Terminology may contain theological or ideological pitfalls. This fact is illustrated most easily by referring to the term coined by Bousset at the beginning of last century, designating Judaism at the turn of the era as *Spätjudentum* or *late Judaism*. This term was, as is obvious today, the result of the theologically biased views of the author, but it may also have led readers to adopt unwittingly the author’s presuppositions about ancient Judaism.¹ When such mistakes concerning terminology are discovered, a search for new terms begins. Meanwhile, however, the old terms are still used, but with definitions questioning the old presumptions; the road to a new consensus regarding the use of terms to describe Judaism in ancient times is evidently a long one. Today we have left behind ‘late Judaism’ but are still struggling to find a new term. Accordingly, in the scholarly literature many designations of Judaism now exist side by side: ‘Early Judaism’, ‘Ancient Judaism’, ‘Middle Judaism’,² ‘Second Temple Judaism’, and so on.

¹ The thought behind the term *Spätjudentum* was that Christianity was understood as having supplanted Judaism, so the proper designation for Judaism must indicate that its time was running out, and the term *Spätjudentum* was chosen. The term is thus a vehicle for what is usually called ‘replacement theology’. Very few scholars, if any, use it any more, being aware of the theological problems inherent in it.

² This term was put forward by G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), but few have followed his suggestion.
Less obvious cases of misleading terminology, which disclose the subjective standpoint of the author, are the terms ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’. The problem with these terms seems to be their vagueness, a vagueness which renders them useless for scientific work unless one is willing to define what they mean every time one uses them.  

In this article, I will try to show that ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’ are terms that mislead the author into making historical statements that are untenable upon closer examination, and therefore are not useful terms for the study of ancient Judaism and Christianity. They simply cannot define the aspects of religion which they are supposed to define, and are unable to distinguish differences or show similarities between religions.

This, it will be argued, is the case both at the level of analysis and at the level of presentation. Therefore, I shall suggest new terms that are adapted to the present state of research, with its emphasis on the diversity evident within these religions in ancient times. The new terms are intended to be more precise and thus to promote more accurate answers to historical questions. In this way, it is hoped that they will facilitate a search for new answers, as well as lead to a presentation of these results in more exact language. The proposed set of terms is intended to be used at the level of both analysis and presentation, since it does not seem possible to find synthesizing terms that do not also violate the manifold aspects of our subject. Finally, I shall give examples of how the new terms can be applied to a selection of texts. These examples are based on preliminary investigations and are included only to show how the study of these aspects of religion can benefit from a new terminology. I do not, as far as the application of the terms to these texts

3. The problems inherent in these terms have been discussed before. In 1961 G. Lindeskok, referring to B. Sundkler and J. Munck, states that ‘There has been some discussion concerning the terms universalism and particularism, and it has been argued that these terms, coined by liberal theology, have no real correspondence in biblical thinking’ (‘Israel in the New Testament: Some Few Remarks on a Great Problem’, SEÅ 26 [1961], pp. 57-92 [66 n. 6]). Later in the same note, Lindeskok nevertheless states that ‘Rightly understood, the terms universalism and particularism are still available as approximately corresponding to biblical thinking’ (p. 67). However, the use of the terms in studies appearing much later than Lindeskok’s article shows that a new set of terms is needed to avoid historical errors and misunderstandings.
is concerned, claim to have the final answer; the main task in this article is not the analysis of these texts, but rather the use of terminology.

1. The Terms ‘Universalism’ and ‘Particularism’

In commenting on Mt. 28.16-20, Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh write that ‘The move away from Israelite particularism was prepared for by Jesus’ interactions with outsiders’. At first sight this statement appears unproblematic and perfectly in line with scholarly opinion. But a second reading leads one to ask what is really meant, and what views of ancient Judaism and Christianity lie behind these words. Starting with the crucial word ‘particularism’, we note that it is used here in connection with missionary activity (Mt. 28.19-20). Mission is thus another word for universalism, because particularism, its opposite, designates the lack of that activity which Matthew endorsed, namely, the command to ‘go and make disciples of all nations’. These authors’ perception of the terms ‘particularism’ and ‘universalism’ is therefore that they denote non-missionary and missionary activity respectively. Secondly, they define mission as the reaching out to people not belonging to the religion promoting the mission with the purpose of converting them to that religion. This is what we, with Martin Goodman’s terminology, may call ‘proselytizing mission’.

Thirdly, Malina and Rohrbaugh state as a fact that Judaism was not involved in such missionary activity, while Christianity (or, more specifically, Matthean Christianity) was. There are several problems with, on the one hand, this use of the term ‘particularism’, and, on the other hand, the treatment of ‘Israelite’ religion as a unified whole with regard to the present topic. These two difficulties are connected, but I will treat them separately, beginning with the former.

Malina and Rohrbaugh are not alone in making ‘particularism’ correspond to non-mission. As one reads articles and monographs on the subject, it becomes clear that ‘universalism’ is commonly used to denote a proselytizing mission, and particularism is used to denote its

opposite.⁶ But other expressions can replace these terms. To take one example from 1963, R. Davidson summarizes Snaith’s view on Second Isaiah with the following words: ‘Thus the phrase “mishpat for the nations” expresses a vigorous religious nationalism, and not a missionary zeal’ (my italics).⁷ ‘Nationalism’, or ‘religious nationalism’, is used here in the same way that Malina and Rohrbaugh use ‘particularism’—as an opposite to missionary activity. We find the same use of the words in S.G. Wilson’s book from 1973.⁸ However, Wilson does not deny that there were ‘proselytizing efforts’ on the part of Judaism, but distinguishes these efforts from ‘the concept of mission as it developed in the early Church’.⁹ In his view, this distinction with regard to mission reveals the difference between Jewish nationalism and Christian freedom from nationalism. However, L. Ginzberg’s use of the terms ‘particularism’ and ‘nationalism’ should make us more cautious about mixing terms: ‘The Messianic ideal, as preached by the prophets and taught by the Rabbis, is against particularism but not nationality… The Messianic hopes of the Pharisees were as we have seen universalistic, yet at the same time, national.’¹⁰ I will return to this issue

⁶. See, e.g., K.W. Clark, ‘The Gentile Bias in Matthew’, JBL 66 (1947), pp. 165-72. On p. 165 Clark mentions ‘Jewish particularism’ as one of the reasons behind the opinion that Matthew was a Jew, or as he puts it, a converted Jew. At first it is difficult to know what Clark means with this expression, but the answer comes in the next section, where he posits Matthew’s ‘Great Commission’, over against ‘Jewish particularism’, as denoting its opposite; particularism is understood exactly in the same way as Malina and Rohrbaugh use it, as the opposite of a proselytizing mission.


