THE PAULINE MOVEMENT AND FIRST-CENTURY JUDAISM: A FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMING THE ISSUES*

P F CRAFFERT

ABSTRACT
The relationship between the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism (or Paul and Judaism) is fundamental to both historical constructions and theological reflection in New Testament studies. Due to the Lutheran spectacles (as a history-of-ideas approach to the problem), it is argued that the received view is inadequate as regards both methodological and historical components in describing this relationship. A redefinition of both the methodological and the historical components of the received view is suggested. A new picture of first-century Judaism informs the social-scientific approach which sees both the Pauline movement groups and first-century Jewish groups as first-century Mediterranean socio-religious (Jewish) phenomena.

1 INTRODUCTION
The issue to be addressed in this paper is commonly posed in a number of familiar ways: Paul's rejection or abandonment of Judaism, the separation of the Pauline movement from Judaism, or, the break between Pauline Christianity and Judaism. The same issue is raised by a number of questions usually asked: Did Paul/Pauline Christianity reject/separate from/break away from Judaism? Basically, this is a question about Paul's self-definition and identity (and that of the Pauline movement) in the face of first-century Judaism.

There is an equally familiar structure, consisting of both methodological and historical components, which attempts to deal with this issue. The methodological component can be described as a history-of-ideas approach. The historical components consequently include a view on some type of normative Judaism in the first century as well as a disregard for the concrete socio-cultural conditions constitutive of the relationship between Paul and Judaism.

The aim of this study is twofold: firstly a critical evaluation of the historical

* I was working on this paper when I heard the tragic news of prof Willem Vorster's death. Several of the issues discussed here were touched on in the thesis which I completed under his supervision. I dedicate this paper to his memory. As promoter, colleague and friend he inspired and supported me more than can be acknowledged here. 0254-8356/93 $4,00 © NTSSA
and methodological components of some of the current frameworks for dealing with the relationship, and secondly, the exploration of an alternative framework for treating the social interaction between and coexistence of the Pauline movement groups and first-century Jewish groups.

2 THE PROTESTANT VIEW AND ITS LEGACY

Protestant scholarship, by and large, gives a clear answer to the question about Paul's and Paulinism relationship to Judaism namely one of opposition and antithesis (see Davies 1965:184). As Sanders says, the majority of New Testament scholars maintains that 'there is a fundamental antithesis between Paul and Judaism, especially Rabbinic Judaism' (1977:9).

This, so-called, Protestant view on the relationship between Paul and Judaism is the result of the Lutheran interpretation of Paul (see Watson 1986:2-10; Dunn 1991:14) and has served as paradigm for large segments of New Testament scholarship, especially on the Pauline letters (see Porter 1978:263). According to this view, Judaism in Paul's time was a narrow, legalistic religion. In contrast to the Jewish religion of 'legalistic work-righteousness' (Sanders 1977:3), Paul (and Jesus) brought a law-free religion of forgiveness and grace. Justification by faith instead of salvation earned through justification by the merit of good works reaches to the heart of Paul's theology (see Dunn 1988:lxv). Although this paradigm has not always been explicit in the interpretation of Paul's letters, it has always been present (see Porter 1978:257-263). Within this view, the position of Paul (or the Pauline movement) within first-century Judaism has never been a problem: Paul rejected Judaism because it was an inferior religion—incapable of salvation (see Loader 1984:11).

Reactions to the Lutheran interpretation are to be found in at least two directions. The first comes from scholars working in the aftermath of the delutheranising of Paul, while the second group claims to make use of models from the social sciences.

2.1 The delutheranising of Paul

The objections to the modernisation of Paul along the lines of Luther's quest for a gracious God have been well documented (see Stendahl 1976:78-96; Watson 1986:10-18; Dunn 1983). Especially objections along two lines of thought are relevant.

The first came with the rediscovery that Paul's main concern was not Luther's quest for a gracious God, but 'the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community' (Stendahl 1976:86). Paul's exposition of justification by faith was no attempt to solve the problem of universal damnation or salvation, but was developed specifically to deal with the position of Gentiles within the covenant people (see Dunn 1983, 1985; Loader 1984:12-14).
Secondly, it was discovered that the Lutheran interpretation is based on an erroneous view of first-century Judaism. Sanders (see 1977) played a major role in showing up this view of first-century Judaism (as a religion of legalistic work-righteousness) for what it was: 'a gross caricature, which regrettably, has played its part in feeding an evil strain of Christian antisemitism' (Dunn 1988:1xv).

On the one hand it seems clear that the process of ' "delutheranizing Paul" is already well under way' (Watson 1986:18). Ironically, on the other hand I would say, this brought very little change to the view that Paul was creating a new religion separated from Judaism or that he rejected Judaism. It would, to my mind, be rather strange if the Lutheran interpretation is rejected while one of its most significant results is left unaltered. It is my hypothesis in this part of the paper that this delutheranising trajectory in the history of research still includes too much of the Protestant legacy to bring about real renewal in this field of study. Their indebtedness to the legacy can be identified with regard to both methodological and historical components.

2.1.1 A history-of-ideas methodology

What is meant by a history-of-ideas approach is that Paul is essentially seen as a matured professor of theology defending his faith and doctrinal views and the context of his communication as primarily that of a theological seminary. This, according to Holmberg, leads to the fallacy of idealism where 'all developments, conflicts and influences are at bottom developments of, and conflicts and influences between ideas' (1978:201). Exegetically, we have failed to take account of the fact that all ideas, concepts and knowledge are socially determined (see Elliott 1981:4). In fact, scholars have failed to explain not only that all ideas are socially determined, but also which socio-cultural systems are taken for granted in reading Paul's letters. In short, this means that historical processes and developments in early Christianity are treated primarily as a history and development of theological ideas divorced from a social system (see further par 4.1).

Both the content and structure of the delutheranising trend exemplify a history-of-ideas approach. It is clearly seen in the question of Paul's break with or rejection of Judaism which is decided primarily on the basis of conflicting theological ideas. Sanders, for example, argues:

What is wrong with the law, and thus with Judaism, is that it does not provide for God's ultimate purpose, that of saving the entire world through faith in Christ, and without the privilege accorded to Jews through the promises, the covenant, and the law (1983:47).
Paul's rejection of Judaism results from it being a different pattern of religion to Christianity: 'this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity' (Sanders 1977:552, italics EPS). Similarly, Paul's 'soteriological exclusivism' (Räisänen 1985:549; and see 1980:71) together with his critique of the law, implies for Räisänen such a degree of discontinuity with Judaism that he speaks of Paul's break with Judaism. Theological, or should one say, soteriological, differences treated in isolation from explicit socio-historical conditions are the bedrock of these arguments.

The basic pattern which structures these approaches confirms this observation: question—scenario (with criteria)—conclusion. Filled in with more detail it reads like this: did Paul reject Judaism or break away from it?—a description of the Pauline movement and Judaism plus a set of criteria in terms of which one can think about rejection/breaking away—Paul either rejected Judaism or was involved in separating the Pauline movement from Judaism. Again Sanders is a case in point.

His concern is not to decide whether Pauline Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism are separate religions, but what the differences/similarities were between two separate patterns of religion (see 1977:11, 19). Thus, he is not concerned to decide whether the Pauline movement was a separate movement outside of Judaism, but what the relationship between two separate patterns of religion was. Once it is established that two different patterns emerge from his analysis (covenantal nomism versus participationist eschatology, 1977:549), his (sociological) conclusion conveniently follows: Paul finds Judaism unacceptable.

