

T. E. VAN SPANJE

# Inconsistency in Paul?

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

110

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**Mohr Siebeck**

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe

Herausgegeben von  
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

110



T. E. van Spanje

# Inconsistency in Paul?

A Critique of the Work of Heikki Räisänen

Mohr Siebeck

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*Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme*

*Spanje, Teunis Erik van:*

Inconsistency in Paul? : a critique of the work of Heikki Räisänen /

T. E. van Spanje. – Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 1999

(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament : Reihe 2 ; 110)

Einheitssacht.: Inconsistentie bij Paulus? <engl.>

ISBN 3-16-147188-1

978-3-16-157212-8 Unveränderte eBook-Ausgabe 2019

© 1996 Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok B.V., Kampen, The Netherlands.

Title of the original edition: T.E. van Spanje: *Inconsistentie bij Paulus? Een confrontatie met het werk van Heikki Räisänen.*

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The book was printed by Druck Partner Rübemann GmbH in Hemsbach on non-aging paper from Papierfabrik Schleipen and bound by Heinr. Koch in Tübingen.

Printed in Germany.

ISSN 0340-9570

*To the Senate  
of the Reformed Theological University  
of Kampen (Broederweg), the Netherlands,  
as a token of gratitude  
for the degree of Doctor of Theology*



## Preface

On 18 December 1996 I had the privilege of defending the Dutch version, *Inconsistentie bij Paulus? Een confrontatie met het werk van Heikki Räisänen*, of this present volume, as my doctoral thesis. After the publication of the Dutch version in which an English summary had been included, it appeared that some colleagues in the English-speaking world were interested in reading the entire study. I also learned that my thesis dealt with an increasingly important debate in contemporary New Testament studies, especially within international New Testament scholarship. In sum, I felt I might serve many others by an English translation so that more people could read it. At the same time, an English translation might perhaps facilitate the discussion with my Finnish interlocutor, Professor Heikki Räisänen. The fact that I am working within an English-speaking setting further stimulated this project. It was, however, not my intention to offer an English translation which would be as literal as possible. My main aim was, by interacting with Heikki Räisänen, to point out clearly my own view on the question of whether Paul's letters are consistent rather than to give a very literal translation of the Dutch version.

Before starting the project, I had to decide how to deal with the overwhelming amount of literature which had been published on Paul's letters during the years after I finished work on the Dutch version of my thesis (September 1996). For a proper update of my thesis, all those studies on Paul were, of course, not to be ignored. Yet I decided to confine myself only to the most important and relevant publications such as J.D.G. Dunn's extensive and impressive *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, published in 1998. Since Dunn has embraced E.P. Sanders' view on Judaism, his recent *magnum opus* on Paul undoubtedly represents a very influential mainstream within contemporary Pauline scholarship. I also found some other relevant literature published in 1996 or earlier of which I had been unaware before. Again I followed the same procedure as for the Dutch version: I selected only those publications which were in my view



really relevant to the topic of my research. It also happened that some publications which I did not find it worthwhile to refer to in my Dutch version I now believed should be mentioned due to some minor shifts in contemporary research on Paul's letters.

I also had to decide whether the quotations in German should be translated as well. After due consideration I decided not to translate them since German is so widely used within New Testament scholarship.

After the completion and the defence of my Dutch version I did some further research on Paul's letters, especially on his view of the law, fascinated as I was (and still am) by these earliest documents of the New Testament. During the past few years I did not feel I had to revise my interpretation of Paul. On the contrary, I am still convinced that there appears to be a consistency in Paul's letters to a great extent. Consequently the overall thrust of the English translation is basically *similar* to that of the Dutch edition. Yet there are a few minor modifications to the Dutch version. Firstly, as pointed out above, I tried to update my translation of the Dutch version by incorporating some of the most important recent studies. Secondly, I also added some other material in support of my own interpretation of Paul. Thirdly, at some points I believed that some further clarifications might be useful, mainly in order to avoid possible misunderstandings. Finally, I offer a considerable number of quotations in the first part of this volume, since this is intended to be an accurate description of Heikki Räisänen's view on Paul. To increase the clarity of the presentation I now decided to offer the lengthy quotations in separate paragraphs.

