# The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology

Volume 14 · Number 3 Fall 2010



*Editorial Office & Subscription Services:*
SBTS Box 832
2825 Lexington Rd.
Louisville, KY 40280
(800) 626-5525, x 4413

*Editorial E-Mail:*
journaloffice@sbts.edu

## Galatians



Yearly subscription costs for four issues: $25, individual inside the U. S.; $50, individual outside the U. S.; $40, institutional inside the U. S.; $65, institutional outside the U. S. Opinions expressed in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* are solely the responsibility of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editors, members of the Advisory Board, or the *SBJT* Forum.

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*® a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, atla@atla.com, www.atla.com.

*The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* is published quarterly by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280. Fall 2010. Vol. 14, No. 3.  ISSN 1520-7307. Second Class postage paid at Louisville, KY. Postmaster: Send address changes to: SBTS, Box 832, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280.

# Editorial: Reflections on the Importance of Galatians for Today

*Stephen J. Wellum*

Each year, since the inception of *SBJT*, we have devoted the Fall issue to the biblical book that is the focus of LifeWay's upcoming January Bible Study. Our goal in doing so is, in some small way, to help our readers become better prepared to study the specific book of focus so that in the words of Paul, "we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Eph 4:14-15, NIV).

Stephen J. Wellum is Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. Wellum received his Ph.D. degree in theology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and has also taught theology at the Associated Canadian Theological Schools and Northwest Baptist Theological College and Seminary in Canada. He has contributed to several publications and a collection of essays on theology and worldview issues.

Now it is certainly the case that every biblical book is worthy of our attention, study, thoughtful reflection, and obedience. Given the fact that "all Scripture is God-breathed" and thus every biblical book "is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16), we are commanded to study every biblical book and to apply it to our lives. But it is also true that there are certain books which demand extra attention given their importance in the canon, their overall contribution to understanding the gospel, and their significance in church history. In this regard, without minimizing the importance of any book of Scripture, one can think of the unique contribution of Genesis, Isaiah, John's Gospel, Romans, Ephesians, and Hebrews to name just a few. What these books have in common is that they have served as foundational to the church's understanding of who God is, what the gospel is all about, and grasping better the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

It is safe to say that Paul's letter to the Galatians—the focus of this issue of *SBJT*—also fits into this category. Why do I put Galatians into this category? Why has it been so important in Christian theology and why is it crucial that we study it anew today? Let me give at least three reasons why I believe the message of Galatians is of absolute importance for this generation of Christians and



*SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 2-3.

why we neglect it to our spiritual impoverishment and peril.

First, Galatians reminds us that every generation must re-commit itself to standing for the gospel in the midst of the perennial danger of compromise and potential loss of the gospel. The context of Galatians is well known. Probably written to the church residing in South Galatia around A.D. 48, the apostle Paul begins his letter by reminding them of his status as an apostle "sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (1:1). He does so because he is astonished at how quickly the Galatians have departed from the gospel—the gospel which he as an apostle under the authority of Christ has proclaimed to them. For Paul, this is no minor issue since the "gospel" they have turned to "is really no gospel at all" (1:7). In fact, he unequivocally states that "even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (1:8). Paul is convinced that what the Galatians have done is not merely added some new insights to the gospel and thus distorted it, instead they have substituted various Jewish teachings for it and thus denied its very heart and soul. Galatians, then, stands as a constant reminder for the church to beware of losing the gospel for a counterfeit, a challenge which we must take seriously today. As with this ancient church, we need to ask constantly, where are we in danger of substituting the truth of God's Word for a lie and dressing it up as if it were the gospel itself? Galatians is incredibly helpful in this regard.

Second, and tied to the first point, Galatians reminds us of the importance of affirming, proclaiming, and living out the implications of the gospel centered in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. In Christian theology and church history this letter has become a classic expression of the great Reformation emphasis on justification by grace through faith in Christ alone. At the heart of the Galatian's substitute gospel is the attempt to attain a righteousness by works and not by faith, whether that was tied to Torah obedience or any other achievement of the sinner before God. In this letter Paul clearly stresses that it is what our Triune God has done which brings about our salvation, not what sinners do. There can be no improvement on the finished work of Christ, either by ritual observance or moral improvement. Christ and his cross alone is the one way of salvation. Justification before the holy God of the universe is only found by the sinner receiving what our Lord has done by faith alone in that all-sufficient work. Today, this message takes on added significance especially in light of the new perspective on Paul which seeks to tweak the precise nature of the Galatian problem, and, as many of our articles demonstrate, is a current form of obscuring the great doctrine of justification and potentially robbing us of seeing anew the glories of Christ's cross and his substitutionary work accomplished for us as he stood in our place, bore our curse, and thus achieved everything necessary to redeem, reconcile, and justify us before our majestic and glorious God.

Third, Galatians, like such books as Romans and Hebrews, also helps us put our Bibles together by unpacking how God's eternal plan progressively unfolds and develops across redemptive history ultimately culminating in Christ. Christians are rightly concerned to know how the entire Bible and plan of God leads us to Christ, and this book, especially in chapter 3, helps us grasp how God's promises are related to covenants and how all of this is now brought to fulfillment in the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, Galatians is incredibly instructive in how to put together the storyline of Scripture properly.

Even though this letter is short, it clearly has an importance out of proportion to its size. It is my prayer that in studying Galatians we will re-commit ourselves to standing for the gospel today, realizing both its urgency and glory, and ultimately coming to know and trust our Savior more, which in truth, is what this letter is all about.

# Another Look at the New Perspective

*Thomas R. Schreiner*

My goal in this essay is to defend a traditional Reformed view of justification in light of the challenges of the "new perspective on Paul." Before I launch into such a defense I want to raise a fundamental question. Does one's view of the new perspective on Paul matter? Luther rightly saw that the most important question in life is whether we can find a gracious God, and our understanding of the law and justification play a central role in our quest. A right view of the law and justification, according to the Reformers, is inextricably tied to a right view of the gospel. Hence, the issues before us must not be relegated to the realm of academic jousting. They impinge upon the very heart of the gospel and directly relate to the issue of our eternal salvation. How we answer the questions before us will affect what church we join and *whether* and *how* we proclaim the gospel to unbelievers. The Reformers believed the issues before us were matters of life and death, and I will argue here that they were right to think so.

Thomas R. Schreiner is James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Associate Dean for Scripture and Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. Schreiner also serves as Preaching Pastor of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. A widely respected New Testament scholar, he is the author of many books, including *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Baker, 2008) and *Galatians* in the Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series (Zondervan, forthcoming).

## THE SANDERS REVOLUTION AND THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

A "Lutheran" or "Reformed" view of Paul dominated Protestant biblical scholarship up until the publication of E. P. Sanders's massive *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977.[1] Sanders vigorously dissented from the standard view of Judaism promulgated in NT studies, arguing that the notion that Judaism was a legalistic religion was a myth. Other voices preceded Sanders. Both Claude Montefiore and George Foote Moore argued for a kinder and gentler Judaism, but their contributions, though appreciated, did nothing to change the prevailing consensus.[2] Krister Stendahl wrote his influential "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" before Sanders's major opus.[3] This essay had an influence that outstripped its size, especially post-Sanders. Stendahl argued that the notion that Paul suffered from a guilty conscience was the product of reading him through the lenses of the experience of Augustine and Luther. A careful reading of the Pauline litera-



*SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 4-18.

ture demonstrates, says Stendahl, that Paul had a robust conscience. Indeed, Paul was not converted to a new religion. He was called as the apostle to the Gentiles. Not surprisingly, then, justification was not central in his theology; what truly animated Paul was the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God.

The view of Judaism defended by Sanders in 1977 was an idea whose time had come in a post-Holocaust world. Scholars were keenly aware that they had judged Judaism from an adversarial standpoint instead of appreciating its distinctive contribution. More specifically, Sanders argued that the notion that Judaism was a legalistic religion was a blatant distortion of the historical sources. Protestant scholars were reading Judaism through the lenses of Luther's conflict with the Roman Catholicism of his day. Sanders argued that an accurate reading of the Jewish literature presented a very different picture of Judaism than what was painted by Protestant scholars. If we look at the pattern of religion in Judaism (including the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and Tannaitic literature), a clear pattern emerges according to Sanders. Sanders describes that pattern as *covenantal nomism.* Israel belonged to the covenant by means of the grace of God, and so Israel got into the covenant by grace and stayed in the covenant by observing the law (hence nomism). Still, their observance of the law did not involve a weighing of merits, as if one had to do more good works than bad to be saved. Nor was Israel guilty of works-righteousness, for all those who repented of their sins and offered sacrifice would be saved.[4] The signature word for Judaism was *grace*, not works. Protestant scholars had blindly imposed a caricature of legalism upon Judaism, which, astonishingly enough, had nothing to do with what Judaism really was.

Sanders (and those who proceeded him) are to be thanked for provoking us to re-examine what the Jewish sources actually say. Furthermore, Sanders spares us from a caricature of Judaism, where (in popular circles at least and in some scholarly circles as well) Jews and Judaism were too often presented as pettifogging legalists who were constantly preoccupied with their own righteousness. Nevertheless, as is so often the case, Sanders over-reacted. His own reading of the Jewish evidence wasn't as objective as he claimed and even seemed to be colored by Christian presuppositions. For instance, Jacob Neusner, though he endorsed some of Sanders's conclusions, noted that the concerns which Sanders brought to the Jewish sources were imposed from without—from Sanders's own theological preconceptions. Furthermore, Neusner complains that he doesn't care if Sanders and others think that Judaism is ritualistic, for, as a Jew, he has no concern about what a Protestant liberal thinks of his religion.[5] Such a response is instructive, for Sanders's work is premised upon the notion that legalism is bad. But Neusner reminds us that it is only bad if one has a Christian perspective. What is "good" and "bad" depends upon one's religious standpoint as well.

Even more important, Sanders's reading of the Jewish sources is debatable. Mark Elliott in a detailed work argues, contra Sanders, that only a remnant will actually be saved on the final day, and the remnant consists of those who have kept the law.[6] Hence, works seem to play a more vital role for final salvation than Sanders suggests. Friedrich Avemarie conducted a careful survey of Tannaitic literature, noting that election and works stand in an unresolved tension in the literature.[7] In some cases the emphasis appears to be on election and grace, and in other instances upon the works of human beings. A clear verdict supporting a gracious pattern of religion cannot be verified. Similarly, Andrew Das and Simon Gathercole maintain that final vindication according to works plays a significant role in Jewish literature, and Das, in particular, notes the demand for perfect obedience regularly appears.[8] Finally, the first volume on *Justification and Variegated Nomism* illustrates that some Second Temple writings conform to Sanders's paradigm, but there are also quite a few

instances where we find a focus on works-righteousness and covenantal nomism does not fit.[9]

How should we assess the recent scholarship that questions Sanders's paradigm? Obviously, I cannot demonstrate in a short essay that Sanders's view is mistaken. Still, the contemporary debate over covenantal nomism in Second Temple Judaism is illuminating for our purposes. Too many today *assume* that Sanders's view is correct, acting as if it has been demonstrated that the Judaism of Paul's day promoted a theology of grace and was not a religion of works-righteousness. In fact, no consensus exists on the nature of Second Temple Judaism. Not surprisingly, scholars assess the evidence differently, so we do not have an open and shut case on the view of salvation in the Judaism of Paul's day. One cannot simply wave Sanders's book in the air and proclaim that the debate is over, for there is significant evidence that some sectors of Judaism promoted works-righteousness.

A further conclusion follows. If some modern scholars see a focus on obeying the law for salvation in Judaism, there is no reason to doubt that Paul may have done the same. Indeed, we must be open to what is historically new and creative. Even if virtually all of Paul's contemporaries thought Judaism was a religion of grace, it is historically possible that Paul advanced another viewpoint, and this would in part explain the disjunction between Judaism and Christianity in subsequent history. Another possibility presents itself as well. Judaism may have been *theoretically* a religion of grace but in *actuality* practiced legalism. Scholars may protest that this is an irrational last resort kind of argument and say, "Where is the evidence?" Scholars, however, face the danger of being tone deaf to everyday life. Those of us who have grown up in the Christian church know that legalism is rife in our churches, even though we have a theology of grace. Our theology of grace has a funny way of getting squeezed out in practice. The same could be true of Judaism as well.

## RE-THINKING THE NEW PERSPECTIVE

### *Works of the Law*

So far I haven't provided any evidence that Paul himself thought Judaism was legalistic. Before examining some evidence in Paul, however, one text from the gospels will be brought in: Luke 18:9-14. I would argue that these are the words of the historical Jesus, and hence reflect his viewpoint in the late 20s or early 30s A.D. But even if someone were to say that these are not the words of Jesus, they reflect the view of early Christians. The passage is well-known and the details do not need to be rehearsed here. What is quite evident is that the Pharisee was full of pride and expected a reward because of his religious practices, which exceeded the demands of the law. Astonishingly, Jesus proclaims that the tax-collector was justified rather than the Pharisee, showing that one's standing before God is in view. The Pharisee's religion was a form of self-exaltation, and it seems that he viewed his obedience as earning a final reward. Since he viewed his obedience as deserving a final reward, he was guilty of legalism. Why did Jesus criticize the works-righteousness of the Pharisee? He did not raise the issue for theoretical and academic reasons. He uttered the parable because self-righteousness and legalism were a practical problem faced by his contemporaries. The NT isn't in the habit of engaging in a polemic over matters that have nothing to do with everyday life.

This brings us to Paul. Let's begin by thinking of "works of law" (*erga nomou*). New perspective readings typically claim that works of law refer to boundary markers that separate Jews and Gentiles, focusing on purity laws, circumcision, and Sabbath.[10] The new perspective has actually, whether or not one agrees with its interpretation of works of law, reminded us of something very important here. The division between Jews and Gentiles, and the inclusion of the Gentiles was a very important theme for Paul. It is evident from reading Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians (which I take to be Pauline) that the inclusion of the Gen-

tiles into the one people of God through Christ was a major issue for Paul. A defense of the old perspective does not lead to the conclusion that we can't learn anything from the new perspective.

Let's assume for the sake of argument that the new perspective view of works of law is entirely true, so that works of law focuses on boundary markers instead of the whole law. If this is true, Paul teaches that one does not receive the Spirit or justification by virtue of being Jewish (Rom 3:20, 28: Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5). One is saved by faith in Christ or by the faithfulness of Christ.[11] Even if the new perspective interpretation of works of law is correct (which I will argue shortly is improbable), it is likely that notions of merit were still in the hearts and minds of those who kept the boundary markers. Such a conclusion appears to be borne out by the universality of human experience. It seems probable that Jews who kept the boundary markers did not merely think, "We are saved simply because we are Jews, because we belong to the people of God and are included in the covenant." They quite likely thought as well: "Those who aren't keeping the law are sinners and are failing to do what the law commands." Typically, when there is ethnic tension between two groups, say the German and the Irish, Germans don't think they are better than the Irish simply because they are German and keep German customs. Almost inevitably they also think of themselves as morally superior to the Irish. It is doubtful that people 2000 years ago thought differently about such matters. Indeed, the parable of the Pharisee and tax-collector suggests they didn't.

In any case, the notion that works of law is restricted to or focuses on boundary markers should be rejected.[12] Evidence from both Galatians and Romans indicates that works of law refers to all that is commanded in the law. The phrase itself is most naturally taken to refer to the entire law, so that it designates all the commands or deeds required by the law (Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). Paul slides easily from "works of law" (*erga nomou*) to "law" (*nomou*) and the latter term almost certainly refers to the entire law. Hence, in the same context where Paul speaks of works of law (2:16), he insists that righteousness does not come via the law but by God's grace (2:21) and speaks of dying to law (2:19). Interestingly, when Paul queries whether the Spirit is received by works of law or by hearing with faith (3:2, 5), he inserts in the midst of the argument a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit (3:3). The contrast is illuminating, for it reveals that the problem with works of law is a reliance on self-effort and human autonomy instead of the supernatural work of God's Spirit, suggesting a focus on doing the law and on one's own moral accomplishments. The wording of Gal 3:10 is particularly important. Works of law are further defined by the words "all things written in the Book of the Law." This is the closest Paul comes to a definition of works of law, and the emphasis is clearly on keeping the whole law (cf. 5:3). The law focuses on *doing* all that is contained in it (3:12; cf. 6:13), and is described in terms of a covenant given to Moses with all the statutes contained therein (3:17). The law is closely related to "transgressions" (Gal 3:19), and it is quite unlikely that such transgressions can be limited to boundary markers. The law's role as a custodian cannot be limited to those precepts that divide Jews from Gentiles (3:24-25), and this is borne out in Galatians, for the Galatians desire to be "under the law" (4:21). It is artificial to segregate "law" from "works of law" in Galatians, and hence it is most convincing to define works of law as referring to all the deeds required by the law. But if that is the case, then it clearly follows that the Galatians were attempting to be justified by their performance of the law, and such an interpretation squares with the Reformers' reading of Galatians.

Romans also supports the idea that "works of law" refers to the entire law. The phrase occurs twice in Romans and in both places Paul asserts that righteousness is not obtained by works of law (Rom 3:20, 28). Is there a focus on boundary markers? No. The summary statement about sin folded between 3:20 and 3:28 assists us in deter-

mining why righteousness does not come via works of law, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23). This is simply another way of saying that no one can be righteous by the law. And what is the reason? Human sin—the failure to do everything required by the law. Such a reading of works of law is confirmed by the larger context in which 3:20, 28 occur (2:17-29 and 3:9-20). In 2:17-29 the Jews are charged with transgression of the law. Paul does not criticize them for their nationalism per se or for excluding Gentiles from the promise. The advantages listed in 2:17-20 and 2:25 are not sinful per se, for the covenantal advantage the Jews enjoyed was not something that was inherently wrong. It was a gift of God. Paul clarifies, however, that Jewish privileges turn into the wrong kind of nationalistic pride if they are not accompanied by obedience. The sins mentioned are *moral* infractions of the law: stealing, adultery, and robbing temples (2:21-22). And when circumcision is raised as a topic, the Jews are not rebuked for excluding Gentiles (2:25-29). The problem seems to be a magical conception of circumcision so that they conceived of it as protecting them from God's wrath. Paul insists, however, that circumcision is of no avail if they don't keep the law as a whole. Again, the sins of the Jews are moral violations of the law. In the same way, Paul summarizes in 3:9-18 with a catena of OT texts the sins of all, both Jews and Gentiles. Doubtless exclusivism and nationalism are sinful, but the focus in the context lies elsewhere. Paul rejects the idea that anyone is righteous and that anyone does what is good (3:10-12). The sinfulness of all is betrayed by the poisonous speech that degrades and savages others (3:13-14). Nor is sin restricted to the area of speech but it expresses itself in evil actions like the shedding of blood (3:15-17). The fundamental and root sin is the failure to fear God (3:18). Both 2:17-29 and 3:9-18 help us to define works of law, for when Paul says that the works of the law do not justify in 3:20 he is *summarizing* the previous argument. And we have seen that in the previous verses that the Jews are indicted for *moral* violations. Indeed, the logic of 3:20 is most naturally understood to support this view. Works of law do not justify because (*gar*) through the law comes the realization of sin.

The understanding of works of law defended here is strengthened by Paul's use of the term "works" in Romans. In chapter 3 the phrase "works of law" (*erga nomou*) appears twice (3:20, 28), but in chapter 4 the term "works" (*erga*) occurs alone (4:2, 6, and note the verbal form [*ergazomai*] in 4:4, 5). It is quite clear that the term "works" cannot refer to the boundary markers of the law, for Abraham did not live under the law. Clearly the word "works" refers to deeds or actions in general. Abraham wasn't justified by working for God but because he believed in the God who justifies the ungodly. Furthermore, there is clearly a polemic against legalism here—one that was implied with the use of works of law in 3:20, 28. If Abraham did the requisite works for justification he could boast (4:2), i.e., he could brag that he had accomplished such a feat. But Paul rejects such a notion, for Abraham was not right with God by doing but by trusting (4:3). Verses 4-5 make this even clearer. In v. 4 an illustration from employment is used. If one receives wages on the basis of works, then payment is not a gift but a debt. Verse 4 illustrates concisely the principle of works-righteousness or merit. Those who meet the standard and do the required work deserve to be paid. If one does the works demanded for justification, then they are rewarded with life eternal.[13] N. T. Wright recognizes a polemic against legalism here, though he downplays it by saying it is a secondary motif.[14] Against Wright it doesn't seem to be secondary at all, for Paul emphasizes this theme in vv. 2-5. Righteousness can't be obtained by works since all are sinners (3:23). Even Abraham himself was ungodly (4:5), for he was an idolater like the rest of his family (Josh 24:2). Hence, righteousness comes not by working for God but by trusting in God. Here is the heart and soul of the gospel. Right-standing with God is a gift granted to those who trust in the atoning sacrifice of Christ (3:21-26).

Many of those who endorse the new perspective claim that boundary markers are an issue since Paul brings up circumcision in 4:9-12. I agree that the inclusion of the Gentiles is an important theme in Romans 4, but the inclusion of the Gentiles is not the primary theme in 4:1-8. In the first section of the chapter we have an old perspective argument against works-righteousness. The new perspective sees something important when it focuses on the inclusion of the Gentiles, and we should embrace that truth, but if it rejects the insights of the Reformers and the old perspective, it sunders what God meant to be kept together.

Others follow Richard Hays, claiming that 4:1-8 is actually about inclusion of the Gentiles by translating 4:1, "What shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?"[15] This rendering should be rejected for two reasons. First, vv. 2-8, as noted above, do not focus on issues of ethnicity and exclusion of Gentiles but on works versus faith. Second, it is more likely that the verse should be translated, "What shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?" If Hays were correct we would expect the inclusion of "we" (*hēmas*) as the subject of the infinitive. Given its absence it is more natural to take "Abraham" as the subject, and hence the reading proposed by Hays should be rejected.

We have seen that Paul engages in a polemic against works-righteousness in 4:1-5 as he discusses the case of Abraham. The forgiveness David received, recounted in vv. 6-8, also does not fit with a new perspective reading. David celebrates his forgiveness—his "righteousness apart from works" (v. 6). The term "works" here certainly does not refer to the boundary markers. David did not need forgiveness because of a failure to receive circumcision or because he violated food laws or because he did not keep the Sabbath. Nor is there any evidence here that David's nationalism or exclusion of Gentiles is in mind. In Psalm 32, cited in Rom 4:7-8, the focus is on David's moral failings—most likely his murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba. This text clearly supports the old perspective. Righteousness is received as a gift, not on the basis of works that are accomplished. Paul ties righteousness and forgiveness very closely together in vv. 6-7, showing that righteousness here is another way of talking about forgiveness of sins.

Another crucial passage to understand the meaning of "works" (*erga*) in Paul is Rom 9:30-10:8. Some new perspective proponents see a focus on ethnocentricism and nationalism in these verses.[16] Space is lacking to delve into the text deeply. We should notice immediately that the term used is "works" not "works of law." Furthermore, nothing is said about boundary markers in the near context. The text does not breathe a word about circumcision, food laws, or Sabbath. Paul emphasizes in these verses a polarity between *doing* and *believing*. Israel's problem is not identified as their exclusivism but as lack of faith (9:32). Apparently they believed they could be righteous by their works (9:32). This is the most natural way to read 10:3 as well. Israel tried to establish its righteousness by works instead of resting on God's righteousness which is a gift granted to those who trust him (10:3). Israel attempted to establish righteousness based on performance instead of relying on the righteousness that is available by faith in Christ (10:6-8). The Reformers constantly emphasized that human beings try to secure their righteousness based on their performance rather than trusting in what God has done in Christ, and such a reading fits with what Paul teaches in Romans. Is it anti-Semitic? Absolutely not. Paul doesn't reflect on a problem unique to Jews, but a problem shared by all human beings.

Philippians 3:2-9 also reflects a polemic against works-righteousness. Paul warns the Philippians about opponents who threaten the gospel. Is part of the emphasis on ethnocentricism? Probably. The opponents clearly advocated circumcision (Phil 3:2), and membership in Israel was apparently important to them (3:5). The goal in exegesis is to listen to every text fairly. The new perspec-

tive rightly emphasizes the sociological dimension of certain texts. We can be grateful for such a reminder, especially in the western world which is fiercely individualistic. Still, there is no need to posit an either-or here. Paul does not merely refer to ethnic badges; he also zeros in on what one *does*. He emphasizes that he observed the law as a Pharisee (3:5), that his zeal manifested itself in the persecution of the church, and that his righteousness under the law was blameless (3:6). The reliance upon the flesh (3:3-4) cannot be restricted to boundary markers but also pertains to activity, to what one has accomplished. Indeed, Paul specifically contrasts "a righteousness of my own" with "righteousness from (*ek*) God" (3:9). The latter is a gift bestowed by grace for those who believe. The former focuses on self-actualization and human performance and hence panders to pride.

The later Pauline letters also support what is often called the old perspective.[17] Now some think these letters (Ephesians, the Pastorals) are not genuinely Pauline. I would differ with this assessment, but even if they were written by a later Pauline disciple they would show how one of the first Pauline disciples understood the Pauline teaching and applied it to a new generation. What is quite striking is how these letters fit with how the Reformers understood Paul. The contribution of the new perspective is not absent (though the Reformers saw this too!), for Eph 2:11-3:13 emphasizes the inclusion of the Gentiles into the one people of God. When the issue of works arises, however, Paul does not use the term works of law but simply the word "works" (*erga*). For instance, in Eph 2:8-9 salvation is presented as a gift, not the product of one's own effort. Paul specifically rules out works to exclude all boasting (Eph 2:9). The text attains Calvin's goal of lucid brevity. If salvation is obtained by one's own works then one could boast about one's contribution. Since salvation, on the contrary, is by faith, there is no room for human boasting. Clearly Paul included these words because some were tempted to boast in their works and to look to them as the basis of their salvation. So too, in 2 Tim 1:9 salvation is ascribed to God's eternal purpose and grace rather than human works. Such a statement fits with Rom 11:5-6 where God's electing grace, as Luther emphasized in his debate with Erasmus, is tied to salvation by grace instead of works.[18] Finally, Titus 3:5 points us in the same direction. Works are clearly defined in terms of accomplishing "those things which we did in righteousness."[19] And salvation is not obtained by such works but by God's mercy.

To sum up, works of law refers to the entire law in Paul, and Paul's use of the related term "works" shows that he engaged in a polemic against works-righteousness. Justification cannot be merited or earned by works but is given to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

### *Called and Converted?*

Krister Stendahl argued that Paul was called as an apostle to the Gentiles, but he was not converted to a new religion.[20] Others have followed Stendahl in this judgment. I will argue here that Stendahl's position is unpersuasive, that it is more in accord with the evidence to say that Paul was both called and converted. But before addressing this issue textually a couple of preliminary observations should be made. Paul didn't operate with the modern category of "religion," and so even to speak of changing "religion" is a bit distorting. Paul clearly believed that faith in Christ fulfilled the OT scriptures, and that he stood in line with the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The law and the prophets were fulfilled through God's righteousness revealed in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21). Jesus as the Messiah fulfilled the covenant made with David (Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8). Paul was convinced that he served God just as his ancestors did (2 Tim. 1:3). It would be quite misleading to think of Paul as repudiating the faith enshrined in the OT scriptures. Furthermore, there is no doubt that Paul believed that he was called, like the prophets were called of old, to proclaim the gospel. In Gal 1:11-17, where Paul relates his call to be an apostle, he draws on the language of the

call of Isaiah (Isa 49:1) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:5) as prophets. The emphasis in the text is clearly on Paul's calling as an apostle to the Gentiles. There is no doubt that Paul on the Damascus Road was called to ministry.

The question before us, then, needs a sharp profile. It is not terribly helpful to ask if Paul converted to a new religion, for Paul would not see his faith in Christ as a departure from OT revelation but as a fulfillment of OT teaching. Nor is there any dispute on whether Paul was called as an apostle to the Gentiles. The question that must be posed is this: did Paul believe that before he met Christ on the Damascus Road that he was headed for eschatological destruction rather than eschatological salvation? The answer I will argue is "yes." There is clear evidence that Paul believed that he was called *and converted* and hence saved from eschatological judgment on the Damascus Road.

Several pieces of evidence need to be considered here. Paul certainly believed that his faith in Christ fulfilled the OT, but that is not the same thing as saying that Paul in his own personal life was truly a member of God's people before Christ appeared to him since up to that point he had failed to believe in the Messiah which the OT scriptures predicted. In Gal 1:13-14 Paul speaks of his "former life in Judaism" (v. 13), his persecution of the church, and his zeal for the ancestral traditions before the revelation of Christ on the Damascus Road. What is telling is that Paul describes Judaism as part of his *past* life. Since he encountered Jesus Christ, he did not consider himself to be part of Judaism but as belonging to the church of Jesus Christ. Only after the Damascus Road did Paul consider himself to be part of God's true assembly, the *qāhāl* of the Lord. Paul did not think he was genuinely a member of the people of God when he was trying to destroy the church. This is confirmed elsewhere in Galatians, for Paul insists that those who proclaim or receive another gospel are anathema (1:8-9), i.e., they will face eschatological destruction. This is the same anathema that Paul pronounces over his fellow-Jews who refuse to believe in Christ in Rom 9:3. Some interpreters, of course, argue that Paul does not require Jews to believe in Christ in Romans 9-11. Space forbids wrestling with that question here, but there are compelling reasons to conclude that the Jews, according to Paul in Romans 9-11, had to believe in Christ to be saved.[21]

Philippians 3:2-9 also supports the idea that Paul was converted. The opponents were almost certainly Jewish, for they advocated circumcision (Phil 3:2). In this case it even looks as if they believed Jesus was the Messiah. But this was not enough for Paul, since he identifies them as "dogs," i.e., unclean animals who were not part of the people of God (cf. 2 Pet 2:22; Rev 22:15). In considering the opponents Paul reflects on his past as well, itemizing the reasons (Phil 3:5-6) why he could place his "confidence in the flesh" (3:4). Part of that confidence could be traced to Paul's former persecution of the church, and his ardent devotion to the law (3:6, 9). But a dramatic change occurred. After encountering Christ, Paul enjoyed righteousness from God rather than his own (3:9). He "lost" his past life but "gained" Christ (3:7-8). Paul alludes here to the words of Jesus who spoke of those who "gained" the whole world but "lost" their soul (Matt . 16:25-26). The clear implication is that Paul, when he was persecuting the church and clinging to his own righteousness, was lost in terms of eschatological salvation. After the Damascus Road he enjoyed true righteousness from God and was truly part of the people of God.

When Paul considers his persecution of the church, it seems quite clear that he was an unbeliever before the Damascus Road. He considered himself unworthy to be an apostle because he persecuted the church (1 Cor 15:9; cf. Eph 3:8). His new life is ascribed entirely to grace (1 Cor 15:10). First Timothy 1:12-16 particularly supports the idea that Paul was converted. Again some scholars (wrongly in my judgment) dismiss this text as inauthentic, but even if the letter was by a later Pauline disciple it reflects one of the earliest commentaries on what happened on the Damascus

Road. Paul identifies himself pre-Damascus Road as "a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent" (v. 13). Further, he describes himself as "the foremost" of sinners (v. 15). Was Paul a believer when he was blaspheming and persecuting the church? Clearly not, for he emphasizes here that "Christ Jesus came . . . to save sinners" like him (v. 15). Before Paul's conversion he was a sinner, and unsaved, for he "acted ignorantly in unbelief" (v. 13). When Jesus appeared to him, however, he was a recipient of "mercy" (v. 13), "grace," and "love" (v. 14). Indeed, Paul views his conversion as exemplary of the salvation of those who would put their faith in Christ and receive "eternal life" (v. 16). Apparently Paul did not have "eternal life" before the Damascus Road, when Jesus appeared to him he was saved.

When we put the accounts together that speak of Paul's call on the Damascus Road, the evidence that he was both called and converted is compelling. Before Jesus appeared to him, Paul belonged to Judaism, persecuted God's true assembly, trusted his own righteousness, put his confidence in the flesh, had worldly gain, was unworthy to be an apostle, was insolent, a blasphemer, and a persecutor. But on the Damascus Road he experienced the grace and mercy and love of God, gained Christ, was righteous by faith, turned from unbelief to belief, enjoyed eternal life, and was saved.

### *Justification*[22]

The idea that justification does not play a central role in Pauline theology did not begin with the new perspective, for we already see such judgments in Wrede and Schweitzer.[23] Sanders picks up the same theme from Schweitzer, seeing participation with Christ rather than justification as the center of Paul's thought.[24] Dunn maintains that Luther misunderstood Paul in formulating his view of justification.[25] My aim here is not to defend justification as the central theme of Paul's theology, though it is more central than its detractors claim.[26] For instance, some maintain that we do not find the theme in Paul's earliest letters, such as 1 Thessalonians,[27] but the idea of final vindication is present conceptually, and hence the notion that the idea of justification is absent is exaggerated. Paul clearly teaches that believers will escape God's anger at the last judgment because of the saving work of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9). Similarly, in 1 Cor 15:1-5 forgiveness of sin is achieved through Christ's cross and resurrection (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-21), and this constitutes the heart of the gospel.[28]

How should the verb "justify" (*dikaioō*) be defined in Paul? It refers to God's judicial verdict which announces that those who belong to Christ (those who are united to Christ in his death and resurrection) are not guilty before God.[29] God's eschatological verdict has been declared in advance for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, but his declaration is hidden from the world and those who belong to Christ cling to this verdict by faith.[30] Those who are justified are guaranteed that they will be spared from God's wrath on the day of judgment (Rom 5:9). God will announce to the entire world on the last day the verdict that those who belong to Christ are not guilty. God's verdict is effective, not in the sense that "justify" means "make righteous" as Augustine thought, but in the sense that those who trust in Christ are truly righteous in God's sight since they are united with Christ.

The forensic and legal character of the term "justify" (*dikaioō*) derives from the verbal form of *tsadeq* in the OT. Judges should declare the righteous to be innocent and condemn the wicked (Deut 25:1; cf. 2 Sam 15:4; 1 Kgs 8:31–32; 2 Chron 6:23; Prov 17:15; Isa 5:23).[31] Judges do not "make" anyone righteous. They pronounce on what is in fact the case—if they are judges who have integrity. God as a righteous judge will determine on the last day whether Paul is acquitted or condemned (1 Cor 4:4). In the same way, a declaration of righteousness is obviously intended in the expression, "the doers of the law will be justified" (Rom 2:13). Romans 8:33 is clearly forensic, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It

is God who justifies." On the last day at the divine tribunal all charges will be dismissed against those whom God has chosen because God's declaration is the only one that matters in the courtroom.

What about the noun "righteousness" (*dikaiosynē*) and the phrase "righteousness of God" (*dikaiosynē theou*) in Paul? Before answering that question, we must step aside briefly to correct a view of righteousness that veers off course. It is quite common in scholarship to find scholars saying that righteousness language in Paul never has the idea of punishment but relates only to salvation. But this view is clearly mistaken. Romans 3:5 teaches that God manifests his judging righteousness at the eschaton. In addition, the day of eschatological wrath in 2:5 is described as the "revelation of "God's righteous judgment." Indeed, there are good reasons to think that in Rom 3:21-26 Paul uses the term righteousness to denote both the saving (vv. 21-22) and the judging righteousness (vv. 25-26) of God, so that both the saving and judging righteousness of God meet at the cross. In this way God is both "just" (judging righteousness) and "the justifier" (saving righteousness).

Perhaps the failure to see any reference to judging righteousness stems from an overemphasis on the covenantal dimensions of righteousness, for God's judging righteousness demonstrates that righteousness also has to do with conformity to a norm, and norms and relationships should not be separated from one another.[32] Often those who support the new perspective say that God's righteousness should be defined as his faithfulness to the covenant.[33] The OT background plays a vital role here, for in the OT righteousness occurs in Hebrew parallelism with God's truth, mercy, and salvation (Ps 31:1; 36:10; 40:10; 71:2; 88:10–12; 98:2–3; 143:1; Isa 46:13; 51:5–8). A very important distinction must be recognized at this point. God's saving actions (his saving righteousness) *fulfill* his covenantal promises, but this should not be confused with saying that that righteousness should be *defined as* covenantal faithfulness.[34] It would be a mistake, for instance, to argue from the parallels in the Hebrew text that "mercy" means "truth," "salvation" means "mercy," and "righteousness" means "truth," as if every word has the same definition. If every term has the same meaning as the other terms with which it appears in parallelism, then we are virtually saying that every word has the same meaning, which is quite unlikely.[35]

I will argue here that when Paul uses the word "righteousness" and "righteousness of God" in theologically weighty texts he refers to the gift of God granted to believers. In other words, the noun is forensic just like the verb. Paul often says that human beings are righteous by faith (e.g., Rom 1:17; 3:22, 26; 4:3, 5, 9, 13; 9:30; 10:4; Gal 2:16; 3:6, 11; 5:5; Phil 3:9).[36] In such contexts righteousness by faith is contrasted with righteousness by works. Righteousness is obviously a gift in these texts, for it is not the one who works but the one who believes who is righteous before God (Rom 4:4–5). Nor is faith conceived of as a "work" that merits a declaration of righteousness. Faith saves because it looks entirely to what God has done for believers in Christ. It rests on Christ's death and resurrection for forgiveness of sins and justification (Rom. 3:21–26; 4:25). Believers are righteous because they are united to Christ in his death and resurrection.[37]

The forensic character of righteousness is also supported by the connection forged between righteousness and forgiveness, and righteousness and reckoning. David's forgiveness of sins is also described as his justification—his being in the right before God (Rom 4:6–8). The term "righteousness" cannot refer here to David's ethical transformation. It calls attention to the wiping clean of David's slate, so that he now stands in the right before God by virtue of the forgiveness of his sins. Paul often teaches that righteousness is reckoned (*logizomai*) to believers. God counts or reckons to believers something that they do not inherently possess, i.e., he counts them as righteous before him (Rom 3:28; 4:3–6, 8–11, 22–24; 9:8; Gal. 3:6). Indeed, such righteousness

is counted to those who believe, not to those who work. God does not "count" sins against those who have put their faith in Christ (2 Cor 5:19). This is a strange reckoning or counting indeed when those who have done evil are considered to be righteous. This fits with the notion that believers have received "the free gift of righteousness" (Rom 5:17).

Should "the righteousness of God" (*dikaiosynē theou*) also be understood as a divine gift *from* God, so that it is forensic (esp. Rom 1:17; 3:21–22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21)? My answer is yes but further explanation is necessary. That the "righteousness of God" refers to a divine gift is clear in Phil 3:9, where Paul speaks of "the righteousness from God" (*tēn ek theou dikaiosynēn*). The righteousness is not Paul's own, deriving from his observance of the law. It is a righteousness from God himself, obtained by faith in Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:9, then, provides an important clue as to how we should interpret God's righteousness (*dikaiosynē theou*) in Rom 1:17; 3:21–22. It refers to God's saving righteousness, given as a gift to those who believe. The lack of the preposition "from" (*ek*) in the texts in Romans is not decisive, for in both instances the same subject is treated: the saving righteousness of God that is given to those who believe.

There are good reasons to think that the genitive "of God" (*theou*) in the phrase "righteousness of God" denotes a righteousness *from* God and a righteousness that *belongs to God*.[38] Romans 1:16-18 is instructive here, for in short order Paul mentions God's power, his righteousness, and his wrath (vv. 16-18). Each of the genitives should be identified as a genitive of source. God's anger and power and righteousness all come from him. At the same time the genitives also describe qualities that belong to God. There is no need to choose between a genitive of source and a descriptive genitive here. God is powerful, righteous, and wrathful, but the point of the text is that God's power, his righteousness, and anger are given to or poured out upon human beings.

Some might object that the alleged parallel between righteousness of God in Romans and Philippians does not work, precisely since Philippians refers to righteousness *from* (*ek theou)* and Romans only of the righteousness *of* God (*theou*). But we should not impose upon Paul a technical terminology, so that we demand that he use the exact same phrase in every instance. Paul could certainly communicate the same truth with slightly different wording. Most important, the remarkable parallels between Romans 10 and Phil 3:2-9 indicate that in both texts the righteousness of God has the same meaning. The commonalities between the two texts preclude the idea that a wedge should be driven between the meaning "righteousness of God" simply because Philippians adds the preposition ("from," *ek*). The following parallels should be noted: (1) Israel had a "zeal for God" (Rom 10:2), and Paul expressed his "zeal" in persecuting the church (Phil 3:6). Paul's criticism of Israel in Romans 10 matches his indictment of his former life in Philippians 3. (2) Paul contrasts righteousness by law and righteousness by faith (Rom 10:4-8; Phil 3:9). (3) More specifically, we see a parallel between Israel's quest to establish its own righteousness (Rom 10:3), which is a "righteousness that is based on the law" and Paul's focus on "a righteousness of my own that comes from the law" (Phil 3:9). The remarkable similarities in subject matter which tie Romans 10 and Philippians 3 together strongly suggest that righteousness in Romans 10 does not have a different definition from what we see in Philippians 3. In the latter text, righteousness clearly is a gift given to sinners—a declaration that those who have failed to keep the law but who have trusted in Jesus Christ stand in the right before God. In other words, Philippians emphasizes that righteousness is a gift *from God.* The same gift character of righteousness is also in view in Romans 10, but Romans 10 also suggests that the righteousness *given by God also belongs to God.*

If the parallels between righteousness of God in Philippians 3 and Romans 10 stand, we can go further. If righteousness refers to the gift of God

in Romans 10 it is highly unlikely that Paul means anything different in Rom 1:17; 3:21–22 since he uses the exact same expression in every instance. When Paul refers to God's righteousness in declaring sinners to be in the right before him by faith in Christ, he has in mind the gift of righteousness—God's declaration that sinners are not guilty. Paul would confuse the readers if in some instances he used the term "righteousness of God" to refer to a gift of a righteous status from God and in others of a divine activity that transforms believers. The simplest hypothesis is that righteousness should be assigned the same meaning in texts that address the same subject. Otherwise, Paul would need to explain much more clearly that he was offering a new definition.

2 Corinthians 5:21 confirms that righteousness refers to a divine gift.[39] God made Christ to be sin, even though he was without sin, so that believers would "in him ... become the righteousness of God." Believers by virtue of their union with Christ in both his death and resurrection (cf. Rom 4:25; 6:1-10) enjoy a righteousness that is given to them. This righteousness is clearly a gift, for it is given to them by God by virtue of the cross work of Jesus Christ. The gift character of God's righteousness is explicated by 2 Cor 5:19, for there Paul explains that it includes the forgiveness of sins. The connection between forgiveness of sins and God's righteousness reminds us of Rom 4:6-8 where, as we saw, Paul forged a close link between "righteousness" and forgiveness of sins. Here the link is between forgiveness of sins and "God's righteousness." The connection between these two texts (Rom 4:6-8; 2 Cor 5:19-21) suggests that the noun "righteousness" and "God's righteousness" refer to the gift of righteousness from God. In other words, we have a clue here that "righteousness" and "righteousness of God" refer to the same reality. And that is just what we would expect. Paul doesn't have to add "of God" every time he speaks of righteousness. Often it is clear in context that he speaks of righteousness which is a gift of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 also explains how God could grant the gift of righteousness to those who are sinners. The gift of righteousness is secured through Christ's death on the cross. God "made him to be sin" so that those who are wicked could become righteous. An interchange between Christ and sinners is posited here, so that Christ takes the place of sinners.

Romans 3:25-26 also explains the rationale for Christ's death.[40] The terms "propitiation" *hilastērion* and "blood" (*haima*) point back to the OT cultus. Scholars have ardently debated whether *hilastērion means* "expiation" or "propitiation."[41] The debate presents a false dichotomy, for both forgiveness and the turning aside of God's wrath are in view. A reference to God's wrath is contextually grounded, since Rom 1:18 announces the revelation of God's wrath and 2:5 describes the final judgment as the day of God's wrath.

The words following "propitiation" substantiate the interpretation offered here. Paul explains that Christ was set forth as a mercy seat to demonstrate God's righteousness.[42] The context reveals that by "righteousness" Paul refers to God's justice, since the text immediately speaks of the sins God passed over previously. In other words, God did not punish fully the sins committed before Christ and his failure to punish calls into question his justice. Paul maintains that God looked ahead to the cross, for there his wrath was appeased since Christ took upon himself the sins of human beings. Romans 3:26 confirms this reading. God is demonstrated through the death of Christ to be both "just and the justifier" of those who put their faith in Christ. God's justice is satisfied because Christ bore the full payment for sin. But God is also the justifier, because on the basis of the cross of Christ sinners receive forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26 is crucial, for we discover here that both the judging and saving righteousness of God meet at the cross.

