

# Paul within Judaism

Edited by  
MICHAEL BIRD,  
RUBEN A. BÜHNER,  
JÖRG FREY,  
and BRIAN ROSNER

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament  
507*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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507





# Paul within Judaism

Perspectives on Paul and Jewish Identity

Edited by

Michael Bird, Ruben A. Bühner, Jörg Frey,  
and Brian Rosner

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## Preface

Our volume *Paul within Judaism* is based on an on-line scholarly symposium organized by Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, graciously sponsored by the Australian College of Theology, held during 21–24 September 2021. The topic of exploration was chosen because of the western fascination with the apostle Paul and the persistent challenge of exploring Paul in relation to both his Jewish heritage and his Messiah-believing commitments. In a sense, the tension to be explored or explained is how is Paul both “Paul the Jewish/Judean follower of Jesus” and simultaneously “St. Paul” of the church’s faith and witness. This is the subject which continues to excite and energize scholars in their articulation of both ancient history as well as contemporary theological commitments and informing inter-faith relationships. The contributors to this volume are not monolithic and they represent a plurality of perspectives and diversity of approaches to Paul vis-à-vis ancient Judaism. It is the hope of the editors that this volume will continue the conversation about Paul and his Jewishness, not despite his being a Messiah-believer, but precisely as part of it.

While the conference took place under the aegis of Ridley College, the volume itself would not have been possible without the editorial team of Dr. Michael Bird, Dr. Brian Rosner, Dr. Ruben A. Bühner, and Prof. Jörg Frey, who all made contributions to the editing, production, and publication of this volume. Hopefully we have set a new benchmark in Euro-Antipodean cooperation, bringing Uluru and the Matterhorn (metaphorically) closer together. We remain grateful too for the editorial support of the Mohr Siebeck publishing team for their hard work in bringing this volume to fruition. We also wish to thank Tsion Seyoum Meren for compiling the indices of authors and ancient sources, and Ruben A. Bühner for the index of subjects. In addition, funding to make this volume open access was generously provided by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The convulsions of COVID meant that such a meeting of learned scholars of religious antiquity and early Christianity were not able to meet in person. We had to settle for an on-line symposium which, though not ideal, proved to be adequate to the ask. A happenstance we hope not to repeat at a future conference on *Paul within Paganism* which will be a natural sequel to this project. Another way of continuing the advancement of Pauline scholarship.

Michael F. Bird

Easter Sunday, 9 April, 2023.



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# An Introduction to the Paul within Judaism Debate

*Michael Bird*

## 1. The Persistence of Pauline Scholarship

I have spent a large part of my scholarly career as a *Neutestamentler* wrestling with the apostle Paul, his life, his letters, and his legacy. The reason for that is quite simple. The study of Paul is inescapable for anyone concerned with the New Testament, the origins of early Christianity, Greco-Roman religion, ancient Judaism, the development of Christian thought, or even the history of western civilization. Paul was unknown to the rich and powerful of his time, he was a divisive figure among those who did know him, and I doubt very much that anybody thought he was destined to become the towering figure of religious and intellectual history that he became. Yet here we are with another scholarly symposium about Paul, another collection of essays about him, and another set of debates and disagreements over him. This volume and the conference it was based on, is but another example of the continuing fascination with Paul in minds of scholars, people of all faiths and none, from different quarters of the globe, representing diverse streams of human experience, who are yet united by their abiding interest in Paul. The scholarship that examines Paul is both deep in its history and now relatively wide in the breadth of people who are drawn to the topic. Paul continues to have much significance for the academy, for those who specialize in the study of religion, and for living communities of faith.

What has become clear to me over the years is that “Paul” stands somewhere between a fragmented mosaic and a Rorschach drawing.

First, studying Paul is like brushing dust off a mosaic in an ancient Ephesian villa. The mosaic contains the face of a human figure and yet the mosaic contains gaps, a few cracked tiles, distortions of colour, and even some tiles that have been secondarily added to mosaic. We cannot and therefore do not see Paul as he really was, only as he was presented by the artist, and even that presentation is fragmentary. That is not to say we cannot see, understand, or know anything about Paul, but our knowledge of Paul is mediated as it is imperfect. The quest for the historical Paul is the quest for the Paul who is the most recoverable and plausible portrait of a historical figure of antiquity. Alas, we shall never find the holy grail that is Paul as his pure self, only Paul as apostle, author, and artwork, Paul as martyr and memory, Paul as a diaspora Jew and a symbol of Christian faith.