Before the publication of the *Dutch* Edition, Heikki Räisänen was unfortunately not able to comment on my manuscript. After its publication, however, he read my study and commented on my own very different understanding of Paul. We corresponded several times by e-mail, and we both agreed that it would be inappropriate to publish or quote from our private correspondence. I am very grateful for the time he gave to entering into discussion with me.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Peter W. Ensor, Dr. Charles S. Morrice, Dr. R. Dean Anderson Jr., and especially to Dr. David Marshall. They read some parts of my translation or even the study as a whole, and kindly made suggestions to improve its English style. I am equally grateful for their critical remarks. I am also grateful to Professor Jakob van Bruggen who was my supervisor during my ThD studies. His guidance and directions were very helpful, and I very much enjoyed being one of his students for a couple of years. I would also like to thank the

publisher of the Dutch version, Kok-Kampen (the Netherlands), for giving permission to publish this translation. I am also grateful to the editors Professor Martin Hengel and Professor Otfried Hofius for their willingness to include this present study in their WUNT Series. I would also like to thank the staff of J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) in Tübingen. It was a pleasure to work with them and to experience their efficiency. The Dutch version was dedicated to my wife. Without her moral support neither the Dutch nor the English Edition would ever have been published. To honour the Reformed University in Kampen (Broederweg) for awarding me the degree of *doctor theologiae* I strongly felt it to be appropriate to dedicate the present volume to the Senate of this University.

T.E. van Spanje  
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Limuru (Kenya), July 1999



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## Abbreviations

<i>ANRW</i>	H. Temporini – W. Haase (Ed.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Berlin–New York.
<i>BDR</i>	F. Blass – A. Debrunner – F. Rehkopf, <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> .
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JPT</i>	H. Räisänen, <i>Jesus, Paul and Torah</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>NorJ</i>	<i>Nordisk Judaistik</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>SEA</i>	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>TC</i>	H. Räisänen, <i>The Torah and Christ</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TTh</i>	<i>Tijdschrift voor Theologie</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WZNT</i>	W. Bauer, <i>Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur</i> .
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>



## Chapter 1

# Introduction: Heikki Räisänen

### *1.1 Inconsistency*

It has frequently been argued in theological literature and especially in New Testament research that Paul's statements are not consistent or that they display a certain amount of inconsistency. In 1907, W. Wrede wrote about Paul:

Man kann leicht sehen, daß seine Gedankengänge etwas sehr Elastisches haben. Gewisse unverrückbare Hauptlinien sind vorhanden, im übrigen bewegt sich das Denken von Brief zu Brief, ja von Kapitel zu Kapitel recht sorglos und frei, ganz unbekümmert um die logische Übereinstimmung des Einzelnen. Die Gesichtspunkte und Begründungen wechseln, sie durchkreuzen einander, ohne daß Paulus es merkt. Es ist daher gar keine Kunst, Widersprüche bei ihm aufzustöbern, selbst in Hauptgedanken.<sup>1</sup>

With reference to Rom 9–11, J. Parkes stated in 1936:

Difficult as it is to penetrate into the contradictions of Pauline thought, it is better to try to do so than to attempt to make a logical and consistent whole of his teaching, if logic and consistency really lack.<sup>2</sup>

In a completely different context (the dispute between Peter and Paul, Gal 2:11–14), P. Gaechter argued in 1958:

Paulus war nicht der Mann ruhigen, diskursiven Denkens, der zu seinen Schlußfolgerungen über die Stufen logischer Entfaltung der Prämissen gelangte und dabei seinen Gegenstand sorglich nach allen Seiten hin zu beleuchten strebte, wie etwa Thomas von Aquin oder Suarez. Seine Art war intuitiv; er drang zum Wesen seines Gegenstandes vor, ohne sich der logischen Deduktion bewußt zu werden, und das jeweils nur unter dem Gesichtswinkel, der ihn im Moment gerade interessierte. Anderes daran, was unter andern Rücksichten ebenso wichtig war, wurde zwar nicht verneint, aber auch nicht berücksichtigt. Wie er dachte, so schrieb er, daher die Einseitigkeit in seinen Briefen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Paulus* 48–9.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus, Paul and the Jews* 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Petrus und seine Zeit. Neutestamentliche Studien* 217.