Some dissent from the interpretation defended here arguing that the revelation and manifestation of God's saving righteousness apocalyptically in history supports a transformative righteousness

(Rom 1:17; 3:21).[43] Certainly God's righteousness is an eschatological revelation, but it does not follow from this that it involves transformation. God's saving gift of righteousness has been revealed and manifested through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gift of righteousness certainly leads to a transformed life (cf. Romans 6) and is the basis of new life, but it does not follow from this that righteousness should be defined as being made righteous.

Others support a transformative view by appealing to Rom 6:7 where Paul says that that those who have died with Christ "are justified of sin" (Rom 6:7). There are good reasons, however, to question such an interpretation. We have already seen that the verb "justify" (*dikaioō*) is forensic. Hence, to posit a different definition here is unlikely. This is not to say that God's declaration of righteousness and a changed life belong to two discrete compartments. The judicial and the transformative are related to one another without being precisely the same thing. God's declaration that sinners are in the right before him is the foundation for a changed life. A similar argument can be made regarding the parallel between the "ministry of righteousness" and the "ministry of the Spirit" in 2 Cor 3:8–9. It was unthinkable for Paul to say that one could be righteous in God's sight without being transformed by the Spirit. And yet it does not follow that the transforming power of the Spirit and righteousness are precisely the same.[44] Too many of those who defend the transformative view argue for identity of meaning from parallelism of terms. Such an approach is flawed, for it collapses the meaning of words so that they become virtually indistinguishable.

Believers are justified, therefore, on the basis of Christ's work and because they are united with him in his death and resurrection. Justification does not describe the ongoing work of the Spirit in believers. The ground of justification is not the moral transformation of believers, even though the transforming work of the Spirit is necessary to receive eternal life.

## CONCLUSION

The new perspective has reminded us of a truth that could be easily forgotten. Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ. Ethno-centricism, racism, and exclusivism are contrary to the gospel. At the same time, the Reformers were right in their proclamation of the gospel, and hence the new perspective has over-reacted. There was legalism in Judaism, for all human beings, including the Jews, are prone to establish their own righteousness based on performance. We have seen in a number of Pauline texts that Paul engages in a polemic against those who attempted to attain righteousness by works. Krister Stendahl rightly emphasized that Paul was called on the Damascus Road to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He is right in what he affirms but wrong in what he denies. Paul was both called and converted on the Damascus Road. He was not only summoned to preach to the Gentiles, but he was also called out of darkness into God's glorious light. Finally, I have argued that righteousness language in Paul is fundamentally forensic. Believers are now in a right relationship with God. This is not a legal fiction, for believers truly stand in the right before God since they are united to Christ in both his death and resurrection. Our righteousness does not lie in ourselves; it is found in Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

## ENDNOTES

[1]E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

[2]See George Foote Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 197–254; Claude G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul* (London: Max Goschen, 1914).

[3]Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78-96.

[4]After the destruction of the temple repentance alone sufficed for forgiveness.

[5]Jacob Neusner, "Mr Sanders' Pharisees and Mine: A

Response to E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991): 73-95, esp. 94-95.

[6]Mark A. Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

[7]Friedrich Avemarie, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

[8]A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001); Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

[9]D. A. Carson, Peter O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 1, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

[10]James D. G. Dunn "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983) 95-122; idem, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985) 523-42; idem, "Yet Once More—'The Works of the Law': A Response," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992) 99-117; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 238.

[11]I would argue that "faith in Christ" is in view. For a recent discussion of the whole question, see Michael F. Bird and Preston Sprinkle, ed., *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009).

[12]James Dunn began his research restricting works of law to boundary markers and then conceded that it refers to the whole law, though he still sees a focus on boundary markers.

[13]I would argue that there is nothing wrong with such boasting or merit if human beings meet the standard. The problem with all people since Adam is that they are prone to trust in their works even though they are sinners and fall badly short of God's standard. Paul's fundamental argument, therefore, is not against legalism but disobedience. Since disobedience is a fact, the attempt to secure righteousness by works is a false path and rooted in human delusion about our goodness.

[14]Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God,* 192.

[15]Richard B. Hays, "'Have We Found Abraham to Be Our Forefather according to the Flesh?' A Reconsideration of Rom 4.1," *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985): 76-98.

[16]E.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1988), 581-83.

[17]I. Howard Marshall, "Salvation, Grace, and Works in the Later Writings in the Pauline Corpus," *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 339-58.

[18]See Martin Luther, *A New Translation of "De Servo Arbitrio (1525)": Martin Luther's Reply to Erasmus of Rotterdam* (trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston; Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1957).

[19]This represents my translation.

[20]Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles,* 7-22.

[21]See especially R. Hvalvik, "A 'Sonderweg' for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25-27," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 87-107.

[22]Here I have revised what I wrote on righteousness in my *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2001).

[23]William Wrede, *Paul* (Lexington, KY: American Theological Library Association, 1962), 122–23; Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: H. Holt, 1931), 225.

[24]Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism,* 502–8.

[25]Dunn, "Yet Once More," 2. Dunn understands justification by faith to speak especially against pride in one's nationality, race, or culture. He does acknowledge truth in the old perspective as well.

[26]For a defense of the cruciality of justification, see Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

[27]I would defend the notion that Galatians was written early, but such a view is contested.

[28]Rightly Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 49, 85–100; Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The*

*"Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2004), 353–66.

[29]The forensic reading is common in the history of interpretation, see more recently, Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul,* 261–96.

[30]See Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *"By Faith, Not By Sight": Paul and the Order of Salvation* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 79–108.

[31]The legal character of righteousness is apparent elsewhere in the OT (Job 4:17; 9:2, 14–15, 20; 13:18; Ps 51:4; Isa 43:9, 26).

[32]See esp. Mark A. Seifrid, "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism," in *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 1 of *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 415-22.

[33]See N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology,* vol. 3, *Romans* (ed. D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 33–34, 39; 1997: 113–33; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 340–46.

[34]See especially Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul,* 286–96.

[35]Against the view that righteousness is centrally a matter of ecclesiology rather than soteriology, Paul A. Rainbow (*The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification.* [Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster, 2005], 104, n. 22) rightly says, "We do not gain a relationship with God by being counted among his people; rather, we find a place among his people by virtue of his acceptance of us."

[36]Some of these texts use the verbal form, but that is precisely my point. The verbal and noun forms should not be sharply distinguished.

[37]For the importance of the resurrection in the Pauline conception of righteousness, see Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 40-59.

[38]The genitive denotes source and is also descriptive. Our grammatical categories can mislead us if we begin to think that the genitive must be restricted to only one category. Such a decision imposes our grammatical distinctions upon the text treating them as if they have fallen from heaven.

[39]Rightly Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 454–56.

[40]The interpretation of Rom 3:21-26 is a subject of intense debate. For an explanation of the interpretation offered here and interaction with the literature, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 176–99.

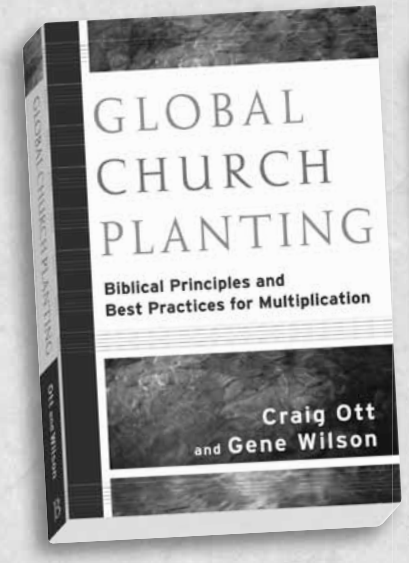
[41]In support of expiation and the notion that judgment is merely the natural result of sin, not the expression of God's personal wrath, see C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), 21–24; idem, *The Bible and the Greeks (*London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 82–95. Supporting a reference to propitiation are Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 144–213; Roger R. Nicole, "C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation," *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1955): 117-57.

[42]Many scholars argue that the word *hilastērion* refers to mercy seat here (see, e.g., Richard H. Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul" *Journal of Theological Studies* 53 [2002]: 17–19). Some think such a reference excludes the idea of propitiation (e.g., Bell). Such a conclusion is mistaken. If the proper steps were not taken in the sanctuary, God's wrath would flame forth (cf. Lev 10:1–3).

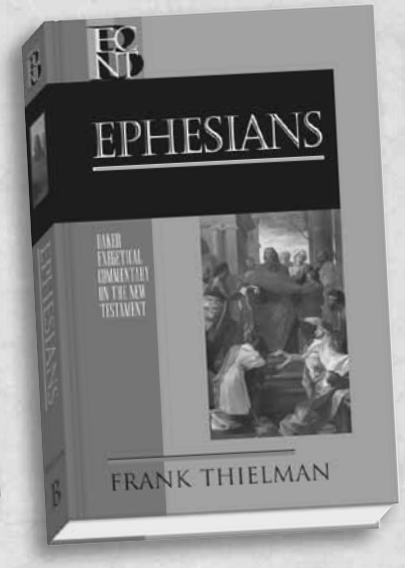
[43]For those who support a transformative view, see Ernst Käsemann, "'The Righteousness of God' in Paul," in *New Testament Questions of Today,* translated by W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress 1969), 168–82; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (FRLANT. 2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966). For a summary of the various views that also details some of the differences among the various writers noted here, see Joseph Plevnik, "Recent Developments in the Discussion concerning Justification by Faith," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 2 (1986): 47–52.

[44]See Harris, *2 Corinthians,* 287–88.

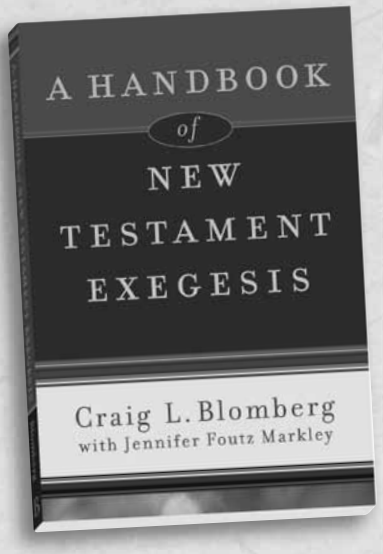
# NEW AND NOTEWORTHY FROM BAKER ACADEMIC



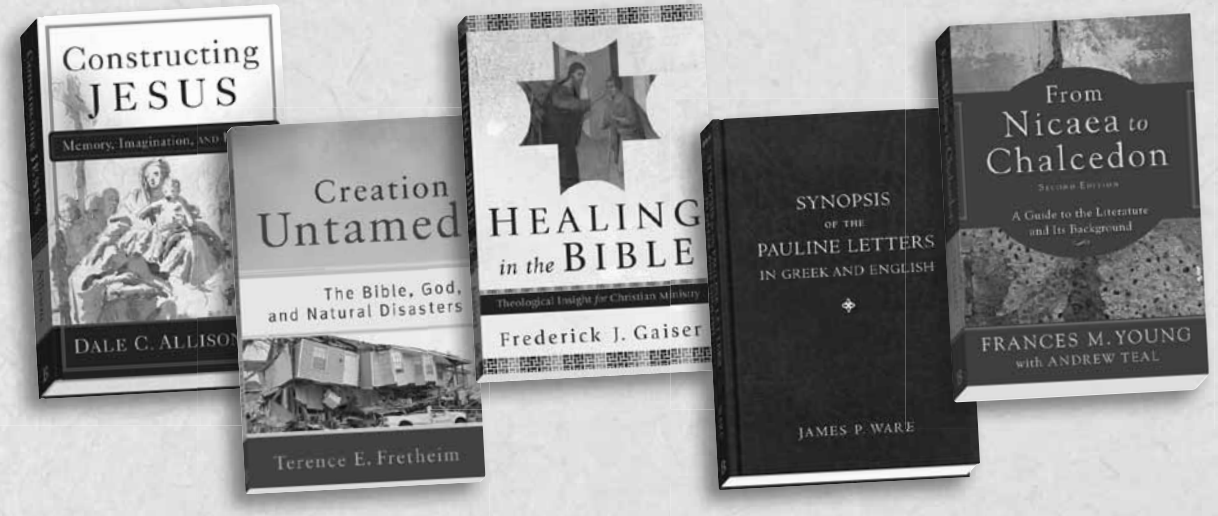

**Global Church Planting**
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR MULTIPLICATION
***Craig Ott and Gene Wilson***
9780801035807 • 480 pp. • $29.99p




**Ephesians**
***Frank Thielman***
9780801026836 • 544 pp. • $44.99c




**A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis**
***Craig L. Blomberg with Jennifer Foutz Markley***
9780801031779 • 304 pp. • $22.99p




**Constructing Jesus**
MEMORY, IMAGINATION, AND HISTORY
***Dale C. Allison Jr.***
9780801035852
624 pp. • $54.99c

**Creation Untamed**
THE BIBLE, GOD, AND NATURAL DISASTERS
***Terence E. Fretheim***
9780801038938
176 pp. • $19.99p

**Healing in the Bible**
THEOLOGICAL INSIGHT FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
***Frederick J. Gaiser***
9780801031014
288 pp. • $24.99p

**Synopsis of the Pauline Letters in Greek and English**
***James P. Ware***
9780801038891
352 pp. • $49.99c
**For more information visit www.BakerAcademic.com/SynopsisofthePaulineLetters**

**From Nicaea to Chalcedon, 2nd ed.**
A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE AND ITS BACKGROUND
***Frances M. Young with Andrew Teal***
9780801039157
416 pp. • $39.99p

Baker Academic

**Available at your local bookstore, www.bakeracademic.com, or by calling 1-800-877-2665. Subscribe to Baker Academic's electronic newsletter (E-Notes) at www.bakeracademic.com.**

# The New Perspective *from* Paul[1]

*Mark A. Seifrid*

## 1. THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

It is a real question as to whether it is proper to speak of a "new perspective on Paul." For at least thirty years New Testament scholarship—especially in the English-speaking world—has been occupied with it in one way or another.[2] The literature on the topic shows no sign of abating. Whether one likes it or not, engagement is necessary. The implications of "the new perspective" for the reading of Paul (and, in fact, of the entire New Testament) are so fundamental that unless a new paradigm emerges it is likely to remain controversial for a long time to come. Its continuing attractions lie not merely in the questions it raises concerning the way in which Christians have read Paul, but also in the way in which it speaks to contemporary concerns about Christian life in the postmodern world. The proponents of the "new perspective on Paul" point to the inclusivity of the gospel, the centrality of Christian community, and the need for Christian ethical engagement in a way that we must take seriously.

Although it had significant precedents, the "new perspective on Paul" can be said to have had its birth in E. P. Sanders's study *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.[3] This comparison of Paul with early Jewish understandings of salvation gave Sanders's work a measure of influence that none of his predecessors enjoyed and called for a fundamental revision of most contemporary Protestant interpretations of Paul. In some measure, therefore, it also challenged the reformational reading of Paul which informed them.[4] We should by all means welcome this impetus to reexamine the apostle's relationship to the Judaism of his day and to "the traditions of his fathers" (cf. Gal 1:14). The Protestant portraits of Paul against which Sanders reacted (and which often still predominate among Christian laity) were in need of revision. Even if one remains skeptical of the tendency of proponents of the "new perspective" to single out Luther as a myopic introvert, a reexamination of the reformational reading of Paul can be a healthy exercise.

What made this "new perspective on Paul" so revolutionary? In the first place, Sanders offered

Mark A. Seifrid is Ernest and Mildred Hogan Professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He has served as Visiting Lecturer at Wheaton College and at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Along with many articles, Dr. Seifrid is the author of *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Brill, 1992) and *Christ Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (InterVaristy, 2001). In addition, he has co-edited (with D. A. Carson and Peter T. O'Brien) the two-volume work *Justification And Variegated Nomism* (Baker, 2001, 2004).

a new paradigm for understanding early Jewish soteriology, which he described as "covenantal nomism." According to Sanders, with only minor exceptions, the early Jewish sources suppose that all those who belong to the covenant God established with Abraham are destined for salvation. Only those who rebel openly and without repentance are excluded from this covenant. The obedience that the law required, especially when it is seen within the context of repentance and sacrificial offerings, was only a matter of "staying in" the salvation already given to Israel, not a matter of "getting in" to the realm of that salvation.

As a result, Sanders called into question those portraits of Paul which imagined that his conversion had to do with relief from the demands of the law or anxiety over the securing of his eternal state through his good works. This was by no means the only picture of Judaism which Christian biblical scholarship had produced, but it was one of the most prominent by the end of the nineteenth century and served for many as the unexamined basis for the interpretation of Paul.[5] Sanders pointed to many places in early Jewish writings in which God's election of Israel was regarded as the sole and secure basis of salvation. In his reading of the materials, the concept of grace in early Judaism seemed to look much the same as that which many Christians attribute to Paul. Paul's break with his past appeared inexplicable on the basis of the older way of interpreting him. The problem lay in the misconception of "grace."

Initially at least, Sanders presented the gap between Paul's past and present as a sort of "leap of faith." Before his encounter with Christ, the Lord's election of Israel provided the promise of salvation. Afterwards, he knew Christ only as the Savior of the world. Some new explanation had to be found for the change of direction in Paul's life, and for the dispute he carries out in his letters with other Jewish Christians concerning the law, righteousness, faith, and the salvation of Gentiles. That new explanation had already been provided. Even before Sanders's study, Krister Stendahl had raised objections to the usual way of interpreting Paul's understanding of justification as the freedom of forgiveness for a guilt-ridden conscience.[6] The true purpose of Paul's teaching on justification was the acceptance of Gentiles into the people of God as equals alongside their Jewish brothers and sisters. The doctrine had to do with *mission* not *salvation*.[7] This conversion of Paul's understanding of justification into a theology of mission has been taken up by virtually all the proponents of the "new perspective on Paul," even if they sometimes affirm that for Paul justification *also* has to do with the salvation of fallen human beings.[8] In varying ways, interpreters subsume Paul's understanding of "justification" within God's election of Israel, an election in which Gentiles now may share. According to this reading, Paul rejects the validity of "works of the law" for salvation, not because they are inadequate to fulfill the law, but because they are "boundary markers" which separate Jews from Gentiles, and thus contradict the universality of the gospel.[9] Not the salvation of the individual, but the community of those being saved stands alone at the center of interest. In its *ethnic* concern the "new perspective" interprets Paul's gospel in *ethical* terms. Most proponents of the "new perspective" regard the reformational understanding of the gospel as lacking ethical relevance, which they then seek to correct in a fresh reading of Paul.

It is a question, however, whether this reading of Paul brings us anything fresh. Who wouldn't choose inclusion and acceptance over rejection and prejudice? Was an encounter with the risen Christ necessary for *this* change of mind? Is the image of early Judaism as exclusionary and nationalistic any more accurate or sympathetic than older views? In the end, the "new perspective" seems to offer nothing more than an old, insipid moralism. As we shall remind ourselves in a moment, Paul's letters provide a quite different picture—one in which a real freshness and newness is present here and now within the fallen world. That is certainly the case with Paul's conversion, as he describes it in his letters. His absolute break with his past

is paradoxically joined to his continuity with it. Otherwise he could not speak of Jesus as Israel's Messiah or identify himself with his Jewish brothers and sisters "according to the flesh." Nor is it explicable in merely moral terms. Paul describes it as an act of the Creator who caused light to shine out of darkness, and who so spoke and acted to create in his heart the light of "the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). Paul's faith was a gift given to him by God in Christ, in which he was granted "a new perspective" on the whole of life and the world, including his Jewish identity and "the works of the law" in which that identity was expressed. It is this "new perspective" from Paul which will guide our following reflections.

Before we turn to Paul, we must note another dimension of the current debate. Some representatives of "the new perspective" (along with others) find the basis of Paul's theology in a "salvation-historical scheme." Stendahl himself appeals to this category. It is no longer the time of the law, it is the time of Christ.[10] Biblical revelation itself now appears to move from a narrow particularism to the universality of the gospel. This form of the new perspective calls into question not only early Judaism, but the Old Testament as well. We shall offer brief reflections on this problematic proposal later. Here it is sufficient to observe that an appeal to a mere temporal shift is hardly sufficient to explain the juxtaposition of the fallen world and the new creation which appears regularly in Paul's letters, or Paul's own break with his past. The "salvation-historical" element of Paul's theology (if the name is appropriate at all) is embedded within the larger framework of the justifying work of the Creator, whose effective word bridges past, present and future.[11]

## 2. THE NEW PERSPECTIVE *FROM* PAUL

As we have noted, the "new perspective" proceeds from the view that early Jewish soteriology may be described as what E. P. Sanders has called "covenantal nomism." God's gracious election of Israel *precedes* his giving the law which was to guide Israel's life, and which it was obligated to obey. Keeping the law is not a "getting in" to salvation, but a "staying in" a salvation already given. Although this interpretation of the Jewish sources has received decisive challenges in the last decade, many scholars have continued merrily to read Paul out of the paradigm that Sanders offered.[12] In so doing, they must overlook the apostle's own new perspective on the world. It is to this new perspective from Paul that we now turn.

### *2.1. Paul's New Perspective on Grace*

It is not at all clear that the way in which proponents of the new perspective use the term "grace" corresponds to Paul's new perspective on "grace." For the apostle, "grace" is not dependent merely on the temporal priority of God's choice of Israel. Grace is the justification of the ungodly (Rom 4:4-8). The objects of grace are "all" who have sinned, those who in radical rebellion and disobedience have turned away from God, the good and loving Creator (Rom 3:23). It is these whom God "justifies freely *by his grace* through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). As is well-known, but often overlooked in recent discussion, God's justifying work takes place not merely *prior* to works, but *apart* from works (Rom 3:21, 28; 4:6). Boasting in the law is excluded (Rom 2:17, 23; 3:27), not because it entails an ethnic particularism—Paul's rhetorical dialogue partner in Rom 2:17-29 is quite happy to share his imagined benefits with others—but because it is empty and unconsciously curved in upon itself.[13] According to the apostle—who appeals to Scripture—"there is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10-11; cf. Ps 14:3 = 53:4). "Works of the law" do not justify because as particular, outward acts they do not fulfill the requirement of the law to love God and neighbor (Rom 3:19-20; Gal 3:10-14; see Rom 13:8-14; Gal 5:13-15). "Works" cannot create anew the persons who perform them (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:14-21). Abraham and David are not models of piety, but of the justification of the

ungodly (Rom 4:1-8). The grace of God in Christ arrives where sin and death reign (Rom 5:12-21). It is only the "wretched person" who knows God's grace in Christ (Rom 7:7-25). The Spirit gives life only where the law has put to death (2 Cor 3:6). This dynamic is not unique to Paul. It runs like a thread through the Scriptural narratives of God's dealings with Israel (e.g., Deut 9:4-5; Ps 78:32-39; Hos 11:8-11).[14] God's grace justifies the human being, fallen under sin and condemned. Admittedly Sanders, along with others after him, understands that God's grace to Israel includes the forgiveness of Israel's sins, but Sanders explicitly excludes from the scope of "covenantal nomism" any open and defiant rebellion against God, any sin "with a high hand," a rejection of the Lord's covenant. According to the apostle, it is precisely this place in which all human beings, including Israel, find themselves! It is here, and only here, that we find God's grace. This radical, unfathomable grace is found in the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ, who is God's amazing, unanticipated answer to our rebellion. It becomes clear then, that the category of "covenantal nomism" obscures the issues at stake between Paul and his Jewish Christian opponents, his Jewish contemporaries, and his own past. The concept is so flexible that with the proper qualifications, we might describe Paul's theology itself as an expression of "covenantal nomism." For the apostle himself, the law itself comes to fulfillment in faith.[15] "Covenantal nomism" is simply not sufficiently defined to serve as a tool by which to compare Paul with early Judaism.

How, then, shall we describe Paul's relationship to the Judaism of his day? In the first place, it is worth reminding ourselves that Paul's statements about Judaism are essentially statements about his own past. His judgments are not abstract and detached. They are bound up with his encounter with the risen Christ and expressed in his personal history as apostle to the Gentiles. Even as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul did not abandon his Jewish identity, even if he was willing at times to set it aside (1 Cor 9:19-23). Near the end of his apostolic mission, as he writes to the church in Rome, he quite consciously identifies himself as a member of the nation of Israel (e.g., Rom 9:1-5). His break with his past was not an abandonment of it, but a coming to see it in a new light. In the same way, it is worth remembering that in Paul's churches the debates over "Jewishness" and over the law were in some measure still *an inner-Jewish debate* over the significance of God's work in Jesus, the Messiah. Those who insisted that the Gentiles must Judaize saw themselves as followers of the Messiah. They nevertheless maintained their "old perspective" on the requirement of the law. It was Paul who had come to a "new perspective" on the law, Judaism, and the entire fallen world in the light of the risen Christ.

It was not Paul alone who came to a "new perspective." For others, too, the eschatological work of God in Christ brought clarity to matters that formerly had remained obscure. It forced decisions that had not been necessary in the past. This crisis already took place in Jesus' open fellowship with "sinners." It reappeared dramatically in the dynamic spread of the gospel among Gentiles in Antioch and beyond. According to both Luke and Paul, it was this dynamic "people movement" which precipitated debate and division within the earliest Jewish Christian community.[16] The proponents of the "new perspective" are thus entirely correct to insist that there was an ethnic dimension to Paul's gospel of the justifying work of God in Christ. Yet it was not merely the inclusion of Gentiles within the promise of salvation for Israel which was at stake. It was rather the question as to what it means to believe Jesus as Messiah. Was obedience to the law *also* necessary for salvation along with faith in Jesus? Prior to the "entrance" of the Gentiles, Jewish believers did not have to face this question. They believed in Jesus as Messiah and remained faithful to the law. They did so as a matter of course, as part of their heritage and identity. According to the witness of Acts, that was also the case *after* the disputes over Gentile

circumcision and the law broke out.[17] Paul himself had no problems with continuing Jewish observance of the law.[18] We shall return to this point, the significance of which the advocates of the new perspective largely have missed. At the moment it is important to see that it was the spread of the gospel among Gentiles, first in Antioch and then in the Pauline mission that required Jewish believers in Jesus to face the question as to precisely where salvation was to be found. Is it to be found in Jesus alone, or is it also necessary to perform the demands of the law in order to be saved? It was precisely on this question that Peter failed at Antioch and Paul found it necessary to confront him (Gal 2:11-21). The meaning of the gospel had to be clarified afresh in the light of the Gentiles' embrace of the gospel. This background is more informative than most representatives of the "new perspective" have realized. Gentiles were notorious not only for their uncircumcision and for ignoring the Sabbath and the food laws, but also for their immorality and idolatry. This sort of conduct, or, conversely, the absence of it, also served as a "boundary marker" separating Jews and Gentiles, as is clear from the inclusion of this concern in the "apostolic decree" of Acts 15.[19] If, however, idolatry and immorality may be included among the "boundary markers," it is clear that "boundary markers" have do to with something larger than ethnicity. The issue at stake is the capacity of the law to effect obedience—and that of the human being to do good. Gentile circumcision is an emblem of a decided stance on this question. One lives either by the power of the crucified and risen Lord, or by the power of the law. Paul is no advocate of idolatry and immorality.[20] According to the apostle, the new creation—the circumcision of the heart worked by the gospel—transcends the law of Moses that bears witness to it and effects true obedience in the human heart. That Paul's adversaries did not raise the issue of Gentile vices suggests that the conduct of Gentile believers was often, although obviously not always, without reproach.

Furthermore, to suppose that the advocates of Judaizing regarded Gentile believers as "outsiders" almost certainly misrepresents their perspective. Their "mission" after all took place among the congregations of believers in Jesus as Messiah, and not, so far as we know, in the many synagogues across the Roman world. Just as the strict (and, most likely, Pharisaic) Eleazar once warned King Izates that to read the things of the law and yet not do them represented great injustice and impiety (*Ant.* 20:44), so the advocates of Judaizing pressed the demand for circumcision upon Gentiles as a completion of that which already had begun. They did so not because they regarded these Gentiles as "outsiders," but rather because they viewed them as "insiders." Gentile "sinners" had become believers in the Messiah of Israel. Who could allow this intolerable contradiction of faith in the Messiah and disregard for complete submission to the law to continue?

The significance of this situation should not be underestimated. One cannot rightly charge Paul's opponents with a conscious, crass reliance upon works for their salvation, nor imagine that Paul did so prior to his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road. In fact, so far as I can see, no Jewish writing from this period can be fairly construed in this way. If nothing else, the work of Sanders and others on early Judaism may well have sharpened our vision to see more clearly what the New Testament actually says about the early Judaism in which it is rooted. One can hardly imagine that the Judaism reflected in the pages of the New Testament was devoid of any conception of the grace of God, a theme which appears regularly in the Hebrew Scriptures. Indeed, in the very opening of the first Gospel, John the Baptist warns Pharisees against false confidence and presumption upon election (Matt 3:7-9). The self-righteous Pharisee at prayer in Jesus' parable in Luke 18:9-14 (who perhaps stands out as a characteristic image of them in the mind of most Christians) does not "boast" in self-achieved works but relies—however mistakenly— upon the grace of

God.[21] Likewise, when Paul's describes his identity as a Pharisee in Gal 1:14 and Phil 3:5-6, he does not recall a status based upon a bare appeal to works, but rehearses the privileges of his birth and national heritage, which his personal zeal only appropriated and actualized. *Only in retrospect,* that is, only in his new perspective, in the light of faith in the crucified and risen Messiah did he come to see that status as a fatal overestimation of himself as a fallen human being.

In other words, Paul's letters themselves suggest that in early Judaism an unresolved tension existed between the concepts of "grace" (or "election") and "works." This conclusion concerning early Judaism has been established elsewhere.[22] Even when "works" were regarded as prerequisite to sharing in the age to come, a right standing with God and the hope of deliverance were attributed to God's mercy. The sources show that this could take place in diverse ways, ranging from the strict monergism of Qumran to the unconscious synergism of the Psalms of Solomon. It is understandable, then, that some early Jewish writings, especially the combative, apocalyptic writings, display diluted understandings of grace or an overestimation of the human being (even under grace), which stand at a clear distance from the hope of the Hebrew Scriptures.[23]

At least three crucial observations emerge from this observation on the tension between "grace" and "works" in early Judaism. First, judging from the Lukan report in Acts, the earliest proclamation *announced* Israel's guilt and the need for forgiveness given through the crucified and risen Jesus. The call to faith in Jesus *clarified* the situation of the human being and the nature of God's grace in Jesus. Whatever those who heard the message might have thought about Israel's election and God's grace beforehand, it was the proclamation of Jesus that either brought them a fresh clarity concerning their faith, or called into question what they had believed and thought beforehand.[24]

Second, the relationship between "faith" and "works" was not resolved by a higher principle of grace or of human moral autonomy. This view was common in liberal Christianity, which regarded Christianity as the "absolute religion."[25] According to the witness of the apostle and the entire New Testament, in contrast, the demand of the law and the promises of God do not meet in a higher idea, but in an event, namely, the cross and resurrection of the Messiah.

Third, Paul's statements concerning grace, faith and works, the law, and the gospel *are directed to those who profess to be Christians*. The apostle invariably clarifies matters and draws distinctions in light of the cross that had become obscured in the minds of his readers and his opponents. As we have noted, Gentile acceptance of the gospel precipitated questions that might otherwise have remained unexplored. As proponents of "the new perspective" have been quick to point out, the apostle generally speaks of faith, works, circumcision, and the law when addressing the question of the place of the Gentiles within the people of God.[26] As we have seen, the issue at stake here was not *simply* ethnic or racial. The meaning of the cross and the resurrection, the identity of God, and the nature of faith are bound up with the place of the Gentiles within the people of God. The apostle's amazement at the Galatians and the anathemas he pronounces in his letter to them are in large measure intended to awaken his readers to the nature of actions of which they were otherwise unaware. They did not imagine that they were "withdrawing from the One who called them by grace" (Gal 1:6) or that in accepting circumcision they invalidated their relationship to Christ (Gal 5:4). The Jewish Christians who had instructed them had no intent of nullifying the cross, only of providing the grace offered there with what they regarded as its necessary supplement. Even the "boasting" which Paul rejects in Romans presupposes that the law had been given to Israel as a gift (Rom 2:17-24; 3:27-31). It is a false boasting because it misunderstands both human fallenness and the place of the creature before the Creator,

but Paul's argument by no means suggests that his Jewish contemporaries *consciously* made claims to self-righteousness (Rom 2:17-29). His subsequent statement that his Jewish contemporaries, "not knowing God's righteousness, sought to establish their own righteousness," does not represent an analysis of their psychological state, but a theological judgment on their aims he reached in the light of the cross (Rom 10:3). His description of righteousness as a "wage" which is a "debt" to be paid by God to the one who "works" (Rom 4:4-5) entails a distinction between "works" and "grace" that one simply does not find in rabbinic writings. One can certainly find affirmations of a coming reward for works and the study of Torah (e.g., m. Abot 2:14-16; m. Abot 6:5), but these are set in the context of statements concerning appeal for mercy (m. Abot 2:13), the nothingness of the human being (m. Abot 3:1), and even love for God apart from reward (m. Abot 1:3). Paul is able to distinguish sharply between "works" and "grace," only because of the event of the cross and resurrection, in which the law and its demands come to fulfillment. It is unlikely that he imagined that Jews or Jewish Christian readers thought of their relationship with God entirely in terms of a contract. Here as well as elsewhere he *is clarifying* for his readers the implications of making salvation contingent on the "works of the law." The same may be said for his brief, defining statement later in Romans, "if [the existence of a remnant] is by grace, it is no longer by works, since then grace is no longer grace" (Rom 11:6). Again and again, Paul finds it necessary to distinguish between grace and works, between law and the gospel. The misunderstanding which he combats did not entail the supplanting of grace by works, but a mixing and dilution of one with the other, a confusion that was largely unconscious and unconsidered. This problem was not unique to early Judaism but was also present in earliest Christianity. It is a problem with which we Christians still must wrestle within our own hearts. Paul's response to it is nothing other than his "new perspective" given to him in his encounter with the crucified and risen Christ.

### *2.2. Paul's New Perspective on Works*

The rethinking of Paul's teaching on justification has brought with it a rethinking of his ethics, particularly the relationship between justification and final judgment.[27] The increasing discussion of this question may be regarded as the most significant recent development of "the perspective." Is it true that the message of justification which brings the forgiveness of sins is sufficient for salvation? Is this message Paul's message?

As we have noted, E. P. Sanders already drew a distinction in early Jewish understandings of salvation between "getting in" (by God's electing grace) and "staying in" (by some measure of obedience).[28] Some of the more prominent representatives of the "new perspective" have been ready to suggest that Paul himself operates with the same understanding of salvation. One is initially justified by faith, but one's works shall finally count toward salvation in the final judgment.[29] Or, in another scheme, justification is nothing other than God's judgment that we are truly human persons, who have faith and are faithful to him.[30] The fresh recognition that according to the witness of Paul (as well as the rest of the New Testament) believers must face an unqualified final judgment is welcome. Protestant interpreters too often have regarded such unwelcome words as hypothetical statements or have relegated them to secondary status ("a judgment for rewards"). Nevertheless, the radical revisionism of the "new perspective" has failed to recognize the full dimensions of what Paul means when he speaks of the gospel as "God's power for salvation." The "circumcision of the heart" by the Spirit is nothing other than God's eschatological act, the new creation of the human being.[31] The new obedience of the believer is nothing other than the newness of the resurrected life at work in the present.[32] The life we grasp by faith in Jesus Christ brings a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). God's justifying work in the crucified and risen Lord brings us *beyond final judgment*

to the new creation and brings the gift of the Spirit and the life of the resurrection to us *here and now*. We are carried through the final judgment by the life beyond judgment which we possess in Jesus Christ. Here there is a separation of the person from their works that only the gospel can effect (1 Cor 3:15). Those unwilling to accept this paradox will never understand the radical confidence of Paul in the lordship of the risen Christ, who by his power will cause all those whom he has purchased and won to stand at the final judgment (Rom 14:4, 5-12). This must be said against all those who would have it otherwise: Christ's lordship is *without qualification* a saving lordship. Judgment comes only to those who reject the crucified and risen Lord. The criterion of the final judgment is nothing other than the gospel itself.[33]

### *2.3. Paul's New Perspective on Israel*

One of the primary concerns of representatives of "the new perspective" has been to provide an adequate account of the *communal* dimension of Paul's gospel. Sanders's work gave further impetus to this concern, which was already present in Stendahl's essay. In his original work, Sanders left the question hanging as to how Paul's faith in Christ as Savior of the world was to be reconciled with his former pursuit of the law. Yet Paul's debate with his early Jewish contemporaries had to be explained somehow. One of the solutions to this problem was to argue that it was not the salvation of the individual, but the salvation of Israel which was the primary concern of Paul's gospel. The nation saw itself as still enduring the exile to Babylon, still left in its guilt and awaiting the fulfillment of promise. That promise, Paul announced, was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In him the exile of Israel came to an end. At the same time, the apostle radically redefined "Israel" in Jesus and his resurrection. It is no longer *ethnic* Israel which shares in salvation, but an *inclusive Israel*, the whole people of God, Jew and Gentile alike.[34] It was this inclusivity which proved to be a stumbling block to Paul's contemporaries. They could not accept the idea that Gentiles could be saved without Judaizing.

Ironically, this reading remains an essentially psychologizing interpretation of Paul who now laments not his own guilt, but that of the nation. Consequently, it cannot deal adequately with Paul's conversion as the *unexpected reversal* of his aims.[35] Here again, the new perspective on Paul cannot comprehend the new perspective *from* Paul. It is likewise difficult to think that most first-century Jews, especially the religious leaders saw *themselves* still in guilt and exile. In the Gospels, the resistance to John the Baptist's call to repentance, the complaints of the Pharisees concerning Jesus' free association with "sinners," and the attempt of the religious leaders to maintain the *status quo* all speak against this interpretation of early Judaism. The strong attraction which Judaism held for Paul's converts in Galatia and elsewhere is hard to explain if Israel as a whole was generally lamenting its condition.[36] Early Jewish writings similarly give evidence of variety and nuance in Jewish self-understanding in this period.[37] The Scroll of Fasting (*Megillat Ta'anit*), for example, marks the celebration of Hasmonean *victories* within Jewish life, days of celebration on which one was *not* to fast. There had been moments of triumph after the return to the land, even if the prophetic promises had not yet appeared in their fullness. The same perspective appears in the Maccabaean literature.[38]

Furthermore, the idea that the "exile" of the people of God simply ended with Jesus' resurrection overruns Paul's realistic understanding of the continuing reality of sin and suffering which continues both within the creation and the lives of believers. The wretched person of Rom 7:7-25, the groaning of the creation (Rom 8:17-39), and the hope of Israel's salvation (Rom 11:25-27), speak against this sort of idealization of Jesus' resurrection. Salvation-history here as usual becomes a tool by which the present conflict between the fallen world and the new creation is made manageable and subordinated to an ideal. The recognition

of our creaturely existence in all its concreteness and particularity is lost in a larger scheme. Yet it is this recognition that we are mere creatures which constitutes our salvation according to the apostle. God's work at Babel is not finished in this fallen world. Salvation does not erase the distinction between Jew and Gentile. It transcends it in the crucified and risen Jesus. Our confession of the Creator's unfathomable ways with us as Jews and Gentiles, giving us over to disobedience in order to work our salvation, is an essential element of our salvation. Only by doing violence to the apostle can we force him into supersessionism. He expects the Gentile mission to come to an end and the salvation of Israel "in the flesh" as the Creator's last act on the stage of human history (Rom 11:25-27).

We already have noted another fundamental problem with the "new perspective." According to virtually all its representatives, Paul's teaching on justification was intended to defend the right of Gentile believers to share in the blessings of salvation which Jews had come to regard as their private possession. In rejecting the "works of the law" Paul was rejecting a nationalistic claim, the placement of "boundary markers" around the grace of God.

Again this claim is highly problematic. To reject the idea that Israel was to be separate from the nations and the particular object of God's saving help is to reject the most basic element of the message of the Old Testament (e.g., Exod 20:1-3; Lev 11:44-45; Deut 7:1-6). Indeed, within Scripture Israel's salvation and well-being almost always arises from the destruction of its enemies in the most violent ways. Israel celebrates the drowning of the Egyptians. It is called to annihilate the seven nations which inhabit the promised land: the divine command makes the current strife in Gaza look like child's play (Deut 7:1-2). The psalms often rejoice in the destruction of Israel's enemies, not least in the graphic, imprecatory psalms (e.g., Ps 137:1-9). Admittedly, these texts present their own theological problems, which deserve careful reflection. In any case, it is clear that the Old Testament presents anything other than an unconditioned universalism. There is an inner tension within the Hebrew Scriptures, in which the nations are both the objects of salvation and the objects of judgment. Israel, likewise, stands between idolatry in its mingling with the nations and pride in a false form of separation from them. According to Paul, that tension is resolved in the crucified and risen Christ. The nations enter into salvation only as conquered enemies (Rom 15:9; Ps 18:50; cf. Eph 4:8; Ps 68:19). Representatives of the "new perspective" wish instead to find the resolution in *an ideal* of universalism, which if followed out consistently, calls the message of Scripture itself into question.

One might also ask what would have been so bad about becoming Jewish. Would an ethnic "boundary marker" have been so very wrong? Paul's opponents in Galatia issued the invitation and laid out the welcome mat to his converts to take on circumcision and all its imagined benefits. They might well have thought of themselves as the vehicles through whom the ancient promise that the Gentiles would stream to Zion was being fulfilled.[39] The rhetorical figure with whom Paul debates in Rom 2:17-24 might be condescending, but he is unquestionably disposed to do good to his Gentile neighbors by imparting to them the wisdom of Torah. It should not escape our notice that Judaizing was a problem in Paul's churches precisely because it was attractive to his Gentile converts. If the problem merely had involved a demand from Jewish Christians that Gentile Christians must be circumcised, it conceivably would have ended if the Gentiles rejected, or at least resisted their demands. But that is not what Paul's letter to the Galatians is all about: Paul charges the Galatian Gentiles themselves, not the agitators, with "withdrawing from the one who called you" (Gal 1:6).

Finally, Paul use's of the expression "works of the law" in Galatians 2-3 and Romans 3-4 makes it quite clear that such "works" are *also* bound

up with the issue of true piety and standing with God.[40] It is this implicit claim to righteousness, *not merely ethnic implications*, which brings Paul to reject the "works of the law." The apostle is quite happy that Jewish believers in Jesus continue in their observance of the law (e.g., 1 Cor 9:20), and even defends the practices of conservative Jewish Christians, although he is careful to define them as *adiaphora* (Rom 14:1-23).

### 3. *The "New Perspective" in Perspective*

The "new perspective on Paul" still has much to learn from the new perspective *from* Paul. In the understanding of the most fundamental elements of Paul's theology, grace, works, and the people of God, representatives of the "new perspective" have failed to come to grips with the message of the apostle. This misunderstanding of Paul plays itself out in the failure of the "new perspective" to articulate its most basic concern for the formation of an inclusive community in the practical realism of the apostle. Whose culture determines the form of community life? Does unity demand uniformity? What place remained for Jewish practices in an increasingly Gentile church? It is precisely at this point that Paul becomes a defender of "the weak" Jewish Christians within the church at Rome. According to the apostle, the unity of believers is found *in Jesus Christ alone* and as long as the gospel spreads, must be accompanied by an outward diversity. Paul does not ask that believing Jews become indistinguishable from believing Gentiles.[41] He rather sees that the common worship of God through Jesus Christ by *Jews* and *Gentiles* is a sign of hope, the presence of the eschaton (Rom 15:5-6). Paul is a defender of "ethnic boundary markers"! He insists only that we see them in the light of faith in Jesus Christ, in whom there is "neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal 3:28). Community, for Paul, does not rest in outward conformity to one another. The only true community is the community of justified sinners.[42] From the apostolic perspective, the "new perspective" is a failure, because it has misinterpreted the one article by which the church—of Jews and Gentiles—stands or falls.