The point should be clear. The way the question is posed, allows only certain answers. Whether the Pauline movement (which in his view had a different pattern of religion from Palestinian Judaism) was still part of Judaism cannot be decided on the basis of a comparison of the patterns unless it can clearly be demonstrated that a deviation from a specific pattern (covenantal nomism) would have disqualified a person or group from being part of Judaism (see also Räisänen 1985 as an example of this structure).

2.1.2 Historical components
The first component to be noted is the implicit criterion in the above structure that a deviation from covenantal nomism would have resulted in a break with or rejection of Judaism. Thus, although the delutheranising school rejects the idea of Judaism as a legalistic religion, the notion of a normative Judaism in Paul's lifetime is alive and well (also pointed out by Lightstone 1984:3; Nickelsburg

---

1 To be sure, Sanders does not think that Paul was deliberately trying to undermine Judaism or to separate the early Christianity communities from Judaism (see Sanders 1988:297). Nevertheless, he sees Paul's pattern of religion as sufficiently hostile to the normative Judaism of the day (covenantal nomism) to conclude to a break with Judaism.
This assumption features sometimes in more explicit and sometimes in more implicit ways.

More explicitly it is found in references to covenantal nomism as 'the basic type of religion' (Sanders 1977:426) in Paul's lifetime, or in Dunn's argument that, despite the fact that 'the concept of an orthodox or normative Judaism for the period prior to 70 CE is, to say the least, very questionable', there was 'a common and unifying core for second Temple Judaism' (1991:18) which constituted a 'mainstream Judaism' (Dunn 1991:35).

In a more implicit way it functions in arguments such as 'the traditional Jewish faith' (Raisänen 1985:546) or 'the Jewish community' (Watson 1986:19, 21) which designates the normative body from which the Pauline movement deviated and thus broke away.

The second component has to do with an undue separation between symbolic and social structures (ideological and sociological components). As a result of the history-of-ideas approach, ideological and sociological components are isolated in a way which leads either to confusion or a mixing of categories. As we have seen, ideological (theological) arguments are used to substantiate a sociological conclusion—without demonstrating why such ideological arguments are applicable. A sound set of sociological tools and evidence, to my mind, is needed to reach such a rather sociological conclusion. It is not denied that theological ideas contributed and played an important part in the selfdefinition and identity of groups or the creation of boundaries between them. Such ideas and selfdefinition, however, need to be situated properly within the social conditions and social setting of the first-century Mediterranean world.

Despite the efforts of this approach to rescue Paul from unhistorical modernisation along the lines of a Lutheran interpretation, they, to my mind, do not succeed in establishing a well-founded historical approach in dealing with the relationship between Paul/the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism.

### 2.2 Some first attempts to introduce the social sciences

The second line of response to the Lutheran interpretation of Paul in various ways introduces models from the social sciences. The hypothesis in this part of the paper is that, although somewhat different from the previous trajectory, too much of the Protestant legacy still lives in these approaches—especially as regards to historical components.

---

2 This core consisted of at least the following pillars: monotheism, election as the covenant people, covenant focused in Torah and land focussed in Temple (see Dunn 1991:19-35). Although each group interpreted and defined these elements in a rather idiosyncratic way, there remains something common to them (see 1991:18) which functioned as the criterion of orthodoxy (see 1991:19). The new movement which started with Jesus questioned and redefined these four axioms 'to a degree unacceptable to mainstream Judaism' (1991:35).
2.2.1 JDG Dunn: Paul’s built in tendency towards a break with Judaism

Dunn strongly emphasises the need to take Paul’s historical setting (‘context’) seriously when trying to understand his letters and solving the issue of Christianity’s separation from Judaism (see Dunn 1983:100; 1988:xv). In doing that, he rejects the majority view of a break between Paul (or the Pauline groups) and Judaism.

In his view, early Christianity was part of Judaism:

The point is that earliest Christianity was not yet seen as something separate and distinct from Judaism. It was a sect, like other sects within first century Judaism. The first Christians had some distinct and peculiar beliefs about Jesus; but their religion was the religion of the Jews (1983:5).

Paul did not intend a separation from Judaism nor a rejection of the law (and Judaism), neither should his actions (interpreted within their proper context) be seen as creating a break with Judaism (see Dunn 1990:208). To be sure, Dunn does not deny Paul’s peculiar beliefs about circumcision (e.g. Gal 5:6) or his apparent criticism of the law (e.g. Gal 2:16, 19; Rom 2:27, 7:6). He claims that when read within their proper ‘historical context’ (see 1983:103; 1985), these verses need not and should not be seen as criticising the law which resulted in a break with Judaism or rejection of the Jewish religion. In fact, he explicitly argues for a ‘sociological perspective’ (1985:538) from which to view the evidence.

By making use of anthropological insights on people’s self-definition and identity, Dunn argues that Paul’s exposition of circumcision and the law on clean and unclean food should be seen within the parameters of ‘a people’s identity and self-understanding, and that these rituals were important not least because they served as such clear boundary markers’ (1985:525). The law’s social function was to create and strengthen Israel’s (the covenant people’s) identity, both as a nation and as a religion (Dunn 1985:526). Thus, Paul’s views on the law and circumcision posed a threat to his kinsmen’s self-understanding and identity as members of the covenant people (see 1985:526). Not his criticism of the law and circumcision as such, but his criticism of these identity markers of the people of God caused the problem. The issues confronting Paul were created by these social conditions and without proper respect for this context, Dunn argues, it might well nigh be impossible to achieve a proper exegesis of Paul’s treatment of the law and circumcision (see 1985:527).

What Paul attacks is works of the law as ‘the expression of a too narrowly nationalistic and racial conception of the covenant, because they had become a badge not of Abraham’s faith but of Israel’s boast’ (1983:120). Paul’s concern is to indicate that God’s covenant grace is also for the Gentiles and Israel’s
boast cannot limit God’s grace (see 1991:124). In attacking the covenantal nomism of the Judaism of his day, Paul was neither attacking the law, nor the covenant...but a covenantal nomism which insisted on treating the law as a boundary round Israel, marking off Jew from Gentile, with only those inside as heirs of God’s promise to Abraham [italics JDGD]. In short, it was the law abused to which Paul objected, not the law itself (Dunn 1991:138).

Dunn admits that Paul’s criticism of the pillars of Judaism undermined the Jewish selfunderstanding and transformed a Jewish Messianism into a faith ‘which sooner or later must break away from Judaism to exist in its own terms’ (1983:115). We should, however, be clear on exactly what Dunn’s position is. He does not dispute that the end result of Paul’s undermining of the pillars of Judaism was a breach between (rabbinic) Judaism and Christianity. I do dispute that this was ever Paul’s intention or that it was inevitable within the context of the much broader stream of pre-70 Judaism. Within the broader stream Paul’s interpretation of covenant and promise was a legitimate option for Jews (and Judaism) within a wider range of options (1990:208).

Only after the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism (post-70) does one find the beginning of the partings of the ways (see Dunn 1991:239).

Notwithstanding Dunn’s rejection of the majority view, he shares the very same approach with Sanders and others who, in spite of the ‘new paradigm’ (Porter 1978), continue within the confines of the Protestant legacy. The basic pattern of his approach remains the comparison of Paul’s theological views with what he takes to be the typical (normative) view on the pillars of first-century Judaism. It has already been indicated that Dunn quite explicitly argues for a common and unifying core which constituted second Temple Judaism (see 1991:18).

Despite his insistence on a so-called sociological perspective, he does not really abandon the history-of-ideas approach which deals with Judaism and the Pauline movement as disembodied entities (in primarily theological terms). I shall return to this issue shortly (see par 4.1).