In his study on Paul (1976), M. Grant stated:

For Paul's mind, despite its great strength, remained undisciplined, paying scant attention to the niceties of rational coherence. The Letters are vividly varied and lively, but unrounded, unarranged and muddled, making their points not by any orderly procedure but by a series of hammer-blow contrasts and antitheses. Paul is far too impulsive and enthusiastic to standardize his terms or arrange his material. He is often ambiguous – with results that have reverberated down the centuries. And he commits *flagrant self-contradictions*<sup>4</sup>, which caused Augustine<sup>5</sup>, among many others, the deepest anxiety.<sup>6</sup>

Many more quotations could be given to show that a number of interpreters argue that Paul's statements are inconsistent.

What does one mean by the term 'inconsistency'? This term could be defined as the impossibility of harmonizing Paul's statements on the same topic in a *logical* way. Instead of inconsistencies, we can also speak of contradictions.<sup>7</sup>

In the second half of this century, the New Testament scholar *Heikki Räisänen*<sup>8</sup> has intensively studied the question of whether and to what extent Paul is a consistent writer. This Finnish scholar also claims that Paul's statements are far from consistent.<sup>9</sup> Although many interpreters regard Paul's thoughts as inconsistent (see quotations above), there are, as far as I can see, very few interpreters who have pointed out inconsistency in Paul in such a systematic way as Räisänen has done. In comparison with others, the research done by Räisänen is characterized by the fact that he not only concentrates on the inconsistent way Paul writes and thinks, but also labels the different inconsistencies and gives a systematic overview of them. He offers such an overview in, for example, his article 'Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law', published in the collection *The Torah and Christ*.<sup>10</sup> Almost the same overview, although a much more extensive one along with a lot of comments, is offered in his *Paul and the*

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<sup>4</sup> My italics.

<sup>5</sup> Grant refers to Augustine's *Confessions* 7:21.

<sup>6</sup> *Saint Paul* 6. In his *Paul and the Law* 11–2 note 72, H. Räisänen also refers to this study by Grant. Yet he mistakenly refers to the wrong page in *Saint Paul*.

<sup>7</sup> In section 10.2, the term inconsistency in connection with Räisänen will be further defined.

<sup>8</sup> Heikki Räisänen (born in 1941) became Doctor of Theology in 1969 having written his thesis *Die Mutter Jesu im Neuen Testament*. From 1975, he has been Professor in New Testament Exegesis at the University of Helsinki, while he has been Research Professor at the Finnish Academy from 1984 until 1994. In 1990, he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>9</sup> "... the complexity (for me, inconsistency) is there", 'Experience' 19.

<sup>10</sup> *The Torah and Christ* 3–24. For the overview, see 'Difficulties' 8–9.

*Law*.<sup>11</sup> Räisänen himself admits that his research is characterized by labelling the different inconsistencies and by giving an overview of them.

Few if any of what I have called contradictions in Paul's view were discovered by me for the first time (although in some cases it was only afterwards that I found out that I had predecessors). What makes my book<sup>12</sup> different is, I believe, the *cumulative*<sup>13</sup> effect, along with my refusal to accept a 'dialectical'<sup>14</sup> explanation.<sup>15</sup>

Although he emphatically rejects a dialectical explanation for Paul's inconsistency, such a refusal is not characteristic only of Räisänen's research, since there are other New Testament scholars who have also refused to accept the same dialectical explanation.<sup>16</sup> The most significant characteristic of his research is, however, the 'cumulative' aspect: Räisänen enumerates several inconsistencies in Paul so that one inconsistency intensifies the other. He not only talks about inconsistency as such, but about *inconsistencies* (in plural). These inconsistencies are, in fact, nothing else than contradictions. Therefore, in his publications he refers to these inconsistencies as "anomalies", "tensions" or "(self-)contradictions".

In Räisänen's view, Paul argues inconsistently especially *with reference to two theological themes*, namely (1) in the theme of the law (or Torah); and (2) in the theme of Israel. Here a number of *publications* by Räisänen will be mentioned where his treatment of the inconsistencies can be found. Subsequently, these inconsistencies will be briefly described in sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

### (1) *The theme of the law*

Here we must mention at least two important publications by Räisänen. In the first place there is his article 'Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law', included in the collection *The Torah and Christ*. Originally, this article was presented as a lecture at the "Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies" in Oxford in 1978. In this article, Räisänen, as far as the inconsistencies within the theme of the law are concerned, pointed out the main lines for another publication, namely his *Paul and the Law* (1983,

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<sup>11</sup> *Paul* 16–161.

<sup>12</sup> Here the reference is to *Paul and the Law*.