ENDNOTES

[1]Address given at the Northeast Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Auburn, MA, April 5, 2008, and at the Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Fergus Falls, MN, January 12, 2009. An earlier form of this essay appeared as "Die neue Perspektive auf Paulus im Lichte der neuen Perspektive des Paulus," *Theologisches Gespräch* 31 (2007): 75-88. It also formed the basis of a useful discussion with Prof. Christof Landmesser's graduate *Sozietät* at the Universität Tübingen.

[2]Among the many useful, critical responses to the "new perspective on Paul" see Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Brendan Byrne, "Interpreting Romans Theologically in a 'Post-New Perspective' Perspective," *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (2001) 227-42; Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Library of Pauline Studies; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[3]E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). This work was followed by a series of essays and monographs, in which Sanders himself embraces the "new perspective" that he elicited with his original work. See E. P. Sanders, "Jesus, Paul and Judaism," *ANRW* 25, no. 1 (1982): 390-450; *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); "Paul on the Law, His Opponents, and the Jewish People in Philippians 3 and 2 Corinthians 11," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity 1* (ed. P. Richardson and D. Granskou; Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University, 1986), 75-90; *Paul*, Past Masters (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991); *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (Philadelphia: SCM/Trin-

ity Press International, 1992).

[4]The effect of Sanders's work was varied. It did not spawn a single "new perspective," but a *variety* of perspectives on Paul. Yet, so long as this diversity of views is not overlooked, the common concern to revise the reformational reading of Paul, or at least to revise the history of its effects makes it legitimate to describe these new interpretations of Paul collectively as the "new perspective on Paul."

[5]On the interpretations of Judaism in critical biblical scholarship see Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer: Ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz (*WUNT 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

[6]Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199–215. See now, too, his latest word on the subject, in which all the current concerns we have named above reappear. Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). Stephen J. Chester has nicely shown that Luther does not import his *Anfechtungen* into his reading of Paul. Indeed, the introspective conscience and preoccupation with one's spiritual state appear to be more characteristic of the modern era, and of the Puritans in particular. See Stephen J. Chester, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of Martin Luther: The Impact of Luther's *Anfechtungen* on His Interpretation of Paul," *Biblical Interpretation* 14 (2006): 508–36. See further Wilfried Härle, "Rethinking Paul and Luther," *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (2006) 303-317; "Paulus und Luther: Ein kritischer Blick auf die 'New Perspektive'" *ZThK* 103 (2006) 362-93.

[7]Not infrequently it is argued that Paul *came* to his understanding of justification as a defense of the acceptance of the Gentiles which already had taken place. The roots of the argument go back at least to William Wrede. Is "justification" merely an ad hoc argument, a *Kampfeslehre* with only secondary implications? Even Jürgen Roloff, who ascribes considerable significance to Paul's understanding of justification gives priority in Paul's thought to baptism and the reception of the Spirit—but then treats baptism and the gift of the Spirit as operating independently of the justifying work of God in Christ and the word of the gospel. See Jürgen Roloff, "Die lutherische Rechtfertigungslehre und ihre biblische Grundlage," in *Frühjudentum und Neues Testament im Horizont Biblischer Theologie* (ed. Wolfgang Kraus, Karl-Wilhelm. Niebuhr, and Lutz Doering; WUNT 162; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 275–300, esp. 282-85.

[8]Despite his qualification that *in abstraction* Paul may be read to support a Reformational understanding, Francis Watson remains firmly rooted in this interpretation of Paul, even in his revised work. See *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 344-50.

[9]Michael Bachmann, *Sünder oder Übertreter: Studien zur Argumentation in Gal 2,15ff.* (WUNT 59; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) argues that "works of the Law" should be understood as "regulations of the Law" (and not the deeds of obedience which follow them). See also Michael Bachmann, "Keil oder Mikroskop? Zur jüngeren Diskussion um den Ausdruck ''Werke' des Gesetzes'," in *Lutherische und neue Paulusperspektive Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselproblem der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion* (ed. Michael Bachmann and Johannes Woyke; WUNT 182; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 69–134. At least in his earlier work, he then appeals to salvation-historical categories to interpret Paul's break with the past: one must not transgress the standards of the new era in Christ, hence the regulations of the Law are not in force. As we have noted above, this solution is hardly satisfactory. Nor is it clear that one can separate "regulation" (or "demand") from obedience. Paul's argument in Gal 3:10-14, for example, presupposes this connection. Giorgio Jossa (*Jews or Christians?: The Followers of Jesus in Search of Their Own Identity* [trans. Molly Rogers; WUNT 202; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 89-102) similarly combines salvation-history with the proclamation of Christ's lordship as the determinative factors in Paul's theology.

[10]E.g. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre in der gegenwärtigen exegetischen Diskussion," in *Worum geht es in der Rechtfertigung-*

*slehre: Das biblische Fundament der "Gemeinsamen Erklärung" von katholischer Kirche und lutherischem Weltbund* (ed. Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Thomas Söding; QD 180; Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 106–30; Bachmann, *Sünder oder Übertreter: Studien Zur Argumentation in Gal 2,15ff.*; Terence Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

[11]On this question see especially Käsemann's response to Stendahl: Ernst Käsemann, "Justification and Salvation History," in *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. M. Kohl; Philadephia: Fortress, 1971), 60–78 = "Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte im Römerbrief," in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (2nd. ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972), 108-39. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn has recently reviewed the exchange between Stendahl and Käsemann, "Juden und Heiden: Aspekte der Verhältnisbestimmung in den paulinischen Briefen, Ein Gespräch mit Krister Stendahl," in *Lutherische und neue Paulusperspektive*, 19–39.

[12]At least two major studies highlight its weaknesses. The first of these, a Tübingen dissertation by Friedrich Avemarie, investigates the significance of Torah in relation to "life" (both now and in the age to come) in the Tannaitic literature. See Friedrich Avemarie, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchungen zur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ 55; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996). Over against the systematic presentations of Ferdinand Weber and Paul Billerbeck, whom Sanders had also subjected to a scathing critique, Avemarie easily demonstrates that the rabbis could speak of a variety of reasons for God's giving the Torah (for Israel's obedience to God and conformity to his character, as the mediatrix of creation and its preserver, for the joy and benefit of the human being, etc.) not merely that of acquiring merit and eschatological reward. At the same time, Avemarie's study shows that the "principle of retribution" remains basically unqualified in various statements in the rabbinic materials. See especially Avemarie, *Torah und Leben*, 291-445, "Erwählung und Vergeltung. Zur optionalen Struktur rabbinischer Soteriologie," *New Testament Studies* 45 (1999): 108-26. Just as the "works righteousness" which Weber and Billerbeck derived from the materials represented a distortion, so Sanders's synthesis (encapsulated in the expressions "covenantal nomism" and "staying in [sc. the covenant]"), which subordinates every statement to God's saving election of Israel, represents an illegitimate reduction of the materials. Rabbinic "theology" is aspectual in nature. It allows a tension between "election" and "retribution" to stand. Attempts at systematization in either direction do violence to the material. We shall return to this observation, which has enormous potential for explaining debates over the Law in earliest Christianity.

A second major study by the late Mark Adam Elliott, entitled *The Survivors of Israel*, examines the soteriology of a number of early Jewish apocalyptic writings, together with the Qumran materials, thus covering another portion of the materials included in Sanders's study of early Judaism, which now, strange to say, appears relatively short in comparison with the combination of the other two. See Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* runs 556 pages, Avemarie's *Torah und Leben*, 596, Elliott's *Survivors of Israel*, 664. Largely on account of the nature of the materials themselves, Elliott offers a more sharply profiled thesis than does Avemarie. Against the prevailing tendency to read Israel's election simply in nationalistic terms, Elliott argues that the history and literature of the second Temple period give evidence of "movements of dissent" which regarded the majority of the nation as apostate. The writings which such sectarian groups produced tended to speak not of a single, static covenant between God and Israel, but, in diverse ways, of covenants which were regarded as conditional and individualized in nature. For the sectarians, not only the exodus from Egypt, but also the flood narrative revealed the pattern of future salvation, which Elliott characterizes as "destruction-preservation" soteriology. The dissenters expected not the final salvation of Israel as a whole, but their own vindication over against the apostate nation. In this framework, the sort of "covenantal nomism" Sanders described has

evaporated into a sectarian exclusivism.

Elliott's work represents a fresh challenge to the assumption that first-century Judaism can be adequately explained by the form of Judaism which we find in the rabbinic materials. Quite clearly, some of the writings which Elliott examines could very well draw lines between insiders and outsiders within Israel on the basis of proper adherence to the Law. The apocalypses, Jubilees and the Qumran material provide him with the best evidence. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, are more debatable. In my judgment, the Psalms of Solomon also provide evidence of an exclusivistic soteriology. In this respect, Elliott's work again shows how tremendously flexible and, therefore, inappropriate Sanders's category of "covenantal nomism" turns out to be, since Sanders finds a way to subsume everything he examines into his paradigm, aside from the telling exception of 4 Ezra. On this topic see D. A. Carson, "Summaries and Conclusions," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume I: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; WUNT 2/140; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 544-45. The "sectarian" writings, with their exclusivistic soteriology must somehow, too, be comprehended within any legitimate picture of first-century Judaism. Elliott's work effectively reopens an old debate which goes back at least to George Foot Moore's description of a "normative Judaism" drawn primarily from the haggadic materials. For an early critique of Moore which points to the significance of the pseudepigrapha, see Frank C. Porter "Judaism in New Testament Times," *Journal of Religion* 8 (1928): 30-62. Moore's portrait of Judaism stood in stark contrast with Wilhelm Bousset's *Die Religion des Judentums*, who took the apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic materials to be representative of a stream of an "unofficial" and "populist" piety, which flowed alongside the "official" teaching. See Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1903). The third edition, which was reworked by Hugo Greßmann, appeared as *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter (*HNT 21; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926). Although Moore distanced himself from any claim to have provided a comprehensive description of early Judaism, his work was generally treated as if he had done so. In placing basically all of "Palestinian" Jewish literature under the large umbrella of "covenantal nomism," Sanders effectively attempted to settle that question, a question which Elliott's work reopens. This is so despite Elliott's challenge to Bousset's claim that the pseudepigrapha remained essentially "nationalistic" in orientation. See *The Survivors of Israel*, 45-46.

While discussion of the *Sitz im Leben* of the "sectarian" writings is inevitably endless, the nuanced description of first-century Judaism which Roland Deines has offered has much to commend it. Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz* (WUNT 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 534-55; "The Pharisees Between 'Judaisms' and 'Common Judaism'," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume I*, 443-504. There are good reasons for assuming the basic validity of Josephus's description of first-century Judaism as being comprised of three streams: Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes, of which the Pharisees were by far the most influential group. They should not, however be regarded as a closed, exclusive "sect," but an inclusive movement which existed for the nation as a whole. Among the people there was wide approval of the Pharisaic ideal of adherence to the Law, but varying degrees of conformity in practice. It was a broad enough movement that it could encompass a number of sectarian groups (who produced and consumed various apocalyptic writings) without being identified with any one of them. If this description of early Judaism is roughly correct, it reveals that under certain conditions or in the face of certain questions, it was quite possible for pious Jews to insist upon adherence to the Law as a condition for final salvation. In doing so, furthermore, they by no means dismissed or negated divine election or grace, but simply viewed it as ultimate and prior to human works. The Law is the Lord's gift to Israel, the means by which it shares in life. Again, with the proper qualifications, we

might describe them all as examples of "covenantal nomism."

[13]The argument of Rom 2:17-5:11 shows that Paul does not presuppose that his Jewish dialogue partner *consciously* boasts in himself. Quite the opposite. The boasting which Paul rejects is a boasting in God (Rom 2:17). Its self-incurvation emerges only as Paul exposes its unrealistic and optimistic estimation of the human being, and sets it in contrast with the boasting in *hope* of the glory of God which is present through and in Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1-5). Before all else, we must remind ourselves that Paul writes for Christians in Rome, whom he instructs and warns concerning their own weaknesses. We shall return to this point.

[14]On this topic, see Otfried Hofius, "'Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen' als Thema biblischer Theologie," in *Paulusstudien* (WUNT 51; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 121–47.

[15]E.g., Rom 2:17-19; Rom 8:1-11; 1 Cor 7:19.

[16]Acts 11:19-26; 15:1-29; Gal 2:11-21.

[17]E.g., Acts 21:18-26.

[18]E.g., Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 7:17-20; Gal 5:6; cf. Acts 16:1-3.

[19]Acts 15:20,29; 21:25.

[20]Wilfried Härle makes this point nicely in "Paulus und Luther: Ein kritischer Blick auf die 'New Perspective,'" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 103 (2006): 370.

[21]"God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of the people, greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or like this toll-collector. I fast twice a week. I tithe all that I acquire" (Luke 18:11-12). Simon Gathercole's interpretation of boasting and of Rom 1:18-3:20 in particular therefore has to be qualified: it is not at all clear that Paul's dialogue partner in Rom 2:17-29 consciously trusts in his own works by trusting in the Law. See Simon Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 197-215.

[22]See n. 12.

[23]Early Jewish Christian apologetic outlined the contours of this hope (e.g., Acts 3:17-26; 5:30; 13:16-41).

[24]Various texts in the Gospels and Acts suggest that for some faith in Jesus was the fulfillment and confirmation of their hopes (e.g., Matt 13:51-52; Luke 1:5-7, 1:25-40; John 1:19-21).

[25]As, for example Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*.

[26]The argument that the absence of justification language in the Thessalonian correspondence shows that Paul developed his teaching only later, or that it served only a secondary role for him fails on this account. His teaching on justification is in fact directed to specifically Jewish objections to the acceptance of the Gentiles. His mission among Gentiles is predicated on the doctrine that he elsewhere developments. That the Gentile believers in Thessalonica "wait for God's son from heaven, who delivers *us* from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10) is nothing other than the message of the justifying work of God in Christ expressed in other language. The Jewish apostle and his Gentile converts together hope in Jesus, the risen Son of God, and in him alone. Against, e.g., Jürgen Roloff, "Die lutherische Rechtfertigungslehre und ihre biblische Grundlage," in *Frühjudentum und Neues Testament im Horizont Biblischer Theologie* (ed. Wolfgang Kraus, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, and Lutz Doering; WUNT 162; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 275–300.

[27]The developing discussion already has presented problematic readings of Paul. See James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 63–88; Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (SNTSMS 105; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999); and especially Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006). Despite its very helpful emphasis on the theocentric character of biblical references to the "day of the Lord," the recent work by Nicola Wendebourg offers no clarity on the question of works. See Nicola Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn: Zur Gerichtserwartung im Neuen Testament auf ihrem alttestamentlichen und frühjüdischen Hintergrund* (WMANT 96; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003). Matthias Konradt's relegation of Paul's statements concerning the judgment of believers to a secondary status is not

convincing. His appeal to outward, ethical "boundary markers" as sufficient for Christians does not deal adequately with the apostle's conception of sin. See Matthias Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde: Eine Studie zur Bedeutung und Funktion von Gerichtsaussagen im Rahmen der paulinischen Ekklesiologie und Ethik im 1 Thess und 1 Kor* (BZNW 117; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2003). Paul Rainbow's proposal is somewhat distant from debates on the "new perspective," yet problematic in its own right. Leaning rather too much on Augustine and Aquinas, he attempts to find a middle way between a Reformational reading of Paul and a Tridentine one. See Paul Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005). The deeds of Christians do not supplement the perfect righteousness of Christ (imputed to us) in any way. But as fruits from a new tree they are *necessary* for a claim to righteousness, which will be examined in final judgment. Everything hangs on the meaning of "necessary," which Rainbow interprets in terms of demand (rather than as a natural necessity, as the metaphor already implies: good trees produce good fruit, the sun necessarily shines). His confusion approximates the temporary confusion of Melanchthon (which Rainbow cites approvingly): on this question, see Mark Seifrid, "Luther, Melanchthon and Paul on the Question of Imputation: Recommendations on a Current Debate," *Justification: What's At Stake in the Current Debates* (ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 137-152. A similar confusion inheres in Don Garlington, *The Obedience of Faith* (WUNT 2/38; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991); Don Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (WUNT 79; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994).

[28]See the early response to Sanders by Robert Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Biblica* 66 (1985): 1–38. Although Gundry's assessment of early Judaism misses the significance of Paul's "new perspective" on his past, and thus may somewhat misrepresent early Jewish views, the essay as a whole is quite valuable.

[29]So, recently, J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 63–72.

[30]N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 121, 148.

[31]Rom 2:25-29; 2 Cor 3:11-18; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11-15; Gal 6:15.

[32]Rom 6:4-5; 8:1-3; Gal 6:15.

[33]See, e.g., Mark 3:28-30; John 3:16-21; 12:44-50; Acts 3:17-26; 17:31; Rom 2:16; Rom 14:7-9; Heb 2:1-4 Recent works on the topic have largely ignored this fundamental element of the apostolic witness.

[34]Others have embraced this interpretation in various forms, but the primary advocate has been N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*. Brant Pitre has taken up the "end of exile" paradigm in a qualified way, interpreting it in terms of the Assyrian exile of the ten tribes. Jesus understood his death as bringing the final tribulation to an end, and thus gathering these tribes from among the nations. This reading is not to be dismissed as a whole. The question remains, however, as to what place this form of continuing exile held in the thought of contemporary Jews. See Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of Exile* (WUNT/2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

[35]See Gal 1:13-17; Phil 3:4-7; 2 Cor 4:4.

[36]Paul's argument, for example, that the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly one is the "mother" of believers presupposes that the earthly city bore considerable influence in the minds of his converts (Gal 4:21-31). His declaration that the present Jerusalem "is enslaved with her children" is an unexpected assertion, not a commonplace of which his readers were aware.

[37]Often the piety of some group within Israel is decoupled from the outward condition of the nation. The "sin" of the people is no longer absolute and all-encompassing. Those who are obedient may await the future with confidence, e.g., "We praise you from our exile because we have turned away from our hearts all the unrighteousness of our fathers who sinned before you" (Bar 3:7). The Qumran community regarded itself as the remnant, delivered from the continuing guilt of the nation, even if they entered a new exile

in their separation from Jerusalem (e.g., CD 1:1-17; 3:10-21). Furthermore, early Jewish materials often present the exile has having ended in some sense or another, even if they also regard it as continuing or recurring. The book of Judith speaks directly of the end of the exile (Judith 4:1-5; 5:17-19). Tobit appears to envision a two-stage conclusion to the exile. By God's mercy some return from the exile and rebuild the Temple in an imperfect way; later all return from exile and rebuild Jerusalem in splendor (Tobit 14:1-9). Quite understandably, those in the land could regard themselves as not being in exile (as, apparently, 2 Macc 1:1-2:18). A mishnaic saying ascribed to Abtalion, who lived in Jerusalem under Herodian rule in the first-century B.C, warns teachers of the Law to guard their words so that they may not become guilty of the punishment of exile. Despite the nation's subjugation to Rome, Abtalion obviously did not regard himself to be in exile (m. 'Abot 1:11). The form of the Passover Seder recorded in the Mishnah is even more significant, since it may reflect something of the common thought of first-century Judaism. A father is to instruct the son concerning the redemption from Egypt from Deuteronomy 26, "beginning with the disgrace and ending with the glory" (Deut 26:5-9). No mention is made of the description of exile in Deuteronomy 28-32 (m. Pesa 10:4). In the Diaspora itself, Philo can speak of God himself as 'homeland, kinsfolk and inheritance' and regard the exile as the Jewish colonization of the world, even though he also expects an end of exile. See Philo, *Quis Heres*, 26-27. Abraham (who perhaps represents Diaspora Jews like Philo) acknowledges God as his homeland, kinsfolk, and inheritance, even though he is a pilgrim and a wanderer. Philo's expectation of an end of exile appears in *De Praemiis et Poenis*, 162-72. Josephus treats the exile typologically. It ended after 70 years, only to be followed by subsequent 'exiles,' including the one he himself experienced (*Ant.* 4:314; 10:112-113; 10:247-277; 11:1-4). Like Jeremiah, he regards exile as having a positive effect and seems to lack an expectation of a return. See L. Feldman, "The Concept of Exile in Josephus," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (ed. J. Scott; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 145-72.

[38]E.g., 1 Macc 13:41-42; 14:4-15; 2 Macc 10:1-9.

[39]Cf. Isa 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-3.

[40]See Rom 3:27 on "boasting" and cf. Rom 2:17-20; further, the connection with Rom 4:1-8; also Gal 2:15, 17 on "sinners" and "sin." Moreover, much of the interpretation of these passages is dependent on how one understands "justification," which transparently is rooted in the cross (Gal 2:20!), and therefore has to do with something more than ethnicity.

[41]Against Daniel Boyarin, who nevertheless inadvertently places his finger on a fundamental weakness of the "new perspective." It reads Paul precisely in the universalistic manner that Boyarin rightly despises. See Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (University of California, 1994).

[42]Dietrich Bonhoeffer's, *Life Together* (trans. & introduction John W. Doberstein; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954) remains a classic on this question, even if one must qualify his problematic identification of the word of God and the church.

# Christ or Family as the "Seed" of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16

*Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer*

Jason S. DeRouchie is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Prior to this he served as Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Dr. DeRouchie received his Ph.D. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the author of (with Duane A. Garrett) *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (B&H, 2009) and is currently writing a commentary on Deuteronomy.

Jason C. Meyer is Associate Professor of New Testament at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Prior to this he served as Dean of Chapel and Assistant Professor of New Testament and Greek at Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana. Dr. Meyer received his Ph.D. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and he is the author of *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (B&H, 2009).

## INTRODUCTION

In Gal 3:16, Paul states that the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his "σπέρματι," which the apostle then interprets as a reference to "Χριστός." N. T. Wright translates 3:16 as follows, maintaining that this singular "seed" *denotes* not the Messiah but the "one family" of God that is represented by the Messiah: "The promises were made 'to Abraham and to his family'. It doesn't say 'his families', as though referring to several, but indicates one: 'and to your family'–which means the Messiah."[1] In support of this rendering, he argues,[2]

> If, as would accord with good exegetical practice, we approach the difficult passage about the "seed" in 3.16 in the light of the quite clear reference in 3.29, where (as in 3.15–18) it is found within a discussion of the Abrahamic "inheritance", we might suggest that the singularity of the "seed" in v. 16 is not the singularity of an individual person contrasted with the plurality of many human beings, but the singularity of one family contrasted with the plurality of families which would result if the Torah were to be regarded the way Paul's opponents apparently regard it.

This paper seeks to expose the unlikelihood of Wright's reading of Gal 3:16, both from the internal logic of Paul's argument in Galatians and from the Old Testament redemptive-historical trajectory that informs that logic. While Wright provides support for his reading, we believe the evidence below both counters Wright's claims and justifies our interpretation. As will be shown, Wright does not appreciate enough Paul's proper stress on the coming of Christ as Abraham's "seed" (v. 16) in order to enable Gentile individuals to be granted the same title (v. 29).



*SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 36-48.

## AN EVALUATION OF WRIGHT IN LIGHT OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT IN GALATIANS 3–4[3]

### *Wright's Reading: An Analytical Summary*

From Wright's perspective, the traditional view of Gal 3:16 that sees the "seed" as a direct reference to the Messiah is flawed from a number of fronts.[4] Not only does it seem to be asking a lot from Paul to jump from singular (v. 16) to collective (v. 29) in the scope of a single chapter, the apparent parallels in Romans 4 and 9 never use σπέρμα in relation to the Messiah. Furthermore, Paul is left "on the very shaky ground of a purely semantic trick, since in the LXX σπέρμα in the singular, when referring to human offspring, is in fact almost always collective rather than singular."[5] Instead, taking his lead from the "clear reference" of the collective use of "seed" in 3:29, Wright proposes to read "seed" in 3:16 in the same way––as pointing to the one family of God.

Stephen Toulmin's model for understanding an argument will assist us in grasping and evaluating Wright's assertions. Figure 1 (below) illustrates how an argument is constructed.[6]

When crafting an argument, the move from known information ("datum") to conclusion ("claim") necessitates a supporting statement ("warrant"), which itself at times requires additional justification ("backing"). In light of this layout, Wright's argument regarding the interpretation of Gal 3:16 can be displayed as in Figure 2. (below).

### *An Initial Evaluation of Wright's Claim*

Wright's argument bears a number of weaknesses, one of the most significant of which is that it forces the interpreter to read Paul's argument backwards from Gal 3:29 to 3:16. A natural "sequential reading" of the text does not prepare the reader for a collective understanding of "seed" in v. 16, for as observed by A. Andrew Das, it is not until v. 29 that "Christians are incorporated into the one seed."[7]

Furthermore, since the phrase "who is Christ" is in apposition to the noun "seed," one wonders how "Χριστός" is an appropriate designation for this singular "family." Because Wright himself affirms that Χριστός always "denotes Jesus of Nazareth,"[8] how can he maintain that the one "seed" refers to the one "family" and not to Christ? Wright deftly argues that Χριστός "denotes" Jesus and "connotes" the one in whom "the people of God are summed up."[9] However, this fine-toothed distinction seems

**Fig. 1. Toulmin's Model for Charting an Argument**

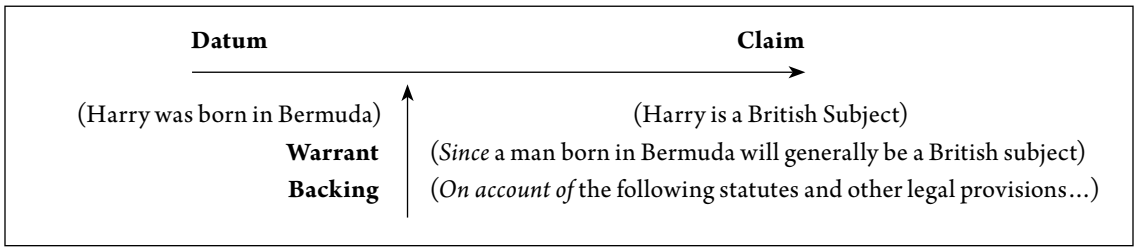
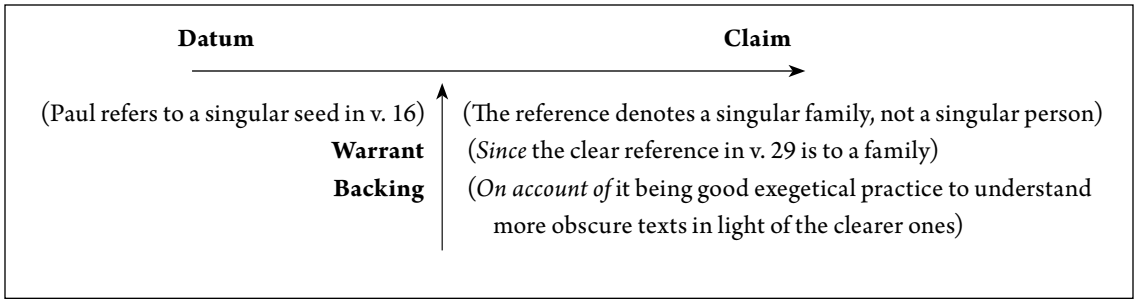



**Fig. 2. Wright's Argument for Interpreting Gal 3:16**



forced and comes perilously close to special pleading. It arises in part because of a desire to justify what Wright believes to be Paul's sloppy exegetical reading of texts like Gen 13:15. Wright solves this undesirable situation by maintaining that Paul makes an "explanatory" point from Genesis, not an "exegetical" point.[10] However, this solution, though ingenious, is unnecessary.

Our deconstruction of Wright's reading will continue in two further phases. In the first phrase, we will attempt to demonstrate the legitimacy of Paul's exegesis of Genesis in Gal 3:16. In the second phase, we will argue that the parallel in Gal 3:19 prohibits Wright's reading.

### *Paul's Exegesis of Genesis in Gal 3:16*

The reference in 3:16 to plural "promises … made to Abraham and to his offspring" immediately sends us back to Genesis and suggests the likelihood of multiple promise texts in Paul's mind. It is true that the inclusion of the conjunction in the phrase "καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου" implies that Paul is indeed *quoting* Gen 13:15; 17:8; and/or 24:7—the only texts in the LXX of Genesis that include the entire phrase and that address Abraham.[11] In our view, the most likely candidate of these three is 17:8, for the mention of Abra(ha)m becoming "the father of a multitude of nations" in the immediate literary context anticipates the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God–one of the key issues at stake in Galatians 3 (cf. the citation of Gen 17:5 in Rom 4:17). However, because each of the three texts noted above deals only with the land promise, the plural ἐπαγγελίαι in Gal 3:16 means that Paul expected his interpreters to read the text(s) he cites in relation to the other "seed" promises in Genesis.[12]

In the part of Genesis directly associated with the patriarchs, the "seed" of promise is/are

- To be the recipient(s) of the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 22:17; 24:7; 26:3; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4);[13]
- To become very numerous (13:16; 15:5; 22:17a; 26:4, 24; 28:14; 32:12; 48:4, 19);[14]
- To possess the gate of his enemies (22:17b; 24:60);
- To be a channel of blessing to all families, *nations*, or tribes of the earth (12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).[15]

Already in Gal 3:8 the apostle had cited the promise to the patriarch that "in you shall all the nations be blessed," so certainly this promise is included among those referred to in Gal 3:16.[16]

What is significant about this last point is that Genesis itself teaches that the curse of Adam would be eradicated and blessing would be enjoyed on a universal scale not simply through Abraham but specifically by means of the work of an *individual, male "seed"* descending from the patriarch. This development is made clear in three texts (Gen 3:15; 22:17b–18; 24:60) and affirmed by later biblical interpretation. The first passage does not address Abraham specifically, but lays the foundation for the pledges God would later make to him.[17]

Before over-viewing these texts, it is important to recognize that the Hebrew term "זֶרַע" is a collective singular noun, which means it is morphologically singular but may have singular or plural co-referents. While the vast majority of instances in Genesis are collective,[18] the singular concept is also expressed.[19] How do we determine if a given usage of the term "seed" refers to a collective group or an individual? C. John Collin's morpho-syntactic study of זֶרַע suggests that, while most occurrences are grammatically ambiguous and thus demand semantic clues in the context, the inclusion of plural pronouns (independent, object, and suffixes) makes זֶרַע denote posterity, whereas the inclusion of singular verb inflections, adjectives, and pronouns makes it denote a specific descendant.[20] For example, the third person masculine plural personal pronoun "their" in Gen 17:9 makes the use of "seed" explicitly collective: "And God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring (וְזַרְעֲךָ) after you throughout

*their* generations (לְדֹרֹתָם)."[21]

In light of Collins' study, we now turn to Gen 3:14–15, which includes what is often referred to as the *protoevangelium* ("first gospel"). In it, God declares to the serpent: "Cursed are you more than all cattle and more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go and dust shall you eat all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you (הוּא יְשׁוּפְךָ) on the head, and you shall bruise him (תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ) on the heel."[22] Drawing attention to the explicit use of pronouns, Collins comments,[23]

> On the syntactical level, the singular pronoun *hû'* in Genesis 3:15 is quite consistent with the pattern where a single individual is in view. In fact, since the subject pronouns are not normally necessary for the meaning, we might wonder if the singular *hû'* in Genesis 3:15 is used precisely in order to make it plain that an individual is being promised, who will win a victory over the snake at cost to himself.

Genesis 3:15 provides a "seed-bed" of Messianic hope. This interpretation is confirmed by Eve's response to the births of Cain and Seth in chapter 4.[24] At the birth of the former, Eve expresses what appears to be hope that this son may be the fulfillment of God's promise to crush the serpent's head: "I have gotten a man with Yahweh" (4:1). However, when Cain murders his brother Abel, he undeniably proves that he is not the awaited "seed," and later biblical interpretation considers Cain among the offspring of the serpent (1 John 3:8–12; cf. John 8:33, 44). Following Abel's death, Eve reaffirmed her hope in the promised "seed" when Seth was born: "God has apportioned for me another offspring (זֶרַע) in place of Abel, because Cain killed him" (Gen 4:25). Seth's life signaled a shift back to Yahweh (4:26), imaged his own father Adam's sonship to God (5:1–3), and initiated the two, ten-member genealogies (Genesis 5 and 11) by which the narrator of Genesis distinguished the line of promise from the line of destruction and heightened his reader's anticipation for the ultimate conquering "seed."[25]

The next text is found in Gen 22:17–18, which is one of the passages that most likely stands behind Paul's recollection in Gal 3:8 of God's promise to Abraham that "in you shall all the nations be blessed." At this point in the narrative, the reader has tracked the offspring promise from "the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20) through two, ten-member genealogies climaxing in Abra(ha)m, in whom "all the families of earth shall be blessed" (12:3). When the patriarch questioned his lack of "offspring" (זֶרַע) (Gen 15:3), the Lord promised (15:4) and then granted him and Sarah a son, declaring, "Through Isaac shall your offspring (זֶרַע) be named" (21:12). This seed-generated context provided the backdrop for Yahweh's amazing "test" in which he called Abraham to sacrifice his son of promise. Genesis 22:17–18 records Yahweh's pledge to fulfill the "descendants, land, and divine blessing" promises to Abraham in light of his dependent, fear-filled obedience.[26]

Three times in Gen 22:17–18 the word זֶרַע occurs, but as has been persuasively argued by T. Desmond Alexander, within the span of two verses the form denotes both a group and an individual.[27] Specifically, building off Collins's study, Alexander has rightly observed that the third-person masculine singular pronominal suffix in the form אֹיְבָיו ("his enemies") of 22:17 suggests that, while the "seed" that will be a numerous "as the stars of heaven" is plural (v. 17a), the "seed" that will possess the enemies' gates (v. 17b) and serve as a channel of blessing to the world (v. 18) is a male *individual*.[28] Collins's rule also suggests that Gen 24:60 contains a similar contrast between the many and the one, wherein upon Rebekah's departure from Mesopotamia, her family blesses her, calling God not only to grant her a flourishing womb but also to cause her offspring to "possess the gate of those who hate *him*."[29]

Significantly, because each of the other Genesis texts that refers to the "seed" as mediator of blessing

are ambiguous syntactically according to Collins's rules (Gen 26:4; 28:14; cf. 12:3; 18:18), it is possible that these too should be understood as pointing to an individual.[30] Regardless, the three texts just mentioned appear to set a trajectory for other biblical authors who interpret these Genesis "seed" texts as referring to a single, Messianic deliverer (e.g., Gen 49:8, 10; Num 24:17–19; 2 Sam 7:12–13; Ps 72:4, 9, 17; Luke 1:68–79; Acts 3:25–26; Gal 3:8, 13–14). Because James M. Hamilton Jr. has already provided a thorough overview of these passages, minimal comment is necessary here.[31]

Building off the Davidic promises in 2 Sam 7:12–13, Psalm 72 applies to Israel's king both the promise of an enemy-destroying offspring (Ps 72:4; cf. Gen 3:15 and 22:17b) and the promise of a blessing-mediating offspring (Ps 72:17; cf. Gen 22:18)[32]: "May [the king] defend the cause of the poor of the people … and crush the oppressor! … May people be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed!" The background of the promises in Gen 3:15 and 22:17b–18 is unmistakable.

Luke highlighted this same connection with direct reference to Jesus, when he recorded Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:68–79: "[God] raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies … to remember the his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham … [and] to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:69–71, 73, 79). What is striking here is that God's work of deliverance and salvation through the Davidic Messiah was specifically related to "the oath that he swore to … Abraham." This link is further highlighted in Acts 3:25–26, where Peter declared, "You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning everyone of you from your wickedness." Jesus is here clearly identified with the "offspring" through whom blessing would come.

The final text to be highlighted is Gal 3:8, 13–14, which provides the very context for our verse in question. Paul writes in 3:8, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'" The apostle returns to this theme in vv. 13–14, when he states, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law … so that *in Christ Jesus* the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles." With Luke, Paul appears to have interpreted the Genesis promises as finding their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth, the one through whom God's blessing reaches the nations.

זֶרַע occurs some fifty-nine times in Genesis and highlights a key aspect of the book's message, bearing theological significance that is linked not only to Abraham but also to the earliest stages of God's dealing with fallen mankind. The term is used with Genesis's תּוֹלְדוֹת structure to highlight one single family line stemming from Adam (and Eve) through Seth and continuing through Abraham and his descendants. Not only this, promise of global influence finds focus in at least three contexts where it is an individual male offspring of this line who will destroy the enemy strongholds (Gen 3:15; 22:17b; 24:60) and mediate blessing to the world (22:18).[33] We suggest that these texts set a trajectory climaxing in the person of Christ Jesus and that Paul's assertion that the "seed … is Christ" in Gal 3:16 is recognition of this fact. The apostle's reading of Genesis is not "hyperliteral,"[34] "a purely semantic trick,"[35] or a mere "explanatory note"[36] but is in fact an exegetically grounded interpretation of Gen 17:8 (and/or 13:15; 24:7) within its broader literary context, especially 3:15 and 22:17–18.[37]

### *The Prohibitive Parallel of Gal 3:19*

Our deconstruction of Wright's argument now continues with some observations related to Gal 3:19, which includes the next occurrence of the "seed" in Galatians 3. Because of his collective interpretation of verse 16, Wright translates verse 19 to read as follows: "Why then the law? It was

added because of transgressions until the family should come to whom it had been promised."[38] This wording accentuates the awkwardness of Wright's interpretation, because the actual flow of Paul's thought prohibits such a translation. Take a moment to recall the layout of Wright's original argument in Figure 2 above. By way of contrast, we can incorporate Gal 3:19 in a counter argument that can be charted as Figure 3 (below).

In order to defend this argument, it is imperative to produce the exegetical data that justifies the above warrant.[39] Specifically, we contend that the "seed" in verse 19 can only be a reference to Jesus of Nazareth. This conclusion finds its support by the parallel structure of thought in Gal 3:23–26 and 4:1–7. We will consider these passages one at a time.

In Gal 3:23–26, the Law is compared to a "παιδαγωγός." The "guardian" (ESV) is given authority over a child for a specific duration of time (usually until adulthood).[40] The key event for Paul is the coming of "faith" (v. 25). The dawning of this age brings the age of the guardian to an end. "But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian." The word "faith" clearly refers to a salvation-historical epoch, not a subjective experience. If no one exercised faith until after the coming of Christ, then Abraham also did not exercise faith. And if Abraham did not exercise faith, then Paul's whole argument in 3:6–9 comes crashing down. Rather, Paul refers to the new era inaugurated by the coming of Christ, not a "family." Now that Christ has come, the promises have been fulfilled. Thus, the establishment of the new covenant and the reception of the promised Spirit (v. 14) introduce an age where the distinguishing mark of God's people becomes faith in the revealed Messiah, not adherence to circumcision and the Law.

The same temporal structure occurs again in Gal 4:1–7. An heir is "under stewards and managers until the date set by the father" (v. 2). Once this specific time period arrives, the "stewards and managers" no longer have authority over the heir. Paul spells out the significance of this analogy in verses 3 and 4. We, while children, were held under the "elemental things of the world."[41] But now the date "set by the father" has come. What is this date? Verse four clearly shows that it is the coming of God's Son, Jesus, not the arrival of a "family." "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (4:4).

Figure 4 (below) highlights the parallel structure of thought that is evident in these passages. Clearly, Paul focuses the shift of redemptive history

**Fig. 3. A Better Argument for Interpreting Gal 3:16**

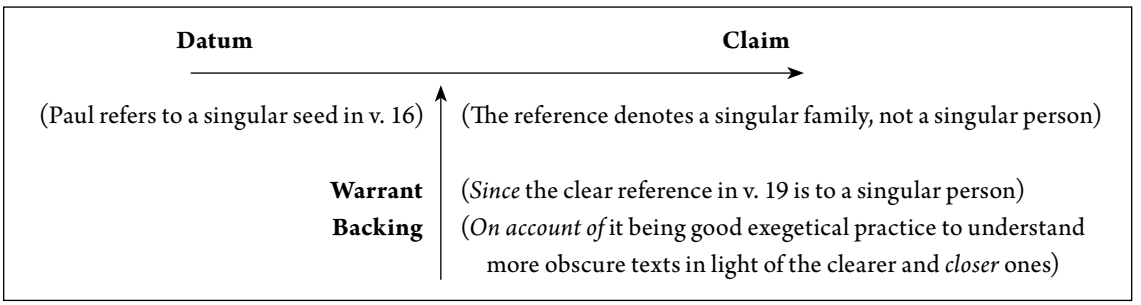



**Fig. 4. Paul's Parallel Through Regarding the Redemptive Historical Shift**

| | |
|---|---|
| 3:19 | When the "seed" comes, the authority of the Law comes to an end. |
| 3:23-24 | When the "faith" era comes, the authority of the guardian comes to an end.[42] |
| 4:1-2 | When the time set by the Father comes, the authority of the stewards and managers comes to an end. |
| 4:3-4 | When God sent forth his Son in the fullness of time, the age of bondage comes to an end. |

on Jesus, not on the inclusion of the Gentiles into a single people of God. The latter is made possible only by faith in Jesus, who is the offspring of Abraham (3:16) and channel of blessing to the world (3:14).

## CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Readers that have compared and contrasted Wright's approach to the one advocated in this article may now justifiably ask: "So what? What is at stake in properly interpreting Gal 3:16?" Two answers are in order. First, it should be obvious, but it always bears repeating, that Scripture is God's word, and as such it demands reverence and respect from God's children. "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and *trembles at my word*" (Isa 66:2; emphasis added). God's word should be handled not only *reverently*, but also *accurately*. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth*" (2 Tim 2:15; emphasis added). A concern for the reverent and accurate interpretation of God's word functions simultaneously as both a necessary speed bump that keeps us from running roughshod over the text and a guard rail protecting us from veering off into the ugly ditch of academic gamesmanship.

Second, there is a vital connection between one's individual exegetical decisions and one's collective interpretive framework. In other words, one's handling of specific texts has direct influence in the shaping of one's overall interpretive grid, and one's interpretive grid can have determinative effects on one's individual interpretations. We are not questioning the viability of operating with an interpretive framework; such a grid can help orient seemingly obscure texts within the grand narrative of Scripture. This interplay need not be a vicious circle, as long as the reader intentionally allows the details of each text to exercise a healthy amount of hermeneutical control that can either further confirm the framework or critique it and challenge it. However, one must stringently avoid imposing one's overall framework (i.e., eisegesis) upon the text so that the details of the text are conveniently muted or minimized. Interpretive grids wreak hermeneutical havoc when they blind the interpreter from seeing what is really there in each individual text (i.e., exegesis).

In light of the above, it is noteworthy that Wright's reading of Gal 3:16 bears a striking resemblance to his reading of other texts in Paul that have come to form the essence of his overall interpretive framework. This grid, which fits the broad contours of the so-called New Perspective on Paul, tends to place stress upon the ecclesiological aspects of Paul's thought, while minimizing many traditional soteriological readings of texts in Paul.

This same dynamic is certainly operative in the text under consideration. Wright's reading assumes that the "family" has been on center stage in Paul's discussion of redemptive history in all three "seed" texts: Gal 3:16, 19, and 29. Our reading maintains that *Christ* takes center stage as the promised "seed" in both 3:16 and 19. The family of faith comes into clear view in 3:29 only *through Christ* as the promised singular "seed" of Abraham. In other words, Jesus' appearance in 3:16 and 19 is what allows the "family" to come into the picture in verse 29.

The grammar of verse 29 reinforces this reading with a first-class conditional statement: "And *if* (εἰ) you are Christ's, *then* (ἄρα) you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." Paul stresses the dependent nature of the family's existence upon the prior work of Christ, which took center stage in the preceding discussion. In other words, Wright is dangerously close to locating the climax of redemptive history in the coming of "the family" rather than in the coming of the Messiah. Wright's reading brings the "family" to the center of the stage in Gal 3:16, 19, and 29.

This slight shift of focus from the coming of Christ to the coming of the "family" risks a departure from the stabilizing and balancing effect that comes from insisting upon the centrality of *Christ*. This issue is one of emphasis. Wright and the present authors agree that the incorporation of the

Gentiles into the family of faith is a key point in Galatians. However, this interpretive agreement does not necessarily dictate where Paul himself places the most stress. Wright stresses the "family" of faith in all three texts (Gal 3:16, 19, 29), but our reading sees Paul stressing the centrality of Christ as Abraham's promised "seed" (3:16, 19) so that by faith in Christ the Gentiles could become Abraham's "seed" (3:29) without becoming Jews. This reading also brings Gal 3:16 into better alignment with Paul's emphatic declaration elsewhere that Christ is the one in whom all the promises find their "Yes" of fulfillment (2 Cor 1:20).

