Contents

Preface ix
Abbreviations xi

Paul in Perspective: An Overview of the Landscape More Than Forty Years after Paul and Palestinian Judaism
B. J. Oropeza and Scot McKnight 1

1. The Roman Catholic Perspective on Paul Brant Pitre 25
   ◗ Traditional Protestant Perspective Response to Pitre A. Andrew Das 56
   ◗ New Perspective Response to Pitre James D. G. Dunn 62
   ◗ Paul within Judaism Perspective Response to Pitre Magnus Zetterholm 65
   ◗ Gift Perspective Response to Pitre John M. G. Barclay 69
   ◗ Roman Catholic Perspective Reply to the Respondents Brant Pitre 75

2. The Traditional Protestant Perspective on Paul A. Andrew Das 83
   ◗ Roman Catholic Perspective Response to Das Brant Pitre 107
   ◗ New Perspective Response to Das James D. G. Dunn 114
   ◗ Paul within Judaism Perspective Response to Das Magnus Zetterholm 117
   ◗ Gift Perspective Response to Das John M. G. Barclay 122
   ◗ Traditional Protestant Perspective Reply to the Respondents A. Andrew Das 127
3. The New Perspective on Paul  JAMES D. G. DUNN  133
   ◗ Roman Catholic Perspective Response to Dunn  BRANT PITRE  146
   ◗ Traditional Protestant Perspective Response to Dunn  A. ANDREW DAS  153
   ◗ Paul within Judaism Perspective Response to Dunn  MAGNUS ZETTERHOLM  159
   ◗ Gift Perspective Response to Dunn  JOHN M. G. BARCLAY  164
   ◗ New Perspective Reply to the Respondents  JAMES D. G. DUNN  168

4. The Paul within Judaism Perspective  MAGNUS ZETTERHOLM  171
   ◗ Roman Catholic Perspective Response to Zetterholm  BRANT PITRE  194
   ◗ Traditional Protestant Perspective Response to Zetterholm  A. ANDREW DAS  201
   ◗ New Perspective Response to Zetterholm  JAMES D. G. DUNN  207
   ◗ Gift Perspective Response to Zetterholm  JOHN M. G. BARCLAY  210
   ◗ Paul within Judaism Perspective Reply to the Respondents  MAGNUS ZETTERHOLM  216

5. The Gift Perspective on Paul  JOHN M. G. BARCLAY  219
   ◗ Roman Catholic Perspective Response to Barclay  BRANT PITRE  237
   ◗ Traditional Protestant Perspective Response to Barclay  A. ANDREW DAS  244
   ◗ New Perspective Response to Barclay  JAMES D. G. DUNN  246
   ◗ Paul within Judaism Perspective Response to Barclay  MAGNUS ZETTERHOLM  248
   ◗ Gift Perspective Reply to the Respondents  JOHN M. G. BARCLAY  253

Afterword: Pastoral Reflections on Perspectives on Paul: Five Views  DENNIS EDWARDS  259

Author Index  267
Scripture Index  273
Subject Index  279
Paul in Perspective

An Overview of the Landscape More Than Forty Years after Paul and Palestinian Judaism

B. J. OROPEZA AND SCOT McKNIGHT

More than forty years have passed since the publication of E. P. Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, a study that would revolutionize the way biblical scholars and theologians interpret Paul and the Judaism of his day. Sanders worked through the “patterns of religion” in the Palestinian literature on Second Temple Judaism and in Paul’s undisputed letters. One of his primary aims was “to destroy the view of Rabbinic Judaism which is still prevalent in much, perhaps most, New Testament scholarship.” Sanders’s perspective in this monograph, along with


2. Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon.

his follow-up book, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, presented a different perspective than the Lutheran-Protestant interpretation of Paul and the Judaism of his time. An entire generation of scholars has been influenced by, or made its point of departure from, Sanders and the New Perspective on Paul that followed from his studies. In this introductory chapter, then, a brief “history of interpretation” is in order that covers Sanders, the New Perspective on Paul, critics of the New Perspective, and some of the major perspectives that followed.


5. Of course, we are not suggesting that these are the only perspectives on Paul on the market. Our focus centers on traditions and criticisms engaging with Sanders and the New Perspective on Paul.


