

Preface

The idea for this volume and the two conferences on which it is based goes back to several conversations between the editors about the importance of the concept of “reception” for the interpretation of historical phenomena. More recently, it has been noted from different perspectives that to understand the present we must rely on “history” as the interpreted past, containing events that shape the self-understanding of a nation, a religious community and so forth.

Against this more general backdrop, the concept of “reception” has received attention of late in Christian theology, especially in biblical scholarship. It has been remarked that the emergence of Christian perspectives on history is deeply tied to founding events in the history of Israel, the interpretation of Jesus’ activity and fate by his early followers and in early Christian gospels as well as to the perception of the person and theology of Paul.

Discussions on this topic among the editors of this volume resulted in the plan to convene a bipartite conference on receptions of Paul in early Christianity. It was and still is our conviction that the various perspectives on Paul in the formative period of Christianity contribute substantially to our own perceptions of the person of Paul and his letters. In various historical situations interpreters highlight different aspects of Paul’s theology and emphasize distinct features of his biography or his thinking. A look at the earliest interpretations of Paul in Christianity, beginning with Paul’s self-perception and the interpretation of his person and work in writings that became part of the New Testament, therefore provides insight into the social constellations that characterize this early period in Christian history.

The contributors to this volume immediately and unanimously agreed to participate in the conferences, to present and discuss their views on different themes related to the overall topic and to prepare their contributions for publication. The editors wish to thank all colleagues for their enthusiasm in participating in this project and for their reliability in submitting their articles for publication.

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