholars to exemplify the atoning death of Jesus: Janowski 2005, 116; Niemand 2002, 113.

²⁸ This fits in very well with the point of view expressed in Joh 2:19–21. Here the logion of destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days is interpreted as referring to the 'temple of his body'—an allusion to death and resurrection of Jesus and the presence of God in Jesus. Even if Johannine theology does not talk about Jesus as *ἰλαστήριον*, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 calls Jesus the *ἰλασμός* for our sins. This supports the view that Rom 3:25 really was a prepauline conception of the first Hellenistic-Jewish Christianity, a group to which also the Johannine community belonged.

²⁹ Cf. Schreiner 1999, 387: 'Ersatz des Tempels durch das Torastudium'.—But note his explanations to the expression 'Tempelsubstitution' (374): 'Dabei mag man natürlich fragen, ob der hier gewählte Begriff des Ersatzes, der *Substitution des Tempels* ein für das Phänomen, das damit beschrieben ist, angemessener Begriff ist. Versteht man darunter jedoch nicht allein eine Ablösung des Tempels in zeitlicher Folge, sondern eine akzeptierte Alternative zum Tempel, die bereits zeitgleich mit ihm existiert hat und als solche akzeptierte Alternative daher nach der Zerstörung des Tempels weiterbestehen konnte, dann hat er sicher seine Berechtigung.'

studying the sacrificial prescriptions, but no longer by practicing them. Christianity went a slightly different way: after the *Parusieverzögerung*, the fulfilment of the eschaton was delayed to the remote future,³⁰ and a near-time-eschatology no longer was practicable. The church became an institution and later on a religion separate from Judaism. Now the question of the real Yom Kippur gained importance. Christians who still celebrated the Jewish Yom Kippur until the fourth century and church fathers who took a fiercely polemic stand against this reflect the struggle of the emerging church with its own roots. Two final conclusions can be drawn. First, we cannot blame Paul for developments of the later church, but rather have to read his writings against the backdrop of Early Jewish thought. And secondly: even if church fathers later considered it vital for the definition of Christianity to negate their own Jewish roots—this never was the intention of God! So we may hope that the *eschaton*, which the people of God—Jews and Christians—are still expecting, might bridge the gap between these two religions and reveal, that both of them in their own theology and their own traditions are intended to participate in God's redemption as it is the vision of Paul in Rom 11:26, the redemption of *all Israel!*

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³⁰ Christianity held on in seeing the *eschaton* arrived, but only in a symbolic way: Death and resurrection of Christ now become the starting point for the end-time, but its fulfillment is delayed in the future. Also here we see that symbolic and real meaning were entirely undetermined!

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