

TROELS ENGBERG-PEDERSEN

# Paul and Philosophy

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament  
509*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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Troels Engberg-Pedersen

# Paul and Philosophy

Selected Essays

Mohr Siebeck

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In Memoriam  
Wayne A. Meeks  
(8.1.1932–10.1.2023)



## Preface

Just after New Year 2022 I raised the idea of gathering a selection of my essays from the last thirty years on Paul and philosophy into a single volume. The response came almost overnight: I am deeply grateful to the editor of the distinguished WUNT series, Jörg Frey, and his associate editors for agreeing to publish the essays included here. I am also grateful to the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, Carsten Selch Jensen, for making it possible for me to retrieve some of the essays that had not yet been digitized. PhD student Jonas Kjøller-Rasmussen did this job with great expertise. At a later stage the publisher, Mohr Siebeck, worked wonderfully to make the volume available. I am grateful, not least, to Elena Müller and her team for their excellent help throughout the process.

The essays are published here in their original form (apart from changes of style in order to make the volume uniform) and in chronological order. As I explain in the Introduction, I wanted to show their inner coherence in the form of a development in my understanding of certain central philosophical issues in Paul. This led me to present in the Introduction a fairly substantial, newly developed interpretation of what I consider to be the essence of Paul's overall conception of the ἐκκλησία ('congregation') in the world, focusing on the notion of the 'Christ circle'. This interpretation is not quite new – in fact, it has partly been anticipated by Albert Schweitzer in *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (1930) – but I believe that it brings together almost everything one should say at a certain level of Paul's understanding of the Christ believers he is addressing in the letters. In writing the Introduction I was much helped by Paula Fredriksen – with her characteristic generosity – concerning the pages that discuss Paul's relationship with Judaism.

I had originally planned to dedicate the volume to my former students and colleagues at the Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen. However, when the sad news came in January 2023 of the death of Wayne Meeks, I decided to dedicate it instead to his memory. I came to know Meeks in the mid-1980s just after the publication of his groundbreaking book on *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (1983) and from a semester's stay at Yale University in the fall of 1988. Meeks' whole approach came as a revelation to me even though my own is distinctly more philosophical. From then on I followed his scholarship closely, and he became a highly valued close friend. Would that we were all as acute, searching and honest in our scholarship as he was!



On concluding this Preface I am struck by the extraordinary intellectual power of Paul himself. Nobody can reasonably say that they have reached the bottom of his thought. There is always something new and striking to be discovered that raises questions for our own ways of thinking. That only makes it all the more fascinating to continue the exploration.

February 2023

Troels Engberg-Pedersen

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## Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AD/A	Das Alte Testament Deutsch/Apokryphen
AGAJC	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Christentums
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
AP	<i>Ancient Philosophy</i>
APR	Ancient Philosophy and Religion
BDAG	Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich)
BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CHLH</i>	<i>Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum, Helsinki</i>
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
DiA	Dialog mit der Antike
<i>EeV</i>	<i>Esprit et Vie</i>
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
FBE	Forum for Bibelsk Eksegese
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBT</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie</i>
<i>JGRCJ</i>	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
<i>JP</i>	<i>Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NSHL	New Synthese Historical Library

<i>NTAb</i>	<i>New Testament Abstracts</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NV</i>	<i>Nova et Vetera</i>
<i>OSAP</i>	<i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i>
<i>PAS</i>	Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society
<i>Phr</i>	<i>Phronesis</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RS</i>	<i>Religious Studies</i>
SAPERE	Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam RELigionemque pertinentia
SB	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBL.TT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SCL	Sather Classical Lectures
SHC	Studies in Hellenistic Civilization
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPS	Sacra Pagina Series
<i>StTh</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> (ed. Ioannes ab Arnim, Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903–24)
<i>ThZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>ThLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### Speaking Within the Christ Circle

This volume presents a selection of my essays on Paul published between 1994 and 2023. To begin with, I had more than thirty essays that might in principle go into the volume. However, I decided to keep it more manageable and so ended up with sixteen. The reason for this is also that I wanted to trace the story of a development in my own understanding of Paul that, as I believe, brings one ever closer to Paul himself. The essays included here all serve to illustrate that development at the same time as they do many other things in addition.