Though the shift present in Wright's reading may be slight, the potential long-term results of this shift are not slight or small. Though sounded years ago, D. A. Carson's warning is still apropos: "I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight. Whenever the periphery is in danger of displacing the center, we are not far removed from idolatry."[43]

We believe that our reading takes better account of the context of Galatians 3 and 4 and thus achieves a higher degree of collective coherence. We respectfully submit that Wright's reading, though possible, is far less plausible than the one presented in this article. Furthermore, the reading of the text expounded here rests on a firmer foundation: the centrality of Christ in redemptive history. Maintaining our stress on the centrality of Christ, the "seed" of Abraham, will certainly have long-term consequences for the health of the church as it pursues the glory of God in all things for the good of all peoples through Jesus.

## ENDNOTES

[1]N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 35.

[2]N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 163. Like our English words "seed" and "offspring," זֶרַע in Hebrew and σπέρμα in Greek are collective nouns, which means they are morphologically singular but may have singular or plural co-referents (E. J. Revell, "Logic of Concord with Collectives in Biblical Narrative," *MAARAV* 9 [2002]: 61). An OT example of the contrast is noted in Ishmael's designation as the "seed" of Abraham (Gen 21:3) and Jacob's "offspring" being compared to "the dust of the earth" (28:14). In the NT, the "seed" can point to all participants in God's covenant family (Rom 9:7; Gal 3:29), or it can refer to an individual, the Servant / Messiah Jesus (Acts 3:25).

[3]An abbreviated version of some of this material is found in Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (NAC Studies in Bible & Theology 6; Nashville: B&H, 2009), 144–46; 171–73.

[4]Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 158–59. For a helpful survey of the different approaches to this verse, see C. John Collins, "Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 1 (2003): 75–79.

[5]Ibid., 158.

[6]Stephen E. Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1958), 94–113, example from 105. In Toulmin's system, most arguments will have four explicit or implicit components: (1) a Datum, (2) a Warrant, (3) a Backing, and (4) a Claim. "Datum" refers to known information—that is, the raw material used in constructing an argument. An argument takes the raw materials (data) and uses them to build a "claim." The claim is the inference or the conclusion drawn from the data. However, the move from "datum" to "claim" requires a basis that supports or justifies the move. This basis is called the "warrant." The warrant authorizes the step from "datum" to the "claim." However, it is possible to challenge the appropriateness of a warrant. In these cases, the warrant itself requires additional support known as "backing." The "backing" of a warrant provides the information necessary to justify the legitimacy of the warrant in the particular case under consideration. Toulmin's example actually includes two more features called "modal qualifiers" and "conditions of exception," but we have omitted these elements for the sake of simplicity. For an explanation of modal qualifiers and conditions of excep-

tion, see *The Uses of Argument*, 101. To see Toulmin's method elucidated, see Nancey C. Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994).

[7]A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 72–73, n. 9. We came to this conclusion before reading Das. We will incorporate this particular insight into a larger argument, which is developed below.

[8]Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 165. He does nuance this statement by pointing out that 2 Cor 5:16 is a possible exception.

[9]Ibid., 174. Wright argues that this reading is justified by other similar occurrences in Paul. "This family is none other, in incorporative language, than the Χριστός, the Messiah-and-his-people" (133).

[10]Ibid., 166.

[11]Cf. the land promise to Isaac in 26:3 and those to Jacob in 28:4, 13; 35:12; and 48:4. Nearly every interpreter since J. B. Lightfoot (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993; orig. published 1865], 142) has viewed Gen 13:15 or 17:8 as the background to Gal 3:16; for a thorough bibliography, see Collins, "What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?", 82 n. 17. In contrast, Collins downplays the presence of καί in Paul's citation and suggests that Paul is only alluding to, not quoting, a text from Genesis and that one need only locate a text with the dative σπέρματι (83 n. 22). He posits that Gen 22:18 is the most likely candidate. For a similar approach, see A. M. Buscemi, "Gal 3,8–14: La Genti benedette in Abramo per la fede," *Antonianum* 74, no. 2 (1999): 195–225.

[12]This observation minimizes any dilemma suggested by the fact that "the reference to the land … plays no part in the argument of Galatians" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* [New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 172). Furthermore, for Paul, the land promises were viewed as typological anticipations of more universal realities (e.g., Rom. 4:13) Collins is one who recognizes the significance of the plural "promises" ("What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?" 83).

[13]Cf. Exod 32:13; 33:1; Num 14:24; Deut 1:8; 4:37; 10:15; 11:9; 34:4; Neh 9:8.

[14]Cf. Gen 16:10; 17:20; Exod 32:13; Jer. 32:22, 26.

[15]In Gen 12:3; 18:18; and 28:14 the verb of blessing is in the Niphal stem (נִבְרְכוּ), whereas in 22:18 and 26:4 it is in the Hithpael (הִתְבָּרֲכוּ). Scholars have long questioned whether the forms are synonymous and whether they should be translated as passives ("they will be blessed"); middles ("the will find blessing"); or reflexives ("they will bless themselves"). (For an overview of the various positions, see M. Daniel Carroll R., "Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10, no. 1 [2000]: 23–24; cf. John H. Walton, *Genesis* [NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 393–94). Following the arguments of Chee-Chiew Lee ("גוים [*sic*] in Genesis 35:11 and the Abrahamic Promise of Blessing for the Nations," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 3 [2009]: 471–72), we take the Niphal to be passive ("they shall be blessed") and the Hithpael to be estimative-declarative reflexive ("they shall declare themselves as blessed") (on the latter, see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], §26.2f). The use of the passive for all forms in the LXX, Targum Onkelos, and the Vulgate, suggests they were read as synonymous, but the fact that the NT quotations of the blessing formula are passive (Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8) means only that they were following the LXX or that they were pointing to the fact that the

passive was used in the foundational Gen 12:3, which informs all the rest. See also Keith N. Grüneberg, *Abraham, Blessing and the Nations: A Philological and Exegetical Study of Genesis 12:3 in Its Narrative Context* (BZAW 332; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003).

[16]Some like F. F. Bruce have argued that Paul's citation in Gal 3:8 was limited to a conflation of Gen 12:3 and 18:18 (*Epistle to the Galatians*, 156). However, Paul's stress that "in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham … [has] come to the Gentiles" suggests that Paul may also be pointing to Gen 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14, all of which explicitly note the means by which the nations will enjoy blessing in Abraham—namely, *through* the promised "seed." Collins persuasively argues this point with respect to Gal 3:8 ("What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?" 80–81), but he fails to see that, along with the blessing promises in these texts, the land promise in Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7 stands in the background of Paul's thought in Gal 3:16.

[17]N. T. Wright affirms the concept of corporate solidarity, wherein Messiah Jesus represents the remnant of both Israel and all humanity in his person and work (see *The Climax of the Covenant*, 18–40). He fails, however, to see how Genesis itself anticipates this reality through its use of "seed" language.

[18]See the collective meaning in Genesis for the following: The seed of Noah (Gen 9:9), Abraham (12:7; 13:15, 16; 15:5, 13, 18; 17:8, 9, 10, 19; 21:12; 22:17; 24:7), Rebekah (24:60), Isaac (26:3, 4, 24), Jacob (28:4, 13, 14; 32:12; 35:12; 46:6, 7; 48:4) and Ephraim (48:19).

[19]See Seth (Gen 4:25), Abraham's anticipated child (15:3) and Ishmael (21:13), and the child of Onan (38:8, 9).

[20]C. John Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 140 (1997): 142–44. Collins further notes that the pattern of the LXX translator is identical, and when the "seed" is an individual, the pronoun will be masculine (or at least, not clearly neuter), even though the Greek word σπέρμα is neuter (cf. 1 Sam 1:11; 2 Sam 7:12–14).

[21]Walton is not convinced by Collins's study (*Genesis*, 225 n. 3), but his rebuttal bears no substance. With this, Walton holds the highly questionable view that OT Messianic expectation grew up only in relation to the promises given to David and so "it is difficult to have much of a messianic hope prior to David" (234). However, apart from the three texts about to be addressed (Gen 3:14; 22:17–18; 24:60), a Messianic hope is stressed through the anticipation of a king (Gen 17:6, 16) from Judah who deserves the obedience of the nations (49:8, 10) and who will defeat enemies and exercise vast dominion (Num 24:17–19); he will be a man of God's *torah* (Deut 17:18–20) who will provide the answer to Israel's chaos (Judg 17:6; 21:5) and stand in the strength of Yahweh (1 Sam 2:10)—all this before David is on the scene. Walton also asserts that the OT includes "no hint of an Israelite messianic expectation that includes the concept of bringing an end to evil in the world" (234–35). Beyond the texts just noted, most of which specifically address eradicating evil, one need only point to the numerous texts that speak of Yahweh's king establishing global justice, peace, and salvation in order see that Walton's claim is not justified (e.g., Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16; Isa 42:4; 49:6; 52:10; Mic 5:4–5; Zech 9:9–10; Mal 3:1–5; Pss 2:7–9; 72:1–4, 14; cf. Acts 3:25–26; 1 Cor 15:24; Gal 3:8, 13–14; Eph 2:16; Col 2:15). Moreover, the NT asserts that in the salvation brought about by the Davidic Messiah God was accomplishing just what "he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies" (Luke 1:70–71). For more on the Messianic trajectory of the Old Testament as a whole, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess, and G. J. Wenham, eds., *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); T. Desmond Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 49 (1998): 191–212; idem, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of Messiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001): 5–23; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds.,

*Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

[22]For an insightful survey of the inner-biblical, Messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15, see James Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (2006): 30–54; cf. W. Wilfall, "Gen. 3:15—A Protoevangelium?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1974): 361–65. For a survey of the history of interpretation of this verse, see Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed (Gen 3:15)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 3 (1991): 299–319.

[23]Collins, "A Syntactical Note," 145. The LXX rendered the Hebrew זֶרַע with the neuter noun σπέρμα but used the masculine αὐτος "he" in place of the Hebrew הוּא. The mismatch of gender between the pronoun and the antecedent may very well suggest that the translators understood the syntax to point to an individual, perhaps even the Messiah. This is all the more likely when one considers that this is the only instance out of more than 100 uses of הוּא in Genesis where the LXX translator used the masculine singular and not the neuter pronoun (cf. R. A. Martin, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 [1965]: 425–27; Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed," 300–01; Walter C. Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 37–42).

[24]For a similar interpretation, see Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 71; James Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *Tyndale Bulletin* 58, no. 2 (2007): 255–58; John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 1:96, 104–05.

[25]T. Desmond Alexander, "Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44, no. 2 (1993): 255–70, esp. 259; cf. Richard S. Hess, "The Genealogies of Genesis 1–11 and Comparative Literature," *Biblica* 70 (1989): 248; David C. Hopkins, "The First Stories of Genesis and the Rhythm of the Generations," in *The Echoes of Many Texts: Reflections on Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Lou H. Silberman, et al.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 40–41. In the aforementioned essay, Alexander observed that the primary line of descent (i.e., the line through which the promised offspring will come) is marked by linear genealogies (A gave birth to B, B gave birth to C, C gave birth to D, etc.; cf. Gen 5:1–32; 11:10–26), whereas the secondary group of antagonists (the "seed of the serpent") is signaled by segmented genealogies (A gave birth to B, C, and D; B gave birth to E, F, and G; C gave birth to H, I, and J; D gave birth to K, L, and M; cf. 10:1; 2:12; 36:1, 9). That the serpent's offspring refers not to slithering snakes but to a line of reprobate humans who are distanced from God is clear from at least two angles: (1) The literary and biblical context of Genesis 3 makes clear that the serpent is a personification (but not a literary fabrication!) of the power of sin, death, and hostility against God. The curse and promise of defeat is not given to snakes per se but to the demonic power that elsewhere is in the Scriptures is spearheaded by the Deceiver, the devil (cf. Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9; 20:2; Hamilton, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman," 30–54). (2) The genealogical structure in Genesis highlights the line of promise in contrast to the line of destruction. In light of this evidence, it is clear that the "seed of the woman" is not *all* her biological offspring but a "spiritual" remnant within it. For a helpful visual that depicts the line of promise, see T. Desmond Alexander, "From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis," *Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (1989): 7. For more on the use of the תּוֹלְדוֹת formula in Genesis see M. H. Woudstra, "The תּוֹלְדוֹת of the Book of Genesis and Their Redemptive-historical Significance," *Calvin Theological Journal* 5 (1970): 184–89; Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 91–106; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 55–56.

[26]For the view that all the Abrahamic promises are summed up as descendants, land, and divine blessing, see T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 98–99; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1987), 258.

[27]Wright's proposed difficulty with Paul shifting from the singular (Gal 3:16) to collective (3:29) usage of "seed" in the span of a single chapter is, therefore,

unwarranted.

[28]T. Desmond Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 363–67; so too idem, "Seed," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 769; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 69 n.26. Alexander sees the use of a *weyiqtol* form rather than *weqatal* at the head of Gen 22:17b (וְיִרַשׁ זַרְעֶךָ "and your seed shall possess . . .") as a substantiation of his view that the זֶרַע referred to in Gen. 22:17b should be read in a way distinct from the זֶרַע in v. 17a ("Further Observations on the Terms 'Seed' in Genesis," 365). Interestingly, in Gen. 22:17b, the LXX did not translate the third-person masculine singular Hebrew pronominal suffix on the substantive אוֹיֵב in the phrase וְיִרַשׁ זַרְעֶךָ אֵת שַׁעַר אֹיְבָיו ("and your seed will possess the gate of his enemies"). As such it is impossible to tell whether the translator understood the phrase to refer to a singular "seed."

[29]While the Leningrad Codex includes שׂנְאָיו ("those hating him"), the Targum, two other Hebrew Mss, and the Samaritan Pentateuch read איביו ("his enemies"), in alignment with Gen 22:17b.

[30]Support for this claim is suggested by the foundational role that Gen 22:15–18 plays in the rest of the Genesis narrative. Here Yahweh declares on oath that the patriarch will receive the fulfillment of the "descendants, land, and divine blessing" promises because he passed the "test" (22:1), obeying God's voice regarding the sacrifice of Isaac (22:16, 18). This very obedience is then recalled after the restatement of the promise to Isaac in 26:4. God would fulfill the promise to Isaac "because Abraham obeyed" (26:5).

[31]Hamilton, "The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," 261–72.

[32]See ibid., 269–70. While the verb rendered "to crush" in Ps 72:4 (piel דכא) is not the same as the verb in Gen 3:15 (qal שוף), Hamilton persuasively argues for the link with Genesis in light of (1) the clear echo of the blessing promise in Ps 72:17; (2) the imprecation in Ps 72:9 that "his enemies lick the dust"; and (3) the fact that the piel דכא is used in Ps 89:10[11] for the crushing of "Rahab," who elsewhere is identified with the evil Leviathan (Ps 74:14) and the dragon (Isa 51:9).

[33]We fully concur with Alexander that "the book of Genesis in its final form anticipates the coming of a king through whom God's blessing will be mediated to all the nations of the earth" ("Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings", 204). This fact does not deny that Genesis also anticipates the ultimate agent of blessing to the whole world by portraying that God blesses others in less universal ways (e.g., Laban [30:27], Potiphar [39:5], Pharaoh [47:7]) through Abraham and his sons (plural).

[34]So Tom Thatcher, "The Plot of Gal 3:1–18," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 3 (1997): 410.

[35]So Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 159.

[36]Ibid., 166.

[37]Cf., with some differences, Collins, "What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?" 75–86. Richard B. Hays argues that Paul's argument is "less perverse than it might appear," but he states this not on the basis of seeing an individual "seed" promised in Genesis but in positing a "catchword" connection between the Abrahamic promises and the Messianic promises made to David in 2 Sam 7:12–14 (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University, 1989], 85). However, if indeed the Messianic promises of 2 Samuel are connected to the promises of the Abrahamic covenant (and thus to Paul's exegesis in Galatians 3), it is by means of a progressive flow of redemptive history that is grounded in Gen 3:15 and 22:17b–18, both passages of which anticipate the ruler from the line of Judah (Gen 49:8, 10).

[38]Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians*, 35.

[39]On the chart, while the backing for the warrant is a hermeneutical principle, the warrant itself can be defended with exegetical data.

[40]See the full discussion in Richard N. Longenecker, "The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (1982): 53–62.

[41]A reference to the old order of things, which includes the Law. See Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 171, n. 188; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 401.

[42]A babysitter is an imperfect, yet helpful, modern illustration of a child under the authority of another for a limited duration. Another example is our modern notion of the need to abide by parental rules until the "legal" age of eighteen or "as long as you live under my roof."

[43]D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 26.

# Covenant Lineage Allegorically Prefigured: "Which Things Are Written Allegorically" (Galatians 4:21–31)

*A. B. Caneday*

## INTRODUCTION

Among Paul's uses of the Old Testament, perhaps most complex, baffling, and elusive are his uses of Genesis and of Isaiah in Gal 4:21-31, with the claim, "these things are ἀλληγορούμενα."[1] What warrants his appeal to *allegory*? What in the Old Testament authorizes the apostle's dual assertions: (1) "Now you, brothers, in keeping with Isaac, are children of promise" (4:28), and (2) "But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free woman'" (4:30). The conundrum is ancient as Antiochene commentaries indicate.[2] Likewise, the Reformers puzzle over Paul's appeal to allegory, viewing it as out of character with his uses of the Old Testament.[3]

Contemporary exegetes tend to reflect the assessment of their Antiochene forebears that Paul really had in mind typology or perhaps a restrained allegory that fades into typology.[4] Because scholars describe Paul's statement, "these things are ἀλληγορούμενα," as indicating that he engages either *typological* or *allegorical interpretation*,[5] they tend to locate the origin of *the allegory* within Paul's interpretive skillfulness rather than within the Genesis narrative itself.[6]

Contemporary discussions concerning Paul's use of ἀλληγορούμενα exclude the third and middle option from purview. Exegetes fixate on two alternatives. They reason that Paul either (1) engages in *typological/allegorical interpretation*—the Genesis story is *historical* and he assigns symbolic spiritual representations to elements of the narrative, or he (2) reads the story as *an allegory*—the story is an

A. B. Caneday is Professor of New Testament Studies and Biblical Theology at Northwestern College in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

He has written many scholarly articles, including contributions to two recent edited volumes: *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (Paternoster, 2009) and *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Context* (T. & T. Clark, 2008). Dr. Caneday is co-author (with Thomas R. Schreiner) of *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (InterVarsity, 2001).



*SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 50-77.

*ahistorical account* from which Paul draws symbolic spiritual aspects that contribute to his argument.[7] Like the Antiochenes, exegetes reject the latter but also shortsightedly favor the former giving the impression, if not advocating, that Paul's argument in Gal 4:21-31 hangs upon his innovative and creative reading of the Genesis narrative rather than upon an allegory written within the Old Testament text by which the historical persons and events narrated bear symbolic significances pointing beyond themselves.[8] The crucial question is that which exegetes do not adequately address. What, within the Genesis narrative, warrants Paul's argument? Thus, the neglected third, or middle, option, which constitutes the concern of this essay, is that *Paul reads Scripture's story of Abraham as historical narrative invested with symbolic representations embedded within the characters and the two contrasting births of two sons—one by natural order, the other by divine promise. Hence, the Genesis text itself, not Paul's interpretation of the text, is allegorical while simultaneously upholding the historical authenticity of those characters and events*.

Contemporary exegesis of Gal 4:21-31 generally accepts the historicity of the Abraham narrative and upholds biblical authority to the degree that it regards Paul to be authoring Scripture with his letter to the Galatians. Nonetheless, the fact that exegetes generally seem to bypass inquiry into what warrants Paul's use of the Genesis narrative prompts at least two questions. First, why does Paul feature Scripture as the ground of his argument, unless he believes the Abraham narrative itself, as written, entails allegory? Second, unless allegorical features are embedded within the Old Testament narrative itself and were there to be recognized all along to authorize Paul's use of the story, then what warrants his argument in Gal 4:21-31 other than "privileged apostolic insight" or interpretive adroitness to spin an allegory to controvert his opponents and to convince his converts to remain loyal to his gospel? If the allegory is not present in the Genesis narrative as written, how can the apostle avoid justified accusations of exploiting interpretive sleight of hand? How does Paul not leave his converts in a fideistic lurch, looking to his interpretive dexterity rather than to Scripture to authorize them (1) to cast out the Sinai covenant and its descendants, the Judaizers and those who embrace their "other gospel," and (2) to warrant his affirmation that Gentile believers are children of promise?[9]

Where, in all his disputations, does the apostle Paul assert raw apostolic authority instead of appeal to Scripture as authorization upon which his converts and readers should hang their trust and receive his gospel as true? This is emphatically so in his letter to the Galatians, among whom his apostleship is under assault and dispute. Luke describes Paul as *reasoning with his hearers from Scripture* (Acts 17:2). He grounded his disputations and preaching of the good news of Christ with appeals to the Scriptures so that his hearers could trace out his proclamations as they "examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Is this not the kind of faith Paul seeks to elicit, a faith authorized by Scripture, not a faith warranted by rhetorical human cleverness that can spin an impressive but contrived allegory (cf. 1 Cor 2:1-4)?

## REVELATION OLD AND NEW: MYSTERY IN GALATIANS

The above sequence of questions calls for the need to identify Paul's Old Testament warrants for using the Genesis narrative concerning Abraham under the rubric of *allegory*. Contemporary exegetes tend to fixate upon Paul's interpretive insight as distinctive, even unique to the extent that some add a kind of disclaimer, which others should not attempt to reproduce Paul's *allegorical interpretation*.[10] This derives in part from efforts to account for and to safeguard, as unique, the revelatory insight Paul received through his Damascus road Christophany which he describes as "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12ff).[11] Such stress upon Paul's apocalyptic and revelatory insight into the gospel at the expense of another essential strand in the fabric of his gospel dominates and inclines negligence concerning the apostle's scriptural warrants.[12]

### *The Theophanic Revelation of Jesus Christ Authorizes Paul's Appeal to Allegory*

The fact that Paul conceives of his gospel as simultaneously (1) promised long ago, even "preached beforehand to Abraham" (3:8), with the promise now being fulfilled (3:16), and (2) concealed for long ages past but now revealed (1:12ff; 3:23ff; cf. Rom 16:25-27), requires one to locate the apostle's warrants for his use of the Abraham narrative in two locations. These locations are: (1) *within his revelatory insight* imparted through his Christophany on the Damascus road, but also (2) *within the Old Testament text itself* wherein the very act of revealing the gospel in advance entailed concealing of the gospel for full disclosure in "the fullness of time" (cf. Gal 4:4). This calls for even-handed attention to the warp and woof in the fabric of Paul's gospel without which the gospel's full grand array and glory is diminished.

The Old Testament's *promise and fulfillment* axis, entwined with *revelatory veiling* or *concealing*, forms the warp of Paul's gospel, while Christ's advent and his theophanic revelation to the Pharisee Saul, bringing fulfillment by *revealing what had been concealed*, forms the woof of the apostle's message. That the gospel was promised long ago and is now fulfilled with Christ's coming, and that the gospel, at the same time that it was promised in ages past, was also veiled or concealed and finally revealed only now with the coming of Messiah is, as various other scholars agree, a revelation schema evident not only in Paul's letters where he employs the noun μυστήριον but also present within his letter to the Galatians where the word is absent.[13]

Perhaps Jesus' epiphany along another road, the road to Emmaus, is instructive concerning Paul's Damascus road Christophany. The narrative of Luke 24:13-35 dramatizes the biblical concept of *mystery*. First, it entails Jesus' act of revealing the Scriptures concerning the Christ accompanied by the act of concealing his identity in plain sight by keeping their eyes from recognizing him, yet they are fully culpable for their blindness, for Jesus rebukes them failing to believe all that the prophets have spoken concerning Christ, both that he should suffer and enter into his glory (Luke 24:25-26). This is followed by Jesus' blessing and breaking of bread, an act that purposefully recalls the same act during the last supper (22:19), an act that reveals Christ's identity concealed from the two disciples in plain sight, by opening their eyes to recognize him as the Christ revealed in Scripture. What had been concealed in plain sight, both objectively in Scripture (24:25-27) and subjectively within their sight (24:16), was now revealed plainly to the two disciples (24:31) who exclaim to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, as he explained the Scriptures to us?" (24:32).

This account entails *concealing* and *revealing* in two distinguishable spheres or realms. These two acts and the two dimensions are both crucial for understanding the biblical concept of mystery as Paul portrays it. Both the concealing and revealing entail two spheres: *objective* (knowledge veiled while simultaneously made known) and *subjective* (knowledge restrained from apprehension, yet with culpability, but later bestowed with understanding). So, both Christ's coming to fulfill Scripture, and his opening of eyes, thus giving faith that brings understanding, are *revelatory*. The former revelatory act constitutes the good news; the latter, the good news received through belief.

Fresh revelation brings clarity to former revelation that comes with a veil. Veiled former revelation becomes lucid as the climactic finale to the storyline clarifies the dramatic development and escalation of the story's whole plotline. *Mystery*, biblically conceived, is akin to how a mystery novel is written to be read, proceeding from beginning to end. As one traces the storyline's development and progression, the story builds toward its dramatic climax at which point the mystery is finally revealed. Embedded within characters, events, settings, and plotted conflict throughout the storyline of a mystery novel are hints, foreshadows, prefigurements, and harbingers written in such a manner

as to incite expectation of full and final resolution eventually to be revealed with surprises that invite deep reflection.

So it is with Scripture. As the story unfolds, hope that the promised Seed who will bring salvation awaits the time which is not yet come. Concurrent with this escalating hope, one finds woven into the storyline characters, events, settings, and plotted conflict, all posing as puzzling enigmas, riddles, prefigurements, and conundrums that tantalize and add to anticipation that builds toward the plotline's climax so that when the time is fulfilled and the mystery finally reaches its climactic point of revelation, with its multifaceted culmination, as with the two disciples Jesus met along the Emmaus road, readers smack their foreheads with their palms and exclaim, "But, of course! There it was all along. It was right before my very eyes from the beginning. How could I have missed it? How could I not have seen it until it was made obvious to me?"

What is now revealed is what was always there in plain sight to be seen for all who have eyes. Such is the way the Old Testament was written. Such is the way Scripture bears witness to Christ Jesus. Such is the way Jesus reveals his kingdom (cf. Mark 4:10ff). Such is what dawns upon Paul by way of his encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. Thus, Paul writes, "Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery concealed for long ages, but is now disclosed through the prophetic scriptures, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known for the obedience of faith unto all the Gentiles–to the only wise God through Jesus Christ, to him be glory forever" (Rom 16:25-27). The same Scriptures that concealed the mystery for long ages are the media through which the mystery is now revealed. Thus, the enigmatic and concealing features within Scripture's storyline, no less than the straightforward promises and predictions, are integral to the gospel's fulfillment and revelation, even though recognized most fully only from the vantage point of fulfillment.[14]

### *The Law, as Old Testament Scripture, Authorizes Paul's Appeal to Allegory*

Translators and exegetes tend to take Paul's statement, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, as "these things are *interpreted* allegorically."[15] Acceptance of this translation tends to locate authorization of Paul's use of the Genesis story in the apostle's interpretive method, implying that the allegory is not located in the Old Testament itself. As a corrective, this essay proposes a more careful identification of Paul's warrants for his use of the Abraham story in Genesis because Paul's fourfold explicit reference to Scripture, including his introductory formula, "for it is written that Abraham had two sons" (4:22), requires that ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα be understood in the sense, "these things are written allegorically."[16] Consequently, the Old Testament text itself authorizes Paul, who has seen Christ Jesus to whom the Scriptures bear witness, to say, "These women are two covenants."[17] Indeed, Paul's reception of the gospel, not through any human agency but by the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11ff), reveals to him the mystery that had previously remained concealed from him, namely "God's Son" (1:16). This also entails the revelation of ἡ πίστις (3:23), which Paul presents as *objectified*, a substitute for the revelation of Abraham's Seed, the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.[18]

Despite the fact that no fewer than four explicit appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures enclose Paul's use of the present passive participle in the statement, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, most exegetes reason that unlike his ordinary reading of Scripture, in this case Paul interprets the Abraham narrative by assigning allegorical or symbolic representation (not written into the original text) to its personages and events above and beyond their originally designed *prima facie* function.[19] Yet, scholars want to distinguish Paul's appeal to allegory from Philo's and that of the later Alexandrian school while accepting the Antiochene notion that if the Genesis narrative itself entails allegory then it is not historical.[20] Some concede that "allegorical interpretation" enters in so that "Gal. 4:21-31 is a

highly allegorical representation of Old Testament history" with Paul appealing to "hidden and symbolic meanings in the words," reflecting a general Jewish background.[21] Most reflect the influence of a school of thought that largely dominates, looking to interpretive practices within Second Temple Jewish literature to account for Paul's uses of the Old Testament. This leads many to scour the literature, especially rabbinic literature, to explain that Paul's uses of the Old Testament are hardly distinguishable from the Jewish rabbis' appropriation techniques.[22] Consequently, ignored is the need to locate the Old Testament textual *warrants* for Paul's appeal to allegory in the Genesis text because leading exegetes contend that, on passages such as Galatians 4:21-31, believers should be content with accepting and reproducing the apostle's *conclusions* without being able to trace or to reproduce the apostle's *exegetical procedures* as normative for Christians to follow.[23] D. A. Carson correctly objects.

> Even if one distinguishes between appropriation techniques and hermeneutical assumptions, something crucial seems to be missing: appealing to hermeneutical assumptions to explain the difference in the exegetical results of Paul the Pharisee and the exegetical results of Paul the apostle is in danger of saying no more than that now that Paul is a Christian, inevitably he finds Christian themes in the Old Testament that he did not find there before. At one level, of course, that is true, and Paul would admit it: it was his conversion on the Damascus road that enabled him to see many things in a new perspective.[24]

Is it not unreasonable to think that Paul expects to convince his converts by grounding his argument in Gal 4:21-31 in nothing more than his adeptness to spin an impressive allegory from the Genesis narrative on the authority of a Christophany, his reception of "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:12ff)? Is it not necessary to inquire how Paul's use of Scripture methodologically differs from that of his Jewish opponents who trouble the Galatians so that he proves his opponents wrong and convinces his converts? How does Paul justify his finding an allegory *in the Old Testament text itself* and do so with the expectation that his readers will track with him?

Belief that Paul devised the allegory and assigned symbolic representations to features in the Abraham narrative that were neither in the historic personages and events nor in the writing of the Old Testament narrative seems to dominate exegetical essays and commentaries concerning Galatians 4:21-31.[25] These approaches are less than satisfying for at least two reasons.

First, Paul appeals to Scripture with expectations that his readers will be able to recognize in the Genesis narrative the allegory that he claims is actually there. In 4:21-31 he brackets his appeal to the Genesis allegory by pressing his singular lead question, "Do you not hear the Law?" (4:21) with his reprise, "But what does the Scripture say?" (4:30). Do not these questions together constrain Paul's readers to refuse to accept his conclusions as warranted apart from being able to trace, to embrace, and to reproduce his exegetical reasoning and argument as integral to, normative for, and eliciting Christian faith? Otherwise, how can Gentile believers be convinced that Scripture, not nimble manipulation of Scripture, legitimately leads to Paul's conclusion, "So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman?"

Second, as Steven DiMattei demonstrates, examination of ancient sources shows that the predominant use of the verb ἀλληγορέω among ancient authors is with the sense "'to *speak* allegorically', in which case it is usually the original author or the personified text itself which speaks allegorically."[26] Tryphon (ca. 60-10 B.C.), a Greek grammarian from Alexandria, provides examples of fourteen kinds of tropes among which is ἀλληγορία which he describes as "an enunciation which while signifying one thing literally, brings forth the thought of something else."[27] Likewise, Pseudo-Heraclitus writes, "The trope that says one thing but signi-

fies something other than what is said is called by the name *allegoria*."[28] So Paul's appeal to Scripture which, though portraying one thing—the birthing of two sons to Abraham from two different women—signifies something else—spiritual lineage from two distinct and different covenants—entails the trope, allegory, when he writes, "These things are *written allegorically*." The focus of Paul's appeal to Scripture, lineage or origin of birth, signaled by the genitives following the preposition *ek* (ἐκ)—one *from* the slave woman and one *from* the free woman (ἕνα ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης καὶ ἕνα ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρας), prepares for his explicit uncommon metaphor: "These women are two covenants" (4:24).[29]

The first of these two observations deserves fuller consideration. The notion that Paul assigns allegorical significance to the elements of the Genesis narrative does not adequately account for the apostle's fourfold appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures to authorize his claim, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα (4:24), where the participle is a plural substantive standing in the predicate following the plural subject, ἅτινα, which refers to Abraham, his two sons, the two women, and the two ways of birthing the sons. Given his repeated explicit appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures and his express declaration, ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα, it is difficult to understand Paul's claim to mean anything other than *these things are written allegorically*, indicating that the Genesis narrative itself, which is historical in character, was written so that the personages and events portrayed, symbolically represent things beyond themselves.[30] Ponder the care with which Paul places his use of ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα within no fewer than four explicit appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures, two bracketing on either side.[31]

If the Galatians want to be subject to the law, then they should give proper attention to hear what the Law actually says. So, Paul structures the whole paragraph in 4:21-31 around one command from the Law that the Galatians who are tempted to heed the Judaizers' "other gospel" need to obey—*Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free woman* (4:30).[32]

Paul begins his four explicit appeals to Scripture by asking, "Speak to me, you who crave to be under the law, do you not hear the Law?" (v. 21). Paul's question seems purposely a play on the meaning of *the Law*.[33] While Paul's dispute with his opponents concerning who constitutes the children of Abraham entails God's restricted jurisdiction given to *the law as covenant*, the apostle questions the Galatians whether they are actually listening to *the Law*.[34] Thus, with this pun on *the Law*, requiring readers to distinguish the Law of Moses *as Scripture* which contains the Law of Moses *as covenant*, Paul makes his first express appeal to Scripture, the Pentateuch (cf. Rom 3:21; Luke 24:44).

Following this lead interrogative he offers an affirmative appeal to the Old Testament to authorize his reasoning concerning the gospel, *for it is written* (γέγραπται γάρ, Gal 4:22). This introductory formula ordinarily prefaces a direct quotation from the Old Testament (as in 3:10, 13; 4:27). However, here it introduces Paul's summation of the Genesis narrative concerning strikingly different births of two sons to Abraham, one born *according to the flesh* (κατὰ σάρκα) and the other *through promise* (δι᾽ ἐπαγγελίας), from two starkly different women, one a *slave* and the other *free*.[35] Thus, the common introductory formula of 4:22—*for it is written* (γέγραπται γάρ)—governs the present passive participle, ἀλληγορούμενα (4:24), giving it the natural sense, *these things are written allegorically*.

Paul repeats his common introductory formula again to authorize his argument in 4:27—*for it is written*—to preface his direct quotation of Isaiah 54:1, which because it puzzles exegetes, often receives little comment, if any.[36] Paul's fourth authoritative appeal to Scripture, when he repeats the question with which he begins the paragraph with the pun on *the law* confirms taking ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα as *these things are written allegorically*. As he begins by interrogating, "Do you

not hear the Law [i.e., Scripture]?" (4:21), so in 4:30 he enforces his initial appeal with a reprise, a kind of inclusio, that presses the first question again, "But what does the Scripture say?"

## A CHIASTIC & BRACKETING ARRANGEMENT OF CITATION FORMULAS

| Verses | Chiasm | Scripture Citation Formula |
|---|---|---|
| 4:21 | **A** | **Do you not hear the Law?** |
| 4:22 | B | For it is written |
| 4:24 | C | These things are written allegorically |
| 4:27 | B′ | For it is written |
| 4:30 | **A′** | **But what does the Scripture say?** |

Between his initial (A) and reprising (A') interrogatives, forming a bracket, Paul twice affirms, "for it is written" (B, B') and these authoritative appeals to Scripture enclose the assertion (C), "These things are written allegorically." Paul, in other words, does not relent. The Scriptures—Genesis and Isaiah—authorize his dual concluding appeal to the Galatians: (1) to cast out the Sinai covenant and its descendants, the Judaizers and those who preach "another gospel," and (2) to affirm that Gentile believers are children of promise. If Paul expects the Galatians to obey the Law's command ("Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free woman."), then he also obliges them to trace his reasoning and recognize that Scripture warrants his appeal for the Galatians to obey this command from the Law. This means that the apostle expects the Galatians and contemporary exegetes to recognize allegory within Genesis itself, authorizing his use of the Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar narrative in 4:21-31.

## THE ABRAHAM NARRATIVE AND PAUL'S ARGUMENT

Debate continues whether Galatians 4:21-31 is more directly related to what precedes (2:11-4:20) or to what follows (5:2-6:10) and what function the passage has in that relationship. The prevailing view has been that 4:21-31 constitutes the last in a series of arguments that support Paul's thesis in 2:15-21.[37] More recently Longenecker proposed that 4:12 begins what he describes as a "deliberative" rhetorical section concluding at 6:10, following the "forensic" rhetorical portion of 1:6-4:11.[38] Keeping in mind that Longenecker regards 4:21-31 as an *ad hominem* or emotional argument (note 19 above), it is understandable that he regards the passage "as part of his appeals and exhortations headed by the imperative 'become like me!' of 4:12."[39] Despite arguments to the contrary, no alternative view has received wide acceptance among scholars to replace the traditional view that 4:21-5:1 is the final segment of Paul's argument that begins in 3:1.[40]

### *Galatians 4:21-5:1: Climax of the Abraham Narrative in Paul's Rhetorical Argument*

Given the prominence of the Abraham narrative throughout Paul's argument, in 3:1-5:1, it hardly seems plausible that 4:21-5:1 is an "afterthought"[41] but that Paul's citation of the Law's command—"Cast out the slave woman and her son!"—is the fitting climax of the entire segment (3:1-5:1).[42] Hays observes, "It is a stunning rhetorical moment. Paul has saved his ace, his most dramatic argument for the end. If the Galatians have followed Paul's exposition of the allegory, they will not miss the import of this command: Scripture is speaking directly to them, telling them to throw out the rival Missionaries and their converts."[43] It seems that Hays and others correctly read 4:21-5:1 as the rhetorical climax of Paul's foregoing argument rather than as the beginning of what follows.

As already noted, use of the Abraham narrative of Genesis enters much earlier in Paul's argument than in 4:21-31.[44] Appeals to the narrative reflect historical progression in the Abraham story, from reception of promise to the birth of two sons. This correlates with Paul's insistence that close attention to the storyline within the Books of Moses is indispensable for correctly recognizing that because the promise to Abraham antedates the giving of the law (3:17); the law covenant, rather than modifying the promise, is eclipsed by it (3:18ff).[45]

So, early in Galatians 3 Paul appeals to Genesis 12 and 15 "as the locus of the definitive statement of, and scriptural proof for"[46] linking the Galatians' reception of the Spirit with Abraham's being declared righteous (καθώς, *just as*, Gal 3:5-6). This deserves closer attention to be provided below. Likewise, Paul features Genesis 12, 15, and 22 in his argument of Gal 3:16, when he asserts, "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed . . . who is Christ."[47] Paul's appeal to the Abraham narrative reaches its apex in 4:21-31 as he inquires "Speak to me, you who crave to be under the law, do you not hear the Law?" and asserts that Abraham's two sons, their mothers, and the ways they gave birth to the sons are written allegorically.

The Galatians need a brisk refresher concerning the significance of their reception of the Spirit. Strong as are both (1) Paul's indictment, "O, foolish Galatians!", and (2) his question, "Who has bewitched you?", the important thing is, as Stephen Fowl observes, "that Paul is the one who both establishes the hermeneutical priority of the Galatians' experience of the Spirit and interprets this experience as a sign of participation in the blessing promised to Abraham."[48] That Paul is willing to suspend his entire case against the Judaizers upon one question must not be missed. His singular question would be to no avail but would be counterproductive, if reception of the Spirit, including miracles and signs, accompanied the Judaizers' preaching.

Paul inquires, "I want to learn from you only this: Did you receive the Spirit *from the deeds required by the law* or *from the hearing of faith*?"[49] Whatever may be the precise nuances of the two contrasting expressions beginning with *from* (ἐκ), that they refer to the Mosaic Law covenant and the gospel (promise), respectively, is sufficient for present concerns.[50] Paul's initial appeal to the Galatians, while interested with sequence—whether they received the Spirit (1) from his proclamation of the gospel among them, or (2) from the Judaizers' later attempts to impose the law upon them—also concerns the effects and consequences of receiving the Spirit (cf. 3:3-5). This is made obvious when Paul not only reiterates the question but also links the Galatians' reception of the Spirit with Abraham's reception of justification. For Paul, "possession of the Spirit seals the actuality of righteousness," for the status of divine sonship is confirmed in the believer's heart by the Spirit's cry, "Abba! Father! (4:6).[51]

The poignancy of the apostle's questions seems more fully expressed in what he writes to the Corinthians:

> Now we received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, in order that we might understand the things freely given to us by God. And we are speaking these things not in words taught by human wisdom but words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to those who are spiritual. But the natural man does not accepts the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:12-14).

The priority of the Spirit in Paul's argument essentially raises the question whether (1) having the Spirit brings light and understanding to Scripture, or (2) having the Scriptures brings the Spirit (cf. John 5:39).[52] The priority of receiving the Spirit does not induce Paul either to dismiss Scripture's pertinence, or to impose his own interpretations upon the biblical text. Instead, Paul beckons the Galatians to acknowledge that their reception of the Spirit entails removal of the veil from their eyes

(cf. 2 Cor 3:16), providing the aperture through which the disparate and diverse disclosures of the Old Testament come into proper focus in the person of the resurrected Christ. In other words, Paul reasonably expects the Galatians to trace his argument through to his conclusions, climaxing in the allegory from Genesis.[53]

Paul underscores correlation between the Galatians and Abraham in at least two notable ways. First, Paul correlates the Galatians' reception of the Spirit with Abraham's being declared righteous (καθώς, *just as*, Gal 3:5-6). Second, he stresses that the gospel was proclaimed to both, even using compound verbs with the pro- prefix to aid the associations.[54] Of the Galatians he writes, "O foolish Galatians! Who bewitched you, before whose eyes *Jesus Christ crucified was publicly placarded*?" (3:1). Concerning Abraham he says, "The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles ἐκ πίστεως, *preaching the gospel in advance* to Abraham, 'In you all the nations will be blessed" (3:8).[55] Paul confirms the correlation between the Galatians and Abraham by writing in 3:9, "So then, those who are ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with faithful Abraham," which he validates by conflating Gen 12:3; 18:18; and 22:18.[56]

Yet there is more, for the query concerning reception of the Spirit correlates the Galatians not only with Abraham's being declared righteous (3:5-6) but also with Paul, for their reception of the Spirit is not unlike his reception of the gospel "through revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:11-12) in so far as the veil lifted from his and their eyes. As Beverly Gaventa has shown, Paul's conversion is paradigmatic "as an example of the gospel's singular and exclusive power to overthrow human conventions, commitments, and values and to replace those with 'the faith of Jesus Christ' (2:16)."[57] Thus, Paul draws upon his experience of the gospel's power to exhort the Galatians. Yet, as Stockhausen insightfully observes, Paul's letter to the Galatians reflects a "constitutive presence of Abraham's story" so that, even though Paul does not cite the Genesis narrative in Galatians 1 and 2, "the story of Abraham is a remarkable parallel at its earliest point to Paul's own story and to the pattern which the Galatians have followed and to which Paul writes to exhort them to remain constant."[58] Thus, Stockhausen suggests that portions of Paul's letter to the Galatians not ordinarily read as governed by his scriptural argument, for example 4:12-20, invite reconsideration. Is it plausible, then, that Paul's statement, "you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus," reflects "the ambiguity of Gen. 18.2, 9-10, 13 and so on between the angelic figures and the Lord alone"?[59]

For example, correlations between the Galatians and Abraham appear natural in Galatians 4:8ff. For the Galatians were Gentiles formerly enslaved to those things that by nature are not gods, not unlike Abraham before the Lord called him. Likewise, Paul characterizes the call of the Galatians like the call of Abraham when he writes, "But now that you have come to know God, or rather, to be known by God, how are you turning back again toward the weak and worthless rudiments whose slaves you desire to become again?" (4:9). Paul's grammatical adjustment to the passive voice mid-sentence underscores that their call originates in divine initiative—"known by God"—just as Abraham's call (Gen 12:1).[60]

If Stockhausen's suggestion is correct that Paul's pattern throughout his letter to Galatians correlates with the Abraham narrative, given Paul's imagery in Gal 4:19—"My children, for whom I am again overcome with the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you"—what if the apostle's maternally voiced endearment and distress over his spiritual children reflects correlation with the protracted time of anticipation Abraham and Sarah awaited the promised son, during which time the son of the slave woman was conceived and born?[61] The question has merit, for Paul's prior argument that Christ (1) is the Seed to whom the promises were spoken (3:16) and (2) is God's Son who was born of a woman under the law in the fullness of time prepares for Paul's arresting claim that he is in the throes and travail of birth pangs concerning his

children for whom he labors (cf. 4:11) that they might be the seed of Abraham.[62] This imagery of the apostle's travailing to give birth distinctly correlates to and anticipates the barren woman who is *not* in labor pains but who will have more children than the woman who has a husband.[63] Is it too much to suppose that the apostle is implying that his apostolic call catches him up into eschatological identity with Sarah, the barren woman, as he travails in birth pains in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the desolate woman?[64]

The birth Paul awaits is *through promise*, not *according to the flesh* (cf. 4:23). This birth is of God, not of his own doing. Accordingly, in preparation for his allegory from Genesis (4:21-31), Paul gives his metaphor an unexpected turn. What the maternal imagery evokes is wholly inadequate to give full expression to the richness of his apostolic and pastoral endearment for and travail over his spiritual children. This is so because, even though he labors for his converts, that which he desires to be formed is not within himself.[65] In fact, not even his children are to be formed. On the contrary, the birth for which Paul endures labor pains is the divine birth of *Christ's becoming incarnate within the Galatians*.[66] Therefore, Paul writes, "My children, for whom I am again overcome with the pains of childbirth *until Christ is formed in you*." This is how the promise spoken to Abraham—"In you all the nations shall be blessed" (3:8)—now realizes fulfillment. As God's Son became incarnate through the woman who bore him, so Paul is in anguish until Christ, the promised Seed, is formed within the Galatians (ἐν ὑμῖν) through the agency of his ministry.[67]

How fitting it is, then, that following this rich imagery Paul offers his final appeal to the Galatians with the allegory from the Genesis narrative concerning Abraham. He does so to clinch his argument with the dual conclusion that the Galatians should: (1) banish the Sinai covenant and its adherents from their midst, and (2) be firmly convinced of their birth as children of the free woman, not of the slave woman (4:21-31).

