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PAUL AND JUDAISM

Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and the
Study of Jewish-Christian Relations

EDITED BY
REIMUND BIERINGER
AND DIDIER POLLEFEYT



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PROLOGUE:
WRESTLING WITH THE JEWISH PAUL

Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt

The relationship of the early followers of Jesus to contemporary Judaism is one of the central issues of the New Testament, particularly the letters of Paul. This relation became controversial when non-Jews started to join the group of Jesus followers. The conflict that arose was not only one of membership criteria but it also raised fundamental theological questions concerning early Christian self-definition, especially in relation to the Judaism(s) of the time. The conflict played itself out as a dispute on the meaning of justification and the issue of salvation. In subsequent centuries, the New Testament texts that deal with this conflict shaped the ensuing theological discussions on who has access to salvation and how access to salvation is made possible. These soteriological discussions determined the self-understanding of the Christian churches and their relationship with the Jewish people. Since the Reformation, a consensus had developed under the influence of Protestant exegesis that Paul is at the origin of an antithesis between contemporary Judaism and Christian faith, an antithesis between works and grace, law and gospel. Consequently, Paul was seen more and more as the actual founder of Christianity while Jesus was presented as having stayed completely within the boundaries of Judaism. In this way, the traditional reading of the letters of Paul became one of the cornerstones of the Christian perception of the Jew as the 'unsaved other' which have had destructive consequences for the Jewish people. One of the key questions of the present volume is whether the traditional understanding of the process of separation of Judaism and Christianity indeed has exegetical and theological support from Paul.

1. From the Old to the New Perspective and Back

In historical perspective it was above all the traditional Lutheran doctrine of justification which determined the way scholars interpreted Paul's understanding of the relation between Judaism and Christianity. Justification means in this context that human persons are not saved by their own merits, but exclusively by God's grace made available by Christ's merits in his death on the cross. Paul's emphasis on justification by grace alone was seen as a reaction against

Judaism. Luther rejected the Roman Church of his time because in his conviction she promised salvation on the basis of works, that is, precisely for the same reason for which Paul, according to Luther, had rejected Judaism. Judaism is here understood and rejected as a legalistic religion which makes salvation dependent on human merits. In light of the dramatic events of the twentieth century, especially the Shoah, this theology of justification came under pressure. James D. G. Dunn, one of the leading scholars in the field, points out how this post-Shoah perspective made possible new developments in the field of New Testament exegesis and theology: 'Post-Holocaust theology could no longer stomach the denigration of historic Judaism.'¹

In Pauline studies the most important developments happened in the context of the so-called 'New Perspective'² which cleared the Judaism contemporary to Paul of the accusation that it is a religion based on works righteousness. Sanders introduced the term 'covenantal nomism' into the debate to summarize his understanding of Judaism as a religion based on the grace of the covenant, seeing works of the law as signs of loyalty and gratitude. Sanders stressed that Judaism like Christianity was based on God's unmerited grace. Sanders' study caused a major shift in Pauline studies because of the 'sharp contrast he drew between his restatement of Palestinian Judaism and the traditional reconstructions of Judaism within Christian theology'.³ This implied a totally new understanding of the relationship between Paul and Judaism. According to Sanders the major difference between Judaism and Pauline Christianity is not the antithesis law and grace, but the (more fundamental) difference between covenantal grace (Judaism) and the grace of the new creation in Christ (Christianity). Thus for Paul it would not be enough for Christ to undo the consequences of human sin by renewing the covenant. Rather the whole creation needs to be renewed. According to Paul this more fundamental goal can only be realized through the death and resurrection of Christ and through dying and rising with Christ (what Sanders calls 'participatory union').⁴ Dunn took 'New Perspective' theology a step further by replacing the antithesis between law and grace which was traditionally seen in Paul's theology by the antithesis between national (exclusive) and universal (inclusive). Dunn is convinced that in the theology of Paul the renewal of the covenant of Judaism in Christ takes the central position. Through the Messianic gift of the Spirit, the national borders of Israel are opened for the nations. 'It is the law understood in terms of works, as a Jewish prerogative and national monopoly, to which he [Paul] takes exception ... It is works which betoken racial prerogative to which he objects.'⁵ According to

1. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 338.

2. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1977); James D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95-122; Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215.

3. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 5.

4. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp. 513-14

5. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 200.

