

KARL OLAV SANDNES

Paul Perceived

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

412

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Herausgeber / Editor
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412



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An Interactionist Perspective on
Paul and the Law

Mohr Siebeck

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ISBN 978-3-16-156101-6 / eISBN 978-3-16-156102-3
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-156102-3

ISSN 0512-1604 / eISSN 2568-7476
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset and printed on non-aging paper by Gulde Druck in Tübingen, and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

I would like to express my gratitude to various persons and institutions for their support during the completion of this book. I owe thanks to my school, MF Norwegian School of Theology, for having granted me six months of Sabbatical to bring this project to an end. A special thanks to the library staff at my school, for kindly and patiently providing me with the literature I needed. I benefit from their kindness on an almost daily basis. I also thank the library staff at Tyndale House in Cambridge for assistance during my stay there in January 2018. Several colleagues have read and commented on chapters of the book. I owe special thanks to Jens Schröter (Berlin), Samuel Byrskog (Lund) for constructive criticism which has improved my manuscript. I am grateful to James A. Kelhoffer (Uppsala) for inviting me to present a paper in his doctoral seminar in December 2017. Likewise my colleagues Ole Jakob Filtvedt, Christine Henriksen Aarflot and Glenn Wehus gave valuable comments and remarks during the process. This applies also to my former teacher and now emeritus, Ernst Baasland. Reidar Hvalvik, my colleague, and my friend since we were students together, took upon himself to read the whole manuscript. I am very grateful for this and for the helpful remarks he made. All these colleagues are to be thanked; any shortcomings are my responsibility. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Jörg Frey, for accepting my manuscript for this prestigious series. I offer my thanks also to the staff at Mohr Siebeck, especially Katharina Gutekunst and Elena Müller for having prepared the manuscript for publication, and Rebekka Zech for overseeing the production of the book.

Oslo, Early Spring 2018.

Contents

Preface	V
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Voices of Others Matter!	1
1.2 An Interactionist Perspective: “Multiple Identities,” “Others,” and Rumors	4
1.3 From Founder of Christianity to Apostolic Judaism: Pauline Scholarship – A Sketch	8
1.4 Approach	16
1.5 The Torah and Jewish Identity	23
2 It Takes Two to Have an Interaction: Sketching Paul for Reasons of Transparency	27
2.1 Addressees and Horizons or Implications of Paul’s Theology Are Not Identical	27
2.2 Paul’s Theology Is Not Identical to Its Occasion	36
2.3 Damascus: Between Biography and Theology	37
2.4 Immediate Damascus: Commission and Abandoning Persecutions	39
2.5 Damascus: A Tandem Disturbed or the Torah and Christ	41
2.6 Damascus: A Paradigm	44
2.7 What about 1 Cor 7:19?	47
2.8 The Naming Game	50
3 Paul’s First Interpreters: Judean Christ Believers and Galatian Adversaries	55
3.1 Between Rhetoric and History	56
3.2 First Embedded Dictum: Gal 1:23 on Paul’s Turnabout	57
What Change?	59
3.3. The Galatian Situation: Opponents	62
Mirror-Reading the Opponents	64

3.4 Second Embedded Dictum: “Christ a Servant of Sin?” (Galatians 2:17)	70
Counter-Exhortation	76
3.5 Third Dictum: The Law Opposed to the Promises of God? (Gal 3:21)	80
3.6 Fourth Dictum: Paul Preaching Circumcision (Gal 5:11)	83
3.7 Summary	90
 4 Roman Debates: The Absurdity of Paul’s Gospel	 93
4.1 Entering Romans through Romans 3:8	93
4.2 The Structure and Line of Thought in Romans 3:1–8	94
4.3 Diatribe: Between Rhetoric and Objections	97
The So-Called Jew in the Diatribe	99
4.4 The Absurdity of Paul’s Gospel: The Dictum of Romans 3:8	104
Romans 3:8 in its Romans Context	105
Blasphemous	106
The Dictum	107
4.5 Paul Responds	110
4.6 Romans 16:17–20: Who Paves the Way for Moral Permissiveness? Finding a Context	115
Out of Context – But Still in Romans	116
4.7 Romans 9–11: God’s Promises and Paul’s Gospel	121
4.8 Summary	124
 5 A Contemporary Context?	 129
5.1 The Necessity of Circumcision	130
Gentiles Residing Among Jews	131
The Adiabene Case	133
Philo and the Allegorists in Alexandria	137
5.2 The Law as an Antidote against Sinful Life	144
5.3 The Continuum of Abraham’s Biography	148
 6 What’s in a Punishment? The Lashes of 2 Corinthians 11:24	 155
6.1 Context – In Paul’s Ministry and the Corinthian Correspondence	155
“Foolish Talk”	158
6.2 Between Reality and Fiction	161
Message and Medium: Prophetic Prototype?	162
6.3 The Punishment and What It Speaks	164
Apostasy?	165

Sociology of Punishments	168
Persecutions and Persecuted	170
A Persistent Troublemaker	173
6.4 What Do the Lashes Speak When Mentioned?	175
6.5 Summary	175
 7 Paul and the Law in the Book of Acts:	
An Ambiguous Picture	179
7.1 Reading Acts Backwards	182
7.2 Paul Accused and Defended	183
In Jerusalem (Acts 21:17–36)	185
Apostasy?	186
In Caesarea (Acts 24:5–8)	191
Group or Heresy?	192
In Corinth: Law, Order, and Torah (Acts 18:12–17)	194
7.3 Law and Salvation in Acts	198
7.4 Summary	200
 8 Final Summary and Implications	205
8.1 Sources and Approach	205
8.2 Findings – Snapshots	208
8.3 Recent Research on Paul and the Torah from an Interactionist Perspective	211
The Power of Sin	211
Decentering Torah	212
For Gentiles Only?	212
8.4 A Polarizing Figure within Judaism	214
 Bibliography	219
Sources, Dictionaries and Grammars	219
Secondary Literature	220
 Indices	243
Index of Ancient Sources	243
Index of Modern Authors	256
Key Subjects	260

1 Introduction

1.1 *Voices of Others Matter!*

Pauline scholars are accustomed to distinguishing sharply between authentic and disputed letters, between Paul's own texts and those of a Pauline tradition, and not to say those in which he figures in texts composed by others (the Acts of the Apostles). The assumption is, of course, that only Paul matters when his theology is to be portrayed. The present study proceeds from the conviction that views, ideas, identity, and theology are a mixed bag of internal as well as external influences. Hence, voices of *others* are likely to mirror Paul's theology, since they contributed to its fashioning, albeit exaggerations and misunderstandings may be at work as well. Nonetheless, scholarship on Paul's theology cannot limit itself to the "real" Paul – the epistolary Paul anyway – since that would cut us loose from his earliest interpreters.