I will begin from explaining the overall character of the essays in terms of their methods and aims. Then I will spend the rest of the Introduction on showing the development that they exhibit and how this development itself brings us to see what I consider to be the core of Paul's own writing in the six genuine letters that I address (excluding the genuine Letter to Philemon). This core is the one alluded to in the subtitle to this Introduction: Speaking Within the Christ Circle. What this means is much more than the obvious fact that Paul is throughout addressing Christ believers. Instead, I aim to identify the overall logic of what it meant, according to Paul, to be a Christ believer here and now both externally in relation to the outside world and internally within the group. What I am after is the inner logic of Paul's *concept* of the group of Christ believers that he had established, the ἐκκλησία ('congregation'). As we will see, this concept is that of a 'circle' in the form of an imagined social space that is constituted by Christ-believing individuals with a cognitive and bodily 'habitus' (à la Pierre Bourdieu) that is both shared and allows for a number of differences, moreover, a social space that fundamentally already belongs 'out of' this world, in heaven. It is this concept – of 'being in Christ' – underlying the ἐκκλησία that Paul is constantly articulating in so many different ways and to which he also constantly appeals in his writing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I hope that the reader will see here the intimate connection between the social orientation in his Pauline studies of the dedicatee of this volume, Wayne A. Meeks, and my own philosophical orientation. Meeks was always skeptical of what he called 'ideas', and for good reason. It is not always, however, that ideas and social practice diverge. In Paul, I believe, they do not. This is also why I am very much in agreement with the socially oriented approach adopted by another admirer of Meeks, J. M. G. Barclay in his *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

### *The Overall Character of the Essays*

Almost all the essays of this volume were written by invitation for special occasions in the form of conferences, volumes on specific topics, *Festschriften* and more. I was of course free to choose precisely what issue I might like to address, but always also under some constraints due to the given occasion. That might result in a somewhat kaleidoscopic picture. However, in addition to the story of a development to which I will come back, there also is a sustained effort in all the essays to read Paul philosophically. I will begin from identifying what this means and why this approach is not just optional but necessary.

### *Paul and Philosophy*

Before I began studying Paul seriously I had spent some time investigating ancient philosophy itself, in particular Aristotle's ethics and Stoic ethics.<sup>2</sup> To begin with, I saw my work on Aristotle, Stoicism and Paul as constituting a kind of trilogy, ending with *Paul and the Stoics* (2000).<sup>3</sup> My approach here was basically philosophical in the way I had learned at the University of Oxford in 1974–1976. I have continued this approach ever since by addressing Paul in the ways one finds in ancient philosophy itself as exemplified by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Stoics. Let me repeat here (from an essay of mine on 'Paul the Philosopher' that is not included in this volume) six formal features that identify this way of thinking.<sup>4</sup> I will exemplify them by drawing specifically on Stoicism.

First: universalizability. What is stated in a piece of ancient philosophy must be intended from the very beginning to be universalizable. An ancient philosophical text may speak of people. But either it will then speak of human beings as general types or else of individuals as playing some general role. For instance, the Stoics spoke of 'the wise' and 'fools'. So does Paul (1 Corinthians 1–2). And he also speaks quite generally of 'Jews' and 'Greeks'. The Stoics spoke of God, Socrates, Chrysippus and, say, Cato. Similarly, Paul spoke of God, Adam, Abraham, Moses and Christ. In all cases, what matters was the universalizable role of what these individuals were said to have been or done, their roles as part of a general story about the world as a whole.