E. P. Sanders’s Perspective

Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* featured a number of tenets that would become pivotal in biblical scholarship, not least his calling into question the historical integrity of much New Testament scholarship.

First, his examination of Palestinian Second Temple Judaism, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Tannaitic literature led him to conclude that the Judaism of Paul’s day was not typified by work-righteousness or legalism; it did not seek to secure divine approval by human merit. Contrary to what Lutheran-Protestant scholars had assumed, ancient Judaism was a religion of grace. The Jews held to what Sanders called *covenantal nomism*: “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.”

A covenant relationship with God and adherence to Mosaic law were central to understanding rewards and punishments from God.
God’s elect people, the aspect of “getting in” a covenant relationship with God happened as a sheer act of grace. The people, moreover, were to keep the Torah in obedience to God, which constituted their “staying in” that covenant relationship. Works are thus the condition of staying in, “but they do not earn salvation.” For Sanders, then, Israel’s salvation is by grace, and judgment is according to works.

Second, when Paul became a Christ-follower, his experience led him from solution to plight. He started with God’s redemption in Christ (solution) and then attempted to explain why humans were in need of salvation (plight). This makes it unlikely that what is at stake with the Torah for Paul is that it is impossible to obey or that it leads to self-righteousness. The issue that Paul faces is how gentiles could be on equal footing with Jews rather than being second-class citizens. Prior to Sanders, Krister Stendahl came to a similar conclusion after arguing that a troubled conscience, exemplified by Luther and Western sentiments, was not Paul’s struggle. As a Pharisee, Paul could claim to have confidence in his status and considered himself “blameless” regarding righteousness in the Torah (Phil. 3:4–6).

Third, for Sanders, when transgressions and other shortcomings took place among Torah adherents, the Torah provided its own means of expiating such violations through cultic sacrifices (e.g., Lev. 4–6; 16). This assisted in maintaining and restoring Israel’s covenant relationship with God. Israel’s atonement already provided a remedy for guilt and sin prior to Christ.

Fourth, Paul’s negativity toward the Torah in his letters resulted from his conclusion that faith in Christ was the only way to salvation. Thus, he ob-

10. PPJ, 420, 543.
11. PPJ, 543 (emphasis original).
12. PPJ, 442–47, 474–76.
13. PLJP, 150–51.
16. PPJ, 442.
17. PLJP, 47; PPJ, 519.
jected to the law because it attempts another way of righteousness. It is not
that Judaism is legalistic; rather, "This is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism:
it is not Christianity."18 God chose another way to save without the law; it is
through faith in Jesus Christ,19 and gentiles simply “cannot live by the law.”20
This either-or approach of Sanders can be seen along the axes of either apoca-
lyptic disruption or salvation-historical fulfillment.

Fifth, whereas justification for Jews meant to live according to the Torah
and so retain covenant membership, justification for Paul involves salvation
through Christ. Sanders prefers to interpret the verb δικαιώ (dikaioō) as “to
righteous” rather than “to justify.” Stress is then placed not on the forensic
aspect of God’s declaration of acquittal but on a person being “righteoused”
by participation in Christ. The righteoused person is transferred over into the
community of God’s people in Christ.21

Sixth, for Paul, to remain a member of God’s covenant people, God’s will
is to be fulfilled not by particularisms of observing things such as Sabbath and
food laws but by loving one’s neighbor.22 Here we see that Sanders maintains
a “getting in” and “staying in” covenantal pattern not only for Second Temple
Judaism but also for Paul.

Sanders’s perspective, though criticized on certain points, received praise
as a milestone in scholarship from early reviewers such as Nils A. Dahl,
Philip King, G. B. Caird, and Samuel Sandmel.23 In more recent years, Sand-
ers’s Comparing Judaism and Christianity: Common Judaism, Paul, and the
Inner and the Outer in Ancient Religion24 collects a number of his previous
essays and unpublished papers, and his massive Paul: The Apostle’s Life,