2.2.2 F Watson: A complete break between the church and the synagogue

As a reaction to the Lutheran interpretation (which misunderstands what the

---

3 It should be remembered that Dunn shares the anti-Lutheran view that ‘the leading edge of Paul’s theological thinking was the conviction that God’s purpose embraced Gentile as well as Jew, not the question of how a guilty man might find a gracious God’ (1985:539).
historical Paul was doing and saying because it isolates Paul's theological reflection from its social context, Watson 1986:20), Watson claims that his sociological approach grasps the historical and social realities underneath Paul's theological reflection. If we are to understand Paul's view on the law and on Judaism correctly, he maintains that

our starting point should not be the complex theoretical discussion of the law found in his letters, but the situation in the history of the early church underlying these discussions (1986:23).

Therefore Watson reads Paul's letters against the background of a specific reconstruction of the socio-historical situation. Based mainly on Paul's letters (because Acts gives us virtually no reliable information about the origins of the mission to the Gentiles, see Watson 1986:23-28), the following construction of the social and historical context is made:

1 Paul began his missionary career by preaching to Jews only. 2. He and others first preached to Gentiles as a response to their failure among Jews. 3 They did not require full submission to the law from their Gentile converts. 4 The abandonment of parts of the law of Moses was intended to make it easier for Gentiles to become Christians. 5 The Gentile mission thus involved the complete separation of the church from the synagogue (Watson 1986:38).

This historical development can in sociological terms be described as 'the transformation of a reform-movement into a sect' (Watson 1986:38). The Jesus movement was a movement to reform Judaism but was deliberately changed by Paul into a sect of Judaism more or less separated from the Jewish community (see Watson 1986:38-39). Once Paul turned his full attention to the Gentiles, he did not insist that they keep the law, and the result was a complete separation of his churches from the synagogues. His letters were part of the theoretical rationale for defending this break (see 1986:45, 48).

Despite his intention to grasp the historical and social realities underlying Paul's discussions, I think Watson does not succeed in doing that. This is perhaps best exemplified in his use of the concept the Jewish community from which Paul and the Pauline movement were separated. Judaism is not treated as a first-century socio-religious phenomenon, but as an abstract entity. Dunn correctly remarks that one of the major flaws in Watson's thesis is that he uses Jewish community in a too 'undifferentiated and all-inclusive' sense (Dunn 1990:262 n 45). Thus, firstly, his mistake results from holding onto a normative type of Judaism in Paul's lifetime (see e.g Watson 1986:21). Secondly, while first-century Judaism is no longer treated as a legalistic religion, it is still seen as primarily a religious system (or pattern) which existed as a normative type of
Judaism all over the Mediterranean world.

These historical flaws in his approach, while still the result of the Protestant legacy, to my mind, partly flow from a misleading methodological claim of sociological analysis (see below par 4.1).

2.2.3 WA Meeks: The separation of the Pauline communities from the synagogues

While affirming that Christianity indeed had been a sect of Judaism, Paul 'looks back at that connection from a point after a decisive break has occurred' (Meeks 1985:94). Although Paul claims the scriptures and traditions of Israel as central to the identity of Jesus' followers, Meeks maintains that

theologically it is correct to say that the scriptures and traditions of Judaism are a central and ineffaceable part of the Pauline Christians' identity. Socially, however, the Pauline groups were never a sect of Judaism. They organised their lives independently from the Jewish associations of the cities where they were founded, and apparently, so far as the evidence reveals, they had little or no interaction with the Jews (1985:106).

Meeks argues that it is likely that the 'Christians made their appearance in the Greek cities as a sect within the Jewish communities' but at least the congregations founded by Paul, very soon, 'became independent in identity and organisation' (1986:110; see also Sanders 1983:176).

A threefold basis for the separation is claimed: an independent organisation, no or little contact with the Jews and a separate identity for the Pauline communities. It is interesting to analyse the underlying reasons for this basis.

Firstly, while this is no place to evaluate the use of Wilson's sectarian models in detail, it is noteworthy that it has left its marks on Meeks's analysis. Wilson defines a sect in terms of its response to the world (see Meeks 1986:99). One of the results of his use of this model is that (similar to Watson) he uses the term Jewish community in an undifferentiated and all-inclusive sense (as substitute for Wilson's the world). For example: Christian prophets brought their challenge 'to the Jewish community in each city'; 'Christian groups see themselves entirely within the orbit of Jewish communities'; 'the Jewish community in Rome' (1986:109); 'it is likely that the Christians made their appearance in the Greek cities as a sect within the Jewish communities' (1986:110). The examples can be multiplied. The point remains that while he treats the Pauline communities as first-century household communities, Judaism is treated as some kind of international, disembodied entity. In place of a normative Judaism one now finds a normative Jewish community.

Secondly, his approach lacks an integrated view on the social dynamics
within the first-century Jewish world. It should be asked whether a distinct organisational structure, even with idiosyncratic features, can be taken as an indication of independence or separation from Judaism. Meeks assumes that groups were defined and the boundaries between them drawn by means of organisational differences or similarities. More to the point, his argument goes, separation from Judaism was determined by the organisational and structural independence of the Pauline household communities.

2.3 Preliminary conclusions
The discussion thus far has made clear at least the following points:

Firstly, the history-of-ideas approach deals with symbolic structures (theological ideas) as if such structures can be isolated from social systems and conditions. The focus on the history of theological ideas has resulted in a parody not only of first-century Judaism but also of the history and development of the early Jesus movement within Judaism. A more sophisticated set of tools is needed for dealing with the coexistence of the Pauline movement groups and first-century Jewish groups within the setting of the Mediterranean world at that time.

Secondly, while the Protestant approach apparently disregards socio-historical conditions by focusing primarily on theological ideas, it is not safeguarded from (explicit or implicit) assumptions on the socio-historical setting—especially on the nature of first-century Judaism. Neither first-century Jewish groups nor the Pauline movement groups were disembodied entities as is implied in these assumptions. New developments in the study of first-century Judaism together with the insights gained from the social-scientific approach make it imperative that both the Jewish communities and the Pauline household communities be examined as concrete first-century Mediterranean socio-religious phenomena. Only then can an adequate estimate of the relationship between them be attempted.

Thirdly, while they move in the right direction, scholars such as Dunn, Watson and Meeks do not succeed in taking seriously enough the principle that ideas are socially determined and embedded in social systems.

3 Recasting the framework
To be successful, an alternative framework should address both the methodological and the historical deficiencies identified in the Protestant legacy. The history-of-ideas lenses of the Lutheran spectacles will be replaced by a set of social-scientific lenses. Consequently, the received view on

4 I have elsewhere dealt with the, to my mind, theoretical problems in Meeks's approach (see 1991:130).
first-century Judaism as either legalistic or normative will be replaced by a new understanding of first-century Judaism as is now emerging from scholarly publications.

The thesis in this part of the paper is that once the Pauline movement groups and first-century Jewish groups are seen within their proper first-century Mediterranean setting, the relationship between them can adequately be described as the coexistence of Jewish groups, competing on the same religious market for mediating the sacred and representing divine power. This will enable us to rephrase the issue of the relationship between Paul and Judaism.

3.1 A rejection of the history-of-ideas approach

Social-scientific interpretation, in the words of Stowers, is a 'deliberate reaction to the unavoidable reductionism and anachronism of theologically oriented scholarship' and aims 'to be consistently historical and descriptively holistic' (1985:149). The aim of the approach, in other words, is to reduce 'socially anachronistic and ethnocentric reading' (Rohrbaugh 1987:23) of New Testament texts and 'to achieve a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the biblical documents and of the societies in which they emerged' (Elliott 1990b:6).

