

EMMANUEL NATHAN

Re-mem-bering the New Covenant at Corinth

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zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

Mohr Siebeck

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Re-membering the New Covenant at Corinth

A Different Perspective on 2 Corinthians 3

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

This work is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation that was defended at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven) towards the end of December 2010. My doctoral supervisors were Prof. Dr. Reimund Bieringer and Prof. Dr. Didier Pollefeyt. My readers were Prof. Dr. Joseph Verheyden, Prof. Dr. William S. Campbell, and Prof. Dr. Sandra Hübenal. I am grateful to all of them for their guidance and support at various times. I also acknowledge the Research Council of KU Leuven and the Research Foundation – Flanders who jointly funded the research project, “New Perspectives on Paul and the Jewish People,” within which this dissertation took shape. Prof. Dr. Friedrich Avemarie, of righteous memory, and Prof. Dr. Jörg Frey very kindly accepted this manuscript into the WUNT II series without any hesitation. I want to especially underline the encouragement I received from Prof. Avemarie on more than one occasion. He would have been happy to receive the manuscript without any substantial changes, but I still felt I needed time away from the dissertation in order to return to it and rework some parts. That period has taken somewhat longer than I imagined due to various projects, personal and professional, including an intercontinental move. My own research interests have broadened considerably in this time, but they have gifted me the necessary distance to redact the manuscript into the concise shape it now has. I am therefore grateful to the publishers for their patience and understanding, and to the persistent encouragement of close friends. I have been greatly aided by the technical assistance of Dr. Andrey Romanov and Dr. Blake Wassell, and to the expert and always helpful advice from the editorial staff at Mohr Siebeck. To my wife, Agnè, and three children, Jogailé, Ignas, and Mikas, I owe everything. And, inadequate as all studies must be, I nonetheless dedicate mine to the memory of my late father, Joseph Michael Nathan, *zikhrono livrakha*.

Sydney, 19 February 2020

Emmanuel Nathan

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AnBib	Analecta biblica
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly: Monograph Series
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies

LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
<i>NedTT</i>	<i>Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift</i>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PSB</i>	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature: Symposium Series
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies: Monograph Series
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
SubBi	Subsidia biblica
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
<i>TZT</i>	<i>Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

The present monograph arose out of a research project devoted to examining the relation between studies on 2 Cor 3:6–18 and the New Perspective on Paul, and contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue. While this last aspect of the research project is not the primary focus of this work, it does hover in the background. The monograph contains eleven studies that reflect, in ever narrowing circles of focus, on the question of continuity and discontinuity that intersects the New Perspective on Paul and, more concretely, Pauline studies of the new covenant (καινή διαθήκη) in 2 Cor 3. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the research project within which this work was situated, our study does not follow the trajectory of a classical monograph in biblical studies. Instead it chooses to wrestle openly with issues of hermeneutics and heuristics, as will become clearer in this work.

We commence with three chapters that are hermeneutical in nature. Chapter One traces the broad context of this study and situates contributors to the New Perspective on Paul (predominantly, E.P. Sanders and James Dunn) alongside their detractors from two camps, the ‘Lutheran’ (e.g., Stephen Westerholm) and the ‘radical new’ perspectives (e.g., Mark Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm). Chapter Two examines two proponents of the New Perspective on Paul (James Dunn and Ellen Christiansen) in order to trace if they have a common position with regard to the covenantal contrasts in 2 Cor 3, given that studies of Galatians and Romans, where issues of ethnicity and justification abound, have been the main focus of New Perspective debates. Chapter Three then follows, by way of counter-balance, a non-New Perspective study (by Scott Hafemann) offering a contextual exegesis of the letter-Spirit contrast in 2 Cor 3. This, in turn, offers the occasion to compare his study against the New Perspective positions on 2 Cor 3 traced in Chapter Two.