18. PPJ, 552 (emphasis original).
20. PPJ, 496.
ard B. Hays, “What Is ‘Real Participation in Christ?’ A Dialogue with E. P. Sanders on Pauline
Soteriology,” and Stanley K. Stowers, “What Is ‘Pauline Participation in Christ’?,” both in Re-
defining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders,
ed. Fabian E. Udoh et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 336–51 and
352–71, respectively. And now see Michael J. Gorman, Participating in Christ: Explorations in
Paul’s Theology and Spirituality (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019); Gorman, Becoming the
Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Gorman, Inhabiting
the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology (Grand
Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Gorman, Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
22. PLJP, 93–135.
Letters, and Thought covers the apostle’s undisputed letters. In these works, inter alia, Sanders reaffirms and expands on his interpretation of Paul and covenantal nomism. Sanders says of Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought, “I have summed up my views after a career as an interpreter of the apostle.” The Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) also recently dedicated a session in honor of Sanders and the fortieth anniversary of Paul and Palestinian Judaism. The articles presented at the session were revised and reprinted in the Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting. In the journal’s introduction the editor-in-chief writes, “In 1977, E. P. Sanders published a book that would change the way that New Testament scholarship approached both Judaism and, in consequence, the NT texts themselves. . . . As the reader will discover on the pages that follow, this quest shows no signs of slowing down. On the contrary, it has entered a new level of intensity and strength.”

The New Perspective of James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright

Scholars influenced by Sanders, particularly James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright, made their own points of departure from Sanders when it came to interpreting Paul. “The New Perspective on Paul” was minted from the title of Dunn’s Manson Memorial Lecture in Manchester (November 4, 1982), which was published the year after in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library. Dunn, however, mentions that Wright used the term earlier in his 1978 article “The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith,” and in the pre-Sanders era, Stendahl used the term in his famous “Introspective Conscience” article. In any case, Dunn claims that the New Perspective


on Paul (NPP) is not really new at all, since it is Paul’s own perspective that highlights teachings he considered central to justification and that largely had been ignored among contemporary perceptions of Paul. Not only do Wright and Dunn disagree with Sanders’s Paul, but also they do not agree with each other on various points. Discussions and criticisms on the NPP, then, must take into account both the similarities and differences among its authors.

Dunn in his NPP article, and again in his other publications that followed, proposed that Sanders’s conclusion regarding Second Temple Judaism (STJ) was correct though overstated. Contrary to Sanders, however, Dunn asserts that Paul maintained a sense of continuity with his Jewishness. Paul’s language of law and justification is to be understood within the social context of his gentile mission. The central point of his letters regarding these issues was that the gospel is about salvation in Christ for all, Jews and gentiles, and the latter are not to be excluded from belonging to God’s people, despite their nonobservance of Jewish customs. For Dunn, Paul’s mentioning of the “works of the law” centers on boundary markers related to Jewish pride and exclusivism, such as circumcision and food laws. These markers became important in the Maccabean era during Hellenist attacks on the Jews, and as such they focused on “Israel’s distinctiveness and made visible Israel’s claims to be a people set apart, [and they] were the clearest points which differentiated the Jews from the nations. The law was coterminous with Judaism.”

33. A number are reprinted in Dunn, New Perspective.
one’s righteousness for granted, and the apostle comes against this attitude by proclaiming salvation by faith in Christ alone and that his gentile converts do not need to become Jewish proselytes in order to be saved. Even so, Dunn has repeatedly clarified that “works of the law” has a broader meaning than the boundary markers; this term refers to “what the law requires, the conduct prescribed by the Torah; whatever the law requires to be done can be described as ‘doing’ the law, as work of the law.” The clarification is important since repeated characterizations of his position wrongly limit his meaning to “boundary markers.” In the context of gentile mission, when gentiles are being compelled to become Jews, however, the works of the law more specifically center on that which divides Jews from gentiles, and hence boundary markers come to the foreground.

In his monumental *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Dunn, along with doing other things, reaffirms and elaborates on the New Perspective, suggesting that interpreting Paul in this light helps combat that type of racism and nationalism that has “distorted and diminished Christianity past and present.” More recently he writes that the NPP does not seek to replace the “Old Perspective” but endeavors to have all factors be included and carefully considered in Paul’s theology of justification. This includes four prominent points. First, the “new perspective” on Judaism views it in terms of covenantal nomism—though with an accent on the “nomism.” Second, although it emphasizes the inclusion of gentiles with Jews, Paul’s gospel mission was for all who believe. Third, in the history of Christian faith, Paul initially set justification in opposition to works of the law as a result of Jewish believers requiring gentile believers to live like Jews. And fourth, the *whole* gospel should be featured in relation to Pauline soteriology, “warts and all,” not just parts that do not create tensions or inconsistencies for the interpreter. Such aspects include (1) justification by faith in Christ (rather than Christ’s faith); (2) readiness with Paul to cut through the “letter” (surface reference) of the law to the principles underlying it that determine faith’s conduct; (3) attention to justification according to works, which encourages good works while warning against moral failure and holding final salvation in some sense contingent upon faithfulness; and (4) a holding

draws attention to this point, adds that such markers “became the acid tests of one’s loyalty to Judaism.” Garlington, “The New Perspective on Paul,” 4 (emphasis original).

together of both the imagery of forensic justification and participation in Christ. 39

N. T. Wright generally concurs with Sanders’s assessment of STJ, and he argues that Paul’s problem with the Judaism that he encounters involves a social dimension. It was caught up in “national righteousness,” an expression also used by Dunn; it held that “fleshly Jewish descent guarantees membership of God’s true covenant people.” 40 Wright describes his “Romans” moment in 1976: He was reading particularly Romans 10:3, where Paul says that his fellow Jews, not knowing God’s righteousness, seek to establish their own righteousness. Wright considered that “their own righteousness” was not “in the sense of a moral status based on the performance of Torah and the consequent accumulation of a treasury of merit, but an ethnic status based on the possession of Torah as the sign of automatic covenant membership.” 41 He agrees with Dunn that “works of the law” identifies Jew over gentile with badges such as Sabbath, circumcision, and food laws. 42 He also finds that justification in Paul normally appears in the context of Jew and gentile coming together and/or his criticism of Judaism. 43

Valuing the role that Scripture plays in Paul’s thinking, Wright posits that God had established a covenant with Abraham as the proper venue to deal with evil, but Abraham’s family tragically shared in the evil. Israel was to be the light of the world and deal with what is wicked, but instead of fulfilling this role to the nations, the people treated their vocation as their exclusive privilege. 44 This became for the people a sin, and Torah enticed Israel to national righteousness. 45 Hence, the Israel of Paul’s day is suffering exile based on prophetic declarations, and due to their being in sin,


44. N. T. Wright, Paul: In Fresh Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 36–37.

45. Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 242–43.
they are under covenant curse (Deut. 27–30). Jewish occupation by Rome is a constant reminder of this. But Jesus the Messiah is to be the people’s restorer in whom the blessing of covenant renewal takes place and extends to the nations. His death on the cross deals the final blow to sin and the curse of the people; he is their representative. Christ is also to be ruler of the world, causing political implications with the Roman Empire and its imperial ideology.

For Wright, righteousness (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosynē*) can be interpreted along the lines of covenant membership, and to be justified identifies the believing person as a covenant member of God’s family, a single people of all nations inclusive of Israel. This is God’s verdict on whoever is genuinely God’s people. Wright adds further that final judgment is on the basis of works, which are to be taken seriously; these works are things showing that one is “in Christ” and obedient to the Spirit’s leading. Justification by faith, then, is courtroom language of the “anticipation in the present of the justification which will occur in the future,” on the ground of “the entirety of the life led.” Wright clarifies:

Justification is not “how someone becomes a Christian.” It is God’s declaration about the person who has just become a Christian. And, just as the final declaration will consist, not of words so much as of an event, namely the resurrection of the person concerned into a glorious body like that of the risen Jesus, so the present declaration consists, not so much of words, though words there may be, but of an event, the event in which one dies with the Messiah and rises to new life with him, anticipating that final resurrection. In other words, baptism.

52. Dunn and Wright, “An Evening Conversation,” 4; similarly, Wright, *Justification*, 251; Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 57.
In response to assumptions that Wright considers works as the basis (rather than evidence) of salvation and thus makes “faith alone” questionable, Wright insists that his view is in accord with traditional Protestant Reformed theology. He also clarifies that how a person is saved or justified should not be polarized against how Jews and gentiles may come together without necessity of the latter being circumcised. Likewise, there is both juridical and participatory (“in Christ”) language in Paul.