Second, studying Paul is also like gazing at a Rorschach drawing. I say that because Paul is a figure read from history and read into history, a subject of exegesis and eisegesis, an extrapolation and a projection, someone other than us and a mirror of us. It is not exaggeration to say that every book about Paul tells you something about Paul and something about the researcher of Paul! A biography of Paul, an introduction to his letters, a description of his religion, or a summation of his thought, is never done in isolation from one's own biography, one's own proclivities, and one's own religious atmosphere. That is not to say that the study of Paul is purely a mirror, as if all we think we know about Paul is only what we project onto him. I don't believe the domain Pauline studies is reducible to an exercise in interpretive self-construction.

But it is incontestably true that the study of Paul is determined very much by context, the context that Paul is placed in, and the context that interpreters find themselves within. E.P. Sanders acknowledges that his own comparative study of Paul and Palestinian Judaism was not prescriptive. Palestinian Judaism simply provided the analogue against which Paul's own religious pattern could be compared. Sanders writes:

Lots of people think that ... somewhere in the pages of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* there is a claim that Paul must be discussed only in the light of Jewish sources of Palestinian origin. There is no such claim: I merely compared him with the material that I had spent ten years studying.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, to study Paul in the context Palestinian Judaism remains a choice and the choices are ample.

Thus, it makes an immense difference if one tries to situate Paul *in the context* of the Qumran scrolls, intra-Jewish sectarianism, itinerant philosophers, Greco-Roman associations, imperial cults, Plutarch's account of Hellenistic religion, Iranian Manicheism, Jewish *hekhalot* traditions, new religious movements, millenarianism, or ancient accounts of gender and ethnicity. Similarly, it matters much if one studies Paul *from the context* of fifth century North African Christianity, a twelfth century Parisian monastery, intra-Protestant debates of the sixteenth century, among Indian civil rights lawyers in nineteenth century Delhi, in African-American churches in Atlanta in the 1960s, or in a Critical Theory class at Stanford University in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Context shapes the purpose of study, the language of enquiry, and the results of research.

The meaning of Paul, that is, the coherences that we try to draw about him, are really the fusion of these ancient and modern contexts. Pauline scholarship consists of the backdrop we place Paul in combined with the lens we manufac-

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Sanders, "Between Judaism and Hellenism," in *Saint Paul among the Philosophers*, ed. Jack Caputa (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 75.

ture to try to understand him. There are of course different ways of doing that, different ways of locating Paul and looking at Paul.

One could generalize that recent study of the apostle Paul and his letters breaks down into roughly five camps: Roman Catholic approaches, traditional Protestant interpretation, the New Perspective on Paul, the Apocalyptic Paul, and Paul within Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Yes, there are other tribes and trends too. Yes, these are not rigid divisions, each is diverse in its own way, but I think the generalization holds true.

## 2. Introducing Paul within Judaism

### 2.1 *The Many Perspectives on Paul as Jewish and in Judaism*

One recent trend in Pauline scholarship is known as *Paul within Judaism*, which is a collection of scholars committed to the project of studying Paul in his Jewish context. So rather than speak merely of Paul *and* Judaism, they are inclined to speak of Paul's Judaism.<sup>3</sup> Most commonly, Paul is described as a Jewish figure, addressing Jewish concerns, engaged in Jewish moral, cultic, and scriptural reasonings with a view to attaining a better grasp of Paul in comparative religious history. By situating Paul *within* Judaism, proponents appear to mean studying the apostle Paul and his letters in relationship to the Jewish people and cultus, reconsidering Paul's Jewish identity and his own Jewish devotion, reassessing the relationship of Paul's Gentile Messiah-believing converts to Jewish communities, and (in some cases) seeking to cultivate better inter-religious relationships between Jews and Christians. It means too, put negatively, avoiding the anachronism of thinking of Paul as a "Christian" theologian, stripping away caricatures of Judaism as a "religion" of "legalism" or "ethnocentrism," undermining the presupposition that sets Paul's discourse against Jews and Judaism, and exposing anti-Jewish perspectives in Pauline scholarship. The "Paul within Judaism" movement (PwJ) – we cannot call it a faction or school – bears these general characteristics, though it has its own internal diversities.