⁸. S.G. Wilson, The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke–Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). On p. 3 Wilson uses ‘nationalism’ in the same way as he uses ‘particularism’ on p. 21. His statement on p. 3 is characteristic of much of New Testament scholarship: ‘Finally they [i.e. the Jews] were limited by a nationalistic approach, since for them there was an inseparable connection between religion and national custom—an attitude from which, if at first a little reluctantly, the early Church did eventually break free’.


below, discussing Davidson’s use of the word ‘paradox’ in an effort to solve the problem of what for some scholars seems to be a contradiction.

In describing Judaism as it developed after the exile, C.J. Roetzel cites W.D. Davies and argues that ‘the post-exilic history of Judaism became the history of a “fenced” community’. In articulating this opinion, Roetzel uses the terms ‘particularism’, ‘nationalism’, ‘exclusivism’ and ‘universalism’. But it is not just a missionary zeal or the lack of it that is meant. Instead the terms denote a much wider field that can be described as the attitude towards Gentiles. This is the second and also widely used meaning of these terms, including the complementary terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘exclusivism’. Roetzel is aware of the fact that there were different views within Jewish tradition concerning these questions, but chooses to emphasize what he calls ‘particularism’. In my opinion this simplification is more easily made because of the broadness of the terms in question, as I shall show below.

Turning to Ferdinand Hahn and his Mission in the New Testament from 1965, which is often cited by scholars treating our subject, we find definitions of the terms similar to Roetzel’s. In the second chapter of his book, which is significantly called ‘Jesus’ Attitude to the Gentiles’ (my italics), he argues that the particularistic sayings in the Gospel traditions are to be rejected as inauthentic. His standpoint is that Jesus was open to Gentiles. Saying this, he does not mean that Jesus actively went to the Gentiles preaching the Gospel. On the contrary, he states that ‘Jesus, indeed, performed his own works on Israel, and did not in any way carry on a “mission to the Gentiles”’. Hahn continues: ‘No actual commission or order was given about a mission to the Gentiles...yet Jesus, by proclaiming to Israel the Kingdom of God, preached the claim and the salvation of God for everyone to hear, and even the Gentiles heard the news’. Hahn argues that Jesus, in working for the salvation of Israel, also worked for the salvation of the whole world. There is no

contradiction in the fact that Jesus did not go directly to the Gentiles and the fact that he had a mission to accomplish in relation to them. For Hahn, Jesus’ power to cast out demons is a sign that Jesus’ task ‘leads far beyond every particularist horizon’.

We are thus able to conclude that the terms ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’ may carry not only the explicit meaning of missionary or non-missionary activity, but also the more general meaning of a certain attitude towards Gentiles. Still, it is obvious that the term ‘universalism’ is the positive one, and ‘particularism’ is regarded as somehow negative. The former term is nearly always applied to Christianity and the latter applied in general to Judaism, no matter which ‘authentic traditions’ are chosen or what aspects are emphasized.

There are, to be sure, scholars who have noted the inexactness of these terms and have tried to make further definitions. In his article ‘Proselytes or “Righteous Gentiles”?’, T.L. Donaldson distinguishes between three kinds of universalistic strains. Under the heading ‘Patterns of Universalism’, he designates these three strains as (1) proselytism, (2) the doctrine of righteous Gentiles, that is, that Gentiles could be regarded as righteous without converting to Judaism, and (3) the pattern of thought traditionally called the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations, or, as he prefers to call it, ‘Zion eschatology’. I will return to Donaldson’s study. At this stage I merely note that the recognition of the complexity of the situation in ancient Judaism has brought on a demand to clarify what is meant by ‘universalism’.

The same happens in Segal’s article ‘Conversion and Universalism: Opposites that Attract’. He states that ‘the Christian community designed its understanding of universal mission in the first century, as it dealt with the issue of the conversion of the Gentiles. Conversely, Rabbinic Judaism designed its specific understanding of universalism in the second and third centuries, as it dealt with the issue of remaining Jewish in a hostile world’ (my italics). Segal would use the positive word ‘universalism’ to describe both Christianity and Judaism. To be
able to do this for Judaism he has to modify the term and call it ‘a specific understanding of universalism’. This modification could also have been used to describe Christianity’s outlook, but since Christianity traditionally has been designated ‘universalistic’ (and Judaism as ‘particularistic’), Christianity has become the standard point of reference. If other patterns of thought are to be called universalistic, they have to be defined from the horizon of Christianity; hence we have the expression ‘a specific understanding of universalism’ applied to Rabbinic Judaism. This is at the level of terminology. At the level of historical facts, Segal has shown clearly that ‘the easy contrast made between the early Christian community and the variety of Jewish sects does not work. It is not just a question of Jewish parochialism being replaced by Christian universalism.’ On the page before he writes: ‘A major point [is] that the NT evinces the same ambivalence on the issue of the inclusion of Gentiles as do the other Jewish sects’. The term ‘universalism’, then, is used to designate different, ‘favourable’ attitudes to Gentiles, these different attitudes to outsiders being positive enough to deserve this label. This is so, regardless of whether it concerns the inclusion of Gentiles into Judaism or Christianity, or whether the question of salvation is being discussed.