Second: conceptuality. What is stated in a piece of ancient philosophy will always be concerned to clarify and draw distinctions between concepts to be understood as resources through which human beings may represent the world. Any Stoic text that counted as being philosophical in the ancient world did ex-

<sup>2</sup> E. g., in T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) and *The Stoic Theory of Oikeiosis: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy* (SHC II; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> T. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Paul the Philosopher', in M. V. Novenson and R. B. Matlock, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022, online 2020) 192–210.

actly that. Did Paul too? Well: 'Is the Law then sin? Far from it. *But ...*' (Rom 7.7). This is just one example of Paul being constantly at work to connect and distinguish within the whole gamut of concepts that he was employing.

Third: discussability. What is stated in a piece of ancient philosophy will always be in principle open to being discussed for its truth value with other people who do not initially share the understanding that is being expressed. This feature is part and parcel of any ancient Stoic text. Does it also hold of Paul? A careful analysis of 1 Cor 1.18–2.16 would show that even where Paul invokes the 'mystery of revelation' and claims the 'spirit' (πνεῦμα) as an epistemological prerequisite for full understanding, he remains within the realm of discussability. His argument for the use of νοῦς (reason) later in the letter (14.13–25) shows that he expected even 'outsiders' to be able to understand what was being said.<sup>5</sup> And in Rom 1.18–32 he claims that the sinners he is describing there did *see* God's 'majesty', which was what made them 'without defence' (1.20, 2.1) when they were punished for their negligence. Thus Paul too is arguing, not just postulating.

Fourth: scope. What is stated in a piece of ancient philosophy may well focus quite narrowly on some particular theme. But there will always be an awareness that what is said *here* on *this* particular issue will be *relevant* for what should be said elsewhere on a different issue. This holds by definition for the old Stoic 'system' of philosophy.<sup>6</sup> But it is also true of the much less systematic endeavours of the later Stoics from Seneca to Marcus Aurelius. It is also quite obviously true of Paul, who constantly attempted to develop the implications of what God had centrally done in the Christ event for a wide range of issues.<sup>7</sup>

Fifth: consistency. What is stated in a piece of ancient philosophy will always be understood as being under the requirement of being *consistent* with what is said about other parts of the world. This feature is closely connected with the previous one. It is wholly characteristic of Stoicism, which prided itself on actually *being* a 'system'. But what about Paul? Once again, it seems clear that such a basic aim of Paul's as to logically connect what we may call his 'theology' (i. e., what God and Christ have done and how human beings should respond to that) with what we may call his 'ethics' (i. e., how human beings should live with one another) does seek for consistency. We know of course (from E. P. Sanders and Heikki Räisänen) that he *was* not always consistent, nor did he always manage to spell out all the relevant connections.<sup>8</sup> But it seems difficult to deny that he did aim for consistency.

<sup>5</sup> Compare my discussion of νοῦς and πνεῦμα in Chapter 15 (2021) below.

<sup>6</sup> In one definition of 'knowledge' (ἐπιστήμη) the Stoics first stated it to be a 'grasp (κατάληψις) that is secure and so as not to be changed by reason' and next as 'a *system* (σύστημα) of such grasps' (SVF 3.112).

<sup>7</sup> For this, see, e. g., Chapter 16 (2023) below on the overall logic of Paul's soteriology.

<sup>8</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977) and *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987<sup>2</sup> [1983]).



The sixth and final feature: a will to wisdom. This feature has more of a summarizing character, which is specifically tied to what was almost a technical term for ‘philosophy’ in the ancient world: σοφία (‘wisdom’). There is no need to substantiate the importance of this term for Stoicism where it actually expresses the insight had by the person – the Stoic sage – who has grasped the full Stoic system. But Paul too explicitly states that he himself speaks of ‘wisdom among those who are perfect’ (1 Cor 2.6), namely, the wisdom of the πνευματικοί (‘spiritual beings’), those who have the full ‘knowledge’ (γνῶσις) of Christ.