Some common tenets generally shared by New Perspective scholars are as follows. First, there is sensitivity toward Judaism and how it is to be perceived by Christians. Second, STJ is generally perceived not in terms of legalism but in terms of grace, election, and covenantal nomism. Third, the pre-Damascus Paul had problems with pride and privilege rather than inner struggles with guilt and sin. Fourth, the social dimension of Paul’s mission to the gentiles is featured. Fifth, whereas distinctive practices such as circumcision demarcated STJ, Paul rejected such particularisms for his gentle churches in favor of righteousness, faith, love, and obedience. Sixth, there is interest in highlighting righteousness related to participation in Christ. Seventh, New Perspective scholars insist that interpretations based on biblical and ancient historical examination carry more weight than traditional and theological dogmas when it comes to interpreting Paul. In addition, six benefits related to studying the NPP are worth repeating: (1) a better understanding of Paul’s Letters; (2) avoidance of individualistic Western perception; (3) reduction of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism; (4) more continuity between Old Testament and New Testament; (5) more continuity between Jesus and Paul; (6) more continuity between Roman Catholics and Protestants over justification.

55. Wright, Justification; Wright, “Justification”; see further Stanley, introduction to Four Views on the Role of Works, 20–23.
58. On these benefits, see Yinger, New Perspective, 87–93.
Responses to the New Perspective: Positive and Negative

A complete survey of supporters and works sympathetic toward the New Perspective is beyond the scope of this study.\textsuperscript{59} Even so, three influential scholars are worth mentioning in this category. Terence L. Donaldson, who agrees with Sanders’s covenantal nomism, advances studies on the gentiles and Paul’s core convictions that provide the framework for his thinking.\textsuperscript{60} Don Garlington stresses the obedience of faith and the importance of perseverance for followers of Christ needed during the “now and not yet” interim of justification and final judgment.\textsuperscript{61} Kent Yinger focuses on the importance of final judgment in relation to justification, and he addresses the issues of Jewish legalism and synergism as factors in the debate between Old and New Perspectives.\textsuperscript{62} Such studies represent a continued interest in scholarship over issues related to Paul and the gentile problem,\textsuperscript{63} and covenant nomism and the pattern of “getting in” and “staying in” in light of


\textsuperscript{63} See, e.g., our discussion of Paul within Judaism below.
tensions between divine and human agencies,\textsuperscript{64} perseverance and apostasy,\textsuperscript{65} justification and final judgment.\textsuperscript{66}

Nevertheless, the NPP has gained many critics over the years.\textsuperscript{67} Critics frequently come from traditional Protestant backgrounds that place emphasis on


justification by grace through faith and the inability to secure divine approval by human merit or submission to divine law. There are three prominent categories of these responses.


First, there are criticisms related to Sanders’s interpretation of Second Temple Judaism.69 Contrary to Sanders’s tendency for the nationalistic election and salvation of Israel, Mark Adam Elliott argues from STJ, minus rabbinic literature, that the sources often provide evidence only for a remnant of Israel being saved.70 Simon J. Gathercole takes issue with Sanders’s lack of focusing on final vindication when STJ sources bear out the importance of obedience as the condition and ground for Jewish confidence at final judgment. Romans 1–5 is then said to criticize a soteriology related to keeping the law to be saved at the eschaton.71 Chris VanLandingham contests Sanders’s connection between grace and election for STJ. What is evident in these sources is “reward for obedience to God’s will, not the unmerited gift of God’s grace.”72 The two-volume compilation edited by D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, Justification and Variegated Nomism,73 is perhaps the most ambitious response of this sort. The contributors in volume 1 set out to examine STJ to assess whether various texts teach covenant nomism as Sanders proposes. Volume 1 assesses various theological aspects relevant to the NPP. The conclusion of this work asserts that STJ is more variegated than Sanders had proposed. Although several of the contributors found covenant nomism to be a useful category for the sources they examined, the conclusion of the monograph has it that Sanders is “wrong when he tries to establish that his category is right everywhere.”74 More recently, John Barclay concedes to grace being pervasively found in STJ, though quite more diverse than Sanders proposed. For Barclay, grace is everywhere present in the literature but not everywhere the same.75

72. VanLandingham, Judgment and Justification, 333.
75. John M. G. Barclay, Paul and the Gift (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), e.g., 319.
Second, a number of critiques focus on the New Perspective’s interpretation of Paul’s Letters. Stephen Westerholm categorizes scholarly criticisms into five groups.76 One group of interpreters argues that Paul’s own view is contradictory or distorts Jewish evidence.77 Another set believes that Paul’s view may be compatible with certain Jewish traditions, and both Paul and these traditions determine that other Jews did not live up to covenant requirement for righteousness.78 Others argue that Christ’s atonement either added reality behind Judaic atonement or invalidated it.79 Others emphasize anthropological pessimism; humans who are not transformed are simply too corrupt to be obedient and contribute to salvation.80 A final group believes that “Paul found it important in principle that human beings rely exclusively on divine goodness for all their needs—and he deemed Judaism, in its reliance on ‘works,’ to have departed from this principle.”81 Westerholm himself argues that righteousness in Paul is not primarily about covenant language; righteousness by faith is about what sinners lack and what is unmerited. Romans 4:4–6 and 5:7–9, for example, cannot be about what humans have done; what they have done is sinned, and transgression brings about curse, since none can obey all that is written in the law. Paul insists that humans “are sinners who do not, and cannot, do the good that the law demands of its subjects.”82 As such, Paul “based his case not on the impracticability of imposing Jewish practices on Gentiles, nor indeed on a charge of ethnocentricity brought against the Jews who thought Gentiles ought to live as they did, but on the inability of

79. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*. But technically, Das opts for a “newer” perspective (see below, his essay “The Traditional Protestant Perspective on Paul”), which arguably can place him among proponents of the more recent trend below.
82. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 444; similarly 333.
the law to cope with human sin.” Gentiles and Jews “are declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ apart from the law (cf. Gal. 2:21; 5:4; Rom. 3:1) and its works (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:20, 28).” Even so, Westerholm concedes with the NPP that ancient Judaism on its own terms did not seem to “promote a self-righteous pursuit of salvation by works,” and he affirms that the NPP has made an important contribution to Pauline studies.

A third manner of critique involves monographs or journals in which other scholars evaluate NPP topics or a work by a NPP proponent, who then responds. The monograph God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright assesses Wright’s tome Paul and the Faithfulness of God. In the final chapter of the critique Wright responds to the contributors. Similarly, various scholars assess Wright’s view of Israel remaining in exile in Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright. Wright contributes two chapters to the volume, the second one a response. Similarly, various essays in German or English assess the NPP in Lutherische und Neue Paulusperspektive (Lutheran and new Pauline perspective). James Dunn responds in the final chapter. In the Journal for the Study of the New Testament Barry Matlock and Douglas Campbell write critiques of Dunn’s Theology of the Apostle Paul, and Dunn responds. A common misconception about the NPP is that it is attempting to overthrow Lutheran, Reformed, or Reformation theology. Both Wright and Dunn deny this. Rather, as biblical scholars, they endeavor to refine Paul’s theology through the rigors of their discipline rather than simply adhere to dogmas that may not be properly sustainable in Paul’s Letters.

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83. Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New, 441.
84. Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New, 442 (emphasis original).
85. Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New, 444.
86. Westerholm, Perspectives Old and New, 445.
87. Apart from the main text, other important NPP responses to critics include Dunn, New Perspective, esp. 1–97; Garlington, Studies in the New Perspective; Yinger, New Perspective, 47–80. For various contributor viewpoints (both for and against the NPP), see James D. G. Dunn, ed., Paul and the Mosaic Law, WUNT 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); Wilkin et al., Four Views on the Role of Works; Beilby and Eddy, Justification: Five Views.
90. Michael Bachmann, ed., subtitled Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselproblem der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion, WUNT 182 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).
91. JSNT 21 (1998): 67–90 (Matlock); 91–111 (Campbell); 113–20 (Dunn).
In an overlooked rapprochement, Dunn and Westerholm wrote back-to-back essays commending each other’s viewpoints, entitled, respectively, “What’s Right about the Old Perspective on Paul” and “What’s Right about the New Perspective on Paul.” For Dunn, Luther’s rediscovering of the saving righteousness of God, his reasserting of faith’s essential role in human-divine relationships, and his emphasis that humans cannot achieve that relationship with God on their own efforts are among positive “Old Perspective” features. For Westerholm, the importance of grace in Judaism, emphasis on the social setting of Jew/gentile relationships, and sensitivity regarding the practical implications of justification, such as with class, gender, and ethnicity, are among the positive NPP features.

Post-New Perspectives

While NPP advocates and critics remain, its influence presses other scholars to reconceptualize relevant Pauline texts and make their own points of departure or rapprochement. This more recent development has been identified as “post-new perspective” or “beyond new perspective.” We now turn to some significant examples.

The “Paul within Judaism Perspective,” also called the “radical” new perspective on Paul, is promoted by scholars such as Mark Nanos.


Fredriksen,97 Pamela Eisenbaum,98 Matthew Thiessen,99 Magnus Zetterholm,100 and others.101 Although not uniform in all of their beliefs, supporters generally maintain that Paul always considered himself a Jew and never left Judaism or its practices after encountering Jesus as the Messiah. Paul started a reformed movement or Jewish sect within Judaism, and he was not a law-free apostle. His teachings are directed at non-Jewish followers of Christ, whom he instructs to live in consistency with Judaism, and yet he respects their identity as non-Jews. Although this perspective affirms its indebtedness to Sanders, Dunn, and Stendahl—and it rejects caricatures of Judaism as a religion of works righteousness—it does not consider itself to be “within the New Perspective paradigm or in reaction against it,” but it endeavors to place Paul “within his most probable first-century context, Judaism,” before having him converse with other contexts or interpretations.102 “Paul within Judaism” disagrees with the NPP, for instance, when the latter claims that Paul found “something wrong with and in Judaism itself, something essentially different from Paul’s ‘Christianity’ (however labeled)”; it also rejects the NPP notion


(102) Nanos, introduction to Paul within Judaism, 2, 6 (emphasis original).
of Paul finding Judaism wrong with regard to ethnocentrism, nationalism, and related terms. An apocalyptic motivation may be viewed behind Paul’s urgency for gentiles against the law.

If Paul within Judaism moves further away from traditional Protestantism than the NPP, another trend moves in the opposite direction by holding to a via media between the Old and New Perspectives on Paul. Bruce Longenecker reflects this position when writing that Lutheran and NPP advocates “make claims which suggest that if one approach has merit, the other does not. . . . However, there is good reason to think that the situation may not be so clear cut, and that the ‘either-or’ that marks out current polemic in Pauline scholarship might best be laid to rest.” He agrees with the NPP that the Galatian concern is centered not on meriting salvation through works but on community identity: “To be excluded was a form of ethnocentrism rather than self-righteousness.” He also agrees with the Traditional Protestant Perspective, for example, when Paul says that the law is not a proper way to life, “since human inability rendered it impossible to do the law perfectly, and since the law is powerless to correct that situation.”

Michael Bird, in *The Saving Righteousness of God*, argues that Reformed and NPP readings of Paul provide a complementary and fuller picture of the apostle’s soteriology. Bird endorses both forensic and covenantal aspects of justification, and for him “incorporated” righteousness captures justification in relation to a believer’s union in Christ. More recently, Garwood Anderson’s *Paul’s New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey* studies the disputed and undisputed Pauline letters together—and his theory depends on dating the letters of Paul—to conclude that both Old and New Perspectives are right, “but not all the time.”

Paul’s view developed from one that was compatible with the NPP regarding “works of the law” in his earlier letters (e.g., Galatians) to “works” as human effort in his later letters (e.g., Pastoral Letters). Stephen Chester’s *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* argues, inter alia, that early Reformers generally came to the same exegetical interpretation as Stendahl: the pre-Damascus Paul was not plagued by a guilty conscience. Such a view developed later on in the tradition. Likewise,

104. A central tenet, e.g., in Eisenbaum, “Jewish Perspectives.”
for Reformers, union with Christ and interest in transformation were held together with Luther’s alien righteousness.\textsuperscript{110}