Present-day scholars are trafficking in the business of commenting on Paul's theology. This business is old, probably as old as the apostle's own letters. For in Paul's letters, embedded sayings are found (i.e., voices critical of him, or voices developing his thoughts further, or voices Paul wants to refute). His letters are *dialogical* in nature.¹ An example may be 1 Cor 15:12 (cf. 2 Tim 2:18): "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say (λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες) there is no resurrection of the dead?" Within Paul's text, a citation is embedded here, or at least, the essentials of a view held by *some* Corinthian converts form the subtext of what Paul says.² From this, we gather that dialogues concerning Paul's theology developed more or less *simultaneously* with its coming into being.

Among the writings included in the New Testament, instances are found where Paul is commented upon, even by the mentioning of his name. Well-known is 2 Pet 3:14–16; addressing Christian churches universally, he speaks of Paul as one who, at times, is known to be hard to understand.³ In some other

¹ We are reminded of the textbook written by Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (London: SCM, 1975), which has appeared in several later editions.

² See Douglas A. Campbell, *Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 540–41 for voices of others in Paul's letters, labelled "multiple textual voices and hidden transcripts."

³ See Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum: Das Bild des Apostels und die*

writings, Paul may be targeted without being mentioned. A possible example is Jude 4, in which the issue is the perverting of grace (χάρις) into licentiousness.⁴ Even more important is Jas 2:20–26, which is dense with terms that bring to mind Paul’s teachings on justification by faith and Abraham in Galatians and Romans.⁵ The two last instances revolve around law and issues pertaining to that. There are also texts which by present-day scholarship have been seen to engage Paul, such as the Gospel of Matthew (see below). Although these texts are not the focus of this investigation, they nevertheless prove the existence of a “Pauline debate” regarding issues on our agenda.

The present study investigates how Paul was regarded by others who commented upon his preaching and teaching, with particular reference to the law and issues pertaining to it. How Paul was perceived by others is, therefore, the lead to be followed in this study. I claim that present-day Pauline scholarship has not paid sufficient attention to this perspective. My sources are, therefore, embedded voices within Paul’s letters, and in addition, the Acts of the Apostles. By “issues pertaining to the law,” I mean topics such as works, faith, justification, circumcision, law, and Israel. With these issues, we are in the midst of the volcano in present-day Pauline scholarship, which are associated with the emergence of the so-called “New Perspective” and the “Radical New Perspective,” or better, “Paul within Judaism” (for these categories, see below). The discussion of these interrelated issues is simply immense. However, looking at them from their asides (i.e., from the perspective of how Paul was *perceived*) may shed some new light on long-standing discussions on Paul and the Torah.

Two citations will help situate this study in its relevance for Pauline studies. According to Michael Wolter, inquiries into Paul’s identity and his relationship with Judaism must distinguish between Paul’s perception of himself on the one hand, and

the perception of others from the side of his non-Christian Jewish contemporaries on the other hand. Furthermore, one can also inquire about an *outside perspective*: How did non-Jewish and non-Christians people perceive Paul? What identity was ascribed to him from their side?⁶

Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion (BHT 58; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 91–97; Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco: TX: Word Books, 1983), 326–35; Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus* (THKNT 15/II; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 354–63.

⁴ Similar allegations against Paul appear in texts to be treated later in the present study.

⁵ See Dale C. Allison Jr., “Jas 2:14–26: Polemic against Paul, Apology for James,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Paul*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt and Joseph Verheyden (NTOA 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 123–49; for an extensive discussion see his *James: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 425–508.

⁶ Michael Wolter, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 428. The italics are Wolter’s.

This insight is important for working out the path to be taken in the present study. John M. G. Barclay has formulated this very succinctly:

In relation to Paul and the question of his “apostasy,” it is a mistake to pay too much heed to what he claims about himself. Discussions of this topic frequently revolve around Paul’s assertions of his Jewishness, citing such passages as 2 Cor. 11.22 or Rom. 11.1 where Paul proudly proclaims his Jewish identity. Every Jew in the Graeco-Roman world had in fact a triple identity: what he thought himself to be, what other Jews thought him to be and what non-Jews thought him to be. It is not difficult to decide which form of identity was socially determinative among Diaspora Jews. What counted here in terms of social and historical outcome was not what Paul himself thought, but how other Jews regarded him. Paul may have thought of himself as a loyal Jew and he may have been regarded as such by non-Jews, but if the Jewish communities in the places where he worked considered him an apostate, their verdict was what was decisive in social terms.⁷

Barclay goes on to say that it makes no sense to ask if Paul was an apostate, as though to suggest “that Paul can be measured on some absolute and objective scale.”⁸ This issue and related ones can only be answered with reference to *who* makes the judgment and in what context. The citations given above point to the importance of an outside perspective, claiming that this is needed in order to come to terms with Paul’s theology. How things are *perceived* is by no means irrelevant for understanding a phenomenon.⁹ The question as to whether Paul was a founder of a new religion, an apostate,¹⁰ or an apostle within Judaism by necessity implies how his theology and message were *responded* to, and also that the responses shaped how his theology ended up. Hence, the voices to be scrutinized here are not only responsive; they also *contributed* to the making of Paul’s theology. In other words, the views held about him, his message, and the groups loyal to him are equally important for how Paul came to be understood and how Christianity – certainly an anachronistic label – gradually came into being. A complexity of reasons, among which Paul *and* respondents are important, is thus assumed here. Patrick Gray has put this in a provocative way, claiming that if anyone is responsible for the founding of Christianity, “perhaps it should be those Jews who, quite reasonably, determined that the teaching of Paul and other ‘Christian’ writers threatened to stretch Judaism to the breaking

⁷ John M. G. Barclay, “Paul among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostasy,” *JSNT* 60 (1995): 113.