Thus there are at least these six – partly overlapping – features of ancient philosophy understood as a both theoretical *and* practical concern for understanding, knowledge and wisdom that are directly relevant to Paul’s way of thinking.<sup>9</sup> The challenge of this is that we as readers of Paul must not come with the unrecognized presupposition that *since Paul was doing theology*, his whole way of thinking will from the very beginning fall under categories other than those of philosophy. It was only a long time after Paul that theology became a discipline that was distinct from philosophy. If Paul meets the criteria given for philosophy, then we should take him to be at work as a philosopher. This is a real challenge since we are so accustomed to seeing him as something quite different: a ‘theologian’. But the rewards are huge. Suddenly one may begin to realize that there is a precise and concrete content to what Paul says that may or may not be right, but at least makes discussable sense at the same level as the claims made by the other philosophers.

This whole approach underlies all the essays in this volume. In some essays it takes the form of starting out from some philosophical concept that was well known in ancient Stoicism and appeared to be relevant to Paul too. This is the case, for instance, in Chapter 6 (2005) on the relationship with others.<sup>10</sup> In other essays it takes the form of starting out from some philosophical concept that has later roots, e.g., ‘action’ (Chapter 9, 2008), ‘the person’ (Chapter 10, 2011) and ‘universalism’ (Chapter 11, 2013), and asking to what extent and in what forms these concepts fit or do not fit what Paul himself says. In yet others of a more directly exegetical type (e.g., Chapter 4, 2002, on Romans 7) the philosophical framework underlying the analysis is more hidden – though still there. All through, there is a concern to analyse Paul in the light of the six features of (ancient) philosophy identified above.

Let me add three points here. First, when I have been comparing Paul with ideas in ancient philosophy, the preferred philosophy has invariably been that

<sup>9</sup> The practical orientation is crucial here, see P. Hadot, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995). English tr. by Michael Chase as *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Cambridge, MA/London: Belknap Press, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Incidentally, this essay is a good example of the way even a Pauline scholar must study the material to be compared (here Stoicism) on its own and with full engagement with up-to-date scholarship on that material.

of Stoicism. This has partly to do with the historical development of ancient philosophy from the beginning of the Hellenistic period to 100 CE, where, as I see it, Stoicism was more basic than Platonism or Aristotelianism.<sup>11</sup> Others have successfully brought in material from Epicurus, Aristotle and Plato.<sup>12</sup> And there should of course be no restrictions on what material one may use – as long as it works. I have been arguing, though, that Stoicism works particularly well. I do not in these essays address head-on whether this or the other philosophy works better.<sup>13</sup> Since Stoicism fits in so many respects, I have kept asking whether on any given issue in Paul Stoicism helps to elucidate that topic too.

Secondly, I have developed an understanding of the exercise of ‘comparison’ – here of Paul with Stoicism – that emphasizes the heuristic purpose of comparing. I have not included all those essays of mine that address the issue of comparison, mainly because my position is made sufficiently clear in Chapter 15 (2015, in discussion with Samuel Vollenweider).<sup>14</sup> What I aim at achieving through the exercise is simply understanding *Paul better*, not, for instance, drawing any wider conclusions about systematic similarities or differences between ‘Jewish thinking’, ‘Christian thinking’, Hellenistic ‘philosophy’ or the like.<sup>15</sup> Reading Paul in the light of Stoicism the way I do is just an exegetical tool. There is of course a constant risk here of reading something *into* Paul. But that risk can, I believe, be avoided by keeping one’s eyes open for everything in Paul that has *no* correspondence in Stoicism and does *not* fit.

Thirdly, I have constantly been preoccupied with the idea that in comparing Paul with this or the other type of material we should go entirely ‘Beyond the

<sup>11</sup> See the introduction to T. Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy 100 BCE–100 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Epicurus: e.g., C. E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (NovTSup 81; Leiden: Brill, 1995). Aristotle: e.g., J. R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection* (HUT 42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). Plato: e.g., E. Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (WUNT II.256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> See, however, my analysis in Chapter 10 (2011) of the light that Rom 8.1–11 throws back over Paul’s account of ἀκρασία (weakness of will) in 7.7–25. I spell this out further in T. Engberg-Pedersen, ‘The Apostle Paul and the Evangelist John as “Stoics”’: On Stoicism in Early Christianity’, in J. Sellars, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of the Stoic Tradition* (London; Routledge, 2016) 29–43 (not included here).