The PwJ network of scholars is not a thunderbolt out of the blue, there are precursors and forerunners. There has been a long history of Jewish intellectuals wrestling with Paul as a figure of Jewish antiquity and as an agent of Chris-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Michael F. Bird, ed., *Four Views on the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012); N.T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (London: SPCK, 2015); Scot McKnight and B.J. Oropeza, eds., *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020); Ben Witherington and Jason A. Myers, *Voices and Views on Paul: Exploring Scholarly Trends* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?" in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 117–60.

tian anti-Semitism.<sup>4</sup> One can see important pioneers in the studies of William D. Davies and Johannes Munck who were among the first scholars in the post *Shoah* era to reconsider Paul as a consistently Jewish figure.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a very underappreciated figure is Markus Barth, son of the great Swiss Theologian Karl Barth. Barth the younger argued for rethinking Paul's *Jewishness* and reframing Jewish-Christian inter-faith relations in such a way that was decades ahead of its time. For Barth, Paul's account of "justification by faith" was not a polemical doctrine, but an ecumenical one, Paul's attempt to unite rather than divide Jewish and Gentile Christians.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Barth believed that it was possible to envisage Paul, even *saint* Paul, as a "good Jew." What was required to do that was for Christian theologians to forfeit their superiority complex and supersessionist impulses as well as reject condescending and caricatured views of Jewish legalism.<sup>7</sup> Barth's contention, banally self-evident as it might sound now, was revolutionary back in 1960s and 70s, i.e., the apostle Paul needs to be rethought and even reclaimed as Jewish thinker. Further, a corollary of a Jewish re-imagining of Paul was that inter-faith ecumenical relationships between Jews and Christians need to be refreshed.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Donald A. Hagner, "Paul in Modern Jewish Thought," in *Pauline Studies*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (FS F.F. Bruce; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 143–65; Stefan Meißner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus*, WUNT 2/87 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); William D. Davies, "Paul: from the Jewish Point of View," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 3 – The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, William D. Davies, and John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.678–730; Sung-Hee Lee-Linke, ed., *Paulus der Jude: Seine Stellung im christlich-jüdischen Dialog heute* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lembeck, 2005); Michael F. Bird and Preston Sprinkle, "Jewish Interpretation of Paul in the Last Thirty Years," *CBR* 6 (2008): 355–76; Daniel R. Langton, *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); John Gager, "The Rehabilitation of Paul in Jewish Tradition," in *'The One Who Sows Bountifully': Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers*, ed. Caroline J. Hodge, Saul M. Olyan, Daniel Ullucci, and Emma Wasserman (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013), 29–41; Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem of History and Culture: The Apostle and His Critics Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 117–41.

<sup>5</sup> William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948) and Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959); idem, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Markus Barth, "Jews and Gentiles: The Social Character of Justification in Paul," *JES* 5 (1968): 241–67.

<sup>7</sup> Markus Barth, "Der gute Jude Paulus," in *Richte unsere Füße auf den Weg des Friedens*, ed. Andreas Baudis, Dieter Clausert, Volkhard Schliski, and Bernhard Wegener, FS Helmut Gollwitzer (München: Christian Kaiser, 1979), 107–37; repr. "St. Paul – A Good Jew," *HBT* 1 (1979): 7–45. See reflections on Markus Barth's article by Stanley E. Porter, "Was Paul a Good Jew? Fundamental Issues in a Current Debate," in *Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Centuries*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Brook W.R. Pearson, JSNTSup 192 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 148–74.

The cluster of scholarship called “The New Perspective on Paul” (NPP), associated with luminaries such as E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, Terence Donaldson, and Bruce Longenecker among others was an important precursor to PwJ.<sup>8</sup> The NPP largely accepted Sanders’ view that first century Palestinian Judaism was not a religion of works-righteousness, a type of moralistic legalism, but expressed what Sanders called “covenantal nomism,” a salvific scheme typified by an efficacious divine election and means of covenantal grace. But, if Judaism was not legalistic as Protestants had imagined, a legalism for which Paul’s gospel of grace was the antithesis and antidote, then what did Paul find wrong with Judaism? Sanders’ answer was that in Paul’s mind the problem was that Judaism was not “Christianity,” it had not experienced or embraced God’s revelation of salvation in the Messiah. Yet that was considered too simplistic an explanation. Instead, it was argued, that Paul’s problem was not a lack of grace in Judaism, but a belief that God’s grace was reserved only for Jews to the exclusion of Gentiles. In other words, the problem was not legalism but trusting in a “national righteousness,” an “ethnocentric covenantalism,” or an “ethnocentric nomism,” that is, clinging to the Jewish way of life as codified in the Torah, summed up as righteousness by “works of the law.”

The gain of the NPP was that Paul was now studied as a figure within Judaism, not as a Protestant tackling medieval anxieties about how to find a merciful God, nor attacking synergistic and sacramental theologies of salvation, and not an existentialist philosopher on a quest for authenticity. Paul was not interested in the question of whether justification entailed an imputation of Jesus’s active obedience by faith alone in opposition to an infusion of grace to energize believers to work out their faith in charitable deeds. Rather, Paul was dealing with Jewish questions: Do Gentiles have to become Jews in order to be followers of Jesus?<sup>9</sup> How do Christ-believing Jews and Gentiles inhabit the same spaces, eat at the same tables, worship in the same tenement when Gentiles have regarded the Jews as misanthropists and Jews have regarded Gentiles as polluted with ignorance, idolatry, immorality, and impurity? The NPP made better sense historically, and it operated on the premise that Paul was not against the Jewish

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hans Hübner, “Zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion über die Theologie des Paulus,” *JBTh* 7 (1992): 399–413; Kent L. Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011); Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 88–154; Garwood P. Anderson, *Paul’s New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Or as E. P. Sanders (*Paul: The Apostles’ Life, Letters, and Thought* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015], 8–9) put it: “The major theological battle of his career was whether or not gentiles (non-Jews) who accepted Jesus must also become Jewish by being circumcised and accepting other parts of the Jewish law that separated Jew from gentile. Paul argued vociferously that his converts could remain gentiles, though they had to accept Jewish monotheism and most aspects of Jewish ethics.”

religion as much as he was transforming it around a particular story of Israel's Messiah.<sup>10</sup>

That is not to say that the NPP did not have its own failings or shortcomings.<sup>11</sup> To begin with, Sanders himself was operating with a liberal Protestant view whereby a religion of grace is eminently better than one of merit; yet that constituted a theological judgment, not a historical one. Plus, Sanders had reiterated the discontinuity between Paul and Judaism by postulating that Paul had replaced "covenantal nomism" with "participation in Christ." In addition, Jewish soteriologies of the Persian, Hellenistic, Second Temple, and Rabbinic periods were not monolithic, there were "variegated" understandings of the purpose of Torah-observance and different "efficacies" as to the nature of divine grace.<sup>12</sup> It is hazardous to over-generalize as to the substance, scope, and instrument of salvation among all Jews and Jewish literature. There was also the danger that the NPP reduced Paul's account of righteousness or justification to a socio-epiphenomenon of in-group identity status and negated the apocalyptic and theocentric texture of Paul's whereby a believer's status vis-à-vis God and the final judgment was at stake. There was also a caricatured dismissal of the Medieval and Reformed traditions as misreaders of Paul rather than appreciating them in their own right as part of the trajectory of Pauline reception.<sup>13</sup> Fi-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g., James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, CITM 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 522–30; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, COQG 4 (London: SPCK, 2014), 1407–72.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g., A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004); Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 88–112; idem, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 20; Anderson, *Paul's New Perspective*, 15–56; Kathy Ehrensperger, *Search Paul: Conversations with the Jewish Apostle to the Nations*, WUNT 429 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 353–75.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mark A. Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 245–307; Donald A. Carson, "Summaries and Conclusions," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Donald A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark Seifrid (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 543–8; Bird, *Saving Righteousness*, 93–4, 179–94; Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*, xvii, 12–9; A. Andrew Das, "Paul and the Law: Pressure Points in the Debate," in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Givens (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 99–116, here 101; Daniel M. Gurtner, ed., *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, LSTS 74 (London: T&T Clark, 2011); Gabriele Boccaccini, "Inner-Jewish Debate on the Tension between Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Development*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon G. Gathercole (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 9–26; Preston M. Sprinkle, *Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 208–38; Jacob Thiessen, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Evangelium im Römerbrief: Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Paulus im Vergleich zu antiken jüdischen Auffassungen und zur neuen Paulusperspektive* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 112–37; David Lincicum, Ruth Sheridan, and Charles M. Stang, eds., *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, WUNT 420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019); John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and*