<sup>13</sup> My italics. In *The Torah and Christ* 60, in which the same article from *Jesus, Paul and Torah* was published earlier, the same word is italicized by Räisänen himself.

<sup>14</sup> This dialectical explanation will come up for discussion in section 3.1.2.

<sup>15</sup> *Jesus, Paul and Torah* 18. Here it concerns the article 'Paul's Call Experience and his Later View of the Law' published in the collection *Jesus, Paul and Torah* 15–47.

<sup>16</sup> See section 3.1.

second Edition in 1987).<sup>17</sup> In his Preface to *Paul and the Law*, Räisänen writes that in 1974 his study of Hans-Joachim Schoeps' *Paulus* drew his attention to a "... whole set of problems I had been happily unaware of".<sup>18</sup> The problems related to Paul's discussion of the law have not given him rest ever since. In the same Preface, he also writes that the publication by E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, has profoundly influenced him, and that "... the publication of Sanders's illuminating work was like a gift from heaven for my own quest".<sup>19</sup> After reading this last study, Räisänen had a fruitful correspondence with Sanders, who read a major part of *Paul and the Law* before its publication and made suggestions. In 1982, Räisänen rounded off his further study in Cambridge and Tübingen with his *Paul and the Law* which is definitely his most important publication, and which has been both praised and criticized.

In 'Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law' and in *Paul and the Law*, it is unequivocally stated that Paul did not succeed in making theological statements on the law in a consistent way. Besides these two publications, Räisänen has written much more on the problem of inconsistency in Paul, mainly with reference to the response to his *Paul and the Law*. Yet, the basic thoughts have already been laid down in the two publications mentioned above. Therefore, when discussing the theme of the law in this study, both the article and the book mentioned above will be our primary sources. All other publications which are important for our discussion of the law will be referred to as necessary, and will be reviewed in a later stage of this study.

## (2) *The theme of Israel*

Two important articles by Räisänen on this theme must be mentioned. In the first place there is 'Römer 9–11: Analyse eines geistigen Ringens', published in the monumental work *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* in 1987. In the second place, the article 'Paul, God, and Israel: Romans 9–11 in Recent Research', which was published in 1988, must be mentioned. These two articles have caused much less response than, for example, *Paul and the Law*. In this study, therefore, more attention will be paid to the inconsistencies within the theme of the law

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<sup>17</sup> Also with reference to 'Difficulties', Räisänen says: "... which summarize some of the main arguments of the book in a preliminary form", *The Torah and Christ* iii. By "the book" is meant *Paul and the Law*.

<sup>18</sup> *Paul* v.

<sup>19</sup> *Paul* v.

than to the inconsistencies within the theme of Israel as detected by Räisänen.

Both themes will now be briefly described.

### 1.1.1 Paul's view of the law

The inconsistencies which Räisänen detects within Paul's view of the law will be briefly described in a concise overview without details in order to get an impression of the whole issue. During the course of this study these inconsistencies will be further elaborated and described.<sup>20</sup>

Räisänen mentions altogether seven inconsistencies. The first two inconsistencies concern the fact that Paul does not unequivocally define the term *nomos* (as far as Paul offers a definition of *nomos*<sup>21</sup>). Paul's view of the law "oscillates" in two different ways:

1. There is a strange "oscillation" in Paul when it comes to the question: who is under the curse of the law?<sup>22</sup> Is it only the Jews, or also the Gentiles? Although the law is connected first and foremost with the Jews and not with the Gentiles, Paul claims that the Gentiles are also under the curse of the law.

One cannot avoid noticing 'a strange oscillation of the concept of law in Paul' – an oscillation between the notion of a historical and particularist Torah and that of a general universal force.<sup>23</sup>

There is in Paul a so-called 'chronological', 'historical' or 'particularist' use of the law, which means a use of the law merely in connection with the Jews. But there is also a 'universal' use of the law in Paul, which means, in this context, a use of the law in connection with the Gentiles. According to Räisänen, both uses exclude each other.

2. Paul does not make a clear distinction between the ritual and the moral law.<sup>24</sup> He gives the impression of discussing only the moral law, while the law also has certain ritual contents. In Paul, therefore, the meaning of the law oscillates so that there is a "looseness of speech"<sup>25</sup>.