<sup>14</sup> Other essays (not included) where I discuss comparison are T. Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Stoic Freedom in Paul’s Letter to the Romans 6.1–8.30 and Epictetus, *Dissertation 4.1: From Being under an Obligation to Wanting*’, in R. Brouwer and E. Vimercati, eds., *Fate, Providence and Free Will: Philosophy and Religion in Dialogue in the Early Imperial Age* (APR 4; Leiden: Brill, 2020) 97–115, and ‘The Past is a Foreign Country: On the Shape and Purposes of Comparison in New Testament Scholarship’, in J. M. G. Barclay and B. G. White, eds., *The New Testament in Comparison: Validity, Method and Purpose in Comparing Traditions* (LNTS 600; London: T&T Clark, 2020) 61–81.

<sup>15</sup> This is something I learned particularly strongly from Wayne Meeks at Yale in 1988. I call it the ‘lex Meeks’.

Judaism/Hellenism Divide’ and range freely across all material that genuinely helps.<sup>16</sup> This position is articulated in Chapter 3 (2001), which reprints the introduction to that book. What it means is that my own ‘Stoicizing’ approach may always be supplemented by other kinds of approach, e. g., ones that bring in distinctly Jewish material – as long as they help us to see Paul better.<sup>17</sup>

*The Philosophical Approach, Other Approaches and Exegesis*

Comparison is not the only possible exegetical tool. How should we relate the philosophical approach adopted here to other approaches that also address the Pauline text from some extraneous set of questions or conceptual frameworks and with the corresponding scholarly interests? And how should we relate it to ‘exegesis’ to be understood as a search for the best overall understanding of what the text itself appears to be saying?

There is no end to the types of approach that may legitimately be adopted in reading a Pauline text as long as they have the required definitional clarity. Indeed, during the last forty years and more, Pauline scholarship has been enormously enriched by a host of new approaches of a modern, theoretical kind. Is the philosophical approach adopted here then just one among so many others? That, however, would not be quite enough. Rather, the philosophical approach ‘meets’ the Pauline text itself in the sense that it responds to and elucidates ideas in the text that are *already* there. Thus the philosophical approach is, I believe, a necessary exegetical tool in order to elucidate what the text itself is saying. Not all other approaches are in this sense necessary.

This is where the philosophical approach has affinities with a more traditional, theological type of reading, which has also quite often been concerned to find and elaborate a more or less coherent system in Paul’s thought.<sup>18</sup> However, the difference is also extremely important. For whereas the theological approach aims at discovering sets of ideas that we as modern readers can more or less immediately make our own, the philosophical approach as adopted here does nothing of the sort. What it is after is the most coherent articulation of an overall, *ancient* worldview no matter whether it is livable for us or not. In fact, the Pauline account that we shall discover of ‘what it means to be a Christ believer’ – following Aristotle we might call this τὸ τί ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ εἶναι – is quite far from anything we could immediately make our own. Thus, as I see it, there are two dimensions of any valid scholarly handling of Paul that must remain central both

<sup>16</sup> See T. Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> I have not myself practised this to any serious degree. However, in Chapter 8 (2008) I develop the logic of Graeco-Roman gift-giving with the help of Seneca’s *De Beneficiis* and then fit it fairly precisely into Paul’s work with the Jewish concept of the covenant.