⁸ Barclay, “Paul among Diaspora Jews,” 112. Stephen Westerholm, *Law and Ethics in Early Judaism and the New Testament* (WUNT 383; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 14 asks “... when we ask whether Paul remained within Judaism, after whose view of Paul *and* Judaism are we inquiring: his own, that of his contemporary, non Christ-believing Jews, or that of modern scholars?”

⁹ One is reminded of the title “*To See Ourselves as Others See Us*”: *Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Fredericks (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 223.

point and thus warranted ostracism.”¹¹ A responsive perspective is in line with how so-called interactionists within the field of sociology think of deviance. People’s reactions are crucial for understanding how a phenomenon comes into being and how it is labelled.¹² The outside perspective of the present study is primarily how other Christ-followers and fellow Jews came to see Paul’s view on the Torah and related issues.

1.2 An Interactionist Perspective: “Multiple Identities,” “Others,” and Rumors

Our topic on the law and pertaining issues is due to the role occupied by law in ancient Jewish sources, which is intimately associated with questions of identity.¹³ Hence, social theory and the role played by “others” have a bearing upon our investigation. Building on Henri Tajfel and his work on social identity and self-categorization, social theorists emphasize the importance of *relations* for the development of identity.¹⁴ This also puts the views of others up front in Pauline studies. The driving force in defining “who Paul was” is intimately involved with his theology on the Mosaic Law as well as the practices following from that. How identity and law are intertwined has been sufficiently demonstrated by the works of “New Perspective” scholars (see chap. 1.3) with their emphasis on how law and ethnicity are entangled. The complexity of this process of identity includes more than delving into what Paul says on this issue, since social identity develops in *relation* to others, be they friends or foes. Identity does not exist as something independent and fixed but is a product of socialization; that is, it is dependent on persons and circumstances with which one *interacts* in various ways. Identity issues are, therefore, always complex and dialogical in nature. Hence, we speak about “multiple identities,” depending on the perspective. Aaron Kuecher says that ethnic identities are not always salient, as “all humans possess multiple social identities.”¹⁵ He makes reference to *Flacc.*

¹¹ Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 132.

¹² See, for example, Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg, *Deviance: An Interactionist Perspective* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2008).

¹³ Thus also Anders Runesson, “Entering a Synagogue with Paul: First-Century Torah Observance,” in *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, ed. Susan J. Wendel and David M. Miller (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 11–26.

¹⁴ See Philip F. Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 13–39 and Andrew D. Clarke and J. Brian Tucker, “Social History and Social Theory in the Study of Social Identity,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 41–58.

¹⁵ Aaron Kuecher, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social*

45–46, where Philo speaks of the identity of Diaspora Jews, consisting of a nexus of Jerusalem and the Diaspora homeland. As for Paul, 1 Cor 7:17–24¹⁶ and his epistle to Philemon¹⁷ work likewise. These passages disclose the existence of multiple identities at work simultaneously; an in-Christ identity is intertwined with cultural, social, and ethnic identities.

According to Aaron Kuecher, “while nested identities can create a complex nexus of identity, an individual’s most basic social identity is his or her *terminal identity*. This social identity orients other lower-level identities and can be conceived as the answer to the question, ‘Who are my people?’”¹⁸ Kuecher’s distinction here between higher- and lower-level identities brings to mind William S. Campbell’s distinction between primary and secondary identities in Pauline studies (see later).¹⁹ Furthermore, conflict is an important aspect of any process of identity formation.²⁰ Hence, in the words of Richard Jenkins, “at the boundary we discover what we are in what we are not.”²¹ Thus, the “others” – be they fellow Christ-believers or fellow Jews – become an intrinsic part of how Paul’s identity, and along with that, his theology on the law were shaped.

It may be helpful to view the present study’s interest in the “others” from an interactionist perspective, which has become so important in the field of sociology and which has proved helpful in understanding a phenomenon such as deviance.²² This study does not depend upon a penetrating theory, but picks up on some common insights established by such theories. Meaning is a product of interacting with people; it is perspectival and societal. This is the obvious link to my interest in “others” in the Pauline tradition. Reactions and responsive actions are decisive for understanding a phenomenon. Hence, interpretation

Identity in the New Testament, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 72.

¹⁶ See pp. 47–50 in this study.

¹⁷ See J. Brian Tucker, “Paul’s Particular Problem—The Continuation of Existing Identities in Philemon,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. B. Tucker and C. A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 401–24.

¹⁸ Kuecher, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” 73.

¹⁹ William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (T&T Clark Biblical Studies; New York: T&T Clark 2008), 156–58.

²⁰ Kuecher, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” 72–75; see also Bengt Holmberg, “Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 14–15; see also Mikael Tellbe, “Identity and Prayer,” in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 15–17.

²¹ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 79.

²² John M. G. Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy: Some Applications of Deviance Theory to First-Century Judaism and Christianity,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 115–18. This perspective draws on a theoretical framework laid down by, for example, George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1934). The so-called “Definitive Edition” of his now classic work appeared in 2015.

and perspective become crucial. Several levels of explanations are necessary to explain identity and behavior. For this reason, it is not sufficient to delve into “how Paul saw it.” Interactions have a shaping effect. With regard to the present study, this means that Paul’s theology is shaped by “others,” who also depend on what they claim to know or have heard about him and his teachings. This sheds light on the dialogical nature of Paul’s epistles.