### *The Use of Scripture in Galatians 4:21-5:1 within Paul's Rhetorical Argument*

At last, the dominant questions that generated and have guided this essay emerge to be answered directly. Much has been stated already concerning warrants located within the latter day revelation of the mystery to Paul through the theophanic appearance of Christ on the road to Damascus. What remains is to locate warrants within the Abraham narrative in Genesis for Paul's claim that "these things were written allegorically" and to understand what authorizes his use of Isa 54:1.

Paul's climactic paragraph consists of three segments. First, the apostle summarizes featured elements of the Abraham narrative. "Speak to me, you who crave to be under the law, do you not hear the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one from the slave woman and one from the free woman. But the son from the slave woman was born according to the flesh, and the free son was born through promise." Second, Paul explains those things he cites from Scripture. He announces, "These things are written allegorically, for these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, who is Hagar, giving birth into slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and represents the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, who is our mother." Then Paul provides supporting scriptural explanation by quoting Isa 54:1, "Rejoice, barren woman who bears no children; burst out with son and cry aloud, you who are not in labor pains! For more are the children of the forsaken woman that those of the woman who has the husband." Third, the apostle applies the allegory as he presses its significance upon the Galatians:

> Now you, brothers, in accord with Isaac are children of promise. But just as at that time the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so also now. But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free

> woman. Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman. For unto freedom Christ set us free; stand firm then and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Paul frames his interrogative—"Speak to me, you who crave to be under the law, do you not hear the Law?" (v. 21)—with negative connotations and sarcasm entailing references to both time and status. His expression, to be *under the law* (ὑπὸ νόμον) occurs three previous times in the letter (3:23; 4:4, 5). These uses show that wanting to be *under the law* is to desire regression to *childhood*; to the era before *the fullness of time*; to the status of nonage, of slavery, of being confined under the law's custody; to dwell under the law's curse, a grave and undesirable condition from which one needs redemption that only Christ provides. Thus, to desire to be *under the law* is tantamount to repudiating God's Son who was born *under the law* for the very purpose that he might become a curse to redeem those who were *under the law* (3:13), that they might receive adoption as sons (4:5), a point Paul later underscores (5:4).

As shown earlier, the apostle's lead question points the Galatians to his climactic question, "What does the Scripture say?" (4:30). If the Galatians actually hear what the Law commands, they will act upon its command: "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free woman." True as it is that Paul's citation of Scripture to warrant this conclusion is evident, appealing to the Abraham narrative of Genesis and to Isa 54:1 as he does, what warrants Paul's use of these portions of Scripture? What justifies his claim that the Genesis narrative entails allegory?

As one begins to search for answers to these questions, given Paul's use of Isa 54:1, it becomes apparent that Paul does not originate the allegory. Furthermore, that Genesis, not Isaiah, establishes the Sarah-Hagar allegory is evident because Paul writes, "for it is written that Abraham had two sons" (4:22), which the apostle claims is "written allegorically."

It may be instructive to observe that for Paul, use of Sarah from Isa 54:1 is not unlike use of Melchizedek from Ps 110:4 is for the writer of Hebrews. As David, in Ps 110:4, does not originate the Melchizedek typology, so Isaiah does not create the Sarah-Hagar allegory. Sarah and Melchizedek have this in common. Outside the Genesis narrative both receive only one explicit mention in the remainder of the Old Testament. Hebrews devotes far more to Melchizedek from the scant mentions of him in Gen 14:18-20 and in Ps 110:4, and much of this from what is not written of him (Heb 7:1-10), than Paul gives to Sarah from numerous accounts concerning her in Genesis and one explicit mention in Isa 51:2 besides the allusive reference in 54:1. Therefore, because Isaiah's allusive use of Sarah and of Hagar in 54:1 goes beyond the bare storyline of Genesis, it seems apparent that the prophet provides an aperture or lens that sharpens the focus for the apostle to see the allegory that actually is present in Genesis.[68]

Isaiah and Paul recognize that the narrative story in Genesis is laden with clusters of symbolic representations concerning salvation that is to come in latter days. For both apostle and prophet the text is a scriptural account of historical persons divinely invested with symbolic significances that transcend their own experiences and times, converging together within an allegorical story, bearing significance that reconfirms the promise and engenders hope that the promise will be fulfilled in the latter days when Messiah, Abraham's true seed, is to be revealed. Thus, by quoting Isa 54:1, Paul is drawing the Galatians' attention to the fact that what they are now experiencing at the hands of those who trouble them with a different gospel was allegorically written long ago *in nuce* in the Genesis narrative that entails Abraham, Sarah (the desolate woman), Hagar (the woman with the husband), and the contrasting conceptions and births of two boys.

As this essay begins to draw to a close, the following presentation of the warrants for Paul's uses

of the Genesis narrative and Isaiah is intended to be evocative, not exhaustive, and instructive, not conclusive.

## SARAH'S DESOLATION, DIVINE OBSTACLE TO GOD'S PROMISES

For both the apostle Paul and the prophet Isaiah, essential to the Abraham narrative of Genesis is the divinely plotted obstacle expressed in Gen 11:30, "Now Sarah was barren, and she had no child."[69] The entire story of Abraham and God's promises in Genesis emerges from and proceeds upon the premise that Sarah is incapable of bearing children. Thus, from the outset, the writer of Genesis signals two decisive features. Of first importance is Sarah's need for God to intervene miraculously on her behalf, if she is to bear a child. Second, the story entailing Sarah, Abraham, and God's promise of seed to them, that accents their creaturely helplessness to reverse the reproach of barrenness, is larger than life, larger than any of the individual personages within the story, thus infusing symbolic significances into the story that reach beyond the characters and events themselves, even if the one who writes the story does not fully grasp these significances in anticipation of the promise's fulfillment. To paraphrase his words elsewhere, Paul recognizes that *these things in the Abraham narrative took place allegorically, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come* (cf. 1 Cor 10:11).

The import of the story's premise promptly becomes evident in Genesis 12. Thus, even before God speaks his promise to Abraham, the humanly insurmountable impediment to the promise's fulfillment is already known both by those in the story and by readers. Given Sarah's sterility, how will God surmount his own imposed impediment in order to keep his promise to Abraham that "in you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (12:3) and "to your seed I will give this land" (12:7)? The plot thickens as the promise repeatedly hangs upon the scantest thread of hope as recipients of the promise are constrained to trust in God alone.

## SARAH THE DESOLATE AND HAGAR THE WIFE

Both age and aging exacerbate the obstacle posed by Sarah's barrenness. When the Lord initially speaks the promise to him in Haran, Abraham is already seventy-five years old. Ten years after entering Canaan, when Abraham is eighty-five and Sarah is still barren, *she gave her servant Hagar to be Abraham's wife* that he might father the promised son with her (Gen 16:3-4). That Sarah gave Hagar to be Abraham's *wife* accounts for Isaiah's words, "For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children *of her who is married*."[70] Sarah, in her desolation, requires a husband greater than Abraham, if she is to bear the promised son. In the portion not explicitly cited by Paul but nonetheless surely included by implicature and to be inferred by readers, Isaiah depicts God as the husband who ends Sarah's reproach in that he reverses Israel's.[71]

Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;
be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced;
for you will forget the shame of our youth,
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.
For your Maker is your husband,
the LORD of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called.
For the LORD has called you
like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit,
like a wife of youth when she is cast off,
says your God.
For a brief moment I deserted you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.
In overflowing anger for a moment
I hid my face from you,
But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer (Isa 54:4-8).

Abraham is eighty-six when Ishmael is born (Gen 16:16). Thirteen years later, in Abraham's

ninety-ninth year, the Lord reaffirms his covenant promise (Gen 17:1). Of Sarah, God says, "I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her" (17:15 ESV). Abraham responds, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" (17:17 ESV). At last, just as God promised, in Abraham's one hundredth year Sarah gives birth to Isaac, Abraham's son (21:1, 5).

Then another divinely imposed obstacle to the fulfillment of God's promises enters the story. It intrudes at the Lord's own command to Abraham to slay his promised son as a sacrifice (22:2), an obstacle God designs to test Abraham's faith but also to function as a parable. The whole episode dramatically represents things greater than its individual components.[72] Isaac lives because of substitutionary sacrifice, surely a feature that shadows heavenly things and foreshadows things to come, hinted at in Isaac's presageful query, "My father! Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (22:7 ESV), but also in Abraham's equally prophetic and confident reply, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (22:8 ESV).

## SARAH'S DESOLATION ENTAILS PREFIGUREMENT

In Genesis the impediment that Sarah's barrenness poses to fulfillment of God's promise is the beginning of a significant theme extending through Genesis and beyond, reaching all the way to the birth narrative in Luke's Gospel. Besides Sarah, two further iterations of barrenness within the narrative both entail covenant couples who are direct descendents of Abraham and Sarah. Rebekah is barren, but like his father, Isaac implores the Lord's favor and she gives birth to twins (Gen 25:21-24). Barrenness, which at this juncture is expressly revealed as divinely imposed, is a motif that continues with Rachel whose rivalry with her sister, Leah, moves her to imitate Sarah by giving her servant (Bilnah) to Jacob as a wife to bear children in her place (30:1-2).[73] At last the Lord opens her womb with the birth of Joseph, as Rachel acknowledges saying, "God has taken away my reproach. May the Lord add to me another son!" (30:22-24 ESV).

Is it not significant that at crucial moments in Israel's history that a barren woman embodies, as it were, Israel's desolation and hope in that the Lord favors the woman with the birth of a son who becomes Israel's deliverer?[74] Is it not worthy of mention that a barren woman, Elizabeth (Luke 1:7), miraculously conceives and gives birth to Messiah's cousin and herald, John the Baptist? Thus, it is fitting that, as the mother of Israel, Sarah's desolation representatively foreshadows the nation's desolation out of which hope arises (cf. Isa 1:7; 5:9; 6:11; 13:9; 17:9; 24:13). It is not surprising, then, that the desolation motif plays a significant role throughout Isaiah (cf. 49:8; 49:19; 54:1, 3; 62:4; 64:10), whom Paul quotes (Gal 4:27). In as much as the Seed to whom the promise was spoken was born of a woman in the fullness of time, Paul cites Isaiah who suggests that Sarah, figuratively speaking "remained barren throughout history until the coming of her child, Christ (recall Gal 3:16, 19)."[75] For Isaiah, Sarah's desolation prefigures Zion, and her giving birth to Isaac foreshadows the birthing of those "who pursue righteousness" and "seek the Lord" (51:1-2). Entailed and therefore implicit within Sarah's desolation and miraculous giving of birth to a people who seek the Lord and pursue righteousness is what plays out in the drama on the mountain. There, Isaac is cast in the role of symbolically representing a people for whom substitutionary sacrifice takes place as the lamb, about which he presciently inquired earlier (Gen 22:7), intercedes as Isaac's substitute, not only sparing his life but also sustaining God's promise.

## SARAH'S BARRENNESS CALLS FOR FAITH IN GOD WHO GIVES LIFE

The barrenness motif's inception and recursion in Genesis makes clear that fulfillment of God's promise concerning the seed is not subject to the will of human flesh but, as with the person-

ages in the Bible's storyline, beckons readers to lift their eyes of faith upward to the giver of life, to the Lord who closes and opens the womb, bringing forth life from deadness,[76] but also simultaneously directs their eyes ever forward along the storyline to anticipate a future manifestation of God's power to fulfill his promises in Abraham's seed. As with the personages within the narrative, so also for those who read the patriarchal story, the barrenness theme heightens anticipation and hope that God will fulfill his promises through those uncommonly conceived and born. Each one, however, one after the other—Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—born in a singular manner, also receives God's reconfirmation of the promises first spoken to Abraham (26:3-4, 24; 28:3-4, 12-15; 35:9-15; 48:3-6). These individual reaffirmations of the promises point to future fulfillment. Each recipient of covenant reaffirmation holds fast these promises in anticipation of their fulfillment, yet each one dies, not seeing the promises fulfilled (cf. Heb 11:39). Nevertheless, they prefigure another who would be uncommonly conceived but who would also receive what was promised. This one singularly conceived, to whom the promise is spoken, is Christ, Abraham's Seed (Gal 4:4; 3:16).[77]

## THE COVENANT SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION AND THE THING SIGNIFIED

Without dispute the Genesis narrative grounds Paul's observation that one son was born *according to the flesh* (κατὰ σάρκα) but the other was born *through promise* (δι' ἐπαγγελίας). Elsewhere Paul uses the phrase *according to the flesh* with no negative connotations when simply referring to ethnic descent (Rom 9:3), even referring to Christ's physical descent (Rom 1:3; 9:5). In Gal 4:23 the phrase *according to the flesh* is not uncomplimentary in so far as it refers to ordinary physical conception and birth. However, because Paul juxtaposes *through promise* (δι' ἐπαγγελίας) in Gal 4:23 with *according to the flesh*, the latter phrase takes on a pejorative connotation. This negative sense is present because God inextricably binds his promise concerning Abraham's seed to the covenant sign of circumcision. Consequently, while the two expressions feature the two distinct ways by which the sons were born, they also accent the greater spiritual distinctions signified by the sign of the covenant, the circumcision in the flesh. This is what Paul sees in the Abraham narrative of Genesis that leads him to intend a pejorative contrast by juxtaposing *according to the flesh* (κατὰ σάρκα) versus *through promise* (δι' ἐπαγγελίας; 4:23). From this the apostle infers, "But just as at that time the one born *according to the flesh* persecuted the one born *according to the Spirit*, so it is now also" (4:29). By saying "just as *at that time*," Paul indicates this distinction he extrapolates—*according to the flesh* (κατὰ σάρκα) and *according to the Spirit* (κατὰ πνεῦμα)—is present within the Genesis narrative because *to be born through promise* (δι' ἐπαγγελίας) signifies heavenly birth that is not subject to the will of human flesh (cf. John 1:13).

From the beginning, to bear only the *sign* of the covenant in the flesh, the removal of the foreskin (Gen 17:11), while not possessing the *spiritual reality* to which the ritual cutting points, rendered one Abraham's seed born *according to the flesh* (κατὰ σάρκα) but not Abraham's seed born *through promise* (δι' ἐπαγγελίας). Is this not precisely what Paul claims elsewhere? He does so when he writes, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring" (Rom 9:6-8 ESV; cf. 2:17-29). Though Ishmael bears the sign of the covenant in his flesh (Gen 17:23), he lacks the spiritual reality signified by the covenant sign. Thus, even though he is from Abraham, he is not of Abraham's seed. On the other hand, Isaac, who receives the sign of the covenant after Ishmael (Gen 21:4), also possesses the spiritual reality symbolically represented by the sign, a heart circumcised by the Spirit (cf. Rom 2:29),

manifest by his belief in God who alone brings forth life from what is dead (Gen 25:21; cf. Rom 4:17ff).[78]

At the risk of importing extraneous categories, in the Abraham narrative Paul finds the vertical axis distinguishing *what is of heaven* from *what is of earth* as his contrasts show.

What emerges to the foreground is the vertical axis made obvious in the contrast between "the Jerusalem now" and "the Jerusalem above" (4:25). If Paul's argument in Gal 3:15-4:6 proceeds largely along the temporal axis of revelation's progression, entailing *before* the coming of the Seed and *now* that the Seed has come (cf. esp. 3:15-25), in 4:21-31 his argument accents the vertical axis while retaining the temporal. The temporal axis recedes without disappearing, made evident in Paul's comparison: "just as *at that time* . . . so also it is *now*" (4:29).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4:22 | One born κατὰ σάρκα | The other born δι᾽ ἐπαγγελίας |
| 4:25 | ἡ νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ | ἡ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ |
| 4:29 | The one born κατὰ σάρκα | The one born κατὰ πνεῦμα |

As argued earlier, much in the Genesis narrative warrants the vertical axis observed in uses by both Isaiah and Paul. Paul attributes the allegory to Genesis, including the two women as two covenants, two mountains, and two Jerusalems, before he states, "for it is written" and then quotes Isa 54:1 to ground his claim, "Now the Jerusalem above is free, who is our mother" (Gal 4:26).[79] Given Paul's knowledge of Isaiah, it may seem odd that at this juncture he does not cite 51:2. Here, not only is Sarah's role as mother more expressly mentioned, but this is also the only Old Testament use of Sarah's name outside Genesis.

> Look to Abraham your father
> and to Sarah who bore you;
> for he was but one when I called him,
> that I might bless him and multiply him
> (Isa 51:2; ESV).[80]

Instead, Paul quotes 54:1.[81]

> "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear;
> break forth into singing and cry aloud,
> you who have not been in labor!
> For the children of the desolate one will be more
> than the children of her who is married," says
> the LORD (Isa 54:1; ESV).

Surely, Paul cites Isa 54:1 because of verbal similarities with Gen 11:30, for both passages accent Sarah's barrenness.[82] In addition to *barrenness* as a catchword, Paul uses Isa 54:1 and not 51:2 because it contrasts two women, obliquely referring to Sarah and Hagar. Additionally, the passage evokes "the whole rippling pool of promise found in the latter chapters" of Isaiah including the inclusion of the Gentiles as recipients of Israel's eschatological blessing.[83] Hays rightly observes, "Paul's link between Sarah and a redeemed Jerusalem surely presupposes Isa. 51:2, even though the text is not quoted in Galatians 4. It is Isaiah's metaphorical linkage of Abraham and Sarah with an eschatologically restored Jerusalem that warrants Paul's use of Isa. 54:1."[84]

As argued above, the Genesis narrative concerning Sarah and Hagar, respectively birthing Isaac and Ishmael, establishes that not all who descend from Abraham are his true children. In Isaiah this theme plays out under the imagery of the city of Jerusalem bearing two identities: (1) enslaved Jerusalem, and (2) free Jerusalem. Isaiah cries out against Jerusalem as "an evil seed" (σπέρμα πονηρόν, Isa 1:4) because "they have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel" (ESV 1:4). Jerusalem, "the faithful city has become a whore"; formerly "Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers" (ESV 1:21).

But Isaiah envisions another Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, after the Lord avenges himself

by judging her for her sins and by banishing the evildoers. The city that became a haven for the unrighteous (1:21-23) "shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (ESV 1:26). Here, the Greek text reads a little differently: "shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful *mother city*, Zion" (1:26). Unlike the Hebrew, the Greek text identifies Jerusalem as a *mother* (μητρόπολις πιστὴ Σιών), informing Paul's statement, "Jerusalem, our mother," which he grounds by citing Isa 54:1.[85]

Within the passage Paul cites from the prophet, by synecdoche, Isaiah substitutes the city imagery for the nation in his allusion to Sarah, first as a barren woman (Isa. 54:1) and then as an afflicted city (54:11ff). Zion will be restored (51:3); the desolate woman's offspring will outnumber those of the woman who has the husband (54:1). Thus, Paul cites this passage, for it reflects the Lord's reaffirmation of his promise to Abraham: "I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her" (Gen 17:16). As the Lord reaffirms his promises to Abraham that desolate Sarah will conceive and bear the promised son, so the Lord reaffirms his promises "to the barren woman, Jerusalem, that even though she is as good as dead, she will yet live with her many children."[86]

## CAST OUT THE SLAVE WOMAN

Paul cites Isa 54:1 also because the prophet's implicit association of those who do not pursue righteousness or seek the Lord (51:1) with Hagar, whose son is born according to the flesh, provides the textual bridge to assist his readers to recognize how the Genesis narrative (Gen 21:10) authorizes him (1) to correlate Gentile believers with Isaac as children of promise; (2) to identify the Judaizers with Ishmael and their opposition to Christ's followers with Ishmael's persecution of Isaac, and (3) to equate Sarah's command to Abraham to banish Hagar as the Law's command to the Galatians to cast out the Mosaic Law and its preachers (Gal 4:28-31). The allegorical function of the Genesis narrative concerning Sarah and Hagar warrants Paul to use Sarah's appeal to Abraham with slight adaptation, not merely by application but as Scripture, even the Law, as directly commanding them: "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free woman." Paul's adaptation is slight but significant by replacing "my son Isaac" with "the son of the free woman."[87] The Genesis allegory warrants this alteration, for Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac all bear symbolic representation pointing to things greater than themselves because they are characters in the drama of the fulfillment of God's promise with a trajectory that spans Israel's history under the law until the fullness of time comes when Messiah, the Seed to whom the promises were spoken, is revealed (Gal 3:15-4:1-7). Therefore Paul reprises his question, "Do you not hear the Law?" (4:21) by asking, "But what does the Scripture say?" (4:30) and by answering, "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not receive an inheritance with the son of the free woman" (4:30). Because the slave woman represents the Sinai covenant, Paul means that the Law (as Scripture) commands that the Galatians are to cast out the Sinai covenant with its descendants, the Judaizers, who trouble them with their message that is subversive to the gospel of Jesus Christ because it is of the flesh and not of the Spirit (cf. Gal 3:3).

## CONCLUSION

Where exegetes locate the apostle Paul's warrants for his claim that Scripture's Abraham narrative entails an allegory, whether (1) inscribed in the text of Genesis, (2) formulated by Isaiah's use of the narrative, or (3) forged by the apostle out of his revelatory-enhanced interpretive insight, is not only disputed but raises valid concerns if Christian faith cannot trace or reproduce his exegesis. Thus, how exegetes represent what they think the apostle Paul is doing by citing Scripture the way he does in Gal 4:21-31, if not careful, may result in unintended consequences. In particular, to claim that Paul is engaged in *allegorical interpretation*, though

perhaps not intended, at best states the case poorly because it necessarily implies that the apostle generates the allegory in the same way that describing Paul's use of Scripture in 1 Cor 10:1-11 as *typological interpretation* attributes too much to Paul. To use such designations as *allegorical interpretation* or *typological interpretation*, even if unintended, does at least two things. First, it implies that what Paul now discovers concerning Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures is grounded in little more than his fresh revelatory bias effected by his conversion. Second, it implies that foreshadows of Christ in the Old Testament are rendered so by retrospect after Messiah's coming, thus inadequately accounting for the fact that foreshadows of the Christ really are there to be seen within the Old Testament, albeit often hidden in plain sight, yet capable of being recognized, if one has eyes with which to see.[88]

Fear to be associated with the Alexandrian and later allegorical schools of exegesis begets innovative exegetical efforts to dodge acceptance of Paul's words at face value in Gal 4:24, that those things he references in Genesis are actually written allegorically. This essay proposes that how Paul structures his argument in 4:21-31, explicitly citing Scripture four times to accent by enclosing his claim that "these things are ἀλληγορούμενα," compels readers to understand that he means that the Abraham narrative itself is *written allegorically*. Hence, while Genesis presents the personages and events as real history, also embedded into the text are features that render Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac, with their experiences directed by God's actions among them, all symbolically representative of things greater than themselves.

What Paul is saying in Galatians 4 is akin to what he writes in 1 Corinthians 10, where he states, "Now these things happened to them *typologically*, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (10:11). As with Israel's experiences, so it is with the patriarchs. Under the controlling providence of God, they and their experiences are divinely imbued with figurative significances that foreshadow things to come. As with the writer to the Hebrews, Paul recognizes that the domestic affairs within Abraham's household are *parabolic*. They symbolically represent coming events of vast redemptive significance (cf. Heb 11:19). In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul uses the adverb *typologically* (τυπικῶς, v. 11) to describe how God providentially brought about the discrete events of Israel's experiences which are inscribed within Scripture "for us" (10:1-11). Similarly, in Galatians 4 the apostle uses the participle *written allegorically* (ἀλληγορούμενα, v. 24) to depict how God imbued the features of the continuous narrative of Genesis concerning Abraham and his household with symbolic representation "for us" who are "children of promise in accord with Isaac. This symbolic imbuement, since the gospel was first announced to Abraham, has continuously foreshadowed the coming Seed, calling for belief in God who brings life out of death.

To be sure, the theophanic revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul on the Damascus road, entailing both his conversion from Pharisee to Christian and his call from rabbinic advocate for the law to apostle of the good news of Jesus Christ, alters how he reads and teaches the Law and the Prophets. The veil that covered his heart is now removed.

Thus, Christ's incarnation and his revelatory visit to Paul forms one of two crucial loci that warrant the apostle's understanding and use of the Old Testament Scriptures to ground his proclamation that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises made to Abraham, reaffirmed to the patriarchs, and sustained throughout the prophets. Indeed, his sight of the resurrected Christ marks not only the beginning of his Christian faith but also his role as Christ's apostle. Paul, however, never pulls apostolic rank to ground his gospel exclusively in his revelatory insight acquired by his heavenly visit from the Christ. Paul never acts as if this insight is his alone, as though only he has the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 7:40). On the contrary, he believes the gift of the Spirit universally distinguishes all who belong to Christ (Gal 3:2ff). Therefore, because the Spirit provides spiritual insight and understanding, in all his disputa-

tions concerning the gospel, Paul invariably grounds his gospel in the Old Testament, the second essential locus that authorizes his insistence that Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of God's ancient promises.

Indeed, Paul's reasoning from the Scriptures sometimes is hard to understand (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), as his appeal to Scripture's allegory in Gal 4:21-31 proves to be. This is in large measure due to the nature of Old Testament revelation, which in the very act of revealing the gospel in advance entails concealing of the gospel to await full and clear disclosure in the fullness of time, when Messiah comes. To the degree that Paul's reasoning from Scripture seems clouded, perhaps to that degree the veil has not yet been fully lifted from the eyes of one's heart (2 Cor 3:14-15). Thus, grasping how the Old Testament foreshadows Christ and the gospel calls for patience and requires spiritual insight to trace Paul's reasoning from the Scriptures. It also calls for diligence like the Bereans show as they eagerly welcome the Word but also examine the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul teaches is true (Acts 17:10).

Paul reserves the allegory to serve as the capstone of his argument in Gal 3:1-5:1, thus expecting his readers to trace his reasoning from the Scriptures. Sarah and Hagar with their respective sons, born in vastly different ways, allegorically prefigure two distinctly different covenants and those who trace their spiritual descent from them. Either one's lineage traces to Isaac through promise or to Ishmael from the law covenant. Because the Judaizers trace their lineage to the Sinai covenant, they are children of the slave woman with Ishmael. They are children of Sinai, heirs of the Mosaic law covenant. Their lineage is *according to the flesh*. By stark contrast, believers in Christ, in accord with Isaac, are born *through promise*, born *according to the Spirit*. They are children of the promise, the true seed of Abraham because they belong to Christ, Abraham's Seed to whom the promises were spoken (Gal 3:29, 16).

## ENDNOTES

[1]I am grateful to Lance Kramer for his research assistance during the spring semester 2010. Lance, a 2010 graduate in Biblical Studies from Northwestern College, graciously shared his research for an essay he wrote on Gal 4:21-31 for an independent study.

[2]See Robert J. Kepple, "An Analysis of Antiochene Exegesis of Galatians 4:24-26," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 39 (1977): 239-49. For example, Chrysostom explains that by using ἀλληγορούμενα Paul "inexactly called the type an allegory." Antiochene exegetes wrongly inferred that allegory denies historicity.

[3]Luther writes, "Allegories do not strongly persuade in divinity ... as painting is an ornament to set forth and garnish a house already builded, so is an allegory the light of a matter which is already otherwise proved and confirmed" (*Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, English Translation, 1860, 347). Cf. Timothy H. Mashke, "The Authority of Scripture: Luther's Approach to Allegory in Galatians" *Logia* 4, no. 2 (April 1995): 28. Similarly, Calvin reasons concerning Galatians 4:21-31, "Viewed simply as an argument, it would not be very powerful; but as a confirmation added to a most satisfactory chain of reasoning, it is not unworthy of attention." (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians and Ephesians* [trans. William Pringle; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, n. d.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 134).

[4]In favor of typology, see Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 139-40. See also Andrew Perriman, "Rhetorical Strategy of Galatians 4:21-5:1," *Evangelical Quarterly* 65 (1993): 27. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1982), 217, where he states, "He is not thinking of allegory in the Philonic sense.... [H]e has in mind that form of allegory which is commonly called typology." See idem, "'Abraham Had Two Sons': A Study in Pauline Hermeneutics," in *New Testament Studies: Essays in Honor of Ray Summers in His Sixty-Fifth Year* (ed. by Huber L. Drumwright & Curtis Vaughan; Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1975), 83. See also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), 116. In favor of allegory, see, James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Tes-

tament Commentaries; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 247-48. Cf. Richard Longenecker, *Galatians* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1990), 209-10. See also R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origin's Interpretation of Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1959; repr. 2002), 83, who states, "Paul ... used allegory as an aid to typology, a method of interpreting the Old Testament which, however fanciful some of its forms may be, does at least regard history as something meaningful."

[5]Many leading voices reject the idea that there is any prospective element to be found within the Old Testament types but insist that types are to be understood by way of retrospective interpretations of OT person, institutions, and events. See, e.g., Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 2:363-66, 384; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 39-42; and David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Relationships Between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 197-98.

Even scholars who believe that embedded in the Old Testament types are prospective elements describe their understanding as *typological interpretation* as does James Hamilton: "I would offer the following working definition of typological interpretation: typological interpretation is canonical exegesis that observes divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible" ("Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 4 (2008): 52. Likewise, Paul A. Kramer, who believes that what Paul sees in the Old Testament Scriptures after his reception of the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12, 16), was always there to be seen, uses the confusing designation, *typological interpretation* and *allegorical interpretation*, emphasizing Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament text rather than the designed allegorical meaning of the Old Testament text as written. For example, Kramer claims, "It would seem . . . that the burden of proof lies with those who would argue that Paul's reading of the passage is something other than an allegorical reading of the Genesis narrative" (186-85) and, "Paul reads the Abraham story typologically" (200-01; 208; "Mystery Without Mystery in Galatians: An Examination of the Relationship Between Revelatory Language in Galatians 1:11-17 and Scripture References in Galatians 3:6-18; 4:21-31," [Ph.D. diss, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2004]). Cf. Peter J. Leithart who states, "The apostles teach us to recognize that 'how it turned out' exposes dimensions of the original event or text that may not have been apparent, and perhaps were not even there, until it turned out as it did. Typological reading is simply reading of earlier texts in the light of later texts and events" (*Deep Exegesis: They Mystery of Reading Scripture* [Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2009], 74).

To speak of *typological interpretation*, using the adjective to modify *interpretation*, creates confusion by focusing upon the *act of interpretation* rather than upon the *act of revelation*. This essay proceeds on the belief that typology and allegory are fundamentally categories that belong to the *act of revelation*, not the *act of interpretation*. The reader discovers types and allegories that are already present in the text. For greater explanation see A. B. Caneday's response to the question, "Can you discuss the significance of typology to biblical theology?" pp. 66-98 in "The *SBJT* Forum: Biblical Theology for the Church," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (2006): 88-100.

[6]John Calvin's comments pose dilemmas consistent with those engendered by contemporary exegetes with their explications of the text. Calvin writes, "But what reply shall we make to Paul's assertion, that these things *are allegorical*? Paul certainly does not mean that Moses wrote the history for the purpose of being turned into an allegory, but points out in what way the history may be made to answer the present subject. This is done by observing a figurative representation of the Church there delineated" (*Galatians and Ephesians*, 136).

[7]For example, on Gal 4:24ff, Kramer offers these two options and excludes the third when he observes, "It would not be superfluous to note the difference between saying that Paul read the narrative allegorically (i.e., he viewed the story as historical and assigned higher spiritual truths to various parts of it for illustrative purposes) and saying that Paul read the narrative as an allegory (i.e., the narrative was an a-historical story from which Paul draw [*sic*] higher spiritual truths). Few, if any would argue that Paul thought the Genesis narrative was without historical basis" ("Mystery without Mystery in Galatians," 185, n. 115).

[8]The notion that Paul assigns allegorical or typological significance to the personages in the Abraham narrative is akin to the side room commentary concerning the stained glass window panels of King's College chapel, Cambridge University: "[W]hen Christianity was a new religion, it linked itself to the sacred Jewish past. It made the Jewish scriptures its own, calling them 'The Old Testament'. It treated this 'Old Testament' as prophecy of its own 'New Testament'. 'The Old Testament' was a story of 'types'—prophecies and stories awaiting their full (Christian) actualisation."

[9]Cf. Steven DiMattei, "Paul's Allegory of the Two Covenants (Gal 4.21-31) in Light of First-Century Hellenistic Rhetoric and Jewish Hermeneutics," *New Testament Studies*, (2006): 121. DiMattei rightly shows that because Paul defines Hagar, the slave woman, as the Sinai covenant, when he quotes Gen 21:10, "Cast out the slave woman," his reference is to the law covenant.

[10]The most explicit formulation of this proposal seems to be offered by Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 126-29 with 218-20.

[11]Longenecker writes, "What then can be said to our question, 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?' I suggest that we must answer both 'No' and 'Yes.' Where that exegesis is based upon a revelatory stance, where it evidences itself to be merely cultural, or where it shows itself to be circumstantial or *ad hominem* in nature, 'No.'... Our commitment as Christians is to the reproduction of the apostolic faith and doctrine, and not necessarily to the specific apostolic exegetical practices.... I propose that in the area of exegesis ... we may appreciate the manner in which the interpretations of our Lord and the New Testament writers were derived and may reproduce their conclusions by means of historico-grammatical exegesis, but we cannot assume that the explanation of their methods is necessarily the norm for our exegesis today. And that, I propose, is an important step in the development of a sound approach to interpretation today" (*Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 218-20). Richard Hays rightly responds to Longenecker, "There is no possibility of accepting Paul's message while simultaneously rejecting the legitimacy of the scripture interpretation that sustains it" (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 182).

[12]For example, J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 410-24. Find this and many other essays in Martyn's influential book, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).

[13]See, e.g., others who observe this same phenomenon. C. Marvin Pate notes, "Although Paul does not use the word 'mystery' in Galatians, that concept seems to be operative in 1:4-5, 12, 16, especially since the term ἀποκάλυψις, which he does use, is a technical one that encompasses mystic experience" (*The Reverse of the Curse: Paul, Wisdom, and the Law* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000], 183-185). See also, D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 2—The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 424-25. James D. G. Dunn comments, "Paul describes his 'conversion' in apocalyptic terms as a 'revelation' (Gal. 1:12, 16) ... which unlocked the mystery of God's purpose hidden until now. Hence also Paul's use of the characteristically apocalyptic term 'mystery' itself to describe his own sense of the eschatologically final revelation and commission which had been given him" ("How New Was Paul's Gospel? The Problem of Continuity and Discontinuity," in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans—Festschrift for Richard N. Longenecker*

(ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994], 376). See also Philip A. Kramer, "Mystery Without Mystery in Galatians: An Examination of the Relationship Between Revelatory Language in Galatians 1:11-17 and Scripture References in Galatians 3:6-18; 4:21-31," (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2004).

Carson further explains the interplay between Paul's reception of the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12ff) and his use of Scripture: "Even though he knows full well that he came to his Christian understanding via the Damascus road experience, and not in classes on exegesis, he also argues that what he, as a Christian and an apostle, finds in the Scriptures is actually *there*, and the reason unconverted Jews do not see it is because "to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it take [*sic*] away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts" (2 Cor 3:14-15). In other words, as far as Paul is concerned, conversion to Christ removes the veil to enable the reader to see what is actually *there*. Judging by his passionate handling of Scripture in Galatians, and in his slightly less passionate but scarcely less intense handling of Scripture in Romans, Paul is concerned to show that the gospel he preaches has in fact actually been announced by what we now refer to as the Old Testament" ("Mystery and Fulfillment," 411).

[14]This latter point, however, does not justify designating the apostles' uses of the Old Testament, *typological* or *allegorical interpretation*. This is to underscore the point made in note 5 above and in the text linked to the note.

[15]Paul's statement is variously translated "this is an allegory" (NRSV), "this is allegorically speaking" (NASB), "this may be interpreted allegorically" (ESV), or "this may be taken figuratively" (NIV). These translations reflect the common assumption accepted among commentators and exegetes that the verb ἀλληγορέω means either (1) "to speak allegorically" or (2) "to interpret allegorically." Most exegetes reject the former and adopt the latter so that they read Gal 4:21-31 as out of character with Paul's usual handling of the Old Testament. Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, "Graphic Illustrations of a Believer's New Life in Christ: Galatians 4:21-31," *Review and Expositor* 91 (1994): 194. Cf. Friedrich Büchsel, "ἀλληγορούμενα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 1:260-63.

[16]Among exegetes, it seems to be accepted *a priori* that if the personages in the Genesis text are allegorical then they cannot be historical. Consider Patrick Barker's comments: "It could be argued that there is not much difference between 'to speak allegorically' and 'to interpret allegorically,' and that whichever way we understand the word, the passage in question is still an allegory. But it is surely one thing to claim that the narrative in Genesis was originally conceived by its author or redactor as an allegory and quite another thing to claim that it is being, or is to be, interpreted as an allegory. If the author or redactor intended to provide an historical account of what happened to Abraham and the other figures in the story, then to maintain that the narrative was spoken allegorically is to contradict the intention of the author or redactor" ("Allegory and Typology in Galatians 4:21-31," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994): 204.

[17]R. V. G. Tasker observes, "Paul's exegesis in [Gal 4:21-31] . . . is not fanciful or arbitrary when once it is recognized that the Old Testament is not just history, but *sacred* history, in which the ultimate end which God had in view during the long period of self-revelation to a particular race, is foreshadowed in the circumstances and events which preceded its final realization. In the old covenant, in other words, was prefigured the shape of things to come" (*The Old Testament in the New Testament* [1946; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963], 93).

[18]It is noteworthy that Paul uses the verb "to reveal" (ἀποκαλύπτω) twice in Galatians, in 1:12 and 3:23. That Paul conceives of ἡ πίστις in Gal 3:22-26 as *objectified* is made clear by the fact that (1) ἡ πίστις is the subject of the verb "to come" (ἔρχομαι; 3:23, 35) and the object of the verb "to reveal" (ἀποκαλύπτω; 3:25); and (2) ἡ πίστις, in 3:22-26, clearly replaces what readers would otherwise expect as "coming" and "being revealed," namely, "the Seed" (3:16, 19) or "the Messiah" (see 3:16, 24). "The ἡ πίστις of which Paul speaks was not present until it 'came' and was 'revealed',

making and eschatological entry. Πρὸ τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν (3:23) corresponds to a series of clauses, both temporal and telic, that relate the Law to the promise and to its fulfillment. The Law played a temporal and purposeful role that anticipated the coming of the Seed, Messiah. The Law's own temporal and purposeful design restricted the extent of its jurisdiction, 'until the Seed would come' (ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθη τὸ σπέρμα, 3:19)." See A. B. Caneday, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ as a Theme in Paul's Theology in Galatians," in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies* (ed. by Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle' Milton Keynes, Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2009), 200-01. Hans D. Betz is surely correct to observe that ἡ πίστις "describes the occurrence of a historical phenomenon, not the act of believing of an individual" (*Galatians* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 176, n. 120). These observations stand whether one takes πίστις Χριστοῦ (3:22) as "Christ's faithfulness" or as "faith in Christ."

[19]Cf. Longenecker, "Galatians 4:21-31," 194.

[20]John Chrysostom, *Comm Epist ad Gal* IV.710 (PG 61.662): Καταχρηστικῶς τὸν τύπον ἀλληγορίαν ἐκάλεσεν ("he inexactly called the type an allegory"). See Robert J. Kepple, "An Analysis of Antiochene Exegesis of Galatians 4:24-26," *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (1977): 239-49. A. T. Hanson notes, "We came to the conclusion that in Gal. 4.21f Paul was in fact using typology, not allegory; but that his typology becomes so complicated and uncontrolled that it is beginning to verge into allegory" (*Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 161). Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 242-59; G. W. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTS 29; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 141-54.

[21]For example, A. T. Hanson reasons, "Paul is not here [Gal 4:24] trying to emancipate the meaning of the passage from its historical content and transmute it into a moral sentiment or a philosophical truth, which is almost the invariable function of Alexandrian allegory" (*Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1959], 82). One who argues for Hellenistic connections is Curtis D. McClane, "The Hellenistic Background to the Pauline Allegorical Method in Galatians 4:21-31," *Restoration Quarterly* 40 (1998): 125-35.

[22]Two leading voices in this school of thought are: (1) E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (WUNT 18; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1978); idem, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 [1957]); idem, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); and (2) Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. Cf. Peter Enns, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in Its First-Century Interpretive Environment," in *Three View on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. Kenneth Berding & Jonathan Lunde; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 167-217.

[23]See notes 7 and 8 above. Peter Enns reasons, "What is 'proper' exegesis for Paul is determined by *his* time, not ours, and this recognition must factor into any contemporary discussion of how we explain the NT use of the OT.... The fact that such an exegetical maneuver would not be persuasive today (and in my opinion should not be reproduced ...) should *not* dissuade us from making the necessary observation that Paul's handling of Scripture here in Galatians 3:15-29 is a function of his Second Temple context" ("Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," 185). Enns contends that though Christians should model their "approach to Scripture after that of the apostles," he explains that "where we follow the NT writers is more in terms of their hermeneutical goal than in terms of their exegetical methods and interpretive traditions. The latter are a function of their cultural moment.... This means that they model for us a hermeneutical 'attitude,' so to speak, that is authoritative for us, even if the authority does not function as a five-step hermeneutical guide" (216-17).

[24]Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment," 410. This is the problem with E. P. Sanders's truism devoid of explanatory power: "In short, this is what Paul finds wrong with Judaism: it is not Christianity" (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 552).