Differently than both perspectives, Francis Watson’s \textit{Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach}\textsuperscript{111} originally was complimentary of the NPP and against the Lutheran view, but in a revision of this work—newly subtitled \textit{Beyond the New Perspective}—he is also critical of the former.\textsuperscript{112} Watson argues, for example, that divine agency “plays a more direct and immediate role in the Pauline ‘pattern of religion’ than in the Judaism” opposed by Paul, and works of the law are not boundary markers but a distinctive “way of life” for Jewish communities.\textsuperscript{113} Paul’s antithetical statements in Romans—faith / works of law—may reflect the antithesis of the church’s separation from the synagogue, and this separation helps give account for why faith in Christ is “incompatible with works of the law.”\textsuperscript{114} Watson still claims, against the Lutheran view, that Judaism as legalism or works righteousness is misleading, but then again, so is the NPP notion of “Judaism as a religion of grace.”\textsuperscript{115}

Douglas Campbell’s point of departure stresses an apocalyptic and participatory reading of Paul, presented most extensively in \textit{The Deliverance of God}.\textsuperscript{116} Among other things, he argues that Paul typically has been misread.


\textsuperscript{111.} SNTSMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.


\textsuperscript{114.} Watson, \textit{Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles} (2007), 98; cf. 60.


This misreading, which Campbell associates with “Justification theory,” focuses on retributive justification, a contractual mode of salvation, and conditional human faith rather than a liberating justification, unconditionality, and the faithfulness of Christ. For Campbell, Romans 1:17, citing Habakkuk 2:4, is not to be understood as “The righteous shall live by faith,” but rather, “The Righteous One [Messiah = Jesus] by faithfulness shall live,” intimating the resurrection of Christ, Christ’s eschatological centrality in salvation, and his faithfulness as the means to the deliverance of God. The following passages in Romans 1–4 are said to characterize “Justification theory,” and as such, they reflect mostly the beliefs of Paul’s opponents, representative of a Jewish Christian “Teacher.” In Campbell’s view, Paul uses speech-in-character (prosopopoeia) here so that, for example, Romans 1:18–32 reflects the Teacher’s words, which Paul contests beginning in 2:1, and the Teacher then responds to Paul, and an exchange continues from there. Paul’s own view stands out prominently in Romans 5–8, which, inter alia, highlights a Triune God known through the act of redemption.

Finally, newly called “the Gift Perspective” for the present volume (see chapter 5), John Barclay presents his own view distilled from his recent work Paul and the Gift. In that study, which has already sparked much discussion, Barclay agrees with the NPP when it comes to the context of Paul’s theology of justification grounded in gentile mission and “the constructions of communities that crossed ethnic (as well as social) boundaries.” At the same time, Barclay parts company with the NPP by locating the root of Paul’s theology in the incongruous grace of the “Christ-gift that shapes his appeals to the Abrahamic promises, to the experience of the Spirit, and to the oneness of God”; in relation to the gentile mission it “demolishes old criteria of worth and clears space for innovative communities that inaugurate new patterns of social existence.” Barclay concludes that his reading harmonizes with neither Augustinian-Lutheran tradition nor NPP, but reshapes both.


118 See, e.g., article reviews by Joel Marcus and Margaret Mitchell, and Barclay’s response, in JSNT 39, no. 3 (2017). The entire issue of EvQ 89, no. 4 (2018), is also dedicated to Barclay’s view.
119 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 572.
120 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 572.
121 Barclay, Paul and the Gift, 573.
Perspectives on Paul

We now present *Perspectives on Paul: Five Views*, which incorporates some of the most influential perspectives above. Five well-recognized scholars present their respective positions. Since the New Perspective responded to the “Old Perspective”—the traditional Protestant perspective influenced by Luther and other Reformers—and Luther, in turn, made his point of departure from Roman Catholicism, it is important for us to include these perspectives in the current discussion. Our first contributor, Brant Pitre, presents the Roman Catholic Perspective on Paul. Our second contributor, A. Andrew Das, presents the Protestant Perspective. Then James D. G. Dunn presents the New Perspective. Magnus Zetterholm then presents the Paul within Judaism Perspective, and finally, John Barclay finishes our viewpoints with the Gift Perspective. They each present their position, and then the other contributors provide a critique of each position. After this, each presenter concludes by replying back to these critiques. After this, Dennis Edwards concludes our study by evaluating the various perspectives from a pastoral point of view.

We hope that these stimulating perspectives and exchanges will challenge every reader to think more deeply, and perhaps even differently, about Paul and salvation.