

## Geleitwort aus dem Kreis der Herausgeberinnen und Herausgeber

Die Reihe 'Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie' (kurz: NET) wurde zu Beginn des neuen Jahrtausends durch François Vouga, Oda Wischmeyer und Hanna Zapp begründet. Die beiden ersten Bände wurden 2001 publiziert. Im Laufe der etwa 17-jährigen Geschichte der Reihe, in der etwa 25 Bände erschienen sind, wurde der Kreis der Herausgeberinnen und Herausgeber erweitert und verändert – er besteht nun aus: Eve-Marie Becker (Aarhus), Jens Herzer (Leipzig), Friedrich Wilhelm Horn (Mainz), Oda Wischmeyer (Erlangen) und Hanna Zapp (Darmstadt).

In der Reihe NET sind bisher vor allem Monographien – teils auf Dissertationen zurückgehend – und Anthologien – teils auf Tagungen basierend – erschienen. Die Reihe steht laut Verlagsbeschreibung u. a. 'für den Dialog zwischen neutestamentlicher Wissenschaft und theologischer Dogmatik, Ethik und praktischer Theologie' sowie 'für den Brückenschlag zur Text-, Literatur- und Sprachwissenschaft'. Gerade die Reflexion der *interdisziplinären* Aufgaben und Qualitäten neutestamentlicher Exegese für die Theologie, aber auch benachbarte geisteswissenschaftliche Disziplinen, prägt das Reihenprofil von NET 1 bis in die Gegenwart.

Wir freuen uns, dass der Reihe NET gleichsam zum Erreichen ihrer Volljährigkeit, also zum bevorstehenden 18. Geburtstag, eine weitere Brückenfunktion zukommen kann: So gewinnt sie mit der ersten in englischer Sprache verfassten Monographie von Jacob P. B. Mortensen (Aarhus) eine *internationale* Profilierung hinzu. Der Brückenschlag von deutschsprachiger zu anglo-amerikanisch geprägter Exegese kann aber nicht allein *sprachlich* gelingen, sondern erfordert auch *intellektuelle Vermittlungsarbeit*. Mortensens Arbeit zum Römerbrief: 'Paul Among the Gentiles: A 'Radical' Reading of Romans' zeigt schon in ihrem Titel an, dass hinter der exegetischen Analyse des Römerbriefs eine konzise These, ein Forschungsdiskurs steht, der zunächst weitgehend anglo-amerikanisch generiert ist. Mortensens Monographie verleugnet ihre Prägung durch die 'radical perspective on Paul' nicht, geht aber sprachlich und sachlich weitere, ihre eigenen Schritte: So wird die 'radical perspective' immer auch in den Grenzen ihrer Interpretationsspielräume beschrieben – dazu verhilft nicht zuletzt der produktive Verweis auf deutschsprachige Forschungstradition und -literatur.

Weitere englischsprachige Arbeiten für NET sind derzeit in Planung. Wir danken dem Verlag für die Öffnung der Sprachgrenzen und dem ersten Autor – sowie den dann folgenden Autorinnen und Autoren – dafür, ihre Arbeiten der Reihe ‘Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie’ im Wissen um die großen Anstrengungen *und* Chancen, die jeder Brückenschlag erfordert *und* bietet, anzuvertrauen.

Eve-Marie Becker

Jerusalem und Aarhus im Dezember 2017

## Preface

This study began life as a doctoral thesis at Aarhus University in 2011. The present reorganized and rewritten product was part of my dissertation of 2014, 'Paul, Paulitics and προσωποποιία.' In the meantime, parts of the dissertation were expanded, and other parts entirely omitted, for example, the analysis of Giorgio Agamben's interpretation of Romans.