We find, then, that different aspects of the relation between Jews/Christians and Gentiles can be, and have been, called by the same name: ‘universalism’. Arguing that the Rabbinic doctrine of righteous Gentiles should be called ‘universalistic’ means that a religious pattern of thought that recognizes outsiders as good enough for the coming kingdom, for life in the world to come, is ‘universalistic’. Thus, a religion need not have a ‘universal’ mission to earn the title ‘universalist’ according to this definition of terms. On the other hand, it can be inferred from the above that a religious pattern of thought which does not recognize this righteous status of outsiders may be called ‘particularistic’. This is the case for Jewish groups, including especially Pauline Christianity, that promoted a ‘universal mission’ and operated under the conviction that the whole world is under the rule of evil powers, and the only way to escape condemnation is to join the

20. See Segal, ‘Conversion and Universalism’, p. 175, where he distinguishes between the issue of conversion and salvation; salvation is not always connected to conversion.
missionary sect or reform movement. When the terms are used in this way, they mean exactly the opposite of what Malina and Rohrbaugh meant by them: Christianity (or more correctly: some Christian groups) is now a particularistic religion because it does not allow for salvation outside its own religion, and Judaism (again more correctly: some Jewish groups) a universalistic religion.21

One could even go further and argue that the only true universalistic religion is a religion that sees all religions as equally good ways to reach salvation. Then, to be sure, one ends up outside the theologies of religions that can be found in Judaism and Christianity, and both of these religions would accordingly have to be called ‘particularistic’, because of their lack of tolerance towards outsiders. We can, however, find this kind of thinking both in ancient times, in forms of Greco-Roman religion, and in our own days in, for example, Hinduism (or better Indian religious thought). Syncretism may also be called a kind of ‘universalism’, because of its ability to incorporate different traditions into a single religious unity. An example of this we find in the Christianization of Sweden at the end of the first millennium. Before religious stability was accomplished, certain groups solved the pluralistic situation by incorporating Christ as just another god in the already existing pantheon.

Perhaps it seems as if I have now moved too far from the first-century Roman world, but the above examples have been chosen to make clear the three main points of this section:

1. There are several meanings which are given to the terms ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’, and different scholars use them in different ways.

2. Since there is no self-evident sense in the terms that determines their meaning, different people choose different meanings according to their theological or ideological presuppositions. Regardless of how they

21. It is true, to be sure, that some Christian texts express the perspective here attributed to Jewish groups not accepting Jesus as the Messiah. I will return to this below, giving for the moment just one example of such a text: 1 Tim. 4.10 (see, e.g., the comment of R.A. Wild in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary [ed. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer and R.E. Murphy; London: Chapman, 1993], p. 898: ‘[This is] one of the strongest biblical affirmations of God’s universal salvific will. Believers enjoy a special, but not a unique, claim’). In the history of the Church, however, a dominant theme has long prevailed which excludes from salvation people not belonging to the Church—extra ecclesiam nulla salus.
are used, ‘universalism’ is the positive term and ‘particularism’ is the
negative.

3. The broadness of the terms allows this subjective use, and enables
them to become tools for misleading interpretations and/or presentations
of the aspects of religion defining the relation between the insider and
the outsider.

Before turning to the next section, I will return to Davidson’s article
mentioned above in order to show yet another reason why a new
terminology is needed. As pointed out earlier, Davidson noted the very
different interpretations of universalism or particularism in Second Isaiah
made by Mowinckel (universalism/missionary activity) and Snaith
(religious nationalism/non-missionary activity). Davidson finds truth in
both of these interpretations, and solves the problem by using the word
‘paradox’.22 Davidson does not look upon ‘particularism’ and
‘universalism’ as opposites, but rather as ‘the tension points in the
paradoxical Old Testament doctrine of mission’.23 On page 183 he notes
that ‘the same paradox of particularism and universalism appears in the
New Testament’. The paradox is this: ‘At precisely the point at which
the note of particularism, we might say religious nationalism is heard, a
note of universalism is likewise sounded’.24 I believe Davidson is
perfectly correct in noting that ‘To neglect this paradox leads to a failure
to recognise the true dimension of the missionary interest in the Old
Testament and to the drawing of too simple a distinction between
Judaism as a nationalistic and early Christianity as a missionary faith’.25
However, I do not believe that the question of universalism and
particularism needs to be described as a paradox; it is only when we use
these terms that we find there is a paradox, due to the difficulty of
defining what is meant. Using another set of terms that are adapted to
describe the complex religious situation in the ancient Middle East might

24. Davidson, ‘Universalism in Second Isaiah’, p. 176. As examples of this
tension in the New Testament, Davidson refers to Paul’s letters. I would add, among
other texts, Acts 1.6-8: the restoration of the Israelite nation shall come, though only
the Father knows when. At the same time as these words are uttered, Jesus sends his
disciples to ‘the end of the earth’ to be his witnesses.
remove the sense of paradox which a twentieth-century scholar may feel when reading documents from a foreign cultural context.

2. The Need for a More Precise Terminology

The complexity of attitudes towards Gentiles in ancient Judaism is today a basic perception in Jewish studies. We have already touched upon this issue above. It should also be recognized that the same diversity applies to early Christianity. These questions have been dealt with by a number of scholars, and we do not need more than a cursory overview to define the state of research today.

One issue that has long been a stumbling block in New Testament research is the historical Jesus’ attitude to Gentiles. The core of the problem seems to lie in the strange fact that the Church directed its missionary activity towards Gentiles, while in the Gospels the ‘founder of the Church’, Jesus, seems not to have gone outside his own people—and religion—with his message. So opinions vary. On the one hand, we have scholars like F. Spitta, who argues that Jesus from the beginning of his career directed his mission in such a way as to include Gentiles. Jesus thus becomes the first Christian missionary. On the other hand, we find Wilson arguing that Jesus did not intend to promote a Gentile mission at all. In between there are several different middle positions.