In my view, the best way to do that is to define the social-scientific approach as an interdisciplinary activity of historically minded social scientists where contemporary social science models and historical data are engaged in an interpretive dialogue. As a definition of the social-scientific approach, its aim is avoiding the pitfalls of either forcing an implicit model onto the data or of shaping the data by means of a contemporary model (see Craffert 1991). Instead, the interpreter should either demonstrate or argue a fit between the own ready-made concepts and structures (models) and the data (the others' social system). Certain constraints are introduced which facilitate dialogue between model and data and which avoid anachronisms (see Craffert 1992a). This approach is, in short, an attempt to account for the fact that New Testament scholars deal with data from a different historical and cultural world.

This definition of the social-scientific approach departs from the assumption that meaning and knowledge are socially constructed and socially interpreted. The meaning of words, ideas and events in the first-century world is embedded in a social system. An interpreter can either rely on the taken for granted social system of the own culture, or construct the culture specific social system of first-century Mediterranean people. Model building thus is a historical activity which aims at uncovering the life world (social system) within which meaning is mediated for those involved. Background information is not helpful to a better understanding of first-century texts, phenomena and history, it is essential as feeding ground for understanding them as such (see Craffert 1992b:43-45).
It is from the viewpoint of this definition of the social-scientific approach that the above attempts at sociological interpretation are considered inappropriate. Watson is a case in point. Sociological models, he says, function 'not as a substitute for historical evidence, but as a way of interpreting the evidence' (1986:x). As a programmatic remark this is highly significant since he starts with a ready made 'historical reconstruction' (1986:23ff) of Paul's situation which is followed by an interpretation thereof based on sociological models. In my view, a reconstruction of the development and history of the Pauline movement as such should be done from the perspective of an interaction of social science models and historical data.

Watson accidentally finds a fit between two models and the historical evidence: firstly the transformation of a reform movement into a sect, and secondly, the ideological legitimation of the separation of the sectarian group from the mother body (see 1986:38-41). However, this fit is neither argued nor demonstrated but assumed. The application of such models should rather be part of an overall strategy in understanding the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism within the social system of the first-century Mediterranean world.

Dunn finds himself in the same boat. His sociological perspective is confined to one single aspect, the social function of the law, whereas the rest of his analysis does not really differ from that in the Protestant view. Both Pauline Christianity and Judaism are dealt with as disembodied theological or religious systems. Introducing a single social aspect to the debate changes the scenario but not the approach.

With Meeks a rather different set of problems enters the debate. While he is aware of the role one's assumed socio-historical setting plays in dealing with Paul's theology, he too quickly decides on a break with Judaism. His sociological analysis of the setting misleads him to think that separate organisational structures implied separate religions. His flaw is the lack of an integrated view of symbolic structures within the social system of that era. I now turn to this aspect.

If should be clear from the above discussion that any discussion of a pattern of religion, that is, the symbolic system (the ideology, beliefs, rituals and tradition, etc), is accompanied, explicitly or implicitly, by assumptions about the socio-historical setting. The Protestant approaches, for example, deal with Judaism and Pauline Christianity as systems of religion without explicitly paying attention to the socio-historical conditions within which those systems made sense. As will become clear shortly, too much is assumed from the religious setting of Protestant religion and too little attention is given to the first-century Mediterranean religious world itself. The least that can be expected from an appropriate approach would be an integrated view which simultaneously takes into account both the symbolic and the social aspects.
What is needed, first of all, is that both Pauline Christianity and Judaism be treated as concrete first-century Mediterranean socio-religious phenomena: instead of Pauline Christianity we should think about the Pauline movement groups or Pauline household communities and instead of Judaism or the Jewish communities, we should think about first-century Jewish groups or synagogue household communities. These should then be understood within the broader framework of first-century religious structures and networks. That is, as phenomena within the social system of an agrarian society: religious beliefs and religious leaders, households and social interaction all as first-century agrarian phenomena. In this way the question shifts from comparing two entities (which already presupposes two distinct entities) to examining the socio-religious interaction and dynamics of the Pauline movement and first-century Judaism within the conditions of the first-century Mediterranean world.

Both the Pauline movement groups and first-century Jewish groups will in the remainder of this paper be discussed as instances of the larger first-century agrarian pattern of socio-religious phenomena. This will be done by addressing two central questions: What constituted these groups? and, What basic functions did they fulfil? However, prior to that a new picture of first-century Judaism will be introduced. After all, first-century Judaism provided the narrower setting within the first-century Mediterranean world for the interaction and coexistence of the Pauline movement groups and Jewish groups.

3.2 A new picture of first-century Judaism
A few preliminary remarks to set the scene for introducing the new picture of first-century Judaism will have to be made.

Firstly, despite acknowledgements that we know 'very little about distinctive characteristics of Judaism in Asia Minor' (Sanders 1977:426), or that 'we know next to nothing of Jewish piety in Asia Minor in Paul's time' (Räisänen 1980:74), it has become clear that any attempt to understand Paul's letters or his relationship to first-century Judaism, in any case presupposes some understanding of first-century Judaism—be it that of a legalistic religion, of normative Judaism or something else. All scholars are subject to the same limitation of having relatively few sources which originated in geographically diverse areas. This condition can, however, no longer be an excuse for ideologically biased pictures of first-century Judaism. We should rather admit the tentative nature of our attempts.

Secondly, the construction which follows has no claim to original historical research based on the sources but, thanks to the work of others, it summarises

---

5 It is accepted in this study that the problem cannot be solved by a simple return to the sources. The methodological framework within which the ancient sources are understood and interpreted is just as important as the sources themselves. As Judge says, 'What we
the findings of those who have done the research. As Charlesworth (1990:36-37) cogently states:

A new understanding of Early Judaism (c a 250 BCE to 200 CE) is now appearing in scholarly publications. The old view of first-century (CE) Judaism was simplistic: The Jewish religion was centered in Jerusalem, with the Temple as the magnet of world Jewry. From this citadel emanated the proper interpretation of the Torah (the embodiment of God's will, Law). The Jewish religion was affirmed to be immune from pagan influences. It was monolithic, orthodox, and normative; and diversity in the system was expressed through four sects, two of which (the Sadducees and the Pharisees) belonged to 'normative Judaism'. Now this historical reconstruction has collapsed.

I mean to present a picture of first-century Judaism which is apparently invisible to many New Testament scholars—at least if judged from the above debates. The challenge facing New Testament scholarship is to abandon the picture of Judaism in the first century, pre-70, that never existed and consequently the interpretation of New Testament documents that has been built on it. It is only in view of an adequate picture of first-century Judaism as a first-century socio-religious phenomenon that we can attempt an answer to the question of the coexistence of the Pauline movement groups and Jewish groups.

3.2.1 A variety of Judaisms instead of any normative Judaism in the first century

Although Rabbinic Judaism had not yet developed by 70 CE, it is commonly accepted that 'something very like it was the common form of the religion, at least in Palestine, and all groups are to be seen as divergent from this primitive stock' (Smith 1983:304). Alongside the idea that there was a normative Judaism in the first century and that it was very similar to what later became Rabbinic Judaism, the idea persists that Judaism in the first century was very much a unified movement (some type of normative Judaism). This is assumed to have been the case both for the Homeland and for the cities of the Roman Empire. However, new sources (evidence) together with a fresh study of the sources has revealed that culturally, socially, and theologically, early Judaism was 'a complex and variegated phenomenon' (Nickelsburg 1986:11; see also Judge lack is not good first-hand sources, but a good secondary tradition and an adequate context' (1972:20). This study attempts to contribute to such a tradition and context.