[25]For example, Richard N. Longenecker posits, "But if we view Paul's use of the Hagar-Sarah story here in Galatians 4:21-31 as principally an *ad hominem* argument [appeal to emotion rather than to reason]—that is, responding in kind to some treatment of the same story by his Galatian opponents—then we need not see Paul saying that allegory was built into the biblical narrative itself, but rather, that the biblical narrative is now being treated by interpreters (whether the Judaizers, or Paul, or both) in an allegorical fashion" ("Galatians 4:21-31," 194). Cf. F. F. Bruce, who states, "Paul now endeavours to reinforce his argument by means of an allegorical interpretation of the Genesis story of Hagar and Sarah, with their respective sons Ishmael and Isaac. Paul himself calls his interpretation 'allegorical' (v 24)—that is to say, the entities in the story stand for something other than their *prima facie* sense, whether that 'something other' was intended by the original author (as, say, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*) or is the contribution of the interpreter (and even when it is the contribution of the interpreter, the interpreter frequently thinks that he is bringing out the intention of the original author)" (*Galatians*, 214-15).

[26]DiMattei, "Paul's Allegory of the Two Covenants," 106-07. DiMattei cites Demetrius, Strabo, [Pseudo-] Heraclitus, Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, and Plutarch. He observes, "The only exception to this usage is to be found in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and perhaps additionally the two examples found in Plutarch. Moreover, out of the total 26 times that Philo uses the verb, the number of occurrences where the verb means 'to interpret allegorically' is rather thin. The *Homeric Allegories* of [Pseudo-] Heraclitus, however, just may be a better source in determining a more accurate picture of the verb's usage in antiquity. Despite the relatively small size of the treatise . . . the author uses the verb significantly more than any other writer of his time period, on average three times per page of Greek text compared to Philo's once every 92 pages of Greek text! [Pseudo-] Heraclitus employs the verb ἀλληγορεύω a total of 26 times, *all* of which either express the idea that Homer speaks allegorically when speaking about the gods, or that a specific element in the text was spoken of allegorically" (106-07).

[27]*De tropis*, 1.1—Ἀλληγορία ἐστὶ φράσις ἕτερον μέν τι κυρίως δηλοῦσά ἑτέρου δὲ ἔννοιαν παριστῶσα. See DiMattei, "Paul's Allegory of the Two Covenants," 106.

[28]*Homeric Allegories* 5.2—Ὁ γὰρ ἄλλα μέν ἀγορεύων τρόπος ἕτερα δὲ ὧν λέγει σημαίνων ἐπωνύμως ἀλληγορία καλεῖται. See DiMattei, "Paul's Allegory of the Two Covenants," 106.

[29]Anne K. Davis rightly observes, "The puzzling characteristic of this strange metaphor is its failure to use any recognized symbols, so the meaning is unclear and even somewhat startling" ("Allegorically Speaking in Galatians 4:21-5:1," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14 [2004]: 166). To highlight the "strange metaphor," Davis contrasts it with familiar metaphors—"you are the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13) and "this cup is the new covenant" (1 Cor 11:25), metaphors that use *vehicles*, the specific words, that give the metaphors their figurative power.

[30]This is not to imply that Paul suggests that either those entailed in the Genesis narrative (Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, etc.) or the writer of Genesis, Moses, understood the allegorical aspects of the drama, but it is to suggest that the apostle claims that God designed the allegory and saw to it that it was recorded in Scripture "for us" (cf. Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 10:11).

[31]Longenecker claims that because ἀλληγορούμενα is a present passive participle, its form favors the notion "that Paul is saying that 'these things are [now] being interpreted allegorically'" ("Galatians 4:21-31," 194). With greater grammatical and textual warrant it seems more likely that Paul uses the present passive participle, ἀλληγορούμενα, to mean "these things are written allegorically," stands in harmony with the perfect passive indicative γέγραπται ("it is written") in 4:22, the finite verb from which the participle would derive its temporal reference. As such, the participle indicates that Scripture itself (i.e., Genesis), assigns allegorical significance to what is written concerning Abraham, his two sons, the slave woman, the free woman, the son born according to the flesh, and the son born through promise.

[32]Cf. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's*

*Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (SNTSMS 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), 11.

[33]Cf. James W. Aageson, *Written Also for Our Sake: Paul and the Art of Biblical Interpretation*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 83.

[34]Here, it is well recognized that Paul uses *the law* (ὁ νόμος) with two distinguishable senses, first, *under the law* (cf. 3:23; 4:4), as referring to jurisdiction of the law covenant, the Mosaic law, and second, *hear the Law*, as referring to Scripture, the Pentateuch. Cf. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, 215, and Longenecker, "Galatians 4:21-31," 193.

[35]The trend is to infer hints from Gal 4:22 that Paul is not voluntarily introducing the Genesis narrative concerning Sarah and Hagar into his argument, for the straightforwardness of the text favors his opponents, but that he is constrained to comment upon the narrative because his opponents have used it to their advantage. See C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," in *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann* (ed. J. Friedrich, W. Pohlmann, and P. Stuhlmacher; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 9.

It may be that Paul is responding to his Judaizing opponents' use of the Abraham narrative in their effort to authorize their "other gospel" with Scripture. It is reasonable, though unnecessary, to infer that Paul may not initiate use of the Genesis narrative in his argument but may be correcting his opponents use of it. Whether he initiates or responds, one still has to account for the fact that Paul's fourfold appeal to Scripture in 4:21-31 in order to authorize his gospel places the burden of proof upon those who contend that Paul engages innovative interpretive techniques rather than accept that the Old Testament texts themselves (Genesis and Isaiah) bear within themselves allegorical qualities that warrant Paul's use of them. For a general reconstruction of the Judaizers' use of the Abraham narrative see Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," 15.

[36]A notable exception is Karen H. Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4:21-31," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 299-320.

[37]For example, Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), lxxiv. Likewise, Betz, *Galatians*, 238-40.

[38]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 199. Cf. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 145-46.

[39]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 199.

[40]Cf. Moisés Silva, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 95-100.

[41]Burton stated, "Before leaving the subject of the seed of Abraham it occurs to the apostle, apparently as an afterthought, that he might make his thought clearer and more persuasive by an allegorical interpretation of the story of Abraham and his two sons" (*Galatians*, 251).

[42]See, e.g., Frank Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical 1992), 177-78. Betz contends that this passage contains the "strongest argument" in all of 3:1-5:1 and that it provides the suitable rhetorical conclusion to the whole section (*Galatians*, 238-40).

[43]Richard B. Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians," *New Interpreter's Bible* 11 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 305.

[44]Steven Fowl's definition of *allegorical reading* notwithstanding, argues with warrant that "Paul's reading of Abraham's story is allegorical throughout Galatians 3-4," not just in 4:21-31 ("Who Can Read Abraham's Story? Allegory and Interpretative Power in Galatians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 55 [1994]: 79). By *allegorical reading*, Fowl means "interpretations that either explicitly or implicitly counter conventional views about a text, a character or an event" (79). Fowl relies upon David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991).

[45]This "salvation-historical" sequence is integral to Paul's argument "that Torah and Christ are not coexistent or coterminous allies. They are allied in God's purpose only in the sequential relationship of 'before' and 'now', of Prefiguration and fulfillment, for Christ's bearing Torah's curse 'upon the tree' is the long-awaited 'Amen'

to God's promise to Abraham" (Caneday, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ," 200).

[46]Carol K. Stockhausen, "2 Corinthians 3 and the Principles of Pauline Exegesis," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. Craig A. Evans & James A. Sanders; JSNTSS 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 149. Stockhausen insightfully contends, "I would argue that a fundamental awareness of the constitutive presence of Abraham's story in Paul argument requires that Paul's arguments in the whole of Galatians be seen, not as isolated 'arguments from Scripture', but as a connected series of statements, which have the primary goal of correctly interpreting the story of Abraham itself and concomitantly show the relationship between that story, the gospel and contemporary events and persons" (149-50).

[47]The point should not be missed that Paul is claiming that the promise was spoken in Christ's presence. I make this observation elsewhere: "Paul reasons that Messiah was present when the promises *were spoken*. This is no more remarkable than his earlier claim, 'And scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles ἐκ πίστεως, *proclaimed the gospel in advance to Abraham:* in you all the Gentiles will be blessed"' (3:8) Messiah is Abraham's unique seed to whom the promises were spoken" (Caneday, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ," 201).

[48]Fowl, "Who Can Read Abraham's Story?," 83-84.

[49]Cf. the similar question Luke records that Paul asked the disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus (Acts 19:1).

[50]For the sake of the argument, it is not crucial to identify the exact meanings of the respective expressions, ἐξ ἔργων νόμου and ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. Cf. Caneday, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ," 191. See also T. David Gordon, who contends, "If we would understand the polemic of Galatians, we must describe it in terms of 'Torah or Christ' rather than in terms of 'Works or Faith'" ("The Pattern at Galatia," *Interpretation* 41 [1987]: 36.

[51]Geerhardus Vos, "Paul's Eschatological Concept of the Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. Richard B. Gaffin; Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1980), 110. Cf. M. M. B. Turner, "The Significance of Spirit Endowment for Paul," *Vox Evangelica* 9 (1975): 56-69.

[52]Hays poses the question a little differently: "[I]s the scriptural text to be illuminated in the light of Spirit-experience, or is Spirit-experience to be measured by normative constraints laid down by the text? This is the fundamental question at issue between Paul and the teachers who were influencing the Galatians" (*Echoes of Scripture*, 108).

[53]Against this, Charles Cosgrove claims, "In Gal. 4:21 ff. Paul introduces an allegorical-typological interpretation in a *debate* situation where he cannot expect his audience to be predisposed toward his conclusions" ("The Law Has Given Sarah No Children [Gal. 4:21-30]" *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987): 221.

[54]Though the two verbs are προεγράφη (προεγράφω) and προευηγγελίσατο (προευηγγελίζομαι), it also seems plausible that Paul purposely writes προεγράφη, in 3:1, to link with another expression that includes the noun γραφη, and another προ- compound verb, προοράω, as in προϊδοῦσα ἡ γραφη, (3:8), a subtle kind of word play between the cognate verb, προεγράφη, and noun, ἡ γραφη.

[55]"Simply put, Abraham belongs to 'us,' οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (vv. 7, 9), not to 'them,' οἱ ἐκ νόμου. In principle, the progenitor of the Jewish race, to whom the gospel was 'preached beforehand' (v. 8), finds his proper identification in the age of the Spirit, not the age of the flesh, even though he lived in the pre-eschatological era." See Don Garlington, "Paul's 'Partisan ἐκ' and the Question of Justification in Galatians," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 578.

[56]Paul recognizes that "they shall be blessed" (ἐνευλογηθήσονται, Gen 22:18) correlates with "God justifies" (δικαιοῖ ὁ θεός, Gal 3:8) so that the promised blessing is equated with being justified. The clear implication is that Paul sees a three-fold equation: "reception of the Spirit" = "justification" = "Abrahamic blessing." This is evident, for Paul interchanges these as he proceeds through his argument in Gal 3:1-14. In 3:14 he adds another element to the equation when he identifies "reception of the Spirit" with "reception of the promise."

[57]Beverly R. Gaventa, "Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography

as Paradigm," *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986): 326. Cf. George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985).

[58]Stockhausen, "The Principles of Pauline Exegesis," 149-50, 152.

[59]Ibid., 150.

[60]Hays comments, "The artful wording of v. 91 illuminates the deep theological syntax of Paul's gospel: 'Now, however, that you have come to know God—or rather to be known by God....' The self-correction is an artful way of calling attention to the theological 'ungrammaticality' of any claim that we as finite creatures can save ourselves by attaining a higher knowledge of God.... The Galatians have entered a new world not because of some epistemological advance of their own, but because God, in elective love, has now 'known' them" ("The Letter to the Galatians," 287).

[61]Beverly R. Gaventa rightly proposes, "Paul's anguish ... reflects the anguish of the whole created order as it awaits the fulfillment of God's action in Jesus Christ" ("The Maternity of Paul: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 4:19," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* [ed. R. T. Fortna and B. R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990]: 194).

[62]Paul's verb of choice (ὠδίνω) is not his usual verb to depict his apostolic laboring (κοπιάω; e.g., 1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; Gal 4:11). Yet, it seems reasonable to understand Gal 4:19 to intensify his comments concerning his apostolic labor on behalf of the Galatians (4:11) under the imagery of birth pangs, preparing for citation of Isa 54:1.

[63]That Paul uses "to suffer great pain" (ὠδίνω) in 4:19 to anticipate the same verb within his later quotation from Isa 54:1 confirms that the apostle correlates himself with the Abraham narrative. Gaventa rightly argues, "Galatians 4:19 associates Paul's apostolic vocation with the anguish anticipated in an apocalyptic era and recalls to the Galatians their own crucifixion with Christ. As such, Gal 4:19 employs a conventional metaphor—that of the anguish of a woman in labor—to identify Paul's apostolic work with the apocalyptic expectation of the whole created order" ("The Maternity of Paul," 191). For Gaventa's mention of the Galatians' crucifixion cf. "until Christ is formed in you" (4:19) with Paul's account in Gal 2:20.

[64]Robert Brawley contends, "Paul's audacious claim to be in the pangs of childbirth (Gal 4,19) places him in parallel with Sarah who underwent the pangs of childbirth for Isaiah's children of Jerusalem (Isa 51,2 LXX). Paul's travail has a double reference indicated by the use of πάλιν in 4,19. It has to do with his present consternation over the Galatians. It also represents his earlier role when he first proclaimed the gospel to them (4,13-14)" ("Contextuality, Intertextuality, and the Hendiadic Relationship of Promise and Law in Galatians," *Zeitschrift für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 [2002], 113).

[65]Hays notes that Paul does not say, "My children, I am again overcome with pains of childbirth until you are birthed anew in Christ" ("The Letter to the Galatians," 296).

[66]Concerning this turn in the imagery, Gaventa rightly argues that Paul does not write, "'until *I bring forth* Christ in you' ... for two reasons. First. God and God alone brings forth Christ.... Second, neither Paul nor any other believer wills Christ into existence or forms Christ within himself or herself" ("The Maternity of Paul," 197).

[67]Hays observes, "The pronoun 'you' is plural, and the phrase ἐν ὑμῖν (*en hymin*) is best translated not as 'in (each one of) you' but rather as 'among you, in your midst'" ("The Letter to the Galatians," 296). Though the congregational accent is doubtless present, it can hardly become a reality apart from the assembling of individuals in whom Christ is formed discretely.

[68]Though their approaches are different from the one presented in this essay, two resources are nonetheless resourceful concerning Sarah in Isaiah. See Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 111-21; and Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 299-320 . For example, Jobes states, "When Paul calls this trope ἀλληγορούμενα ... [h]e simply is simply preparing his readers to understand that this exposition of Sarah and Hagar goes beyond the traditional historical understanding of these women. He is transforming the story of Sarah and Hagar from narrative history to (realized) prophetic proclamation just as Isaiah did" (317-18).

[69]LXX—Gen 11:30 (ἦν Σαρα στεῖρα καί οὐκ ἐτεκνοποίει); Isa 54:1 (εὐφράνθητι στεῖρα οὐ τίκτουσα).

[70]Jobes wonders, "If, as many interpreters suggest, the barren one is Sarah, then it obviously must refer to her in that time of her life before she gave birth to Isaac. But this identification does not seem completely apt, for in the quotation the barren one is contrasted with the one 'who has a husband.' It was Sarah, not Hagar, who was the wife of Abraham" ("Jerusalem Our Mother," 302).

[71]On how the NT writers sometimes intend reference to wider contexts than the brief citations actually quoted, see C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet; New York: Scribners, 1953). "We have seen reason to suppose that they often quoted a single phrase or sentence not merely for its own sake, but as a pointer to a whole context" (idem, *The Old Testament in the New* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963], 20).

[72]Concerning the *Akedah* narrated in Genesis 22, it is instructive to observe that Heb 11:19 treats the narrative of Genesis 22 as *parable*, for the author explains that Abraham reckons that God is able to raise someone from the dead "and ἐν παραβολῇ did receive him back." This is akin to Paul's use of ἀλληγορέω.

[73]Though the Genesis text does not explicitly indicate that God is the one who shuts the womb from conceiving, in 30:1-2 the text makes this explicit when Jacob responds to Rachel's complaint, "Give me children, or I shall die!", "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

[74]Find the barrenness theme elsewhere in the case of Manoah and his wife with the birth of Samson (Judg 13:1-24), concerning Hannah and the birth of Samuel (1 Sam 1:2, 6), and implied in the story of the Shunammite woman and the birth of her son (2 Kgs 4:14). Except in the case of the Shunammite's son, barrenness plays the purposeful role of displaying the extraordinary power and glory of the Lord who, in displays of uncommon grace to bring about conception and birth against nature's impediment, and the sons born became Israel's deliverers. Is it unreasonable to infer that this barrenness theme with such displays of God's power, from the beginning, foreshadows the greatest uncommon birth of the greatest deliverer of all, not just from a barren womb but from a virgin's womb? After all, this greatest uncommon conception of all fulfilled the promise of the Seed made to Abraham whose wife, Sarah, was the barren one.

[75]Cosgrove, "The Law Has Given Sarah No Children," 231. Cosgrove observes, "Here, then, is the argument. If Is. 54:1, in speaking of Sarah-Jerusalem, implies that her barrenness extends until the eschatological time of fulfillment, *then the law has given Sarah no children*. And with this point Paul reinforces in the strongest possible terms the repeated accent in Galatians that *life* (the Spirit, the realization of the promise, access to the inheritance, the blessing of Abraham) is not to be found in the Torah."

[76]Space prohibits development of Paul's association of Isaac's miraculous conception and birth from Sarah's barren and aged womb, which was as good as dead (cf. Rom 4:19; Gen 18:11), with resurrection in Christ Jesus (Rom 4:17-25). On this see Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 314-316; and Joshua W. Jipp, "Rereading the Story of Abraham, Isaac, and 'Us' in Romans 4," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (2009): 217-42.

[77]In contrast to this way of reading the recursive barrenness theme in Genesis, with its accompanying motifs, Mary Callaway contrasts Isaiah's use of the theme in 54:1 as speaking of a future revelation of God's power while Genesis uses the theme to portray God's past faithfulness to his people (*Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* [SBLDS 91; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986], 63-64). Read properly from retrospect, Genesis does portray God's past faithfulness to his covenant promises, but Paul's uses of the Abraham narrative constrain us to read the storyline prospectively, as predictive of God's future revelation to be realized in Christ Jesus.

[78]Jobes assumes that Paul is compelled to counter his opponents' use of the Abraham narrative. So she argues, "The story of the 'seed' and 'inheritance' as found in Genesis 17 seems to support the argument of the Judaizers: if the Gentile Christians of Galatia truly want to identify themselves as children of Abra-

ham and recipients of the promised inheritance, then they, too, like Abraham (not to mention the Lord Jesus himself), should be circumcised. Through circumcision, the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, they should identify themselves with God's covenant people. And yet Paul uses the same story of Abraham to argue just the opposite. How so? Paul's argument in Gal 4:21-31 resonates, not with the Genesis narrative, but with Isaiah's transformation of its themes of seed and inheritance. By using Isa 54:1 to sound the note of barrenness in Gal 4:27, Paul is metaleptically evoking echoes of Isaiah's proclamation concerning the seed and the inheritance" ("Jerusalem, Our Mother," 310).

[79]Not to be missed is the fact that the two covenants are (1) the Mosaic covenant God makes with Israel at Sinai, and (2) the promise covenant God makes not only with Abraham but also speaks to Christ, who is Abraham's Seed (cf. Gal 3:16). Cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 114-15.

[80]Some might be tempted to suppose that the two passages are in contradiction because Isaiah 51:2 reads, "Look . . . to Sarah, who *travails to bear* you," while Isa 54:1 uses the same word negatively, "Sing, O barren one, who does not bear children, break forth and cry aloud, you who are *not travailing in birth pangs*." Cf. the Greek text: ἐμβλέψατε ... εἰς Σαρραν τὴν ὠδίνουσαν ὑμᾶς (Isa 51:2 LXX) and εὐφράνθητί στεῖρα ἡ οὐ τίκτουσά ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα (Isa 54:1 LXX).

[81]It is uncertain whether first century A.D. synagogue services (*haftarah*) included the selection from the Prophets, Isaiah 54, following the lesson from the Torah, Genesis 16, concerning Sarah's giving Hagar to Abraham as a wife to bear the promised son. The NT provides evidence for *haftarah* readings in the synagogue as in Acts 13:15 and Luke 4:17.

[82]Cf. Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 306-07. Cf. LXX of Isa 54:1 (εὐφράνθητι στεῖρα οὐ τίκτουσα) and Gen 11:30 (καὶ ἦν Σαρα στεῖρα καί οὐκ ἐτεκνοποίει). See also Martinus C. De Boer, "Paul's Quotation of Isaiah 54.1 in Galatians 4.27," *New Testament Studies* 50 (2004): 387

[83]Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 120.

[84]Ibid.

[85]I owe this observation to Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 310). Cf. Isa 54:12ff. By way of contrast, cf. Isa 64:10, "Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation."

[86]Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 309. Jobes credits Isaiah with "transforming" the Genesis story of Sarah which becomes the basis for Paul's use in Gal 4:21-31. Despite her approach, different from this essay's, her summary is on target when she states, "Isaiah's proclamation (1) provides an interpretation of Sarah's motherhood that can be taken to have wider reference than to the nation of Israel; (2) merges the concepts of matriarchal barrenness and the feminine personification of capital cities to produce female images of two Jerusalems, a barren, cursed Jerusalem and a rejoicing Jerusalem; and (3) introduces the concept of a miraculous birth to a barren woman as a demonstration of God's power to deliver a nation of people from death" (309).

[87]Cf. Paul's wording with the text of the LXX with differences highlighted.

Gen 21:10—ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην ταύτην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς, οὐ γὰρ κληρονομησει ὁ υἱὸς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ισαακ.

Gal 4:30—ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς· οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομησει ὁ υἱὸς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

[88]Much of the Old Testament is parabolic and must be read or heard as one reads or hears Jesus' parables, such as the Parable of the Sower. Symbolic representation really is there in the parable, if one has ears to hear and eyes to see.

# Context Is Everything: "The Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16

*Christopher W. Cowan*

## INTRODUCTION

As Paul brings to a close his letter to the churches in Galatia, his final words include a profound benediction. Even as the apostle declares at the beginning of his letter a curse upon those—whether human or angelic—who would preach a false gospel (1:8-9), so now at the conclusion he pronounces a blessing upon certain individuals (6:16).[1] The question is "To whom is this blessing directed?" More specifically, who is "the Israel of God" in v. 16? Answering this question is clearly the exegetical issue in Paul's postscript that has generated the most discussion and disagreement among interpreters of the letter. Most in the history of interpretation have argued that Paul uses this phrase with reference to the church, the "true Israel" or "spiritual Israel." Yet a number of scholars believe this view is very questionable, if not highly unlikely.

Christopher W. Cowan serves as Executive Assistant to the Senior Vice President for Academic Administration at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is also Associate Editor of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* and Adjunct Instructor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary. He has contributed articles and book reviews for several theological journals and is a Ph.D. candidate in New Testament.

In Gal 6:16, Paul writes, "And as many as walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (ESV). The verb translated "walk by" (στοιχήσουσιν) means to be in conformity with or to follow that which is considered a standard for one's conduct.[2] Paul uses it earlier when he exhorts the Galatians, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by ("conform to," "keep in step with") the Spirit" (5:25). Paul's blessing in 6:16 is thus upon those whose lives are in conformity to the "this rule" he has just proclaimed. But what is this "rule/standard" (κανόνι)? In the previous verse, Paul writes, "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Most likely, the "rule" or "standard" is the "new creation" itself. All who have experienced the new creation in Christ will have lives that manifest conformity to it.[3] The remainder of v. 16 contains Paul's blessing. The ambiguous syntax contributes to the differences in interpretation. The Greek text (εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ) could be rendered, "peace and mercy be upon them, that



*SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 78-85.

is (or "namely"), upon the Israel of God," taking the second *kai* in an explicative or epexegetical sense. In this way, the "Israel of God" would be further describing the "them" who "walk by this rule." In other words, Paul would have in mind *one* group: the church. A similar view sees the *kai* as slightly ascensive ("even")[4] but still denoting equivalence of the two groups.[5] Others, however, argue that the *kai* after "mercy" is used in an ascensive sense ("even") or copulative sense ("and"), indicating that Paul has in mind *two* groups: "peace be upon them, and mercy even (or "also") upon the Israel of God," or "peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." For most interpreters who translate the verse in one of these latter ways, "the Israel of God" is understood to be either believing ethnic Jews or the remnant of ethnic Jews chosen by grace who, according to Paul, will be saved in the future (see Rom 11:5, 26).

The following brief essay will consider the issues that have contributed to the competing understandings of the verse, looking first to the arguments of those who believe Paul uses "the Israel of God" to speak of ethnic Jews in some sense. I will then offer several reasons to justify the traditional interpretation and argue that Paul instead uses the phrase to refer to the church. In the context of Galatians (and the New Testament) it is best to see "the Israel of God" in Gal 6:16 as a reference to the unified people of God consisting of both Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Jesus Christ.

## VIEW #1: "THE ISRAEL OF GOD" REFERS TO ETHNIC JEWS

Ernest de Witt Burton is an important commentator who advocates seeing "the Israel of God" in Gal 6:16 as a reference to ethnic Jews. Burton believes Paul is speaking not of the whole Jewish nation but of pious Israel—"the remnant according to the election of grace (Rom 11:5)." The apostle has two groups in mind. He invokes peace on those who walk according to the principle of 6:15, and he proclaims mercy on those within Israel who are as yet unenlightened but who constitute the true Israel of God. Burton views the *kai* after "mercy" as slightly ascensive, thus expressing his true feelings toward his own people in light of his strong anti-judaistic argument. "It can scarcely be translated into English without overtranslating," he contends.[6] Against seeing both groups as referring to the Christian community, he finds the order of the words "peace" (εἰρήνη) and "mercy" (ἔλεος) to be illogical, placing cause after effect. In other NT benedictions "mercy" always precedes "peace" (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 2). Though he acknowledges that Paul elsewhere distinguishes between Israel according to the flesh and Israel according to election (Rom 9:6; 1 Cor 10:18) and that Paul's expressions in Rom 2:29 and Phil 3:3 could lend support to the alternative view, Burton emphasizes that there is no other instance in which Paul uses the term "Israel" except to refer to the Jewish nation.[7]

Probably the most influential scholar to oppose viewing "the Israel of God" as applying to the church is Peter Richardson. He contends that, from an historical perspective, the term "Israel" is explicitly applied to the church for the first time in Christian literature in A.D. 160 by Justin Martyr.[8] Like Burton, Richardson also observes the illogical order of "peace" and "mercy." If one considers the word "grace" as well, one finds further evidence that Paul arranges the terms logically in prayers, blessings, and liturgical formula. When used, the formula "grace and peace" is never varied in Paul—the order being based on "the logic of God's activity among men: source then benefits."[9] So, rather than one group in 6:16, Richardson sees two. When Paul adds his conclusion to the letter, he wants to prevent the Galatians from moving toward "a new Christian exclusiveness and sectarianism," so he writes, "May God give peace to all who will walk according to this criterion, and mercy also to his faithful people Israel.[10]

S. Lewis Johnson also argues against equating the "Israel of God" with the church. It is "very relevant," he emphasizes, that in Scripture "the term *Israel* is never found in the sense of the church."[11]

Furthermore, Johnson objects to taking the *kai* that follows "mercy" in an explicative or epexegetic sense ("namely," "that is"). "In the absence of compelling exegetical and theological considerations," he insists, "we should avoid the rarer grammatical usages when the common ones make good sense."[12] Since the explicative or epexegetical usage of *kai* is "proportionately very infrequent" in the literature and "the common and frequent usage of *and* makes perfectly good sense in Galatians 6:16," Johnson believes the former should be rejected.[13] He further argues that if Paul had wanted to identify the two groups in 6:16, "why not simply eliminate the *kai* after 'mercy?'" One could then make a solid case for "Israel of God" being in apposition to "them." According to Johnson, interpreting the *kai* in an explicative or appositional sense indicates that "dogmatic concern overcame grammatical usage."[14]

## VIEW #2: "THE ISRAEL OF GOD" REFERS TO THE CHURCH

In spite of these arguments and objections, it seems best to understand Paul as speaking of one group in 6:16 and applying the phrase "the Israel of God" to all believers, Jew and Gentile. Paul invokes peace and mercy upon all who walk in conformity to the new creation: "that is, upon the Israel of God." The church is, thus, the "true Israel" or "spiritual Israel." The following reasons are offered in support of this view.

(1) While it is certainly true that nowhere else in the New Testament do we find the *term* "Israel" being applied to the church, the *concept* is ubiquitous. I will limit my survey to the writings of Paul. The apostle frequently speaks of believers in Christ (including Gentiles) using Old Testament language that originally referred to Israel. Believers are God's "elect" or "chosen" (Rom 8:33; Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4) and those whom he has "called" (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 1:24). They are "sons of God" (Rom 8:14; Gal 3:26) and "sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:7). Paul tells the Ephesians they are a "holy temple" and a "dwelling of God" (Eph 2:21-22). In contrast to the Judaizers and their false circumcision ("mutilation," Phil 3:2), Paul tells the Philippians, "*We* are the (true) circumcision" (3:3). In Romans, Paul clearly makes a distinction between ethnic and spiritual Israel. Being a Jew is not outward, nor is circumcision outward. A true Jew is one inwardly, whose heart has been circumcised by the Spirit (Rom 2:28-29). If being a (true) Jew is not about externals but the circumcision of the heart, then this would apply in a spiritual sense to Gentiles. Therefore, the objection that the term "Israel" is never used to refer to the church (except for Gal 6:16!) is not very weighty in light of the clear evidence for the concept.

(2) The context of Galatians justifies understanding "the Israel of God" as designating all believers, Jew and Gentile. While questions of syntax and grammar in Gal 6:16 must be addressed, Thomas Schreiner is right: "It is unlikely that the dispute can be resolved on the basis of grammar alone."[15] The most decisive factor is the context of the epistle in which the phrase is found. Throughout the letter, Paul has argued that Gentiles need not be circumcised and practice "works of the law" to be justified, receive the Spirit, and be incorporated into the people of God (2:16; 3:2; 5:2-6). Rather, those of faith are sons of Abraham and, in Christ, receive the promised Spirit (Gal 3:7, 14). The Galatians are sons of God in Christ Jesus through faith (3:26), having received adoption as sons (4:4-7). Through their incorporation into Christ—who is the seed of Abraham (3:16)—*they* become Abraham's seed. "There is neither Jew nor Greek," for they are "all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). Therefore, they are Abraham's offspring and heirs of the promise (3:29). The "Jerusalem above" is their mother, so they are "children of promise" just like Isaac (4:26, 28). Gentiles are not second-class citizens, but full members of God's people. As Donald Guthrie suggests, given Paul's argument in the letter, he is perhaps describing the Christian church in this way "because he wants to assure the Galatians that they will not forfeit the benefits of being part of the true Israel by refusing circumcision."[16] While it is possible for one to abstract 6:16 from its con-

text and argue that "the Israel of God" in this verse *can* refer to those who are ethnic Jews (particularly in light of Romans 9-11), it is very hard to accept this view when one has read the verse in light of the whole epistle. To make a distinction between Jews and Gentiles here at the end of the letter would appear to counteract Paul's entire preceding argument! Richard Longenecker's conclusion seems justified: "All of the views that take 'Israel of God' to refer to Jews and not Gentiles, while supportable by reference to Paul's wider usage (or nonusage) of terms and expressions, fail to take seriously enough the context of the Galatian letter itself."[17]

(3) Many of the interpreters who deny that Paul uses "the Israel of God" to refer to Jew and Gentile believers attempt to reconcile the verse with Paul's discussion in Romans 9-11 and his affirmation that God has not abandoned his people but that eventually "all Israel" will be saved.[18] However, one need not see the two passages in conflict. The fact that Paul saw a future for ethnic Israel does not mean he could not use the term for the church in a spiritual sense. Johnson acknowledges that Paul can use "Israel" to refer to those who "are truly Israel" as well as those who "are not truly Israel" (Rom 9:6).[19] But if, according to Paul, what it means to be "truly Israel" has nothing to do with ethnicity, why can Paul not refer to Gentiles as part of "true Israel"? Believing that the church is the "true Israel" and that there is a future salvation for ethnic Israel are not inconsistent propositions. They would only be so if ethnic Jews became part of the people of God on a different ground than Gentiles. However, Jews do not become part of spiritual Israel on account of their race, but through faith in Christ. Acknowledging the church as the "true" or "spiritual" Israel does not mean ethnic Israel has been eliminated. Ethnic Israel continues to exist and, through faith in Jesus Christ, can be incorporated into spiritual Israel.[20]

(4) The infrequency of the epexegtical usage of *kai* is not sufficient evidence to deny its presence in Gal 6:16. Standard Greek grammars and lexicons attest to an epexegetic or explicative usage of *kai* in the New Testament in general and in Paul in particular.[21] Johnson believes one should avoid the rarer usages "when the common ones make good sense."[22] But the fact that the *kai* in 6:16 is capable of being read with more than one meaning does not imply that we are simply to assume the more commonly attested one. The *context* is the ultimate determiner of meaning—not the frequency or infrequency of a given meaning. Examining the function of *kai* in the NT, Kermit Titrud maintains that *kai* introduces apposition much more frequently than translators and commentators realize. How does one determine if a particular usage of *kai* is appositional (i.e., epexetical, explicative)? Titrud cites the linguistic principle of "maximum redundancy"—that is, "the best meaning is the least meaning." In other words, the correct meaning is usually the one that "contributes the least new information to the total context."[23] Charles A. Ray Jr. subsequently applied Titrud's analysis to Gal 6:16, believing the context of the letter indicates that Paul applies "the Israel of God" to his followers.[24] To say that Paul intends the phrase to mean all believers, Jew and Gentile, is consistent with the letter and adds the least new information to the context.[25] Therefore, an appositional or epexegtical usage of *kai* in 6:16 seems quite defensible.[26]

(5) Regarding the alleged "illogical order" of the words "peace and mercy" in Paul's postscript, the following should be noted. The New Testament benedictions that Burton compares to Gal 6:16 (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 John 3; Jude 2) are all part of the introductions of letters—not conclusions. Furthermore, each of these introductory formulas is actually threefold. The first three also include the word "grace" (χάρις), and Jude 2 includes "love" (ἀγάπη). So they are not exactly parallel to Gal 6:16. The unique construction of Paul's benediction here and the unique combination of "peace and mercy" would appear to argue against its being a formulaic benediction.[27]

## CONCLUSION

For these reasons, it seems best to understand Paul as invoking peace and mercy upon the church in Gal 6:16 and using the expression "the Israel of God" to describe the unified people of God. As the saying goes, "context is everything," and context is the decisive factor in understanding Paul's meaning here. Having contended for the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ throughout his letter, now at the conclusion Paul identifies the church, those who conform to the new creation in Christ, as the *true* Israel.

ENDNOTES

[1]Brian Vickers notes the parallel between the curse and the blessing in "Who Is the 'Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16)?" *Eusebia* 6 (Spring 2006): 5.

[2]See Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (ed. Frederick W. Danker; 3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), "στοιχέω" (hereafter, BDAG).

[3]So Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 226; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 567. Two interesting parallels to Gal 6:15—one of which occurs in the same letter—appear in Paul: "For in Christ Jesus, neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love" (5:6) and "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19). While each statement affirms the irrelevancy of circumcision and uncircumcision, Paul provides three different declarations of what really matters: "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6), "a new creation" (6:15), and "keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19). Those who are "in Christ," and thus a part of the "new creation" (Gal 6:15), have received the eschatological gift of the Spirit (3:14). After telling the Galatians that what matters in Christ is not circumcision or uncircumcision but "faith working through love" (5:6), Paul exhorts them to serve one another in love and so fulfill the law: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (5:13-14). But this is only possible for those who walk by the Spirit (5:16). Likewise, for Paul, "keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19) refers to "the moral norms of the law, which believers are enabled to keep by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 171). Therefore, Paul's language of "new creation" in Galatians 6:15 not only testifies to an objective renewal of creation in Christ, but also, because of these parallel texts, should be understood as pointing to the subjective aspect of that renewal. The new creation manifests itself in loving behavior toward one's neighbor, which fulfills the law (5:14, cf. 6:2). This is the very opposite of the behavior of the Judaizers who wanted to force circumcision on the Galatians so that they could boast in their flesh and avoid persecution for the cross of Christ (Gal 6:12-13).

[4]Daniel B. Wallace defines an ascensive conjunction as expressing "a *final addition* or *point of focus*. It is often translated *even*. This classification is usually determined by the context" (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 670, emphasis in original).

[5]Some who hold this latter view affirm that both groups refer to the church but argue that "those who walk by this rule" refers to the Galatian Christians while "the Israel of God" refers to all Christians (see, e.g., Matera, *Galatians*, 232; Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Identity of the 'ΙΣΡΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ [Israel of God] in Galatians 6:16," *Faith and Mission* 19, no. 1 [Fall 2001]: 13). However, since these two views are in essential agreement (i.e., both believe "the Israel of God" is a reference to Christians, both Jew and Gentile), there is no need to argue for one over the other here.

[6]Ernest de Witt Burton, *Galatians* (International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 358.

[7]Ibid., 357-58. Other interpreters who, similar to Burton, identify "the Israel of God" with Paul's "all Israel" of Rom 11:26 include Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), 82-84; F. F. Bruce, *Galatians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 275; S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Paul and

'Israel of God': An Exegetical and Eschatological Case-Study," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost* (ed. Stanley D. Toussaint and Charles H. Dyer; Chicago: Moody, 1986), 192-94.

Hans Dieter Betz, on the other hand, claims Paul has in mind believing Jews: "Paul extends the blessing beyond the Galatian Paulinists to those Jewish Christians who approve of his κανών ("rule") in v. 15" (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 323). D. W. B. Robinson insists that the "Israel of God" refers only to Jewish believers and not Gentile believers (see his "The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians," *Australian Biblical Review* 13 [1965]: 29-48). This is consistent with his contention that Paul distinguishes between the two groups *throughout his letter*. He bases his view on his interpretation of Paul's relationship to Jerusalem (Galatians 2) and largely on the assumption that Paul frequently uses different pronouns to refer to Jews ("we") and Gentiles ("you"). However, such a position that sees a distinction in referent by virtue of the pronoun used seems extremely difficult to maintain with consistency and coherency throughout the epistle. Moreover, it is hard to believe the Galatians could have understood Paul's argument without more explicit references (i.e., "we *Jews*," "you *Gentiles*").

[8]Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 9. In *Dialogue with Trypho* 11.5, Justin Martyr writes, "For the true spiritual Israel and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham ... are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ" (in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* [vol. 1; ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1899], 200).

[9]Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 76-77. Richardson claims that the LXX displays the same pattern concerning usage of the words. The only exception to this pattern ("mercy and peace") is found in later Jewish tradition in a benediction of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, which reads, "Bestow peace, happiness, and blessing, grace, loving-kindness, and mercy upon us and upon all Israel your people." Here "peace" and "mercy," as in Galatians, are found in reverse order (ibid., 77-79). While some have pointed to this text as evidence that the terms can be reversed (See, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* [Word Biblical Commentary; Nasville: Thomas Nelson, 1990], 298), Richardson notes the references in the benediction to two groups, "us" (the present worshippers) and "all Israel" (the Jewish community wherever it may be). He believes the similarity with Galatians makes it plausible that Paul is dependent upon or unconsciously alluding to the *Shemoneh Esreh*; however, Paul gives the benediction an ironic twist. While the former speaks of "us" and "them" (where "them" is an extension of "us"), Paul speaks of "us" and "them," where the latter refers to those who should be part of "us," but who are not yet. Richardson identifies this second group as those Israelites to whom God will grant mercy in the future, those who will receive Christ (*Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 79, 81-82).

G. K. Beale, however, emphasizes the difficulty in attempting to argue that the language of the *Shemoneh Esreh* "existed in an earlier form as far back as the first century"—thus enabling Paul to be dependent on its benediction. The Palestinian recension (approx. A.D. 70-100) omits half of the benediction's wording, which is found in the later Babylonian recension—including the word "mercy" ("Peace and Mercy Upon the Israel of God: The Old Testament Background of Galatians 6,16b," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 208).

[10]Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, 84. Regarding his paraphrase, Richardson adds, "It is difficult to get exactly the right sense in English: 'also' is not quite right, but 'even' is too strong" (84, n. 2).

[11]Johnson, "Paul and 'Israel of God'," 190.

[12]Ibid, 187

[13]Ibid., 188.

[14]Ibid. As with this statement, Johnson's comments throughout his article seem greatly overstated. He claims the interpretation of "the Israel of God" as the church is asserted "in spite of a mass of evidence to the contrary" (182). He says it is the "least likely view among several alternatives" (182), the bases of its interpretation "are few and feeble" (184), and it "totters on a tenuous foundation" (195). On the other hand, there is "overwhelming support" for a more limited interpretation (his) (182).

[15]Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming 2010).

[16]Donald Guthrie, *Galatians* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 152.

[17]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 298. Note the similar comments from others: "It is difficult to believe … that in a letter where Paul has been breaking down the distinctions that separate Jewish and Gentile Christians and stressing the equality of both groups, that he in the closing would give a peace benediction addressed to believing Jews as a separate group within the church" (Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Gal. 6:11-18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 [1993]: 104). "Against this backdrop [of the letter], taking 'Israel of God' as a reference to ethnic Jews throws Paul's entire argument up to that point into confusion" (Vickers, "Who Is the 'Israel of God'," 8).

[18]W. S. Campbell confesses, "Our approach to Galatians 6:16 has naturally been coloured by the meaning of 'Israel' in Romans 9-11" ("Christianity and Judaism: Continuity and Discontinuity," *Christian Jewish Relations* 18 [1985]: 10).

[19]Johnson, "Israel of God," 189.

[20]Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Church as the New Israel and the Future of Ethnic Israel in Paul," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 13 (1983): 37. Vickers writes, "This interpretation does not spell the end of ethnic Judaism any more than saying 'no male nor female' [Gal 3:28] means there are no longer distinctions between the sexes" ("Who Is the 'Israel of God'," 8).

[21]See BDAG, "καί" (1c); F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), §442 (9); Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 335; G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis* (trans. W. F. Moulton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882) 545-46 (citing Gal 6:16); and Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples* (trans from 4th Latin ed. Joseph Smith; Rome, 1963), 154 (citing Gal 6:16, though with a question mark).

[22]Johnson, "Israel of God," 187.

[23]Kermit Titrud, "The Function of καί in the Greek New Testament and an Application to 2 Peter," in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (ed. David Alan Black; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 247-48. He concludes, "[W]e have ... posited that there is an element of καί that is unlike 'and,' namely that it regularly introduces apposition, and that this ... is often missed by exegetes.... [W]e have maintained in light of the rule of maximum redundancy that if apposition is a viable option among constituents of propositions conjoined by καί, it should be highly considered" (255).

[24]See Charles A. Ray, Jr., "The Identity of the 'Israel of God'," *The Theological Educator* 50 (1994): 105-14. Linguist Martin Joos first suggested the "rule of maximal redundancy" to address the problem of *hapax legomena*. However, according to Moisés Silva, "the principle is readily applicable to polysemy [a word with more than one meaning]" (*Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* [rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 155).

[25]As Betz rightly notes, the expression "Israel of God" is redundant: "it makes no sense to speak of an Israel which is not 'of God.' Yet such an expression does make sense as a critical distinction between a 'true' and a 'false' Israel" (*Galatians*, 323). But for Paul to use the phrase to refer exclusively to *Jewish* believers (as Betz contends) who are the "true" Israel would seem to introduce new material into the context that would not be readily apparent to his readers—who have not read Romans 9-11!

[26]Johnson's contention ("Paul and 'Israel of God'," 190) that a solid case for apposition could be made if Paul had eliminated the *kai* does not seem valid. The elimination of the *kai* after "mercy" need not necessarily render the phrase "peace and mercy be upon them, upon the Israel of God." After all, advocates of view #1 like Burton (*Galatians*, 358) understand the *kai before* "mercy" to connect the two groups. Thus, the phrase could read, "peace be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God" (ibid., 357), which would still permit one to argue for two distinct groups.