Engaging embedded dicta in Paul’s epistles, we become involved in an informal level of information circulating among converts, adversaries, and synagogues. This means that categories such as rumor and gossip are relevant for understanding what we are aiming at. In her study on the Pastoral Epistles, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow has worked out how rumor and gossip are related.²³ Both refer to “evaluative talk.” Rumor is the most appropriate term in the present study, although the two are not to be separated. Rumors convey and disseminate informal pieces of information. They are mostly anonymous and are circulated without any control. There is a certain hybridity to them, as they consist of twisted or interpreted facts. Rumors often come with a troubling effect upon those whom they are about. Hence, they are weapons in a protest aimed at preserving an established order. The destabilizing potential of rumors may be illustrated with Tacitus’s narrative about the fire in Rome during the reign of Nero (*Ann.* 15.44.3–4). Due to sinister rumors, the Emperor had to take action and decided to blame the Christians who lived in the city.

Jean-Noël Kapferer has investigated the idea of rumors, calling them “the oldest media in the world.”²⁴ According to Kapferer, rumors are an important source of knowledge, particularly since they are “anti-establishment.”²⁵ In the texts under scrutiny in this study, “anti-establishment” is not easily defined. The rumors present in Paul’s letters owe more to established opinions²⁶ than the reverse, but Paul *makes* them in his presentation and refutation “anti-establishment.” With reference to Jean-Noël Kapferer, Claire Clivaz says that “[i]n Paul’s letters the theme of rumors and its effects occur several times.”²⁷ She notices

²³ Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (BZNW 164; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), see 48, 53, 71–73, 89, 112–14, 206–207 in particular. Kartzow considers words of the Greek root *φλῶν* as most important, although she does not restrict herself to this. Words of this root do not appear in the letters addressed in the present study. Kartzow’s emphasis on gendered speech makes this a natural focus. Gender is not an issue in the present study.

²⁴ This renders the title of his book, *Rumeurs: Le Plus Vieux Media du Monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

²⁵ Kapferer, *Rumeurs*, 22, 25.

²⁶ See chapter 5 in this study.

²⁷ Claire Clivaz, “Rumour: A Category for Articulating Self-Portraits and Reception of Paul: For They Say, ‘His Letters are Weighty ... But His Speech is Contemptible’ (2 Corinthians 10.10),” in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul’s Claim upon Israel’s Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters*, ed. David P. Moessner et al. (LNTS 452; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 272–74.

three examples: Gal 1:23; 2 Cor 10:9–10, and other texts in which the rumors of 2 Cor 10 are found, revolving around the issue of boldness and weakness that accompanied his ministry. Clivaz rightly points out that the rumors preceded Paul's interacting with them in his letters. This is the area that the present study embarks upon, with the Torah as the governing theme.

According to Howard S. Becker, deviance is a consequence of others applying rules and sanctions to an offender. In other words, reaction is everything, not the act itself. References are not made to any given norms, but to reaction.²⁸ Becker's point is helpful in this study as it theoretically highlights the importance of others. However, his point that deviance is only a matter of labelling, without involving given norms, needs some qualification in a Jewish discourse revolving around the Torah, which by its very nature gives regulations to be obeyed. Albeit, the continuous need for interpreting this norm forms part of the discourse.

In this light, the views of others become highly relevant in a study pertaining to Paul and the Torah. Who Paul was is also a product of how he was perceived. Hence, four perspectives on Paul are relevant in his portrayal:

- Paul himself (the so-called "real" Paul; in practice, the epistolary Paul)
- Fellow Christ-believers, be they Jews or Gentiles
- Fellow Jews
- Greeks or Romans

Within the framework of this study, the second and third will be emphasized. In a study focusing on the Torah, the perspectives of Greeks and Romans for natural reasons have less significance, although Acts 18:12–17 about Gallio's judgment will come into play.²⁹

Thus, the present study delves into the responses that Paul and his theology received. I am not organizing these voices into a harmonious choir; they do not make up distinct groups of people, as they are separated in both time and space. There will be no attempt to organize the sources group-wise, as though we knew what sources belonged historically together. What is at stake is primarily to establish early perceptions of Paul and the Torah, and to see if some currents do appear. The question that will resonate throughout is this: Are issues high on the agenda of present-day Pauline scholarship recognizable when Paul is seen through the eyes of his earliest respondents?

The aim of the present study is thus to look into the epicenter of Pauline scholarship. To put it very simply, how did Paul appear to others, be they fellow Jews or other Christ-believers? Clearly, these voices, whether explicit or not, are

²⁸ Howards S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 9.

²⁹ See pp. 194–98 in the present study.

not sources of Paul's theology as such. They may well be exaggerations, polemically developed statements, or simply misunderstandings or caricatures. For sure, they are *fragmentary* vis-à-vis Paul's theology in general. Nonetheless, they are relevant, since rarely, nothing comes from nothing. They may, in an indirect way, serve to illuminate aspects of Paul's theology, simply because they indicate how aspects of his theology were perceived. From this follows that the perspectives of "others," even if partial, might serve a critical end toward present-day Pauline scholarship.

This study belongs within reception criticism of Paul's theology. Traces of how Paul was perceived are found in the Pauline tradition as it emerges in the so-called Deuteropauline epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, Ignatius, Acts of Paul, and Irenaeus, to mention just a few. This study proceeds from the fact that the reception of Paul has its beginnings during his own time, witnessed in the dialogical nature of many passages in his letters and in actions taken against him by contemporaries. In other words, the focus is on a reception that is *simultaneous* to Paul (found in his letters) or chronologically not too distant from him (found in the Acts of the Apostles). Hence, reception here is not identical with the Pauline legacy, as the term is often used.³⁰ The "original" is not untouched by the responses received, and it is itself a result of its reception. Implied is that reception in this study is a simultaneous phenomenon. In fact, there is no Paul from whom this reception can be removed, because the reception partly made him become the epistolary Paul. As for the Acts of the Apostles, this is naturally different. What is then the present-day context of scholarship that lends significance to such a study? What is the backdrop against which it is apposite to undertake this investigation? The answer to that question is the recent developments of Pauline studies on the law and pertaining issues. To that we now turn.

1.3 From Founder of Christianity to Apostolic Judaism: Pauline Scholarship – A Sketch

According to Adolf von Harnack, Paul "delivered the Christian religion from Judaism."³¹ He was the true founder of Christianity, a new religion separated from Judaism, which, at best, was a forerunner preparing the way for Christianity. Numerous assumptions on hotly debated issues in the Pauline letters are at

³⁰ See, for example, Jens Schröter, "Kirche im Anschluss an Paulus: Aspekte der Paulusrezeption in der Apostelgeschichte und in den Pastoralbriefen," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 77–104, who uses the term "Erbe des Paulus" throughout. Daniel Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters* (WUNT 310; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1–21, defines reception history as "Paul after Paul"; it is *subsequent* to the *original*. My perspective on "reception" in this study differs from such definitions.

³¹ Quoted from the excerpts of *The Founder of Christianity* (ET 1901), collected in *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1972), 302–308.

work in this conclusion. Most importantly, Paul's critique of the law forms the nexus between Paul and von Harnack's view on how Christianity separated from Judaism. Precisely, this topic is the gist of many controversies in present-day Pauline studies.

As we now proceed to providing a sketch of Pauline scholarship on the Torah and relevant issues, it may be helpful to keep in mind that two sets of questions are involved. The first set of questions revolves around issues related to what has been labelled "the parting of the ways"; that is, how "synagogue" and "church" eventually went their separate ways. Here belong questions such as: Was Paul a Jew or a Christian? Was there anything wrong with Judaism to Paul? How is the "deficit" in Judaism, if there at all, to be defined? The second set of questions revolves around contingency versus universalism in Paul's theology. The questions here are whether Paul's theology is equally applicable to Jews and Gentiles, and how his theology is eventually perpetuated. The two sets of questions are certainly intertwined in such a way that the first often provides the rationale for the second.

Although these questions are formulated with present-day debates in mind, kindred questions were at the center of Paul's correspondence with his churches during his own time. Internal differences between the letters (e.g., Galatians and Romans) suggest that Paul was in the process of finding his own way.³² According to Daniel Marguerat, the apostle's theology is marked by dialogue and evolution.³³ Both aspects have a bearing on the present investigation, as they both bring out the *dynamic* of Paul's theology, to which also belongs response, reception, critique, and rumors. The dialogical nature of the letters is part of this dynamic process. In current Pauline scholarship, the issues involved in the present investigation have, particularly since the publication of E.P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977),³⁴ become the epicenter of Pauline studies. The literature on the topics involved is simply immense. The present section is aimed only at mapping the landscape, providing a backdrop against which to evaluate the relevance of early perceptions of Paul for present-day scholarship, and also pointing out what I have in mind when talking about present-day Pauline scholarship.

Behind the scenes of current debates on Pauline theology is the way the Lutheran tradition in particular interpreted and made use of Paul, and how this pattern of thoughts has been perpetuated in scholarship until the present. Francis Watson depicts modern scholarship in Pauline studies as a critical dialogue

³² Udo Schnelle, "Gibt es eine Entwicklung in der Rechtfertigungslehre vom Galater- zum Römerbrief?" in *Paulus – Werk und Wirkung: In Honor of Andreas Lindemann*, ed. Paul-Gerhard Klumbies and David S. du Toit (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 289–309.

³³ Marguerat, *Paul*, 1, 200.

³⁴ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

with the Lutheran reading of Paul.³⁵ Magnus Zetterholm says that the debate on Paul and the law has been theologically driven, aimed at “finding a Paul who makes sense for the present-day church.”³⁶ This reformation-driven research has often been dubbed the “Old Perspective.” Paul’s alleged critique of the law and “works of law” were accommodated within the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, and added rationale for this gap. Judaism was perceived as a religion of “works-righteousness,” requiring law observance to find salvation. The anti-legalistic Paul was equally the anti-Jewish Paul. Paul’s law-free theology, manifested in the Christian Gospel, contrasted with Judaism. The anti-thetical style and the sharpness of Paul’s gospel, especially as it finds its expression in Galatians, became means whereby a theological wedge was driven between Judaism and Christianity.³⁷

As pointed out by John M. G. Barclay, Paul’s theology of grace, apart from the law, was liberating good news to the individual conscience. In the Lutheran tradition and among scholars sympathetic to this reading of Paul, this paved the way for *universalizing* Paul’s gospel: How can a sinner find a gracious God? Thus, Paul’s gospel was not only universalized but also de-contextualized.³⁸ Paul’s biography supported this interpretation. His Damascus experience was a “conversion,” and in his mission, he established groups of “Christians” who saw themselves as independent of the synagogue.

From E. P. Sanders’s insights in his monumental book from 1977, namely that Judaism was not a religion of work-righteousness, evolved new directions in Pauline studies. James D. G. Dunn launched in 1983 what has been dubbed the “New Perspective,”³⁹ arguing that Sanders failed to take “the opportunity his

³⁵ Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*. Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 27–56.

³⁶ Magnus Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism: The State of the Question,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 46. In his *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), Zetterholm traces the developments in Pauline scholarship. Issues relevant to the present study are given much attention.

³⁷ John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 339–41.

³⁸ As for this Lutheran tradition at work in Pauline scholarship, see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 22–41, 88–97; John M. G. Barclay, “The Text of Galatians and the Theology of Luther,” in *Reformation Readings of Paul: Explorations in History and Exegesis*, ed. Michael Allen and Jonathan A. Linebaugh (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 49–69. See also Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017).

³⁹ James D. G. Dunn’s Mansion Memorial Lecture, “The New Perspective on Paul,” from 1982 was published in 1983; it is now easily accessible in his *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 89–110. This collection has altogether 22 papers presenting Dunn’s version of the “New Perspective.” See also his *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1996), 335–59. For a good presentation of the “New Perspective,” see Kent L. Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

own mouldbreaking work offered.⁴⁰ What was wrong with Judaism and the law to Paul, according to Sanders, is that they did “not provide for God’s ultimate purpose, that of saving the entire world through faith in Christ.”⁴¹ This is epitomized in what has become a well-known dictum: “In short, *this is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity*.”⁴² Dunn argues that Sanders portrays Paul as jumping from one system to another, thus maintaining an antithesis between faith in Christ and Paul’s Jewish heritage. Paul’s critique of the law is much more precise and limited, claims Dunn and other advocates of the so-called “New Perspective.” Much of Paul’s critique of Judaism melts away, if it is taken into account that he addresses the ethnic boundaries that were kept in force through the “works of law,” understood as national or ethnic identity markers of boundaries, such as circumcision, dietary rules, and the Sabbath. Paul’s theology revolved around precisely or mainly these aspects of the Mosaic Law.