In my time as a doctoral student, the Department of Biblical Studies at Aarhus University gave me a home and an eminently congenial place to work. My colleagues provided stimulus, discussion, criticism, and sympathy. I was outstandingly fortunate to have Professor Eve-Marie Becker and Professor Svend Andersen as my doctoral supervisors. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to them both for giving me the opportunity to realize this project. I also wish to express my gratitude to Professor Hermut Löhr (Münster), Dr. Ward Blanton (Kent), and Associate Professor Kasper Bro Larsen (Aarhus) who were my examiners. They honoured me with the care and attentiveness they gave to my dissertation. Their suggestions were welcome improvements that are reflected in the present work. Their enthusiasm for my work was deeply gratifying.

I would like to thank the editors of the NET ('Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie') for accepting my manuscript for the series, and the Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, especially Isabel Johe and Valeska Lembke, and Vanessa Weihgold for helping me through the publication process. I also want to thank Aarhus University Research Foundation (AUFF) for financial aid in the publication process. I also want to thank Michaela Scioscia for proofreading the manuscript.

It goes without saying that a project such as the one whose fruits are represented here requires the energy and commitment of more than just one person. I am indebted and grateful to the following people without whom this work would not have materialized: Mom, Dad, Julie, Markus, Frederik, Kristin, Rasmus, Malene, Silas, Henning, Rie, Caro, Lotte, Lars Nørgaard, Kristian Mejrup, Hans Christiansen and Mads Dambæk. I also want to thank everyone who read parts of, or the entire manuscript, and helped improve it: Jon Stewart, Tyler Smith, Silas Mortensen, Lars Östman, Lone Fatum, Dale Martin and Eve-Marie Becker.

I especially wish to thank Eve-Marie Becker for her mentorship, counsel, and for her intellectual grit and creativity. Her competence as a scholar and supervisor are exceeded only by her generosity as a friend. She supported me and

believed in this project from its tiny inception to the final refinements. I will continue to learn from her for years to come.

Lastly and most importantly, I wish to thank my family for their love and support. Jonathan and Sarah, I love you. Sofie, this book is in many ways yours as much as it is mine. I dedicate it to you, since I could not have done this without you, and I would not want it in any other way. I love you.

Jacob P. B. Mortensen

Frederiksberg, December, 2017

## Introduction

This book is the record of an encounter with one of the most remarkable texts in the canon of Western literature, Paul's letter to the Romans. From the early beginnings of Christian exegesis, Paul's letter to the Romans was regarded as the defining element for an understanding of Paul as a person, his work, and his theology. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) took Romans as the point of departure for his personal experience of conversion, and established the conversion story of Romans 7 as a paradigm for all believers to imitate. Martin Luther (1483–1546) looked to Romans (and Galatians) as a bulwark against the Catholic Church, with his proclamation of justification by faith. The post-World War II New Testament scholar, Günther Bornkamm (1905–1990), argued that Romans represents Paul's spiritual testament. In present-day New Testament exegesis, Romans stands as the heart and highlight of the Pauline letters – the prime gem in the Pauline canon.

Despite the value ascribed to Paul's letter to the Romans, there have been major differences in the perceptions and interpretations of the text. For many years, the core of the text was thought to be 3:21–26, with its message of justification by faith, for all humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike. Also, many scholars focused on chapters 1 to 8, and perceived these chapters as concerned with justification (1–4) and sanctification (5–8). However, especially beginning with the work initiated by Johannes Munck (1904–1965) and Krister Stendahl (1921–2008), there followed a concern with the incorporation of chapters 9 to 11 into the overall understanding of Romans. With the advent of the 'New Perspective' on Paul – in the wake of scholars such as E.P. Sanders (\* 1937), James Dunn (\* 1939), Gerd Theissen (\* 1943), Hans Dieter Betz (\* 1931) and Heikki Räisänen (\* 1941) – attention was broadened to the paraenetic part of the letter (chapters 12–15). The latest development in the interpretation of the letter comes from the 'Radical New Perspective' on Paul or 'Paul within Judaism', and includes scholars such as John Gager (\* 1937), Mark D. Nanos (\* 1954), Paula Fredriksen (\* 1951), Magnus Zetterholm (\* 1958), Caroline Johnson Hodge, and Pamela Eisenbaum. Despite the fact that this group of scholars disagrees on several specific issues concerning the letter, they agree on Paul's position as being 'within Judaism', and on his focus being exclusively on Gentiles.