[27]Beale, "Peace and Mercy Upon the Israel of God," 220-21. Beale offers another argument for viewing "the Israel of God" as the church by examining the Old Testament background of 6:16. Some have posited as a potential Old Testament background the LXX of Ps 124:5 and 127:6: "peace be upon Israel" (εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τὸν' Ισραήλ). However, the passages lack any reference to "mercy," which is present in Gal 6:16. Instead, Beale proposes Isaiah 54 as a likely background. In Isa 54:10, we read, "But my *lovingkindness* (חסד; LXX: ἔλεος) will not be removed from you, and my covenant of *peace* (שלום; LXX: εἰρήνη) will not be shaken." This is one of only three Old Testament texts (the others are Jer 16:5 and Ps 84:10) in which these two Hebrew words occur in such close proximity (208). While Beale thinks all three may have had a collective influence on Paul in writing Gal 6:16, if one of the texts was foremost in the apostle's mind, Beale believes it likely to have been Isa 54:10 and its context for the following reasons: (1) Paul has already quoted from Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27. So we have explicit evidence that he has this context in mind while writing to the Galatians. (2) The word συστοιχέω ("corresponds") appears in 4:25 just prior to the Isaiah quote, and στοιχέω ("conform") appears in 6:15 preceding "peace and mercy." The two words semantically overlap. (3) The "mercy" and "peace" of Isa 54:10 find their expression in 54:11-12, in which the Lord speaks of establishing Israel's foundation, gates, and walls with crystal and precious stones. Revelation alludes to these same verses (Rev 21:18-21) to describe the appearance of the Jerusalem that descends from heaven—all of which is set in the context of the portrayal of the "new heaven and new earth" (Rev 21:1). Isaiah 54:11-12, then, is describing the conditions of the *new creation*, which Paul mentions in Gal 6:15 (210-11, 214). Having, thus, made his case for viewing Isaiah 54 as the possible OT background, Beale insists that it is unlikely that Paul has two groups in mind in Gal 6:16. If Paul is thinking of Isa 54:10—which speaks of the "peace" and "mercy" Israel would experience in the new creation—then he likely sees *all* believers composing end-time Israel. The MT of Isa 54:15 speaks of God's protection of Israel from her enemies. But in the LXX interpretive paraphrase of this verse, Gentiles receive eschatological blessing through their incorporation into Israel: "behold proselytes will come to you through me, and they will sojourn with you, and they will run to you for refuge." From the LXX translator's perspective, Gentiles receive God's blessing through their identification with Israel (cf. Gal 3:16, 29) (215-17).

Beale's background proposal is possible and well-argued. However, "the decisive argument for seeing the church as the Israel of God is the argument of Galatians as a whole" (Schreiner, *Galatians*, forthcoming).

# *Sermon:* The Curse of the Law and the Cross of Christ (Galatians 3:10-14)[1]

*Lee Tankersley*

For the last two weeks, I've found my thoughts centering on Phil 3:1-11. It is, perhaps, easy to imagine what first would have drawn me to this text, as the argument in those verses reflects so much of what we've seen in Galatians. What has stuck in my head for the last two weeks, though, has not been the precise argument that Paul makes in Phil 3:1-11. Rather, what I have been reminded of again and again is something Paul wrote as he was introducing the argument of those verses, namely, "To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you."

Lee Tankersley is Pastor of Cornerstone Community Church in Jackson, Tennessee.

He is also a Ph.D. candidate in Systematic Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Paul knew, as he was writing to the Philippians, that what he was about to write was nothing that he hadn't said to them again and again, day after day, week after week. However, it was no trouble for him, and more than that, he knew it was safe for them. Just this week, though, I sat in my office, studying these verses and thinking, "The problem is not that saying the same things is trouble to me. I fear that if I'm saying the same thing again and again it would be trouble for you." How do I keep you from saying to yourselves, "Yes, we know that already?"

Then, I picked up Luther's *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, and I turned to the section of letters written to the "perplexed and doubting" (for obvious reasons). And I read the first letter in a section where Luther writes to a man who had come out of Roman Catholicism as he had seen the truth that man is justified by faith alone and not by some sort of mixture of faith and works. As Luther writes this letter, he sees that the man is being pressed by those who still hold to the false teaching from which he had been trying to break away. Therefore, Luther writes to him about those pressing him, "They try to do good of themselves in order that they might stand before God clothed in their own virtues and merits. But this is impossible. Among us you were one who held this opinion, or rather, error." Then, he adds, "So was I, and I am still fighting against the error without



*SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 86-92.

having conquered it yet."[2]

And in that moment, it hit me afresh why we need to be reminded again and again of this truth that we are justified by faith alone. It is because even though we may hear this truth a thousand times, we are all prone to slip back into a false teaching that says we are righteous before God and approved by him because of our good works. We're no different than the Philippians, than Luther, or the Galatians. We are all prone to confess justification by faith alone with our mouths and then live as if we are justified by works.

That's what Paul was saying in Phil 3:1. If you take his statement that it is safe for them to hear this message again and state the same thing negatively, we feel perhaps a bit more strongly what Paul was saying to them, namely, "If I do not say this same thing to you, reminding you again that we are justified by faith alone and not by doing the commands that the law, then that would be dangerous for you."

The reason it's dangerous not to hear the truth that we're justified by faith and not by works is because so many of us are prone to legalism. We've lived as if we were justified by works for years. And we're good at living that way.

One of the most impressive feats in the history of NASA came during the Apollo 13 space mission. Multiple issues were going on that threatened the safe return of the crew, but one of them was that the carbon dioxide levels were rising, and the engineers at NASA had to come up with a way to put together a unit that would help funnel the carbon dioxide out of the shuttle. The only problem was that the crew on Apollo 13 itself was very limited. Ultimately, however, using moon rock plastic bags, cardboard, suit hoses, and duct tape, the engineers assembled something that would do the trick. They relayed it to the space crew, and soon the carbon dioxide levels lowered.[3]

But I don't think those NASA engineers exhibited any more craftiness than many of us do when we continue to live as if we're justified by the works of the law. Sure, we may sit and hear sermon after sermon through Galatians and feel as if the means by which we think we are justified by the law are removed, but at the end of the day, we find ways to live as if our justification, our approval before God, is dependent upon our good works. We tell ourselves that the message we've been hearing for the last few weeks is true, but then we come up with ways to make our lives and our specific situations exceptions. We acknowledge that we're justified through faith but still live as if we're second-class citizens among the people of God until we can go through a good long period of time where our holy living lets us believe we're really forgiven. Some of us even want others to know that we still haven't forgiven ourselves for things we've done because that feels like it carries a sense of holiness or personal responsibility with it. Some of us even encourage others to walk around with a feeling of condemnation and not with the freedom that the gospel gives, enslaving our brothers and sisters because we feel that this is how we can communicate to them that we want to fight for their holiness. All of that is living as if we are justified by our works.

Some even hear me say that and respond, "Well, sure, we're justified by faith, but now we're talking about holy living, about sanctification." So, I will remind you that Paul doesn't ignore sanctification. Remember in 3:1-9 how Paul forced the Galatians to remember when they first received the Spirit? He was dealing then with the point of their justification. They had gone from enemies of God to those who desired to obey God not because they had obeyed the law but because they saw their wickedness, placed their faith in the crucified and risen Christ, were given the Spirit, and then the Spirit produced in them a desire for holiness unlike they had ever known. Then, Paul asked them, "Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" That is, do you think that the means by which a desire for holiness at the point of your justification is no longer a sufficient means to produce a desire for holiness in you now? Again, if it's a desire for holiness that we're worried about, then Paul tells us that such a desire comes as we have faith in the gospel and the Spirit produces it in us.

Let us not be found trying to be wiser than God.

So, as I considered all of these issues, I realized the weight of Paul's claim that it's dangerous for us not to be reminded again and again that we're justified by faith alone. But it's not just dangerous for us to forget that we are justified by faith. It is remarkably beneficial for us if we will truly grasp this beautiful reality that we are justified by faith alone in the crucified and risen Christ and not based on our good works. I think this congregation would be remarkably changed if we would just grasp this truth deep in our hearts. I think our singing would be more joyful, our praying would be more fervent, our passion for evangelism would be higher, our love for one another would be deeper, and our obedience to the Lord's commands would be greater. And I say that because I truly believe that the greatest motivation for a people to devote themselves fully to the Lord is not found in putting a law on them that says, "If you don't do this, he'll stand as a condemning judge over you," but is found in allowing them to see the glory and beauty of the gospel and in reminding them that they are free from condemnation through faith in Christ and have no need to enslave themselves again.

Therefore, that has been my hope and my aim and the goal of my prayers as we've studied through this book, and that is my hope and aim and goal now. I want us to see, understand, and delight in the gospel and the freedom we have through it. That is why saying the same thing to you again is no trouble to me, and I believe it is safe and beneficial for all of us. I would dare say that if God would graciously grant us as a people a deeper understanding and delight in the reality that we are free from condemnation by faith in Christ alone, we would notice a difference in this church.

So, with that said I want us to look specifically this morning at Gal 3:10-14. In these verses, Paul continues to mount up his arguments for why no man is justified by doing the works of the law but rather is only justified as he places his faith in Christ. He continues to show the absurdity of what the Galatians were being tempted to believe, namely, that we have to combine obedience to the law's commands with our faith in order to be justified. Therefore, he gives them one more argument concerning the nature of the law, its incompatibility with faith, and a number of Old Testament references to convince his hearers again of the truth. So, I want us to look at these realities and see for ourselves the foolishness of thinking that we can be justified by doing good works.

Now, as we think about Paul's argument so far, you could imagine Paul's opponents saying, "Paul, you're right. Abraham was justified by faith, but then God brought along Moses and gave him the law. Therefore, the law is something God gave to add to faith. Just as God reveals more of his truth as redemptive history unfolds, so he showed us the necessity of faith for justification through Abraham and then showed us the necessity of obedience to (at least) much of what the law commands through Moses."[4] Therefore, it is fitting for Paul to reveal the nature of the law, and he begins by reminding the Galatians that everyone who relies on the law in order to be justified is cursed because the law requires perfect obedience (v. 10).

## EVERYONE WHO RELIES ON THE LAW TO BE JUSTIFIED IS CURSED BECAUSE THE LAW REQUIRES PERFECT OBEDIENCE (V. 10)

Paul writes in verse 10, "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law and do them.'" Paul wants his readers to see that if anyone attempts to be justified according to the law, then they need to understand that the law requires perfect obedience. This is confirmed in James 2:10, as James writes, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." If you fail at one point in the law, you've broken the law and are condemned. We see the same reality concerning condemnation in the sin of Adam and Eve. They did not sin multiple times and so heap condemnation on themselves. They sinned once

and were condemned, driven from the garden.

But this reality is also clear in this verse itself. Paul says that those who rely on the works of the law for justification are under a curse because "cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law and do them." Do you see it in this verse? Paul quotes Deut 27:26, a section in Deuteronomy where God tells the people of blessings and curses, and reminds them that cursed is the man who does not do "all things" commanded in the law. That is, the law demands perfect obedience. Otherwise, the one under the law is cursed.

Of course, the unspoken implication in this verse is that no one perfectly keeps the law. No one abides by everything that is written in the law and obeys perfectly. Paul has confirmed this elsewhere, reminding us in Rom 3:10 and following that there is none righteous and that all of us have sinned. That's universal.

Therefore, what Paul wants us to see is that if we're thinking about being justified based on being good enough, based on obeying God's commands in his law, then we need to realize that God requires absolute perfect obedience. In fact, disobeying the law at any one point makes one cursed before God, with God's condemnation bearing down on one at all times and in all places. God will accept nothing less than absolute perfect obedience to his commands, and anyone who falls short of that is cursed.

And this might come as an odd statement to make, but I think this point is one of the greatest weapons we have in the fight against legalism. I know well that the nature of temptation to sin is such that we are faced with lies. We become convinced that somehow it really will make the hurt we feel inside ease a bit if we'll just gossip. We tell ourselves that giving into our lustful appetites will bring us lasting joy. And in those moments, it's helpful to be able to remind ourselves of truth and identify the lie in this temptation. Well, I think one of the greatest truths of which we can remind ourselves when we're faced with the enemy's lies that say we need to do more good works before God approves of us or that we need to do more before God will really forgive us is the truth that God requires absolutely perfect obedience before anyone will be justified in his sight. That way, when Satan tempts us to despair and tells us that God wants nothing to do with us, we can answer, "Yes, I would be hopeless even if I had not sinned in the ways I can think of today or this week because unless anyone obeys God's commands perfectly, that one is cursed. That's why my only hope is Christ." Then, you can look to the gospel and be reminded that one has lived perfectly righteous for you.

So, first, Paul reminds us that anyone who looks to the works of the law to be justified stands under the curse of God because God requires perfect obedience to his commands, and everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Therefore, Paul concludes in verse 11 that no one is then justified by the law but only through faith.

### NO ONE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW BUT ONLY THROUGH FAITH (V. 11)

Now, this is nothing new as we've gone through this letter, but here we see it again. Paul writes in verse 11, "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" Paul states in verse 11 what he has already shown; no one will be justified before God by the law, and the reason is because God requires perfect obedience and no one obeys perfectly. However, he adds another reason here in verse 11. He quotes Hab 2:4, reminding them that even this Old Testament book proclaimed, "the righteous shall live by faith."

Therefore, Paul is showing them that the Old Testament itself witnessed that our only hope of justification is through faith. Paul had already shown this with Abraham, quoting Gen 15:6, and reminding the Galatians that Abraham believed God and that God credited him as righteous. However, he adds Hab 2:4 as well.

Now, the situation in Habakkuk is one where the prophet predicts of a day when the Chaldeans will come and judge Judah as a divine punishment

for their sins. Therefore, the call for those in Judah is to trust in God, to have faith. The righteous ones will live by faith. And Habakkuk becomes the leading example of this, declaring in Hab 3:17-18 that though the fig tree does not blossom, the vines bear no fruit, and there be no herd in the stalls, yet he will rejoice in the Lord. He will trust. He will believe. The call to the righteous is to have faith.

Paul points to that reality in Habakkuk and shows the Galatians that no man was ever intended to be justified by doing the commands of the law but that the call has always been to place our faith in the Lord. That's how we're justified. That's how we have eternal life. So, the call to us is to believe the gospel, not to try to be justified by the works of the law.

But there's more. In verse 12 Paul shows just how incompatible these two realities are. And this is crucial because the false teachers were telling the Galatians that they had to exercise faith and supplement it with obedience to the law in order to be justified. Paul so far has said, "No," because the Old Testament says the righteous live by faith and that if you try to be justified by the law, you're required to keep and obey it perfectly, and thus the law brings nothing but a curse to those trying to be justified by it.

Now, Paul shows how being justified by faith and being justified by the works of the law cannot be combined by pointing out that the essential nature of the law is that of doing, not of faith.

### THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE LAW IS THAT OF DOING, NOT OF FAITH (V. 12)

So, if faith is saying, "I cannot do enough. I simply look in faith, in trust, to God, who must provide for me and do what I cannot do," the essential nature of the law is completely the opposite of that. Paul writes in verse 12, "But the law is not of faith, rather, 'The one who does them shall live by them.'"

Paul quotes Lev 18:5 to show that the nature of the law was built upon obedience in order to bring blessing. You do this and you're blessed. Do this, and you'll live. The essential nature of the law was to make demands that must be met. It was about doing. Faith, however, is about trusting, about confessing our inability and failure and looking in hope to the Lord to do for us. Therefore, you can't mix these together. Lest anyone think that salvation is by faith and works of the law, Paul says, "No, it cannot happen. They are incompatible."

Therefore, to confess that you're justified by faith and still living as if you must do certain things for God to approve of you is mixing together two things that are the opposite. It is like professing that you think marital faithfulness is right and good while constantly committing adultery. This is beyond inconsistency or hypocrisy. It's trying to put two things together that by definition, by their essential nature, cannot be mixed. Justification by faith and justification by the law cannot both exist. Either you're justified by faith alone or on the basis of works. And Paul has made clear which of these is true.

"Fine," we might say, "if God requires perfect obedience or we're cursed, under his judgment so that we're justified by faith and not by the law (nor some mixture of faith and obedience to the law), then what are we having faith in? What are we trusting in as our hope to be freed from the curse of the law that we've brought on ourselves by failing to obey God perfectly?" The answer, Paul gives us is Christ and what he has done for us. Specifically, Paul reminds us in verse 13 that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by paying our penalty as our substitute.

### CHRIST REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW BY PAYING OUR PENALTY AS OUR SUBSTITUTE (V. 13)

Paul writes in verse 13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." Now, at this point, we could make a devastating error in our thinking. We might think that the gospel is the good news that though we come short of God's demand of perfect obedience to his commands and have brought a curse upon

ourselves in the very form of God's judgment and condemnation, that God has decided to lower his commands or overlook the curse we've earned or just take what we can offer as good enough. That is not the gospel. If that were the case, then there would have been no need for God the Son to take on flesh, live, die, and be raised for us.

The good news, rather, is that God still demands perfection and though we've merited his judgment, Christ lived perfectly righteous for us and bore the judgment our sins had merited. That's what Paul is saying in verse 13. The curse did not simply go away. God demonstrated his love for us not by somehow compromising his holiness and acting as if our sins had never happened or that we had not merited a curse, his judgment, and his wrath. Rather, he demonstrated his love for us by sending his Son to take the punishment that we deserved. That's what Paul is saying in Gal 3:13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. The amazing love of God is seen not in his ceasing to be holy and removing his wrath but in sending his Son so that he might appease God's wrath for us. That is the glory of God's love.

This is what we mean when we talk about penal substitutionary atonement. Christ paid our penalty for us, serving as our substitute, and so made atonement for our sins. And Paul illustrates this by quoting Deut 21:23, writing, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."

You see, once a criminal was killed, he would be placed on a tree, on a stake, a piece of wood so as to serve as an announcement that this one had been justly condemned. Being hanged on a tree was a sign that one had borne the curse of God in his death.[5] So, Paul is saying that when Jesus was hanged on a tree (that is, crucified), it was a sign that he had borne the curse of God himself. Christ bore the punishment we had earned by our sin. He took it for us so that instead of being the objects of God's wrath, we might become the objects of God's love and forgiveness.

Now, for Paul, at one point, this had no doubt been a reason why he had rejected the notion that Jesus was God's promised Savior, the Messiah. Jesus had clearly been condemned in death under the curse of God. Once the risen Christ appeared to him, however, Paul began to see that though Jesus died under the curse of God, it had nothing to do with Jesus deserving punishment. Rather, he had become a curse "for us." As Isaiah 53 tells us, "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.... The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:5-6). Jesus died, taking upon himself the curse that we deserved.

This means that God does not overlook your sin. All the sin that Satan brings to your mind to tell you that God will not forgive you or that he does not declare you righteous, Jesus paid the penalty for that sin. The reason you can be forgiven of your sin is not because God lovingly decided to ignore it. It's because he lovingly decided to send his Son to pay for it. So, we don't tell Satan that we have not sinned or are not deserving of judgment when he mounts his attacks against us. We simply tell him that Jesus paid for them.

Again, Luther is helpful here. He writes, "When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares that we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak thus: 'I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means. For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction in my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God."[6]

That is good news. That's why we still have hope, though condemned by the law. You see, the law says, "Do this and you will live," but we must answer, "I can't, but I place my faith in one who has obeyed for me and one who has paid for my failures." Therefore, this isn't a call just to have faith in something. It's specifically a call to place your faith in Christ and his life, death, and resurrection as being sufficient for your righteousness, sufficient for payment for your sins before a holy God.

Therefore, Paul has shown us why the law is a hopeless route for justification—it requires per-

fect obedience and we cannot offer that. Therefore, we are simply cursed under the law. He shows us why faith is necessary, namely, because the Scriptures have always taught that righteousness comes through faith. He shows us why the law and faith are incompatible. And he shows us why faith can justify—because our faith is in one who has lived, died, and been raised for us. But he doesn't stop there. Finally, he shows us that not only are we justified by faith, but God gives us the Holy Spirit, a demonstration that the blessing of Abraham has come to us.

### THEREFORE, IF WE BELIEVE, WE RECEIVE ABRAHAM'S BLESSING – THE HOLY SPIRIT (V. 14)

The Galatians were no doubt being told that if their faith in Christ merited them anything, it most definitely did not make them blessed as Abraham's offspring. For that, they had to be circumcised. And, it's true that God did promise to bless Abraham and his offspring. Ultimately Paul even remarks that Abraham is an heir of the whole world (Rom 4:13). So then who gets the blessing promised to Abraham? Is it those who are circumcised or those who obey parts of the law?

Paul writes that those who have faith in Christ receive the promise given to Abraham. He writes in verse 14, "So that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." As we believe, we receive the Holy Spirit, and that is a sure sign that we will be blessed with Abraham, that we are children of God.

Therefore, I know that the temptation is to turn to our obedience in order to think of ourselves as righteous before God. But fight that temptation, see the nature of the law and the nature of Christ's work, and know that faith is the only means by which to be justified before God. In essence, I want to encourage you to be aware enough of your sin to know that there is no hope of looking to your works to merit a right standing before God, and I want you to be constantly aware of the gospel so that you may be reminded daily that you are free from condemnation because of what Christ has done for you.

ENDNOTES

[1]This is a slight revision of a sermon originally preached on October 25, 2009, at Cornerstone Community Church in Jackson, Tennessee.

[2]Martin Luther, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (The Library of Christian Classics; vol. 28; ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 110.

[3]This story is provided at http://history.nasa.gov/alsj/a13/a13.summary.html.

[4]Timothy George similarly writes, "At this point Paul's Galatian opponents could well chime in: 'Of course! That's just what we've been saying all along. The history of salvation does not run from Abraham to Christ but from Abraham through Moses to Christ. The way for the Gentiles to receive the blessings of Abraham is by way of the law. The law is not opposed to faith but rather supplements and strengthens it by making demands of it'" (*Galatians* [New American Commentary; Nashville: B&H, 1994], 228).

[5]Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 285.

[6]Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 86-87.

# Book Reviews

*40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. By Robert L. Plummer. 40 Questions Series, edited by Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010, 347 pp., $17.99 paper.

Robert Plummer is Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This is not a book about hermeneutics in the generally accepted technical sense of the word, but a guide to biblical interpretation written for any who want to improve their Bible-reading skills. It is immensely practical and written at a level that does not require technical theological or philosophical training, and is thus accessible to the ordinary Christian. Of course, such an ordinary Christian will need to be prepared from time to time to venture into unchartered waters or, as the saying goes, to think outside the box.

*40 Questions* is arranged in four parts. Part 1 is "Getting Started: Text, Canon, and Translation," a section that explores the matter of what the Bible is and how we have come to get it in the form we have. "Part 2: Approaching the Bible Generally," is further divided into two sections: "Questions Related to Interpretation," and "Questions Related to Meaning." "Part 3: Approaching Specific Texts" seeks to give guidance in approaching some of the various literary genres of both Old and New Testaments. "Part 4: Issues in Recent Discussion" takes up some matters that have caused controversy or which represent recent developments in the theory of interpretation.

First of all, what does this book not set out to do? It does not claim to deal with all the matters that modern interpreters or Bible-readers might be concerned with. Nor does it aim to give any more than a brief survey of the history of biblical interpretation. It does not primarily aim to refute the claims and counter-claims of non-evangelical positions in interpretation. It does not set out to give exhaustive treatments of the matters it deals with.

So what does it do, and how does it do it? *Forty* questions is an arbitrary number imposed by the series of which this book is a part. The author, therefore, cannot deal with every significant issue that evangelical Christians may be concerned about when it comes to interpreting the Bible. Furthermore, those matters that are covered are not necessarily explained with as much detail as some might like. Plummer, however, at the conclusion of each chapter, does give guidance for further reading. Also, each chapter (*Question*) concludes with a few reflection questions that might well be used either by the individual reader or in a group study.

Many Christians are prepared to take the canon of Scripture on trust simply because that is

what they are brought up to do in their respective churches or sub-cultural Christian groups. Part 1 would repay careful study by such people. Section A of Part 2 (*Questions Related to Interpretation*) is likewise probably new ground for many Christians, although much of the content deals with things that, for many, are intuitive though best not left to chance. There are also practical issues of becoming better interpreters and reference to helps that are available.

Section B of Part 2 (*Questions Related to Meaning*) deals with some vital issues, both practical and theoretical, in determining the meaning of a text. These include: "Can a text have more than one meaning?"; "What is the overarching message of the Bible?"; and "Is the Bible really all about Jesus?" These are crucial questions since they relate to the whole task of understanding the Bible as God's word to us Christians in the here and now.

Part 3 takes us to the practical matters of dealing with different kinds of texts in the Bible. This part, as far as it goes, is full of useful helps to reading the Bible. Plummer takes us through some of the various genres found in both Testaments, such as narrative, prophecy, and apocalyptic. The treatment of genres found mainly in one or other Testament include proverbs, poetry, psalms, parables, and epistles. Each *Question* is provided with well thought-out answers that point up the characteristics of each genre so that they are not read as something that they are not intended to be.

It is this section that I feel lacks an important dimension. Notwithstanding the questions already dealt with in Part 2, Section B, a reader wanting to know how to deal with the Old Testament genres such as proverbs or prophecy may still well ask, after reading the relevant chapters, "What do I do now?" Even though these chapters follow one on "Is the whole Bible about Jesus?" (to which the answer is an unequivocal "yes"), how one makes the link between narrative, or wisdom texts, and Jesus is not, in my opinion, at all clear. A preacher, a Sunday School teacher, or even a Christian parent, all wanting to point their respective audiences to Christ from, say, an Old Testament narrative or prophecy, might feel that little guidance is given as to how one gets from the text to a Christian application that honors Christ. Genre identification is crucial. But, understanding the characteristics of, say, proverbial literature is only the first part of interpretation of the relevant biblical texts.

Of course, it is unfair to criticize a book for not doing what it was never intended to do. Biblical interpretation is such an important issue that in places can be rather involved. Perhaps it needs more than one volume in this series to do it justice, even at the level of the non-technical reader. How many readers are going to follow up on the suggested readings to find answers to their further questions? Probably not many. Given the artificial constraints of the "40 Questions" format, this book does succeed in anticipating and asking a number of pertinent questions (FAQs) about biblical interpretation, and then in providing much useful information about them. It simply cannot deal in depth with the issues of interpreting texts, especially from the Old Testament, in a way that relates them to the New Testament's claims that Jesus is subject matter of all Scripture. While providing a good introduction to the non-technically trained, its value for preachers and the theologically literate is, to some extent, limited.

—Graeme Goldsworthy
Visiting Lecturer in Hermeneutics
Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia

*Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. By J. Nelson Kraybill. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010, 224 pp., $21.99 paper.

J. Nelson Kraybill received his Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. He has served as president of the Associated Mennonite Bibli-

cal Seminary. The Book of Revelation has been a topic of teaching and learning for the author for more than twenty years. He is also the author of *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse.*

When I approach a book on John's Revelation I'm always cautious. I don't know if I'm going to be engrossed into so much contextual detail that I'm stuck in the past with no relevance for today or if I'm going to be surrounded by a hyper-sensational televangelist view that has only a slight relevance to the text. To my delight, this book was neither. In addition, the usual end-time structures are not here. Kraybill creates a refreshing structure that communicates what he believes is the essential message of John's letter. His unique approach lends itself to Kraybill's purpose of identifying the key political systems of emperor worship, the kingdom of God, and how they are influencing people in both John's day and ours. The author has struck a great balance in his work. Kraybill's cultural understanding of first century Rome will give any reader a clearer view of the political structure of John's day, which will be the type in the end of the present age.

John's letter clearly paints a portrait of two kingdoms at war. As indicated by the title of this book, Kraybill believes the main emphasis in Revelation is worship and understanding worship intertwined in the political and spiritual forces in the current and future age. Kraybill interprets the emperor worship of John's day as the type that will encompass men in the end to demand worship. At the same time, he rightly points to the Revelation as a letter which opens up the heavens and gives the reader a vision of the true/loving/just God who is in control, no matter what circumstances may surround a believer—even martyrdom.

This text is recommended for two specific purposes. The author's exegetical and cultural information on the Roman Empire is outstanding. This book will lend itself to the any student as an aide to understand the culture of the New Testament in general. Kraybill's information expands beyond the Book of Revelation to help every Christian understand Jesus' words to followers, words such as "count the cost," or "take up your cross and follow me." Kraybill clearly defines the political and social pressure Rome placed the early church under and the cost to follow Christ.

Second, the judgment of God and the wrath of Satan in Revelation are extremely violent. It was a curiosity of mine to how a Mennonite would approach John's Revelation, as Mennonites are traditionally pacifists. Kraybill's insight into the use of violence, its place and understanding in Scripture, and the proper Christian response are admirable.

—Gary D. Almon
Assistant Professor of Christian Education
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*. By Jonathan T. Pennington. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009, xv + 399 pp., $42.99 paper.

This book is a revised version of the doctoral dissertation of Jonathan Pennington submitted to St. Andrews University in Scotland and originally published by Brill in the Netherlands as the Novum Testamentum Supplements Series. Pennington currently teaches New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Before I started reading this book I had simply assumed that Matthew's preference for "Kingdom of Heaven" instead of "Kingdom of God" was due to the Hebraic character of Matthew. The Evangelist used "Heaven" as a circumlocution for "God" and employed it in order to avoid writing the divine name for God due to his Jewish sensitivities. I thought it was rather akin to modern rabbinic authors who write "G-d" for "God." I am quite happy to say that Pennington has sowed seeds of doubt in my mind on this topic. In a thorough and robust study of the topic, Pennington successfully shows that "Kingdom of Heaven" is not merely a circumlocution for "King-

dom of God"—rather, it is part of a highly developed cosmological discourse about the heavens and the earth in relation to God, Jesus, and the Church. Pennington maintains that "Kingdom of Heaven" highlights a particular spatial understanding of the universe as well as of God's reign. Pennington's thesis is based on his observation of four distinctive aspects of Matthew's use of heavenly language in the Beatitudes, Lord's Prayer, ecclesiological passages, Great Commission, and "Kingdom" references: (1) Matthew's intentional distinction between the singular and plural uses of the Greek *ouranos/ouranoi* and his preference for the latter; (2) the frequent use of the binary pairing of heaven and earth; (3) the use of "heavenly father" and "Father in heaven"; and (4) the frequent use of the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven."

The path that the book takes is by critiquing the consensus built on G. Dalman's earlier work that "heaven" is used as a circumlocution for God in Second Temple Jewish literature and the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 1). He then proceeds to conduct a general survey about "heaven" in the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature (chapter 2) and also in the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 3). Pennington then shows how this heavenly theme interacts with an array of other topics in Matthew (chapter 4). Thereafter, Pennington examines several topics in the Old Testament, Second Temple literature, and Matthew including *ouranos/ouranoi* (chapters 5 and 6), heaven and earth (chapters 7 and 8), God as Father (chapters 9 and 10), the kingdom of God in the Old Testament and Second Temple literature (chapter 11), and Matthew's usage of "Kingdom of Heaven" (chapter 12).

In the conclusion, Pennington explores the way that Kingdom of Heaven relates to Matthew's dualistic worldview and his symbolic universe. He also provides an interestingly brief survey of the reception of "Kingdom of Heaven" in the early church whereby Christians were not looking for a political kingdom on earth, but for a transcendent one. In sum, Pennington believes that understanding "Kingdom of Heaven" in a cosmological/worldview framework has the following the implications: (1) it emphasizes the universality of God's dominion; (2) it makes a clear biblical-theological connection with the Old Testament; (3) it strengthens the Christological claims of the Gospel; (4) undergirds the ethical teaching of Jesus; and (5) legitimates and encourages Matthew's readers as the true people of God. Pennington successfully shows how Matthew intended to reconfigure the worldview of the readers so that they would align their behavior, beliefs, and values with the God who dwells in heaven.

The other interesting thing about this book is that it taught me a new word, "cornucopia," which means "abundance." May Pennington's work on Matthew receive a cornucopia of attention.

—Michael F. Bird
Lecturer in Theological Studies
Crossway College

*The Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Approach*. By Christopher D. Stanley. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010, xvi + 544 pp., $42.00 paper.

Christopher Stanley is a Pauline scholar at St. Bonaventure University and even though Stanley ventured outside his primary field of study in producing this volume he exhibits a keen grasp of the history, debates, and current trends of thought within Old Testament studies.

This textbook is designed to appeal to a range of opinions by claiming to interpret topics from the perspectives of three groups of scholars: "conservatives" which "adhere to traditional ideas about the divine inspiration of the Bible and therefore believe that the Bible should be trusted as a historical source;" "maximalists" which do not let religious beliefs "interfere with historical research" yet believe that the "majority of the stories are based on earlier oral or written traditions that contained significant amounts of historically

trustworthy data;" and "minimalists" that "regard the biblical narratives as largely fictional works composed in the postexilic period" (121).

The interpretive sections are only included within the conclusions of selected chapters while the bulk of the material is presented in a narrative that accords with the standard conclusions of more-or-less contemporary critical consensus. Stanley frames his textbook as an objective description along with three separate interpretive perspectives, but, along with his unspoken assumption of critical consensus, at times he is openly dismissive of the "conservative" position. For example, within the body of chapter 36 he says, "While many conservatives accept the book's claim that Daniel's visions represent genuine predictions of future events . . . the real author of this vision was not a Jewish member of the Babylonian court named Daniel who lived in the sixth century B.C.E. but an unknown resident of Palestine in the second century B.C.E." (489-90). Furthermore, Stanley often places traditional interpretations alongside fanciful revisionist ones in ways that imply parity. For instance, he says that Genesis 2-3 could be interpreted to make "the humans emerge as heroes . . . while Yahweh comes across as a liar and bully" (208). He concludes that this view might "offend many religious believers, but it finds support in many of the details of the narrative" and both the traditional interpretation and this new approach "represent selective readings of the text" so they are a wash and no better interpretation is presented (208).

Lastly, Stanley's depth of treatment is often unbalanced. For instance, he devotes roughly the same amount of space (1.5 pages) to a discussion concerning the calendrical conventions B.C. vs. B.C.E. (22-23) as he does the book of Judges (264-65). Stanley does a good job introducing students to a wide variety of topics that aid in comprehending the Old Testament such as sociology, comparative religions, and ritual studies; however, the book would be better without its pretense of objectivity and patronizing tone.

—Charles Halton
Instructor of Old Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*1-3 John*. By Robert W. Yarbrough. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008, xx + 434 pp., $39.99.

Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein are the editors of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, and they have now each contributed stellar volumes to the series. This series has established itself as a top tier set of commentaries on the New Testament, and Yarbrough's volume on the Johannine epistles is a credit to the others. This brief review will focus on the treatment of 1 John, but Yarbrough's treatment of the two shorter epistles is as strong as his treatment of the longer.

In his preface, Yarbrough identifies six emphases that distinguish his work on these letters of John. I condense them as follows: (1) reliance on the Gospels as true and influencing the Johannine letters, especially the Gospel of John; (2) use of computer aids to explore linguistic ties with the LXX; (3) attention given to each textual variant noted in NA[27]; (4) use of recent scholarship; (5) use of historic Christian scholarship from the Fathers to the Reformers; and (6) an attempt to bear in mind international contexts, whether Muslim, post-Marxist, Asian, or persecuted.

The introduction to the commentary offers a thoroughgoing defense of the idea that John the son of Zebedee was the author of both the Fourth Gospel and 1-3 John, convincingly demonstrating the implausibility of Richard Bauckham's reliance on Eusebius's dubious introduction of a second John in addition to the son of Zebedee. Yarbrough maintains that 1 John is a letter on the basis of ancient testimony and certain epistolary features it bears, and he surveys the evidence for the setting of Ephesus and Asia Minor in the last few decades of the first century. Yarbrough then traces

intriguing connections between the letters of John and the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. In view of the lack of consensus regarding 1 John's organization, he relies on divisions that became standard among scribal copyists, which are reflected in the inner marginal numbers of NA[27]. These are the basis for his detailed exegetical outline of 1 John. Yarbrough's discussion of the theology of John concludes that the center of John's thought is the same as the center of Paul's, as argued by Thomas Schreiner: "the grandeur and centrality of God" (27).

Here I can only survey some conclusions espoused in the commentary, but the evidence adduced for them is of the highest quality. Readers will want to avail themselves of these arguments. As the commentary unfolds, Yarbrough helpfully identifies John's focus on believing, doing, and loving. On 1 John 2:2, he explains that "Jesus did not suffer for every individual indiscriminately but particularly for those whom God knew he would save," agreeing with Calvin on the point that "'the whole world' refers to believers scattered everywhere and in all times" (80). This does not keep him from adding in the next sentence: "And yet none of this rules out certain positive benefits—God's common grace to humans generally . . . that are spin-offs of the central redeeming benefit proper of the cross" (81). He also affirms that the gospel can be offered to all in good faith. On 2:12-13, Yarbrough takes "little children" to refer to the whole audience, which is then divided into older and younger with the address to fathers and young men. The lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life in 2:16 are aptly explained as "what the body hankers for and the eyes itch to see and what people toil to acquire" (134). The coming antichrist in 2:18 seems to be an individual, while the antichrists are ringleaders of doctrinal aberration or ethical laxity. The sense in which Christians do not sin (e.g., 3:6) is that they do not strike "an advanced or confirmed posture of noncompliance with John's message" (185). The water and blood by which Jesus came in 5:6 refer to his baptism and death (282). The sin unto death in 5:16 "is simply violation of the fundamental terms of relationship with God that Jesus Christ mediates" (310), and this is "to have a heart unchanged by God's love in Christ and so persist in convictions and acts and commitments" that betray unbelief (311).

Robert Yarbrough has given us what is, in my opinion, the best commentary on the Johannine epistles available. Slightly more detailed than Daniel L. Akin's excellent volume (2001, NAC), this will be the first one I turn to and the first I recommend.

—James M. Hamilton, Jr.
Associate Professor of Biblical Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Encounters with Biblical Theology*. By John J. Collins. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005, 243 pp., $26.00 paper.

John J. Collins of Yale is not to be confused with C. John Collins of Covenant Seminary. This volume is a collection of essays published over the course of 30 years. These essays "attempt to address biblical theology consistently from the perspective of historical criticism" (1). Collins rejects irrelevance and orthodox Christianity, refusing to bracket "out all questions of the significance of the text for the modern world" as well as "a view of biblical theology as a confessional enterprise" (1-2).

Collins believes that history has shown the Bible to be erroneous (4), that archaeology "is often at odds with the biblical account of early Israelite history" (5), and that "The testimony about the conquest of Canaan by divine command runs afoul of modern sensibilities about the morality of genocide. No one in modern pluralist society can live in a world that is shaped by the Bible" (5). Collins evaluates the Bible's historical, ethical, and theological claims from

a position of superiority. He writes, "Think, for example, of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, depicted as a heroic act of faith, of the command to slaughter the Canaanites, the laws about slavery, or the treatment of women. . . . Any attempt to apply [the Bible] to a modern situation, or to deduce ethical principles from it, must be approached with caution. . . . It is also too dangerous to be removed from public discussion and relegated to the realm of unquestioned belief and acceptance" (7).

Considering the last century of discussion, Collins explains, "There have always been attempts by religious conservatives to evade the consequences of historical criticism for biblical theology," but Brevard Childs has sought to move beyond the problems not by rejecting or disputing historical criticism but by granting it "no theological importance." Collins writes that Childs failed because of inconsistency, because there never has been any normative canon like Childs's, because Childs's approach lacks "explanatory power," lacks a hermeneutic like Bultmann's that would "provide the common ground necessary for intelligibility," and because Childs's proposal isolates "biblical theology from much of what is vital and interesting in biblical studies today." Collins concludes that Childs's approach is "self-defeating" (15).

Collins rightly points out that "Historical criticism, consistently understood, is not compatible with a confessional theology that is committed to specific doctrines on the basis of faith." He insists, "It is, however, quite compatible with theology, understood as an open-ended and critical inquiry into the meaning and function of God-language." Collins holds that historical criticism is thus the best framework for doing biblical theology because "it provides a broad framework for scholarly dialogue"—with everyone except orthodox Christians—and in this case the "main contribution of the biblical theologian is to clarify the genre of the biblical material in the broad sense of the way in which it should be read and the expectations that are appropriate to it" (22).

For Collins, theology should be "an academic discipline, which is analytical rather than confessional," and provides the valid contribution of "the analysis of biblical God-language." He explains that "This model is designed for the academy rather than for the church, but its practical value should not be underestimated" (27). Biblical theology contributes to the history of religions.

Knowing as he does that the book of Daniel was written after the events it prophesies and was falsely attributed to Daniel, Collins explores how, "as Childs observes, 'the issue continues to trouble the average lay reader'"—the issue that "The writer, were he not Daniel, must have lied on a most frightful scale" (28). As mentioned above, Collins embraces a belief system he finds superior to the Bible's on historical, theological, and ethical levels, so he is able to see that in the case of Daniel, while "the common people accepted the attribution [to Daniel], or the message would lose much of its effect," the "circle of authors . . . . In view of the urgency of the message . . . considered the literary fiction justified and that it did not detract from the religious value of the revelation" (29). So Collins can see from his perspective that the ends justify the means, but what he does not explore is the way that—if he is correct about what they did—the ends of these authors are betrayed and undermined by the means they used.

For the present reviewer, this collection of essays contributes little to the discussion of biblical theology, because Collins is not actually writing about biblical theology. This collection of essays presents the attempt of a learned man to argue that even though he has rejected the Bible, what he says about the Bible remains relevant for ethics and theology. There is a remarkable tension in the pages of this volume as Collins seems to recognize as he tries to explain away the reality that he has replaced what he sees as the exclusive, intolerant, faith based claims of those who believe the Bible with his own set of faith based claims that exclude and refuse to tolerate those who believe the Bible. In the process of excluding and

refusing to tolerate those who believe the Bible, Collins wants to write in such a way that what he says about the Bible remains relevant to those who care about the Bible. Such an approach seems doomed to fail since it is internally inconsistent.

—James M. Hamilton, Jr.
Associate Professor of Biblical Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Holy Spirit*. By F. LeRon Shults and Andrea Hollingsworth. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008, viii + 156 pp., $16.00 paper.

It used to be said, and with good reason, that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was "the Cinderella of theology," but such cannot be said now. Books on the Spirit have multiplied dramatically in the past forty years or so, due to the emergence of the Charismatic movement and the worldwide spread of Pentecostalism, as well as the re-discovery of the Trinity by scholars and church leaders alike. In this current wave of interest in the Spirit, this recent study by F. LeRon Shults, professor of theology at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway, and Andrea Hollingsworth, a Ph.D. candidate at Loyola University, is one of the better studies of the historical development of Christian thinking about the Spirit.

The authors see two main sources shaping this development—Scripture and "the cultural context of the Church" (17). With regard to the latter, they are alert, for example, to the influence of Middle Platonism on such second and third century Christian authors as Justin Martyr and Origen (18–23) and that of Aristotelianism on Thomas Aquinas (42). The authors also point out the pastoral concerns that guided much of the patristic pneumatological reflection (25-29, 32), and rightly note the vital role played by the Cappadocians in the advance of this reflection (25). The key leader opposing the Cappadocians, however, was not the somewhat shadowy Macedonius as Shults and Hollingsworth claim, but Basil of Caesarea's one-time mentor and friend Eustathius of Sebaste (25). Augustine's interpretation of the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, the *filioque*, is seen as having roots in Scripture (35), but also anthropological presuppositions (33-34). Differing from the authors, however, this reviewer would tend to view scriptural concerns as being the more dominant influence (33).

After a very helpful review of the medieval scene—both East and West—as it relates to the Spirit (38-44), the authors deal with the Reformers. Regin Prenter's seminal work on Luther's pneumatology, *Spiritus Creator* (1953), rightly orients their discussion of Luther. The treatment of Calvin, though, is not as helpful. His influential formulation of the inner witness of the Spirit is overlooked entirely, while his struggle to affirm the rectitude of classical patristic terminology as it relates to the Trinity—the use of terms such as *ousia* and *hypostasis*—is not fully recognized.

The tradition that comes from Calvin and fellow Reformed theologians, what is called "Reformed scholasticism" (59), is depicted as one that hardly mentions the Spirit (though, cp. 49). What the authors do not consider, however, is the tremendous contribution made by the Reformed tradition in the British Isles, namely, Puritanism. In a major lacuna, none of the great Puritan divines who wrote extensively on the Spirit—Richard Sibbes, John Owen, John Flavel, Thomas Goodwin, or John Howe—is referenced, let alone discussed. In fact, whatever else the Puritans may have been—social, political, and ecclesiastical Reformers—they were primarily men and women intensely passionate about piety and Christian experience. By and large united in their Calvinism, the Puritans believed that every aspect of their spiritual lives came from the work of the Holy Spirit.