In order to address the question of continuity and discontinuity more precisely, we make our own turn to the text of 2 Cor 3:6–18 from Chapter Four onwards. Chapter Four identifies four verses (3:7, 11, 13, 14) where two highly ‘discontinuous’ terms, καταργέω (‘abrogated’) and τέλος (‘cessation’ or ‘goal’) are interrogated as to their exegetical options. In subsequently alternating between discussions on method and applications to the text (2 Cor 3:6, 7–18), we allow for a gradual refinement of the question of continuity and dis-

continuity. We do so first in terms of introducing the question of ‘identity transformation’, since this involves asking whether (a) one moves from one identity to another (in Paul’s case, from ‘Jewish’ to ‘Christian’) or (b) retains one’s former identity and in the process transforms it as a result of a new experience (in Paul’s case, his encounter with Christ). Chapter Five explores sociological approaches (Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Edward Adams, Francis Watson) to identity transformation (David Horrell, William Campbell, Brian Tucker) in search of a suitable method to gauge identity transformation in 2 Cor 3. Chapter Six is then a study that discerns four trends on Paul’s argument from Scripture in 2 Cor 3 and ends up interrogating their implications for identity transformation.

In Chapter Seven we introduce the question of memory, building on the insight that the ‘construction of identity’ involves the re-membling of traditions in order to provide alternative foundational narratives. We therefore examine scholars who have drawn the link between both identity and memory (Judith Lieu, Samuel Byrskog, Philip Esler). Given the linking nature of the chapter, Chapter Seven also contains a brief application in social memory from the perspective of identity formation, more specifically, the function of counter-memories in the emergence of new identities. As a first exercise in memory theory, this application produces results which challenge a too-easy emphasis on Paul’s continuity with Judaism that is asserted by proponents of the radical new perspective (e.g., Mark Nanos and Paula Fredriksen) and those arguing for the ‘Ways that Never Parted’ (Adam Becker, Annette Yoshiko Reed *et al.*).

Chapter Eight then explores social memory theory in its own right, moving from more general theoretical approaches (e.g., Jan and Aleida Assmann, Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher) to applications of the theory in New Testament studies (Minna Shkul, Rafael Rodríguez, Anthony Le Donne). It is ultimately Anthony Le Donne’s articulation of the ‘mnemonic refraction model’ that we find most useful to heuristically interrogate the question of Pauline continuity and discontinuity in 2 Cor 3. Chapter Nine presents our own application of the mnemonic refraction model to 2 Cor 3:6–18. In so doing, Chapter Nine demonstrates how social memory theory reframes the larger, and much harder to answer, question of Paul’s continuity or discontinuity with Judaism and, far more modestly by comparison, seeks instead to examine the ways in which Paul refracts, redeploys, and reconfigures existing traditions in service of local needs, among them the formation and transformation of character among his community at Corinth.

Building on insights from the foregoing, we offer in Chapter Ten our own perspective on Paul’s ambivalent usage of Moses in 2 Cor 3:6–18. We argue that Paul’s narrative conflation of his own *διακονία* within a typological narrative of Moses’ glory represents none other than an evaluation of his own life prior to conversion in much the same way that he did in Phil 3:3–11. We then proceed to argue that this ‘turning’/conversion had implications for identity

transformation, both Paul's and the Corinthians', given that Paul had already articulated a mimetic programme for Corinthian emulation in 1 Cor 4:16 and 11:1. In short, we contend that 2 Cor 3:6–18 represents not a negative assessment of Judaism or the Law, but rather a reflection on Paul's own life prior to, during, and after conversion. It was only as a second step that the narrative in 2 Cor 3:6–18 came to be understood as representing a separation process from Judaism. That it was, and has been, understood that way is reflected upon in our final chapter.

In Chapter Eleven we return to issues of hermeneutics by offering a hermeneutical reflection on the tension between ideology and utopia in 2 Cor 3, as argued from the hermeneutical arc of new covenant and new creation. In this hermeneutical reading we take seriously the unfortunate reception history that the covenantal contrasts have generated in Christian-Jewish encounter. But, in addition to acknowledging the unfortunate role that 2 Cor 3 has played in the history of that encounter, we also argue that by seeking out and affirming the utopian potentials of Paul's language in that very same passage, we can hope that it leads to transformative action in the present.