<sup>18</sup> It was in order to get away from this that Wayne Meeks was against merely analysing ‘ideas’ (see n. 1 above).

now and in the future: the historical perspective and the exegetical one. What we should want – but certainly among other things too – is understanding the Pauline text better on its own historical premises. The philosophical approach that I am adopting throughout this volume serves that aim.<sup>19</sup>

Let us now turn to the development I detect in the essays in the understanding of what, according to Paul, it meant to be a Christ believer here and now. The aim of tracing that development is to arrive at the best account of this that I am able to present based on the essays reprinted here. It is not clearly presented in the essays themselves and is to that extent new. However, it may be developed *out of* them. At the same time, each essay will of course stand on its own, based on its individual queries and solutions.

### *The First Main Issue: ‘Theology’ (and ‘Apocalypticism’) and ‘Ethics’*

There are two main issues in Paul with which I have constantly been preoccupied throughout these sixteen essays. It is in the handling of these that one can see a clear development. The two issues are the following.

First, what is the relationship between ‘theology’ and ‘ethics’ in Paul? That is how I set up the issue in the earliest essays (Chapters 1 and 2, 1994 and 1995, on Stoicism in Philippians and on Galatians 5–6 in Romans 5–9) – and indeed also in *Paul and the Stoics* (2000). Here I put ‘theology’ and ‘ethics’ in scare quotes since I recognized that Paul does not himself distinguish explicitly between the two. But I also insisted that Paul himself does distinguish between them. This is seen when throughout the letters he at some point turns to paraenesis, that is, begins to speak about how believers should behave in relation to *one another* (which is how I have defined ‘ethics’) – though of course in the light of what he has previously said in a more ‘theological’ mood, namely, as reflecting what God

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<sup>19</sup> This approach is thereby entirely different from that found in the many modern appropriations of Paul that began with Jacob Taubes (in A. and J. Assmann, eds., *Die politische Theologie des Paulus*, München: Fink, 1993. English tr. by D. Hollander, *The Political Theology of Paul*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Alain Badiou (*Saint Paul: La fondation de l’universalisme*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997. English tr. by R. Brassier, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). Here belong also G. Agamben (*Il tempo che resta: Un commento alla «Lettera ai Romani»*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000. English tr. by P. Dailey, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), J.-M. Rey (*Paul ou les ambiguïtés*, Paris: Éditions de l’Olivier, 2008) and others. Pauline scholars have duly responded to this very interesting challenge, e.g., in the following four volumes: J.D. Caputo and L.M. Alcoff, eds., *St. Paul among the Philosophers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); W. Blanton and H. de Vries, eds., *Paul and the Philosophers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); P. Frick, ed., *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers: The Apostle and Contemporary Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013); and G.-J. van der Heiden, G. van Kooten and A. Cimino, eds., *Saint Paul and Philosophy: The Consonance of Ancient and Modern Thought* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017). For my own reactions, see Chapter 11 (2013) on Badiou and my review of *Saint Paul and Philosophy* (*ThLZ* 2019 No. 7, Column 793–795).

and Christ have done and how human beings have responded to *that*. One example of this turn to paraenesis is in the earliest letter, at 1 Thess 4.1–2. Another is in what I take to be the last letter that we have, at Rom 12.1–2. Even here, though, Paul certainly keeps the ‘theological’ perspective intact, e.g., in 1 Thess 4.13–17 and Rom 13.11–14. Indeed, what he says, for instance, in 1 Thess 4.3–8 on such an ‘ethical’ topic as the Thessalonians’ sex life is tied directly to the ‘theology’: it should fulfil ‘the will of God’ (4.3)! In the first phase, however, I did not go into such particular connections. Instead, I asked how the two sides were connected with one another at the most general level.

The answer that I gave goes into what we may call *Phase 1*. Here Paul’s ‘theological’ talk and his ‘ethical’ talk were taken to run *in parallel* so as to supplement one another. Initially, though, I was most concerned with the ‘ethical’ side and it was here that I first brought in Stoicism as a comparative tool. But I also argued that both sides together served a dual purpose of Paul’s whole writing, which was to focus on *practice* and *identity*.<sup>20</sup> Paul aimed to create in his addressees a sense of their new identity, which would also show itself in their practice. It was to reach that aim that he set forth both his ‘theology’ and his ‘ethics’.