A key passage has been identified as the first instance in which Paul applies justification language and addresses the issue of law, namely Gal 2:16: “... justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” Here, Paul sums up the issues of contentions involved in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10) and Antioch (2:11–14), namely circumcision and dietary rules, respectively. These functioned as badges of the covenant people, keeping Israel distinct from the nations. Paul’s gospel was aimed at erasing such ethnic boundaries: “What Paul denies is that God’s justification depends on ‘covenantal nomism,’ that God’s grace extends only to those who wear the badge of the covenant.”⁴³ Faith in Christ renders these badges superfluous, according to James D. G. Dunn. Paul is not anti-legalistic; he is anti-ethnocentric. In the words of John M. G. Barclay, James D. G. Dunn “locates the focus of Paul’s theology not in existential issues of conscience, trust, and motivation but in social attitudes towards ethnicity, community, and boundaries.”⁴⁴

Lately, yet another approach addresses Paul and the law with issues pertaining to it in a way that has been dubbed a “Radical New Perspective”⁴⁵ or “Paul within Judaism.”⁴⁶ This recent development was anticipated by, for example, Lloyd Gaston who made the decisive point that the addressees of Paul’s epistles

⁴⁰ Dunn, “The New Perspective,” 93.

⁴¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 47.

⁴² Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552. Italics in the original.

⁴³ Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” 101.

⁴⁴ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 344.

⁴⁵ This is the term used by, for example, Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 215–16.

⁴⁶ So labelled in the volume edited by Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015). Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 169 says that “Paul within Judaism” is the best name, and I agree, as this name indicates what really is at stake here.

were non-Jews. The problems Paul addresses and the solutions he comes up with are, therefore, relevant solely for *these* addressees.⁴⁷ By implication, this renders Paul's gospel almost irrelevant for his fellow Jews. Furthermore, these scholars argue that even within the "New Perspective," the legacy of "something is wrong with Judaism" remains, albeit now reduced to ethnocentrism. The uneasiness that a number of scholars felt toward what they saw as remaining sentiments of an anti-Jewish legacy, even within the "New Perspective," were expressed in Pamela Eisenbaum's *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*.

Eisenbaum sets out to overturn the picture of Paul as the "first true Christian,"⁴⁸ whereby he is seen as a convert, turning from Judaism to Christianity. In other words, her position flies in the face of von Harnack and the legacy within which his interpretation belongs (see above). Paul was a Jew, and he remained so after Damascus. The traditional presentation of Paul has been deeply influenced by the grand narrative concerning the origin and development of the Christian Church, and hence, according to Eisenbaum, flawed if judged by what the apostle wrote himself: "In sum, the portrait of Paul as the quintessential convert is established early on, but the image is not rooted in Paul's letters but in other sources."⁴⁹

Two assumptions figure prominently in Eisenbaum's Pauline interpretation. In the first place, she says that the picture of Paul as the convert owes more to the Acts of the Apostles than to Paul himself. His Damascus experience, as we know from his own letters, cannot be given the role it usually occupies in reconstructions of Paul's theology. This experience was indeed "life-changing,"⁵⁰ and implied a giving up on the past.⁵¹ Yet, this has been emphasized at the expense of this event as a call or vocation. She aligns herself with her teacher Krister Stendahl's well-known mechanism for understanding the nature of this event, namely that it was equivalent to a call.⁵² Galatians 1:13–14 is seen as "merely a foil for contrasting the ways in which Paul acquired knowledge: he learned the Torah and ancestral traditions through human teachers, but Paul's knowledge of Christ came through a revelation from God, not from human teachers."⁵³ In

⁴⁷ Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987). See also William Campbell, "Paul, Antisemitism, and Early Christian Identity," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccacini and Carlos A. Segovia (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 326.

⁴⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 2.

⁴⁹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 43.

⁵⁰ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 142.

⁵¹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 134.

⁵² Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM, 1977), 7–23; thus also John G. Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity? The Jewish Lives of the Apostle Paul* (American Lectures on the History of Religions. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 38.

⁵³ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 141.

other words, the contrast between Gal 1:13–14 and 1:15–16a is identical with the contrast urged between human and divine origin in the preceding verses (Gal 1:10–12), not between Judaism and Christianity. The persecution mentioned in Gal 1:13–14 means that Paul turned from “having a complacent attitude toward the Romans to preaching a message of defiance.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, his vision primarily implied a new understanding of the *time* in which he lived. The time was now ripe to reach out to the Gentiles, in accordance with biblical apocalyptic hopes of the ingathering of the nations (e.g., Isa 2:2–3; Micah 4:1–5). The shift, therefore, concerns *time* rather than theology. He “now experienced time as hurtling toward a final cataclysm.”⁵⁵ In short, “Paul did not undergo a conversion from Judaism to Christianity.”

Furthermore, Paul’s letters were addressed to *specific* churches. He never envisioned his audience as representing the church as one body of believers. Eisenbaum makes much of this *particularism* of Paul’s letters:

Most important for modern readers to note is that Paul wrote to specific communities of believers, people with whom he usually had an intimate relationship. Even within his own time, the audience Paul addressed was not the church universal, but specific churches.⁵⁶

In other words, Paul’s primary audience was *Gentile* Jesus-believers, a fact which is essential for grasping his conceptual thinking. According to Eisenbaum, this fundamental feature determines all that he wrote, and this fact puts limitations on any attempt at construing a universal theology from Paul’s letters. The distinction between Jews and Gentiles, or between particularism and universalism, is absolutely fundamental for unravelling Paul’s thinking. This implies that his critique of the Torah concerns Gentiles only.⁵⁷ Accordingly, when Paul in Galatians emphasizes that his addressees should not be circumcised, this applies solely to Gentiles: “Therefore Paul’s interaction with Gentiles should not be seen as the radical step it is typically perceived to be.”⁵⁸ From this

⁵⁴ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 146.

⁵⁵ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 200. Thus also Paula Fredriksen, “How Later Contexts Affect Pauline Content, or: Retrospect is the Mother of Anachronism,” in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write their Histories*, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Joshua J. Schwartz (CRIT 13; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 37–39. This conviction of Paul is often limited to his understanding of *time*, thus neglecting the role that the coming of *Christ* has for his understanding of time (see later on this).

⁵⁶ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 61 cf. 170, 216–17.

⁵⁷ See also Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 45–51, who gives a helpful insight into how this view emerged among Jewish Pauline scholars. In my Scandinavian context, Magnus Zetterholm (Lund) holds views very similar to those presented here; see his *Lagen som evangelium? Den nya synen på Paulus och judendomen* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006), especially 140–54.

⁵⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 115.

it follows for Eisenbaum that “Jesus saves, but he only saves the Gentiles.”⁵⁹ She is thus an advocate of a so-called “two-way theology.”⁶⁰

John G. Gager’s recent book, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, reasons likewise: “Just as he [i.e. Paul] no longer thinks of salvation for Gentiles within the Mosaic covenant, so he does not imagine salvation for Jews through their acceptance of Jesus.”⁶¹ Gager argues that Paul’s statements about the law and circumcision are “disputes entirely within the Jesus-movement, not with Jews outside. Galatians is a letter not against *Judaism* but rather against other apostles *within the Jesus-movement itself*.”⁶² Paul’s negative statements about the law and circumcision have nothing to do with Jews outside the Jesus-movement. Gager’s point here is characteristic of some advocates of “Paul within Judaism,” as he envisages a complete separation between the Jesus-movement and Judaism. I find this surprising from a scholar whose point and aim is to argue that Paul is *within* Judaism. The only movement that Paul is really within is, according to Gager, the Jesus-movement. Unintentionally, Gager’s argument draws a wedge between Paul and Judaism, contrary to what he states and opts for.

Also Matthew Thiessen’s recent book, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*,⁶³ follows in the wake of Pamela Eisenbaum, Mark Nanos, and Magnus Zetterholm. He says that there are two hermeneutical keys for reading Paul’s letters adequately, and particularly regarding the law and issues pertaining to it. Both keys substantiate the “Paul within Judaism” perspective. The first key is the explicit claims of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7–8; Rom 11:13;⁶⁴ 15:16–18), suggesting a Gentile readership and intended addressees. Thiessen thus perpetuates the view introduced by Lloyd Gaston (see above). Second, there is the remark or slogan in 1 Cor 7:19 (cf. Gal 5:6; 6:15) that “circumcision is nothing, and

⁵⁹ Eisenbaum, *Paul*, 242. Similarly Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 165: “The Law was a curse *for gentiles*. The Law only revealed sin *for gentiles*. The Law was a service of death *for gentiles*. But for Israel the Law, God-given, was a defining privilege.” However, on p. 234 n. 64, Fredriksen says that Christ as the Messiah “could never be of null import for Israel.” She thus carefully distances herself from a position voiced clearly by Lloyd Gaston, John G. Gager, and Pamela Eisenbaum. This observation of Fredriksen is of outmost importance.

⁶⁰ A present-day rethinking of Paul’s theology should, according to Pamela Eisenbaum, lead to religious pluralism. She hopes that her book will foster appreciation of Paul’s theological pluralism; see her *Paul*, 4 and 255. This is not necessarily so with all advocates of “Paul within Judaism”; see, for example, Thiessen, *Paul*, 235. Thiessen does not explain *why* he differs from Eisenbaum here.

⁶¹ Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 28.

⁶² Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 26. Italics by Gager himself. For an engagement with Gager, see Joshua W. Jipp, “Is the Apostle Paul the Father of Christian Anti-Judaism? Engaging John Gager’s *Who Made Early Christianity?*” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 39 (2017): 83–92.

⁶³ Thiessen, *Paul*, 8–11.

⁶⁴ Romans 11:13 is in my mind a text often approached narrowly by scholars from “Paul within Judaism”; I will return to this later; see pp. 27–29 in this study.

uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything.” With reference to E.P. Sanders, Thiessen points out that this is “one of the most amazing sentences Paul ever wrote.”⁶⁵ The reason is that Paul seems to urge a distinction between the commandments and circumcision, as though circumcision was not among what he considered an important means of keeping the commandments: “To any person who viewed the Pentateuch as the oracles of God (cf. Rom 3:2), how could it make sense to distinguish between circumcision and the commandments of God?”⁶⁶ Along with many other scholars, Thiessen solves this conundrum by making reference to Paul who frequently speaks of circumcision and uncircumcision as epithets for Jews and Gentiles. With that interpretation, the first part of the sentence only says that being a Jew or Gentile is indifferent – the ritual of circumcision as such is not in view;⁶⁷ keeping the commandments is still what matters. Thus, Paul assumes the abiding relevance of law observance and circumcision.

Indeed, it is a long way from the legacy of Paul shaped by the Lutheran Reformation, as adopted by Adolf von Harnack, to the view that Paul’s gospel is applicable and relevant for Gentiles only, and that the law was a problem solely to them. Paula Fredriksen has formulated both the shift of paradigms and the challenge of present-day Pauline scholarship accordingly:

The paradigm shifted from Paul *against* Judaism to Paul *and* Judaism. That perspective is shifting yet again, from Paul *and* Judaism to Paul *within* Judaism. A daunting task of re-imagining lies before us. The letters must all be translated. The work books must all be recast. The commentaries must all be redone.⁶⁸

The present study calls for sensitivity to voices embedded in Paul’s letters. What happens if we take into account Paul’s early expositors when the tasks called for by Fredriksen are undertaken?⁶⁹ In the search for the real Paul, untainted by later interpretations, the necessary sensitivity to such sources has not been given due attention. Thus, the purpose of this study is to remedy this need to account for the complexities involved. Speaking about complexities, it is also pertinent to point out that neither of the scholarly perspectives mentioned here are uniform in the sense of being “schools.” They rather form networks of scholars sharing some fundamental assumptions and arguments.

⁶⁵ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 183.

⁶⁶ Thiessen, *Paul*, 8.

⁶⁷ Thus also Mark D. Nanos, “The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul’s Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus’s Advisors to King Izates,” in *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 132; see pp. 47–49 and 144 in this study.

⁶⁸ Fredriksen, “Later Contexts,” 51. Fredriksen, *Paul* represents her attempt at reformulating this field of study.

⁶⁹ In my view, Fredriksen’s citation is indeed an exaggeration.

1.4 Approach

There are basically three ways of pursuing an investigation into the topics related to Paul and the law. The first and most important is obviously to delve into Paul's own letters, and to address this as a question of how to interpret relevant Pauline passages. Naturally, this is precisely what Pauline scholars must do. For sure, there is no lack of such studies. However, these efforts have not brought consensus, but they have certainly stimulated fresh research on Paul and his theology in its historical context. This approach can be combined with a second way, namely a view into contemporary Judaism or Judaisms – the diversity in itself becomes an argument for accommodating “Paul within Judaism” (see below). Much vitality in Pauline scholarship is due to insights into the diversity of contemporary Judaism. The third option is to address the issue from the perspective of those who viewed, evaluated, and criticized Paul from “aside.” Albeit, this includes people with whom Paul was intimately associated, be they Christ-followers of Jewish background or not. The “aside” here simply refers to how others, whoever they are, perceived Paul's theology on the law and issues pertaining to that. They do not constitute a single group that can be lumped together. They are separated by geography and time, and perhaps also by theology; nonetheless, these sources provide an opportunity for another angle. Obviously, this other Paul, or better, other Pauls (plural), cannot independently guide how Paul's letters and theology are to be interpreted. According to John G. Gager, “there were many Pauls.”⁷⁰ I work with one of them, although I do not think that the Paul of this study was always presented by the same people; in principle, there may even have been a plurality of Pauls in how he was perceived by others. Sensitivity to the debates Paul stirred is called for. They represent views to be accounted for when Paul's theology is portrayed. How did Paul's theology on the Torah appear to them? Voices that are “othered” in Paul's letters may be uncovered in four different categories of texts:

- Texts referring to “some” (τινες). In these instances, Paul makes reference to certain people without naming them. His use of “some” may be neutral with no other meaning attached (e.g., 1 Cor 6:11; 8:7; 10:7–10; Rom 11:17). In other instances, “some” refers to shadowy characters whom Paul considers opponents to his mission and gospel (Gal 1:7; 2:12; 1 Cor 4:18; 15:12, 34; 2 Cor 3:1; Phil 1:15 [possibly]).⁷¹

⁷⁰ Gager, *Who Made Early Christianity?*, 15.

⁷¹ According to Andrie du Toit, “Vilification as a Pragmatic Device in Early Christian Epistolography,” in Andrie du Toit, *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and David S. du Toit (BZNW 151; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 48–49, τινες has a strong negative force; it is a “deliberate blurring of the faces of opponents in order to portray them as negative, shadowy figures.” It is not always obvious if Paul here refers to opponents whom he is vilifying, or to backsliders. See also

- Passages in which Paul makes use of the diatribe-style; that is, where he engages an interlocutor be it real or imagined (see pp. 97–99 in this study);
- In some places, notably in First Corinthians, Paul cites maxims or slogans probably coined by fellow believers, often in order to pinpoint Paul’s purported view or to question him. In some modern Bible translations, as in NRSV for example, such slogans are indicated with quotation marks.⁷² These slogans are less important to the present investigation as they do not directly address our topic. Nonetheless, they are important as they draw our attention to Paul’s practice of embedding in his epistles words of others, and then to engage them.
- Mirror-reading Paul when he engages opponents polemically, Galatians being the most prominent example (see below and pp. 64–70 in this study). This implies that Paul’s interactions with opinions about himself also come into play. He engages the viewpoints of others.

When Paul interacts with opponents or with rumors of various kinds about himself and his purported message, it differs from citations where New Testament authors cite, summarize, or interpret biblical passages or texts, or when Origen interacts with the viewpoints of Celsus or Heracleon. Paul interacts with much less identifiable opponents, who are not the same all the time, and even when he cites them, *he* is in control of what they say. This is so since there is no *text* Paul can refer to, like Origen did; more probable, it is about commonly held opinions being voiced or circulated. It is, therefore, not possible to distinguish sharply between quotations, summaries, or interpretative paraphrases. There is even the possibility that what Paul renders are assertions made on the basis of his own perceptions of what he hears people saying about him.⁷³ By

2 Thess 3:11; 1 Tim 1:6, 19; 4:1; 5:15; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim 2:17–18. The last passage is the only instance where “some” are identified by name. As for the role of these letters in this study, see below.

⁷² See, for example, 1 Cor 6:13; 8:1, 4, 8. Which slogans they really are, and where they start and end, is, of course, open to discussion. For a recent discussion, see Andrew David Naselli, “Is Every Sin outside the Body except Immoral Sex? Weighing Whether 1 Corinthians 6:18b is Paul’s Statement or a Corinthian Slogan,” *JBL* 136 (2017): 969–87.

⁷³ Carl Johan Berglund, “Evaluating Quotations in Ancient Greek Literature: The Case of Heracleon’s *hypomnēmata*,” in *Shadowy Characters and Fragmentary Evidence*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Tobias Nicklas, and Elisabeth Hernitscheck (WUNT 388; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 201–31, has drawn attention to quotation practices in ancient literature. He points out that *verba dicendi* (verbs of speaking) – like what we have in Rom 3:8 – are often used to introduce quotations. However, where quotations end are often not marked, and generally, there is no consistency in how to mark quotations. Moreover, ancient authors felt free to adapt citations according to their needs. Berglund points out that especially in polemical contexts, citations could be re-used in ways that departed from the “original.” Here it is necessary to remind ourselves that Paul’s letters are not literary pieces of work, but correspondences with persons involved or affected by the situations addressed. This sets some limits on his creativity. Furthermore, we need to remind ourselves that the present study does not look into how Paul quotes pieces from ancient literary works, but how he draws upon rumors, shadowy and anonymous figures appearing in his letters. This means that my use of “shadowy figures” differs