One of these middle positions is that of C.J. Cadoux, resembling very much a solution Davidson might prefer: Jesus went only to Israel, but this was in order to prepare them for their task of taking care of the Gentiles in a second phase. Cadoux tries to find a balance between ‘particularism’ and ‘universalism’ in much the way Davidson did with Second Isaiah. The majority position among scholars, if such a position

26. See, e.g., Segal, ‘Conversion and Universalism’.
27. For example, it is a revealing fact that M.D. Hooker’s article in The Expository Times 82 (1971), pp. 361-65, entitled ‘The Prohibition of Foreign Missions (Mt. 10.5-6)’, is included under the heading ‘Uncomfortable Words’.
28. F. Spitta, Jesus und die Heidenmission (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909).
can be defined, seems to be that Jesus himself did not go to the Gentiles (even if scholars differ as to why he limited himself in this way). Strangely enough, we seldom find that Jesus is called ‘particularistic’, or that he represents a narrow, religious nationalism.\(^{32}\) This is nevertheless the case when certain scholars describe the same religious outlook on the part of ‘Judaism’, and more specifically Second Temple Judaism or Rabbinic Judaism. The diversity of opinion concerning the Gentile position in the new Jesus-oriented interpretation of Judaism is obvious in the New Testament texts. This fact, and the fact that these views can be seen in connection with other Jewish groups, has been noted by many scholars, including Segal (see above) and E.P. Sanders.\(^{33}\) We need only to think of the differences in opinion between Jesus, Paul, Acts and Matthew to realize that this was a difficult problem during the first century of Christianity. We should be very careful not to read back into the New Testament era the Church’s position in later times when it had become predominantly Gentile, and the standpoint of Paul in a modified form had proven to be the successful one. This same warning also needs to be repeated with respect to Judaism.

The diversity of Judaism’s opinions about Gentiles is well documented by many scholars. I have already mentioned Donaldson. Sanders finds six different strands of thought concerning Gentiles in the biblical prophets, all of which are also discernible in later Jewish literature.\(^{34}\) There is no way these different traditions can easily be labelled ‘universalistic’ or ‘particularistic’. What must be done is to discern different aspects of Judaism’s and Christianity’s relation to Gentiles in the different texts, and from there create a terminology that covers these aspects.

I find at least three different and important aspects that should be taken into account when working with these questions. These three and imposed the same limitation upon his disciples. On the other hand, it has been established that Jesus expressly promised the Gentiles a share in the kingdom of God’ (p. 55).

\(^{32}\) See, e.g., Hooker, ‘The Prohibition of Foreign Missions’, p. 364, who is very careful not to describe Jesus as particularistic: ‘But the concentration of Jesus’ mission upon Jews is not to be interpreted as a “particularist” attitude over against the idea of “universalism”. For what was at issue was not so much a question of privilege as of responsibility.’


\(^{34}\) Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 212-18.
aspects do not comply with the past usage of broader terms like ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’; they may have different positions in relation to each other in different texts. This shows that there is no simple division between traditions along the lines of the usual terminology. Thus, it is not possible even at the level of presentation to use terms broader than those used in the analysis. The three aspects of a religion’s view with regard to outsiders which I wish to highlight are the following:

a. Ethnic Aspect
This aspect concerns the ethnic origins of the members of a religion and the possibility of receiving into this religion members not belonging to its ethnic group. There are three possible positions a group can take concerning the ethnic aspect.

1. Closed-Ethnic Religion. This means that a religion is completely closed to outsiders and no conversions are possible. There is an identification between the ethnic group and religious identity.

2. Open-Ethnic Religion. The same identification is made between people and religion as above, but here we find that conversion is possible; there are ways for people not belonging to the ethnic group to become members of the religion through certain rites.

3. Non-Ethnic Religion. This type has no ethnic ties whatsoever. People of different ethnic backgrounds gather around a common religious belief.

b. Salvation
A second aspect of a religion’s relation to outsiders is that of salvation. Here there are two main views.

1. Salvation-Inclusive Religion. This view recognizes the possibility of salvation for people of other faiths. Salvation is not thought of as something belonging to one religion alone, despite the differences between the members of the religion in question and people with other belief-systems. In this group, we often find that ethical laws are more important than theological-theoretical patterns of thought, that is, people of other faiths are judged with respect to their ethical behaviour.
2. Salvation-Exclusive Religion. The borders of a religion are the borders of salvation. Outside this specific religion there is no salvation available.

c. Mission
With the aspect of mission I mean different types of reaching out to people not belonging to the religious pattern expressed by the missionary group.\(^{35}\) This definition includes activity directed towards people belonging to the same religion as the missionary group, but not sharing all beliefs of that group. Goodman has presented a number of different types of mission in his book about *Mission and Conversion*. Here I will limit the discussion to three types important for my purpose, employing a slightly modified version of Goodman’s suggestions. All of these three types are subdivided into both active and passive expressions. This means that ‘type’ refers to the purpose of the mission, and ‘active’ or ‘passive’ refers to the manner or method of the mission (viz., whether any active missionary efforts are carried out, if the mission is thought to be carried out by God, or if the mission is only carried out by people living their own faith and so attracting others\(^{36}\)). This last

\(^{35}\) The importance of defining what is meant by ‘mission’ can be seen in the article of S. Brown, ‘The Mission to Israel in Matthew’s Central Section (Mt. 9.35–11.1)’, *ZNW* 69 (1978), pp. 73-90. One of his arguments for not calling this text ‘The Missionary Discourse’ is that ‘the term “missionary” has certain connotations in contemporary language which obscure [the] evangelist’s purpose’ (p. 73 n. 1).

\(^{36}\) Cf. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission*, pp. 1-2. Wilson wishes to distinguish between ‘universalism’ and ‘mission’ in the Old Testament, claiming that the former designates what we have called ‘passive mission’ and reserving the latter for what we have called ‘active mission’. The reason for this, as he rightly observes, is that ‘The idea that God is Lord of all creation may be an essential presupposition for universal mission, but the idea of mission is not, at least for the Old Testament, a logical implicate of universalism’. Further, he argues that the movement is centripetal rather than centrifugal—Gentiles will come to Zion, Israel need not go to the Gentiles. Wilson is probably correct here as well, but the problem is that he looks at the method of the mission when deciding what should be called ‘mission’ and what should not. I believe it is more helpful to concentrate on purpose when choosing terminology, and the purpose in both cases is somehow, by means of different methods, to make the Gentiles honour the God of Israel. Whether this is done actively or passively is a question of further distinctions within the concept of mission. A non-missionary stance would rather be exemplified by someone who does not believe that his or her religion has any larger meaning or purpose for people not already belonging to it.
distinction might seem superfluous, but it will prove helpful when I define different strands of traditions. The three types of mission are as follows.