6 New sources include not only new literary texts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, but also non-literary material and inscriptions together with a mass of archaeological finds (see Nickelsburg 1986:9). New evidence together with new methods brought a different reading from that which had conventionally been accepted. Even a tradition-historical analysis of the rabbinic sources contributed to the demise of the notion of a normative Judaism (see Neusner 1983:1-4).
1972:22). During this period no such thing as a normative Judaism existed from which one or another 'heretical' group might diverge (see Neusner 1984:29) for there just was no 'uniform "Judaism" to which all evidence attested equally well' (Neusner 1983:4). Judaism was in what we might call 'an experimental stage' (Schiffman 1981:147). Contrary to Rabbinic Judaism which is dominated 'by an identifiable perspective...early Judaism appears to encompass almost unlimited diversity and variety' (Nickelsburg 1986:2). It might be more appropriate to contemplate a post-70 Pharisaic type of Judaism and a variety of pre-70 Judaisms (see Neusner 1983:59ff; Smith 1982:14; Nickelsburg 1986:2; Charlesworth 1990:37). The question remains, what constituted this variety and were there any common denominators?

In the received view the variety is often expressed in the various sects mentioned by Josephus and Philo (see Porton 1986 for a list). However, the man in the street (the average Palestinian Jew, who was not without religion) was not part of any of these groups or 'sects' (see Smith 1956:73). The drawback of an approach which focuses on these groups is that it tends to focus primarily on 'a very limited sub-section of the overall picture' and it ignores 'the great masses of the people who do not seem to have been "card-carrying members" of any formal group' (Kraft 1975:189).7

If there was an orthodox or normative Judaism in the first century, 'it must have been that which is now almost unknown to us, the religion of the average "people of the land"' (Smith 1956:81). They had their own synagogues and legal traditions (see Smith 1963:171). They were not the outcasts and lowly classes since their leaders 'seem to have been the well-to-do landholders and business men who probably had more Greek education than the average Pharisee' (Smith 1963:172; and see Neusner 1988:175). That still does not cover the whole spectrum of first-century Judaism. There were also the 'worldly Jews—the Herodians, tax gatherers, usurers, gamblers, shepherds, and robbers (by the thousands) who fill the pages of the Gospels, the Talmuds, and Josephus' (Smith 1956:74). Recent studies on the Diaspora furthermore remind us that there were vast differences among Jewish groups: not only from city to city in western Asia Minor but also within specific cities (see Judge 1972:22; White 1988:18).

If we ask what constituted Judaism in Paul's lifetime, Smith (1983:304) suggests that we

---

7 It is often forgotten that the major 'philosophical sects' as identified by Josephus represented a very small proportion of the Jewish population. The largest and probably most influential group, the Pharisees, in all probability numbered only 6000, whereas the number of the Essenes was allegedly not more than 4000 (see Lohse 1976:79, 85). That was when the total number of Jews was round about four and a half million (see Lohse 1976:122), of which the numbers outside Palestine by far exceeded those inside.
had better think of pre-70 Judaism simply as the sum of its parts, plus other elements of which we know little more than that they existed, plus yet more elements of which even the existence is now unknown.

If first-century Judaism in Palestine was not monolithic, this was even less the case in the diverse and alien environment of the Diaspora (see White 1985/6:108). In fact, Kraabel notes, one of the questionable assumptions on Diaspora Judaism research is that it is ‘seen to be monolithic, inter-connected and even directly controlled from Palestine’ (1982:453). These communities were neither ideologically nor organisationally directed or controlled by any mother organisation. In fact, it is important to realise that the social structure of first-century Jewish religion neither allowed set formulae of authoritative credal statements which had a dogmatic binding force nor acknowledged an authority which could issue such dogmas (see Dexinger 1981:111).

The principal elements found in Judaisms prior to the fall of the Temple are ‘the Pentateuch, the Temple, and the ‘amme ha’arez, the ordinary Jews who were not members of any sect’ (Smith 1961:356; and see Cohen 1986:47). Even so it should not mistakenly be assumed that there was any general agreement as to any of these symbols (they were not the pillars in Dunn’s sense). Symbols such as Temple and Torah were open for debate: ‘Which Torah? Consisting of how many books? In which translation? Interpreted from what standpoint? Which temple? Run by which priesthood?’ (Johnson 1989:427). Furthermore, evidence on a variety of temples with their own priesthoods within Judaism is well attested (see e.g. Stone 1980:77-82) while others, such as the Pharisees, apparently had no need for the Temple in Jerusalem (see Overman 1992:70). In view of this one can hardly disagree with Saldarini:

Any intellectual construction of a normative Judaism, so convenient as a foil to Christian theology, did violence to the lived reality of thousands of Jewish communities throughout the diaspora, each of which had developed its own grasp of the tradition and created its own accommodations with the local communities and cultures (1992:xvii).

Each group, although a minority, argued for its own primacy and superiority, claimed Israel’s traditions and symbols coupled with varying interpretations thereof (see Smith 1957:125-126; Schiffman 1981:148). The adoption and adaptation of Greco-Roman socio-cultural structures by these groups need further attention.

It is not enough to know that there were not one but many Judaisms in Paul’s lifetime or that there was no normative Judaism at the time. The danger remains that Judaisms, can still be treated in a vacuum as primarily religious systems or patterns of religion disembodied from first-century social realities. Therefore
two aspects will be looked at more closely: firstly, the social organisation of Jewish communities in the Diaspora, and secondly, the social structure of first-century Jewish religion.

3.2.2 Judaisms and synagogue household communities

In what way were Jewish communities (the variety of Judaisms) in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire organised? One of the most common notions found in scholarly publications is that of the Jewish community in a particular city, based on the idea of a central body (a gerousia) in each city, representing the Jews (see Meeks 1983:35). However, given the lack of evidence, it would be dangerous to assume a central body like the one in Alexandria for every other city (see Kraabel 1981:87) and should at best be seen as a local phenomenon (see White 1990:90-91). One should rather move to synagogue communities as the concrete manifestations of Judaisms in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire. Therefore, it is important to establish the organisational features of first-century synagogue communities.

Synagogues were, in short, household based (Jewish) communities. The Jews it seems, like other groups, established ethnic associations by means of community gatherings since before the first century (see Gutmann 1981b:3; White 1990:66). A synagogue, according to Meyers and Strange ‘could well have been nothing more than a large meeting room in a private house or part of a larger structure set apart for worship’ (1981:141). This observation is supported by Kee’s conclusion as regards Jewish synagogues in the Homeland:

[T]here is simply no evidence to speak of synagogues in Palestine as architecturally distinguishable edifices prior to 200 C.E. Evidence of meeting places: ‘Yes’, both in private homes and in public buildings. Evidence of distinctive architectural features of a place of worship or for study of Torah: ‘No’ (1990:9).

This is probably even more true of the situation in the Diaspora. Kraabel suggests that ‘the synagogue Judaism of the Roman Diaspora is best understood as the grafting of a biblical Diaspora theology onto a Greco-Roman social organization’ (1987:58). Synagogues were constituted along the lines of the extended household.

Since synagogues most probably were a kind of guild or voluntary associa-

---

8 It is well known that for legal purposes the Romans classified synagogues in each city as collegia or associations. Examples are Caesar’s ban on all collegia with the exception of ‘certain long established groups’ (Meeks 1983:35). Synagogues were among those explicitly exempted. A further example comes from Josephus’s references to the Jewish community at Sardis. Josephus calls the synagogue a synodos, which is one of the most common and general terms for a club, guild or voluntary association (see Meeks 1983:35).
tion (see White 1987:153; 1990:66; Overman 1992:75), it is not surprising to learn that they were subject to the conventions of patronage. It seems likely that ‘leadership roles in the synagogue, as in other religious associations, entailed benefactions’ (White 1990:81). Many Jewish patrons were in all probability wealthy members of the community who, by virtue of their generosity, were accorded leadership roles and honoured accordingly. A number of non-Jewish patrons fulfilled the same role (see White 1987; 1990:78-85; Meeks 1983:206 n 161).  