Gradually, however, the issue of the relationship between ‘theology’ and ‘ethics’ became reformulated as being between ‘apocalypticism’ and ‘paraenesis’. This was to a large extent due to the reactions to my book *Paul and the Stoics* (2000), including an extensive discussion review of it by J. Louis Martyn.<sup>21</sup> It gradually became clear to me that ‘theology’ would not do even in the simple – and I believe in itself correct and still useful – manner in which I had understood it. Instead, one would have to confront directly that Paul’s ‘theology’ was indeed of the more specific type that modern scholars have identified as ‘apocalyptic’.

So, from Chapter 10 (2011) onwards the frame of reference within which the essays are operating is no longer that of ‘theology and ethics’ but of ‘apocalypticism’ and ‘paraenesis’, ‘ethics’, ‘moral psychology’ and the like.<sup>22</sup> There is still an emphasis on the ‘ethical’ side, which I throughout understood as a matter of *cognition*. Indeed, I had also continued after *Paul and the Stoics* (2000) to develop that side in a number of ways. In Chapter 4 (2002) I studied the shape Paul gives in Rom 7.7–25 to the ‘ethical’ problem of *ἀκρασία* (weakness of will), which is very much a matter of cognition. In Chapter 5 (2003) I developed the shape that he articulates in Phil 2.4 of what I take to constitute the very essence of his ‘ethics’, that of ‘radical altruism’. In Chapter 6 (2005) I spelled out the huge area

<sup>20</sup> This emphasis goes back to what I learned during a stay at Yale University in 1988 from Wayne Meeks and Abraham Malherbe.

<sup>21</sup> J.L. Martyn, ‘De-apocalypticizing Paul: An Essay Focused on *Paul and the Stoics* by Troels Engberg-Pedersen’ (*JSNT* 24/86, 2002) 61–102, together with T. Engberg-Pedersen, ‘Response to Martyn’, 103–114.

<sup>22</sup> This began already in *Cosmology and Self* (2010).

where Paul agrees with Stoicism in his understanding of the relationship with others as part of his 'ethics'. And in Chapters 9 (2008) and 10 (2011) I addressed two central issues – of the logic of action and the concept of the person – that continued to be cognitive and to belong under 'ethics'.

All through, however, there was a constant awareness of the other, 'theological' and now 'apocalyptic' side. But this side too I basically interpreted as a matter of cognition. Moreover, the question of the *specific* relationship of the two sides was not directly addressed. For instance, in my analysis of Paul's 'radical altruism' (2003) I did not even address as a topic of its own the relationship between the 'ethics' of Phil 2.4 and the 'theology' of 2.5. Instead, I basically stayed with the idea that the two sides run in parallel without creating any friction and that they were held together by the fact that they issued in *practice* and together identified a *specific identity*. These points were all, I believe, right as far as they went and they should be left to stand. Only, as I gradually came to see, they were not sufficient in relation to Paul's own text. There was more to be said about the connection between the two sides.

#### *The Second Main Issue: The 'Problem of Paraenesis'*

Another issue runs through all the essays from the beginning: the 'problem of paraenesis'. It is that Paul appears in some texts to have taken it that by coming to have Christ faith his addressees had *already* become fully 'in Christ' with all that this implies for practice: why then did he also feel the need for paraenesis, that is, for *exhorting* them to behave as required 'in Christ'? This problem is none other than that of the relationship between the 'indicative and imperative' as we know it from Rudolf Bultmann and before.<sup>23</sup>