Dunn the conflict concerning the works of the law has to be understood as an intra-Christian clash between 'Pauline' and 'Jewish' Christianity.

The 'New Perspective' which was developed by authors such as Sanders and Dunn in order to free the relationship between Paul and Judaism from the stereotypical, potentially anti-Jewish patterns was, however, put under critique from two very different sides. Some authors try to undo the 'New Perspective' completely at the risk of reintroducing the sharp opposition between Judaism and Christianity. Gundry, for instance, tries to undermine the shift which Sanders caused in Pauline research by claiming that it is irrelevant whether Judaism at Paul's time taught works righteousness or not. According to him the only thing that counts is that Paul understood (and rejected) the Judaism of his time as a religion which taught works righteousness.⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, some authors come to the conclusion that even the shift brought about in the work of Sanders and of Dunn does ultimately not transcend the anti-Jewish character of the theology of Paul. According to them, the 'New Perspective' runs the risk of introducing new, potentially anti-Jewish patterns into the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. They accuse Sanders of replacing works righteousness by an exclusive christomonism and Dunn of replacing works righteousness by national exclusivism. The 'New Perspective' is critiqued for presenting Judaism as a religion which lacks the Spirit and which is unfaithful to its divine mission for the nations. Mark Nanos points out that the supposed intra-Christian character of the conflict is in no way able to dispel its anti-Jewishness: the same things for which Paul reproaches Jewish Christians ultimately also concern Judaism itself.⁷

In our analysis the fundamental problem in this discussion is the question of continuity and discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity and its assumed implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue. We note that it is commonly assumed that continuity is automatically favourable for the dialogue and discontinuity is automatically an obstacle for dialogue. While the traditional approach to Pauline studies emphasized strong discontinuity and had potentially anti-Jewish implications, the 'New Perspective' was commonly perceived as the rediscovery of continuity between (Palestinian) Judaism and (early) Christianity. The 'New Perspective' is usually seen as a constructive contribution to Jewish-Christian relations by those who experience the post-Shoah rapprochement of Jews and Christians as something positive. It was, however, criticized and rejected by those who see the rapprochement only as a threat to the Christian (and particularly Protestant) identity.

Next to the discussion on the continuity or discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity in the thought of Paul, a second central dimension of the relationship between Jewish and Christian identity in Paul's work concerns Paul's understanding of salvation as exclusive, inclusive or pluralist. This

6. Robert H. Gundry, *The Old is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations*, WUNT 178 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 195–224, here 223.

7. See Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

discussion is closely linked with the theological debate between the one and two covenant theories. Some authors will argue that there is only one covenant and that Christianity is an extension of the original Jewish covenant. Jews and Christians are included in the same covenant. However, authors differ as to how this inclusion is realized, sometimes understanding the original covenant as the true covenant, and the inclusion of Christians as the tail end of Judaism; sometimes, Judaism as the precursor and prefiguration of the (true) Christian covenant; sometimes, Judaism and Christianity as two modalities of the same covenant both being of equal value (inclusivism). Other authors will argue for two different covenants. Sometimes authors will argue for two successive, even mutually exclusive covenants (exclusivism); others will argue for two parallel covenants, both being of equal value and enduring legitimacy (pluralism).

Within this matrix of continuity and discontinuity on the one hand (the historical dimension) and exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism on the other (the soteriological dimension), various positions are possible. We have grouped the various contributors in this volume according to where we think their work is positioned on this historical-soteriological axis. After categorizing the different approaches, albeit in summary fashion, we will then primarily focus on presenting our own position on the matter.

1.1. Historical continuity with Judaism and soteriological inclusivism

Paul was in historical continuity with Judaism and advocated soteriological inclusivism. This position covers those who argue that Paul's gospel was compatible with the common Judaism of the Second Temple period and that Paul did not set out to start a new religion called Christianity. Rather, Paul was reforming and extending the Mosaic covenant in new ways based on the new revelation made known to him through Christ. Further, this position usually includes those who hold that Paul was soteriologically inclusive of non-Christian Jews, seeing an eventual acceptance of Christ by ethnic Israel at some point in the future.