nally, one could also argue that the NPP continued with the Christian tradition of essentializing Judaism, that is, reducing Judaism to the negative foil for Paul's gospel, with the exception that the NPP had replaced Jewish "legalism" with Jewish "nationalism." The Jews remained the villains and are directly or indirectly vilified as opponents of Paul, Paul's Christ, and Paul's God.

Some, however, taking their cue from the NPP, wanted to go further, and argue that Paul himself had no contention with Jews and Judaism. Paul's gospel was about messianic salvation for Gentiles, a gospel which left the Jewish covenant and Jewish way of life completely intact, without any need for conversion or consolation. Such a view was initially identified as the "Radical Paul" (RP) since the RP represented a more radicalized approach to reimagining a Jewish Paul. To give one example, John Gager argues that for Paul, "The law remains in effect for who are circumcised." In fact, "Paul's affirmation of the law's continued validity for Israel" means that there can be no "End-time conversion of Israel to Christ." Paul does not envisage a *Sonderweg* for Israel, for the Jewish covenant remains effective. To the contrary, what Paul "taught and preached" says Gager, "was instead a special path, a *Sonderweg*, for Gentiles."<sup>14</sup>

The RP never really caught on or displaced the NPP as the resident paradigm for Pauline studies to rival traditional Protestant and Catholic interpretations. That said, out of the NPP and RP was birthed the PwJ network. PwJ can be viewed, in some ways, as a follow-up to the NPP, or else as a mopping up exercise to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's" and correct a few motifs that the NPP mistook. PwJ is perhaps the NPP with a kippah!<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2 *Paul within Judaism: A Preliminary Appreciation*

PwJ is among the most exciting and controversial avenues for studying Paul because it is testing many old assumptions and positing fresh proposal on Paul vis-à-vis Judaism. There is no single manifesto or definitive publication of its aims or ambitions.<sup>16</sup> I'd aver that above all, PwJ is marked out by the claim that

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*His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); Michael Bachmann and Johannes Woyke, eds., *Lutherische und neue Paulusperspektive: Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselproblem der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion*, WUNT 182 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 146.

<sup>15</sup> According to Ehrensperger (*Searching Paul*, 373) what the NPP, RP, and PwJ share is interest in plotting the social position and theological identity of Paul's Christ-following groups.

<sup>16</sup> Note should be taken of Paula Fredriksen's contributions, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2017); idem, "What Does It Mean to See Paul 'within Judaism,'" *JBL* 141 (2022): 359–80. A few edited collections by Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015); Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress,



Paul's Jewishness and Judaism are neither tacit nor token, neither theoretical nor formal, but lay at the core of his identity, mission, and something he practiced even as a Messiah-confessor. Beyond that axiom several other claims and insights stand out.

First, PwJ scholars are freshly probing the meaning of Ἰουδαῖος ("Jew/Judean") and Ἰουδαϊσμός ("Judaism").