The solution that I proposed in several of the essays draws on the fact that Paul's *παράκλησις* is closely similar to Stoic '*paraenesis*'. Thus Pauline paraenesis is not in fact 'exhortation' in the sense of an appeal to people to become different from what they already are. Rather, it presupposes that its addressees are already where they should be and then 'encourages' them to *remain* there.<sup>24</sup> An excellent example is Bultmann's own prize exhibit: Gal 5.25. 'If (or inasmuch as) we live by the *πνεῦμα*, then *let us also* [subjunctively, that is] walk (or practise) by the *πνεῦμα*.' This is Stoic paraenesis in its purest form and it opens up for all the rhetorical strategies that the Stoics had invented: describing models of the proper behaviour, speaking in a reminding mode, articulating what the ultimate value that Paul's believers have already grasped in fact means in this or the other

<sup>23</sup> R. Bultmann, 'Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus', ZNW 23 (1924) 123–140.

<sup>24</sup> I have suggested that we should translate Paul's *παρακαλεῖν* as 'encourage' so that it will cover both cases of 'exhortation' (as, e.g., in 1 Thess 4.1) and 'consolation' (as, e.g., in 2 Cor 1.2–7). These are two sides of the same phenomenon: 'encouragement'.

type of situation – and more.<sup>25</sup> I have made use of two images to bring the idea across. Paul the encourager may be compared to a person who reminds a former smoker that he or she has already left smoking behind. Here the addressee may well from time to time be tempted to have just a single suck on a cigarette. Enter Paul, reminding the person of what is by now past. Or Paul the encourager may be compared to an instructor in a mental gym. His addressees do have the required muscles to resist any temptation. Only, they may well need to be reminded to remain in practice in order to keep those muscles in shape.

All of this is, I believe, correct and important. It should stand and must not be forgotten. However, a problem does arise that I did not address sufficiently in *Phase 1*, nor even in *Phase 2*, to which we will eventually come. If Paul took it that his addressees had already (in principle, at least) grasped the ultimate value and hence only needed some reminding to remain there, then why does he do *so much* paraenesis? Did he actually, as I claimed, see his addressees as having *fully* grasped the ultimate value – even if we add the treacherous ‘in principle’? This problem presumably lies behind the fact that only quite few scholars have been prepared to accept the premise that raises the problem – to the effect that Paul did see his addressees as (in principle) *perfect*. To his credit, one of those scholars is E. P. Sanders, who spoke of Paul’s ‘perfectionism’.<sup>26</sup> And there have been earlier scholars who have adopted the same line.<sup>27</sup> But the overwhelming majority of scholars do not. And quite reasonably so: why all this paraenesis if the addressees are already (in principle) perfect?

This question may be supported in an interesting way. As I showed already in Chapter 1 (1994), in Phil 1.25 Paul identifies his addressees as *προκόπτοντες* (‘progressing’) by means of the distinctly Stoic term of *προκοπή* (‘progression’). Now, in Stoicism *προκοπή* is found among people who are *not* (yet) ‘wise’ (*sapientes*, σοφοί) and for that reason are in fact (still) ‘fools’ (*stulti*). Although they remain ‘fools’, they do have *some* grasp of the ultimate good. They may then ‘progress’ (*προκόπτειν*) towards having a *full* grasp of the good, not just in some general form but in all the necessary details, but they do not yet *have* it. They are not yet wise. This means that their acts are not *always*, but only *generally*, good and in accordance with the ultimate good. Such acts (or rather act-types) are identified as *καθήκοντα* (‘duties’, *officia*) and paraenesis to a large extent consists in articulating the general rules of acting that will make a person per-

<sup>25</sup> This whole area has of course been placed on the scholarly map by A. J. Malherbe, e.g., in ‘Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament’ (ANRW II.26.1; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992) 268–333.

<sup>26</sup> See E. P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 101: ‘[M]any scholars overlook Paul’s perfectionism ... The moral perfection which he required of his converts, he first required of himself. This came all the easier because he expected the end to come soon.’

<sup>27</sup> See P. Wernle, *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus* (Freiburg/Leipzig: Mohr [Siebeck], 1879). Also H. Windisch, ‘Das Problem des paulinischen Imperativs’, *ZNW* 23 (1924) 265–281.



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