Such a stance obviously questions E. P. Sanders' emphasis on Paul's discontinuity and his related claim that Paul transcended covenantal categories altogether through his wider stress on the 'new creation'. In this volume, Thomas Blanton, in his study 'Paul's Covenantal Theology in 2 Cor. 2.14–7.4', could be located within this approach. He contends that it is a false dichotomy to play off the particularity of the covenant against the universality of new creation, as if Paul replaced one with the other. He maintains that the covenantal nomism of Second Temple Judaism already contained the seeds for universalism within itself as standard practice.⁸ Was not the God of ethnic Israel also the maker of heaven and earth and did not the prophets proclaim that all nations would eventually look to this God for their own well-being and salvation along with Israel? Paul's use of universalistic language, such

8. Thomas Blanton, 'Paul's Covenantal Theology', pp. 61–71.

as 'new creation' or cosmic reconciliation did not then transcend covenantal categories. On the contrary, Paul's discourse in 2 Cor. 2.14–7.4 was a type of covenantal nomism itself that continued the prophetic hope for covenantal renewal.⁹ His gospel included the basic elements of covenant, obedience, reconciliation and judgement in a similar way to Sanders' covenantal nomism. In light of this, 'Paul's theology in 2 Cor. 2–7 is to be classified as a subset within the broader category, Judaism.' From this perspective, Paul was in historical continuity with Judaism and his own theologizing was broadly inclusivistic.

In a similar way to Blanton, W. S. Campbell, in his study 'Covenantal Theology and Participation in Christ: Pauline Perspectives on Transformation', seeks to emphasize aspects of 'commonality and continuity in Paul's understanding of covenant rather than those of opposition and discontinuity'.¹⁰ He understands Paul to regularly engage in comparative theology, comparing covenantal nomism (Second Temple Judaism) with what he now had in the gospel of Christ. In this regard Paul quite frequently employed *qal wahomer* arguments, meaning that he argued from the lesser (e.g., the ministry of death in 2 Cor. 3.7) to the greater (e.g., ministry of the Spirit in 2 Cor. 3.7). Contrary to common scholarly opinion, Paul was not thereby denigrating Judaism per se; he was rather upholding the value of Judaism in its covenantal nomistic form but pointing to something even greater that had arisen out of it.

At the same time, Campbell notes that though Paul operated out of a covenantal context, he did not construct a separate covenant for the gentiles or call them 'Israel' as James Dunn has argued.¹¹ Paul allowed gentiles to share in the promises of Israel through Christ, but he did not allow them to enter into Israel's covenant itself. The inclusion of the gentiles was primarily a christological issue (based on their belief in Jesus as Messiah) and not a covenantal one. What is often overlooked is that by acting in this way, Paul was actually protecting and preserving Jewish identity as a good thing. Rather than demolishing or abolishing it, Paul was actually valuing it highly enough to preserve it. That is, he sought to keep Jewish believers as Jews and gentile believers as gentiles within the one, shared church community.¹²

So Paul's comparisons with Judaism implied an underlying continuity with Judaism. Seemingly discontinuous statements made by him were not statements of ultimate value but of comparative value only. Sanders was wrong to say that Paul had transcended covenantal categories altogether. Paul still operated out of them, though he reserved covenant membership proper for the Jews alone. Gentile believers were 'in Christ' rather than 'in the covenant'.

9. Ibid.

10. W. S. Campbell, 'Covenantal Theology and Participation in Christ: Pauline Perspectives on Transformation', p. 41.

11. Dunn's comment, 'A Christianity which does not understand itself in some proper sense as "Israel" forfeits its claim to the scriptures of Israel', *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 508, cf. also pp. 509–13. Cited in Campbell, p. 12.

12. See the similarity here with Paula Fredriksen's 'Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel', *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52.