This information on the household setting, the honouring of pagan benefactors (both men and women) in synagogues together with the features of a voluntary association, illuminates both the ‘internal order of the Jewish community and its social place within the larger environment’ (White 1987:154). It exposes something of the nature of both synagogue communities and synagogue gatherings in the Diaspora.

Firstly, the internal order merits a closer look. It is known that there was often, even in the same city, more than one synagogue or Jewish community (see White 1985/6:109, 120; 1987:154). It is important to note that information about the eleven Jewish synagogues identified in Rome on which data are available, suggests that they were constituted along social and status lines. The spectrum varied from ‘the virtually illiterate funerary inscriptions from the Synagogue of the Hebrews’ (White 1985/6:110 n 61) to the Synagogue of the Augustasians, which apparently owed allegiance to the Emperor (see Meeks 1983:206 n 161; White 1990:61). If this is an indication of a general pattern, it suggests that membership of synagogue communities was very much based on social relations. The network of social relations, which includes the reciprocity demanded from patronage, constituted particular synagogue communities which pledged loyalty to household patrons. It thus seems as if, due to the household institution, membership, leadership and entrance requirements were all largely dependent on social factors (see further Craffert 1992b:193-199, 201-206).

Secondly, the matter of external contact needs to be discussed. The illusionary impression that both Jews and Christians lived in ‘total apartness’ (Rajak 1985:250) from their pagan neighbours in the cities of the Empire should be abandoned. It should be realised that, despite all the reservations on the part of Jews and Christians against taking part in festivals and pagan sacrifices (which

9 Some interesting examples in this regard are that of a certain Julia Severa at Acmonia in Roman Phrygia. Julia—also known to have been a priestess of the imperial cult—donated a building to the Jewish community and was duly honoured (see White 1990:81). A second woman, Tation, at Phocaea in Roman Lydia (during the reign of Nero) built an edifice and court and donated it to the Jewish community. She was honoured with a golden crown and a seat of honour in the synagogue (see White 1987a:143). Even Luke, (7:3-6) towards the end of the first century, mentions a non-Jew, the Roman centurion, as the benefactor who sponsored the building of the synagogue.
contributed to the impression), to be outside these activities would have meant, in effect, to be outside the city (see Rajak 1985:252; Kraabel 1992:275). Despite such reservations, both the New Testament (see Harvey 1985:81) and archaeological evidence on Diaspora synagogues (see Kraabel 1978:20-21) provide evidence of intimate contact of Gentiles with Jewish institutions (see Kraabel 1982:452; White 1990:92). Collins argues that 'we find a broad range of degrees of attachment' (1985:184) of Gentiles to synagogues. Gentiles, Lightstone maintains, attended communal prayer in the synagogues on Sabbaths and festivals. They used Jewish courts, even when Jews were not party to the litigation, and frequented Jewish Holy Men both inside and outside the synagogue setting (1988:52).

Despite some peculiar beliefs and practises, Jewish groups were very much part of the social networks within the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire. Segal maintains that the period 586 BCE—70 CE produced an enormous variety of Jewish communities, adapted to the plethora of new and different social, political, and economic environments brought about by the dispersion of Jews throughout the ancient world. In each place where Jews sought to dwell, the meaning of the covenant seemed different (1986:12).

In this the household setting seems to have been constitutive not only of the organisational form, but also the religious character of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. The household setting together with its accompanying social networks, to a large extend contributed to the adoption of and adaptation to local cultural conditions.

3.2.3 Jewish household communities and the mediation of the sacred
A balanced approach should not only focus on Jewish household groups (synagogues) as socio-religious phenomena, but should also account for the basic structure of Jewish religion in the first-century Mediterranean world. We thus turn to the second question: What was the basic structure of the Jewish religion of the time? An attempt to outline the social structure of religion in the first-century Mediterranean world in general, will be supplemented by a view on Jewish religion in particular.

3.2.3.1 Religion in the first-century world
Since I have discussed the problem of a cross-cultural analysis of religion elsewhere (see Craffert 1992b:163-174), only a few remarks will suffice to indicate the structural significance of religion in the first-century world.

Firstly, contrary to formal religion as an independent social institution in the
modern world, religion in that world did not exist as an independent social institution but was embedded in either politics or kinship. Religion embedded in politics (such as monumental public temples and Emperor worship) will receive less attention than household based religions. In this regard the, to my mind, valuable distinction proposed by J Z Smith (following Peter Brown) will be followed.

Brown argues that ‘the emergence of the holy man at the expense of the temple marks the end of the classical world’ (quoted in J Z Smith 1977:238). Smith argues that this shift started as early as the second century (BCE).

One way of stating this shift is to note that the cosmos has become anthropologized. The old, imperial cosmological language that was the major mode of religious expression of the archaic temple and court cultus has been transformed. Rather than a city wall, the new enclave protecting man against external, hostile powers will be a human group, a religious association or secret society. Rather than a return to chaos or the threat of decreation, the enemy will be described as other men or demons, the threats as evil or death. Rather than a sacred space, the new center and chief means of access to divinity will be a divine man, a magician, who will function, by and large, as an entrepreneur without fixed office and will be, by and large, related to ‘protean deities’ of relatively unfixed form whose major characteristic is their sudden and dramatic authophanies (Smith 1977:238).

Although it was a civic duty to worship the Roman gods, politically oriented religion never was the major thrust of religious life (see Winslow 1971:239-240). Furthermore, household religious activities took their place alongside that of the classical temples (see White 1990:26).

Secondly, the close calculation of truth, credo, dogma or doctrine was either impossible or simply irrelevant (see Malina 1986:98) since they were not so much concerned with ‘believing in gods’ as ‘having gods’.

Thirdly, people in the first-century world over a broad spectrum shared the belief that demons of various sorts (both good and evil), angels and spirits all contributed to the misfortune or well-being of human beings.

Fourthly, salvation was not concerned with the individualistic achiever but was about the well being of a person, security from loss of honour, physical dangers, loss of crop, etcetera. To be healed, to achieve power, to find patrons and clients, to have a proper funeral, to take part in weekly communal meals.

---

10 The question of the relative structural significance and function of a belief system vis-a-vis the overall social system shared by synagogue communities cannot be discussed here (this formulation is derived from a similar formulation by Aune 1976:3). In my view this is one of those problems created by the high significance of dogma, doctrine and belief systems in most modern Western religious traditions. In order to understand their position in the first-century world it is necessary to investigate the overall structure of first-century religion (see Craffert 1992b:143-145, 163-174).
would all count as reasons why people would join religious activities or a salvation cult (see Malina 1986:97).

Finally, a leader in religious affairs functioned as a broker mediating between the man in the street and the gods. Access to persons (human and non-human) who controlled or had contacts to control social, political, economic, agricultural, and other matters was a key to success and respect (see Malina 1981:26-27).

From this point of view the variety of Judaisms can be seen as a first-century phenomenon related either to the temple or the household.