3. There is no clarity in Paul on the question of whether the law has been abrogated.<sup>26</sup> "Thus we find two conflicting lines of thought in Paul's

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter 2. In 'Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law' 8–9, the inconsistencies are concisely mentioned and very briefly discussed. In *Paul and the Law* 16–161, however, the inconsistencies are indicated and discussed in detail.

<sup>21</sup> See *Paul* 16–8.

<sup>22</sup> See *Paul* 18–23. This inconsistency is not mentioned in so many words in 'Difficulties'.

<sup>23</sup> *Paul* 21.

<sup>24</sup> See *Paul* 23–8.

<sup>25</sup> The term is from P. Gardner. See *Paul* 28.

<sup>26</sup> See *Paul* 42–83.



theology of the law. Paul asserts both the abolition of the law and also its permanently normative character".<sup>27</sup>

4. Nobody can fulfil the law since otherwise Christ would have died in vain. Yet, Christians and even non-Christian Gentiles are said to fulfil the law.<sup>28</sup> "Paul's mind is divided".<sup>29</sup>

5. According to Gal 3:15–20, the law is not of divine origin. This is the opposite of what is stated in Rom 7 and 8.<sup>30</sup>

6. On the one hand the power of sin in the world is due to Adam's fall (Rom 5), while on the other hand this power is due to the law (Rom 7). According to Rom 7, sin was dead before the introduction of the law, whereas according to Rom 5, sin was already a power and a concrete reality since Adam.<sup>31</sup>

7. The law has been given in order to give life (Rom 7:10), while the same law has never had life-giving power (2 Cor 3, Rom 8:3, and Gal 3:21).<sup>32</sup> In this connection, one of the problems is that the law was only a temporary addition to God's 'testament' (Gal 3:15ff), while a dramatic act on God's part was still needed to liberate men from its curse (Gal 3:13).<sup>33</sup>

These seven inconsistencies are immanent within Paul's own thoughts. If we pay attention not only to the logic of Paul's statements but also to their premises, then three *other difficulties* can be indicated<sup>34</sup>:

1. In comparison with the Jewish methods of interpreting the Old Testament, Paul distorts the exegesis of some Old Testament passages. This problem, which is not separately discussed in *Paul and the Law*, does not bear on the central concerns of this study and therefore will not receive any further treatment.

2. The statement that the law engenders and increases sin is, at least, problematic.<sup>35</sup> This will be discussed in connection with inconsistency 6 (see above).

3. Why should someone fulfil the entire law and why is the possibility of repentance excluded? These questions are related to another question, namely: how should we interpret the Jewish religion in Paul's time?

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<sup>27</sup> *Paul* 69.

<sup>28</sup> *Paul* 94–119.

<sup>29</sup> *Paul* 107.

<sup>30</sup> *Paul* 128–33. Yet, this inconsistency is not mentioned in 'Difficulties'.

<sup>31</sup> *Paul* 140–50.

<sup>32</sup> *Paul* 150–4.

<sup>33</sup> See 'Difficulties' 9. In *Paul* 150–4, this difficulty is labelled as the problem of so-called theodicy.

<sup>34</sup> See 'Difficulties' 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Paul* 140–50.

E.P. Sanders in particular has sparked off this discussion by his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. This set of problems will *not* be discussed *now*, because this is only an overview. Besides, questions on the understanding of the Jewish religion in Paul's day do not constitute an inconsistency as such. We shall return to this set of problems in section 4.2.1.

### 1.1.2 Paul's view of Israel

Räisänen has also done some research on Rom 9–11. In these three chapters, Paul discusses problems related to Israel. Although there are many themes discussed in Rom 9–11, Räisänen writes:

Während alle diese Themen wenigstens in Ansätzen in den betreffenden Kapiteln vorhanden sind, herrscht heute große Einmütigkeit darüber, daß die Behandlung des Problems der *Treue Gottes* in bezug auf seine Verheißungen an Israel das eigentliche Anliegen des Apostels ist.<sup>36</sup>

The expositions by Paul in Rom 9–11 arouse many questions, such as:

Wie hat sich Paulus die Art der anvisierten Rettung vorgestellt? Hat er gar an einen 'Sonderweg' gedacht, so daß Israel das eschatologische Heil erreichen wird, ohne zum Glauben an Jesus Christus zu kommen? Wie verhält sich die Zusage einer sicheren Rettung ganz Israels zu früheren Aussagen über Israel in 1 Thess oder Gal? Hat sich die Theologie des Paulus etwa nach der Abfassung des Galaterbriefes erheblich entwickelt, oder hat sie gar gewechselt? Wenn aber Röm 11 eine neue Entwicklungsstufe darstellt, was ist dann mit Röm 9? Viele Exegeten, die die Entwicklungshypothese nicht teilen, meinen, daß Röm 9 und Röm 11 sich widersprechen.<sup>37</sup>

With regard to Rom 9–11, Räisänen scrutinizes Paul's view of the salvation of Israel.

Im Brennpunkt wird die Frage nach der Kohärenz bzw. Widersprüchlichkeit seiner Ausführungen stehen, sowohl mit Rücksicht auf das gegenseitige Verhältnis von Röm 9 und 11 als auch auf das Verhältnis von Röm 9–11 zum übrigen Römerbrief und zu anderen Paulusbriefen, wo von Israel die Rede ist.<sup>38</sup>

As in section 1.1.1, again a brief overview of the inconsistencies will be offered first. During the course of this study, the indicated inconsistencies will be further elaborated.<sup>39</sup> With reference to Rom 9–11, Räisänen refers to two kinds of inconsistencies. The first kind consists of two, while the second kind consists of six inconsistencies. The first kind is related to the three chapters *Rom 9–11*:

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<sup>36</sup> 'Analyse' 2893.

<sup>37</sup> 'Analyse' 2893.

<sup>38</sup> 'Analyse' 2894.

<sup>39</sup> See chapter 6.

1. Rom 9:6–29 and Rom 9:30–10:21 are two sections which cannot be harmonized with each other in a logical manner; there is a disharmony between divine predestination and human responsibility.<sup>40</sup>

2. On the one hand the empirical Israel is not elected but hardened and damned (Rom 9:6–29), whereas on the other hand the empirical Israel will be saved because of God's loyalty to his own promises and to the election of his people (Rom 11:11–36). This inconsistency is more important than the previous one.<sup>41</sup>

If *Paul's other letters* are compared with Rom 9–11, the following six inconsistencies can also be noted:

1. In Rom 9–11, Israel is being hardened by God, whereas in 2 Cor 4, the hardening is traced back to an anti-divine power, while there is also a difference concerning the period of hardening (2 Cor 3).<sup>42</sup>

2. There is a tension between Rom 11 and 1 Thess 2:14–16. In the latter passage, the unbelief of the Jews is not a stimulus, as in Rom 11, but a hindrance to preaching to the Gentiles.<sup>43</sup>

3. The comparison of Israel to the olive tree in Rom 11 does not fit in the letter to the Galatians.<sup>44</sup>

4. In Rom 11:11–14, Paul gives the impression of presenting himself as an apostle to *Israel*. This conflicts with Gal 1:15–16.<sup>45</sup>

5. Paul talks about a miraculous and eschatological salvation of Israel only in Rom 11.<sup>46</sup>

6. We find neither the well-known thought of 'justification by faith', nor the thought of 'being-in-Christ' in Rom 9–11.<sup>47</sup>

## 1.2 Complexity

Already on the first page of the Introduction to *Paul and the Law*, Räsänen writes that he wants to shed some small light upon Paul's view of the law. He does not only, therefore, merely sum up the several

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<sup>40</sup> 'Israel' 181–6; 'Analyse' 2909–11.

<sup>41</sup> "For the topic of this essay, the relationship between divine hardening and man's disobedience is of less interest ... The crucial question is the treatment of Israel ...", 'Israel' 192; compare 'Analyse' 2930ff.

<sup>42</sup> 'Analyse' 2923–4.

<sup>43</sup> 'Analyse' 2924–5.

<sup>44</sup> 'Analyse' 2925–6.

<sup>45</sup> 'Israel' 187–8; 'Analyse' 2913–4.

<sup>46</sup> 'Analyse' 2926–7.