1.2. Historical continuity with Judaism in terms of Torah observance and soteriological inclusivism

Paul was in historical continuity with Judaism in terms of Torah observance and advocated a soteriological inclusivism. This position is similar to the one above, but goes deeper in that it stresses the historical continuity in terms of Paul actually keeping the Torah after coming to believe in Jesus as the Christ. This is reflected in the study by Mark Nanos, entitled 'Paul's Relationship to Torah in Light of his Strategy "to Become Everything to Everyone" (1 Corinthians 9.19-23)'. In this study Nanos takes Paul's ongoing Torah observance for granted (as a matter of covenant fidelity) and contends that his letters reflect an intra-Jewish debate about the correct interpretation of Torah and the role of those gentiles who were associating with the Jewish community. From that perspective Nanos highlights Paul's rhetorical adaptability in 1 Cor. 9.19-23 to argue from the point of view of different interlocutors in order to persuade them to come to his Torah-respecting conclusions. Paul argued according to whatever context he found himself in, for example from the standpoint of those outside the law, or from the viewpoint of those who are under the law in order to highlight his own position of being in Christ. By being in Christ one is able to 'fulfil the law', rather than be 'without it' or 'under it'. Paul attempted to sustain this position as the only truly valid one for both Jew and gentile alike. Paul was thus setting out to sanctify both the nations and the Jews who came across his path by helping them all attain the goal of the Torah, that is, righteous living. Such a reading kept Paul firmly within Judaism, even though Paul hoped that all would adopt his christocentric form of Judaism.

1.3. Historical discontinuity within a greater continuity and soteriological inclusivism

Paul had elements of historical discontinuity, but always within a greater continuity vis-à-vis Judaism. Once more the apostle advocated soteriological inclusivism. Hans Hermann Henrix, in his study entitled 'Paul at the Intersection between Continuity and Discontinuity: On Paul's Place in Early Judaism and Christianity as well as in Christian-Jewish Dialogue Today', presents such a position of discontinuity within continuity. The discontinuity is to be found in Paul's quite radical and new understanding of the Torah as now being communicated through Christ and as being embodied by him. Embracing this new insight Paul then went to the nations as a Jewish apostle to testify to this message. However, despite the seeming disjuncture with his own religious heritage, this model underlines the fact that Paul was actually 'called' to a christocentric form of Judaism rather than 'converted' to a new religion called Christianity. In a way similar to Nanos, Henrix is also open to seeing Paul and other Jewish Christians continue to live in a 'loving

correspondence with the Torah'¹³ and considers that it is misguided to imagine Paul as bringing a Law-free gospel. On the contrary, this approach maintains that such a re-evaluation of the relationship between Christ and the Torah is a very important development and one that will help overcome the negative historical view of Paulinism vis-à-vis Judaism and the Jewish people.

In a similar vein Michael Bachmann also champions a discontinuity within continuity model. In his study on 'Paul, Israel and the Gentiles: Hermeneutical and Exegetical Notes', he presents Paul as seeking to overcome the boundary markers that separated Jews from gentiles and thus to relativize the importance of the Law. However, Bachmann is keen to point out that Paul was generally positive in his comments on the Law though he was aware of how sin abused it to increase human desire for what was prohibited. Paul's problem was ultimately not the Law but rather the shortcomings of human nature that could not perform adequately under a nomistic framework. For Paul the Christ-event revealed this powerlessness and offered a spiritual transformation in a way that the Law could not. The Christ-event therefore continued at a higher level what the Law was attempting to achieve.

As a corollary this approach does not see Paul as replacing Israel with the church but as complementing Israel by the church. In Bachmann's analysis Paul retained the nomenclature 'Israel' exclusively for the Jews. Gentiles joined the 'church (of God)' but not Israel. The Pauline church could not therefore be interpreted as an anti-Judaic reality because it arose in Judaism and emerged out of Judaism. It was something like the universalization of the Jewish people. More explicitly than several of the other models presented above, this approach also touches on the soteriological question of the status of non-Christ-believing Jews. Yet in tandem with what we can assume from the trajectories of those previous approaches, this stance likewise argues that for Paul the 'salvation of all Israel' did not mean a salvation without Christ. Paul expected Israel to acknowledge Christ at the *parousia*. Nonetheless, in Bachmann's view, Paul was not responsible for disinheriting Judaism by claiming this. The church and Israel were two elect groups which would ultimately be reunited eschatologically.

1.4. *Historical continuity and discontinuity: inclusivism*

Paul had elements of historical continuity with Judaism but only within a greater discontinuity. The church today should realize that the Jews are already in a related saving relationship with God. Approaches in this vein have attempted to address the hermeneutical question regarding the gap between Paul and the contemporary church and have sought ways to understand Paul

13. Hans Hermann Henrix, 'Paul at the Intersection between Continuity and Discontinuity', p. 205, here citing from Michael Bachmann's contribution, 'Paul, Israel and the Gentiles', p. 97.

for the twenty-first century. Philip Cunningham, in his contribution 'Paul's Letters and the Relationship between the People of Israel and the Church Today', has put forward a dialectical hermeneutic that seeks to do just that. This is understood as a hermeneutic that highlights the relation between textual explanation (with a focus on the past) and textual meaning for the contemporary reader (with a focus on the present). Textual explanation includes the historical-critical and literary-critical readings which ground all legitimate interpretations. Textual meaning on the other hand includes the engagement of the reader with the text, producing the meaning of the text for today.

On the historical-critical and literary-critical levels, Paul can be shown to hold together various (paradoxical) statements. He simultaneously held to (1) the irrevocable election of all the People of Israel and the inevitable fulfilment of God's promises to them; (2) Israel's current failure to perceive these promises as being fulfilled in Christ; (3) the significance of Christ for all humanity; and (4) Christ's imminent *parousia* and the dawning of the New Creation.

On the level of textual meaning, various discrepancies between Paul's perspective and today's (Western) Christian reader come to the fore. The contemporary reader usually does not share Paul's end-times expectations. Christians also have a radically different 'effective history' vis-à-vis Judaism than in Paul's day. They now often have to learn from Jews about Judaism and Christianity's own Jewish roots. Further, in difference to Paul, the Christian religion is for all purposes a gentile Church. Any Jewish Christians that there still are usually assimilate into the gentile environment and are in any case considered non-Jews by their former co-religionists.

In dialectically contemporizing Paul through bringing these two perspectives into dialogue, Cunningham comes up with a series of guidelines, or pointers for a twenty-first-century post-Shoah Christian response and relationship to Judaism. These include the affirmation that God intends for both Judaism and Christianity to have complementary, if different, roles in the world. Their covenantal life is to be lived out in two distinct but related modalities. As a result of this, the church should no longer seek to baptize Jews, even if Paul was open to do this in his day.

1.5. Historical continuity and discontinuity: inclusivism with pluralistic tendencies

Paul had both historical continuity and discontinuity vis-à-vis Judaism. He was an inclusivist with pluralistic tendencies. John T. Pawlikowski takes this position in a study entitled 'A Christian-Jewish Dialogical Model in Light of New Research on Paul's Relationship with Judaism', related to Cunningham's approach. This position notes that thanks to the New Perspective we now have a Paul who is 'still very much a Jew, still quite appreciative of Jewish Torah with seemingly no objection to its continued practice by Jewish Christians so

long as their basic orientation is founded in Christ'.¹⁴ This model holds Christ and Torah together in an unresolved tension, though Christ takes the role of *primus inter pares*. Yet by continuing to uphold Torah, Paul was both a faithful Jew as well as the de facto 'founder' of 'Christianity' since the gentile form of his movement eventually became the norm for the whole church. Any critique Paul had on the Law was not against the Law itself but against any fellow Jewish or gentile believers who were extreme Judaizers, that is, who put Torah above and before Christ.

Pawlikowski also addresses the soteriological issues regarding non-baptized Jews and argues that Paul was not a pluralist, that is, he did not hold that Judaism and Christianity were two different ways to salvation. Yet nor was he an exclusivist who said that all peoples, including the Jews, had to confess Christ now in order to be saved. Paul in fact was an inclusivist, that is, he saw Israel and the church as ultimately enjoying the same salvation through Christ without showing how this would really come about. However, by Paul's holding onto Israel's eventual redemption even though Israel did not regard Jesus as the Messiah, Pawlikowski thinks it is best to see Paul as an inclusivist with pluralistic tendencies. From that point of view it is better to talk of 'distinctive but not distinct' paths to salvation for both Jews and Christians as 'the best current linguistic option'.¹⁵

1.6. *Historical continuity within a greater discontinuity and soteriological pluralism*

Another possible position is that represented by Hans-Joachim Sander in his chapter, 'Sharing God with Others or Dividing God from Powerlessness: a Late-Modern Challenge by the Heterotopian Experience of the New Paul'. This approach champions the New Perspective on Paul from a unique angle. It sees Paul as one who challenges religio-cultural binary oppositions that divide people. Paul sought to overcome the binary presupposition that separated Jew and gentile and he did this not by force but by presenting Christ's powerlessness. Contrary to the Lutheran reading of Paul that stressed the role and power of the individual, this new approach relativizes the power of the individual by highlighting that the fate of the individual depends on others. For example, Paul came to the insight that justification could only truly come about when both Jews and gentiles saw themselves as equal citizens in God's kingdom. Such a mutual justification does away with the binary code between 'us and them'.