3.2.3.2 Jewish religion and mediating the sacred

On the one hand, the temple cult in Jerusalem with its Torah worship represents a social concentric model. The Israelite world of the early Second Commonwealth was clearly ordered by the central position of Jerusalem and the temple. The temple architecture with its concentric circles about the Holy of Holies structured and symbolised sacred space, time and people (see Smith 1969:111-118; Malina 1981:122-143); 'The successive courtyards marked the boundaries of access to the cult's centre for Gentiles, clean Israelite women, clean Israelite men, Levites, ministering priests and the High priest respectively' (Lightstone 1984:10). These symbolic and architectural boundaries had their counterpart in geographical boundaries: from Jerusalem as the centre of the earth, demographic boundaries relegated the cosmic universe. The outer ring where all people could mix marked the perimeter of ordered space and thus the boundary to the chaotic, devoid of the sacred.

On the other hand, most Diaspora Jews could not seriously see themselves under the influence of the sacred space created by the Temple cult, since in terms of the social-concentric model they would have been relegated to the regions of the chaotic or unclean by virtue of occupying and sharing living space with Gentiles (see Lightstone 1984:7,11,90). Instead the role of the holy man or 'shamanistic model' (Lightstone 1984:7) can be used to deal in a historically appropriate way with the mediation of the sacred within the Diaspora Jewish communities. 12

11 Although some Jews in the Diaspora venerated the Temple (for example sending their yearly taxes), they remained outside its concentric circles of order (Lightstone 1984:54). Kraabel argues that Jerusalem remained the centre of their worlds, but 'not necessarily the Palestine of their own times, but the biblical Israel elevated to mythical status' (Kraabel 1987:55). It has furthermore been pointed out that first-century Judaisms did not react in a monolithic way to the Temple. Some, like the Pharisees, had no need for the actual Temple (see Overman 1992:73) while other Judaisms erected either their own temples or their own priesthoods (see Nickelsburg & Stone 1991:52).

12 'What is diasporic?' is hotly debated. Smith convincingly argues that differences cannot be drawn along geographical borders (see 1983:299-300). Overman furthermore points out that not all Judaisms in Roman Palestine 'required a Temple, much less pos.
It is widely acknowledged that synagogues never substituted the Temple in its sacrificial and ritual functions. Rightly so, since no synagogue could view itself as the centre of this type of systematic ordering of people and sacred space/time about the sanctuary (see Lightstone 1988:53). Instead of replicating the Temple, each Jewish household community in the Diaspora identified a host of places, means and persons which in each locale mediated the sacred. Excluded from the concentric circles of order constituted by the Temple cult, they found other means of constructing their worlds meaningfully (see Lightstone 1984:53-54). This is perfectly illustrated by the case of demonic powers and exorcisms.

Both belief in demons and ways to get rid of them were widespread amongst Jews in the Greco-Roman Empire (see Lightstone 1984:50) while Jews in Paul’s time were apparently prominent in the field of exorcism (see Smith 1978:114). However, lack of interest in demons and exorcism amongst Jews coincided with access to the temple cult with its purification system (or the expectation of a restoration of the temple in some rabbinic circles). The temple with its purification system and those Jews outside its sphere of influence, apparently had mutually exclusive systems: purification and exorcism each fulfils parallel functions within their respective systemic contexts (see Smith 1977).

In view of the shamanistic model, a synagogue was indeed a locus of the sacred and an institution mediating between heaven and earth (see Lightstone 1984:113-116)—a viewpoint which perfectly fits the synagogue as household institution. The household as central institution in the first-century Mediterranean world was a religious unit par excellence (see Craffert 1992b:168-174, 199-204). This view finds support, for example, in the participation of Gentiles and pagans in some cultic activities. While the concentric temple system could never allow the blurring of ethnic boundaries, synagogue household services could.

Lightstone (see 1984; 1988:45-58) identifies the following modes of mediating the sacred to Diaspora Jews: divine men, tombs, the dead and the Torah. A few remarks on Jewish divine men, life of Torah and the synagogue liturgy will have to suffice.

Jews were prominent amongst the magicians in their world and there were considerable Jewish elements in Greco-Roman magic (see Stone 1980:82-86). If one remembers that one man’s holy man is another man’s magician, then the stories in Acts (8:9ff, 19:11ff) of encounters between Phillip and Paul with Jewish magicians add further evidence to the well attested competition between various itinerant Jewish Holy Men (see Lightstone 1984:18-40 for more exam-
Magicians and Holy Men operate in a world where belief in demons and evil powers are well established and exorcisms and protection against them by all means are practised. Such divine men were at the heart and centre of Jewish societies in the Diaspora. They were intimately connected to the household setting (synagogues), since 'one went to the synagogue to contact those who dispensed amulets, incantations, exorcisms and the like' (Lightstone 1984:144).

The remote effect of the Temple cult on Diaspora Jews could hardly be sufficient. Torah, sanctioned by revelation, could, however, provide a medium of sacrality. However, much of Torah, edited for the restoration community in Jerusalem, could hardly apply to conditions outside the Homeland (see Lightstone 1984:89-90). Torah constituted not so much a 'comprehensive “system” of cosmic order' as a 'source of feasts and taboos appropriating the past...mediating the power of their deity and reinforcing the religio-ethnic identity in a highly varied Hellenistic society' (Lightstone 1984:108).

Synagogues were not in themselves sacred places, but provided room for mediating the sacred via synagogue liturgies and by housing sacred objects, such as sacred scrolls. As a multi-functional organ of community life, it also played 'the role of locus sanctus for public celebration and prayer by assimilating to itself other sacred objects, relics, such as martyr’s bones and Torah scrolls' (Lightstone 1984:122-123). If conditions in Chrysostom’s 4th century conflict with the Jews are any indication of the nature of synagogue liturgies in the first century, then they confirm observations about the shamanistic type of religion in the Diaspora. Chrysostom’s Christians attend synagogue ‘to use the service of Jewish Holy Men, who exorcise demons and provide incantations and amulets’ (Lightstone 1984:119). Communal prayers might in this setting legitimately be viewed as a type of group incantation—the repetition of established word-formulae and rites to provide protection and salvation. Prayer, as Smith says, 'was a speciality of ancient magicians' (1978:130).

The tension between a national based temple-like religion and the household based mediation of the sacred by various intermediaries seems to have been a central feature of first-century Judaisms. Furthermore, the household based religious units established by Jews in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire go a long way in accounting for the variety within Judaisms. Adaptation of local customs to received traditions reflects something about the social structure of household religion. Judaism was neither legalistic nor normative in the first

13 Lightstone mentions the interesting fact that while Scroll and codex contain the same text, only the former functioned as holy object or relic in the synagogue liturgy (see 1984:118-119).

14 Several features, such as providing for burial needs, communal meals and the sorting out of legal disputes were very typical of voluntary associations as well as Jewish synagogue communities (see for example Meeks 1983:35). Furthermore, the participation of women (and children) was typical of both synagogues and other voluntary associations.
century, but shamanistic-like household communities mediating the sacred and providing access to divine powers.

3.3 Pauline household groups: the true Israel
It is commonplace today to say that the household institution was central to Paul's activities. The household structure provided the basic social setting both for the expansion and for the assembly of the Pauline communities in the cities of the Greco-Roman Empire (see White 1990:107). The Pauline movement groups truly were first-century household socio-religious units. Not only was Paul indebted to household patrons in patron-client relationships of various kinds, but they were also indebted to him as a wandering divine man mediating the sacred and providing access to divine power. Furthermore, by far the majority of members of the Pauline household communities were attached not so much to a belief system as being recruited to the social network of an extended household—they were in search of salvation and security. Most probably the Pauline household communities were quite literally a new invention every place they appeared.