<sup>47</sup> 'Analyse' 2927–9

inconsistencies relating to Paul's view of the law as such, but he also tries to explain them, at the same time rejecting many explanations, including a number of common ones. A striking characteristic of his research is the fact<sup>48</sup> that he also tries to fit his explanation of Paul's inconsistencies into a *historical framework*. Here the illustration of *two concentric circles* can be helpful. The *interior* circle stands for Räisänen's *theological explanation* for Paul's inconsistencies, and the *exterior* circle stands for his *historical explanation*. Räisänen tries to give the *theological* explanation on the basis of the text itself, and this explanation can be briefly described by saying that since, for Paul, *Christ is the only way* to salvation, all other ways, such as, for example, the law, cannot, *a priori*, be a way to salvation. The *historical* explanation, into which the theological explanation has to fit (in concentric circles), has to do with Paul's missionary activities and his contact with the *Hellenistic congregation in Antioch*. Paul gave up the requirement of circumcision for the Gentiles, an attitude which he would have adopted from the Hellenistic congregation in Antioch. Räisänen does not claim that his historical explanation is the only right one; it remains just a hypothesis. Although already W. Wrede alluded to such a historical explanation, the hypothesis offered by Räisänen is original in the sense that he has elaborated the explanation proposed by Wrede in much greater detail.<sup>49</sup>

There is still another fact which makes the whole issue complex, namely the new perspective on Jewish religion in Paul's day. E.P. Sanders thinks he has proved by his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* that, according to Judaism, the law was never a way to salvation. In this volume, Sanders introduces the term 'covenantal nomism' as a description of the function of the law within Judaism. In short, Sanders believes that, by obeying the law, the Jew expressed the desire to *remain* within the covenant; to be obedient to the law would, therefore, not be a means to *earning* salvation. If Sanders is right, his view would imply that Paul ascribes a function to the law which the law never possessed, namely providing a way to salvation. In other words, Paul's antithesis between works of law (as a way to salvation) and faith in Christ is based on a caricature of Judaism. In *Paul and the Law*, Räisänen devotes an entire chapter to this antithesis (chapter 5). But basically, this chapter deals with a separate kind of problem, not directly related to the inconsistencies as indicated by Räisänen (chapters 1–4). Räisänen himself also admits this:

The chapter on 'the antithesis between works of law and faith in Christ' in my *Paul and the Law* was by far the most difficult one to write. It is, moreover, of less

<sup>48</sup> Besides the cumulative aspect of his *Paul and the Law* (see above).

<sup>49</sup> See chapters 5 and 9.

significance for my understanding of Paul's 'theological difficulties' with the law than are chapters 1–4. These chapters deal with problems *immanent* in Paul's view. Chapter 5 tries to isolate a different kind of problem: a problematic presupposition in Paul's argument.<sup>50</sup>

Briefly, the relation between Paul's inconsistencies and Sanders' view can be described as follows<sup>51</sup>: since Paul assumes that Christ is the only way to salvation – for Paul a basic premise which is important within the inconsistencies (see chapter 3) – he has made a caricature of the Judaism of his day by making the law a way to salvation. Because of the fact that there *is* a relation, although merely in the sense of a “problematic presupposition”, between Paul's inconsistencies and the above set of problems concerning Judaism, some attention must be paid to this set of problems in this study.<sup>52</sup>

This results in a complex picture. For the sake of clarity, therefore, we continuously have to concentrate on and to distinguish between four different issues:

1. The *inconsistencies* in Paul as detected by Räisänen;
2. Räisänen's *theological explanation* for these inconsistencies;
3. The *new perspective on the Judaism* of Paul's day as introduced by Sanders in connection with Paul's antithesis between works of law and faith in Christ;
4. Räisänen's proposed *hypothesis as a possible historical explanation*.

During this study attention must be paid to each of these issues.<sup>53</sup> We must also have a close look at the different relations between these four issues. Further, it is quite obvious that the new perspective on Judaism will have far-reaching implications for our interpretation of Paul, since many exegetes still assume that Judaism displays a certain kind of 'legalism' (the law is a way to salvation). Räisänen does not refrain from drawing far-reaching conclusions from that new perspective on Judaism for his interpretation of Paul.<sup>54</sup>

When we try to survey the inconsistencies concerning the law, we are confronted, as already mentioned, with a complexity. Whoever studies Räisänen will also find that it is not easy to follow this Finnish scholar. Often in his articles so many aspects of his research come up for discussion that it is sometimes hard to understand how things are related

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<sup>50</sup> 'Experience' 33. See also *Paul* xxviii note 70.

<sup>51</sup> See also sections 4.2 (beginning) and 4.2.3.

<sup>52</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>53</sup> The inconsistencies will be discussed in chapter 2, the theological explanation in chapter 3, the antithesis between works of law and faith in Christ in chapter 4, and the historical explanation in chapter 5.

<sup>54</sup> See, e.g., chapter 4 below.

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