Another great era of interest in the Spirit, the eighteenth century, is focused in three pages (60-62) and on three figures: Nicholas von Zinzendorf (his middle name, Ludwig, is used instead of the

more normal Nicholas in the book [60]), Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley. Zinzendorf is understandably included because of his unique—at least for the eighteenth century—description of the Spirit as "Mother." Edwards's Trinitarianism is seen as critical to understanding the American theologian, while the links of Wesley with patristic streams of pneumatology and his lifelong concern to link pneumatology and ethics are highlighted.

In their treatment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the authors point to the enormous influence exercised by Charles Hodge over Reformed thought in North America, as well as upon twentieth century fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Interest in the Spirit's work was narrowed to his inspiration of the Scriptures and his sanctification of believers (68). There seems little doubt that it was this legacy in part that prevented Reformed, fundamentalist, and evangelical theologians from adequately responding to Pentecostalism as it emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century (68-72). The treatment of twentieth century authors from the ecumenical, feminist, and liberation theology traditions is helpful in making sense of these different traditions as they relate to pneumatology (72-82). This is followed by a superb overview of such twentieth century theologians as Karl Barth (who, it is argued, played a key role in reviving interest in the Trinity), Karl Rahner, Sergius Bulgakov, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, David Coffey, and Robert Jenson (82-88).

The final section of the essay portion of the book is a provocative look at the future shape of pneumatology. There have been significant shifts in philosophical perspectives in the course of the last one hundred years, and the authors are desirous of seeing these shifts reflected in the way we conceive of the Holy Spirit. Shifts in the way we think about the concepts of person, matter, and force, Shults and Hollingsworth believe, should open up new vistas (93-94), though they are not without an awareness of the way each of these new vistas also brings challenges—dangers such as pantheism, tritheism (a danger faced by proponents of the social analogy of the Trinity), and an imbalance when it comes to the relationship between divine sovereignty and human voluntarism.

The final third of the book (99-150) is a superb "Annotated Bibliography" that could easily be published as a stand-alone piece.

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*. By Ferdinand Schlingensiepen. Translated by Isabel Best. New York: T&T Clark, 2010, xxx + 439 pp., $29.95.

Although Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) only lived for the first half of the twentieth century, the German theologian is one of the most influential Christian thinkers of that entire century. There is, of course, a deep level of interest generated in a life like his that was lived in such world-shaking circumstances. The unrelenting stream of books on his contemporary, Winston Churchill, is evidence of the same. But there is no doubt that his profound existential reflections on the question of what it means to be a Christian in our modern world—reflections that were lived out in the horrors of the Nazi regime—are a key reason for the attraction of this German theologian. Whatever one's belief about the rectitude of Bonhoeffer's decision to be actively involved in the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler, there is, without a shadow of a doubt, much to be learned from this remarkable man about Christian discipleship.

This new biography of Bonhoeffer by pastor-theologian Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, whose father was involved in the Confessing Church and who is himself a close friend of Eberhard

Bethge—Bonhoeffer's colleague and first biographer—originally appeared in German on the centenary of Bonhoeffer's birth (2006). With profound historical reflection and an eye for detail that comes from long acquaintance with the primary sources, Schlingensiepen takes us through Bonhoeffer's upbringing, his brilliant academic career prior to the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor (Prime Minister), his active opposition to the Nazi regime, and his embrace of violence as his only possible course of action. The genesis of this biography goes back to the late 1960s when Bethge asked Schlingensiepen to write a shorter version of his massive biography (well over 1,000 pages). As Schlingensiepen notes, though, this is not that book. In light of new material about Bonhoeffer and the Third Reich, as well as a much more positive perspective in Germany itself about the attempted coup of July 20, 1944, a new work was needed (xvi–xvii). There is no doubt in the mind of this reviewer that this work does for our generation what Bethge's massive biography did for his in the late 1960s.

What comes through loud and clear is Bonhoeffer's wisdom in living a truly Christian life in the worst of times—ultimately, a product of divine grace, as he himself would admit. Unlike many of his contemporary theologians, Bonhoeffer, "an inconvenient Cassandra" (127), had the foresight to see through Hitler's political use of Christian jargon and committed himself to oppose the Nazis, especially with regard to their position on the Jews. As Schlingensiepen notes, "Bonhoeffer's early rejection of Nazism had much to do with the Jewish question" (127). In fact, Bonhoeffer's clear theological foundation to his political decision to join the Resistance to Hitler leads Schlingensiepen to describe his subject as a "Christian martyr" (xvii), a description that some may well question. What, however, I think cannot be questioned is Bonhoeffer's vital insight that theology and political action are ultimately inseparable (xvii).

Although Bonhoeffer knew that the decision to actively plot the assassination of Hitler was a decision that would put him at odds with many of his fellow Christians, the *sanctorum communion* (the fellowship of the saints) was central to both his thought and life as a Christian believer (75). Bonhoeffer was deeply critical of the failure of the German Church of his day to live prophetically because of its naive embrace of German culture, yet he was also very conscious that belonging to the Church was central to the experience of salvation. It was this conviction that informed his deeply controversial remark that "whoever knowingly separates himself from the Confessing Church separates himself from salvation" (189), a variant of the patristic adage that there is no salvation *extra ecclesiam*. In fact, one of the most profound studies that I have ever read of this central Christian reality is Bonhoeffer's, *Life Together* (Schlingensiepen has but one brief paragraph on this tremendous work, on page 182), written in 1937. And almost the final scene of his life is his leading a worship service in the prison of Flossenbürg (377).

If you plan on reading only one biography this fall, then make it this one.

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Baptist Confession of Faith & The Baptist Catechism*. Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books/Carlisle, PN: Reformed Baptist Publications, 2010, xvi + 123 pp.

Historically Baptists have been, and thankfully many still are, a confessional people. Yes, they are supremely a people of the Book, the Holy Scriptures. But confessions have been central to their experience of the Christian life. The twentieth-century attempt to explain Baptist life and thought primarily in terms of soul-liberty seri-

ously skews the evidence. Of course, freedom from external coercion has always been a major concern of Baptist apologetics. But up until the twentieth century, this emphasis has generally never been at the expense of a clear and explicit confessionalism.

Of the many confessions of faith that Baptists have produced—and they have produced a goodly number—none has been more influential than the *Second London Confession*, popularly known as the *1689 Confession*. It was not only the confession of faith adopted by the majority of Baptists in the British Isles and Ireland from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but it was also the major confessional document on the American Baptist scene, where it was known as the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742) and which added an article on the laying on of hands and also one on the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Among Southern Baptists this confession played an influential role as *The Charleston Confession* (1767),[1] which became the basis of *The Abstract of Principles*, the statement of faith of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.[2]

This new leather-bound edition of the *Second London Confession* is indeed welcome. There were a number of editions in the twentieth century,[3] but the advantage of this edition is not only the beautiful format in which it has been produced, but also its having James Renihan as the editor and the inclusion of the original letter to the reader and the addendum on baptism that accompanied the 1688 publication.[4] Renihan is currently one of the most diligent and careful scholars of seventeenth-century Calvinistic Baptist life and his "Foreword" provides an extremely helpful introduction to the *Confession*, detailing both its provenance and its importance. The inclusion of the original letter to the reader and the addendum on baptism are also very welcome since they deepen the twenty-first century reader's understanding of both the irenicism and rock-like convictions of the men who signed the *Confession*.[5]

The list of the original signatories of the *Confession* is also included (69-70). It is quite a list of Baptist worthies. Among them are the two great pioneers of Baptist life, Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin; the most important Baptist theologian of the seventeenth century, Benjamin Keach; and those remarkable preachers Hercules Collins and Andrew Gifford, Sr. There is a typographical error on page 70 in this list of signatories: Christopher Price was from Abergavenny, not Abergayenny.

An added bonus to this edition is the inclusion of what is known as *Keach's Catechism*, though Benjamin Keach actually had nothing to do with the writing and publication of this catechism. In the minds of seventeenth-century Protestants, and Baptists are typical in this regard, confession and catechism went together. It too is nicely introduced by Renihan.

ENDNOTES

[1]The sole area of difference between the *Philadelphia Confession* and the *Charleston Confession* was the latter's omission of the article on the laying on of hands. The 1767 *Charleston Confession* was reprinted in 1813, 1831, and 1850.

[2]For details of the links between the *Charleston Confession* and the *Abstract of Principles*, see Michael A. G. Haykin, Roger D. Duke, and A. James Fuller, *Soldiers of Christ: Selections from the Writings of Basil Manly, Sr., & Basil Manly, Jr.* (Cape Coral, Florida: Founders Press, 2009), 36–40.

[3]See *Things Most Surely Believed Among Us: The Baptist Confession of Faith* (London: Evangelical Press, 1958)—this edition of the *Confession* has been published in North America by Gospel Mission, Choteau, Montana, and Valley Gospel Missions, Langley, British Columbia; *A Faith to Confess: The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* (Haywards Heath, Sussex: Carey Publications, 1975 and 1977); *The Baptist Confession of Faith 1689*, ed. Peter Masters (London: The Wakeman Trust, 1981). See also *A Confession of Faith* (1677 ed. repr. in a facsimile edition; Auburn, Massachusetts: B&R Press, 2000).

[4]For an exposition of the *Confession*, see Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist*

*Confession of Faith* (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1989).

[5]The *Confession* was published in 1677, 1688, and 1699, but apparently not in 1689. That was the year it was adopted at the General Assembly of the Particular Baptists in London (ix).

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Why We're All Romans: The Roman Contribution to the Western World*. By Carl J. Richard. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, xviii + 301 pp., $26.95.

A number of recent books have reminded modern men and women that they are deeply in the debt of various peoples of the past. According to the titles of two such books, it was the Irish who saved civilization and the Scots who built the modern world (Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* [1995]; and Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* [2001]). Any such reminder is salutary, for as a rule, moderns tend to think of themselves as self-made men and women. This new work by Carl Richard, professor of history at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, picks up this same sort of theme, but with a difference: this book is essentially an overview of the entirety of Roman civilization. After a concise summary of Roman history from the early days of the Republic to the fall of the Empire in the fifth century (chapter 1), Richard examines such things as administration and law (chapter 2), engineering and architecture (chapter 3)—an area in which, due to men like Sextus Julius Frontinus (35-103AD), the water commissioner of Rome, Roman genius shone (59)—poetry (chapter 4), philosophy and historical works (chapters 6-7), in order to demonstrate that while the Greeks are rightly accorded a key place in the edifice of Occidental culture (see his comments in chapter 9), Rome needs to be recognized as having far more influence. By and large, Richard, who has specialized in writing works relating to the influence of classical civilization on the West, is able to sustain his thesis.

In the final chapter—"The Rise and Romanization of Christianity" (chapter 10)—Richard examines the emergence of Christianity in the Roman world, its rise to dominance in that world under Constantine and Theodosius I in the fourth century, and the way in which Christianity was to some degree Romanized in the process. Richard helpfully lays out the main reasons for the success of Christianity (260-69), even noting such things as the difference between pagan and Christian views of humility (268). He argues that the Christian focus on love was central to the triumph of the Christian faith. As he notes, "no other religion had made it the chief obligation of its adherents" (266). Surprisingly, he comments that without Paul Christianity probably would have perished (256). There is no doubt that Paul was a key figure in the advance of the Faith. Luke's repetition of the narrative of his conversion in the Book of Acts no less than three times certainly indicates that the New Testament historian saw it that way. But no early Christian would ever have argued that Paul was so indispensable that without him Christianity would have disappeared.

It is also noteworthy that Richard has some strong words for what he calls "replacement theology," namely, the idea that the prophecies of the Old Testament that refer to Israel are actually to be fulfilled in the realm of the Church, not national Israel. In a word, such a view is "nonsensical" (272). Here, Richard fails to take into consideration the way in which the New Testament itself interprets some of these prophecies and so sets a pattern for later patristic exegetes.

Overall, though, this is an excellent study that could be used to great advantage in survey courses of the Roman world and would be very helpful in orienting students of the New Testament and

early Christianity to the matrix of the Ancient Church.

—Michael A. G. Haykin
Professor of Church History and
Biblical Spirituality
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Out of My Bone: The Letters of Joy Davidman*. Edited by Don W. King. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009, 387 pp., $28.00.

It may be that the best known utterance of Joy Davidman, recorded by Warnie Lewis on her first and rather shocking visit to Magdalen College, is, "Is there anywhere in this monastic establishment where a lady can relieve herself?" It was this rather shocking woman, however, of whom C. S. Lewis wrote this epitaph:

> Here the whole world (stars, water, air,
> And field, and forest, as they were
> Reflected in a single mind)
> Like cast off clothes was left behind
> In ashes, yet with hope that she,
> Re-born from holy poverty,
> In lenten lands, hereafter may
> Resume them on her Easter Day.

What human mind, however poor and cramped, cannot help but reflect the whole world? This is what the mind is made for, and what it does for no other reason that it has two eyes and stands upon two legs. But that is not, of course, what Joy's husband wished to have the reader understand about her. He wanted to explain as best he could why he loved her as the last and greatest gift, the comprehending gift, of the world he had gratefully received from its Creator—not simply stars, water, air, field and forest simply considered, but as the cataphatic emblems of Deep Meaning and Sweet Desire for which he had no words. Even in his own world, he had a living Narnian star explain to young Eustace, flaming gas is only what stars are made of, not what they are.

Joy told a correspondent that of her writing Jack liked the poetry best, and it is there, not in her correspondence, one discovers her mind, "panther-like," as a fitting companion for his—how she could be his intellectual and spiritual peer. Neither do her letters go far in explaining his fascination with her, why she came to fill a remarkably Joy-shaped space in his heart as the last stroke of a great artwork painted on the canvas of Jack Lewis, whose removal by the same Artist was his great trial of faith, and which marked the beginning of the end of his life on earth. The epitaph was also his own, for the words were of Joy, but the stone on which they were graven was his own heart.

If the sort of correspondence found here doesn't touch the poetical depths, it does exhibit the framework of character from which the poetry was suspended, apart from which the poet cannot be known. Although there is only minor evidence here of a pantherine mind, there is plenty of the leonine character in which it crouched. Containing Joy's known extant correspondence from the age of 26 to her death in 1960 at 45, of its 170-odd letters, 100 are to her husband—eventually, ex-husband—William (Bill) Lindsay Gresham. The second largest number went to Chad and/or Eva Walsh (14), and the third were of the young Joy to the poet and novelist Stephen Vincent Benét (8). There is one to her son, David, and one to C. S. Lewis. The letters to Bill nearly all concern monies he had promised to send to England for the support of her and their two sons—monies which he hadn't sent or were in very serious arrears, so that Joy, in the days before she was supported by Lewis, and whose priority was first to pay for the best educations she could afford for the boys, often lived in severe poverty.

It is in those letters to the ever-improvident, sexually unfaithful, and occasionally religious Bill, however, in which the framing of her character can be most clearly seen. They are an interesting tightrope act that required a great deal of literary

skill and emotional self-control. On one hand, she naturally did not wish to anger the very provoking person responsible for most of her support, but on the other, she wished to let him know in the most emphatic terms that she and the boys were in desperate need of what he had promised. Bill was intelligent and perceptive, not the sort who could be wheedled or manipulated by theatrics—and while he was an alcoholic, weak and subject to his most destructive passions, there is evidence in his letters, some of which are excerpted here, that he meant well, felt real affection for Joy and his sons, and was not altogether bad. The correspondence indicates that Joy took careful account of all these factors in an immensely complex relationship, here as maintained at long distance and awkward intervals.

What shines through them perhaps best of all is her courage and charity: her desire to forgive, concretely expressed in her willingness to help and encourage those who had hurt her, even when her circumstances had improved and prudence no longer required it, and her extraordinary boldness in (yes, this metaphor does come to mind) boldly seizing an indifferent world by the throat in her struggle to be, above all things, a Christian wife and mother.

"Now you are a lioness," said Aslan to Lucy, clearly Lewis's favorite among the Pevensies, "And now all Narnia will be renewed." It was this lionish sort of women, bright and brave, full of gloriously feminine, passionate, and often strongly insistent energy, that Lewis had always liked best. They march across his life as the poetry upon his page from Lady Reason to Janie Moore to Perelandra to Sarah Smith to Margery Dimble to Lucy to Oruel to Joy as their culmination and end. What some have mistaken for feminist sympathy was in fact his love for the terrible strength of womanhood, lost when it degenerated into either the weak and silly, as it did in Susan, or cut itself off from its masculine source, as Jane and Tinidril almost did, and as, in his story, Psyche did in fact. One does wonder whether the ridiculous Uncle Andrew might have been Lewis muttering behind his handkerchief that even the witch terrorizing London was in her own way a "dem fine woman."

*Out of My Bone* is heavily and helpfully footnoted, contains Joy's account of her conversion, "The Longest Way Round," and a good set of photographs, including a panoramic view of The Kilns property which by itself sheds a good amount of light on the Lewis family's home life, including the necessary range of Joy's varmint rifle and "Just how large is that pond?"

—S. M. Hutchens
Senior Editor
*Touchstone*

*The Literary Study Bible*. Edited by Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007, 1,913 pp., $49.99.

It is an obvious fact that the Bible is not a systematic theology book. Instead, God has given us his revelation in a vast and beautiful collection of writings that are literary in form. A large percentage of the Bible is poetry. There is a huge amount of narrative. There are apocalyptic literature and epithalamia. There are hero stories and love stories. There are allegories, acrostics, odes, oracles, and soliloquies. Similes and metaphors abound. If we are going to be faithful teachers and preachers of God's Word, we must know something about literature and how to interpret it. As a young pastor, I was convicted of my need to learn Greek when a friend asked me, "You would expect a teacher of French literature to know French, wouldn't you?" A similar question is appropriate: "A teacher of biblical literature ought to know something about literature, shouldn't he?"

For most of the past year I have been reading *The Literary Study Bible*, and I am convinced that it would be an extraordinarily useful tool for all serious students of the Bible, but especially for every preacher and teacher of the Bible. Since so

few of us have educational backgrounds that are strong in literary studies, we need help in seeing and appreciating literary conventions we might otherwise not even know are present in the text. *The Literary Study Bible* can help readers to see literary motifs and developments in the Bible and to understand how literary form affects theological meaning. With the possible exception of proverbial literature, virtually all other literary genres require the reader to see individual passages as part of a larger, usually organic, context. One of the greatest potential benefits of *The Literary Study Bible* is that it can assist readers in grasping the big picture of the Bible and the way that big picture affects the interpretation of individual passages of Scripture.

Each book of the Bible is prefaced with an introduction that points out the literary features found in that book. For example, the introduction to Genesis has sections devoted to genres, the literary concept of a hero, the storylines, the cast of characters, unifying motifs, inferred literary intentions, theological themes, and Genesis as a chapter in the master story of the Bible. The entire Bible is divided into small readable units, and each unit is headed by a literary introduction. There are no footnotes other than the textual notes accompanying the English Standard Version translation.

The note that introduces Genesis 24, "Isaac Gets a Wife," is a happy example of how literary considerations enable the reader to see elements of truth in the narrative that he might otherwise overlook.

> Chapter 24 is a love story, and we can note at the outset that the storyteller satisfies the human interest in love stories by devoting a whopping sixty-seven verses to the episode in which Isaac conducts the courtship of his wife by proxy. Even though the story may seem to belong to Isaac rather than Abraham, it is actually an extension of Abraham's domestic role, since it was his responsibility to find a wife for his son. The spirit in which Abraham undertakes the quest for Isaac's wife surrounds it with religious significance (vv. 5-8). We are to understand that Abraham was concerned to protect the covenant line, which stipulated that the covenant would be perpetuated through his family. The two lead characters in the romance drama are the servant who undertakes the journey and Rebekah, the bride of choice. One way to bring the servant in to focus is to ponder the litany of things that make him one of the most attractive minor characters in the Bible. We can get a grip on Rebekah's characterization by scrutinizing the story for details that would commend her as a future wife. The story has a nice abundance of suspense, and it is a drama in miniature with speeches and dialogue fully reported. The first meeting of Isaac and Rebekah (vv. 62-67) is a masterpiece of atmosphere, tenderness, and understated emotion.

While the notes are often academic, they are liberally sprinkled with thought provoking, spiritual observations that are readily applied. For example, in the note introducing the destruction of Sodom, the editors write concerning Lot, "The man who had reached for the stars in terms of success, prosperity, and affluence ends up as a cave man. . . . We also learn in Lot's later life that it is easier to get the family out of Sodom than it is to get Sodom out of the family."

There is a significant amount of material from the editors—I would estimate that around twenty to twenty-five percent of *The Literary Study Bible* consists of editorial remarks. Unlike other study Bibles where the reader may consult the notes only when puzzled or when especially interested in a topic, the editors apparently expect us to read all that they have written. Granted, it is usually advantageous to do so, especially when literary ignorance is so rampant, but still, the persevering reader must be committed to the editors' fundamental premise: literary considerations are crucial to understanding the Bible. They admirably establish this fundamental premise in the editors' pref-

ace and introduction, which, regrettably, many readers may neglect to read.

*The Literary Study Bible* is an excellent resource, even for the reader who uses it only as a reference, but a more thorough reading will pay rich dividends. A guide for reading the entire Bible through in a year is appended, and if the discerning reader reads every note for every reading through the year, he or she will gain a vast treasure of literary sensibilities and skills that will greatly increase understanding of and appreciation for God's literary masterpiece, the Bible.

—Jim Orrick
Professor of Literature and Culture
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later.* Edited by Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell. New York: T&T Clark, 2009, 175 pp., $29.95 paper.

The contents of this book were derived from a two-day symposium held in September 2008 to reassess the contributions made to New Testament studies since the 1983 publication of *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul,* by Wayne A. Meeks. The editors collaborated together, with six scholars (including Meeks), with the hope "that this work will serve not only to introduce a new generation of students to Meeks's book but also to provide an outline of current discussion and debate in the various areas addressed in *The First Urban Christians*" (preface).

Meeks's landmark work, *The First Urban Christians,* was comprised of six chapters where he addressed issues such as the first-century urban environment, social stratification, how the societies influenced the formation of local churches, how conflict was handled, rituals, and patterns of belief and life. He wrote from the presupposition that when it comes to studying the Apostolic Church, "If we do not ever see their world, we cannot claim to understand early Christianity" (*The First Urban Christians,* 2nd ed., 2). In a renewed attempt to describe the social history of early Christianity, Meeks continued the process (which had started in the 1970s) of moving New Testament scholarship into a more interdisciplinary direction, wedding literary analysis with theological reflection, historical studies, and sociological, anthropological, and psychological theories.

The contributors to *After the First Urban Christians* work diligently to fulfill the hope stated above and in numerous ways advocate this continued direction articulated by Meeks. David Horrell responds to some common critiques to Meek's methodology, while arguing for the ongoing development of the social-scientific study of the New Testament. Peter Oaks argues for using Pompeii as a model in which to understand better the urban environments of the Pauline churches. Bruce W. Longenecker addresses socio-economic profiling of the first-century believers. Edward Adams examines many of the scholarly developments since Meeks. Todd D. Still includes a chapter on the establishment and exercise of authority in the first churches. Louise J. Lawrence writes on ritual related to life and death. Dale B. Martin examines the correlations between the patterns of belief and life. Wayne A. Meeks concludes the work by reflecting on the various chapters and his own views since the publication of his book under consideration.

The academic nature of this book and the perspectives of various contributors make for a challenging read. While it is not necessary to have read *The First Urban Christians* before reading Still and Horrell's work, I would strongly encourage the reader to do so. While the various authors of this book provide some excellent summarizations of Meeks's book, most of the time they assume the reader's familiarity with his original work. There is also the natural assumption that readers are familiar with weighty concepts such as ritual, symbol, symbolic realities, organizational structures, social structures, discourse analysis, structural-

ism, post-structuralism, and the thoughts of the fathers of classical sociology, Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. Regardless of these challenges, Still and Horrell have provided us a glimpse into the world of praise and criticisms that have followed Meeks's 1983 publication.

—J. D. Payne
Associate Professor of Church Planting
and Evangelism
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation*. By Robert H. Gundry. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, 1,072 pp., $49.95.

Wouldn't it be great if anytime you had a question about a particular text you could call your old Bible professor from seminary and get a brief, homiletically-oriented summary of the text's meaning? Robert H. Gundry's, *Commentary on the New Testament* provides just this sort of information in one published volume. Scholar-in-residence and professor emeritus at Westmont College, Gundry discusses every verse in the New Testament in this 1,072-page *magnum opus*. Well-known for his commentaries on Matthew and Mark and his widely-used, *Survey of the New Testament*, Gundry distills decades of scholarly experience in working paragraph-by-paragraph through the New Testament—focusing on the divinely inspired human author's meaning with an eye to modern-day explication of the passage. As an interesting additional feature, the English version of the biblical text quoted throughout this volume is a formally equivalent (word-for-word) translation done by Gundry himself.

In reviewing this text, I did not read the entire volume, but sampled various texts throughout the New Testament. Gundry writes in a clear, engaging style and demonstrates a wealth of knowledge. I think it very likely that I will refer to this book in the future—especially when I am looking for a respected New Testament scholar's concise opinion on a thorny text. That being said, I must also express three reservations about this book.

First, as with any book of this length, I differ with the author on some interpretations. For example, in Gundry's discussion of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, he asserts that the names of the immediate ancestors of Joseph are highly symbolic names. Though he does not explicitly deny that such names correspond to historical persons, he fails to comment on that issue, nor does he attempt to reconcile the list with the corresponding genealogy in Luke. (Here, I prefer the treatment of Matthew's Gospel by the early church father Julius Africanus, who asserts that Matthew gives us Joseph's biological lineage, while Luke gives us Joseph's legal lineage via Levirate marriage.) Gundry's brevity of discussion highlights an accompanying problem—1,072 pages (the length of this book) sounds like a massive tome until you consider the complex debates that rage over numerous texts in the New Testament. At several places, I hoped for a bit more explanation (e.g., in the discussion of the millennium in Revelation 20).

Another hesitation I have with Gundry's commentary is his rigid application of an almost "classroom style" word-for-word approach to translation. This method results in not a few idiosyncratic renderings (e.g., "Our God is an incinerating fire" [Heb 12:28]). I also wonder if this approach does not illegitimately imply superiority to formally-equivalent translation theory. I fear that repeated appeals to such overly-literal renderings will wrongly result in some readers feeling uneasy about the many good, readable Bible translations we have in English.

A final hesitation I have with Gundry's commentary is his stated resistance to providing theological synthesis for apparently divergent biblical assertions (e.g., the Bible's warnings against falling away alongside biblical assurances of believers' perseverance). Yes, we need to allow biblical texts to function in their stark forms—whether as com-

forts or warnings. Yet, in the end, a person in the pew is going to ask questions such as, "Can I lose my salvation?" I would argue that biblical scholars cannot simply leave theological integration to systematic theologians.

Few persons have the expertise to produce a one-volume tour-de-force of this sort. Gundry clearly does. Even with the reservations I express above, I commend this work as containing many helpful reflections on the New Testament from a highly respected scholar.

—Robert L. Plummer
Associate Professor of
New Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Psychology in the Spirit: Contours of a Transformational Psychology.* By John H. Coe and Todd W. Hall. Downers Grove, IL. Intervarsity Press, 2010, 422 pp., $22.00 paper.

*Psychology in the Spirit* by John Coe and Todd Hall is a 422-page book that seeks to bring a "new" perspective to the Christian counseling table. That perspective is the "transformational psychology view." This view is seen as formidable enough and different enough to be added to what used to be, *Psychology & Christianity: Four Views* to make up the fifth official view of the new publication, *Christianity & Psychology: Five Views.* There are some differences, but when all is said and done, perhaps this "transformational view" is not different enough. By their own admission the authors seek to "show how it accommodates the other approaches, avoiding their weaknesses"—but in actuality they don't avoid a few of the key weaknesses of the Christian integrationist's approach (200). Even though there are some well stated motivational differences and some uniqueness in how their functional perspective is communicated, this "new" view, at its heart, in a very real sense is not so new at all.

The book is laid out in vie sections: foundations, methodology, content, the praxis of soul care, and the ultimate goal. While these major headings seem clear cut, the book is not by any means a straight forward or easy read and therefore must have one's full attention and careful evaluation to determine what is actually being proposed. With phrases like, "a *true* psychologist," "high-road head knowledge," "low-road, gut level knowledge," "*attachment filters*," and Kierkegaard's "*I-ness*," the reader must stay his evaluation until these things are fully unfolded. There is so much that could be addressed in this book (both positive and negative) but there is not space enough here to do justice to all of them.

Perhaps the most troubling presupposition that becomes apparent in the transformational view of counseling is too high a view of the "truth" gleaned from the "science" of psychology and its too low a view of Scripture. Coe and Hall use "truth" and "reality" interchangeably and hold up the "realities of creation" or "natural realities" (truth discovered by the observation and interpretation from man's study of man) as the missing "truth" for the needs and troubles of man. They write about the need for the Christian psychologist to do psychology "anew," themselves, with a *wholistic* approach to what is known as faith and science; to see *both* as science (natural realities) and *both* as faith (God's will and revelation). This approach is fraught with subjectivity and the same old misconception that the different levels of knowledge are equal in certitude. It is the long-standing error of equalizing God's Word and natural observations by saying, "all truth is God's truth." The familiar mistake of lumping soft "science" of psychology in with the hard science of empirical and un-theorized data is clearly a contributing factor. Leaning too heavily on the reason of fallen man to determine "truth" or "reality" is another. Nowhere in the book is there any claim of Scripture (the infallible truth) itself being the foundation for their model; neither do they outline the important use of Scripture to evaluate said "realities."

In a discussion of "doing psychology as a unified vision of reality in faith" it is said, "It [the term 'Christian realities'] is not meant to arbitrarily dichotomize religious and secular realities. Both are realities in God's world" (Synopsis 206 and page 83). What is even more starling is that the authors would seem to lift "science" above God's written revelation when they say, "this psychology does not merely have as its data the natural phenomena of the person, but includes 'Christian realities' as a legitimate datum of science," and "psychology needs to give its 'truth' to the church," and "the scriptures . . . are important to help frame and give insight to our natural law reflections on life [rather than to evaluate them]" (83; 206; 338; 204). At the very least, it is clear that these authors see the natural "realities" on a functional par with Scripture, and possess a mystical (rather than Word-based) approach to the Spirit that doesn't help their view of truth either. These things are further revealed in other statements the authors make:

> [O]ur transformational approach is a mandate to do psychology in faith anew: to do the first hand work of discovering a psychology of a person that is science; open to the experience of the Spirit and open to the truths from Scripture, as well as open to truths from observation and reflection on ourselves, on other human beings and on what others have thought about human nature (Synopsis 202).

> Psychologists who have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in prayer will be more sensitive to understand and explore the experience in their theory and research (90).

> We do not know these Christian tenants to be true because we suppose them. Rather, they are true because they correspond to or are born out in the *experience* of reality . . . they are as certain as the knowing of my own existence and of other objects (82, emphasis added).

Coe and Hall use the idea of the Old Testament sage and the Proverbs to make the case that "truths" discovered by the discipline of psychology are just as much God's truth as His written Word, and just as much needed. This also allows them to "reject the idea that Scripture is the only place for finding [truly needed] wisdom or prescriptions for living well in God and that psychology and its [softly] scientific methodology should be only descriptive in nature" at best (208). The authors present the Old Testament sage of the Proverbs as the truest and oldest version of a psychologist doing psychology as God intended, in that he looks to nature and the observation of man to determine truth to live by. This is a strange twisting of scriptural truth. In actuality the Proverbs (as is all of Scripture) are the written revelation of God, given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as the very words of God (though many of the proverbs are clearly conveyed as general truisms rather than intended to apply in all situations). They are not wisdom discovered by the writer's own observation and interpretation for prescription. The author of Proverbs looks to (and the Holy Spirit uses) what he knows of nature, man's actions, and his own experience to illustrate God's truth that is supernaturally given to him (often an application of the Torah).

On a positive note, this transformation view does indeed seem somewhat different from other Christian psychology views in its communicated emphasis on the character and spirituality of the psychologist himself and in the stated motivation of all of his efforts as a "good" or transformed psychologist. Even the needed character and spirituality of the psychologist is fundamentally linked to the ultimate motivation the authors initially lift up as the very purpose for the existence of man: to love God and neighbor, like Christ, for the glory of God. At the very crux of their perspective is their capitalization on the fact that man is fundamentally created relational in nature in order to flourish in his union with God in an un-bifurcated manner and thereby affect his Christ-likeness and

other relationships.

This was a worthy encouragement and a quite commendable perspective. However, where the spotlight or focus really lands and how affected by secular thought their methodology and content is concerning it, is not so commendable. As a result of a consuming goal to help others be the relational beings they were created to be, this in itself is what their counseling becomes all about. Hall explains that his own counseling is "relational psychoanalytic and attachment based approach to therapy" that employs several of the traditional relational therapeutic techniques (339).

In other words, after an apparent recognition of man's *most* ultimate motivation (the glory of God), the rest of their discussion, methodology, and content is unmistakably void of the "glory of God" part. Furthermore, well into the book it is clear that the transformation referred to is mostly the transformation of the psychologist into a relationally "open" individual himself and the transformation of the client's "attachment filters and their capacity to love" (350). It is proposed that relational blocks and intuitive relational responses, the subject of which "are the core of a relational view of human nature and development," stand in the way of their relationship with God and others (240). These negative filters are presented as a result of ruling, gut-level, unconscious knowledge or deep intuitive beliefs that that cannot be easily known or helped by cognitive means (this is Freudian). I see this as in direct opposition to what God tells us about our transformation, that it is accomplished by the renewing of our mind—our thoughts, beliefs, and desires—by the Spirit of God using His Word (Rom 12:2, and described in Phil 4:6-8).

It also is proposed by Coe and Hall that psychotherapy that employs many traditional modalities is what it takes to facilitate the transformation that is necessary to help troubled Christians grow in their union with God and in their responses to people and events. Most assuredly this idea is not new. What is being said and has been said in many other ways is that 1. *Salvation* (a fundamentally changed heart through forgiveness), 2. *the indwelling of the Holy Spirit* (His work and our dependence on His power), 3. *an increasing recognition of the supreme value of Christ and knowing Him* (and the inferiority of all else), 4. *sin confessed and turning from it* (repentance), 5. *the written Word of God recognized, agreed with and intentionally applied to thoughts, beliefs, desires, and actions* (God's character, teachings, and promises), 6. *the Body of Christ's involvement*, 7. *alertness to the spiritual battle that rages* and a *looking forward to our hope* (Christ's return, dwelling with Him and the absence of sin and suffering) are not sufficient to grow us in our relationship with God, to transform us into Christ-likeness, and to help us bring more and more glory to God. God's Word tells very differently! It teaches us that these truly inspired realities employed are the needed and sufficient elements of change according to God. Each and every one of these things is so intricately linked to the personal application of the written Word of God that truly sanctifies us (John 17:17).

Other issues that need addressing or further addressing in this book are the idea of the subconscious, the knowledge spiral of science values, contingent communication or reflective self-functioning, human attachment, the realized self, the place of reason and intellect, the purpose and use of general revelation, and the proper view of the social sciences and how to interact with them. What I gained from reading this book is a renewed fervor just to be a *Bible-wise* counselor who is certainly willing to explore some of the more "hard science" data and non-interpreted observations of the field of psychology, but in a very critical manner (with the Word of God) and only for the purpose of seeing if it can shed practical light on God's written revelation or its application (not the other way around). The Apostle Paul aptly warns us about the dangers of teachings that are outside of Scripture and how we build on the foundation of Christ (Col 2:8, 16-19, 23, 1 Cor 3:10-14). These teachings often give the appearance of wisdom

but don't meet the litmus test of God's Word. I leave you with these passages to consider about transformation: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 2 Peter 1:3; Psalm 19:7-11.

—Stuart W. Scott
Associate Professor of Biblical Counseling
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Congregation and Campus: North American Baptists in Higher Education*. By William H. Brackney. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009, 499 pp., $49.00.

From the prolific pen of William H. Brackney comes another helpful study in American Baptist life. Similar to his efforts to unite the wide diversity of Baptist theology under a single title in *The Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (MUP, 2004), Brackney once again casts a broad net in an effort to tell as a single story the diverse, and at times controversial, developments of education among Baptists of North America.

He introduces the study with a consideration of Baptist identity. Baptists began as a diverse group with no united theological position. Hence, it should come as no surprise that this "highly variegated religious tradition" has produced a complex network of educational traditions. While the earliest schools were organized by Baptist groups primarily for their own constituencies, neither those who attended the schools nor even those who were allowed to teach were limited to the Baptist family. It was this inclusiveness that Brackney identifies as the first of three chief characteristics of Baptist education. Second, no religious tests were required for students or faculty, at least for most of the Baptist schools. Students came from diverse religious traditions—post-Reformation Protestantism, generally—and were allowed to remain as they came. Moreover, professors teaching in the schools also could hold to non-Baptist religious sentiments such as Presbyterianism or Methodism. Finally, there was "a broad intellectual and cultural understanding of training for ministry" not merely focusing on the Bible but on broad areas of education.

Brackney traces his history through the various categories of educational efforts that Baptists attempted from manual labors schools to colleges to seminaries for the training of the ministry. As he recounts this complex story, he introduces the readers to an enormous amount of research into dozens and dozens of schools, many of which hardly had the momentum to commence and failed nearly as quickly as they began. The history includes brief stories of schools long forgotten. This is the work's most important contribution. The collection of materials is simply amazing and one comes to realize that Baptists took education seriously, raising up new schools at every opportunity. Having worked among the Baptists in several Canadian provinces, Brackney is also able to tell insightfully the contribution that Canadian Baptists made to higher education. Brackney also includes an important discussion on the contributions of Baptists not affiliated with major Baptist groups. These independent Baptists have arisen largely in the twentieth century in response to theological liberalism in the older Baptist associations. They too have made numerous attempts, successful and otherwise, at providing diverse educational opportunities to their respective constituencies. All in all, the collection of data is so vast that only a seasoned and accomplished historian could have attempted it. Baptists owe to the author a debt of gratitude for charting the variegated landscape of Baptist education.

As Brackney ends the story, he concludes that Baptist identity has devolved over its history. He suggests that numerous issues contributed to this devolution including financial pressures and denominational affiliation. But it was the naked challenge of liberalism, which Brackney fails to identify clearly, that brought the most significant challenges in Baptist educational life. Theological liberalism sought hegemony between Baptists

north and south. Historically, Baptist schools like Brown University and the University of Chicago, two of his exemplars, eventually moved well beyond their Baptist roots and embraced secularism. It is here that the analysis falls short. Northern Baptist education has been hit especially hard by the devolution of Baptist identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, on the eve of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, Northern Baptists had six major seminaries (Newton, Colgate, Rochester, Crozer, Chicago, and Berkeley) and numerous colleges with which they partnered who turned out ministers for the Convention. By the end of the twentieth century, those six had been reduced to two that are still meaningfully identified as part of the Baptist tradition. The prospects for these two schools look rather bleak. Recently those seminaries, Andover Newton Theological Seminary and Colgate-Rochester-Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS), considered a merger that would have reduced that number to just one school. While these seminaries are not the only schools that currently serve the American Baptist Churches USA, these historic institutions that were the nurseries of Baptist ministry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, today do little to serve their founding tradition. The University of Chicago Divinity School, started by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and his associates, was largely a Baptist effort, but has long since had any real Baptist identity. CRCDS has fallen on such hard times in recent years that it was forced to divest itself of the bulk of its stellar library. The American Baptist Historical Archives that used to be housed in its grand building was moved to Atlanta, GA, because of denominational budgetary concerns and because CRCDS could not contribute to its maintenance. In its recent history, CRCDS even had a retired Presbyterian minister as its president.

Brackney sees the broad diversity in Baptist life often as a good thing, a part of the polygenetic nature of Baptist identity. However, it was this misguided diversity that allowed the board of Brown University under the leadership of William H. P. Faunce, an avowed liberal, to change the policy that saw Brown completely lost to Baptist identity. Until Faunce, a Baptist was required to serve as Brown's president. Brown is chief among numerous colleges and universities that have little or no connection today with the Baptist faith that brought them to life and whose devoted followers built and endowed them. These schools were lost simply because there was no doctrinal basis upon which they could be retained. The tradition of doctrinal conformity has been more robust in Southern Baptist education, especially in its lead seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. As a result of the conservative resurgence (1979-2000), Southern Baptists began to take their theological identity more seriously. The denomination in general and its seminaries in particular have embraced a more consistent doctrinal standard. While it is true that Brown and many other schools did not have narrow Baptist creeds, it is hard to imagine that its early Baptist leaders envisioned the possibility of such a wide diversity, quite detached from biblical orthodoxy, which came to dominate these schools. The nineteenth century saw the gradual dissipation of theological belief and witnessed a slow departure from biblical religion among Baptists and other groups. By the time the Divinity School of the University of Chicago was a decade old, few of its faculty held to anything remotely resembling historic Christianity. It is regrettable that the author did not probe this angle of the story more fully so that other Baptists today who still retain a biblical form of Christianity which our Baptist forebears all embraced, whether they were Calvinists or Arminians, might be warned against repeating the mistakes of our forbearers.

Still, the work is a very helpful and widely researched study that deserves a careful read by all Baptists who love their heritage and long to see their youth trained in the Baptist way. It is a welcome and needed addition to the history of education among the people called Baptists.

—Jeffrey Paul Straub
Professor of Historical Theology
Central Baptist Theological Seminary,
Minneapolis, MN

*Liberalism without Illusions: Renewing an American Christian Tradition*. By Christopher H. Evans. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, ix + 207 pp., $24.95 paper.

Can religious liberalism be renewed? Liberalism was a powerful movement for most of the twentieth century, possessing broad popular support and extensive cultural and political influence. But since the 1970s liberalism's popular base in the churches has withered considerably, its cultural and political leadership has waned, and its institutional strength is increasingly isolated to universities and seminaries.

In this book, Christopher Evans, professor of church history at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, summons his fellow liberals to a concerted effort to save liberalism from its current malaise. Evans does not expect liberalism to regain its former glory. He believes however that liberalism can be restored to health and influence.

Renewing liberalism will require it to dispense with some of the "illusions" of its glory days. Above all it must dispense with its preoccupation with establishing Christendom. Liberals sought to Christianize America and the world, and they believed that the church's labors would establish democratic societies characterized by justice, equality, and goodness—they would inaugurate the promised kingdom of God. Contemporary liberals, Evans says, must settle for something less. They must labor for a just society but recognize that this is an unattainable ideal.

Renewing liberalism will also require that it restore an emphasis on personal piety. Personal faith and piety constitute the fundamental source of powerful religious movements. Christianity's social power thus depends largely on its power to heal the heart and to provide meaning and purpose to individuals. American evangelicalism succeeds here, Evans says, and for this reason has achieved considerable social power.

Liberalism must learn from evangelicalism at this point, Evans urges. If liberalism will only tap into the Bible's deeper themes of love, redemption, and reconciliation, it can be renewed. Liberals must therefore wrestle with "the meaning of Christ and of salvation", and take seriously the question of what it means to follow Christ. Evans recognizes that this requires liberalism to reconnect with the faith traditions of historic Christianity.

This, I believe, is the very thing that liberalism cannot accomplish. Liberal thinkers have been trying to find their way back to the precritical, premodern faith of the church since at least the 1970s. But the way is blocked by criticism. Liberalism's commitment to a naturalistic biblical criticism makes any straightforward acceptance of the first-century gospel impossible.

The personal faith that gives meaning and power to individual Christians hinges on confidence in the Bible's gospel message that the solution to personal guilt, alienation, and fear is faith in Jesus Christ, who was crucified and rose again from the dead that all who believe in him might not perish but have eternal life. Criticism destroys confidence in the truthfulness of this gospel. Liberalism cannot expect to achieve real gospel power without a return to the ancient gospel.

Liberalism's commitment to criticism has cut the movement from the taproot of the Christian gospel—the truthfulness of scriptures. The withering of its churches and its isolation in the academy will continue until it abandons naturalistic criticism for faith in the supernatural inspiration of the scriptures. But then it will not be liberalism.

—Gregory A. Wills
Professor of Church History
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary