

# CONTENTS

PREFACE	<i>ix</i>
ABBREVIATIONS	<i>xü</i>
1. PAUL AND HISTORY	1
INTRODUCTION • PAUL, APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES • THE ELUSIVE PAUL • PAUL AND JUDAISM • THE AIM AND OUTLINE OF THIS BOOK • PAUL—FROM PHARISEE TO APOSTLE	
2. THE EMERGENCE OF A PARADIGM	33
THE TÜBINGEN SCHOOL AND GERMAN IDEALISM • ANTI-SEMITISM IN ANTIQUITY • LAW VERSUS GRACE—LUTHER AND PROTESTANTISM • NINETEENTH-CENTURY EFFECTS	
3. THE FORMATION OF THE STANDARD VIEW OF PAUL	69
RUDOLF BULTMANN • THE BULTMANN SCHOOL • PAUL VERSUS JUDAISM	
4. TOWARD A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL	95
A CHANGED WORLD • THE PREREQUISITE—A NEW VIEW OF JUDAISM • NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PAUL	
5. BEYOND THE NEW PERSPECTIVE	127
PAUL AND THE PARALLEL COVENANTS—LLOYD GASTON • PAUL AND HALAKAH—PETER J. TOMSON • PAUL AND SELF-CONTROL—STANLEY STOWERS • PAUL, THE JEW AMONG THE NATIONS—MARK D. NANOS • PAUL AND ETHNICITY—CAROLINE JOHNSON HODGE • CONCLUSION	
6. IN DEFENSE OF PROTESTANTISM	165
FROM PLIGHT TO SOLUTION—FRANK S. THIELMAN • BEYOND COVENANTAL NOMISM—A. ANDREW DAS • BOASTING IN CHRIST—SIMON J. GATHERCOLE • THE EXPLICITLY LUTHERAN PAUL—STEPHEN WESTERHOLM • CONCLUSION	
7. BREAKING BOUNDARIES	195
PAUL AND THE PHILOSOPHERS • POSTCOLONIAL APPROACHES • PAUL AND THE FEMINISTS • MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES • CONCLUSION	
8. CONCLUSION—HISTORY AND PAUL	225
PAUL—FROM HEGEL TO ŽIŽEK • THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON PAUL • KNOWING THE TRUTH	
NOTES	241
BIBLIOGRAPHY	249
INDEX	261



## PREFACE

The study of Paul involves a paradox that is rather unique in the field of religious studies. On the one hand, Pauline theology, carefully extracted from the apostle's literary production, is one of the cornerstones upon which the Christian church is built. Several important Christian doctrines—"righteousness through faith alone" being the most famous one—represent a very precise understanding of what Paul intended to communicate to his audience. Thus, with regard to certain aspects of vital importance for the Christian church over the centuries, there has been a rather general agreement on what Paul meant. The vast majority of Pauline scholars have commonly agreed that Paul broke radically with Judaism and that he ceased observing the Jewish law in a Jewish way. According to this understanding, the historical Paul clearly lived in a state of opposition to Judaism.

On the other hand, among scholars who generally share this overarching perspective on Paul, there has simultaneously been a considerable disagreement over what Paul really wanted to say. Scholars have developed various strategies for coming to terms with apparent inconsistencies in Paul's thinking. In recent decades, the situation has become yet more complicated: an increasing number of scholars have begun to question one of the few areas where up to now there has been a fairly widespread consensus: *Paul's relation to Judaism*.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, Pauline scholarship has experienced a virtual explosion of interpretations that aim at explaining Paul *without assuming a radical break with Judaism*. Some scholars even believe that Paul continued to observe the Torah after his transforming vision of the risen Christ and that he believed that only non-Jews should refrain from Torah observance. If this is true, it seems to mean that the church will need to revisit some of its fundamental doctrines.