1. **Proselytizing Mission.** This type is what is usually in mind when missionary activity is discussed. Its purpose is to incorporate outsiders into the missionary group, often through a certain rite. Note that the kind of rite which is used has no importance. Thus, it does not matter whether the rite is ‘Jewish circumcision’ or ‘Christian baptism’.

2. **Ethical-Religious Mission.** There is a certain kind of mission carried out by different religious groups in ancient and modern times which does not have as its goal to make people convert to its own religion. Instead the purpose is to change the lifestyle of people of other faiths according to the ethical norm of the missionary group. I have called this type of mission ‘ethical-religious’; the word ‘religious’ is included because this type always takes its ethical code from its own religious tradition. It is the ethics of a certain religion that are spread, not the entire religious system.

3. **Inward Mission.** This type refers to an effort made to influence individuals or groups within one’s own religion, in order to make them comply with one’s own views on certain aspects of that religion. This type of mission is perhaps the most usual in the world of religions. Sometimes, however, it may lead to a point where different opinions are no longer able to co-exist within one single religion. In such cases, there is a beginning of a parting of the ways, in which two strands of a tradition become two distinct religions, like children born of the same mother. A further distinction can be made between two kinds of inward mission: (1) a mission with the purpose of ‘correcting’ how people understand their religion by referring to known traditions, and (2) a mission with the purpose of introducing a new element or doctrine which reforms a religion in such a way that its members do not perceive it as inaugurating a new religion.

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These three aspects, and the terminology which I have suggested should be used in connection with them, will, I believe, be useful tools in the study of ancient Judaism’s and early Christianity’s ways of relating to people not belonging to their own religious groups. Further distinctions are possible, but it is more important to note that there is not a neat division exactly along these lines in every document. However, it is hoped that the suggested terminology will be precise enough to assist in the description of the theologies of religions in ancient Judaism and early Christianity. Before concluding, it would be illuminating to apply these terms to a few texts in order to see how they can be used and how they function in relation to each other.

3. A New Terminology in Use

Perhaps the best way to begin this overview is by considering the figure who stands in both Jewish and Christian traditions, or religions if you like, namely, Jesus.

Taking as a fact that Jesus did not direct his mission to Gentiles, and had no such intention, his missionary activity can be labelled as an *inward mission*. Jesus went to his own people and tried to introduce his own understanding of Judaism in his community. This understanding was to a great deal based on traditions already known, but nevertheless there were new elements in his teaching and interpretation of the law that made him the leader of one of many Jewish groups in the Second Temple period. Therefore his mission should be described as an inward mission aimed at introducing a new understanding of Judaism (subgroup c.3.[2]).

Concerning Jesus’ attitude to Gentiles, there is little evidence about the ethnic aspect. We have sayings like Mt. 23.15 which, if taken as authentic, seem to be very critical of bringing in proselytes. This verse could, however, also be interpreted as a critique of *Pharisaic* proselytes in Judaism. On the other hand, we have several sayings that mention

38. See above and compare F.W. Beare, ‘The Mission of the Disciples and the Mission Charge: Matthew 10 and Parallels’, *JBL* 89 (1970), pp. 1-13. Referring to Rom. 15.8, Beare states that the prohibition of foreign missions ‘is not out of keeping with the actual practice of Jesus’. At the same time he notes that the prohibition itself would have been completely unnecessary in the time of Jesus and thus ‘reflects a time in the life of the early church after the issue of the Gentile mission had been joined, or when it was at least contemplated’ (pp. 8-9).
Gentiles in a positive way. None of these, however, says a word about Gentiles converting to Judaism. Perhaps one way of solving the problem with the ethnic aspect would be to look first at the aspect of salvation.

It seems quite clear that Jesus somehow counted on the inclusion of the Gentiles in the world to come. The question, then, is whether they would be admitted as proselytes or as ‘righteous Gentiles’, that is, as persons not needing to convert. Following Donaldson, who comes to the conclusion that Gentiles likely were not required to convert at the end of times according to several Jewish texts, it seems probable that Jesus also thought of their eschatological salvation in terms of ‘righteous Gentiles’.39

In agreement with what I stated above about Jesus directing his mission to his own people, I do not find any active ethical-religious mission with Jesus. On the other hand, perhaps we could talk about a passive mission, based on the conviction that the Gentiles will come of their own accord (cf. ‘a light for the Gentiles’ in Isa. 42.6-7 and Mt. 5.14).40 There is no single text where Jesus is said to demand conversion of the Gentiles. Their positive relation to him, expressed in terms of faith, is sufficient. Thus, I would argue that Jesus’ theology of religions is salvation inclusive (subgroup b.1) and that it is not incomprehensible that the ethnic aspect is best described as a reluctant open-ethnic (subgroup a.2) or even closed-ethnic stance (subgroup a.1).

Paul’s position is somewhat more difficult to define because his mission was to both Jews and Gentiles (even if he declared himself to be first and foremost the apostle to the Gentiles). In his mission to his own people, his mission should be called an inward, active mission aimed at introducing a new understanding of Judaism (subgroup c.3.[2]) since he does not inaugurate a new religion but introduces new elements within that religion (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 7.18-20; Rom. 11.1).