To begin with, there is the extant debate as to whether Ἰουδαῖος should be treated as an ethnic, religious, or geographical identifier (or a mixture thereof).<sup>17</sup> While the translation "Judean" gained favor for a time, and in some contexts is an appropriate translation,<sup>18</sup> there is a general recognition now that "Jew" might be preferable given that Ἰουδαῖος communicates a mixture of common ancestry and shared custom which transcends the geographical confines of Judea.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, there is a recognition that Ἰουδαϊσμός means the Jewish/Judean way of life.<sup>20</sup> The complicating fact is that Judaism was of course diverse, some even prefer to speak of "Judaisms" in the plural, a semantic innovation made from observing the pluriformity of Jewish communities and practices even if "Judaisms" is an ultimately unsatisfying nomenclature.<sup>21</sup> In any case, there were

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2016); František Ábel, ed., *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism* (Lanham: Lexington, 2020). Useful summaries are Mark D. Nanos, "A Jewish View," in *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 159–92 and Magnus Zetterholm, "The Paul within Judaism Perspective," in *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views*, ed. Scot McKnight and B.J. Oropeza (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), 171–218.

<sup>17</sup> See survey in David M. Miller, "Ethnicity, Religion, and the Meaning of *Ioudaios* in Ancient 'Judaism,'" *CBR* 12 (2014): 216–65; and more recent discussion in Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 11–21; Matthew V. Novenson, *Paul Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), 25–31.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g., Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 63–74; Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512; Steve Mason and Philip F. Esler, "Judean and Christ-Follower Identities: Grounds for a Distinction," *NTS* 62 (2016): 439–60.

<sup>19</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 404; Michael F. Bird, *Crossing over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 13–6; idem, *An Anomalous Jew*, 47–8.

<sup>20</sup> BDAG, 479.

<sup>21</sup> According to J. Andrew Overman (*Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* [Valley Forge, PA: TPL, 1996], 9): "So varied was Jewish society in the land of Israel in this period, and so varied were the Jewish groups, that scholars no longer speak of Judaism in the singular when discussing this formative and fertile period in Jewish history. Instead, we speak about Judaisms. In this time and place, there existed a number of competing, even rival Judaisms." However, James C. Vanderkam ("Judaism in the Land of Israel," in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012], 70–94, here 91) rejects the language of "Judaisms" because: "The surviving evidence exhibits a richness and diversity in the Judaism of the Second Temple era, a diversity so great that some have resorted to the neologism 'Judaisms' to express it. Yet, despite the undoubted diversity present in the texts, there are fundamental

different ways of adhering to and living out Jewishness in Judea and the Diaspora. In addition, in Christian interpretation, the term “Judaism” has become defined as the negative foil or anti-thesis to Christianity.<sup>22</sup> In other words, “Judaism” was “invented” to be the darkness against which the luminous brightness of Pauline grace shone so brightly. We can certainly contest or qualify any attempt to provide a simplistic account of the “parting of the ways” between Christianity and Judaism, just as we need caution as to the reification of Jewishness and Christian-ness as discreet identities.<sup>23</sup> The PwJ claim is that the juxtaposition of Judaism and Christianity as distinct and even competing religions owes much to (mis)readings of Paul rather than something intended by Paul, misreadings that need to be corrected.

This is why one of the most significant passages to draw attention in PwJ scholarship is Gal 1:13–14 where Paul narrates to the Galatians, “You have heard of my former way of life *in Judaism*” (Ἡκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ). What is Paul contrasting here? Does Paul contrast his former way of life in Judaism with his current way of life as a Christ-follower that is post-Judaism? Or, does Paul contrast his former way in Judaism with his current way of life in Judaism as a Christ-follower?<sup>24</sup> Given Paul’s commitment to Torah, monotheism, avoiding idolatry, affirming Israel’s eschatological hopes, messianic devotion, and immersing Gentile in such things, it makes no sense to speak of his abandonment of Judaism.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Paul does make a sharp and jarring contrast between his former and current modes of life with respect to Judaism. Perhaps the solution is that Paul here means “Judaism” is a particular sense, not as his dislocation from or denunciation of the entire ethno-reli-

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beliefs and practices that would have been accepted by virtually all Jews during those centuries and that justify retaining the singular noun Judaism.” See also E. P. Sanders, “Common Judaism Explored,” in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism*, ed. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 11–23, on balancing unity and diversity in ancient Judaism.