Pauline scholarship today may best be described as including two fundamental approaches to Paul that are really impossible to reconcile: one that assumes that Paul broke with Judaism, and one that presumes that he remained within Judaism. Within both these paradigms there are

considerable variations. With Pauline studies we are entering a world where almost nothing seems certain any longer, and the focus of this book is precisely this variation of perspectives and mutually irreconcilable readings of Paul. Thus, the reader who expects to find in this book the ultimate answers to the question of who Paul really was will be disappointed. With regard to the historical Paul, I am afraid that this book provides very few absolute answers. Rather, the aim of the present study is to point to the questions and to perhaps contribute an explanation as to why Pauline scholarship has developed in this peculiar way.

This book focuses on the significance of the underlying assumptions in Pauline scholarship. For that reason it is perhaps only fair that I give an account of some of my own. In general, I approach the issue of Paul and Judaism from a secular perspective. This means, for instance, that I am not affiliated with any religious community. I generally lack theological convictions and consequently have no theology to defend. Having said that, it should be clear that I do not mean to suggest that this state of affair guarantees scholarly objectivity or freedom from influencing biases—only that my biases are of a different kind. It will probably become clear in the book that I side with those scholars who regard Paul as a part of first-century Judaism. I firmly believe that trying to understand Paul as *connected* to Judaism, rather than in *conflict* with Judaism, is a better perspective when searching for the historical Paul.

I am quite aware that recognizing the connection between the traditional Christian teaching on Paul and the crimes committed against the Jewish people throughout history has led me to take this position. I must confess that I find it strange that so much Pauline scholarship, even in a post-Holocaust perspective, still insists on showing the inferiority of Judaism in comparison to Christianity. However, the most decisive reason for assuming a Jewish Paul is, in my view, the history of Pauline scholarship itself. Considering the historical situation in which the Christian anti-Semitic discourse emerged and how this emergence led to the formation of a pattern of thought within Western civilization that emphasized the opposition between Judaism and Christianity, I find it hard to take seriously this *theological* pattern as a fundamental point of departure for a *historical* study of Paul. Thus I am convinced that Pauline scholarship needs to explore other interpretive keys than the dogmatically motivated dichotomy between Judaism and Christianity.

Part of my agenda certainly is to invite new generations of Pauline scholars to engage in such an enterprise, which I believe in no way constitutes a threat to Christian theology. The only threat is to certain preconceived ways of creating theology that, from a Jewish perspective—*Paul's* perspective—would appear hopelessly disconnected from the historical roots of the Christian church.

Publishing books is rarely a one-person show. Behind the scene, several people are usually involved in various ways and deserve the gratitude of the author (who gets all the royalties). So also in the case of this book: as always, Karin, my best colleague and my partner in life, has been a keen discussion companion also with regard to this project. She has read and commented on various versions and provided all other kinds of support that have made it possible for me to bring this project to an end. In addition, I am indebted to Sven Heilo, Bengt Holmberg, Mark Nanos, and Birger Olsson, who have all read the whole or parts of the manuscript and suggested important improvements. The same is true for Neil Elliott at Fortress, who together with Marissa Bauck and the rest of the Fortress staff have turned this project into a really pleasant publishing experience.

I have benefitted from two sabbaticals at Yale University. During my first visit, in 2004–2005, I first began planning this book, which I am now about to complete during my second visit, this present semester. Thus, I wish to express my gratitude, especially to Dale Martin in the Religion Department and to Harold Attridge at Yale Divinity School, for allowing me to be part of the intellectual milieu of this fine institution.

Financial supporters indeed belong to the circle of those who deserve my gratitude. Parts of the book were written when I was a Research Fellow at the Swedish Research Council during the spring semester 2009. In addition, I received a generous scholarship from The Lars Hierta Memorial Foundation in 2007. For this important form of assistance I am truly grateful.

Finally, I have dedicated this book to the memory of my parents as a small token of appreciation for an upbringing characterized by the constant challenge to question authorities and those who claim to possess the absolute truth. In the end, that is, of course, what scholarship really is about.