When turning to the Gentiles, however, Paul falls between the types of proselytizing mission (subgroup c.1) and ethical-religious mission

39. See Donaldson, ‘Proselytes or “Righteous Gentiles”?’ Cf. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism, p. 217, who argues on the contrary that the most general expectation in Judaism probably was that the Gentiles would ultimately have to go through circumcision.
40. Cf. the expression of A. Schweitzer in Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930), p. 176: ‘expectant universalism’. This expression underlines the eschatological aspect, but does not solve the other problems I have discussed here.
This is because he would not allow Gentiles to enter Judaism by means of circumcision, and so would not allow them to keep the whole of the Torah (cf. Gal. 5.2-3). He nevertheless demands they keep its ethical commandments (cf. Gal. 5.22-23). In Sanders’s words, ‘Gentiles should not accept those parts of the law which distinguish Jew from Greek’. On the other hand, we find Paul demanding a rite of conversion—baptism—of the Gentiles, in order to become part of the people of God. To conclude, there is in Paul a hybrid of two missionary types concerning the Gentiles, resulting from his own eschatological interpretation. Indeed, Paul’s mission is proselytizing, but at the same time Paul argues that no Gentile should join the Jewish people as a Jew, that is, they should not attain the same status as the missionary had himself.

Contrary to what is generally believed concerning the ethnic aspect, I suggest on the basis of texts like Gal. 5.2-3, 1 Cor. 7.17-18, and Romans 9–11 that Paul’s Christianity is best labelled closed-ethnic (subgroup a.1) or open-ethnic (subgroup a.2). It is not non-ethnic because Paul still claims that the ‘natural olive tree’ is made up of Christian Jews, and the Gentiles are called ‘a wild olive shoot’ (Rom. 11.1-5, 17-21). In Paul, we find the first step towards a Christianity that eventually became non-ethnic, but Paul seems not to have taken that step himself.

Concerning the aspect of salvation, Paul represents a salvation exclusive stance (subgroup b.2), modified in the case of Jews who do not believe in Jesus (cf. Rom. 11.25-29). Actually, Paul has inverted the general Jewish eschatological expectation that, in the end, all (or at least quite a lot) of the Gentiles will join them. Instead, it is now the Jews who do not believe in Jesus that play this role in the eschatological drama, but with a much stronger effect: when the time has come they will join the saved people (the Gentiles being saved because of the rejection of the

42. The fact that Paul would not allow Gentiles to become Jews when they joined his movement suggests that his stance is best described as closed-ethnic. However, the unity between the different parts of the people of God described in the olive metaphor in Rom. 11 results in a religious system which includes both Jews and Gentiles, though they do not have the same status. From this perspective, Paul’s stance can be described as open ethnic. (It seems as if this ‘unity in diversity’ in theory and practice was one of the main reasons for the parting of the ways and the creation of a new religion in the long run. But this was not, I believe, Paul’s intention.)
Jews who did not believe in Jesus) and it is this inclusion in itself that brings life to the dead (Rom. 11.15). Paul’s salvation-exclusivism appears to be balanced with an eschatological expectation of God’s power to attract those Jews who do not share Paul’s faith.

In Matthew’s story the type of mission, the ethnic aspect, and the aspect of salvation seem to change during the journey from chs. 1 and 2 to ch. 28. The existence of Gentiles in the community of Matthew, assumed by many scholars, may lead one to designate Matthew as open-ethnic, yet there is no evidence of proselytes in the text prior to ch. 28. This suggests that the main part of the Gospel has a closed-ethnic character (subgroup a.1). Further, Matthew claims that there should not be any mission to Gentiles, and hence here is a case of an inward mission, introducing new elements in the religious tradition (subgroup c.3.[2]), although Matthew emphasizes more than the other Gospels Jesus’ continuity with Moses and the prophets. Along with this view, in the main part of the Gospel there is a salvation-inclusive perspective (subgroup b.1); Gentiles receive their share of the covenant blessings without any demand for conversion. This may suggest that there are Gentiles loosely connected to Matthew’s community, a kind of Matthean ‘godfearers’, or ‘sympathizers’.

In the final verses of the final chapter, however, something happens. Suddenly Christian Jews (up till now only Jews could be full members of the Jesus group in Matthew’s story) are commanded to carry out a mission to Gentiles. This mission has as its purpose to include Gentiles in the Jesus group. The usual understanding of this passage is that baptism is the rite of conversion for allowing these people to enter the community. D.C. Sim, however, argues that ‘On the much debated questions of whether the male Gentiles were circumcised and whether all Gentile converts were expected to follow the whole Torah, it is almost certain that the answer is yes on both counts… This means that those Gentiles who became Matthean Christians became Jews in the

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43. E.g., Mt. 10.5 and 15.24.
44. E.g., Mt. 8.5-13 and 15.21-28.
45. See, e.g., R.H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 596: ‘For those who enter the school of Christ, baptism is the rite of initiation’. Further, he argues that baptism was required also for Jews, and that Jews are to be included in the mission command (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).
process. Following Sim, it is probable that all male members of Matthew’s community were both circumcised and baptized. To be sure, the text does not mention circumcision explicitly, but several indications point us in that direction. The Matthean mission is thus changing direction at the same time as the ethnic aspect is changed; Matthew’s Gospel is completely dominated by an inward mission accompanied by a closed-ethnic perspective but ends with a proselytizing mission (subgroup c.1) and an open-ethnic stance (subgroup a.2).

The problem of salvation is more difficult to solve. On the basis of type of mission, it is possible to make more or less qualified guesses. It could be argued that, in a community that promotes a proselytizing mission, it is likely that a salvation-exclusive viewpoint lies behind such activity. Then again, if there is an inward mission, it is possible that the community views salvation in an inclusive way; there is no real need for carrying out a mission to outsiders if they can be seen as having other roads to walk towards final salvation. The problem is whether the salvation-inclusive view (subgroup b.1) remains valid throughout the Gospel, when the type of mission changes in ch. 28. In my opinion it does.

Turning now to other Jewish groups, my first example will be the community at Qumran, a group with very sharp community and faith borders. To begin with, they believed that every Jew who did not belong

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48. A way to argue for this view may be to study the Matthean pericope regarding the final judgment, which follows chronologically if not narratively the mission command in Mt. 28.19-20. The most important text that claims a salvation-inclusive stance in Matthew would then be Mt. 25.31-46, interpreted as referring solely to Gentiles (so, e.g., R. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991], pp. 358-60). This text defines the criteria of divine judgment as based on deeds of loving-kindness performed in relation to Jesus’ disciples; there is no demand either for faith or for conversion. The Gentiles who are allowed into the kingdom are approved as *Gentiles* on the basis of their deeds.
to their group was bound to perish.\textsuperscript{49} If this was said of fellow Jews, how much more of Gentiles!\textsuperscript{50} The Qumranite group may, then, be labelled as a clear case of \textit{salvation-exclusivism} (subgroup b.2). It goes without saying that they did not engage in a mission to the Gentiles, and if we find a mission at all, it was directed to their own people; they can thus be designated as either \textit{non missionary or as somehow involved in an inward mission, probably passive} (subgroup c.3). The ethnic aspect is, however, not closed to Gentiles as one might expect, but open, since the community recognized the inclusion of proselytes. Proselytes did not, however, enjoy the same status as Jews, which sets the Qumran community apart from later Rabbinic Judaism.\textsuperscript{51}

Rabbinic Judaism was the result of the bringing together of many different strands of traditions. This means that there are several divergent opinions on many topics, including the status of outsiders. Finding a majority position is, then, not the same as finding \textit{the} Rabbinic stance with respect to a certain question; if the Rabbis had room for diversity, we do well in acknowledging that they did not have the same view as many have today on what constitutes religious unity. Concerning the aspect of mission, there are different answers and attitudes. There are texts which speak of a \textit{proselytizing mission} (subgroup c.1),\textsuperscript{52} but there are also traditions that are highly negative.

\textsuperscript{49} See, e.g., Sanders, \textit{Jesus and Judaism}, p. 217. Sanders argues that the covenanters at Qumran are not to be seen as representative for Jewish views of outsiders. That statement has something to do with how many members this group had; the larger the group, the more reason there is to see these views as representative for the Judaism of the time. Cf., e.g., H. Stegemann, \textit{Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus} (Freiburg: Herder, 1994).


\textsuperscript{51} Schiffman, \textit{Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls}, p. 383.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{b. Pes.} 87b. Goodman, \textit{Mission and Conversion}, p. 139, argues on the contrary that this text is not about missionary activity. Despite his arguments, I believe that a case can be made that it is. \textit{Genesis Rabbah} contains several texts about well-known persons from the Hebrew Bible portrayed as missionaries: 39.14 (Abraham and Sarah), 91.5 (Joseph). See also 84.4, 90.6. \textit{Ecclesiastes Rabbah}, compiled considerably later than \textit{Genesis Rabbah}, contains a text claiming that the only negative aspect of the proselytes is that they did not come of their own accord, i.e., that there had to be a Jewish mission to convert them. If these texts in fact refer to a Jewish proselytizing mission, we may conclude that such a mission was present, one way or the other, from at least the time of the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud until about 900 CE.
towards the reception of proselytes.53 Taken together, these different opinions suggest that certain groups within Rabbinic Judaism promoted a proselytizing mission, but that other groups rejected this practice.54

Turning to the ethnic aspect, it is obvious that groups that proselytized must be called open-ethnic (subgroup a.2), while groups that did not permit the reception of proselytes must be called closed-ethnic (subgroup a.1).

Connected to the ethnic aspect is that of salvation. In the Rabbinic discussion, the issue of salvation focuses on the question of whether or not Gentiles can be considered righteous as Gentiles or not. Again, there are different opinions. Rabbi Eliezer, for example, says outright that there are no righteous Gentiles (t. Sanh. 13.2).55 This view, however, is immediately contrasted with the opinion of Rabbi Joshua, who claims that there are Gentiles who have a share in the world to come. The view attributed to Rabbi Joshua, which is clearly salvation-inclusive (subgroup b.1), is the opinion of the majority,56 but, again, we must not forget that the existence of a majority position does not make Rabbinic thinking uniform, any more than it does in emerging Christianity. It should also be noted that the allowance that some Gentiles are righteous did not lead to the conclusion that every Gentile is righteous; the outsider is always considered from the viewpoint of the insider. This means that Rabbinic Judaism itself determined what is required of a

53. See, e.g., b. Yev. 47b. b. Yev. 24b divides proselytes into different groups, claiming that many of them were not ‘real’ proselytes. In the extra-canonical tractate µyrg tjsm, the status of proselytes is discussed, and an attempt is made to solve the problem. M. Higger argues in his Seven Minor Treatises (New York: Bloch, 1930), that this tractate, together with six others, was produced in the period following the compilation of the Mishnah. The common view, however, is that most of them date from the post-Talmudic period (see H.L. Strack and G. Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991], pp. 252-53).

54. For a discussion of this subject, see L. Feldman, Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). See also Goodman, Mission and Conversion, arguing against the view of Feldman, and others sharing his opinion.

55. See also, e.g., b. Hag. 13a, which says that the study of the Torah is forbidden to non-Jews, making it impossible for Gentiles even to know the ethical commandments or, what would develop as the dominant solution, the seven Noahide Laws. Cf. Exod. R. (compiled about 1000 CE) 30.12 stating that this prohibition made Aquilla become a proselyte, so that he would be able to study the Torah.

Gentile in order to be called righteous. In this discussion there are different sets of laws especially designed for non-Jews. These laws varied in number from 6 to 30. The opinion that gradually became dominant was that the seven Noahide commandments provide the requirements expected of Gentiles, and this doctrine is still the dominant one in contemporary Judaism.

Before concluding with some examples from modern times, let me take a brief look at some books in the Hebrew Bible, the mother of the twins Judaism and Christianity.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are examples of solutions to a difficult situation following the Babylonian exile. Their solution was to shut all doors and try to save what was left. Accordingly here is a closed-ethnic (subgroup a.1) stance (cf., e.g., Ezra 9, 10; Neh. 13.3) with a strong inward missionary activity aiming at restoring Jewish beliefs and practices (subgroup c.3.[1]). But it is not as easy to unravel the understanding of salvation. The purpose of these texts was primarily to reform the Jewish community, and thus they do not deal with the salvation of those outside the community as a separate issue. Still, it is likely that they promoted a salvation-exclusive outlook (subgroup b.2).