Chapter 1

The Context of This Study

The present study can be considered an examination of tradition and innovation in Paul, that is to say, an investigation into the extent to which Paul relies on traditions and then employs them to new ends. The concept that we are attempting to trace in this way is Paul's use of *καινή διαθήκη* in 2 Cor 3:6, a term which he seems to contrast with *παλαιὰ διαθήκη* (the 'old covenant') in the same chapter (2 Cor 3:14). Instead of approaching the term *καινή διαθήκη* as a traditional word study, we shall be undertaking its investigation as a social concept and shall be doing so from the perspectives of social memory and identity. These perspectives will be fleshed out in coming chapters. In this chapter we outline the broader context of this study.

Our study arose out of an interdisciplinary research project that examined the role of Paul's theology in the process of early Christian self-definition in relation to contemporary Judaism.¹ Fitting within this larger project, our study devotes special attention to 2 Cor 3:6–18, a text which has not normally played a pivotal role in research on Paul's relationship to the Jewish people, other than it being considered a passing reference by Paul, in the heat of an argument, that witnesses to his generally negative assessment of Judaism. The research question posed by this project is whether 2 Cor 3:6–18 is indeed a witness to the antithesis which Paul allegedly developed with regard to contemporary Judaism. The answer to this question would have significant implications for a crucial question in Jewish-Christian dialogue, namely whether Paul became the founder of Christianity in this process of separation while Jesus had stayed completely within the boundaries of Judaism.²

¹ It was jointly funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders and the Research Council of KU Leuven (principal investigators: Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt). It resulted in two major publications: Reimund Bieringer and Didier Pollefeyt (eds.), *Paul and Judaism: Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and Jewish-Christian Relations*, LNTS 463 (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2012); and Reimund Bieringer, Emmanuel Nathan, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson (eds.), *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of Late Second Temple Judaism*, CRINT 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

² The innovative nature of this project was that it sought to critically evaluate the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul', which seemed to dissolve the tension between Paul and Judaism by understanding Paul as being in harmony with his Jewish background (although our study will nuance this understanding of the New Perspective on Paul). At the same time, the research project was also wary of deconstructing the New Perspective on Paul in order

The above paragraph has articulated the research project's aims *in nuce* that provided the outer frame for this study. In what follows, it will be important to distinguish between two issues that have tended to overlap in Pauline studies in the past but now are increasingly diverging from one another: the question of Paul's Jewishness (initiated in many ways by the New Perspective on Paul) and the separation between Judaism and Christianity (the so-called Parting of the Ways).

1. Paul's Jewishness and the Parting of the Ways or Was Paul the Founder of Christianity?

Paul's contribution to Christian theology can hardly be underestimated. It is in fact no exaggeration to say that for many he, and not Jesus, was the real founder of Christianity as a religion. Gerd Lüdemann, a modern exponent of such a view, put it aptly:

The new religion required a doctrinal unity and the authority to enforce it; that in turn called for vision (and perhaps *a* vision) and the supreme self-assuredness to insist on its truth; and those, of course, were the spark and the fuel which powered the immense missionary effort that made Paul the founder of Christianity.³

While Lüdemann credited the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche on his understanding of Paul as the founder of Christianity,⁴ most New Testament scholars would more readily admit the influence of Ferdinand Christian Baur, whose antithesis of 'Petrinism' and 'Paulinism' deeply shaped the way in which the emergence of primitive Christianity was viewed by more than a generation of biblical scholars.⁵

to then simply reaffirm Christian identity against Judaism. For example, Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel*, WUNT I/140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); Simon Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); and Robert H. Gundry, *The Old Is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations*, WUNT I/178 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). The list could go on.

³ Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul: The Founder of Christianity* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2002) 215.

⁴ Lüdemann, *Paul: The Founder of Christianity*, 227: "I would like to draw the reader's attention again to Nietzsche, whose analysis has greatly helped me to understand Paul as the founder of Christianity." This is then followed by a quote from Nietzsche's *The Dawn*, sec. 68, where Paul is credited with both launching Christianity and removing it from its Jewish roots.