In 1977 (and again in 1991), Karl P. Donfried edited a collection of essays under the title of *The Romans Debate*. This collection of essays proved to be seminal,

because it gathered the most important contributions by some of the most influential scholars concerning the background, situation, and purpose of Romans. The scholars represented by the collection of essays provide various interpretations of the situation in the Roman assembly, and the purpose and meaning of the letter. Despite the differences in opinion about almost everything related to the letter, a consensus still seemed to grow from the first to the second edition of the book. In the introduction to the second edition, Karl Donfried explained the kind of consensus, from this point of view, that had been reached: Romans was addressed to the Christian community in Rome, and this community found itself in a particular historical situation, which influenced the perception of the letter.<sup>1</sup> However, another and more important question also emerged from the discussion: How did the various parts of the letter contribute to the perception of the situation behind the letter, and the overall purpose of the letter – in short: What was the meaning of Romans, when all the parts were taken into account?

Scholars have struggled to answer the foregoing questions ever since, and there are often as many answers as there are scholars. Frequently, scholars work more concentratedly on the parts of the letter that they find most interesting, and touch on the question of the letter's overall meaning and coherence only in passing. This approach may seem more manageable, since Romans has many profound and difficult passages. Nevertheless, in this monograph I wish to present my own interpretation of the entire letter. I suggest solutions to various problems that have emerged from readings by proponents of both the new and the radical new perspectives on Paul. As will become clear, my interpretation is inspired from the radical new perspective on Paul, but I do not consider my views to be part of the radical new perspective, as such.

I take a rather simple premise as my starting point: As should most ancient letters and books, Paul's letter should be read from beginning to end. This assumption may seem self-evident, but it certainly is not. Several scholars have suggested reading Romans either from behind or from some hidden inner logic. If, as I propose here, we read Romans from beginning to end, we must be able to explain and evaluate the significance of every part of the letter to the progression and development of the discourse, and for its contribution to the meaning and purpose of the entire letter. Hence, the various parts build up to a climactic ending in the body of the letter. In this book, I argue that such a consecutive, successive, or straightforward reading of Romans – indeed, a coherent reading – is not only sensible and consistent with Paul's situation, but also provides a logical, scholarly approach.

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1 Donfried 1991a, lxix

I argue that the first of the main parts of the letter (chapters 2–11) is the staging of a conversation between two persons, Paul and an interlocutor. If the introduction and staging of the interlocutor are to be perceived as parts of an ongoing dialogue, the epistolary *persona* should be relevant to the purpose of the letter. Hence, the two persons conversing must discuss something relevant to a) the interlocutor b) the group the person represents among the addressees and c) the purpose of the letter. Thus, the dialogue represents the historical situation in which it seeks to intervene, and it has indispensable value in terms of the purpose of the letter. From such a reading it follows that the final part of the letter should be seen as the natural and logical climax of the discourse and, hence, the most significant part for determining its purpose. Such a reading contrasts with interpretations of Romans that take 3:21–26 as the heart of the letter, and give less weight to the following 13 chapters.

As a minor qualification to the above-stated approach, it may not be necessary to look for a single purpose of the letter. Scholars have not been slow to realize that Paul presents himself more comprehensively in Romans than in his other letters. This has to do with the fact that he is addressing an assembly that he had not founded himself, and that was largely unknown to him personally (cf. Rom 15:20). Therefore, Paul's self-presentation is considered one purpose of the letter. However, the specific and topical material in the final part of the letter, directed to the addressees in Rome, suggests that this could be the main purpose of the letter. With such an understanding of Romans, Paul may have wanted to intervene in Roman affairs, while introducing himself as apostle to the Gentiles, even if he had not founded the assembly himself. This would make Romans a real letter, which intervenes in an actual historical situation with an actual historical purpose, instead of being conceived as a theological will or tractate.

