

This review originally appeared in *JETS* 53 (2010), 655-57.

*Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship.* By Magnus Zetterholm. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009, xv + 270 pp., \$20.00 paper.

Arguably the single most important development in Pauline studies over the last three decades or so, and the catalyst for new work in a range of related disciplines, is the renewed focus on the relationship of Paul to his Jewish heritage. In this introductory work designed for theological students, Magnus Zetterholm relates the story of the development and destruction of a well-established paradigm, and the scholarly projects that ensued in the aftermath. Zetterholm is a New Testament scholar at Lund University in Sweden and writes as an outsider to orthodox Christian faith. He makes clear in his preface that he writes as a secular scholar with no affiliation to any religious community or tradition (p. x). In his view, this allows him to approach Paul and the quite polarized set of recent debates dispassionately. Zetterholm aims to understand Paul and his thought in terms of his Jewish heritage and also to come to grips with the historical developments that set Paul in opposition to his Jewish heritage. In many ways this is the larger historical picture needed to understand the debates and discussions of the last thirty-five years with regard to Paul and what has come to be called the “new perspective on Paul.”

In his opening chapter, Zetterholm notes that a responsible recovery of the historical Paul depends on more than merely the historical documents (p. 4). The portrait of the apostle and his relationship to his Jewish heritage that held sway before the Reformation and certainly since that era derived from a particular angle of approach just as much as from Luke's depiction and Paul's letters. The hermeneutical issues, therefore, immediately come to the fore. Zetterholm contends that Paul's letters and Luke's portrait of him in Acts have been read from a particular angle that sets Paul over against his heritage, and that is not necessarily an objective nor even a fair reading of the New Testament (pp. 4-13). Zetterholm develops a narrative of Paul's life in the rest of this chapter, one that begins with Paul's identity as a Pharisee and sees the remainder of his life in continuity with—not in contrast to—this identity.

In his second and third chapters, Zetterholm chronicles the rise of the modern view whereby Paul was set in contrast to his Jewish heritage, jettisoning Judaism with his embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He traces this perspective back to F. C. Bauer, a main figure in the Tübingen School of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Hegelian ideology dominated Tübingen during this time, shaping the major proposals that were generated. Bauer posited a conflict model of the development of early Christianity. For Bauer there was a basic antagonism between a “Pauline, universal type of Christianity, for which the Torah had had its day, and a Jewish-oriented, particularistic type of Christianity, still bound by the Torah” (p. 38). This basic conflict shaped Bauer's entire outlook on the development of early Christianity, and it developed into a deep conflict between Judaism and Christianity. He eventually came to see Judaism as an inferior religion that needed to be abandoned once the “ideal religion,” Christianity, came on the scene (p. 40). The development of Bauer's thesis, according to Zetterholm, lent scientific credence to the classic Lutheran vision of Paul.

This vision of Paul against Judaism became the standard view among German biblical scholars, and proved highly influential throughout the rest of the world, too. Zetterholm traces this notion through Bultmann, Käsemann, and Bornkamm. A few notable exceptions were the protests of Montefiore, Schechter, and Moore, though their work did little to turn scholars away from what had become an accepted way of reading Paul in relation to his heritage. To this point, the history traced by Zetterholm ought to prove enlightening for many who have assumed that to

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read Paul as rejecting Judaism was the only way to read him. This angle of approach simply does not come from a surface reading of the text but is quite historically conditioned.

In chapter 4, Zetterholm covers some familiar territory, elaborating the development of the “new perspective.” The initial shot, often acknowledged, was made by Krister Stendahl, who questioned the highly psychologized reading of Paul in his classic article, “Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West.” Another blow to the established view came from E. P. Sanders who questioned the assumption of Judaism’s legalism in his massive work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. While Sanders’s work on Judaism was paradigm-shifting, his reading of Paul maintained old assumptions, resulting in a Paul who did not quite understand the Judaism he supposedly critiqued (pp. 105-8). Zetterholm rightly notes that it was left to James Dunn and N. T. Wright to bring to bear more fully the findings of Sanders with regard to Judaism on a thoroughgoing reading of Paul.

One of Zetterholm’s genuine contributions to the larger discussions over perspectives from which to interpret Paul is his positioning of the “new perspective” as a sort of exegetical middle ground between traditional readings and those he calls “radical new perspective” interpreters. He discusses these in his fifth chapter. While these interpreters are not consciously part of any unified school (much like “new perspective” interpreters), they have in common the “general assumption that Paul belonged to first-century Judaism—not that he left it” (p. 161). Perhaps the most influential interpreter among this group is Mark Nanos, who maintains that Paul remained a Torah observant Jewish person and advocated that gentiles respect a Jewish lifestyle while among Jews (pp. 147-55). This perspective is growing among evangelical New Testament scholars, as publications having to do with Messianic Judaism slated for the next several years indicate.

Zetterholm chronicles the reaction to these emerging perspectives in chapter 6, in which he reviews the work of Thielman, Das, Gathercole, and Westerholm. While sympathetic interpreters will disagree with this assessment, Zetterholm maintains that these scholars represent a reunion of normative theology with exegesis. That is, their work is done in a conscious effort to buttress a traditional Protestant theological perspective (p. 192).

In another original move, Zetterholm discusses some new angles of approach that do not necessarily grow organically from discussions over Paul’s relationship to Judaism. His seventh chapter appears as something of an add-on to what has gone before, covering philosophical approaches to Paul along with feminist approaches.

It is difficult to review a book like this that tells such an involved and contested story. As discussions among readers of this journal and other evangelicals have shown, the debates over interpreting Paul go right to the heart of evangelical identity. Everyone is highly invested. In one sense, this is as it should be. Evangelicals take their identity and commitment to Scripture seriously. Alternatively, such passionate investment often clouds judgment and prevents a genuine hearing of the word of God. Not only is the situation among evangelicals highly charged, but there are so many players in the interpretive game to cover. In my estimation, however, Zetterholm does a very fair job of representing those he mentions in his narrative. He makes his own commitments very clear from the outset, makes extensive reference to the works of each interpreter, and tells the story plainly. He is not an obnoxious champion of any one view though it is evident that he sees much promise among those who regard Paul as best interpreted within his Jewish context rather than in reaction against it.

This book is a gift for those looking for a longer and broader history behind and leading up to the onset of the “new perspective on Paul.” Along with Stephen Westerholm’s massive

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volume (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 2004), Zetterholm ought to become standard reading for theological students desiring an introduction to the debate over interpretations of Paul and his Jewish heritage. Zetterholm, as mentioned above, is religiously unaffiliated and employs a social-scientific angle of approach, while Westerholm quite consciously favors a more Reformed approach to Paul. Reading these two works together would give students complementary visions of the history leading up to the current contested climate in Pauline studies.

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