⁵ Ferdinand Christian Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der Korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom," *TZT* 5 (1831) 61–206, and then further developed in *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen, 1853). See

Baur posited a Hegelian clash between Jewish particularism and Christian universalism, reflected in the dispute between Petrine and Pauline parties. Paulinism gave Christianity its inner, spiritual and universal dimensions, whereas Petrine Christianity's attachment to the formal, the external and the particular would be the reason why Jewish Christianity ultimately disappeared when the gospel spread among the Gentiles as a result of Paul's spearheading and forward-thinking mission. It should also not be forgotten that Baur's model served confessional ends. Petrine and Pauline Christianity reflected the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. As such, it remained a dominant paradigm in Protestant scholarship and the subsequent revisions to the model in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by such figures as Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Abrecht Ritschl, or the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school, did little to remove the basic dualistic scheme or the perception of the primitive church as 'early Catholicism'.⁶ But how justified is it to speak of Paul as the founder of Christianity?

1.1 A New Perspective on Paul

A new way of understanding of Paul arrived in the second half of the twentieth century. This was in no small part caused by world events in the first half of the century. In the past thirty years, the recovery of Paul's Jewishness (similar in trend to the rehabilitation of 'Jesus the Jew') has allowed Pauline scholars to place the theological statements in his letters within a matrix of his relationship to Second Temple Judaism. In what would become a seminal article,⁷ Krister Stendahl argued that Luther's introspective search for salvific grace, concentrating on the individual's relation to God, had been read back into the mind of Paul, ignoring the apostle's more social concerns of relations between Jews and Gentiles that had been made possible in Christ. Similarly, Paul's critique of a Jewish legalistic 'works-righteousness' was really a reflection of Luther's own battle against the Church's reliance on paid-for indulgences. Stendahl's article came to greater recognition in a 1976 reprint,⁸ a year before another prominent figure, Ed Sanders, published a monumental work that highlighted the deleterious effects of reconstructing Judaism from Paul's rhetorical

also Robert Morgan, "The Significance of 'Paulinism'," *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C.K. Barrett*, ed. M.D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982) 320–338.

⁶ See James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM; Philadelphia, PA: Trinity International, 1991) 1–17 for an overview of the trends in modern biblical scholarship with regard to the origins of earliest Christianity.

⁷ Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56 (1963) 199–215.

⁸ Reprinted in, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976) 78–96.

presentation of it in his epistles.⁹ The legalistic caricature of Judaism that emerged from an unbridgeable gulf between Law and Gospel would go on to treat Rabbinic Judaism as *Spätjudentum*, ‘late Judaism’, implying that once Christianity emerged, nothing further of serious note occurred in Judaism afterwards. Refuting this, Sanders set out to show that Judaism is an equally grace-filled religion by virtue of ‘covenantal nomism’, the notion that God elects Israel into his covenant as an act of grace (‘getting in’) while Israel obeys the commandments (‘staying in’) to remain faithful to that covenant.¹⁰

Sanders’ legacy was further taken up by James Dunn when he proposed a ‘new perspective on Paul’.¹¹ Dunn saw himself in broad agreement with Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. We shall have occasion to return to the distinction between Sanders and Dunn a bit later on. For now, though, it suffices to say that within this new perspective on Paul, Paul was no longer seen as separated from Judaism, a separation that only occurred at a much later date, in what was referred to as ‘the Parting of the Ways’.

1.2 The Parting of the Ways (and Some of Its Problems)

The Parting of the Ways is a model used to describe the separation between Judaism and Christianity in 135 CE after the Bar Kochba revolt. Judith Lieu has traced the origin of this term back to a 1912 collection of essays by Foakes Jackson, entitled *The Parting of the Roads: Studies in the Development of Judaism and Early Christianity*.¹² James Dunn became one its leading proponents. In 1989 he convened a research symposium at the University of Durham devoted to the theme of the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism. Their conclusions showed that the parting of the ways was a long drawn-out process but that the period of 70–135 was of particular importance.¹³ With these findings Dunn went on to paint the portrait of the partings (plural) of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. He called attention to the significance of the crisis of 70 CE (which ended in the destruction of the Temple) but that

⁹ Ed P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).

¹⁰ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75: “Briefly put, covenantal nomism is the view that one’s place in God’s plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression.”

¹¹ James D.G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 (1983) 95–122. See also the collected essays in Id., *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays*, WUNT I/185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

¹² Judith Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?” *JSNT* 56 (1994) 101–119, 101.

¹³ James D.G. Dunn, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135. The Second Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism (Durham, September, 1989)*, WUNT I/66 (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1992).