Despite the numerous suggested purposes of Romans, considering the various parts as contributing elements of a logical whole, and as equally important to the development of the argument or rhetorical strategy of the text, is crucial to an understanding of this letter. Therefore, I emphasize the overall purpose of the letter as defining the meaning of the letter. Hence, the preceding parts of the letter must be understood in such a way that they support the conclusion. One of the main questions that must be answered to reach this understanding concerns the identity of the interlocutor from chapter 2 onwards, and his relation to the circumstances behind the letter. With regard to these points, I combine two approaches: First, I rigorously address the text-internal information Paul provides about the interlocutor, the addressees, and Paul's self-perception as apostle to the Gentiles. I will address these matters, first, in the introductory chapters on author and addressees, and also in the chapter on προσωποποιία.

Secondly, I try to calibrate the text-internal findings to the general outlook of the radical new perspective's emphasis on Gentiles as the exclusive objects of Paul's missionary endeavour. What follows from this is that the conflict between the 'strong' and the 'weak' in the Roman assembly must be read against the background of a conflict between two Gentile groups. I intend to demonstrate that this is indeed how we should understand the situation described by Paul. Hence, I provide a reading of Romans from a general outlook (inspired by the radical new perspective) on Paul's missionary activity as exclusively directed towards Gentiles, and combine this with the text-internal information of the letter concerning the interlocutor, addressees, and author.

An important disclosure must be made and emphasized in the current delicate discussion of positions and viewpoints. I am not attempting a specific historical reconstruction of the Roman assembly. I do not go into detail about the possible presence of Jews in Rome at the time of the letter, or the effect of Claudius's edict. I am concerned simply with the text-internal information of the letter, and combine this with a reading of Romans, set against the background of the new perspective and the radical new perspective on Paul.

This book intends to offer an interpretation of the unity, coherence, and progression of the epistolary discourse on the surface level of the letter. Many scholars have provided impressive and intriguing interpretations of Romans, but few have managed to link together all the separate parts of Romans as a coherent whole. Two important examples of such work, by which I have been very influenced, deserve mention here. One is Troels Engberg-Pedersen's *Paul and the Stoics* (2000). Throughout the chapters on Romans, Engberg-Pedersen strives to incorporate all the different parts of Romans into one coherent and unified whole. However, he succeeds only by assuming that the letter has an internal logic. Hence, Engberg-Pedersen's interpretation does not unfold, from the beginning to the end of the letter, as a natural and logical development of the rhetorical strategy of the letter. Stanley Stowers' work (*A Rereading of Romans*, 1994) does accomplish this. However, Stowers wavers on the identity of the interlocutor in chapter 2 of Romans, and finds two separate interlocutors in chapter 2. Hence, Stowers does proceed on the surface level of the letter from beginning to end, but switches the identity of the interlocutor from chapter to chapter, making the dialogue in the letter somewhat difficult to follow. In this book, I have tried to provide a simpler and more consistent interpretation, which proceeds from beginning to end, sticks to one interlocutor throughout chapters 2 to 11, and attempts to incorporate all the different parts of Romans into one coherent and unified whole. I hope and intend that the reading of Romans pro-

posed here will be useful, and prompt fruitful, scholarly debates within Pauline circles.

# 1 The State of the Research - the radical new perspective

## Introduction

My intent with this chapter is to consider a few representative positions of scholars who either explicitly or implicitly have worked to push the new perspective on Paul further.<sup>1</sup> It almost goes without saying that the ‘radical’ new perspective on Paul extends and further elaborates on the ‘new’ perspective on Paul.<sup>2</sup> However, as this ongoing process of refinement continues, the necessity of drawing further conclusions and mapping out new positions develop. Consequently, many of the scholars calling themselves ‘radicals’ find it necessary to bespeak the emergence of a new paradigm.<sup>3</sup> Although I find the defining of a new paradigm questionable at this point, this introductory chapter serves the purpose of mapping out those fundamental paths that may have the potential to make the new perspective on Paul implode, and dissolve into something ‘radically’ other.

## History of research

To my knowledge, only two scholars have tried to explain the development from the new perspective to the radical new perspective. The first scholar is John Gager, with his book, *Reinventing Paul* (2000), the second is Magnus Zetterholm, with his book, *Approaches to Paul* (2009). Both scholars describe themselves as belonging to the newest development in Pauline studies. Gager presents himself as part of the ‘New Views of Paul’, as differentiated from ‘The Traditional View

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1 Some may argue that I should include the scholarly work of John Barclay and N.T. Wright. However, I have chosen to not include their work, as I do not believe it to push ‘beyond’ the new perspective. Instead, I consider their work to be firmly situated within (perhaps even mainstream) new perspective interpretations of Paul.

2 In 2000, John Gager wrote about ‘a new paradigm’ within Pauline studies (Gager 2000, 145). However – to my knowledge – the first scholars who spoke of ‘a radical new perspective’ are Caroline Johnson Hodge (2007, 153), Pamela Eisenbaum (2009, 250), and Magnus Zetterholm (2009, 161).

3 Cf. Gager 2000, 145; Nanos 2015, 1–2; Eisenbaum 2009, 250

of Paul' (Gager 2000, v). When Gager wrote his book, the new perspective was still thriving, and many scholars connected to the impetus from this kind of research. In the years following the publication of his book, the radical perspective materialized more and more, and scholars began to distance themselves more specifically from the new perspective and, instead, to speak of a radical new perspective. So even if Gager fits best within the radical perspective, he 'merely' presents himself as a scholar holding the 'New Views of Paul'.

Gager and Zetterholm stage the history of research on Paul in the same way: They present the research on Paul as moving from a 'traditional' view to a 'New Perspective', or even 'Beyond the New Perspective'. Gager labels the 'old' view from which he distances himself 'The Traditional View'. He organizes his study thematically, under headings such as, 'Paul Converted from Judaism to Christianity', 'Paul Preached against the Law and Israel', and 'Generalizing and Universalizing'. Hence, Gager mentions few scholars, and he describes the 'traditional' view (*i.e.* all scholarship before his own) in broader terms, as though they all agreed on the points he presents. Zetterholm sets about his task slightly differently. He reviews the actual work of many different scholars and their specific books under three headings: 'The Formation of the Standard View of Paul', 'Toward a New Perspective on Paul', and 'Beyond the New Perspective'. So the ways in which Gager and Zetterholm planned their presentations are similar: From something 'old', 'traditional', or 'standard', to something 'new' or 'beyond the new'. But Gager approached this task from a thematic perspective, whereas Zetterholm approached it from the perspective of individual scholars.

The one thing lacking in both Gager's and Zetterholm's presentations is a critical view of their own radical positions or perspectives. This may be too much to ask of a scholar deeply involved in developing a new position. However, some sort of critical evaluation still needs to be presented. The only one of which I am aware is Terence L. Donaldson's, in a book edited by Mark Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism* (2015).<sup>4</sup> There is another critique, by Alexander Wedderburn, but this is more a critique of the new, rather than the

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4 N.T. Wright's critique of something similar to the radical perspective, concerning Paul's identity, and whether he still considered himself a Jew following the (Mosaic) law, misses the point. Wright brings in Gal 2 (and Rom 7:4–6,) and states that he can understand people who are concerned with Christian–Jewish relations today, and people who try to explain the passage in Gal 2 by making it a rhetorical overstatement. But he cannot understand scholars making the argument that Paul was a Torah-observant Jew without mentioning Gal 2 as a major piece of counter-evidence (Wright 2013, 1430). Wright does not consider the possibility that Paul does not speak in a universalizing way, but specifically addresses issues relevant to his Gentile addresses, and, therefore frames his argument for this purpose.