This model also picks up on the turn to Paul within philosophy by writers such as Badiou, Agamben and Žižek, who explore the

14. John T. Pawlikowski, 'A Christian-Jewish Dialogical Model', p. 168.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

meaning of Paul in a post-modern context. Here Žižek's stress on the powerless of Paul's gospel and the challenge this presents to institutions and civilizations that base themselves on seeking power in perpetuity is especially highlighted. For Sander, Paul dangerously deconstructed the binary codes of inclusion and exclusion on which power is usually built by means of his message of the cross. This is what he calls Paul's heterotopian perspective that goes beyond the utopias of artificial binary constructs, whether theological, political, cultural, and so on: 'By the new perspective and by the new philosophy on Paul, Paul's canonical letters are turned into a heterotopos.'¹⁶

In terms of soteriology, this understanding of the apostle's message translates into the full acceptance of Jewish otherness, foregoing the need to have any Christian mission to the Jews. Mission, he argues, is based on a binary view of justification, that God can only save through a certain group's own salvific means. Overcoming that binary code of the 'saved' and the 'unsaved' lets God be God once more and lets him justify anyone and everyone in his own way.

1.7. Sharp historical discontinuity and soteriological exclusivism

A last position is that modelled by Michael F. Bird in his contribution 'Salvation in Paul's Judaism?'. Here he seeks to compare how Paul described salvation in Judaism with salvation in Christ. He argues that while Paul is a Jew, he is an 'in-Christ' Jew whose reconfiguration of eschatology, identity transformation and christology could no longer be accommodated within common Second Temple Judaism. Bird actually thinks that the new group of Jesus believers could be conceived of as a third race.

As regards the Law, this position holds that since it has fulfilled its goal in the life of Christ, its operation is terminated. Salvation has moved on from the Mosaic covenantal framework to faith in Christ directly. This means that Paul was largely behind the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, though what he was advocating was a surpassing of Judaism rather than setting it aside altogether.

So while Bird is in favour of advocating Paul's discontinuity with Judaism, it is a qualified discontinuity because Paul sees faith in Christ as an extension of Judaism's own scriptural heritage. On the other hand, since Paul sees Christ as the goal of Judaism, Bird is content to say that for the apostle 'salvation is of Judaism only in so far as Judaism is of Jesus Christ'.¹⁷

16. Hans-Joachim Sander, 'Sharing God with Others', p. 191.

17. Michael F. Bird, 'Salvation in Paul's Judaism?', p. 40.

2. *The Future Perspective as a New Norm for Pauline Theology*

The above overview of the positions offered in this book highlights that several scholars primarily focus on the historical question of continuity/discontinuity regarding Paul's relationship with Judaism (i.e., Blanton, Campbell, Henrix and Nanos). On the other hand, several scholars also focus on the soteriological question and the issue of whether Jews need to be baptized in order to be saved (e.g., Bachmann, Bird, Cunningham, Pawlikowski and Sander). Our above analysis has shown how the two axes of historical continuity/discontinuity on the one hand and soteriological exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism on the other come into play.

In our own analysis of the above positions we note that there are several premises at work, often interlocking and more often than not taken for granted. These are as follows.

Premise one: historical continuity is necessary between Paul and Judaism in order to justify (save) Paul in a post-Shoah context. Premise two: historical discontinuity between Paul and Judaism is bad for dialogue in a post-Shoah context. Premise three: soteriological inclusivism, and to a lesser degree exclusivism, are espoused to guarantee the christological finality of salvation history. That is, both maintain that Christ is necessary for the fullness of salvation to be achieved and enjoyed. Premise four: soteriological pluralism is generally considered theologically less attractive because it does not do full justice to either Jewish or Christian particularism.

In light of these premises, it is perhaps not surprising that we end up with the largest group of scholars covered above having a bias towards historical continuity and soteriological inclusivism. When these axes are crossed we have a picture of Paul as a Jew operating from within common Jewish theological loci and presenting a gospel that is complementary with rather than antithetical to Judaism. In this scheme of things, the Jews will still eventually need to acknowledge Christ as saviour, since the *eschaton* is the dénouement of the whole salvation historical enterprise. Only a few of the authors question that consensus. Cunningham, for example, cautions against assuming that the *eschaton* will be homogeneous and opens the door to eschatological pluralism. In a similar vein, Pawlikowski warns against assuming that Jews will have to acknowledge the coming messianic event in explicitly christological terms. Further afield, Sander contends for a de facto pluralism, limiting the meaning of Christ's universal significance to Christians alone, while Bird argues at the other end of the spectrum for a christological exclusivism that applies universally to Jews as to Christians.

This grouping of most scholars around historical continuity-cum-soteriological inclusivism actually reflects on the impact the New Perspective on Paul has had within Pauline studies over the last generation. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the New Perspective is largely responsible for challenging and even overturning the classical Baurian inspired Old Perspective that explicitly positioned Paul against Judaism, based on the Lutheran rubric of Law versus Grace. Dunn has succeeded in replacing a clear discontinuity

paradigm with a revitalized continuity one. In terms of soteriology, Dunn is also an advocate of soteriological inclusivism, to be made apparent in the eschatological era.¹⁸ His influence on the axial positioning of our contributors is therefore significant.

In our opinion, however, several of these underlying premises can be questioned. Historical continuity is not necessary in itself to justify Paul after the Holocaust. It remains a pertinent question in its own right based of course on critical historical reconstructions. We ourselves are persuaded that the move towards seeing Paul as continuing within a Jewish theological context is to be welcomed as a historically credible reading of the apostle (here broadly in agreement with the New Perspective). We are further persuaded that Paul continued to operate out of given Jewish theological premises concerning, for example, God, the covenants, the election of Israel and so on, but that is not the same thing as saying that he remained within Judaism itself.

In our opinion, the focus of Paul's gospel was ultimately the embrace of all in the new creation, which if it does not abrogate covenantal categories, certainly transcends them in its goal. While Paul does mention the new covenant in Christ (1 Cor. 11.23-26; 2 Cor. 3.6), he takes it as a starting place rather than an end in itself. For Paul, the new covenant leads to new creation (2 Cor. 3.6; 5.17). The former is indispensable for the latter, but the latter remains the ultimate goal. By new creation (Gal. 6.15; 2 Cor. 5.17) we mean Paul's understanding of God's dream to establish justice, well-being and life for all, the earth included (Rom. 8.19-21; 1 Cor. 15.28). Such a horizon, or rather the joining of the two horizons of heaven and earth, cannot easily be contained within a covenantal framework since covenants are normally particular expressions of the divine-human relationship and can only with difficulty capture the universal outworking of what they themselves represent. The new covenant, for example, points towards the eventual justice of God on the earth, which remains an eschatological dream, and to a large extent the sign of an unrealized signified. But it is that very dream that is at the heart of Paul's message, rather than the re-establishment of a covenantal framework. So while there is undoubted historical and theological continuity between Paul and Judaism, it is our understanding that such continuities take place within a more fundamental discontinuity, since what is signified in Paul's new covenant in Christ points to a transformative future that for Paul was already dawning and which was all-embracing.

Paul's vision was ultimately not christocentric nor even pneumatocentric but theocentric. His furthest horizon was God becoming 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15.28), a view that surpassed Jewish distinctives and particularities, as well as Christian ones. The reality of the new creation was all-absorbing for Paul (though he was admittedly inconsistent in how he lived out its ideal) and in our opinion it still presents challenges for any type of covenantal language to mediate it.

18. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 508; idem, 'Two Covenants or One? The Interdependence of Jewish and Christian Identity', in eds Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger and Peter Schäfer, FS M. Hengel, *Geschichte-Tradition-Reflexion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), pp. 97-122, here 117.

Further, we are persuaded hermeneutically that we do not need to stay encamped at the last place Paul visited in his own developing understanding of the relationship between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' or the church and the synagogue. While it is clear that Paul held elements of both exclusivism and inclusivism together without working out the systematic relationship between them, we, two millennia later, can certainly re-evaluate that relationship according to our own vision for the now in light of how we understand the future. Without a doubt there has been much that could be considered tragic in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* and *Auslegungsgeschichte* of both Pauline and New Testament texts in general vis-à-vis the Jewish people. We realize that the mediation of all revelation comes through soiled hands and that ours today are no different. We cannot divorce ourselves from our previous tradition, nor stand in judgement over it from some Archimedian point. We are rather an extension of our ongoing tradition in its totality and, in dialogue with it, we take up responsibility for how we continue its witness in our generation and beyond.

This is where a closer analysis of the hermeneutical approach known as Normativity of the Future may come in useful.¹⁹ In this perspective the stress is laid upon the 'dialogical dimensions of the theology of revelation' as expressed, for example, in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council *Dei Verbum* 2.²⁰ This dialogical aspect puts an emphasis on the contemporary reading community and their ability, through engaging with the Spirit who transcends the text, to go beyond the limitations of the biblical text and 'write their own fifth gospel'.²¹ This future-orientated hermeneutic 'look[s] at texts from the perspective of their future and ... [sees] the locus of revelation in that future'.²² The future unfolded by the texts is an alternative world. The criteria for discerning which elements of that alternative projection could be used as building blocks for better representing God's ultimate dream for humanity is expressed as 'those things which allow for or even create a future for all humanity without exception', that is, 'a vision of a just and inclusive community'.²³

19. Reimund Bieringer and Mary Elsbernd, 'Introduction: The "Normativity of the Future" Approach: Its Roots, Development, Current State and Challenges', in idem, eds, *Normativity of the Future: Reading Biblical and Other Authorative Texts in an Eschatological Perspective* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 3–25.

20. Ibid., p. 4. See further, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965), no. 2, which includes the words: 'Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1.15; 1 Tim. 1.17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33.11; John 15.14–15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3.38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself.' Available online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed 26 October 2010).

21. Reimund Bieringer, 'Biblical Revelation and Exegetical Interpretation According to *Dei Verbum* 12', in eds M. Lamberigts and L. Kenis, *Vatican II and Its Legacy*, BETL 166 (Leuven: Leuven University Press; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2002), pp. 25–58 (52).

22. Bieringer and Elsbernd, 'Introduction: The "Normativity of the Future"', p. 5.

23. Ibid., p. 7.

While being aware that the future per se is not necessarily superior to the present or the past, and that ideological distortion may still be present in one's understanding of a biblically inspired future, the position is taken that the future vision contained in the texts could certainly make ethical and theological claims on the present.²⁴ In that sense, the texts are not to be taken as simple scripts to be slavishly followed, nor are they even to be endlessly reinterpreted in a search for their permanent core principles. Rather they have a 'paradigmatic value' which means that 'the reading community has the task of reading and internalizing the ancient text as the first chapters of a chain novel of which they have to write the next chapter'.²⁵

The reading community is encouraged to write that new chapter in light of what they discerned as the Normativity of the Future, since its association with God's vision for humanity entails a certain hermeneutical privilege over the present and the past. Moreover, the future's inclusive justice as the horizon of the biblical texts and of the texts of Paul in particular ('God become all in all' in 1 Cor. 15.28) is to take precedence over any conflict of values encountered in the historical or literary dimensions of the text.²⁶ In other words, marginalizing, discriminating, or of course in our case, supersessionary elements in the biblical story and in Paul's letters in particular, could be openly challenged in the name of what that story ultimately pointed towards – the inclusive and life-giving reign of God. Here the text certainly takes a privileged place vis-à-vis the author, but for their part the reading community is not just asked to re-engage with the text in a new way, rather it is asked to write a new text, in line with what the biblical text had taught the community about God's dream. In that sense the Bible is not to be treated as a closed canon but as an open narrative to which each generation has its own contributions to make. All authors, of course, whether past or present, have to take responsibility for the consequences of their writings including any effects it may have (or had had) on others. 'Scholarship is a political act.'²⁷

In our understanding, from a Normativity of the Future approach we are encouraged by our vision of the future to position ourselves on the borderlands of inclusivism-pluralism, certainly as it concerns the Jewish-Christian relationship. God is in a permanent relationship with the Jewish people. That guarantees their salvation. Where Paul lost sight of that in his writings, the contemporary church community needs to enter into constructive dialogue with him in light of his own future vision. We can also agree with those who, like Sanders, critique the all too common power plays attendant to soteriological debates. Christ does not need to save everybody directly in order for him to remain as the Christ. God has many ways to express his commitment and love to creation. Regaining a theocentric vision, the real *telos* of Paul's new creation, is actually continuing the Pauline project and exploring further the avenues he all too vaguely mapped out.

24. Ibid., pp. 6–9.

25. Ibid., p. 10.

26. Ibid., p. 12.

27. Ibid., p. 16.