<sup>22</sup> See esp. Ignatius, *Phild.* 6.1; *Magn.* 8.1; 10.3. While Justin Martyr’s *Dialogues with Trypho* does not use the term “Judaism,” nonetheless, Justin’s presentation of the Jewish tradition is as a precursor and preparation for the gospel, while also obsolete and even superseded by Christian faith. See Daniel Boyarin, “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *Church History* 70 (2001): 427–61; idem, “Why Ignatius Invented Judaism,” in *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*, ed. Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008), 309–24.

<sup>23</sup> On such cautions, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism*, TSAJ 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 82–4.

<sup>24</sup> See discussion in Susan D. Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 33–43; Markus Cromhout, “Paul’s ‘Former Conduct in the Judean Way of Life’ (Gal 1:13) ... or Not?” *HTSTS* 63 (2009): 1–12; David Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 44–6; Daniel Boyarin, “*Ioudaismos* within Paul: A Modified Reading of Gal 1:13–14,” in Åbel, *The Message of Paul*, 167–78.

<sup>25</sup> Rightly Novenson, *Paul Then and Now*, 47–50.

gion of the Jews, but as referring to his dereliction of a zealous and fanatical mode of Judaism, the Pharisaic tradition.<sup>26</sup> It was this zealous Judeanism which drove his persecution of the churches, who were in his mind, a rogue messianic cult,<sup>27</sup> who were lowering the currency of Israel's election and contaminating Israel's capacity to worship God in holiness by fraternizing with Gentiles and by venerating Jesus in unusually intense ways. In other words, what Paul rejects is a post-Maccabean species of sectarian Judaism typified by its zeal for national holiness and pharisaic *halakhab*.<sup>28</sup> Whatever solution is preferred, such texts are ground zero in PwJ to wrestle with Paul's Jewish identity as well as his many aggravated denials and relentless affirmations with respect to his Christ-following devotion.

PwJ scholarship, therefore, attempts to explore Paul's language of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαϊσμός with greater lexical precision, informed by ancient notions of ethnicity and religious identity, and without the baggage of essentializing Jews and Judaism as the anti-type to Christianity.

Second, PwJ scholars take it as axiomatic that Paul himself was Torah-observant. Paul strenuously rejects the imposition of Torah observance upon Gentiles, especially circumcision and food laws, yet never implies that Jews should cease from observing the Torah.<sup>29</sup> As such, Paul's remarks that the Torah is not nullified but upheld by faith in Christ are taken seriously (Rom 3:31). Paul negates the need for proselytism for Gentiles to be Christ-followers, that is, he rejects compelling them to judaize to the point of circumcision (see Josephus, *Bell.* 2.454) as part of allegiance to Christ (Rom 3:21–4:25; 1 Cor 7:18–20; Gal 5:1–11; 6:12–16) and as the condition for table fellowship in the church (Gal 2:1–21).<sup>30</sup> While Paul would not permit Titus to be circumcised under duress (Gal 2:3), yet the Lucan Paul consented for Timothy to be circumcised which sounds plausible enough (Acts 16:1–3). An interesting qualification is that Paul does in

<sup>26</sup> Paul as a Jewish Christ-believing convert speaks of "Judaism" the same way an ex-Muslim Christian might speak of "Jihadism." Not all Judaism is about zealous and pharisaic traditions just as not all of Islam is about jihad.

<sup>27</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostles' Life, Letters, and Thought*, 194–5, 494.

<sup>28</sup> See Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 22–4; Matthew V. Novenson, "Paul's Former Occupation in *Ioudaismos*," in *Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter*, ed. Mark W. Elliott, Scott J. Hafemann, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 24–39; Boyarin, "Ioudaismos within Paul," 173–5.

<sup>29</sup> See Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Offene Fragen zur Gesetzespraxis bei Paulus und seinen Gemeinden (Sabbat, Speisegebote, Beschneidung)," *BThZ* 25 (2008): 16–51.

<sup>30</sup> Whether Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to "convert" to Judaism was a matter of considerable contention even among Jewish communities. Josephus's account of the conversion/circumcision of King Izates of Adiabene is case in point (*Ant.* 20.34–48) and backgrounds the discussion of Gentile circumcision in Acts 15, Galatians 2–5, and Romans 1–4. On which, see Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*, 97–9 and Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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