When looking at the social structure of religion in Paul's world, Paul perfectly fits the shamanistic role of a divine man involved in rivalries over mediating the sacred and providing access to divine power and magic. In fact, the New Testament supports this viewpoint. Paul's attributes as performer of healing miracles (2 Cor 12:12; Rm 15:19; Gl 3:5), his claims to gifts of prophecy (1 Ts 3:4; 1 Cor 15:51) and his power of glossolalia (1 Cor 14:18) certainly were impressive recommendations for a divine man. He furthermore admits that he relied on signs, marvels, and miracles (see 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 2:4) and not on his skills as a preacher to convince people (see Smith 1980:249). Magic, curses and evil eye accusations imply a magico-religious world-view (see Elliott 1990a:263) in which access to power and protection against threats were considered important. Paul not only lived in a world where belief in the evil eye was widely accepted and practised, he himself was involved in such accusations and counter accusations (see Elliott 1990a). We should furthermore keep in mind that the traditions in Luke's Acts portray Paul as a 'visionary, charismatic preacher, healer and miracle worker' (Jervell 1984:71). Even the Pauline worship as reflected in his letters, argues Smith (see 1980), suggests features of magical rites.

Given the social structure of household religion, the features of Paul's activities as divine man and the variety of Judaisms, it is likely that Paul was not at all concerned with rejecting or breaking away from Judaism, but with getting a foothold in the market of mediating the sacred and distributing divine power. Paul's apocalyptic brand of messianic Judaism was no rejection or breaking away but rather a definition of the true Israel as he saw it (see Blenkinsopp 1981...
on the tendency in Second Temple Judaism to true Israel-claims).

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The argument in this paper is all about a proper framework for interpreting the data or sources. Data turn into evidence (for a particular case) once one has viewed the available information from a specific methodological and historical point of view.

Both the delutheranising approaches and some sociological approaches share too much of the legacy they try to overcome: a type of normative Judaism replaces the legalistic view of first-century Judaism. Neither the delutheranising attempts which still stand in the history-of-ideas approach, nor the sociological attempts succeed in developing an integrated way of dealing with contemporary models and ancient sources in a satisfactory way. The least which can be expected is a recasting of both the methodological mould and the historical evidence.

The present state of research, together with the consequent history of interpretation of Paul's letters, misleads us in that it causes us to believe that Paul was, since he rejected Judaism in favour of Christianity, primarily engaged in attacking Judaism as an inferior or inadequate religion. However, the fact that Judaism and Christianity today exist as two separate religious patterns should not be retrojected back onto Paul's setting. In view of the constructed framework, my suggestion is that the proper understanding of Paul's relationship to Judaism should be sought within the structures of first-century household units (as socio-religious units) competing on the religious market for mediating the sacred and distributing divine power. While this implies a rereading of at least Paul's letters (the sources) on the relationship between the Pauline household communities and first-century Judaism within this constructed framework, the actual task cannot be undertaken here. Although this framework needs to be filled out in much more detail, an indication of the direction in which to proceed will, however, be given.

In view of the constructed framework, Paul was not anti-Jewish (much less anti-Semitic). In fact, he should not be blamed for rejecting, separating or breaking away from Judaism for it was hardly possible within the setting of the first-century social network. Searching for (and finding) the roots of separation or anti-Judaism in Paul's attempts at selfdefinition and identification is a matter of misplacing the blame. It might well be that under different conditions Paul's words and actions could be interpreted as a rejection of Judaism or a breaking away from it, but given the socio-cultural and socio-religious conditions under which he operated, it hardly was the case. Neither organisational separation nor differences in belief system could count as breaking away from or the rejection of Judaism. Instead, Paul was probably in what he did and said as mainstream
as any other Jewish divine man of his time and place: he called on the traditions and symbols of ancient Israel to legitimise the establishment of messianic apocalyptic household communities.

The constructed framework, however, sets contemporary scholarship a rather different challenge, which is to understand and describe Paul’s interaction with other Jewish groups in view of the variety of Judaisms and the lack of any normative first-century Judaism. The emergence of, co-existence and dynamics between different socio-religious groups within the first-century setting should form the focus of further investigations. Models such as faction, sect or cult models which were developed to investigate the origin and development of new religious movements and groups may prove helpful in this task. Rivalries between various divine men and their ways of establishing legitimacy and defining the self should obviously be investigated.

If Paul is to be blamed for anything, it is for furthering the mentality of divine sanction and absolute truth for his viewpoint. Paul rejected all who disagreed with his viewpoint and even identified his view with the divine view (see e.g. GI 1:6-9, 15-16). It might well be that from his point of view all other definitions of Judaism were inferior and incomplete. However, his fallacy (which need not be repeated in history) is his claims to ultimate truth and divine sanction. An exclusivistic mentality stood between him and outsiders—those who did not accept his authority or interpretation of Israelite traditions and symbols. Paul was not as much anti-Jewish as he was pro-Pauline.

Nickelsburg calls attention to the criterion of revealed wisdom in a great number of Jewish texts—also in Paul’s letters (see 1985). He points out that the theology of anti-Judaism is not only present in the Scriptures of the Church, but the crux is to be found precisely in places where early Christian preachers and teachers are making claims of revelation. The exclusivism that has bred anti-Judaism is supported and defended by appeals to revelation. Indeed, the exclusivistic viewpoint itself is explicitly affirmed as revealed truth (1985:90).

In view of the above framework, Paul is not to be credited with a theology of anti-Judaism. His mistake was not rejecting Judaism (Räisänen) or finding it inappropriate (Sanders) or breaking away from it in creating independent communities (Meeks and Watson) or anti-Jewish sentiments, but in identifying his self-definition with God’s view and in claiming ultimate truth for his viewpoints.

This mentality not only bred anti-Judaism in later contexts (when Judaism and Christianity existed as separate religions), but can be found at the root of most instances of intolerance which characterise not only much of the history of the Church, but also that of Scriptural interpretation. Christian theology cannot but face up to the challenge of addressing this feature which was endemic to the
socio-religious setting of its origins. Not anti-Judaism, but the divinisation of men and their versions of truth are at stake. Koester concludes a paper on the divine human being by a plea to abandon the idea of the divine man, the genius, the ultimate leader from a democratic society (see 1985). If I may rephrase a question posed by Watson (see 1986:180): Can a Paul who devotes his energies to establish his credentials as divine man and thus claiming ultimate truth for his viewpoints, still be seen as the bearer of a message with profound universal significance?

This was no attempt to give an alternative answer to the age old question of the relationship between Paul and Judaism, but to transform the question. Not a different answer but different issues are at stake. If there is any value in the framework presented here, it is worthwhile to reread our sources (especially Paul's letters) in this light. In my view, we should reread them in the light of the dynamics and interaction between different first-century Jewish groups in competition for mediating the sacred, controlling the sources of entry to the divine realm, protecting against evil and consequently providing peace of mind about everyday affairs. In view of this proposal Paul's attempts at selfdefinition and identity need no longer be seen as attempts at separation or breaking away from Judaism but can be reread as his attempts to define what he considered to be the true Israel. His messianic brand of apocalyptic Judaism was his answer to the need for salvation.

**WORKS CONSULTED**


Sanders, E P; Baumgarten, A I & Mendelson, A (eds), Jewish and Christian selfdefinition: Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman period, vol 2. London: SCM.


Winslow, D 1971. Religion and the early Roman Empire, in Benko, S & O'Rourke, J J (eds), *The catacombs and the colosseum: The Roman Empire as the setting of primitive Christianity*, 237-254. Valley Forge: Judson.

Dr P F Craffert, Department of New Testament, University of South Africa, P O Box 392, PRETORIA, 0001 Republic of South Africa.