The book of Jonah may be called a reaction against these views. Jonah is sent to a Gentile city to proclaim the will of God. But there is no proselytizing mission; no conversion to Judaism is required, only a change to a more ethical behaviour as defined by the author(s) of the book of Jonah. Thus there is in this text an ethical-religious mission (subgroup c.2). This attitude to mission demands a salvation-inclusive stance (subgroup b.1).

The ethnic aspect is not as easily defined. It could be classified as closed-ethnic (since Gentiles have the possibility of living a righteous life as Gentiles, and should therefore not become Jews) or open-ethnic (since

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58. This reaction has often been seen by Christian scholars as negative, since it excludes others from the religious community. For example, Davidson writes that ‘the totally negative attitude towards the non-Jewish world…was an attempt to destroy the paradox… It enthroned exclusiveness as an end in itself’ (‘Universalism in Second Isaiah’, p. 183).

59. However, we must be careful not to make too sharp a distinction between these texts. Both Ezra and Jonah may be described as closed-ethnic, since Jonah only stresses the responsibility of the Jews for other peoples; Ezra and Nehemiah have a very different purpose, which is to take care of the Jewish community.
there is no need for Gentiles to convert, even if there is no prohibition stopping them from doing so). From the text itself, nothing more than conjectures can be made. I suggest that the open-ethnic stance (subgroup a.2) is the more probable one.

Finally a word on the modern forms of Judaism and Christianity. The majority of Jewish groups today are not involved in a mission to non-Jews in any explicit way, though inward mission is as common as it has always been in most religions. Inward mission is, to be sure, also present in Christianity, but Christianity has, with different emphases in different periods of church history, always promoted a proselytizing mission (subgroup c.1). This probably has to do with its emphasis on a salvation-exclusive stance (subgroup b.2); if Christianity is the only path to salvation at the final end, Christian love—so it has been argued—demands that Christians do whatever they can to convert as many as possible. In the same way, the Jewish missionary stance can be explained by its salvation-inclusive theology (subgroup b.1); if there are alternative ways to salvation the need for a proselytizing mission will not be emphasized as strongly.60

Concerning the ethnic aspect, Judaism is today, like the majority of ancient Jewish groups, open-ethnic. Christianity is today a non-ethnic religion. It is interesting to note that this is so despite the fact that very few texts in the New Testament, if any, can be argued to take this stance. It is tempting to see here one of the main reasons for the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity; Christianity left a closed-ethnic or open-ethnic stance, proceeding via Paul’s complicated variant of closed-ethnic/open-ethnic thinking (see above) which was influenced by what originally was salvation-inclusivism (Gentiles should remain Gentiles), to a final position that lacked ethnic ties altogether. This is, however, not the place to elaborate these thoughts.

4. Conclusion

In this article I have argued that the simple distinction between universalism and particularism should be rejected. Instead, I have tried to

60. To be sure, these explanations are related to the religious texts of the respective faith. Of course one could (and should) also argue on a sociological level, and see how different conflicts, for example, have governed the development of theology.
create a new set of terms which are adapted to the demands of current scholarship. These terms concern three main aspects of a theology of religions, and may be outlined as follows:

a. The *ethnic aspect*. In this group there are three possible variants: (1) closed-ethnic religion, (2) open-ethnic religion, and (3) non-ethnic religion.

b. The second aspect is the *aspect of salvation*, and here we find two alternatives: (1) salvation-inclusive religion, and (2) salvation-exclusive religion.

c. Finally, there is the *aspect of mission*. It is possible to define mission in more detail, but in this article I have chosen only three main types: (1) proselytizing mission, (2) ethical-religious mission, and (3) inward mission.

These three aspects may relate to each other in different more or less complex ways in different religious traditions. In other words, no automatic connections exist between them, entailing that the adoption of one stance in one aspect results in a certain stance in another aspect even if some connections may be discernible.

It is hoped that these terms will facilitate a more detailed analysis and description of ancient Judaism and early Christianity than the terms ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’ allow for. As an example of the difference between the two sets of terms, it is possible to argue that a religion is universalistic if it can be labelled closed-ethnic, non-missionary, salvation-inclusive. In this case, one emphasizes the aspect of salvation. It is also possible to use the same label for a religion displaying non-ethnic, non-missionary, salvation-exclusive features; emphasis is then put on the ethnic aspect. Further, a religion which is open-ethnic, proselytizing, and salvation-exclusive may also be argued to be universalistic, placing emphasis on missionary activity. The examples could easily be multiplied.

A more precise terminology helps to avoid historical errors. Thus, it is not possible without further definitions to describe ancient Judaism as particularistic and early Christianity as universalistic; this simply fails to meet the demands of scientific argument. Instead, such terminology shows only one thing, judging from how it has been used in scholarly
literature, and that is the theological or ideological bias of the author; somehow particularism—regardless of its definition—almost always applies to Jewish texts but never to the New Testament in works by non-Jewish scholars.

On the other hand, it is not satisfying to follow Davidson and other authors who try to avoid the simple distinction between universalism and particularism by saying that we are dealing with a paradox. To be sure, paradoxes are present in the sphere of religion, and without them any religion would wither away. But we should be careful not to claim to have found paradoxes where things look different from our modern way of thinking. In many cases, it could just as much be a question of trying to see matters from a different angle. In the case treated above, the paradox was a paradox only while there were not specific enough terms to describe the phenomenon in a distinct way. What looked like contradictory statements when one used overly broad terms resolved instead into the logical consequences of the inner relation between the three different aspects of religion we have considered in this article.

Providing an adequate terminology may thus turn out to be an important task for the study of ancient Judaism and early Christianity and the relation between them. This article offers an attempt to update the terminology in this field of research.